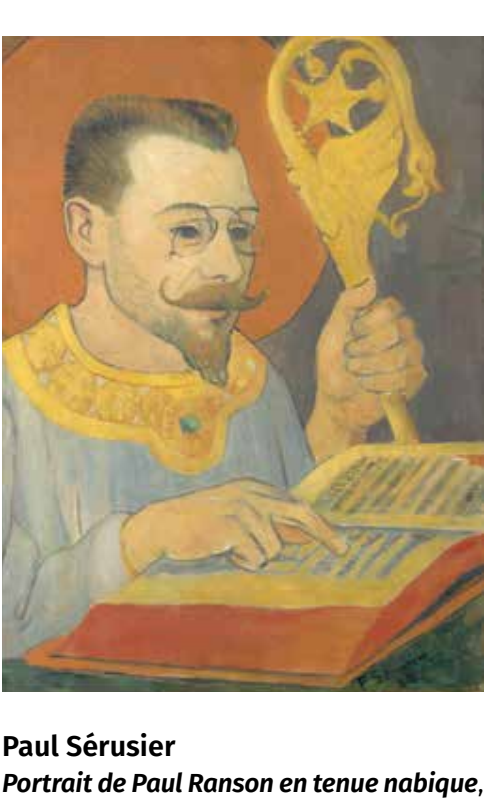
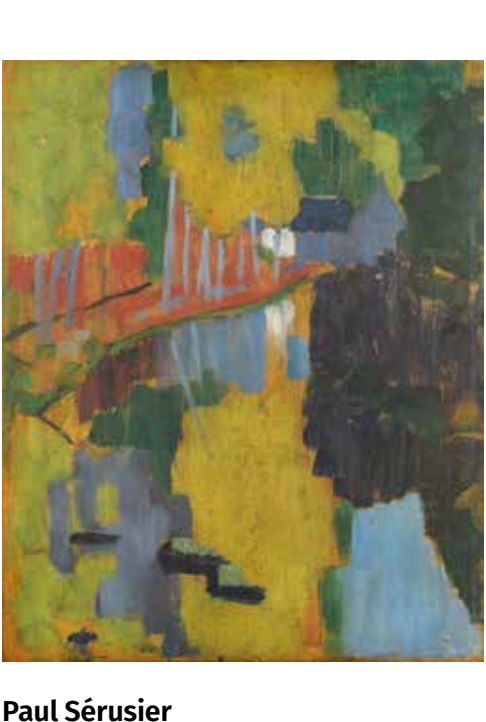


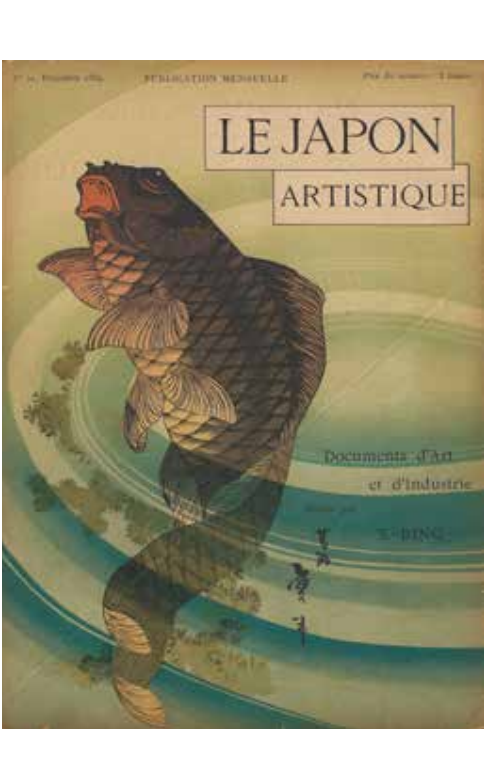
Paul Sérusier
Portrait de Paul Ranson en tenue nabique, 1890
Musée d'Orsay, París

Ranson is depicted here in fancy dress: a chasuble adorned with an emerald, a crozier marked with a pentagram, and a manuscript bearing mysterious characters. He appears to be officiating at a mystic ritual. Behind him, a red halo adds a note of strangeness to the portrait. These symbols, borrowed from alchemical imagery, contrast with the painter's very ordinary eyeglasses. However, this staging is somewhat misrepresentative of the dynamic between the Nabis, whose esoteric expressions were generally more mischievous than mystical.



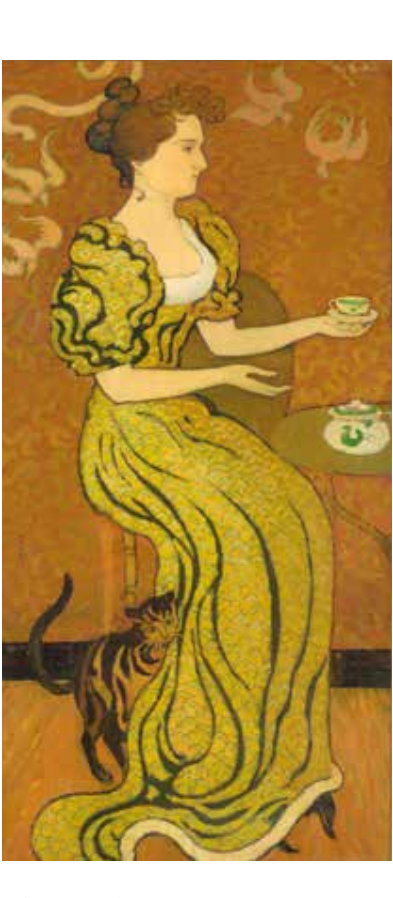
Paul Sérusier
Le talisman. Paysage au bois d'Amour, 1888
Musée d'Orsay, París

Painted in 1888 in Pont-Aven, Brittany, under the guidance of Paul Gauguin, *Paysage au Bois d'Amour* by Sérusier constitutes a lesson transmitted from master to disciple. When the artist showed it to his comrades at the Académie Julian, the painting quickly became a reference point — their '*Talisman*', an object endowed with quasi-magical power. Denis was the first owner of this painting, which was considered emblematic of the birth of the Nabis as a group.



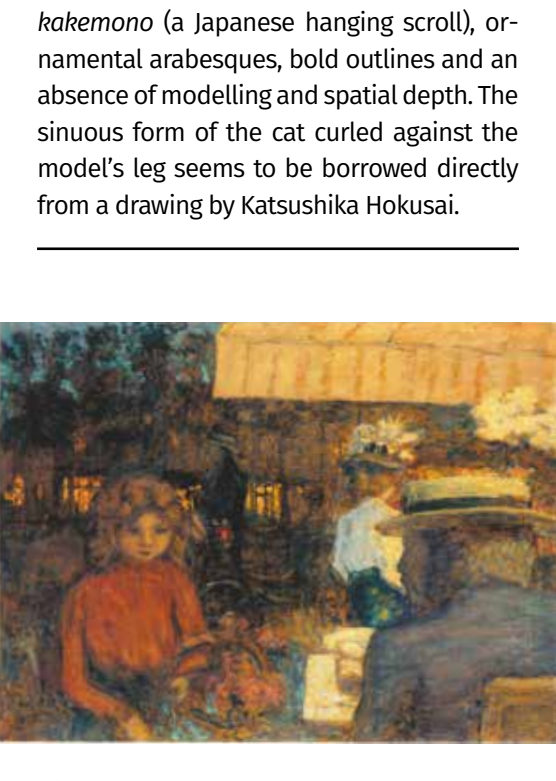
Le Japon Artistique. Documents d'Art et d'Industrie, (1888-1891)
Private collection

Between 1888 and 1891, Siegfried Bing published an illustrated journal, *Le Japon artistique: documents d'art et d'industrie*, whose mission was to reveal the richness and variety of Japanese art, proposing new sources of inspiration to European artists and artisans. The Nabis were among the first readers of this periodical, dedicated to traditional Japanese forms. Published in three languages, the journal was distinguished by the excellence of its colour illustrations.



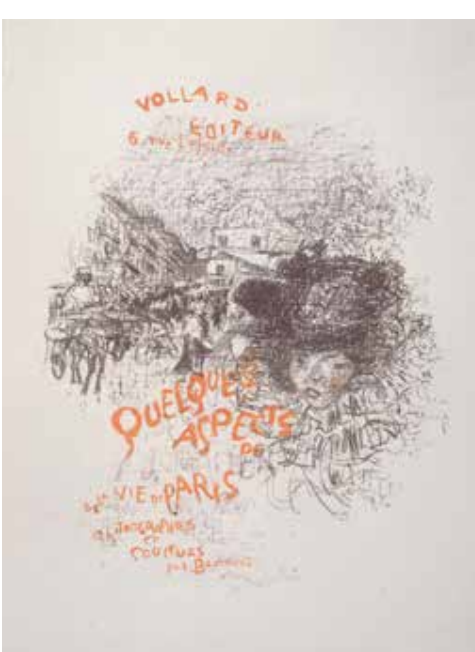
Maurice Denis
Portrait de Madame Ranson au chat,
ca. 1892
Musee Departemental Maurice Denis, Saint-Germain-en-Laye

From the autumn of 1889, France Ranson, the first cousin and wife of Ranson, welcomed members of the Nabis group to her husband's studio every Saturday afternoon. Denis pays tribute to her with this portrait, which is laden with multiple references to Japanese art: a vertical format evoking a *kakemono* (a Japanese hanging scroll), ornamental arabesques, bold outlines and an absence of modelling and spatial depth. The sinuous form of the cat curled against the model's leg seems to be borrowed directly from a drawing by Katsushika Hokusai.



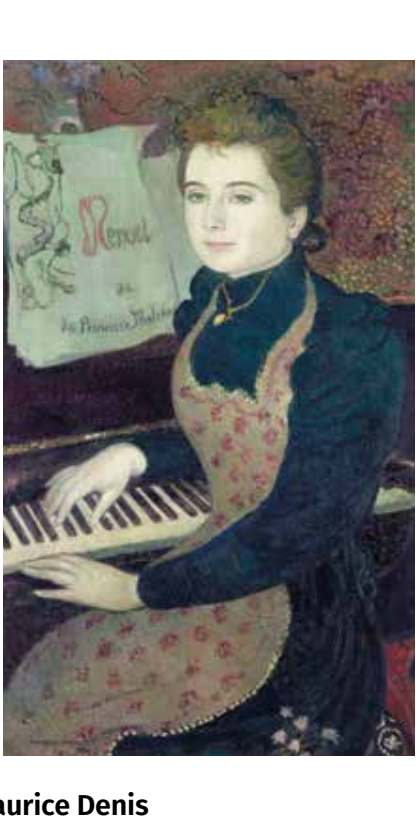
Pierre Bonnard
La place de Clichy, 1898
Victor Schmit Collection

Throughout his life, Bonnard remained deeply attached to Paris's Montmartre district, whose boulevards stretched to the Place de Clichy, which he depicted many times in his urban landscapes. In this nocturnal scene, the eye is drawn to a couple seated at a café terrace bordering the square. Lighting plays a central role in this composition, creating alternations of light and shadow between the figures.



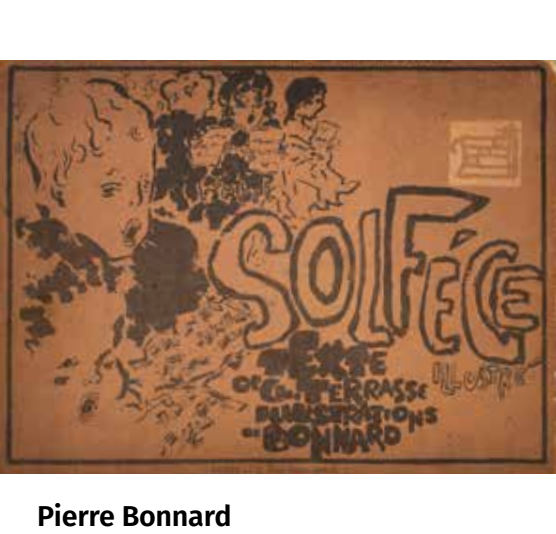
Pierre Bonnard
Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris, 1899
Petit Palais, Musée del Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris

Commissioned by the gallerist-publisher Ambroise Vollard in 1895, this album occupied Bonnard for nearly four years. The artist focused neither on grand panoramas nor on the capital's emblematic monuments — although some are identifiable, such as the Arc de Triomphe. Instead, he favoured scenes of Parisian life representing street trades and passers-by. The diversity of viewpoints and the fluidity of the flat tints testify to the influence of *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* by Andō Hiroshige.



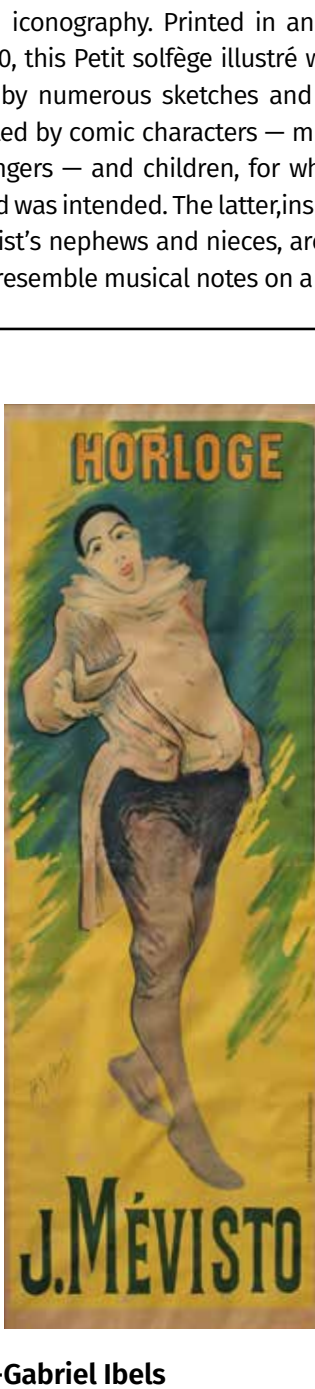
Maurice Denis
Le menuet de 'La princesse Maleine', 1891
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Marthe Meurier, Denis's fiancée, whom he would marry on 12 June 1893, is depicted here at the piano, her hands resting delicately on the keyboard. In the background sheet music can be seen: the now-lost minuet by Pierre Hermant, entitled *La Princesse Maleine*, inspired by the Symbolist drama by Maurice Maeterlinck performed the year before. The peaceful and mysterious atmosphere of the portrait contrasts with the violent tragedy of the play, which was never performed during the author's lifetime.



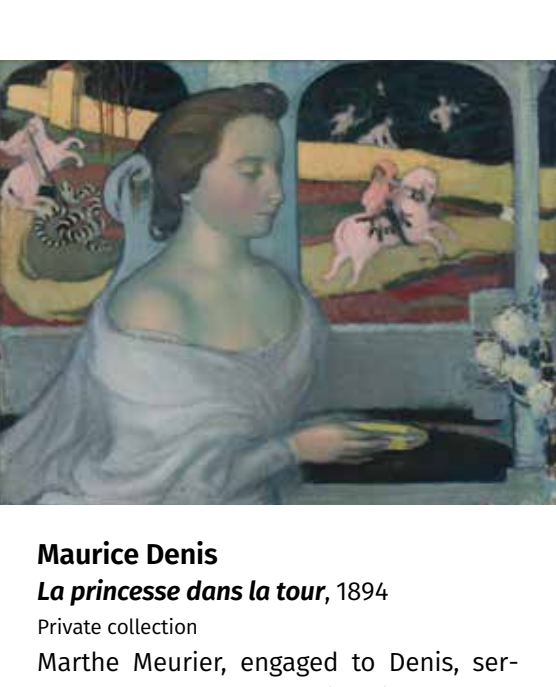
Pierre Bonnard
***Petit solfège illustré*, de Claude Terrasse**, 1893
Musée Bonnard, Le Cannet

This music-theory primer for children is the fruit of a close collaboration between Bonnard and his brother-in-law, the composer Claude Terrasse. The manual is distinguished by the richness of its expressive and refined iconography. Printed in an edition of 2,000, this Petit solfège illustré was preceded by numerous sketches and studies animated by comic characters — musicians and singers — and children, for whom the method was intended. The latter,inspired by the artist's nephews and nieces, are depicted to resemble musical notes on a stave.



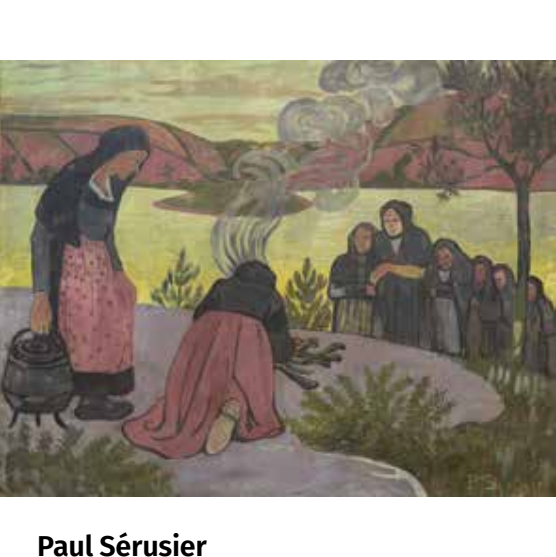
Henri-Gabriel Ibels
Horloge. J. Mévisto, 1892
Private collection

Jules Mévisto, born in Paris in 1857, was a renowned café-concert singer and performer, both a *chansonnier* (a poet-songwriter) and a pantomime actor. He debuted in 1891 at the Concert de l'Horloge, a music hall located in the gardens of the Champs-Élysées. He rapidly achieved fame performing under the name Pierrot at the Parisian music hall, La Scala. His repertoire of songs, some on macabre themes, was a resounding success. Depicted in his pantomime persona, Mévisto appears almost life-size on this poster created by Ibels for a show given in 1892 at the Horloge.



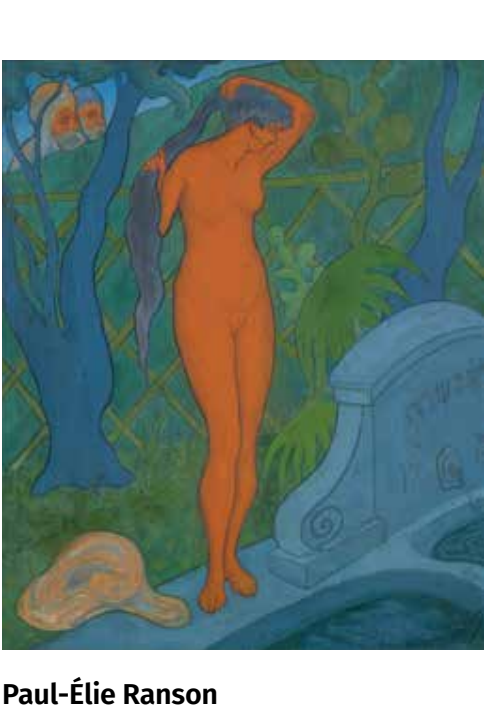
Maurice Denis
La princesse dans la tour, 1894
Private collection

Marthe Meurier, engaged to Denis, served as the model for this princess, clad in a white muslin gown and a virginal veil. Pale, motionless, with her gaze lowered, she remains detached from the agitation of the knights in the background, one of which is fighting a dragon while another rides at the foot of the tower. This scene, inspired by the imagery of courtly love, transposes the fervent feelings of the betrothed couple in an idealised manner, symbolically announcing their upcoming marriage.



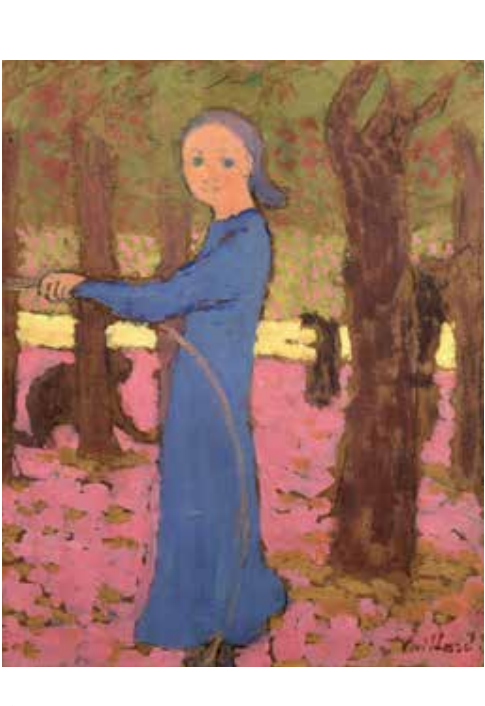
Paul Sérusier
Le feu dehors, o Les Mammau, 1893
Mouradian Collection

This picture, painted in Huelgoat where Sérusier had settled in 1891, depicts a silent procession of Breton women in peasant costume. One of them, seen from behind, lights a fire to heat a cauldron. The Breton term *Mammau*, which appears in the alternative title of the painting, refers to water sources associated with fertility or healing. The landscape, treated in a decorative and synthetic manner, lends the scene a mysterious atmosphere of secret, superstitious rites.



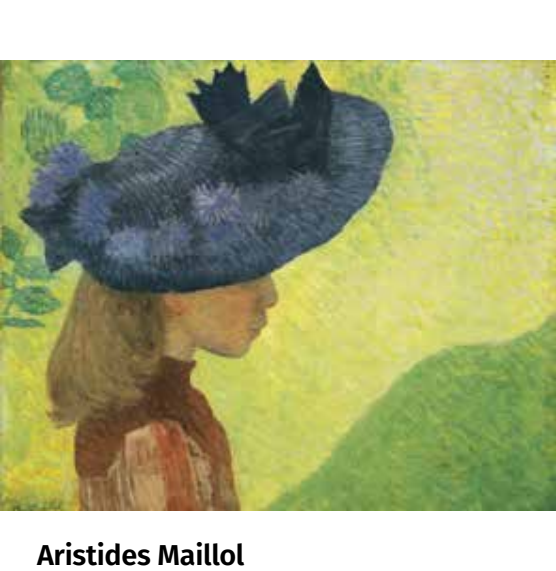
Paul-Élie Ranson
Suzanne et les vieillards, 1891
LGR Collection, Belgium

Universal in its resonance, the story of Susanna ant the Elders reflects on timeless themes such as desire, transgression, slander and injustice. Presented in 1892 at the eighth Exhibition of the Société des Artistes Indépendants, the painting illustrates the young woman's innocence. The elders, placed at a distance, are reduced to voyeurs, while a trellis protects Shoshana — meaning 'Lily' in Hebrew — from their covetousness. This barrier marks a moral boundary as much as a physical one.



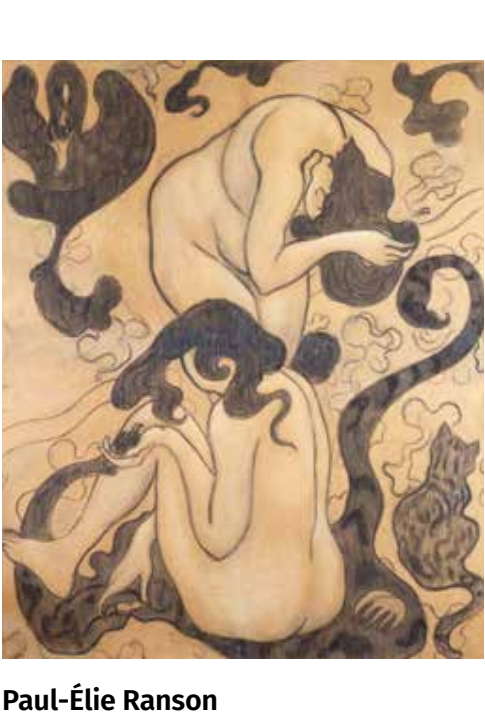
Édouard Vuillard
La fillette au cerceau, 1891
Private collection

In the early 1890s, Vuillard created a series of compositions inspired by the Jardin des Tuileries in Paris, which he visited almost daily. He observed children playing, the nannies and mothers watching over them, as well as solitary strollers. The scene, centred on a young girl holding a large hoop, is painted in a synthetic and deliberately naive manner. The hoop, cut off by the frame, suggests a snapshot vision, like a moment suspended in a dreamlike setting.



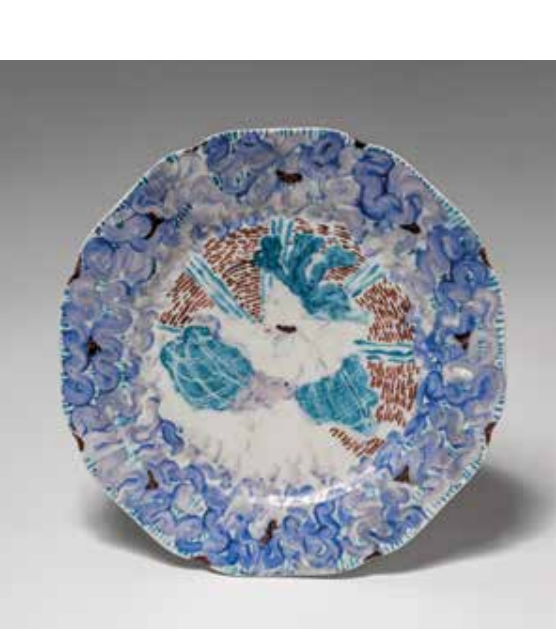
Aristides Maillol
Mademoiselle Faraill au chapeau, 1890
Fondation Dina-Vierny – Musée Maillol, París

Before becoming one of the most renowned sculptors of his era, Maillol began his career as a painter. Between the late 1880s and 1894, he produced a series of commissioned portraits for the sculptor Gabriel Faraill, depicting his six daughters. The latter introduced him to his nephew, Albert Faraill, who in turn commissioned a portrait of his daughter Jeanne. Maillol depicted her in profile like a medal, as in Renaissance portraits, her face partially hidden by a *capeline,* a wide-brimmed hat.



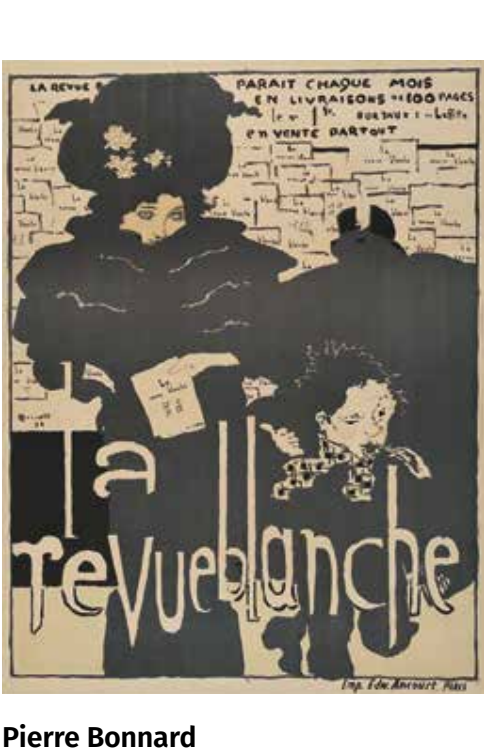
Paul-Élie Ranson
Deux femmes nues, 1892
Association des Amis du Petit Palais, Ginebra

This large-format composition, depicting two nude women accompanied by a black cat against a background of esoteric decorative motifs, is likely a preparatory cartoon for a tapestry. The iconography of this large drawing refers to the occult world of witchcraft, a recurring theme in the artist's production, where Symbolism, mystery and fascination with invisible forces intermingle.



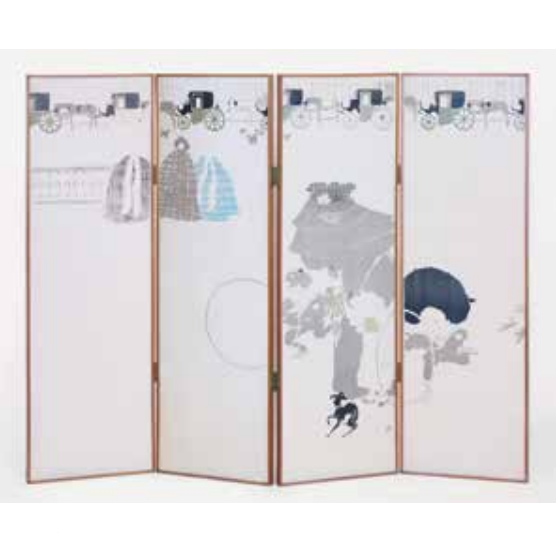
Édouard Vuillard
Vaixella per a Jean Schopfer, *ca.* 1895
Marc Larock Collection

In 1895, Vuillard received a commission for a porcelain dinner service to celebrate the marriage of the critic Jean Schopfer to Alice Wetherbee. He used standard white porcelain from the Haviland factory in Limoges, which he covered with low-fire enamels in blue, green and violet tones, sometimes heightened with bistre brown. The service consists of a set of around one hundred pieces where female figures merge into a refined ornamental décor. Pieces from the service were presented at the opening exhibition of Bing's Maison de l'Art Nouveau in December 1895.



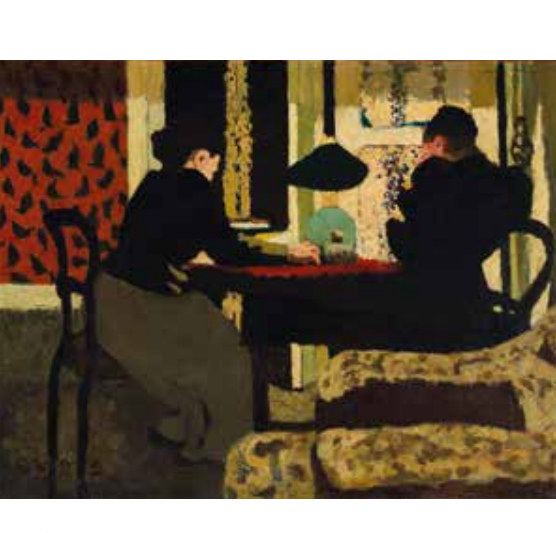
Pierre Bonnard
La Revue Blanche, 1894
Galerie Berès, Paris

This advertising poster by Bonnard was the first created for *La Revue blanche*, the avant-garde journal run by the Natanson brothers. The young woman promoting the periodical is Misia Godebska, the wife of Thadée Natanson. She is presented here as a modern and elegant reader, whilst a Parisian street urchin with a mischievous look gives the magazine the thumbs up. In the background, a bourgeois man in a top hat walks away, as if alarmed by the content of this journal with its anarchist sensibilities.



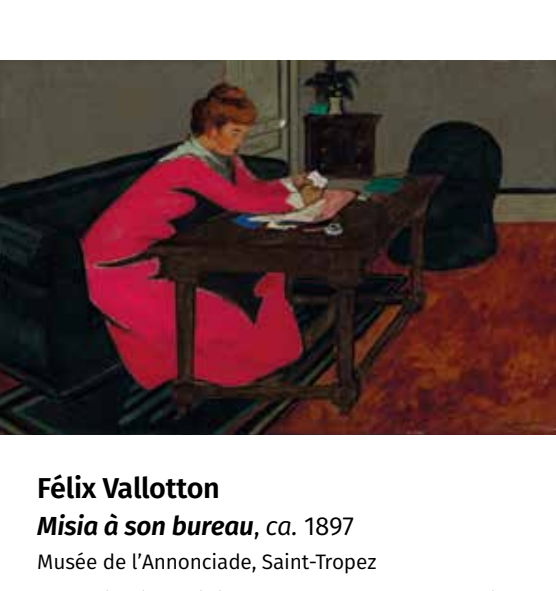
Pierre Bonnard
Promenade des nourrices, frise de fiacres, 1897
Tania Grand d'Hauteville Collection, Genève

In 1894, Bonnard painted a four-panel folding screen, *Promenade des nourrices, frise des fiacres,* representing a scene on Paris's Place de la Concorde. Three years later, he proposed a lithographed version, conceived as a reproducible object intended for wider distribution. On this screen of light tones, the Japonist composition is structured by a dual movement: in the foreground, animated silhouettes introduce an impression of movement, while in the background, the group of nannies and a frieze of aligned carriages establish a more mechanical rhythm, like successive images in a magic lantern.



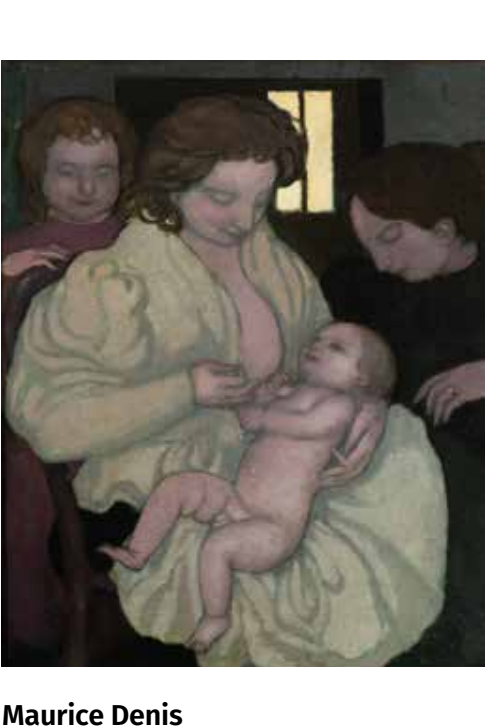
Édouard Vuillard
Deux femmes sous la lampe, 1892
Centre Pompidou, MNAM/CCI, Paris. Le. G. Grammons, 1959, Musée de l'Annonciade, Saint Tropez

Many of Vuillard's compositions from the Nabi period depict his close family in daily occupations. Inspired by his mother's sewing workshop, the painter dramatised his interiors by playing on lighting contrasts. Here, two women in mourning appear backlit on either side of an oil lamp, absorbed in their work. Their forms, lacking volume and composed of dark, flat tints, stand out in a space saturated with dabs of colour.



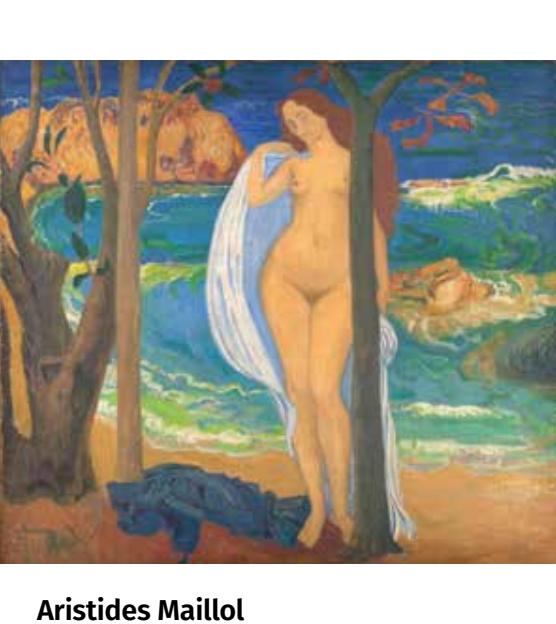
Félix Vallotton
Misia à son bureau, *ca.* 1897
Musée de l'Annonciade, Saint-Tropez

The pianist Misia Godebska was the wife of Thadée Natanson, director of *La Revue blanche*, the avant-garde journal that reported on a wide variety of modern art tendencies, and the Nabis in particular. Misia held an essential place among these artists as a friend, confidante, muse and patron. She posed repeatedly for Bonnard, Vuillard and Vallotton, who all frequented the couple's Parisian flat and country residences. In this portrait, Misia's red dress and resolute posture convey the high-spirited nature of her personality.



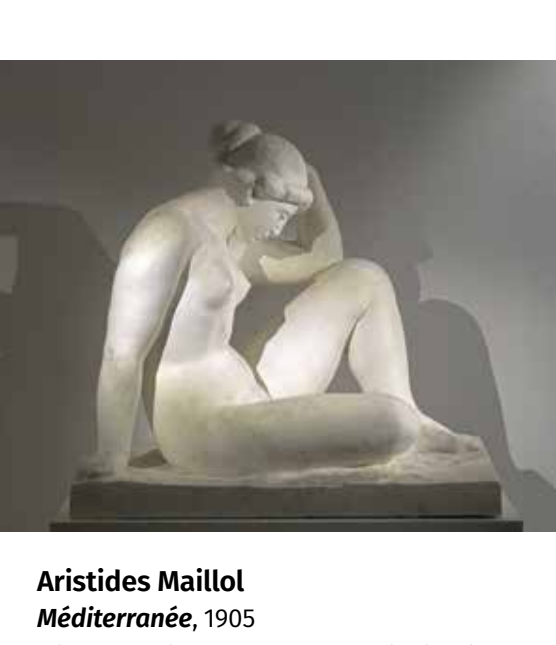
Maurice Denis
Maternité, 1895
LGR Collection, Belgique

Denis drew inspiration from his family circle to develop symbolic scenes profoundly marked by his Catholic faith. Married twice, and the father of nine children, he placed the family at the heart of his work. Each birth became an occasion to exalt maternity, conceived as a mission of divine origin. In a simplified composition, he represents Marthe here in the manner of a Virgo Lactans, or Nursing Madonna, about to breastfeed Jean-Paul, the couple's first son. He was born in October 1894, and died suddenly at the age of four months.



Aristides Maillol
Méditerranée, *ca.* 1895
Petit Palais, Musées des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris

Having re-settled in his native Banyuls-sur-Mer in 1894, Maillol looked to women from the coastal town as models for his art. He integrated them into compositions imbued with Symbolism, such as this monumental figure with its full, harmonious forms. The young woman placed between tree trunks is here the incarnation of a timeless Mediterranean. An allegory of fertility, abundance and the original Eden, she stands out like an antique idol against a blue background of sky and sea.



Aristides Maillol
Méditerranée, 1905
Private collection, by courtesy of Galerie Dina Vierny, Paris

Kessler commissioned Maillol to create a sculpture representing a seated woman. The plaster was exhibited at the Salon d'Automne of 1905 under the title *Femme*. This work is distinguished by its aesthetic based on the primacy of pure form, excluding all narration. André Gide highlighted its importance by evoking 'a silent work', centred solely on the manifestation of beauty. Maillol subsequently executed versions in stone and then marble, entitled *Méditerranée*. The sculpture embodies an ideal of youth, purity and nobility associated with what Maillol called the 'Mediterranean spirit'.