



THE  
**ROTHSCHILD**  
COLLECTORS

FEMALE PATRONS AND DONORS PAR EXCELLENCE

## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	3
The spirit of collecting.....	5
The Rothschild collectors.....	7
Charlotte.....	7
Adèle .....	12
Alice.....	17
Thérèse.....	20
Béatrice .....	23
Mathilde .....	28
Alix.....	31
Cécile.....	34
Liliane .....	37

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the 19th century, the legendary Rothschild family has been synonymous with success in the world of finance, but also intellectual and artistic erudition. However, unknown figures and an unexpected heritage lie behind this name. This exhibition, which was designed in collaboration with the Louvre Museum, offers a unique perspective that highlights nine women from the Rothschild family with striking personalities of their own. These female collectors, patrons, heiresses and donors made a significant contribution to the enrichment of historical heritage and collections in French museums through their exceptional donations and legacies. This exhibition highlights the tastes and personalities of these

nine women. Sometimes independent and sometimes in the shadow of their husbands, they played an important role in art history, history, society and even the lives of artists in their time. Through a selection of more than 350 pieces from approximately thirty French institutions and private collections, the exhibition offers a journey through works by major artists like Fragonard, Chardin, Delacroix or even Cézanne, as well as collections of jewels, porcelain items and works of art from Africa and the Far East. The collection testifies to the history of tastes and collecting throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

### THE ROTHSCHILD FAMILY

Isaac Elchanan adopted the surname Rothschild in 1570. This was a reference to the sign on the small house that he had built in 1567 in the Judengasse ('the Jewish alley') in Frankfurt in the state of Hesse in Germany. He lived in this house with his family. Houses in the Judengasse very often had colourful signs. Families living there frequently derived their own surnames from them. Thus, the sign 'Zum Roten Schild' (meaning 'with the red shield') became 'de Rothschild'.

Mayer Amschel de Rothschild (1744–1812) transformed his father's modest pawnshop into a renowned bank, in particular thanks to the management of the wealth of William I, Elector of Hesse, who had one of the largest fortunes in Europe at that time. His five sons each managed a branch of the family bank: London (Nathan Mayer de Rothschild), Paris (James Mayer de Rothschild), Vienna (Salomon Mayer de Rothschild), Naples (Carl Mayer de Rothschild) and Frankfurt (Amschel Mayer de Rothschild). They collectively made up the Rothschild banking dynasty, which became one of the most famous families in the business world. In 1822, Francis II, Emperor of Austria, appointed him a baron. Marriages between different branches of the family made it possible to carry out activities in various fields of banking and finance, thanks to their investment capacity. As a result, the Rothschilds became important financiers and investors, particularly in mining and the development of railway networks. Only the English and French branches remain today.



Birthplace of the Rothschild family in Frankfurt © <https://www.wakpool.fr/> (D.R)

## THE BANKING REVOLUTION

In the 18th century, 'merchant bankers', who specialised in commercial loans and investments, were distinguished from 'local bankers', who dealt in discounts and loans. The strength of these bankers lay in their displays of tangible capital, such as real estate, which earned the trust of their clients and encouraged them to make deposits. Some banks were even beginning to raise capital via the stock exchange.

During the Second Empire, in order to ensure confidence in a tumultuous time characterised by industrial revolutions and the development of domestic and international trade, modern banking was gradually implemented through compensation, which made it possible to receive assets that corresponded to the transactions carried out in their own name or on behalf of their clients. Therefore, during the 19th century, the major banking institutions were founded.

## THE SPIRIT OF COLLECTING

Collecting poses a series of questions. Why collect? How were acquisitions selected? Should one kind of acquisitions be prioritised? Does the collector make the decision alone, or get advice from an expert? How was the collection preserved? How should it be presented? Should it be exhibited? How will the collector classify it? Will they publish writings about their collection? Will they try to pass it on to their descendants?

Since Antiquity, collecting has sometimes had a political component. It could be a diplomatic demonstration of power and strength. It reflected the extent of the knowledge and the tastes of the person who assembled it. By extension, the collection became a tool to demonstrate the qualities of the owner. While these politically minded collectors could personally choose acquisitions, they could also delegate this duty to artists or scholars. This approach aimed to focus primarily on the 'image' conveyed by the collection. Private collections stemmed from a compulsive desire to uncover masterpieces. They mirrored the ego and imagination of the collector, who was, in turn, driven by passion and feeling. When enriched with a famous, rare and expensive piece, private collections also became a tool to achieve social status, which was obtained through the power of money. To this end, some private collections occasionally combined subjective choices and impulses with financial speculation. In short, there are as many kinds of collectors as there are types of collections. The collection is a kind of self-portrait of the collector, reflecting their personality, and became almost an extension of the collector themselves.

## COLLECTIONS

The term 'collection' refers to both a group of objects with a singular theme (scientific artefacts, works of art, everyday items, etc.) and the act of gathering, maintaining and managing this assortment. Collections can be accrued in a recreational setting, for the purposes of a private collection, or practised professionally (curators in museums, libraries, archives, etc.). Although collections have existed since Antiquity, the term 'collector' did not appear until 1839, when it was coined by Honoré de Balzac in 'Monographie du rentier'.

## COLLECTING

(DEFINITION BY E. WHARTON)

A person who wishes to own work must have more than just the means to acquire it; they must also have the ability to select it – an ability based on cultural knowledge and judgement – and an eye for beauty that cannot be learned, but simply sharpened and perfected through study.

The earliest evidence of the activity of collectors was unearthed in the Renne cave in Arcy-sur-Cure (Yonne, France), which was occupied by Neanderthals during the Middle Palaeolithic era. In the ancient world, collections could be found in temples, libraries, royal palaces and more. During the Renaissance, European aristocrats were fascinated

by cabinets of curiosities, which were characterised by the eclecticism of their collections. The liberal bourgeoisie developed during the 19th century. They owed their economic success to the industrial boom. These wealthy individuals showed a keen interest in acquiring works of art, which allowed them to craft a social identity and gain legitimacy. Collecting was a worldly ritual and the person with the collection was seen as a person with lofty ideals. Around the middle of the century, collections also became more specialised: the act of collecting was no longer about collecting curious items, but rather identifying a collection with a historic or aesthetic theme. In this sense, collectors classified and inventoried in search of knowledge and expertise. They kept a record of their purchases, a catalogue, and compiled any documents that could attest to their good taste. Collectors became both critic and expert, adding a coherent and meaningful vision to their collection.

Many collectors wanted their collections to continue, in whole or in part, after their death. Some of them shared their collections during their lifetime, while others would establish a donation or legacy to small and large institutions (national, regional or municipal museums), which may or may not have had conditions. Others still established a foundation or museum in their name. This way, they made the collection accessible to a wide audience, like a crowning achievement for their work. Were they driven by pride, power, ego, passion or generosity?

## COLLECTING AMONG WOMEN

In the 19th century, women were legally subservient to their father or their husband. As a result, they were not allowed to own private property. Within their homes, they were responsible for managing trinkets, which were obtained primarily through inheritances. This activity based around works of art was a means of circumventing social conventions linked to their gender and became commonplace for women from the bourgeoisie. In this way, collecting made it possible to achieve a sort of personal emancipation from the limitations of the role that society had assigned them, to legitimise their position in society (they were perceived as patrons who were sensitive to artistic matters) and to adopt an intellectual endeavour, by making them active figures in the art world.

This exhibition celebrates nine female collectors from the Rothschild family. While this approach may be new, it seems to be entirely necessary. Though these women are often cited in footnotes of donations and acquisitions from their husbands, they are rarely studied in their own right. Where history does take an interest in them, it is to highlight their sensitivity and generosity (as opposed to the male members of their family, who are praised for their erudition, knowledge, special expertise and professionalism). In 19th-century bourgeois society, collecting was reserved for men. However, the work of these female collectors could also have an impact on the career and recognition of certain artists.

## THE ROTHSCHILD COLLECTORS

### FEMALE PATRONS AND DONORS PAR EXCELLENCE



#### CHARLOTTE DE ROTHSCHILD

1825 – 1899, Paris

**Father** : James Mayer de Rothschild (1792 – 1868) – French branch

**Mother** : Betty de Rothschild (1805 – 1886), James' cousin – Austrian branch

**Husband** : Nathaniel de Rothschild (1812 – 1870), her cousin – English branch

Charlotte de Rothschild was a worldly figure: she was both a collector and a patron, as well as a watercolour artist. After training with artists Hercule Trachel and Nélie Jacquemart, she enjoyed a career as an artist. She started exhibiting in salons in 1864. She was heavily involved in the art scene and was one of the founders of the Society of French Watercolour Artists in 1879. Charlotte was also interested in music and socialised with the musicians of her era, in particular Frédéric Chopin, who dedicated several compositions to her. In 1842, she married her cousin, Nathaniel de Rothschild. The couple lived in a mansion at 33 Faubourg Saint-Honoré from 1860. They also bought a vineyard in 1853, which would become 'Château Mouton Rothschild'. She inherited part of her husband's collection in 1870, including landscape works by artists from THE Dutch School. She continued to enrich this collection, in particular by acquiring 18th-century paintings, Renaissance paintings and works by contemporary artists. She complemented this collection of

paintings with jewels, leather boxes, musical instruments and objects relating to Jewish culture.

She donated 200 jewels and 48 leather boxes to the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris. She donated her collection of Italian paintings to the Louvre Museum and her musical instruments to the National Conservatory of Music (today, these are stored at the Museum of Music, Paris Philharmonic).

Ary Scheffer, *Portrait of Baroness Nathaniel de Rothschild* (detail), private collection © 2022, Gaëlle Deleflie



### HÔTEL PERRINET DE JARS AT 33 RUE DU FAUBOURG SAINT-HONORÉ (8TH DISTRICT OF PARIS)

In 1714, Anne Levieux, the wife of a financier, had this mansion built by Pierre Grandhomme. It would later be owned by Étienne Perrinet de Jars, an aristocrat responsible for collecting rent and taxes for farms on behalf of the king). It passed into the hands of the Duke Decrès, Minister in the City Hall of Napoleon I in 1810. The building was rented by the Russian embassy between 1849 and 1864. It was finally acquired by Baron Nathaniel de Rothschild in 1856, who had it converted in 1864. In particular, he had the body rebuilt on the street and reassembled the woodwork from 1762. The building was listed as a Historic Monument in 1928 and today houses the Cercle de l'Union Interalliée.

Hotel Perrinet de Jars, 33 rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, Paris © <https://www.maguytran-pinterville.com/> (DR.)

### THE CASTELLANI WORKSHOP

Fortunato Pio Castellani was responsible for founding the workshop of the same name. In Rome, his father trained him in gold-smithing. Starting in 1820, he lost interest in contemporary jewellery and began to draw inspiration from ancient Greek and Roman works, as well as early Christian pieces. The pendant and earrings with the image of the lion of Saint Mark in Charlotte's collection are a fine example of micro-ceramics. This technique was developed in the Vatican workshop at the end of the 18th century. These mosaics were made up of a collection of very small enamel tesserae known as smalti. The popularity of the technique faded over the course of the 19th century, until the Castellani house took an interest in it. These pieces were produced under the direction of Luigi Podio and show great finesse. The workshop experienced international success and opened branches in Paris and London. Fortunato Pio later entrusted the management to two of his sons: Alessandro and Augusto.

**MOÏSE TIEFFENBRUCKER, LUTH,**  
ROSEWOOD AND IVORY, VENICE, 16TH CENTURY,  
CITÉ DE LA MUSIQUE, PARIS.

While Charlotte's collection of musical instruments has only eight pieces, they are valuable and of exceptional quality. Charlotte focused her attention on string instruments from the luth family from Italy. They were richly decorated and most were designed by famous luthiers. This six-string luth, which was produced in Venice by Moïse Tieffenbrucker, has a sound box made from rosewood (a type of tropical wood) and a design with 15 ivory ribs, which play on the contrast between black and white. In her will, Charlotte described them as 'old musical instruments', a description that, in the 19th century, referred to instruments that had become obsolete, such as luths, viols, harpsichords, etc. Instruments from schools in Italy were the most popular, thanks to their elegance, scarcity, refinement and, in particular, their sound. She saw them as works of art and curios to be studied.



Moïse Tieffenbrucker, Luth, rosewood and ivory, Venice, 16th century, Cité de la Musique, Paris © musée de la Musique / J.-M. Anglès

### THE TIEFFENBRUCKER FAMILY OF INSTRUMENT MAKERS

The roots of this family of luthiers trace back to Bavaria and the village of Tieffenbrucker in the Füssen region. During the 16th century, a branch of the family settled in Lyon and specialised in producing viols. The other branch earned a solid reputation in Italy, particularly in Venice and Mantua. Moïse Tieffenbrucker and his brother Magno II took over the family workshop in Venice in 1571. Several instruments by the Tieffenbrucker family, mostly dating from the 16th century, have been passed down to us. Many are of excellent quality and were intended for rich clients.

### LUTHS

The luth is a plucked string instrument with a rounded sound box. Introduced to the West by Arabs in Spain in the 14th century, it became an essential instrument in the 15th and 16th centuries. It originally had four strings, with a fifth one added in the 15th century and another added in the 16th century. The luth was an ideal instrument to accompany vocalists and evolved constantly until it fell out of favour in the 18th century, in favour of keyboard instruments like the harpsichord. During the 19th century, it was not uncommon to see some luths transformed into so-called 'romantic' six-string guitars.

## CIRCUMCISION CUP PADUA, 17TH CENTURY

Isaac Strauss, a popular composer of waltzes and polkas, started collecting all sorts of Hebrew objects in 1850. He searched, bought and resold. This approach allowed him to highlight the existence of Jewish art with an international influence. He viewed his collection as a unit and did not want it to be scattered after his death. However, it would come to be sold in 1890. The collection was acquired by Charlotte and was then donated to the Cluny Museum, in a specially dedicated room. As a result, items of Hebrew worship entered the French national collections for the first time. This inclusion in national heritage served as recognition for the baroness, at a time when anti-Semitism was on the rise. The room would remain in place until 1939. After the war, Cluny refocused on an exhibition dedicated to the Middle Ages. A campaign for the establishment of a Jewish museum began as a result, with this exceptional collection providing the masterpieces from a historical and artistic point of view. In 1998, the Museum of Jewish Art and History was opened in Paris.

The 149 pieces in this collection include a chiselled gilt-silver circumcision cup from Padua in Italy. It is a hexagonal cup, the hollow portion of which is decorated with an embossed motif depicting a circumcision scene. The godfather can be seen sitting on a seat (that of the prophet Elijah). He is holding the child on his knee and presenting them to the mohel, the person responsible for cutting babies' foreskin on the eighth day after their birth during the brit milah ceremony. The edge of the cup bears an inscription in beautiful Hebrew script: 'Abraham circumcises his son, Isaac, at eight days old, as God has commanded him.'

**MASTER OF THE CASTELLO  
NATIVITY, THE VIRGIN AND CHILD  
WITH A GOLDFINCH, CIRCA 1450**

In addition to musical instruments, jewels and items of Hebrew origin, Charlotte also took an interest in painting, particularly pieces by Italian primitive artists. This painting of 'The Virgin and Child with a Goldfinch' is one of her major pieces. It dates to the second half of the 15th century. Charlotte was responsible for acquiring the piece in 1859. When the baroness had her portrait painted by Léon Gérôme, she posed in front of some of her paintings, including this masterpiece. This painting was initially attributed to the Florentine painter Alesso Baldovinetti. Over time, it came to be attributed to several other artists, such as Florentine artist Domenico Veneziano and Domenico Ghirlandaio. In 1913, it was compared to other works by the Master of the Castello Nativity. Thirty pieces have been attributed to this artist, who took his name from a nativity conserved at the Galleria dell'Academia in Florence and a villa in Castello. The painting, which has a trompe-l'œil effect and an antique structure, bears stylistic similarities to the works of Filippo Lippi. The Master of the Castello Nativity would have frequented this workshop. The chubby child, with his tousled hair, has stylistic similarities to those depicted by Luca Della Robbia. The goldfinch was a symbol of the Passion of Christ, evoking the crown of thorns, and was a common decorative element in nativity scenes. Indeed, these birds feed on thorny thistles and evoke the crucifixion of Christ.



Master of the Castello Nativity, *The Virgin and Child with a Goldfinch*, The Louvre Museum, Paris © 2019 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / René-Gabriel OjedaMuseum



## ADÈLE DE ROTHSCHILD

1843, Frankfurt – 1922, Paris

**Father** : Mayer Carl de Rothschild (1820–1886) – Italian branch

**Mother** : Louise de Rothschild (1820–1894) – English branch (sister of Nathaniel, Charlotte's husband)

**Husband** : Salomon de Rothschild (1835–1864) – French branch (her uncle, Charlotte's brother)

Charles Escot, *Portrait of Baroness Salomon de Rothschild*, 1867-68, Gaillac, musée des Beaux-Arts © Musée des Beaux-Arts de Gaillac

Adèle met Salomon de Rothschild when he was staying in Germany between 1857 and 1859. They were married in Frankfurt in 1862. The couple settled down in Paris, on the ground floor of 25 Faubourg Saint-Honoré. Adèle was a cosmopolitan woman. She maintained close ties in the United States, frequented salons in Paris and became friends with the artists associated with them. Salomon died of a heart attack in 1864. Following this dramatic event, Adèle retired from public life and society for around ten years. She had a mansion built at 11 Rue Berryer in the eighth district of Paris. The building was heavily inspired by the décor of the Château de Ferrières, which was owned by the Rothschild family. It was within this mansion that she presented her husband's collections, as well as the collections she inherited from her father and her father-in-law. Inside the mansion, the so-called 'smoking room' served as a cabinet of curiosities, paying tribute to the memory of Salomon James. This space exuded a cosy atmosphere and was a place for rest, but also socialising, for Adèle. The furniture she selected also mirrored this ambience, which she wanted to permeate the room (checkers, chess

boards, writing desks, etc.). Decorations include fragments of antiques, gold-smithing pieces, a statuette by the Renaissance artist Giambologna, drawings bearing the monogram of Albrecht Dürer, jade objects and Japanese weaponry. This 'Wunderkammer' (a cabinet of curiosities) served as a tribute to the baron and his eclectic, eastern-inspired collection. UPON her death in 1922, Adèle bequeathed her home and its contents to the French STATE, with a view to converting it into a house museum for the arts. The premises act as a venue for exhibitions, concerts, charity auctions and artist receptions and are managed by the Salomon de Rothschild Foundation. In addition, Adèle also left some of her collections to the Louvre Museum, the Museum of Decorative Art in Paris, the National Library of France and the Cluny Museum. In 1880, Adèle had photographs taken of her private mansion. This precious documentation made it possible to reconstruct the mansion in an almost identical manner during restoration works in 2000. The cabinet reopened to the public in 2017.



## HÔTEL SALOMON DE ROTHSCHILD, 11 RUE BERRYER, PARIS (8TH DISTRICT)

In 1872, Adèle started to take an interest in the buildings and land on the former property of financier Nicolas Beaujon, who was known as 'Folie Beaujon'. She purchased the main building, which was called Chartreuse Beaujon, and had it torn down in 1873. She entrusted architect Léon Ohnet with the construction of a modern mansion. When Ohnet died, his student Justin Ponsard completed the project. She also acquired Folie Beaujon's former outbuilding from Balzac's widow, which she also had demolished in 1890 in order to expand her garden, and the old Saint Nicolas chapel in 1882, which was also torn down and replaced with a rotunda. The mansion is Neoclassical, in keeping with architectural tastes from the late 18th century. Its interiors were sumptuously furnished, in order to accommodate the collections of Salomon and Adèle. Zenith lighting in the hall, sets of mirrors in the corridor between the dining room and the winter garden, Italian-style décor, a grand staircase and painted ceilings add elegance to the building. When Adèle died, in accordance with her wishes, the building became a house museum for the arts, hosting exhibitions, artists' meetings, parties and charity auctions for the benefit of artists. The mansion subsequently housed the library of art and archaeology, the print room for the National Library and the administration and exhibitions of the National Centre for Contemporary Art (today, the Centre Pompidou). Since 1976, the property has been managed by the National Foundation for Graphic and Visual Arts. The estate was listed as a Historic Monument in 2005 and served as the filming location for 'Gramps Is in the Resistance' in 1983.



## CHÂTEAU DE FERRIÈRES

Between 1855 and 1859, the architect Joseph Paxton oversaw the construction of Château de Ferrières for Baron James Mayer de Rothschild. This château was located in Seine-et-Marne and replaced the home of Joseph Fouché, the Duke of Otrante and Minister of Police under Napoleon I. In 1862, the new château, which boasted neo-Renaissance façades, was inaugurated by Napoleon III. The grand staircase was a replica of the one Joseph Paxton had created for the Crystal Palace at the Great Exhibition in London in 1851. The château had 28 suites with central heating and running water. An underground passage, fitted with rails and trolleys, made it possible to communicate with the kitchen, which was located in an annex to avoid odours. The house was surrounded by a 125-hectare English-style park, which was regarded as one of the most beautiful in France. After World War II, the Rothschild family opened the château to Jewish children from the Œuvre de Secours aux Enfants (OSE). It was uninhabited until 1959 and then bequeathed to the Chancellery of the Universities of Paris by Baron Guy de Rothschild in 1975. Today, the château is home to a foundation in their name and a centre for research, meetings, symposiums and intellectual reflection.

Château de Ferrières, Seine-et-Marne © <https://sochateaux.com/> (D.R.)

Eugène Delacroix, *Young Arab in the Countryside*, circa 1832.  
Artists' Foundation, Paris © 2022, Gérald Micheels  
Eugène Delacroix, *Lion Gripping a Crocodile*, ca 1850-1860  
Artists' Foundation, Paris © 2022, Gérald Micheels

## ADÈLE AND EUGÈNE DELACROIX

In their collection, Adèle and Salomon possessed a number of paintings, including French pieces from the 18th century and works by contemporary artists. These included two compositions by the French painter Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863). Delacroix was a great Romantic painter and also an important part of the Orientalist movement.

Between 1798 and 1801, Bonaparte's expedition in Egypt, which was documented by a group of scientists and artists that accompanied him, inspired a new vision of a fantasy Orient. In addition to this, the Greek independence movement from Ottoman power played a role, as it embodied the ideals of Romantic artists.

In 1832, Delacroix, who was already an established artist, took a trip to Morocco and Algiers, which represented the culmination of a major project. He accompanied Count Edgard de Mornay on a diplomatic mission to Sultan Moulay Abderrahman. During the trip, he recorded his impressions and observations in notes, sketches and watercolours in travel diaries. These diaries reflected his astonishment and acted as a source of inspiration when the artist returned to France. In this way, this voyage through the Orient was a decisive visual experience for him, where he discovered the magic of colour and a singular atmosphere. He would produce more than 80 paintings inspired by the Orient, in which he transcended both shapes and light.

The pastel drawing depicts a young Arab in the countryside, wearing a turban and oriental slippers. The Atlas mountains are suggested on the horizon, tinged with different shades of blue against a twilight sky. This type of production was representative of the kind of work that Delacroix produced upon returning from Morocco.

The oil-on-canvas 'Lion Gripping a Crocodile' is part of his 'Wild Animals Hunting' series, which was loosely inspired by the hunting scenes depicted by painter Pierre Paul Rubens (1577–1640), which he produced many iterations of throughout his career. He studied these wild animals at the Royal Menagerie at the Jardin des Plantes between 1827 and 1828. In this piece, he captures all of the dramatic tension of these animals fighting to survive. The free strokes, which were made up of juxtaposed brushstrokes, and limited palette of blue-green and ochre shades, bring this painting in line with his later compositions.



## CABINETS OF CURIOSITIES

Cabinets of curiosities were rooms in which an eclectic selection of rare and singular objects were gathered. These artefacts included 'naturalia' (objects of natural history, such as minerals, taxidermied animals, fossils and shells, teeth, horns and plants) and 'artificialia' (man-made items, such as archaeological and antique objects, works of art, weapons and scientific and exotic tools).

These rooms reflected the world's more scientific concerns and their goal was to help people to discover these through an illustrated inventory. These unique collections started to appear in Europe during the Renaissance and were often open to the public. During the 18th century, cabinets centred around themes and were structured in the image of the Rationalist movement from the Age of Enlightenment. Many people consider them to be the precursors to museums.



## ALICE DE ROTHSCHILD

1847, Frankfurt – 1922, Paris

**Father** : Anselm Salomon de Rothschild (1803–1874) – Austrian branch – Brother of Betty, Charlotte's mother

**Mother** : Charlotte de Rothschild (1807–1859) – English branch – Sister of Nathaniel (Charlotte's husband) and Louise (Adèle's mother)

**Husband** : ///

Portrait of Baroness Alice de Rothschild. Waddesdon Manor, Waddesdon © Waddesdon Manor

Alice grew up in Vienna. Her mother died when she was only twelve years old. When her brother Ferdinand was widowed in 1866, she joined him at his manor in Waddesdon in Buckinghamshire. Doctors advised her not to live near water, as she suffered from rheumatism. She subsequently traded the manor for the south of France and its gentle climate in winter. She returned there regularly from 1883. In 1887, she acquired Villa Césarie in Grasse (known today as Villa Victoria). Alice spent six months during the summer in England in their manor in Waddesdon and the other six months in Grasse. She used each of her visits to expand her estate.

While the baroness was passionate about plants and flowers, she also had a unique collection of pipes and matchboxes. This included 450 pipes from Europe and Asia Minor, dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. They were made from all sorts of materials (Sèvres porcelain, fruit wood, ceramics, metal, blown glass, meerschaum, antler, horn, ivory, etc.) and covered a variety of themes (allegorical, political, historical, mythological, hunting parties, oriental inspiration, etc.). Alice also collected

106 matchboxes from France, Spain and Italy. These boxes were everyday items and had designs that evoked popular culture, as well as moral or, on the contrary, frivolous scenes, advertisements, famous characters or even political themes. Edmond de Rothschild donated Alice's collection to the municipality of Grasse in 1927. Today, it is stored in the city's Municipal Library.



### VILLA VICTORIA IN GRASSE

In 1887, Alice stayed at the Grand Hôtel in Grasse. She was attracted by the landscape, which was different from the coast, and acquired a 135-hectare olive grove to build 'Villa Victoria' (named in honour of the Queen of England). She was an expert botanist and applied the principles of the English natural garden. She left the majority of the olive trees in place, removed the terraces and hedges and added exotic plants like palm trees, cacti, aloe plants, lemon trees, orange trees and mimosas, which offered flowers consistently between November and March. This was all complemented by a rock garden, a winter grotto with flowers and a spectacular three-kilometre road with hairpin bends that offered a new surprise for walkers around every turn (wild plants, panoramic views, etc.). Alice employed more than 100 gardeners to maintain this exceptional garden. Upon her death, the estate, which is now property of the municipality of Grasse, became the Corniche public park and the Princess Garden.

Postcard, View of Rothschild's Villa Victoria, Grasse, 19th century © Grasse, Bibliothèque & Médiathèques, Collection Alice de Rothschild

### THE INVENTION OF MATCHES

In 1826, English chemist John Walker invented matches that could be lit via friction. He developed a mixture of antimony sulphide, potassium chlorate, gum and starch. When rubbed against a rough surface made of phosphorus and manganese peroxide, the mixture ignited. The first matches were then marketed as 'Lucifers'. Hungarian-born Janos Irinyi improved the formula, making it less unstable and less explosive. Frenchman Charles Sauria added white phosphorus to the mixture to reduce the odour. This improvement saw the popularity of modern matches rise and they started to be produced industrially in 1832. The Swede Gustaf Erik Pasch developed the safety match in 1844. This required a special scraping surface made from chemical elements that reacted with the material of the match. In 1871, France implemented a tax on matches in order to improve public finances, which had been damaged by the Franco-Prussian war. The production and import of matches was declared a state monopoly in 1872. The sector then became a unitary industrial organisation managed by the Société Générale des Allumettes Chimiques (which became the Service d'Exploitation Industrielle des Tabacs et des Allumettes in 1935). In 1972, a law eased the monopoly by authorising the import of matches from member states of the European Community. The monopoly was definitively broken up in 1995, when S.E.I.T.A. was privatised.

### PIPE 398

Alice acquired this ivory, horn and silver-lid pipe during the sale of William Bragge's collection in 1882. He was a civil engineer from England, but also an antiques dealer. He collected 13,000 pipes and objects related to tobacco. The pipe was originally from Italy and dates to the 18th century. In her hand-written inventory, Alice described the object, adding comments and comparisons to great masters from the history of art, such as Tintoretto. The stem and the bowl of the pipe were sculpted in the round, like a sculpted miniature. In particular, one can make out a naked body inspired by Antiquity, a mythological scene and a pastoral landscape. Two languid bodies draped in Roman clothing in the image of bacchanalia are wrapped around the stem.



Pipe sheath n°398 © Grasse, Bibliothèque & Médiathèques, Collection Alice de Rothschild



## THÉRÈSE DE ROTHSCHILD

1847, Frankfurt – 1931, Paris

**Father** : Carl Mayer de Rothschild (1820–1886) – Italian branch

**Mother** : Louise de Rothschild (1820–1894) – English branch (sister of Nathaniel, Charlotte's husband)

**Sister** : Adèle de Rothschild (1843-1922)

**Husband** : James Edouard de Rothschild (1844–1881) – English branch (her cousin, son of Nathaniel and Charlotte)

Anonymous, Portrait of Baroness Therese de Rothschild, n.d., Photograph, London, Rothschild Archives © The Rothschild Archive, London

In 1871, Laura Thérèse de Rothschild married her cousin James Edouard. The couple were well-matched and shied away from frivolity. The baroness was given the sober nickname Thérèse and was particularly pious and dedicated, alongside her husband, to supporting a number of charity associations and organisations that cared for the sick. She also worked as a nurse during the Franco-Prussian war. In the same year that they were married, the baron acquired two parcels of land beside the beach in Berck-sur-Mer, a resort town renowned for its healing properties. He used one of the plots to build a hospital. He and Thérèse helped Jewish children who needed the benefits of the healing waters. Thérèse took over the management of the hospital in 1881, after the premature death of James Edouard. Thérèse had a wooden chalet called 'Les Oyats' built on the other parcel in 1883. Unfortunately, this was destroyed by the Germany army during the Occupation. Thérèse inherited her husband's exceptional collection of old books and bindings. James Edouard was an avid book lover and had assembled old manuscripts,

incunabula, rare editions and sumptuous bindings. The collection serves as a reflection of bibliophile practices at the end of the 19th century. Upon the death of her father, Carl Mayer, in 1886, Thérèse inherited important Medieval manuscripts that complemented the collection. Under the guidance of Émile Picot, a linguist, romance scholar and collector, she continued to enrich the collection with nearly 130 new acquisitions between 1881 and 1888. She was committed to making the collection accessible to researchers of the era. To this end, she authorised the production of facsimiles of certain works, had photographs taken and, with the help of Picot, finalised the extensive catalogue of her husband's collection. The collection was kept in the library of the mansion on Avenue Friedland. Thérèse chose to shelter it in several of the family estates, far from the German offensives, in the spring of 1918. The most valuable pieces found refuge in her father-in-law's vineyard estate, Château Mouton. Though Thérèse had no personal interest in amassing this remarkable collection, she ensured its survival, along with

her son Henri (Mathilde's husband). Furthermore, mother and son also founded a popular library in Gouvieux (near Chantilly), which offered books that aligned with the idea of culture espoused by the republican state. It was Henri who bequeathed this exceptional literary heritage to the National Library of France.



### CHÂTEAU DES FONTAINES

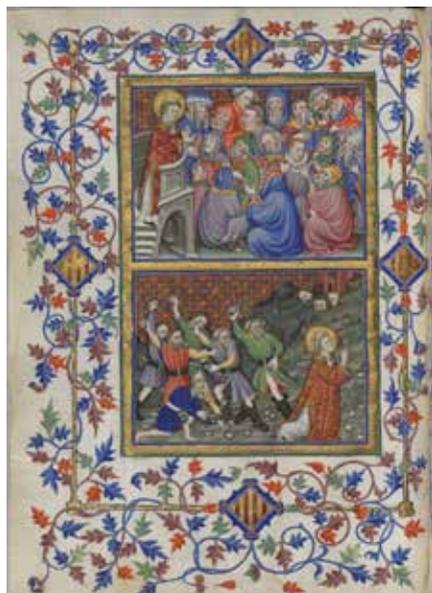
A vast pond extends between Gouvieux and Chantilly. During the 17th century, it was converted into a marshy meadow. In 1781, several parcels of land were brought together to form a romantic garden. The Hermitage, the fisherman's cabin and the Obelisk were also erected there, and the river was diverted to create the pond that is found there today. In 1798, Baron Nathan James de Rothschild purchased the property. He entrusted architect Félix Langlais with the construction of a chateau, based on James' plans. James was also responsible for giving instructions concerning decorations and furnishings. The building has heavily sloping roofs, while the multi-coloured stones and bricks and high turrets give it a picturesque look. The work was completed in 1882, one year after the death of the baron. Thérèse had the Norman farm added ten years later. It was inhabited by Thérèse until 1930 and served as a setting for conversing and sharing art and knowledge. Her son, Henri, inherited the estate, which became the property of the Jesuits in 1946. They transformed it into a cultural centre, a vast library and 140 scholastic rooms. In 1998, the Capgemini group established its international campus there.

### THE BERCK SCHOOL

In 1877, the Berck School was created at the impetus of artist Ludovic-Napoléon Lepic. The small town on the Côte d'Opale had been welcoming painters since 1860, bolstered by the popularity of open-air painting and the development of transport systems (such as the railway). Renowned artists visited Berck, such as Renoir, Sisley, Manet and Boudin. Berck gradually became an attractive and cosmopolitan town. The dunes and the Baie d'Authie were popular subjects. Thérèse socialised and became friends with artists such as Francis Tattegrain. She also encouraged these artists by purchasing their work. World War I marked the end of the Berck School.

### THE BREVIARY OF MARTIN OF ARAGON

This breviary is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful in the collection inherited by Thérèse. It contains the texts that were read at services during the liturgical year. It was made between 1398 and 1410 by Cistercian monks in Poblet, a Catalan abbey linked to the powerful Aragon dynasty. This dynasty is also mentioned throughout the volume, either through its arms, references to the anniversary of the death of several Aragonese sovereigns or depictions of the king in prayer in a dropped capital. Its abundant iconography contains a hundred miniatures of great artistic quality. It is enhanced by lush plant borders and decorated with animals, chimeras and fantastical creatures.



Breviarium secundum ordinem cisterciencium, also known as the breviary of Martin of Aragon, 1380–1450. National Library of France, Paris © National Library of France



## BÉATRICE DE ROTHSCHILD

1864 Paris – 1934, Davos

**Father** : Mayer Alphonse de Rothschild (1827–1905) – French branch (Charlotte's brother)

**Mother** : Léonora de Rothschild (1837–1911) – English branch

**Husband** : Baron Maurice Ephrussi (1849–1916)

Photo portrait of Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild, circa 1920, Musée Albert-Kahn, Boulogne-Billancourt © Musée Albert-Kahn

In 1883, Béatrice married a friend of her parents who was 15 years her senior, French billionaire and banker Maurice Ephrussi, who was of Russian origin. Béatrice and her husband would not be able to have children. The couple was passionate about art, architecture and nature and lived in a sumptuous private mansion on Rue Foch in Paris, which has since become the Angolan embassy. However, the couple separated in 1904. Despite this, Béatrice kept the Ephrussi name.

The following year, Béatrice inherited part of her father's fortune. After this, she had the villa of her dreams built in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat. Béatrice was very familiar with the French Riviera: she spent winters in Nice and stayed with her grandmother Betty in Cannes on several occasions, as well as her aunt by marriage, Alice, in Grasse. She was an extravagant personality and regularly frequented the Casino de Monte Carlo. The discovery of the mule track in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, which reminded her of her visit to the China Sea, was love at first sight. As a result, she ordered the construction of the 'Île-de-France' villa on the so-called 'White Hill', on a seven-hectare estate. This

was also known as Villa Ephrussi.

Béatrice threw herself wholeheartedly into the construction and decoration of this villa between 1907 and 1912. She thought about the façades, gardens and interior design. She ultimately did not spend much time living there and bequeathed the villa to the French Academy of Fine Arts in 1933, along with her entire collections, with the hope of establishing a museum there that captured the spirit of a salon. In addition to her mansion in Paris, she also owned the 'Villa Soleil' and 'Villa Rose' in Monte Carlo, which have since been demolished.

Béatrice was an erudite polyglot and was famous for her determined and independent temperament, which could also be dictatorial at times. In keeping with the Rothschild tradition, Béatrice was also an eclectic collector. She acquired paintings by great Impressionist masters, such as Monet, Renoir and Sisley, as well as Italian and Spanish pictorial works from the 15th and 16th centuries, tapestries and works of art and furnishings, including Asian pieces and porcelains.

The porcelain collection was very varied and included groups of statuettes,

table services and bathroom items that Béatrice installed in her various residences, which attested to her refined tastes. She was interested in French pieces, such as porcelain from

Vincennes and Sèvres, and foreign productions, such as porcelain from Meissen.



### VILLA EPHRUSSI

Béatrice was attracted by the natural beauty of the peninsula and purchased seven hectares on the narrowest section of it. She found herself competing to buy the property against Leopold II, the King of the Belgians, who hoped to expand his property. The plan by architect Jacques Marcel Auburtin (a Prix de Rome winner) won over Béatrice. The architectural style of the villa resembled the grand residences from the Italian Renaissance. Béatrice was a demanding client and did not hesitate to have large-scale projects carried out to ensure a satisfactory result. The villa included a series of lounges, galleries, cabinets, bedrooms and boudoirs, in which she stored the pieces from her art collection. Her favourite colour, pink, dominated the interior design.

The estate encouraged guests to move around, boasting nine thematic gardens in addition to the villa itself. These have been attributed to the landscape artists Achille Duchêne and Harold Preto (French-style garden, Spanish-style garden, Florentine garden, rock garden, Japanese-style garden, exotic garden, Provence-style garden and rose garden). It was nicknamed Villa Île-de-France because of the shape of the main garden, which resembled the prow of a boat and evoked memories of Béatrice's travels. The gardens have been listed as Historical Monuments since 1996.

## PORCELAIN FROM VINCENNES AND SÈVRES

In 1740, Jean-Louis-Henry Orry opened a porcelain factory at the Château de Vincennes. Ten years later, King Louis XV took a stake for 25% of the capital and the factory became a Royal Manufacturer, with products labelled as 'Porcelaines de France'. The goal was to compete with productions from Chantilly and Meissen. The workshop used a soft porcelain paste with added alum to make it white. It also contained a 'frit', that is, a mixture of sand and soda that allowed the paste to be vitrified after it was cooked. The shapes were obtained via moulding and the decorations produced after cooking. Over time, the factory came to perfect its gold-work and developed the biscuit technique (cooking without glaze or enamel). Jean Hellot, the commissioner for the king at the factory, perfected the process for applying coloured backgrounds and enriched the colour palette, in particular, with royal blue and lapis blue. Due to the success of the company, the premises quickly proved to be too cramped and expansion was impossible. The decision to transfer production to the Sèvres site was made in 1756. The 200 workers left Vincennes with their families in 186 cars, carrying their belongings and tools to Sèvres and Château Bellevue. In 1756, Louis XV bought all the shares in Sèvres and became the sole shareholder. Despite a number of efforts to develop a recipe for hard paste, this was not marketed until 1770 because deposits of kaolin would not be discovered in France until 1765. New decorations began to appear, such as the bottom of scales in 1790. In 1875, the factory was moved to buildings that had been specially constructed by the government on the edge of Saint-Cloud park. Production continued here until the 21st century.

## PORCELAIN FROM MEISSEN

Trade with the Far East developed in the 18th century. The French East India Company helped to develop westerners taste for these exotic productions, in particular fine porcelain that the western world was not capable of producing. The discovery of a deposit of kaolin in Saxony at the beginning of the 18th century made it possible to create hard-paste white porcelain, which was relatively translucent and very similar visually to porcelain pieces from China and Japan. In 1710, Auguste Lefort, the Elector of Saxony, created the Royal Manufacturer of Meissen, whose productions were certified starting from 1722 by a mark with crossed swords that evoked the Lefort coat of arms. The production mixed Asian influences and European sensibilities. The factory also created animal sculptures inspired by indigenous and exotic animals from the menagerie, as well as trophies for Auguste Lefort's hunting lodge. The 'snowball' flower motif and mythological scenes with garlands and festoons complemented the iconographic corpus. The richness, variety and brilliance of the colours would make the factory one of the largest in Europe and it supplied the princely courts with luxury items.

## ALFRED SISLEY, SAINT MARTIN'S SUMMER, AROUND MORET

1891, MUSÉE MARMOTTAN MONET

Alfred Sisley (1839–1899) was a British national, but spent almost all of his life in France, namely Paris and Île-de-France. His father, who was the director of an international company dealing in artificial flowers, made him study commerce, with a view to taking over the family business. Sisley was already passionate about painting though. He managed to win over his parents and enrolled at the School of Fine Arts in Paris in 1861. While there, he met Renoir, Monet and Bazille. The young artists aimed to paint 'on the spot', that is, to leave their workshops to paint landscapes in the open air in the surroundings of Paris, towards the forest in Fontainebleau or in Barbizon. Indeed, Sisley was inspired by the great landscape artists from the Barbizon School, such as Corot and Daubigny. As a result, landscapes represent almost all of his work. He very carefully captured the light of the seasons. He added depth to his work by playing on all the potential nuances of colour, shadow and light created by the atmospheric conditions. In 1880, the painter settled in the vicinity of Moret-sur-Loing, a small municipality in Seine-et-Marne, which was located on the edge of the forest in Fontainebleau, on the banks of the Loing river, a tributary of the Seine. The Gothic church in the village would also serve as a recurring subject in his work. He travelled throughout the area and produced series of pieces based on different sites. As a result, the artist had a perfect understanding of the locations he depicted. He analysed them, in order to produce carefully considered compositions. The title of the piece evokes Saint Martin's summer, a period of mild weather after 11 November (Saint Martin's), when winter should be beginning to set in. While Sisley gradually earned recognition in the last years of his life, it would not be until the 20th century that he came to be considered as one of the great Impressionist landscape artists.



Alfred Sisley, *Poplars on the Banks of a River, or Saint Martin's Summer, around Moret-sur-Loing*, 1891, Paris, Musée Marmottan © 2008, Pierre Ballif

**AUGUSTE RENOIR, ANTIBES OR THE OLIVE TREES OF CAGNES, 1904**

In 1920, Béatrice bought a number of paintings from the 19th century, which would be her final acquisitions. These included four landscapes by Auguste Renoir (1840–1919). A key figure in the Impressionist movement, Auguste Renoir turned away from his friends and this movement in around 1880, in the hopes of finding recognition. His art was assertive, with lines, marked contrasts and highlighted contours that brought him success. Between 1890 and 1900, he changed again, opting for a more fluid, colourful style. In 1903, having achieved success as a painter, he moved to Cagnes-sur-Mer (Alpes-Maritimes), where the climate had a favourable impact on his health. He acquired the Domaine des Colettes, which was located on a hillside to the east of Cagnes in order to save the venerable olive trees there from another potential buyer. Renoir had his final home built there. The canvases from his period in Cagnes comprise landscapes, portraits, nudes, still-life pieces and mythological scenes, with shimmering colours, fluid materials and transparent effects. The climate and light in Cagnes made it possible to reproduce the colours of the olive trees, flowers and fruits on his estate on canvas in the open air. Although he was weakened by illness, he painted passionately until his death.



Auguste Renoir, *Antibes or The Olive Trees of Cagnes*, 1904, Paris, Musée Marmottan © 2008, Pierre Ballif



## MATHILDE DE ROTHSCHILD

1874 Frankfurt – 1926, Bagnères-de-Luchon

**Father** : Georges de Weissweiller

**Mother** : Sophie Sulzbach

**Husband** : Henri de Rothschild (1872–1946) – English branch (Thérèse's son and Charlotte's grandson)

Portrait of Mathilde de Rothschild, Léopold-Émile Reutlinger, 1897 © Museum of Jewish Art and History

Mathilde was the daughter of financier Georges de Weissweiller. In 1895, she married Henri de Rothschild, one of the few members of the family who did not dedicate himself to the banking business, but to medicine instead. Known as the 'queen of good taste and manners', she lived the life of a society woman and split her time between worldly pursuits and charity. She was very much a woman of her time and practised hunting with hounds and car racing, which was a very recent development. She founded the Women's Automobile Club in Paris with her friend, the Duchess of Uzès.

She shared her husband's interest in the medical profession and translated studies by Polish neurosurgeons into German. During World War I, she worked as a nurse on the front and in the hospital in Gouvieux, like her mother-in-law Thérèse, for which she received the Legion of Honour. This interest in medicine is perhaps no stranger than Mathilde's collection.

The general public learned of the existence of Mathilde's unique collection of skulls in her obituary in 1926. Some were surprised by the baroness' interest

in macabre mementos, an interest that was considered to be reserved for men at that time, as opposed to the collections of trinkets, fans or perfume bottles that were usually accepted as feminine. Her collection remained confidential and only her friends and merchants knew of it and guided her towards pieces at second-hand dealers. Even her husband Henri, who paid tribute to her twenty years after her death in a piece entitled 'Une dame d'autrefois' did not refer to it.

A trend towards the macabre developed at the turn of the 20th century. Many people collected Vanitas art. Furthermore, Mathilde acquired twenty pieces from the sale of the collection of bibliophile Maurice Barbier de Tinan at the Hôtel Drouot in 1885. These made up the core of her unusual collection. Today, it is impossible to determine what led Mathilde to assemble this surprising collection. It is likely that she did not try to study it and had little knowledge of it; in any case, she did not leave behind any testimonial. This important collection is stored at the Château de la Muette and the Cistercian abbey in Rambouillet (which was purchased by Henri's



### CHÂTEAU DE LA MUETTE

Located near the Bois de Boulogne park on Rue André-Pascal in the 16th district in Paris, this building was constructed for Henri de Rothschild, based on plans by architect Lucien Hesse, in the early 1920s in an 18th-century style. Three châteaux have existed, one after another, on this site since the Renaissance. The term 'muette' may refer to the moulting of deer or falcons; alternatively, an older spelling can refer to a pack of dogs. The château was sold by Henri's heirs to the European Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1948.

Château de la Muette, Paris © <https://fr.wikipedia.org>

grandmother, Charlotte de Rothschild) and includes pieces that are primarily from Europe, as well as examples from Asia and Mexico. Upon her death, she bequeathed this incredible collection to the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris.

### GUSTAV TROUVÉ, SKULL STICK PIN

Gustave Trouvé was a prolific inventor who combined watch-making and electrical systems. He patented his electro-mobile jewellery. This little figurine, which was mounted as a stick pin on a tie, was powered by zinc pocket batteries, which were protected by an air-tight case made from hardened rubber and ebonite. This battery was connected to the stick pin by a small ring welded to the back (this is no longer present). Thanks to this system, the jaws and eyes of the skull became mobile. Trouvé's inventions were presented at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1867 and were hugely successful. The provenance of this piece is unknown, so it is unclear if the baroness received it with a functioning mechanism.



*Banker's tie pin smoking a cigar, ca. 1890-1900, Paris, musée des Arts décoratifs © Les Arts Décoratifs, Jean Tholance*

### DR GALL'S CRANIOLOGY SNUFFBOX

Franz Joseph Gall was a German doctor who was passionate about how the brain worked. He is at the root of theories surrounding craniology, which studies the shape and variations of the human skull. He believed that the bumps on the surface of the skull make it possible to measure a person's intellectual capabilities. He was banned from attending conferences in Austria as a result of breaching moral order, but he gave public lectures in Paris starting in 1808, speaking about his new science. At the end of these sessions, he sold round boxes with a depiction of a skull seen from three different angles on them, as well as numbers illustrating the 27 psychological and social dispositions, the list of which could be found on the back. It is not known whether Mathilde, who was a nurse and the wife of a doctor, had any direct interest in craniology. It is also unclear if she received this snuffbox as a memento from a session by Gall.



*craniology snuffbox, around 1830, Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs © Felipe Ribon*



## ALIX DE ROTHSCHILD

1911, Frankfurt – 1982, Reux

**Father** : Philipp Schey De Koromla (1881 - 1957)

**Mother** : Lili Jeannette von Goldschmidt-de Rothschild (1883–1925) – English branch (Cousin of Adèle and Thérèse)

**Husband** : Guy Edouard Alphonse Paul de Rothschild (1909–2007) – French branch (Her cousin and Béatrice's son)

André Ostier-Heil (1906-1994), Alix de Rothschild in her costume at the 'Bal du Siècle' at the Palais Labia organised by Bestegui, 1951 © D.R.

In 1936, Alix lost her first husband, Kurt Otto Kraemer, with whom she had one daughter: Lili Adélaïde. In 1937, she married her cousin, Guy de Rothschild, and they settled down at 21 Avenue Foch in Paris. They also owned a property in Reux, Normandy. In October 1941, the couple fled the war and sought refuge in New York. She subsequently settled down in Reux in 1956. She was elected mayor (starting in 1974) and ran the municipality for nearly 30 years. Alix quickly developed a keen interest in artists from the second School of Paris and German Impressionists. They were originally from Central Europe or South America and most of them exhibited their works in Paris at the start of the 1950s. In particular, she acquired 'Le Lavoir' by Pablo Picasso in 1952. Over the years, Alix, who considered herself to be an enlightened amateur, collected more than 2,000 pieces, which she stored in her two homes. She was also interested in African art, which would topple avant-garde art. These productions, which were considered to be so-called 'Primitive' art, inspired western modernity. These items served as a template for new ways of seeing things and accrued value, coming to be

seen as masterpieces over time.

She was a thoughtful collector who followed her instincts and soon earned a strong reputation. She joined the council of the National Museum of Modern Art in Paris in 1961. In 1962, she became president of the Society of Friends of the Museum of Man, a museum that focused on ethnography, anthropology and natural history. Under her mandate, the museum organised major exhibitions and events. She also donated pieces to museums in Le Havre, Caen, Honfleur and more on a number of occasions. Alix was also the recipient of multiple awards: the 'Chevalier des palmes académiques' and 'Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres et du Mérite social'. When she died, a large portion of Alix's collection was dispersed.

**CÉZANNE, STILL LIFE WITH OPEN DRAWER, 1877**

Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) was a French painter and trailblazer. He came from a wealthy family and started studying law at the request of his father. He abandoned his studies and moved to Paris to study painting in 1860. He failed out of the School of Fine Arts in Paris and tried his luck at the Académie de Charles Suisse in 1862. He spent a lot of time at the Louvre, where he made copies of masterpieces and met Monet and Renoir. He was rejected from the Salon several times, so he moved to Auvers-sur-Oise in 1872, where he composed his first Impressionist paintings. He moved away from Impressionism and tried to capture the essence of his motifs by bringing out their geometric shapes and sculpting the pictorial material that he used through strokes and impasto. Still life was one of the major themes that Paul Cézanne depicted throughout his career. For the artist, still life, much like portraits and landscapes, was a medium like any other for working on the geometry of volumes and the relationship between colours and shapes. He developed the relationships between solid and empty spaces, between backgrounds and motifs. More often than not, he staged everyday items of little value, which he painted in a larger-than-life manner by accentuating their formal flaws. He associated them with tea towels, tablecloths, fruits or flowers, which were placed on a corner of a table. Of all of his motifs, apples were one of his primary artistic obsessions. This *Still life with open drawer* was painted in 1877 and is part of the painter's fixation with working on this theme. However, his style evolved to be more and more like blocks, the next step in his artistic process. The tilted mirror in the background expands the space towards the 'unseen' – space outside the field of the canvas. His touch is lively and created with broad strokes, primarily adding dynamism to this inanimate scene in an oblique fashion.

### GURO MASK, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, EARLY 20TH CENTURY

The Guro ethnic group, which belongs to the Mandé, lives on the banks of the Bandama river in central Côte d'Ivoire. The Guro group are neighbours of the Baoulé people and worship masks, attaching great importance to depictions of humans and animals. Any occasion is a pretext to take out masks, which are supposed to represent the fight between good and evil, between the real and the supernatural. Masks ensured a sort of symbolic continuity between the groups. This mask, which is listed as a Guro mask, would most likely be closer to the Yohoure culture, an ethnic group from the mid-west of the Côte d'Ivoire, close to the Guro people. Their masks are characterised by an oval-shaped, elongated face, a thin nasal ridge, a slightly protruding mouth, semi-circular eye and, on occasion, horns, which may be surmounted by a totem animal or a comb-shaped motif. Attributing the piece to one ethnic group remains difficult, as the Baoulé people were influenced by their neighbours, the Guro and Yohoure groups. Furthermore, masks circulated widely in this geographical area, due to the lack of clearly defined borders. In spite of this, masks from the Baoulé, Guro and Yohoure groups share refined shapes and details, as well as a symmetrical balance of the volumes at play. This aesthetic, with the pure, schematic lines, was particularly appealing to early lovers of African art and avant-garde artists.



Mask, Côte d'Ivoire (Guro), early 20th century, Paris, Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac © musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Claude Germain



## CÉCILE DE ROTHSCHILD

1913 Paris – 1995, Paris

**Father** : Robert Philippe Gustave de Rothschild (1880–1946) – French branch (Béatrice’s cousin)

**Mother** : Gabrielle Nelly Régine Beer (1886–1945)

**Husband** : ///

Portrait of Baroness Cécile de Rothschild, 20th century, Paris, Private collection © D.R.

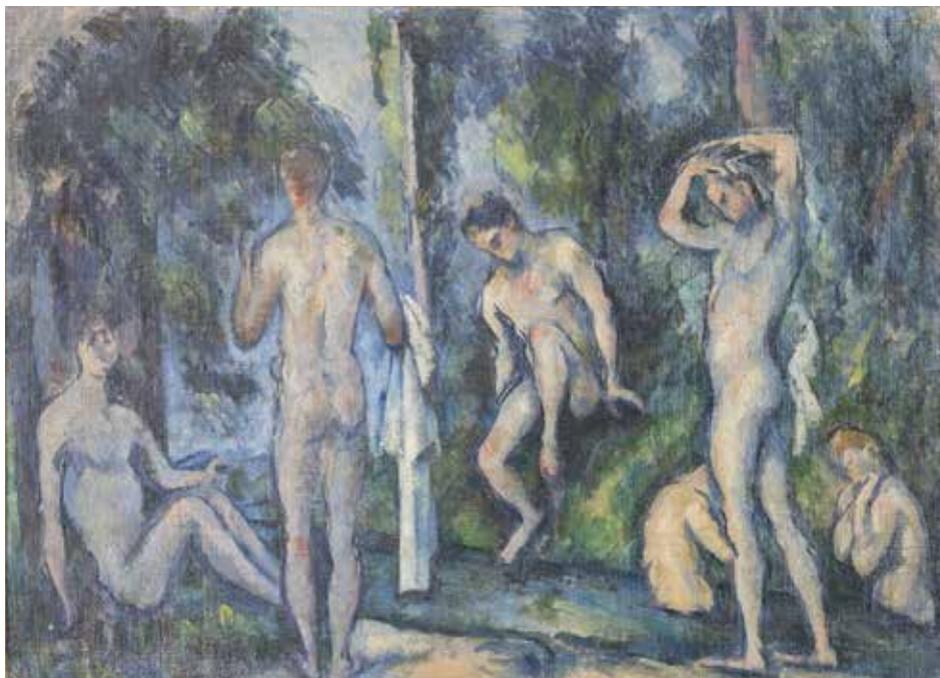
Cécile was a modern woman: she forged a career for herself in golf and was a member of the French team for 20 years. She notably won the Gaveau cup in 1956. This cup paid tribute to her teammate Jeanine Gaveau, who died in 1950. Cécile also indulged other passions: the English-style gardening and landscaping of the garden at her home in Noisy-sur-Oise, travelling to New York, on her yacht in the Mediterranean or in Asia and the Near East, and art. Like her cousin Alix, Cécile was particularly interested in modern art, in particular Pablo Picasso,

Egon Schiele and Paul Cézanne. During World War II, she also traded France for New York (Alix and her husband did the same). Whilst there, she discovered the American avant-garde movements between 1950 and 1960. She was also interested in decorative works of art, such as porcelain from Sèvres and Vincennes, silverware, Louis XIV furniture and Italian maiolica. In the early 1960s, Cécile met Greta Garbo at a dinner in Paris. She became her companion and best friend until the death of the actress in 1990.

**CÉZANNE, *THE BATHERS*, 1890, PRIVATE COLLECTION**

Between 1870 and the end of his life, Cézanne produced more than 200 paintings, drawings and sketches around the theme of people bathing. While this was not a new theme, and had already been explored by Titian and Poussin, Cézanne deviated from the academic standard of 19th-century salons and revitalised the topic. Above all, he sought to blend the human form and the landscape. This theme evoked memories of his youth, when he bathed with his friends in the Arc River. While his treatment of shapes and colours is eminently modern, the largely idealised poses are a reference to Greek art. The artist's son kept a pencil drawing in his collection, which was dated 1875–1877. This drawing studied the pose of the main character, as seen from behind. Cézanne treated each motif with the same level of importance and then integrated them into an overarching structure. It is the bodies of the characters that give the space its structure.

This piece by Cézanne was the first addition to Cécile's collection. She acquired it when she was 13 years old in a quite unusual fashion. Upon returning from a trip to London, her father asked his children to guess what was inside the package he had brought with him. Whoever answered correctly would receive it. He gave them one hint: 'It begins with the letter "C"'. Cécile guessed Cézanne, revealing her early interest in modern art.



Paul Cézanne, *The Bathers*, 1890, Paris, Private collection © 2022, Gérald Micheels

## EGON SCHIELE AND ENGRAVING

Viennese artist Egon Schiele (1890–1918) drew and painted from a young age. In 1906, after the death of his father, he enrolled in the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Vienna was one of the leading centres of the European art world at that time. He found himself at odds with the education he received there and founded a group of independent artists with some of his peers. Art Nouveau (Secession style in Austria) and Symbolism, led by Gustav Klimt, had a major influence on the young Schiele. After meeting the woman who would become his companion, Wally (a former model for Klimt), in 1911, many of Schiele's productions became tinged with a sense of eroticism. Starting in 1913, the artist achieved international fame in the world of avant-garde art, although his reputation was marred by accusations of child abduction after he had a young girl pose with Wally the year prior. During this period, he also started to explore various engraving techniques, including wood engraving. The outbreak of war sounded the death knell for his artistic experimentation and he ended up working in a prison camp. He died in 1918 of the Spanish flu. He was fascinated by the human body and, to a greater extent, its fragility. As a result, he transposed body language onto images with a great deal of sensitivity. His human figures, which were traced with precise and acerbic lines, dominated the entire page, reflecting the tension of bodies. These contorted – and occasionally even twisted – bodies are exposed to our gaze and sometimes even give the impression of painful convulsions. As the years passed, his models struck increasingly provocative poses, going so far as to reveal their genitals.



Egon Schiele, Plate no. 3, engraving, 1914, Paris, Private collection © 2022, Gérald Micheels



## LILIANE DE ROTHSCHILD

1916, Paris – 2003, Royaumont Abbey

**Father** : Eugène Fould-Springer (1876-1929)

**Mother** : Marie-Cécile Fould-Springer (1886-1978)

**Husband** : Elie Robert de Rothschild (1917– 2007) – French branch (Cécile's brother)

Cecil Beaton. *Photo portrait of Baroness Liliane de Rothschild*. Londres, National Portrait Gallery © Cecil Beaton Studio Archive / Conde Nast

Liliane was the daughter of a banker, who was also given the title of baron. She grew up in the abbey-palace in Royaumont (Asnières-sur-Oise). She would also end her days there in 2003. She married her childhood friend, Elie de Rothschild, by proxy in 1942, in the middle of World War II, while he was a prisoner in Germany. The religious celebration would take place at the end of the war in 1945. The highly cultured Liliane was fascinated by the Palace of Versailles and amassed a collection dedicated to key female figures in the history of France, in particular, Marie Antoinette. The multiple residences owned by the couple acted as the

home of this vast collection. Starting in the 1960s, Liliane began to make donations to Versailles and the Musée Carnavalet. Furthermore, while she lent pieces to public institutions, she was also involved in organising exhibitions, such as at Versailles, where she acted as the general secretariat for an exhibition dedicated to Marie Antoinette in 1955. She and her husband were generous patrons to national museums in France. Upon her death, her heirs sold a portion of her collection at an auction organised by Christie's in 2015. Versailles acquired many pieces during this auction, enriching the treasures of its collections.

**LOUIS AUGUSTE BRUN, ALSO KNOWN AS BRUN DE VERSOIX,  
MARIE ANTOINETTE, QUEEN OF FRANCE, HUNTING, 1783**

Louis-Auguste Brun, also known as Brun de Versoix (1758–1815), was a painter from the canton of Vaud in Switzerland. He was excellent at painting animals and landscapes and produced a number of pieces for the court of Versailles (between 1782 and 1788), including equestrian portraits and hunting scenes depicting members of the royal family. He was a regular member of the queen's entourage and was nicknamed Marie Antoinette's painter. During the Revolution, he moved to Versoix on the shores of Lake Geneva and abandoned life as a painter to devote himself to politics and his work as a collector and art dealer.

Marie Antoinette was more interested in intimate works that depicted her favourite pastimes than she was in large historical court portraits. As a result, she privately commissioned several small paintings that depicted her hunting with hounds. The idea behind hunting with hounds involved pursuing game until it was exhausted by sending a pack of running dogs after it. The dogs were controlled by people on horseback and hunters (the organisers of the hunt), who were equipped with a horn that allowed them to communicate. Hunting was an almost daily ritual at Versailles (which was the former hunting lodge of Louis XIII). Whether it was Louis XIV, Louis XV or Louis XVI, the king practised hunting with hounds once every three days. Hunting was both a recreational activity and a way to show their power, prepare for war and demonstrate their capacity to lead their subjects. The women of the court joined the hunt and, like her husband, Marie Antoinette was fond of it. Louis-Auguste Brun depicts her riding side-saddle in an understated, yet elegant, outfit and a large straw hat with white feathers, which was known as the 'à la Bastienne' style. Dogs from the pack and a servant are at her side. Other riders follow in the background. In terms of aesthetics, the piece is characteristic of the artist, who was known for using a dark palette enhanced with bright colours.



Louis-Auguste Brun (also known as Brun de Versoix), *Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, hunting*, circa 1783–1785, Versailles, Museum and National Estate of Versailles and the Trianon © Château de Versailles, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Christophe Fouin



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