

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 21 – LOUIS JOSEPH DENIS BORÉLY BEDCHAMBER

Digital display

Luxury in motion : a full-scale model of a first-class compartment on the Côte d'Azur Pullman Express

Inaugurated in 1929 by the Paris–Lyon–Méditerranée Railway Company (PLM), the Côte d'Azur Pullman Express epitomised the golden age of luxury rail travel between Paris and the Mediterranean. Following in the wake of the Orient-Express, this prestigious train offered affluent passengers a refined experience combining technical comfort with exceptional interior design, en route to the Riviera.

A symbol of the expansion of luxury transport during the interwar period, it connected Paris to Ventimiglia via Lyon, Marseille and Nice—reached in just fourteen hours and ten minutes—and Menton.

To assert its prestige, the PLM enlisted the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits (CIWL) to equip the Côte d'Azur Pullman Express with luxurious carriages. The CIWL devised an exceptionally refined onboard service and entrusted the decoration of the carriages to leading designers.

René Prou (1887–1947), a major figure in furniture design in the 1920s, was commissioned to design the first-class carriages. He collaborated with René Lalique (1860–1945), a master glassmaker at the height of his career, who in turn involved his daughter, Suzanne Lalique-Haviland (1892–1989). Produced around 1929, this full-scale model demonstrates the remarkable coherence of their collaboration, at the intersection of decorative arts and technical innovation.

The wood panelling, made of plane tree, is punctuated by floral motifs in moulded-pressed glass with silver powder, designed by Suzanne Lalique-Haviland and inlaid into the wood. She also created the textiles: the fabric covering the wingback armchairs designed by Prou, as well as the beige carpet with brown motifs inspired by stylised railway tracks arranged in a staggered pattern.

This project highlights the essential role played by Suzanne Lalique-Haviland within the Lalique workshop. Without formal academic training, she developed a distinctive artistic voice at an early stage under her father's influence. Her work spans numerous fields, including textiles, glass, and tableware—initially for the Manufacture de Sèvres and later for Théodore Haviland's manufactory in Limoges.

For the Pullman Express, she also designed the table service, adorned with the company's gilt monogram, contributing to a refined and streamlined decorative language that combined the French tradition of luxury with the functional demands of railway design.