

From interview with Cynthia Fendel

(author of Novelty Hand Fans, Fashionable Functional Fun Accessories of the Past):

Another style and recent favorite are large 1890's paper folding fans decorated with crisscrossed cord on their outside (guard) sticks. When partially folded, the illustration printed across the paper fan leaf (the folded part) takes on a humorous picture, different than when the fan is fully opened.

keywords: folding fans, paper, visual play

On abanicos:

And, just as flowers and colors carried their own special messages, abanicos became not just a useful tool to relieve the heat, but a means of communication.

(...)

By the 19th century, the art and language of the abanico had developed into a complex code, used especially between lovers. Colonial coquettes, normally chaperoned during all social outings, found that they literally held in their hands an elaborate and sensual way to discreetly encourage or dissuade suitors, signal their emotions, or set up clandestine meetings.

keywords: communication tool, fan language, messages

In essence, this intriguing language gave ladies the means to bypass social etiquette and take the initiative in their relationships.

keywords: fan language, interaction, emancipation

British Prime Minister Disraeli likened them to swords and swore they often did more damage—while the class conscious could tell at a glance a woman's status by the fan she carried and by the way she wielded it.

keywords: communication tool, fan language, messages social status, weapon

On handfans:

The earliest evidence of fans can be found in pictorial records from approximately 3,000bc in China.

keywords: China, chronology

The Japanese are credited with making the first folding hand fan sometime during the 1600s. (...)

Folding hand fans spread from the East via the trade routes of Portugal to the rest of Europe. Italian women were the first to carry fans as a fashion accessory. These fans were made from calfskin and leaves, cut into strips and woven together. By the 1700s, fashionable fans had spread to France and England and wealthy women were soon commissioning artists to design and paint their hand fans. This is probably when the fan first became a symbol of the frailty of women.

keywords: folding fans, chronology, geography, symbolism

There was no better way for a woman to show her taste in fine art than to carry a fan painted and signed by a prominent artist.

keywords: messages, social status

Nineteenth-century women used their fans as a means of communication with their admirers. A set code was developed and phrase books were published to translate a lady's gestures.

keywords: communication tool, fan language

The changes in society during the 1900s reflected the changes in the way hand fans were made and used. Fans began to do advertisements instead of art.

keywords: communication tool, fan language, advertising

From internet:

Fans had a dual purpose. It was a status symbol as well as an ornament.

keywords: symbolism, ornament

Fans have been made from myriad materials on which man found enough scope to decorate and express his art and craft.

keywords: material, creative expression

Chinese culture links the fan with mythology, legend and history.

Screen fans were used in China. The earliest fans in China are made from bamboo and dates back to the 2nd century BC. The

Chinese pictorial word depiction of a fan shows feathers under a roof. The word pien-mien means to 'agitate air'. Here too fans and social standing were linked together. Each class and gender had special fans.

keywords: China, screen fans, chronology, social status

The Chinese variety consists of a row of feathers fixed on a handle. It came into vogue during the Ming dynasty. The centre of production of folding fans was Hangzhou. The Chinese dancing fan is the Mai Ogi. It has ten sticks mounted on thick paper depicting the family crest. The slats were made of various materials – bone, ivory, mother of pearl, mica, sandalwood or tortoise shell. These were carved and then covered with paper of some fabric. Fanning the fan became a highly sophisticated art courts and women were the most adept at it.

keywords: China, folding fan, fanning

Fans were also weapons. The iron fan of tie shan (Chinese) and tessen (Japanese). Simple Japanese fans are called harisens. In recent Japanese pop culture these harisens are shown as weapons.

keywords: China, weapon

From internet

Other than feather and silk fans, laborers used big round fans made out of grass in the summer to help to keep them cool. And in the society of aristocrats and scholars, fans were made from fine paper mounted on bamboo. Aristocrats and scholars found it interesting to paint their poetic and artistic expression on the surface. Those fans with a famous artist's painting or calligraphy would be highly prized.

keywords: China, materials, social status, creative expression

Fans of aristocrats and scholars became more as a decorative tool and a symbol for them rather than the purpose of keeping them cool. They would also often wave their fans to show off their grace when composing or thinking about poetry. When fan were not used, they were concealed inside the sleeves or hung from the waist.

keywords: China, ornament, symbolism, social status, manner/gesture

Hand fans today are rarely used for fashion purposes throughout China, but ladies still carry them in their handbag for cooling purposes in summer and also for performances of the traditional hand fan dance.

keywords: China, creative expression, cooling device, manner/gesture

From interview with Pamela Sher:

"I'm very interested in cultural history, and everything you could want to know in regard to cultural history appears in some form or another on a fan," (...) "It's a very neat and concise little package. You open up one of these fans, and the world opens up."

keywords: cultural history

An 18th century English lady of the gentry class would have a whole collection of fans: fans to use in the morning, fans to use in the afternoon, fans to use at a gala, fans to use when they had a death in the family."

keywords: symbolism, social status

"This gives us an idea not only of the idealized countryside but also of social interactions,"(...)These fans functioned as "an extension of the wrist and hand." "Women at this time had only some body parts exposed,"(...). "One of them, fairly erotic, could be the wrist. To have a graceful wrist and a beautiful hand and lovely manicure -- the fan could be an extension of that and draw attention to it."

keywords: interaction, social status, manner/gesture

the agitated flutter, the languorous wave and the quick whack on the arm...

keywords: manner/gesture

"Men have the sword, women have the fan, and the fan is probably as effective a weapon."

keywords: weapon

"We also want to bring fans to the attention of the public as a modern-day alternative energy device," Sher said. "This is something from our past that was easily used and pervasive in all societies, so why not bring it back?"

keywords: cooling device, intercultural

From Alice in Wonderland:

After a time she heard a little pattering of feet in the distance, and she hastily dried her eyes to see what was coming. It was the White Rabbit returning, splendidly dressed, with a pair of white kid gloves in one hand and a large fan in the other: he came trotting along in a great hurry, muttering to himself as he came, 'Oh! the Duchess, the Duchess! Oh! won't she be savage if I've kept her waiting!' Alice felt so desperate that she was ready to ask help of any one; so, when the Rabbit came near her, she began, in a low, timid voice, 'If you please, sir--' The Rabbit started violently, dropped the white kid gloves and the fan, and skurried away into the darkness as hard as he could go.

Alice took up the fan and gloves, and, as the hall was very hot, she kept fanning herself all the time she went on talking: 'Dear, dear! How queer everything is to-day! And yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is, Who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle!' (...)

As she said this she looked down at her hands, and was surprised to see that she had put on one of the Rabbit's little white kid gloves while she was talking. 'How can I have done that?' she thought. 'I must be growing small again.' She got up and went to the table to measure herself by it, and found that, as nearly as she could guess, she was now about two feet high, and was going on shrinking rapidly: she soon found out that the cause of this was the fan she was holding, and she dropped it hastily, just in time to avoid shrinking away altogether.

keywords: fanning, gender independent,

Le Merveilleux éventail vivant (1904)
film by Georges Méliès

From Fans from the East (1978)

Fans are the microcosms of the fine and the applied arts, reflecting with peculiar fidelity the nuances of a complex cultural interaction between East and West.

keywords: cultural history, intercultural, creative expression

As the 18th century progressed, Europe witnessed an increasing interest in China, which partly manifested itself in a desire for objects of Chinese manufacture. The Chinese sought to exploit this ready market by supplying the West with goods of a directly popular appeal.

This was achieved by evolving a style of decoration which adapted traditional Chinese motifs and combined them to a greater or lesser extent with the elements of Western design.

keywords: China, cultural history, intercultural, exchange marketing

Fans. From the 18th to the beginning of the 20th century.

The fan is from that family of objects that protect us, such as the parasol and the umbrella. In a large part of the world men also carry them....

The fan and the muff are complementary. They keep the hands occupied and calm in the game of gesticulation.

A fan has spirit. There are so many ways to make use of it without needing to speak its famous language, which, in any case, is no longer understood. (...)

The fan wishes to be the screen of modesty. It prefers paradox to the cold dilemma of logic.

The Academy, in defining it, speaks of the “little piece of equipment which serves as a fan or a portable screen.”

keywords: gesture

Wikipedia

It has been said that in the courts of England, Spain and elsewhere fans were used in a more or less secret, unspoken code of messages. These fan languages were a way to cope with the restricting social etiquette. However, modern research has proved that this was a marketing ploy developed in the 18th century - one that has kept its appeal remarkably over the succeeding centuries. This is now used for marketing by fan makers like Duvelleroy in London who produced a series of advertisements in the 1960s showing “the language of the fan” with models displaying antique fans with this “language”.

keywords: communication tool, myths, marketing

From www. www.fancircleinternational.org

Women's hands however were no longer as free as they had been in the past. They began to be filled with the new fashions for smoking and cocktails. Fans were a nuisance when trying to clutch these items and look sophisticated, and increasing they were left aside. Simultaneously electric fans were available to cool the room.

keywords: cultural history, manner/gesture

The far east has always had a different attitude to fans than the west. Fans, in Asia, have been seen for centuries as an art form of great merit, and this is what has preserved the skill in fan making in those countries. However, in the west the fan was seen as a frivolous accessory, a pleasing, beautiful, expensive item.

keywords: cultural history, east vs. west

扇子 FAN WAAIER EVENTAIL ABANICO FÄCHER

Touching the fan to the right cheek:	Yes.
Touching the fan to the left cheek:	No.
Handing over a closed fan:	Do you love me?
Covering the face with a half-opened fan:	Be careful.
Turning the fan with the left hand:	We are being watched.
Turning the fan with the right hand:	I love another.
Opening and closing the fan, then pointing it:	Wait for me there, I will be with you shortly.
Opening and closing the fan repeatedly:	You've treated me infernally.
Lowering the fan:	We are just friends.
Fanning oneself slowly:	I am a married woman.
Fanning oneself rapidly:	I am engaged.
Opening the fan half-way:	Wait for me.
Touching a closed fan to the right eye:	I wish to see you.
Slowly closing a fully open fan:	I will marry you.
Opening a fan to show a particular number of ribs:	The answer to the question: "At what time?"
Counting the ribs:	I wish to speak to you.
A half-opened fan touched to the lips:	Kiss me.
A closed fan touched to the lips:	Please do not reveal my secret.
Lifting the hair off the forehead with the base of the fan, or touching the fan to the temple:	Don't forget me. I am thinking about you.
Moving the fan near the forehead:	You have changed.
Touching the fan to the heart:	I yearn for you.
Dropping the fan:	I am yours.
Tapping the left hand with the fan:	Love me.
Touching the fan to the palm of the hand:	I am thinking about whether our relationship is convenient.
Appearing at the balcony, fan in hand:	I will be going out today.
Leaving the fan on the window sill:	I will not be going out today.
Carrying an open fan with the right hand:	You are too passionate.
Carrying an open fan with the left hand:	Let's sit and talk.
Studying the motif painted on the fan:	I am attracted to you.
Shaking a closed fan:	You are not being prudent.
Transferring the fan from hand to hand:	You are watching another.
Touching the fan to the nose:	I suspect something is wrong.
Snapping shut the fan:	I am jealous.
Holding an open fan with both hands:	Forget me.
Handing over a fan to one's mother or chaperone:	It is over between us.