

Christofle

A Brilliant Story



MAM

MUSÉE DES ARTS
DÉCORATIFS

EN

14 November 2024 - 20 April 2025

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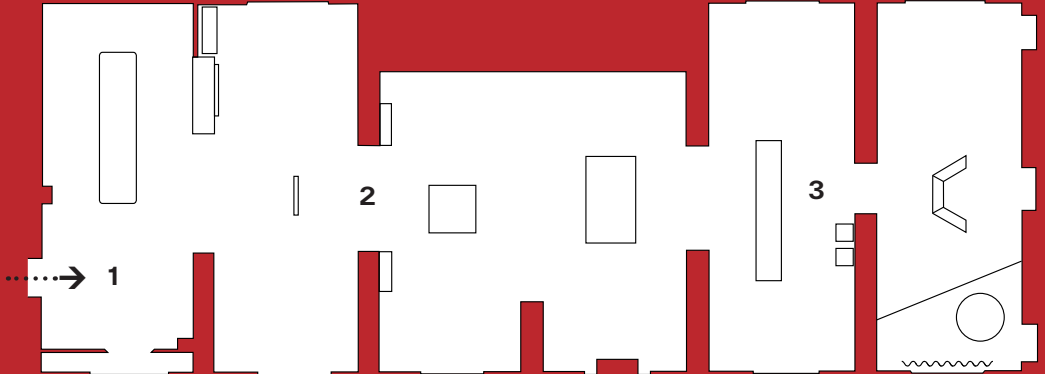
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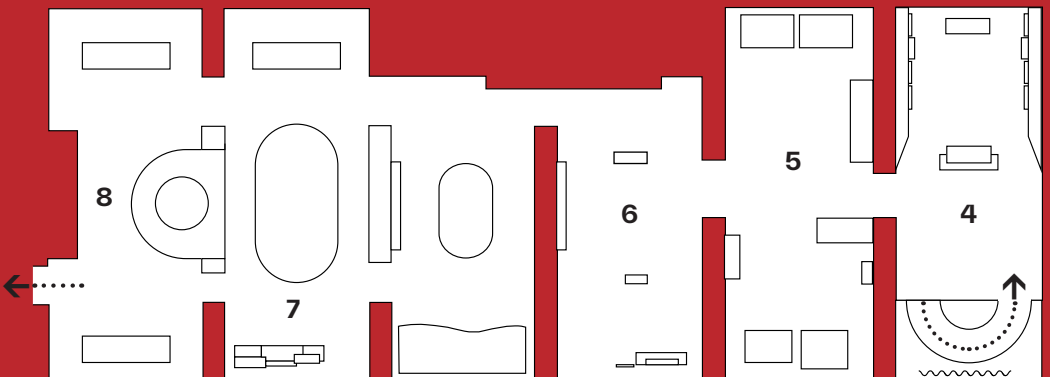
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Welcome to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs and the exhibition

Christofle

A Brilliant Story

Enjoy your visit!

Since the second half of the 19th century, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs has maintained close ties with Christofle. Today, the museum is presenting the largest exhibition ever dedicated to this silverware firm, whose rich history spans almost two hundred years, shining a spotlight on its extraordinary creations and expertise.

From the company's founding in the 1830s to the present day, the silversmiths of the lineage originating with Charles Christofle and Henri Bouilhet have transformed the lines and decorations of silverware, establishing it as part of daily life. Associated with leading designers such as Luc Lanel, Gio Ponti, Andrée Putman, and Karl Lagerfeld, Christofle is a creative laboratory that has revolutionized traditional silversmithing by reconceiving its applications and adorning it with new colors and decorations.

From small tablespoons to monumental vases featured at universal exhibitions, some thousand works, including precious metal and jewelry pieces, paintings, drawings, and posters, retrace the extraordinary story of this historic firm. The exhibition reveals the hidden worlds behind the craft of silversmithing and the lavish tables of legend, retracing a history of the decorative arts through works in precious metal, from historicism to Japonisme, from Art Nouveau to Art Deco, and from 1950s design to the most contemporary pieces.

For the comfort and accessibility of all, folding seats, wheelchairs, magnetic induction loops, baby carriers, and changing tables are available on level -1 near the cloakrooms.



RECYCLE ME!

If you leave your brochure at the end of the exhibition, it can be recycled or reused

**Christofle, François Gilbert,
Georges Diebolt,
Pierre-Louis Rouillard**

Centerpiece for the one hundred
place settings service made for
Napoléon III for the Tuileries Palace:
“Industry” candelabra, 1852-1855,
silver-plated metal

Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, donated by
Paul Christofle and Henri Bouilhet, 1891
© Les Arts Décoratifs / Jean Tholance



2

Alchemical – Transforming silver

In 1842, Charles Christofle, a jeweler by training, purchased the patents for silver and gold plating by electrolysis: using an electric current, a fine layer of silver or gold can be deposited on a non precious metal, giving it the appearance of precious metal. This revolutionary industrial process marked the dawn of a new era in gold- and silverware, developed by Charles Christofle and his successors, his son Paul and his nephew Henri Bouilhet. Tableware, services, and flatware would become the company’s specialty, alongside more exceptional pieces, monumental sculptures, and reproductions of artworks.

Although some processes are now mechanized, the crafting of precious metal practiced in the Christofle factory in Yainville, Normandy, for the fabrication and silvering or gilding of flatware and silverware, remains similar to those of the methods of the mid-19th century.

1

Innovative and historic

Founded in the early 1830s, Christofle, specializing in silverware, has always been committed to reinventing the decorative arts through the metamorphosis of forms and decorations, and by associating silver with unexpected materials to challenge the codes of luxury. Today, Christofle continues to innovate, finding its way into our daily lives by transforming everyday objects into works of design, from videogame consoles to coffee cups and shoeboxes.

The company’s history has been linked to that of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs since the last third of the 19th century. During the Paris Commune of 1871, the Tuileries Palace, where the monumental one hundred place settings service owned by Emperor Napoleon III was kept, burned down. A masterpiece executed between 1852 and 1855, its centerpiece, made up of large sculptures, was saved from the ruins and donated by the directors of Christofle to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. Made from silverplated metal achieved through an electrochemical process, it embodies the modernity that Christofle introduced to the dining tables of the powerful.



Christofle

Ice bucket, “Médicis form, rim and
feet with roses” model from 1849,
manufactured between 1854 and 1857
Silver-plated metal

Conservatoire Bouilhet Christofle
© Christophe Dellière

SOME SILVERSMITHING TECHNIQUES

Shaping metal

To shape the metal plate, the silversmith works it cold; between certain stages, annealing with a blowtorch is necessary to ensure the metal's malleability.

Planishing

For flat pieces, the work is done from the inside of the piece and is called planishing. Using steel hammers, the silversmith strikes the metal until the desired shape is achieved. The bottom of the plate is lowered onto a steel support set in a piece of wood.

Raising

For hollow elements, the metal is worked from the outside: this is called raising. It is shaped with a boxwood hammer on a steel horn, a small anvil with one or two horns.

Spinning-embossing

Spinning-embossing has been practiced in France since the early 19th century. A wooden form called a mandrel is placed on the mechanical lathe. With the latter rotating, the silversmith gradually spins the metal onto different mandrels using a tool called a spoon to create the round, hollow shape.

Casting

Casting is not done in the silversmith's workshop; the elements in relief (handles, feet, grips) are made in a foundry, where molten metal is poured into a mold.

Assembly

After the piece has been shaped, it is assembled. By adjusting and soldering the different elements, the silversmith joins together the various elements of the piece created by planishing, raising, spinning, and casting.

Decoration

Once the piece has taken shape, the decoration can be obtained either through an intervention on the form, with or without the removal of metal, or by the addition of material, which may or may not be metallic.

Chasing

Chasing consists of detailing the metal without removing any material, using chasing punches. These small steel tools, the head of which may be engraved with a design, are struck with a small hammer. We use the term *repoussé* when the decoration projects outward in relief.

Engraving

Engraving consists of creating a decoration by removing a channel of metal using a chisel.

Electroplating

Using an electric current, a fine layer of silver or gold can be deposited on a non-precious metal, giving it the appearance of silver or gold.

Cloisonné enamel

The decoration is delineated by thin partitions (cloisons), created by soldering metallic wires perpendicular to the piece. The individual compartments are filled with enamel powder that melts when fired. This vitreous material is colored with metallic oxides.

Damascening

Damascened decoration is obtained by inlaying wire, leaves or small sheets of differently colored metals onto an engraved surface.

Patinas

Artificial patinas can produce a large range of colors through a chemical transformation of the metal's surface layer.

3

Monumental – International competitions

Showcases for industrial progress and fierce international competitions, universal exhibitions punctuate Christofle's history, from the first, organized in London in 1851, to that held in Paris in 1925, which marked the advent of modernity. The millions of visitors, the press coverage and the prestige of the awards, encouraged Christofle to push the limits, presenting monumental pieces and spectacular technical achievements. With rare consistency, Christofle took first place, sweeping up gold medals in the face of English, German, and American competitors.

From 1869, as a prelude to the universal exhibitions, Christofle began presenting new works at shows organized by the future Musée des Arts Décoratifs, then known as the Union Centrale des Beaux-Arts Appliqués à l'Industrie, and as of 1882, the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs. Associated with leading designers and sculptors, Christofle accumulated patents, reinventing forms and decorations with unequaled creativity and translating into gold and silver the aesthetic movements of the day: revival styles, Orientalism, Japonisme, Art Nouveau, and Art Deco.



**Christofle, Émile Reiber,
Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse,
Gustave-Joseph Chéret**
"Louis XVI" boudoir table, 1867
Gold- and silver-plated metal,
lapis-lazuli, jasper, mahogany
Presented at the Universal Exhibition
of Paris of 1867

Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, donated
by Alfred and Jacques Pereire in memory
of their grandparents Émile and Isaac Pereire and
their parents M. and Mme Gustave Pereire, 1938
© Les Arts Décoratifs / Jean Tholance

THE PLACE OF HISTORY

In the second half of the 19th century, the scrolls of the rococo style under Louis XV and the neoclassical ornamentation of Louis XVI's reign were fertile sources of inspiration for Christofle. Until 1900, the company presented tea services, tableware, trophies, and even furniture created by designers and sculptors inspired by the 18th century, considered the golden age of French decorative arts.

THE NEO-GREEK STYLE

In the mid-19th century, antiquity came back into fashion, following Greek and Roman archaeological discoveries, which provided new models for works in precious metal. The first-century Roman treasure found in Hildesheim, Germany, and reproduced by Christofle from 1869, was a sensation throughout Europe. The lion manes, Greek masks, and figures from classical antiquity that decorated these pieces provided a portfolio of motifs reproduced by Christofle on pieces colored with black, red, and orange, referencing ancient terracotta pots. These patinas, obtained by chemical reactions with copper, triumphed at the 1873 World's Fair in Vienna.



Christofle, Émile Reiber
Ewer, 1867
Gold-plated copper alloy,
cloisonné enamel
Presented at the Universal
Exhibition of Paris of 1867
Paris, Galerie Steinitz
©Christophe Dellière



**Christofle, Marcel Eudes
and Claude Leprêtre**
Refreshment fountain, 1873
Gold- and silver-plated metal, ivory
Presented at the Universal
Exhibition of Vienna of 1873
Conservatoire Bouilhet Christofle
© Christophe Dellière

ORIENTALISM

In the early 1860s, a taste for decorations and forms derived from Middle Eastern and Indian art combined with a fascination for the technique of cloisonné enameling practiced in China and Japan. The enameller Jean-Baptiste Tard, who began working for Christofle in 1865, developed a technique rivaling Asian cloisonné.

At the 1867 Universal Exhibition in Paris, Christofle presented its first cloisonné enamels designed by Émile Reiber, the head of the composition and design studio at the time. The curling vegetal and floral motifs that he employed were inspired by Persian and Indian art.



JAPONISME

In the mid-19th century, Japan progressively opened to the West. The commercial treaty signed with France in 1858, followed by Japan's participation in the universal exhibitions of 1862 in London and 1867 in Paris, inspired a taste for Japanese arts, which became the model for reinvigorating the decorative arts.

An incomparable draftsman, Émile Reiber, head of Christofle's composition and design studio from 1865 to 1878, studied the Asian collections exhibited in Paris. He produced many designs for silverware pieces decorated with motifs and colors borrowed from Chinese and Japanese works. The mix of these Asian influences, known as "Japonisme," impregnated decorations, as well as compositions inspired by Japanese prints, and the techniques used, such as metal patinas and cloisonné enameling. This was one of Christofle's most creative periods.

Christofle, Émile Reiber
 "Gourds and Vines" torchère, 1874
 Gilded and patinated
 copper alloy, cloisonné enamel
 Presented at the Exhibition
 of the Union Centrale of 1874
 Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs
 © Les Arts Décoratifs / Christophe Dellière

ART NOUVEAU

At the Universal Exhibition of 1900 in Paris, Christofle presented a stand dominated by vegetal forms: tea services shaped like squash, plates decorated with anemones and poppies, small vases metamorphosing into romaine lettuces or bunches of carrots, soup tureens shaped like cabbages or celery, and vases and lamps as irises, chrysanthemums, peonies, and thistles. Many of these pieces had already been presented at the Exhibition of the Feminine Arts organized by the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs (the future Musée des Arts Décoratifs) in 1892. Ever in search of novelty, Christofle became a pioneer in a "new art"—Art Nouveau – that found its source of inspiration in nature rather than in the past.



Christofle, Léon Mallet
 Kettle from the "Squash"
 tea and coffee service, ca. 1891
 Silverplate, silver, ivory
 Presented at the Universal
 Exhibition of Paris of 1900
 Conservatoire Bouilhet Christofle
 © Christophe Dellière

ART DECO

In 1925, for the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris, Christofle, at the initiative of Tony Bouilhet (grandson of Henri Bouilhet), exhibited works at the Grand Palais, in the silverware section, but also in a pavilion shared with Baccarat. Christofle became known as a champion of modernity and collaborated with the leading figures in Art Deco including Luc Lanel, who served as the company's artistic director from 1922 to 1946, Christian Fjerdningstad, Louis Süe and André Mare, Paul Foliot, André Groult, and Joseph-Élie Cazes. Sober decoration and geometric forms defined the designs. In hand-raised copper pieces, copper is combined with gold, silver, and colored patinas; they contributed to the company's ongoing research in the coloration of metalwork since the 1860s.

Christofle, Luc Lanel

Cone vase, "Dinanderies" collection, 1928

Silvered and patinated copper alloy

Conservatoire Bouilhet Christofle

© Christophe Dellière

4

Daily - Shining in society

In the second half of the 19th century, the arts of the table were flourishing. The bourgeoisie, with its increasing power, established mealtimes as an essential moment for performative socializing. The Russian-style service, in which dishes were served individually to each guest, became widespread, introducing the specialization of flatware, which was replaced after each course. Impressive sets comprising hundreds of pieces with flatware for every use and complete tea services developed at this time.

Christofle distributed its latest wares in Paris at the Pavillon de Hanovre, its largest store from 1854 until 1931, when it was succeeded by the store on Rue Royale. Pieces were also sold through numerous points of sale that proliferated throughout France and across the entire world. Catalogues and advertising inserts were among other sales strategies used by the internationally recognized French silversmith.



5

Exceptional – Embodying French luxury

As of the 1850s, Christofle positioned itself as the preferred supplier to luxury hotels and restaurants, which were flourishing at the time. Christofle had provided services, flatware, and barware to a long list of prestigious establishments by the early 20th century, including the Grand Hôtel du Louvre, the Grand Hôtel de la Paix, the Hôtel Terminus, the Ritz, the Meurice, the Crillon, and the Lutetia in Paris, as well as the Riviera Palace in Monte-Carlo and the Negresco in Nice.

The splendor of fine dining in luxury hotels was mirrored in the opulence of sea and rail travel, which developed in the second half of the 19th century, reaching its apogee in the 1920s. Prestigious trains such as the Orient Express and legendary ocean liners, including the *Normandie*, offered their clients luxurious cabins complete with Christofle silverware. As of 1926, Christofle products also accompanied the first tourist flights made by Air Union, the future Air France, which the company continues to supply.



Table setting for the Orient Express
(Compagnie Internationale
des Wagons-Lits), ca. 1929
Collection of Michel Cozic
© Christophe Dellière

CODIFYING USE

In the second half of the 19th century, table utensils were specially adapted for every use and dish. Equipped with ingenious systems that were constantly being perfected with new patents, they helped dinner guests avoid touching their food and introduced new gestures for picking it up, cutting and consuming it. Salad tongs fitted with springs, egg-cutting scissors, sauce spoons for separating the grease, asparagus holders, stands for bunches of grapes ... This extreme variety brought unparalleled refinement to the tables of the late 19th century, generating an infinite array of necessities that the consumer was obliged to purchase in order to properly receive their guests.

THE ORIENT EXPRESS

In 1876, the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits introduced luxurious trains departing from Paris. In 1882, the Express d'Orient train, known as the Orient Express from 1891, offered journeys between Paris and Istanbul. Until the 1930s, Christofle was the favored supplier for these prestigious trains: the Sud Express to Madrid and Lisbon, the Train Bleu to Vintimille, the Flèche d'Or to London, and the Étoile du Nord to Amsterdam. Adapting to the confined spaces and mobility of the dining cars, Christofle developed a large range of objects facilitating on-board service, with simple models produced over many decades in which only the logos of the trains and rail companies changed.



Christofle, Gio Ponti
"Flèche" candelabra,
1928 model, produced
between 1928 and 1942
Silverplate
Conservatoire Bouilhet Christofle
© Christophe Dellière

6

Modern and Contemporary - Design metal

At the initiative of Tony Bouilhet, the head of Christofle from 1930 to 1969, the company evolved within avant-garde artistic circles and took a more modern direction. His meeting with Italian architect and designer Gio Ponti in 1925 was a defining moment. From that time, the company embraced dynamic lines, often punctuated by the humor of Italian design, and later Scandinavian influences. During the Second World War, the production of silverware stopped and, at Tony Bouilhet's initiative, the boutique on Rue Royale became an art gallery presenting work by Jean Cocteau, Paul Éluard, and Jean-Charles Moreux. This adventure lasted until the 1970s, witnessing collaborations with César and Jean-Michel Folon. Since 1986, Christofle has returned to the jewelry-making activities of its founder, Charles Christofle, and has joined forces with international designers to claim its place within the history of contemporary art.

7

Diplomatic - Bringing power to the table

From the early days of the business, in the mid-1840s, the modernity of the silverplating process developed by Christofle, as well as the variety of decorations and forms in its tableware, made it the supplier of choice for the King of the French, Louis-Philippe, and his family. In the following decades, Christofle specialized in majestic dinner services comprising hundreds of pieces, some monumental in size. These large services were commissioned by Emperor Napoleon III for his residences, but also by the ministries and the Élysée and Luxembourg palaces. As silversmith to kings, princes, and emperors, Christofle would cater to presidents when the Third Republic was proclaimed in 1870. Since then, most of the ministries, the residence of the president of the National Assembly, and the Élysée Palace maintain complete services that allow the French art of living to reign over the tables where important diplomatic negotiations take place.



**Christofle, Léon Mallet
and Mathurin Moreau**

“Louis XV Athletes” pair of candelabras
with ten lights arms, service
of the Palais de l’Élysée, 1889
Silverplate metal

Paris, Présidence de la République

© Présidence de la République / Christophe Dellière



CHRISTOFLE TODAY

Today, Christofle's artistic collaborations take many forms: animal sculptures in the round that recall the tradition of the second half of the 19th century, monumental works such as Marcel Wanders's grandfather clock, and tableware that, depending on their designer, shift between a return to ornament and a great economy of means in form and decoration. Artists from different horizons, including jewellery, bring a spirit of openness to Christofle's designs.

8

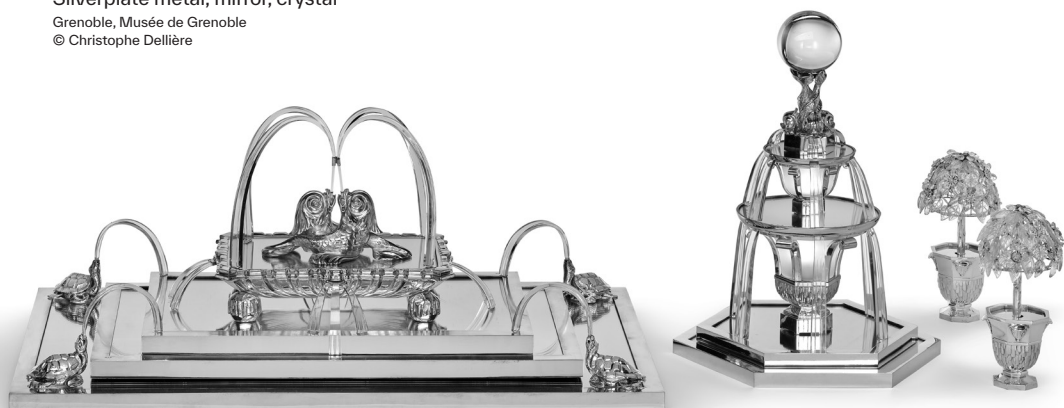
Enchanting - The dream table

In the 20th and 21st centuries, Christofle has adapted large table services to suit evolutions in taste and industrial progress. In its magnificence, the centerpiece has continued to captivate designers and create an atmosphere of splendor and enchantment at the center of the grandest dinner tables. In the 1920s, this tradition was updated with the geometric lines of Art Deco and electric lighting, which became integrated into table decorations. *Vertigo*, the iconic service produced by Christofle, since 2002, was conceived by the designer Andrée Putman. The simple, timeless forms, stripped of all ornament, are adorned with a slightly twisted ring that acts as a handle. Today, while decorative floral arrangements have largely taken the place of silver tableware, the centerpiece can still be found on the most majestic tables. The latest Haute Orfèvrerie creation by Christofle, the *Ode aux origines* centerpiece, is a marriage of silverplated metal, rock crystal, and mirrors that adapts the legacy of the 19th century to express a contemporary aesthetic.

**Christofle, Compagnie
des Arts Français by Louis Süe
and André Mare, Luc Lanel**

"Dolphins" centerpiece, 1922
Silverplate metal, mirror, crystal

Grenoble, Musée de Grenoble
© Christophe Dellière



DISCOVER THE EXHIBITION IN A DIFFERENT WAY: ACTIVITIES

INDIVIDUALS

GUIDED TOUR

> ADULTS

Thursdays 6:30 - 8:00 PM

Fridays 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

Saturdays 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM, 2:00 - 3:30 PM, 4:00 - 5:30 PM

WORKSHOP

> AGES 4-6, 7-10 AND FAMILY

À la belle fourchette!

This workshop invites children to discover how Christofle cutlery is made and decorated. In the exhibition, they can draw the shapes and motifs of the objects on display, and then design their own engraved metal spoon or fork in the workshop.

> AGES 11-14

A beautifully set table!

Following in the designer's footsteps, from drawing to experimenting with the decorative properties of metal, each person creates a research notebook around the shapes and decorations of the objects to design a decoration to be placed at the center of the table!

Wednesdays, 2:30 - 4:30 PM

Tuesday to Friday during school

holidays, 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM

and/or 2:30 - 4:30 PM

LECTURE

Colorer le métal, de l'analyse à la restauration des patines et des émaux de Christofle (in French only). By Michel Bouchard, Philippe Colomban, Catherine Didelot, Audrey Gay-Mazuel, Amandine Hélène et Julie Schröter.

Thursday 5 December 2024

from 6:30 PM to 8 PM

STUDY DAY

Les maisons françaises d'orfèvrerie, du XIX^e au XXI^e siècle : patrimoine, recherche et création (in French only).

Thursday 20 March 2025

from 9:30 AM to 5:30 PM

GROUPS

Guided tour - *in French or in English* - and the visit-workshop combination are available for adults as well as youths, according to profile (student groups, recreation centers, higher education, associations, companies), at the day and time of their choice.

PROGRAMME MAD PRO

Dresser la table avec Christofle

CAP to BTS - vocational high schools and apprentice training centers, for students in hospitality and catering professions.

To book a guided tour

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You are looking for a time slot for your group tour (with no guided tour):

book a self-guided group ticket at

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Scan this code to find all the information about the exhibition and to book activities:



CONTINUE YOUR VISIT TO THE MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS COLLECTIONS

Your ticket gives you access to the entire museum, so make the most of it!

Spread over eight floors and punctuated by period rooms or reconstructions of living rooms, the tour invites you to immerse yourself in the French art of living, from the Middle Ages to the present day, and from the everyday to the exceptional.

Discover other masterpieces of 19th century silverware on the 4th floor.

Our reception staff will be happy to help.



4th floor - Room 32

Jean-Baptiste-Claude Odier (1763-1850)

Centerpiece basket, Paris, ca. 1819-1827

Silver with liner in silver-plated metal

Acquired thanks to the support of Madame Krystyna Campbell-Pretty and her family, 2021
© Les Arts Décoratifs/Christophe Dellière



4th floor - Room 36

Jean-Valentin Morel (1794-1860)

"Shell" tea and coffee service, Paris, 1842-1848

Silver and silver-gilt

Acquired thanks to the support of Madame Krystyna Campbell-Pretty and her family, 2022
© Les Arts Décoratifs/Christophe Dellière



4th floor - Room 38

Émile Froment-Meurice (1837-1913), silversmith,

Émile François Carlier (1827-1879), sculptor

Centerpiece of Napoléon III with fritillaria:

bowl and pair of candelabras, Paris, 1867

Glass, gold-plated bronze, silver-plated metal

Acquisition, 1907
© Les Arts Décoratifs/Christophe Dellière



4th floor - Room 45

Alphonse Debain, silversmith

Teapot, Paris, 1900

Gold-plated silver and ivory

Model presented at the Universal Exhibition of 1900

Acquired thanks to the support of Madame Krystyna Campbell-Pretty and her family, 2021
© Les Arts Décoratifs/Christophe Dellière

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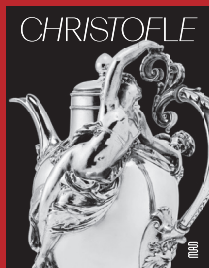
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The SOLO or DUO pass is valid for one year and gives you unlimited priority access to the temporary exhibitions and permanent collections of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs for one or two people. For more information, visit madparis.fr.



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Available at the bookstore-boutique, in French and in English.

Published by Les Arts Décoratifs, 304 pages, 230 illustrations, 22 x 29 cm, €55.

EXHIBITION ALBUM

Available at the bookstore-boutique, in French. Published by Les Arts

Décoratifs, 48 pages, 50 illustrations, 21 x 28 cm, €12.

MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS

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Open daily from noon to 2 PM

and from 7 PM to 11 PM

#Expo_Christofle

Curator: Audrey Gay-Mazuel

Associate curator: Astrid Grange

Assisted by Alexane Claudel

and Mathurin Jonchères

Scenography: Martin Michel

Exhibition graphic design:

Pierre Péronnet and Wijntje van Rooijen

Graphic design of the booklet:

Bernard Lagacé and Lysandre Le Cléac'h



Christofle

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ELLE
DECORATION



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Exhibition designed by the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris
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With the exceptional support of the Musée d'Orsay

Discover the collections and exhibitions of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs with our digital guide, available on the free Bloomberg Connects app