

LES **BONNARD, VUILLARD, MAURICE DENIS...**

NABIS

ET LE DÉCOR

MUSÉE DU LUXEMBOURG

13 MARCH - 30 JUNE 2019

True pioneers of modern décor, Bonnard, Vuillard, Maurice Denis, Sérusier, Ranson and Vallotton defended an art relating directly to life. They created original, joyous and rhythmic works, intended to decorate contemporary interiors in reaction against the aesthetics of historical pastiche that were in vogue at the end of the 19th century. The decorative arts of the Nabis are a specific experience of total art, based on breaking down the boundaries of technique. Responding most often to commissions from friends and patrons close to the group, they took themes familiar to artists such as the association of women with nature, inwardness and spirituality. Driven by the desire to create an art accessible to all, the Nabis innovated in the fields of tapestry, wallpaper, stained glass and ceramics. Their creations, remaining as prototypes, are part of the movement of decorative renewal defended and popularised in France by Siegfried Bing. Most of the decorative panels of the Nabis have been dispersed over time. The ambition of the exhibition is to reconstitute as completely as possible some of the major collections they produced. But it has become impossible to show their original hangings in the absence of documents or photographs.



Who are the Nabis?

In the late 1880s, young artists fascinated by Gauguin's painting came together to assert their opposition to Impressionism, which they considered too close to reality. They referred to themselves as "Nabis" - a word that means "prophets" in Hebrew and Arabic - because their ambition was to reveal a new art.

The group, active between 1888 and 1900, initially consisting of painters such as Paul Sérusier, Paul Ranson, Pierre Bonnard, Édouard Vuillard and Maurice Denis, was soon joined by other artists, including Ker-Xavier Roussel. These very different personalities agreed to give painting an essentially decorative role with the idea of abolishing the boundary between fine and applied arts. Fascinated by Japanese prints discovered during an exhibition organised at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1890, the Nabis took inspiration from these flat and colourful images to create an original style.

Their art fed on their observations of the contemporary world, but also on various philosophies, religions and doctrines such as esotericism. It was also inspired by literature, theatre and poetry.

1. WOMEN IN THE GARDEN

The theme of women in the garden in the decorative arts of the Nabis does not describe a specific place but a fragile temporality referring to the cycle of seasons or life. Unlike the *femme fatales* of *fin de siècle* literature or the mythological nudes of classical painting, these characters were posed by models familiar to the painters, sisters or fiancées.

In 1891, Pierre Bonnard was the first to associate feminine figures with a plant motif to compose a décor. It accentuates the ornamental nature of the natural elements by linear deformations, bright colours laid flat and a perspective without depth. The female silhouettes undergo the same stylisation in arabesque. Bonnard is quickly followed

by Maurice Denis, Édouard Vuillard and Ker-Xavier Roussel.

In his first allegorical décor, designed for a maiden's room, Maurice Denis shows the stages of engagement associated with months of the year. In another composition for a ceiling decoration, *Poetic Arabesque*, he symbolises a halt in time in the form of four identical figures of young girls perched on a ladder in an upward or downward movement that provides a link between the earthly and the heavenly realms.

PUBLIC GARDENS

Vuillard was thirty-six years old when he received a commission from his friend Alexandre Natanson to create a monumental décor designed to adorn the living-dining room of his mansion. His patron gave him *carte blanche* for the subject of panels intended to be embedded in the woodwork.

Vuillard, who was then working on the theme of public gardens, conceived a cycle of nine compositions in diptych or triptych representing different locations as well as lintels. This outdoor theme taken from modern life, where each scene can be read independently or in continuity, was unheard of for an interior décor.

The panels, dismantled on the death of their benefactor, are now preserved in several museums and collections. Some could not be loaned because of the fragility of their technique, painting with glue on canvas.

2. INTERIORS

Vuillard had early commissions for panels to decorate his friends' interiors, such as the Natanson family, or modern painting enthusiasts, such as Doctor Vaquez, a renowned cardiologist. In both sets exhibited, he chooses to show the occupants of the locations in their own environment. This *mise en abyme* allowed the patrons to see themselves in their décor as a reflection of reality.

The sophisticated interiors of Vuillard show a place protected from any external intrusion and

aggressions of modern society. They are an ideal setting for the flourishing of the arts, music and literature. A feeling of confinement nevertheless emerges from these spaces saturated with patches of vibrant colour where the characters seem about to be absorbed by the décor.

The symbolic dimension of Vuillard's interiors is directly linked to his experience as a director at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre. Inspired by the repertoire of Ibsen and Strindberg, the artist is interested in the expression of the psyche and the tensions between the characters. An impression of melancholy emerges from the seductive and poisonous atmosphere of its bourgeois interiors.

3. ART NOUVEAU

In December 1895, Parisians discovered the first exhibition organised by Siegfried Bing in his Maison de l'Art Nouveau. Rooms filled with furniture, trinkets, paintings, sculptures and prints were furnished like an apartment. Decorative friezes commissioned by Bing from Denis and Ranson are among furniture designed by interior designer Henry Van de Velde. Bing had the brilliant idea of combining the talent of artists with that of artisans to revive modern interior design.

At that time, almost all Nabis worked on applied arts projects, whether or not they were commissioned. They produced prototypes in small sizes, such as fans or lampshades, or larger sizes, such as tapestries or wallpapers. After a trip to the United States in 1895, Bing commissioned models for stained glass panels from Bonnard, Maurice Denis, Roussel, Toulouse-Lautrec and Vallotton, which he had executed by the American master glassmaker Louis Comfort Tiffany.

The Nabis' creations in the field of applied arts, while still experimental, have played an important role in the abolition of the boundaries between arts and crafts.

DÉCOR FOR A BEDROOM

In 1895, Siegfried Bing asked Maurice Denis to create a decorative frieze for a bedroom intended for his Maison de l'Art Nouveau. Denis is inspired by Schumann's lieder cycle *Frauen-Liebe und Leben* to depict episodes of feminine existence, from passionate love to motherhood. Painted in a twilight tone dominated by the colour blue, the décor mixes familiar patterns with symbolist visions. Only two panels are currently known to exist from a set of seven, dispersed by successive sales.

Very attached to this décor, Denis created a new version at the end of the 1890s for the room of his wife Marthe, a frieze which was subject to several additions and modifications. The small landscapes painted around 1900 in a naïve style represent the walled garden of the artist's villa in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, the setting for the first emotional stirrings of Martha and Maurice during their engagement.

JAPONISM

No testimony can accurately date the beginning of the interest of the Nabis in Japanese art. It is, however, established that most of them discovered *ukiyo-e* ("floating world image") prints by visiting the "Japanese Engraving Exhibition" organised at the École des Beaux-arts in Paris in the spring of 1890. They began to collect prints, which they pinned on the walls of their workshops.

Japanese genius was particularly admired for its ability to simplify forms, for its love of bright colours, its way of depicting fugitive impressions and decorative fantasy.

The craze for Japanese art, called Japonism, had a considerable influence on the revolution in applied arts. From 1888, Siegfried Bing published *Le Japon artistique*, a luxuriously illustrated magazine, aimed at promoting traditional Japanese techniques and famous artists.

DÉCOR FOR BING

This set of seven panels, six of which are now preserved at the Musée Départemental Maurice Denis in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, was designed

for the dining room commissioned by Bing for the opening of his Salon de l'Art Nouveau in 1895. A period photograph shows the design placed high in cedar wood panelling, above furniture designed by Henry Van de Velde.

Ranson chose several themes related to women's outdoor work for his compositions. The decorative treatment of silhouettes and the landscape with soft lines, the simplified chromatic scale and the rhythmic treatment of the forms give an allegorical dimension to the design. The motifs of the fountain and the harvest refer to the fundamentals of the nourishing earth and the cycle of life, associating woman with the fertility of nature.

4. SACRED RITES

Some artists of the Nabis group were more interested in symbolist subjects, which they transposed into their designs. The principal representatives of this current were Paul Sérusier, Paul-Elie Ranson and Maurice Denis, who conceived of art as the expression of a higher thought in connection with spirituality, philosophy, poetry and esotericism.

In 1897, Paul Sérusier was inspired by the theme of the forest - a place of magic rites, populated by fantastic creatures - to compose a collection for the dining room of his friend, the sculptor Georges Lacombe. He applied the principle of the golden ratio to his panels, a mathematical formula of ideal proportions, which he had studied at the abbey of Beuron, Germany, with the monk and theoretician Desiderius Lenz.

The search for a higher principle, a transcendence of reality, is also found in the work of Maurice Denis, who placed his Christian faith at the centre of his work. Repeating the formal simplifications of the Italian Primitives, he associates a secular world with a mystical vision in an important decorative cycle created for Baron Denys Cochin.

His interpretation of music, dances and sacred songs in panels designed to adorn the music room of a German Art Nouveau lover, Kurt von Mutzenbecher, elevates the decoration of private interiors to the level of churches or palaces.

THE LEGEND OF SAINT HUBERT

Commissioned in 1895 by Denys Cochin, this monumental décor was intended to adorn the study of his mansion. The subject had been suggested by its patron, an avid hunter. For three years, Denis immersed himself in the subject by participating in hunts and making many sketches and photographs.

The succession of panels shows the linear progression of the story, from the start of the hunt, with portraits of the Cochin family, until the denouement, with the arrival at the hermitage. Between the two, the hunt becomes a legend summoning the appearance of the cross of Christ to Saint Hubert between the antlers of a stag. The cruel reality of hunting is thus transcended by spiritual forces. The last panel of the décor represents the Cochin clan as a model of Christian family, united in peace and prayer.

Curators: Isabelle Cahn, General Curator of Paintings at the Musée d'Orsay and Guy Cogeval, Director of the Centre d'études des Nabis et du Symbolisme in Paris

Scenography: Hubert Le Gall

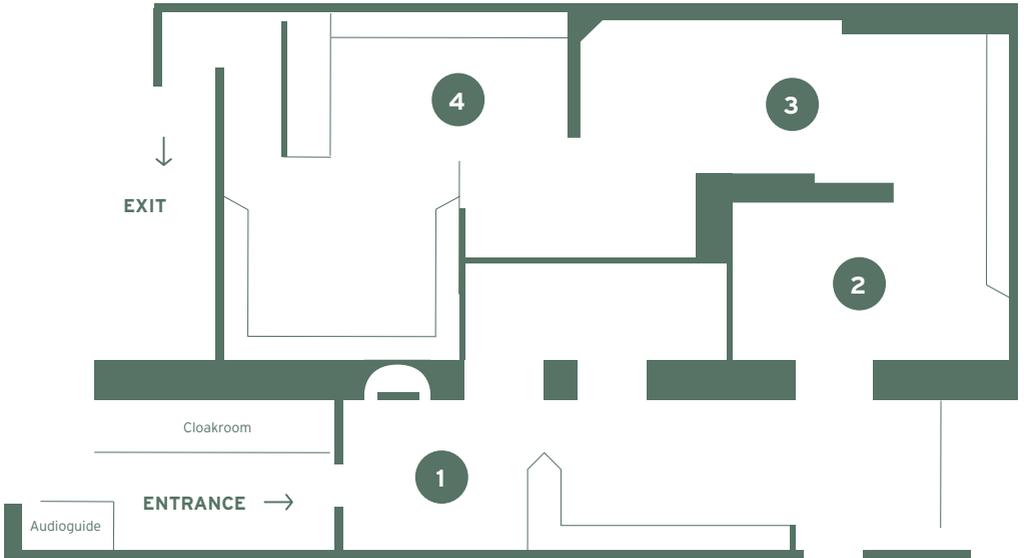
Graphics: Jean-Paul Camargo

Lighting: Philippe Collet

This exhibition is organised by the Réunion des Musées Nationaux - Grand Palais and the Musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie, Paris.



EXHIBITION MAP



AROUND THE EXHIBITION

CULTURAL PROGRAMME

MUSEUM LECTURES

FILM SCREENINGS LES 3 LUXEMBOURG

67, rue Monsieur Le Prince 75006 Paris

free entry, reservation essential on museeduluxembourg.fr

EXHIBITION PRESENTATION CONFERENCE

Thursday 21 March, 6.30 pm

Isabelle Cahn, General Curator of Painting at the Musée d'Orsay, curator of the exhibition

Discover the first exhibition dedicated to the decorative arts of the Nabis with its curator. Learn more about these works that break the boundary between the decorative and fine arts and how frequently dispersed collections were brought together for the exhibition.

THE VIEWS OF DESIGNER HUBERT LE GALL ON THE DECORATIVE ARTS OF THE NABIS

Thursday 4 April, 6.30 pm

Hubert Le Gall, designer, scenographer of the exhibition

At the end of the 19th century, the Nabis' research formed part of a highly dynamic movement in the field of decorative arts. How does Hubert Le Gall, a contemporary designer who gave the title *Eternal Spring* to a recent exhibition of his work after the collection by Maurice Denis, perceive these works?

PARISIAN INTERIORS AT THE TIME OF THE NABIS

Thursday 11 April, 6.30 pm

Elise Dubreuil, Curator in charge of Decorative Arts at the Musée d'Orsay

The Nabis sought to create a modern décor for their contemporaries. But what did the interiors in which these artists evolved at the end of the 19th century look like? How is their research situated in the great movement of renovation in decorative arts that defined their era?

THE NABIS AND MUSIC

Thursday, May 16th, 6.30 pm

Fabienne Stahl, Heritage Conservation Attaché at the Musée Maurice Denis

The Nabis created fertile friendships with musicians and composers such as Ernest Chausson, Claude Debussy and Claude Terrasse. The musical inspiration finds its full expression in their decorative art, of which the ceiling of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées is a major example.

EVENTS AND EVENINGS

AT THE THÉÂTRE DES CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES

15, avenue Montaigne, 75008 Paris

THE NABIS AND FRENCH MELODY VISIT

Monday, March 25 at 6.30 pm

reservation on: <https://www.theatrechampselysees.fr/>

Visit the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées to discover or rediscover the monumental cupola painted by Maurice Denis in 1912. Fabienne Stahl, specialist in painting, will tell you everything about this sumptuous décor dedicated to the history of music.

AT THE MUSÉE D'ORSAY, STUDIO 4.1

STUDY DAY: FROM PAINTING TO DÉCOR. ABOLISHING BOUNDARIES?

Thursday 28 March 2019 - 10 am-5 pm, *registration on musee-orsay.fr*

Organised for the exhibitions "Sérusier's The Talisman, a prophecy of colour" (28 January - 28 April 2019) at the Musée d'Orsay and "The Nabis and the Decorative Arts - Bonnard, Vuillard, Maurice Denis..." at the Musée du Luxembourg, this day will be an opportunity to revisit the links between colour and spirituality and the formal principles that govern the ambition of "art in everything" and "art for all".

AT THE MUSÉE DU LUXEMBOURG

HENRI-GABRIEL, THE LITTLE GHOST

Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 April from 10.30 am to 6.30 pm

Free access from the exhibition galleries

Effects of reversals, transparencies and patterns, this minimal tale imagined by students of the Ecole Estienne can be seen as a pretext for an exploration of the Nabi universe.

SKETCHBOOK EVENING

Tuesday 9 April from 7 pm to 9 pm, last entry 8.30 pm

Reservation required on museeduluxembourg.fr

An evening for all the amateurs who want to draw the exteriors flooded with light or the richly decorated Nabi interior designs!

NIGHT OF MUSEUMS

Saturday, May 18 from 7.30 pm to midnight, last entry 11.30 pm

Free admission

Enjoy the exhibition with Paris Dauphine students who become guides for a day and discover a repertoire inspired by the Nabis performed by the talented students of the Conservatory Jean-Philippe Rameau: music, dance and drama are on the programme!

FÊTE DE LA MUSIQUE: THE ETERNAL SUMMER

Friday, June 21st, from 7.30 pm to 10 pm, last entry 9.30 pm

reservation required on museeduluxembourg.fr

Celebrate the arrival of summer with a contemporary *live* program inspired by Maurice Denis' *Eternal Summer* screen, concocted by the cartoonists, musicians and dancers of the Soirées Dessinées and the *Tsuku Boshi* label!

CULTURAL MEDIATION

BOOKINGS AT MUSEEDULUXEMBOURG.FR

AUDIOGUIDES

Enjoy commentary on some twenty major works from the exhibition as well as a musical tour based on original compositions.

French, English, Spanish, German and children's version in French
price: €5, Sésame+ price: €4, application €3.49

GUIDED TOURS AND WORKSHOPS

Guided tour "Walls, walls to decorate!", for ages 13 +, duration: 75 minutes

every day from 16 March to 22 April at 12.15 pm then every Monday, Saturday and Sunday, additional sessions at 7 pm on Mondays and at 4.45 pm on Sundays

Inspired by Japanese prints, the Nabis sought to create a new art. Through the creation of great decorative cycles and the design of objects, these artists worked to embellish the modern living environment, giving the representation of everyday life the power of sacred rituals.

Audio-described guided tour for the visually impaired

alain mikli with the patronage of Mikli Diffusion France
paris

Saturday 13 April and Sunday 19 May at 10.15 am,
duration: 2h, reservation on www.museeduluxembourg.fr

A two-stage visit for visually impaired visitors: a speaker presents the exhibition with tactile interpretations of four major works, before conducting an audio-described tour of the galleries.

Family visit: Outside - Inside, for ages 6 +, duration: 1 hour

at 2 pm on Sunday, extra sessions during the school holidays
This visit is a joyful exploration of the décors imagined by the Nabis, who gave pride of place to outdoor representations of scenes from everyday life: a park full of children's games or meadows where women walk in small groups.

"Mioches" story tour, for young children (3-5 years old) accompanied by their parents, duration: 30 mins

Saturday 6 April and Sunday 16 June from 9.45 am to 10.30 am, reservation on www.museeduluxembourg.fr

From some of their most evocative works unfolds a tale in which the colours, shapes and figures of the Nabis converse with the everyday world of the young: a gentle first impression.

Children's workshop tour: Landscapes and screens, for ages 6 +, duration: 2 hours

Sunday 24 March, Monday 22 April, Sunday 19 May, Monday 10 June, Sunday 16 June at 2.30 pm

The screen was a field of experimentation appreciated by the Nabis. After discovering objects and designs from the exhibition, the children will create a small screen decorated with a landscape inspired by the Nabis and Japanese art.

PUBLICATIONS

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

Written by the leading experts, this catalogue is conceived as an abundant book of images, reviews the aesthetic advances facilitated by the Nabis as well as their pictorial heritage, all supported by a choice of sumptuous works and four large posters.

Editions Rmn - Grand Palais, 200 pages, 200 illustrations, €39

JOURNAL OF THE EXHIBITION

Written by the art historian Camille Viéville, this journal offers an introduction to decorative art developed by the Nabis.

A synoptic text and a rich iconography... available in 11 wallpapers to decorate your home!

Editions Rmn - Grand Palais, 24 pages, 50 illustrations, €6

MULTIMEDIA



THE EXHIBITION APP

on Google Play and the App Store: €3.49

VINTAGE PHOTO BOOTH

Have your portrait taken in front of a Paul Ranson décor and leave with a souvenir of the exhibition!

Upload your photos and share them on social networks with #ExpoNabis

Strip of 4 poses, €3

Share #ExpoNabis



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and panoramadelart.com
Subscribe to our Le Mag newsletter at grandpalais.fr

GRAND PALAIS

ROUGE

ART AND UTOPIA IN THE LAND OF SOVIETS

20 March > 1 July 2019

This exhibition will allow you to discover the repercussions of the revolution of October 1917, and its dramatic social upheaval, on artistic creativity, and how many artists adhering to the communist project wanted to contribute to the construction of this new society until the progressive establishment of socialist realism.

LA LUNE

FROM THE REAL JOURNEY TO THE IMAGINARY VOYAGE

3 April > 22 July 2019

To mark the 50th anniversary of man's first steps on the moon, this art exhibition reveals man's relationship with this astral body, source of much inspiration and a wide range of representations. An invitation to dream and contemplate!

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ET LE DÉCOR

13 MARCH - 30 JUNE 2019

AT THE MUSÉE DU LUXEMBOURG,

19 RUE DE VAUGIRARD 75006 Paris

OPEN EVERY DAY FROM 10:30 AM TO 7 PM

OPEN LATE EVERY MONDAY UNTIL 10 PM

OPEN ON ALL PUBLIC HOLIDAYS EXCEPT 1 MAY

(start of evacuation of the rooms 15 minutes before closing time)

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