

# The Art Nouveau Spirit

## The Pierre Roche donation to the Petit Palais

Exhibition in the museum

10 March - 11 September 2022



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

For more informations  
[petitpalais.paris.fr](http://petitpalais.paris.fr)

The Petit Palais is very pleased to (re)introduce to the public the work of Pierre Roche, an Art Nouveau artist who was a friend of Loïe Fuller and Huysmans.

Now forgotten, some of his sculptures adorn the parks and gardens as well as the streets of Paris, such as the Fontaine Avril located in the gardens of the Palais Galliera. Trained in painting by Gervex and Roll and then in sculpture by Dalou, the artist was a true jack-of-all-trades who loved to experiment. He was interested in the decorative arts but also engraving, for which he invented new techniques.

This exhibition, made possible thanks to the donation by his family of an exceptional collection of 4,000 pieces directly from the artist's studio, is divided into seven chapters around some hundred works. It will present the different facets and originality of Roche's work.



Pierre Roche, *Swan-women - Standstill*, 1916.  
Gypsography, print in brown and blue. Petit Palais.

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### Travels

Throughout his career as an artist, Pierre Roche never stopped travelling: in Switzerland, England, throughout France, but also in the East (Egypt, Algeria). He drew and painted what he saw in watercolour in notebooks or on loose sheets, building up a pattern book which he then declined in various forms. His gypsographs (relief or embossed prints made from a plaster matrix), from Fez to Paris, from Egypt to Majorca, testify to his appetite for new horizons.

### Fauna and Flora

Pierre Roche's art is at the crossroads of Art Nouveau, Japonisme and symbolism. Animal and plant forms populate his artistic universe and invade his prints, including the delicate menus and invitations he composed. The inspiration he drew from nature is also found in his algae and seaweed herbarium whose compilation of shapes and colours served as direct inspiration for numerous drawings and prints.

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### Loïe Fuller

Pierre Roche was very close to the dancer Loïe Fuller, whom he represented in drawing and sculpture, virtuously restoring the deployment of the veils of her costume. The Petit Palais has both the working copy of Pierre Roche and his attempts at layout and colouring, but also the copy dedicated by Loïe Fuller « to my very great friend Pierre Roche ».

### Posters with gold leaf

For the *Salon des Cent* devoted to graphic arts and organized by the magazine *La Plume*, Pierre Roche created two spectacular posters for which he used gold leaf. These posters are representative of his taste for rare materials and the search for innovative creative processes such as eglomisation, a technique that superimposes parchment, paper or mica leaves on gold or silver leaves to create fragile works.

### The creative process

Unpublished gypsography, gypsotyping, and eglomisation moulds will be presented to better understand these atypical and age-old techniques used by Pierre Roche.

### Elective affinities

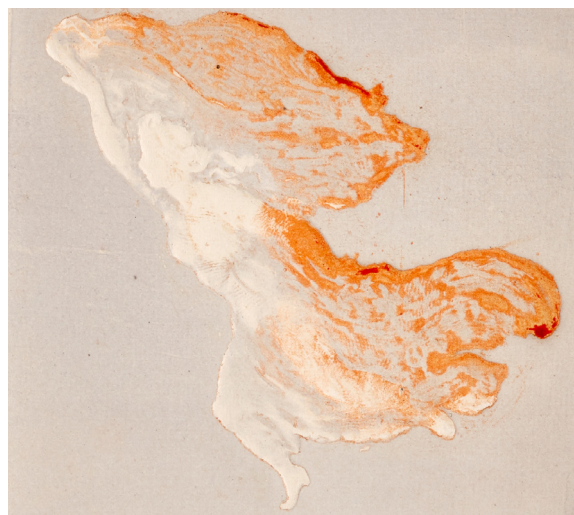
Because his works were often made for collectors, art critics, artists or his friends, Pierre Roche's production has had a confidential character which surely explains why he has remained unknown to the general public. Among his close friends were Aimé-Jules Dalou, Siegfried Bing, Jean-Paul Laurens, Paul Vitry, Roger Marx, Louis Vauxelles and Joris-Karl Huysmans, whose bust he sculpted and illustrated for the frontispiece of *La Cathédrale* (1897).

### Death and war

The macabre and the strange occupy an important place in the artist's production, where mythological and allegorical figures such as *Ankou*, personification of death in Breton folklore, and *Le Faucheur* are illustrated. The artist also worked in a commemorative register on the First World War, creating medals with a powerful composition declined in gypsographs and gypsotypes. He created *L'Histoire métallique de la Guerre*, a collection of a hundred medals from 1914 to 1918, and even gave a conference on the subject at the Petit Palais just a few weeks before his death.

### Curation :

Cécilie Champy-Vinas, director of the Zadkine Museum  
Joëlle Raineau-Lehuédé, scientific collaborator, graphic arts, Petit Palais  
Clara Roca, curator of 19th and 20th century graphic arts and photographs, Petit Palais



Roger Marx and Pierre Roche, *Loïe Fuller*. Prints modelled by Pierre Roche. Working copy, 1904, gypsotype. Petit Palais  
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Pierre Roche, *Buste of Joris-Karl Huysmans*, 1900, bronze, Petit Palais  
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