

# Oscar Wilde

PRESS RELEASE  
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## INSOLENCE INCARNATE

28 September 2016 - 15 January 2017



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

Tuesday – Sunday, 10 am – 6 pm  
Late opening: Friday until 9 pm

INFORMATIONS  
[www.petitpalais.paris.fr](http://www.petitpalais.paris.fr)

The Petit Palais is delighted to be presenting **the first major exhibition in France devoted to the famous writer Oscar Wilde** (Dublin 1854 – Paris 1900). Although Wilde died in the French capital, the centenary of his death was not celebrated here; London, on the contrary, honoured him with two large-scale exhibitions in 2000, one – mainly literary and biographical – at the British Library, and the other at the Barbican Centre, focusing on his connections with the artists of his time.

For this landmark event the Petit Palais will retrace the life and work of this ardent francophile and speaker of perfect French through **more than 200 remarkable exhibits, some never shown before: manuscripts, photographs, drawings, caricatures and personal effects; as well as paintings borrowed not only from Ireland and England, but also from the United States, Canada and Italy, from French institutions including the Musée d'Orsay and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and from various private collections.**

It was only natural that Paris should ultimately host an exhibition like this one, given **Wilde's creative links with a host of leading figures on the artistic and intellectual scenes in late 19th-century Paris**. He made frequent stays in the city between 1883 and 1894 and counted among his writer friends **André Gide, Pierre Louÿs, Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine** and even met **Victor Hugo**. He wrote his play *Salomé* originally in French, with **Sarah Bernhardt** in mind for the title role. Wilde would die, wretchedly poor, in Paris in 1900, after his conviction for homosexuality in London five years before; his tomb in Père Lachaise cemetery is topped with a sculpture by **Jacob Epstein**. The biographical element of the exhibition will be **uniquely innovative in bringing together a number of painted portraits for the first time, in particular the one by Harper Pennington** (William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA, Los Angeles). **A further world premiere will be the first-ever group showing of 13 of the original oversize photo-portraits taken by Napoleon Sarony during Wilde's tour of America in 1882.**

These portraits will be complemented by others, both famous and unexpected: Wilde in back view, for example, in the left foreground of **Toulouse-Lautrec's *La Danse mauresque*** (Musée d'Orsay), painted as part of the set at the Baraque de la Goulue cabaret.



Napoleon Sarony, *Portrait of Oscar Wilde*, 1882. © Library of Congress, Washington.

### CURATORS:

**Dominique Morel** : chief curator, Petit Palais  
**Merlin Holland** : academic adviser

### PRESS OFFICER:

**Mathilde Beaujard**  
[mathilde.beaujard@paris.fr](mailto:mathilde.beaujard@paris.fr) / +331 53 43 40 14

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**Portraits of Wilde's family and friends**, among them his wife Constance and Lord Alfred Douglas, will offer an insight into his personal life, together with various memorabilia and drawings, watercolours, landscapes and portraits by Wilde himself.

Needless to say the exhibition will also include **his most significant manuscripts**, copies of books inscribed to French writers and samples of his correspondence. Special attention will be given to *Salomé*, **published in French in 1893**, with its celebrated illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley and we are privileged to be showing two of the original artworks.

In addition to showcases displaying the books and manuscripts, the exhibition will be visually enhanced by a selection of Pre-Raphaelite pictures – by **Watts, Millais, Hunt, Crane, Tissot, Stanhope** and others – shown at the **Grosvenor Gallery in London in 1877 and 1879** and extensively written about by Wilde in his role as art critic. At different points visitors will also be offered excerpts from historic films, from interviews with Wilde's grandson **Merlin Holland** and **Robert Badinter**, author of the play *C. 3. 3.* – an account of Wilde's trial and imprisonment – and from recordings of Wilde's works read by English actor **Rupert Everett**.

A further feature will be **a mobile phone application serving as a guide and digital catalogue**. The application will divide the exhibition itinerary into 25 segments, with audio commentary by the two curators and high-definition images. The digital catalogue will help the visitor to discover the writer and his influence from different angles: via a timeline, a map of the world and an Oscar Wilde primer. It will also include the filmed interviews.

**CATALOGUE:** preface by Charles Dantzig, 256 pages, 39.90 euros.



John Roddam Spencer Stanhope (1829-1908), *Love and the Maiden*, 1877.

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