

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

Marseille, Château Borély – Musée des Arts décoratifs, de la Faïence et de la Mode
8th MAY 2026 – 25th APRIL 2027

Room 16 – GUEST BEDCHAMBER

Introductory wall text

Art Deco (1920–1935)

During the interwar period, Art Deco established itself as an aesthetic of modernity, founded upon clarity of line, the stylisation of motifs and the refinement of materials. As the heir to Art Nouveau, this style gradually asserted itself within a context marked by reconstruction, industrial innovation and a redefinition of taste.

Three principal themes structure this room.

- The first illustrates the evolution of the decorative vocabulary from the 1910s onwards, characterised by the simplification of forms, the gradual abandonment of naturalistic ornament and the growing prominence of geometry.
- The second highlights the contribution of the École de Nancy to this transition. Collaborations between Daum, Louis Majorelle and Jacques Gruber illustrate how the craftsmen of Nancy adapted their expertise to a renewed formal language. Glassware with stylised decoration, furniture with clear, structured lines and stained-glass windows with ordered compositions all signal this turning point.
- The third theme brings into focus the new generation of decorative artists such as Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann, Armand-Albert Rateau and Jules Leleu, who embodied the excellence of French decorative arts on the international stage.

A decisive moment was the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, organised in Paris in 1925, which consecrated this new artistic language. The exhibition represented both a synthesis of the experiments undertaken since the war and a showcase for French prestige. Art Deco appeared there in its full breadth, reconciling artisanal tradition with modernity, luxury with rationality, in a deliberate effort to influence taste on a global scale.

Within this context, the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres played an active role by renewing its productions. Between 1920 and 1938 it pursued a policy of openness to modernity, introducing new materials such as stoneware and earthenware, entrusted to artists including Paul Bonifas, Émile Lenoble, René Buthaud and Félix Aubert.

Section wall texts

The Evolution of the Decorative Repertoire and Style

The transition between Art Nouveau and Art Deco was not abrupt.

The sober, geometric style of Henri Bellery-Desfontaines offers an example of late Art Nouveau whose stylistic markers already anticipate those of Art Deco.

From the 1910s onwards, the new generation of decorative artists gradually abandoned the exuberance of Art Nouveau, which detractors quickly dubbed the “noodle style”. Stylisation, symmetry and the purification of forms replaced the naturalism of the École de Nancy and the celebrated “whiplash” lines of Hector Guimard. Nature - particularly floral motifs - remained an important source of inspiration, however.

The new style also drew upon Antiquity and upon the neoclassical iconography of the eighteenth century: cornucopias, baskets and garlands of fruit or flowers, and fluted furniture legs reminiscent of classical columns were especially favoured by decorators.

Yet Art Deco was also unmistakably a style of its own time. Modern machines and means of transport—automobiles, trains and ocean liners—as well as references to Cubism entered the decorative vocabulary of the 1920s. Colours became bolder and more contrasted.

New materials were also employed within the decorative arts: eggshell inlay, straw marquetry, as well as shagreen (sharkskin) and plastics such as bakelite and galalith. Designers were equally attracted to exotic materials. The cabinetmaker Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann excelled in selecting rare and precious woods for his furniture, while Jean Dunand mastered the technique of Japanese lacquer.

The École de Nancy and Its Transition towards Art Deco

The death of Émile Gallé, the first president of the École de Nancy, in 1904, together with the upheaval of the First World War and the gradual decline in favour of Art Nouveau, prompted the decorative-arts industrialists of Nancy to renew their decorative vocabulary in order to continue embodying a form of modernity in the field of the decorative arts.

Louis Majorelle, Daum and Jacques Gruber adapted their styles to the new Art Deco taste. Meanwhile, the Établissements Gallé, whose activity continued after the death of their founder, carried on producing Art Nouveau pieces until 1931, though these soon appeared distinctly outdated.

Majorelle distinguished himself through the creation of solid furniture with rectilinear lines and also invested considerable effort in the field of artistic metalwork. He collaborated with the house of Daum to produce works combining glass with metal frameworks. The stained-glass artist Jacques Gruber, for his part, established a second workshop in Paris and adopted the Art Deco style. The lead comes of stained glass—which had previously served only a structural function in holding the glass panels together—now became an integral element of the composition. Their thick, straight lines emphasised the geometric and radiant motifs favoured by Gruber during the 1920s and 1930s.

A New Generation of Decorative Artists

While important figures of Art Nouveau adapted to the new style—such as René Lalique, who moved from creating Art Nouveau jewellery to developing a glass industry in the 1920s—a new generation of decorative artists contributed to shaping what would become known as Art Deco.

Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann—often compared with Jean-Henri Riesener—opened his decorating agency in Paris as early as 1912, as did Maurice Dufrené and Louis Süe, who soon joined forces with André Mare within the Compagnie des Arts Français. These decorators—also known as *ensembliers*—achieved great success at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes.

The Manufacture nationale de Sèvres and the Manufacture des Gobelins likewise became involved in the creation of Art Deco objects and furniture and presented their productions at the exhibition. Among the works displayed in the Gobelins stand were pieces of furniture by Ruhlmann, as well as the ensemble *Les Oiseaux d'or* by Armand-Albert Rateau and René Piot.

At the same time, the major Parisian department stores developed their own furniture workshops, entrusted to prominent decorators. Printemps thus founded the design studio Primavera as early as 1912, under the artistic direction of Charlotte Chauchet-Guilleré, the wife of René Guilleré.

During the 1920s, other department stores followed suit by establishing their own workshops: Galeries Lafayette created La Maîtrise under the direction of Maurice Dufrené; Le Bon Marché collaborated with Paul Follot to establish the studio Pomone; while the Grands Magasins du Louvre opened their own studio, Studium, under the direction of Étienne Kohlmann.

Within these workshops, luxurious productions coexisted with more affordable yet modern designs intended for the middle classes, thereby helping to make Art Deco more widely accessible.

Digital displays

Stylistic developments in the art of glass

During the interwar period, the art of glass experienced a significant creative revival. Glass manufacturers produced objects of simpler forms, within a more restrained palette—either monochrome or composed of subtle tonal variations.

The house of Daum, as well as the Verreries Schneider, for example, created works featuring geometric decoration or stylised vegetal motifs, often acid-etched. Daum also collaborated with the Établissements Majorelle to produce so-called “wrought glass” (verreries ferronnées), combining glass and metal.

René Lalique (1860–1945) played a pivotal role in diversifying the uses of glass. Renowned for his Art Nouveau jewellery, he acquired a glassworks at Wingen-sur-Moder in 1921 and applied industrial techniques to glass production. Processes such as mould-pressing and mechanical blowing into moulds made it possible to produce pieces in series. Lalique specialised in the production of opalescent glass.

In his work, glass extended into the realm of architecture: monumental illuminated fountains, moulded panels used as wall decoration or incorporated into doors. His production followed contemporary tastes and adapted to modern ways of life; he also ventured into the manufacture of car radiator mascots (on display in Room 20 of the exhibition).

Pâte de verre, one of the historic specialities of the Daum house, was likewise explored by glass artists such as François Décorchemont (1880–1971) and Gabriel Argy-Rousseau (1885–1953), who produced vases and bowls adorned with stylised floral motifs or friezes inspired by Antiquity. Finally, Maurice Marinot (1882–1960) attracted considerable attention in the 1920s and 1930s with his highly original acid-etched bubbled glass.

The Gobelins and Beauvais Tapestry Manufactories

The Gobelins and Beauvais tapestry manufactories played a significant role in the development of Art Deco following the First World War.

Gustave Geffroy (1855–1926), administrator of the Gobelins manufactory from 1908, sought to renew the art of tapestry by commissioning contemporary painters such as Jules Chéret and Claude Monet. He continued this modernising strategy after the war.

Jean Ajalbert (1863–1947), administrator of the Beauvais manufactory from 1917 to 1934, chose to abandon the reproduction of nineteenth-century models. Instead, he brought together tapestry designers (cartonniers) and interior designers (ensemblers) to create resolutely modern furnishings, in which the wooden structures and upholstered tapestry elements were closely integrated.

During his tenure, Ajalbert commissioned talented artists including Raoul Dufy (1877–1953), Georges Leroux (1877–1957) and Paul Follot (1879–1933), who designed models intended for translation into tapestry. These were mounted on seating designed by some of the leading decorators of the period, such as Maurice Dufrêne (1876–1955), Léon Jallot (1874–1967), Armand-Albert Rateau (1882–1938) and Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann (1879–1933).

The two manufactories presented their work jointly at the 1925 International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, where they were installed within the Grand Palais itself. Armand-Albert Rateau exhibited pieces from his ensemble *Les Oiseaux d'or* alongside furniture by Ruhlmann. The Gobelins also displayed imposing hangings, including the *Fairy Tales* series after Jean Véber (1864–1928), which was likewise produced as Beauvais tapestry and mounted on wooden frames designed by Paul Follot.

The manufactories' intense artistic activity continued unabated throughout the 1930s.

The Sèvres Manufactory

Following the First World War, the Sèvres porcelain manufactory underwent a period of intense technical and creative renewal, driven by its administrator, Georges Lechevallier-Chevignard (1878–1945). In order to revitalise artistic production, he enlisted the collaboration of renowned artists and designers, including Henri Rapin (1873–1939), who served as Director of Artistic Works at the manufactory from 1920 to 1938.

The diversity of Sèvres production was fully showcased in the two symmetrical pavilions occupied by the manufactory at the 1925 International Exhibition: walls clad in stoneware tiles, fountains and enamelled porcelain panels, monumental vases designed by the architect Pierre Patout (1879–1965), and display cases presenting the most recent creations, notably vases and figurines.

In the wake of this exhibition, leading decorators such as Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann and Félix Aubert designed models of vases and cups for the manufactory, which were subsequently decorated by modern artists. Simon Lissim (1900–1981) notably introduced a vibrant and richly coloured style marked by Slavic influences. The artist Anne-Marie Fontaine (1900–1938) distinguished herself through the development of innovative decorative techniques, based on the application of coloured pastes to white porcelain vases.

The interwar period also marked a phase of profound technical transformation. In 1920, Georges Lechevallier-Chevignard revived the production of faïence under the direction of Maurice Gensoli (1892–1973), followed in 1930–1931 by the reintroduction of stoneware, entrusted to Louis Delachenal (1897–1966).

The manufactory's various workshops also produced objects intended for the decorative departments of major Parisian department stores, such as *La Maîtrise* at Galeries Lafayette and *Studium* at the Grands Magasins du Louvre. Less costly than porcelain, these productions achieved wider distribution among the middle classes.

Expanded object labels

Félix Aubert (1866–1940), designer, and **Clément Freyssinges (1903–1970)**, decorator

Globular Vase, c. 1925, hard-paste Sèvres porcelain

Château Borély - Musée des Arts décoratifs, de la Faïence et de la Mode (on deposit from Manufactures nationales, Sèvres & Mobilier national, Paris)

At the beginning of the 20th century, vases produced by the Sèvres manufactory were initially named after cities, then rivers. From around 1923–1925 onwards, they began to bear the name of their designer. The first examples of this new practice were the "Aubert" vases, conceived by the painter and decorator Félix Aubert. During the 1920s, he created nearly sixty forms for Sèvres, including the globular vase presented here, decorated by Clément Freyssinges, who worked at the manufactory from 1919 to 1968.

Paul Bonifas (1893–1967)

A Swiss artist trained in Geneva, Paul Bonifas settled in Paris, where he associated with Amédée Ozenfant and Le Corbusier, leading figures of Purism. From 1925 onwards, he oriented his production towards an architectural and sculptural expression, favouring purity of line and rigour of form. The use of a lustrous black glaze, which became his signature, underscores the density and sobriety of his works.

Albert Braïtou-Sala (1885–1972)

The Woman in Pink, 1927, oil on canvas

Riom, musée Mandet

Born in Tunisia, Albert Sala, known as Braïtou-Sala, trained in Paris at the Académie Julian before becoming, during the interwar period, one of the most sought-after society portraitists. Through his friend Alexandre Joannidès (1879–1927), a historian of the Comédie-Française, he moved within artistic and theatrical circles. Painted in 1927, the year of the critic's death, this portrait depicts his wife, Jouvenette Joannidès. The X-shaped composition, formed by the outstretched arms and crossed legs, structures the image and enhances the frontal presence of the sitter. Short, waved hair, made-up face, plucked eyebrows and a direct gaze embody the modern woman of the 1920s, akin to that revealed in photographic portraits of Nancy Cunard, an avant-garde icon, taken in 1926 by Man Ray. The dress, with its elongated bodice, dropped waist and wide flounced skirt revealing the legs—popularised by Jeanne Lanvin—illustrates this new feminine elegance.

René Buthaud (1886–1987)

Trained in painting and engraving, René Buthaud turned to ceramics after 1918. A contemporary of Ernest Chaplet, Auguste Delaherche and Jean Mayodon, his work combines the artisanal traditions of Far Eastern and Islamic ceramics with a modern sensibility open to folk art and so-called "primitive" arts. On robust and powerful forms, sometimes enhanced with gold glazes, he frequently painted figures inspired by marine mythology: sirens, Nereids or bathers.

Jean Dunand (1877–1942)

Screen "La Forêt", 1935, lacquer

Manufactures nationales, Sèvres & Mobilier national, Paris, inv. GME 7196

Jean Dunand was a versatile artist: decorator, lacquer artist, sculptor and metalworker. He is particularly renowned for his lacquer work, a Japanese technique he learned from the master Seizo Sugawara in 1912. Dunand frequently collaborated with other decorative artists, notably for the decoration of ocean liners such as the famous Normandie, as well as with fashion designers.

The imposing screen *La Forêt*, composed of twelve panels joined by hinges, depicts a profusion of trees, vegetation and stylised animals rendered in various tones of lacquer: black, brown, cream, ochre and gold.

René Gabriel (1899–1950)

Sideboard, c. 1930, wood, metal, ivory

Château Borély - Musée des Arts décoratifs, de la Faïence et de la Mode (Musée Cantini collection)

A decorator chiefly known for his furniture designs, René Gabriel may be regarded as a precursor of French design. He began his career designing wallpapers and carpets, before gaining recognition at the 1925 Exhibition

with the “young girl’s bedroom” in the pavilion of the Société des artistes décorateurs, entitled “Une ambassade française”. He subsequently focused on the production of serial, economical and accessible furniture. This particularly imposing sideboard reflects the geometric forms characteristic of Art Deco. Its clean lines and rectilinear metal decoration, however, place it within a more modernist approach to furniture design.

Jules Leleu (1883–1961)

Low Sideboard, 1930, amboyna, wood, bronze, metal
Manufactures nationales, Sèvres & Mobilier national, Paris

The decorator Jules Leleu devoted himself to furniture-making from 1918 onwards. He participated in the 1925 International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts and later contributed to furnishing the celebrated ocean liner Normandie in 1935. This sideboard in amboyna burl, a precious exotic wood notably found in Thailand, is adorned with ivory marquetry depicting three stylised roses. From 1937 to 1997, it formed part of the furnishings of the Constitutional Council.

Émile Lenoble (1875–1940)

Trained at the École nationale des arts décoratifs in Paris, Émile Lenoble established his workshop in Boulogne-Billancourt, where he worked primarily in stoneware from 1905 onwards. He belongs to the generation of artists who, following Ernest Chaplet, explored the plastic qualities of stoneware and the effects of glazes. During the interwar period, he favoured pared-down forms in which the sobriety of the profile highlights the richness of the material.

Henri Patou (active mid-20th century)

A former pupil of Félix Aubert, Henri Patou designed forms and decorations at Sèvres between 1922 and 1942.

Charles Pihan (born 1863), decorator

Charles Pihan worked there as a decorator from 1879 to 1928.

René Piot (1866–1934), for the tapestry cartoons, and **Armand-Albert Rateau (1882–1938)**, for the woodwork Set “Les Oiseaux d’or” (piece no. 30), 1924, Beauvais tapestry, carved and gilded wood
Manufactures nationales, Sèvres & Mobilier national, Paris

Woven after cartoons by René Piot, the set entitled « Les Oiseaux d’or » comprised a sofa, six armchairs and a fire screen. One armchair and the screen were presented at the 1925 International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts. Close to the Nabis and later the Fauves, René Piot (1869–1934), a pupil of Pierre Andrieu (a former collaborator of Delacroix) and of Gustave Moreau, developed his activity chiefly in the theatrical field, working as a designer, stage director and choreographer.

After training as a sculptor at the École Boulle, Armand-Albert Rateau joined Georges Hoentschel as a draughtsman, the latter being responsible for the Union centrale des Arts décoratifs pavilion at the 1900 Universal Exhibition. At the age of twenty-four, he was appointed artistic director of the firm Lucien Alavoine & Cie, specialising in tapestry and interior decoration. In 1919, he established his own workshop and produced significant decorative ensembles for private residences and prestigious institutions. From 1921 onwards, his collaboration with Jeanne Lanvin within Lanvin Décoration led to the creation of boutiques and refined interiors,

culminating at the 1925 International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, where Rateau designed the Pavillon de l'Élégance, a true manifesto of the dialogue between fashion and decorative arts, before creating the celebrated Arpège perfume bottle (1927).

Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann (1879–1933)

Sideboard, 1920, varnished amboyna burl marquetry with ivory inlays on an oak frame, silvered bronzes
Manufactures nationales, Sèvres & Mobilier national, Paris, inv. GME 9492/001

Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann was a decorator specialising in furniture design. He distinguished himself through his taste for rare and precious woods and for marquetry. He was particularly acclaimed at the 1925 International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, where he notably created the furnishings for the Hôtel du Collectionneur. A prolific designer, he also produced textile and wallpaper designs, as well as vase forms for the Sèvres manufactory.

The marquetry of this sideboard evokes a mesh pattern, also referred to as cailloutis. The octagonal silvered bronze plaque, by the sculptor Simon Foucault (1884–1923), depicts two allegorical female figures embodying Day and Night. Produced in 1920, the sideboard was exhibited at the French Art Exhibition in San Francisco in 1924, then at the 1925 International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, before entering the collections of the Élysée Palace in 1926.

Jean Veber for the tapestry cartoons, **Paul Follot** for the wood design

Armchair "The King of the Dwarfs", after the tale by Anatole France, "Abeille" (1882), Furniture No. 23 "Fairy Tales", 1921, gilded wood, Beauvais tapestry
Manufactures nationales de Sèvres et Mobilier national, Paris

The tapestry upholstery of these armchairs was woven between 1919 and 1926 from cartoons by Jean Veber, commissioned in 1914 and 1920. The ensemble, mounted on wooden frames designed by Paul Follot, comprised a sofa, four armchairs, four chairs and a screen. It completed a set of three tapestries produced for Gustave Geffroy, then director of the Gobelins manufactory. Presented at the Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes de 1925, this salon, exhibited by the Gobelins and Beauvais manufactories among their most recent productions, was widely admired by critics, who praised "the artist's picturesque and joyful spirit [...], his elevated and pure imagination, and his prodigious talent as a colourist".