

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 25 – FASHION GALLERY – Alcove

Introductory wall text

The End of Art Deco, 1930–1937

The 1930s were marked by a succession of economic, political and social crises, bringing an end to the *Années folles*, the carefree decade that followed the First World War. The luxurious and ostentatious furniture and objets d'art of the 1920s, largely intended for a wealthy clientele, no longer corresponded to the spirit of the time.

Nevertheless, the Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne held in Paris sought to continue celebrating modern life and French luxury. Decorators such as André Arbus achieved consecration there, alongside artists, art-industry entrepreneurs and architects including René Lalique and Gaston Castel, who once again designed the pavilion devoted to Provence, as he had done in 1925.

The furniture ensembles displayed adopted a more sober and classical style, devoid of elaborate decoration or ornament. Chrome-plated metal increasingly appeared in furniture design, under the influence of the modernist movement championed by architects and designers such as Le Corbusier and Charlotte Perriand.

The Second World War ultimately sounded the death knell of Art Deco, a style now considered outdated and unsuited to the needs of French households in the post-war period. Reconstruction brought about a major expansion in the furniture industry. Modern, durable and affordable furniture was henceforth mass-produced, finally realising the social ambitions that the decorators and art-industry pioneers of Art Nouveau and Art Deco had only partially achieved.

Section wall text

Black and White : A Perfect Harmony

*"But for whom are you in mourning, mademoiselle ?" would have asked Paul Poiret of Gabrielle Chanel.
"For you, monsieur !"*

Paris, 1909: Gabrielle Chanel opens a millinery workshop. Within a few years, she propels couture towards a modernity of use, transforming comfort into elegance. From 1912 onwards, she establishes her "sport" ensembles, elevating jersey—hitherto confined to hosiery—to create a rational silhouette designed for movement.

In pursuit of simplicity and naturalness, Chanel favours formal and chromatic restraint. An advocate of so-called "non-colours", she introduces in the early 1920s the celebrated "little black dress", a distillation of efficiency and discretion that becomes a staple of every wardrobe. In 1926, the magazine *Vogue US* dubs it "the Ford signed Chanel".

After the crisis of 1929, her stylised evening gowns follow newly rediscovered curves, articulated through drapery and asymmetrical panels. Lightweight fabrics are exploited to their fullest effect, without ostentation. Nicknamed the “Queen of Beige”, she also privileges black, white and ivory—a palette echoed in the décor of her apartment on the rue Cambon. On the eve of the Second World War, she closes her house and withdraws to Switzerland. Fifteen years later, in 1954, she resumes activity with a collection that breaks with the ultra-feminine silhouette of Christian Dior.

If Art Deco is defined by the modernity of its forms, the refinement of its materials and a taste for innovation, Gabrielle Chanel undeniably shares its spirit. Like her, the decorators André Groult and André Arbus moved within the aristocratic circles of Parisian high society during the Roaring Twenties, sharing a common conception of modern luxury. From the interiors conceived by Groult to the liberated silhouette fashioned by Chanel, and through to the furniture of Arbus, there emerges an art of living founded on elegance, comfort and the excellence of craftsmanship. In contrast to the functionalist avant-gardes, these creators embody a distinctive path, rooted in the continuity of tradition and in a particular vision of French refinement.

Expanded objects labels

André Arbus (1903–1969)

Chaise longue, 1937, bronze, metal, modern satin

Manufactures nationales, Sèvres & Mobilier national, Paris

Chaise longue designed for the bathroom of the Manufacture de Sèvres pavilion at the 1937 International Exhibition, this chaise longue exemplifies André Arbus’s modern and luxurious aesthetic. Acquired by the Mobilier national at the close of the exhibition, it formed part of a suite that also included a chair and a pedestal table. Dish

Émile Decoeur (1876–1953)

Émile Decoeur was one of the foremost French ceramists of the first half of the twentieth century. A pupil of Edmond Lachenal, his stoneware and porcelain works were influenced by the forms of Art Nouveau and Japanese craftsmanship. During the 1920s, his style evolved towards a more restrained and refined aesthetic, reflecting broader trends of the period shaped by a renewed interest in Chinese and Korean pottery of the tenth century.

André Groult (1884-1966)

Fall-front secrétaire, 1937, ebony, wood, leather, metal

Manufactures nationales, Sèvres & Mobilier national, Paris

This secrétaire, presented at the 1937 International Exhibition, was acquired on that occasion by the Mobilier national.

Raoul Lachenal (1885–1956)

Raoul Lachenal worked alongside his father, the ceramist Edmond Lachenal, in the family workshop until 1911, when he established a new studio in Boulogne-sur-Seine. In 1914, he exhibited at the Pavillon de Marsan, where his works—featuring scale-like decoration and symmetrical experiments—met with considerable success. He produced ceramics of simple, balanced forms inspired by Eastern models and employed slip-casting techniques.

Georges Serré (1889–1956)

Trained at the Manufacture de Sèvres, Georges Serré travelled to Saigon in 1916, where Far Eastern aesthetics left a lasting impression on his work. Upon his return in 1922, he opened a studio in Sèvres and produced thick stoneware fired in wood kilns, initially valued for their glazes and later enriched with incised decoration beneath the glaze. From 1940 to 1950, he directed the ceramics workshops at the École des arts appliqués in Paris.

Séraphin Soudbinine (1867–1944)

Following his period working with the sculptor Rodin, Séraphin Soudbinine drew inspiration from Chinese and Japanese stoneware traditions, adopting their restrained treatment of surface and material. In the 1930s, he combined these influences with the principal tenets of the Art Deco style.