Public access description

The rococo artist, François Boucher (1703-1770), had a long and fruitful association with the Beauvais Tapestry Manufactory. This tapestry belongs to Boucher’s 'Fêtes Italiennes' series. The title of the work 'La Bohémienne', refers to the young Gypsy woman engaged in reading the shepherdess’s palm.

Descriptive line

Tapestry 'La Bohémienne' woven in wool and silk, from 'Fêtes Italiennes', designed by François Boucher, made by Beauvais Tapestry Factory, France, 1738-1759

Physical description

Tapestry woven in wool and silk. 22 warp threads to the inch (8 to the cm). The design consists of a ruined building, with a capital supported by a herm overgrown with trees, sit three young women. A young man in a blue coat holds a wreath of flowers over the head of the foremost woman in a robe of reds and pinks over a yellow petticoat. The shepherdess at the back of the group, in the centre of the composition, wears a yellow robe. She has her fortune told by a young Gypsy with a baby on her back. In front are sheep, and to the right side is a tree and flowers and reeds. The tapestry is enclosed in a border imitating a gold frame.

Dimensions

Width: 3250 mm Top edge, Width: 3260 mm Bottom edge, Weight: 34 kg, Length: 3330 mm Proper left, Length: 3380 mm Proper right

Museum number

T.216-1972

Object history note

François Boucher designed the 'Fêtes Italiennes' in fourteen pieces for the Beauvais manufactory in 1736, and according to Badin, La manufacture des tapisseries de Beauvais, there were thirty-four weavings of varying numbers of tapestries from the set. 'La Bohémienne' was woven at least 14 times. Badin notes its production in 1738 (twice), 1739, 1740 (twice), 1741 (twice), 1745, 1750 (3 times), 1759 and 1762. Of these, one of the sets of 1750 was made for the King of Sweden and is still part of the royal collections, and the set of 1762 is in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. There were also sets made which went unrecorded Badin: in the Departmental collection of photographs are two pieces (including 'La Bohémienne') with the arms of Rohan-Soubise, probably ordered for the Hotel Soubise by the Duc de Rohan-Rohan (d. 1749).

URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O131066/la-bohemienne-tapestry-boucher-francois/