

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 19 – CABINET OF GRAPHIC ARTS

From 08.05 to 06.09.2026

Introductory wall text

David Dellepiane (1866–1932)

Born in Genoa and brought to Marseille as a child, David Dellepiane emerged as one of the city's major artists at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After a period in Paris—where he collaborated with Jules Chéret—he developed his career fully in Marseille, making the city his principal source of inspiration.

Particularly renowned as a poster artist, Dellepiane produced numerous lithographs for the Syndicat d'Initiative de Provence. Intended for a broad audience, these works are distinguished by their modernity, bold compositions and vibrant colours. Scenes such as *Le Déchargement des oranges* and *Le marché de la porte d'Aix* offer a sensitive and intimate vision of Marseille, far removed from simple picturesque representation.

Through the dissemination of his posters in urban space, Dellepiane played a major role in popularising Art Nouveau in Marseille, transforming institutional commissions into genuine artistic creations that combined art and advertising at a moment of profound transformation. During the 1920s, his style evolved towards a more restrained and structured aesthetic influenced by Art Deco, while never abandoning his distinctive artistic personality.

Section wall texts

The International Exhibition of Electricity in Marseille

From April to October 1908, Marseille hosted the Exposition internationale d'électricité de Marseille, a major event devoted to the advances of electricity and electromechanics.

The poster designed by Dellepiane is among his most striking graphic works, expressing the fascination of the Belle Époque for an innovation destined to transform both the city and industry. Electricity is represented not merely as a technical achievement but as an almost mystical force.

In the form of a female allegory whose brow radiates light, it appears to transmit electrical energy to the city with her delicate hands. While the Parc Chanot glows with illumination, the rest of Marseille remains plunged in darkness. Through contrasts of light and decorative motifs, Dellepiane stages the advent of a new era. The sinuous lines and flowing curves of Art Nouveau lend this celebration of science a poetic dimension, making light itself the symbol of modernity and progress.

The Motor Show

In April 1913, Marseille hosted the Salon de l'Automobile de Marseille 1913, at a moment when the motor car was emerging as an emblem of modernity and progress. The poster designed by Dellepiane reflects the optimism of the period and highlights Marseille's place in the rise of new industries.

Drawing masterfully upon the visual language of Art Nouveau, Dellepiane lends the automobile an almost mythical dimension. The poster is composed like a theatrical set: in the foreground, dark, fluid lines—extended by a pine tree—frame the view of the Grand Palais du parc Chanot. Placed at the centre of the composition, the vehicle, rendered in ochre and red tones, symbolises the advent of a new era.

Beyond promoting the event, the image bears witness to the growing role of the automobile in transforming the city and ways of life. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the motor car was no longer merely a technical dream but a powerful agent of profound change in society and mobility.

From 09.09.2026 to 25.04.2027

Drawings by students of the Marseille School of Fine Arts (1928–1929)

Sources regarding the organisation of the Marseille School of Fine Arts in the late 1920s remain limited, and the instructors responsible for the sections devoted to the decorative arts are still imperfectly identified. Nevertheless, the drawings presented here – mainly furniture designs produced by students in 1928–1929 – clearly attest to their grounding in the Art Deco aesthetic.

Through the rigour of their lines, their command of composition and their cultivated sense of ornament, these works reveal the vitality of graphic and decorative training in Marseille, as well as the students' assimilation of the stylistic codes of their time.