

## Exhibition *Art nouveau - Art déco. Marseille au cœur des styles*

Marseille, Château Borély – Musée des Arts décoratifs, de la Faïence et de la Mode

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### Room 12 – GRAND SALON

#### Introductory wall text

##### Art Nouveau (1890–1910)

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Art Nouveau revolutionised the decorative arts through its determination to break with historical styles and to rethink the everyday environment as a unified whole. Inspired by organic forms, particularly vegetal motifs, the movement favoured the sinuous line, asymmetry, refined materials and a harmonious union between formal beauty and function.

This room highlights the diversity of Art Nouveau through works originating from its principal artistic centres. In Paris, ornamentation tended towards luxury, with a predilection for precious materials and stylised forms. In Nancy, the artists of the École developed a more naturalistic aesthetic, grounded in a committed vision of art applied to every aspect of daily life.

A third section explores the movement's echoes in Marseille. Although the city was not a major centre of Art Nouveau, several identified examples allow us to evoke the reception of the style within the private sphere, particularly through furniture designed for local residences or workshops. The rise of Art Nouveau in France—both intense and relatively brief—no doubt explains why Marseille preserves only a limited number of emblematic examples.

#### Section wall texts

##### Art Nouveau in Paris

In Paris, Art Nouveau emerged in the wake of the Universal Exhibitions of 1889 and 1900, major showcases of industrial and artistic progress.

The exhibition of 1889, marked by the inauguration of the Eiffel Tower, highlighted the importance of the applied arts. The 1900 edition effectively consecrated the style with the Pavilion of Art Nouveau designed by the art dealer and publisher Siegfried Bing (1838–1905), founder in 1895 of the Maison de l'Art Nouveau. There he presented complete decorative ensembles created by artists he supported, notably Georges de Feure (1868–1943), who was responsible for the interior decoration of two rooms within the pavilion.

Other Parisian designers explored an ornamental language inspired by living forms. Hector Guimard (1867–1942), celebrated for his iconic Paris Métro entrances, introduced a supple and organic style into architecture, characterised by the celebrated “whiplash” motif.

Art Nouveau distinguished itself through its emphasis on the unity of the arts: architecture, furniture, glasswork, metalwork and graphic arts all contributed to a single decorative ideal. Building façades combined stone, ceramic and metal, while vegetal lines unfurled in balconies, stained-glass windows and interior decoration. The deliberate use of industrial materials—cast iron, steel and glass—was thus allied with ornamentation inspired by nature.

### The École de Nancy : A Laboratory of Artistic Innovation

The École de Nancy, also known as the Alliance provinciale pour les industries d'art (Provincial Alliance for the Art Industries), brought together several industrialists from Nancy working in the field of the decorative arts—glassmaking, stained glass, cabinetmaking, metalwork and ceramics—united by a shared ambition to promote the artistic productions of Lorraine while also encouraging the principle of “art for all” through the serial production of furniture and objects.

The style of the École de Nancy is characterised by particular attention to decorative motifs inspired by nature—plants, flowers, insects and aquatic life—and by the use of supple, flowing lines. The creation of new models of furniture and objets d'art was also grounded in a constant search for decorative innovation of remarkable virtuosity, serving a distinctive Art Nouveau aesthetic. Industrialists from Nancy such as Émile Gallé, in the fields of glassmaking and cabinetmaking, the cabinetmaker Louis Majorelle, and the glassmaker Antonin Daum registered numerous patents and were regularly awarded prizes at international exhibitions, notably in Paris in 1900 and Turin in 1902.

The furniture produced by these Nancy manufacturers was not conceived as a series of independent pieces but as a coherent decorative ensemble. This is exemplified by Émile Gallé's *Berce des prés suite*, which included a bed, chairs, sideboards and chests of drawers. The notion of the “total work of art” is therefore particularly apt when applied to the creators of the École de Nancy.

### Echoes of Art Nouveau in Marseille

Unlike Paris, Nancy or Brussels, Marseille did not develop into a true centre of Art Nouveau. The city did not give rise to a structured local school or to major figures associated with the movement. Nevertheless, a number of isolated examples reveal how the style was received and adapted within the private sphere, particularly in the interior decoration of certain bourgeois residences at the turn of the century.

One of the most remarkable testimonies is the private mansion of Dr Jacques Silhol, located in the Périer district. In 1903, the physician entrusted the decoration of his residence to two Parisian artists, Henri Bellery-Desfontaines and Henri Rapin, both associated with the Art Nouveau movement. The balustrade adorned with umbel motifs—a flower emblematic of the style—demonstrates with great refinement the integration of vegetal ornament into architecture, creating an overall harmony inspired by Mediterranean landscapes.

Another significant example is the furniture designed by Émile Gallé for his daughter Thérèse, who settled in Marseille with her husband Lucien Bourgogne in 1902. These pieces illustrate the circulation of Art Nouveau taste through family and cultural networks, as well as the manner in which leading designers could respond to private commissions beyond their regions of origin.

Photography also played a role in the dissemination of the Art Nouveau aesthetic. The Nadar studio, established in Marseille from the late nineteenth century onwards, adopted the visual codes of modernism in its portraits through the treatment of décor, accessories and posture. This approach reflects the evolving forms of representation and the new sensibility that was emerging in the visual arts.

## Digital displays

### Art Nouveau ceramics : the union of beauty and utility

At the turn of the 20th century, ceramics broke free from the traditional boundaries of the decorative arts to establish itself as a field of experimentation in its own right.

At the Sèvres National Manufactory, renowned for its porcelain, this ambition took shape under the impetus of Alexandre Sandier, architect-decorator and Director of Artistic Works from 1897. Tasked with revitalising production in preparation for the 1900 Exposition Universelle, he rethought forms, materials and the relationship between function and aesthetics. From a technical standpoint, Sèvres developed research into crystalline glazes, metallic lustres and polychrome enamels. Rediscovered for its plastic and technical qualities, stoneware became the material of choice for this modernisation, finding a particularly striking showcase in the stoneware and porcelain pavilion at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle.

Alongside these experiments, the manufactory continued to refine porcelain production, whose whiteness and translucency provided a counterpoint to the more organic and vibrant qualities of stoneware.

This coexistence of materials reflects the richness of the research undertaken at Sèvres, where a spirit of innovation was combined with centuries-old expertise. This renewal is embodied in the profusion of technical and formal experimentation evident in the works presented here.

### Art Nouveau Glass and Stained glass

From the 1880s onwards, the art of glass underwent a major technical and creative renewal. Art Nouveau glassmakers revived decorative techniques inherited from earlier practitioners while also developing new processes : inclusions, iridescence, effects of transparency and opacity, the application of patina or glass powder to the surface, layered or cameo glass, and pâte de verre.

Mastery of these new decorative techniques enabled the realisation of the dreamlike and poetic creations of Émile Gallé—who, like many industrial glassmakers, did not himself blow the glass—as well as the nature-inspired vases produced by the Daum brothers. Already used by glass manufacturers from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century for serial production, acid made it easier to engrave glass.

In the field of stained glass, Louis Trézel, a collaborator of Hector Guimard, developed translucent relief enamels applied to glass. He notably employed this technique in the stained-glass windows of several Parisian bouillons, the popular restaurants of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Jacques Gruber, for his part, used thick English and American glass whose opalescence and variations in colour lend his stained-glass works—engraved with acid or painted in grisaille—a shimmering quality. These various processes made it possible to create true pictures in glass.

### The balustrade of Dr Jacques Silhol's townhouse in Marseille

In 1903, the physician Jacques Silhol commissioned the decoration of his Marseille residence from the designer Henri Bellery-Desfontaines (1867–1909), assisted by Henri Rapin. Bellery-Desfontaines was closely connected to the medical milieu, having previously designed the décor of the interns' hall at the Hôpital de la Charité in Paris. After practising in Paris, Dr Silhol settled in Marseille, where he served as an assistant professor of surgical and obstetrical clinical practice at the École de Marseille.

Overlooking the first-floor hall, the decorative scheme devised by Bellery-Desfontaines and Rapin evokes the atmosphere of Mediterranean landscapes. The staircase rail and balustrade, executed in mahogany adorned with copper flowers, display stylised umbel motifs. The rear wall is painted with an idyllic landscape, framed by

columns of blue stoneware topped with green and gilt capitals. The ceiling stained-glass panel, produced by E. Socard and H. Du Basty, depicts a female figure surrounded by a radiant sun, celestial bodies and signs of the zodiac, bathing the hall in light. The door panels, in repoussé leather, were created by Henri Rapin. The wood panelling and blue walls decorated with painted orange trees complete this evocation of a southern ambience. Here, Bellery-Desfontaines and Rapin depart from the sensitive naturalism of the École de Nancy. The umbel motifs of the balustrade are not rendered as botanically precise studies, in the manner of Émile Gallé, but are simplified into rhythmic decorative forms. This stylisation aligns them more closely with the aesthetic promoted by William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement, which, in the second half of the nineteenth century, advocated clear ornamentation based on structure and the repetition of motifs.

While the Arts and Crafts movement foreshadowed Art Nouveau through its rejection of historicism and its return to nature, the décor of the Hôtel Silhol already reveals a shift towards greater formal rigour. Through the simplification of vegetal forms and the balance of lines, it anticipates tendencies that would become more fully developed in the 1910s and 1920s.

#### Furniture by Émile Gallé for Thérèse Gallé in Marseille

Émile Gallé designed the furniture intended for the home of his eldest daughter, Thérèse, who settled in Marseille from 1902 onwards. Her husband, Lucien Bourgogne, was a teacher appointed to the Grand Lycée (now Lycée Thiers). The couple resided at 2 rue Marius Jauffret, in the Périer district.

This furniture, which notably included chairs from the Berce des prés suite, a sideboard and a display cabinet, was presented by Émile Gallé to his daughter on the occasion of her marriage. In 1905, Thérèse Gallé wrote to her father: "We are both very busy, and all the more do we cherish those brief moments of respite spent contemplating our furniture—turning it, moving it, observing it from every angle, in every light, and exchanging our impressions. The more we look at it, the more it enchants us! We continually discover new beauties within it."

The display cabinet presented in the exhibition forms part of this ensemble, now dispersed. It features a decorative scheme inspired by wheat and barley.

#### Plant forms in Art Nouveau : the example of the umbel

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Art Nouveau emerged as an artistic language deeply inspired by nature. In response to industrialisation, artists sought a regenerative, organic art rooted in the living world. Across all disciplines—architecture, furniture, glass, jewellery and illustration—creators drew upon the forms and rhythms of plant life.

From the 1890s onwards, the plant ceased to function merely as ornament and became a structural principle of composition. Stems, veins and roots were transposed into dynamic forms expressing growth and vital energy. Designers also explored less conspicuous elements, such as mosses, tubers and aquatic foliage, in a search for origins that combined aesthetic regression with a fascination for the most primitive forms of life.

Among the favoured motifs was the umbel, characteristic of the Apiaceae family (including fennel, hogweed and dill), whose radiating structure combines lightness with geometric rigour. This motif appears across a wide range of media: acid-etched glass by Émile Gallé, openwork furniture supports by Louis Majorelle, and architectural decoration, as seen in the balustrade of Dr Silhol's townhouse in Marseille, where umbel motifs in red copper translate vegetal dynamism into a rigid material.

As a symbol of the transition from scientific language to decorative aesthetics, the umbel also reflects the influence of contemporary botanical publications, such as the plates of Eugène Grasset and Maurice Pillard Verneuil, as well as the morphological studies of Léon Geneau de Lamarlière.

## Expanded object labels

### **Jean-Charles Cazin (1841–1901)**

The influence of the École de Nancy can be seen in the work of artists such as Jean-Charles and Marie Cazin, whose stoneware pieces combine restrained forms with subtly modulated glazes, expressing a sensitivity deeply attuned to nature.

### **Ernest Chaplet (1835–1909)**

Ernest Chaplet breathed new life into porcelain and stoneware. A collaborator of Félix Bracquemond and later of Charles Haviland, he began as early as 1875 to explore glaze effects inspired by Japanese stoneware from Bizen and Satsuma. In 1885 he succeeded in reproducing the legendary Chinese copper-red glaze known as sang-de-bœuf, applying it first to stoneware and later to porcelain—an achievement that marked a major milestone in French ceramic art.

### **Daum**

In 1876, Jean Daum established a glassworks in Nancy, which was taken over a decade later by his sons, Auguste Daum and subsequently Antonin Daum from 1891, who ensured its expansion and reputation.

The Daum brothers quickly turned to artistic glassmaking, following the path opened by Émile Gallé, and recruited Jacques Gruber as artistic director in 1893, followed by Henri Bergé.

Daum specialised in pâte de verre, as well as double- and triple-layered glass engraved with acid and wheel. The manufactory multiplied collaborations, notably with Louis Majorelle. Together, they created lighting designs from 1898 and later vases with metal mounts in the 1920s. Daum distinguished itself from Gallé through a more industrial and commercial mode of production, while sharing a decorative repertoire inspired by nature.

### **Félix Auguste Delaherche (1857–1940)**

Félix Auguste Delaherche was trained in the Beauvais region, renowned for its ceramic tradition. He later learned the technique of flamed stoneware from Ernest Chaplet, whose Paris workshop he eventually purchased. A prolific artist, he received several medals at international exhibitions, including a gold medal at the Exposition Universelle de 1889, where he exhibited a vase decorated with peacock feathers.

Delaherche also worked with porcelain and conducted numerous experiments with glazing techniques, achieving subtle and original variations in colour.

### **Charles Delanglade (1870–1952)**

The Marseille-based ceramicist, sculptor and medallist Charles Delanglade is best known for his relief portraits, statues and busts in bronze, wood or marble that adorn several monuments in Marseille. Deeply involved in the city's artistic life, he took part in the colonial exhibitions of 1906 and 1922 and was admitted to the Académie de Marseille in 1919, succeeding Jules Cantini.

He also devoted himself to ceramic production, experimenting with glazes to create iridescent effects, much like the ceramicist Clément Massier at the same period, producing either abstract motifs or designs inspired by vegetal forms

### **David Dellepiane (1866–1932)**

Poster : Fine Arts Exhibition of the Association des Artistes Marseillais, 1896, lithography  
Marseille, Musée d'Histoire

A painter, decorator and poster artist, David Dellepiane trained in Genoa before settling in Marseille, where he became a leading figure in local graphic art. His stay in Paris in the early 1890s proved pivotal : he discovered the flourishing « modern style », notably through the posters of Alfons Mucha, and worked under the direction of Jules Chéret, whose influence on his style was lasting.

Produced for the 7th Exhibition of the Association des Artistes Marseillais - founded to unite and promote local creators - this poster reflects a period of intense experimentation for the artist. It illustrates his rapid adoption of the Art Nouveau vocabulary: flat areas of colour, emphasised contours, flowing lines and stylisation derived from Japanese prints. Idealised female figures - elongated silhouettes and refined faces - become decorative emblems in his work. The model's floral dress, echoing the vegetal background, encapsulates this symbolist and ornamental aesthetic that characterises his graphic production.

### **Eugène Feuillâtre (1870–1916)**

Vase decorated with butterflies, 1900, opaque and translucent enamel on copper  
Paris, Musée d'Orsay

Eugène Feuillâtre began his career as head of the enamelling workshop for the jeweller René Lalique in 1890, a position he held until 1897 before opening his own studio. Initially a jewellery designer, he later specialised in enamelled works—cloisonné, painted and plique-à-jour enamels—creating jewellery, vases, boxes and bowls. This vase decorated with butterflies plays with the transparency of opaque and translucent enamels and demonstrates his distinctive style. Following his premature death in 1916, relatively few of Feuillâtre's works entered public collections.

### **Georges de Feure (1868–1943)**

Painter, poster artist, ceramicist, glassmaker, decorator and furniture designer, Georges de Feure was a major figure in the artistic renewal around 1900. Trained at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Amsterdam, he settled in Montmartre in 1889. Inspired by Charles Baudelaire and Georges Rodenbach, and close to Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel and Erik Satie, he was recognised by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes as a leading Symbolist painter. His work, dominated by the female figure and natural forms, belongs to the Art Nouveau alongside figures such as Hector Guimard, Louis Majorelle and Émile Gallé. In 1900, Siegfried Bing entrusted him with the design of the façade and interiors of the Pavillon de l'Art Nouveau at the Exposition Universelle de 1900. Widely celebrated from 1903 onwards, he later designed the couture house of Madeleine Vionnet on Avenue Montaigne in 1922 and participated in the international exhibitions of 1925 and 1937 in Paris.

### **Émile Gallé (1846–1904)**

Émile Gallé, a founding member of the École de Nancy, began his career within the family business specialising in glass and faïence before establishing himself in the art of glassmaking. From the early 1870s, he produced his first enamelled glass pieces and subsequently devoted himself to the development of innovative techniques and original decorative schemes, informed by his scholarly knowledge of botany. Alongside the naturalistic dimension of his work, a distinctive poetic quality emerges. Exploring effects of colour and material—layered glass, metallic inclusions, and the application of glass powders—he filed two patents in 1898 relating to glass marquetry and patination. Émile Gallé thus occupies a central place in the history of glassmaking.

Overmantel or Console Mirror Frame, c. 1900, walnut, inlaid with various woods, glass  
Paris, Musée d'Orsay

Émile Gallé began producing furniture in 1884. Lacking formal training in cabinet-making, he relied on skilled craftsmen in this field. He developed the technique of marquetry in particular, playing with the tonal variations of different wood species.

Gallé also paid close attention to the relationship between decoration—marked by his passion for botany—and the form of the object. The structure of this highly original mirror frame takes the form of a sculpted climbing plant, enclosing marquetry panels depicting a forest landscape, as well as snowdrops and bluebells. The piece also possesses a poetic and almost auditory dimension, with birdsong suggested beneath the overmantel and a musical staff unfolding beneath the mirror.

### **Léonard Gébleux (1861–after 1929)**

Léonard Gébleux worked as a decorator at the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres from 1883 to 1919 and later served as head of the workshops responsible for forms and decorative designs between 1920 and 1929.

### **Jacques Gruber (1870–1936)**

“Ferns” Vase, 1904, flamed stoneware with metallic sheen  
Paris, Musée d'Orsay

Jacques Gruber, an Alsatian master glassmaker, stained-glass artist and cabinet-maker, was a major figure of the École de Nancy. A versatile artist, he worked as a decorative designer for the Daum glassworks between 1893 and 1897, designed furniture and created bookbinding models. He is best known for his Art Nouveau stained-glass windows adorned with vegetal motifs. He also designed models for vases and umbrella stands in stoneware for the Société anonyme des produits céramiques de Rambervillers (SAPCR), directed by Alphonse Cytère. The “Ferns” vase—one of Gruber’s favoured motifs—belongs to this group. After the First World War, the style he developed in his stained glass evolved towards the geometric and stylised forms characteristic of Art Deco.

### **Hector Guimard (1867–1942)**

Armchair for the Coilliot House, 1898, American walnut with modern upholstery  
Paris, Musée d'Orsay

A major figure of French Art Nouveau, Hector Guimard is renowned for the monumental entrances to the Paris Métro designed for the inauguration of the metropolitan railway in 1900. Architect of numerous villas and townhouses—including the Castel Béanger, the Castel Henriette, and the house built in Lille for the ceramicist Louis Coilliot—he also designed stained glass, wallpapers, ceramics, ironwork and furniture associated with his architectural projects.

The furniture created for the Coilliot house, to which this armchair belongs, was conceived to harmonise perfectly with the architecture and decoration of the interiors. Viewing his creations as coherent ensembles, Guimard made line both a structural element and a decorative principle. Inspired by nature, his stylised and controlled vocabulary unites function and form, defining the originality of his work.

**Paul Jeannenet (1861–1920)**

A pupil and disciple of Jean Carriès (1856–1894), Paul Jeannenet ranks among the ceramicists most strongly influenced by his work. He produced flamed stoneware inspired by Chinese ceramics as well as trompe-l'œil pieces in the manner of Japanese potters.

**Edmond Lachenal (1855–1948)**

Edmond Lachenal embodies the transition between the ornamentalism of the nineteenth century and Art Nouveau. Trained in the workshop of Théodore Deck, where he became head of the studio, he settled near Paris around 1880. From the 1890s onwards he produced Japanese-inspired flamed stoneware with refined glazes and naturalistic decoration—bamboo, clover, irises and lizards.

**Louis Majorelle (1859–1926)**

Louis Majorelle took over in 1879 the faience and furniture manufactory founded by his father, Auguste, in Nancy. He initially designed furniture inspired by Japanese art, while also producing copies of eighteenth-century pieces and specialising in lacquered works. In the 1890s, under the influence of Émile Gallé, he turned towards the production of marquetry furniture, likewise drawing upon a naturalistic repertoire. His carved decorative vocabulary, however, is distinguished by a more restrained ornamentation than that of Gallé. The industrial organisation of his workshops also enabled serial production. Majorelle equipped his manufactory with a forge dedicated to the creation of metal elements and ornamental components, and collaborated on numerous occasions with the Daum glassworks, for which he notably designed metal lamp bases.

**Clément Massier (1844–1917)**

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Massier family profoundly transformed the ceramics of Vallauris, elevating it from a craft tradition to a true artistic expression. Together with the engineer Alexandre Bigot, Clément Massier explored metallic lustres from around 1890, producing iridescent surfaces inspired by Hispano-Moresque lustreware and organic forms.

**André Metthey (1871–1920)**

A ceramicist based in Asnières-sur-Seine, André Metthey distinguished himself in the early twentieth century through his research into glazed earthenware and iridescent glazes. Although he collaborated for a time with the painters of the Fauvism, his personal work reveals remarkable formal inventiveness and a distinctive decorative sensibility. He thus established himself as one of the most innovative ceramicists of the Belle Époque.

**Muller brothers (active 1897–1952)**

The Muller brothers were the founders of the Muller Frères glassworks in Lunéville. In 1894, the elder members of the family—Émile, Camille, Jean, Auguste and Désiré—who had trained as glass cutters and engravers at the Cristallerie de Saint-Louis, were recruited by Émile Gallé in Nancy, while Henri Muller joined as a clerk. In 1897, he left Gallé's workshop to partner with the glassworks at Croismare, near Lunéville, whose production soon entered into direct competition with that of Gallé and the Daum manufactory. The firm continued its activity until the 1930s.

**Nadar (1820–1910)**

Screen, 1897–1904, mahogany, brass, canvas  
Marseille, History Museum

The celebrated photographer Nadar - born Félix Tournachon - was renowned for his portraits of Parisian celebrities of the second half of the nineteenth century, including Sarah Bernhardt, Charles Baudelaire and Victor Hugo. In 1897, he opened his fourth and final photographic studio in Marseille, at 21 rue de Noailles (now 77 La Canebière). For five years, he photographed the city's elite, and his studio became a fashionable meeting place for Marseille's cultural circles and visitors alike. This Art Nouveau screen, in mahogany veneered with copper sheet, formed part of the studio's décor and bears the photographer's celebrated signature. In 1902, the studio was taken over by the photographer Fernand Detaille, whose family continued the photographic activity for several decades.

**Fernand Thesmar (1843–1912)**

Fernand Thesmar was both painter and enameller. He devoted himself particularly to enamelling on porcelain and began collaborating with the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres in 1891.

Reviving medieval enamelling techniques—such as *plique-à-jour*, which produces an effect similar to miniature stained-glass windows—he applied them with great virtuosity to the decoration of vases, bowls, cane handles and jewellery. His creations, often inspired by Japanese and Chinese enamelled decoration, were exhibited at the Exposition Universelle de 1900.