

About Art Nouveau ~ Blog about getting to know Art Nouveau

Treasure hunting at the BRAFA – always a pleasure!

29 Tuesday Jan 2019

POSTED BY OLGA HARMSSEN IN 7. EXHIBITIONS, BRUSSELS

≈ 4 COMMENTS

Tags

Carlo Bugatti, Edmund Dulac, Elisabeth Sonrel, Firmin Baes, Galerie Alexis Bordes, Galerie Berko, Gustave Serrurier-Bovy, King Baudouin Foundation, Kornél Maria Spányik, Late 19th and early 20th century painting, Philippe Wolfers

Every year I look forward to visiting the Brussels Art Fair (BRAFA), and this year was no different. Like usual, I prepared my visit way in advance: checked the exhibitors list (*will all my favourite galleries be there?*), investigated the new participants, and marked the galleries I want to visit on my map. (*the BRAFA is só big, you might easily miss an exhibitor if you don't work with a map!*) And then, when the day is finally there, I follow the markings on my map... and embark upon my annual treasure hunt!



Galerie Alexis Bordes

For me, the *absolute* highlight of this years BRAFA is Galerie Alexis Bordes from Paris. They always bring several paintings that surprise me. But this year... they present the showstopper of the BRAFA: The Two Beauties (1897) by Kornél Maria Spányik. Never heard of the man before, but doesn't that

makes this mesmerizing portrait even more of a discovery?!?



Kornél Maria Spányik

So who was this painter? Kornel Spányik (Bratislava 1858 – Budapest 1943), son of a lawyer, studied painting at the Viennese Academy of Fine Arts under Christian Griepenkerl, and then under Gyula Benczúr at his atelier in Budapest. He completed his studies with Sándor Liezen-Mayer, an imperial portraitist in Munich. After his return to Hungary in 1886, Spányik was placed under the high patronage of the Archduke Frederick of Austria. His older brother Adalbert Spányik von Dömeháza was the *Flügeladjutant* of the Austro-Hungarian emperor Franz Joseph I. Hence, Spányik was in many ways linked to the imperial court and the aristocracy, which guaranteed him many commissions. In February 1937, Spányik was even called '*Hungary's most versatile painter*' in Képes Krónika.

The Two Beauties measures 2 by 1,2 meters, and deserves a prominent place; I think it would fit perfectly over the sofa in my living room... 😊



Elisabeth Sonrel

Also at Galerie Alexis Bordes, I walked into a beautiful painting by Elisabeth Sonrel. Sonrel (Tours 1874 – Sceaux 1953) was a French painter who studied in Paris under Jules Lefebvre at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Her signature pieces are large, bright watercolors and gouaches inspired by mythology and Arthurian legend, in the Pre-Raphaelite style. They are allegorical, mystical and symbolic. And her work is extremely precise, especially in the representation of costumes, plants and flowers. Although her portraits often remind me of the portraits by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828 – 1882), I like those by Sonrel a lot more. (There is something with the lips of the Rossetti-women that bothers me.) Elisabeth Sonrel is well-known, and most of her works are in museum collections. So you don't see them very often 'in the wild'. Imagine my utter bliss when I discovered yet another Sonrel at the BRAFA! Galery Ary Jan (also from Paris) showcases the beautiful 'Portrait of Beatrix'.



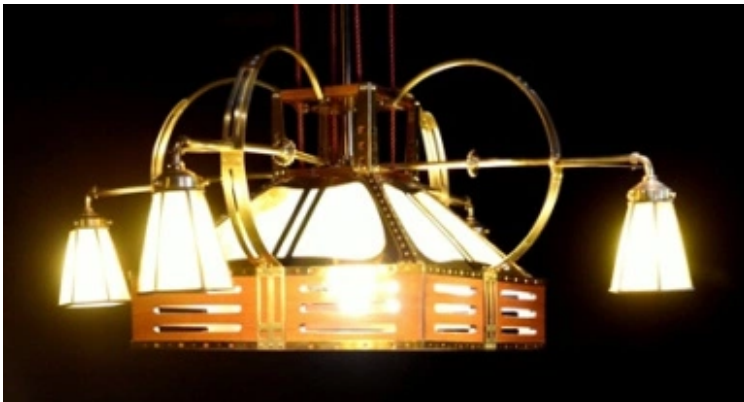
Another artist you don't come across very often is Edmund Dulac (1882-1953). As he was a successful illustrator of gift books, it's not difficult to find antique books with his illustrations; personally, I own a copy his 1915 Picture-Book for the French Red Cross. But you never see a real painting. Well, almost never. Galery Ary Jan now presents a 'Portrait of Eléonora' at the BRAFA.



Want to see more work by Dulac? Click on above photo

King Baudouin Foundation

In the field of the applied arts, I located some 'treasures' at The King Baudouin Foundation. This organisation puts great effort into conserving and protecting Belgium's heritage. Through its Heritage Fund, the Foundation acquires masterpieces, promotes them and makes them accessible to the general public. And every year they bring their new acquisitions to the BRAFA. The objects I find most interesting this year, are a clock and a chandelier that were created by Belgian architect and furniture designer Gustave Serrurier-Bovy (1858–1910). His work was strongly influenced by the English Arts & Crafts style, as he became fascinated with the work of William Morris when he stayed in England. The clock and chandelier are among the last designs Serrurier-Bovy created before he died.



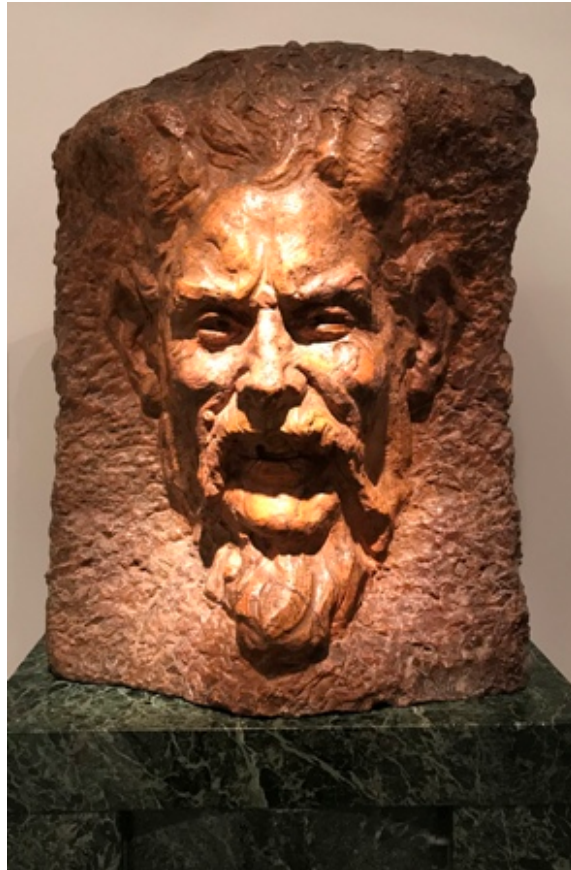
Galerie Montanari

Galerie Montanary exhibits some great Art Nouveau *frames*. After a closer inspection, I realised they are the same beautiful frames as last year. But there is a new one too. So if you have a nice picture and you wish to mount it in a truly unique frame, check out Galerie Montanari in Paris.



Galerie Victor Werner

At Galerie Victor Werner I spotted a fascinating 1918 statue by Philippe Wolfers (1858-1929) called 'Masque de Pan'. Pan is a mythological faun-like figure. He is the God of nature, the wild, shepherds and flocks – often associated with sexuality. Amazing how well Wolfers expressed *all that* in a block of marble! I find this object particularly of interest as it is so different from the other Wolfers pieces I have seen before.

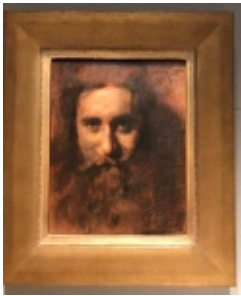


Epoque Fine Jewels

Of course I should mention Epoque Fine Jewels as they have absolutely got the finest collection of Art Nouveau jewellery available. Their choker 'Glycines' by Philippe Wolfers (there he is again!) is just breathtaking. I wrote a whole article about this choker earlier, so if you would like to know more about its creation and maker, [check out this post](#) from last year.



Lucky for us, the BRAFA has asked their film crew to interview *Wolfers expert* Werner Adriaenssens (who is a Professor of History of Decorative Arts at the VUB – Vrije Universiteit Brussel and curator Decorative Arts of the 20th Century at the Art & History Museum Brussels) about his 'coup de coeur'.

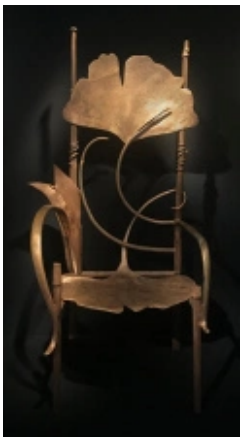
BRAFA 2019 features a unique Art Nouveau choker by ...

Since Philippe Wolfers appears to be such an important player in this edition of the BRAFA (also Cento Anni and the King Baudouin Foundation present respectively statues by Wolfers and original jewellery designs by Wolfers), I thought it would be nice to show you a 1909 portrait by Franz van Holder of him, which I found at [Galerie Francis Maere](#).

And last but not least, I would like to share a few pictures of my smaller discoveries, just so you can get an impression of the other objects I came across. It is however only a tiny selection of what there is to see... you'd better go to Brussels, and see for yourself! The BRAFA is open from 26 January to 3 February 2019.









Below two works by Firmin Baes (1874-1943) are not really Art Nouveau anymore, but both pastels were so impressive that I *had* to share them with you! I spotted the left one *Serenity* at Galerie Berko, and *The Little Knitter* in the blue dress at Galerie Alexis Bordes.





And this, my dear reader, is just a tip of the iceberg! The BRAFA is an exceptional showcase of high quality and rare pieces dating from the Bronze Age to the present day, covering some 5000 years of history. 133 leading galleries from 16 countries are represented, 10.000 to 15.000 objects are on show and 65.000 visitors attend from across the world. If you have never been to the BRAFA, maybe below video can give you an idea of what it's like...

The BRAFA Art Fair 2019 offers Art Without Frontiers



**BRAFA, Tour & Taxis, Avenue du Port 86c, 1000 Brussels, Belgium
26 January – 3 February 2019**

My favourite Art Galleries:

[BRAFA, Brussels Art Fair](#)

[Galerie Berko Fine Paintings](#) (19th – early 20th century painting)

[Galerie Cento Anni](#) (Art Nouveau and Art Deco decorative art)

[Lancz Gallery](#) (early 20th century painting)

[Epoque Fine Jewels](#) (Art Nouveau & Art Deco jewellery)

[Galerie Ary Jan](#) (Orientalism & Belle Epoque paintings)

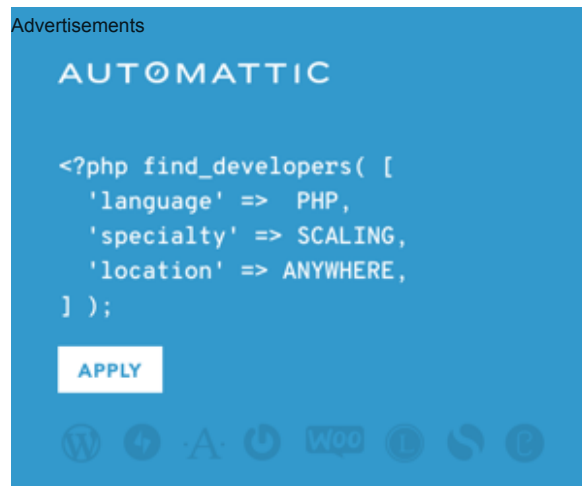
[Galerie Alexis Bordes](#) (18th – early 20th century French School painting)

[The Belgian Antiquarian Booksellers' Association](#) (CLAM)

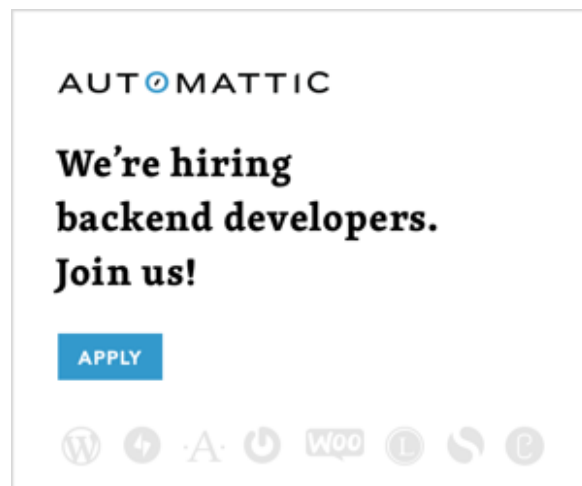
Galerie Oscar De Vos (Flemish art from 1880 to 1940)

Galerie Mathivet (20th century decorative art)

Univers du Bronze (bronze statues 1830-1930)



REPORT THIS AD



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thoughts on “Treasure hunting at the BRAFA – always a pleasure!”

1. *said:*Daniela

January 29, 2019 at 10:07 am

Thanks for sharing

REPLY

◦ *said:*seishonagon3

January 29, 2019 at 10:23 am

Thank you for stopping by Daniela!

REPLY

2. *said:*Traisnel

January 31, 2019 at 11:49 am

Thank you very much for your time and attention during your visit at Brafa: it is really a great overview of what you can discover about Art Nouveau in the fair. I also found interesting jewels from that period. All the best and let's keep in touch!

Frank – Galerie Alexis Bordes

REPLY

◦ *said:*Olga Harmsen

January 31, 2019 at 1:27 pm

Dear Frank, it was a pleasure to meet you at the BRAFA and I really enjoyed your beautiful collection of Art Nouveau paintings this year! Thank you very much for bringing this selection to Brussel. Hope to see you again next year. Olga

REPLY

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