
André Devambez

Vertigo of the imagination

From 9 September to 31 December 2022



Petit Palais
Musée des Beaux-Arts
de la Ville de Paris

Information
petitpalais.paris.fr

Organised in collaboration with the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rennes, the Petit Palais is pleased to present a new retrospective devoted to André Devambez, an artist of the Belle Époque with an engaging personality and unbridled humour. A true jack-of-all-trades, he was a painter, engraver and illustrator, oscillating between serious and light subjects. The Petit Palais wishes to shed light on this artist, who is little known to the general public today, but who received many honours during his lifetime and enjoyed great renown.



André Devambez, *Le seul oiseau qui vole au-dessus des nuages*, 1910.
Paris, musée d'Orsay. © RMN-Grand Palais (musée d'Orsay) / Hervé Lewandowski

With nearly 250 works, the exhibition takes visitors on a journey through the artist's florid imagination, demonstrating both a taste for modernity and vibrant creativity.

André Devambez was born in Paris and grew up amidst his family's engraving and publishing business, the Maison Devambez, which his father Édouard founded. He showed an early aptitude for drawing and quickly began academic studies at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He was awarded the Prix de Rome, which enabled him to perfect his training at the Villa Medici.

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On his return to Paris, André Devambez turned to genre scenes and drew inspiration from his family. He devoted himself to the art of portraiture, depicting his son Pierre and daughter Valentine at different times in their lives. As an inveterate flâneur, Paris and its inhabitants were one of his favourite subjects. Devambez painted the Parisian metro with crowds spilling out onto the platforms, the regulars of cafés whom he sketched with humour, and theatres and their audiences from all different angles.

His pictures of the French capital with their bird's-eye views show his taste for innovative framing. It was even said that his views could cause vertigo! Devambez also chose to depict a skirmish in the capital from above; *The Charge* is one of the artist's undisputed masterpieces. He had a passion for modern inventions, in particular the automobile, double-decker buses, airships, and especially aeroplanes. He regularly visited airfields and, as an attentive observer, depicted them in his «aeronautical views» with perfect precision.

At the same time, Devambez pursued a career as an illustrator for magazines such as *Le Figaro illustré* and *l'Illustration*, and for literary works such as *The Fête at Coqueville* by Émile Zola and *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift. With this medium, the artist gave his vivid imagination free reign. He conjured up teeming crowds, ornery characters and nightmarish monsters such as the Macrobes which he invented for a science fiction short story. He also dabbled in children's literature; his book *Auguste a mauvais caractère* ("Augustus has a bad temper") features an oversized, capricious baby. Devambez made extensive use of the world of tales and legends in his tout-petits, miniature paintings measuring just a few centimetres that are true conversation pieces.

General curator: Annick Lemoine, director of the Petit Palais

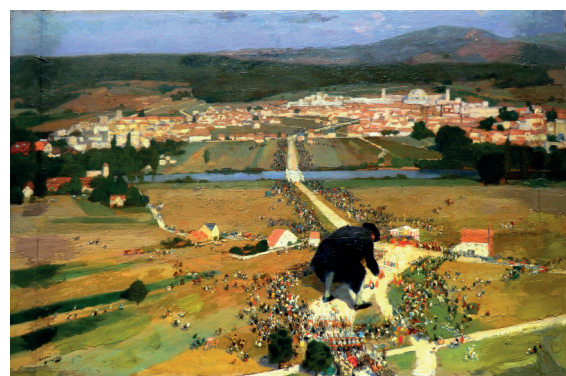
Curators: Maïté Metz, heritage curator at the Petit Palais and Guillaume Kazerouni, head of the ancient art collections at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rennes.



André Devambez, *La Charge, boulevard Montmartre*
Paris, musée d'Orsay
© RMN-Grand Palais (musée d'Orsay) /
Hervé Lewandowski



André Devambez, *Les Avions fantaisistes, 1911-1914*
MUDO, musée de l'Oise.
© RMN-Grand Palais / Hervé Lewandowski



André Devambez, *Gulliver en tournée à Lilliput, 1909*
© Collection particulière

The exhibition is organised with the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes