

ON THE WATCH - Alphonse Gaudefroy (1845-1936)



Leaning against a tree, the pretty goose-tender is knitting, and paying little attention to the gallant sportsman who is trying to woo her. The animals' attitude ironically comments on the scene: the geese attack the intruder and the dog lamely finds refuge behind his master's legs.

Alphonse Gaudefroy was a pupil of Léon Cogniet and Alexandre Cabanel. He was a genre painter and a decorator. He also worked for the Gobelins and Beauvais tapestry manufactures.

The document shown here is a contemporary phototype of Gaudefroy's painting.



"Ateliers de Reproductions Artistiques"

"Phototype"

"13 Quai Voltaire Paris"

Phototyping was one of the numerous attempts at reproducing images that were experimented at the time. French engineer and photographer Louis Alphonse Poitevin imagined covering a glass surface with dichromated gelatin, exposing it to light and then using it to reproduce images using lithographic techniques. German photographer Joseph Albert perfected the invention, but never contested Poitevin's merit: "To make a *civet*, you need a rabbit, to make phototypes you need dichromated gelatin", he is said to have declared, meaning that Poitevin's use of this substance was the starting point of his own improvements.[1]

Phototyping, also known as photolithography [2], consisted of applying light-sensitive coats to glass panes, at least half an inch thick, exposing them to light and using them on lithographic presses to print as many as 1,000 or 1,500 copies a day.

I don't know if Lauronce used phototyping in his printing office. His patents show no reference to it, so I suppose he concerned himself mainly with chromolithography and reproduced Godefroy's painting using his usual technique.



The fan shows very few changes: the young man has simply moved back a bit, so that his face cuts out more sharply on the satin background than on the tree trunk. A wise change, except that now he seems to be wooing the tree instead of the girl.

The phototype gives a 'picture-perfect' reproduction of the painting but no idea as to the original colours. The fans are usually in shades of brown and grey with touches of blue on the clothes. It must

have been a popular subject among Lauronce's fans: no less than 9 surviving copies are known at the moment.

[1] Quoted by Alfred Lemerrier in "*La Lithographie française et les arts qui s'y rattachent, manuel pratique s'adressant aux artistes et aux imprimeurs*" 1896.

[2] In the same source, Lemerrier explains that the name 'photolithography' was discarded to avoid bad jokes from printers who were experiencing difficulties with the new technique and quickly turned it into "F.....lithography".
