ART DECO

Victoria Charles
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MINISTÈRE DU COMMERCE ET DE L’INDUSTRIE

PARIS - 1925

EXPOSITION INTERNATIONALE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS ET INDUSTRIELS MODERNES

AVRIL - OCTOBRE
Decorative and industrial arts, like all forms of art, are an expression of life itself: they evolve with the times and with moral or material demands to which they must respond. Their agenda and means are modern, ever-changing, and aided by technological progress. It is the agenda that determines the shapes; hence technology is also part of it: sometimes they are limited by its imperfections, sometimes it develops them by way of its resources, and sometimes they form themselves. Weaving was initially invented because of the need to clothe the body. Its development has been crucial to that of textile arts. Today, market competition has created the need for advertising: the poster is a resulting development and the chromolithograph turned it into an art form. Railways could not have existed without the progress of metallurgy, which in turn paved the way for a new style of architecture.

There is a clear parallel between human needs and the technology that caters to them. Art is no different. The shapes it creates are determined by those needs and new technologies; hence, they can only be modern. The more logical they are, the more likely they are to be beautiful. If art wants to assume eccentric shapes for no reason, it will be nothing more than a fad because there is no meaning behind it. Sources of inspiration alone do not constitute modernism. However numerous they are, there is not an inexhaustive supply of them: it is not the first time that artists have dared to use geometry, nor is it the first time that they have drawn inspiration from the vegetable kingdom. Roman goldsmiths, sculptors from the reign of Louis XIV, and Japanese embroiderers all perhaps reproduced the flower motif more accurately than in 1900. Some “modern” pottery works are similar to the primitive works of the Chinese or the Greeks. Perhaps it is not paradoxical to claim that the new forms of decoration are only ancient forms long gone from our collective memory.

An overactive imagination, an over-use of complicated curves, and excessive use of the vegetable motif – these have been, over the centuries, the criticisms ascribed to the fantasies of their predecessors by restorers of straight lines, lines that Eugène Delacroix qualified as monstrous to his romantic vision. What’s more, in the same way that there has always been a right wing and a left wing in every political spectrum, ancient and modern artists (in age and artistic tendencies) have always existed side-by-side. Their squabbles seem so much more futile, as with a little hindsight, we can see the similarities in the themes of their creations, which define their styles.

The style of an era is marked on all works that are attributed to it, and an artist’s individualism does not exempt his works from it. It would be excessive to say that art must be limited to current visions in order to be modern. It is, however, also true that the representation of contemporary customs and fashion was, at all times, one of the elements of modernism. The style of a Corinthian crater comes from its shape, a thin-walled pottery vessel inspired by the custom of mixing water and wine before serving them. But its style also results from its decoration: the scenes painted on it depicted contemporary life or mythological scenes.

Those who think that the Jacquard loom, the lace-making machine, the great metalworking industry, and gas lighting all date from the beginning of the 19th century,
would be interested to learn that they were not pioneering technologies; they were only used
to copy ancient silks, needle-points, or spindle laces to create imitation stone walls and light
porcelain candles. Hence, it is necessary to admire those who dared to use cast and rolled iron
in construction. They were the first to revive the tradition of modernism in architecture;
they are the true descendants of French cathedral builders. Therefore, Antoine-Rémy
Polonceau, Henri Labrouste, and Gustave Eiffel are perhaps the fathers of the 19th-century
Renaissance, rather than the charming decorators who, following John Ruskin, tried to break
with the pastiche and create, first and foremost, a new style using nature as a starting point.

The vision of nature, literally paraphrased and translated in the works of Émile Gallé, was not
compatible with the demands of the design and the material. "A marrow," wrote Robert de
Sizeranne, "can become a library; a thistle, an office; a water lily, a ballroom. A sideboard is a
synthesis; a curtain tassel, an analysis; a pair of tweezers, a symbol." The research of
something new borrowed from the poetry of nature, in breaking voluntarily with the laws of
construction and past traditions, must have offended both common sense and good taste. To
transpose nature into its fantasies rather than studying its laws was a mistake as grave as
imitating past styles without trying to understand what they applied to. This was just the
fashion of the time, but being fashionable does not constitute modernism.

Reviving tradition in all its logic, but finding a new expression in the purpose of the objects
and in the technical means to achieve them, which is neither in contradiction nor an imitation

Jean Fouquet,
Pendant, c. 1930.
White gold, yellow gold and citrine, 8 x 7 cm. Private collection, Paris.

Edward Steichen,
Art Deco Clothing Design,
photograph taken at the apartment of Nina Price, 1925. Gelatin silver print.
of former shapes, but which follows on naturally; this was the “modern” ideal of the 20th century. This ideal was subject to a new influence: science. How could it be that artists would remain oblivious to the latent, familiar, and universal presence of this neo-mechanisation, this vehicle for exchanges between men: steamers, engines, and planes, which ensure the domination of the continents and the seas, antennas and receivers which capture the human voice across the surface of the globe, cables which mark out roads awakened to a new life, visions of the whole world projected at high speed on cinema screens? Machines have renewed all forms of work: forests of cylinders, networks of drains, regular movements of engines. How could all this confused boiling of universal life not affect the brains of the decorators?

Exhibition programme

Thus, from all sides, it was an era metamorphosed by scientific progress and economic evolution, turned upside down politically and socially by the war, liberated from both anachronistic pastiche and illogical imaginings. Whilst the artist’s invention reclaimed its rightful place, machines, no longer a factor in intellectual decline through its making or distributing of counterfeit copies of beautiful materials, would permeate aesthetically original and rational creations everywhere. This world movement, however, was lacking the

Boucheron (jewellers),
Decorative brooch, 1925.
Lapis lazuli, coral, jade, and onyx set in lead glass and gold, with a turquoise, diamond, and platinum pendant. Boucheron SAS, Paris.

Pierre Chareau,
Pair of lamps “LP998”, c. 1930-1932.
Alabaster, height: 25 cm.
Private collection.
effective support and clear understanding of the public. Only these accolades would merit an exhibition. But rather than a bazaar intended to show the power of the respective production of the nations, it would have to be a presentation of excellence turned towards the future.

When the Exposition internationale des Arts décoratifs et industriels modernes, or International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts—originally planned for 1916, but adjourned because of the war—was re-envisioned in 1919 by public authorities, modifications were imperative. The 1911 classification project contains only three groups: architecture, furniture, and finery. The arts of the theatre, of the streets, and the gardens, which were special sections, naturally required a new group. In its title, the new project also comprised a significant addition. The Exhibition was to be devoted to decorative and “industrial” arts; it would affirm the willingness of a close co-operation between aesthetic creation and its distribution through the powerful means of industry. Besides the manufacturers, the material suppliers were also to be given a large space, thanks to the design which inspired the presentations of 1925. “Modern” decorative art was to be presented in its entirety like an existing reality, completely suited to contemporary aesthetic and material needs. Ceramic tiles, hanging fabric wall coverings, and wallpaper—each has their reason for adorning particular spaces. The ideal mode of presentation was thus the meeting of a certain number of “modern” buildings, decorated entirely inside and out, which would be placed next to stores, post offices, and school rooms, constituting a kind of miniature city or village.

Moreover, these designs had to inspire the materials they had to work with, adopted for the use of the location granted and the distribution of the works which were thoughtfully placed in their midst. That is how four principal modes of presentation were determined: in isolated pavilions, in shops, in galleries of the Esplanade des Invalides, and in the halls of the Grand Palais. The isolated pavilions, reserved for associations of artists, craftsmen, and manufacturers had to represent village and countryside homes, hotel businesses, schools, and even churches and town halls. In short, all the framework of contemporary life could be found here. Shops marked the importance attached to urban art and offered the possibility of presenting window-dressings, as well as displays, spanning one or more units. The galleries, particularly for architecture and furniture, allowed compositions connected to the Court of Trades, which were managed by the theatre and the library. They were meant to constitute the largest part of the Exhibition. At last, the interior installations of the Grand Palais were systematically categorised.

The Exhibition aroused new activity long in advance, as a consequence of the emulation it caused among artists and manufacturers. The creator’s efforts were significantly encouraged by groups of “modern” minds, which grew in number and made engaging and effective propaganda. Foreign exhibitors attach no less importance than the hosts to an opportunity that would allow most countries to compare their efforts and enrich their designs. Thus, the frame of mind of the exhibition was not a centralising narrow-mindedness, a formal modernism of the time. Far from imposing rigid and concrete specifications of style, the Exhibition of 1925 became apparent as an overview intended to reveal the tendencies in contemporary art, and to showcase their first achievements. The only stipulation was for it to be an ‘original production’, appropriate to the needs, universal or local, of the time. This phrase could be used to refer to any previous century, which may have only been said to be great because it was thought to be innovatory.

All exhibitions comprised of new construction greatly credited the efforts of the architects: well-adapted to the requirements for its brief, more or less accessible and expressive, and leaving visitors with a sincere and lasting first impression. Even more so, in an exhibition devoted to decorative and industrial modern arts, architecture required the most attentive care and excited great interest. Indeed, the most utilitarian of all arts is also the most “decorative” and the most closely related to industrial progress.

Decorative art is as such based on the great number of its creations. Large silhouettes of buildings are more important in the scenery of life than all other objects with which we can adorn it. Sculpture and painting can only add a little to the beauty of their already thick volumes, and will not be able to enrich their legacy, should they not have their own intrinsic nobility. As for the alliance of art with industry, architects did not wait to conclude it, the eloquent manifestos which, for almost a century, have proclaimed the need of it. Continuously in search of new materials, effective and economic construction processes, they benefit from the discoveries of science and sometimes even cause them. Lastly, having to create a framework where everything that further embellishes the pavilion finds its place and makes sense, architecture coordinates the efforts of the other arts. It should, therefore, be a source of inspiration. However, it ultimately becomes a slave to the whole, a mere shell from which a unity of expression must originate in order to create the style of its time or, more simply, the harmony of the pavilion itself.

“Modern” architecture: new materials, new shapes

If we understand by “modern” architecture that which profits from the successes of industry, by using the new materials and methods of construction of the time, in order to carry out their new programmes, then the Exhibition of 1900 truly marked the decline of “modernism”. In France, the 19th century, in spite of its taste for formulas borrowed from previous eras, was marked by strong and original works. Progress in metallurgy, a consequence of the development of public transport infrastructure, had drawn attention to the varied possibilities and real beauty of iron. From Henri Labrouste to Victor Baltard, and Paul Sédille to Émile André, architects used it unreservedly for the construction of public libraries, market halls, stations, department stores, and museums. With the Eiffel Tower, the Machine Gallery, and the palaces of Jean-Camille Formigé, the Exhibition of 1889 dedicated a lengthy and persevering effort to the cause. Nevertheless, eleven years later, despite a few exceptions, the retrograde tendencies dominated.
Is it necessary to recall to which point the multiple implementations of science, steam, hydraulic force, electricity, and the reciprocating engine modified the conditions of life? Must we discuss the progress of transport systems, the development of industrial and commercial enterprises, the evolution of social ideas, or how health concerns altered the way everything was viewed? By observing these causes one by one, we would find the origin of buildings whose modest beginnings aroused the admiration of previous generations and which were, in comparison, quite varied from the boldest expectations of a hundred years ago: stations, hotels, factories, department stores, housing estates, schools, public swimming pools – so many projects which, despite the many years of stagnation due to war, stimulated the imagination of architects in every country.

The layout, structure, and façade of antique houses had changed; there is nothing better than a house to reveal the customs of a country and a time period. A typical house of the 1920s has various floors, distributed between tenants or landlords, of the space. The interior distribution most clearly reflected everyone’s new needs. Using thicker walls, the architect was able to provide a whole system of ducts and piping for smoke, water, gas, electricity, and steam, a vacuum system to ensure that the “rented box” became, according a very visual word, a “dwelling machine”. In the early 20th century, in all the relatively opulent buildings, the narrow old vestibule evolved into a spacious gallery, an example first exhibited by Charles Garnier. Toilets and bathrooms got bigger, often at the expense of the bedroom or the nearly obsolete living room. The dining-room and living rooms co-habit, separated by a half-wall, though still considered to be only one room. Where necessary, the number of rooms would be reduced in order to obtain, on an equal surface, some larger areas with better ventilation. Bold theorist of new architecture, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, better known as Le Corbusier, offers the following advice in his Manual of the Dwelling:

Demand that the bathroom, fully sunlit, be one of the largest rooms in the apartment, the old living room for example. With full-length windows, opening, if possible, onto a terrace for sunbathing, a porcelain washbasin, a bath-tub, showers, and gym equipment. In the adjacent room: a walk-in wardrobe for dressing and undressing. Do not undress in your bedroom. It is not very clean and it creates a distressing disorder. Demand one big room in place of all the living rooms. If you can, put the kitchen under the roof, to avoid odours. Demand a garage for cars, bicycles, and motorbikes from your owner, one per apartment. Ask for the servants’ quarters to be on the same floor. Do not pen your servants in under the roofs.

One should note that the writer of this catechism would prefer bare walls and replaces the cumbersome pieces of furniture commonly exposed to dust with wall cupboards or built-in closets. Our need for outside air and light translates in the number, shape, and dimension of bay windows, using bow- and oriel windows which increase brightness, available surface area, and also allow for enfilade views, such as those seen from old watch towers. Fake decorated plating on giant pilasters are no longer of fashion, instead, a careful study of the interior distribution of space and the height of the ceilings, so as more modern architects can seek to unite the entire construction and give life to its façade. As early as 1912, Henri Sauvage found another very original solution:
a tiered house in which no floor deprives the lower floors of air or light, where each inhabitant is at home, on his terrace which may be full of shrubs and flowers.

Individual homes of cheaper construction are better suited for new experiments than large constructions built for rental purposes. At this time, one could easily have believed that because of the high price of building sites in the cities and because of the housing-shortage crisis, private mansions, enclosed between houses that rise to any height, would gradually disappear. But the periphery, or the suburbs, of large cities, remains an option; cars brought inhabitants closer to the centre. The housing shortage, a consequence of the interruption of construction caused by the war, and the temporary uncertainty of the value of money determined the revival and even proliferation around major urban centres; apart from the private mansion, the word would often be considered pretentious, at least referring to the small, family house. Here, a few young architects, such as Robert Mallet-Stevens, André Lurçat, Jean-Charles Moreux, and Henri Pacon, applied, with an intransigence which often does not exclude taste, their principles of rational distribution and construction. Thanks to bay windows that span the length of a room, obscure angles are avoided. Although they banished all decoration, they were concerned about practical details which were carefully studied: interior blinds, sliding doors and windows, saving space by not having to install cumbersome shutters. Uncluttered rooms, for them, meant supreme elegance.

To carry out these various projects, from large factories to small houses, the architect takes advantage of the industry's achievements. Materials are provided to him cheaply due to more time efficient working methods. The invaluable invention of plywood, which—unlike natural wood—does not warp over large areas, offered new facilities for the execution of panelling and doors. Rolled steel, the newest innovation to come out of factories, was more lightweight and resistant than its predecessors; they are invaluable to the halls of department stores and openwork façades of commercial buildings. They are also used in houses for window joinery; metal allows more light to stream through than wood. However, iron has well-known defects. For example, it oxidises if it is not protected by a coating and it requires constant monitoring, which can be expensive to maintain. One would agree with Auguste Perret when he said: “If man were to suddenly disappear, the steel and iron buildings would not be long in following them.”

Fortuitously invented in 1849 by Joseph Monnier, a gardener of Boulogne, improved by the research of Joseph-Louis Lambot, cement or reinforced concrete consists of a mixture of cement, sand, and stones coating a steel reinforcement. The stones then act as a part of the inert material, like grease-remover mixed with earth in large ceramic containers. The relationship between the ratio of steel expansion and cement allows the concrete to lengthen while following the deformations of metal without falling apart, so that, in essence, the reinforced concrete behaves like a single entity. Reinforced concrete is well-suited for finer work. Cement hardens quickly, but it is breakable, making it better to use for posts and beams rather than hollow blocks because the works can be altered after a few days. The speed of its creation is comparable in speed to the assembly of iron frames which were prepared in advance with expensive machinery. Concrete made with clinker is less resistant to the pickaxe than granular cement and, hence, invaluable to temporary buildings. Used for roofs, floors, and partitions due to its light weight,
it protects against heat and cold and often decreases the excessive resonance which comes with reinforced concrete constructions. The strengthened stone is a mixture of many materials, which makes it suitable for façade renovation. Whatever its varieties, this resistant material allows the fast construction of a structure in which the use of other materials might make the project more difficult and ultimately destroy it. A work thus built is an artificial monolith. It has justly been compared to the concrete buildings of Rome and Byzantium, where tensile brick framework played a role analogous to iron and concrete.

The consequences of this discovery, from the point of view of construction, can well be seen: extraordinarily long lintels, long-ranging, continuous arcs made from a single piece, and strong and slender posts. The obstruction of the fulcrums is kept to a minimum much more easily than in Gothic constructions. Whilst the intersecting ribs required buttresses and flying buttresses to balance it out, the monolithic framework in reinforced concrete holds without external stays. The walls which do not support any weight but are mere partition walls, can be removed on the whim of the architect. He can replace a solid wall with a double wall to lock in an insulating air pocket. Engineers were the first to understand the part reinforced concrete could play in architecture. Anatole de Baudot, who had already preached its virtues through his teachings, employed it at the end of the 19th century at the Lycée Lakanal and the Church of Saint-Jean-de-Montmartre. He was only in the wrong to abuse narrow curves, whereas his technique was particularly suitable for rectilinear forms. Immediately after him, Charles Génuy made reinforced concrete an increasingly important standing, in 1892 and 1898, in the factories of Armentières and Boulogne-on-Seine, in 1907, in a private mansion in Auteuil, and afterwards in his constructions for the national railway. Louis Bonnier, who implemented it in 1911 for the lintels, floors, and staircases of the school complex of the rue de Grenelle, reserving brickwork for the façades, made use of it on a large scale in 1922 and 1923 in the great nave of the swimming pool built at Butte-aux-Cailles. At the same time, Charles Plumet made the judicious choice to use it for the new metro stations. Tony Garnier who, already dreaming of reinforced concrete in the shade of the Villa Medici, was able to construct some of his grandest designs out of this material, as part of the major works of the town of Lyon. The terraces of the Lycée Jules Ferry, designed by Pacquet, are made of reinforced concrete, as are the arcs of the departure hall of Biarritz railway station by Dervaux, the cupola of the Boucherie Economique by Alfred Agache, the large roofs of the Galleries Lafayette by Chanut, and the pillars and the vaults of the Church of Saint-Dominique by Gaudibert. Savage used it for the framework of his house with tiered steps from the rue de Vavin and in a building on the Boulevard Raspail; Boileau, in the two basements of the new appendix of the Bon Marché; Danis, in the framework and the staircase of the Pasteur museum in Strasbourg; Bonnemain, in his rental properties. In the Church of Saint-Louis in Vincennes, Droz and Marrast combined it with grinding stone and brick. Inside the Church of Saint-Leon in Paris, Leon Brunet adorned it with beautifully laid out bricks. At the very moment when the Exhibition opened, Deneux started to produce the amazing framework of Rheims Cathedral consisting of 17,800 elements moulded on-site, then assembled, put up, and fitted together without the help of bolts or metal parts.

As for the works of Auguste and Gustave Perret – the house of the rue Franklin (1902), the garage of the rue de Ponthieu (1905), the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (1911-1913),
the Church of Notre-Dame du Raincy, the Sainte Chapelle made of reinforced concrete (1922-1923), the tower of the Exhibition of Grenoble (1925) – all of these were built after considering the behaviour of this new material. As Paul Jamot wrote, these buildings attest “that a building which is governed solely by the systematic use of reinforced concrete, with the greatest possible savings of material and labour, can be beautiful in itself and, in spite of the absence of any superfluous ornament, be a work of art”. Which forms are thus born most naturally from reinforced concrete? Simple and large ones. As it lends itself to ample vaults, it especially restores to honour the horizontal line. The section of pillars gives it an austere elegance. Bases are no longer necessary as the column sticks straight out of the ground. No more capitals, as the beam and column are made from the same material. The capital, useful in the construction of foundations in order to distribute the weight of the architrave or the lintel amongst the supporting columns, became superfluous in a monolithic system. On the façades, no more horizontal projections except those of some rectangular canopies and sometimes, in order to finish the wall, the hem of a narrow frieze to underlines a distinct shadow.

*Claude Beelman*,
Eastern Columbia Building, 1930.
Clad in glazed turquoise terracotta tiles and copper panels. Los Angeles.
The walls are nothing but large empty surfaces. However, the reinforced concrete is well-suited for coatings. The marble panels can be fixed more firmly to it than to brick. It admits encrusted stoneware tiles, mosaics which are composed in advance at the base of the wall, stuck together with cement, the reliefs taking shape in the moulds. It offers a vast field of possibilities for the fresco. But it is by its sparse appearance, its blunt edges, by the harmony of the large areas exposed, or those hidden from the light that its most fervent supporters intend to stir our emotions. At most it is polished, in order to soften the roughness of it, or the colour is varied by ochre, grey, blue, pink, or green plastering, which seems to be a part of it. Reinforced concrete, a combination of materials, was already widely used in many countries across the globe. The Exhibition comprised, in the foreign as well as in the French section, a presentation of models, drawings and photographs of recently built works or works in the process of being built; however, its display was limited. The buildings erected for the Exhibition itself account for the greater part of Class I. To what extent does this architectural framework, where decorative arts represented real life as closely as possible, reflect contemporary architecture? There was no revelation comparable with those built for the *Exposition Universelle* of 1889, works like the Eiffel Tower and the *Gallerie des Machines* (Machinery Hall). However, there were many examples of intelligence, knowledge, ingenuity, talent, a serious understanding of the art of building, a deep sensitivity, and a sober taste, which revealed a progression of trends over the previous twenty or twenty-five years. To judge these buildings equitably, it is initially necessary to take into account the conditions imposed.

A house of more than one storey does not lend itself easily to the flow of the crowd. A pavilion anticipates it; hence a certain width of doors and passages, and an increased number of buildings (without ceasing to be accessible), yet keeping some of the mystery through pricking curiosity as to what lay behind the closed façades. Others, such as the houses of the former Soviet Union, and the factories of Copenhagen, Limoges, the Grand Maison de Blanc department store, and the Diamanteries, attracted the public with their outside windows,
similar to shop window-displays. Lastly, others presented various compromises between these two extremes. Particular constraints, such as limiting the architects’ freedom, put their talent to the test. At the entrance of the Esplanade des Invalides, an underground station prohibited the digging of the ground deep below the surface. It is important to note that the architect Pierre Patout managed to balance the pylons of the monumental Porte de la Concorde without the help of foundations, whereas Boileau and Sauvage had to distribute the weight of both of the pavilions of Le Bon Marché and Le Printemps on four of the cast iron columns of the station of Les Invalides.

Various metals were implemented. The woodwork apparent on the Japanese pavilion contributed to its particular appearance, as with the elegant windows of the pavilion of the Manufacturers of Copenhagen, built with wooden planks, rafters, pine battens, and the Sabot – or clog – maker’s house, a work by Gabriel Guillemonat. Brickwork characterised the typical houses of the north-eastern French towns of Roubaix and Tourcoing, along with those of Denmark and the Netherlands, and lastly those of Italy – to which the brick owed its blond colour. Stonework was represented, with infinite artistic talent, by the model that the School of the Paris employers’ federation of building, cement, and reinforced concrete contractors had carried out and displayed in the “teaching” group, according to the drawings of Pierre Paquet. This model of a pavilion, dedicated to rest in a sea of leisure, was so well studied and carried out stone by stone to such perfection, that it was worth building to scale. In the library, a clad iron ceiling shed a generous light on the books. In the domed vestibule of the pavilion of Nancy, the architects had achieved a decorative effect from the steel elements and connecting rivets. On the lintels of the covered walkway of the Esplanade des Invalides, Charles Plumet left the iron beams exposed, acting as both a structural component and decoration. Plaster naturally played a great part. Maurice Dufrêne deserves credit for acknowledging this material frankly in the shops of the Alexandre III Bridge. In the construction of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Auguste Perret was clearly biased in favour of temporary materials: timber posts supporting a reinforced concrete frame, with a timber frame on the inside, and coated with thick plaster.

On the whole, reinforced concrete dominated the event. Entire constructions, such as the tourist information pavilion or the rest stop pavilion for automobile drivers owed their lines to it. Others borrowed their entire framework from it, like, for example, the pavilion of the Netherlands whose unexpected lighting would have been impossible to realise without its contribution. Elsewhere, architects had been content with imitations of precarious material, forgetting that reinforced concrete is not necessarily blocky and can assume, on the contrary, a certain elegance. Even if the Exhibition did not help the new concept of construction progress on a technical level, the date is marked in the history of its diffusion. It accustomed the eyes to its bold spans, its simple shapes, and its large cantilever overhangs. It established its recognition.

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were many attacks against the decorative arts. At the dawn of the last century, architects and decorators took liberties with decorative fantasy. They claimed to have based their style on the visual development of themes borrowed from flora or on the use of sinuous lines which they imposed on pieces of furniture as well as on houses, stone, wood, and metal. A backlash was inevitable.
As people had grown accustomed to the bare beauty of machines, the reaction had the character of a puritan reform. A well-known manifesto of the Austrian architect Adolphe Loos, *Ornament and Crime*, became the bible for a whole group of young artists. “The ornament of an ordinary object,” Loos essentially said, “is, like tattooing, a sign of cruelty or degeneration. It is a criminal waste of time, money, and energy.” Loos foretells of a civilisation where “the streets of the cities will shine out like large, very white walls.”

In general, the architects estimated that discrete decoration, judiciously placed and carried out tastefully, would animate and enrich the materials. The beauty of the bare parts must be appreciated, as they, themselves, give all their value to the decorated parts. It is, however, necessary that the architect remains the authorising director. The direct submission of the painter, sculptor, and designer to the architect of the piece was one of the major features of the 1925 Exhibition. The fashionable decoration at the Exhibition has often been described as cubist. In truth, in 1925, authentic cubes or at least simple shapes, with flat surfaces were seen: those of reinforced concrete constructions and plywood pieces of furniture. But they did not owe Braque or Picasso anything. In order to understand the beauty of the bare masses, architects and cabinet-makers had not awaited the revelation of which some amateur critics had been the noisy heralds.

Cubism was hardly represented at the Exhibition, at least not in the paintings decorating the architectural compositions, except for two works placed in the hall of the embassy. One, a work of Fernand Léger, juxtaposed geometrical surfaces illuminated by pure colours spread out flat. The other, shimmering with colour, was entitled *La Ville de Paris*, or the *City of Paris*. Robert Delaunay had painted the Eiffel Tower and a lady,
barely clothed, on the Pont de la Concorde. Whatever one might think of the outcome obtained in painting and sculpture by Picasso, Braque, and their disciples, it is certain that their formula contributed to develop the decorators’ taste for broken lines and abstracted decoration, far from living nature. Tired of curves and having exhausted the joys of a timid naturalism and of the stylisations of flora and fauna, which their precursors had abused, the decorators of 1925 took pleasure in a capricious geometry which had nothing to do with science.

The decoration on the monumental entrances of the place de la Concorde – in the low-reliefs intelligently composed by the Martel brothers for the pylons and the pedestal of the statue named L’Accueil, or Reception, – announced the union of art and industry. It could be found in the pavilion of Le Bon Marché (department store), of L’Intransigent (daily newspaper), of Christofle (silverware), and Baccarat (crystal ware), and in a great number of kiosks. In response to the sensitivity of a generation who, in art, flee away from details and prefer the essence, this fashion resulting from Cubism remains a simple decorative convention. In theory, sculpture was only allowed at the Exhibition as long as it was a part of an architectural piece, hence the considerable number of low-reliefs. However, without taking into account the fountains, such as those of Max Blondat, Christofle, Marcel Loyau, and Naoum Aronson, statues and groups decorated the gardens, or the entrances to the buildings. This broad interpretation of the regulations made it possible to admire, close to the pavilion of the General Commissioner, a nude figure of a sovereign eurhythmy by Despiau, calm without being inert and, in addition, in an alcove of the Bernheim Jeune pavilion, a splendidly full-figured bronze nude by Maillot; both variations on an age-old theme, but nevertheless “modern” works due to the originality of vision.
Despite the subordination of sculptures in the round and low-reliefs to their architectural units, the Exhibition offered a rather exact image of the current state of sculpture in France. From sculpture which only stirs emotions through its lively profiles and its rhythmic outlines, to that which has the ambition to express ideas, and from the most traditional to the most paradoxical, every trend has its defenders. In the foreign sections, sculpture could not be represented in a complete state to qualify it for an overall judgement. We will focus later, within their respective sections, on capital works such as those of Mateo Hernandez of Spain, Henryk Kuna of Poland, Ivar Johnson and Carl Milles of Sweden, as well as Jean Stursa of the former Czechoslovakia.

In spite of the theories, sculpture is protected from any dangerous concern, because of the requirements of the profession which demands complete clarity of form. With fewer constraints, the painter can suggest more than he can express, can be more pleasing with a range of tones, and more charming with promises that may or may not be kept. Whilst sculpture has remained healthy and robust, painting underwent a significant crisis which was revealed by the Exhibition. This explains why the walls of the Court of Trades were not offered to the most original champions of young French painting. It is by paintings of restricted size exhibited in certain furniture units or in the pavilion Bernheim Jeune that their talent could be judged.

In the years leading up to the Exhibition, a renaissance of the fresco was witnessed. Paul Baudouin, disciple and friend of Symbolist painter Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, showed that frescos can survive as well under a wet sky as in a dry climate, if the painting materials are judiciously chosen and if the wall is preserved with saltpetre. The failure of many attempts made in France, in the first half of the 19th century, is due only to poor technique. It is known that painting with fresco, known from the Greeks and the Romans, and with so many masterpieces produced in Italy and in medieval France, consists of spreading colours diluted in water over a fresh plaster of faded lime and fine sand. Fixed on this mortar they become, whilst drying, as hard as the wall itself. The fresco, which requires prompt execution, is therefore a school of decision and, consequently, of reflection. The fresco painter has no time to either hesitate or get bogged down in the meticulousness of details. His composition must be finalised beforehand, then carried out on a large scale. It is also a school of simplicity, because lime admits only a restricted number of colours. Since the example of Paul Baudouin, the fresco already produced remarkable works: the splendid ensemble by Bourdelle at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, the compositions of Marcel Lenoir at the seminar of Toulouse, heavy, systematic, but truly powerful, those of Caro Delvaille, those of Henry Marret, in particular in the Church of Saint-Louis de Vincennes. It seems that this technique must benefit from the appreciation of large flat surfaces, and it must offer reinforced concrete – a material of a rather poor appearance, or with asbestos cement (a substrate used by Marret), a suitable decoration for it. It was a significant part of the Exhibition, particularly in the French section.

The French section

Reinforced concrete and its derivatives played such a large part in the Exhibition that a classification based on the implemented materials would not ensure a clearer approach.

Tiffany & Co,
Desk clock.
Silver, jade, crystal, black onyx, and enamel, signed, height: 12.7 cm.
Jean Dunand,
Lacquered panel with gold leaf, 1930.
It would be better to look at the achievements of the various projects, starting with the section’s over plans.

The French section comprised two main areas, almost perpendicular to each other: one of them marked by the Seine between the Pont de la Concorde and the Alma Bridge, the other one, leading alongside the Avenue Nicolas II, the Alexandre III Bridge, and the alley bisecting the section cutting across the Esplanade des Invalides from north to south. On the quays of the right bank of the river and the Cours-la-Reine, the visitor would successively encounter the foreign and the French pavilions, then the French Village and the colonial pavilions. On the left bank, some more pavilions, miniature toys presented in a model village, the transport gallery, and the amusement park. On the Esplanade, symmetry and variety, order and life, obtained by an extremely considered arrangement of buildings, predominantly assigned to France. Lastly, in order to connect the two parts of the Exhibition separated by the Seine and for fear the public would not be tempted to cross from one bank to the other under the summer sun, the Alexandre III Bridge was transformed, from two lines of shops into a kind of Rialto. It was, like certain bridges of the Middle Ages, a street spanning a river. Dictated by the terrain itself, the general plan mapped out by Charles Plumet left nothing to be desired in terms of clarity.

The chief architect had focused his main effort on the Esplanade des Invalides. Two contrasting but essential considerations presented themselves: to assure that the splendid view of the dome was not inhibited, but nevertheless avoid the monotony of a long, ordinary avenue. The available space was divided into two parts of unequal length, separated by the two twin pavilions of the Sèvres factory. In the first one, close to the Seine, two galleries masked the entry and the exit of the underground station of Les Invalides. One was dedicated to sumptuous boutiques: Henry Sauvage had created there a striking orchestration of black, red, and gold. The other one, reserved for the foreign sections, had been built in a simple and practical way by Leon Gaudibert and Julien Polti and decorated with discrete paintings by the decorator Camille Boignard. Between these two galleries, twelve buildings of ranging importance formed, bordering a garden, a first unit where, wedged in the four corners, four pavilions intended for the department stores stood.

The second unit comprised ten pavilions facing each other in a line along the side of the central walkway. As with the latter, it was fenced in on the right and left sides by galleries. A covered promenade skirted them, connecting them to four imposing corner towers and curved around to end at the entrance hall of the Court of Trades. To avoid a repeat of the disorder of previous exhibitions, with an excess and confusion of shadows, the façades of the pavilions were not to exceed a height restriction of 16 feet. This white herd would have been monotonous without some dominant constructions, giving rhythm to the composition. Hence, the towers of Charles Plumet were created, evidently, out of a decorative need. By assigning them as restaurants where one could enjoy the products of four provinces of France, the architect was not unaware that he was exposing himself to criticism for having exalted culinary art in an exhibition dedicated to decorative art in the most important buildings in the ensemble. But he remembered the attraction of American restaurants located on the upper floors of a skyscraper. What to place in these lookouts, if not a place for weary visitors to rest, allowing them to associate the delights of the table with the sight of an urban landscape?
Once this project was adopted, Plumet carried it out with logic. On the ground floor of each tower, a hall lit by high glass walls was used as a vestibule by the galleries adjacent to the exhibition. In the four corners, octagonal turrets neatly housed staircases and elevators. Above the hall, a service floor, then the dining area, enlarged by four projecting storeys from where the view stretched out as far as the eye could see. Each of them was supported by four impressive columns; between which lead to the kitchens and other services. Such an arrangement of supports was a concession to usual visual expectations. The whole construction was in clinker concrete, less solid than ballast concrete, which facilitated a future demolition. The projecting porches, simply carved, were made of reinforced stone and plywood, which lends itself to restoration works.

The Court of Trades was made of the same materials and presented, for a very different project, similar qualities: a low construction along the main road of the Esplanade and the dome and a refuge for meditation at ground level. The hall, flanked by two porches whose turrets mirrored those of the towers, connected at the same level with the covered walkway of the Esplanade. However, its linked pillars, without bases but widened at their top by a discrete cushion capital and with a deliberate transition between the eight columns and the lintels, indicated a greater search for elegance. Largely open, like that of the Grand Trianon, but without a curved courtyard, it owed its character to the harmony of the proportions and to the simple decoration obtained by the apparent gaps between beams and joists, with a clearly exposed firmness of the lines. As for the Court itself, it was a more modern cloister without columns or pillars, surrounding a geometrical garden with a fountain at its centre. To offer a discrete setting for the paintings and sculptures, Plumet had simply divided up the awning by the stark, projecting reinforcements. Three constructions were closely related to the composition designed for the Esplanade des Invalides: the library and the theatre which flanked the Court of Trades symmetrically and the twin pavilions of Sèvres, built across from each other on the main road.

The library, a work of Paul Huillard, could have had the longer, yet more precise name of “showroom of the art of the book”. Readers were not envisaged there, nor their tables, their seats, the quiet atmosphere conducive to their studies, or the shelves for stacking the books. It was not a typical library. But in its hall with its visible framework and few supports, under the light which shone through the broad bay windows at the upper part of the walls, printed pages, engravings, and bindings were presented under the most favourable conditions. The theatre of the Perret brothers and Granet was precisely admired for its elegance at the same time as being “novel and natural”. Architects, such as Paul Jamot, had proposed to create, in the most simple and most economical way possible, “a meeting and contact place between drama and the public”. As at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, the room was arranged in such way that from of every seat, the spectator could easily see the whole scene. Built on a square plan, its architecture encroached on the stage which, divided into three parts by two columns, lent itself to multiple scene layouts. Great care had been taken with the lighting. It fell from a glass ceiling, where the light, of many different colours, was diffused without visible hearth and could enrich the silver-grey rendering with the finest gold. A gallery for electricity, to aid the monitoring, removed “the miserable installation of projectors in the middle of the public”. Placed directly below the ceiling, all around the room, it constituted at the same time the best kind of decoration –
Herman Sachs,
*Spirit of Transportation*,
ceiling of the entrance hall of the Bullocks Wilshire building, 1929.
Los Angeles.
one that fulfils a purpose. The same intelligence went into the construction process. For an ephemeral building, Auguste Perret had only implemented expensive and durable materials when they were proven to be warranted. He had taken care not to forget that the humble fir tree has the same compressive strength (40 kilograms per square centimetre) as the hardest concrete. Thirty-four wooden posts, transformed by a coating onto grooved columns, supported a reinforced concrete frame. The ceiling rested on steel beams. The architect had laid out his posts in pairs: some stood within the room, others, visible from the outside, were formed against the bare wall to which a coating of a lithogenic, or stone-forming, component was used to create the texture of stone, a far-reaching colonnade corresponding exactly to the interior framework. The peristyle decor, the main room, artists' dressing rooms, lighting and monitoring gallery – the whole composition, viewed clearly from the outside, conferred a lively appearance to the very simple façade. Below the cornice there was a continuous frieze of narrow cylinders. This frieze, also visible from inside the room, was not part of the decoration, rather it formed a mechanical ventilation device made of a succession of half-pipes encased one inside the other, and which, in letting the air pass, intercepted the light.

In the pavilions and garden of the Sèvres factory, Patout's subtle art and his taste for contrasts and theatrical effects could be found. Eight colossal seven-metre tall vases, made from concrete reinforced with wood, and covered with sandstone tiles, constituted an apotheosis of great allure. Close to them, the low white pavilions which faced each other and were reflected in mirror-like water with blue edges, the garden, surrounded by small square plinths which connected the festoons, full of refinement and delicacy. The pavilions were made of reinforced stone, covered with sandstone until halfway-up. No window punctuated the façade, so that no wall's inside surface was lost for the presentation of objects. The light came from the ceiling. It was a simple and expressive project of a homogeneous composition, despite its division into two parts, imposed by the site. The goal was to highlight ceramic as a resource for the interior or exterior decoration of the house and for the decoration of a garden. This goal was achieved.

Good architecture is made from the inside out. The internal plan of the Exhibition determined the place, the importance, and the character of the doors. Two of the most important ones were situated at the end of the two main thoroughfares and opened up for the visitor coming from the centre of the city. At a time when the barriers fall, when the exchanges of all kinds multiply, does not the phrase “monumental gate” awaken more than a vague idea? In fact, they were not the gates of cities, but the gates of an exhibition. Since an enclosure had been traced, it was necessary to create gates to get in and get out. For all of them, the same strategy was adopted: the entrance on the sides where the visitors waited in lines, the exit in the middle where they could come and go without obstruction, side-by-side, in small groups. The Gate of Honour opened onto the Avenue Nicolas II. Let us imagine it as we would have seen it if the projects of the architects Henri Favier and André Ventre had been carried out with permanent materials. Arranged two by two, sixteen polished granite pylons connected by openwork grids and pressed metal fringes were strongly drawn up in the plan. Bronze basins stood on them from which neon-illuminated glass flowed at night. Carried out by means of iron ribbons passed through the rolling mill, then cut, curved, and assembled in patterns of water jets which were repeated in staggered rows; the grids were to prove that the machine,
subjected to human intelligence, can create beauty as well as the hand, just more economically. In fact, these materials and this work were imitated in shiny plaster. The visitor was only to assess what was in front of him as full-scale mock-up. But we could admire the elegance of the silhouettes, the equal distribution of the framework and the openwork panels, the welcoming appearance of the whole which, although starting out with a wide angled frame, gradually narrowed, guiding the visitor and his view towards the centre of the Exhibition.

Favier and Ventre only had to raise a gate spanning an avenue lined with constructions to house exhibits. More complex was the problem Patout had to deal with at the entrance of the Cours-la-Reine. Obliged to treat the trees with care and to only use the gaps between their main branches, he was required to build constructions high enough to attract attention from far away and stable enough to resist the wind, but without being able to use foundations; moreover he had to take into account the fact that the gate was shaped like a spire, that could be seen from different directions. He thus arranged his piece in a circle, the only non-deformable figure: ten square columns, crowned with basins out of which beams of light would spout. Between these pylons, the outgoing flow of visitors would go out, leaving in all directions. The entrances were to the right and to the left: four lines, arranged in a circle of square bases, connected by chains, channelled the crowd towards the turnstiles.

Each pylon measured 72 feet in height, 11 and a half feet in width and weighed approximately 100 metric tons. They were built out of reinforced clinker concrete. Their walls, three inches thick, were coated on the outside in a lime mortar. An open door located nearly ten feet above the ground, and a hook-on ladder placed on the inside, gave access to the top to service the lighting. Due to the impossibility of digging the ground because of the sewers, of the tramlines, the gas and water pipes, and the electric cables; Patout had built some of the pylons on reinforced concrete bridges, others on concrete plinths or stone slabs which distributed the load in low pressure over the loose ground. Lastly, to ensure their stability, he ballasted them at the base by piling up paving stones between their walls to a height of ten feet above the ground. Despite being very interesting from the point of view of the technical challenges, with simple lines, and an original and well-conceived design in order to catch the eye from afar, the merits of the work were, however, much discussed. We acknowledge the fact that, on one point, the criticism is deserved, specifically on what was not done. At certain times, a door must be closed, even if it is called “monumental entrance”. However, no means of closure having been planned, it was necessary, in order to comply with the rules of the customs warehouses, to put up a wooden barrier with full doors behind the pylons, of little monumental effect.

The architect was not to blame for having disturbed the peace of the beautiful decor to which many eyes were accustomed. Any other construction in a new style, in its place, would also undoubtedly have appeared just as discordant. Another gate, the third most important, gave a merry welcome to the crowd: the Porte d’Orsay, built from the designs of the architect Boileau. Its two pillars, with a geometric design, supported a large beam on which a decorated metal banner was suspended, on one side with large typeface, on the other by a semi-cubist painting by Voguet. However, the visitor, passing under this banner,
did not get the impression of a “sword of Damocles” because the banner was hidden from him by a circular plate which connected the two pillars, 11 feet above the ground, which sheltered the turnstiles of the rain and the sun. The four symmetrical gates of the Rue de Constantine and Rue Fabert, works of Lucien Woog, Pierre Ferret, Marrast, and Herscher, were used at the same time as entrances to the Exhibition and galleries: hence their deep porches and pylon surrounding. At the site of the Victor-Emmanuel-III, Albert I, and Grenelle gates, the architects Guidetti, Adolphe Thiers, and Levard carried out a project already simple in itself with further simplicity.

Located near the Gate of Honour is the tourist information pavilion. In spite of its rather strange design, it comprised an element which, as with the pylons, served only to attract visitors. It was a kind of tower, or rather mast, formed by two thin walls with sharp edges, coated with a rough mortar, and cut at right angles. It housed, at a height of a little over 100 feet, the rectangular case of an electric clock, the elegant and spiritual nature of a sculptor as much as of an architect. If the small canopies of the clock case could be louvres, three small planks of concrete placed horizontally and equidistant of one another, the one below seemed to have no other purpose but to create recalls of forms, contrasts of light and shade: a decoration in the same capacity as the garlands of the past but of a more severe aspect.
This new type of mast had four vertical posts of reinforced concrete as its framework, connected by beams forming standoffs, with the space between them which was bricked up. They went down 21 feet below the ground where they drowned into a reinforced concrete footing. Thus, the lowering of the centre of gravity had ensured the stability of the ensemble. In the hall, the entrance of which was announced by this mast, Mallet-Stevens used reinforced concrete with such skill, but without compromising the decoration. The work could not have been better conceived to suit its purpose. Outside, there was an almost full and rather mysterious wall. Inside, a room, 66 feet long, surrounded by exchange and information services. The great light which lit them up fell from the ceiling and poured through stained glass windows, set in a bay window which measured only 20 inches in height, but which circled the whole hall with a continuous band of images of the most beautiful monuments of France toppling over one another, like scenery whizzing past the window of a car travelling at top speed. The part of the wall which surmounted this translucent frieze seemed, paradoxically, to be leaning on it. In fact, it was supported by strong reinforced concrete beams, placed on pillars so thin that one did not notice their presence.

Pavilions of cities or regions, of department stores, of an individual or a group in the French section numbered around a hundred. On one of the sites, under the shade of the Champs-Élysées and decorated with flowers, Paris wanted to exhibit the work of its schoolchildren. Two long, symmetrical, robust, and elegant wings were connected by a hall which was used as a reception room for the Municipal Council. Full and empty, projections and recesses were learnedly balanced by the architect Roger Bouvard. Each wing ended in a three-part projection, pierced by three high bays. This semi-hexagonal form which was repeated, high up, at the crowning of each window, showed firm lines without stiffness. With the ceramics vases which decorated the front steps and the stucco-marble frieze which was located under the cornice, this Trianon of schoolchildren was brightened by a discrete polychromy.

The pavilions built for other cities raised the very delicate question of regionalism in architecture. Undoubtedly the walls were the same, though the same roofs are not suitable for different terrains or different climates like the ones of Brittany, Alsace, Picardy, or Provence. But local traditions, reflected in the style of building, are also due to habits, ways of life, working methods which were no longer valid. In a centralised country, in a time when the progress of the means of transport shortened distances, these traditions disappear. Isn’t the architect who maintains them, with a tenderness for the past, likely to create an anachronistic decoration? At the Exhibition, the problem became even more complicated. The aim was to present, under favourable conditions, various productions in the area of arts, born in such or such a region, but intended for many others.

Were they not settling for an easy picturesque style, which puts them in a category from before they were born? A few architects deliberately freed themselves from local traditions. Rather, they built for cities whose characters were not so strongly marked. In the pavilions of Lyon, Nancy, and Limoges, there was nothing particularly typical. On the contrary, Mulhouse, Roubaix and Tourcoing, the Alpes-Maritimes, Normandy, Berry, Alsace, and Brittany invited the visitor on a tour of the provinces. The long blind façade of the pavilion of Lyon and Saint-Etienne, its three-tiered octagonal crowning, with 120 windows, reminded the visitor of Tony Garnier’s fancy for grand-scale works.
But the powerful city, which was at the cutting edge of French urban design, offered a vast space to the talent of its architect. He seemed to be cramped with the meagre portion of the Esplanade des Invalides allotted to him. The building, well laid out, seemed to be designed for greater dimensions.

Of equal surface area, the pavilion of Nancy and the East, work of Jean Bourgon and Pierre Le Bourgeois, was less original, but of a more satisfactory scale. Its flattened dome on top of an octagonal tambour crowned a steel hall. The rectangular bay windows of its wings would illuminate a conference room and auditorium on one side and a museum of the region of Lorraine on the other. Everything, up to the frieze of the entrance, screamed for a propaganda and information office for the Eastern regions. Under the trees of the Cours-la-Reine sat the pavilion of Limoges, by Pierre Chabrol, which had a vast shop window of harmonious proportions where enamels and the porcelains shimmered of their own will. One can find, in the camp of picturesque portrayals of the regions,

Jean Dunand,
Project for lacquer panels for a pair of doors, c. 1930.

Jean Dunand,
Folding screen with two panels, c. 1925. Lacquer and ivory. Presented at the Salon des Artistes Décorateurs (Convention of Artist-Decorators) in 1928.
capped with three floors of attic windows, the highly-steeped, sloping roof designed by André Ventre and Jean Launay, architects of the pavilion of Mulhouse. On the walls, reinforced concrete beams replaced the old timber frame. In composing the pavilion of Roubaix and Tourcoing, De Feure remembered the brick frontages and tiered gables of the North of France. The pavilion-smallholding of Berry-Nivernais by Gauchery and Dreyer, the "Clos Normand", or enclosed flower garden, by Victorien Lelong and Pierre Chirol, and the pavilion of Franche-Comté by Bouterin all showcased beautiful framework. The traditional farmhouse of Provence by Dallest, Castel, and Tournon, and the delightful pavilion of the Alpes-Maritimes of Charles and Marcel Dalmas could, on rare occasion, give the illusion of this privileged land where the rough-cast ochre or pink walls, the Genoese roof cornices, and the terraces with tiled balustrades form, along with large flowered earthenware jars, the most pleasant decoration.

Why were there, at the entrance of the Village, two pavilions to represent Alsace? This is, Raymond Régamey tells us, because of two different concepts of regionalism, one narrower, the other one broader, which divide Alsatian architects. Eugene Haug, in the House of Alsace, was forced to make some changes to this residence that would previously have pleased his German neighbours. Théo Berst, on the contrary, creator of the pavilion of Art in Alsace, did not fear these alterations. He had faith in reinforced concrete. The obligation to fit a public passage under the country house that he had designed, had given him the idea of building external staircases reminiscent of those we sometimes see in his homeland. But he had given up on the projecting storey and on gables protected by flat, tiled canopies, as they seemed a little misplaced in Paris. At the other end of the Village, high slate roofs, white rendering, paved granite kerbs: it was the massive House of Brittany, somewhat modernised, built by Vaugeois. The painter Lemordant, the ardent organiser of the work, had arranged for it to house an exhibition gallery.

The local characteristics of materials, forms, and colours appeared even better in the colonial pavilions. One mainly noticed the large hall with carved wooden columns of Indo-China, the white patios enhanced with green and blue ceramics of North Africa, the massive buildings of red stone coming from the beginning of time, and the dome of the palace of French Western Africa, built by Germain Olivier, which bristled with threatening spikes.

Let us return to the constructions which best epitomised 1925. Few projects were more "modern" than that of a pavilion of a department store. There, a certain outward shine and gloss is appropriate: it contributes to publicity. Hence, let us not reproach the luxury of stained glass and marble of such or such a pavilion, or another its cement with gold niello accents, its columns, its roof dotted with pebbles of moulded glass which illuminated the night. Let us note the variety of solutions brought to the same challenges: the use of octagonal rooms of the same dimensions, the same size pavilions, and ease of circulation. All four comprised of a central hall, the axis around which radiated largely open rooms. All four of them used floral decoration to a great extent. But, what a differences in appearance! The pavilion of Le Bon Marché, a work of Boileau, glows like a piece of rock crystal. Projections jutted out from the outside of the rooms. The top was tiered. Two projecting porches, containing the up and down staircases,
flanked the oblong door, separated by a trumeau which separated the entrance from the
exit. The stand taken could not have been expressed more clearly.

Sauvage did not want to lose even one inch of the space conceded to the Printemps stores;
hence, this hut came to be. As it happens it is rather elegant with its conical roof of reinforced concrete, following the exact outline and capping low walls, coating the sides of the octagon. But, except for the bay windows, there was no significant match between the outside and the interior, where hollow columns by Levard had a great effect but did not support any weight. The work of Laprade, the pavilion of the Louvre stores, made of iron and fireproofed wood, covered with plaster, was characterised by its welcoming covered terrace. A little complicated, but of an extremely original design was the pavilion of the Galleries Lafayette, by Hiriart, Tribout, and Beau, with its external shop windows, its front porch, its pergolas, its three tiered terraces, the façade of its entrance crowned with a glass roof and set back enough of a way to rise as high as the hall, without exceeding the outline. The carpets and furniture stores of the Place Clichy were presented by Charles Siclis in two symmetrical pavilions, the great inscriptions of which constituted the principal decoration. The department store La Samaritaine had settled in a very simple cubic pavilion, initially intended for a publishing house. Its architect, Auguste Perret, had applied to it, as at the theatre, his principles of economy. Four wooden posts pushed into the ground on a bank of the Seine raised to the level of the quay and then bore long lintels and framings made of reinforced concrete.

In the pavilions built for decorators or industrialists, a great number of architects exhibited their talent. The pavilion of stained glass windows was one of the most remarkable works from a point of view of the implementation of the plan. Built on stilts by Lucien Woog, his project of broken lines had, in a restricted space, appreciably increased the surface of the walls made available to translucent paintings. Some pavilions were characterised by the importance of the external shop windows: such as those of La Maison de Blanc by Onème and Marleix, or those of the Diamantes (diamond cutters) by J. Lambert, Saacké, and Bailly, octagonal kiosks capped with a dome on stilts such the Goldscheider pavilion by Eric Bagge, lit up like a sculptor’s workshop, or the one of Art and Decoration and of contemporary French Artisans, by Henri Pacon, vertically divided into two areas, the lower area all in openwork, the other one, calm and full. Dimensions of the ground and the outline could not have been used any better for the presentation of books and precious artefacts.

Elsewhere reined the serene beauty of full walls, or only pierced by essential thin teeth. A large square door, framed by glass tiles, which opened onto the main façade with simple nobility, was offered by the Lalique pavilion built by Marc Ducluzeaud. The pavilion of the Musée d’Art Contemporain, by Louis Sée and André Mare, which had maliciously been compared with a marabout (Muslim holy man’s shrine), comprised a circular gallery, surrounding a large round room with cupola. Hence its appearance, which was repeated for the Fontaine pavilion, a work of the same architects: a low cube with its main entrance on a chamfered wall, blind walls capped with a low, flat roof. The pavilion of Christofle and Baccarat by Georges Chevalier, well-lit inside by a glass ceiling, presented the outside appearance of a massive, rectangular construction. At the pavilion of the Editions Crès publishing house, where three symbolic buttresses systems affected the shape of books.
propped upright on the ground as if on a shelf, the imagination and the subtle taste of Hiriart, Tribout, and Beau could be found. The pavilion of Art Applied to Trades, by Charles-Henri Besnard and Bernard Haubold, housed ten rooms distributed around a central hall. The preoccupation with emphasising various materials could be recognised: the grey walls and the balustrade were made from concrete hardened with coarse aggregates, the polished stones of the Lyon region framed the entrance, and the slate roof, in the shape of a cross, undulated to make it shimmer.

The Hôtel du Collectionneur, built under the direction of Pierre Patout, presented an elegant compromise between an exhibition pavilion and a real hotel. It was like a contemporary folly (or purposeless – though aesthetically pleasing – construction), whose white walls one would have liked to have seen emerging from the greenery of a park. Entering through the narrow door, the visitor got the impression of having benefitted from a favour. As soon as he passed through the low hall and the gallery, he would arrive under the high cupola of an oval living room, on whose right and left were rooms intended for private use. This layout, along with the differences in height of the rooms, translated on the outside into projections from the walls and a crowning in the shape of a truncated pyramid, with broad steps. In addition, the back wall was slightly withdrawn on one of the sides of the square conceded to the Ruhlmann group. The architect had sacrificed part of the ground in order to be able, without exceeding the tyrannical, but beneficial, outline, to build the walls of the oval living room, and, therefore, the three beautiful French windows, higher. Thus he had obtained, from both the outside and the inside, these contrasts which animate the work and make it possible to give even an exiguous space an impression of size.

On the right bank of the Seine, let us mention the Fontanis pavilion, a closed temple dedicated to the perfumes created by Eric Bagge, the Corcellet-Morancé pavilion, a sort of “little house” where Marrast had skilfully arranged pleasant viewpoints, the Renaissance pavilion, a small building of pleasing sobriety, like a park gazebo designed by Guillaume Tronchet. The latter was also the architect of the Postes et Télégraphes pavilion and the pavilion of the Royal Asturian Mining Company. The former was notable for its great size. The latter constituted a demonstration of the possible application of zinc for the coating of roofs and walls. The pavilion of the Club des Architectes diplômés had been built with moulded materials under the direction of Paul Tournon. The overall unit did not appear at first glance. The architect had to use the ground not taken over by the trees. From a hexagonal hall, four wings sheltering the showrooms glowed under the greenery. The main door, flanked by two symmetrical bay windows and two niches, offered a relaxing view over the principal clearing of the gardens of the Cours-la-Reine.

Next to the houses intended to offer framework a lively setting for the decorative works of art, some real or possible houses could be seen: “modern” houses, without outrageous modernism, those of the Village. A daring anticipation of the house of tomorrow: the “cell” of the “New Spirit”. Equidistant from one another were the rest stop pavilions. The initial plan of the French Village had been conceived by Adolphe Dervaux; Charles Génuyts carried it out. An infinitely delicate task, given that this collective work united a score of architects with very different tendencies, allied by a common ideal of sincerity and common sense. It was like an anthology of the renewed village or rather like a portion of a rather rich village, built alongside a narrow street during those previous years.
Concrete allied itself with a judicious use of traditional materials. Town hall was pleasing and its plan irreproachable. However, the undulations and decoration of its façade transported visitors to the 1900s. It could be assumed that the construction had been entrusted to Hector Guimard by a bold municipality some twenty-five years before. Since then, a younger generation of municipal officials who were not afraid of innovation, such as Patout’s expressive piece made of reinforced concrete; a limited but clearly defined design. Brunet had built for the weaver, a man of good taste and with a successful business, a house not only intimate but also airy and light, able to make a good impression next to the accommodating vicinity of the old houses of the Île-de-France and the Loire. To varying degrees, the middle-class dwelling by Hamelet, the Lorraine inn of Pierre Selmersheim, the Maison de Tous, a model communal house with polychrome highlights by Agache, and finally the bazaar of Oudin, all presented the same elegance.
No doubt was possible as for the destination of Bluyse's pharmacy, Gouverneur's fish shop, Guillemonat's houses for clog-makers, or Lois Brachet’s monumental mason. The surprising element of Levard’s bakery was its two massive columns which seemed to be the quaint remainders of an older construction. For the school, Paul Génuyx had enjoyed a particular advantage. The space that had been allocated to him was less limited than that of his fellow members. A school necessitates the strict observation of certain dimensions, and, in particular, the height of the ceiling fixed at 13 feet. It made full use of this obligation. With its canopy, its portico where one could imagine children sheltered from the rain, and a well ventilated classroom, the school was incredibly pleasing.

The village had a church and a cemetery. The latter was a little rich for a village, but certainly of good quality, as the monumental masons had worked magic there. As for the church, without a nave due to a lack of space, its principal purpose was to show that certain parts of the ensemble, required by the immutable needs for worship, were particularly suited to the use of concrete. If Droz had made it a little imposing, it was because he had to provide a large mural surface on the inside for the various manifestations of religious art. He designed it as a rectangular oratory, whose façade was occupied by the porch and the base of the bell-tower. The decoration of the three chapels with open sections on the other sides had been entrusted to the three religious art societies grouped around the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society. Which country did the cell of the New Spirit call its home? It was difficult to say. In spite of its strange appearance it was of our world, of an industrialised world, not of a utopian kingdom. We say “cell” and not “pavilion”. Le Corbusier and Jeanneret had indeed presented one unit of a whole, an element of a “building-villa”, produced in series with posts and flagstones. “Mass produced houses for the common man, architectural standards, and entirely industrial construction”, including the metal fittings of bay windows. “The carpenter no longer interferes with the building.” The building-villa, thus imagined, would include a hundred identical villas atop one another on five storeys. For each one, a terrace-garden, rigorously separate, a vast room divided by a sloping ceiling and partitioning. The effect of composition should not be considered by each individual unit, but by looking at its repetition within the ensemble. At the Exhibition, the ceiling of the terrace-garden was pierced to allow the passage of a tree which the architect did not have the right to touch. Hence the bizarre sight which either piqued the visitor’s curiosity or shattered his illusion. But this was nevertheless a significant detail. Elsewhere, the architects endeavoured to adapt their composition to the terrain and the existing topiary. Le Corbusier, on the contrary, wanted to demonstrate a priori, his abstract schema, able to be replicated on any other site, with contempt for the trivial circumstances to which others did not hesitate to alter their designs. This schema, in spite of the excesses, is well worth considering and could open up new prospects to observers.

The rest-stop pavilion, where a pleasant restaurant fits naturally into its space, was halfway between the old inns without comfort, though amusing for the eye of the painter, and the “dwelling machine” of Le Corbusier. The use of reinforced concrete did not banish any of its picturesque nature, but it was only due to its projections, justified by their utility. The welcoming rest-stop, with its supply of gasoline and oil, bar, restaurant, and berths that the tourist, due to bad weather conditions or mechanical failure,
would be happy to find along the roadside. Following a contest organised by the National Alumni Association of the School of Decorative Arts, the talent of Marcel Bernard was honoured. But it also showed the excellence of the flexible, vivacious, and rational teaching, which Charles Génuys provided to the pupils of this school for many years.

It was appropriate that a reception hall was reserved for the Exhibition’s organisers in the gardens of the Exhibition, near the offices arranged in the Grand Palais. It is for this hall, together with some additional rooms, that Albert Chrétien-Lalanne had a pavilion with terrace built, simple but not lacking nobility, with a peristyle porch and crowned with a wrought iron balustrade. A liquid stone rendering gave the walls a clean look, free from dryness. The meeting room, built by Haubold, the function room of Louis Sweats, and the monumental staircase of Charles Letrosne which lead to this hall, did not require any work to be expressed through external silhouettes. They were, inside the walls of the Grand Palais, large decorations carried out in precarious materials. Inside the meeting room there was a huge challenge to anchor, even temporarily, the overhang of the balconies intended to contain several hundred people, into the galleries on the first storey of the Grand Palais, and to organise a platform with the possibility of making cinematographic projections onto a screen, whereby the existing cupola was obstructing its mounting. The authors showed what could have been an audition hall, if it was carried out with the simple shapes of reinforced concrete, covered with a beautiful material such as yellow marble, combined with the gold of the luminous frieze and the framing of the platform, with the swathes of violet carpets, and the seats and the painting forming the background. The village hall attracted more attention with its decoration than by its architecture. The pompous decoration was a premeditated challenge to the artistic Puritanism of the time. The white niches, heavily plastered and ornamented with reverse brackets, emphasised the paintings of Jaulmes and one admired the rich imagination of their luminous fountains.

The monumental staircase and the hall designed by Charles Letrosne were to lend themselves to large and brilliant ceremonies. None of the visitors will ever forget the striking impression of this ensemble where the straight line ruled supreme. The hall used only two thirds of the height of the nave under which it was located. Nonetheless, it appeared taller. This illusion was created by contrasts and the simplicity of the surfaces. Long lintels rested on thin square pillars; doors and niches on a human scale opened on the bottom of full walls going up without interruption as far as the cornice. The progressive narrowing of the steps increased the perspective effect of the staircase. The walls, with a rough, rosy-grey coating, were almost bare. Only some pale gold arabesques glistened gently here and there. All this was nothing but a decoration supported by an invisible forest of framework. But this decoration could have been carried out in reinforced concrete. With simple, large, and firm lines, it will remain in memory like a symbol of the contemporary aspirations of French architecture, associated with an art of composition which has not lost any of its privileges.

In the pavilion of the Club des Architects diplômés, a panoramic model and ancient glass slides, lit from behind, transported the visitor to Morocco. One was able to admire the great architectural work in all its glory, achieved under the direction of a visionary chief and powerful organiser. These constructions possibly reflected “French policy in Islamic countries,

Raymond Hood,
American Standard Building
(formerly the American Radiator Building), 1924. New York.
a policy of reciprocal respect, esteem, and penetration of the two civilisations. In the new general residence of Rabat, Henri Prost and his collaborators, Laprade, Laforgue, and Rigollet, created a novel French work without brutally breaking with the country’s architectural tradition. In Casablanca, the law courts by Marrast and the post office building by Laforgue deserve the same praise. As for the new indigenous city, its design was different. Though traced with better skill and more salubrious than the old one, it had to be completely Arabian. It is the case and this result does credit to the architect Laprade. With its small houses with terraces and its patios shaded by a tree or a trellis, it is a garden-city under the African sun.

In the French section, sculpture played a considerable role, showing that at that time, as before, there was no other art which produced on the premises better and brighter talents. But good sculpture cannot be improvised. The figures which Charles Despiau and Aristide Maillol exhibited were the result of a long research period. La France by Bourdelle which, standing in front of the Grand Palais, seeming to greet the nations, had been cast in bronze to commemorate the arrival of the American volunteers in 1917 at the Pointe de Grave. The sculptures of The White Bear by François Pompom, The Source by Alfred Jean Halou, the groups or the statues by Lucienne Heuvelmans and Yvonne Serruys, Arnold, Guenot, Poncin, Traverse, and Réal del Sarte, were all already known, this without counting many busts and figures which enriched the furniture sets. The Pallas Athena bronze by Carlo Sarrazin, forgetting her dignity, drunk in her state of Pyrrhichios dance, was, however, a surprise to eyes accustomed to calmer forms. The Reception by Louis Dejean was not an isolated statue. Standing upright on a base in front of the pylons of the Porte de la Concorde, this figure of woman, semi-nude and gilded, animated the monumental entrance with its silhouette. It looked very much like the recent creations of a sculptor who, having started off from modelling spiritual representations which carry on the methods of yesteryear, had gradually been elevated to a more vigorous and more general art, without losing anything of its sensitivity. Associating sculpture with architecture by placing statues in niches is certainly not an innovation. However, Charles Plumet, chief architect of the Exhibition, had need of niches in the Court of Trades in order to break up the monotony of long sides coloured by paintings.

He created so many half-sized bronze figures of simple, straight lines for these fourteen niches, representing the principal crafts and trades. Although these figures, placed almost in the open air, gave too much of an impression of precious statuettes made for a closed gallery, who would not commend the study for and the implementation of the design, the choice of sculptors, and their willingness to work under the direction of the project manager? One could admire talents as diverse as those of Paul Niclausse, inspired by the Middle Ages painters of popular pictures, which combined the largest forms with a moving observation of the model, as well as Fernand David, whose death was a great loss for art, Albert Pommier, Dejean, Marque, Wlérick, Cavaillon, Drivier, Halou, Arnold, Guenot, Traverse, Vigoureux, and Contesse. The ensemble, supplemented by low-reliefs of the fountain created by Poisson, and by the decorations of the corners by Le Bourgeois, proved that then, as in the past, originality does not come without an intelligent discipline. But in the high or the low-relief, it is the wall itself which, in certain chosen places, lit up by a “human smile”. The difficulty consists in choosing their location. They put the onus on the architect to equip the building with bases (pediments, metopes, or frizes,
tymanums, archivolts, or splays); the same could not be said in a concrete construction which is presented in the form of a block, and even less of a temporary building where the framework covered in plaster. It is, above all, the personal taste of the architect which determines the relief’s shape and protrusion, its position in harmony with the lines of the façade, and the height where it is affixed to the building.

Without counting the low-reliefs which were essential to be seen by the visitor throughout the Exhibition, we will mention, as strong examples, the enormous cartouche which grouped together, on the square pediment of the pavilion of Lyon and Saint-Étienne, the symbols of the Saone and the Loire rivers. Less imposing, though more legible, were the flexible compositions of Joseph Bernard, inscribed on the outside walls of the Hôtel du Collectionneur. The rough-hewn letters, with a stark contrast between shade and light, remain inert. It is in the subtle passages connecting the various parts of the ensemble that the sculpture quivers under the caresses of the day. Such had been the rich lesson of the great Rodin and, many years earlier, of the Greeks and of Assyria, with its Wounded Lioness. Qualities similar to those of Joseph Bernard were noticed in the low-relief of Janniot, at the entrance of the Saint-Dominique-Constantine gallery. They were also found in his Homage to Jean Goujon, a group very fortunately placed in front of the façade of the Hôtel du Collectionneur, in quarter circles. Unfortunately, these skilful compositions, these attractive models revealed a manner rather than a style. The heads curiously small, with a conventional smile, were perhaps closer to certain spiritual mannequins, exhibited in the fashionable galleries, than to Hellenic sculpture or the sculpture of Jean Goujon. Without distinguishable sculptural qualities, the friezes of workmen at work, modelled by Bachelet for the pavilion of Nancy, were aligned with the building. The same goes for the discontinuous friezes of the Navarre pavilion and the panel of the Gate of Honour. The forms were voluntarily abridged, but the composition was legible and the figures were to scale. It is difficult to imagine a high relief more interdependent with the wall than the two Victories with their giant swords drawn up at the entry of the crypt of Hartmannswillerkopf. They were the work of a Master who knew how to discipline his ardour and his romanticism in order to render the monumental statuary its power. In harmony with the noble architecture of Danis, the two winged sentinels of Bourdelle, upright for eternal duty, are the picture of serene vigilance and of an enduring memory.

To respect architectural dimensions, many sculptors made sure to establish their reliefs very low, protected by the bare part of the wall, such as Saupique and Jouant, creators of the flat panels encrusted below the external doors of the Court of Trades. On the outer walls of the pavilions of Sèvres, the graceful medallions of the late Max Blondat, and on the doors of the pavilion of Le Bon Marché, the compositions of Céline Lepage were done in champlevé. The low-reliefs by Pierre Poisson, on the four faces of the fountain of the Court of Trades were not very prominent, but were highly stylised: the gold film which covered them made the fine decoration highly sensitive. The low-reliefs of Bouraine and Faguays at the pavilion of the City of Paris (designed by Drivier and Delamarre), situated in the same hall with the polychrome stuccos composed by Russet-Spitz, were thicker but the composition was just as calm. The ones which Dardé had sculpted for the framework of a chimney were illuminated like in naïve imagery. The spiritual representations of contemporary travelling,
carried out by the Martel brothers in the tourist information pavilion, were almost flat, so much so that the creators felt the need to present the overall designs in muted colours.

Elsewhere, the low-relief was reduced to a simple-shaped engraving, set into the thin face of a slanting, bowl-shaped piece, like in the Egypt of the Pharaohs. This is laudable, so long as it keeps its charm. Henry Bouchard presented the best examples with the fountain of the gardens of Sèvres and with two friezes in the main hall of the embassy. However, as four very “modern” interpretations of the eternal topic of the four seasons testified, modelled by him for a patio of the Esplanade des Invalides, this was but one of the faces of his marvellous talent, directed by intelligence and nourished by observation. Two groups of sculptures, supported by individual initiatives, were once again due to the technique of the low-relief (one completely, the other for the most part): La Pergola de la Douce France and Le Temple de l’Effort humain by Landowski. In La Pergola de la Douce France, the general composition and distribution of the sculpture had been imagined by Emmanuel de Thubert, allowing the group of sculptors to translate the Celtic doctrine by directly carving it onto beautiful stone of the country, provided courtesy of the quarrymen of Verdun and Lens.

The architecture had been carried out by Lucien Woog, with the collaboration of Jacques Bouvet. The Celtic faith had not prevented the collaborator, Emmanuel de Thubert, from producing works as varied as the cubists dancers of the Martel brothers, an image of heavenly delight from L’Ile d’Avalon, and the Holy Grail of Georges Saupique, of traditional weighting, Les Serpents des Druides of the Séguin workshop, a model of full composition, and the Sanglier, or Wild Boar of Pompon, depicted mid-leap, according to the tradition of prehistoric engravers. There was no less variety in the low-reliefs of Hilbert, Lamourdiedieu, Pablo Manès, Nicot, and Zadkine. As for the discipline of direct carving, it is a salutary reminder of the loyalty due to the craft, at a time when too many sculptors entrusted the expert completion of their works to mere technicians. It is a laudable reaction against the weakness of modelling and “the infernal ease” of using clay. As for the rest, the firmness of the sculpture is due to intelligence, not the hand. The good craftsmen of La Pergola de la Douce France have proved this to be so, each one according to his spirit: that is how Joachim Costa, in his skilfully composed low-relief of Tristan and Iseult, combined the richness of the plans and the subtlety of the design with the most virile execution. The group of Paul Landowski, a result of long years of meditation and labour, had the perfect unity of a work designed and created by only one artist. But how many painters of popular images would be needed to carve these innumerable figures one after the other, in order to carry out this “stone book” in a permanent material? In Le Temple de l’Effort humain, all the heroic sacrifices, all the loftiest loves are evoked by a generous imagination. Sculpture, here, is at the service of thought.

Aspects of daily life had inspired the painters. The committee of aesthetics, responsible for reviewing the projects conceived for the decoration of the Court of Trades, estimated that at the heart of an exhibition dedicated to decorative and industrial modern arts, contemporary life and work were to be glorified. In spite of its beautiful overall quality and the talent of its artists, a first group was rejected, because it evoked a historical synthesis of old civilisations.
The work consequently entrusted to Guillonnet, Marret, and Rapin had as subjects: on one side of the cloister, Gardens, Decoration, and The Theatre, and on the other side: The Street, Sports, and Transport. As a break between these two continuations of animated and merry compositions, two subjects of a more serious nature: Architecture and Teaching, created by Henry Painter, an artist of various talents, furniture designer, decorator, and painter. In the other compositions, the research of the movement and outside life had inspired Guillonnet and Marret to create some anecdotal pieces, of a little noisy cheerfulness. Had these works been painted not with oil, but, as initially proposed, in fresco, the artists would have been naturally led to a simpler and broader work, with more discrete colourings, embedded in the wall.

At the pavilion of Nancy, Victor Prouvé represented the fine trades in a frieze in which Lorraine excels, with a healthy dose of realism. In the hall of Algerian carpets, one could see above woollen mosaics, the young workers who knot the threads together one by one, sitting in front of their loom. This composition, which contained different set elements as in a stained glass cartoon, was the work of Cauvy. Yvonne Sjoestedt especially touched us through the freshness of the feeling, evoking, in the Maison de Tous, the popular joys of a Sunday. On the interior walls of the entrance-chamber of the Court of Trades, Loys Prat had painted Agriculture, and Barat-Levraux, Industry. If the first maintained, in spite of its machines, an idyllic charm, the second embodied the life of a factory, with all the steam and flames of the metal working industry.

Tasked with representing the contemporary men in contemporary dress, the painting which decorated the meeting room added a didactic intention. In addition, Henri-Marcel Magne had to solve a serious problem in order to preserve the unity of the work on the back wall perforated by a high rectangular door. The pyramid-shaped composition firmly hugged the door. On monumental steps reaching a platform, two symmetrical processions, outlined clearly on a background with large vertical linear compartments, symbolised the groups and the classes of the Exhibition. Located at the top, the architect had his drawings displayed. In the function room, composed by Louis Sweats, the work Les Mois en Fête, seven large pages traced by Jaulmes, was rolled out on a pink background which dominated everything: figures, garlands, draperies, and foliages distributed the greys and blues. The perfect harmony of shades, selected as ideal to be viewed under candlelight, made us forget their strength. Traditional and “modern”, the arabesques decorated the walls in the manner of tapestries, without encumbering or perforating them. The laddered patterns, the values emanated from such a good taste that the space seemed enlarged.

Inside the towers, paintings were to celebrate the appearance and richness of the French provinces. Baffier pointed out to us the gentle way of life in Touraine, and Rapin the valleys of Alsace and the hillsides of Champagne covered with agriculture and vines like a patchwork quilt. In the tower of Bordeaux, Despujols, Roganeau, de Buzon, and Dupas sang the praises of the regions of Gironde and Landes: their fields, forests, famous vineyards, trade, and colonies. They depicted them as water drinkers, in a sad little monochrome painting. Louis Pierre Rigal painted of the fresco Les Neufs Symphonies, where, under the cupola of the Hôtel du Collectionneur, he intertwined body parts in the manner of Michelangelo. Jean Dupas and Despujols belonged to a group of young artists,
scholars, and volunteers, trained at the Médicis villa, whose most brilliant representative for sculpture is Janniot. What they call “Academicism”, the same academicism against which they rose up, is not servitude towards certain conventions; it is a schoolboy exactitude which respects the model, warts and all. Out of loathing for vulgarity, they invented their own humanity where memories of the Italian Renaissance, Ingres and some amongst the previous generation of artists mixed. They have a singular way to turn a neck into a column, to model a kneecap, or an ankle, or to attach the nose to the forehead, and they infinitely love gazelles and doves. Their dogma of “necessary deformation” unfortunately translated into calculated formulas.

The frescos were numerous in the French section. Let us quote the moving compositions with which Maurice Denis and Desvallières had decorated the church of the Village, those by Henry Marret at the Hôtel du Collectionneur, and finally the works of the pupils of Paul Baudouin, Jean Adler, Leon Toubland, Paul Hanaux, Jalabert, Luceau, Paul Lemasson, and particularly La Montagne Saint Hubert, artist of a pleasant decoration inspired by the fables of La Fontaine, in the hall of the embassy. The Exhibition fulfilled its goal by showing the – sometimes opposing – tendencies following which the “modern” artists seek to implement sculpture and painting (mainly for decorative purposes) in harmony with architecture (that with an, imperiously rational purpose).

Foreign sections

All the exhibiting nations, except China and Latvia, appeared in Class I. The role of the architects of the Finnish section were reduced to the perfect presentation of the national works of art in the great hall organised at the Grand Palais.

Austria

The restorer of Austrian architecture, at the end of last century, was Otto Wagner. The most brilliant of his pupils, Josef Hoffmann, was given the torch. The action of Josef Hoffmann did not only contribute to the art of building. Professor at the School of Decorative Arts of Vienna, founder, in 1905, of the workshop Wiener Werkstätte, organiser of interior decorations and creator of pieces of furniture, he would always concern himself with maintaining close links between all the techniques which are used together in the construction and home improvement. Finally, works of the first order, such as the Stoclet Hotel in Brussels (1907), the pavilion of Austria at the Exhibition of Cologne (1914), and the Skywa-Primavesi house in Vienna, have earned him a European reputation.

Josef Hoffmann was thus particularly well-suited to act as the artistic director of the Austrian section to the Exhibition of 1925. His experience and taste could be seen not only with the gallery of the Esplanade des Invalides, but also with the pavilion of the Cours-la-Reine. But it is on the latter that his efforts were concentrated. Assisted by members of his staff, he showed, once again, that he is not a man of a singular method and for him practical issues must be consistent with the imagination of Austrian art.

Hildreth Meière,
_Dance Art Deco Medallion._
On the façade of the Radio City Music Hall, Rockefeller Center, New York.
Elsewhere, he showed his mastering of the art of placing the most complex designs within a clearly distinguishable framework. The imposing appearance of his buildings is due to the prevalence of vertical lines, limiting or giving rhythm to almost bare walls. In Paris, these lines were concealed. Only the organ tower of Oskar Strnad stood above the low constructions, whose ensemble constituted the pavilion of Austria.

The architect wanted to carry out an attractive and varied work economically. He connected, with a short colonnade, the two parts of his composition, one built on the Cours-la-Reine, the other on a terrace on the bank of the river. When the visitor went from the main wing, built by Hoffmann, to the cubic hall made of iron and glass built by Peters Behrens, then to the Viennese café of Franck, a clever maze of galleries and corridors, off which small rooms or niches opened, gave it, over a few thousand square feet, the impression of a scenic and appealing journey.

The profile of the façade was less original than the design. Above a rectilinear base, two or three broad ogees, separated by horizontal mouldings showed the length of the walls. They were enhanced, without any particular order, by light inscriptions in relief, bearing the names of great artists. Undoubtedly these wavy surfaces which recalled the taste of the Italian Baroque, without imitating it, were neither a strong enough indication nor did they possess enough of a quiet allure for it to be a permanent work. But they adorned the ephemeral galleries with a singular grace.

Painting hardly intervened in the Austrian section except for some irregular patterns spread along the joinery of the windows, with dull colours, sometimes with a straightforward cheerfulness, at other times reduced to stark contrasts of black and white. Sculpture represented two different tendencies. On a lively figure by Anton Hanak, The Human Flame, light streamed down on it like on a Rodin bronze. Eugen Steinhof combines Viennese elegance with fuller and calmer forms. In the hall of worship, low-reliefs, hieratic figures carried out by female hands, under the direction of Anton Hanak, remind us that the difficult technique of using repoussé metal, without a preliminary model, seduced some Austrian artists in this moment through its primitive audacity.

Belgium

The documents united in a gallery of the Esplanade des Invalides gave a rather complete idea of the valiant effort of contemporary architects in Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, and Liege. In a major study, published at the front of the catalogue of the Belgian section, De Rudder cites the principal artists. Almost all of them were represented at the Exhibition with drawings or photographs. Included were: Paul Hamesse, the pupil of Hankar and his two brothers, creators of moderately decorated theatres and original commercial buildings; Van de Voorde who built, in 1913, the exhibition centre of Ghent; Van Neck and Eggerickx, judicious constructors of cheap housing; Huib Hoste, whose grave church, built at Zonnebeke, marks the renaissance of art in a devastated country; Rubbers, Pump, and Hoeben who collaborated with Huib Hoste in the construction of the city of Kappelenveld, developed according to the newest ideas; Joseph de Lange, Camille Damman; Victor Bourgeois, creator of a model garden-city, that at Sint-Agatha-Berchem.
Wirt Rowland, Smith, Hinchman & Grylls Associates Inc.,
Guardian (or Union Trust) Building,
lobby, 1929. Detroit.
In addition, Leon Sneyers was in charge of the overall decoration of the Belgian halls at the ground floor of the Grand Palais, whilst the Belgian gallery of architecture, at the Esplanade des Invalides, was due to Paul Jaspar who, as well as being modern for his time, restored monuments of molassan art with a pious intelligence of the past.

It was one of the leaders of the "modern" movement, a veteran young at heart, to whom the honour had been reserved to build the pavilion of Belgium. Compared to the works which, twenty-five years ago, evoked the name of Horta, this building was but symbolic. It summarised a whole evolution. Undoubtedly, the essential qualities to which the creator of the Maison du Peuple du Bruxelles (House of the People of Brussels) testified were found right from the beginning: the clarity of design, the sincere use of materials, and an intimate bonding of all parties involved. But how far they were, the sinuous stems charged with decorative flowers and the curves of 1900! The straight line reigned supreme. Three big halls and six small ones exposed their cubic shapes to the outside. A high rectangular tower dominated the ensemble. Victor Horta had made the most of the T-shaped space allotted to him, similar to those which were conceded to Great Britain, Italy, and Japan. Its building with rigid silhouettes, with its buttresses and its cornices, did not evoke without reason the idea of a wooden architecture. Constrained to savings in a country hardly raised of its ruins, the architect had built it entirely out of wooden frames filled with plaster, without ever seeking to give the illusion of stone. Carried out in inexpensive materials and almost without decoration, this robust mass however was not deprived of anything. Six figures at the upper section of the tower by Wolfers, in simple chiselling, symbolised decorative art throughout the ages. Under the tiered terraces, the walls of the monumental hall improve at the top thanks to an openwork frieze, a work of Pierre Braecke. Attached the construction itself, it ensured at the same time the external decoration and the discrete lighting of the hall in the interior. A big hall of the pavilion owed its decoration to the painter Constant Montald. A tapestry and stained glass window with designs taken from its preliminary sketches were displayed, as well as a great allegorical composition a long way from the research of the new style of Belgian painting, but of an erudite balance.

Denmark

If the architect Kay Fisker, the creator of the pavilion of Denmark, had proposed to build an exhibition hall for furniture and decorative art objects, a hall for publicity, or even a tourist information office, his work would have justified the criticisms which were not spared him. It would not have been less debatable if he had claimed to provide a typical example of "modern" architecture in his country. Why these walls without windows, these inordinately high doors, these narrow offices, lit by the glass ceiling, these terraces which would have been, in winter, loaded with snow? If, in addition, the pavilion of Denmark was to be a demonstration of the possibilities of construction in brickwork, did these long range lintels – made with bricks which did not support their own weight, but instead needed the support of the reinforced concrete – not go against what the architect had wanted to prove? But Kay Fisker did not look at it this way. He knew that the pieces of furniture, the ceramics, and the goldsmith’s art where his compatriots excelled would not be presented in the national pavilion.

John Eberson,
The Colony Theater, lobby, 1937.
Cleveland (Ohio).
His intention was, above all, to raise a decorative construction marking at the Exhibition, in the manner of a pyramid, the place of his country. At the same time he wanted to recall, through a simple set of beautiful buildings, the reaction of the young Danish architects against walls too perforated or faceted and against decorative exuberance. If one judges a work without prejudice of rationalism and without criticising its author for not having done precisely what he had not wanted to do, one will recognise that Fisker had actually achieved his goal. This cube, deeply notched on its four vertical edges to evoke the form of the Cross of Honour of the Order of the Dannebrog, extending its points of equal length on a square base, these full masses, where layers of red bricks lying lengthways on their narrow edge alternated with layers of white bricks lying lengthways on their flat side, had a sombre feel but was of a striking nobility. The murals of the main hall completed the decorative character of the pavilion. Mogens Lorentzen was inspired by the old maps of Denmark, the “country of islands sown on the green sea like clouds on a blue sky”. He imitated its whimsical contours and its way of recalling by naïve images the legendary records, mythology and the history, the richness of the country.

Another architectural complex, very different from the first one, graced the Danish section. It offered the most elegant and frank realisation of a practical project. As light as greenhouses, with subtle ornamentation, two symmetrical pavilions connected by a terrace accommodated the richness of the Royal Porcelain Factory. Their glazed, slightly convex and good-sized façades seemed to suck in the light. The construction of these pavilions, which counted amongst the most successful of the Exhibition, had required only beams, rafters, and exposed pine battens.

Spain

There are, in architecture, old works which, in being continuously tailored to their needs, remain up-to-date and even more modern than many innovative attempts nowadays. An intelligent adaptation to the needs of the environment and life, tallied with social mores, a wise choice of materials, and lengthy experience lead to types of housing that are so appropriate that they can hardly be improved. We understand that, having reached that aim, we confine ourselves to fine-tuning the details, on an imaginative whim, which accepts in advance a framework with the input of a long succession of generations.

Henri Martinić

Thus Pascual Bravo, architect of the national pavilion of Spain, had restrained himself, under the garb of modernism, to seek inspiration outside his country. His elegant building, with white walls brightened with blue-glazed faience and topped with pergolas, reproduced freely and without pastiche the traditional Hispanic-Moorish house. The main door, flanked by two earthenware fountains, the ceramic tiles, panelling of the patio – everything was in line to make this southern dwelling an asylum of freshness and coloured twilight. No paintings, but stained glass which tempered the heat of the sun. Two sculptors, well-known in Paris where they work, had contributed with their works,
Donald Deskey,
Living room of the private apartment of Roxy Rothafel, architect of Radio City Music Hall, c. 1931.
Cherrywood pannelling, furniture in lacquered wood, bakelite and brushed aluminium.
Radio City Music Hall, New York.
to the beauty of the pavilion or the flower borders. One of them, Jose Clara, models graceful female figures. The other one, Mateo Hernandez, sculpts wild animals directly out of the hardest materials, whose sober magnificence evoked the masterpieces of Egypt or Assyria. It was a shame not to see featured alongside these two artists one of the young Masters of Spanish sculpture, Victorio Macho, the sculptor of the Monument to Santiago Ramón y Cajal.

**Great Britain**

Imagination and practical spirit blend well in the pavilion of Great Britain. The architects Easton and Robertson laid out a simple and clear plan. To the east, a hall preceded by a porch, to the west, a group of the offices marked the ends of the long, elevated building. In between, a succession of small, well-lit rooms were laid out symmetrically on each side of an arched corridor, leading to quite an imposing hall, housing religious art, above which was a tower with windows. The tower was in line with the British restaurant, built on a platform on the bank of the Seine. Seen from the left bank, the restaurant with its canvas tent and the pavilion with its waving flags formed a lively and colourful ensemble. An essentially temporary construction should not have the appearance of a palace built for centuries. Easton and Robertson had avoided all excess of sombreness or grandeur. They mainly relied on rapid and economic painting, as the main decorative attraction, perfectly subordinated to the lines of the building. Arabesques sheltered under the cornices or in the jambs of the bay windows, mingling memories of Asia with those of 18th century Great Britain. The joinery of the doors and windows was decorated with flashy colours. This merry polychrome colouring moderated the conceited character of the high, pale ochre walls, the high bay windows, and the armorial bearings located above the monumental entrance to the tower, a little steeple atop a symbolic nave. Their surprisingly cheerful form animated two carved figures in niches placed at the exterior façades of the hall.

Compared with other recent creations of British architecture, the work of Easton and Robertson presented a festive atmosphere, showing exceptional imagination for an exhibition pavilion. More than fifty British architects had brought together, in a hall of the Grand Palais, photographs and drawings. These documents attested the traditional respect for certain noble forms, less favourable for the revival of official constructions. They also showed us that the house in Great Britain developed at a slower pace and more cautiously than in other European countries. It is true that, for a long time, models of intimacy and comfort, better adapted to the climate, and more in harmony with the landscape, were built there. Judging by the exhibits on display, the evolution of painting and sculpture in Great Britain is not any faster. Standing in front of the sculptures of Henry Wilson or the large canvas where Alfred Kingsley Lawrence allegorically recalls the sacrifice of men and the service of women during the war, how was it possible not to remember the famous school of the end of the 19th century? Such works are worth more for their depth of feeling, or for their care of workmanship, than if they were to belong to a new trend. George Sheringham who, together with Victor Hembrow, had designed the layout of three halls on the ground floor of the Grand Palais, had also carried a vast decoration recalling his recent works on the theatre on one of the back walls.

**William van Alen,**  

**Joseph Urban,**  
Sketch for the façade of the proposed Max Reinhardt Theatre, New York, 1928. Ink and watercolour on paper, 37.5 x 28.6 cm. (p. 82)

**Rubush & Hunter,**  
Circle Tower, vestibule, 1929-1930. Engraved limestone with bronze doors. Indianapolis. (p. 83)
Greece

We should be grateful that the Hellenic Republic, in spite of economic and political difficulties, responded to France’s friendly invitation. It was a house for better-off peasants, built by Constantin Skyrianos to accommodate carpets and works of fine linen. A charming construction, quite picturesque, conformed to the motto: “nothing in excess”. Its thick walls protect from the sun as well as the cold, appropriate for a country of extreme temperatures. The semicircular arch of the porch, its windows with wooden shutters, the three brick rows of its cornice, and its rough coat would not have been out of place on the Provençal coast where, in times of old, Phocaean navigators found a new homeland.

Italy

At that time a feverish industrial and architectural activity was renewing the face of Italy. From Milan to Naples, the factories modernised their buildings and their tools. Wider and safer roads were created, sometimes at the expense of the beautiful countryside. The pride of being the best museums in the world was no longer enough for these ancient cities. They want to be admired for their deep vitality and re-emerging youth. Was there a country with constructions of a more audacious novelty than that of this Turin factory? Its terrace, made of concrete covered with asphalt, is but a test track offered to motorists, 100 feet above ground, with a track 80 feet wide and over half a mile around, whose steep turns are so perfectly calculated that it allowed for the highest speeds, without the risk of taking off. But Italy also wanted to inherit Rome’s glory. Proud of a glorious past, it sought a discipline to carry it into the future. Margherita Sarfatti, who participated with gracious authority in the work of the Jury of the group I, has this to say on the matter:

To be modern is to move with the times. However, the time of decay is over. There is a quest for clean shapes with bold edges. There has been a return to the clear logic of forms and, consequently, to a certain influence of the indigenous tradition in each country, and for us, therefore, a classical influence.

Genuine reform, she added, straight to the point, must arise from the inside, from the disposition and sensibilities of the people, but not from modifications on the surface imposed by an act of will. Italy achieved this reform by returning to its roots: A classical revival has animated the country since the war, like the heavy flow of sap. The effects of this are evidenced by way of life of the people, from their physical build, their Roman greeting with raised arm, up to the group education of the national militia, whose legions spontaneously readopted traditional names.

A deft justification of a modernism, which is much like a reaction. But it is quite true that no other European country could have spoken in the same terms. Until the 17th century at least,
Italian architecture did not undergo as deep a metamorphosis as that of its neighbours. Like the façade by Palladio and the dome by Michelangelo, the Colosseum and the Pantheon in Rome will live on forever.

Undoubtedly, the thesis of Margherita Sarfatti would have been rather difficult to defend had the completion of the project been dictated by practical needs. But it is more of a ceremonial building, a symbolic pavilion. In this respect, Sarfatti went on to say that whilst remaining faithful to the Roman concept of the art of building, Armando Brasini had not worked as an archaeologist, but translated with “the faith of the true artist” a major aspiration for Italy. Although Roman and traditional, he concealed thick concrete walls under the shiny decorations of golden bricks and the decorative plating of columns and pilasters.

The Italian pavilion, which seemed to have stood there for eternity, gave the impression of a well-balanced and imposing building from the outside, with pleasant colours and competent execution in every detail. Inside, a coffered ceiling, stained glass windows, ornamental marble and faience tiling of various colours, white marble panelling, and columns, a decorative painting where peacocks clashed amongst the foliage, a large fountain-basin of ironwork and glass, changed the hall into a sumptuous reception hall. The same luxuries were noted in the neighbouring rooms. Lastly, in the hall again, a gigantic cast bronze bust was placed on a base which elevated it to human height, its broad shoulders wider than its base; the leader of the new Italy made himself present, in the midst of this ostentation. This energetic effigy, with hollow eyes like those of ancient masks, was the work of Adolfo Wildt. Its colossal dimensions make us think of the heroic busts carved by David d’Angers shortly after the imperial saga. But it was more taut and of a simpler design, with Italian fluidity of lines.

**Japan**

From the point of view of architecture, Japan, under European influence, was going through a period of transformation. Public buildings, hospitals, schools, stores, banks, and hotels, were being built more and more like the ones of European big cities. The painful experiences of the previous years showed that these brick, stone, or concrete constructions are better able to withstand earthquakes and especially fires than the light traditional wooden houses in the country.

However, by reserving buildings of seven or eight storeys for trade and administrations, the Japanese were able to remain faithful to the small family house of their forefathers for their private dwellings. Never was fidelity more justified than in this instance. The Japanese house is charming, perfectly adapted to the climate with materials drawn from the soil, built with hygiene and ventilation in mind, perhaps a good model for other countries to follow. Partitions which could be altered, removed, or even replaced according to the seasons, allow the house to be protected from the heat and the cold simultaneously. There was no cumbersome furniture. Beds were replaced by layered mattresses which were stored in wall closets during the day; no seats, just cushions on which the Japanese sit in front of small coffee tables. No cellar, the saké most likely kept in a room adjacent to the kitchens and coolers, filled in to keep cool during the summer.
In the homes bestowed with a more modern comfort for the times, electric heaters or gas radiators replaced chimneys or stoves, banished for fear of fire. Neatness reigned over all.

The house on the Cours-la-Reine is a traditional one. Shichigoro Yamada and Iwakichi Miyamoto had provided the plans. Tokichi Shimada was in charge of the implementation of the materials, all brought over from Japan and assembled by Japanese workmen. A clever contrast of rough or smoothly varnished materials could be seen, for example straw walls next to the most sophisticated materials, such as lacquers. In the garden, a pavilion for the tea ceremony where young girls were initiated, according to the rites, in preparing the national beverage with meticulous care and accomplished grace.

Hewitt & Brown,

Edgar Brandt,
The Netherlands

The halls of the Grand Palais, occupied by the Dutch section, were organised by Henrik Wijdeveld, who had recently edited the avant-garde magazine *Wendingen*. In one of the halls, a group of architects exhibited photographs and drawings representing blocks of houses, workers’ housing, schools, villas, shops, and banks, built in the previous years. For the foreign visitor, witness to recent events mirroring the artistic activity of this country, it was an astonishing revelation. He entered a new world: a world of powerful, sometimes strange forms, where a curious mixture of rigorous rationalism and aesthetic research appears, an impressive array of components created by the will of a people, whose entire history has been an example of methodical tenacity. In all of these, with the exception of the neatness of windowless bays and the implementation of red bricks, almost nothing would evoke the Dutch house of yesteryear, descended from the ones in those well-loved paintings of Vermeer and Pieter de Hooch, their pretty slatted gables reflected in the water of the canals. In all of these, in spite of the variety of the individual talents, there is an expression of unity and an obvious relationship with Dutch furniture, as often they are created by the very same artists who built these cities, schools and large “modern” buildings.

The issue of housing must have been of paramount importance in a country whose population doubled in half a century. To address the housing shortage which became full-blown in 1916, the State and municipalities were proactive by encouraging individual initiatives and offering assistance to companies. Thanks to their support, between 1919 and 1925 in Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, and Utrecht, new districts and even entire new cities emerged. The perfect cohesion of these complexes is due to their fast creation by a group of architects imbued with the same principles and for whom unity no longer refers to just a house, but a block of houses, the street, the district, the workers’ housing with its courtyards and its gardens. Its development was due in part to wise regulations: since 1901, a contractor was no longer free to build residential housing at his own discretion. An architect is assigned to him, who submits the plans to an aesthetic commission himself.

Two eminent artists exerted a very beneficial influence on the new Dutch architecture. One is the justly renowned architect of the famous Amsterdam Stock Exchange (1898-1903), Henrik Petrus Berlage, the other is Karel de Bazel, who died in 1923, as the reinforced concrete framework of his most beautiful building – a bank in Amsterdam – was being completed. Breaking with arbitrary formalism, Berlage continued, in the name of reason and sincerity, to continue to fight Pierre Cuypers’ battle from long ago, having a great love for medieval architecture, just like Viollet-le-Duc. De Bazel, an architect open to varied research, was mostly concerned with the clarity of forms and the nobility of the proportions.

The most distinguished amongst the architects for whom these Masters paved the way, were independent followers. Their works, as important for their quality as by their number did not result from passively accepted formulas. They provide evidence of a moving conflict between two tendencies which were at odds at all times.

**Carl Milles,**
*Dancing Maenad*, 1912. Bronze.
*Carl Milles Museum, Stockholm.*

**Paul Manship,**

**Demètre Chiparus,**
It was this tendency that, drenched in romanticism, was shown in the national pavilion of the Netherlands, built by Jan Frederik Staal. Here, at least, the solemn imagination of the architect applied neither to a house, nor to a building for practical purposes. The pavilion sheltered a mysterious hall, conveying the luxury of the Dutch colonies. An enormous roof, slightly raised at the base like the one of a pagoda, weighed down on stocky walls. The ensemble was reflected in two rectangular ponds bordered with bricks, the same as for canals. Flowers climbed up from broad baskets sat at the foot of the walls. On the gable of the back wall, crowned by the blazon of the United Provinces (now the Dutch Republic) made from Delftware, the bricks, laid out with remarkable virtuosity, depicted a ship on the crest of a wave. Bricks, tiles and wood – national materials – were central in this construction. But concrete played a significant role. In fact, it was the imperceptible posts supporting the weight of the roof that allowed a luminous frieze to open below its projection. As in the tourist information pavilion, to no less surprise, large sheets of frosted glass appeared to be supporting a heavy load but were only acting as a partition wall. Outside, Hildo Krop's basic carvings were cut directly into the stone; inside, the sculptures of John Raedecker, made of painted wood and concrete, compliment this firmly set and highly focused work perfectly.

**Poland**

What a contrast between the pavilion of the Netherlands and the one of Poland! Whilst the former was simple and close to the ground, the latter was slender, shiny, and airy. Memories and innovations were mingled with spirit. The walls evoke the white walls of the small Polish churches of 17th and 18th centuries. Its spire of glass and iron, enlivened with plumes of ironwork, was not dissimilar to the bell-towers and turrets that we encounter in Slavic countries. It is difficult to know what oriental influence survived in its pediments. But this pavilion honoured the science and the talent of Joseph Czajkowski and was not the copy of any model. It was built freely on the elongated rectangle allotted to Poland. The design and the building elevations corresponded to the very specific instructions given to him. The sharp angles of its frontages and its spire, the geometrical facets of its decoration reflected, without excess, a taste for purity.

One crossed an atrium surrounded on three sides by covered galleries where the armorial blazons of the big Polish cities stood out in white against a black background. This was followed by a vestibule flanked by two small halls coloured by stained-glass windows. And here a stream of light would fall from a round glass dome, welcoming the visitor. This was the pleasant surprise prepared by the architect under the glimmering of its spire. This cupola crowned the Hall of Honour, built in an octagonal shape. It was supported by eight columns of dark oak with geometrical designs. On the walls, representations of peasants mingle familiarly with those of Slavic gods. Sophie Stryjenska depicted this popular verve with an intensity of colour: the lives of lords and of commoners throughout the twelve months of the year. A charming series of images which, if converted into tapestries (like many other compositions by the same painter), would not have lost any of their savour. Of a much less spontaneous style was
Jean Dunand,

La Pêche, 1935.

Gold leaf and lacquered panel.

Private collection. Smaller version
executed for the first class smoking
room of the ocean liner 'Normandie'.

the marble statue erected by Henri Kuna in the middle of the atrium. The search for
expression through its gestures may seem excessive to us and the symbolism
somewhat obscure. However, a musical harmony links the supple drapery to the
arabesque of the body.

Moreover, no statue has ever been placed within a framework which could better enhance
it. The atrium, with its rigid lines, would have seemed cold and deserted without the lively
profile of this female figure, springing forth like a jet of water. Clarity, imagination,
expression, these qualities of Polish art, drawn from popular sources, can be found in the
halls of the Épinal des Invalides and the Grand Palais organised by Adalbert
Jastrzebowski. Furthermore, the numerous drawings exhibited by the Ministry of Public
Works and the Warsaw Society of Architects showed that in spite of the attachment to
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Works and the Warsaw Society of Architects showed that in spite of the attachment to
popular architecture in Europe,
Sweden

A plethora of architects maintain Sweden’s reputation. They continue the efforts of Ferdinand Boberg, the architect of the exhibition of Malmö. Two very different works showed us their tendencies: at the Cours-la-Reine was the national pavilion, designed by one of the youngest members, Carl G. Bergsten; and at the Grand Palais, the model for Stockholm’s town hall could be found, a work of Ragnar Östberg, one of the noblest monuments built in the preceding twenty years in Europe. The pavilion was a model of refined elegance. The town hall, the symbol of the power of a big city, expresses an ideal of serene force. These two constructions, however, presented a common feature. They attested to the fact that in contemporary Swedish architecture, the understanding of the needs and the processes of construction does not override the attachment to long-held traditions. Erik Wettergren, then Director of the Decorative Art collections of Stockholm’s Nationalmuseum, later Director General, wrote:

There is no doubt that the influences of the historical epoch which we have most easily and realistically assimilated, came to us from France and, during our great artistic century, the 18th century, no country has better understood the driving force, the grace, and the harmony of French artistic culture than Sweden. The construction and, above all, the furnishing of the Royal Palace of Stockholm served to propagate this French style, which however, was not copied, rather the Swedes put a bit of their soul into it, as well as a touch of sober simplicity and architectural clarity. The French influence had a revival when Bernadotte, as king of Sweden, brought back the severe style of the Napoleonic saga, but it became even simpler, adapting to a functional style, more adept for daily life than if it had been designed in the workshops of Percier and Fontaine.

It was very much in line with the Franco-Swedish tradition of around 1800, which evoked the style of ancient times, whose use of lines greatly influenced the pavilion of Carl G. Bergsten. A mirror of water reflected the fineness of the two fluted peristyle columns, without simplified ionic capitals. The cupola of the hall was supported by eight cast-iron posts. The reception room was discreetly decorated, particularly charming by the delicacy of its colour: the parquet floor was framed with limestone and the stucco walls were superimposed with three shades of pink, ranging from light to dark. In this ensemble, there were no startling revelations, no glare, but the most polished of tastes and the finest proportions. The Stockholm town hall, begun in 1911 and inaugurated in 1923, sits on the shore of Lake Mälar, a vast rectangle surrounding a square tower over a hundred metres tall. By its basic colonnade, its loggia or wide façade, it recalls Doge’s Palace. But it is much less decorated and its coat of red bricks gives it a stern majesty. The decorative richness is inside, especially in the function room, known as the “Golden Hall”, covered with mosaics of primitive roughness, with a floor made of finest marble.

It is difficult to consider the large stylised maps which covered the walls of the hall in the Swedish pavilion at the time as being significant creations of the art of painting.
Zodiac Pool,
Umaid Bhawan Palace, Jodhpur,
1929-1944.
Like those of the Danish pavilion, but without the naïve imagery, they constituted, nevertheless, a type decoration, examples of which could be found in certain Flemish and English tapestries of the 16th and 17th centuries. Moreover, they offered the visitor a clear and concise lesson on economic geography. Who would deny its usefulness?

No foreign section was richer in sculptures than the one which was honoured with the names of Carl Milles, Nile Sjögren, and Ivar Johnson. Several works, among these a fountain of black granite, represent a rugged taste, but also a deep feeling of life, and the decorative verve of Carl Milles. Embedded above the main doors and the exit, the only decoration on the otherwise blank walls, two low-reliefs by Nile Sjögren, skilfully composed to animate a rectangular field, told poetically the birth of decorative arts: an Horae offered a cloak to Venus rising from the wave and a Vulcan presented a mirror shaped by his hands to the goddess. If Ivar Johnsson was known only for his terracotta low-reliefs: The Four Winds, encrusted in the walls of the peristyle; or his gracious compositions modelled on the sides of cast-iron urns, he could be viewed only as a spiritual decorator. But, through the balance and firmness of the body and an intimate ardour where the spirit of the Renaissance comes alive, his statue of David is a masterpiece.

**Czechoslovakia**

Reminders of the Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo prevail throughout central Europe. It would not be surprising to find their traces even in Czechoslovakian decorative art. The Hall of Honour of the Czechoslovakian pavilion attests to this remark. Composed by the architect Paul Janak, this room was of noble proportions, but from the floor to the ceiling and without exception, every surface was covered by a profusion of ornaments.

On the contrary, in architecture, Czechoslovakia enthusiastically adopted the boldest of modernist principles. The Masters whom these young constructors admired and in whom they saw the prophets of the future’s art, are Le Corbusier and the Dutch architects, J.J.P. Oud and Jan Wills. A rectangular base supporting a set-back storey, such was the very simple strategy adopted by Josef Gočár, professor at the School of Fine Arts of Prague, for the Czechoslovakian pavilion. It was constructed using reinforced concrete. But a coating of vibrant red glass panes appears on smooth surfaces of the bedrock, contrasting sharply with the grey nudity of the cement, legitimates the publicity for a national industry which was based in Jablonec nad Nisou, in the Czech Republic (formerly Bohemia). The use of this glass, being not especially shock-resistant, would doubtless be difficult to replicate.

Viewed from the front, the pavilion looked like a nave whose high prow darted through the waves. This prow, however, was not a pure symbol. Instead, its shape allowed for the creation and display of a beautiful oak staircase on the inside, which was illuminated by its glass canopy. On the ground floor, thanks to the concrete, an exhibition gallery occupied with few fulcrums almost the entire surface of the bedrock. There were no windows in order to maximise the space for the wall-mounted display cases,
a glass ceiling let the light fall from invisible lamps on precious items. In the Hall of Honour, tapestries served in place of decorative paintings. As for Czechoslovakian sculpture, its principal representative was an artist named Jean Stursa who was born in 1880, and died during the year of the Exhibition. When he was young, he was the leader of the movement and taught at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague. Departing from Impressionism, he arrived, through observation, reflection, and determination, to render increasingly precise and full forms, where visual beauty was never separated from expression. Was this a farewell to life, the gesture of this genius who, so firmly planted in front of the Czechoslovakian prow, seemed to be welcoming in the new days with a confident and joyous wave of the hand?

Russia

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR) undertook great works of architecture. The search for features in these constructions reminiscent of buildings erected at the time of the tsars would be in vain. On the other hand, these buildings present a striking analogy with the works of Le Corbusier and André Lurçat, Walter Gropius, De Dessau, Frank, and De Vienna, artists for whom the architects of the "new" Russia did not conceal their admiration. In a country where ideas and theories are so powerful, it was surprising to see the success of modernism stripped of any concession to former practices. At this moment, "modern art" was an imported art for Russia. It is true that in this country, the official architecture of the 18th and 19th centuries did not offer a more national character either.

The pavilion of the USSR could not present the same forms as the new buildings of Moscow. The programme and the materials were very different. But it offered a reasoned solution to an architectural problem. The man for the job, chosen by way of competition, was Melnikov, a very young artist on whom attention had been focused in 1922, by his building of workers’ dwellings. The following year, he put up the Tobacco pavilion at the Agricultural Exhibition and, in 1924, the central market of Moscow. It was he who devised Lenin’s tomb. He had but a small budget, and so created a modest building of wood and glass: a box with windows. A staircase passed diagonally through, and allowed the visitor to take advantage of the view from above in the pavilion. The staircase was covered not by a continuous ceiling, but by a succession of oblique and opposed plans. This provision is seeking to let the air flow whilst preventing the rain from entering, from whichever direction it came. The staircase was truly difficult to climb. The tilted and opposed plans were an imperfect solution for protecting the staircase from the rain. It would have been difficult to give credence to the theory that no traces of paradoxical and arbitrary originality could be seen in the pavilion of the USSR. But, on the whole, Melnikov achieved his goal: to build at very low cost a temporary building, a huge showcase which attracted and enjoyed attention. In the USSR's section at the Grand Palais, models for a monument of the twenty-six people’s commissars in Bakou, and various architectural projects were marked by a theatrical flair and a certain megalomania specific to the revolutionary times.
Furniture and Furniture Sets

The 1925 Exhibition contained a classification never before seen in previous exhibitions: that of furniture sets. Architects had given up composing pieces of furniture as Robert de Cotte had done, creating pieces for Versailles, Jean-François Heurtier and Charles François Darnaudin in arranging the Louis XVI library, and Charles Percier in designing the cradle for the King of Rome. The architect limited his domain to permanent decoration later supplemented by the tapestry-maker; in this setting, the cabinetmaker would later place his pieces of furniture.

Such a concept would lead to a triple failure: the stylish decorations made in advance by the architect could hardly lend themselves to the work of the tapestry-maker, nor to the presentation of the cabinetmakers' models. The cause of this discordance has to be sought in the generalisation of rented apartments. A permanent residence, such as the old mansions of the 18th century, needed an ephemeral decoration, no longer suitable for a rented apartment, which hosted new tenants every three, six, or nine years. It is to the honour of some architects to have revived, at the end of the 19th century, the past tradition of designing an entire interior. Thus, at the Exposition Universelle of 1900, in the French section, furniture sets could be seen, particularly those of Plumet made in collaboration with cabinetmaker Tony Selmersheim. The first interior designers, being architects, tended to convert the furniture into permanent decoration by connecting the book-cases to the skirting boards, the divans to the book-cases, and even the tables to the divans. A particular piece of furniture thus lost its movable nature and simply became part of the architecture.

The beginning of this century reflected a new development. France, along with a majority of other European countries, replaced stylish decoration with simpler provisions which were more neutral, making it possible to modify the environment more easily. Thus, each element resumes its place and its role: within all the hangings and architectural lines, movable objects respond to a certain necessity and are complete in themselves. These tendencies are geared towards the new classification of the 1925 Exhibition. Decorators of whole furniture, whether for dwellings or transport, fall into Class VII. Cabinetmakers comprise Class VIII. Both classes are in intimate embrace. Sets of furniture have always reflected the spirit and morals of a time. If architecture affirms the development and the taste of a civilisation, interior design, easier to recycle, provides us with intimate, precise, and meticulous details about daily life.

More “modern” decorators – amongst whom, in France and abroad, were a great number of architects – succeeded in applying those doctrines to furniture which the customers would not allow them to try out on more costly constructions: they introduced the notion of space into furnishing and interior decoration. Drawing upon all the different elements intended to coexist in the same location, they took the name of interior designers, hence intending to indicate the one who takes overall responsibility,
who knows the resources of all trades who he must call upon, who arranges them and organises them for a joint task, composing and assembling them, associating good taste with an exact technique. The interior designer should not only be a tapestry maker capable of making a success of hangings, sets of furniture, and objects, but he also needs to be an architect and an engineer. As Émile Sedeyn, gossip of the Admission Board of Class VII once said, “the feeling for decoration had evolved out of a pressing need; it evolved with the innovations that had been carried out in the art of building, with new materials, with new approaches to hygiene, comfort, and luxury: it evolved more and more closely alongside living conditions”. Never before had so much concern been raised about the scale of the components which composed an interior; never had anyone been more concerned about a dominant architecture, insisting that the slightest object be linked with the unit as a whole. In the conceptions of “modern” decorators, each element applies not only by what it offers but also by what it receives. All these exchanges as a whole compose “the unit”.

Paul Theodore Frankl,
Puzzle desk, c. 1927.
Red lacquer, silver leaf, silver-plated knobs, height: 83.8 cm.

Pierre Legrain,
Table and stool, c. 1924.
Silver and black lacquered wood and chrome-plated metal.
Henri Rapin, Pierre Selmersheim and others, 
Grand Salon of the French Embassy, 1925 Paris Exhibition.
Contemporary developments and trends

Researching new formulas to express real life through decoration was a popular concept around this time. Everyone decorated according to their degree of evolution and social level. This explains the differences between contemporary designs such as those which come from countries like Poland and Holland, animated by the same spirit of comprehensive renovation. Recent scientific inventions and their industrial applications resulted in a universal abandonment of the pastiche. Steam and electricity deeply transformed the way of life of the common person. The development of transport and communication “shrank” the world and extended the playing field available to individuals. On such a horizon, broadened by the progress of mechanisation, emerges a new – more masculine, more assertive, more proactive – beauty, knowing nothing of trinkets, whose sporting dress fits tightly to the body. This beauty is in line with logic and movement. At that time, everything varied according to speed. This style comes from the impact of life on artistic invention. Increased knowledge and the great number of new materials determined the search for innovative forms and tones. The structure of buildings influenced that of manufactured objects. Art Deco furniture, with its sensitive severity due to sleek and carefully studied curved lines and calculated dimensions, is similar to the simple architecture of reinforced concrete which forms part of our civilisation.
For a great many centuries, humanity built only with wood, stone, dry earth, or terracotta. It seemed that all possible combinations had been exhausted, when two other materials became available: iron and reinforced concrete. Art Deco no longer sought to please through unnecessary ornamentation, but rather through moderation: balanced forms, harmony of proportions and tones, and a contrast of lights and shades – such are its essential principles. Within the variety of the styles expressed in the Exhibition, these tendencies were common to the majority of the exhibitors, regardless of their nationality.

The notion of hygiene exerted the most profound influence on habits and daily lives. Hygiene, formerly rejected, became an important concern for builders. Walking through the galleries exhibiting furniture sets, a great number of kitchens, bathrooms, and toilet facilities could be seen and were often studied by the visitors. They testified to the strong interest the public had taken in health issues in recent years. Hygienic concerns, however, did not only result in the creation of new rooms and customs – it also had an impact on the appearance of the interior, such as large openings of bay windows and parquet wood panelling up to the ceiling, mainly intended to let in air and light, just like the type of windows employed in hospitals. As a consequence of the fight against microbes, the tapestries were removed, as they trapped dust. This also explains the emergence of smooth surfaces, as well as pieces of furniture without moulding or cornices.

Lighting also contributed to this new atmosphere created for us by hygiene. However, its use and distribution quickly posed complex problems. With regard to natural light, Western people have always endeavoured to let as much in as possible. But also, throughout the ages, the construction requirements have more or less limited the scope of availability. It could be noted that there was a general tendency to open up vast bay windows, taking up the length of a wall, from floor to ceiling, with its size. For the artificial lighting, electricity offered, so to speak, inexhaustible possibilities. However, of all the industries which contributed to the comfort of domestic life, indoor lighting was the last on the scene. Inventors of appliances did not follow on from the progress accomplished over the last century by gas, oil, and electricity; they remained, for the most part, slaves to the old styles.

The Exhibition suggested many new solutions. Electrical installations varied in accordance with the setting of the object it served. In a dining-room, the table should be lit with an even and soft light without directly striking the eyes or casting sharp shadows on the table cloth and crystal glasses. In addition, a chandelier that hangs from the ceiling of the living room can contribute to the glitter of receptions and its rays illuminate guests’ evening wear and adornments. Artists and industrialists have to forget all memory of past models ever used for other purposes, and concentrate on one unique issue: the production of a device built to use the electric source of lighting. It is not sufficient for the artist to have taste, or for the industrialist to master the technique. They cannot be unaware of the principles of hygiene, the general laws of optics, or the phenomena which govern the emission of light. Science had to be taken into account when designing decoration for lighting. Artists could not ignore the laboratory research.

Resources offered by natural or artificial materials have always been used in furniture sets, with a view to establishing harmonies or contrasts between fixed decoration and pieces of furniture.
Painted walls contrasted with cedar seats encrusted with ivory and trimmed with leather in the style of the Egyptians, and with turned or engraved bronze furniture, in the Greek and Roman traditions. Whilst the Arabs covered the halls of the Alhambra with ceramics, artists of the Middle Ages combined the polychromic tapestries with the severe tones of the ceilings, the skirting, and pieces of furniture made from carved oak. The Italian Renaissance introduced marble coverings, ceilings decorated with plaster and paintings, and encrusted or inlaid pieces of furniture to France. Spain’s imagination produced embossed, gilded, and painted leather coverings. In France, in the 17th and 18th centuries, square parquet flooring and deluxe, hand-made French carpets supported brass- and tortoiseshell-coated furniture, decorated with chiselled bronze; gilded wooden chairs with coverings of silk or tapestry, surrounded by such magnificent decor as white marble walls accentuated with gold, mirrors, and cut-crystal. At the end of the 18th century, painted wall panels framed mahogany furniture decorated with bronze, and the introduction of fabric wall-coverings succeeded in creating a cosy bourgeois feel. The amount of materials and techniques at the architect’s disposal increased substantially in the last few centuries.

Solid woods owe their artistic effect to its structure, cutting, turning, and to mouldings and sculptures. Mechanical tools allow fast and precise execution of any work which does not require handiwork. Cabinetmakers do not only use oak, walnut, ash, and beech, but also exotic woods which were formerly seen as being rare and precious; though unsuitable for use on a large-scale, they were not becoming as common as those of local provenance. It is much easier to apply the solid wood technique to these exotic woods, as they offer almost twice the resistance of European woods. It is, therefore, possible to reduce its thickness, the new lighter furniture ultimately producing a new decorative look. Moreover, these exotic woods have colours which have made them deeply desirable as veneers. Their hardness may have caused a great transformation in the use of contemporary tools and simplifications in moulding or sculpture, but is it not through changes of materials and techniques that art is renewed?

For veneers, the thin layers formerly obtained with a saw, have since become sliced or rotary-cut. This second process makes it possible to use tree trunks of a very small diameter, in addition, it makes the use of defective woods possible which are often the most decorative, such as maples or the purple woods of America, and we can make full use of the burrs. Laid out like a piece of cloth, these burrs provide panels which can be assembled symmetrically. They offer a splendour which no composition could equal. Surfaces can be decorated by the wood itself and these vast sheets with a decorative foliage pattern deserve the most sumptuous marquetry.

Slicing also allows burrs – forks which tighten the fibres at the beginning of large branches – to be used which, when not used as a solid wood, has a shiny appearance. Thus, not being satisfied with using the various shades of local or exotic woods, it was possible, as De Sizeranne pointed it out, to choose the parts being moulded by nature itself amongst the following species, to get even more variety:

Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann,
‘Dubly’ games table, 1933.
Macassar ebony veneer,
white shagreen, silver-plated bronze,
74 x 84.5 cm.

Burrs of amboyna, rosewood, walnut, mahogany, elm, and thuja, everything that is spotted, speckled, striped, mottled, curly or flamed, everything that is splattered with concentric veins like in agate or wavy like in marble.
Edgar Brandt,
*Oasis*, folding screen, c. 1924.
Iron and copper.
In addition to the finest woods, cabinetmakers used ivory, mother-of-pearl, copper, and tortoiseshell. Chemical discoveries over the years added synthetic products, the richest of which is pearloid, a cellulose-based French invention using pearl essence. The design of bentwood seats, first developed in Austria, is based on very different principles. For this special work, green wood is sawn along the grain of the wood, beech, walnut, and ash being the most preferred. Steamed and shaped, the finished parts are dried and turned into durable material which will retain its shape. In 1924, the wood furniture industry curved light and sturdy bentwood into simple yet pleasant shapes which came to be greatly appreciated. Straw, rattan, and reeds also played a very important role in "modern" furnishing. Initially used for garden or greenhouse furniture, they are now used in coffee shops and restaurants, and even as luxury furnishing in halls, galleries, and living rooms of country houses. This type of furniture, whose production before the First World War was almost exclusively German and Austrian, began to be manufactured in France, particularly in the Haute-Marne region, in the north-east of the country. The use of woven bamboo – at that time, a recently revived ancient Japanese industry – also became more prevalent.

Metal, especially iron, was rarely employed before, other than for special purposes such as church lecterns and gold-gilded console furniture for apartments. But it harmonised with the wooden furniture and fixed decor. For hygienic reasons, metal played a great part in the construction of beds, where it was used as edging for the frame, or for round or square iron bedposts, in long, hollow tubes. Combining health research and the quest for new aesthetics, complete furniture sets made of copper or aluminium, with glass panels or shelves, were used in bedrooms and bathrooms. Wrought iron also became more flexible, intruding in private lives and imposing itself into homes. Not only does it exist in lighting equipment and radiator screens, but also in supports or mirror frames, consoles, flares, screens, folding screens, sideboards, even tables and seats – it has many uses. Wrought, matte, polished, or gilded metal gives rise to various effects, harmonising force and lightness, simplicity and splendour. Autogenous welding and mechanical embossing made it possible to carry out a series of works that were intended to spread the notion of taste amongst all social classes. An entire range of metal furniture, cupboards, and racks adapted to the furnishing of offices. The seats of coffee shop terraces are have their names embossed on them. Should true modernism not fully implement all the means of production and action of this time? Industrial creation can become a source of inspiration for the artist.

The machine, in terms of the metalwork industry, has proven its performance much more satisfactorily than handmade works. In kitchens and bathrooms, the enamel coating on cast iron contributes a pleasant aspect to heating appliances and ensures easy maintenance. Combined with wood in the construction of furniture, metal never reached the exceptional popularity which gilded bronze maintained in the 18th century where it protected veneers and fragile edges. And yet, the veneer technique plays a crucial role in contemporary furniture. In terms of seat upholstery, the large variety of shades obtained by dyeing multiplies the uses of leather. If hygienic requirements reduced or caused the disappearance of draping around beds and windows, the role of the tapestry maker became more important than ever for the upholstery of the seats. When wood became flexible and adapted to the shape of the human body, upholstery complemented it.
With the rigid lines of "modern" aesthetics, direct contact with the body had to be avoided – an art which required the modelling of the fabric, whose volume and contours form part of the outline and proportions of the seat.

Permanent decoration is often seen in marble (whose methodical extraction developed their unique and infinite colouration), stucco or various other polished materials; all these make provision for the taut architectural lines and provide a valuable setting for furniture. Mirrors, moulded or engraved glass and stained glass windows irradiate natural light and filter electric light. Ceramics and mosaics are typical materials for hygienic installations, such as kitchens and bathrooms. In the absence of these materials, enameled metal sheets and even wipeable wallpaper offer economic solutions. For the floors: cork tiles fixed with binder or wooden mosaics of parquetry without joints for easy maintenance. Rubber is used to manufacture smooth washable floor coverings, which can be decorated to give it an artistic character.

Thanks to the use of these resources, a more "modern" art came to be, though this was traditional at the same time, as it was based on established and original criteria, despite the newness of the elements. An aesthetic then emerged, based on simplicity, respect of the materials, and the will to tailor-fit the form to the destination. Nothing could attest better than the evolution of furniture, to the existence of such an international community linking the various aspirations of the then modern artists.

French section

The renaissance of furniture in France dates to the end of the 19th century. It is because of the architects who applied their talent as constructors to research innovative shapes for furniture and to the decorators who, in refusing copy the old styles, borrowed its decorative themes from nature. However, their error was, according to Sedeyn, "to have wanted to start it all over again, rather than merely continuing on". They forgot that the centuries are, as Renan said it, pages of the same book and that an innovation is often nothing but a forgotten truth. The majority of them approached the study of furniture as if it were a very new question, as in the successful manner in which vehicle bodywork was undertaken. They would fail to recognise the rights and prestige of the past, established practices, and the attachment to the past. The public marked its disapproval.

Decorators of the 1900s did not give up because their efforts were based on solid personal convictions. Thanks to them, we witnessed the splendid blooming of Art Deco, fine tuned and developed over thirty years of experience and research. A major determinant of such change is that it is based on tradition. They did not in any way disavow tradition, but rather reconnected with it, reuniting art with functionality and developing a contemporary expression which is the obvious result of previous expressions. As De Souza points out extremely well, "a tradition is not a fixed thing; it is alive and changes its course". To achieve this goal, the inclusion of industrialists could only be a good thing, bringing a wealth of indispensable experience. The union of artists and manufacturers, long-awaited and finally come about, was what made the French section so successful in 1925. If the Parisian artists and industrialists, principal representatives of the French participation,
were subject to the general influences of “modern” evolution, it was only because they followed the conditions that were created by the traditions and customs of the capital. Apartment buildings no longer had the high storeys of the “Grand Siècle”, or 17th century. Built in expensive locations, it was necessary to multiply the number of apartments, whilst strictly limiting their height. To match with the rooms, the seats and beds were low, and the wardrobe with a full-length mirror replaced by the sideboard.

The high price of land led to a decrease in the surface area of each room, and therefore the number of pieces of furniture was reduced. The architects returned to using the vast walk-in cupboards of the previous centuries, which had proved to be very useful in Japanese houses. The innovators made an effort to minimise the obstruction of furniture which distorted the proportions and was detrimental to the distribution of space. To protect themselves from the cold, the rooms used to be well closed; however, since central heating came about and distributed an equal temperature throughout, wide open bay windows allow the decorator to either join the rooms together or isolate them completely. The lady’s bedroom and study exhibited by Kohlmann were only separated by doors and Rapin used the same means of separation within an ensemble which constituted a living room and a dining-room. In fact, the specialisation of the rooms, which was common over the last two centuries, was slowly becoming obsolete.

Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann, ‘Cabanel’ chiffonier, c. 1921-1922. Macassar ebony veneer, glass, and ivory, 133.5 x 75.5 x 39.5 cm. Private collection.

Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann, Pair of ‘Listel’ chairs, c. 1925. Macassar ebony on an oak frame, silver-plated bronze and silk, height: 89.5 cm. Private collection.
In apartments where the space is limited but the rent is expensive, it appears illogical to leave some of the rooms unoccupied. We have witnessed the gradual phasing out of the living room, and then of the dining-room; the Exhibition presented only a small number of rooms for specific purposes. The reception rooms looked more like a hall or a studio, designed like an artist’s workshop. Those who exhibited rooms gave them names such as relaxation lounge, intimacy lounge, music room, or boudoir. The living room no longer offers us the luxury which was once intended for exceptional receptions, the glitz and glamour is missing; it has a more noble aspect, though it is not exempt from comfort. French diners began to move to the corner of the dining-room while the table was being cleared, for tea, cigars, and conversation. It is closer to the English living room, German Wohnzimmer, and, in a return to the past, the hall of the Middle Ages. Here, family and daily life occur. This transformation also holds part of the answer to the influence that women exert, in Paris more than everywhere else, on domestic appliances. Like these, the apartment adopted a freer style; it became more welcoming and people lived in all the rooms.

Even the shape of furniture varies with the changing fashions for women. Just as a sack-back gown would not allow for a voyage in the metro, in the same way the long corset, an 18th-century fashion, would not have permitted the user to sit on low and deep couches or in the hollow armchair which are so inviting for a rest after a hectic day. Female whim continued to reign supreme in the boudoir. Light and mobile furniture, cushions, and soft sofas covered with animal skins all imparted a fun, yet subtle appearance. The decorators gave free reign to their imagination in these sets, which did not require any traditional kind of furniture. Thus, female influence has a direct bearing on every aspect of the interior installation. The decorator softens his personal designs with the ever-dominant taste of a housewife. Besides, this discrete collaboration is highly desirable as women have more of a flair for intimacy than men.
The seduction which emanates from a private room is felt deeply when visiting the pavilion of the La Maîtrise Studio, where the bedroom by Maurice Dufrène is exhibited. On the other hand, it was absent from certain pieces, more comfortable than pleasing, where the different components were balanced with stale dimensional accuracy.

The study can also be suitable for new research; it has been interpreted in a number of ways. Pierre Chareau designed a study-library illuminated by a cupola. Michon and Pigé created the ideal installation for a factory manager: a loudspeaker would keep him updated about the Stock Exchange over the course of the day and the production figures of the various workshops were displayed on a board lit up by flashing lights. The types of offices varied according to profession, but they were all designed for orderliness and concision. There is no more time to play around with knick-knacks; clutter is feared. Some creators championed the empty cell, with harmonious proportions, in which the spirit communes without the sight being distracted.

The same spirit of cleanliness appears in the kitchen, butlery, and bathroom. The importance of kitchens within furniture sets presented at the Exhibition testified to the increasingly utilitarian tendency of the “modern” applied arts. Some of them were singularly attractive, such as that of Jacques Bonnier in the Pavilion of Arts applied to Trade or the one designed by Madeleine Sougez in the apartment carried out by Primavera. That of Rene Gabriel, made for the Harmand Establishments, fully met the requirements of that time. Ceramics appear in all its shapes from floor coverings to tiling. Luxury results from cleanliness; the wall materials, the generous proportions of surfaces and objects contribute to its achievement. Bathrooms were numerous in the French section. There are, indeed, very few contemporary apartments which do not reserve a space for hydrotherapy. In luxury installations, we can note a tendency to remove the bathtub and to replace it with a basin dug in the ground.

**Presentation of the French section**

These general trends guided the exhibitors of the French section in the choice and presentation of their works. In the galleries reserved for Class VII on the Esplanade des Invalides, and those of Class XIX, gathering together furniture sets intended for transport at the quay of Orsay, everywhere the preoccupation appeared to provide a plan to give the public, to the maximum extent possible, the illusion of a real vicinity of the various rooms. For the organisation of the gallery adjoining the tower of Paris, Pierre Chareau, a bold innovator, decided on an extremely clever architectural concept. The stands leaned two by two, one against the other, on a triangular plan, presenting splay walls and conferring a great diversity to the overall aspect, whilst making it possible to consider each of the isolated rooms off a vast central hall.

Imitating this first grouping, between two halls of great style, Pierre Selmersheim arranged a gallery in a logical and attractive way. Thanks to skilful provisions, the architect was able to avoid all monotony in the presentation of the stands. A large octagonal hall, containing a sculpted decoration by Hairon, gave the visitor the impression of crossing through a succession of apartments.
Upon leaving the Selmersheim Gallery, the visitor would enter the buildings adjacent to the Tower of the Champagne region, arranged by Maurice Dufrêne who, curling round the passageways at the ends, allowed Lucie Renaudot, on one hand, to organise a studio designed for the Maison Dumas and for some young people, on the other hand, to exhibit the "niche" of an artist’s workshop. Joseph Hiriart, Georges Tribout, and Georges Beau arranged a transverse gallery which ended at the Saint-Dominique-Constantine door. To avoid monotonous alignments, they would have preferred the stands to be discovered little

Eileen Gray,
Folding screen, c. 1928.
Lacquered wood.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
by little in perspective. Their site was divided into two galleries and three halls, sowed bright stains on the sobriety of the general decoration.

The same effort was attempted in the presentation of furniture pieces separately exhibited at the Grand Palais; the organisers quickly found themselves with great difficulties. They had to set up the exhibits of very diverse nature in a homogeneous way. In addition, it was important that the raw material manufacturers were acknowledged and pleased with the final product,
even though the regulations of the Exhibition did not accept unfinished objects. The Installation Committee of Class VIII, however, felt it would be interesting to make way, in this category of furniture, for the art of plywood, which had transformed contemporary cabinetmaking. They also considered it useful to put emphasis on various leather treatments, which supplemented these provisions. It was not enough to present skins which were merely tanned. What’s more, it was not enough to just stand pieces of furniture against the wall. Pierre Patout imagined placing them on platforms and insulating them by means of folding screens. He asked the leather manufacturers to furnish sixty folding screens with variations of elaborate skins, so as to establish mobile stands of interesting appearance and whose warm tones blended harmoniously with the blue of the carpet and the pearl-grey draperies.

Similarly, department stores grouped all of the rooms of the home around the central halls. At the beginning of the 20th century, each leading Parisian fabric store had a “modern art” workshop directed by an eminent artist-decorator. This innovation improved and enriched the production of ceramics, glassmaking, goldsmith’s art, hanging fabrics, and furnishing in general. This is an effective means of propaganda for “modern” art. The department stores made a point of presenting the works of their workshops at the Exhibition of 1925. They did it in a way which evidenced the seriousness of their attempt and the exposure that they intended to give it. This strong commitment to trade and industry constitutes a great victory for contemporary decorators. A tour of the pavilions of the Parisian department stores showed that far from obeying a certain trend or particular fashion, each one of them contributed harmony, designs, and a means which are unique to its production of “modern” art.

Le Printemps department store took the lead in setting up the Primavera workshop as early as 1912. Is it due to this anteriority that it presented works of a more frank originality, of a more daring modernism? The dining-room and study by Marcel Guillemard and the boudoir and bedroom of Louis Sognot highlight the constructive line taken: surfaces are bare, the lines simple and sturdy. The grace and cheerfulness come from the colour of the materials, hangings, and carpets. As a whole, the Primavera pavilion constitutes a true presentation of doctrines. Sedeyn wrote:

The very typical French personality of Maurice Dufrêne appears in each detail of the pavilion of the La Maîtrise Studio. It is known that he repudiated violence, but was extremely convincing. Here there is no theory, constructive approach, or anything else other than a marvellous aptitude to tackle the most varied problems and solve them with a soft, easy, often brilliant, elegance.

Diversity characterises the Louvre auditorium. If the study by Djo Bourgeois marks an accentuated modernism, the reception room of André Fréchet, Pierre Lahalle, and Georges Levard, in amaranth and silver plated wood, and their boudoir made from lemon wood, are designed in a way which will appear more reassuring to amateurs whose taste is still unsure. In the pavilion of the Bon Marché department store, housing creations of the Pomone workshop, managed by Paul Follot with the greatest possible professional competency, the atmosphere is more peaceful. Colour, lines, and general harmony arise under a calm, elegant, plush, contemplative appearance.
The participation of the French provinces was ensured through their representative pavilions. The presentation of furniture sets varied in accordance with the areas and the visitor could undertake the most suggestive voyages from the pavilion of Brittany organised by Lemordant, to the two houses of Alsace. The *Mas*, or traditional Farmhouse of Provence, the pavilion of the Alpes-Maritimes, and the enclosed flower gardens of Normandy submitted appealing regional entries; the exhibition of the Berry-Nivernais region with a small land holding, was a model of practical and original research. In the pavilion of North Africa, the Tunisian, Algerian, and Moroccan sections were juxtaposed. Tunisia presented an Arabian pavilion with a patio and dining-room, where marble and ceramics made up not only the benches and the tables, but also covered the walls, the study where the softwood lumber industry triumphed, lounges with their inlays and leather, and a gynaecium and bedroom decorated with carpets. Each Tunisian industry represented reflected a tendency towards a new orientation likely to be adapted to “modern” taste. For the Algerian section, pieces of furniture were grouped and displayed with a decoration of admirable carpets. Morocco, through its carved cedar works, sets of furniture, and leather cushions, used traditional forms to express the new life they discovered through research. The colonies also made a laudable effort: the pavilions of French Indochina and colonial art grouped units from creators such as Pierre Chareau, René Gabriel, René Prou, the Muratore brothers, Marcel Bernanose, and Albert Durier.

Other examples of presentations made in accordance with daily life populated the French Village, in particular the furniture which was designed by Leon Jallot and made by Pierre Gouffé for the Carde pavilion, or the two installations executed by Mathieu Gallerery for the “Weaver’s House” and the “Bourgeois House”. The fitting-out of all public buildings, such as the coffee shops and the restaurants, comes under Class VII. Indeed, this was extremely important for propagating new ideas. The public realised that it was possible to live agreeably in a setting which was considered foreign to them,

Pierre Legrain,
‘Python’ table, c. 1928.
Nickel-plated wood and snakeskin.
but with an environment which they could gradually get used to. It was the very

decoration of life which the shops of the Alexandre III Bridge displayed and of the gallery

built by Henri Sauvage, in about sixty units in which Dim, Sézille, Temporal, Bernel,

Crémier, and others demonstrated, with an amazing variety, their practicality and

salesmanship. Shops had come a long way since the sombre shops of the 19th century – the

“modern” shops, from the window displays down to the unimaginably minute details of the

interior, strive to attract attention, to seduce. It is promotional and didactic. The

decorators employed a subtle, yet playful art, experimenting with materials and lights. If,

amongst the findings, we were to search for a common theme, we would find it in both the

sumptuous and discrete quality of the presentation: the sumptuousness of the material

and the discretion of its employment, not detracting from the value of the objects on sale.

Each firm draws on the nature of its trade. The shop windows and counters were

transformed into jewel cases for one or more first-rate items. Elsewhere, an effort was

made to divide the abundance of materials. Further still, mannequins of a new kind were

employed, whose silhouettes introduced into commercial units, an appearance so life-like

that it could not exist with banal wax figures.
Out of all the furniture pavilions, the most complete and imposing was set up in the side galleries of the Court of Trades by the Society of Artist-Decorators which, for a quarter of a century, had played a great role in the evolution of applied art. The Directorate of Fine Arts had entrusted this group to carry out a project comprising the building of the reception and private apartments of the French embassy. The general organisation was carried out by two architects: Pierre Selmersheim drew up plans for the official apartment, and Louis-Pierre Sézille those of the private rooms. Some of France’s best creators took part in it. Several of the pieces of furniture exhibited could be judged in the same league as some of the most splendid examples of past styles. As soon as the visitor would enter Pierre and Tony Selmersheim’s vestibule, the office-library made by Louis-Hippolyte Boileau and Charles Carrière, furnished by Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann, in the small living room by Maurice Dufrêne or in the smoking-room by Jean Dunand, he would sense an art of the highest taste. Two essential concerns were imposed on the creators: the architectural study of dimensions and atmosphere of the rooms.

The reception hall, composed by Henri Rapin and Pierre Selmersheim, showed that the decorators, often accused of indigence, are able to design rooms as sumptuous as those of the Louis XIV era. The furniture in this formal room stood side by side with pieces of furniture created by Leon Jallot, Jules Leleu, Louis Sue and Andre Pond, Pierre-Paul Montagnac, and Nathan and Léon-Émile Bouchet without clashing. Wall-hangings and carpets emanated a delicate symphony, demonstrating the intimate union between the artist and manufacturer. In the private apartments of the embassy, from the entrance by Paul Follot and the lady’s room by André Groult, to the installations of the purest modernism created by Robert Mallet-Stevens, Francis Jordain, and Pierre Chareau, the diverse designs were nevertheless close without disparity. Each room of the embassy, despite the formal and lavish character of some of them, is open and welcoming. The lack of windows is not due to a fear of the daylight but because the buildings conceded to the Society of Artist-Decorators did not have any. This difficulty deprived the organisers of many resources. It is conceivable that such a presentation would have been charming and sumptuous had it been possible to liven it up with stained glass windows or blinds with embroidery and lace. Between the reception hall and the private sphere of the embassy there was a large space, whose furnishing had been entrusted to Michel Roux-Spitz. The antechamber of a Ministry of Fine Arts building and a collection hall made one appreciate the artist’s sober taste. Among the most striking achievements of French furniture sets, the installation of a railway carriage of the Paris-Orléans Railway Company should be mentioned, including a smoking-room by Francis Jourdain and a ladies’ salon by Maurice Dufrêne. Finally, Paul Poiret’s three furnished barges were among the exhibits of a personal inspiration and successful achievement, uniting a perfect balance of comfort and delicate imagination. Sedeyn wrote:

Since 1900, the dominant trait of artistic production is, in all branches, individualism. There are still leading figures, around whom group young people at their beginnings whose vocation seeks a momentary support, an orientation. Strictly speaking there are no more school leaders. Personality is considered to be an essential merit. As a consequence, many artists try to create a personal touch before having studied the grammar of their art. Every artist dreams to dig his own furrow and to work in freedom, without having...

André Groult,
Chiffonier, 1925.
Mahogany, ivory and sharkskin,
Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris.
to learn doctrines or disciplines unfamiliar to his spirit. This ambition, so common, leads to a remarkable productivity and inevitable disorder. We saw many examples of this as much amongst the decorators as amongst the sculptors and painters, and contemporaries who want a style at any cost could end up getting irritated. Does individualism have any other effect than to multiply the appearance of some general truths, and does it not exert against these truths by dispersing its power and consequently delaying its revelation in a concrete and final form, which is nothing more than the style, or at least its germination?

The general appearance of the French section shows that in 1925 individualism, matured over time, continues its research along fewer and fewer divergent paths. Admittedly, it had not yet arrived at this sovereign harmony, this equilibrium of style, this perfection which measures taste and discourages invention, but the basis of a solid agreement already exists. Depending on his temperament, his age, culture, and environment, the artist who undertakes the study of furniture sets, thinks of the present or the future. He thinks of the present if he designs his work for one of his contemporaries, careful and calm, he attempts to carry out a transitional decor. Whilst largely taking into account the new harmony of the home, and whilst knowing how to use new materials, fabrics, carpets, and tapestries which the industry created for him, he makes a point of preserving the environment, thus creating a calm and discrete decor which summarises the French tradition and binds us to it with such powerful bonds. If he mainly thinks of the future, if he is more ambitious, he will be attracted by boldness. If he rejects the outdated tradition to assert his own concept of the “modern” interior, then he will carry out a work that is frankly newer, probably more fruitful but which, in contrast with the accepted ideas and practices, will offer a less direct and less reassuring seductive power. Of these two mindsets, it can be said that the first one adapts while the second one creates. They are united in their common search for average dimensions, simple surfaces, pure lines, and sumptuous materials.

The furniture assembled by Maurice Dufrêne in the pavilion of the La Maîtrise Studio is that which an artist would enjoy designing for a prince who, in the past, held a taste for grandeur and, in the present, all the finesse of this sensibility, and the subtle refinement of literary culture. His grey and blue dining-room evoked a wonderland with the crystal and polished steel table, where fountains met a flicker of the light: magic in harmony with a 1920s elegance, daring necklines, and light silks of rare tones.

In the Hôtel d’un Collectionneur, built by the Ruhlmann group, the main room is a large living room in rotunda. The effect seems to be restricted to mural decoration; the furniture is stocky and collected around itself. The wall covering, made by Henri Stéphany, is an opulent grey silk, decorated with vases and garlands. Émile Gaudissart drew his inspiration from flora for the decoration of the carpet and the seats. On the main panel of a large lacquered cabinet by Jean Dunand, feature two animals squaring up to one another. This grandiose set, dominated by Rigal’s painted ceiling, shows off the intuitions of the great creator that was Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann. The dining-room, study, bedroom, and even the boudoir bear the stamp of his considered talent, his taste for clean lines and subtle harmonies which demonstrate a fine sense of luxury. The spacious lounge in rotunda,
in the pavilion of the Musée d’Art Contemporain of Sue and Mare (Company of French Arts), also exhibited illustrated wall-hangings and upholstery: flowers and fruit on the walls and scenes with figures on the backs of the seats. A large basket-shaped glass chandelier hangs down from the dome. As sumptuous as the art of Ruhlmann may be, Sue and Mare’s art seems more simple and plentiful.

The Maison Mercier Frères, one of oldest establishments of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, was also one of the first to adopt the “modern” movement. Their large dining-room, designed by Raymond Quibel, is not one of these works of moderated inspiration through which the industry usually expresses cautious support with new ideas. This is a resolutely original set: a grey stone framework with mauve inlay, decorated with large panels of brown, purple, and green shades, a pink marble frieze, a yellow carpet with black foliage pattern and bevelled mirrors. In this setting, the greyish tones, the green marble chimney, and the green upholstery of the seats, produce an impression of freshness and meditation. A large table of polished rosewood with fold-down extensions adds a peaceful note to these bold colours.

Despite the simple design, these sets provide a luxurious feeling through the use of beautiful colonial wood and it is perhaps amongst them that forms of furniture best designed to suit their purpose could be found. The desire to highlight the beauty of the wood explains the extent of the forms, the vast plain surfaces, and the adoption of solid doors. On the other hand, some purely utilitarian considerations suggest research and lead to many ingenious discoveries. The dining-room table becomes round or oval in shape; angles are avoided in the profile of its plateau. A central pillar of a harmonious shape or a double support at the ends replaces the old and often distasteful table legs, always an inconvenience. The dresser has become a closed cupboard with solid doors, where silver and porcelain find true shelter. Its oblong shape is created by its high wood panelling and stitched fabric panels. The sideboard is but a replica, with nothing on the outside except the occasional beautiful piece of jewellery, copperware, or ceramic. Like the dressers, the cupboards are broad, tall, and monumental. The taste and customs of this time demanded dresses, lingerie, and beauty accessories more and more. There were few sculptures: the decoration draws its effects from simple marquetry, with metal or ivory inlays. Sculptor and inlayer rarely evoke flora or fauna themes. Picturesque ornamentation seemed for a time to be finished; only lines without figurative intention are drawn. In lieu of imposing ideas or images, the ornament merely suggests a pretext for reverie. This decorative refinement is very similar to that found in the oriental tapestries which we have admired for many centuries.

From André-Charles Boulle’s creations, combining tortoiseshell with copper, through those of Martin Carlin who allied engraved bronzes with Chinese lacquers, or those of Guillaume Benneman inlaying Wedgwood cameos, the sideboard was the most luxurious expression of arts past, and continued to be so through contemporary art. In a work designed by Bouchet and carried out by G.E.J. Dennery, the cross-pieces and legs, delicately moulded and carved, highlight the curved surfaces of rosewood, only the lock design with its bronze escutcheon disrupts the unity of the surface. In an admirable sideboard by Ruhlmann, amboyna wood and ivory frame the figures of the central motif; the spherical fluted legs and curvature of the top soften the straight lines which outline the imposing mass.

Floor lamp, presented at the 1925 Paris Exhibition.
Silver-plated bronze and alabaster.
It is perhaps with the small pieces of furniture that cabinetmakers and decorators have shown the most talent. The grace of the ladies writing desks and of the dressers of the 18th century can be found in creations of artists such as André Fréchet or René Gabriel. The fire screen, used in the past to moderate the heat and light of the flames, still gives rise to works full of charm. Decorative artists, without changing the dimensions, renewed their themes. The folding screen, intended to exclude draughts, is naturally built so that its full panels rest directly on the floor; by connecting them with bi-fold hinges, a zigzag installation is obtained, ensuring stability. The lacquer adds a rare sumptuousness to the panels. Other artists prefer to use metal for these pieces to filter the heat or air without stopping its flow completely, thanks to the openings in the decoration. Edgar Brandt and his colleague, architect Henri Favier, affirmed their strong faith in the future of this new art of iron. They showed that it was possible to entrust the decoration of a piece to a metal worker capable of making a lively, elegant and beautiful environment. Although set creators waived decorative bronze furnishings in an attempt to simplify, decorative ironmongery and metalwork remained essential to the mechanics of furniture.

Heeding Charles Lebrun’s example, who was not above designing a lock, artists such as Sue and Mare Montagnac, Prou, Gigou, Le Bourgeois, the Dominique group, and Georges Dunaiame, established a selection of “modern” pieces that are likely to satisfy all the requirements of permanent decoration. They conscientiously focused on recomposing the repertory of the locksmith, plumber, and electrician. Locks, bolts, snaps, key inputs, handles or knobs, finger plates, lever handles, hinges and locking bars or bath faucets, handles, drains, and electric pushbuttons were manufactured in large enough quantities to enable them to be bought in bulk. Firms such as De La Fontaine (specialising in metal doors and frames),

**Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann,**
‘Éventail’ (fan) wall light, c. 1925.
Alabaster and chrome-plated bronze,
45.8 x 69.5 x 37 cm.
Private collection.

**Jean Dunand,**
Bed, c. 1930s.
Lacquered wood.
Bezault (ironmongers), and Bricard (locksmiths), have already expressed interest in collaborating in these manufacturing processes. Especially in respect to furniture, they produced small hardware items tailored to the requirements of the furniture designers: plugs, hinges, handles, rings or drawer knobs, and escutcheons that cheerfully enhance the settings. Some of these small works, embellished with silver enamel, have a luxurious appeal without being too heavy or overbearing.

With regards to the bed, there were few happy revelations. Since it was removed from the mystery of the alcoves and publicly placed in the very centre of the room, this piece of furniture appears to dither between various forms. Sometimes, as if ashamed of itself and its burdensome symbols, it appears under the guise of a couch, at other times it is spread out and draped with an excess of cosiness or ceremony. In the presence of the difficulties which arise from its position, one can understand why, in times past, hygiene was ignored for aesthetic reasons; “the instrument of rest” was always concealed or relegated to an obscure corner of the room. By this time, not only had the bed been given pride of place, but it is more spacious than ever, and designers appear to be extremely hindered by this. Smooth and clear wood is used for their contours, their gleaming, reflective surfaces give the impression of cleanliness; sometimes the wood is replaced with cold marble, then covered with multi-coloured furs or silks. By turns insolent or sad, the simplicity required to set the stage for sleep had yet to be found. The most harmonious effects were obtained in the few rooms where the bed was narrow and fully tailored to the size of the person. Perhaps it was even a faux-pas in these proportions.

There was less inventiveness in the world of seating. The most successful models recall 18th-century seating. Their simple lines give a more or less free and resourceful interpretation of it. The structure of the seat does not lend itself easily to variation. Besides, it is here that the spirit of adaptation is practised, utilising fabrics and trimmings which highlight the “modern” touch. The choice of the fabric is not only important for the appearance of the padded seat, but also for its longevity. They must be highly resistant: to replace tapestry of the 17th and 18th centuries, it is advisable to use more conventional but solid fabrics, such as plain-woven or velvet fabrics; fabrics made with warp-dominated weaving techniques, like satins or twills, wear out very quickly with friction. Amongst the old forms that “modern” art has most ingeniously adapted, is the folding stool which provided the theme for seats in a rigid X-form, developing the two branches at the junction which, curved in scrolls, provided soft armrests. In regards to the chairs, designers found satisfactory answers. They went back to the just principles of construction: the arrangement of the legs, the mid-section and back, the strength of the sections to be assembled, the lightness of the rest of the piece, and its moulding and sculpting were carved out of pieces of square timber. These achievements overcame an unnecessarily naturalistic decoration; they took the same starting point and directions as the craftsmen of yesteryear. The variety of original forms created by the “modern” designers clearly shows that the subject was very far from being exhausted.

The same could be said for the armchairs which, since the Renaissance, have been the most comfortable type of individual seat. The quest for improvement proved relentless. Taking the design for the Gondola Chair, a simplified construction, as a starting point, and modifying its height depending on its destined setting, decorators like Léon Jallot and Paul Follot,
made it eminently French. A comparable tradition does not exist anywhere else and it
would be a slight to the interests of French art to settle for these perfunctory solutions,
which would have been seen as a progress elsewhere, but which would have constituted a
regression for the French style. The formal-looking settee can hardly been seen today
except in official furniture sets. The chaise longue is the type of large seat which
corresponds best to contemporary habits. The comfortable form, the low height of the
seat, and the symmetry of the armrests facilitate the sitting or lying position. Without
imitating the forms of any particular era, the “modern” chaise longue is a logical work
which adapts to the elegance of female fashion. The greatest error, in regard to seats,
consists in pre-determining the forms, on the pretext of making them follow strict lines,
even if it means adding cumbersome padding later on to make up for the lack of comfort
of these forms.

It is precisely this error which architects have to avoid given that, as opposed to traditional
designers, they seek what could be called integral modernism and they confine themselves
to the arid and precise art of the engineer, made with mathematical calculations, to the
detriment of decoration. Pierre Chareau, Robert Mallet-Stevens, and Francis Jourdain are
among those which pursued this scientific vision. The study-library, composed by Chareau
for the Embassy, fulfilled these criteria: he combined simple lines with sumptuous materials
times to the point of monotony. The development of industry, along with the
progress of business, created two new types of office: the factory office and the
commercial office. At that time, some offices for engineering firms evoked the interiors of
a machine, made from metal and insulating matter. As for the personal office, all the major
cities witnessed their take-over of whole houses and even districts; organisations were
created for their mass-produced furnishing. But should such facilities invade our homes?
Is it necessary that the study, in which the scholar locks himself away with his books, be
deprived of all comfort and charm? Is it ideal to reduce the pieces of furniture to their
bare minimum, as Le Corbusier and Jeanneret seemed to prefer in their pavilion dedicated
to the New Spirit? Nowhere does the practical approach appear better placed than in the
installation of transport. The surface area is limited, so it should thus be used with the
utmost ingenuity to maximise comfort. In addition, the weight of the objects must be
considered in order to ensure the transport’s stability and traction. To give the traveller
freedom of movement, it is important to remove as many of the angles and protruding
parts as possible. Weight reduction can be obtained through the use of plywood panels in
the partitions and furniture. It is understandable that interior designer focuses on the
establishment of absolutely simple shapes and seeks to make them comfortable by the use
of beautiful materials, even more so in transport than in the pieces intended for use in
houses. Thus discipline, imposed on the decorator by the requirements of the project, is
consistent with the principles of “modern” applied art.

**Ordinary home furnishings**

Without necessarily recommending a Spartan simplicity, it could be said that through an
excess of their sumptuousness, certain furniture sets seemed to belong more to stage decor
than to homes. Perhaps they were, then, not very “modern”, because what was important
for those democracies of the time was to make furniture accessible to the masses.

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Cassandre (Adolphe Mouron),
*Nord Express*, 1927.

Munetsugu Satomi,
Colour lithograph, 103.3 x 63.2 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
(p. 146)

Sugiura Hisui,
*The Only Metro in the Orient*, 1927.
(p. 147)
Jean Dunand, 
Folding screen, 1931. 
Chinese black lacquer, red lacquer, and gold leaf, each panel: 298 x 54 cm. Private collection.

This defiance of everyday home furnishings, serving an artistic and economic programme, should have appealed to the artists because there is nothing more contrary to the interests of “modern” art than to manufacture cheap and showy furniture in imitation of pieces of luxury furniture. Companies which produce at low-cost, distribute low quality furniture made of colonial wood in garish shades, overloaded with bronze and inlaid panels. One cannot react strongly enough against such mistakes. For standard pieces of furniture, solid wood from France is the most suitable. Thus Gallerey, in his “Weaver’s House”, “Bourgeois House”, and a school for the French Village, he presented the work of an accomplished craftsman seeking a sincere adaptation to the demands of life. Rather than creating an illusion and producing tasteless works of poor quality, he frankly manufactures well-designed pieces of furniture. He uses solid wood of indigenous species.

The solid wooden cabinet accommodates the often humid climate which prevails in France much better than the veneered pieces of furniture, especially when this veneer is manufactured cheaply. It makes it possible to create mouldings and sculptures from solid wood. The craftsman who knows his craft can, with the use of machinery, obtain pleasant contrasts between spindle moulding and chisel work. The mechanical processes, which simultaneously offer the ability to carve several panels at once, are used increasingly in mass production provided that the sculpture is “bare”. It is preferable to use these sound technical processes rather than mixing different techniques if the aim is to achieve an identical set. The dining-room is made of carved oak, designed by Quibel and executed by Saddier et Fils for the Meubles Boyoud furniture company, and presented simple furniture which was as carefully designed as luxury furniture. Besides Saddier, Gallerey, and Jallot, the Primavera workshops also successfully achieved, in collaboration with Charlotte Chauchet-Guilleré, Madeleine Sougez, Jean Burkhalter, René Gabriel, and Louis Bureau, using very simple means, apartment furniture which had been scrupulously composed for mass production. These works were too rare among Parisian exhibitors: let us congratulate the province which made solid wood furniture common.

Provincial participation

The provinces’ active participation gave the Exhibition one of its essential characteristics. Approximately twenty regions that proclaimed their vitality were able to achieve important representations through local efforts alone. The creation of large economic areas and the establishment of regional committees for the applied arts had a valuable effect on domestic production. It is appropriate to recall that it was in the most tragic hours of the war, during the siege of Verdun, that similar committees were founded, in all provinces of France, to become the leading assemblies for artistic research. These administrative measures gave new life to the regions that were developmentally paralysed by centralisation. Regionalism is a principle in which expressions evolve and change, without fear of modernism, but also without neglecting tradition. The participation of various regions in Classes VII and VIII showed what could be expected from the old cities and countryside of France. It was often said that the speed of communication has an effect on the longevity of regional arts. Regardless of the unification that occurs gradually between construction and interior design, it will never be possible to build or live in the same way at one of the Poles or in the Tropics, in the city or in the countryside, in an industrial centre or a seaside resort.
Moreover, does the spirit of man not remain attached, with unbreakable bonds, to the place where he was born? To the familiar landscapes, childhood habits, and traditional customs? These reminiscences of the past have exerted a strong influence on some of our creators.

The provinces may be the moderating factor. The Parisian microcosm is sometimes artificial, an area which is less rowdy, more modest, and often pertaining more energy. Paris despised the solid wooden furniture introduced by the provinces. Oak, which defies time, walnut, chestnut, and many other indigenous woods, had a very old history, which was to be continued. Almost all of the popular furnishing presented by the French section was due to the provinces. The pavilion of Brittany, whose general provision allowed a special place for the various local areas (Léon and Cornouaille, Trégor, Nantes, Rennes, Vannes, and surrounding areas), showed that if regional art is a particular expression of the material, spiritual, and moral needs of a population, then these needs change and the new generation of artists knows how to satisfy them. Julien Lemordant, the admirable artist who organised the pavilion, wrote:

In Brittany, especially on the coast, winters are severe and the night gatherings are long. It is thus necessary to close the doors carefully and confine oneself to the home. Furniture, even that of a humble cottage is, therefore, of special importance. This helps us understand how farmers past preferred to order their sideboards, their box-beds, and their cupboards to be made under their direction, and to be able to determine an ornamental embellishment according to their religion, political ties, or symbols of their convictions or faith. Once the customer's influence ceased to be felt by the producers, the craftsmen began to sell reproduced works, which marked the beginning of the decline. A change in the manner of building, and a different view on hygiene, meant that there was no longer any point of reference to the previous set of rules on which the manufacturers based their work. In our current search for simplicity, there is not only a question of taste to be considered, but also the desire to alleviate housework. It is necessary to reconcile these practical reasons with more refined considerations. Breton peasants have always liked to own richly carved furniture. The most unsophisticated among them, at certain times, willingly depart from the pleasures of reverie, in which the sight of a familiar or legendary character illustrated on a panel and an arabesque of lines, plants, or stylised animals, provide food for thought. The conditions in the economic life of the people have changed drastically, but the land and climate have not changed, and the Breton soul remains the same. It is it the true source of inspiration, the soul which needs to be understood and loved.

The pavilion of Provence, the one of the Marseilles region, and of the Alpes-Maritimes differed from the others in breaking with the banal style of the deluxe hotels and villas. Vitry wrote that they also returned to "a more natural and more colourful style, which is combined with the bright streams of local light, whilst defying the heat of the sun, thanks to thick walls and well-sheltered galleries, with discrete windows". The pieces of furniture were "among the most pleasing creations of these provincial workshops which,
without claiming to create a style of their own and without falling in line with Parisian workshops, can keep up to date with progress achieved”.

The large and clear pavilion of Franche-Comté with timber-framed walls and its “Clos Normand” (or enclosed) gardens, so fortunately included in the ensemble, with its big hall and many furniture sets, amongst which the cabin-living room of a yacht recalled its neighbour, the sea. This was no less original than the pavilion of the Limoges area, where the furniture industry is doubly blessed, because of the presence of the tapestry workshops and the proximity of the walnut trees of the Dordogne and Corrèze regions. The Berry-Neverais region might perhaps have had a better understanding of its regional role than any other, by introducing a “modern” smallholding which included a vast common room comfortably furnished to contain an abundance of staff with ease, the small office where people are received for business transactions, the simple and elegant bedroom, the toilets, arranged with all modern comfort, and finally the outbuildings,
in perfect harmony with the main building. The table, the dresser, composed by A. Burie for the common room, were of completely original craftsmanship.

Louis Majorelle, in the pavilion of Nancy whose decoration took its inspiration from the prevailing character of the metal-working industry, affirmed the continued evolution of a local art which was, towards the end of the 19th century, at the avant-garde of the "modern" movement. In Tours, Angers, Lyon, Dijon, and the Basque Country, artists and industrialists united in their efforts to create decorative sets, each of them bringing their own original touch.

The Alsace region contrasted two opposing trends: the pavilion of Alsace was a modernised and simplified expression of the classical tradition, whilst the pavilion of Art in Alsace, although also inspired by the ideas, practices and local characteristics, avoided traditional forms with the use of reinforced concrete. In the first pavilion, furniture sets perfectly meeting the tastes of the upper middle-classes could be found, along with completely adapted store fittings: one for Alsatian food products and one for the mining development company of Pechelbron, thanks to the collaboration of René Lalique. The furniture exhibited by Art in Alsace was not just a superficial imitation of outdated pieces of furniture. As indicated by Théo Berst, the eminent president of this group, the works were Alsatian because they took into account the specific needs of Alsace and because their creators had an Alsatian temperament: "in the forms, no pretension and no excess; instead, moderation without banality, striving to create an intimate, enjoyable atmosphere, and an art which can create a familiar setting, worthy of a simple life".

It is this regional spirit that characterised all the provincial pavilions, showing on the spot how much the infinite repertory of traditional forms can still produce fertile initiatives. Let it not be said that it is plagiarism or pastiche. A sideboard by Clément Goyencéhe, David or Lemordant, in spite of its earthly tone, looks no more like one of our old southern or Breton pieces of furniture, than a table by Sue and Mare resembles a Louis-Philippe pedestal table. By supporting the effort of small provincial regions, the Exhibition served the whole nation.

It is told that in the Middle Ages, when the bell founders passed through the cities, everyone threw his gold, jewels, and precious tableware into the crucible: the sonority of the metal created by this alloy repeated ad infinitum all the sacrifices made for this common cause. Thus all of them, the inhabitants from Provence, Normandy, Brittany, Franche-Comté, Lyon, Alsace, the Basque Country, Limoges, Flanders, Berry, Touraine, or Lorraine, poured into the large crucible of French art the best of their force, the purest of their genius. Who gave more, who gave less, nobody knew and it did not matter provided that the bell rang clear and that the development of the French name throughout the world reflected the enthusiasm of these efforts.

**Colonial art**

A very important place had been reserved by the Exhibition in those remote provinces which were once French colonies. Exchanges between people multiplied exponentially.
Colonial tourism allowed artists, supported in those days by funded travel grants, to extend their research for documentation. Others, even more of them, dreamed of these foreign lands through books. It would be futile to ignore the influence of exoticism on the contemporary creators. Tropical floral and wildlife motifs feature throughout the ensembles, on the pieces of furniture, the ironwork, the stained glass windows and the textiles. French art was often subjected to Eastern influences without ever having lost anything of its vigour, so that this colonial contribution never elicited the least concern. Whether it be at the time of the crusades, during the 18th century marked by the activity of the colonial society, at the time when Delacroix was full of enthusiasm for Greece or during the period the Russian Ballet, France always assimilated all these foreign contributions, without ever changing. Each of the overseas colonies had set up a pavilion in which one was transported to another world, in the middle of objects, of pieces of furniture completely different from the French ones and were difficult to judge, owing to lack of sufficient experience.

In addition, a pavilion of French colonial art housed decorative and furniture sets inspired by native styles and presented projects concerning the construction and the organisation of buildings in hot countries. This sudden boom of interest in the colonies, thick and fast, and from so many different origins, posed many challenges. What is colonial art during the 1920s? How could it be “modern”?

There were three kinds of colonial art. The first, that which reflects the exact meaning of the word, is indigenous art. But another type of colonial art is that which was practised by the European colonisers, putting the stamp of their own needs, science, and aesthetics on native civilisations. Finally, the same name is appropriate for the European works influenced by exoticism. These three modes of colonial art featured in the Exhibition. Thus, how could indigenous art be modernised? In two different ways, it seemed: either by dissociating itself from European art, or by adapting its local manufacturing processes to the new conditions of life, whilst retaining the spirit of national tradition. Only this last method could provide good results.

If a Tonkinese cabinetmaker was to have manufactured works that were decorated with attributes borrowed from French styles, that would have been a new development. It would have, nevertheless, been contrary to the logic of “modern” art. Undoubtedly, French civilisation determined an evolution in these countries, from which local industries could not abstain. However, it was important for it not to copy foreign objects, but rather to adapt its local arts. The exhibition of French Indochina, with a dining-room and smoking-room by Marcel Bernanose, presented a laudable test of this formula. Indigenous arts have their ideal, their technique, and their particular charm. It was important that the colonial artists be inspired without imposing their vision on local craftsmen. It was better to initiate the foreign apprentices in the methods of Europe, whilst respecting their own genius. It was the goal which the vocational schools of Tonkin pursued. Small encrusted pieces of furniture testified a remarkable technical perfection that these young craftsmen should be allowed to join to free imagination. Great care was taken not to impose a classical ideal, without any relation to their intellectual training. The possibility of renewing indigenous art, within local traditions, was brilliantly shown in several ensembles of the North African pavilion. An Englishman, Hovell, protesting against the fact of having introduced the aesthetic ideal of Greek and Roman art into India, wrote:
“There was a strong determination to instil this false classical education in the inhabitants, without realising that one had a living Greece before us, which had to develop according to its own genius.” This enlightening observation is a lesson which we should all bear in mind.

The pavilion of French colonial art gathered several furniture sets designed by Parisian decorators for colonial life. If the indigenous craftsmen had to adapt their inventions and techniques to a different way of life modified by the European contribution, the programme which was required of our decorators was quite the opposite: to adjust their designs to the uses and requirements of life in foreign climes. Its application was incomplete. The creators of the exhibited items lacked sufficient information on colonial life, knowledge relating to the climate and to its effects. They presented a bedroom, a dining-room whose veneers would not have lasted six months in the Tropics, and stuffed pieces of furniture instead of seats and beds appropriate for these burning-hot latitudes. These examples, of which there are many more, show all the distance which exists between the imaginative fantasy of an artist and its practical application. Applied art required a long work of documentation from the colonies. A painter can be influenced by the arts, the sites, and the habits of countries without having visited them, but a creator of pieces of furniture needs to have studied on-site. He cannot work blind, trusting in fate, ignoring a series of details which must be associated with design as well as with manufacture. Paris had everything to gain by trading materials with these colonies, by methodically establishing forest exploitation, and by supplementing it with a rail and maritime transport organisation. Western Africa presented a complete exhibition of the various tropical species in its pavilion. These woods would meet all of France’s needs. Contemporary applied art, which laid down as a principle the respectful use of beautiful materials, would make good use of wood exported from France’s colonies at that time.

Foreign sections

Foreign participation in the sections for furniture and interior design gave the Exhibition one of its essential characteristics. Out of the 21 nations that had responded to the call of France, only one, Latvia, did not count any exhibitors either in Class VII or in Class VIII. Finland was only present in the Hall of Honour in which only a limited number of furniture pieces appeared, without the name of the designer. China had not sent anything to Class VII; the only works presented in Class VIII preserved a traditional spirit. The same applied for the items sent by Turkey. The other seventeen nations were represented by important pieces or sets of furniture.

Austria

Austria represented the Germanic peoples at the Exhibition. Despite the cataclysm of the war, Vienna remained a very dynamic art centre, rivalling Munich. Austria’s contribution was considerable and all the more noteworthy as this young republic was experiencing a time of austerity. By organising a vast pavilion and numerous units, the Austrian section proved that even though the nation had been territorially decreased, it remained, however,
one of the hotbeds of progress of Central Europe. The entire exhibition stood for its readiness to become a productive organisation of “modern” art.

The exhibition of Austria was largely the work of Professor Josef Hoffmann, all the more so as Oswald Haerdtl, and Gorge and Witzmann, exhibiting next to him, appeared to be clearly under his intellectual domination. We owe to Josef Hoffmann, student of the innovative architect Otto Wagner, the admirable organisation of the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. Since 1898, Austrian art bears the imprint of his creative originality. His colleagues Olbrich and Koloman Moser, as well as other designers such as Alfred Roller, Gustav Klimt, Bortold Loeffler, Cicek, Michael Powolny, and Eugene Steinhof, have been influenced by his methods and his creative personality. He strongly stimulated the natural ingenuity of his fellow citizens. The interiors, displayed in the gallery of the Esplanade des Invalides, resulted from a fertile imagination combined with the desire to be selected. Sometimes, more imagination could be seen than constructive logic. The appearance of certain pieces of furniture, with ogive designs, echoing the walls of the official pavilion, the original taste which emanated from rooms such as the bedroom, illustrated the solid principles of Josef Hoffmann’s education system. “The purpose of teaching,” according to the title page of a pamphlet-programme, “is to make the students achieve the intellectual and material basis of rhythmic creation; they will subsequently look at decoration as being the external need of interior laws.”
The resourceful layout of the Viennese coffee house, so pleasant and welcoming, was practical and logical while remaining enjoyable. It was noted how much more flexible and refined Viennese art was compared to German art. This characteristic was evident in the greenhouse with an aquarium composed by Peter Behrens and which, though extremely well presented, remained above all the work of an engineer. Captivating and instructive, Austria’s contribution showed that Vienna constituted a centre for studies in the centre of Europe, where the cornerstones for a renaissance were being developed: it highlighted the high professional qualities of the cabinetmakers, such as Niedermoser & Sohn, Anton Pospischil, Jakob Soulek, and August Ungethüem, who created the sets exhibited.

Belgium

No other foreign design was as similar to France’s as that of Belgium. Out of all the foreign countries, Belgium sent the greatest number of exhibitors to Class VII. In the field of applied arts, constant exchanges brought the two countries so close together that the aspirations of both peoples almost seem to fuse. Adrien van der Burch, chief commissioner of the Belgian section, wrote these very telling lines:

What should strike the visitors above all is to see how much the Belgian pavilion, to which a thoughtful soul wanted to give pride of place, remains in the intellectual vicinity of the French effort. For that reason, we did not have to give up anything; it was enough for us to remain authentically ourselves, such as we find ourselves within a privileged, neighbourly bond. We know, we practise the bold simplifications adopted mainly by the North. However, this is not what was decided on. We want innovations which remain within the limits of taste and harmony cherished by French thinking, for the sake of usefulness and reason, characterising our ethnic feeling. We could not have expressed ourselves either by extreme imagination of the East, or by the simplistic systems of the North. We remain, by our soul and our borders,
close to France, and our architects, our artists, and our craftsmen work next
to theirs, in search of new designs which summarise without destroying,
which liberate without missing divine commitment.

This was an inspired formula, illustrated by several books of high value in the Belgian
section, either in the national pavilion built by this innovator who was, from 1890, the
architect Victor Horta or in the galleries of the Esplanade des Invalides or in the halls of
the Grand Palais. The fertile activity of the kingdom was exerted in a practical order
which did not neglect any form of achievement, from the most sumptuous installation,
such as the dining-room created by Philippe Wolfers, up to the simple room of an
employee, or a student, where Albert Van Huffel and Chalres Rosel so ingeniously used all
available space, hiding the bed and the bathroom in cupboards or behind mobile partitions,
and managing to fit an entire apartment in one room, an invaluable innovation at a time of
high living costs, and intense overpopulation. A variety of trends of the French section
were found in the work of the Belgian artists, from the coloured sets of Georges-Abel Van
de Voorde and Leon Sneyers, who both followed during the heroic hours the movement
created by the architects Horta, Paul Hankar and Georges Hobé, up to the simple cubist
office by Huib Hoste near which one could have imagined finding the seven arts under the
aegis of Pierre Bourgeois. Between these two extreme schools representatives of mixed
formulas can be found, such as Paul Hamesse who belonged to the intermediate generation
and Beirnaert, who composed, with all the experience of a manufacturer and an organiser,
the office of the chief commissioner.

The Flemish common room by De Coëne Frères and Deleu had equal qualities of
composition and execution. The Victor de Cunsel workshops had carried out this
imposing ensemble, whose sober and dark appearance expertly highlights the exhibits of
the community of jewellery makers. The most important and the most accomplished
work of the section was the ceremonial dining-room, installed in the honorary pavilion
by Philippe Wolfers. It was studied in depth and closely scrutinised. In a dining-room,
the principal piece of furniture is the table; on the table, the showpiece is the plate. It is
this piece of silversmithy which determines the whole piece, the round plate on a
decagon and the long dish on a dodecagon. Having chosen these linear items, the artist
can begin to construct interior architecture, pieces of furniture and objects with an
implacable logic based on its shape. Not only the furniture, perfectly carried out by the
arts company Pope and Co., but even the slightest knick-knack, carpet, tablecloth, mat,
or glassware, would betray the initial geometrical form, and each object had been the
subject of a special study. Wolfers made the work of a complete artist reverting to
medieval tradition where art was not separated from techniques and where the
“contractors” had the upper hand on all the trades, as they knew of the resources and
the difficulties.

**Denmark**

Denmark, some kind of Heliades of the northern seas, endeavoured to extend the
manifestations of its artistic and intellectual activity further. Its relations with France go
far back in the past. The French were asked in the 18th century to decorate the royal castles;

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_**Gérard Mille,**_
Pair of decorative lampposts, c. 1936.
Nickel-plated metal, lacquered wood, and white paint, height: 210 cm. Private collection.

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it was a pupil of Charles Percier and Louis-Hippolyte Lebas, Gustav Friedrich Hetsch, who imported the Empire style. Jutland and its isles constitute countries of strong tradition; traditional formulas were, therefore, transmitted to the Exhibition. The pieces of furniture made up Kaj Gottlob, Aage Rafn, and Johan Rohde also reflected the influence of Percier and Fontaine. This style evolved towards Scandinavian sobriety. In Denmark, a land full of nuances, where the rays of the sun divide up in the prism of an atmosphere always full of vapour, people do not like great fanfare, or violent contrasts. People prefer to stick to the intimacy of a serious and family life. That was clearly the character of the various pieces of furniture exhibited, rationally built but nevertheless keeping the ancestral appearance. These pieces of furniture were carried out with a perfect care by cabinetmakers such as Otto Meyer and J.P. Mørck.

Denmark is one of the rare countries in which, during the 19th century, artists, craftsmen, and manufacturers successfully managed to maintain permanent communication with each other and thus safeguarded the heritage of the trades. The most original unit of the section was the interior of the national pavilion, the construction and installation of which had been entrusted to the architect Kaj Fisker. This pavilion, which was greatly discussed, found its origins in the very roots of the proud liberation ideal. The fine layout of this cube-shaped building honoured the artist who had had the courage to tackle and solve a difficult problem independently, without calling on solutions of the daily routine, the reminiscences of history, or even the processes of workshops.
He came up with the idea of decorating this national pavilion with the image of the country. The walls and the ceiling of the large hall show us a map of Denmark: old monuments, big cities and also the lighthouse of Skagen, the extreme north point of Jutland. The effect was most curious. The painter Mogens Lorentzen had used, with a good deal of panache, scenes from industry and the trades: farming, navigation, and fishing. The coloured bricks of the tiling also constituted a map of the country. Wooden pieces of furniture, others of bronze, lamps, and novel constructions, blended harmoniously with the architecture.

Spain

Apart from Catalonia, Spain was barely touched by the revival of the visual arts. The official pavilion and its interior decoration were of modernised Moorish style. On the ground floor of the Grand Palais, the Sevillian kitchen constituted a picturesque stand, richer of local savour than of true innovation. Thus the Iberian Peninsula – left out of international developments due to its geographical position – dwelled in the past, preserving all its charm. Only the dynamic Catalonia testifies to a bold avant-garde spirit by its constructions, its publications, and its many exhibitions.

Wilhelm Kage,
Argenta vase, c. 1930.
Stoneware inlaid with silver.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Erik Gunnar Asplund, Chair, 1925.
Mahogany, leather and ivory.
Nordiska Museet, Stockholm.
For Classes VII and VIII, the Spanish contribution to contemporary research was limited to the Catalan exhibition organised by the Foment de les Arts Decoratives of Barcelona, a federation of creators of models, similar to the French Society of Artist-Decorators. Some stands, opening onto a well laid-out rotunda, sheltered sets which had already appeared within the Exhibition of Barcelona. These exhibits were especially striking due to their warm colouring, and one of them was presented as a homage to cubism.

**Great Britain**

With its national pavilion, and its vast galleries in the Grand Palais and on the Esplanade des Invalides, British participation was worthy of its economic power. However, from an artistic point of view, it did not deliver the revelations expected of a country which was the cradle of the reaction against ugliness and pastiche, and where marvellous effort was made in the 19th century by Ruskin, William Morris, and Walter Crane to renovate the art of this time. Was it that these prophets did not have disciples, or that the persistence of Ruskin’s theories, hostile to mechanisation, delayed progress? Whatever the reason, the furniture of the British section did not always give evidence of profound originality; in the gallery of the Esplanade des Invalides, it was a small room which appeared to be the best tailored to the Exhibition’s programme. It evoked the works of the previous generation of furniture designers: Maple, Chippendale, Hepplewhite and Sheraton, who had been largely influenced by the French Directoire style. The stand where the newest research was displayed was the one which contained kitchen furniture: the porcelain table, the serving trolley, and the domestic icebox by Easiwork, Ltd.

The British Government pavilion offered a more lively interest. First of all, the construction built according to the plans of Easton and Robertson, whilst largely modelled on colonial heritage, had the merit of not evoking any ancient national style. Turning the volutes of the ionic column capitals on their heads is a mediocre innovation, but the search for simple forms, highlighted by colour, provided the furniture stands with a harmonious setting. The arches, decorated by Henry Wilson, former president of the Arts and Crafts association, provided unity, lightness, and a little rigorous nobility to the whole. In the rooms located on the sides of the central gallery, Mrs Maufe had laid out in an extremely agreeable way a few sets of a more “modern” inspiration than those of the gallery of the Esplanade des Invalides. However, none of these creations were striking due to its originality, and Great Britain had already shown us similar achievements which seemed to have more verve and certainty. A fresh impression came from the frequent use of species of wood little used in France; yew, boxwood, camphor, and hemlock woods, for example, without forgetting the English chestnut tree. The true lesson of the English participation was the flawless execution such as could be found in the pieces of furniture by Bath Cabinet Makers, Ltd. or in the windows exhibited by Betjemann and Sons.

**Italy**

In Italy, the national pavilion’s architect recalled the past. The structure of his work brought us back to the time of the Romans, whilst its interior summoned the Renaissance.
The ensemble was harmonious and imposing. The richest materials had been lavished; Viterbo stone was combined with marble, porphyry, lapis lazuli, malachite, and ceramics. Furniture formed a homogeneous whole with architecture, even though it was discreetly “modern”. The aerial grace of a chandelier by Venini was a joy to behold. In the gallery of the Esplanade des Invalides, the attention was drawn to the works made of glass, ceramics and metal, more than to furniture.

In the Grand Palais futuristic exhibits could be found, but these items did not belong to Classes VII and VIII. Thus, in the Italian section, the two extremes met. It lacked this element of transition which prepares for evolution without going, as the ardent Marinetti suggests, so far as burning the museums. Only the children’s room of the Ars Lenci pavilion, of a welcome simplicity and as far from noble memories as from the temporary confusion of dreams, responded to the designs of the time.

Still, we know, through the exhibitions at Monza, a plethora of Italian innovators – from sculptors of the Piedmontese School to cabinetmakers of the Lombard School – whose works conform to the ideas that were expressed in 1923 in the programme of the first exhibition of Monza:

We do not want vulgar and mechanical reproductions of old models and outdated forms. We seek artists, not monkeys. But we also firmly reject these cold works where the search for originality is pushed further, always further, without any concern for beauty, these oddities which sometimes appear frenzied and which find themselves, in turn, only on the margins of true art.

One can only regret the non-participation of these creators in 1925: full of enthusiasm, with healthy logic and fertile achievements.

Japan

Exoticism often has an air of novelty. It is necessary to be well-informed in order not to be mistaken. But with regards to the Japanese arts, a legitimate admiration made them rather well-known so that it is easy to see that Japanese artists had the desire to remain faithful to their glorious traditions. The beginning of the 20th century saw the Japanese style in competition with Western style furniture, as well as traditional versus “modern” style, and whether or not it should be adapted to indigenous art. Belgium, then Austria and Great Britain, were the first to exert this influence, to which Germany, then France, later contributed. Materials and techniques used by the Japanese were different from those of the Westerners. The assimilation of this foreign influence by local craftsmen was particularly difficult: it did not produce interesting results, but at least had the fortunate effect of stimulating the Japanese furniture industry. An association was founded in Tokyo to study everything to do with this industry. Since the end of the war, centres were created in Osaka and in the district of Kwansai.

It was in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto where bamboo objects were mainly manufactured. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the technique of industrial goods has shifted;
going in the direction of the high-quality of the flower baskets, which were previously finely braided by the most renowned craftsmen available. This progress, together with the achievements in dyeing, explains the success obtained in the export of these articles. Aside from being the manufacturers of bamboo items and basket makers, the 121 exhibitors of the Japanese section of Class VIII included lacquerers, inlayers, cabinetmakers, and woodcarvers. Among them feature the unparalleled Jitoku Akatsuka, Taiseki Aoyama, and Chutaro Rokkaku.

Japan does not seem to have greatly modified the ancestral layout of its dwellings. The national pavilion presented a charming wooden house, typical of middle-class residences. Non-crafted materials, used to the best of their advantage in a precious setting, could be observed. A varnished tree trunk lay across a living room or supported a frieze. Elsewhere, there was another trunk, stripped of its bark, or straw applied on the partitions, all of this harmonised with embroidered fabrics, ceramics, bronzes, or lacquers. If Japan appeared indifferent to Western designs, it was perhaps precisely because ours have become closer of theirs. The Japanese people are lovers of air and light; they tolerate neither dust nor clutter. Their traditional home, without beds or seats, is completely rudimentary. In their unadorned house, cupboards play a paramount role. Their ideal is close to that of our extremists. The differences in application are due to the climate and ethnic origins. And one can wonder whether the lesson of sobriety that France used to claim to give to the world, could not have been learned in Asia, mother of the world, where ideas are timeless.

The Netherlands

Holland was, at the beginning of the 20th century, one of the European countries where architecture was highly celebrated. It dominated the other arts with its spirit and discipline. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the “modern” movement had developed in the Netherlands; the subordination of other arts to architecture continued, especially under the influence of Berlage, architect of the Amsterdam Stock Exchange. The younger generations, who had separated from their elders, benefited from this trend in their studies. This situation helps us to better understand what contribution Holland brought to furniture sets. The latter has three essential qualities: simplicity, homogeneity, and originality. Simplicity of expression, sought by Dutch decorators, from Berlage to the cubist Sybold van Ravesteyn, is based on an aesthetic concern which derives from the construction. This homogeneity is due to the same influence which comes from a constant search for balance across the ensemble and the rapport between the colours. One might have feared that the great simplicity of the design and, for the latest works, the almost exclusive use of rectilinear forms, would consequently be monotonous. In truth, it has not happened. If we analyse the furniture composed by the architects Berlage, de Bazel, Kramer, Wouda, Oud, De Klerk, Rutgers, Van Ravesteyn, Warners, and Wydeveld and made by cabinetmakers such as C. Alberts father and sons and H.F. Jansen & Zonen, we see that each one of them reveals a personal style and harmony.

With this free presentation of the artistic expression and style of Dutch furniture, it would have been ideal to be able to include some works created by the De Stijl group,
whose theories appear close to those of France’s extremists of purity in furniture. No
installation or piece of furniture revealed the achievements of these innovators, whose
tendencies Théo Van Doesburg summarised as follows: “New architecture is anti-
decorative. Colour does not have a decorative value, but it is an elementary means of
architectural expression.”

Lastly let us look at the special character of the Dutch house. At a time and in a country
where the cult of the straight line dominates more and more, the architect De Staal
conceived, with a great flexibility, a national symbol which aroused the most impassioned
interest at the Exhibition. Free to choose his collaborators, he was able to achieve an
ensemble of a perfect unity. The building, designed as a reception hall, comprised of only
restrained furniture but it expressed between all its parts a perfect unity. Stained glass,
sculpture, and furniture went well with the architecture. Supporters of horizontal and
verticals lines could have heeded the lesson and seen that the use of curves is not
necessarily reactionary. Although a banal truth, it is, however, advisable to repeat, since so
many talented artists stubbornly exclude half the recourses available to them.

Poland

The Polish exhibition was unlike any other. Neither its national character, nor its great
originality can be denied. There was no trace of any Austrian, German, or Russian
influence. It was a revelation. No foreign participation became so sharply apparent.
Whether we mention the national pavilion, the pieces of furniture, or the knick-knacks,
the whole production expressed the same spirit that can also be found in coloured paper
clippings – bright, unexpected, and freely tangled, which is also the joy of the Polish
people. Perhaps some may argue that this art is too complicated angular. Effort should
be made to adapt to the concepts of each country. The only thing that matters is the
overall effect. Works by Polish artists can contain elements which make us think
metaphorically of the abundance of consonants of their language. Only the final
harmonious result matters!

The furnishing of the interior of the national pavilion was indisputably harmonious. In
the centre of the building there was a central hall whose glass dome was supported by
eight columns of black oak. A geometrical, triangular sculpture provided alternating
periods of light and shade all along these columns, affirming one of the most beautiful
talents of Polish artists, that of animating surfaces with the interplay of light. Producing
a strong impression, the triangular stylings reappeared in the frieze under the glass roof,
on the wooden mosaic of the parquet floor, in the style of the pieces of furniture by Karol
Stryjeński and even in the upper part of the framing of the murals of his wife at the time,
Zofia Stryjeńska which linked the palatable imagination with a profound sense of the
grouping of the characters. A stylish study-living room opened onto the central room,
which had been studied by Józef Czajkowski and Adelbert Jastrzebowski to the last detail,
and the execution of which had been carried out by Sroczynski.

In the galleries of the Esplanade, we again come across Jastrzebowski, with a dining-
room whose structure was at first disconcerting, but then would grow on the visitor.
This piece, carried out by Jaszczolt, was covered with batik from the workshops of Krakow, where some artists successfully tested in Poland what Poiret had carried out in France. The study composed by Mieczyslas Kotarbinski and carried out by Herodek, an original creation with a strange set-up, generated by the contrast of the provisions and an unlikely distribution.

The masterpiece of the section was the chapel by Jan Szczepkowski. This artist was able to combine the virtue of tradition and the newest ideas with a very personal art. What mastery of wood carving, animating the wall with an interplay of light and shade! What an erudite use of all suitable means to develop all these decorative possibilities! We must here pay homage to an enlightened restorer of tradition, departing from it, then returning to it in a homogeneous work which does not clash, where even the smallest line plays its part. The Polish chapel undoubtedly constituted one of the most complete achievements of the Exhibition. The execution of the carved walls had been entrusted to the pupils of the Municipal School of Arts and Decorative Painting of Warsaw. Their success testified to the worth of the technicians, whose artwork Poland could count on in the future. It was also in a school that the tapestries of the chapel were manufactured, these kilims, witnesses to the renovation of an industry.

In short, Polish art was in for a splendid boom. For it to come about, it was necessary for art and industry to liaise. The artist was not yet admitted to the factories in the capacity of a permanent collaborator, even though he worked there occasionally with great success. All that Poland lacked to be able to progress was to tighten the bonds between the creators and the manufacturers of models.

**Sweden**

Swedish furniture sets are aristocratic in their ideal and popular in their application. The art of the Swedish home was perhaps already the most democratic of Europe. It served the needs of intellectuals, the middle classes and a small number of the working classes. These customers provided a livelihood, whereas, in France, artists had only worked until that point for the privileged few. Artistic productions were given the name of luxury industries. This term did not apply to Sweden where the marketing effort tended rather to focus on middle-class comfort. During the 1920s, traditional yet adapted to present life, Swedish production took inspiration at the same time from folklore, French styles imported in the 18th and 19th centuries, and finally on the requisites of contemporary manufacturing, when they did not limit themselves to single pieces.

In 1874, following Great Britain’s lead, Sweden made great efforts to bring a renewed vitality to manual work, reduced by the progress of mechanisation. At that time the Society of Friends of Work and the Associations for Domestic Art were created, which sought out examples of old peasant works. In the field of architecture and furniture, the tradition was based on the French Louis XVI and the Empire style. The great Swedish artistic century, that being the 18th century, had deeply felt the influence of French culture. Later, Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte (later King Karl III Johan of Sweden)
had imported the fashion of the decorations designed in the taste of Percier and Fontaine. Thus, between 1770 and 1820, French styles were installed at the very heart of the nation taking, in contact with a patriarchal society, a very special character. When artistic regionalism was called upon, classicism was reborn and assimilated by the Swedish people.

An architect-decorator and cabinetmaker, Carl Malmsten, was able to give to these trends a uniform expression. He guided interior decoration towards a pleasant rationalism of the past, preserving even in its colour an out-dated patina which presented a very great charm. This concept of furniture design was obviously miles away from that of Chareau, Montagnac, or Dufrène and it was not, as one could think, only the richness of the materials that sets them apart. Malmsten and his disciples Carl P. Bergsten, Carl Hörvik, and Ture Ryberg (next to whom should be mentioned the furnishing companies and department stores Nordiska Kompaniet, Svenska Möbel-Fabrikerna, and the Blomqvist Company), are much closer to French regional cabinetmakers who stuck to local formulas at affordable prices for the lower-middle classes, in their pieces displayed in the pavilions of the Alpes-Maritime, the Provence, or Brittany. The national pavilion also presented a mixture of classicism and folklore inside. One was struck by the traditional feeling which reigned there, whilst the pieces of furniture, carpets, and various objects were of popular origin. This example of a tendency to enhance the decor of everyday life cannot be stressed enough, not amongst works of high-end luxury, rather with everyday objects of a real artistic value, accessible to the people.

Czechoslovakia

The Czechoslovakian people had a good eye for decoration. The old trades had always maintained their traditions. The government of the 1920s, in wanting to stress the original qualities of its people, managed to call upon popular funds. The Czechs, who were the most Western Slavs, were at the crossroads of two peoples and constituted a transition between them. On the first floor of the national pavilion, a complete furniture set was exhibited by the professors and the students of the School of Decorative Arts of Prague. This set, designed for a castle in Prague, residence of the former Kings of Bohemia, was of an imposing size. The pieces of furniture were harmonised with the vast dimensions of the room and its sumptuous decoration. This room contained the first tapestries in the style of the Gobelins tapestry produced in Bohemia and a carpet of more than 330 square feet created in an institute for disabled children.

On the Esplanade, an important gallery contained several sets whose overall project was due to the architect Lozek and whose cabinetmakers such as Pisch, Strnad and Vanicek, had ensured their impeccable execution. This work demonstrated the mastery of the Czechoslovakian craftsmen. Sometimes these interiors gave the impression of an excessive coldness, but they presented a harmony combined with the application of a conscientious technique affirming the skill of the Czechoslovakian craftsmen in all wooden artefacts. The results obtained were more than encouraging, all to the credit of a nation having organised the artistic life of the country. Furnishings were designed in a style that was created intentionally for “modern” lives, adjusted to the needs of the 20th century.
Of all the industries that are related to finery, jewellery is the one that most clearly belongs to the decorative arts. In the past, jewellers would be linked with goldsmiths' guilds. Their art had an impact on sculpture and decoration. The price and the long life span of the stones and metals give the jewels an immortality that clothing, hats and vanity accessories lack, worn for one season and forgotten about soon after. But only seemingly so. The value of the material, far from preserving the jewels, leads them to certain destruction. Portraits and rare drawings only enable us to imagine what the tags of Anne of Austria looked like, the necklace of the Queen, the diadem of Josephine or that of Empress Eugenie. A collector of antiquarian jewels can hardly put in his showcase anything but items of minor quality and importance; all the others had become obsolete. At all times the daughters wished a new mounting for the precious stones of their mothers. Since the Revolution, more frequent breaks in tradition, and more sudden and greater displacements of private fortune accelerated these transformations. The jewellery presented by the French section was generally designed according to the "modern" spirit, from which the Exhibition took its inspiration. The sketches that were visibly inspired by an antique style or that evoked the decorative style fashionable after 1900 had been eliminated. It was a great service rendered to the French jewellery trade, forced to find a new style.

"A style?" some critics might have said, "perhaps, although it is disparate. The precious gemstones on this pin are beautiful, I agree, and laid out simply. But this diadem, isn’t it somewhat Oriental? This necklace vaguely African? This vanity table Chinese? Why is this cubic pendant around the gracious neck of a young woman? Is this style better than another? It is novel, you claim, there have always been novelties: Froment-Meurice during my grandmother’s lifetime, the House of Boucheron in about 1880 and since then, René Lalique who certainly has a lot of talent."

It is not a question of knowing if the style of the jewellery in 1925, was better or worse than others, but rather if it is more innovative. It fulfils the requirements of the contemporary fashion, it is of its time, and that makes all its difference. All that we can do is to bring out the decorative elements and materials which compose it. The simplification of lines and decoration, and a variety of colour is desirable in previous styles of jewellery, so that it is in harmony with the fashion of the 1920s. French jewellers, in order to achieve this goal, did not use every resource they pertained. They used vertical, horizontal, and parallel lines, circles, and geometrical curves extremely skilfully. But is there any reason why they wouldn’t be subject to outside influences? One should not rely on seeing the renewal of an original movement, such as that which determined the birth of Gothic art. There must be circumstances which men do not master. When trying to artificially create something new at all costs, it only leads to the "Modern Style". We can ask the decorator, the jewellery designer, not to mimic. We should not blame him for copying close works existing in other fields or patterns coming from other countries and other times, provided that he interprets, transposes, re-imagine, and adapts them to its purpose. Would our Renaissance style exist without Italy, Louis XV without Baroque,

Gérard Sandoz,
Sémaphore brooch, c. 1928,
White and yellow gold, platinum, onyx, coral and diamonds, 8.7 x 5 cm.
Private collection, London.
or Louis XVI without antiquity? To note this is not to deny their existence, nor to decrease their value.

Therefore, it is not relevant to blame the designers of jewellery in 1925, for having sometimes looked towards the Orient, China, or cubist painting. To reproduce in coloured gemstones and on a base of diamonds, characters borrowed from Persian miniatures, to decorate a pendant slavishly copied from a Chinese object or a violin cut into two whose halves are offset, is nothing but fantasy. But studying how Asia employs jades, corals, enamels, and pearls in order to obtain particular colour effects; evoking an Egyptian pattern or these splendid ornaments that revealed the archaic bronze work of China, to attain some of the effects of a powerful simplicity; to make use of the shades and lines offered by certain paintings of the time to create well balanced jewellery, in harmony with the clothing; is there anything objectionable about it? Why would these influences be more detrimental in jewellery than in fabrics? Simply, once again, the artist should not become submissive to them, but assimilate them. They were all on the same wavelength: searching for an emphasis. The results are not always equally as good, but this is because it depends on the artist’s own imagination and temperament. Jacques Guerin, the gossip of the class of 1924, adequately valued the whole of the French section: “Was even the least sophisticated visitor,” he wrote, “standing in the centre of the ellipse where the leading names of Parisian jewellery-making gathered together, not struck by an obvious kinship between many jewels, works of different houses?” This analogy references the very ancient custom of the guild of goldsmith-jewellers, a testimony of which can be found in the remarkable book of Henri Vever and which might be found by browsing through the archives of the guild of goldsmiths of the 18th century or a trade newspaper, such as that of the famous Lazare-Duvaux. Many important jewellery houses, as well as having their own workshops and draughtsmen, solicit the work of specialists, artists of great talent, submitting their designs to be carried out by them. The panel of judges was pleased to reward these deserving creator-manufacturers whose names are unknown to the public.
Undoubtedly they will always stay in close cooperation with the jewellery house for whom they work daily. The choice, the taste of his boss, the guidelines, and the drawings are far from insignificant. However, the hallmark of the artist remains visible and the jewellery of such an artist can nonetheless be identified, in whichever showcase where they are exhibited. It is not at all a criticism of the status quo which is inevitable due to the nature of the work; it is but a simple observation. This results in a division of the exhibitors into two distinct groups, although a little arbitrary: on the one hand the inventors, on the other hand those who undergo, according to Jacques Guerin, “the influence of the rue de la Paix”. In the world of the latter group, for whom the “creator-manufacturers” usually work, one finds more uniformity in the design, a submission to forms favoured on a whim, for reasons which have less to do with aesthetics than with fashion. As for the former group: artists designing for themselves, sometimes manufacturing their own jewellery, or perhaps industrialists of a more personal approach; more research and originality could be seen. Amongst them, in 1900, Lalique and Vever distinguished themselves. One only has to look at the selection of jewellery of 1925 to recognise what came to replace it. The rapprochement among them, during several months in the same hall, could only exert a salutary effect on those who, with precious materials and a skilled workforce, followed trends too readily, without seeking to modify them. As such, the Exhibition of 1925 could have had a long-lasting action on the orientation of French jewellery.

What was the jewellery of the 1920s made of? Pearls, diamonds, emeralds, rubies, or sapphires, if only because of their price-tag, did not lose any of their favour. But the use of straight lines, geometrical forms, and simple decoration together seek variety: the charm of a set of jewellery with contrasting materials, shades, and values. Therefore, long outmoded precious stones were employed, such as topaz and aquamarine which, full-sized, provide transparent materials where clearness plays gently as in calm and tinted waters.

Jean Després,
Pendant, 1932. Silver, gold, citrine and lacquer. Collection of Stephanie Seymour Brant, courtesy The Stephanie and Peter Brant Foundation Greenwich CT USA.

Raymond Templier,

Jean Dunand,
Articulated bracelet, c. 1925. Gold-plated, nickel-plated and lacquered copper, 4 x 16.4 cm. Collection Dunand. (p. 190)

Jean Dunand,
Bracelet, c. 1930. Rosewood, Thuya burl wood, nickel-plated metal and lacquer, 4.5 x 18 cm. Collection of Mrs Eva Chow. (p. 190)
Enamel, mother-of-pearl, coral, and onyx came back into favour. Jade was brought in from China. These gems were not used alone in necklaces or pendants. Together with dressed stones which reflect the light, they provided new contrasts, thanks to their relative opacity or their matte finish.

Even with diamonds, new effects were created. Traditional cuts were juxtaposed with different sizes, cuts, and shapes, which produce light nuances in the scintillating surface of the jewel, a source of pleasure, all the more subtle as our eyes do not immediately distinguish its origin. Often, coloured gemstones trace a design in this glistening floor-tiling. Such combinations, where no gap appeared, only became possible through the ease of working the platinum. In the mid-19th century, the coloured gemstones were retained, isolated from their surroundings, by visible gold clips; whereas, to avoid using gold, the diamonds were set in silver, thick and quickly tarnished; platinum, in its whiteness, its inalterable resistance, made it possible to mask the reinforcement. It enabled the gemstone to divide into a great many parts connected by tiny articulations. A bracelet takes the flexibility of a ribbon, the support which assembles them is hardly noticeable, and no protrusion is visible under the mosaic of precious stones.

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This same perfection appears in the setting-out or the ornamentation of certain invaluable objects which really belonged to this time period. Such are the ladies’ cigarette cases, or even the prettily-named vanity cases, those which contain all that was needed put life into the complexion, the eyes, and the mouth in one moment. The gracious knick-knacks satisfied contemporary customs, in which an abundance of jewellers’ creations could be found, as with those of the goldsmiths of the 18th century along with the manufacture of snuffboxes. They combined enamel, lacquer, jade, amber, gold, and diamonds, and displayed a fantasy, if not always original, then at least elegant.
It comes as no surprise that an exotic influence was exerted on French jewellery, as in the former colonies, skilful engravers maintained old traditions of art, and that these countries provided a variety of their gemstones.

Apart from priceless jewels, the Exhibition presented others, infinitely less pretentious, in gold or silver, engraved or highlighted with enamel. Some were still strongly related to the already outdated taste of the first ten years of the century. Many others indicated, with more economic means, the same general trend: simple and robust forms, clear lines, frank colours, and excellently harmonised.

As for costume jewellery, can be divided it into two categories: the first, made up of ornaments intended to enhance dresses and hats – hooks, buckles, and pins are attached to the simple jewellery to great effect. But the jewellery used depends on the designer and the milliner, in the same capacity as embroidery, since it works exclusively for them. The second category includes imitation jewellery. They followed, with more or less taste, the styles in favour at the Rue de la Paix. There is nothing, therefore, to be said from the point of view of decorative invention. We will only quote the ever growing perfection of execution and the development of this branch of the jewellery industry. The economic circumstances supported the trade of real jewels, very often constituting a convenient and sure placement. They also served the costume jewellery trade by spreading the taste of the luxury throughout the social classes.

In the jewellery trade, as in other branches of fashion, Paris set the tone for the elegant citizens of Europe and America. That is where they went to buy “what was in fashion”. Some of the principal Parisian jewellers established important branches in foreign cities or seaside resorts frequented by a luxury clientele of these two worlds. The distribution of French jewellery abroad was very extensive and constituted one of the most important means of the dissemination of the French taste.

Jean Fouquet,  
Ring and bracelet, c. 1931.  
Unpolished rock crystal, oval-shaped and faceted amethysts, and cabochon moonstones set in platinum.  
Primavera Gallery Collection, New York.

Gérard Sandoz,  
Match case, c. 1924. Engraved and nielloed silver, 6 x 5.3 cm.  
Jacques Sitbon Collection.
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The Art Deco movement emerged from the remnants of a world that had been torn apart. After World War I, this aesthetic movement came to embody dreams of industry and prosperity. In the whirl of the Jazz Age and the frenzy of the “Roaring Twenties”, the streamlined silhouette of the flapper girl was reflected in the architectural aesthetic of Art Deco—the rounded curve was conquered by the androgynous straight line… Architecture, painting, furniture, and sculpture evolved into oeuvres enhanced with sharp lines and broken angles. Although fleeting and short lived, this movement still influences contemporary design today.