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THE COLLECTIONS OF THE CHATEAU DE GOURDON

ART NOUVEAU – ART DECO – MODERNISM AND THE UAM (UNION DES ARTISTES MODERNES)

Paris – Christie's announces the sale of the *Gourdon Collection*, one of the finest private collections of early 20th century decorative art and design ever to be offered at auction, on 29, 30 and 31 March 2011, at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. The collection is estimated to achieve between 40 and 60 million euros.

Housed in the spectacular medieval Château de Gourdon near Grasse, towering majestically over the Gorges du Loup, this collection of masterpieces has focused principally on the classicism of Art Deco and on the emergence of Modernism in France – the latter movement symbolised by the outstanding representation of the Union des Artistes Modernes (UAM.). The collection provides a chronological narrative – starting with exemplary works from the age of Art Nouveau, moving on to demonstrate the great achievements of Art Deco in the 1920s and illustrating in depth the utopian Modernist aesthetic – a radical new approach to design for the machine age.

"The exceptional Gourdon auction presents a landmark opportunity for institutions and serious connoisseurs. It is totally unique, in that it unites all the different movements of the Art Deco period, which are at times contradictory: from the classicism of Ruhlmann and Dunand to the modernism of Eileen Gray, Pierre Chareau and Francis Jourdain," **said François de Ricqlès, President of Christie's France.**

Including important one-off pieces, important prototypes, special commissions for prestigious patrons, and historic furniture and objects created by some of the artists for their own use, the collection comprises around 500 exceptional works by Louis Majorelle, Maurice Bouval, Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann, Jean Dunand, Eileen Gray, Pierre Chareau, Pierre Legrain, Jacques Adnet, Charlotte Alix, Louis Sognot, Georges Djo-Bourgeois, Jean Burkhalter, Francis Jourdain, Jan and Joël Martel, Boris Jean Lacroix, Hélène Henry, Charlotte Perriand, René Herbst, Jacques le Chevallier, Robert Mallet Stevens, Eckart Muthesius, and Jean Perzel, among others.

Their creations – furniture, sculpture, lacquer work, metalwork, lighting, rugs, jewellery, perfume bottles, and graphic works – illustrate the range and sophistication of techniques used in this period: cabinet-making traditions from the 18th century were enriched by the use of exotic woods and materials such as ivory, tortoise shell and shagreen; new technologies meanwhile suggested new possibilities as designers explored the potential of innovations in machine tools, novel alloys (such as 'alpaca' or nickel silver) and new synthetic materials (such as 'lakarmé, galathite mixed with plaster, and bakelite).

ART NOUVEAU

The spectacular bedroom suite 'Aux Nénuphars' (Water-lilies) by **Louis Majorelle (1859-1926)** is one of the defining emblems of the Art Nouveau style. Inspired by Symbolism, drawing its iconographic vocabulary and forms from the nature, Art Nouveau emerged at the end of the 19th century and flourished briefly but dramatically during its heyday between 1900 and 1905.

The extravagant mahogany bed and its pair of bedside tables, produced circa 1905, sculpted in sensual fluid forms ornamented with gilt bronze water-lilies, are estimated at 1 million to 1.5 million euros. This masterpiece by Majorelle – the perfect expression of Art Nouveau – is recorded in three examples. The other two are in major museum collections, one in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, and the other in the Lewis collection at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, USA. The collection includes a writing desk (estimate: €100,000-150,000) and a chair (estimate: €15,000-20,000) with gilt bronze fittings on the same theme.

ART DECO

Art Deco, the consummately refined style that married a respect for classical forms with a desire to reduce these to their purest elements, is well represented in an impressive collection of works by **Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann (1879-1933)**. Considered the 'Riesener' of the 20th century, he is hailed as the master cabinet-maker and 'ensemblier' of this period. The collection includes more than 45 Ruhlmann works, showcasing an exceptional selection of furniture and furnishings: fine pieces in Macassar ebony, rosewood, mahogany, with inlays of ivory, tortoiseshell, shagreen, and fittings – lock-plates, handles, *sabots* – of silvered or gilt bronze; light fittings of alabaster and bronze; and wall and table mirrors of elegant simplicity.

Beside his numerous private commissions, Ruhlmann also worked on official projects, including the interior design and furnishings for the Élysée Palace and the residence of the chairman of the National Assembly, circa 1920. He also worked on furnishing passenger liners including the prestigious *Ile-de-France*, launched in 1927 and *Le Normandie*, launched in 1935.

The embodiment of Art Deco's grand classicism, the imposing 'Lassalle' chest-of-drawers, circa 1925, (estimate: €500,000-700,000) is a model that Ruhlmann included in his celebrated *Pavillon du Collectionneur* at the Paris International Exhibition of 1925. The Macassar ebony façade is inlaid with fine criss-crossing diagonal lines of ivory, a motif also found on the 'Cabanel' chiffonier, circa 1921-22 (estimate: €200,000-300,000). The 'Colonnettes' dressing table, circa 1919-1920, (estimate: €200,000-300,000) perfectly encapsulates both the artistry of Ruhlmann, and the Art Deco style with which he is so closely associated. Here we find Macassar ebony veneer, elements in ribbed silvered bronze, ivory inlays achieving various effects from the cobblestone motif so specific to this designer, the frieze of small dots emphasising the structure of the furniture, and the ogee lines. This piece was formerly in the distinguished Ruhlmann collection of Geneva and Pierre Hebey sold in Paris in October 1999 before entering the Château de Gourdon collection.

Another highlight is the 'Nicolle' drinks cabinet of 1926 – the ultimate expression of refinement – made for a rich industrialist from northern France. Constructed in Macassar ebony, it has a red tortoiseshell-veneered façade, inlaid in the lozenge pattern of the ivory decoration mentioned above and so favoured by Ruhlmann, and framed with a frieze of ivory dentils (estimate: €300,000-400,000). It is raised on slender, tapered legs of a perfect elegance. The model was exhibited at the Salon des Artistes Décorateurs in Paris in 1926 and subsequently within the Ruhlmann retrospective at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in 1934.

In the late 1920s, Ruhlmann evolved his style in harmony with prevailing shifts in taste, tending towards ever greater simplicity and abandoning the overt preciousness of the materials that had hitherto predominated in his work. The 'Tardieu' writing desk (estimate: €2,000,000-3,000,000) is evidence of this creative renewal as he also demonstrated, in parallel with the emerging Modernists, a radical approach to the geometry of forms. He exploits unornamented surfaces, emphasising the play of perspective and line, while maintaining the distinctive majesty and elegance of his work. This desk was executed in 1929 in black Duco lacquer. It was presented at the Salon des Artistes Décorateurs in the 'Studio apartment of a crowned prince' and acquired by André Tardieu, then Président du Conseil. This model would be adopted by Ruhlmann himself for his own office on Rue de Lisbonne, and chosen by the Maharaja of Indore, who ordered a version in Macassar ebony. This aesthetic turning point was further defined by a concern that the designs should more clearly demonstrate their functionality. The desk, for example, is fitted with a lamp, a pivoting waste-paper basket, and a foot-rest/heater with built-in electrical control panel. These elements are in chromium-plated bronze, contrasting with the sleek black surfaces. The pivoting mechanism for the desk chair is also conceived as a distinct formal element. These concepts are echoed in another legendary piece of Ruhlmann furniture: the chaise longue 'on skis' created in 1929 for the Maharaja of Indore (estimate: €2,000,000-3,000,000). The chaise, which rests on a pair of black Duco lacquered skis, is fitted with an electrical control panel to adjust its angle and with a foot-rest/heater in the form of a chromium-plated bronze cylinder.

Exquisite elegance is further found in a pair of black lacquered side tables, produced in collaboration with Jean Dunand, each with two oval trays on a cylindrical stem resting on a

rectangular gilt bronze base. Created circa 1925, this design has the elegance of simplicity and faultless proportion (estimate: €150,000-200,000).

Jean Dunand (1877-1942) was a sculptor by training, an unrivalled master of metalwork and a prestigious lacquer worker; his atelier eventually employed almost 100 people. His production included numerous patinated, inlaid or lacquered vases and decorative lacquered panels, screens and furniture, both for private clients and for such public spaces as the grand rooms of luxury liners including *L'Île-de-France* and *Le Normandie*, projects on which he worked alongside Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann. Dunand's furniture tended to simplicity of form as a foil for lacquered surfaces, often decorated with abstract geometric motifs that allude to Cubism. The Château de Gourdon collection boasts truly outstanding examples of his artistry.

Commissioned in around 1928-1929 for the smoking room of Madame Colette Aboucaya's apartment on Rue de Monceau, Paris, the *Les Palmiers* panelling reinterprets the theme of palm trees in extreme, near-abstract Cubistic stylisation. These panels of incised, textured and lacquered wood constitute a stunning room, an exceptional and evocative Art Deco environment. Dunand and his team of skilled craftsmen have exploited a variety of techniques to create subtle contrasts of surfaces in black and shades of silver-grey lacquers. This room is undoubtedly one of the most sophisticated domestic projects of the period, each detail meticulously considered. It is estimated at 3 to 4 million euros.

The unique games table, in black lacquer with egg-shell inlay, was designed in 1930 for the library of the apartment of pre-eminent couturier Madeleine Vionnet, (estimate: €3,000,000-5,000,000). The top incorporates a chessboard with squares of inlaid crushed egg-shell, a painstaking technique in which Dunand was a master. The lacquer and metal seats, upholstered in beige leather, slide into the table to create a compact, lustrous black cube, reflecting light and setting off the refinement of the table top's decoration.

Among the major pieces is a chest-of-drawers with a swivel work surface in pale tortoiseshell lacquer, the handles picked out in black, circa 1928. This was designed for his own use by Jean Dunand to store his colours and to allow him to work from his bed (estimate: €250,000-350,000).

Jean Dunand worked in fruitful collaborations with other painters and sculptors, including Jean Lambert-Rucki (1888-1967). The collection includes a mantelpiece in lacquered wood, circa 1930, on which Lambert-Rucki's refined geometrical design of a man and a woman facing one another is immediately recognisable (estimate: €80,000-120,000).

A Cubist inspiration can be found in the work of **Pierre Legrain (1888-1929)**, an artist with a distinct and powerful style. He worked firstly on the satirical publications of Paul Iribe before collaborating with him on furnishings for patron Jacques Doucet. In 1917, Legrain signed a contract with Doucet, for whom he produced numerous bindings, before going on to create a number of pieces of furniture for this distinguished patron, including the square wool rug included in the collection (estimate: €120,000-180,000). Legrain later work closely with

architect Paul Ruaud on the installation for Doucet of the famous Studio Saint-James Studio in Neuilly, where this very rug occupied a central place in the salon. Doucet introduced Legrain to high-fashion milliner Jeanne Tachard who, greatly admiring his work, commissioned several pieces of furniture, notably the sofa presented here (estimate: €300,000-400,000), whose simple and striking structure comprises a geometrically cut double platform in brown mottled lacquer. The collection also features a pair of black leather armchairs (estimate: €300,000-400,000) raised on saw-tooth feet made by Legrain for French writer and literary critic Maurice Martin du Gard (1896–1970).

The Château de Gourdon collection includes an important group of works by one of the most emblematic figures of the decorative arts and modernist movement in France – expatriate Irish woman **Eileen Gray (1879-1976)**.

Like Pierre Legrain she had excuted pieces for Jacques Doucet, who discovered her at the Salon des Artistes Décorateurs in 1913. Miss Gray was an extraordinary character, single-minded and individualistic, who managed to capture and express in her own way the prevailing spirit of the age in design through the first decades of the 20th century. She was celebrated in February 2009 during the auction of the Yves Saint Laurent-Pierre Bergé collections at the Grand Palais when her remarkable 'dragons' chair, circa 1917-1919, originally from the collections of fashionable milliner Suzanne Talbot and the quintessence of her work in lacquer, achieved the record sum of €21 million.

Eileen Gray arrived in Paris in 1902, studying at the Académie Colorassi and the Académie Julian before exploring the medium of lacquer after her curiosity was sparked by a visit to a small atelier in Soho. She met Japanese artist Seizo Sugarawa with whom she would work for a number of years. An enigmatic personality, as private as she was determined, she chose in the early 1920s to move away from the highly refined lacquer work of her early days, in order to focus on more functionalist designs in metal, glass and painted wood, inspired at first by the Modernist ideas of the Dutch De Stijl movement.

Her creativity and vision found expression in new forms, such as the 'Brick' screen (estimate: €1,200,000-1,500,000) – developed from the panels she used in the hallway of the apartment of Suzanne Talbot on Rue de Lota, circa 1922. The black-lacquered screen presented here was part of her personal furnishing and featured in her apartment on Rue Bonaparte. Other examples of her work include the floor light, the black and yellow base of which resembles a piece of Constructivist architecture (estimate: €400,000-600,000), again made for her own use, or the 'Transat' armchair, circa 1925 (estimate: €1,000,000-1,500,000), in black lacquer with seat made from coated canvas, formerly the property of her friend and collaborator architect Jean Badovici, founder of the avant-garde magazine *L'Architecture Vivante*, 1923.

Eileen Gray's evolving vision, as she pursued the alliance of form and function in an expressive modern spirit, is well evidenced in a number of radically Modernist works within the Château de Gourdon collection. These include the 'Bibendum' armchair (estimate: €800,000-1,200,000) with a tubular chrome base and seat formed from stacked, curved, cream-coloured 'sausages' –

clearly evocative of the logo of tire-manufacturer Michelin. This, the only known intact surviving example, was made for Jeanne Tachard.

Miss Gray's unique inspiration can be seen in her 'Aéroplane' ceiling light, circa 1925-28, (estimate: €300,000-500,000), constructed like an abstract sculpture from metal elements and two sheets of glass, one white, one blue. This specific example had belonged to Miss Gray. Another was commissioned by the eminent connoisseur and patron of Modernism, the Maharaja of Indore. Among the 15 pieces which make up the Eileen Gray collection, a further notable example is the small circular extendable pedestal table made from nickel-plated tubular metal and with an aluminium top, circa 1927, (estimate: €200,000-300,000) for her house in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, E1027, and the fitted furniture for her bedroom on Rue Bonaparte, an asymmetrical linear construction in grey-painted wood and aluminium, in which she incorporated pivoting drawers and other functional elements.

MODERNISM AND THE UAM (UNION DES ARTISTES MODERNES)

The path followed by Eileen Gray is a perfect illustration of the central concern addressed by modern artists after the end of the First World War: that of the relative status of style and of purpose. The architect Le Corbusier (1887-1965) and the painter Amédée Ozenfant (1886-1966) expressed this succinctly: 'Où en est la vie moderne ?' (What progress is being made with modern life?). The 1920 launch of their magazine *L'Esprit Nouveau* – which for the first time placed literature, the visual arts, music and science on an equal footing – provided a beacon for innovators.

Modernity would henceforth be asserted through the positive celebration of technological progress and of the mechanisation of society. The development of automobiles and aviation, and the construction of the great transatlantic passenger liners were obvious manifestations of this. This 'poetry of machines and speed' would truly mark the aesthetic of these years.

The tensions and disagreements between advocates of the Classical tradition and of Modernism grew steadily and polarised dramatically in the context of the International Exhibition of 1925, where the Modernists were bullied and ostracised by the traditionalists, along with the management committee and many critics. But the painter and furniture designer Francis Jourdain (1876-1958), architect and interior designer Pierre Chareau (1883-1950) and Le Corbusier very quickly formed an opposition and fought against all the odds to be part of the international event. They were convinced of the need to show the public another view of the future and of the century. Le Corbusier and his cousin Pierre Jeanneret (1896-1967) created the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau, a space in which works by Georges Braque, Juan Gris, Jeanneret, Fernand Léger, Jacques Lipchitz, Amédée Ozenfant and Picasso were exhibited together with designs expressive of the new spirit. The pavilion was considered a provocation and galvanised all those with opposing views.

An important step towards the future organisation of the Modernist movement came in 1928. The architects and interior designers Charlotte Perriand, René Herbst and Djo-Bourgeois collaborated on a joint exhibition at the Salon des Artistes Décorateurs. They wanted to stand out from the disparate displays of the regular exhibitors. In order to more forcefully demonstrate the coherence and innovation of their proposals, they presented a selection of radical yet cohesive objects designs: jewellery by Jean Fouquet and Gérard Sandoz, gold and silverware by Jean Puiforcat, crockery by Jean Luce. They were barred from exhibiting together again the following year.

Many of these artists, interior designers and architects then left the Société des Artistes Décorateurs, considering its approach to be too commercial, corrupted by too many compromises and lacking a real purpose. This schism became official in 1929 when they formed the Union des Artistes Modernes (UAM), founded in May of that year. Its headquarters were at the home of Hélène Henry, a designer of fabrics and rugs, a friend and faithful colleague of Pierre Chareau, Francis Jourdain and Robert Mallet-Stevens. The famous UAM logo was designed by Pierre Legrain.

A long, rich and varied list of designers joined the Modernist movement including architects, furniture designers, interior designers, ceramicists, glass makers, lighting engineers, sculptors, painters, poster artists, illustrators, jewellers, fabric designers and and silversmiths. These artists and their Modernist ideals are a central component of the Château de Gourdon collection. Through this remarkable anthology one can appreciate the authority and impact of this historic group in shaping a concept of the modern that came to dominate the last century.

Robert Mallet-Stevens (1886-1945), UAM chairman, is represented by more than 30 pieces in the collection, with a number coming from his personal collection, notably his dining room. This comprises a large extendable table in brown lacquer, cabinet pieces and a set of eight chairs made by Marcel Breuer (model B5) made from nickel-plated metal which are unique in that their seats and backs were woven by Mme Mallet-Stevens. Together these are estimated at €400,000-600,000. Other works of note include a sycamore-veneer and polished metal dressing table (estimate €200,000-250,000) from the Villa Cavrois. Located in Croix, in northern France, the last villa built by Robert Mallet-Stevens was commissioned in 1929 by Paul Cavrois, a textile industrialist, and completed in the spring of 1932. One of the architect's major works and a very rare example of a complete commission in European domestic architecture, this immediately gained a place among the key architectural achievements of the 20th century.

The style of **Pierre Chareau (1883-1950)** was inspired by contemporary Cubist research; he also collected pieces by Picasso and Mondrian. His work is defined by high-quality materials, contrasts of wood and iron, fine finishes and rationalisation of form. The collection includes an impressive number of pieces by Chareau, among them furniture designed for the child's room of the Maison de Verre. The auction will include around 10 light fittings, highlighting the importance of his work on lighting. As much a sculpture as a functional object, the design of the famous model 'Religieuse' SN31 remains unique in the history of furniture, the base of this floor

lamp taking the shape of a folded cone, evoking rolled fabric. The collection boasts two variant examples, one with alabaster shades (estimate: €300,000-500,000) the other with a fabric shade (estimate: €400,000-600,000). Also presented will be 57 drawings exploring design ideas.

René Herbst (1891-1982) also paid particularly close attention to lighting, especially indirect lighting and the way in which reflections provide a more diffuse light, with less glare which is closer to natural light. Several light fittings perfectly illustrate this research, including a 1935 ceiling light from his personal collection (estimate: €20,000-30,000) as well as a Modernist ceiling light, 1929, made from nickel-plated bronze with three disks with reducing apertures that catch the light on their edges (estimate €30,000-40,000). In 1930, René Herbst tried to popularise new shapes and materials, favouring industrial materials, as with his design for a desk in tubular metal and glass (estimate: €80,000-120,000), and he even designed a whole series of tubular steel chairs with seats made from elasticated cords. There are four in the collection (estimate: €20,000-30,000).

The collection assembles a remarkable group of light fittings by **Jacques Le Chevallier (1896-1987)**. His clean-lined designs use industrial materials – as with 'lampe type 4', circa 1928, in aluminium and ebonite and taking the form of an exploded sphere (estimate: €30,000-40,000) – and were incorporated into such seminal Modernist architectural projects as Robert Mallet-Stevens's Villa Cavrois.

Complementing the work of the UAM are pieces by the German architect **Eckart Muthesius (1904-1989)**, the son of Hermann Muthesius, founder of Deutsches Werkbund. Very early in his career, aged just 25, he met someone destined to become a major patron – the Maharaja of Indore, Shri Yeswant Rao Holkar Bahadur (1905-1956) who, in 1930, commissioned him to create a modern residence that would be his most prestigious project: the palace of Manik Bagh (Jewel Gardens), in the central Indian state of Mahratta. Both shared a taste for the clean lines and purity of the Modernist style. The Château de Gourdon collection features several pieces from the palace, including a pair of wall-fixed standard lamps made from nickel silver, 1930 (estimate: 200,000-300,000), from the dining room of the palace, along with a sleek mural bookshelf in glass and nickel silver, 1930 (estimate: €400,000-600,000), for the palace library. The Maharaja, who was brought up in Europe, developed a deep interest in avant-garde art, architecture and design. A highly sophisticated figure, he enjoyed the role of aesthete and patron and his natural elegance is immortalised in numerous portraits, including photographic portraits by Man Ray (1890-1976), a selection of which are included in the sale.

Images Available on Request
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Viewing and Auctions

Espaces du Palais de Tokyo - 13 Avenue du Président Wilson - 75116 Paris

Viewing :

Friday 25 March, Saturday 26 March, Sunday 27 March and Monday 28 March

Sales:

Tuesday 29 March:

Art Deco - UAM

Wednesday 30 March:

Documentary (Books, Photographs, Drawings)

Art Nouveau and Art Deco

Thursday 31 March:

Classical Museum

UAM

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*Estimates do not include buyer's premium