

MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS ANTOINE LÉCUYER

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Persons with reduced mobility have partial access to the museum.

DIRECTION DU PATRIMOINE

Soutenu
par



From academic tradition to Interwar art



As part of its scientific and cultural project, the museum invites you to discover three areas of the permanent exhibition. Dedicated to the academic aesthetic and art from the Post World War I Reconstruction, those rooms display the most beautiful masterpieces from the years 1850-1945, many of which have been specially brought out of storage.

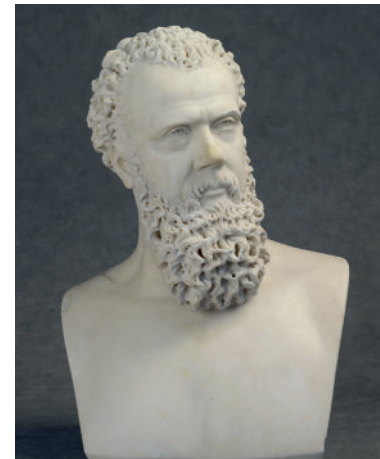


Auguste BONNEFOI, *Vanité sur la tombe de Maurice-Quentin de La Tour*, 1854, oil on canvas, inv. 2001.25.1 FA

ACADEMIC ART : A FORMAL ART

Since its foundation, the Academy sets the rules that the artist must strictly follow : choice of subject among the noblest of genres : history painting, mythology (*Judith and L'Enlèvement de Psyché* by Fernand Lematte, at the reception, are part of this movement), painted or sculpted portrait (*Lucien Augé de Lassus et son épouse* by Alphonse de Monchablon, *Anatole de La Forge* by Eugène Guérain) but also quest for Beauty and imitation of reality even to the point of idealizing it. If Bonnefoi paints with precision the opulent peonies and the fragility of the still closed tulips, the local artist takes the liberty to associate flowers such as the ipomoea, the peony or the narcissus which do not bloom at the same period.

Despite some big names among its representatives, Alexandre Cabanel, Jean-Léon Gérôme or William Bouguereau, academic art falters in the late 19th century. Accused of restraining creativity and the flourishing of new artistic forms, the academic aesthetic sets us back to a conventional, rigid art form, trapped by overly strict rules.



Eugène GUERLAIN, *Anatole de La Forge*, 1867, marble, inv. 2002.25.1 FA

THE ACADEMY, A KEY PLAYER IN THE 19th CENTURY ART WORLD

Heir to the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, founded in 1648 to regulate artistic productions while also contributing to the artist's emancipation, the Academy of Fine Arts is created in 1816 under the Bourbon Restoration. Its influence on the instruction of artists and their career is significant : it provides a rigorous apprenticeship to the students, advises the State in its ordering policy and organizes the Salon, a major artistic event during which the Academy awards prizes and rewards, among the most prestigious, the Rome Prize.



Alphonse MONCHABLON, *Lucien Augé de Lassus (et son épouse ?)*, 1896, oil on canvas, inv. 2005.1.1 FA

THE ROME PRIZE : THE ARTIST'S SACRAMENT

Symbol of the academic institution, the Rome Prize designates the highest honor awarded during the Salon to an artist keen to embark on a fine arts career. It is given with a lodging allocated to the laureate, in order to allow them to perfect their studies at the French Academy in Rome. The Rome Prize represents the promise of getting important public orders. Alphonse de Monchablon obtains this prestigious award in 1863 with *Joseph reconnu par ses frères*, as well as the artist from Saint-Quentin Fernand Lematte in 1870 with *La Mort de Messaline* (both of them being kept at the Superior School of Fine Art in Paris).

WHY THE “SALON” ?

From 1737, the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture regularly organizes public exhibitions of its member's artworks. They carry on until the Second Empire at the Louvre, more precisely in the Salon Carré, hence the name “Salon”. Just like in the big room that you just visited, the hanging is tight, frame against frame on many rows in order to enhance some artworks at the expense of others. An important place of critical exchanges and meetings between artists, their potential purchasers and the public, the Salon whose access is monitored by a jury, incarnates a requirement for those who wish to establish their artistic reputation. In 1880, the Third Republic ends the Fine Arts Academy's monopoly on the Salon's organization. Jules Ferry then entrusts the event's management to the Society of French Artists, established by 80 artists on June 16 1882. It was at this Salon in 1886 that Marie Cazin, pupil of Rosa Bonheur and of the animal sculptor Antoine-Louis Barye, exhibits her bronze *Jeunes filles*.



Marie CAZIN, *Jeunes filles*, circa 1886, bronze, dépôt du musée d'Orsay deposit, inv. RF 3918 LUX 290 / E 17



René BUTHAUD, *Vase aux quatre danseurs*, 1923-1926, glazed high-fired ceramics with molded-modeled decoration, inv. 2023.1.1

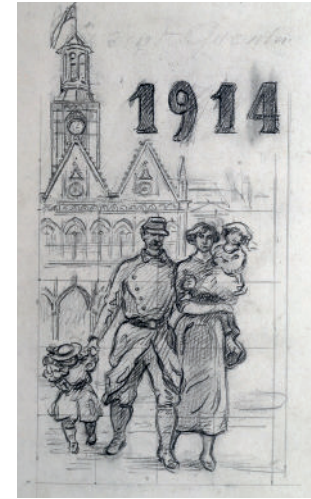


René BUTHAUD, *Vase à décors abstraits*, 1934-1940, high-fired ceramics with gold highlights, inv. 2023.2.1

René Buthaud, engraver, painter and above all a ceramic artist, is a key player in the revival of the *Art Deco* in the 20th century. He asserts his style between classicism and modernity during the 1920's-30's. His universe reveals the impact of both Ancient art inspired patterns and stylized feminine figures.

This monochrome, thinly cracked vase displays four naked hellenistic dancers, seen from the side. The shape here reflects the artist's ongoing research into the process of ceramic decoration. As from 1923, Primavera, the furniture and decoration department of the famous Department Store *Printemps*, calls on Buthaud to modernize its pottery production. Although it is not a work specially produced for this department, ceramics belong to this creative period, while the vase with its abstract decoration reflects the master's outstanding skills as a colorist. Circular

shapes, red, black and gold discs seem directly inspired by the pictorial universe of Robert and Sonia Delaunay. This piece is produced as part of Buthaud's commercial agreement with Mr. Salmicouri, the art dealer, as from 1934. The artist then exports pieces signed "J. Doris" to the United States, a name derived from *Douris*, the Greek painter.



Paul SERET, *La famille du soldat devant l'Hôtel de Ville*, 1914, pencil on paper, inv. 2007.4.5 FA

SAINT-QUENTIN 1914-1918 : AN OCCUPIED CITY

When on August 28 1914, the first German ulhans break into the city through the 8 Octobre square, the inhabitants are far from conceiving the horrors and suffering that they are going to endorse.

This 36 months long occupation is first and foremost a forced cohabitation between 45 000 inhabitants and the German administration that is in control of do's and dont's, supplies and public affairs. Some of the locals resist but pay for it with their life, or are sentenced with fines or imprisonment in Germany.

With the retreat of the German troops on the Hindenburg Line going past Saint Quentin, the French army decides to evacuate the town from its residents in March 1917 towards the northern cities and to Belgium. Some of them will even be sent back to France, via Switzerland. Already affected by aerial bombardments, Saint-Quentin is now the target of the French and English artillery fires, which are trying to drive the German army out of the city. When the French soldiers of general Debeney's first Army enter the city on October 1st 1918, all is doom and gloom.

Paul Seret, manager of the retail store Seret-Frères, is one of the witnesses of this page of our History, which he reveals through a series of sketches, sometimes in an ironic way. Produced between 1914 and 1917, these drawings depict German soldiers and civilians, Saint-Quentin inhabitants as well as scenes from daily life. Those mainly illustrate Élie Fleury's publication "*Under the Boot - History of the city of Saint-Quentin during German Occupation, August 1914 - February 1917*". These drawings, particularly fragiles, are exhibited here periodically.

ART DURING THE GREAT WAR

If the First World War left permanent scars on bodies and minds, it also inspired many artists, actors or witnesses of this 20th century tragedy. The museum preserves a range of collections evoking the Great War, mostly acquired thanks to funds allocated to Saint-Quentin as war damage.

Through the characters' intensity and the power of the messages it delivers, *La Pensée aux Absents* by André Devambez constitutes, with a great psychological sharpness, the master piece of this collection. A soldier himself, Devambez represents his family at the center of an impressive triptych. In the middle, his mother Catherine, on the left, his daughter Valentine and on the right, his wife Cécile. The three forlorn women dressed in black fluctuate between suffering, contemplation and sorrow.

In 1936, the museum acquires a set of artwork from so called modern artists, such as Charles Hoffbauer, whose topic also reveals, with much humanity, the experience and the painful memory of the Great War. His scenes of soldiers and war landscapes are testimonies of his mobilization at the front. With great psychology, portraits of prisoners were drawn as he was, imprisoned in Münster Germany.



André DEVAMBEZ, *La Pensée aux absents* (detail), oil on canvas, inv. BA 149



Gabriel GIRODON, *Les Pastels de La Tour*, 1940, pastel on paper, inv. LT 133



«Au Pauvre Diable» museum entrance panels in Maubeuge, 1917, painted wood, inv. 2007.6.1 FA

PASTELS IN TIMES OF WAR (1914-1945)

As soon as they invaded France, German authorities showed a genuine interest in the pastels of Maurice-Quentin de la Tour. In December 1914, the Kommandantur demanded that the works of art be safely moved to the museum's cellars in August 1914 before the arrival of German troops and be returned to their exhibition rooms. Fascinated by the virtuosity of the Saint-Quentin-born pastelist, the occupiers went as far as to publish, in early 1917, *La Tour Der Pastellmaler Ludwigs XV* (La Tour, pastelist of Louis XV).

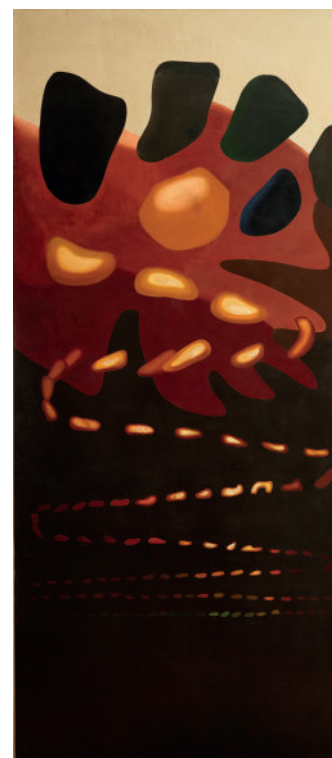
Plagued by aerial bombings and artillery fire, on February 8th 1917, German authorities decided to evacuate Saint-Quentin's artwork to Maubeuge. A German museum, under the management of lieutenant Detlev Von Hadeln, is then erected in the department store "Au Pauvre Diable". Both entrance panels, made of painted wood, disclose

to us: "The exhibition of De La Tour's pastels and other works of art saved from Saint-Quentin and surroundings". A true cultural site, the museum is open to the German troops from June 1st 1917. Facing the October 1918 meltdown, the museum shuts down. Its ruined state prevented the return of the pastels, which were not brought back to their rebuilt home until 1932.

During the Second World War, Maurice-Quentin de La Tour's studio collection undergoes yet another forced evacuation. Gabriel Girodon, a Saint-Quentin-born artist popularized forever this period with his pastels at le Château du Rocher in Mézangers (Mayenne) in 1940.



Jean DUPAS, *L'Enlèvement d'Europe*, 1934, graphite, black ink, charcoal and gouach on paper, inv. 2002.1.1 FA



Amédée OZENFANT, *Coucher de soleil*, 1947, oil on canvas, inv. 2001.45.1

FROM ART DECO TO MODERNITY

The spirit of Art Deco is perfectly expressed through a collection of sculptures, paintings and drawings kept in the museum's holdings. Artists then revert to a sober technique with smooth sculptures and straighter lines, after the swirls of the *Belle Epoque* and *Art Nouveau*. Georges Chauvel's feminine mask, free of any asperity, is serene; Marcel Gaumont's young girl, bending under the weight of her flower, is treated as a pillar, athenian tunic, tight knees to hold the pose; Arlette Laprade with her turtles, daughter of the architect of the fountain for which she is to serve as the decorative theme for the 1925 International Exhibition, is seen from the side by René Letourneur, just like an Egyptian low relief; Alfred Janniot's mischievous Eros, conceived at the Villa Medici and surrounded by his muses, is a nod to a very "Renaissance" mythology.

Art Deco artists draw on the source of Art History while revisiting it with humor and elegance. *L'Enlèvement d'Europe* by Jean Dupas, a draft for the great eglomized glass decor of the 1st class lounge on the Normandy liner, is a masterpiece. The liner is the ideal setting for the transatlantic crossings of Jules Cayron's elegant beauties, flappers, wearing sequined or silk dresses with feathered fans, they feature the new heroines of Art Deco.

At the same time, the purism and abstraction of Saint-Quentin's Amédée Ozenfant and the cubism of André Lhote definitively turned the page on Art Deco, anchoring artistic creation in a new modernity.