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GALERIE ALEXIS PENTCHEFF

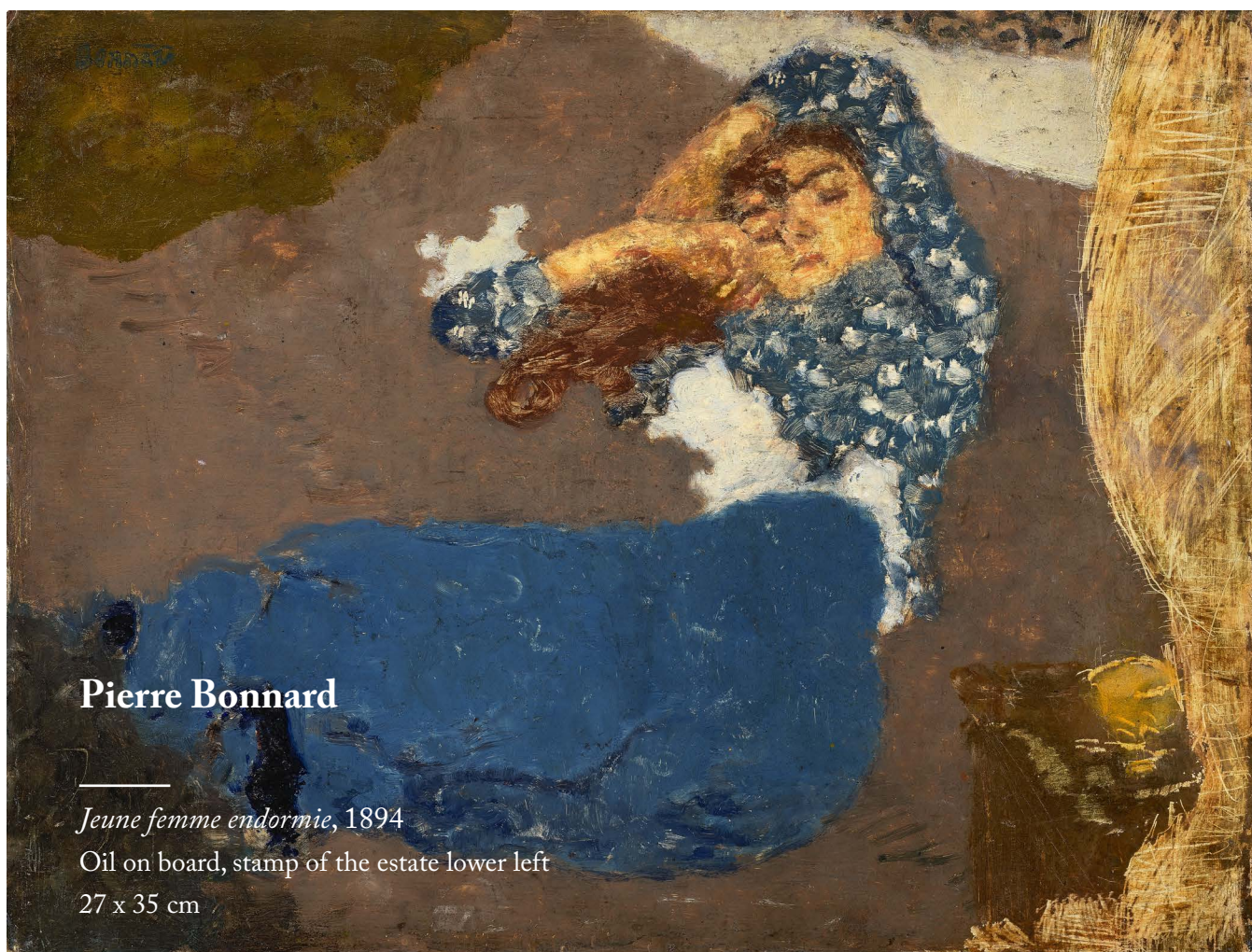
BRAFA
ART FAIR

For its sixth participation in BRAFA, Galerie Alexis Pentcheff is delighted to present a selection of post-impressionist paintings as well as a rare collection of works dedicated to Nabis painters and Misia Sert, modern muse.

At the end of the 19th century, Nabis' painting, free of any academic convention, was bold and already modern. While the gallery has been committed to representing modernity developed in Provence, its beloved region, it seems coherent to return today to the young hours of this pictorial tumult with this selection.

Looking at Paul Sérusier's *Talisman* painted in 1888, Pierre Bonnard discovered the power of modern painting. One year after the creation of the Nabis group, this revelation led him to devote himself fully to his art in 1890. An ardent, innovative art, guided by his own subjectivity and driven by a profound admiration for Paul Gauguin's work. Alongside his «partners» - being Paul Sérusier, Paul Ranson, Edouard Vuillard and Maurice Denis - the painter set himself as a visionary, that of new worlds, revealed under his brushes' impulse. With this new artistic movement, painting is cleared from detail in an explosive artistic language, inherited from Japanese art, in which raw colour and soft line gave the canvas its autonomy.

The Nabis' corpus of work is of rare collective strength. Driven by the same spiritual aim - the painting's emancipation - their artistic production cemented their friendship bringing together antagonistic social and political figures. According to the group, art must detach itself from its servitude to reality. It, therefore, freed himself to reveal an underlying truth, palpable by the artist's unique expression and subject to his personal interpretation. The spectator, released from any intellectualized literary chatter due to reality, suddenly found himself alone in front of his individual emotions.



Misia

Modern muse

In the 1890s, Pierre Bonnard shared a studio at 28 rue de Pigalle with Edouard Vuillard, Maurice Denis and Aurélien Lugné-Poe. Shortly, this space became a meeting place for the Parisian avant-garde. Nabis' art was total. They crossed disciplines - poster, theatre, stained glass, mosaics, illustration, printmaking, engraving, wallpaper, furniture - in order to clear themselves from easel painting's constraints, which nevertheless remained their main focus.

In this multidisciplinary environment, Bonnard and Vuillard's works were deeply intertwined. The two artists favoured the same themes, demonstrating a clear attraction for intimate and familiar representations, in a striking correspondence. Both preferred small formats for the proximity they imposed between scenography of the works and their viewers. Largely influenced by the theatre, they observed the effervescence of Paris, captured the fugacities of its actors, and then with their brushstrokes, animated the stage on the medium with great meticulousness.

The two artists are charmed by the famous musician **Misia Godebska**, wife of the *Revue Blanche*'s director, who was none other than their friend, Thadée Natanson. The talented woman enchanted the greatest artists of her time, including Toulouse-Lautrec, Vallotton and the novelist Romain Cooolus. Born in Russia to a family of artists, the young woman charmed the Parisian cultural microcosm, which she regularly welcomed at her home for large parties. She enjoyed the company of artists and appreciated this rich cultural atmosphere familiar to her. Misia seduced. Her beauty was however only a very small aspect of her captivating personality. Independent, intelligent and discreet, she is a cultivated woman, who was appointed as the arbiter of good taste among artistic trends.

Muse and patron, Misia embodied the ideal of the elegant and erudite Parisian woman. The emerging idylls nourished many paintings - immortal witnesses of a ravishing charm. Yet, Misia also found refuge in music and the arts, while she suffered romantic disappointments. She divorced for the third time from a husband who will leave her his name, José Maria Sert, in 1927.

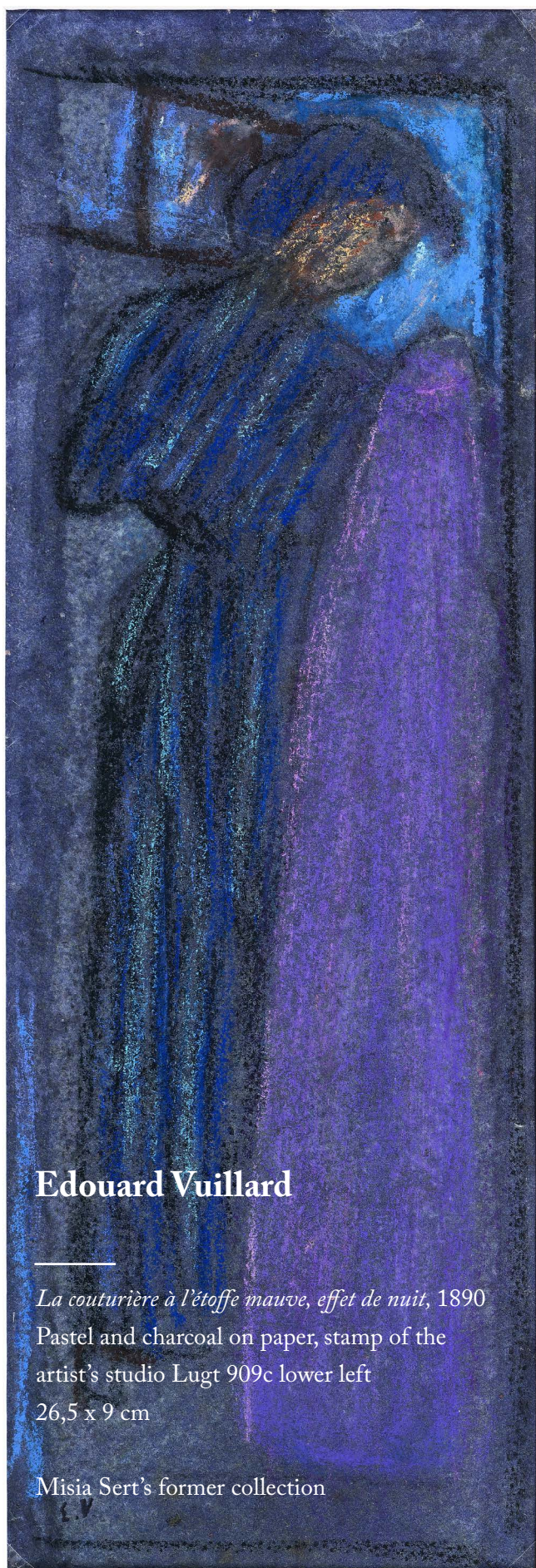
Edouard Vuillard

La couturière à l'étoffe mauve, effet de nuit, 1890

Pastel and charcoal on paper, stamp of the artist's studio Lugt 909c lower left

26,5 x 9 cm

Misia Sert's former collection





Edouard Vuillard

Misia à Cannes (étude pour Le Nonchaloir), 1901

Coloured pencil, charcoal and graphite on paper, stamp of the artist's studio lower left

6 x 8,5 cm



Edouard Vuillard

Misia assise dans une bergère dit «Nonchaloir», 1901

Oil on canvas

44,3 x 43,5 cm

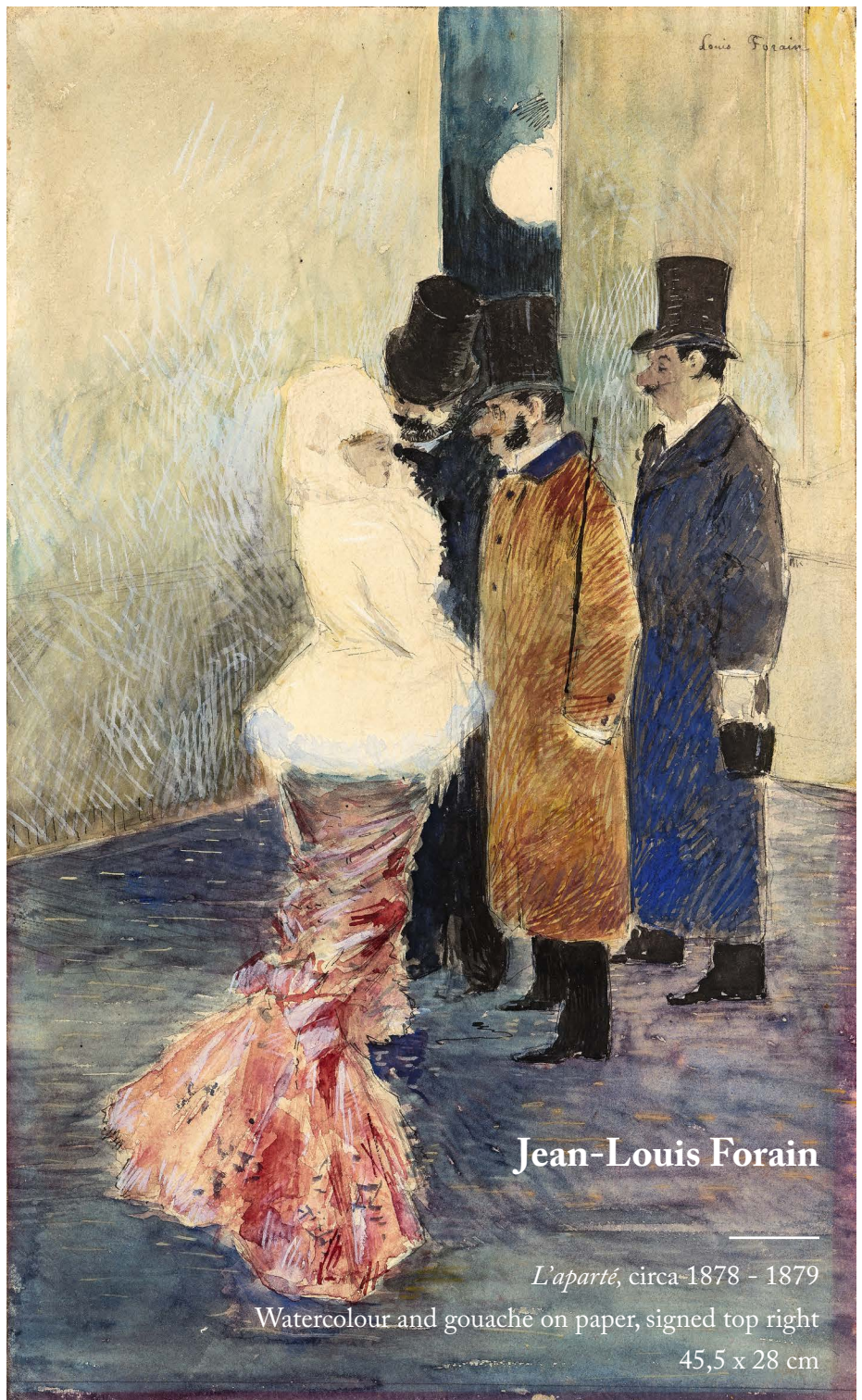
Orsay Museum, Paris, France

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Jean-Louis Forain

(1852 - 1931)

A few years earlier, Jean-Louis Forain, also seduced by the world of theatre and opera, joined the Impressionists. With an incisive eye on Parisian life, the artist rather depicted scenes of daily life than large representations. In 1876, while living a bohemian Montmartre life, Forain published his first satirical drawings in *Le Scapin*, then in *La Cravache Parisienne*, *La République des Lettres*, *La Vie Moderne* and finally *Le Monde Parisien*. A close friend to Degas, the painter participated in the Impressionists' exhibitions from 1879 to 1886 thanks to the master's initiative.



Jean-Louis Forain

L'aparté, circa-1878 - 1879

Watercolour and gouache on paper, signed top right

45,5 x 28 cm

Forain's line was sharp. The artist excoriated bourgeois conventions and denounced political contradictions in a vivid style with vibrant colours. His favourite subjects are related to his time: places of entertainment, street scenes, cafés and racecourses. In 1886, the art dealer Durand-Ruel exhibited his paintings in New York alongside Degas, Manet, Renoir, Monet, or Pissarro. At the same time, the artist continued his work as an illustrator for major newspapers, which gave substance to his raw interpretations of Parisian society.

From 1900 onwards, Forain's palette darkened serving political works that depicted the First World War. In 1913, a monographic exhibition dedicated Jean-Louis Forain's work was organised at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs with nearly four hundred works.

The painter died on July 11, 1931 at his Parisian home.

Pierre Bonnard

(1867 - 1947)

Pierre Bonnard was born in 1867 in Fontenay-aux-Roses. He studied law and graduated in 1888. However, painting is his great passion: he enrolled at the Julian Academy at the same time as his studies and then joined the Ecole des beaux-arts de Paris. He took the Lawyer's oath but devoted himself to his passion from the early 1890s. He then shared a studio on rue Pigalle with Maurice Denis and Edouard Vuillard. He joined the Nabis group and received the nickname «*Nabi très japonard*» (a very Japanese Nabis) due to his interest in the aesthetics of Japanese art.

In 1893, he exhibited at the *Salon des Indépendants* and the same year, he met Marthe, who would be the companion of a lifetime and the almost exclusive model of his Nudes until his death. He worked on numerous illustration and poster projects and participated in group exhibitions, notably at Vollard's in 1897. Bonnard is a close friend of Vuillard, but also Thadée Natansson and his wife Misia, the architect Albert Laprade and Maurice Ravel, while he maintained an ongoing correspondence with Maurice Denis.

In the summer of 1909, Pierre Bonnard stayed in Saint-Tropez following an invitation from Henri Manguin. He then returned there in 1911 with Paul Signac and painted a large triptych entitled *Méditerranée*.

In 1914, he exhibited at Bernheim Jeune. He regularly visits the French Riviera, Cannes, Antibes... It was in 1926 that he bought a villa in Le Cannet, after having married Marthe the previous year. From then, the couple split up between their Parisian home on Boulevard des Batignolles and their house in the South.

In 1928, a large private exhibition of the artist was organized in New York, which was followed a few years later by the presentation of some forty works at the Wildenstein Gallery. Alongside Vuillard and Roussel, Pierre Bonnard was assigned the decoration of the foyer of the Palais de Chaillot theatre in 1936.

In 1942, Martha died in the midst of a world conflict. He continued to see the faithful friends who remained alive, but his notebooks reflected difficult moments for the artist when he lacked inspiration and the desire to paint. Pierre Bonnard died at Le Cannet in January 1947. A museum has been entirely dedicated to him in this city since 2011. In 2015, a retrospective exhibition of the artist's work was held at the Musée d'Orsay: *Pierre Bonnard, Peindre l'Arcadie*, which was a great success with the public.

Edouard Vuillard

(1868 - 1940)

Edouard Vuillard was born on November 11, 1868, in Cuiseaux in Saône-et-Loire. Coming from a modest background, his mother is a corset maker. The family moved to Paris in 1877 when Vuillard began his schooling at the Lycée Condorcet where Bergson and Mallarmé were teachers. He then met Maurice Denis, Lugné Poe, and Kerr-Xavier Roussel.

After attending the Julian Academy for a short time, he joined the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1887 and quickly came close to a group of innovative painters - the Nabis - who was highly influenced by Paul Gauguin and Emile Bernard. The movement was formed in 1889 around Paul Ranson, Paul Sérusier, Maurice Denis and Pierre Bonnard. Nevertheless, Vuillard kept, at least at the beginning, a slight distance from this «society» detached from any academic affiliation.

In 1889, Vuillard exhibited for the first time at the *Salon des Artistes Français*. He settled in a small studio at 28 rue Pigalle with Pierre Bonnard and Maurice Denis. In 1891 he met Thadée Natanson, who that same year became director of the *Revue Blanche*. Natanson dedicated a major exhibition to him within the journal's workspace which was also a meeting place for intellectuals and artists. Thadée and his wife, Misia, introduced the painter to the Parisian avant-garde and opened the doors of a cultural microcosm that gave a new dimension to his work. That same year, he exhibited at the gallery of Le Barc de Boutteville in Saint Germain-en-Laye alongside the Nabis group.

Edouard Vuillard, in the 1890s, also made a name for himself through the creation of large decors, notably with the Desmarais Panels in 1892. Initiated to this practice with his collaborations with the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* in 1891 and 1892, the painter created a monumental work in 1894, *Les Jardins Publics*, nine large panels decorating Alexandre Natanson's dining room - Thadée's brother - while Vuillard also painted four panels for Dr Vaquez in 1896. From 1893 to 1894, the painter designed theatre sets for Lugné-Poe. Thus, the artist embraced a process of decompartmentalization between painting and decoration at the end of the 19th century, already initiated by the Nabis.

During this period, Vuillard painted intimate interiors depicting rich wallpaper decorations and played with material effects. Far from being anecdotal, these interior scenes also reflected a strong taste for theatre and literature in which the characters evolved to the rhythm of the story they were relating. The influence of the masters encountered at the Louvre - Chardin and the 17th-century Dutch painters - progressively faded to reveal the Nabis fever and with it the explosion of colour, born under the impulse of wide flat areas and deformed shapes.

From 1900, the painter was getting closer to fashionable galleries, notably Bernheim-Jeune, and began working exclusively with the art dealer Jos Hessel, Alexandre Bernheim's nephew. His wife, Lucy, became Vuillard's muse and lover for four years. He then entered the world of businessmen and politicians. His painting became softer, sometimes darker, reviving his taste for naturalism and structured compositions.

During this period, Vuillard painted an important series of portraits of the High Society and declared: **«I don't do portraits, I paint people in their homes.»** At the end of his life, he received several state commissions and became a member of the Institut de France in 1937. His first major retrospective was held at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in 1938.

Edouard Vuillard died on 21 June 1940 in La Baule where he had taken refuge during the war.



Edouard Vuillard

Au café, c. 1894-1895

Watercolour and highlights of pastel on
graphite on paper, artist's studio stamp
lower right

11,2 x 11,2 cm

BRAFA ART FAIR

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