



JACQUES CAFFIERI
(1678-1755)

*Pair of Candelabra
with Chinese white
statuettes*

18th century

Ciselled gilt bronze and
porcelain

The two Chinese statuettes set in large gilt bronze candelabras bear witness to the interest Western artists took in Asian arts, particularly porcelain since the technique had not yet been mastered at the time. Between the 16th and 17th centuries, China exported its porcelain in large quantities. European artists used to set them in decorative mounts such as these candelabras attributed to Jacques Caffieri, an Italian who became a court sculptor of King Louis XV. He was a key figure in the rocaille style, characterized here by the vigorous scrolls in the form of foliage.



PAUL SIGNAC

(1863-1935)

*The Bell Tower of
Saint-Tropez*

1896

Oil on canvas

In 1892, Paul Signac, a founder member of the Divisionist movement, sailed with his wife on their yacht Olympia from the Atlantic coast to the small port of Saint-Tropez on the Mediterranean shore. There, like many of his fellow artists, Signac discovered the bright sunlight of Southern France, which softened his palette, flattened his brushstrokes and, for a time, made him distance himself from his purely scientific approach to painting. This painting is one of a series produced during the summer of 1896 and was exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in 1898.



PIERRE BONNARD

(1867-1947)

Preparatory study for The Bathrobe

Ca. 1890

Watercolour and gouache
on paper

Nicknamed the ‘very Japanese Nabi’, Pierre Bonnard, like many of his fellow artists, develops a lively passion for Japanese art, which the West discovered after Japan opened to trade at the end of the 19th century. In this preparatory study to a painting in the Musée d’Orsay, the painter takes inspiration from the traditional vertical format of the kakemono and adopts the twisting movement of the figure seen from the back, typical of the aesthetic developed by Japanese artists. Here, the kimono gives way to the Western bathrobe, which, in an explosion of red hues, becomes the real protagonist of the composition.



JAN VAN GOYEN

(1596-1656)

A Ferryboat with a Coach and Four Horses (Nijmegen)

1648

Oil on wood

A ferryboat loaded with a coach crosses the River Waal to reach the Dutch city of Nijmegen, identifiable with its imposing fortress. The United Provinces (now the Netherlands) were a young nation at the head of a powerful colonial and commercial empire, which became prosperous in the 17th century. Jan van Goyen, a painter of the Dutch Golden Age, specialized in depicting seascapes and landscapes. In addition to atmospheric effects, he was interested in the human activities that testified to the exploitation and management of this territory, made up of dykes and canals to access the sea and facilitate trade.



JEAN DE
BOLOGNE CALLED
GIAMBOLOGNA (after)
(1529-1608)

Mercury

17th century

Bronze

This statuette is testament to Giambologna's virtuosity. He was a Flemish sculptor who chiefly worked in Italy, renowned for his dynamic compositions using spiral movements. This statuette, based on a sculpture created in 1564 for the Farnese family, represents the winged-footed god Mercury who rises into the sky. Mercury wears two of his famous attributes: the caduceus and a helmet known as petasus. Messenger of the gods and protector of merchants, Mercury appears regularly in the decoration of Toulouse town houses, as if to watch over the affairs of their owners, who were once wealthy merchants.



FRANCESCO GUARDI
(1712-1793)

*View of the Punta della
Dogana, Venice*

Ca. 1765

Oil on canvas

Francesco Guardi is one of the main painters of views of Venice (vedute) in the 18th century. In this painting, the artist pays tribute to the Punta della Dogana, the old customs house and point of entry for all goods from which Venice, which was located at the crossroad of East and West, once derived all its wealth. After the discovery of the American continent at the end of the 15th century and the fall of Constantinople (1453), the city-state lost part of its commercial activities in the Mediterranean whilst remaining a major artistic centre. By combining a lively, light handling of paint with topographical precision, Guardi renders the grandeur of 18th-century Venice, which already fascinated his contemporaries.



FRANCESCO GUARDI
(1712-1793)

Rialto Bridge

Ca. 1775

Oil on canvas

Built in 1591, the Rialto Bridge, with its unique arch allowing boats to pass, connects the oldest market of Venice with San Marco quarters. Guardi depicts the historic and economic heart of the city, bustling with activity. Nowadays tourists invade its streets instead of goods. They were already numerous in the 18th century, since Venice was on the itinerary of the Grand Tour, from which the word “tourism” derived. Fond of these vedute, they represented an important clientele for Guardi, his works evoking the travel memories of today.



EUGÈNE BOUDIN

(1824-1898)

Crinolines on the Beach

Ca. 1863

Oil on wood

Forerunner of the Impressionist movement and an adept of painting in the open air, Boudin captured the atmospheric and climatic effects while testifying to the rise of a rapidly changing leisure society. The new seaside resorts of Trouville and Deauville were accessible from Paris by train, which reduced travel time, hence distances. Parisian society, driven by the fashion for seaside bathing initiated by Empress Eugénie, took advantage of these communication routes and found a new place to relax in Normandy, Eugène Boudin's native country.



ANONYMOUS, GERMANY

Cup

End of 16th century

Silver-gilt and coconut

Originating in the distant lands of Asia Minor and rare in Europe during the Renaissance, coconuts reflected the taste for the exotic in the humanist culture of the time. The shell is sublimated by a silver-gilt mount, which turns it into a luxurious piece of goldsmithery. In this way, the cup becomes the quintessential object of the Wunderkammer (Chambers of wonders). Set up by German princes to house all manner of extraordinary objects - naturalia, ancient relics, scientific instruments - these cabinets reflect an era of great expeditions and discoveries.



ALBERT MARQUET
(1875-1947)

River landscape

Between 1903 and 1927

Oil on canvas

The motif of the lock in the foreground of this peaceful, timeless vision of the Seine hints to the reality of Marquet's time. Throughout his life, the painter was fascinated by the quays he observed in Paris, his homeport, and during stays in Normandy, Algiers or Morocco. Marquet was appointed official painter to the French Navy in 1945. The sense of calm and silence emanating from his landscapes contrasts with the intense economic activity of these places that produce, transport, trade and transform. In the 19th century, river freight developed considerably in Europe, facilitated by locks and canals.



RAOUL DUFY
(1877-1953)

The Riverbank

1906-1907

Oil on canvas

Born in the port city of Le Havre, Dufy worked for a company importing Brazilian coffee as a young man before devoting himself to painting. This view of Paris riverbanks is an example of his lifelong interest in ports and rivers, possibly hinting to his Norman origins, to which he remains very attached. In the distance, factory chimneys belch out their smoke. Dufy shows the changes taking place in the city as industrialization, trade and commerce took off, organised around rivers, routes of communication and movement of goods.



PIERRE BONNARD

(1867-1947)

Self-portrait

1945

Oil on canvas

Throughout his life, the painter produced many self-portraits, of which the present one, dated 1945, is the last. It represents the culmination of Bonnard's artistic development, synthesizing his research into light and colour, and paying tribute to his primary source of inspiration: Japanese art, which fascinated him from the outset. Simple forms, the choice of clothing and pose of the figure shows this renewed influence. The sitter's frozen face, with dark, slanted eyes, is evocative of a mask from the traditional Japanese Noh theatre.