Dynamics and Divisions at the Salons of The Rose-Croix: Statistics, Aesthetic Theories, Practices, and Subjects

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Practices, and Subjects

By

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

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Adviser: Rose-Carol Washton Long

A variety of alternative Salons arose in France following the demise of the official Salon. Within this phrenetic climate for alternative exhibition venue creation, Joséphin Péladan founded the Salons of the Rose + Croix (1892-1897). He framed the Salons as ideologically unified exhibitions at which idealized works focusing on spirituality, tradition, and beauty would engender social reform by encouraging a decadent society to focus on timeless poetic and mystical ideas. Nevertheless, in practice the Rose + Croix functioned mainly as an exhibition venue for artists whose work only loosely responded to the established platform. The exhibited works reveal some overlap with Péladan’s mystical, idealized, and reformist aims, yet even the central ten exhibitors deviated from the leader’s published mandates in myriad ways, showing that the Rose + Croix was not an ideologically united group.

I determine the ten central exhibitors with statistical analysis of the salon catalogs and fifty contemporary reviews, moving beyond anecdotal considerations to base my conclusions on the ideas and production of the group’s main affiliates.

Péladan’s principles are clearly those of a writer attempting to direct artists. Rarely discussing specific techniques, he usually focused on subject matter and conceptual frameworks. The exhibiting artists built on many of his broader ideas, developing anti-naturalist methods to express their focus on eternal, mystical Ideas. Nevertheless, contemporary reviews and critical
writings by Péladan and the artists reveal divergences between the platform and implementation in terms of: the relationship between art and life, the transformation of nature, and the influence of history and earlier artistic movements. Additionally, the artists associated with the group incorporated a range of religious and scientific—or pseudo-scientific—influences into their works, combining Catholic, Rosicrucian, and theosophical principles with optical science and psychology, especially theories about hysteria. The depictions of women and the highly varied literary illustrations and themes reveal that even in areas where Péladan issued specific guidelines, the exhibited works often deviated from his principles. The group also expressed conflicting attitudes toward women because at least five female artists exhibited works at the Salon—violating a central group tenet that outlawed women’s participation.
For both of the Robins.
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Abbreviations:

BCMN: Bibliothèque Centrale des Musées Nationaux

Arsenal: La bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, Bibliothèque nationale de France

BNF Richelieu: Richelieu bibliothèque, Bibliothèque nationale de France
Introduction

The Salons of the Rose + Croix were founded by the writer and critic Joséphin Péladan and showed works by hundreds of artists between 1892 and 1897.¹ These artists varied widely, including some who were well-known (like Fernand Khnopff), some who were best-known for their decorative works and furniture (like François Rupert Carabin), some who lived during the Middle Ages or Renaissance (whom I call historical exhibitors²), some female artists (despite the group rule prohibiting their participation),³ and many relatively unknown artists (some of whom have yet to be clearly identified). These exhibitors came together after Joséphin Péladan (1858-1919) created his Rose + Croix,⁴ breaking from another Rosicrucian group, led by Stanislas de

¹ Following the Chicago Manual of Style, obvious typographical and spelling errors in quotes (such as missing accent marks in typewritten documents), especially for the names Sâr Péladan, Fernand Khnopff, and the Rose + Croix, have been corrected, modernized, and standardized.

² I also use this term to refer to a few artists who did not personally exhibit their own works. To differentiate between artists who were committed to the venture and those who did not personally exhibit at the salons, I use this term to denote exhibitors from the Middle Ages and Renaissance through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries whose artworks were shown by collectors, rather than by the artists themselves. Most of these artworks were exhibited at the Salon of 1893, but several, especially those dating from the nineteenth century, were exhibited in other years. The art historian Pincus-Witten refers to these artists as “Old Masters” and does not include them in his accounting of the total number of exhibitors or his chart of exhibitors. Robert Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France: Joséphin Péladan and the Salons de la Rose-Croix (New York: Garland, 1976), 217–223. While Pincus-Witten’s term effectively conveys the wide divide between these artworks and those of the contemporary exhibitors, it cannot effectively be applied to artists like Gustave Déloy (1838-1899), whose La Gloire couronnant Th. Gauthier was exhibited at the Salon in 1893 by the owner, Judith Gauthier, rather than the artist himself. For further information on Gauthier, see: Henri Boucher, Iconographie générale de Théophile Gautier (Paris: H. Leclerc, 1912), 86–87; Théophile Gauthier and Madeleine Cottin, Voyage pittoresque en Algérie: 1845 (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1973), 25 n. 20.

³ For more on these women and the rule prohibiting their exhibition at the Salons, see Chapter Four.

⁴ For the sake of clarity and brevity, throughout this dissertation, when used alone, the terms Rose + Croix and Salon will refer to Péladan’s group, thus replacing the lengthier and more varied terms utilized by Péladan, such as the Salons of the Rose + Croix and the Rose + Croix Catholic of the Temple and the Grail. In referring to other Rosicrucian groups and orders, more specific terms will be used to differentiate the larger historical movement and contemporary groups like Stanislas de Guaita’s Rose + Croix Kabbalistic. Other salons, including the Salons of the Champ de Mars and the Champs-Elysées and the Salons of the Indépendants, will be referred to using these or other specific terms. Scholarship focusing on Péladan’s Rose + Croix generally uses the terms in this manner. See, for example: Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France; Christophe Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918): Essai
Guaita (1861-1897), which did not have Salons. In the process, Péladan sought to create a new Catholic social movement, utilizing the realm of the visual arts to instigate the larger social and religious changes he sought.\textsuperscript{5} In addition to the “Grand Master” Péladan, the group had what he termed a \textit{septenaire} of seven leaders, including Léonce de Larmandie (1851-1921) and Antoine de La Rochefoucauld (1862-1960).

Péladan was a prolific novelist and playwright who also wrote art criticism. He created the Rose + Croix as a venue to exhibit idealist Catholic art with occultist tendencies, writing most of the group publications himself as he sought to maintain control over the organization. His multitude of group doctrines, infamous persona, skill at promoting the Salons, and incorporation of fashionable concepts like occultism all played key roles in promulgating the group and attracting artists. Yet, while the group’s written doctrines built on the founder’s principles, the exhibited artworks often deviated from his ideas. Péladan publicized the Rose + Croix as an ideologically united Salon where the exhibiting artists built on his complex, often highly detailed rules and created artworks that used idealism, Catholicism, and occultism to improve society. However, the participating artists and exhibited works only loosely responded to his doctrines, revealing that the group actually served as a far more divided exhibition venue.

As a writer creating an artistic group, Péladan sought to establish and maintain the supremacy of literature and the written word over the visual arts. Additionally, he rarely

\textit{sur une maladie du lyrisme} (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1993). The development of the group and changing terminology will be addressed in terms of the impact on group dynamics and relationships. For more specific details and a chronological accounting, see Pincus-Witten, \textit{Occult Symbolism in France}; Beaufils, \textit{Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)}.

addressed specific styles or techniques, revealing a certain ambiguity over exactly how his theoretical principles could be translated into visual forms. However, he generally rejected modern stylistic developments, only supporting the use of historically based methods. He also usually opposed the deformation or transformation of the outside world to a greater extent than the participating artists did, especially changes to the proportions of the human body and perspective. While the exhibited artworks built on many of his broader idealist principles, incorporating a variety of his theories and favored subjects, they also deviated from many of his more specific mandates.

The six exhibitions of the Rose + Croix varied widely in size and publicity, as they were held at a series of different venues and generally received fewer reviews after the first two widely visited exhibits. Additionally, the Salons were not just visual events—musical and theatrical productions were often held in the same rooms. In terms of the visual arts, the Salons included a range of works, as artists exhibited paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints—although it is difficult to determine the percentages, since the catalog entries rarely specify the medium. While some reviewers singled out specific sculptors and emphasized this aspect of the Salon, the exhibitors that critics generally associated with the group were mostly painters.

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6 After the first two years, the events were generally less-often reviewed, although the fifth salon was widely discussed since it followed Péladan’s marriage to a countess, who Péladan referred to as a princess. Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 184–187.

7 These events were referred to as the Soirées of the Rose + Croix. Joséphin Péladan, Salon de la Rose-Croix: règles et monitoires (Paris: Dentu, 1891), 15.

8 Critical response to the sculptures exhibited at the Salons was extremely divided, as some critics framed these works as mere afterthoughts, while others considered them the highlights of the exhibits. Many critics focused on the two-dimensional works, then addressed only a few sculptors or sculptures at the end of their reviews. In contrast, Paul Bluysen argued that the best works exhibited at the first Salon were actually the sculptures, focusing on works by Vallgren and Dampt. Paul Bluysen, “Chronique: Le Salon de la Rose + Croix,” La République Française, no. 7384 (March 10, 1892): 1–2. Similarly, Roger Miles complimented the sculptural works at the first event. L. Roger
Determining the group’s key themes, styles, and subjects is difficult since such a large number of the artworks remain unidentified. Among the known works, many incorporated idealized depictions of the human body, building on Péladan’s argument that human beings were more effective and important subjects than landscapes and animals. Many of these figures were supernatural or were imbued with religious meaning (often representing angels or saints).

Several of the exhibited works were tied to the concept of the synthesis of the arts and incorporated literary or musical themes. The exhibited artworks varied widely in style—including pointillist productions, returns to quattrocento techniques, and Symbolist interests in the emotional effects of color and line—but they generally rejected naturalism and the realistic depiction of contemporary life.

Literature on the Rose + Croix—some of it part of larger studies of Symbolism—overemphasizes Péladan’s control, failing to adequately investigate the group’s relationships and

9 Péladan considered the human form an essential component of painting and he opposed landscape painting by arguing that one tree was no different from another. He also claimed that landscapes can only be successful in their depiction of light and dark. According to Péladan: “Comme les formes végétales ne représentent qu’une beauté de masses et qu’il n’y a pas d’arbre plus arbre qu’un autre, qu’en somme l’individu n’existe pas dans la végétation, que tout y paraît collectif, il faut sacrifier à l’intention poétique la plus grande partie du tableau.” Joséphin Péladan, L’art idéaliste et mystique: doctrine de l’ordre et du salon annuel des Rose + Croix (Paris: Chamuel, 1894), 128. Similarly, he wrote that animals could not be the subjects of artworks: “Quant à l’animal, il ne peut être sujet d’œuvre, mais seulement l’accessoire: complémentaire de l’expression, il ne signifie jamais assez pour l’isoler de l’homme.” Péladan, L’art idéaliste et mystique, 131. While paintings by Osbert, Point, Séon, and other central artists that depict women in landscapes are more emblematic of the group, some artists did exhibit landscapes without staffage even though the group program generally opposed this. For example, according to Félix Fénéon, Vallotton exhibited landscape prints. Félix Fénéon, “R. + C.,” Le Chat noir, no. 531 (March 19, 1892): 1924, 1926.
conflicts. Scholars often argue that Péladan’s theories and publications on the visual arts formed a coherent, planned aesthetic doctrine around which the group was centered—but in reality, Péladan’s contradictory and nonspecific aesthetic pronouncements do not constitute a single uniform doctrine. Focus on Péladan has obscured the tensions that developed among the exhibiting artists, who responded to his dictates in varied ways. My dissertation not only closely analyzes specific works, techniques, and motifs, but also rectifies oversights and oversimplifications in previous scholarship by highlighting the ways in which the artists of the Rose + Croix were divided as well as united.

The group published a variety of sometimes contradictory rules, mandates, and

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10 The tendency of literature on Symbolism to overemphasize Péladan builds on the critic’s own myth and on Pincus-Witten’s approach. Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*. For other examples of this emphasis see: Jean da Silva, *Le Salon de la Rose Croix: 1892-1897* (Paris: Syros-Alternatives, 1991); Rodolphe Rapetti, *Symbolism*, trans. Deke Dusinberre (Paris: Flammarion, 2005), 88–91. Still other references downplay the group’s achievements: “It lasted only six years, and its chief merit was to bring together works from all over Europe.” Michael Gibson, *Symbolism* (Cologne: Taschen, 1995), 55. When stylistic differences are mentioned, they are often addressed briefly; and sometimes important sources include major inaccuracies. See for example, Patricia Mathews’ inclusion of van Gogh and Gauguin as exhibitors: “Participants included a stylistic range of Symbolist painters such as Charles Filiger, Émile Bernard, Armand Point, Carlos Schwabe, Paul Gauguin, and Vincent van Gogh.” Patricia Townley Mathews, *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender, and French Symbolist Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 32. Another common misconception in the literature is the emphasis on unity within and between the salons—despite the major variations in terms of the funding, location, and critical response to each of the six salons. For example, Mathieu writes: The salons “…were all equally successful…” Pierre-Louis Mathieu, *The Symbolist Generation, 1870-1910* (New York: Skira; Rizzoli, 1990), 104.

11 Blumstein claims that Péladan’s ideas can be viewed as a coherent doctrine which is most clearly reflected in Osbert’s work. Neil Blumstein, “Le Peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et son époque” (Master’s thesis, Paris: Université Paris-Sorbonne, 1982), 121–123. On the other hand, Mathieu notes that Péladan “issued no directives regarding technique properly speaking, other than to point to the example of Italian painting from Giotto and Fra Angelico on.” Mathieu, *The Symbolist Generation, 1870-1910*, 103. Scholarly descriptions of the founder’s doctrine often rely heavily on a few quotes and specific statements regarding the aesthetic doctrine and are rarely representative of the entire group. For example, in 1983, Leona Lokensgard wrote: “The doctrine of the Rose+Croix, as expressed by Péladan, was to ‘restore the cult of the IDEAL in all its splendor, with TRADITION as its base and BEAUTY as its means.’ The Salon of the Rose+Croix was designed to ‘ruin realism,’ reform Latin taste and create a school of idealist art. Emphasizing the ‘Catholic ideal and Mysticism,’ the order of the Rose+Croix encouraged abstract mural-like designs.” (Emphasis in original) Lynne Leona Lokensgard, “Edmond Aman-Jean, 1858-1936” (PhD diss., Ann Arbor, MI: University of Kansas, 1983), 12. While Lokensgard’s description could be applied to some exhibitors, such as the subject of her dissertation, Edmond Aman-Jean, it is not representative of the entire group.
constitutions—almost always signed by Péladan. The clearly numbered lists of rules imply that the Rose + Croix followed a set doctrine, yet these principles were not standardized. For the purposes of this dissertation, a variety of primary documents will be used to lay out the group’s theories. I divide the official group publications into several overlapping types: (1) Rules—which were generally appended to each catalog and also published in several other documents. These lengthy numbered lists usually included about five to seven pages of rules stating the goals, types of rejected and accepted works, and other issues. In the first few years, these rules changed from year to year—usually when a few were removed or shifted around and only rarely when they were added or rewritten. In scholarship on the group, these are the most-often cited and discussed publications. (2) Mandates, Acts, and Constitutions—which focus on the Salons’ goals, but were generally not written as numbered lists. These are less-clearly organized, more-rarely cited, and more contradictory. (3) The Theoretical Doctrine—Péladan laid out the group doctrine in L’art idéalist et mystique, but the book does not focus on specific aesthetic

12 In the planned rules for the first salon, the seven-page list includes twenty-seven numbered rules, while twenty numbered rules comprising five pages were planned for the (unachieved) seventh salon. Péladan, Salon de la Rose-Croix: règles et monitoires, 7–14; Joséphin Péladan, Ordre de la rose + croix du temple et du Graal: VIème geste esthétique: sixième salon: catalogue (Paris: Imp. Georges Petit, 1897), 30–35.

13 For example, see: Péladan, Salon de la Rose-Croix: règles et monitoires; Joséphin Péladan, La décadence latine, éthopée XI. Typhonia; avec la règle esthétique du second salon de la Rose + Croix (Paris: E. Dentu, 1892), 244–249; Péladan, VIème geste esthétique, 30–35.

14 For example, see: Joséphin Péladan, Le Salon de Joséphin Péladan (9ème année): Salon national et salon Jullian, suivi de trois mandements de la Rose Croix catholique à l’Aristie (Paris: E. Dentu, 1890), 65–75; Joséphin Péladan, Constitutions de la Rose-Croix, le Temple et le Graal (Paris: Secrétariat, 1893); Péladan, Salon de la Rose-Croix: règles et monitoires; Joséphin Péladan, Bulletin mensuel de l’ordre de la Rose + Croix du Temple et du Graal, contenant le catalogue du IVe Salon, 1 (Beauvais: Imp. Professionnelle, 1895), 10–26. (Problematically, sometimes the constitutions are also written as a numbered series of doctrines, but generally, these are less often cited and are more complex than the rules. See for example: Joséphin Péladan, IIe Geste esthétique: catalogue du salon de la Rose Croix: Catalogue officiel: Illustré de 160 dessins: du second Salon de la Rose Croix, avec la Règle esthétique et les constitutions de l’Ordre (Paris: Librairie Nilsson, 1893), XXXI–XXXIX.)
theories.\textsuperscript{15} Advertising and Group Publications: especially in the first year, the group leaders published a variety of articles, reviews of their own Salon, and advertisements which varied widely in type—these publications included lists of expected group members and articles focusing on the planned rules.\textsuperscript{16}

In addition to his varying rules, Péladan’s eccentricity often detracted from his theories and art criticism; Alain Mercier argues that the best Symbolist writers were too suspicious of Péladan’s persona to publically recognize him (although Mercier notes ties between Péladan’s work and that of several Symbolist writers).\textsuperscript{17} Péladan’s reception among his contemporaries led Pincus-Witten to argue that the founder was “one of the most remarkable art critics of the Symbolist Movement whose eccentric positions ultimately were of greater endurance than his esthetic positions.”\textsuperscript{18} Known as the Sâr, Péladan wore outrageous clothing and made peculiar public statements to draw attention to himself, his writing, and his Salons.\textsuperscript{19} His demeanor, costume, and verbosity played a significant role in publicizing the Salons—in fact, a number of contemporary Salon reviews devote considerable attention to Péladan’s clothing and language.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{15} Péladan, \textit{L’art idéaliste et mystique}.

\textsuperscript{16} For example, see: Joséphin Péladan, “Le Salon de la Rose + Croix,” \textit{Le Figaro}, no. 245 (September 2, 1891): 1; Antoine de La Rochefoucauld, “La Rose + Croix du Temple,” \textit{La Chronique des Arts} (September 5, 1891): 227–228.

\textsuperscript{17} Mercier argues for Péladan’s ties to Alfred Jarry and Paul Valéry and writes that the Symbolist writers Elémir Bourges and Saint-Pol-Roux were both members of the salon’s leadership. Alain Mercier, “La poétique de Péladan, ‘La Queste du Graal’ et les écrivains symbolistes,” \textit{Revue des études péladanes: organe officiel de la Société Josephin Péladan}, no. 4 and 5, March and June (1976): 13–15.

\textsuperscript{18} Pincus-Witten, \textit{Occult Symbolism in France}, 7–8.

\textsuperscript{19} For more on Péladan’s sensational biography, see Beaufils, \textit{Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)}.

\textsuperscript{20} For example, one review of the final salon reads: “Après l’exécution magistrale du \textit{Parsifal} de Wagner, le sâr a fait son entrée au milieu d’une foule des plus élégantes, vêtu d’un habit noir, d’un gilet jaune entr’ouvert, et portant des fraises en guise de col et de manchettes. Dans un langage, d’ailleurs fort élevé, il a fait le procès de l’art pictural
While such eccentricities clearly played a role in promoting the Rose + Croix, scholarly focus on them has deflected attention from Péladan’s ideology and platforms as well as from analysis of the artworks themselves, the complex dynamics among the artists, and these artists’ aesthetic theories. This dissertation considers the larger artistic themes and concerns identified by the writers and artists rather than focusing on Péladan’s affectations.

Péladan’s group clearly responded to the revival of esoteric and occult religions—including Rosicrucianism and theosophy—at the end of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth-century occult revival is often associated with the writings of Eliphas Lévi (pseudonym of Alphonse Louis Constant), who published the *Dogma and Ritual of High Magic*, *The History of Magic*, and *The Key of the Great Mysteries* in the 1850s and 1860s, and Madame Blavatsky (Helena Petrovna Blavatsky), who founded the Theosophical Society in 1875.\(^{21}\) Major figures in the 1890s included Édouard Schuré, whose *The Great Initiates* first appeared in 1889, and Papus (Dr. Gerard Encausse) who wrote his *Elementary Treatise on Occult Science* in 1888.\(^{22}\) Elements of this revival are often dated to the time of the French Revolution and its influences have been traced forward to artistic movements of the twentieth century.\(^{23}\) Additionally, a wide range of


social and cultural developments of the nineteenth century have been connected to the occult
revival, including: increasing opposition to the climate of skepticism and positivism; the
discovery of scientific developments which could not be explained by contemporary theories of
matter; and even women’s desire to establish political authority and ownership of their bodies
and beliefs. Péladan was personally interested in occultism from an early age, responding to the
work his father and older brother did in the field.

Rosicrucianism has a long and contested history, and the name has been used to describe
a range of different movements and practices. The term Rose + Croix itself is alternatively dated
to either the fourteenth or seventeenth century and was tied to a variety of religions and
practices, including both Catholic and Protestant sects, Freemasonry, and alchemy. The first
evidence of the Rosicrucian movement comes from a series of three pamphlets published
between 1614 and 1616, stating that Christian Rosenkreutz created the society in 1376. The
terms Rosicrucian and Rose + Croix were used by a wide range of movements, so that, although
“the term ‘Rosicrucian’ ostensibly describes the (likely fictional) secret fraternity of the 17th

24 McIntosh, Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival, 12; Morrisson, Modern alchemy, 33; L. Anne Delgado,
“Cosmic Plots: Occult Knowledge and Narratives of Belief” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2011), 4.
26 Janine Lévy-Mery, “Peladan, l’ésotérisme et les peintres des salons Rose-Croix” (Master’s thesis, S.l.: Paris IV,
1990), 16, 22–23.
27 Roland Edighoffer, “Hermeticism in Early Rosicrucianism,” in Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern
According to Delgado, the first pamphlet, the Fama was “unapologetically anti-Papal.” Delgado, “Cosmic Plots,” 29.
When discussing the nineteenth-century occult revival, some scholars generalize between a variety of occult
principles, situating the broader occult movement in opposition to Catholicism and positivism. According to Sarah
Joy Sik: “As the Occult Revival took root at the fin de siècle, the opposition [which] mysticism offered to the
certitudes of Catholicism as well as to the positivism of science attracted many individuals with anarchistic
2010, 11. Sik’s overly broad statement on occult opposition to Catholicism is problematic, because of Péladan’s
belief that his version of Rosicrucianism was based on Catholicism.
century, it is one that also encompasses a variety of occult philosophies and practices, herbalism and alchemy among them.”

Significantly, Péladan’s Rose + Croix began more out of an interest in social and religious change than a specific desire to have an impact on the arts or to create an occult group. Larmandie, one of the group’s leaders, wrote that they chose to found a Salon not because they wanted to create a new artistic movement, but because they saw an opening there. According to him, the Rose + Croix was not truly an occultist group and the reason for the focus on art was the leaders’ desire to impact contemporaries:

We easily agreed that the time was not favorable for the formation of an occult metaphysical group, but that the fine arts, on the other hand, would offer to our efforts an extensive and useful career, and that by the aesthetic channel we could get our spiritualist theories to penetrate the frivolous brains of our contemporaries.

With this statement, Larmandie distanced the Rose + Croix from the visual arts by noting that they were not the group’s main interest, but stressed that the Rose + Croix was not actually an occult group either—since he felt that the time was not right for this type of society. In response, a variety of critics questioned the intensity of the group’s commitment to magic, as when one


29 Larmandie, L’entr’acte idéal, 10. This deviates from Mathieu’s assertion that “The aspirations of this new society were aesthetic, rather than occult.” Mathieu, The Symbolist Generation, 1870-1910, 103.

30 “Nous convinmes aisément que le temps n’était pas propice à la constitution d’un groupe d’occulte métaphysique, mais que les beaux-arts, par contre, offririaient a nos efforts une carrière vaste et utile, et que par le canal esthétique nous pourrions faire pénétrer nos théories spiritualistes dans les cervelles frivoles de nos contemporains.” Larmandie, L’entr’acte idéal, 10.
wrote that for those critics who know “nothing of magic,…we are forced to admit that this material does not abound.”

In addition to writing that occultism was not their central concern, Péladan and the group leaders maintained that the organization was strictly Catholic. Péladan’s desire to split from a larger Rosicrucian sect and create a more Catholic variant played a major role in his founding of the Rose + Croix—but his repeated statements that the group was entirely Catholic are problematic, since it clearly favored a fusion of Rosicrucianism and Catholicism. Ideological differences, personal disputes, and Péladan’s ambition undoubtedly played major roles in the founder’s split from Stanislas de Guaita’s group and the creation of Péladan’s Rose + Croix. Ideologically, Péladan sought a greater emphasis on Catholicism and opposed Guaita’s acceptance of Freemasonry, his insistence on the superiority of the Kabala over the New Testament, and his belief that the Pope was the anti-Christ. However, the ideological and

31 “Seulement, on nous permettra, ne connaissant rien à la magie, de ne chercher, dans une exposition de peinture que ce qui est œuvre de peintre; et force nous est d’avouer que cette matière n’abonde pas. Nous aurons vite fait de citer la dizaine d’artistes qui ont eu moins de souci de se montrer bons mages que bons ouvriers.” N.A., “La Salon du Sâr Péladan,” Gazette Anecdotique, no. 7 (April 15, 1893): 208–209.

32 When founding the group, Péladan referred to it as favoring Catholicism over occultism and remaining loyal to the Pope. Joséphin Péladan, “Ordre de la Rose-Croix k.—Dé mission de Joséphine Péladan.—Fondation de l’Artiste (R+C+C).—Péladan, légat catholique romain auprès de l’Initiation,” L’Initiation (June 1890): 282. Similarly, Larmandie described the group as Catholic: “La Rose + Croix est une société d’idéalisme catholique s’étendant sur tous les plans intellectuels, esthétiques et de gubernation.” Larmandie, L’entr’acte idéal, 33. Like Péladan, Larmandie situated himself and the group as Catholic, writing that his book on esotericism was for Catholics and “believers of good faith.” “Il s’adresse aux catholiques intelligents et aux incroyants de bonne foi.” Léonce de Larmandie, Eoraka: notes sur l’esotérisme par un Templier de la R.C.C. (Paris: Chamuel, 1891), 11. Larmandie even included a two page profession of his “Roman and Apostolic Catholic Faith,” stating that his submission to the Pope was “perpetual and absolute.” Larmandie, Eoraka, 15–16. To support this claim, he argued that although Catholicism was more social and esotericism more abstract and intellectual, they were actually the same faith. “L’Ésotérisme relativement au Catholicisme est une source abstraite et une origine intellectuelle. Le Catholicisme relativement à l’Esotérisme est un dérivé concret, une manifestation sociale.” Larmandie, Eoraka, 12.

33 For more on the personal issues, see Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918).

34 Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 71.
biographical disputes in this split are not central to the dynamics of the Salons of the Rose + Croix, since most of the exhibiting artists joined the group after the split from Guaita was finalized.

At the same time that Péladan sought to combine occultism and Catholicism, the Catholic Church was involved in a broader political realignment in France. Specifically, the new Papal policy of *ralliement* finally accepted the French Republic. Based on this policy, joining with more moderate Republicans in the 1890s brought the Catholics into a powerful coalition which could oppose the anticlericalism of the Left. ³⁵ This period of compromise and increased prominence followed major setbacks for the Catholic Church in France in the 1880s—especially in terms of increases in secular education following Jules Ferry’s reforms of 1881 and 1882. ³⁶ Within this climate of increased political cooperation, Péladan turned away from political discussions or direct action to focus on his vague goals of idealist social reform with the Rose + Croix.

In addition to these complex relationships with Rosicrucianism and Catholicism, the nature of the Rose + Croix’s connection to Symbolism has also been disputed, although scholars generally address the Rose + Croix within considerations of Symbolism. For example, Sébastien Clerbois refers to the Rose + Croix as a Symbolist group, arguing that it was part of a second form that arose after the first wave (which he associates with the work of Moreau, Puvis, and


Redon). Michelle Facos discusses the Rose + Croix within her book on Symbolism, but considers many of the exhibited works to be allegorical rather than Symbolist. While she notes that contemporaries applied the term to exhibitors like Alexandre Séon, she points out that “Symbolism... was such a popular trend by the 1890s that the label ‘Symbolist’ was indiscriminately applied to promote works as progressive.” Symbolism is a slippery term that has had a complicated history—yet it remains helpful when addressing art that emphasizes anti-naturalism and stylization, foregrounds the eternal or metaphysical, and incorporates myth, mysticism, religion, and correspondences—among both the senses and the genres.

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Contemporary critics applied the multivalent label to various groups and artists—and many used it to describe the Rose + Croix.\footnote{For example, Fernand Briveszac frames the Rose + Croix as central to the Symbolist movement when he discusses the schism between Péladan and Antoine de La Rochefoucauld, writing: “C’est en fait, le schisme est entré dans le symbolisme. Le Sâr représente la doctrine orthodoxe et l’Archonte l’hérésie noire.” Fernand Brivezac, “Paris Instantané,” \textit{La Vie Moderne: Journal Hebdomadaire Illustré}, no. 12 (March 20, 1892): 121.\textit{}} Modern scholars also generally tend to address the Rose + Croix within considerations of Symbolism, despite Robert Goldwater’s attempt to distance these artists from the movement by situating them and several German painters within the realm of \textit{Gedankenmalerei}.\footnote{Goldwater, \textit{Symbolism}, 9–15. For example, the Rose + Croix, and other artists Goldwater labels as \textit{Gedankenmalerei} painters, such as Franz von Stuck and Arnold Böcklin, are included in Pierre Théberge and Jean Clair, eds., \textit{Lost Paradise: Symbolist Europe} (Montreal, Quebec: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1995); Mathieu, \textit{The Symbolist Generation, 1870-1910}; Michael Gibson, \textit{The Symbolists} (New York: Abrams, 1988); Facos, \textit{Symbolist Art in Context}.\textit{}}

In scholarship on the Rose + Croix, Christophe Beaufils’ biography of Joséphin Péladan (1993) is a chronological work that addresses the writer’s entire life and career rather than just his time with the Rose + Croix.\footnote{Beaufils, \textit{Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)}.\textit{}} Due to its large scope, much of the book is not directly relevant to the group, but Beaufils’ extensive research on Péladan includes a great deal of previously unpublished information. Additionally, Beaufils clarifies the roles of figures affiliated with the Salons, particularly in his discussions of the identities of the group leaders.\footnote{Beaufils, \textit{Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)}, 178–188, 271.\textit{}} Nevertheless, with his literary and biographical focus, Beaufils does not emphasize group dynamics or focus on the exhibiting artists.

Jean da Silva’s book from 1991 plays a key role in French scholarship on the group, but in many ways the author builds on Robert Pincus-Witten’s previous research.\footnote{Silva, \textit{Le Salon de la Rose Croix}.\textit{}} Silva’s work is
shorter than Pincus-Witten’s published dissertation and has a less scholarly focus, but the format is similar, since both authors focus on the founder’s role and lay out their discussion of the Salons chronologically. Silva does address some significant issues in his more thematic chapters, including the group’s ties to Wagner and Péladan’s association with Erik Satie. Nevertheless, his twelve-page chapter on the artists exhibiting with the group does not adequately address the group dynamics, the artists, or the exhibited artworks.

Robert Pincus-Witten’s dissertation—which was completed in 1968 and published in 1976—on Péladan and the Rose + Croix is an essential source, though the author’s focus on Péladan and the chronology of the movement minimizes the importance of the artists and their production. While this work filled an important gap in the literature at the time, the author devotes more attention to the founder than the dynamics of the group, the exhibited works, and the themes and exhibitors that tied the Rose + Croix to other groups and movements. Additionally, Pincus-Witten effectively argues that Péladan had a great deal of control over the group, yet he overstates this domination by arguing: “Péladan’s was the authentic voice, and manner, and vocabulary, of a six-year episode.” Although Péladan did insist upon and maintain authority over the group, Pincus-Witten’s claim neglects the various tensions, disagreements, and controversies within the Rose + Croix. Likewise, he leaves out the contradictions between


47 Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*.

48 Three out of four of his main chapters are devoted to the writer and critic. His fourth chapter focuses on chronology and biography, considering only a few art works in depth. Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*, 100–101.

Péladan’s own various attempts at framing the endeavor as a collaborative enterprise or as completely under his authority.

Pincus-Witten also highlights the presence of artists like Émile Bernard, Charles Filiger, and Félix Vallotton at the first event, but these artists cannot be considered central members of the group because they only participated in a single Salon. Pincus-Witten frames this break as one of the major failings of the Rose + Croix. This is largely because he views the short term involvement of these artists as one of the most important aspects of the Salons, marking them as “events of cardinal importance in the history of Symbolism.”50 He further argues that Péladan made a significant mistake in “expung[ing]” these artists who were the “finest representatives” of the founder’s theories.51 This framing of the struggle is based not on contemporaneous judgments of which artists were most emblematic of Péladan’s ideas, but on twentieth-century conceptions of the varying quality of these artworks. Moreover, it overly simplifies the extent to which the artists’ defection was an explicit choice by Péladan.

In addition to these larger works, a variety of shorter studies address specific aspects of the Rose + Croix, adding greatly to our knowledge of the Salons. In particular, Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond discusses several aspects of the Rose + Croix in his catalog essays. In one very brief discussion of the Salons, he argues that the group was avant-garde, despite scholarly emphasis on its conservatism, writing that Péladan built on Baudelaire and “argued for a form of artistic activity that turned its back on the superficial world of Impressionism and the

50 Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*, 121.
51 Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*, 121.
conventional concerns of academicism.”52 In this essay, Jumeau-Lafond also notes the group’s “modern” emphasis on combining the Salon with theatrical and musical events and the Rose + Croix’s use of propagandistic materials like posters.53 However, the scholar assigns the founder too much knowledge and interest in the different types of artistic Symbolism and in the goals of artists. He also downplays the number of artists who rejected their invitations when he writes: “[Péladan] wanted to create a centre for Idealism and to offer artists a new prominence, in spite of the tensions that existed between the different strands of Symbolism,” adding that “he received some rejections.”54 In fact, Péladan rarely simply offered anything to artists—instead, he often exhorted and attacked them—and he certainly also wanted to use the Salons as a venue to stage his own theatrical works. For another exhibition, in a brief section titled “Les Salons de la Rose + Croix: un militantisme idéaliste,” Jumeau-Lafond discusses the group in the context of a variety of Salons, galleries, and exhibitions, arguing that they countered more official exhibition spaces and served as a venue for a variety of artists who could not have exhibited otherwise.55

Another scholar, Sébastien Clerbois, discusses the group within his work on the influence of occultism on Belgian art. He argues that important French Symbolist painters were not faithful to Péladan, but that the Belgian Symbolists exhibited regularly throughout the course of the


events. The Belgian artists certainly were an important aspect of the Rose + Croix, and Jean Delville and Fernand Khnopff were central members, but the Belgians did not comprise a large contingent and many of the Belgian exhibitors were not regular participants. Clerbois’ chapters addressing the Rose + Croix include a great deal of useful primary documentation, but generally focus on Péladan’s influence in Belgium. However, Clerbois does add a variety of important details, especially in regards to the disputes between Péladan and artists like Gustave Moreau, the role of the critic and writer Ray Nyst—who traveled to Paris with many of the Belgian submissions, and the visits that Delville made to ateliers in Belgium with Péladan to solicit new exhibitors for the second Salon.

Several other brief works address certain aspects of the Salon in detail, providing important foundations, but not focusing on the group as a whole. Maria di Pasquale’s article on Péladan’s occultism and his ties to science adds important background details, but focuses on the author’s earlier criticism, rather than the Rose + Croix. Laurinda Dixon addresses the role of music at the Salons, moving beyond previous scholars’ emphasis on Péladan, and Marla Hand effectively argues for the importance of Schwabe’s poster for the first Salon, showing how the work reflects Péladan’s principles. Yet, in Hand’s article, as in the article by Pasquale and the

56 Clerbois, L’éotérisme et le symbolisme belge, 59.

57 Among the Belgian artists Clerbois notes as regular exhibitors, he includes Fernand Dubois—who only exhibited at the Salon in 1895. Clerbois, L’éotérisme et le symbolisme belge, 59.

58 Clerbois, L’éotérisme et le symbolisme belge, 43, 47, 53.


chapter by Dixon, the author is unable to address the broader Rose + Croix, including the group dynamics and other associated artists. Similarly, Richard Thomson makes a significant argument that Péladan deviated from the exhibiting artists because they were more liberal than him in terms of their religion, politics, and style—but he does not develop this argument since he only addresses the group for two pages.61

A variety of monographic dissertations and books have been written on many of the exhibitors at the Rose + Croix. These works tend to present each artist in isolation, rarely addressing shared themes and motivations in detail.62 Véronique Dumas’ dissertation, article, and book on Osbert are based on a wealth of archival information and connect the artist to a variety of contemporary movements, figures, and groups.63 Robert Doré’s and Myriam de Palma’s dissertations and books on, respectively, Armand Point and Maurice Chabas provide essential information on otherwise-understudied major figures in the group.64 Delphine Montalant’s

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chapter on Séon similarly addresses a key group figure and works by Sarah Sik Joy and Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond on François-Rupert Carabin and Carlos Schwabe are also important sources on exhibiting artists. Often the authors of the French works are the descendants of the artists or their circles and thus, they incorporate a variety of documentation from private archives. These works all form essential sources, providing key information on each artist’s biography, specific works, techniques, and connections with the Rose + Croix. Nevertheless, they do not focus on the artists’ participation in the Rose + Croix, the exhibited works, or the larger group.

Throughout this dissertation, I consider a variety of primary sources that have not previously been adequately addressed in research on the group—or have not been considered at all. Although important research has been conducted in Péladan’s and Alphonse Osbert’s archives, due to their large size, some important documents have not been studied in depth. For example, Osbert’s archives include an invitation card to a meeting at Armand Point’s studio following the split from Antoine de la Rochefoucauld, revealing Point’s importance at this key juncture and showing how Péladan sought to retain the membership of specific artists at a time when many defected from the group. Similarly, Péladan’s archives include a variety of sketches, photographs, and newspaper clippings that have not been addressed in scholarship focusing on the group—such as two clippings that claim that Péladan’s wife had previously


66 For example, Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond is the great-grandson of Carlos Schwabe, the subject of his dissertation. Jumeau-Lafond, Carlos Schwabe, n.p.

exhibited a work at the Salon. In addition to these archival sources, a broad swath of Salon reviews has not been addressed in scholarship on the Rose + Croix. Especially in the first two years, a multitude of newspapers published on the events. Fewer journals included reviews of the later four Salons, but these events also produced critical responses that have not previously been discussed. A broad range of publications wrote on the Salons, from daily newspapers like *Le Soir, Le Figaro, La Presse, Le Radical* and *L’événement* to monthly or bi-monthly journals focusing on various artistic and cultural issues, such as *La Plume, L’Ermitage: Revue Artistique et Littéraire, Le Monde Artisté,* and *L’Art et la Vie.* Some particularly important critics, who closely engaged with the works and whose reviews will be addressed in detail include: Henri Degron, Alphonse Germain, Pierre de Lano, and Gustave Soulier. While scholarship on the group often addresses some of these reviews, my dissertation considers a far wider range of critical responses, as well as Péladan’s mandates, constitutions, principles, and Salon catalogs and Léonce de Larmandie’s history of the group. Larmandie’s history of the Rose + Croix is an important document because it was published less than ten years after the end of the Salons, giving an important early perspective on the group and including a variety of previously unpublished details. However, Larmandie was not an art critic, but a poet and writer, and his book is more a celebration of the events than a neutral account. Additionally, the work includes several significant errors—such as the omission of many exhibitors and the inclusion of other artists who were never listed in the

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68 N.A. “Le Mariage du Sar Péladan.” Arsenal MS 13415 fol. 116, third clipping; N.A. Arsenal MS 13415 fol. 116, fourth clipping.

Unlike previous studies of the Rose + Croix, this dissertation foregrounds the complex group dynamics, the artists’ differing levels of commitment to, and identification with, the movement, their breaks from Péladan’s directives, the variations among their works, and the ties between the Rose + Croix and contemporary groups. By focusing on the exhibiting artists and placing the Rose + Croix within the context of the larger development of artistic brotherhoods and alternative exhibition spaces, my dissertation highlights the divergences between Péladan’s ideology and the actual practice of exhibiting works that deviated from his principles.

To show that even the most committed, central artists treated the Rose + Croix as an exhibition venue and broke from its ideology, I use statistical analysis of group catalogs and contemporary reviews to determine the central ten exhibiting artists. Using a sample of fifty contemporary reviews, I identify those artists who were most often linked to the group by contemporary critics (See Table 1). At the same time, I analyze which artists were committed to the group for the longest time and exhibited the largest number of works (See Tables 2, 3, 4).

Rather than addressing only a few reviews or focusing only on the artists who remain well-known today, I discuss a range of exhibiting artists who were considered central by multiple critics during the period of the group’s exhibitions. Based on this analysis, a central group of artists thus emerges: Maurice Chabas (1862-1947), Pierre-Émile Cornillier (1863-?), Jean Delville (1867-1953), André des Gachons (1871-1951), Fernand Khnopff (1858-1921), Pinckney

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70 Larmandie, L’entr’acte idéal, 173–176.
Marcius-Simons (1865-1909), Alphonse Osbert (1857-1939), Armand Point (1861-1932), Alexandre Séon (1855-1917), and Ville Vallgren (Carl Wilhelm Wallgren) (1855-1940).\(^71\)

While these ten were considered central figures at the time, they did not wholeheartedly embrace the group and Péladan’s mandates. Instead, they diverged from his principles in a variety of ways. For example, two years before leaving the group, Armand Point reportedly “deplored some of the organization’s flaws.”\(^72\) Similarly, Alexandre Séon apparently claimed that he, rather than Péladan, started the idealist movement, stating dismissively in 1907: “Oh, Péladan! He had a little potential!”\(^73\) Beyond criticizing the group and the founder directly, artists who exhibited at the Salons broke from Péladan’s ideology in terms of their own theories, styles, and subjects.

Chapter One includes discussions of the biographies and central themes, styles, and scholarship related to the key group leaders and the central ten exhibitors. It also addresses the divergences in the group structure, revealing how Péladan varied between referring to the

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\(^71\) Many of these names are often spelled differently in literature on the Rose + Croix—particularly, Vallgren is often spelled as Walgren or Valgren, but in literature on the artist, his name is spelled Carl Wilhelm Wallgren, although he is most commonly referred to simply as Ville Vallgren. Leena Ahtola-Moorhouse, Ville Vallgren: 1855 - 1940 (Helsinki: Ateneum Art Museum, 2003), 54. Pierre Rambaud complicates this account, since his works were shown at four events, he exhibited a total of fifteen works and he was often mentioned in reviews. Yet, since the artist died in 1893, the later two exhibitions were posthumous. Joséphin Péladan, Ordre de la Rose + Croix: geste esthétique: troisième salon: catalogue (Paris, 1894), 3, 17. Since he did not choose to show works at these salons and could not fully participate as a group member after his death, I only include his first two exhibitions in my account, and thus, do not consider him one of the most representative artists.


exhibitors as guests or members and framing the leadership structure as collaborative or entirely under his control. Additionally, comparisons to a variety of other contemporaneous exhibition venues and artistic brotherhoods reveal key variations between the publicized structure and dynamics of the Rose + Croix and the actual practices.

The second chapter focuses on the divisions and dynamics within the Rose + Croix. This chapter lays out my method of determining the central ten exhibitors based on statistical analysis of the contemporary reviews and salon catalogues. In addition to showing which artists were most representative of the group, I also reveal a variety of divisions in this chapter. Specifically, I address how critics divided the group and discussed the group dynamics. Additionally, I reveal divergences between the actual structure and the published doctrines in terms of the changing leadership model, as well as discussing variations between the ideas espoused by the group leaders.

The third chapter addresses doctrinal divisions, focusing on the breaks between Péladan’s theories and those espoused by the exhibiting artists. As noted by a variety of contemporaneous critics, there were significant differences between the group’s programs and the implementation of these policies. Additionally, Péladan’s theories diverged from those of the artists in terms of the role of social reform, ties to nature, and attitudes toward the past. In particular, Péladan expressed varied views about the extent to which the Salons could or should improve society—

74 Due to the size of the group, previous scholarship has tended to only address the most representative artists. For example, when Sarah Blythe discusses the tensions between group leaders and their followers, her discussion of the Salons of the Rose + Croix focuses on just Alphonse Osbert. Sarah Ganz Blythe, “Promising Pictures: Utopian Aspirations and Pictorial Realities in 1890s France” (PhD diss., New York University, 2007), 70–91. She does mention some other figures—for example, she includes several of Péladan’s quotes on Séon, but this section of a paragraph is only nine lines long. Blythe, “Promising Pictures,” 76–77. Additionally, this method allows me to consider a range of reviews and not just the select few that are often addressed by scholars when discussing the Rose + Cross. For example, Sarah Blythe mentions the fact that the Rose + Croix “was one of the most avidly reviewed exhibitions”—but cites only one example in the footnote for this sentence. Blythe, “Promising Pictures,” 75.
and the participating artists expressed similarly conflicted attitudes. At the same time, Péladan feared and opposed painted alterations of the human body and perspective to a greater degree than many of the exhibiting artists, who transformed, deformed, and idealized nature in a range of ways. Additionally, these artists were influenced by a variety of different moments from the past.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the group’s application of religious and scientific principles. This chapter addresses the overlap between various contemporaneous esoteric religions and scientific theories, as well as the color theories that Séon and Osbert developed, both relying upon recent optical discoveries as well as emotional and symbolic uses of color. This chapter also addresses the fact that several exhibitors utilized hysterical imagery in their depictions of visionary saints and religious women and that others painted auras and the astral fluid. A multitude of exhibiting artists built on Rosicrucian diagrams and theories regarding duality in creating vertically symmetrical works. These artworks and others often emphasize the importance of the religious path, specifically highlighting upward progression toward more eternal, geometric, and simpler realms.

The fifth chapter addresses the range of subjects shown at the Rose + Croix, as well as considering the broader role of women. Specifically, I prove that at least five women exhibited at the Salons, despite the clear mandate rejecting their works: “Following Magical Law no work by a woman will ever be exhibited or executed by the Order.” This divergence reflects a larger split in the group between doctrine and practice and highlights the variability of the founder’s attitudes. Artists’ contributions to the Salons reflected a broader range and combination of types.

than Péladan considered acceptable within the visual arts, including combinations of *femmes fatales, fées* (fairies), saints, and angels. Yet, despite his theoretical focus on idealism, comparisons to Péladan’s novels reveal that despite the author’s desire to focus on the ideal, his characters similarly include a range of female types. Péladan and the exhibiting artists also expressed varying attitudes toward the *paragone*—or the hierarchy of the genres. Many of them reflected the contemporary emphasis on combining the genres, but Péladan continually sought to assert the superiority of literature over the visual and musical arts.
Chapter 1: Principle Figures, Group Dynamics, and other Alternative Venues

New alternative salons rose to prominence in France following the demise of the official Salon and the development of competing exhibition spaces.¹ Venues like the Indépendants showed a wide range of works without a unified ideological platform, seeking to display a variety of artworks and give artists a space to exhibit, rather than attempting to link the works or further a specific theory or agenda. At the same time, ideologically motivated artists’ circles and venues developed, serving a variety of functions—from giving artists a place to meet and discuss ideas to exhibiting works that were aligned with specific stylistic or theoretical platforms. The Salons of the Rose + Croix arose within this frenetic climate of exhibition venue creation.

Joséphin Péladan (Fig. 1.1, 1.2) founded the Rose + Croix with an ideological platform that focused on reforming society through idealist art.² He claimed that its exhibitions would offer a space for idealized, Catholic, and occult artworks that relied heavily on historical influences, and, in some ways, the artists exhibiting at the Rose + Croix built on these mandates. Many showed religious, mystical and occult works and depictions of idealized women. Additionally, a number of the artworks exhibited over the course of six years were steeped in historical techniques and themes. Yet despite the thematic and ideological ties between the exhibitors, the artists also diverged from Péladan’s mandates in various ways. Thus, rather than

¹ The French government officially stopped supporting the Salon de Champs-Élysées in January, 1881. At this point, these Salons were no longer officially sanctioned by the state, and a series of other large Salons emerged to compete with it, including the Salons of the Société des artistes français in 1881 and, in 1884, the Société des artistes indépendants. Later, in 1890, many important members seceded and created the Salon du Champ de Mars, which was also known as the Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. Patricia Mainardi, The End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 81, 85–86.

² Although he sometimes wrote that the group’s purpose was to celebrate the end of the Latin race, he generally focused on the positive, reformist position.
serving as a unified group committed to the founder’s reformist principles, the Rose + Croix emerged as a divided exhibition venue, in which the works on display were only loosely related to Péladan’s preconceived and doctrinaire notions of what they would be.

This chapter addresses the principal ideologues and central exhibiting artists of the group, laying out their biographies and discussing their interrelationships in order to show that they generally lacked a shared development and did not constitute a typical artists’ circle. The artists who exhibited at the Salons of the Rose + Croix manifested different levels of commitment to the group, and many exhibited at a range of other venues. Although Péladan consistently characterized the Rose + Croix as a united group, he referred to its constituent artists variously as “members,” and as “guests,” and vacillated between stressing ties between the artists (implying that they formed a cohesive group who subscribed to his principles) and emphasizing the connections between the works (framing the Salons as exhibitions of works he selected solely on the basis of their alignment with his platforms). As comparisons with other alternative exhibition spaces show, with its large size, formal leadership structure, set doctrine, and lack of meetings, the Rose + Croix differed significantly from contemporaneous artists’ collaboratives and exhibiting organizations in both publicized form and in reality.

**Key Leaders and Central Group Members**

Joséphin Péladan (1858-1919) was a novelist, art critic, and playwright well-known for his eccentric persona and his use of a variety of esoteric titles, such as Sâr Mérodack. Christophe Beaufils’ biography of the author serves as the key source of information on Péladan and his writing.³ Péladan’s father and older brother were both occultists and Joséphin incorporated

³ Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918).
arcane themes into many of his writings while nevertheless arguing that he was a strict Catholic.\footnote{Beaufils, \textit{Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)}, 17–18, 23–26.}

Highly prolific, he produced over one hundred works, many of them novels written in series including \textit{La Décadence latine} (Éthopée) (twenty-one books), \textit{Amphithéâtre des sciences mortes} (seven books), and \textit{Les idées et les formes} (eleven books). Additionally, Péladan’s \textit{Théâtre de la Rose-Croix} comprised six plays. When well-known novelist Jules-Amédée Barbey d’Aurevilly wrote the preface to Péladan’s \textit{Le vice suprême} in 1884, Péladan became a well-known literary figure, though his later works were not widely read.

Péladan was married twice, first in 1896 and again in 1900. His first marriage is significant to the Rose + Croix because he wed the niece of another of the group’s leaders, Léonce de Larmandie (1851-1921). This wedding was a major social event and brought a great deal of publicity to the 1896 Salon of the Rose + Croix.\footnote{Two contemporaneous reviews refer to this woman as Antoinette de Guerre—who exhibited at the Salons, despite a mandate rejecting exhibitions by women artists. However, these claims are unsubstantiated, so without any evidence to support it, these reports are only really useful for noting the extent to which contemporaries associated Péladan with Guerre.} Larmandie (1851-1921) was a poet and writer who promoted the ideals of the Rose + Croix, and later wrote a history of the group, titled \textit{L’entr’acte idéal} (1903).\footnote{Larmandie, \textit{L’entr’acte idéal}.} This chronicle is a useful early source, though it mainly functions as a highly biased celebration of the Salons. Larmandie’s \textit{Eôraka}, published before the first Rose + Salon was mounted, addresses magical doctrine and principles linked to the group’s foundation, but does not address the visual arts and was never a central document of the group, mainly because Péladan did not publicize or cross-reference to the same extent that he promoted his own
pronouncements.\(^7\) Many of the Rose + Croix’s leaders broke with Péladan over the course of six years in which the Rose + Croix Salons were held, but Larmandie retained a central role in organizing each of the annual exhibitions. While little information on the Salons’ planning and organization remains, several critics are known to have relied upon Larmandie as their contact within the group, especially in the Rose + Croix’s last years.

The wealthy and aristocratic artist/collector Antoine de la Rochefoucauld (1862-1960), though only associated with the Rose + Croix for the first event, provided financial support that was crucial to getting the Rose + Croix off the ground. Publicity surrounding his subsequent break from Péladan brought the Rose + Croix some of its initial notoriety. Rochefoucauld, the only member of the group’s leadership who worked as an artist, was much more supportive of new artistic techniques—most notably Neo-Impressionism—than Péladan was.\(^8\) He certainly played a role in selecting artworks for the first event (where he showed a single work) but he completely split with the Rose + Croix thereafter.

Among the artist exhibitors at the Rose + Croix, Maurice Chabas (1862-1947) showed many works, most of which are now unaccounted for. Myriam de Palma’s dissertation on Chabas is the key source for this little-known artist.\(^9\) She writes of his focus on art’s social mission, his incorporation of theosophical principles, and his later interest in scientific developments, the last influenced by his friendship with astronomer Camille Flammarion.\(^10\) Chabas emphasized

\(^7\) Larmandie, \textit{Eôraka}.


\(^10\) Palma, \textit{Maurice Chabas, peintre et messager spirituel, 1862-1947}, 19, 41.
mystical and mythological themes in his early years, and employed the fairly academic technique
that is seen in his Les Vierges des Falaises (Fig. 1.3). In the titles he gave to works shown at the
Rose + Croix, Chabas made references to the theosophical, scientific, and mystical principles
that he developed more fully in his later art and writings. \(^{11}\)

Pierre-Émile Cornillier (1863-?) remains one of the least-researched of the Rose +
Croix’s core exhibitors. Many of the artworks Cornillier exhibited with the Rose + Croix were
illustrations, which were usually included as part of a series of unspecified, but related
illustrations (i.e. twelve illustrations of the philosophical poems of Victor Hugo in 1893) (Figs.
1.4, 1.5). Cornillier later wrote books on his experiences with mediums and psychics, addressing
the field of hypnotism and the concept of the astral planes. \(^{12}\)

Jean Delville (1867-1953), a Belgian painter who also exhibited with Les Vingt, is one of
the better-known members of the core group. Discussions of Delville and his work often are
included in studies of Les Vingt, Belgian symbolism, and esoteric art and Brendan Cole wrote a
dissertation on Delville in 2000. \(^{13}\) Delville exhibited a range of works at the Rose + Croix, from
idealist paintings like Ange des Splendeurs to his well-known drawing L’idole de la Perversité
(Figs. 1.6, 4.26) After founding a competing group in Belgium in 1896 (Le Salon d’Art

\(^{11}\) For example, Myriam de Palma includes quotes in her work on Chabas from a document identified as: Maurice
Chabas, Quelques pensées. Extraits de carnets, brochure imprimée, vers 1918-1920. Palma, Maurice Chabas,
peintre et messager spirituel, 1862-1947, 19, 27.

\(^{12}\) In La Survivance de l’Ame et Son Évolution Après la Mort, the author’s address is still listed as “21 rue
Guénégaud.” Pierre-Émile Cornillier, La survivance de l’âme et son évolution après la mort: comptes rendus

\(^{13}\) Brendan Cole, “Jean Delville’s l’Esthétique idéaliste: art between nature and the absolute (1887-1906)” (PhD
Idéaliste), Delville stopped participating in the Rose + Croix. His book on idealist art bears comparison to the doctrines of the Rose + Croix.14

André des Gachons (1871-1951), if rarely discussed in scholarship on the Rose + Croix, was one its central contributors. The subject of a recent dissertation by Delphine Durand,15 much of his work survives, since Gachons tended toward graphic works and illustrations, many of which were published—most especially in *Le Livre de Légendes*, a journal led by his brother, Jacques des Gachons. This magazine carried works by several other exhibitors in the group, who thus form a subgroup within Rose + Croix.16 Gachons’ exhibited works include many religious images, such as *La Guillaneu* (Fig. 1.8).

Fernand Khnopff (1858-1921), another of the Rose + Croix’s Belgian participants, is without question its best-known exhibitor, though little of the extensive literature on Khnopff focuses on his association with Péladan’s group. Scholars of Khnopff’s work include Jeffrey Howe, Robert Delevoy, Catherine de Croës, and Gisele Ollinger-Zinque,17 who tend to highlight the artist’s founding role in Les Vingt rather than ties to the Rose + Croix. Khnopff exhibited several unspecified frontispieces and drawings at the Rose + Croix, along with well-known


paintings including *I Lock my Door Upon Myself* (Fig. 1.9), a highly symbolic image that took its inspiration and title from an Anglophone poem by Christina Rossetti (1830-94).

Pinckney Marcius-Simons (1865-1909), like Cornillier, is little-studied and scarcely known, despite his sustained affiliation with the Rose + Croix. Born in the United States, Marcius-Simons worked in Paris. While several of his paintings have recently been sold at auction, they cannot be clearly dated and none now carry titles that can be linked to those of works Marcius-Simons is known to have shown at the Salons. An illustration of one of the works he exhibited there, a portrayal of Joan of Arc (current whereabouts unknown), is, however, extant (Fig. 1.10). One of the best sources on Marcius-Simons remains a contemporaneous article by the critic Fernand Weyl, which includes a discussion of this painter’s preference for landscape, which stemmed from his pantheistic belief that nature could evoke the divine and encourage meditative thought.\(^\text{18}\)

Alphonse Osbert (1857-1939) is one of the most-researched of the Rose + Croix’s French exhibitors. It was while studying with academician Henri Lehmann that Osbert became friendly with Georges Seurat (1859-91) and future Rose + Croix exhibitor Alexandre Séon (1855-1917). The majority of current literature on Osbert has been written by Véronique Dumas,\(^\text{19}\) who describes his work as more evocative and emotional than narrative. Osbert emphasized color over line in paintings that often depict symbolic female figures set in landscapes, as in *Vision* (Fig. 1.11). Though Osbert deviated from many of Péladan’s stated principles, he exhibited at all six Salons. The seriousness of his commitment to the Rose + Croix, first questioned by Osbert’s

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daughter, continues to be debated; a lack of direct evidence or primary sources—apart from his visibility at the Rose + Croix Salons—makes the sincerity of his adherence difficult to judge.  

Armand Point (1861-1932), strongly tied to the Rose + Croix in for the first five years, was born in Algiers but studied in Paris; his work is discussed in Robert Doré’s dissertation and recent book. After a trip to Italy in 1893, he adapted *quattrocentro* techniques to his work, which bore some resemblance to that of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Meditative women were favorite subjects, as in *Ecce Ancilla Domini* and *Au Bord de l’Eurotas* (Fig. 1.12, 1.13). In 1895, Point founded the workshop, Haute-Claire, which produced jewelry, boxes, and other *objets d’art*—none of which were exhibited with the Rose + Croix. After showing in several Salons, Point began to denounce the Rose + Croix’s unnamed “flaws,” and may have quarreled with Osbert, believing that he should be cast out. It was Point, however, who did not exhibit in the final Salon.

Alexandre Séon (1855-1917) was one of the Rose + Croix’s more committed artists, exhibiting almost twice as many works there as any other participant. He is the subject of a chapter by Delphine Montalant in which she ties him to Symbolist painting. Séon studied in Lehmann’s studio, where, as noted above, he befriended Seurat and Osbert. He also worked as an assistant to Puvis de Chavannes (1824-98), who exerted a good deal of influence on his work;


indeed, some contemporaries criticized Séon’s painting as overly reliant on that of Puvis. Séon created many frontispieces for Péladan that were exhibited at the Salons (Fig. 1.14). His paintings often take up mythological themes; stylistically, Séon often punctuated zones of flat, neutral beiges and browns with spots of bright color and highly detailed and illusionistic passages (Fig. 1.15). Although Péladan remained committed to Séon’s art after the Salons ceased, Séon seems to have challenged Péladan’s authority when in 1907, he claimed to have been the actual founder of the idealist movement.

Ville Vallgren (Carl Wilhelm Wallgren) (1855-1940) was a Finnish sculptor who showed with the Rose + Croix. He is not regularly discussed in literature on the group, but Leena Ahtola-Moorhouse has written several articles on his work, as well as an exhibition catalogue. Vallgren, who produced a wide range of works, is well known for his funeral urns, images of women mourning, and couples kissing—some of which were considered derivative of Auguste Rodin (Fig. 1.16).

The Role of the Artist: Conflicting Group Structures

The Rose + Croix was not an organic group that developed out of close collaboration or friendship between the exhibiting artists. Instead, over two hundred artists responded to a preexisting program, submitting and exhibiting works that were variously linked to an ideology


devised by a theoretically inclined writer who was not a visual artist. Any large group is likely to have some less committed members who are not strongly allied to other members or to the group’s key tenets, but even the central exhibitors at the Rose + Croix did not form a cohesive core. The organization’s structure and the fact that its rules were written by the leaders without strong professional or personal ties to the members ensured a divide between the ideologues and the practitioners. The fact that the Rose + Croix was organized, and its principles laid out, by writers (whose goals, understandings of the visual arts, and abilities to effectively discuss and legislate on technique and aesthetic theories varied) underscored its hierarchical nature from the start. Moreover, in order to promote himself and retain nominal control of the Rose + Croix, Péladan made pronouncements (in the form of “rules”) that denigrated the role of the artists—especially one mandate that insisted exhibitors were not members, but merely guests.

One dimension of my consideration of group dynamics within the Rose + Croix derives from Michael P. Farrell’s sociological study of artists’ groups. Examination of Farrell’s notion of the “collaborative circle,” for instance, underscores disconnects between the Rose + Croix’s publicized image and its actual structure. According to Farrell:

A collaborative circle combines the dynamics of a friendship group and a work group. At the core is a set of friends who, over a period of time working together, negotiate a shared vision that guides their work. As the group evolves, the members develop their own rituals and jargon, and each member comes to play an expected role.27

27 Michael P Farrell, Collaborative Circles: Friendship Dynamics & Creative Work (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 7. Much of the creative development occurs within subgroups or coalitions (usually pairs), who then further develop their visions within the context of the whole group. Farrell, Collaborative Circles, 22–23. This process involves a “center coalition” of respected group members, which combines the ideas of the creative pairs to develop a consensus. Farrell, Collaborative Circles, 23–24. Especially in the rebellion phases, a charismatic leader takes on a central role. Farrell, Collaborative Circles, 279. Significantly, in the group’s published literature, Péladan vacillates between depicting the Rose + Croix as a top-down exhibition group and a more unified group, publically displaying a few key aspects of a collaborative circle. In his publications, Péladan retained the role of leader and organizer, but he framed the exhibitions as a collaborative action by a group of seven commanders in his order,
The Rose + Croix cannot be considered a typical artists’ group of the “collaborative circle” mode, due mainly to its lack of “shared vision” and friendly core, but also because of its formality, large size, and lack of dialogue. Consideration of Farrell’s model highlights the fact that the Rose + Croix was not a naturally occurring group with affiliations that grew out of shared interests and goals, but a construct devised by Péladan in the abstract – one that never really jelled, despite his attempts to portray it as a collaborative project propelled by shared concerns.

Around the time of the Rose + Croix’s founding, several new exhibition groups developed in Paris, taking a variety of forms. Some were dedicated to providing display venues for large numbers of independent exhibitors, while smaller, mission-driven collaboratives shared goals and styles and held informal meetings. The Rose + Croix, while promulgating a shared platform, also exhibited works by a large number of eccentric artists, whose themes and styles did not necessarily mesh—either with one another’s production or with Péladan’s taste and ideas. Still, Péladan was wont to imply, in publications and pronouncements, that the group was marked by a level of cooperation and cohesion that did not actually exist.

In contrast to true “collaborative circles,” the Rose + Croix was a fabrication in which roles were assigned, rather than developing naturally and informally, in the manner of Farrell’s
model for artists’ groups. Moreover, a lack of regular meetings at which members might have engaged dialogue and critiques prevented the development of a shared vision, so its platform never evolved from the one Péladan outlined in writing before visual artists (other than the briefly allied Rochefoucauld) joined the Rose + Croix.

Péladan’s publicized description of the group’s structure corresponds to the framework Farrell considers typical of a Collaborative Circle, a group that generally includes a gatekeeper, who finds many of the participants and brings them together; a discontent and narcissistic leader, who directs others; and an executive manager, who markets, organizes, and coordinates effectively. As the Rose + Croix was being formed, the gatekeeper’s role was taken by Antoine de La Rochefoucauld and Péladan clearly took that of the discontent and narcissistic leader. Larmandie emerged as the executive manager, charged with many practical concerns. He

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29 Farrell focuses on groups that developed informally, and specifically addresses the significance of informal roles in the group. Farrell, *Collaborative Circles*, 7, 11. The Rosicrucian principles developed not out of negotiation, but in the form of rules laid out and published by Péladan, which were intended to then attract like-minded artists. The group did not have the sort of regular group meetings, incorporating critique and discussion and developing into a ritual that are essential for a group to be considered a collaborative circle. Farrell, *Collaborative Circles*, 295–296. (The seven commanders must have had some meetings, yet these cannot be considered regular, and did not include the entire group. McIntosh states that the commanders met in Péladan’s apartment on Notre-Dame-des-Champs, where the Sâr wore a monk’s robe decorated with a rose and cross at the chest—yet McIntosh does not qualify how often these meetings occurred, and on the following page, he incorrectly states that the Salons “ran for five years.” Christopher McIntosh, *The Rosicrucians: The History, Mythology, and Rituals of an Esoteric Order* (York Beach, ME: Weiser Books, 1998), 95–96.) For a collaborative group, a shared set of principles or vision is essential—but for a collaborative circle, it is important that this develops out of a process of negotiation and dialogue. Farrell, *Collaborative Circles*, 11. Additionally, the Rose + Croix was immediately focused on collective action—in terms of placing an exhibition before the public—rather than developing a vision together. In contrast, only after they have developed their vision do Farrell’s Collaborative Circles turn toward collective action and impacting the public through a large project. Farrell, *Collaborative Circles*, 17–26.

30 Collaborative circles often meet regularly in the same location, developing rituals such as using a specific table, specific chairs, and having readings or critiques at each meeting. Farrell also differentiates between this type of group and the relationship between mentors and protégés, wherein one older figure seeks to guide younger ones, who may rebel or become disciples, but without the collaboration and negotiated vision. While Collaborative Circles do have a charismatic leader in the rebellion phase, after this phase, creative pair work in the main structural form by which the group members develop the group’s new vision. Farrell, *Collaborative Circles*.

later served as the group’s historian. But while in the beginning and on paper, the Rose + Croix corresponded, in its highest echelons, to Farrell’s cooperative model, in practice Péladan did not relinquish much control or foster collaboration. Routinely insisting upon his own complete authority, Péladan undermined his stated interest in collaboration, and, as the group took shape and Salons were mounted, it became clear that the Rose + Croix existed more as an ad hoc exhibition group than as the ideologically united collaborative Péladan held it to be.

Throughout the course of the Salons, Péladan—depending on what point he wished to stress—variously referred to exhibiting artists as “guests” (when he wished to emphasize his own prominence and ultimate control) or as “members” (when he sought to claim prominent Rose + Croix artists as his own when they exhibited at other venues). In the first instance, he proclaimed, “The theocratic character of the order of the R+C does not in any way involve the artists, and their individuality remains outside of the character of the order. They are only Guests, and as a result in no way united with us from a doctrinal point of view.” With this statement, Péladan clearly sought to distance the artists from his group, framing the Rose + Croix a unified exhibition venue at which all the works were closely tied to the group doctrine. On other occasions, however, it suited Péladan’s purpose to differentiate between mere guests and those he characterized as founding artists or founding members (some foreign artists may even have


34 He differentiated between founding artists and invited artists in a publication for the last salon, when notes that the “les artistes fondateurs et invités” must send the information about their artwork two months before the Salon. Péladan, VIème geste esthétique, 34–35. In his reviews of the Champ de Mars and Champs-Elysées Salons in 1892,
been issued membership cards or badges. Péladan’s theoretical position that the exhibitions would serve as a platform for a curated group of works was never effectively implemented. The art that eventually was shown and the artists who made these works regularly deviated from the Péladan’s conceptions (which he continued to promote through texts), and the Rose + Croix group was, in the end, scarcely a united group at all, and certainly not a collaborative circle of the sort Farrell describes.

Péladan’s tendency to privilege theory over practice and generalized notions over actual artists and production was echoed by Larmandie’s insistence upon the intellectual underpinnings of the Rose + Croix. In his history, Larmandie writes of the impact of five unnamed “intellectuals” who helped hang the second exhibition and became known as “Le 45.” Although Larmandie did not explain the origins of this designation, “Le 45” apparently referred to the fact that the men of letters in question lived at 45 quai Bourbon—though whether their

he highlighted the Rosicrucian artists with the notation: “(R+C).” He wrote that these artists, specifically Henri Martin, Savine, Rambaud, Osbert, Marcellin Desboutin, Point, Aman-Jean, Séon, Bethune, Hodler, Dampt, Vallgren, Charpentier, and Bourdelle, were founding members: “Ce signe: R.+C. signifie que l’artiste est en des membres fondateurs du Salon annuel de la Rose+Croix.” Yet he did not add this notation for other artists who exhibited in 1892, including Rogelio de Egusquiza and Jean-Alexandre Pézieux. Joséphin Péladan, La Rose + Croix: Organe trimestriel de l’Ordre: 1re livraison: Salon des Champs-Élysées; règle pour la geste esthétique de 1893, La rose + croix: organe trimestriel de l’Ordre (Paris: Commanderie de Tiphereth, 1892), 6, 12, 13, 18, 19. Additionally, he referred to Jules du Jardin and Middleleer as “deux chevaliers peintres de la Rose + Croix” in an advertisement for the book L’Art Flamand included within the catalog for the seventh Salon. Péladan, VIème geste esthétique, 29.

35 Jan Toorop, Thorn Prikker, and Roland Holst were reportedly issued some form of insignia or badge making them official members of the Rose + Croix, while Péladan was lecturing in The Hague and Leiden from November 12th to 15th, 1892. Geurt Imanse and John Steen, “Achtergronden van het Symbolisme,” in Kunstenaren der idee. Symbolistische tendenzen in Nederland ca. 1880-1930, ed. Carel Blotkamp (The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij, 1978), 27.

36 Péladan, Salon de la Rose-Croix: règles et monitoires, 10; Péladan, Organe trimestriel de l’Ordre: 1re livraison, 6, 12, 13, 18, 19; Péladan, VIème geste esthétique, 29, 34–35.

37 This Salon required a great deal of work by the volunteers because in the central dome of the Champ-de-Mars they were not allowed to use any nails and had to create interior walls for hanging the artworks.

38 Larmandie, L’entr’acte idéal, 42–45.
cohabitation there came before or after the exhibition is unclear, and their identities remain sketchy. Larmandie refers to them as “The Commander, Maximilian, the Knights Marcel, Albert, and Dominique, the Squire Flavien,” and describes their main pursuit as philosophy; according to his history, the five were not recruited, but rather volunteered their services to Péladan. According to Larmandie, then, the group was intellectual and philosophical at its core, with participating artists at the periphery of decision-making—including exhibition strategies.

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39 In addition to figuring in the history of the cenacle, the address “45 quai Bourbon” also appears in the catalogs. Three artists used 45 quai Bourbon as their address in the catalogs—Gabriel Albinet, Jean Delville, and François Merentier. Their use of this address also makes identification of Albinet and Merentier difficult. Albinet only exhibited one work, a poster for the third salon, while Merentier exhibited at least six works symbolic of the group (such as monograms) (Five works are listed in his written section, but only two of these are numbered. The other works correspond three works and one additional piece are illustrated. The spelling varies between the written and illustrated portions of the catalog—in the written section, his name is spelled “Merentier,” whereas it is spelled as “Mérintier” in the illustrated portion of the 1893 catalog.) Péladan, *Ile Geste esthétique*, XVII, 1, 67, 74, 97.

Beaufils addresses the fact that these three figures utilize this address, noting that their use of this address may have been utilitarian, rather than serving to tie these artists, especially Delville, to the cenacle. Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)*, 265.

40 Larmandie, *L’entr’acte idéal*, 42–45. This group apparently included three members of the Bazalgette family, who corresponded to the intellectual and religious aspects of Le 45—Albert, Léon, and Maurice. According to Lucy Bazalgette, an unspecified note written by Albert Bazalgette in 1941 confirms the roles of these figures: “…Serai-je le dernier vétérain de cette phalange où s’engagea la tribu Bazalgette, formée de Léon, Maurice, et moi?…” Albert Bazalgette, Note. 1941. Quoted in Lucy Bazalgette, “Un Chevalier Rose-Croix: Maurice Bazalgette (1861-1922),” *Revue des études péladanes: organe officiel de la Société Josephin Péladan*, no. 8–9 (1977): 22. Yet, it is not clear which figures were attached to which pseudonyms—if all these three brothers were the same rank, they could represent “the Knights Marcel, Albert, and Dominique. Larmandie, *L’entr’acte idéal*, 42–45. However, Beaufils argues that Chevalier Albert is “without a doubt” Albert Fleury. Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)*, 265.

Maurice Bazalgette was most likely a chevalier, since Péladan titled him “Chevalier” in an invitation to his wedding dating from Jan 11, 1896. Péladan specifically tied Maurice to the salons, since he addressed a published letter to him, in which he explained his reasons for ending the Salons, arguing that he was moving further toward theater. In addition to Maurice’s ties to the group, Albert Bazalgette was associated with Péladan’s planned “une école d’art théâtral,” which was to be focused on idealist theatre. Specifically, Albert played the role of “Sinnakirib” at the exhibition of the play “Babylon” at the second Salon—a role that is attributed to a member of the Order in notices for the play. Bazalgette, “Revue des études péladanes,” 18–19.
Group Dynamics in the Context of other Alternative Venues

In the belief that the juries of other emergent exhibitions—the Salons of the Champ de Mars and the Champs-Elysées—were “hostile to the abstract, religious, or simply artistic idea,” Péladan devised the Salons of the Rose + Croix as oppositional. Eventually, he declared the other Salons entirely dead and classified the Indépendants as merely exhibitionistic. Nonetheless, Péladan continued to review the Champ de Mars and the Champs-Elysées Salons.

As several art historians note, artists who exhibited at the Rose + Croix tended to show at other venues, as well, despite Péladan’s disdain for these competing salons. Pincus-Witten, for instance, writes: “It must be remembered that while the Rose + Croix painters sent their work to the Sâr’s manifestation, they were also committed to the Salon des Indépendants as well as to an enlarging group of private picture dealers.” While he does not address the larger significance of these artists’ ties to other associations, both Geneviève Lacambre and Sarah Blythe consider the broader issue of group development at the fin de siècle. Lacambre ties the rise of new groups in

41 “Le jury du Champ de Mars est aussi hostile à l’idée abstraite, religieuse ou simplement artistique que celui des Champs-Elysées.” Péladan, Salon de la Rose-Croix: règles et monitoires, 25.

42 “Les salons-bazars, les salons éclatiques mourront comme le journal est mort en tant que tribune et dans un avenir prochain, on ne verra plus que des salons doctrinaires comme la Rose-Croix ou simplement exhibitionnistes comme les Indépendants.” Joséphin Péladan, Bulletin mensuel de l’ordre de la Rose + Croix du Temple et du Graal, contenant la critique des trois salons, Rose + Croix, Champ-de-Mars, Champs-Elysées, 2 (Beauvais: Imp. Professionnelle, 1895), 48.

43 Blythe states that Osbert and other Rosicrucian artists exhibited at other venues. Yet, she does not address this in depth, simply noting that Rosicrucian exhibited at the official salons, with the Nabis, at the Bing gallery, and at events held by L’Art et la Vie and La Plume, but she mentions only one specific work—Osbert’s Vision. Blythe, “Promising Pictures,” 82–83.

44 Robert Pincus-Witten, Les Salons de la Rose + Croix, 1892-1897 (London: Piccadilly Gallery, 1968), 4. In his published dissertation, Pincus-Witten only briefly mentions that there is overlap between the Rose + Croix and groups like the Indépendants, Les XX, and Pour l’Art, specifically mentioning the fact that Osbert, Bernard, Filiger, and Séon and several other artists exhibited with the Indépendants. Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 45–46, 110.
Paris and Brussels in the 1880s and 1890s to the “new tendencies” that arose at this time, especially Symbolism, a trend, she argues that could only have developed in the context of alternative exhibition venues like the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts, the Indépendants, Les Vingt, la Libre Esthétique, and the exhibitions at the Barc de Boutteville, as well as the Rose + Croix.  

Blythe writes that a number of exhibition groups, collaborative artistic circles, independent galleries, and temporary exhibitions arose at the end of the nineteenth century, creating what she describes as a “decentralized artistic system that was fully in effect in the 1890s and speaks to the pervasiveness of the temporary exhibitions themselves—spaces where, for the most part, hitherto unknown works of art were presented together for a limited time under some unifying premise.” She notes that many of the artists who aligned themselves with associations and collaboratives did not fully accept or fall in line with goals outlined by group leaders, and argues that even those circles that sought to develop and promote a shared identity staged exhibitions that “tended to be more an occasion to simply show work—a service the Salons had previously provided—rather than the opportunity to posit a thesis about the state or direction of art.”

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47 Blythe, “Promising Pictures,” 69–70. When she discusses the Rose + Croix specifically, Blythe raises some key issues, but unfortunately, they are not the focus of her work, so she does not explore these issues in detail. Thus, while she devotes twenty-one pages to the group, the only artist she discusses is Alphonse Osbert. Blythe, “Promising Pictures,” 70–91.

48 Blythe, “Promising Pictures,” 68.
Paul Aron describes the vital role played by groups like Les Vingt, L’Essor, and La Libre Esthétique in Brussels, all of which organized exhibits that helped artists gain renown and sell their works,⁴⁹ and Valentina Anker argues that the majority of Belgian and Swiss artists who participated in Rose + Cross Salons did so with the aim of tapping the French market.⁵⁰ That clearly was a motivation for Ferdinand Hodler who showed at just one Rose + Croix event, but remarked afterward, “Two more exhibitions like this and I shall be seriously under way in Paris, solidly enough to make me independent of Switzerland.”⁵¹

Although many of those who exhibited with the Rose + Croix also showed at the Salon des Indépendants (Osbert’s ties to that group were especially close⁵²), Péladan did not make public appraisals of those shows. Instead, he chose to focus on the juried salons of the Champ de Mars and the Champs-Elysées, and saw his group as part of a triad with them. This was a view some critics shared, though an undated caricature from the founder’s archives shows the Rose + Croix in third place among the three exhibitions, portraying Péladan in a tutu (Fig. 2.5).⁵³

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⁵³ Newspaper Clipping: “Les Trois Salons.” Arsenal, Ms 13412, fol. 7.
Perhaps Péladan overlooked the Indépendants because it, like the Rose + Croix, was an unjuried exhibition society, and thus perceived by him as a competitor. Publicity materials for the Rose + Croix not only promoted it as unjuried, but derided the jury system that had reigned in French exhibitions since one had been set up in the mid-18th century to vet entries to the state-sponsored Salon. Nonetheless, Péladan’s publications concurrently stress the importance of selectivity when organizing the Rose + Croix Salons, where works were ostensibly admitted on the basis of their compatibility with the tenets Péladan outlined and promoted. Thus, while the Salons technically were unjuried, works were accepted or rejected by the nonartists of Péladan’s inner advisory circle. Unlike the academicians who traditionally approved or denied entry to submissions to the official Salon, the Rose + Croix’s unofficial “jury” were less concerned with technical merit than with a work’s perceived beauty, nobility, and lyricism.

By judging according to their compliance (or noncompliance) with these vague and subjective ideals, while also publicizing a long list of specific rejected subjects (e.g., landscapes, military paintings, still lifes, portraits, etc.), the Rose + Croix privileged subject matter over technique. Indeed, Péladan’s rules specifically stated that works of imperfect execution might find favor if they depicted welcome subjects.

54 For more on the demise of the Salon, which occurred in the 1880s, see Mainardi, *The End of the Salon*.
Péladan’s statements regarding the extent to which artists should participate in or be aligned with other exhibitions varied. He allowed that artists exhibiting at Rose + Croix Salons might also exhibit at other venues, but demanded that those who sought inclusion in his Salons send at least one work that had been specially made for the Rose + Croix and was previously unexhibited. Despite this directive, several of the Salons’ exhibitors never debuted a work at the Rose + Croix.  

Rather than ignoring the fact that Rose + Croix exhibitors routinely showed in other exhibition venues, Péladan saw this as accruing prestige for his group; in his reviews of the Champ de Mars and Elysées salons, he designated artists who had also shown works his group with the notation “(R+C).” Thus, despite the fact that he often characterized the Rose + Croix as decidedly different from all other groups, he highlighted “his” artists’ presence at significant, if competing, exhibitions.

In addition to showing at the Champ de Mars and Champs Elysées shows, several Rose + Croix exhibitors crossed over to the Indépendants. Many, too, showed works at Les Vingt in Brussels, which held a series of ten annual exhibitions beginning (well in advance of the Rose + Croix) in 1884. Unlike the Rose + Croix, Les Vingt was founded by a group of artists and led by rotating committees in order to avoid stagnation. Les Vingt, however, had a theorizing leader, Octave Maus (1856-1919), who, like Péladan, did not rotate and was not an artist. Maus was a

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57 For example, Antoinette de Guerre only exhibited one work, a medallion that Péladan had previously published. Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918), 271.

58 Péladan, Organe trimestriel de l’Ordre: 1re livraison, 6.

59 Among the positions that rotated were the three members who formed the annual organizing committee. This committee was in charge of planning exhibits, but each artist’s location was chosen randomly and the artists helped hang their own works.
lawyer and critic whose desire to direct Les Vingt created tensions within the group and eventually led to its disbanding, but the degree to which he controlled Les Vingt never approached the level of Péladan’s power within the Rose + Croix.

Several of those who exhibited with the Rose + Croix also showed with The Painters/Artists of the Soul, a small and short-lived organization that staged its first exhibition at the Bodinière Theater in December 1894 and another from February to March 1896. Art critic Gustave Soulier organized the Painters of the Soul with an emphasis on stylistic unity and the group’s participating artists included Osbert, Séon, Point, Gachons, Aman-Jean, Jean Dampt, Henri Martin, Carlos Schwabe, and Vallgren. Several scholars tie the Painters of the Soul agenda to Péladan’s principles, and Dumas writes that affiliates of both groups were “subjugated by the esoteric verbiage of the Rose+Croix.” She holds that its perceived links to Rose + Croix led to the Painters of the Soul’s critical castigation.

According to Susan M. Canning, Les Vingt also suffered from power struggles deriving from Maus’ increasing power and emphasis on French works, rather than nationalistic Belgian art. Although many members, including Van Rysselberghe, supported Maus’ French emphasis, James Ensor was particularly opposed to it. This friction and Maus’ desire for more power were factors in the eventual disbanding of the group and founding of La Libre Esthétique, which was more explicitly under Maus’ control. Susan M. Canning, “Soyons Nous: Les XX and the Cultural Discourse of the Belgian Avant-Garde,” in Les XX and the Belgian Avant-Garde: Prints, Drawings, and Books, Ca. 1890, ed. Stephen H Goddard, Jane Block, and Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art (Lawrence, KS: Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 1992), 38–39.

They were referred to as the Artists of the Soul in 1894 and the Painters of the Soul in 1896. Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond, Les peintres de l’âme: le symbolisme idealiste en France (Ghent; Antwerp: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon; Pandora, 1999), 189.

Dumas, Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert, 64.


“…personnalités douées, mais subjuguées par le verbiage ésotérique des Rose+Croix.” Dumas, Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert, 20–21.

A regular contributor in the Rose + Croix’s early years, Belgian artist Jean Delville—as noted above—ceased to show there once he founded Le Salon d’Art Idéaliste in 1896, and organized three shows under its auspices (the last in 1898). Sébastien Clerbois notes that while Delville’s idealist exhibitions are often presumed to be descendants of the Rose + Croix, Péladan in fact considered this group to be in competition with his own.\(^66\) Le Salon d’Art Idéaliste drew support from the Parisian group and some participants stopped exhibiting at the Rose + Croix once they affiliated with Delville. Although Pincus-Witten downplays divides between the two groups, writing that “Delville became Péladan’s voice, arranging idealist exhibitions in 1896 and after based on the format established by Péladan when the latter’s had ceased to exist,”\(^67\) the groups overlapped (chronologically and in terms of their participants), and their interrelationship was complex than he allows. Janine Lévy-Mery more recently has suggested not only that Péladan was annoyed by Delville’s founding of a competing salon, but that Delville’s group may have played a role in Péladan’s decision to end the Salons of the Rose + Croix.\(^68\)

Point’s founding of Haute-Claire was somewhat different, since Haute-Claire, a workshop rather than an exhibiting organization, did not compete directly with the Rose + Croix. Nonetheless, Point, like Delville, stopped showing at Péladan’s Salons once he had established his own group—one that, according to a contemporary, was “a new association of artists and craftsmen desirous of establishing a fixed style—a tradition—in industrial art. Jewelry,

\(^66\) Clerbois identifies this group as the reason Péladan rails against Belgian abuses in the final catalog. Clerbois, L’ésotérisme et le symbolisme belge, 114.

\(^67\) Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 46.

\(^68\) Lévy-Mery also notes other possibilities for the end of the events, addressing Larmandie’s statement that the Salons were ending at a time when they had greatly influenced art, but also noting Péladan’s boredom and his realization that the exhibited works were monotonous. Lévy-Mery, “Peladan, l’ésotérisme et les peintres des salons Rose-Croix,” 107–108.
enameling, sculpture, binding, furniture-making and pottery—all these branches... [were] undertaken by the Haute-Claire society."69 Although Péladan apparently visited Haute-Claire’s studio in Marlotte often,70 some scholars believe the workshop’s founding divided Point from the Rose + Croix.71 This view seems to be borne out by the fact that while Point no longer showed at Péladan’s Salons, he exhibited works at other venues in the later ‘90s—including Delville’s idealist salon of 1898.72

One very short-lived group of two artists bears comparison to the Rose + Croix, since its organizer, Émile Bernard (1868-1941), laid out a clear list of rules, as Péladan had. Before exhibiting with the Rose + Croix, Bernard joined forces with Belgian painter Eugène Boch (1855-1941) to form the Association des Anonymes, a “group” that existed for just two months and never mounted an exhibition. In a letter to Émile Schuffenecker, dated January 1891,73


71 Pincus-Witten and Dumas both note the dispute with Osbert and address the fact that Point might have been busy with Haute-Claire. Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 191–192; Dumas, “Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et les Salons de la Rose+Croix,” 43.

72 K., “Brussels,” 68.

73 The timing of this letter is significant since it predates the legal founding of the Rose + Croix, but post-dates Péladan’s first publications regarding the group, including his article in L’Initiation in June of the previous year. Dora refers to this group as predating the Rose + Croix, but given Bernard’s reference to the esoteric group, he must have known of and had already associated himself with the Rose + Croix when he wrote this letter. Henri Dorra writes that Association prefigures the Rose + Croix: “His formulation of rules for a projected ‘Association des Anonymes’ precedes, and in some ways heralds that of Péladan’s first Rose-Croix exhibition.” Henri Dorra, “Extrats de la Correspondance d’Emile Bernard des Débuts a la Rose-Croix (1876-1892),” Gazette des Beaux-Arts 96 (September 1980): 241. Yet, Bernard’s reference to his membership in an esoteric group in this letter implies that he was already aware of and associated with Péladan’s group—even though the official notification of the founding of the society was not published until August 23. Although Péladan did not formally found the group until August 1891, he published three mandates in May 1890 and a founding statement in June 1890. Joséphin Péladan, “9256,” Petites Affiches: Journal Général d’Affiches; Annonces Judiciaires, Légales et avis Divers, no. 235 (August 23, 1891): 6; Péladan, Le Salon de Joséphin Péladan (9ème année): Salon national et salon Jullian, suivi de trois mandements de la RoseCroix catholique à l’Aristie; Péladan, “Ordre de la Rose-Croix K.—Dé mission de Joséphine
Bernard set forth the association’s rules, which are decidedly different from those governing the Rose + Croix (which were being developed simultaneously). Bernard wrote:

**Association of the Anonymous**
The goal of the association is art for art.
1. No popularity, no jealousies, no dishonest plagiarism
   …
   Here each member remains absolutely unknown, he abdicates all vanity, all glory, he renounces his personality. To carry his rock to the edifice as a whole which will be the synthesis of the efforts of each.
2. Abstention from individual literary criticism.
   …
   All works judged mediocre unanimously will be expelled
All freedom to exhibit outside of the group is left to each member, but on the condition that he remains unidentified and signs “Anonymous” that is to say “a member of the Anonymous.” Otherwise it becomes detrimental to his confederates.
   …
   I regret that you cannot be one of us, as you are already known and need popularity to live. But have faith that this makes me no less a colleague of yours or of the artists of the esoteric group.  
   …
   No vain glory, no commerce, no popularity.

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Péladan.—Fondation de l’Artistie (R+C+C).—Péladan, légat catholique romain auprès de l’Initiation.” Additionally, Bernard appears on the handwritten “First list of artists” associated with the group, dated to August 1891. Joséphine Péladan. First List. 1891. August. Arsenal, Ms 13205, fol. 584.


75 “Association des anonymes /Le but de l’association est l’art pour l’art. /1° Pas de popularité, pas de jalousies, pas de plagiats malhonnêtes. /En effet; que résulte-t-il des ordinaires expositions de groupe, des discussions pour le succès, des intrigues auprès de la critique? Des dissensions intestines nuisibles à l’intérêt de tous en particulier et ainsi à l’art. / Ici chaque membre reste absolument inconnu, il abdique toute vanité, toute gloire, il renonce à sa personnalité. Pour apporter sa pierre à l’ensemble de l’édifice qui sera la synthèse des efforts de [l’ensemble: mot rayé] chacun. /2° Abstention de la critique littéraire individuelle. /3° Synthèse des tendances. /Sont admis tous ceux dont les efforts tendent vers un idéal commun et qui ne sont pas encore connus c’est-à-dire qui ne peuvent pas être reconnus par le public. /Règles/Incognito absolu /-Les décisions dépendent de la majorité /Expulsion /-Ceux qui par les agissements condamnés d’avance auront enfreint à la loyauté de leur promesse /-Ceux dont les tendances deviendront contraires à l’idéal commun /Divers /Toute œuvre jugée mediocre à l’unanimité sera expulsée /Toute liberté d’exposition hors le groupe est laissée à chaque membre, mais à condition qu’il garde l’incognito et signe un anonyme c’est-à-dire un membre des Anonymes. Autrement il serait préjudiciable à ses confrères en se produisant à leur détriment. /Comme vous le voyez c’est l’art pour l’art et rien de plus, comme les glorieux artistes qui firent les cathédrales et n’aimèrent que l’art. Nous appelons à notre groupe en cette époque d’ambitions à toute vapeur et de
Like Péladan, Bernard would have allowed “his” artists to show at other venues, and believed that simultaneously aligning with multiple groups was possible. Noting that he remained a co-disciple of Schuffenecker and the Rose + Croix even as he embraced the “Association des Anonymes,” Bernard preached unity over division. His rejection of economic motivation, personal aggrandizement, and popular acclaim was however, at odds with Péladan’s goals for himself and the Rose + Croix.76

While Jean da Silva posits a strong connection between the Rose + Croix and the exhibitions of the *Peintres impressionistes et symbolistes* staged at the Barc de Boutteville

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76 Notably, the fact that this framework conflicts with an artist’s ability to earn a living as a painter led to the disbanding of this group. In February 13, Bernard wrote to Boch that Maurice Denis refused to join the group because he needed to sell works in order to live. “J’ai reçu la visite de Denis à qui j’avais mandé un rendez-vous. Nous avons naturellement parlé du projet. Après diverses objections que j’ai assez facilement vaincues par des arguments favorables je l’ai vu pencher un peu de mon côté; finalement je croyais qu’il allait dire oui quand il a objecté qu’il a besoin de vivre et pour cela de vendre et que cela semble porter préjudices à la vente puisque l’on ne se fait pas connaître.” Letter from Bernard to Boch, February 13, 1891. McWilliam, Harscoët-Maire, and Welsh-Ovcharov, *Émile Bernard: les lettres d’un artiste*, 132–130.
gallery in the 1890s, Véronique Dumas highlights the theoretical disagreements between Péladan and Maurice Denis (1870-1943). Denis, who wrote the introduction to the catalogue for the Barc de Boutteville’s 1895 exhibition of *Peintres impressionistes et symbolistes* did not share Péladan’s disdain for Impressionism and, generally speaking, the Barc de Boutteville’s exhibits were much more inclusive than those of the Rose + Croix.

The Rose + Croix arose at the same time as many other artists’ groups and exhibition venues, and these associations provide an important context for studying the anomalous structure and dynamics of Péladan’s organization and Salons. Although multiple versions of Péladan’s mandates and the variations between the Rose + Croix’s publicized structure and the actual practices make it difficult to analyze the group dynamics, comparisons to other groups demonstrate that despite Péladan’s attempts to create an artists’ organization united around his platform, the lack of shared development or doctrinal input from the artists he recruited doomed his project. Despite the leadership’s occasional attempts to tie the artists closely to the platform and create a more unified structure, the exhibitors generally functioned (in Péladan’s own assessment) as guests rather than committed members. Finally, in addition to these issues, schisms between the literary leadership and the visual artists and the lack of personal connections...

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78 In addition to these ties to contemporaneous groups, in the twentieth century, two groups sought to revive the salons of the Rose + Croix, framing their events as descendants of those created by Péladan. The Expositions de la Rosace group resurrected some of Péladan’s ideas, holding four salons between 1909 and 1913, which included works by Armand Point and Alexandre Séon. According to Beaufils, these salons were organized by Frère Angel. Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)*, 398–399. Later, Émile Dantinne (1884-1969), who also viewed himself as the continuer of Péladan’s mission, named himself Sâr Hieronymus and attempted to reinstate the movement. In this way, he built on claims that on frequent visits to Brussels, Péladan had organized Rosicrucian salons in the Maison d’Art, including works by Point, Delville, de Regoyos. Joël Goffin, *Le secret de Bruges-la-Morte*, 2011, 67–68, [http://bruges-la-morte.net/wp-content/uploads/Le-secret-de-Bruges-la-Morte.pdf](http://bruges-la-morte.net/wp-content/uploads/Le-secret-de-Bruges-la-Morte.pdf).
between the exhibitors highlight the fact that this exhibition group lacked the collaborative, committed dynamics that characterized many contemporaneous artists’ associations.
Chapter 2: Dynamics and Divisions: Statistics, Critical Responses, and Leadership Roles

With a large exhibition group like the Rose + Croix, scholarly considerations of the key themes, motives, and dynamics are often based on unspecified, inconsistently-applied, or anecdotal considerations of which members comprised the central core. Additionally, with a widely varied group, where some members are well-known but others have not been identified, the dearth of information on some key (but understudied) members often plays an important role in determining which participants are highlighted. With over two hundred exhibitors, no study of the Rose + Croix can adequately address all of the participants, so determining which artists played key roles in the group allows me to determine the themes, styles, and subjects exhibited by the central artists. In addition to the sheer size of the group, the exhibitors were not all equally affiliated with it. Rather, contemporary critics associated these exhibitors with the Rose + Croix to varying degrees and the participants expressed different levels of commitment to the Salons. In this chapter, I lay out my method of statistical analysis, proving that ten artists were the group’s central exhibitors.

Just as this analysis divides the central exhibitors from the other participants, statements by several key critics reveal a variety of other divisions within the group and highlight its unusual dynamics. Additionally, shortly after the first event, a significant conflict split the group’s commanders, showing that these divisions permeated the entire group. At least one leader left the Rose + Croix at this point, while others decamped in later years, complicating the continuously evolving leadership model with their defections.

Statistically Speaking: Critical Reviews, Duration, and Intensity

The artists exhibiting with the Rose + Croix demonstrated different levels of attachment to the group and their commitment varied both in its duration and in terms of the quantity of
artworks that an artist exhibited. Including the historical exhibitors, as many as 227 artists showed works at the Salons of the Rose + Croix. Despite this large number of participants, 150 showed with the group only once and another thirty-three exhibited at just two Salons (See Table 4). The quantity of artworks they showed also varied. Moreover, contemporary critics viewed the artists as representative of the Rose + Croix to varying degrees. Considering the duration and intensity of an artist’s commitment, as well as the extent to which critics associated him with the group reveals some divergences between the artists who were most closely connected to Rose + Croix at the time and those who have been featured in scholarship on the group. I argue that ten central members showed a long-term commitment to the Salons, exhibited a large number of works, and were the most-often referenced in contemporary Salon reviews (See Tables 1, 2).

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1 For an explanation of the historical exhibitors, see page 1.

2 Artworks were exhibited under 228 different names, but some of these names are pseudonyms and at least one artist exhibited under two different names (Jean de Caldain/Raymond Marchand). Additionally, one work was exhibited in 1893 without a name—but this appears to be a case where the artist exhibited several works and the name was merely omitted for submission, so I do not consider this a work by a different artist. If this artist was not an additional exhibitor and this was the only instance of an artist exhibiting under two names, then 227 artists exhibited—including the historical exhibitors.

3 In these tables and throughout this dissertation, I utilize seven catalogs published by the Rose + Croix, including: one illustrated and one written version from 1892; a single catalog from 1893 that includes illustrations, a written section, and an attached supplemental addendum; and un-illustrated versions from each of the other four years. Joséphine Péladan, Catalogue du Salon de la Rose-Croix: 10 mars 1892-10 avril 1892, Galeries Durand-Ruel (Paris: Galerie Durand-Ruel, 1892); Péladan, Catalogue du Salon de la Rose-Croix; Péladan, Ie Geste esthétique; Péladan, Troisième salon: catalogue; Péladan, Le catalogue du IVe Salon; Joséphine Péladan, Salon de la Rose + Croix: Galerie des Arts réunis: Catalogue des œuvres exposées (Paris: Léopold Verger, 1896); Péladan, VIème geste esthétique. Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond has also referenced the presence of an eighth catalog (a third version from 1892), but neither he nor I is aware of the current location of this document. Jumeau-Lafond, email message to the author, August 3, 2013. Additionally, this eighth catalog most likely includes fewer artworks than the other written version from 1892 (published by Warmont), since Jumeau-Lafond cites Schwabe’s artworks as numbers 116-119, whereas in the Warmont catalog, the artist’s contributions are numbered from 136-142. Jumeau-Lafond, Carlos Schwabe, 240 n23; Péladan, Catalogue du Salon de la Rose-Croix, 30. I do not include works that were not listed in the catalogs, even if they are noted in reviews or other documents. These reviews rarely include enough detail and often include inaccuracies. I do not include the other artists who were listed as exhibitors by Larmandie (but without specific years or titles) or by other scholars (but without adequate documentation). Specifically, Larmandie adds Agache, Compton, Duverney, Granier, Lel, Mellerio, and J. Rignard. Larmandie, L’entr’acte idéal, 173–175. Sébastien Clerbois argues that two artists were added to the program for 1894 at the last minute—Auguste Levêque and Arthur Craco—but while Levêque is included in the catalog, Craco is not, and Clerbois does not cite an
These ten exhibitors were the only artists who exhibited at least half of the Salons, showed a minimum of ten total works, and were referred to in at least fifteen of fifty contemporary reviews of the Salon. These ten central artists were: Chabas, Cornillier, Delville, Gachons, Khnopff, Marcius-Simons, Osbert, Point, Séon, and Ville Vallgren. This account of the most representative figures includes a variety of lesser-known artists, who are rarely discussed in scholarship on the Rose + Croix. Some of these artists have been the subject of recent monographs, including Chabas and Vallgren, while others remain understudied, like Gachons, Cornillier, and Marcius-Simons. Cornillier exhibited at every event, but is rarely discussed in literature on the group; Pincus-Witten devotes only two paragraphs to Cornillier, despite the fact that this artist exhibited the third-highest total number of works. These figures were more central, for instance, than Edmond Aman-Jean—who only exhibited at the first two exhibitions of the Rose + Croix, but is often discussed as a central figure.

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4 These specific cut-offs have been chosen because they generally exclude many of the same artists. In comparing the artists who exhibited most often, showed the most works, and were included in the most reviews, these three marks tend to include most of the same artists. Forty-two artists meet at least one of these qualifications, but only twenty-three meet two criteria. For those artists who meet two, but not three of these criteria, Maurin only exhibited seven works at the Salons, Aman-Jean only exhibited at two of the events, and the artworks of Moreau-Neret, Egusquiza, Ricaud, George-Arthur Jacquin, Marquest de Vasselot, Edgar Maxence, Duthoit, Couty, LaLyre, and Rosencrantz were only noted in between two and ten of fifty contemporary reviews. These artists made significant contributions to the Salons and their works will be considered throughout this dissertation, but due to the lack of contemporary recognition of their participation at the events, they cannot be considered among the most representative exhibitors.


6 Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 138–139.

7 For example, Michele Facos discuses only Point and Aman-Jean as key figures and Jean da Silva identifies Point, Séon, and Aman-Jean. Facos, Symbolist Art in Context, 175; Silva, Le Salon de la Rose Croix, 55.
My statistical method expands on Larmandie’s early account of the events as well as Pincus-Witten’s table of the participants. Larmandie published a list of all of the exhibitors in *L’entra’acte idéal*. However, he did not address how often each artist exhibited and both added artists who were never listed in the official catalogs and omitted some known participants. In his dissertation on the group, Pincus-Witten appends a table of all the artists who exhibited at the Salons and the years in which they participated, contributing greatly to scholarly knowledge regarding which artists were most involved with the group. Yet, he does not include the number of artworks exhibited by each artist and, like Larmandie, he elides some of those who exhibited. Building on Larmandie’s work, Pincus-Witten lists 196 artists, including three anonymous figures that were not listed in the catalogs. Due to the vagaries of Larmandie’s list, I exclude those artists whose names were included in it but not in the catalogs. I have also

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10 For example, Pincus-Witten only lists the female exhibitors under their pseudonyms and elides Léon-Charles de La Barre Duparcq, whose submission was illustrated but not included in the written catalog in 1892. Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*, 217–223; Péladan, *Catalogue du Salon de la Rose-Croix*, 60.

11 He also notes the presence of thirty-five Old Masters—or historical exhibitors—in 1893, which would bring his complete total to 231 (although he does not include these artists in his list). Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*, 217. Problematically, he includes the late Eugène Delacroix in his list (even though Delacroix is more appropriately categorized as a historical exhibitor since he died in 1863), but does not include Gustave Déloye. Déloye was still alive at the time of the exhibitions, but his *La Gloire couronnant Th. Gautier* from 1867 was exhibited by Judith Gauthier. I categorize both Delacroix and Déloye as historical exhibitors, since neither artist submitted his own work to the Rose + Croix. I exclude Larmandie’s additions and do not include any anonymous figures—a term that Pincus-Witten applies to the exhibited artworks which were illustrated without a name cited. I believe these were merely typographical omissions of the names of some of the artists who exhibited several works, so the names were not elided in order to keep the artists anonymous.

included data on artists exhibiting under pseudonyms. Additionally, I collate the data into tables on the levels of commitment, duration, and critical response, using statistics to reveal which ten artists were central members in terms of both their own attachment and how representative of the group they were to contemporary critics (Tables 1, 2, 3, 4).

Scholarly accounts vary in regards to which artists were central members of the Rose + Croix. For example, Pincus-Witten refers to Séon, Osbert, and Point as the figures who were most representative of “the hard-core Rosicrucian style,” yet he occasionally situates other artists as central figures.13 For example, he claims that the first (handwritten) list that Péladan wrote of proposed exhibitors (which includes neither Point nor Séon) covers the “nucleus group” in collaboration and style.14 Additionally, Pincus-Witten occasionally classifies artists who rarely exhibited as equally tied to the group, writing: “Paradoxically, the adjective ‘Rosicrucian’ may now meaningfully be applied to an early Bernard or Filiger as it equally stigmatizes a vast body of popular and sentimental art.”15 But, since Bernard only exhibited once and Filiger showed twice, these artists must be considered less committed to the Rose + Croix than more regular contributors. Jean da Silva argues for a slightly different core group than Pincus-Witten’s,


14 Péladan’s original list of hoped for exhibitors, from August 1891, in the Bibliothèque Arsenal lists: “Aman Jean/ Henri Martin/ William Lee/ Marcellin Desboutin/ André Desboutin/ R. de Egusquiza/ Hodler/ Point/ Séon/ Osbert/ Schwabe/ Dampt/ Anquetin/ Fauche/ Marcel Mangin/ Monchablon/ de la Perche Boyer/ Lapiere/ de la Barre Duparc/ Maurice Denis/ Filiger/ Odilon Redon/ Schuffenecker/ Emile Bernard/ Gary de Lacrozre/ Antoine de Larochefoucald.” Joséphin Péladan. First List. 1891. August. Arsenal, Ms 13205, fol. 584. Problematically, Pincus-Witten notes that these are not all the artists who exhibited and many of these artists never exhibited, yet he argues that the list covers “…the nucleus group either in terms of collaboration or in terms of stylistic direction.” Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*, 93.

writing that the artists closest to Péladan were Point, Séon, and Aman-Jean. In contrast, Michelle Facos refers to Aman-Jean and Point as “two of the Rose + Croix’s most active participants”—even though Aman-Jean only participated in the first two Salons. According to Beaufils, the regular exhibitors of the R+C were: “Point, Séon, Osbert, Aman-Jean, Chabas,” Cornillier, and Khnopff. On the other hand, Blumstein refers to Osbert, Point, Séon, Delville, and Khnopff as the most faithful exhibitors. Geneviève Lacambre lists a variety of artists who participated in the Salons, but argues that only three artists “remained faithful” to Péladan: Chabas, Séon, and Osbert. While Pincus-Witten, Silva, Beaufils, Blumstein, and Lacambre all consider Séon central, these scholars diverge in terms of the place of Aman-Jean, Chabas, Cornillier, Delville, Khnopff, Point, and Osbert.

While Beaufils refers to Séon as the most representative and mentions that the artist exhibited at least fifty-three works, a variety of scholars do not address their reasons for adding or removing specific artists from their lists. Additionally, although the number of works Séon exhibited plays a role for Beaufils, he does not consider the total number of works shown by other artists or rank the exhibitors based on the quantity of works they sent. Lacambre most

16 Silva, *Le Salon de la Rose Croix*, 55. He also notes that Péladan’s choices were tied to the 1891 Champ de Mars Salon, where Péladan also emphasized the works of Osbert and Hodler. Silva, *Le Salon de la Rose Croix*, 56.


18 Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)*, 271.


21 Beaufils’ accounting method is unclear—he focuses on the final Salon alone in this section, which may account for his total count being much lower that Séon’s final total, but then, his total for the final Salon is too high. These numbers often diverge though, because sometimes the artists exhibited multiple works under one number, works were unnumbered in the catalog, or, in the first two years, some were included as illustrations but were not listed in the written catalog. Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)*, 313.
likely removes Point from her list because of the fact that the artist did not exhibit at the final Salon, but she does not state this, and she does not choose to remove Séon, even though he did not participate in the third event. Lacambre accurately states that Osbert and Chabas were faithful, because they did exhibit every year, but Séon did not do so and Cornillier showed works at all six Salons—but he is not included in Lacambre’s list. While all of these scholars utilize statistical considerations in addressing the central figures, they apply this method loosely, rather than analyzing the entire group.

These scholarly arguments reveal a consistent emphasis on commitment and duration in discussing the Rose + Croix, but they show the need for more accurate and complete data in order to add detail and correct errors and variations. The number of events at which an artist exhibited is an important component in determining how closely he was connected with the group, especially since a large number of artists only exhibited at a single Salon. Based on the Salon catalogs, Chabas, Osbert, and Cornillier are the only artists who exhibited all six Salons (Table 4). Another four, Séon, Point, Gachon, Edmé Couty, and Duthoit, showed at five events. One unfortunate drawback of this method—in my work and in that of previous scholars writing on this issue—is the fact that it relies upon the Salon catalogs. These documents clearly include typographical errors and must also contain omissions and additions, especially since several reviewers refer to artworks being exhibited at events which were not included in the official catalogs. Nevertheless, these catalogs provide the only consistent data on which works were

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22 These artworks are not included here because the reviews rarely add detailed information (i.e. the exact names of the artists and their artworks) and I have not found corroborating sources to verify these inclusions. For example, a review from 1892 includes a “Bernulette” and a “de Cooren,” while a review of the Salon of 1896 includes a bust after Botticelli by “Bellor.” These names do not appear in the catalogs. These may be significant misspellings, artists who actually exhibited but were not included in the catalogs, or accidental additions by the reviewers. N.A., “Le
exhibited, and thus, despite their inaccuracies, they must form the backbone of any study of the participating artists.

In addition to the duration of an artist’s association, the quantity of works exhibited can be useful as one measure of the intensity of an artist’s commitment—which is why Beaufils cites Séon’s total number of works in arguing that he was the most committed artist.\(^{23}\) Revealing the lack of intense commitment on the part of many artists, seventy-six participants only showed a single work at all of the events, and, including these, 157 artists exhibited five or less throughout the course of the events (See Table 4). Even among the core artists, the number of works reveals variations from the commitment levels implied by the duration of an artist’s attachment. For example, Osbert exhibited at all six events, while Séon and Point each only participated at five, yet Osbert showed a total of only forty-five works, compared to Séon’s 112 and Point’s fifty-six.\(^{24}\) Osbert did participate in every event, but he only sent a single work to the first Salon, a detail that would be missing in accounting only for the duration of an artist’s attachment. Similarly, three anomalous artists reveal the importance of considering both duration and quantity in concert. These artists exhibited very high numbers of artworks at only a single event.

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\(^{23}\) Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)*, 313.

\(^{24}\) In this table, I have only included works listed or illustrated in the catalog (I have not added works referred to in contemporary or later reviews, which were never officially included). I have included numbered works from the main catalogs and works included as illustrations (even when they do not appear in the written catalogs). I have not split numbered works—some artists listed several works (often illustrations) grouped under one number. Sometimes the catalogs specify that several works were included in the same frame or form a specific grouping, such as a diptych or triptych, yet even when they do, I have maintained the artist’s choice to exhibit these works as one unit under one number, and counted them as a single artwork. Additionally, I have counted repeated titles at different Salons (the same work—or multiple works with the same title—which were exhibited at multiple events) as separate works, since they constitute separate exhibitions.
appearing to have had an extremely strong commitment in terms of quantity, but not duration. 25
Unfortunately, one major drawback of using this method to determine the intensity of the artist’s
commitment is the fact that it does not account for the relative importance of a specific work of
art. While Maurin sent only one artwork to the first Salon, L’Aurore (Fig. 2.1), this was
technically a triptych composed of three separate works and it received a greater (although
widely divided) critical response than Servat’s five works or Cadel’s five works (Table 1). As a
result of these divergences, I consider this number in conjunction with the critical reviews and
duration in order to develop a greater understanding of each artist’s association with the group.

Critical Divisions:

Critics and scholars generally agree that Osbert, Séon, and Point are the three artists who
were most representative of the Rose + Croix. However, their accounts diverge slightly since
they add or remove other names and frame the artists as representative to different degrees. In
addition to these three, the artists who are most commonly added to the core group are Aman-
Jean, Delville, and Khnopff. Significantly, critics and scholars frequently attempt to raise the
profile of an artist by highlighting his role in the group, while simultaneously, distancing the
exhibitor from the more controversial aspects of the Rose + Croix and asserting his independence
from Péladan.

Quotes from contemporary critics vary widely in terms of which artists the reviewers tied
to the Rose + Croix—which is why it is important to consider a range of critical responses.
Additionally, the writers’ overall positive or negative attitude towards the events impacted the

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25 The quantity of works belies the short duration of the commitment for several artists: Moreau-Néret sent forty-
four artworks to three events, with forty of those at a single Salon; thirty-two works were shown by Albert Trachsel
at the first Salon; and Charles Bérengier sent twenty-seven to the second event.
extent to which they considered their preferred artists central figures in the group. For example, one reviewer singled out and distanced Henri Martin and Fernand Khnopff from the Salons, situating them among an unnamed half dozen artists who apparently appeared lost amid the pretention of the events.26 Problematically, this critic argued that Khnopff was anomalous because of Péladan’s pretentiousness, despite simultaneously arguing that Khnopff was actually closely associated with Péladan.27 Other critics singled out specific artists in order to tie them to the Salon, with one referring to Point as one of the seniors or “doyens” of the Rose + Croix and another considering Séon a founding member of the group.28 Another reviewer also highlighted Point’s importance and added Osbert, when he listed the brief snippets of conversations that he heard during the Salon: “Venice,… Astral Influences,… exquisite….. Point….. Toward the Ideal… Osbert… Venice…. Larmandie…”29 Similarly, in discussing the third Salon, one critic referred to the fact that within the fields of painting and drawing, viewers saw the artists they were “accustomed” to seeing at the Rose + Croix—specifically, the works of Khnopff, Point,

26 Bluysen, “Chronique: Le Salon de la Rose + Croix.”


Edmé Couty, Osbert, and Chabas. Another writer framed a slightly different group as central and argued that the highest quality works from the first Salon were by Schwabe, Delville, Séon, Osbert, and Rogelio de Egusquiza. In discussing the second Salon, this writer praised Aman-Jean, Khnopff, and Point, but above all, Marcellin Desboutin, who he compared to Titian. These critical reviews reveal that while many writers sought to identify central figures, they varied in terms of which artists they considered key and their attitudes towards the events impacted the extent to which they tied their preferred artists to the Rose + Croix.

These statements help us to gauge the artists’ critical response, but the reviewers’ choices of the core group were heavily biased based upon their overall response to the events. As a result, in addition to these quotes, another important consideration is how often each artist was discussed—in positive, negative, and mixed terms—in articles addressing the Rose + Croix as a whole (See Table 1). My table shows the number of specific references to each artist across a cross-section of fifty reviews. These articles all address the entire group, rather than focusing on specific figures or the leaders, or just discussing the group’s theories or platforms. In these fifty reviews, twelve artists are mentioned at least fifteen times each. Among these, Point, Osbert, Khnopff, and Séon are discussed most often—between thirty-one and thirty-six times each.

30 “Vous retrouverez là nos peintres et dessinateurs accoutumés...” He also discusses two sculptors without referring to them as accustomed exhibitors: Vallgren and “Descat,” who he identifies as having exhibited a Tête d’inquisiteur and a depiction of Saint John the Baptist. Quittard, “Le Prochain Salon de la Rose + Croix,” 2.

31 Unlike the other critical reviews in this section, this work was published after the end of the Salons, in 1904. Aubrun claimed that the inclusion of works of a lower quality was necessary in creating a new movement, and thus argued that there was a reasonably divided positive and negative response. René Georges Aubrun, Péladan (Paris: E. Sansot et cie, 1904), 16–17.

32 Aubrun, Péladan, 17–18.

33 This chart addresses reviews of the salons, not articles dedicated to specific artists or subgroups, and only lists reviews which discuss at least three artists by name.
Chabas, Gachons, Cornillier, and Vallgren received between twenty and twenty-seven references. Finally, Marcius-Simons, Delville, Rambaud, and Aman-Jean are noted between fifteen and nineteen times. Overall, a total of forty-seven artists were mentioned three or more times in these fifty reviews.

Positive discussions, wholehearted condemnations, mixed reviews, and simple lists of names are included together in this accounting. Unlike the quotes, this analysis does not gauge the positive or negative response of the critics. Rather, it calculates the level of publicity each artist generated in reviews dedicated to the Salon as a whole. It can be used as a partial measure in gauging a variety of interrelated issues, including: the extent to which these critics considered the artists essential figures who needed to be mentioned; the amount of publicity an artist’s exhibition at the Salon generated; and the extent to which the broader public reading these reviews would have consequently associated each artist with the Rose + Croix. This form of statistical analysis cannot definitively answer these questions, but it can clarify these issues and work to remedy the divergences between recent scholarly discussions of the key artists compared to those that contemporary critics associated with the group.

As with the reviews, much of the monographic research focusing on specific exhibitors vacillates between emphasizing ties to the Rose + Croix (in order to increase the profiles of the artists and highlight their contemporary relevance) and attempting to distance them from Péladan’s scandalous persona and the negative critical responses the Salons often elicited. For example, the scholar Dumas associates both Osbert’s technique and his subject matter with the group, arguing that Osbert’s depictions of priestesses and musicians fit within what critics
“defined as the style most representative of the Rose + Croix.” She writes that “the artist succeeded in creating a totally idealist pictorial universe which perfectly corresponds with what Péladan expects from painting.” Yet, while Dumas argues that after the first two years, Osbert’s iconography “will appear in the critics’ eyes as the most representative of Rosicrucian painting,” she also emphasizes Osbert’s independence by arguing that because many of his works were also exhibited at other venues: “Osbert did not create a style specific to the Salon of the Rose + Croix.” Additionally, she notes the difficulty of determining Osbert’s reasons for exhibiting at the Salons.

Osbert’s contemporaries did not agree on the seriousness of his commitment to the Rose + Croix, reflecting the fact that despite his continuing participation and occasional support of the core principles, he was not resolutely tied to the entire doctrine. In a letter to Osbert, his friend the critic Pierre de Lano joked about Péladan and the Rose + Croix, but lauded Larmandie’s


35 “L’artiste a réussi à créer un univers pictural totalement idéaliste qui correspond parfaitement à ce que Péladan attend de la peinture.” She also argues that these works are perfectly representative of Baudelaire’s concept of Correspondences, since they focus on ties between “state of the soul” and nature. Dumas, *Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert*, 160.

36 She specifically refers to the iconography in work dating from 1894 and after. “Osbert ne crée pas de style propre au Salon de la Rose+Croix…” and “…apparaitra aux yeux de la critique comme la plus représentative de la peinture rosicrucienne.” Dumas, *Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert*, 161–162.

37 Dumas, *Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert*, 55. Like Dumas, Blumstein simultaneously situates Osbert as closely tied to Péladan’s theories while also arguing that the artist did not believe in the founder’s mission, writing: “Sans doute ne croit-il pas tout à fait à la mission divine l’artiste proposée par Péladan.” Blumstein, “Le Peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et son époque,” 127. Blumstein claims that Péladan’s ideas can be viewed as a coherent doctrine which is reflected in Osbert’s work and ideas, since he considers the artist and the writer pessimistic and solitary figures that viewed society as decadent and escaped what they viewed as ugly reality by focusing on idealist female types. Blumstein, “Le Peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et son époque,” 121–123. Blumstein argues that it was not surprising that Osbert exhibited at the Salons, since the artist’s and writer’s ideas were so similar. Yet at the same time, he distances Osbert from Péladan by emphasizing the fact that Osbert, unlike Point and Séon, did not create frontispieces for the author—neglecting to mention the fact that Osbert actually exhibited at every Salon, unlike the other two artists. Blumstein, “Le Peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et son époque,” 126.
passion and asked Osbert for forgiveness. Since he followed this apology with a statement that it had been too long since they had spoken, Lano was presumably unsure how seriously Osbert was taking the venture, and whether his jokes would be well-received. Lano wrote:

Regarding obsessive fears, I read and you must have read the book by Larmandie with the Arms of the Rose + Croix. You’re doing well in the Rose + Croix! No salvation, outside of it, that is to say, in comprehensible language, no talent, nothing! It is perhaps a tad exaggerated. But Larmandie has passion and I like him.

But why the devil this formality of language between colleagues, between brotherly peers. All this …really seems to me a little childish, a little unfashionable. … Forgive this speech. But it has been a long time since I had chatted with you. At heart, noble knight of the R+C+C+ you agree with me [,] and you favor your bright brush over the rapier—Amen!38

Yet while Osbert may not have taken all of Péladan’s pronouncements and ideas seriously, he participated in all of the Salons and he occasionally expressed support for the Rose + Croix’s idealist, regenerative goals. In a letter to the Nabi Maurice Denis, written before the first Salon, Osbert restated many of Péladan’s theories and expressed his hope for the Salons’ success, noting his belief that “a feeling for art which … for our époque becomes rarer and rarer … perhaps will live again at the exhibition of the Rose +. [sic] Péléidan had a superb idea there and I think that its time is coming.”39 Thus, Osbert did restate some of the major principles of the


39 He discussed a work by Denis as having a positive sentiment: “un sentiment d’art qui est une chose qui à notre époque devient de plus en plus rare et qui peut-être va revivre à l’exposition Rose +. Péliadan a eu là une idée superbe et venant je crois bien à son heure.” Alphonse Osbert. Letter to Maurice Denis. 1891. September 14. BCNM Ms 307 (1), fol. 171.
Salons and believed before the first event that the Rose + Croix could effectively reinvigorate society, revealing that at some points Osbert expressed his commitment to the broad reformist goals of the Rose + Croix. Nevertheless, Lano’s ridiculing of Péladan’s theories reveals that a friend believed that the artist did not take the venture entirely seriously, highlighting the presence of schisms within the exhibition group, especially in terms of the specific doctrinal details and florid language.

Complicating these levels of association, several artists who were considered highly representative exhibitors by contemporary critics were not strongly committed to the Rose + Croix, the Salons were not a defining aspect of their careers, or they did not exhibit key works there. Other artists simultaneously exhibited at a variety of other venues, of which the Rose + Croix was only one. Some artists who showed at the Rose + Croix were even more closely connected to other doctrinal groups. For instance, Khnopff was a central member of the Rose + Croix, yet this affiliation was not of primary importance for him, and he remained more closely tied to the group that he co-founded—Les Vingt.40 Additionally, even though Osbert was a central figure, the artist’s contemporaries attempted to distance him from the Rose + Croix. Even while Osbert was still exhibiting at the Rose + Croix, his friend, the poet Henri Degron, tied Osbert not to the Rose + Croix, but to Soulier’s short-lived Painters of the Soul, as well as mentioning works that Osbert exhibited at other Salons and at the Georges Petit Gallery.41

40 Additionally, Catherine Croës discusses Khnopff as a member of both Les Vingt and the Rose + Croix, but argues that he was even more tied to the Vienna Secession. Catherine Croës, “Fernand Khnopff,” in Les Passions de l’âme: Les Symbolistes Belges, ed. Miklós Mojzer and Catherine de Croës (Budapest: Hungarofest, 2002), 93.

41 This article is a nine-page illustrated biographical review of the artist. In this case, the author’s emphasis on framing Osbert as independent plays a key role in his distancing of the artist from the Rose + Croix. Yet, by choosing to address the artist’s ties to other groups and his connection to the Rose + Croix, Degron highlighted Osbert’s simultaneous association with a variety of different circles. Henri Degron, “Alphonse Osbert,” La Plume, no. 165 (March 1, 1896): 138–147. According to Jean da Silva, the Artists of the Soul exhibition was organized by
Sometimes the Salon was significantly less important in an artist’s career than the exhibitor was for the group. As a result, scholarship on these artists often simultaneously highlights their affinities with the platform of the Rose + Croix while downplaying the seriousness of their commitment. These central artists often treated the group as an exhibition venue and deviated from the published doctrines—and for some of them, the Rose + Croix was not a key aspect of the careers. Yet, these artists cannot be completely distanced from the group—they did respond to the broader reformist program and remained committed to the exhibition venue for years.

**Conflicts: The Evolution of the Septenaire, Leadership Models, and Group Dynamics**

Péladan, the other leaders, and the artists wrestled for control of the group, framing the organization in different ways in various publications. These group mandates, rules, and theories reveal tensions among the members and variations between the publicized structures and the actual group interactions. After announcing the start of the Rose + Croix, Péladan added a

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Maurice Pujo’s *L’Art et la Vie* between February 22 and March 13 1896. Silva, *Le Salon de la Rose Croix*, 53. Additionally, Dumas discusses the importance of marketing for Osbert, arguing that a key aspect of his rejection of Impressionism was the fact that he would not receive official recognition with this approach. Dumas argues that between 1880 and the beginning of the Salon des Indépendants, the official salons were the only exhibition at which an artist could receive recognition, therefore, “La démarche impressionniste devait l’intéresser mais ne constituait pour lui aucune sécurité car elle était marginale et hors du circuit officiel.” Dumas, *Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert*, 21–22. Dumas’ clear emphasis on the market in terms of Osbert’s stylistic and exhibition choices complicates the artist’s desire to be so closely associated with the Rose + Croix—which, like the Impressionist exhibitions, was definitely outside of the official salon circuit.


43 For a translation of one set of rules, see Pincus-Witten’s Appendix II. Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*, 211–216.

44 According Boutet, Gary de Lacroze claimed that he and Péladan developed the idea together. However, there is no evidence to prove this second-hand claim. Gary de Lacroze. Unspecified interview or document. Quoted or paraphrased in Boutet, *Les aventuriers du mystère*, 146. Larmandie wrote that the two were named commanders of the Rose + Croix at the same time. Larmandie, *L’entr’acte idéal*, 10–11.
septenaire of seven leaders whose roles varied widely (both over time and among the commanders). Sometimes they were framed as a group situated below Péladan, who served as the “Grand Master”—yet on other occasions, Péladan was included among the seven. Over the course of the Salons, as one by one, the majority of the leaders separated from the group, Péladan’s control and publicized role increased—although this was a general pattern and not a smooth, consistent tendency.

Scholarship on the group and primary documents vary in terms of which figures were leaders, when they were tied to the Rose + Croix, and what role they played in the group. Over

45 This term refers to the occult, spiritist, and numerological significance of groups of seven, in for example, the solar system, music, and colors. J. Camille Chaigneau, “Les Principes Supérieurs du Septénaire Humain: Devant le Spiritisme,” L’Initiation (February 1891): 409–411. An early, more democratic organization is clearly based upon the model of the R+C+K, which was led by six pairs of leaders. In some early documents, such as the 1892 Constitution, Péladan is not technically placed in a higher position than the other Commanders. Although he referred to himself as the Grand Master, in his hierarchy, the title of “Grand Maitre” is not included, so that the seven known and seven unknown commanders are situated at the top of the hierarchy, followed by the “Chevaliers,” the “Ecuyers,” and finally, “Servants d’oeuvre (les scribes et gens de métier.” Péladan, Constitutions de la Rose-Croix, le Temple et le Graal, 32. At this stage, the specific role of the artists was not laid out. Instead, the salons were discussed as one of four types of events put on by the group, whose members were required to answer a series of questions. These four types of events were supposed to take place each year and included: salons, theatrical performances, musical works, and conferences. Péladan, Constitutions de la Rose-Croix, le Temple et le Graal, 36–37.

46 The Sâr’s conflicting pronouncements and their varied interpretations make it difficult to identify a coherent and cohesive trajectory within the group dynamics (for example, a steady, consistent increase or decrease in the diffusion of power), yet he only sought to publicize a varied leadership and a complex group dynamic during the group’s early years. He held that he alone was responsible for the events, but at this early stage, he assigned clear roles to specific other leaders and included additional names on group pronouncements. In later years, both of these divisions of power became less common. Yet even in an early version of the rules, Péladan insisted that all decisions would be made by him. In his third rule, he wrote that the consultateur (Gary de Lacroze) chose the artworks, or alternatively, Péladan did so with the input of two other leaders, while his fifth rule counteracts this inclusionary leadership model by stating conclusively that only Péladan was responsible for the Salons, because: “5. En cas imprévu dans le Règle et en tout conflit d’artiste avec les Commandeurs, l’autorité du Sâr étant abstraite, est absolue.” Altotats, “Etres & Choses,” La France Moderne, no. 41 (July 9, 1891): 3; La Rochefoucauld, “La Rose + Croix du Temple,” 227–228.

47 Beaufils cites Elémir Bourges as one of the septenaire, noting that that he did not contribute greatly, but rather, mostly only added his name to the group. Beaufils notes that Bourges had little in common with Péladan and that his name did not appear on group documents after 1894. Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858–1918), 186–187. Additionally, Suzy Levy argues that Bourges was the first committed member (or “le premier partisan enthousiaste”), but later distanced himself from Péladan. Suzy Lévy, Lettres inédites d’Odilon Redon à Bonger.
the years, the identifiable leadership was composed of: a novelist (Élémir Bourges); a pianist (Louis Bénédictus); a writer who addressed theories of art, physiognomy, and the temperaments (Émile Gary de Lacroze—pseudonym of Émile Gary); a poet and writer on magical and esoteric issues (Larmandie); an artist and collector (Rochefoucauld); and possibly, a poet (Saint-Pol-Roux or Paul-Pierre Roux). Péladan’s first announcements of the Rose + Croix (May 14 and June 1890) do not include any additional founding members, names, or signatures, but in August 1890, he wrote that the group was led by seven commanders—or a septenaire—to whom

Jourdain, Viñes (Paris: José Corti Editions, 1987), 46. However, it is unlikely that Bourges was associated with the group before Gary de Lacroze, and he was generally fairly distant from its activities—so much so that he asked Péladan in June 1894 if the Salon had even occurred that year. Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918), 280. Both Alain Mercier and Théophile Briant argue that Saint-Pol-Roux was a member of the septenaire, was faithful to Péladan, and kept his membership silent out of obedience. Mercier, “Revue des études péladaneries,” 13; Théophile Briant, Saint-Pol-Roux, ed. Jacques Goorma and Alistair Whyte, 4th ed., Poètes d‘aujourd’hui 28 (Paris: Seghers, 1989), 115. According to Briant: “Si Saint-Pol-Roux, par esprit d‘obéissance et de chevalerie, observa la consigne de silence, qui est de tradition chez les adeptes, on n‘en trouve pas moins ça et là dans son œuvre mieux que des allusions, qui nous renseignent sur son appartenance à la doctrine ésotérique et à la descendance du Trismégiste.” Briant, Saint-Pol-Roux, 115. In this statement, Briant refers to two of the order’s vows, those of obedience and chivalry, but implies that these vows also incorporated secrecy—which, according to the Constitution, they did not. Additionally, as a commander, Saint-Pol-Roux would apparently only be held to the vow of obedience: “Il y a trois voeux: l’idéalité et c’est celui d‘écuyer; de fidélité et c’est celui de chevalier; d‘obéissance et c’est celui de commandeur.” Péladan, Constitutions de la Rose-Croix, le Temple et le Graal, 24. While secrecy played a major role in many Rosicrucian and occult societies, it was not actually central to the vows of the Rose + Croix. Given Péladan’s focus on publicity over secrecy, including publicizing his participation and that of most of the other commanders, it is unlikely that Saint-Pol-Roux was following Péladan’s specific guidelines in remaining silent regarding his participation in the order. Even though he remained silent regarding his participation, Saint-Pol-Roux was apparently strongly attached to his title, since for the rest of his life he continued to use the name “Magnifique” when signing his name. Lévy-Mery, “Péladan, l‘ésotérisme et les peintres des salons Rose-Croix,” 57. Louis Bénédicte presumably remained a Commander until at least 1895, since Péladan dedicated his Mélusine to “Benedictus: Commandeur de Rose-Croix.” Joséphin Péladan, Mélusine (Paris: P. Ollendorff, 1895), XI–XIII. In addition to these members of the septenaire, an additional pseudonym, Samas or Tammuz, which refers to the Sun-God, may not be tied to a specific figure. Thus, Levy-Mery argues that there are three unclaimed chaldéen names, Sin, Adar, and Samas, which referred to figures in Péladan’s novels and probably were not attached to specific people. Lévy-Mery, “Péladan, l‘ésotérisme et les peintres des salons Rose-Croix,” 58.

48 Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918), 133–182.

49 Briant, Saint-Pol-Roux, 34; Lévy, Lettres inédites d‘Odilon Redon à Bonger, Jourdain, Viñes, 45.
he referred using their pseudonyms. Generally, the term founder should not be used in reference to the members of the septenaire. Arguably, it could be applied to Lacroze, if there were sufficient evidence to support his claim that he developed the idea in concert with Péladan, but the other commanders cannot be considered founders of the original group, since their names do not appear on the earliest documents. Additionally, the commanders changed over the course of the Salons and determining which figure was attached to which pseudonym at any given point is problematic. Since each departing leader was generally immediately replaced by a new pseudonym, it is likely that some of the pseudonyms were added without referring to specific figures, so that, on some occasions there were fewer actual leaders than there were


51 Technically, other members were included in the public announcement of the group founding. Legally, the other figures could be referred to as founders—but the Rose + Croix was clearly started and documents were published before the legal announcement, so in all senses other than the legal one, these figures cannot be considered founders. Péladan, “Ordre de la Rose-Croix.”—Dé mission de Joséphine Péladan.—Fondation de l’Artiste (R+C+C).—Péladan, légat catholique romain auprès de l’Initiation.” 282–284. Montalant correctly states that Séon was not a founder of the group—because none of the artists other than Antoine de La Rochefoucauld were given this honor. (Technically, Péladan did occasionally vacillate on this position, referring to some artists, including Séon, as founding members.) However, Montalant argues that the reason Séon cannot be considered a founder is because the artist was too poor to be able to financially support a venture like the Rose+ Croix. “Notons que Séon n’a jamais été un des fondateurs de la Rose+ Croix, comme certaines notices le laissent entendre. Comment aurait-il pu l’être? Foncièrement impécunieux, il n’a pu contribuer aux fonds de l’ordre. Il faudra donc voir dans le contact privilégié de Péladan et Séon ce que certains érudits ont confondu avec une paternité du mouvement.” Montalant, “Le Peintre Symboliste: Alexandre Séon,” 24. In discussing the Rose + Croix, it is important to note that neither the term “founder” nor membership in the septenaire implied financial support of the venture. Although Antoine de La Rochefoucauld was certainly a financial supporter of the first events, financial contributions must have not have been required of all members of this committee, since Péladan included one well-known figure, Papus (Gérard Encausse) without previously notifying him. Péladan, “Tiers Ordre de la Rose + Croix Catholique: R + C+ C,” 480.

52 In this Péladan clearly built on the R+C+K, which reportedly had a council of twelve leaders, of which six were supposedly always unknown. The month after Péladan renounced his position of the Supreme Council of the R+C+K, a notice was published in *L’Initiation* stating that his public position on the council was being taken over by a figure who was already an unknown member, Frère Alta. Thus, the new public council was composed of “Agûr, Alta, Barlet, de Guaita, Papus, et Polti.” N.A., “Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose + Croix,” *L’Initiation* (July 1890): 384.
pseudonyms. Further complicating the role of the *septenaire* and highlighting the tension
between Péladan’s emphasis on a varied leadership model and his continued desire to maintain
power over the group, he routinely added statements that he alone was responsible for the events
and that all final decisions were to be made by him.\(^53\)

In addition to questions regarding who led the group at any one time, attitudes vary as to
what membership in the *septenaire* entailed. According to Christopher McIntosh and Lucy
Bazalgette, some of the commanders apparently wore costumes associated with their positions,
implying that their membership in the *septenaire* involved secret, costumed ceremonies and
meetings.\(^54\) However, neither McIntosh nor Bazalgette note that these scholarly arguments are
supported by archival photographic documents, including a series of photographs of a ceremony
featuring the founder and at least two figures covered in sheets (Figs. 2.2, 2.3).\(^55\) Beaufils has
reproduced those images, but has not included another photograph, which shows masked figures
or puppets in a theatrical setting, with a painted backdrop (Fig. 2.4).\(^56\) These photographs are
problematic because they do not show a full set of seven figures and because, instead of being
tied to the first years of the Salons, the series of photographs presumably dates from 1896-1899,

\(^{53}\) In the 1890 letter that includes Gary de Lacroze as the only other member at that time, Péladan also adds a
postscript stating that all documents signed by the “Grand Maître” were written solely by him.“N.B. Tout acte de la

\(^{54}\) McIntosh states that the group met at Péladan’s apartment on Notre-Dame-des-Champs. Although he does not cite
a specific source, he does mention that Péladan wore monk’s robes with the symbol of the rose and cross on the
chest. McIntosh, *The Rosicrucians*, 95. Similarly, Lucy Bazalgette notes that at the end of his life, Larmandie would
wear “la tiare de cuir chamoiséâ deux cornes des Commandeurs de la Rose-Croix, et revêtu de la longue cape rouge
doublée de noir des hauts dignitaires de l’Ordre!” Lucy Bazalgette, “Le Comte Leonce de Larmandie, Commandeur

\(^{55}\) Unidentified photographs. Arsenal, Ms 13412, fol. 64-66.

\(^{56}\) Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)*, n.p.; Unidentified photograph. Arsenal, Ms 13412, fol. 70.
since some of the images show Péladan wearing a wedding ring. Some of the costumes reflect the three types Péladan laid out in the Constitution—although throughout the Salons, Péladan varied in his choice of robes, deviating from the idea that each type of robe signified the specific path chosen when one was knighted into the order.\textsuperscript{57} A contemporary short satirical play reflects the widespread interest in this purported ceremonial aspect of the group. In this play, Péladan questions an adept on a variety of subjects, including his clothing and favorite writer, and then accepts him and allows him to exhibit at the events even though he is not a painter.\textsuperscript{58} Despite this focus on ceremony, the continual changes within the ranks of the commanders and the fact that some of the leaders were ill-informed about the group’s events implies that it is unlikely that all of the commanders engaged in these meetings, that they met regularly, or that the meetings endured for the full six years.

Péladan announced the creation of the Rose + Croix with three mandates published on May 14, 1890 and another founding document in June.\textsuperscript{59} At this point, he began his split—commonly called the “War of the Two Roses”—from another Rosicrucian group, the Rose + Croix Kabbalistic—or R+C+K—, which was led by Stanislas de Guaita.\textsuperscript{60} Significantly, Guaita’s

\textsuperscript{57} Péladan, \textit{Constitutions de la Rose-Croix, le Temple et le Graal}, 29–30. For example, although McIntosh notes that Péladan wore the white robes with the red cross, Péladan is wearing robes of only one color in the black and white photographs. If these correspond with any of the three types described in the constitution, they could be the blue robes, since the other options involve multiple colors. McIntosh, \textit{The Rosicrucians}, 95.

\textsuperscript{58} Alfred Capus. “La Petit Comédie: Mages et Occultistes Français.” Newspaper Clipping. Arsenal, MS 13412, fol.14 and fol. 16.


\textsuperscript{60} As noted in the introduction, for the sake of clarity, “Rose + Croix” is used throughout this dissertation to refer to Péladan’s group—Guiata’s group is called the Rose + Croix Kabbalistic or the R+C+K.
group was never tied to the visual arts—it had a regular journal but no Salons. When he split from the Kabbalistic Rose + Croix, Péladan insisted that he was superior to the other group leaders, argued that Guaita’s group emphasized occultism over Catholicism, and opposed Guaita’s incorporation of Freemasonry and Buddhism. While Péladan occasionally referred to his group as an offshoot of the R+C+K in the first year, the divorce of the two groups was in place well before the first Salon.

The leadership dynamic of Péladan’s group first evolved to include two additional figures—Gary de Lacroze and Count Léonce de Larmandie. Larmandie was the first figure whose association with the group was publicized—in August 1890. However, Lacroze apparently claimed to have joined the group first, arguing that he developed the idea in concert with Péladan—specifically, that the two men actually came up with the idea of the group while walking together at night. Yet the first written evidence of his affiliation is in the form of a

61 Péladan, “Ordre de la Rose-Croix 8.—Dé mission de Joséphine Péladan.—Fondation de l’Artistie (R+C+C).—Péladan, légat catholique romain auprès de l’Initiation.”

62 Specifically, the creation of pairs of leaders derived from Guiata’s group. In early documents, Péladan occasionally referred to his own group as actually having two septenaires, one public, and one unknown, thus reflecting the composition of the R+C+K, which was similarly composed of six pairs, with half of the members not being publically known. Péladan did not continue to refer to these pairs, however, and there is little evidence to suggest that he ever actually implemented this structure. N.A., “Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose + Croix”; Péladan, Constitutions de la Rose-Croix, le Temple et le Graal, 39; Joséphin Péladan, Le salon de Joséphin Péladan: dixième année: avec instauration de la Rose croix esthétique (Paris: E. Dentu, 1891), 53.

63 This document states there were seven leaders but only lists six, including another unspecified count and three pseudonyms. “Sar Peladan, Samas, Sin, comte de Larmandie, comte de……….., Tammuz.” Péladan, “Tiers Ordre de la Rose + Croix Catholique: R + C+ C,” 480.

64 Boutet either quotes or paraphrases Larmandie, writing: “La fondation de la Rose-Croix Catholique, qui avait irité Guaita par un prétendu mangue d’avertissement, avait été décidée dans une longue promenade nocturne que j’avais faite avec Péladan quelque temps auparavant, et où nous avions reconnu l’impossibilité de neutraliser les influences maçonniques de la Rose-Croix Kabbalistique.” Gary de Lacroze. Unspecified interview or document. Quoted or paraphrased in Boutet, Les aventuriers du mystère, 146.
transcription of an undated letter from Péladan most likely dating to the summer of 1890.65 Although this letter does not clarify Lacroze’s role in the development of the group, it does imply that his attachment predated that of the other leaders and it gives Lacroze the power to find additional associates.66 In fact, Lacroze claimed that he recruited La Rochefoucauld as a result of the letter.67

The septenaire theoretically remained in place for the entire duration of the events—although many group documents do not include the list of seven names.68 In May 1891, Péladan published an announcement stating that the septenaire of leaders included himself, Lacroze, Larmandie, and La Rochefoucauld and three pseudonyms.69 Yet, in August 1891, Péladan published the legal announcement of the Rose + Croix with only five names—adding Elémir Bourges to the aforementioned four leaders.70 Additionally, several scholars argue that Saint-Pol-

65 Boutet, Les aventuriers du mystère, 147. Beaufils dates the letter to the summer of 1890. Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918), 182–183. Although this letter is undated, Lacroze specifically noted that it did not predate the first announcement of the group, on May 14, 1890. “La première information en parut à la fin de la brochure jaune que Péladan publiait tous les ans sur le Salon. J’avais pris soin moi-même que Guaita en reçut à temps l’avertissement amical. La brochure annonçait l’ouverture de l’Aristie, postulat de la Rose-Croix Catholique du Temple et du Graal et, à son départ pour Nîmes, chez sa mère, Péladan me libella une magnifique charte sur parchemin,écrite à l’encre bleue, de sa grande écriture décorative, qui commençait par le dessin d’une haute tiare, d’un étendard, d’un calice et de trois croix différentes et qui continuait en style noble et archaïque.” Boutet, Les aventuriers du mystère, 146–147.

66 Boutet, Les aventuriers du mystère, 147.

67 “C’est en vertu de cette charte originale que, quelque temps après, je reçus dans l’Ordre un descendant de l’illustre auteur des Maximes le comte Antoine de La Rochefoucauld, par qui fut réalisée la Première Geste Esthétique de la Rose-Croix qui eut le retentissement que l’on sait, mondial et mérité.” Boutet, Les aventuriers du mystère, 147–148.

68 Even though the structure was never officially removed, it was referred to less often in later years, when most of the commanders were no longer associated with the group.


70 According to this document, the group was officially registered on the 22nd of August, and the leaders were: “M. Joséphin PÉLADAN, Comte Léonce DE LARMANDIE, GARY de LACROZE, Elémir BOURGES, 19, rue de
Roux was also a member of the *septenaire* at this point.\(^{71}\) Two commanders left before the second Salon, and Louis Bénédictus was added, alongside three pseudonyms, so that the list of leaders was given as: “Comte Léonce de Larmandie, Elémir Bourges, Gary de Lacroze, Benedictus, Bihn Grallon, Sin et Adar.”\(^{72}\) Significantly, these varied pronouncements did not clarify the structure for contemporaries, since a variety of reviews reveal that critics did not understand the leadership model. In particular, sometimes, a member of the *septenaire* was considered a co-director or equal figure alongside Péladan.\(^{73}\) On other occasions, well-known figures that were unaffiliated, such as Max Nordau (an author and doctor who wrote a study of degeneration) and Papus (the pseudonym of Gérard Encausse, a doctor who popularized occultism), were referred to as leaders.\(^{74}\)

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\(^{71}\) Briant, *Saint-Pol-Roux*, 34; Lévy, *Lettres inédites d’Odilon Redon à Bonger, Jourdain, Viñes*, 45.

\(^{72}\) Péladan, *Organe trimestriel de l’Ordre: 1re livraison*, 21. Bihn Grallon is occasionally listed as a commander and member of the *septenaire*. He is also cited as the conductor of “Marche Antique pour la Rose + Croix” and “Préludes sur des Thèmes d’Orient” in the first Salon catalog. Péladan, *Catalogue du Salon de la Rose-Croix*, IV. The name Bihn Grallon has been attributed to either Satie or Louis Bénédictus. Steven Moore Whiting, *Satie the Bohemian: From Cabaret to Concert Hall* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 148; Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*(1858-1918), 227; Alan M. Gillmor, *Erik Satie* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), 78, 271 n.12.


\(^{74}\) For example, one writer inaccurately referred to the group leaders as: “Titre enviable: *la Révolte intellectuelle*. Collaboration magistrale: MM. Ledrain, Léon Dierx, Alta, Papus, le marquis Saint-Yves, les Dr Gibier et Nordau, le sculpteur Marquet de Vasselot et le peintre Aman Jean. Joséphin Péladan sera co-directeur; l’on peut donc être assuré d’avance d’une allure absolument esthétique et d’une fière indépendance.” Torcy, “Eoraka,” 177. This
The most significant power struggle in the group occurred during the first Salon, in late March 1892, and divided Antoine de La Rochechefoucauld from the Rose + Croix. This conflict was widely publicized, separated the group from its main financial support, and involved the permanent severing of ties to many artists. The struggle between Péladan and La Rochechefoucauld was based on a variety of financial, aesthetic, and other disagreements, and grew to encompass many figures associated with the group. These leaders disagreed on a wide variety of issues, including: finances—since after paying for the rest of the events, La Rochechefoucauld refused to fund two additional performances of Péladan’s badly received *Le Fils de Étoiles*, titles—since Péladan referred to La Rochechefoucauld as a mere arch-count (he was actually a count); control—since La Rochechefoucauld leased the Durand-Ruel gallery in his own name instead of Péladan’s, making him the artistic director, an act that Péladan considered “traitorous”; and personnel—

reflects Péladan’s own practices, since, even before the official beginning of the Salons, he began using other figures in his lists of supporters without their knowledge. Specifically, in announcing the artists who were “practically all adherents” of the group, he included Puvis de Chavannes and Dagnan Bouveret, who both responded by publishing their refusal to join the group. Similarly, in 1891, Count Léonce de Larmandie announced a new monthly review, which was to be co-directed by himself and Péladan. In this announcement, he referred to Papus (Gérard Encausse) as a collaborator, even though Papus later claimed to have been unaware of the venture and recused himself from the Revue. Larmandie, *Éóraka*, 21; Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)*, 188.

75 After paying for the first Salon and the events association with it, Antoine de La Rochechefoucauld refused to fund two additional nights of a badly received play (written by Péladan) and a specific conductor. At an event, a bearded man accosted La Rochechefoucauld, who unmasked him and found it was Gary de Lacroze—this was the basis of his legal battle against Lacroze. Revealing the extent of this disagreement, a legal complaint by Antoine de La Rochechefoucauld against Lacroze frames Péladan’s followers as fitting into two types: “Parmi ses disciples, il en est qui sont venus à lui pour sa bizarrerie, il en est d’autres qui l’ont suivi malgré cette bizarrerie et pour ses généreuses aspirations à combattre le matérialisme dans l’art, que ce matérialisme se traduise par la brutalité de la forme ou l’excès de fini d’une main-d’œuvre étouffant la pensée.” Lucien Jullemier, *Plaidoirie de Me Jullemier pour M. le Cte Antoine de La Rochechefoucauld contre M. Gary de Lacroze, le 19 mai 1892.* (Paris: A. Warmont, 1892), 4.


since Péladan claimed La Rochefoucauld forced Bénédictus to be replaced by a different
conductor, Lamoureux, while La Rochefoucauld claimed it was Bénédictus’ choice.\(^7^9\) These
disputes spread to involve another member of the *septenaire*, Gary de Lacroze, and included a
legal case and a variety of dramatic scenes and scandals that appeared in many journals.\(^8^0\) Within
a month, this resulted in a definitive legal break.\(^8^1\)

La Rochefoucauld and Péladan disagreed on aesthetic issues, but these concerns played
only a minor role in La Rochefoucauld’s departure.\(^8^2\) Yet, in his history of the group, Larmandie
claimed that aesthetic disagreements caused the separation:

Some discussions arose on the subject of the two tendencies juxtaposed at the
Salon of the exposition: one, the majority, affirmed an exclusively classical
tradition while others favored modern Impressionism…these differences of view
and of appreciation caused a schism in the Order: The Archonte [La
Rochefoucauld] separated from the Grand Master and the Commanders.\(^8^3\)

This argument reflects the fact that, when La Rochefoucauld split from the Rose + Croix at the
end of the first Salon, a variety of well-known artists left with him—and several of these

\(^7^9\) According to the lawyer, the major disagreement occurred because La Rochefoucauld was unhappy with
Péladan’s choices of Bénédictus or Lamoureux as conductor. Jullemier, *Plaidoirie de Me Jullemier*, 5–6; Beaufils,
*Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)*, 228.

\(^8^0\) Jullemier, *Plaidoirie de Me Jullemier*, 6–7.

\(^8^1\) For further details on this dispute, see Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*, 141–143.

\(^8^2\) They had already judged the submissions, hung the selected artworks, and opened the Salon before the dispute.
According to Antoine de La Rochefoucauld’s lawyer, when discussing aesthetic issues, before the salon, Péladan
“seduced” the count to believe that it was necessary for art to focus more on thought and the idea than on technique

\(^8^3\) “Quelques discussions s’élevèrent au sujet des deux tendances juxtaposées au salon de l’exposition: les uns, la
majorité, tenaient pour l’exclusivité de la tradition classique, d’autres favorisaient le moderne impressionnisme.
Quand on n’est pas des séraphins, nul d’entre nous n’a jamais prétendu au plan pneumatique, les divergences
do’opinion peuvent malheureusement s’accuser par de trop vives paroles sans que pour cela la valabilité de ceux qui
les prononcent en puisse être diminuée, ni leur bonne foi altérée, ni leurs intentions corrompues. Ces différences de
vue et d’appréciation causèrent une scission dans l’ordre: l’Archonte se sépara du Grand Maître et des
defectors incorporated more stylistic deformations into their works than Pédadan generally preferred. However, these aesthetic differences should not be framed as the central provocation for the split between La Rochefoucauld and Pédadan, since it was disagreements over music, the theater, and finances that immediately preceded the clash. In fact, the dispute occurred after the two figures had already compromised on aesthetic issues, since the works for the first Salon had already been chosen and hung.

For many scholars, this debate is not just a question of aesthetic differences, but also an issue of quality, since many of the artists who left with Antoine de La Rochefoucauld were more innovative than those supported by Pédadan. Thus, Pincus-Witten notes the break between Pédadan’s theories and his aesthetic judgments, arguing:

Had Pédadan not been blindly bound to this theoretical superstructure, had he been capable of valuing experience as highly as he valued polemics, he would have recognized immediately that the artists he rejected were precisely those who would bring the greatest posthumous honor to his “gestes ideals” and who, in certain measure, would become the finest representatives—e.g., Filiger and Bernard—of his occult theory. It took the first Salon de la Rose + Croix for Pédadan to realize exactly what the proper Rosicrucian “look” was, after which he was honor bound to choose the second rate in favor of the first.

While many of the artists who remained with the group were certainly less aesthetically innovative than those who left, Pincus-Witten’s position is problematic. He implies that Pédadan consciously chose to de-value experience and made his decision based upon honor. However,

84 The two figures apparently compromised on the exhibitors at the first event, which clearly included artists tied to and favored by each figure. Although aesthetic differences may have played a part in their mutual distaste for each other, it was the discussions over the musical and theatrical events, rather than the artworks included at the exhibition that immediately preceded the break. According to La Rochefoucauld’s lawyer, Pédadan’s rules rejected many artists that La Rochefoucauld favored, but the Salon still went well: “L’exposition de peinture réussit malgré le Sar qui écarta, par ses règles extravagantes, de grands artistes regrettés de M. de La Rochefoucauld.” Jullemier, Plaidoirie de Me Jullemier, 5.

85 Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 121.
Péladan probably did not directly remove any exhibitors, but rather, they left of their own volition, because several of them, including Filiger, were closely associated with Antoine de La Rochefoucauld. In this case, Péladan can be held responsible for the personal argument with La Rochefoucauld, but not the aesthetic choice or the direct removal of the artists. Péladan placed his conflicts with La Rochefoucauld above the interests of the group and any aesthetic concerns, yet he did not have the actual power to determine which of the artists who had exhibited at the first Salon created works that were most in line with his theories and should remain with the group.

A note from Péladan to Osbert shows that the founder invited some artists to a meeting held at the end of the first Salon, at Point’s studio, where the founder discussed the recent disagreements and the organization of the next Salon. While there is no evidence that Péladan chose to remove specific artists from the group, his note to Osbert implies that he specifically sought to explain the situation to some participants. Dumas discusses this note within the context

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86 Some artists exhibited works owned by Antoine de La Rochefoucauld at the first Salon—for example, two of Filiger’s six works at the first Salon were owned by La Rochefoucauld. Péladan, *Catalogue du Salon de la Rose-Croix*, 25. Additionally, Pincus-Witten argues that La Rochefoucauld had corresponded with and invited many of the artists to the first Salon: “It seems certain that many of the figures who consented to appear at the first Salon de la Rose + Croix did so owing to the support which La Rochefoucauld gave to the movement.” Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*, 129.

87 It could be argued that these artists were expunged in indirect fashion, since some of them received negative reviews in an anonymous work published by one of the commanders—clearly because of the artists’ attachment to Antoine de La Rochefoucauld. N.A., “Le Salon de la Rose + Croix.”

88 Apparently, Péladan did specifically choose some artists he wanted to stay, and invited them to Armand Point’s studio to discuss the break. A handwritten form note with the artist’s name added in different handwriting invites Osbert to this gathering. The note reads: “Le Sar Péladan prie le Seigneur Osbert de venir le lundi 11, à neuf heures précises du soir, en l’atelier de Point __15 rue Vaneau__ pour l’explication des troubles de la Rose + Croix et l’organisation du Salon de la Rose + Croix de 1893. Sar Peladan.” This is written on the back of an invitation to the first Salon, with a cross added over Antoine de La Rochefoucauld’s name on the front. The note most likely refers to a meeting occurring the day after the end of the first Salon, thus, on Monday, April 11, 1892. Joséphin Péladan. Letter to Alphonse Osbert. 1892. BCMN Ms 307 (2.3), fol.10, n. 9. Although this note reveals that Péladan actively sought the continued participation of some artists in the second salon, it does not necessarily follow that he actually “expunged” others.

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of addressing the later conflicts between Point and Osbert.\textsuperscript{89} However, I argue that the note’s reference to recent troubles most likely alludes to the larger break with La Rochefoucauld and not to a dispute between these artists. First, the significant change between the handwriting of “Osbert” and the rest of the letter implies that this was a form letter sent to several people, with the name added later in the blank space. Thus, it should be interpreted as a larger meeting of participating artists, rather than an attempted reconciliation between these two. Additionally, while the two artists most likely engaged in a dispute that led to Point’s decision to not participate in the final Salon, there is no evidence to suggest that Point and Osbert were involved in a significant conflict at this early point.

Gary de Lacroze and Count Larmandie were Pélédan’s two most committed group leaders—but articles written under both of their pseudonyms appeared in a journal funded by La Rochefoucauld after he split with Pélédan. Dario Gamboni and Susan Lévy both identify the author of some of these articles as Gary de Lacroze and Lévy notes the journal’s connection to La Rochefoucauld. Yet neither scholar addresses the fact that these articles were published after La Rochefoucauld split from Pélédan.\textsuperscript{90} These two figures were key group leaders—in addition to Larmandie’s close association with the group, Lacroze served as the aesthetic consultant, determining if artworks should be accepted.\textsuperscript{91} Nevertheless, even after the dispute with Antoine

\textsuperscript{89} Dumas, “Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et les Salons de la Rose+Croix,” 43.

\textsuperscript{90} Dario Gamboni, The Brush and the Pen: Odilon Redon and Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 256; Lévy, Lettres inédites d’Odilon Redon à Bonger, Jourdain, Viñes, 45. In scholarship on Paul Signac, however, the author of these articles has been identified as Antoine de La Rochefoucauld. Yet this statement is made without support or clarification. Marina Ferretti-Bocquillon, Signac: 1863 - 1935 (New York City: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 330.

\textsuperscript{91} Gary de Lacroze was assigned the role of aesthetic consultant in early documents and given the task of determining if artworks were acceptable for the Salon. (Although in disputed cases, Pélédan had absolute authority. Allotats, “Etres & Choses.” Boutet described Gary de Lacroze and his relationship with the group at length: “Or, je
de La Rochefoucauld, both figures regularly participated in *Le Cœur*—a journal which ran through ten issues between April 1893 and June 1895, focused on esoteric issues, was directed by Jules Bois, and was funded by Antoine de La Rochefoucauld. The first issue includes articles by “Gébürah” (Larmandie’s pseudonym with the Rose + Croix) and “Tiphereth” (Lacroze’s pseudonym), as well as a drawing by La Rochefoucauld—and all three remained regular contributors.

In addition to the fact that they contributed to this journal, the articles written by these two committed leaders of the Rose + Croix also reveal breaks from Péladan. In one article for this journal, Tiphereth/Gary de Lacroze negatively reviewed the exhibitor Aman-Jean for his...

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trendy idealism, academic drawing, and Pre-Raphaelite pastiches. Tipéreth wrote a lengthy diatribe against idealist art and then laid out a series of numbered points regarding art, revealing a variety of similarities and slight differences from Péladan in terms of the importance of religion, opposition to materialism, focus on pure art and tradition, and incorporation of anti-rationalist rhetoric:

1° We do not want to bring any judgment on the religious beliefs of the author or the priests who approved his work with such joy—and even less do we [mean to] cast the littlest doubt on their faith.

2° What we just wanted to say and record, is that the souls [that] we believe [are] the most sincere souls cannot avoid the spell of our time by the consequences of the materialist philosophy reigning now, and that has spread everywhere. …

The mozaïstes [sic] of Ravenna, decorators of Saint-Savin …
Miniaturists and illuminators of the Middle Ages …
The glass of the cathedrals …

4° In the philosophical point of view, it is fundamentally the Semitic idea which, having reached the end of its evolution, now seems so prevalent it has entered the domain of art. The Semitic idea is materialistic as opposed to the Aryan-Hellenic idea which was always idealistic.

The Jewish idea is the cause of iconoclasm, then of all Protestantism.
Protestantism bore in turn rationalism, which today has now wrapped all in its evil spells. From Rationalism in general flows immediately in Art[—] Realism in all its forms, be it from low, flat, and abject realism visible to all, or be it realism hiding under the guise of religious thought.

94 The author specifically did not discuss the Rose + Croix, except when he referred to the group obliquely, writing that, at the reviewed exhibition, M. Feure exhibited the same works that he had shown in the spring in a room on the Rue de la Paix—which is where Rose + Croix was held in 1894. Tiphéreth, “Regard en arrière et simples réflexions sur l’Art en 1894,” 6–7.

95 “1° Nous ne voulons porter aucune appréciation sur les convictions religieuses de l’Auteur ni des prêtres qui ont approuvé son œuvre avec tant de joie,—et encore bien moins nous n’émettons le moindre doute sur leur foi.

2° Ce que simplement nous avons voulu dire et constater, c’est que les âmes que nous croyons les plus sincères ne peuvent éviter l’événement de l’époque par les conséquences de la philosophie matérialiste qui règne et partout s’est répandue.

3° Au point de vue de l’Art Pur nous disons hautement que l’œuvre de M. Tissot n’a rien à voir avec l’Art Pur qui est celui de la grande tradition mystico-religieuse représentée depuis des siècles par :
Les mozaïstes [sic] de Ravenne, des décorateurs de Saint-Savin, des églises…
Les miniaturistes et enlumineurs de tout le moyen âge …
Les verriers des cathédrales…
Les grands peintres et fresquistes…
The author of this passage emphasizes the importance of past movements, claims that materialism is encroaching everywhere, and opposes Protestantism and Realism just as Péladan does. Yet, Tipéreth/Lacroze’s attitude varied slightly from Péladan’s at this point in terms of his fundamental opposition to Jews rather than Protestants and his argument that no souls could avoid the effects of materialist philosophy (although Péladan did occasionally express a similar level of pessimism, he generally focused on the potential for reform). In addition to these divergences, Lacroze’s participation in this journal alongside Antoine de La Rochefoucauld is difficult to comprehend since La Rochefoucauld sued Lacroze while breaking from Péladan. However, these articles reveal that the writers must not have completely broken from Rochefoucauld when he left the Rose + Croix. These deviations and complex dynamics within the leadership reveal that the group did not function as a united whole and the actual practices regularly deviated from the group publications.

4° Au point de vue philosophique, c’est au fond l’idée sémite qui, ayant abouti au terme de son évolution, semble à cette heure triompher jusque dans l’Art. L’Idée sémite est matérialiste en opposition à l’Idée arya-hellénique qui fut toujours idéaliste.
Chapter 3: Doctrinal Divisions, Social Reform, Nature, and the Past: “The notorious exhibition program has necessarily been reduced”\(^1\)

Péladan sought to reform society by exhibiting religious, idealized art that would: depict an external realm outside of everyday life; focus on his concept of Beauty; avoid unacceptable deformations of the natural world; venerate the past; and utilize historically based techniques. In some ways, the exhibiting artists built on these ideas, developing anti-naturalist, anti-materialist methods to express their focus on eternal, mystical Ideas. Thus, like many contemporary Symbolists and exhibitors at alternative venues, they turned away from positivism to focus on larger spiritual matters. In his theories, Péladan emphasized the importance of keeping sacred art separate from everyday life. However, many of the participating artists diverged from this principle by supporting the integration of art and life, often arguing that reform and an increase in spirituality could result from mixing art—for example decorative or functional works—with life. Other participants transformed natural forms, utilizing a range of techniques, often elongating bodies, distorting perspective, and intensifying colors to depict immaterial spaces and ideas. While Péladan supported idealizing nature, he rarely discussed specific aesthetic techniques and when he did, he argued against what he considered to be deformations of the human body or perspective. Additionally, some artists broke from Péladan in terms of the extent to which they relied on specific historical practices and developed new techniques. Throughout this chapter, I use critical writings by Péladan and the artists to reveal divergences between their theories across these three general categories: the relationship between art and life, the

interpretation or transformation of nature, and the influence of history and earlier artistic movements.

Péladan’s desire to synthesize religion and art in order to improve society was tied to a key artistic and theoretical discourse at the time. In late nineteenth-century France, numerous artists attempted to improve society, often through the use of religious art and esoteric sources.² Thus, Geneviève Lacambre writes that artists turned to theosophy, esotericism, the dream, and the imagination because they “live[d] in an anxious society and search[ed] to escape the grip of naturalism and dominant materialism.”³ In this way, Péladan and the exhibiting artists reflected widespread contemporary attitudes as they sought to use art, religion, and mysticism to idealize and improve themselves and reform a society that they considered banal.⁴

Despite the exhibitors’ larger ties to the group’s platform and their emphasis on improving society, several committed artists and many occasional participants developed theoretical frameworks that diverged from Péladan’s ideas. In fact, contemporary critics, unlike many scholars of the Rose + Croix, perceived these doctrinal rifts and went so far as to argue that Péladan ineffectively implemented his ideas in organizing the Salons. Specifically, Delville’s


⁴ See Hirsh for a discussion of how contemporary Symbolists attempted to solve the purportedly degenerative effects of urbanization through an emphasis on the individual’s inner life. Hirsh opposes the idea that Symbolist artists merely sought to escape from materialist society, instead revealing the ways in which a variety of these artists sought to mitigate the impact of what many saw as widespread degeneration. Hirsh, Symbolism and Modern Urban Society.
theories on the social role of art, on Idealism, and on Impressionism and Point’s statements regarding Idealism and the importance of history diverge significantly from the group platforms. Similarly, published works by Edmé Couty on the decorative arts and by Adolphe LaLyre on the role of academic drawing reveal tensions between Péladan’s doctrines and those espoused by the associated artists. In addition, statements by Séon, Chabas, and Osbert reveal breaks from Péladan in terms of idealism, the depiction of nature, and the role of reliance on past art.

**Criticism—Concessions and Castigation**

Contemporary reviewers of the Rose + Croix noted significant divisions between the group’s doctrine and the implementation as several writers argued that the organization’s lofty and important principles were not enforced. The group published a variety of detailed rules and manifestos but did not standardize these rules and did not even adhere to clearly stated principles. Contemporary writers noted a variety of breaks between the platforms and the events and critics discussed what they believed to be organizational failures, arguing that the quality of the exhibited artworks varied widely and that the group ignored the Salon’s idealist program. Other writers focused on the founder himself, blaming Péladan for not creating clear stylistic guidelines due to his focus on literary rather than aesthetic concerns. The artist was another commonly identified culprit, since many reviewers either blamed the exhibitors for sending inferior works or singled out specific successes as anomalies.

Some recent scholarly accounts address the divide between the Salons’ goals and executions but do not accurately express the full extent of these breaks. For example, Blythe

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5 This section considers a wide variety of reviews focused on the six salons, showing contemporary responses across a range of publications and throughout the duration of the events. Daily newspapers, monthly art reviews, and journals addressing a variety of religious and artistic topics are all included in order to consider a broad spectrum of responses.
makes important connections to other contemporary exhibition groups, but in terms of the Rose + Croix, she writes: “For the most part Péladan’s selection reflected these goals—timeless landscapes, but only ones with figures, ideally robed women, no references to history, but plenty of mythology of all sorts.” Yet Péladan actually broke from his own mandates by accepting landscapes. For example, Félix Vallotton exhibited *Cadre Contenant Deux Sujets Originaux Sur Bois:*—*Hautes-Aples [sic]* in 1892, which the art critic Félix Fénéon identified as woodcut landscapes depicting *Le Cervin* and *Le Breithorn* (Figs. 3.1, 3.2)

For some critics, the divide between the goals and execution was so extreme that they viewed the Salons as a failure, considering them merely social occasions—in contrast to Péladan’s argument that they were major aesthetic events that would reform both society and art. Many contemporary writers highlighted this social aspect of the exhibitions by discussing the large number of viewers, the fashionable attendees, and the traffic jams, or by describing the Salons as stylish and scandalous, rather than aesthetically innovative. Even critics who argued for the importance of the exhibitions tended to frame this significance more in terms of curiosity

6 Blythe, “Promising Pictures,” 76.

7 Additionally, although Péladan rejected genre scenes, Blythe inaccurately states that the Salons elided historical references. Significantly, the original restriction was not actually opposed to all historical references—thus the inclusion of historical figures like Joan of Arc and references to medieval tempera techniques fit the original program, but not Blythe’s restatement of it.


than artistic development or reform. One reviewer even claimed that the Salons were unworthy of repeated or close viewing, writing: “One goes there one time; one does not return there.”

The rules clearly privileged low quality or poorly executed works that fit the larger program over even perfectly executed depictions of the rejected subjects. Yet critics often ignored this policy, viewing the inclusion of works of lower quality as a major flaw in implementation, rather than a problematic tenet of the program. These writers considered the perceived lack of effective editorial control to be a major impediment to creating an exhibition of high-quality art—a fairly standard goal for exhibitions in fin de siècle Paris. For example, one critic argued for a change in the execution of the platform, writing:

Some originalities manage though to arise out of the flow of cumbersome banalities, and still, it seems to me that we should look to curb the fury of these floods. There is between originality and stupidity (say folly, if the word stupidity is too strong) a bridge so small, so slender and so fragile, that it is necessary to severely restrict [one’s]…steps, before crossing it.

However, rather than a flaw of implementation, the exhibition of imperfect works was actually aligned with the foundational principles of the Rose + Croix, which argued for the inclusion of low-quality idealist artworks. In this light, what critics identified as Péladan’s lack of emphasis

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11 “L’intérêt de ces expositions n’est pas contestable, et le succès réel des deux précédentes, la curiosité excitée dans le public par la mise en scène singulière et surannée dont elles ont coutume de s’entourer, et aussi, il le faut dire, le mérite indéniable de quelques-uns des artistes ainsi révélés, faisaient un devoir de s’enquérir de celle-là et de faire connaître quelles attractions inédites elle réservait cette année.” Quittard, “Le Prochain Salon de la Rose + Croix,” 2.


13 Péladan, Salon de la Rose-Croix: règles et monitoires, 8–9.

14 “Quelques originalités arrivent pourtant à émerger du flot des banalités encombrantes, et encore, me semble-t-il qu’il va falloir veiller à mettre un frein à la fureur de ces flots. Il y a entre l’originalité et la stupidité (mettons la folie, si le mot de stupidité est trop fort) un pont si petit, si menu et si fragile, qu’il faut mesurer sévèrement ses pas, avant que de la franchir.” Victor Cousin, “La Vie Artistique: Salon de la Rose + Croix,” L’événement (March 22, 1897): 2.
on technique and execution was not a problem of implementation. This fundamental misconception by critics reveals how badly understood the principles of the Rose + Croix were.

The fact that reviewers did not always understand the complex and sometimes contradictory constitution, manifesto, and rules is especially problematic because several reviewers complemented the platform, conception, or vision of the Salons, but criticized the actual events. One such critic lamented the wide divergence between Péladan’s valuable ideals and the group’s failure to meet these goals:

And it’s a pity. Mr. Péladan’s thought had a haughty and painful nobility; but having dreamed so high, the author of The Supreme Vice did not how to keep his vision of the artist and the simplicity it held. His efforts were better than the sarcasm and indifference due to which a so beautifully conceived attempt is now dying out.\(^{15}\)

Despite his support for the original concept, this critic argued that the idealist tendency was dying, and the fault lay in the fact that Péladan had diverged from his conceptions of the Salons. On the other hand, another critic more clearly laid out several specific problems with the Salon, blaming the lack of effective works—and in fact, the presence of nightmarish works—on a variety of factors, including the organizers’ lack of interest in execution and a perceived break from science.\(^{16}\) Chastising the artists as well, this reviewer argued that the exhibitors did not create these works in bad faith, but that the poor quality of the objects themselves did result in

\(^{15}\) “Et c’est dommage. La pensée de M. Peladan a été d’une hautaine et gêneuse noblesse; mais d’avoir rêvé si haut, l’auteur de Vice suprême n’a pas su garder à sa vision d’artiste la tenue et la simplicité qu’elle comportait. Ses efforts valaient mieux que la sarcasme et l’indifférence dans laquelle se meurt aujourd’hui une tentative si bellement conçue.” Jean de Mitty, “Les Petits Salons,” La Grande Dame (1894): 165–166.

\(^{16}\) H. Durand-Tahier, “Le Salon de la Rose + Croix,” La Plume, no. 70 (March 15, 1892): 131–132. A variety of other critics also criticized the Salon for the breaks between style and theories. For example, René Boylesve’s review of Henri Martin’s work is positive, but he notes that the stylization is lower than the level of the conception. He considers the means of evoking and suggesting used in works showing women alone, looking and dreaming to be somewhat puerile, and a conventional sign. René Boylesve, “Les Arts,” L’Ermitage (1896): 44.
the group’s inability to execute its program. In particular, this writer singled out Albert Trachsel’s fantastical architectural pieces, arguing that even the artist himself could not have admired these works.¹⁷

Even in positive reviews, critics often mentioned the Salons’ breaks from the group’s platform. For example, one-time exhibitor and member of the Nabis Félix Vallotton wrote that despite everyone’s expectations to the contrary, the first Salon was actually well-organized, and the works were made with sincerity, faith, and honesty.¹⁸ Vallotton even went so far as to endorse Péladan: “One can have for Sâr Péladan, his habits, his costumes and his absurdity, all possible indifference; but one owes him in any case, after the smile, a cordial thanks for having allowed the public itself to judge so many braveries and such tangible results.”¹⁹ Yet, despite beginning with these positive descriptions and even thanking Péladan for the Salons, Vallotton asserted that they events were only loosely connected to Péladan’s original conceptions:

The notorious exhibition program has necessarily been reduced, such that of its primitive rigors, hardly anything has survived but the exclusion of all work related to contemporary life, as well as all portraiture—with an honorary


¹⁹ “On peut avoir pour le Sâr Péladan, pour ses manies, ses costumes et son ridicule, toute l’indifférence possible; mais on lui doit en tout cas, après le sourire, un cordial remerciement pour avoir mis le public à même de juger tant de vaillances et de si tangibles résultats.” Vallotton, “Beaux-Arts: Le salon de la Rose-Croix: I,” 3. For slightly different transcriptions and translations, see Hedy Hahnloser-Bühler, Félix Vallotton et ses amis (Paris: A. Sedrowski, 1936), 179; Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 131.
exception made, naturally,—for this one of the Sâr, in a purple toga, displayed in full light and pitifully bad.\textsuperscript{20} (Fig. 1.1)

Even to the Salon’s supporters and appreciators, the group’s conception was more effective than its execution. Similarly, the critic Alphonse Germain reacted more positively to the program than the implementation itself, arguing that the Rose + Croix was complaisant in applying its principles.\textsuperscript{21} In his review, Germain’s florid language reflects that of the platform, revealing his own attachment to the group’s verbiage: “O Laws of Harmony, Sacred Standards, once highly venerated, today unknown! Who shall worship your honor? But who will open the eyes of the people who, losing all sense of truth, are deserting the altars of God?”\textsuperscript{22} Nevertheless, he critiqued the event when he suggested that the Rose + Croix should have followed its stated ideology even if it had to show only a small number of works.\textsuperscript{23}

Vallotton actually understated the range of breaks from the program when he wrote that the only rules that remained were the rejections of contemporary life and portraiture—in fact, at the first Salon there were at least seven portraits.\textsuperscript{24} Yet, technically, according to various

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\textsuperscript{20}“Le fameux programme de l’exposition a forcément dû être atténué, et de ses rigueurs primitives, il n’a guère subsisté que l’exclusion de toute œuvre ayant trait à la vie contemporaine, ainsi que de tout portrair, —exception d’honneur, naturellement, —pour celui du Sâr, en toge violette, étalé en pleine lumière et mauvais à faire pitié.” Vallotton, “Beaux-Arts: Le salon de la Rose-Croix: I,” 3. For a slightly different translation, see Pincus-Witten, \textit{Occult Symbolism in France}, 131.


\textsuperscript{23}“Un programme était dressé, la cause exigeait qu’il fût scrupuleusement mis à exécution, dût-on n’exposer que trente œuvres ou moins encore.” Germain, “L’Idéal au Salon de la Rose+Croix,” 216.

\textsuperscript{24}The section on rejected subjects excludes the exhibition of (even perfectly executed) history, military or patriotic, and contemporary paintings. All portraits were to be rejected—with variable exceptions, related either the works’ honor or the costume being undatable. Péladan, \textit{Salon de la Rose-Croix: règles et monitoires}, 8; Péladan, \textit{La décadence latine, étôpée XI. Typhonie; avec la règle esthétique du second salon de la Rose + Croix}, 245; Péladan,
published doctrines there were a wide variety of unspecified exceptions to this rule, because a portrait was acceptable if it was “not dated by costume and attain[ed] style,” in the case of an unspecified “iconic honor,” “on the condition that the person may be otherwise beautiful or notable according to the aesthetic,” or if it was not a “portrait of unknowns.”  

25 Séon’s exhibition of a portrait of Péladan and a study for the same work presumably fit within these exceptions. Portraits of Richard Wagner by Rogelio de Egusquiza, a bust of Verlaine by Auguste de Niederhaüsern-Rodo, and Vallotton’s portraits of Verlaine and Baudelaire (Figs. 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5) would have been similarly exempt.  

26 Less easily explained, however, a work by Jean-Alexandre Pézieux, *Buste de ma mère*, more clearly breaks from the restriction against portraiture. The organizer’s concessions on rejected subjects varied in consistency from year to year and at the second Salon, in addition to several portraits, there was even a still life—despite the rule unambiguously excluding this genre.  

27 The next year, the organizers claimed that these acceptances had been necessary to fill the large venue, arguing that the rules would be
implemented more strictly at the third Salon, which was to be held in a smaller room. This official acknowledgment that the leaders were not following their own rules reveals the extent to which the Rose + Croix diverged from even Péladan’s most clearly articulated principles.

Count Larmandie and contemporary critics often tied these breaks from the rules to logistical issues. Criticism of the third Salon, for instance, often mentioned that it was held in a much smaller venue and only a limited number of works were shown. Larmandie even framed the larger quantity of works as a drawback of the previous Salons, admitting that whereas they had previously bent the rules in order to accept enough works to fill the large rooms, the third Salon would more strictly adhere to its platform:

The exhibition of last year, [Larmandie] tells us, sinned by more than one point: the exaggerated dimensions of the room where it took place and, perhaps, an insufficiently critical [perspective] allowed the admission of far too large a number of paintings. This excessive number of art objects of which some, it is permissible to say, had no right to be there, undermined the success of our show. So this year, we have shown a greater severity, justified anyway by the extreme rigor of our statutes. The rules of the order prohibit…any painting that is not pure idealism, regardless of its value. The portrait in general, landscape, genre, and military painting are not admitted, and this year, the rules will be strictly applied.

Although this exhibition was, in fact, smaller and included fewer works, it did not escape criticism for including works beyond the scope of the group’s program. For example, one critic still argued that this Salon featured artworks that were ineffective, outside of the rules, or merely

28 Quittard paraphrased Léonce de Larmandie in Quittard, “Le Prochain Salon de la Rose + Croix,” 2.

29 Quittard paraphrases Léonce de Larmandie: “L’Exposition de l’année dernière, nous dit-il, péchait par plus d’un point: les dimensions exagérées de la salle où elle avait lieu et, peut-être aussi, une critique insuffisante avait permis l’admission d’un nombre de toiles infiniment trop considérable. Ce nombre exagéré d’objets d’art dont quelques-uns, il est permis de la dire, n’avaient aucun titre à prendre place chez nous, a nui au succès de notre exposition. Aussi, cette année, nous nous sommes montrées d’une sévérité plus grande, justifiée d’ailleurs par l’extrême rigueur de nos statuts. Les règles de l’ordre proscivent, vous le savez, tout tableau qui n’est pas de pure idéalité, quelle que puisse être sa valeur. Le portrait, en général, le paysage, le genre, la peinture militaire ne sont point admis et, cette année, le règlement sera étroitement appliqué.” Quittard, “Le Prochain Salon de la Rose + Croix,” 2.
bizarre. He conceded however, that the smaller space and number of objects allowed for greater homogeneity. Another critic argued that due to its diminished size, this event was even less significant than that of the previous year. Additionally, while Larmandie framed this reduction as the result of stricter regulation, this reviewer instead saw it as an exodus on the part of the artists and wrote that he regretted that such a large number of artists had defected from the group.

In addition to criticizing the events and the implementation of the rules, a variety of reviewers critiqued the platform itself, arguing that Péladan overemphasized esoteric or literary issues to the detriment of aesthetic concerns. One critic approved of “restoring the Ideal,” and “focusing on tradition,” but wrote that Péladan was distracted from aesthetic effectiveness: “Aesthetic Péladan seems diminished by hierophant Péladan.” On the other hand, another reviewer cited literary emphasis, rather than esoteric diversions, as the key problem. He stated that the Rose + Croix responded to literary rather than artistic goals and as a result: “Péladan does not seem to want to provide our ateliers with a new technique.” The critic went so far as to assert that Péladan’s emphasis would later doom the venture: “Here, the aesthetic attempt is merely the tail of a literary movement. It serves no painter’s desire, but only the desires of

30 “Le salon de la Rose + Croix a la vie duré. Nous ne lui en ferons certes pas de reproche. Chacun a bien le droit de manifester comme il l’entend ses tendances artistiques, et celles-ci sont, au moins sur le programme de ce petit cénacle, d’un idéal assez noble et élève pour qu’on les prenne au sérieux et qu’on leur souhaite bonne chance. Le malheur est, que dans cet ambitieux essai de régénérescence de l’art par l’idéalisme, il y ait trop peu de vrais artistes et souvent plus de bizarrerie que de talent et de conception…. Cette année du moins la collection de toiles qui nous est présentée a plus d’homogénéité est moins déparée d’épouvantails que l’année dernière.” Fréchencourt, “Le Salon de la Rose + Croix,” La Gazette de France (April 9, 1894): 2–3.


writers. There is hardly any example in the history of art that evolutions of this kind ever succeeded.”

Beyond discussing the organization and principles, some writers singled out specific artists and artworks that did not conform to the group’s theories, whether in positive or negative terms. Supporting the dissidents, one critic distanced his favorite works from Péladan’s conceptions by categorizing said works (by Khnopff, Delville, Point, Cornillier, Chabas, and Gachons) as “the beautiful works sent to the Rose + Croix [that incorporate]…nothing very specific to its program.” On the other hand, another reviewer argued against these anomalous artists, singling out Charles Maurin’s work as pornographic and Vallotton’s as unidealized. Additionally, he identified the presence of works specifically rejected from the program—including landscapes, portraits, and humorous or naturalistic depictions of contemporary life.

In Vallotton’s two-part review of the first Salon, he discussed a variety of specific artists, generally supporting the venture, but writing that as at all exhibits, “there are the inevitable horrors.” In fact, Vallotton denigrated Séon as one of the lesser artists, yet one who predominated: “His countless frames fail to provide the total value of just one of [the better


works], but he is the most ‘Rose + Croix’ and that compensates.”38 Vallotton supported his close friend Charles Maurin, writing that “of all the exhibited works, that of M. Maurin is unquestionably one of the most interesting, [one] of the most elevated, and [one] of the most learned,” and blamed the audience for the negative criticism of Maurin’s work, writing that “the public who seeks above all in a painting the ‘little story’ and who does not find it there, screams immediately of the hoax and of the scandal.”39 Specifically, Vallotton argued that Maurin created the work because he was unhappy with having to follow contemporary tastes, so instead, Maurin:

has, for his own joy of it, for his own contentment and for his own love of beautiful forms and of harmonious curves, grouped some nudes in his paintings, as it pleased him to, as he wanted them and where he wanted them, regardless of verisimilitude, or secondary questions of perspective or common sense,—all things, whatever they say, that an artist is sometimes happy to get rid of.40

According to this one-time exhibitor, the events included a range of artworks which conformed to the group’s theories to varying extents—yet he argued that this did not necessarily correspond with each work’s general effectiveness.

In addition to reprimanding the organizers for being complaisant with regard to the implementation of their principles, contemporary critic Alphonse Germain also criticized some


39 “Et cependant, de toutes les œuvres exposées, celle de M. Maurin est sans contredit une plus des plus intéressantes, des plus élevées, artistiquement parlant, et des plus savantes; mais le public qui cherche avant tout dans un tableau ‘la petite histoire,’ et qui ne l’y trouve pas, crie tout de suite à la mystification et au scandale. ” Vallotton, “Beaux-Arts: Le salon de la Rose-Croix: II,” 3.

40 “…a, pour sa joie à lui, pour son seul contentement et pour son seul amour des belles formes et des bourbes harmonieuses, groupé des nus dans ses toiles, selon son bon plaisir, comme il le voulait et où il le voulait, sans souci des vraisemblances, ou des secondaires questions de perspective ou de sens commun, —toutes choses, quoiqu’on dise, dont un artiste est parfois heureux de pouvoir se débarrasser.” Vallotton, “Beaux-Arts: Le salon de la Rose-Croix: II,” 3.
artists for sending their best works to the higher-profile Salons of the Champs-Elysées and the Champ de Mars.\textsuperscript{41} For Germain, this was a renunciation of the artists’ commitment to the Rose + Croix and an example of a bourgeois attitude to money.\textsuperscript{42} Thus, for the critic, a variety of artists exhibiting at the events showed low levels of commitment to the group.\textsuperscript{43} Similarly, another reviewer wrote that some of the artists who continued to exhibit in 1895 were not sending their best works: “Some artists who send neither the best nor the most interesting of their work remain faithful, always surrounded by a larger number of objects which pass only by the favor of a title and [which] would be welcomed nowhere.”\textsuperscript{44} According to these critics, artists were utilizing the Salons as an unimportant venue for their low-quality works. Péladan clearly opposed this idea, and specifically insisted that artists should not treat the Rose + Croix as a venue for works that had already been exhibited elsewhere, writing: “The R+C artist is free to exhibit where and when he pleases, provided he sends a specially made work to the Salon of R+C every year.”\textsuperscript{45} Despite this injunction, however, several artists never adhered to this policy and several critics even

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\textsuperscript{41} He blames this on the artists’ desire for official recognition. Germain, “L’Idéal au Salon de la Rose+Croix,” 215–216.
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\textsuperscript{43} Alphonse Germain refers to several specific artists, including Dampt, Pézieux, Aman-Jean, and Rambaud, as sending works do not reveal their full talents. Germain, “L’Idéal au Salon de la Rose+Croix,” 215.
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\textsuperscript{44} “Quelques artistes qui n’envoient ni le meilleur ni le plus intéressant de leur œuvre restent fidèles, toujours environnés d’un plus grand nombre d’objets qui ne passent qu’à la faveur d’un titre et ne seraient accueillis nulle part.” Thadée Natanson, “Exposition,” \textit{La Revue Blanche} (1895): 336.
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\textsuperscript{45} “4. L’artiste R+C demeure libre d’exposer où et quand il lui plait, pourvu qu’il envoie tous les ans au Salon de la R+C, une œuvre spécialement faite.” Altotas, “Êtres & Choses.” Also see La Rochefoucauld, “La Rose + Croix du Temple,” 227–228.
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argued that some artists sent works that they would not have considered worthy of a more important venue.\textsuperscript{46}

These varied critiques over six years of the Salons reveal complex divisions between the artists and the way they were received. Additionally, two divisive reviews of the first Salon highlight the early presence of schisms.\textsuperscript{47} While still tied to the group, Antoine de La Rochefoucauld published a mixed review of the event in \textit{Notes d’art et d’archéologie}—which included a competing review by an anonymous figure associated with the group the next month.\textsuperscript{48} These reviews diverge significantly in terms of the extent to which they frame the Salons as an effective realization of the group’s program. La Rochefoucauld wrote that the “idealism [is] a little mixed and responds only imperfectly to the program developed by Sâr Péladan,” while the later reviewer argued that “the majority of the exhibited works respond to

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46 For example, Georges Minne clearly broke this Péladan’s rule that an artist had to send a work made for the Rose + Croix every year. He showed only one work at the first exhibition—\textit{Les adolescents dans les épines}. In the catalog listing this work is simply titled \textit{Dessin} with the owner listed as Robert Picard. Robert Pincus-Witten considered the work unknown, yet Albert Alhadeff persuasively argues that the work can be definitively identified as \textit{Les adolescents dans les épines}, a drawing that Edmond Picard commissioned for his son, Robert Picard, for his “don de majorité.” Alhadeff cites the fact that Edmond commissioned the work for Robert de Puyvelde. Significantly, this drawing was created in 1890, and was exhibited three times in 1892—at Les XX, The Rose + Croix, and finally, at L’association pour l’art. Albert Alhadeff, “George Minne: fin de siècle drawings and sculpture” (PhD diss., New York University, 1971), 97–101, 106. Minne never exhibited a work “specially made” for the Rose + Croix and if this directive were applied, Minne could not be considered an “R+C artist.” However, this rule was clearly not utilized, and thus, instead of further distancing the one-time exhibitor from the group, this exception actually reveals another break between the written rules and actual implementation.

47 Perhaps because they were published in a somewhat minor journal, these works have not been analyzed in scholarship focusing on the Rose + Croix.

48 Antoine de La Rochefoucauld, “Chronique,” \textit{Notes d’art et d’archéologie} (March 1892): 72; N.A., “Le Salon de la Rose + Croix.” Léonce de Larmandie may have been the author of the anonymous article, since several details are similar to his later discussion in \textit{L’entr’acte idéal}. In both works the author specifically cited the number of visitors on varnishing day—although the number cited is different. The anonymous author argued that the salon was a response to \textit{en plein air} painting, the Académie Jullian, and the Courbetists and describes the negative reaction of visitors to the Manet painting at the Durand-Ruel gallery—comments which parallel Larmandie’s descriptions of the salons in \textit{L’entr’acte idéal}. N.A., “Le Salon de la Rose + Croix,” 94.
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the severe and exclusive program, which was formulated six months ago by the organizers.49 To support this point, the anonymous reviewer claimed that there were no history, genre, marine, or military works and incorrectly stated that there was only one portrait.50 Despite his argument that the events closely matched the program, this reviewer blamed the inclusion of works which did not fit the program on “friendly considerations” (the implication being that they were only exhibited because of the artists’ ties to La Rochefoucauld as several exhibiting artists who deviated from Péladan’s principles were associated with La Rochefoucauld and left when he split from the group).51

These authors diverged significantly in their discussions of several artists, especially in their treatment of Albert Trachsel—who exhibited a series of highly geometrical theoretical plans and illustrations of various festivals and buildings. La Rochefoucauld conceded that the artist’s works were largely unintelligible but argued that this confusion was due to his own lack of knowledge, writing that “to tell the truth, in terms of the symbolism of lines and colors, we

49 “Elle est curieuse à voir, quoique d’un idéalisme un peu mêlé et ne répondant qu’imparfaitement aux conditions du programme élaboré par le ‘Sâr’ Peladan. Les peintures, purement mystiques, sont, en général, d’une faiblesse telle qu’on a tendance à n’y voir que des mystifications. Par contre, dès que l’on a affaire à un artiste en possession de son métier, il semble que le symbolisme s’évapore sous ses doigts trop habiles.” La Rochefoucauld, “Chronique,” 72. “La plus grande partie des œuvres exposées répond au programme sévère et exclusif, formulé il y a six mois, par les organisateurs.” N.A., “Le Salon de la Rose + Croix,” 93.


51 “Il y a bien par ci par là quelques œuvres fâcheuses, inférieures, contradictoires aux règles péladanes, que certaines considérations de camaraderie ont malheureusement inspirées. C’est, en tout cas, le très petit nombre. Je citerai les impuissantes laideurs d’Émile Bernard, bien intentionné, mais sachant mal son métier; les imitations inutiles de Cimabue, signées Filiger; les douteuses macabres des Belges Cainberlani [sic] et Delville; la Clinique obstétricale, de Cooren. L’Aurore, de Maurin, devant laquelle le public s’entasse cependant, que l’un exalte et que l’autre injure, ne mérite ni cet excès d’honneur ni cette indignité. Cette toile est peinte à la manière japonaise; toute perspective en est absente, la composition est confuse, les nudités, par trop nombreuses, ont des attitudes qui frisent l’obsénité. Mais les qualities de dessin sont des plus précieuses, et l’expression des vierges, éminemment fine et suggestive, démontre péremptoirement que l’on a affaire à une grande allégorie, et non point à une exhibition pornographique.” N.A., “Le Salon de la Rose + Croix,” 93–94. It is unclear which artist or work the author is referring to when he discusses the Clinique obstétricale.
confess to having everything to learn.” On the other hand, the anonymous reviewer singled out Trachsel for exhibiting “the most singularly boring” of the artworks shown at the Salon, describing the plans as unexecutable, and writing that the artist had succeeded in depicting a nightmare, “glory to his geometric soul.” Unsurprisingly, Trachsel did not return to any of the next five Salons.

Even in La Rochefoucauld’ś early review of the first Salon, tensions, divisions, and disagreements are apparent. La Rochefoucauld left the group before the anonymous review was published, yet the variations continued. Just as the critics highlighted the lack of unity throughout the six years, the artists’ own theories and principles reveal a variety of disagreements within the Rose + Croix. Rather than following the Rose + Croix’s detailed platforms, they treated the Salons as a broadly-conceived exhibition venue, sending widely varied works that only loosely corresponded with the specific mandates.

**Art and Society: The Role of the Decorative**

Péladan and the artists exhibiting at the Rose + Croix developed divergent theories regarding the value of intertwining art and everyday life. These questions were part of widespread contemporary debates regarding art’s role in reforming and improving society. A variety of Symbolist concepts and Rosicrucian principles informed these discussions, which encompassed issues of decadence, the salvageability of society, the role of the decorative arts,

52 “…à vrai dire, en matière de symbolisme des lignes et des couleurs, nous avouons avoir tout à apprendre.” La Rochefoucauld, “Chronique,” 72.


54 The term Decadence is generally applied to the literary movement at the fin de siècle that used themes and stylistic devices to depict the artificial, elaborate, perverse, and exotic, emphasizing what many contemporaries believed was the decay of civilization. While most often used to describe literature, the definition is sometimes
and the concept of the “decorative” in painting. Definitions of the decorative and the decorative arts were widely debated and the significance of the decorative for easel painting was interpreted in a variety of different ways. Symbolist theorists and artists frequently argued for the importance of bringing decorative elements into easel paintings—especially with murals influencing the depiction of broad zones of flat color and in terms of the desire to create decorative ensembles that either literally expanded to include interior design or figuratively controlled the surrounding space and environment. At the same time, the decorative, industrial, or ornamental arts—which encompassed a wide range of items that could include fans, vases, jewelry, and furniture—also began to be exhibited at the Champ de Mars and Champs-Elysées Salons. Theorists, artists, and dealers who believed in the restorative power of art and thought that society could be saved from complete degeneration often argued for integrating form and

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function, art and life, or utility and beauty through the decorative arts.\textsuperscript{57} In contrast, other artists and theorists adopted a pessimistic view that society was beyond salvation, arguing that art was sacred and needed to be protected from the degenerative effects of base life. Following this argument, art could more effectively create a sanctuary by remaining clearly distinct from everyday life. However, these positions were not mutually exclusive and many critics argued that the private, feminine sphere of the home created a sanctuary from the world and distanced art from the pervasive influence of base urban life.\textsuperscript{58}

Although Péladan and the artists repeatedly discussed the importance of social change, their emphasis on widespread reform actually diverges from some Rosicrucian principles, which value personal improvement over social change. According to such theories, social improvement can result from personal development, but the central purpose is the development of personal knowledge through occultism. Thus, the goal is not to improve society, but rather, to enhance the lives of individual members.\textsuperscript{59} Péladan fundamentally broke from this concept by creating a more accessible group, with advertisements and open exhibitions. Further, although his attempts to reach and impact a large audience incorporated many magical and occult doctrines, by publicizing his theories and events and seeking to reform all of society, he countered the

\textsuperscript{57} See Silverman, \textit{Art nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France}. See especially page 173 for the “fusion of beauty and utility,” 220 for “a ‘social’ art...that would infuse beauty into daily life,” and 273 for “nature as the source of solidarity in both style and society.”

\textsuperscript{58} For more on the varied attitudes toward public and private life and the integration of art and decoration, see Gloria Lynn Groom, \textit{Beyond the easel: decorative paintings by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis, and Roussel, 1890-1930} (Chicago; New Haven: Art Institute of Chicago; Yale University Press, 2001).

\textsuperscript{59} Goffin, \textit{Le secret de Bruges-la-Morte}, 46.
underlying principles of secrecy and personal improvement on which these concepts were based.  

Péladan repeatedly wrote that the main purpose of the Salons was social rather than aesthetic and that art was either a vehicle for social improvement or a means of celebrating the end of an unsalvageable decadent society. For example, he discussed beauty’s powers of redemption in a letter to Erik Satie and restated this function in the Salon rules, writing that the goal of the Rose + Croix was to “restore” the ideal, using tradition and beauty. Larmandie recounted that the group chose the aesthetic sphere not because it was their main goal, but because they saw an opening there and believed they could use art to impact their contemporaries. This principle explains Péladan’s acceptance of poorly executed but (apparently) socially redemptive works. One-time exhibitor Émile Bernard noted this break between the social goals of the Rose + Croix and the aesthetic concerns of contemporary artists, writing that “with the Salon of the Rose + Croix, the Sâr Péladan did not have the ambition of initiating a technical crusade—he wanted, in order to produce a spiritualist movement, to accept it in all forms.” For Bernard, due to this social rather than aesthetic emphasis, “it goes without

60 During the late nineteenth century, a wide variety of other authors, scholars, and artists also sought to publicize these concepts, but in doing so, they acted against the principles of Rosicrucian doctrine that was based not just on levels of initiation and layers of secrecy, but on personal development and group improvement, rather than general social evolution.

61 He generally framed the salons as a vehicle for social improvement, but he sometimes he wrote that his main purpose was to celebrate the end of Latin society. In either case, art was merely vehicle for what the founder viewed as larger concerns.


63 Larmandie, L’entr’acte idéal, 10.
saying that those boldest Synthetists agreed with him [Péladan] only poorly.”

The group’s emphasis on reforming society built on a variety of contemporary Symbolist and aesthetic concepts and was often repeated by critics, central figures like Larmandie, and exhibiting artists, like Bernard. Yet Péladan occasionally reversed his position on the main purpose of the Salons. Even though the Sâr generally stated that the goal of the Rose + Croix was to improve society, he sometimes wrote that society was beyond salvation and the Salons existed purely to create one last spectacle of the Latin Race. He referred to this pessimistic view less frequently, yet such a major divergence reveals a broader divide in terms of the group’s theoretical foundation. Pincus-Witten acknowledges that Péladan did not always support social reform, noting his occasional conflicting defeatist principles, yet the scholar argues: “Joséphin was convinced of the redemptive function of art.” While the main purpose of the Salons was certainly reformist and redemptive, Péladan’s nebulous attitude actually wavered between


65 Péladan, Salon de la Rose-Croix: règles et monitoires, 7; Péladan, “Le Salon de la Rose + Croix,” 1. Péladan’s divergent positions regarding social change are also apparent in his literary output, in which he also tended to vacillate between focusing on a celebration and an idealist reformation. Péladan’s Latin Decadence is a series of fifteen novels which incorporates autobiographical characters, astrological elements, and a wide variety of plots and subjects, all within his larger project of depicting the downfall of the Latin Race by showing the depths to which French society had fallen. The works were published starting in 1884 and established Péladan’s reputation, largely due to the preface to the first novel, which was written by Jules Barbey d’Aurevilly. Dixon, Laurinda S, “Art and Music in the Salons de la Rose + Croix, 1892-1897,” 172. At the same time, Péladan’s writing has been widely criticized for the author’s verbose style. For example, Pincus-Witten writes: “A self-styled visionary, Péladan’s criticism is seriously crippled by an excess of florid and pedantic display.” Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 7.

66 Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 33.
extreme positions; he alternately argued that art would guide the way to redemption and that there was no hope for salvation.

Reflecting the group’s focus on social reform, Chabas, an artist who exhibited at every Salon, argued that religion, art, and social change were intertwined, and that reform could only result from depicting ideal, eternal scenes. Even years later, he wrote that creating this type of work was an artist’s duty: “Only the transcription of the divine world should concern the artist, whose mission is to materialize in forms comprehensive to our human minds, the external appearances of the celestial states.” For Chabas, this mission allowed artists to have a larger social impact; as Chabas scholar Myriam de Palma explains:

The aesthetic question constituted a major problem for Maurice Chabas, because he thought that from his solution flowed social guidelines. If, for him, humanity went adrift, it was precisely [the fault of] of this essential rudder. He proclaims thus the necessity of never separating the aesthetic ideal and the social project.

Chabas’ sentiments effectively reflect the group’s broad reformist principles. Like Péladan, for Chabas, the route to social change was not through integrating art into daily life, but through depicting idealized scenes that could raise the human consciousness. In contrast to these ideas, a variety of exhibiting artists focused on creating functional objects or “decorative” compositions that would integrate with their surroundings. Instead of viewing art as part of an eternal, sacred

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67 “Seule la transcription du monde divin doit préoccuper l’artiste, qui se donne pour mission de matérialiser dans des formes compréhensives (sic) à nos entendements humains, les apparences extérieures des états célestes.” Myriam de Palma quotes from a document identified as: Maurice Chabas, Quelques pensées. Extraits de carnets, brochure imprimée, vers 1918-1920. Palma, Maurice Chabas, peintre et messager spirituel, 1862-1947, 19, 27.

68 “La question esthétique constituait un problème capital pour Maurice Chabas, car il pensait que de sa solution découlaient les directives sociales. Si, pour lui, l’humanité s’en allait à la dérive, c’était précisément faute de ce gouvernail indispensable. Il proclamait ainsi la nécessité de ne jamais dissocier idéal esthétique et projet social.” Palma, Maurice Chabas, peintre et messager spirituel, 1862-1947, 19.
space that needed to be protected from the material world, these artists sought to bring about social improvement in a different way—by integrating art and life.

A variety of artworks exhibited at the Rose + Croix were discussed as decorative works by critics or were listed as “decorative panels” in the catalog. In the early twentieth century, while discussing some exhibitors at the Salons, art critic Achille Segard wrote that decorative paintings were created for a specific location and were subordinate to the overall ensemble. Yet he also addressed a range of decorative easel works which did not have a predetermined venue but displayed decorative qualities such as simplicity and large fields of color. He specifically argued that the exhibitors Henri Martin and Edmond Aman-Jean created works that expanded to encompass the surrounding space:

Decorative design implies a direct relationship between the destination imposed on the artist and the idea or feeling that the artist wants to bring out of a determined space. Decorative execution considers the subject by the masses, proceeds by large touches, removes detail, requires distance, and subordinates all the means of execution to the simplicity and clarity of a lesson … intended for communities rather than individuals. The decorative sense finally, by purely plastic means, especially by the invisible extensions of its arabesque, establishes continuity between the painted work and the place where it is placed, radiates beyond the physical limits of the frame, affects surfaces surrounding the frame around the painting and creates a kind of atmosphere around the painting that prevents the work from ever appearing focused on itself and isolated from the rest of the world.

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70 Segard, Peintres d’aujourd’hui, 65.

71 “La conception décorative implique un rapport direct entre la destination imposée à l’artiste et l’idée ou le sentiment que le peintre veut faire surgir d’un espace déterminé. L’exécution décorative, envisage le sujet par les masses, procède par grandes taches, supprime les détails, exige du recul, et subordonne tous les moyens d’exécution à la simplicité et à la clarté d’un enseignement (fût-il purement plastique) destiné à des collectivités plutôt qu’à des individualités. Le sens décoratif enfin, par des moyens purement plastiques, plus particulièrement par les prolongements invisibles de son arabesque, établit une continuité entre l’œuvre peinte et le lieu où elle est placée, irradie au-delà des limites matérielles du cadre, influe sur les surfaces environnantes, les enveloppe, et crée autour
For Segard, even easel paintings by Martin and Aman-Jean display a decorative sense because of their expansion and envelopment of nearby works.\textsuperscript{72}

Significantly, at the Salons of the Rose + Croix these easel paintings were not exhibited as part of a larger program, but as singular objects. This must be contrasted to the concept of the decorative advocated by a variety of other contemporary artists, especially several members of the Nabis, who, according to Katherine Kuenzli, specifically distanced their works from easel painting by creating decorative environments that focused on sensation, imagination, the dream, and collective experience.\textsuperscript{73} While Segard argued that Aman-Jean’s easel paintings were decorative because they fit the surrounding space, the Nabis actually did fill private spaces with permanent decorative environments that emphasized individual sensation and a unity that “critiqued modernity and its culture of individualism.”\textsuperscript{74} Kuenzli argues that, in the case of the Nabis, these environments erased the “boundaries between self and other, painting and viewer, in order to inspire in the beholder a sense of oneness with the world.”\textsuperscript{75} Thus, the more expansive Nabi creations form an important contrast to the public, temporary exhibition of decorative easel painting at the Rose + Croix.

\textsuperscript{72} Segard, \textit{Peintres d’aujourd’hui}, 64–65.

\textsuperscript{73} Kuenzli, \textit{The Nabis and intimate modernism}, 25.

\textsuperscript{74} Kuenzli, \textit{The Nabis and intimate modernism}, 15.

\textsuperscript{75} Kuenzli, \textit{The Nabis and intimate modernism}, 15.
In addition to this characterization of works in the catalog and by critics, another decorative presence at the Salons was the exhibition of functional items and objects d’art. The Salons of the Rose + Croix included a range of functional objects and several sculptures were exhibited by artists who were otherwise best known for their functional or decorative works. Specifically, even though François-Rupert Carabin exhibited a statuette at the Rose + Croix, he was well-known for his furniture. Albert Gabriel Servat also exhibited five forged iron works at the first Salon, including a wall lamp, three candlesticks, and a chandelier. Similarly, Cornillier displayed a fan and Delphine Arnould de Cool showed several Limoges Enamels. Other functional decorative works included a holy water font by Dubois, two screens by Numa Gillet, and a funerary urn by Vallgren.

The inclusion of some of these decorative, ornamental works at the Salons reveals another significant break from the group’s doctrine as published in Péladan’s *L’art idéaliste & mystique: Doctrine de l’ordre et du Salon Annuel des Rose + Croix*, in which the author denounced any ornamental works that produced pleasure but not nobility and specifically divided

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**76** At this time, the definitions of these terms were widely debated, and although the Salons of the Champ de Mars and the Champs-Élysées both used the term *objets d’art*, neither established definitive lines between their categories for drawing, *objets d’art*, and sculpture. Thus, some types of artworks were exhibited in multiple categories. Although these categories were not clearly defined, the artworks were exhibited in separate rooms divided by these groups, unlike at the Rose + Croix, where the works were all shown together. See for example, the catalog for the 1893 Salon des Champs-Élysées: Société des artistes français, *Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure et lithographie des artistes vivants exposés au Palais des Champs-Élysées le 1er mai 1893* (Paris: P. Dupont, 1893), CCX–CCXVII, 165–387. Reproduced in Sanchez, *Les catalogues des Salons*, vol. 17: 1893–1895. (Dijon: Echelle de Jacob Editions, 2009). For a detailed discussion of the role of the decorative arts at this time, see Silverman, *Art nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France*, 207–283.

**77** Servat collaborated with Carabin on decorative projects like a bookcase currently housed at the Musée d’Orsay.

**78** Only the medium (and not the specific format of these works) is included in the catalog.
sacred works from secular or worldly artworks. He even argued against the exhibition of functional decorative works alongside paintings, writing:

In the field of decorative art, that is to say art subordinated to industry, one can brighten up a panel, a piano, a box cover, the leaves of a fan with flowers; but exhibiting them as works of art is tantamount to inviting music lovers to hear a piano exercise. Flower painting must therefore never leave industry and intimacy and, since I pronounced this word decorative art, I want to say that the entire age is wrong by conflating mural or monumental painting with stationery, marquetry [inlaid ivory, wood, etc.], brassware.

Péladan tied such works to degeneration, arguing that, like all secular pieces, they could never have a regenerative role, elevate the soul, or be more than a shadow of great art. In addition to the fact that he argues against showing these works alongside paintings, Péladan’s discussion of decorative artworks as subordinate to industry (rather than focused on Beauty or reform) makes their exhibition at the Salons problematic, since the Rose + Croix was supposed to focus on viewers who were interested in moral improvement, not those merely seeking amusement or aesthetic pleasure. Although decorative or functional objects, including some ceramics, painted enamels, candlesticks, and fans did not comprise a major portion of the exhibition, their mere inclusion reveals an important break from the founder’s doctrine.

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79 Péladan, *L’art idéaliste et mystique*, 52.

80 “Dans le domaine de l’art décoratif, c’est-à-dire de l’art subordonné à l’industrie, on peut égayer un panneau, un piano, un couvercle de boîte, les brandies d’éventail avec des fleurs; mais les exposer comme œuvres d’art équivaut à convier des mélomanes pour entendre un exercice de trait pianistique. La peinture de fleurs ne doit donc jamais sortir de l’industrie et de l’intimité et, puisque j’ai prononcé ce mot d’art décoratif, je tiens à dire que l’époque entière se trompe en amalgamant la fresque, ou peinture monumentale, avec la papeterie, la marqueterie, la dinanderie.” Péladan, *L’art idéaliste et mystique*, 132–133.


Despite Péladan’s personal opposition to exhibiting decorative works alongside murals and monumental paintings, the platform of Rose + Croix specifically allowed for the exhibition of the decorative arts. Whereas Péladan railed against ornamental works, Gary de Lacroze, who claimed a foundational role in the group, argued for the importance of the exhibition of the decorative arts at the Salons:

By the cult of tradition it brought the Ideal and Beautiful into Art, while satisfying modern tendencies toward the ‘beautiful manner’ by the rehabilitation of the minor arts, that have been admitted alongside the great art in the first exhibition of modern and decorative art. This ‘Third Salon,’ as one called it, announced and preceded the initiative of the last official Salons, and the success of the recent exhibitions of the decorative arts.\(^83\)

His support for the decorative arts reveals that this policy was aligned with his beliefs, even though it broke from Péladan’s theories. Additionally, with this quote, Lacroze distanced himself from Péladan’s rejection of modernity by arguing that including the decorative arts was a way to combine what he referred to as the modern and the traditional.\(^84\)

In addition to Gary de Lacroze, another member of the septenaire may have played a role in developing this rule. Specifically, Antoine de La Rochefoucauld signed the original mandate that allowed for the inclusion of these works.\(^85\) This rule specifically allowed for the exhibition


\(^{84}\) Lacroze also notes that the policy builds on the recent successful change in the official Salons, since the SNBA first included these works in 1891. Gary de Lacroze. Unspecified interview or document. Quoted or paraphrased in Boutet, Les aventuriers du mystère, 148.

\(^{85}\) Péladan, Salon de la Rose-Croix: règles et monitoires, 18. However, not all of the versions of the rules from this year include additional authors—some versions from the same year are attributed entirely to Péladan. Péladan, Organe trimestriel de l’Ordre: 1re livraison, 26–27.
of the decorative arts, works in metal, furniture, and ornamental drawings. Like several other statutes, it includes the names of specific historical artists as acceptable types.\textsuperscript{86} Significantly, however, although Péladan was not listed as the author in one version of the rules (implying that he did not write the original statute), he later included it in his own versions and retained it until the end of the Salons.\textsuperscript{87}

Beyond these divisions in the leadership’s positions, Péladan’s concept of the decorative differed from theories on this subject espoused by exhibiting artists. Five-time exhibitor Edmé Couty advocated for the decorative arts, worked at the Sèvres factory, and published a three-hundred-page book on drawing and composition in the industrial arts.\textsuperscript{88} In this work, Couty argued for the importance of decoration and line, claiming that children first experienced the world in terms of flatness and abstraction, rather than perspective or light and dark (\textit{clair-obscur}).\textsuperscript{89} According to Couty, education in the decorative arts should differ from that in painting and sculpture and focus more on developing memory and skills in analytical reasoning. Yet, Couty argued that since the decorator had to utilize all forms of nature and life, he needed to be able to think as an architect, a sculpture, and a painter—implying that the all-encompassing

\textsuperscript{86} These artists are “Jean d’Udine” and “Polydore of Caravage.” Péladan, \textit{Salon de la Rose-Croix: règles et monitoires}, 18.

\textsuperscript{87} In 1897, this appears as rule nine, “Aux Ouvriers d’Art.” Péladan, \textit{Vlème geste esthétique}, 33.


\textsuperscript{89} In this book, he also made a cross-cultural argument that perspective was actually a form of deformation, since he argued that it appeared in neither “primitive” art nor in all cultures. Edmé Couty, \textit{Le Dessin et la composition décorative appliqués aux industries d’art} (Paris: H. Dunod et E. Pinat, 1913), 63.
decorative arts were superior. Cauty’s stated goal was to add beauty to simple, logical forms, noting that decorative works required increased coherence due to their functionality. These theories emphasize decorative works, deviating from Péladan’s argument that these works should be treated as less significant than murals and monumental painting. Beyond this, Couty also assigned a significant role to mimesis by arguing that, although it was more complex, imaginative drawing relied on the same compositional principles as imitative composition.

Péladan rarely discussed specific artistic techniques, but he did advocate moving away from imitation when he stated: “The artist is one who feels and reproduces his emotion and not one who sees and reproduces only that which others can see.” In this way, Couty advocated for a greater acceptance of imitative drawing and the decorative arts than Péladan did.

Like Couty, one-time exhibitor François-Rupert Carabin engaged in debates on the role of the decorative arts. He had previously tested the artistic hierarchy and jury-free policies of the Indépendants in 1890, where he sought to exhibit a bookcase and desk. These items were rejected, with the official explanation that the artist ignored unspecified “regulations and deadlines.” While Carabin did not exhibit similarly functional items at the Rose + Croix, other artists did exhibit a fan, an urn, a font for holy water, and several light fixtures.

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90 Cauty, *Le Dessin et la composition décorative*, viii, 2. This also reflects contemporary ideas on the synthesis of the arts, which were strongly influenced by Wagner’s conceptions of the Gesamtkunstwerk.


92 He even mentions that perhaps these two forms should be taught simultaneously, rather than having imitative drawing viewed and taught as a precursor for imaginative work. Cauty, *Le Dessin et la composition décorative*, 1–2.

93 Péladan, *L’art idéaliste et mystique*, 128.

Including decorative items at the Salons of the Rose + Croix tied the group to recent exhibition developments, specifically building on Lacroze’s emphasis on bringing in “modern tendencies” and countering Péladan’s argument that his contemporaries should stop equating painting and the decorative arts.95 The inclusion of a wide range of objets d’art at Salons was a recent development, given that the Champ de Mars Salon only started accepting what they termed objets d’art in 1891 and the Indépendants rejected Carabin’s works in 1890. As explained by Lacroze, by incorporating these works, the Salons of the Rose + Croix, “this ‘Third Salon,’ … announced and preceded the initiative of the subsequent official Salons, and the success of the recent expositions of the Decorative Arts.”96 In this way, Lacroze explains the importance of the inclusion of the decorative arts by focusing on the group’s role in the development of newer exhibition strategies. This emphasis on recent developments breaks from Péladan’s constant focus on the past—an attachment which he later highlighted when he wrote: “I have loved the Past too much, its pompousness and its works.”97

The Natural World: Deformation and Idealization

Symbolist and idealist theories supporting distorting, deforming, or idealizing nature often built on the Neoplatonic idea that these transformations could reveal aspects of the more


97 “J’ai trop aimé le Passé, ses pompes et ses œuvres. Avec une terminologie archaïque, souverainement déplaisante dans un pays de suffrage universel et de laïcisme, j’ai prêché littéralement dans une langue morte. …Le vœu demeure; si je ne dois pas trouver la forme moderne de la vérité, j’aiderai les prédestinés par la leçon de mon aventure, à cette découverte…” Joséphin Péladan, Traité des antinomies: métaphysique (Paris: Chacornac, 1901), v.
perfect hidden world of forms. Scholars note, however, that Symbolists only superficially understood this German philosophy and its idealist versions, as discussed in the work of Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Fitch, and Schopenhauer. In addition to these sources, Symbolists also based their idealist art theories on Baudelaire’s concept of “correspondences” between nature and emotional or religious states. Pincus-Witten and Silva both tie Péladan’s ideas to those of Albert Aurier, especially his five Symbolist terms. Silva specifically associates the Salons with Aurier and the idealist, antinaturalist movement, arguing that these exhibitions represented both the aesthetic and sociological splits between art and the public. For Pincus-Witten, “the crucial difference between Aurier and Péladan is that Aurier had the genius to recognize these principles in the art of Paul Gauguin whereas Péladan’s were applied a priori to a host of less illustrious and, in many cases, inept artists.” However, rather than just a difference in application, Péladan’s concerns regarding the deformation of the body and the rules of perspective reveal a

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98 Burhan, Blythe, and Pincus-Witten all discuss this influence. Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 99. Burhan notes the fact that the Symbolist knowledge of German Idealist philosophy was superficial, citing A. G. Lehman and Karl Uitti. Burhan, “Vision and Visionaries,” 72. Blythe ties the French interest in idealism to the German philosophies that spread into France after the Franco-Prussian war, including Arthur Schopenhauer’s work—his The World as Will and Idea was published in French in 1886. She notes that French writers often cited Kant, Hegel, Schelling, and Fitch, adding that historians have noted the shallowness of the French understanding of these philosophies. Blythe, “Promising Pictures,” 30–31.


100 These five terms were: Ideist, Symbolist, Synthetic, Subjective, and Decorative. Aurier, “Symbolism in Painting: Paul Gauguin,” 1025–1029. Although Aurier’s theories were highly influential, he was unwilling to label many artists as true Symbolists—only van Gogh and Gauguin maintained this status, while the Neo-Impressionists were viewed as precursors and Maurice Denis was labeled a Synthetist. Mathews, Aurier’s Symbolist Art Criticism and Theory, 113–127.

101 “L’instauration du Salon de la Rose + Croix doit être située formellement dans le contexte de cette ‘réaction idéalist, mystique même’ que le critique Albert Aurier voyait se préparer après ‘l’agonie du naturalisme,’ et sociologiquement en regard de l’éclatement des institutions gestionnaires des expositions artistiques. Elle est symptomatique de la rupture qui s’opère alors en Occident entre l’art et le ‘public.‘” Silva, Le Salon de la Rose Croix, 6.

significant break from Aurier’s principles. In fact, Péladan actually had to stray from his own theories to accept artworks like *Ange des Splendeurs*, *Ecce Ancilla Domini* and *The Lamentation of Orpheus* (Figs. 1.6, 1.12, 1.15).

A variety of contemporary theorists disagreed on exactly how artists should transform, synthesize, distort, deform, or idealize nature in works of art, adapting what they saw to make it more personal, evocative, or eternal.103 These practices involved the distortion of bodily proportions, the depiction of impossible spaces, and the modulation or intensification of colors, such as the elongated body in Delville’s *Ange des Splendeurs*, the distorted perspective in Point’s *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, and the contrast between the heightened blue tones and muted sand and rocks in Séon’s *The Lamentation of Orpheus*. Péladan argued for the importance of idealizing nature, yet he also claimed that the Rose + Croix was fundamentally opposed to deformations of the natural world and that the body, perspective, and traditional artistic laws should not be altered, writing: “Even though the Order claims to decide only the ideality of a work; it will nevertheless reject, any work in which the proportions of the human body, the laws of perspective, and finally the technical rules are insolently violated, even if the subject is

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103 For discussions of the role the Ideal, see in particular: André Mellerio, *Le mouvement idéaliste en peinture* (Paris: H. Floury, 1896); Ferdinand Brunetière, *La renaissance de l’idéalisme* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1896). See Blythe for a larger discussion and summary of fin de siècle attitudes toward the ideal. Blythe, “Promising Pictures,” 27–43. The term *ideal* was first used in French by Denis Diderot in 1765 to separate between depicting the object itself in art and the ideal, which Quatremère de Quincy built on this in the 1820s and 1830s by focusing on abstraction vs. individualization. Blythe sums up scholarship on idealism by stating: “In response to scientific positivism, idealism offered a way to move beyond the limitations of material reality and with it the conviction that an ameliorated state could be achieved.” Blythe, “Promising Pictures,” 28–32. Shiff writes of the goals of Idealism that “great artists were to be distinguished from lesser ones by the degree to which their personal or particular ideal corresponded with a universal or general ideal (a ‘perfection’) that served to inspire others.” Richard Shiff, “Representation, Copying, and the Technique of Originality,” *New Literary History* 15, no. 2 (January 1, 1984): 338.
mystical.”

As with many of Péladan’s oblique mandates, the modifier “insolently” could allow the reader to interpret this phrase as allowing deformations so long as they are respectful. Yet on other occasions, the writer railed against all Impressionist and Symbolist artists who dared to exhibit works that deformed the world by rejecting perspective and modeling:

I consider these things without name, without drawing, without halftones, without modeling, without perspective, without form, which one exhibits with impunity. This is called Impressionism or Symbolism in the newspapers, and dementia for rational beings. There are even those who dare to entitle the deformers, and the other tachistes.

Works exhibited at the Rose + Croix certainly did not reject perspective, modeling or form, yet Ange des Splendeurs, Ecce Ancilla Domini, and The Lamentation of Orpheus certainly modified the body, perspective, and historical conceptions of colors and lighting. Péladan was not an artist, and this certainly played a role in the evasiveness of his aesthetic mandates, which can usually be interpreted in a variety of ways. Yet since he rarely discussed specific techniques, his rejection of violations of the body, perspective, and technical laws reveals that these were major concerns for the founder, since this is one of his clearest mandates on technique.

Artists associated with the Rose + Croix, especially Armand Point and Jean Delville, built on many of the founder’s principles, but diverged from Péladan’s theories in some of their discussions of the role and use of idealization in art. Like Péladan, Point highlighted the importance of idealizing nature and utilizing Italian quattrocento sources. He built on

104 “Quoique l’Ordre ne prétende décider que de l’idéalité d’une œuvre; il repoussera cependant, le sujet fut-il mystique, toute œuvre où les proportions du corps humain, les lois de perspective, enfin les règles techniques seraient insolemment violées.” Péladan, Organe trimestriel de l’Ordre: 1re livraison, 27.

105 “Une telle administration n’est dépassée en absurdité que par la production de ce temps; abandonnant l’art officiel et récompensé, j’envisage ces choses sans nom, sans dessin, sans demi-teintes, sans modelé, sans perspective, sans forme, qu’on exhibe impunément. Cela s’appelle impressionnisme ou symbolisme, dans les journaux, et démence pour les êtres raisonnables. Il y en a même qui osent s’intituler les déformateurs, et d’autres les tachistes.” Péladan, L’art idéaliste et mystique, 148–149.
Neoplatonic ideas and Cennino Cennini’s definition of painting, writing that an artist “must find the unknown things (hiding under the shadow of nature) by giving them a form, such that what is not[,] is.” Like Péladan, Point argued against directly copying nature, which “requires all the imbecility of a bourgeoisie.” Similarly, Point supported Idealism, writing that, “Of the walls of a palace, they made a temple of beauty, of the walls of a church the antechamber of Paradise, because they were the Revealers of the breath of God, which hides itself in the shadow of nature.” For Point, nature was an essential source, but direct, imitative copying could not result in an ideal work, since the truly meaningful aspects of nature remained hidden. Rather than focusing on mimesis, Point emphasized the importance of line, harmony, and color: “Through the magic of their penetration, they sought the secret of a new language, consisting of the inflections of line, the play of light and shadow, the sensitive relationships of colors.”

106 Cennino Cennini (c. 1370-c. 1440) was an Italian painter who wrote a variety of works on art and artistic training. His treatise on painting was published in a French translation in 1858. Cennino Cennini, Traité de la peinture, trans. Victor Mottez (Paris: J. Renouard, 1858).

107 “Cennino Cennini nous tend la main…Voici la définition de la peinture: ‘Il est un art, qui provient de la science et qui demande l’habileté de la main et la fantaisie, c’est la peinture. Il doit trouver des choses inconnues (se cachant sous l’ombre de la nature) en leur donnant une forme, de façon que ce qui n’est pas soit.’” (emphasis in original) Armand Point, “L’éducation d’un artiste aux XIVe, XVe et XVIe siècles [Part two of eleven],” La Rénovation Esthétique, no. 7 (November 1905): 6. Point effectively restates major points from Cennini’s treatise, where this passage reads: “C’est un art que l’on désigne par le mot peindre; il demande la fantaisie et l’habilité des mains; il veut trouver des choses nouvelles cachées sous les formes connues de la nature, et les exprimer avec la main de manière à faire croire que ce qui n’est pas, soit.” Cennini, Traité de la peinture, 30.


discussion corresponds to many of Péladan’s principles, yet Point emphasized the importance of color to a far greater extent than Péladan.

One of the most representative artists, four-time exhibitor Jean Delville, incorporated—but also diverged from—Péladan’s ideas in many of his theories. During the Rose + Croix’s final two years, Delville developed his own Belgian idealist exhibition group that served as either a franchise or competitor and he later wrote a book on idealist art.\textsuperscript{111} In his book, the artist wrote that it was the lack of alternative venues that led him to create his own idealist exhibition. Lamenting the fact that no one of more authority had moved Idealism forward, he wrote: “I have waited for that man. He has not come. I have endeavoured humbly to be that man, since no one would raise his voice in the name of pure Beauty.”\textsuperscript{112} Delville even clearly stated that Péladan had not filled this role:

\begin{quote}
Not even Péladan, so lucid in his metaphysics, but whose idealism is too aristocratic, or occasionally too lenient to antiquated conventions [has] presented a clear conception of Art as being evolved agreeably to all the creative energies, both psychic and natural, of the harmonies of the universe.\textsuperscript{113}
\end{quote}

Despite their similar goals, Delville disapproved of Péladan’s outdated ideals, specifically, his focus on older aesthetic methods (such as those of quattrocento Florence) and his emphasis on social hierarchies and the aristocracy.\textsuperscript{114}

Delville further distinguished himself from Péladan in the far higher position he assigned to execution and technique. The former, he believed, played a key role as one of three aspects of

\textsuperscript{111} For more on the Salons d’Art Idéaliste, see Chapter Five.

\textsuperscript{112} Delville, \textit{The New Mission of Art: A Study of Idealism in Art}, xxxvi.

\textsuperscript{113} Delville, \textit{The New Mission of Art: A Study of Idealism in Art}, xxxvii.

\textsuperscript{114} For more on Delville’s hierarchies in art and nature, see for example, page 16-19. Delville, \textit{The New Mission of Art: A Study of Idealism in Art}, 16–19.
Idealism, since he wrote that “Beauty of Execution,” was equal to “Beauty of the Idea” and “Beauty of Form.” Even though Delville assigned technique an equal place, he did write that it should “be put at the service of” the other concepts to create a perfect work and argued that one should refine “one’s craft to such a point that it does not predominate in the work to the detriment of expression.” Compared to Péladan, Delville assigned technique a far higher position, even arguing: “If form without idea is of small value in art, idea without form is not worth much more.”

Delville argued that Idealism was not tied to one specific style and that whichever style was utilized, it should be grounded in laws and conventions. To dissenting critics, he said that one should not “impose any particular style,” because style “is the signature of the individual, the impression of the soul, the spirit.” According to Delville, “it always indicates the dominating quality of the artist… It indicates what degree of psychic elevation the personality that manifests it has reached.” While he wrote that the realm of aesthetics was not entirely up to the individual, he argued that the artist could develop his personality in a particular way and balance the four temperaments to create harmony. Beyond this, however, “There is no other individualism.” Thus, Delville claimed that idealist art did not have conventions or precepts, but Art itself “contains a science whose laws are naturally fixed by the supreme logic of

116 Delville, The New Mission of Art: A Study of Idealism in Art, 15, 156.
117 Delville, The New Mission of Art: A Study of Idealism in Art, 15, 156.
118 Delville, The New Mission of Art: A Study of Idealism in Art, 158.
119 These four temperaments are the “lymphatic, sanguine, nervous, and bilious,” which can make one: “objective, subjective, passive, or active.” Delville, The New Mission of Art: A Study of Idealism in Art, 173–175.
beauty.” In this way, while Péladan tied his opposition to deformations of the body and perspective in unspecified technical rules and laws that should not be violated, Delville focused on combining fixed laws of beauty with personal style.

Variations between contemporary definitions of Symbolism reveal breaks between the artists and Péladan in terms of the role of narrative and the use of newly developed techniques to express larger ideals. According to Silva, Péladan’s idealist principles clashed with Symbolist concepts espoused by artists like Maurice Denis since Péladan focused on creating meaning with narrative, literary, and allegorical connections, whereas Denis emphasized the use of plastic signs to convey mystical expression—specifically, using formal elements like color and brushstroke to impact the viewer. In this way, Denis sought to communicate with the viewer by developing new means of expression rather than only imparting meaning through narrative or subject matter. In contrast, Péladan believed that only historical and eternal expressive forms should be used and opposed the artist’s development of a new personal language or the transformation of nature using modern techniques. While a variety of participating artists adopted Péladan’s emphasis on historical techniques and forms, most also incorporated some personal and modern techniques. For example, Osbert repeatedly utilized pointillist brushstrokes and both Osbert and Séon developed personal color and line theories influenced by


121 Silva, Le Salon de la Rose Croix, 40–42.

122 «L’attitude de Maurice Denis lui permet de penser comme nécessaire une transformation des formes. Pour Péladan, toute recherche de formes nouvelles est d'emblée proscrite puis qu'elle intervient dans le domaine de l'expression et du sensible. Les formes ne peuvent être que celles, éternelles, de la tradition.” Silva, Le Salon de la Rose Croix, 41.
contemporary scientific discoveries. While Péladan’s theories broke from Symbolist concepts because he only allowed for older methods of expression, a variety of exhibiting artists diverged from him in terms of how they transformed the external world.

In contrast to Péladan, a variety of writers considered these new techniques an important component of idealism. The art critic Mellerio situated artists like Séon, Point, Gachons, and Osbert on the periphery of the idealist movement. Like Péladan, Mellerio viewed the removal of extraneous details as central to Idealism, but unlike Péladan, he emphasized subjective expression, defining the movement itself as “the tendency of artists seeking to escape contingency by inspiration and the means of expression.” For Mellerio, the idealist transformation of the natural world involved the subjective sensations experienced by the artist, so that “while what the realist takes for the ultimate goal is to reproduce nature in the direct sensation that it makes felt—the idealist wants to see it only as the distant starting point of his work. Everything lies for him in the entirely subjective cerebral transformation… It is more about sensation.” A wide variety of writers likewise debated the definition of Idealism and privileged the role of new techniques. Louis Dumur wrote of Albert Aurier’s search for an end to naturalism: “The idealism of the twentieth century is not the idealism of the Middle Ages, nor even that of the Alexandrians. No offense to Mr. Zola, it will be much more advanced, much

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123 For more on Osbert and Séon’s color and line theories, see Chapter Three.


125 “…tandis que le réaliste prend pour but final de reproduire la nature dans la sensation directe qu’elle fait éprouver—l’idéaliste ne veut y voir que le point de départ éloigné de son œuvre. Tout réside pour lui dans la transformation cérébrale, entièrement subjective, que lui fait subir son esprit. Il s’agit plus de sensation.” Mellerio, Le mouvement idéaliste en peinture, 9.
more modern, much more scientific than his positivism of the nineteenth century.”¹²⁶ Charles Henry also tied idealism to new methods: “I do not believe in the future of psychologism or of naturalism, nor, in general, of any realistic school. I believe on the contrary in the advent not long from now of a very idealistic art, mystical even, based on absolutely new techniques.”¹²⁷ These debates reveal widespread opposition to Péladan’s argument for the use of only historically grounded techniques in idealist art.

Just as Péladan disagreed with many contemporary theorists, a variety of exhibiting artists diverged significantly from his idealist principles. For example, Dumas argues that Osbert’s idealism was closer to that of Aurier and Mellerio than Péladan, since it involved the use of lines and colors for expressive purposes.¹²⁸ Osbert broke from Péladan’s concept of idealism by focusing on expression through line and color instead of subject matter. But this dissension was actually widespread. In fact, a wide range of artists exhibiting at the Rose + Croix—and not solely Osbert—deviated from Péladan. Many artists incorporated Symbolist tendencies, depicting distorted bodies and perspective and expressively using color and line—in addition to Péladan’s preferred traditional techniques and emphasis on subject matter.


¹²⁸ Dumas, Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert, 18–19.
Nevertheless, this division should not be inaccurately magnified, because even though Péladan and the artists disagreed on techniques, their broader goals generally converged.

Osbert continued to build on many of Péladan’s concepts several years later, when a critic accused him of being too literary. As noted by Dumas, the artist built on Péladan’s broad focus on making art more spiritual and intellectual. Nevertheless, Osbert’s response (in the two extant drafts he wrote of a letter to the critic who said he was overly literary) is significant because of the artist’s uncharacteristic elucidation of his aesthetic theories which reveals the ways in which he continued to build on and break from Péladan. In the theories discussed in these letters, Osbert incorporated Péladan’s focus on line, beauty, literature, and religion—as well as his opposition to naturalism and the direct depiction of the external world. Unlike Péladan, however, Osbert emphasized color, focused on personal expression, and did not indicate the preeminence of line or of forms derived from earlier art. While Osbert included both color and line in his explanation, he did not give line the central position that Péladan insisted upon in his own writing. In his own work almost a decade before the first Salon, Péladan already favored line, writing, “drawing is then the most perfect form of Art.” Similarly, he also argued: “The

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131 These two drafts are preserved in Osbert’s archives: BCMN Ms 307 (1) f62-69. One draft is dated May 1, 1899.


133 Péladan wrote that “le dessin est donc la forme la plus parfait de l’Art. … la ligne suffit à l’expression métaphysique: elle est la lettre de l’écriture plastique, apogée de l’écriture figurative qui fut primitive et d’instinct.”
contemporary School only has a future if it begins to draw. Drawing is the Catholicism of the fine arts—outside of it, no salvation!”\textsuperscript{134}

In considering the historical debate over line and color, it is significant that Péladan chose to address line only in terms of drawing, rather than also considering line as a compositional element within painting. When Péladan discussed drawing, he argued that it was never merely a portion of, or preparation for painting, but a completely separate genre.\textsuperscript{135} Like many who favored line over color in this long-running debate, Péladan took the position that drawing was more philosophical, since it was less tied to the temperament and was abstracted from nature, relying more on human intelligence.\textsuperscript{136} In fact, Péladan’s rules allowed for the exhibition of “all forms of drawing from simple lead-pencil studies to cartoons for fresco and stained glass.”\textsuperscript{137}

As with the decorative arts, drawings shown at the Salons of the Rose + Croix largely conformed to Péladan’s ideas, but the number of drawings exhibited did not reflect the extremes of his directives. Only 22\% of the works exhibited at the Rose + Croix were identified as some


\textsuperscript{134} “L’école contemporaine n’a d’avenir que si elle se met à dessiner. Le dessin est le catholicisme des beaux-arts: hors de lui pas de salut! et le petit nombre des élus m’épouvante!” Péladan, “Les Collections d’art de province: La Collection Jusky de dessins de maîtres anciens,” 186. Translation by Pincus-Witten, who also notes that in this passage Péladan parallels his review of the official 1882 salon but replaces the “outside the church” with outside of drawing. Pincus-Witten, \textit{Occult Symbolism in France}, 38.

\textsuperscript{135} Péladan, \textit{L’art idéaliste et mystique}, 101–102.

\textsuperscript{136} Péladan, \textit{L’art idéaliste et mystique}, 101–103.

form of drawing or sketch in the catalogs. This high percentage was clearly influenced by Péladan’s public acceptance of a wide variety of drawings—yet it does not reflect the extent of Péladan’s emphasis on this medium.

Like Péladan, the exhibitor Adolphe LaLyre saw drawing as essential and, in 1910, published a history of the nude in art in which he used drawing as support for the traditional academic system and the École des Beaux-Arts. The book is heavily illustrated with the artist’s own sketches of different types and poses of nudes. Railing against nepotism in the École, LaLyre argued for a hierarchy of quality within the art world and complained about “neophyte” painters. Yet despite this critique, he clearly favored the École, which he referred to as incomparable, as he argued that artists could protect themselves throughout their careers with the marvelous preparation of the modern masters teaching there. Significantly, his emphasis on academic training logically follows from both Péladan and LaLyre’s insistence on the primacy of drawing. It reflects the large number of artists exhibiting at the Salons of the Rose + Croix who received academic training, many of whom studied under Bouguereau, Cabanel, and Lehmann. Like LaLyre, these exhibitors supported the founder’s emphasis on line, but for Péladan, subject matter was always more important than technique. Although academic training produced the highly finished, traditional drawing skill that Péladan espoused, he was willing to sacrifice

138 These figures are based on works identified in the catalogs as a: “Dessin,” “Étude” (Problematically, some of these may have been painted or sculpted studies. However, I have not included ones that are also referred to as a “peinture,” “cire,” or as an “esquisse terre”), “carton,” “pastel,” “esquisse,” “croquis,” “sanguine,” “projet,” and a work titled “Pour un affiche.” I have not included illustrated works that appear to be drawings, since the illustrations do not always accurately represent the work and medium. I have also not included works which were not identified in the catalog as a drawing even if a drawing of the same title by the artist is extant, since many of these artists created multiple works with the same title.

139 Adolphe La Lyre, Le nu féminin à travers les ages, chez tous les peuples ... (Paris: Armand Guérinet, 1910), 71.

140 La Lyre, Le nu féminin à travers les ages, chez tous les peuples ..., 71.
technique in order to attack the École for not being Italianate enough, not being aware of metaphysical concerns, and ineptly dictating subjects to students.\textsuperscript{141} Péladan’s focus on subject matter, rather than technique and training, reveals that drawing was one of the areas in which there were significant breaks between his literary theories and the specific technical concepts discussed by the contributing artists. Similarly, his lack of emphasis on color, his opposition to deformation, and his hostility toward modern means of expression reveal divergences between the established group platforms and both the theories espoused by the participating artists and many of the works they exhibited at the Salons.

\textbf{The Past: Opposition and Reliance}

Although he responded to contemporary idealist and Symbolist concepts, Péladan also attempted to isolate his group from these movements in favor of a return to the Middle Ages and \textit{quattrocento} Italy. Like many Symbolist artists and theorists, Péladan railed against naturalism, positivism, and Impressionism, but nevertheless, he and the exhibiting artists actually built on these movements and theories. At the same time, participating artists expressed preferences for a variety of earlier styles and argued for different methods of utilizing these historical sources. Additionally, contemporary reactions to this reliance on earlier movements varied widely. While some writers considered the artists of the Rose + Croix equal to or greater than their historical predecessors, others believed that this adaptation rendered them mere copyists.

Like Symbolist writers, artists, and theorists, critics expressed mixed views regarding references to other contemporaneous and recent styles, including Naturalism and Impressionism. For example, an anonymous reviewer signaled his agreement with Symbolist opposition to

\textsuperscript{141} Péladan, \textit{L’art idéaliste et mystique}, 139, 218, 250.
Naturalism, writing: “It is obvious that the mystical aspirations which appear at present in a numerous group of artists and writers, are only the very legitimate response and long expected, against the abuses of a naturalism which has approached revulsion.” Yet, despite the oppositional language used by many Symbolists and their contemporaries, several scholars have argued for the presence of a variety of bridges between these movements. Allison Morehead, for example, argues: “Although [it is] often seen as a rejection of [both] Naturalism and Impressionism, Symbolism had a more complex, fraught relationship with the artistic currents that had come before it and was, more accurately, a reorientation of Naturalism’s aims.” She specifically discusses the impact of experimental pathological studies on avant-garde artists at the end of the nineteenth century, arguing that while some theorists, including Albert Aurier, mocked science and positivism, several others, such as Maurice Denis and Paul Sérusier, actually incorporated aspects of it. Morehead also notes that Symbolists used modified terms, addressing their polemical attacks only at specifically banal, false, or vulgar forms of positivism, science, naturalism, and materialism, so that the “problem was not ‘science’ itself, but how ‘science’ was used, the kinds of questions it had asked, and the kinds of problems to which it had been applied.”

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In discussing the Rose + Croix and Osbert in particular, Dumas also argues that despite Symbolist attacks on Impressionism, Osbert and other Symbolist artists actually incorporated Impressionist ideas. Specifically, she connects the movements by arguing that Osbert’s development of Impressionist landscape studies pushed him toward Symbolism. In supporting this point, she notes that a variety of contemporary critics associated these movements by discussing Monet’s Post-Impressionist works from the 1890s in terms of Symbolism, by tying Impressionism to the dream, and by connecting Neo-Impressionism to Symbolism.\(^{146}\) Yet, Dumas argues that Péladan opposed Impressionism more categorically than Denis, since Péladan banned all Impressionist works from the Rose + Croix.\(^{147}\) Although she identifies this division between Péladan and Osbert’s principles, Dumas also observes that Péladan’s mandate did not actually prevent him from accepting the same kind of Impressionist works as Denis, since she argues that in 1893 Osbert exhibited works with Impressionist influences at both Salons.\(^{148}\) Thus, although Péladan framed the Rose + Croix as opposed to the Impressionist movement and used more inflammatory and oppositional language than Denis, he allowed for the exhibition of works that developed out of some Impressionist principles.

Repeat exhibitor Jean Delville and one-time exhibitor Vallotton both addressed the importance of breaking with previous movements. Diverging from Péladan, Delville accepted Impressionism, even though he still believed it was less effective than idealism, since


\(^{147}\) In contrast, according to Dumas, Denis allowed them at the Barc de Boutteville, if they were creative and inventive. Dumas, *Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert*, 60.

“…excellent though it may be in intention… [Impressionism] is the business of the inferior.”

Vallotton also argued against building on movements from earlier in the century, arguing: “There is no doubt, indeed, that realism is very sick or even lost.” He added: “There is absolute weariness from all sides, even among young men, a keen revolt against it. This movement is characterized by a violent reaction, which is the natural order, against all its processes and systems.” On the other hand, he conceded that this reaction against earlier movements often went too far, overemphasizing what he described as “primitive” techniques and producing ghostly copies of vibrant works.

In addition to these considerations of Impressionism and Realism, Pre-Raphaelite, medieval, and quattrocento influences also abounded among the artworks produced by contributing artists. Contemporaries frequently cited the extent to which Péladan built on

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149 Significantly, however, he expanded the definition of Impressionism to include a range of figures, such as “Ensor, Monet, Seurat, and Gauguin,” all of whom he tied to this “shameless” practice of framing “the most shocking studio daubs.” Delville, *The New Mission of Art: A Study of Idealism in Art*, 155.


152 “De là à l’antithèse il n’y a pas loin; le retour aux pratiques primitives, plus ou moins bien comprises, est indiqué; maintenant, on est, on se croit mystiques, ou symbolistes; en tous cas, on affecte de le dire. Aux robustesses exagérées d’antan succèdent de pâles œuvres énigmatiques, fantomatiques, cataleptiques, et ce besoin de quintessencier se fait de plus en plus général.” Additionally, although he opposed artists who paint portraits, still life scenes, and contemporary scenes, he also disapproved of overly combative artists, instead preferring serious and hardworking painters. “Cette évolution date de quelque temps déjà, mais elle n’avait jamais pris pareille allure combative, de très sérieux artistes y travaillent sans bruit, qui à Montmartre, qui à Montparnasse. C’est de ceux-là, encore inconnus, que sortiront les œuvres maîtresses à venir et autour desquels graviera pour dix, vingt ou trente années, toute la pensée artistique des générations prochaines.” Félix Vallotton. Unspecified document responding to Péladan’s manifesto. Quoted in Hahnloser-Bühler, *Félix Vallotton et ses amis*, 177–178.

previous artistic developments, with one reviewer noting that Péladan “has the highest respect for masterpieces, the cult of the master, the veneration of the past.” Péladan even later went so far as to admit that he had “liked the Past too much,” adding that his use of “a dead language” and of “archaic terms” was ill-suited for “a country of universal suffrage and secularism.” Moreover, in 1901, he recognized that in focusing on the past to such an extent he had failed to integrate the lessons of history into modernity—a task that he left to future generations. A variety of critics highlighted this reliance on the past, often arguing that the Rose + Croix built too heavily on earlier sources. One writer negatively compared one-time exhibitor Charles Filiger to Maurice Denis, arguing that although both artists used similar sources, Filiger did so without ingenuity or originality. He argued that even though Denis never exhibited with the Rose + Croix, the presence of similar but more original historical and mystical themes meant that he was a “mystical spirit of the race,” “whose triumphant place had been at the Rose-Croix.”

One specific disagreement among scholars and critics on the Rose + Croix is the extent to which each artist was influenced by ideas derived from the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. One

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155 “J’ai trop aimé le Passé, ses pompes et ses œuvres. Avec une terminologie archaïque, souverainement dépouillée dans un pays de suffrage universel et de laïcisme, j’ai prêché littéralement dans une langue morte. …Le vœu demeure : si je ne dois pas trouver la forme moderne de la vérité, j’ aiderai les prédestinés par la leçon de mon aventure, à cette découverte.” Péladan, Traité des antinomies, V. At the same time, however, he avoided an excessive level of self-awareness or criticism, since he also argued that the Salon was not based at all on profit or vanity. “Quand vous êtes venu, il n’y avait plus ni profit, ni vanité, en Rose-Croix.” Péladan, Traité des antinomies, IV.

156 Péladan, Traité des antinomies, V.

reviewer even begin a discussion of the Rose + Croix by referring to Péladan as the “grand maître pre-Raphaelite de la Rose + Croix.” This writer criticized Péladan for his overemphasis on poems and mysticism instead of aesthetics and argued that the exhibited works relied too heavily on earlier masters. Instead of creating either an idealist or aesthetic revival, he wrote that “the best success of the Sâr is in having grouped some truly intellectual painters in a contemplative milieu where the thinking youth can without irony celebrate the masters.”

Despite some negative responses to this reliance on the past at the first event, Péladan actually increased the references to the past and earlier artistic styles at the second Salon by exhibiting a wide variety of works by deceased artists and loans from collectors. The exhibition of these artworks (which date from as early as the Middle Ages and as late as the middle of the nineteenth century) alongside contemporaneous idealist paintings highlights the extent of Péladan’s focus on tradition. Problematically, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how


160 Generally, these historical artworks were included in the illustrated portion of the catalog, but not in the written section. The written section usually includes the exhibitor’s address and sometimes adds the name of the owner if a work has already been sold. Pincus-Witten refers to these works as “Old Master” paintings and does not include them in his accounts of the total number of artists and artworks. However, in order to reflect the wide variation among these artists, I refer to them as historical exhibitors. Since artists who had died before the first salon did not choose to exhibit their artworks with Péladan, these works are not included in my total counts either. The works are difficult to identify and attribute for several reasons. First, little information is included with the works in the illustrated and supplemental portions of the catalog were these works are found. Second, the works are often inaccurately attributed. Sometimes the reason for this is unclear, especially when the attribution does not match other contemporary descriptions of the same work. Specifically, three works are illustrated in L’Artiste in 1883 and then included in the 1893 salon—two of these works are identified as “Études, de Bandinelli” and “Dessin de Corneille.” Yet the same two works are illustrated in the 1893 salon catalog and described as: Baudin, Études de nu and P. Siméon Etude pour l’archimage Nakhorenta de la tragédie Babylone, The third artwork is identified in catalog and the journal as Satyre agaçant un bouc, dessin de Raymond de la Fage and Satyre by R. de la Fage. Péladan, Il Geste esthétique, 57, 125, 133. All three are included as unpaginated illustrations at the end of the L’Artiste volume which includes Péladan’s article on the Jusky collection. Péladan, “Les Collections d’art de province: La Collection Jusky de dessins de maîtres anciens.”
many of the works exhibited at this Salon were created by historical exhibitors and how many were exhibited under pseudonyms or created by artists who are currently unidentified.

Péladan specifically advocated a return to the Italian *quattrocento*—an influence that is especially apparent in the work and theories of Armand Point. Contemporary critic René Boylesve approved of this influence, but argued that Point was too overwhelmed by Botticelli in Florence, becoming absorbed by the *quattrocento* instead of creating new modern works.¹⁶¹ Boylesve noted that he would always be attracted to Point’s work, based on his earlier hope that the artist would be able to combine Botticelli with a modern style.¹⁶² However, Boylesve did not celebrate all of Botticelli’s work, arguing instead that some of Botticelli’s more illustrative works were artificial and affected, and cautioning artists to avoid the better-known Botticellis in favor of the artist’s stronger, more masculine and balanced compositions in the Sistine Chapel.¹⁶³ Despite these critiques, Point built heavily on the *quattrocento* in his art and writing. He published an article on “Primitives and Symbolists” based upon his first-hand study of Italian works and his reading of books on Italian painting, including Vasari’s history and *Cennino Cennini’s Craftsman’s Handbook*.¹⁶⁴ The artist incorporated many of these ideas into his own

¹⁶¹ Boylesve suggests that Point should begin to create larger scale works and frescoes. But that year, Armand Point actually did exhibit a fresco at the Rose + Croix and emphasized his use of traditional techniques in his catalog entries, describing two works as created using techniques reconstitution from the Italian tradition. *Ecce Ancilla Domini* is described as “Peinture à l’œuf reconstituée selon la tradition des primitifs Italiens” and *Sirène des lacs* is referred to as “Peinture à fresque reconstituée selon la tradition des primitifs Italiens.” Péladan, *Salon de la Rose + Croix: Galerie des Arts réunis: Catalogue des œuvres exposées*, 17.


paintings, apparently making his own paints using methods derived from the *quattrocento*.\(^{165}\) Point focused on the importance of all of the means of expression—including line, color, and *clair-obscur*—and argued that artists needed to turn away from the specific, low-class figures of the naturalists in order to raise the spirit of the viewer with majestic groups, attitudes, lines, and movements.\(^{166}\) He wrote that the artist’s task was “to find in nature, an expressive form corresponding to the sentiment that the artist would like to create … and not to reproduce a scene of life stumbled upon at random in the street,” advocating for a return to God and Nature through the natural world.\(^{167}\) This emphasis on incorporating a broad swath of natural forms breaks from Péladan, who favored the human body to the extent that his rules excluded landscape and still-life painting. In contrast, for Point, a tree or rock could be as important as a face:

> The shape of a tree, of a rock reveals us to ourselves as well as the face of a man. This is the mysterious relationship of things and beings that we want to express, us symbolists, admitting nowhere the indifference of creation, and so we return to reconstitute a religion, that of Nature, the pantheism of the Greeks who deified aspects of heaven and earth and who animated the oaks and the fountains and the wind in the spring leaves.\(^{168}\)


\(^{166}\) Armand Point, “Primitifs et Symbolistes,” *L’Ermitage* 11 (July 1895): 12.

\(^{167}\) “Lisez l’histoire, visitez les musées d’Italie, ville à ville, et vous verrez qu’à partir de Cimabue à Florence, de Duccio à Sienne, de Pisano à Pise, le seul souci jusqu’à Michel-Ange, c’est de trouver dans la Nature, une forme expressive correspondante au sentiment que l’artiste voulait crier à travers les siècles, et non pas de reproduire une scène de la vie, au hasard de la rue.” Point, “Primitifs et Symbolistes,” 12. In discussing the move away from idealistic artworks, Point complains about the spread of depictions of the three graces, Venus, Bacchus, arguing that “Sous une influence panthéiste la Foi disparaît.” Point, “Primitifs et Symbolistes,” 13.

\(^{168}\) “La forme d’un arbre, d’un rocher nous révèle à nous-même aussi bien que le visage d’un homme. C’est ce lien mystérieux des choses et des êtres que nous voulons exprimer, nous symbolistes, n’admettant nulle part l’indifférence de la création, et nous revenons ainsi à reconstituer une religion, celle de la Nature, le panthéisme des Grecs qui défiaient les aspects du ciel et de la terre et qui animaient les chênes et les fontaines et le vent dans les feuilles printanières.” Point, “Primitifs et Symbolistes,” 15–16.
Unlike Péladan, Point did not elevate the human being above the rest of the universe, believing instead that landscapes could be both religious and idealist.

Point’s contemporary, the critic Soulier cited the artist as having argued that it was essential to have “an eye in the past, an eye in the present, and the two in nature.” According to Soulier, Point believed a modern interest in color should be combined with the fifteenth-century focus on line in order to create “works that resist time.” This emphasis on combining the past and present was tied to Point’s view of history as cyclical—the artist believed that the universe was neither constantly progressing nor declining, but rather, that these developments and regressions occurred cyclically: “Matter will again triumph little by little over spirit, with the illusion of its appearance like absolute beauty and the artists seduced by the charm of contours, will forget the breath which animates them and [then] the decadence will begin.” This focus on decadence and progression is related to Péladan’s ideas, but Point placed a higher emphasis on the present. Thus, just as the artist was opposed to those who overemphasized the modern and saw history as a constant progression, he also wrote in opposition to those figures—perhaps even Péladan—who relied too much on the past, studying it in a cold search for another time.

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169 According to Gustave Soulier, in an uncited quote, Armand Point said that it was important to have “un œil dans le présent, un œil dans le passé, et les deux dans la nature.” Soulier, “Les artistes de l’âme: Armand Point,” 173.


Point did not overtly criticize Péladan, but neither he nor his student exhibited at the final event. Additionally, the critic Soulier noted Point’s opposition to some unspecified aspects of the Rose + Croix. Even two years before the artist broke from the group, Soulier wrote that Point was opposed to the unspecified “flaws” of the Rose + Croix. According to Soulier, Point agreed with the group’s historical emphasis and “from these true notions originates Armand Point’s diligence to the Salons of the Rose + Croix, however [much] he deplore[d] (some of) the organization’s flaws.” He added that the artist “befriended Sâr Péladan[,] who in aberration of naturalism, supported the love of the Masters, and helped to bring the artist to the pursuit of the ideal.”

Despite this emphasis on the artist’s agreement with Péladan, Soulier’s statement highlights the tensions within the group by noting that this central artist deplored some aspects of the exhibition group. Additionally, beyond distancing the artist from the group’s flaws, Soulier also emphasized differences among the artists. In this review, he argued that Point created more eternal works than the other artists because of his eclectic combination of traditional and modern techniques—Soulier even made the unsupported claim that Point delved so far into modern methods that he utilized pointillist brushstrokes.

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174 When Soulier describes the pointillist brushstrokes, it is not clear to which work he is referring. Given the artist’s emphasis on line, this would be a significant break from his extant works. “Et à propos de cette toile, il n’est pas inutile de remarquer la vibration des rayons de soleil, traités à la manière pointillistes. Ici apparaît encore le légitime éclectisme d’Armand Point. Il prend bien partout où il trouve, et unit les solides traditions d’autrefois avec ce qu’il peut y avoir de plus sensible dans les ressources de la facture moderne… C’est toujours un peu, dans tous les domaines de l’Art, la question des Anciens et des Modernes, et ils sont rares, les esprits qui savent démêler ce qu’il y a d’équitable dans les théories adverses et se approprier, en se détachant des intérêts mesquins pour juger avec les principes immuables et la vue plus large de la postérité.” Soulier, “Les artistes de l’âme: Armand Point,” 175.
Although some critics positively highlighted the group’s reliance on *quattrocento* and Pre-Raphaelite sources, others argued that the works at the Rose + Croix were merely pastiches of more famous artists who refused to exhibit at the Salons. They often accused specific artists of aping Puvis de Chavannes, Moreau, and Redon—one reviewer, for instance, referred to the presence of imitations of Puvis, the Impressionists, and a variety of medieval masters. Later, in reference to the final Salon, Soulier complained about the widespread exhibition of artworks by Moreau’s students, arguing that they relied too heavily on their teacher. Similarly, one critic claimed that the effective works shown at the Salon would be more apparent if they were “not lost in the flood of weak imitations of Gustave Moreau.” Another reviewer considered Séon’s works to be too heavily based on Puvis and one writer actually referred to one of Séon’s works as a tracing of Puvis’ depiction of Joan of Arc. Séon worked as an assistant to Puvis de Chavannes for twelve years and critics repeatedly accused him of an over-reliance on Puvis in terms of line, color, composition, and subject matter. In fact, Montalant argues that not only did Séon’s color and line build heavily on his instructor, but “certain motifs seem to have been taken directly from the master.” In this way, she concedes that *The Passante* recalls *The

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Nevertheless, despite this tie to Puvis, Montalant argues that Séon broke from his teacher by creating a personal theory of symbolic colors and lines.  

These divisions between Péladan and the exhibiting artists—in terms of the relationship between art and life, the role of nature, and the significance of history and previous movements—reveal fissures within their doctrinal and theoretical foundations. While Péladan rarely addressed specific aesthetic issues and techniques, a variety of artists exhibiting at the Salons wrote on technical issues. Additionally, as will be discussed in the next chapter, comparisons between these statements, considerations of the artworks themselves, and the varied critical responses reveal the presence of a variety of attitudes regarding the roles of science and religion in the creation of art.

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Chapter 4: The “High Sciences:” Hysteria, Astral Fluids, Symmetrical Diagrams, Optics, and Psychology

In developing techniques to depict their larger religious and mystical ideas, the artists associated with the Rose + Croix incorporated a variety of religious and scientific—or pseudo-scientific—references into their works.¹ Artworks exhibited at the Salons reveal competing and yet connected Catholic, Rosicrucian, and theosophical principles, as well as the influence of optical science and psychology—particularly studies of hysteria.² Some artists referred to hysterical states and poses (drawn from theories and photographs), while others touched on the relationships between the physical and eternal planes, sometimes utilizing optical and color theories to differentiate their work from paintings they viewed as earthly, banal, and un-idealized. The participating artists’ use of this range of scientific and religious ideas reveals that while the exhibitors shared broad idealist concepts, they deviated from Péladan and each other in the specific stylistic applications of their shared theories. Specifically, the artists highlighted their focus on mystical, immaterial concepts—instead of the physical realm—by combining scientific and religious principles, developing personal color theories, incorporating the concepts of hysteria and the astral fluid into their works, and emphasizing verticality and religious diagrams.

Several scholars discuss the links between occultism, science, and art at the end of the nineteenth-century—and the fact that these fields were not clearly divided at the time. Linda Henderson addresses the long-term impact of scientific developments in art, arguing for the

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¹ From a scientific perspective, many of these doctrines have been disproven and are considered pseudo-scientific or quasi-scientific. However, I refer to these concepts as scientific in order to reflect attitudes towards these ideas at the fin de siècle, when the divisions between science, pseudo-science, and occultism were often blurred. For more on the links between these concepts, see Henderson, The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art.

² For more on the popularity of these ideas at this time, see Sofie Lachapelle, Investigating the Supernatural: From Spiritism and Occultism to Psychical Research and Metapsychics in France, 1853–1931 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).
influence of esoteric religions, especially Theosophy, on artists’ understanding and depiction of other spatial dimensions. Additionally, in an important article, Henderson discusses the state of art historical studies of mysticism, occultism, and Symbolism, noting at the same time, the artists’ appropriation of scientific studies like psychology. Barbara Larson reveals the impact of developments in germ theory and fears of degeneration in artworks depicting death, disease, decay, and social disintegration and highlights the significance of evolutionary theory. Allison Morehead describes the impact of experimental pathological studies on avant-garde artists at the end of the nineteenth century, as well as showing that a wide variety of Symbolists built on aspects of science, positivism, naturalism, and materialism, despite their polemical claims to represent the antithesis of these movements.

Péladan and the exhibiting artists also expressed opposition to positivist and materialist ideas while simultaneously accepting Rosicrucian and other occult principles framing alchemy.


5 Fear of degeneration was widespread at the fin de siècle, as a variety of scientific and cultural leaders argued that scientific principles including evolutionary theory supported their claims that society was stagnating or regressing, instead of moving forward. A wide variety of groups, types, social developments, and other issues were blamed for this problem. See for example: Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848-1918* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); William M. Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture, and the Novel, 1880-1940* (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Silverman, *Art nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France*.


and hypnotic séances as scientific.\(^\text{10}\) While the artists associated with the Rose + Croix generally rejected positivism, experimental sciences, and the scientific method, they simultaneously—and in seeming contrast—blended recent scientific debates and discoveries into their aesthetic techniques, theories, and subjects.\(^\text{11}\) Specifically, Séon and Osbert incorporated scientific principles of their time into their color theories, seeking to create a “psychology of nature” or a harmonious “symbolism of tints.”\(^\text{12}\) Additionally, some artists exhibiting at the Rose + Croix referenced hysteria, hypnotism, and psychology in their paintings, especially in their depictions of female saints and other mystical and visionary figures. Several artists built on the principle of the astral fluid, which was a key concept for Theosophists and Rosicrucians and was even discussed by scientists intrigued by the related theories of the astral and magnetic fluids, the astral plane, astral bodies, astral light, and auras.\(^\text{13}\) Generally, the astral/magnetic fluid was

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\(^\text{10}\) Henderson has discussed the larger connections between occultism and science in association with Symbolism. Henderson, “Mysticism and Occultism in Modern Art,” 6.

\(^\text{11}\) See Henderson and Morehead for larger discussions of this trend: Morehead, “Creative pathologies”; Henderson, “Mysticism and Occultism in Modern Art”; Henderson, The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art.


\(^\text{13}\) Occult writers used a variety of different terms when discussing inhabitants of the astral planes. For example, Papus laid out the differences between the agents of the astral fluid, discussing elementals (the spirits of elements, who are generally both mortal and conjured by someone in control of them) and élémentaires (who are apparently more intelligent than elementals). Papus, Traité élémentaire de science occulte (5e éd., augm. d’une 3e partie sur l’histoire secrète de la terre et de la race blanche, sur la constitution de l’homme et le plan astral...), 335–338. On the other hand, Lévi referred to this realm as the land of fairies (“fées”) and Swedenborg described the beings as spirts and angels. Éliphas Lévi, La clef des grands mystères: suivant Hénoch, Abraham, Hermès Trismégiste et Salomon (Paris: F. Alcan, 1897), 203–204; Emanuel Swedenborg, Des terres dans notre monde solaire qui sont nommées planètes, et des terres dans le ciel astral, de leurs habitants, de leurs esprits et de leurs anges, d’après ce qui a été vu et entendu, trans. Jean-Pierre Moët (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1824), 12. Another occult writer, Marius Decrespe argued that elemental beings were tied to all organisms and natural features, not just the four elements. He wrote that elementals were manifestations of trees, plants, animals, and even drops of blood. For him, these beings were the source of a variety of legendary creatures, including: gnomes, sylphs, nymps, fairies, and dryads. Marius Decrespe, Principes de physique occulte. Les microbes de l’astral (Paris: Chamuel, 1894), 73–74.
believed to surround and interpenetrate everyone and everything, retaining images of the past, allowing people to project themselves, and displaying auras for initiates or mediums. \(^{14}\) Several associated artists depicted the atmosphere as fluid by linking figures and landscapes or depicting auras. Additionally, compositional focus on symmetry and emphasis on verticality reveal the influence of Rosicrucian diagrams and theories regarding vertical progression.

The styles and techniques developed and exhibited by participating artists were only loosely connected to Péladan’s platforms, since, as Pincus-Witten states, Péladan’s ideal art “was to be achieved not so much through a fundamental revision of prevailing conceptions of form, but through a radical change in content.”\(^{15}\) Even as the artists built on religious concepts aligned with vertical movement, their depiction of hazy auras and the astral fluid, their use of symmetrical compositions, and their development of personal color and line theories involved specific aesthetic issues that Péladan rarely addressed. Péladan was a writer, not an artist, and in his platforms, rules, and mandates, he focused on content and subject matter over stylistic issues. Although he occasionally discussed specific formal concerns in his Salon reviews and other writings on contemporary artists, his otherwise highly specific rules for the Salon do not address stylistic issues in detail. Instead, the development of related and divergent techniques was left primarily to the artists exhibiting at the Rose + Croix, revealing one of the ways in which the group developed outside of Péladan’s guidelines.

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\(^{14}\) In this chapter, for more on the importance of secrecy to Lévi, see note 41 and 153; for more on his numerological theories, see notes 52 and 53; for more on his conception of elemental beings, see note 128; and for his idea regarding ties between humans and nature, see note 145. For one explanation of his principles, see Éliphas Lévi, *The Mysteries of Magic*, trans. Arthur Edward Waite (London: George Redway, 1886), 74–79.

\(^{15}\) Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*, 40.
Overlapping and Competing Religious Realms

The Rose + Croix’s combination of esoteric and mainstream doctrines and principles reflects the complex relationship between various occult and Catholic movements. While many artists and critics viewed esoteric religions like Rosicrucianism and Theosophy as interrelated, some figures, including Péladan, sought to establish boundaries between them.16 These varied religious ideologies and influences reflected broader debates within and among esoteric movements and differences between artistic and critical responses to the group doctrine. The artists’ and founder’s interpretations and uses of correspondences, secrecy, initiation, numerology, and links to scientific principles like evolution and degeneration highlight the divergent ways in which they deployed Rosicrucian theories and concepts.

Despite the group’s esoteric name, many critics did not take the religious aspect of the group seriously.17 In addition to criticizing the bizarre features of the Salon and the founder’s “puffisme” (or quackery),18 some reviewers suggested that profit was a motivating factor or argued that the group merely exploited a contemporary occultist fad and was not seriously dedicated to its esoteric principles. One critic described the esoteric craze as not only

16 Péladan specifically sought to create boundaries between his own apparently thoroughly Catholic organization and other esoteric and occult groups. However, even though Péladan considered his group an example of strict Catholicism, he did not effectively portray the Rose + Croix as an orthodox Catholic association.

17 Several scholars have pointed out specific reviews critiquing aspects of the Salon and many have noted the general increase in negative criticism after the first event, but none have addressed a wide range of criticism in detail. Pincus-Witten notes that “The second Salon was greeted with a growing sense of disappointment and futility. … The lean years of the Salons de la Rose + Croix had begun”—but does so without citing any source other than Larmandie. Pincus-Witten, Les Salons de la Rose + Croix, 163. At other points he notes a variety of critical responses, addressing a few specific critiques of the salons, but he is not able to address the critical response in depth. See for example Pincus-Witten, Les Salons de la Rose + Croix, 164, 182.

“fashionable,” but omnipresent: “In the world, in the street, in the theater, in the restaurant, on the railroad, on the beaches, occultism reigns. We cannot take a step without encountering a mage.”19 Another writer described Péladan by writing that if the founder was not seeking a profit, then he was mocking his audience with “his horror of simplicity,…the deliberate obscurity of his writing,” and “his trimmings of satin, of lace, and of transparent riddles.”20 This critic argued that Péladan’s focus on magic was just a posture and that the group was more concerned with profitable occultism than with art, writing: “His magical postures revealed him to the crowd” and claiming that there is “a profit which is gained more easily in occultism, than in the effort of art.”21 Even a reviewer who considered himself knowledgeable about esotericism doubted the group’s ability to create art that effectively built on these theories. This writer argued that esotericism (and by extension, the group as well) was based on Catholicism,22 yet, despite his appreciation for this esoteric variant and its allegiance to Catholicism, this critic argued that


20 “Se tromperai-beaucoup de dire que par ses allures singulières, par son horreur de la simplicité, par l’obscurité voulue de son écriture, suivant le mot des décadents, le Sâr Péladan n’est pas sans chercher son profit qui est, au moins, de se moquer de ses contemporains ? Je n’imagine point que par fantaisie non raisonnée, on aille, en ce siècle de positivisme, s’ériger en grand prêtre de l’idéal mystique, dispensateur gracieux des pouvoirs du surnaturel, et contester au souverain pontife gouvernement des âmes. Les Sâr Péladan, avec ses chamarrures de satin, de dentelles et de logogriphes transcendants, est en habile qui a compris son monde, et le set avec aussi peu de désintéressement que possible.” T., Untitled Press Clipping, Arsenal MS 13205, fol. 326.

21 “Ses postures magiques l’ont révélé à la foule. C’est là un profit qui s’acquiert avec plus de facilité dans l’occultisme, que dans l’effort de l’art.” T., Untitled Press Clipping, Arsenal MS 13205, fol. 326.

the venture would not succeed: “Unfortunately, if the theory is easy, the art is extremely difficult, and I doubt that our Christian mages, …[who] call themselves supporters of the Rose + Croix, will ever manage [at that], despite their rules [which are] no less bizarre than severe.” Other critics also commented upon the spiritual diversity of the group, arguing that many of the artists diverged from Péladan and that the exhibited works did not derive from the founder’s doctrines or from his faith. According to one reviewer, many of the artworks exhibited at the first Salon had nothing to do “with occultism, magic, and the aesthetic of the Rose + Croix.” The same critic, deriding Péladan, applauded the discrepancy between the faith of the organizers and that of the artists, writing: “Thank God, the Catholicism which has gladly claimed M. Péladan is not responsible for his theories and their aesthetic results.”

Even critics who supported the venture did not always view the Rose + Croix’s occultism as central. For example, one contemporary reviewer focused on what he saw as the idealist successes of the Salons, arguing that the founder should be forgiven for the esotericism he displayed but did not truly feel:

Therefore, we must be grateful to Péladan, heroic charlatan, (for braving) the jeers and for displaying a faith more apparent than real. In theology as in politics,

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23 This article is dated to the day after the opening of the Salon, but was presumably written before or without attending the Salon, since the invitation is described, but the artworks are not. “Malheureusement, si la théorie est facile, l’art est extrêmement difficile, et je doute que nos mages chrétiens, tels que s’intitulent les partisans de la Rose+Croix, y parviennent jamais, malgré leur règlement non moins bizarre que sévère.” Meurville, “Lettres Parisiennes: L’Exposition de la Rose + Croix,” 1–2.

24 This critic argued that a variety of works broke from the program, especially works by Desboutins, Deneux, Emile Bernard, Filiger, Grasset, Armand Point, Sainville, and also, Servat, who exhibited “ferronneries d’art n’ont rien à voir avec l’occultisme, la magie et l’esthétique de la Rose-Croix.” Ernst, “Le Salon de la Rose-Croix,” 2.

25 “Dieu merci, le catholicisme, dont se réclame volontiers M. Péladan, n’est pas responsable de ses théories et de leurs résultats esthétiques. C’était une autre foi, une autre sympathie aimante, qui animaient les tailleurs d’images français du XIIIe siècle, ou les pieux artistes de l’Ombrie, ou le génie si touchant d’un Memling.” Ernst, “Le Salon de la Rose-Croix,” 2.
conviction is useless, an agenda suffices. The Sâr has provoked an idealist movement and this should forgive him his books, heaps of theses stolen from the coffins of mummies, compilations of alchemical jumbles, where the hieratic juggles with a devilish lust, and where those of dubious gender flagellate themselves with thorns in worldly sacristies perfumed with fragrant incense and sweet myrrh.  

Expressing a similar point with less descriptive language, another reviewer discussed ten unspecified contributing artists who were not “good mages,” but were “good workers,” writing that, for those critics who know “nothing of magic,…we are forced to admit that this material does not abound.”  

Even more emphatically, another writer argued that “the aesthetic of Mr. Péladan proceed[ed] in no fashion from magic,” noting that unlike Péladan’s uninteresting “spells” and “love potions,” the works exhibited at the Salons “awaken[ed] in everyone a lively curiosity” and in the art “there [was] an effort worthy of note and perhaps even sympathy.”

26 “Donc, il faut savoir gré à Péladan, charlatan héroïque, de braver les quolibets et de faire étalage d'une foi plus apparente que réelle. En théologie comme en politique, la conviction est inutile, un programme suffit. Le Sâr a provoqué un mouvement idéaliste et cela doit lui faire pardonner ses livres, ramassis de thèses volées aux cercueils des momies, compilations du fatras des alchimistes, où le hiératique jongle avec un diabolique luxurieux, et où des sexes douteux se flagellent d'épines en des sacristies mondaines parfumées d'encens et d'opoponax.” Guy Mayniel, “Lettre de Paris,” La Tribune, no. 18 (April 29, 1892): 2.

27 “Seulement, on nous permettra, ne connaissant rien à la magie, de ne chercher, dans une exposition de peinture que ce qui est œuvre de peintre; et force nous est d’avouer que cette matière n’abonde pas. Nous aurons vite fait de citer la dizaine d’artistes qui ont eu moins de souci de se montrer bons mages que bons ouvriers.” N.A., “La Salon du Sâr Péladan,” 208–209.

28 “Les Rose + Croix modernes ne sont pas si patients. Ils n’existaient pas depuis trois jours, que déjà ils manifestaient dans les journaux. Il serait tout aussi vain de rechercher dans les sciences gnostiques, psychiques, occultes, ésotériques, bouddhistes, où le Sâr a joué son rôle, tout comme Mme Blavatsky, le colonel Olcott, lady Caithness, Papus ou M. Harden-Hickey, l’origine des théories d’art appliquées au Salon de la galerie Durand-Ruel. L’esthétique de M. Péladan ne procède en aucune façon de sa magie. Celle-ci est une chose et celle-là en est une autre. De tout temps, on a su que l’auteur des Ethopées était Mage: c’est depuis peu qu’il s’est révélé le rénovateur d’art. Les deux incarnations de M. Péladan sont d’une importance toute différente: tandis que ses sortilèges, ses philètres d’amour, intéressaient, en somme, assez médiocrement le public, parce qu’ils ne se manifestaient par aucun fait précis, les tableaux et les sculptures inspirées par ses objugations éveillent chez tout le monde une vive curiosité. Même pour ceux que les gracieles compositions de MM. Paul Legrand, Séon, Bernard, Schwabe laissent parfaitement ‘frigides,’ il y a l’un effort digne de remarque et peut-être même de sympathie.” La Sizeranne, “Rose + Croix: Pré-Raphaelites et Esthétes,” 1129.
Suggesting that contemporaries were confused about the degree of occultism present in the group, other critics argued that the associated artists did in fact, utilize occult elements. Two reviewers highlighted these elements in works by central exhibitors—but not while discussing paintings shown at the Rose + Croix. For example, in reviewing Osbert’s works at L’Éclectique in 1894, one writer argued that the titles of works like Archea and Awena were mystical names, which only initiates could understand, carrying little importance for the writer.\textsuperscript{29} To some contemporary viewers, even when shown at other, broader-based exhibitions, artworks produced by exhibitors at the Rose + Croix carried mystical and initiatory connotations. Even more clearly, one writer discussed the alchemical and occult principles in Séon’s works—but focused on a work not exhibited at the Salon—adding heavily to his description of the exhibited work with layers of esoteric principles:

\begin{quote}
It is the perverse star, coaxingly perverse, the star of suspicious acts, guilty obsessions, terrible hallucinations; star of witches and ghouls, of erect phalluses and homosexuals; [the] star [is a] treacherous adviser and instigator of sin, [it is a] pimp star soliciting for Hell. Its promising and lying smile seems to invite the passerby to some rare orgy, its eye, in an equivocal scintilla [of doubt], radiates magical empoisoning.\textsuperscript{30}
\end{quote}


Despite this emphasis on Séon’s depiction of esoteric sexuality, in reviews of the Rose + Croix, critics often questioned the depth of the group’s interest in occultism and esotericism.

In addition to the fact that some reviewers debated the extent of the group’s emphasis on occultism, Péladan argued that the group was Catholic and some critics emphasized and built on this pronouncement. In fact, in his theoretical writings, Péladan claimed that Catholicism was the only basis for effective art and the Salon rules allowed for the inclusion of any work with a subject based in Catholic dogma, even if the artwork was imperfectly executed. 31 Reflecting Péladan’s Catholic emphasis, a variety of exhibitors depicted saints, including Cecilia, Madeline, Elizabeth, George, and Genevieve. 32 Artists also combined recognizable religious figures with a variety of Rosicrucian and other occult concepts. Despite the inclusion of these elements, some critics accepted Péladan’s argument that the group was Catholic, with one claiming not only that the group was founded to support the Catholic Church, but even that the cessation of the Salons was due to Catholic influence, writing: “When the Church, [which was] incomprehensibly alarmed, asked him [to], he submitted and put the esoteric group to sleep.” 33 Despite this reviewer’s acceptance of the group’s Catholicism, several other critics questioned the Rose +


32 For example, LaLyre exhibited works showing saints Cecilia, Madeline, and Elizabeth, while Marcius-Simons depicted Saint George and the later-beatified Joan of Arc. Paintings depicting Sainte Genevieve or Joan of Arc by Séon and Osbert received strong critical responses.

33 “Toutefois quand l’Eglise, incompréhensiblement alarmée, le lui demandée, il se soumit et mit en sommeil son groupe ésotérique.” Paul Courant, “Le Destin de Péladan,” Revue des études péladanes: organe officiel de la Société Josephin Péladan, no. N. 1 June (1975): 11. This motivation is unlikely to have actually played a role in Péladan’s decision to disband the group—it is unclear why a request from the Church would have occurred after six salons had already taken place, if they had did not make this appeal during the most scandalous and widely publicized first two years.
Croix’s orthodoxy, just as they remained uncertain about the esoteric elements. For example, one writer contended that the group clearly represented a new religion because Péladan argued that he was qualified to turn artists into priests and made a variety of unspecified un-Catholic predictions.\(^{\text{34}}\) Thus, even though the founder argued for the group’s devout Catholicism, critics noted the Rose + Croix’s deviations from strict adherence to the Catholic faith.

While some artists and associated figures were committed to specific Catholic agendas or Rosicrucian variants, others made reference to a variety of other esoteric traditions. These artists viewed the Rose + Croix as part of the larger esoteric domain, rather than as a competing ideology.\(^{\text{35}}\) Although the Rose + Croix differed from other occult movements in the preeminence which it gave Catholicism, it was similar to these groups in other ways, including its emphasis on correspondences between this word and a hidden one.\(^{\text{36}}\) Yet the Rose + Croix rejected many of the principles of secret societies, seeking a broader audience and impact, as well as increased publicity. As a result of this lack of secrecy, literary scholar Joël Goffin argues that it is difficult


\(^{\text{35}}\) Such links (and divergences) between Rosicrucianism and other occult movements have also been debated within the field of the sociology of religion. For example, see: Edmund B Lingan, “The Theatre of the New Religious Movements of Europe and America from the Nineteenth Century to the Present” (PhD diss., New York City: City University of New York, 2006), 10.

\(^{\text{36}}\) For more on the role of correspondences and Neoplatonic theory, see my Chapter Two: Doctrinal Divisions, Social Reform, Nature, and the Past: “The famous exhibition program has necessarily been attenuated.” In her discussion of the ties between Symbolism, the occult sciences, and psychology, Burhan oversimplifies the relationship between these groups. She reductively views the groups as associated only by their emphasis on the presence of a mysterious realm tied to the visible world by correspondences. Burhan writes: “For although esoteric doctrine assumed any number of forms throughout its long history, it is quite possible to reduce them all to a single common denominator: the theory of correspondence \[\text{sic}\].” Burhan, “Vision and Visionaries,” 129. Burhan’s term “theory of correspondences,” is much more frequently used in studies of Symbolism than in those focusing on the occult. There are certainly parallels between Symbolist theories of correspondences, the occult concept of the earthly, astral, and divine realms, and the Neoplatonic world of forms. Yet, Burhan’s emphasis on this term aids her argument for parallels between Symbolist and occult theories, but does not accurately represent the astral terminology most often used by occult writers.
to define the group as a “secret society.” Unlike secret societies, the Rose + Croix and a variety of contemporary occult groups sought publicity and a broad social impact, instead of just aiming to improve the initiate and other members. While the Rose + Croix was unusually focused on public recognition, the group reflected a broader conflict between the desires for social reform and secrecy. One of the proponents of a certain degree of secrecy, occult author Éliphas Lévi, argued that the general public could not comprehend and opposed magic because they felt threatened by its power. Lévi claimed that widespread knowledge could put the eternal truths and symbols in danger of mutilation, yet he personally published on the topic—even though he wrote that he might have already “said too much.” In this way, Lévi and Péladan both maintained an initiatory hierarchy by seeking publicity while simultaneously claiming to keep the higher principles secret. Péladan’s move away from privacy and secrecy also reflects a larger

37 Goffin, Le secret de Bruges-la-Morte, 43.

38 Initiatory societies are based upon secrecy—higher levels and important secrets are guarded from general knowledge and can only be learned after following the hierarchical path through the group’s various levels. Guaita’s group also broke from the principles of secrecy, since it was associated with a publically available journal—L’Initiation. Yet, de Guaita still referred to his Rosicrucian variant as “a secret society for individual and reciprocal (improvement).” Goffin, Le secret de Bruges-la-Morte, 46. For more on the idea of social improvement and reform in the Rose + Croix and other contemporary groups, see Chapter Three.

39 Pseudonym of Alphonse Louis Constant.

40 Lévi, The Mysteries of Magic, 2. At the same time, according to Lévi: “the supreme science has been always known, but only by the flower of intelligences, who have understood the necessity of being silent, and biding their time.” Lévi argued that over time, symbols became mutilated and keys have been lost, thus clarifying the importance of keeping the knowledge “exclusive,” and of using symbols and analogies to “conceal from the profane, and always preserve for the elect, the same eternal truth.” Lévi, The Mysteries of Magic, 5.

41 Lévi, The Mysteries of Magic, 10.
social trend, as reforms and regulations at the end of the nineteenth century made a range of health issues more public.\textsuperscript{42}

Beyond his publications and group associations, Péladan was personally tied to occultism—as seen in archival photographs of two different ceremonies.\textsuperscript{43} Beyond the founder, however, a variety of exhibiting artists engaged in occultist practices, like the séances in which Point participated and those that Osbert held in his studio.\textsuperscript{44} The latter rented out ateliers and rooms to artists in his building and held regular Friday night meetings celebrating idealism which incorporated séances. These events attracted a variety of poets, writers, critics, and journalists—including critics who wrote on the Rose + Croix: Henri Degron, Henry Eon, and Pierre de Lano.\textsuperscript{45} Revealing the apparent difficulty of convincing the dead to act as couriers, one attendee of these events wrote that Degron “wanted to invoke the spirit of Verlaine (who had died the day before) but there was another spirit in the table, that of a very old man who would not go to search for Verlaine.” This spirit reportedly “showed by his raps that he was called Dominique and wanted to talk to Degron.”\textsuperscript{46}


\textsuperscript{43} Unidentified photographs. Arsenal, Ms 13412, fol. 64-66, 70.

\textsuperscript{44} Osbert held salons at his studio, on in the afternoons and evenings, for the first three “vendredis” of each month. Blumstein, “Le Peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et son époque,” 95. According to Dumas, these events included séances. Dumas, \textit{Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert}, 77–78.

\textsuperscript{45} Dumas, \textit{Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert}, 70–77.

\textsuperscript{46} “Il avait bien voulu invoquer l’esprit de Verlaine (qui était mort la veille) mais il y avait un autre esprit sous la table, celui d’un homme très font qui ne voulait pas aller chercher Verlaine. Il montrait pas ses frappements qu’il s’appelait Dominique et voulait parler à Degron.” Dumas, \textit{Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert}, 77–78.
Although critics questioned the group’s commitment to esoteric principles, many exhibiting artists did, in fact, incorporate occult symbols and elements into their works. Schwabe’s poster for the second Salon is often cited as an example of the group’s attachment to Rosicrucian principles (Fig. 4.1). In an article on this work, Marla Hand even argues: “This poster was intended to publicize and give monumental pictorial representation to the esoteric philosophy and artistic ideals of the new Salon. It was the pictorial manifesto of the Salon’s founder, Sâr Joséphin Péladan.” In this poster, the three women are hierarchically arranged, with the most physically substantial and most clearly modeled female figure seated at the bottom, literally dripping with the mire of everyday life. Moving beyond the muck of the material realm, a woman with some shading and detail rises up the stairs, yet because she glances back at it, she remains tied to the physical world. Only at the highest level of the hierarchy is the female figure able to close her eyes and focus entirely on the eternal idea, becoming less physically present, with only a lightly outlined form. In this way, the work clearly lays out the principle of moving from base, worldly concerns upward, in a hierarchical and progressive manner, toward a greater, more beautiful and hazier focus on the divine and eternal. Schwabe incorporated similar motifs and concepts into other works he exhibited at the Salons, including Jour de Morts (Fig. 4.2), in which the artist created a hierarchy by separating the viewer and the

47 Many of the artworks exhibited at the salons are not extant or have not been conclusively identified. Yet, a variety of the works are described as including symbolic colors and motifs. For example, Myriam de Palma discusses the prevalence of occult symbolism in works by Maurice Chabas at the salons, including the symbolic use of the color red and the depiction of a heron. Palma, Maurice Chabas, peintre et messager spirituel, 1862-1947, 182–183.


49 Hand, “Carloz Schwabe’s Poster for the Salon de la Rose+Croix,” 40.

50 Hand, “Carloz Schwabe’s Poster for the Salon de la Rose+Croix,” 42.
material world from the female figure with the branches of a weeping willow. Additionally, the woman herself is separated from the eternal sun/pyramid by a wall. These specific motifs served to remind initiates of the importance of moving incrementally along this passage to the eternal. Similarly, two works exhibited by the unidentified Félix Oudart, *Sur le Chemin* and *La Froide* highlight the importance of the path. *Sur le Chemin* includes a trail and a symbolic combat between a bird and a snake while *La Froide* utilizes a river canyon to create an avenue toward the moon (Figs. 4.3, 4.4).\(^{51}\) As in Schwabe’s poster, in Oudart’s works, a central, worldly figure pauses on the path to the eternal. In this way, these works highlight not just the importance of progression, but also the personal struggles one faces on the road to higher levels of consciousness.

Numerology is one specific form of occultism which was reflected in a variety of exhibited artworks. Numerological principles were widely discussed at the time and, according to Lévi, all of the numbers between two and ten have specific universal magical properties and references—for example, six refers to “initiation by trial,” “equilibrium,” and “the hieroglyphic knowledge of good and evil,” while nine is the “absolute number,” since it is three multiplied by three, whose “mysteries…must never be revealed.”\(^ {52}\) Similarly, for Péladan all numbers had


\(^{52}\) Lévi, *The Mysteries of Magic*, 69–70. Lévi devotes two pages to the triad, which he describes as “the universal dogma, and the basis of magical doctrine.” He addresses the Trinity, the fact that grammar includes up to the third person, the triads within alchemy, magic, and the family, and the material, spiritual and divine worlds. Lévi, *The Mysteries of Magic*, 67–69.
great symbolic and magical significance. As scholars have noted, Péladan repeatedly incorporated the number three into his doctrines by dividing concepts, groups, and artists into threesomes. However, an important distinction here is Péladan’s connection to a larger interest in numerology, since Péladan included a wide variety of different numbers throughout his texts, all with specific symbolic importance. Despite his emphasis on specific numbers, it was not just threes and sevens, but actually all numbers that carried symbolic weight for Péladan. Just as in Lévi’s doctrines, some numbers are repeated or discussed more often, but all numbers symbolize larger principles and are important not just for their specific references, but for the larger role they play as a symbolic language.

While the exhibiting artists did incorporate occult and numerological references, they were generally more selective and sparing than the leaders in this regard. Even though numerology certainly featured in the artworks exhibited at the Rose + Croix, explicit references to it were less widespread than in Péladan’s writing. As broadly discussed by Sébastien Clerbois, Delville and Khnopff incorporated a variety of numerological references into their works.

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53 A wide variety of numbers are repeated throughout both Péladan and Larmandie’s works—all carrying a number of specific symbolic meanings. For example, Péladan refers to a triangle of three exemplary contemporary artists. Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*, 41; Joséphin Péladan, *La décadence esthétique: L’art ochlocratique, salons de 1882 et 1883* (Paris: Dentu, 1888), 108–109. In discussing the salons, Larmandie also utilizes magical references to the number six—although, it is important to note that for writers like Lévi, every number between two and ten held a numerological significance. The number seven also plays a major role in the Salons, since there are seven commanders. According to Lévi, “the number seven, or the septenary, is the sacred number of all theogonies and all symbols, because it is composed of the triad and tetrads. It represents magic power in its whole scope; it is…the symbol of all religion.” Lévi, *The Mysteries of Magic*, 66–70.

54 Joel Goffin emphasizes the role of the number three for the Salons, referring to them as “trinitaire” and addressing a variety of uses of the number three—including the trinity, the three grades, the three forms of activities they could engage in, the three Orthodox qualities, and inclusion of 63 initiates in séances.” Goffin, *Le secret de Bruges-la-Morte*, 44.

55 Sébastien Clerbois has considered the impact of theosophy and Rosicrucianism on Belgian Symbolists, including the role of numerology. See Sébastien Clerbois, “In Search of the Forme-Pensée: The Influence of Theosophy on
Specifically, Delville’s *Symbolisation de la chair et de l’Esprit* (Fig. 1.7) refers to the numerology of the duad with its binary conception of the relationship between Spirit and Flesh.\(^{56}\)

The titles of several exhibited works that have not been found divide the world into its component parts, referencing numerological principles, including for example: Ricaud’s *L’ame (Ba) vole de la tombe au soleil nocturne* and *Le Double (Ka) rêve au seuil de la tombe* and Duthoit’s *L’Air et la Terre*. Similarly, Pierre-Théo Wagner’s *Le Ciel, la Terre, l’Enfer*, Gachon’s *Enfer, Purgatoire, Paradis*, and Maurin’s three works: *L’amour animique, L’Amour materiel*, and *L’Amour spiritual*, all refer to Catholic and occult concepts of a tripartite universe.\(^{57}\)

The presence of these numerological elements reveals a type of occult influence prevalent throughout the Salons—but this esoteric doctrine was still less apparent in the exhibited artworks than in Péladan’s writing.

In late nineteenth-century France, beliefs in the occult, alchemy, or alternative religions and interest in science were not mutually exclusive—Péladan even sought to increase

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\(^{56}\) Delville’s image of the combination of Flesh and Spirit is related to Péladan’s discussion of the numerology of unity, the binary, and the triad. The author argued for the importance of creating a unified whole out of the binary forms of spirit and matter, writing: “Le mystère n’a pas d’autre nom que l’unité, et l’homme, d’autre employ de sa triple force que la recherché du mystère, c’est-à-dire de l’Un. Sur la plan physique, l’unité s’appelle pierre philosophale et panacée; sur le plan animique, on la nomme amour; sur le plan esthétique qui est median entre l’esprit et la matière, on la nomme beauté.” Additionally, he included a more esoteric explanation, writing that in the beginning of the Torah: “*Le Béreschît* donne un nom pluriel aux premières phases de la création pour exprimer que, dans une cosmogonie, l’être absolu s’appelle le nom-être par rapport à l’être créé et évolutif, tandis que les collectifs humains de x° chapitre, traitant des exodes primitifs, attribuent un singulier à chacune des tribus humaines.” Péladan, *L’art idéaliste et mystique*, 171.

\(^{57}\) Similarly, Joël Goffin argues that a monogram by Khnopff which was created around 1888-1889, which hung to the right of his studio entrance, carries a variety of symbolic references. According to Goffin, in addition to incorporating the letters F and K into the monogram, it is also significant that the letters are included within a circle, which has three parts, referring to the trinity and connecting to both the rose and the shamrock. Additionally, the letters form not just a cross, but also a “johannique tau,” the cross of Anjou/Lorraine, and a capital “M.” Goffin, *Le secret de Bruges-la-Morte*, 78.
occultism’s scholastic prevalence, so that it would be taught in tandem with science in schools. With this attitude, Péladan responded to a variety of contemporaries who associated occultism and science. For example, Lévi wrote: “Magic is the traditional science of the secrets of Nature which comes to us from the Magi. It unites in a single science all that is most certain in philosophy and most infallible and eternal in religion.” Both scientific and religious principles were expressed by leaders of the Rose + Croix. Saint-Pol-Roux—who may have been a member of the leadership septenaire—argued that science and art were intertwined and while Science represented humanity, Art depicted Divinity. For Saint-Pol-Roux, these disciplines evolved differently, with Science progressing forward toward old age while Art moved toward the past, becoming increasingly purer and closer to the Idea. At the same time, even though writers like Lévi and Saint-Pol-Roux associated occult practices with the sciences and incorporated aspects of each into their own work, they did not accept all scientific disciplines and principles. Specifically, these writers disliked positivist models, the experimental sciences, and the scientific method. Nevertheless, despite opposing these specific scientific practices, Larmandie nonetheless lauded specific scientists and doctors, arguing that in the work of someone like Max

58 Goffin states that Péladan sought to have occultism taught in the schools, but Goffin over-assigns importance to Péladan within the world of the occult when he discusses Péladan and Papus as the “principal occultists of their time.” Goffin, Le secret de Bruges-la-Morte, 23, 46.


61 In this way, he argued for the importance of focusing on the past in Art, writing that artists were always returning to an earlier point of existence: “Ils quittèrent la Beauté au sortir de la Vie Antérieure et la retrouveront aux rentrées de la Vie Future, à moins qu’à la suite des siècles leurs dévouements solidaires ne l’aient réalisée ici-bas. S’il en était ainsi, la Vie Futur serait un ici-bas où la Beauté serait sensible,—et notre monde aurait fin sans fin-du-monde saisissable.” Saint-Pol-Roux, “De l’Art Magnifique,” 12.
Nordau (a German doctor who wrote a study of degeneration), “scientific esotericism reaches out its hand to religious exotericism.” And this “joining of hands,” so to speak, can also be seen in the paintings exhibited at the Rose + Croix.

A variety of critics discussed how the exhibiting artists responded to the contemporary pseudo-scientific theory of degeneration—specifically, idealizing their works by removing signs of degeneration. One writer discussed the group’s artistic techniques as scientific, building on the contemporary popularity of scientific concepts, even though he did not elucidate his reasons for this association when he wrote: “They are not only original conceivers, they have the true science of their art; thanks to them the Rose + Croix was really an idealist manifestation.”

Another critic revealed that he considered the group’s depiction of the Ideal to be rooted in, but an improvement upon, science. When discussing the work of Gachons, this reviewer wrote that the artist was engaged in the search for “a mysterious Ideal, not in absolute negation of the acquisitions of Science, but moving beyond its frontiers.”

Another writer, Alphonse Germain, discussed the Rose + Croix’s focus on idealism as a form of opposition to the contemporaneous


64 “Dans l’impatience de ces présentes années vers la possession d’un Idéal mystérieux, non en absolue négation des acquisitions de la Science mais allant au-delà de leurs frontières; dans l’envol vers des croyances indéfinies, vers cette inquiétude des contacts, à travers l’espace, des époques futures avec les temps abolis, sous la hantise pénétrante du frôlement des âmes disparues, —dans cet envol qui trace un sillon lumineux dans notre lutte littéraire, et dont l’éclat s’est augmenté du grandiose effort de trop rares artistes graphiques.” Léon Maillard, “Le Salon de ‘La Plume;’ Andhré des Gachons,” La Plume, no. 85 (November 1, 1892): 471.

65 For more on Alphonse Germain, see Michael Andrew Marlais, Conservative Echoes in Fin-de-siècle Parisian Art Criticism (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 171–183.
scientific concept of degeneration. Specifically, he argued that idealized art involved the
negation of all signs of the scientific process of racial degeneration.66 Although this critic wrote
that contemporary subjects were not generally ideal, he also argued for the viability of subjects
that were not inherently elevated and meaningful—specifically, nudes. Germain argued that
artists could ennoble nudes with style, by idealizing or stylizing the body, by creating a type, and
by removing all deformations or signs of work:

The stylized nude, that is to say the human body in its essential type,—Imagine, O
artists, the human body free of all stigmas of degradation, deformations of work
or signs showing the degeneration of a race … By the nude, rendered expressive
by means of gestures and emotional thanks to nuance, all sentiments, all states of
the soul, can be translated, the personal as well as the collective, the perennial as
the details of an era. By the nude!67

This emphasis on idealization was common at the Salons, as was the focus on responding to
contemporaneous scientific theories like the concept of degeneration.68

Rather than building on scientific theories by eliding the results of degenerative
processes, Jean Delville emphasized the integration of the arts and sciences in his theories of
idealist art. Delville argued that aesthetics was a science and that style served to synthesize the


67 “Mais, de ce que la représentation de faits-divers ou de scènes quelconques se prête mal à l’idéalisme, il n’en faut
pas conclure, comme ceux de l’Institut, à la nécessité d’élire des sujets nobles. L’ignorance ambiante oblige d’insister
sur ce point: avant tout sujet, il y a le style,—le style ennoblisseur par excellence. Le nu stylisé, c’est-à-dire le corps
humain dans son type essentiel,—entendez, ô artistes, le corps humain débarrassé de tout stigmate d’avilissement,
des déformations du travail ou des signes accusait la déchéance d’une race,—voilà le suprême idéalisateur de toute
plasticisation de nos concepts. Par le nu, rendu expressif au moyen du geste et affectif grâce à la nuance, tous les
sentiments, tous les états d’âme, se peuvent traduire, les personnels comme les collectifs, les pérennels comme ceux

68 For example, Count Larmandie discussed both the scientific and religious principles of evolution and involution (a
cosmic, cyclical process) in his Eōraka. According to Larmandie, involution creates liquids, solids, and gases out of
cosmic matter and is continually followed by evolution. Over time, this brings matter to its cosmic, primitive state,
thus returning to the start of the cycle. In laying out these ideas, he draws upon a variety of scientific theories,
including Darwinism and the social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer. Larmandie, Eōraka, 174–182.
laws of art and life. He further stated that “The study of the laws of the universe, far from checking the exercise of aesthetic faculties, affords them a wider field in their search for the ideal.” In this way, Delville argued that scientific studies should be intertwined with style and idealism. For him, the artist’s ability to create ideal art relied upon the artist’s ability to perceive underlying Ideal forms. These Neoplatonic forms then needed to be combined with natural elements: “The elements of which the external world is composed are used by the idealist to recreate and rediscover an ideal world in his thought.” Significantly, Delville tied these underlying forms to scientific principles, discussing them in terms of their degrees of evolution. As with many of the exhibiting artists, Delville thus responded to contemporaneous scientific concepts and principles, integrating these with religious, idealist, and aesthetic concerns.

**Theories of Color, the “Psychology of Nature,” and the “Symbolism of Tints”**

Several artists who exhibited at the Rose + Croix developed related color theories, often influenced by Michel Eugène Chevreul, Ogden Rood, Charles Blanc, Charles Henry, and Georges Seurat. Contemporary critics highlighted the relevance of “science” to these artists’

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aesthetic theories, coining the terms “psychology of nature” to discuss Osbert’s artwork and “symbolism of tints” and “fresco-anthropology” in reference to Séon’s paintings. Despite their shared interest in science, the artists’ theories, the artworks themselves, and the critical responses varied. For example, although Osbert and Séon utilized similar theories, Osbert tended to depict a limited range of extreme contrasts incorporating only a few specific complementary colors, generally opposing cool blues and purples with acidic yellows. At the same time, he often used a variety of long and short brushstrokes, contrasting pointillist dots with longer dashes. Séon, on the other hand, incorporated a wider range of color contrasts and often opposed flat, neutral regions with divisionist, pointillist, or illusionistic zones. Both artists were connected with Neo-Impressionism, having studied together with Seurat, but Osbert’s range of colors and use of complementsaries remained far more limited than many of his contemporaries and only one extant work by Séon foregrounds divisionism.\textsuperscript{76} Neo-Impressionist techniques were a significant influence for both artists, yet Osbert and Séon incorporated a variety of other concepts in developing their own personal, emotional, and scientific color theories. Additionally, through their emphasis on the importance of color, these artists deviated from Péladan’s principles, which focused on subject matter and line as the key means of communicating with viewers.

Several scholars discuss these artists’ color theories, but they generally consider the artists in isolation, rather than focusing on their place within the Rose + Croix. According to Véronique Dumas, Osbert developed his color theories based on a variety of ideas, including the

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those of Charles Henry, Chevreul, and Humbert de Superville and he would have known of other widespread theories of light and color, such as Newton’s law of complementaries. Clearly, Osbert knew of a variety of scientific ideas, since he wrote on Chevreul’s theories in his notebooks and used a textbook by Charles Blanc. Yet, although he began with a similar theoretical viewpoint as a Neo-Impressionist like Seurat, their artworks were widely separated. Dumas separates Osbert from the Rose + Croix due to his use of contrasting colors and exhibition at the Indépendants. For Dumas, this lack of fidelity to the Rose + Croix makes it unsurprising that Osbert exhibited works influenced by Chevreul, Impressionism, and pointillism, at Péladan’s Salons. Yet Osbert was not alone in exhibiting this type of work because Séon incorporated divisionist principles into one extant work.

Séon was even better versed in contemporary Neo-Impressionist theories than Osbert. Séon knew of these ideas through Seurat and Germain and the artist also revealed this knowledge in an unpublished manuscript on divisionism and its application. In fact, according to Jumeau-Lafond, “one cannot doubt the perfect knowledge that Séon possessed of the theories of Neo-

80 Dumas argues that a major aspect of the artist’s evolution, as shown in works like l’Adieu au Soleil and Hymne à la Mer is the focus on contrasting colors, an issue that she ties to his continued exhibition at the Indépendants throughout the existence of the Rose + Croix. Dumas, *Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert*, 159. Specifically, she situates Osbert between Charles Henry’s “Chromo-luminariste” movement and the “Idéaliste-Idéiste” Rosicrucians. She refers to these as Charles Henry’s “chromo-luminariste” movement and the “idéaliste-idéiste” Rosicrucians. Dumas, *Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert*, 21–22.
82 Jean David Jumeau-Lafond notes that this work is in a private collection, but includes a photograph of a diagram from the manuscript. Jumeau-Lafond, “Le néo-impressionnisme idéaliste d’Alexandre Séon,” 71.
Impressionism.” Thus, instead of whether Séon knew of these theories, for Jumeau-Lafond, the key is “in the manner [by] which [he] wished to appropriate Neo-Impressionism to inflect it toward [his] idealist vision of art.” Similarly, Dumas argues that Osbert was less knowledgeable than Séon in terms of color theory. She writes that while both artists “invented a new pictorial language founded essentially on expression by lines and colors,” it can be difficult to determine the extent to which Osbert understood these theories independently of Séon. She states that Séon focused on logic, intellectualization, and using a rational schema to organize his paintings, whereas she describes Osbert’s work as tied to his interest in nature and en plein air painting. While Dumas highlights Séon’s rationality and logic, his emphasis on mystical primordial ideas and the emotional impact of color remain key aspects of his principles. Significantly, in addition to being similarly influenced by Seurat, Séon and Osbert certainly shared and discussed scientific and aesthetic principles, as revealed in a series of letters from Séon to Osbert before the start of the Salons, in which the artist briefly discussed the successes and failures of Seurat’s optical mixing. In particular, Séon complained about applications of the


84 Dumas, Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert, 129.

85 Dumas, Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert, 129.

86 He also discusses the negative impact of literature on painting and the problem of imbecilic juries and exhibitions. There are three letters from Séon to Osbert in Osbert’s archives. The first letter (it is included first in the archive) is dated only to Sunday morning, the 19th, without a year or month. The month is unclear on the second letter, but it is sent on a Friday the 13th in 1889—since it discusses the same exhibition concerns as the third letter and the 13th only fell on a Friday in September and December, this letter most likely dates from September 13, 1889. The third is clearly dated to September 28th, 1889. BCMN 307 (1) Letters Addressed to Osbert, Letters from Séon to Osbert, fols. 225-230. In the first letter, Osbert wrote: “La! vous voila remonte alors je puis vous dire ce que j’ai fait. Produire est un besoin de ma nature s’il n’y avait ni jures imbéciles, ni expositions aussi imbéciles, je peindrai dans le ravinement, calmement pour mou et ceux qui sont de même esthétique. Mais la Société ignoble dans tout nous force
theory to ordinary nature—presumably preferring more eternal, religious, and mystical themes to those he considered “common.”

Osbert developed an aesthetic strategy that fused scientific influences with emotional symbolism. In the process, he deviated from artists like Seurat by the extent to which he emphasized a subjective—rather than structured or universal—depiction of emotion. In contrast to this more personal process, Seurat sought to develop a more scientific method of utilizing color and line to depict emotion. Osbert also diverged from Péladan’s theories with his interest in Neo-Impressionist techniques, his emphasis on emotional expression, and his preference for symbolic color over line. In discussing the artist’s theories, critics routinely referenced Osbert’s interest in psychology, building on the fact that Osbert’s friend, the critic Henri Degron, coined the term “psychology of nature” to discuss how the artist modified the exterior world with emotions and dreams. In addition to this focus on science, Degron also associated Osbert’s color theory with more mystical concepts, writing that the artist’s harmonic blues, purples, and oranges expressed the Idea and the emotional state of the soul.

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87 In discussing the works at one exhibition, Séon wrote: “Les toiles envoyées sont peu intéressantes à part trois ou quatre. La méthode Seurat, le mélange optique, ne produit rien de bien neuf. Il[?] l’applique d’ailleurs à des coins de nature d’un banal! Vraiment c’est quelque chose et on produit aussi des sensations par l’aménagement.” BCMN 307 (1) Letters Addressed to Osbert, Letter from Séon to Osbert, September 28, 1889, fol. 230.

88 For more on how Seurat sought to use color and line both scientifically and emotionally, see his letter to Maurice Beauborg, Georges Seurat. Letter to Maurice Beauborg. August 28, 1890. Musée des lettres et manuscrits. For a discussion of these theories, see: Robert L. Herbert, Seurat: Drawings and Paintings (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 13–15.


90 “Et alors, l’esthétique idéaliste de l’artiste, nous apparaît suffisamment. Aux tons noirâtres et gris de jadis ont fait place les gammes tendres et harmoniques du bleu, du violet et de l’orange ; et de leur assemblage sobrement condensé, s’insinuant sur les paysages et les attitudes, s’est révélée davantage toute la musique émotive de l’âme.
Osbert’s method of depicting the emotional aspect of nature was influenced by a variety of optical theories, but it was more personal than that of his friend Seurat. Osbert deviated from Seurat with his focus on emotion and his use of noticeably varied brushstrokes.\textsuperscript{91} As noted by Robert Herbert, Seurat incorporated a range of dots and dashes—yet according to the scholar, despite this variation, “we are normally…more conscious of the relative uniformity of the stroke.”\textsuperscript{92} Thus, while both artists used a range of brushstrokes, Osbert’s long strokes are far more apparent to viewers than the dashes included in Seurat’s works. Additionally, despite Osbert’s use of pointillism and complementary colors, the artist stood apart from strict divisionism because of his focus on the emotional effects of nature and his use of harmonic colors and dramatic (rather than even) lighting. Additionally, while Degron’s phrase highlights Osbert’s interest in psychology and scientific principles, the artist’s attachment to and study of science must not be overstated.

Osbert’s emphasis on adjacent instead of complementary colors and his focus on the emotional and symbolic importance of the color blue reveal two major ways in which the artist deviated from more scientific color theories in developing his own expressive model. He fused these ideas to create a more personal method, so that the artist’s technique did not develop into a

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\textsuperscript{91} Seurat emphasized the importance of utilizing small, comparatively uniform pointillist brushstrokes with bright, even lighting of the local colors, believing this would create an optical mixture of the divided colors in the eye. For more on this see Hajo Düchting, \textit{Georges Seurat, 1859-1891: The Master of Pointillism} (Cologne; Los Angeles: Taschen, 2000), 44–46.

\textsuperscript{92} Herbert, \textit{Seurat}, 13, 85.
methodical manner, but instead, into an expressive and decorative one.\textsuperscript{93} In fact, Blumstein argues that Osbert’s application of scientific theories was not rigorous or scientific and even “if he uses a vague pointillism in certain parts of his canvases, his paintings are never … pointillist paintings.”\textsuperscript{94} Additionally, revealing the significance of emotional expression for the artist, Dumas explains that Osbert emphasized blue based on his idea that blue was the most profound, immaterial, and eternal color and as a result, could express the idea that his paintings were focused on the spirit world and were disconnected from time.\textsuperscript{95} In this way, instead of depicting local colors, Osbert often utilized shades of blue throughout his paintings to unify his compositions, sometimes painting overwhelmingly blue works like \textit{Mystère de la Nuit}, \textit{Incestuous Souls}, and \textit{Les Chants de la Nuit} (Figs. 4.5, 4.6, 4.7). Although Osbert contrasted these tones with near-complementary orange-tinted yellow moons, he did not divide his colors into their component parts. Thus, Osbert utilized his study of complementary colors to organize his compositions, but he did not actually divide his colors utilizing a divisionist model. Based upon this, the critic Degron explained that the artist’s application of these color theories was “purely subjective” and not systematic.\textsuperscript{96} In this way, Osbert developed his own expressive technique influenced by scientific theories by incorporating complementary colors and pointillist brushstrokes alongside his harmonic ranges of expressive colors.

\textsuperscript{93} Dumas, \textit{Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert}, 125.

\textsuperscript{94} “…s’il utilise un vague pointillisme dans certaines parties de ses toiles, ses tableaux ne sont jamais pour cela, des tableaux pointillistes.” Blumstein, “Le Peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et son époque,” 36.

\textsuperscript{95} Dumas, \textit{Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert}, 126–127.

\textsuperscript{96} Degron, “Alphonse Osbert,” 143–147.
Beyond revising scientific principles, Osbert also broke from the rigorous application of scientific concepts by introducing more variation and contrast into his brushstroke. Osbert’s incorporation of a range of brushstrokes deviated from Neo-Impressionist theories of optical vibration, wherein small, even, and generally uniform dots of color were supposed to mix in the eye to produce a more luminous effect. Similarly, he created contrasting zones of luminosity—in that some areas in a painting incorporate complementaries while other areas focus on harmonious color combinations. This produces variation and interest, but deviates from divisionist principles which require more uniform lighting. For example, in *Hymne à la Mer*, the painter used pointillist brushstrokes to depict the atmospheric effects just above the horizon. In addition to using dots of color in this zone, he alternated between orange-tinted yellow and blue-tinted purple, creating a luminous effect with his use of pointillist complementary colors. Nevertheless, the artist did not incorporate this effect into the rest of the canvas, depicting the grasses and water with lines of color instead of dots and utilizing harmonious color combinations. In this way, the artist created a contrast within the work between the areas that were more influenced by divisionist techniques and those that were not.

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97 See Robert Herbert for more on optical vibration and optical mixing. Herbert, *Seurat*, 12. Robert Herbert clarifies that Seurat and the other Neo-Impressionists generally focused on optical vibration and not optical mixing—as he explains, Seurat’s colors do not completely mix even from a distance. Instead of fully mixing, according the principle of vibration, the multiple colors never fully resolve and mix, but become more active because of how they vibrate against the other nearby colors. Herbert, *Seurat*, 12.

98 In all three of these works, the planetary body is most likely the moon and not the sun, due to the darkness of the sky.

99 The water does include some contrast between the yellow reflections and the blues and purples of the water, and the distant water also includes some dots of color, but despite this use of contrast, the brushstrokes are not pointillist and within each area, the colors are not divided.
Osbert broke from Péladan by using the modern technique of pointillism, focusing on expression through emotional impact rather than subject matter, and emphasizing color. While drawing is often emphasized in Osbert’s sketches, color takes on the central role in the final works and line is relegated to a lower position.\(^{100}\) For Dumas, this focus on color reveals the artist’s reliance on theorists like Baudelaire who gave color a greater importance than Péladan did.\(^{101}\) In fact, she argues that Osbert rarely included specific symbolic subjects and motifs because his central focus was on the symbolic use of colors and the depiction of the divine presence.\(^{102}\) While Osbert did routinely include additional symbolic elements like lyres, color symbolism certainly plays a significant role for the artist.

Dumas argues that Osbert was unusual, since he broke from the group and Péladan with his use of scientific complementary colors and his general emphasis on color.\(^{103}\) However, Osbert was not the only exhibiting artist interested in contemporary color theory. His friend Séon established his own personal theories of color, influenced by Neo-Impressionist and scientific discoveries and ideas.\(^{104}\) Séon developed a different technique from Osbert, utilizing pointillist and divisionist principles in some areas, but contrasting these zones with regions of flat, neutral color. Like Osbert, he associated colors with emotional states, deviating from Péladan in terms of his emphasis on the symbolic weight of color.


\(^{101}\) Dumas, *Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert*, 158.


\(^{103}\) Dumas, *Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert*, 159.

\(^{104}\) Osbert was close friends with another Rosicrucian artist, Alexandre Séon, with whom he studied under Lehmann and organized a dinner for the teacher’s former students in 1887. Blumstein, “Le Peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et son époque,” 97.
Séon incorporated elements of his friend Seurat’s principles into his works, but developed his own theory—a “symbolism of tints,” as discussed by Germain. Germain argued for the relevance of emotion and optical science in the artist’s work, writing that all of Séon’s nuanced colors, poses, rhythms, and lines were associated with specific emotional, symbolic, and psychic states:

Vassal to Beauty above all, Séon seeks to syncretize the recent discoveries and idealist principles. If he presents lights following optical laws, it is always in the service of the Idea or of the Dream. As for colors, he makes them play a sensorial role, as important as that of lines. For this subtle nuance, the multiple nuances of the spectral colors and of the white that contains them all correspond with our intimate perceptions, our psyches, as a consequence, must serve to translate them, to symbolize them, on the canvas (This is what he called the symbolism of tints.) To express some feeling by a gesture, an attitude; to support this sentiment by rhythms and an arabesque, … and by the compatible colors—thus summarizes his theory.  

Clarifying these ideas in another article on the painter, Germain argued that for Séon, every color in the spectrum was associated with a specific primordial idea. He even wrote that through contemplation, one could deduce the abstract ideas and iconic symbolism of each color. While Germain did not actually identify which primordial ideas were tied to which colors, the artist’s


\[\text{105} \text{ “Féal au Beau avant tout, Séon cherche à syncrétismer les découvertes récentes et les principes idéalistes. S’il présente des lumières d’après les lois optiques, c’est toujours mises au service de l’Idée ou du Rêve. Quant aux colorations, il leur fait jouer un rôle sensationnel aussi important que celui des linéatures. Car pour ce subtil, les multiples nuances des couleurs spectrales et du blanc qui les contient toutes correspondent avec nos intimes perceptions, nos psychismes, par conséquent doivent servir à les traduire, à les symboliser sur toile. (C’est ce qu’il a appelé le symbolisme des teintes.) Exprimer quelque sentiment par un geste, une attitude; corroborer ce sentiment par des rythmes et une arabesque; enfin, le rendre affectif au moyen d’une photogénie et de colorations concordantes,—ainsi se résume sa théorie.” Germain, “L’Idéal au Salon de la Rose+Croix,” 211.}

\[\text{106} \text{ “Séon, posant comme postulat que chaque couleur spectrale et le blanc qui les contient toutes correspondent à une ou plusieurs de nos perceptions primordiales, en déduit que leurs mille nuances sont aptes à contémplariser la symbolisation iconique d’un état d’âme ou d’idées abstraites.” Germain, “Critique d’Art: Sur un Tableau Refusé: Théorie du Symbolisme des Teintes,” 171.}
emphasis on the emotional impact of hues reveals a major break from the emphasis on scientific
principles—despite the critic’s references to “spectral colors” and optical laws.”

Séon developed a range of techniques and methods which he often combined in a single
work. He used a Neo-Impressionist technique including the division of colors, but he diverged
from the strict application of these principles through his incorporation of contrast. Specifically,
he often opposed his zones of bright, complementary, and divided colors with muted, neutral
areas. Séon’s Désespoir de la chimère is often seen as the clearest example of the artist’s theories
and his strictest application of Neo-Impressionist techniques (Fig. 4.8). Yet, in addition to the
zones of divisionism present in this work, I argue that the artist also included some more
illusionistically painted areas, developing his own method wherein this contrast highlights the
effects of each technique. This painting shows the artist’s developing color theory through his
depiction of a variety of modulated tones, his use of flecks of contrasting colors in the rocks, and
his incorporation of zones of harmonizing colors (especially in the body and sky). Specifically,
the rocks include a wide range of complementary colors including periwinkle, turquoise, rose,
pale green, peach, and yellow. Even the sky incorporates contrasts between rose and yellow. Yet
the face, the body, and especially the belly, legs, and tail of the lion are more illusionistic than
the rest of the work. Although the shadows in these regions incorporate some complementary
colors, the brushstrokes are more precise than those depicting the rocks. This creates a significant

107 Both Montalant and Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond highlight the importance of Désespoir de la chimère. Montalant,
brisées; de teintes: bleuâtre algide.’ La facture associe quant à elle la division du ton par touches de formes
variables, depuis le point jusqu’à des touches plus larges. On y reconnaît dans le traitement du visage, des ailes et
des roches, la dégradation perspective du ton revendiquée par le peintre. Certes, … la facture n’est pas homogène car
Séon … mais l’œuvre reste frappante par la complexité de la division et le symbolisme des lignes associés à un
thème qui prend valeur de manifeste esthétique.” Jumeau-Lafond, “Le néo-impressionnisme idéaliste d’Alexandre
Séon,” 73.
contrast within the work, one that breaks from a strict application of Neo-Impressionist principles.

Séon’s technique of using contrasting areas of different techniques to create a dramatic effect is especially apparent in his *Lamentation d’Orphée* (Fig. 1.15). In this work, Séon contrasted highly illusionistic areas with a flat, largely unmodulated swath of neutral color and with a few zones of heightened color. Specifically, Orpheus’ body, the lyre, and the rocks are painted in natural colors with details and modeling. The artist heightened the impact of this illusionism by contrasting it with the presence of the neutral, flat expanse of sand. The color accurately represents sand, yet it lacks modulation or detail, lacking any drifts, dunes, or other depressions. Additionally, while Orpheus casts a slight shadow, the rocks do not cast any shadows upon this surface, highlighting its drab flatness. Further enhancing the dramatic effect of the work, Séon depicted Orpheus’ drapery and the sea with an intense blue and turquoise. The impact of these tints is heightened by their contrast with the muted, neutral colors in the other zones.

Unlike *Désespoir de la chimère*, however, the Orpheus relies very little on scientific developments. Like Degron’s explanation of Osbert’s work, Germain’s description of *Douleur* (Fig. 4.9) emphasizes the emotional effect of the colors, as well as highlighting the integration of the human figure into the natural world:

*Douleur* shows us a November twilight full of farewell sadness. The fallen foliage covers the ground with a verdigris carpet and trees silhouetted against a sky of sulfur, their long leafless branches—so many arms in despair. Statue of despair, a pious dryad in tears supported by an arm against the trunk of a beech tree. Undoubtedly, she bears the mourning of the departed season, her drapery is a shade of vines, and in doubt, she weeps for the death of the leaves of her wood.
Orchestrated orange-red and melancholic gray-yellow harmonize in contrast with a distant bluish color, analogous to the desolate lines.108 The critic further emphasizes the symbolism of these colors in his next paragraph by writing of the “vehement feeling” created by the “simplicity” of the technique, which incorporates “few shades” in the “large masses,” developing into a work that is “so aptly symbolic.”109 In this way, Séon developed his theories by combining color symbolism, contrasting masses, scientific theories, and emotional expression.

The artists of the Rose + Croix did not incorporate optical and scientific principles into their works to the same extent as many contemporary artists, such as the Neo-Impressionists. Yet, they did build on these theories and integrated them with various religious principles. In the process, they developed a range of related and divergent techniques. These methods were rooted in Péladan’s idealist principles, but were more complex and detailed than his generalized discussions of style and technique. They also relied on color as a key means of expression, breaking from Péladan’s emphasis on the importance of the subject and line in affecting the viewer.


Hysteria and Hypnotism: Visionary Women

Numerous artworks which were exhibited at the Rose + Croix depict religious women in visionary states and incorporate references to contemporary debates regarding hysteria, hypnotism, mesmerism, and psychology. These theories and fields were well-known at the time and were not confined to psychiatric or scientific publications, appearing in a variety of works, such as journals dedicated to esoteric and occult studies, like *L’Initiation.* Despite the contemporaneous widespread knowledge of these topics, scholars have only recently begun to explore their broader impact. For example, several scholars have shown the wide-ranging influence that theories, photographs, and descriptions of hysteria had on French society. This section explores why artists exhibiting at the Rose + Croix would have been interested in these ideas. Several exhibiting artists used hysterical poses in depicting religious women. While we do not have statements by the artists addressing these connections, descriptions of the works by friends and contemporaries of the artists which utilize hysterical terms and Larmandie’s theories regarding hysteria reveal how deeply the artists’ associates connected these images of religious women with hysteria.

Like many of his contemporaries, Larmandie (who described himself as a fervent Catholic), discussed the analogies between dream states, hallucinations, mystical visions, and


hysterical and hypnotic experiences. Although Larmandie argued against directly comparing a
saint to a female hysteric, he nevertheless did so in his own writing when he asserted that the
visionary and hysterical states exhibited similar physical presentations. He combined Catholic
and occultist principles with scientific theories when he argued that hysterics, people praying,
and holy figures all looked similar in terms of the astral fluid, since these people all had strong
effects on it. Larmandie asserted that his ideas were all rooted in Catholicism, but he
intertwined the occult concept of astral planes, principles regarding hysteria, and Catholic
conceptions of visionary women. Building on Larmandie’s ideas, scientific and religious
themes influenced the widespread depiction of visionary subjects at the Salons, especially those
of female saints. Rigid and unusual poses reminded viewers that mystical apparitions and
experiences were sacred visions, distant from the everyday physical realm. In order to separate
their subjects from the material world, the contributing artists incorporated scientific and
religious studies regarding hysteria, gesture, and psychology into their exhibited artworks,
especially their paintings of the visionary experiences of female saints.

Scholars have noted some examples of the influence of hysteria on the artists exhibiting
at the Rose + Croix, but they have not fully explored this issue or addressed the fact that such a
large number of figures affiliated with the group were influenced by studies of hysteria. Richard
Thomson ties both Osbert’s Vision and Séon’s Jeanne d’Arc to images of hysteria from the
Salpêtrière, including a description, but he does not discuss this in detail or reference specific

112 For more on the Astral Fluid, see the next section on “Haze, Auras, and the Astral Fluid.”

113 Larmandie, Eôraka, 93–94.

114 Larmandie, Eôraka, 47, 69.
images that he sees as influential (Figs. 1.11, 4.10). Rodolphe Rapetti writes that ties between Symbolist paintings and hysterical images and studies are “fundamental in understanding the movement’s expressive depiction of the body, its derivation and ramifications.” Rapetti ties Osbert’s Vision to a specific image—a photograph from the Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière showing “Période Terminale: Extase” (Fig. 4.11). He also notes the influence of hysteria on the title of Chabas’ Celsa (Phase extatique) and discusses Séon’s Jeanne d’Arc, arguing that Joan’s pose “corresponds with one of the cataloged positions of catalepsy induced in hysterics ‘by an unexpected loud noise.’” However, Rapetti does not discuss the references to hysteria in contemporary critic Alphonse Germain’s description of Jeanne d’Arc, he does not consider the artist’s second version of this work, and most problematically for a consideration of the Rose + Croix, when addressing “the minor Symbolists who clustered around Sâr Péladan,” he discusses only Eugène Grasset—who exhibited a single work—and Carlos Schwabe, focusing on pieces produced after 1900. Additionally, while Rapetti introduces a great deal of evidence linking hysteria and Symbolism, he vacillates in his argument by claiming that there is not

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115 Thomson notes that Osbert’s image was accepted to the Salon Nationale des Beaux-Arts, where Séon’s painting was refused, arguing that Osbert’s more pious, natural figure and more generic title may have played a role in this. Although he argues that Osbert’s pose is less extreme, Thomson identifies the influence of hysteria in these works, as well as an earlier piece by three-time Rosicrucian exhibitor Charles Maurin. Richard Thomson, “Seeing Visions, Painting Visions: On Psychology and Representation Under the Early Third Republic,” in Visions: Gauguin and His Time: Van Gogh Studies 3 (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 2010), 144.


enough “factual” or “indisputable” evidence to definitively link the two.\textsuperscript{120} In introducing his discussion of Vision, he makes the problematic argument that by including these new “elements of modern neurosis,” Symbolist artists “divested” the traditional, religious, and mythological meanings from their themes.\textsuperscript{121} Artists who exhibited at the Rose + Croix certainly connected their works to discourses on hysteria and science, but these associations merged with, rather replacing, the paintings’ simultaneous ties to religion, myth, and history.

Visions, dreams, and hallucinations played an important role in Symbolist art, theory, and writing. Additionally, a variety of theories on related and indeterminate visionary states also affected the exhibitors’ theories, subjects, and techniques. Important influences included: the Symbolist focus on depicting the eternal Idea; various religious theories regarding saintly and mystical visions; the belief in spirits and elementals\textsuperscript{122} residing in the Astral plane (the realm between the material and divine worlds); and scientific discourses on hallucinations and hysterical visions. The titles of artworks exhibited at the Salons likewise refer to astral images, mystical visions, visions of the flood, visions in the evenings, visions during the nighttime, and visions of the Virgin.

\textsuperscript{120} Rapetti, “From Anguish to Ecstasy: Symbolism and the Study of Hysteria,” 224, 229.

\textsuperscript{121} Rapetti, “From Anguish to Ecstasy: Symbolism and the Study of Hysteria,” 229.

\textsuperscript{122} Theories of elemental creatures and spirits varied widely. One seventeenth-century book focuses on categorization, dividing elementals into four categories, representing the four elements, including gnomes (earth), nymphs (water), sylphs (air), and salamanders (fire). McIntosh, The Rosicrucians, 107. Éliphas Lévi also differentiates between elemental forms, separating mortal elemental forms (including demons) and immortal spirits. Éliphas. Lévi, The Book of Splendours: The Inner Mysteries of Qabalism (New York City: Weiser Books, 1973); Lévi, The Mysteries of Magic, 82, 114, 115, 117. On the other hand, the artists exhibiting with the Rose + Croix did not tend to differentiate between the various elemental, spirit, and fairy forms.
One common motif at the Salons was visionary experiences among Catholic figures, including Joan of Arc, Saint Genevieve, and Saint Cecile. Some notable examples were created by: Osbert—who painted Saint Genevieve; Séon and Marcus-Simons—who exhibited renderings of Joan of Arc; Azambre—who illustrated Saint Cecile’s dream; and Cadel—who depicted a woman in a habit receiving a vision of Christ in *Amour Mystique* (Fig. 4.12). These images of visionary experiences built on contemporary linkages between hysteria, hypnotism, hallucinations, and mystical visions. Joan of Arc experienced voices (rather than specifically visions), yet Alexandre Séon represented her as a visionary saint, glancing up with rays of divine light reaching toward her. Séon exhibited his painting of Joan of Arc at the first Salon and it was illustrated in the exhibition catalog (Fig. 4.10). Additionally, a recently discovered copy of the work by Séon reveals the artist’s continued emphasis on hysteria in terms of the pose and gesture (Fig. 4.13).

123 The complex history and debates regarding Catholicism, the Church, secularism, education, and related issues in nineteenth-century France is outside the scope of this project. For one consideration of these issues, see Joseph F. Byrnes, *Catholic and French Forever: Religious and National Identity in Modern France* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2005).

124 Larmandie built on these ideas when he argued that female hysterics and saints had similar effects on the astral fluid. Larmandie, *Eôraka*, 93–94. In addition to these visionary depictions of female saints, several other artists depicted these saints in other situations, including Gachon’s depictions of *Ma Mie Jehanne* and Aman-Jean’s painting of Joan of Arc. These works are still tied to the role of visions—in the artist’s depiction of Joan of Arc, either a tapestry depicting a battle or a vision of a battle is depicted in the background.

125 Séon’s painting of Joan of Arc from the Rosicrucian Salon was long considered lost—in 2005, Dumas noted that the location of *Joan of Arc* was unknown. Dumas, *Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert*, 128. Yet, a painted version was sold at auction in 2009 as the original. In 2011, Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond questioned whether this might actually be a later version of the subject (dating to after the artist’s renunciation of divisionism in 1900) and thus, if the painting exhibited at the Salons of the Rose + Croix might still be missing. Jumeau-Lafond, “Le néo-impressionnisme idéaliste d’Alexandre Séon,” 75. The scholar notes significant divergences between the critic Alphonse Germain’s description of the original painting and the version sold at auction, specifically, regarding the incorporation of optical laws (like optical vibration and the division of color) into the depiction of the visionary light and in terms of Germain’s description of the background as a “curtain of poplars,” since the painting depicts only a single tree—and one which is definitely not a poplar. As stated by Jumeau Lafond: “Il en va de même des descriptions critiques déjà citées, que l’on ne retrouve guère dans ce tableau, tant le motif lui-même (ainsi du ‘rideau de peupliers’ mentionné par Germain) que la technique censée ‘présenter des lumières selon les lois optiques,”
In the later painting, even though Séon moved away from his earlier pointillist and Neo-Impressionist influences, he depicted the pose and gesture with the same emphasis on hysteria, revealing his long-term attachment to these principles. In these works, the two figures stand in similar frontal positions, holding their arms rigidly away from their bodies with clenched fists. The rigid pose plays a key role in both images, showing that the figure is transfixed by her visionary experience. Joan of Arc’s clenched fists and straight arms reveal the intensity of her experience. In both works, while she glances up, her body remains immobile, fixed in place, symbolizing the psychological (rather than physical) impact of the light.

Alphonse Germain utilized a combination of occultist and scientific vocabulary tied to hypnotism and hysteria in describing the painting of Joan of Arc that Séon exhibited at the Rose + Croix. He specifically identified the occultist influences by discussing the astral origins of the

toujours d’après Germain. Une ‘première’ Jeanne d’Arc reste-t-elle donc à découvrir, hypothétique chef-d’œuvre qui n’aurait pas encore livré son dernier combat face à la postérité ? La gravure reproduit-elle un dessin indépendant de l’huile, ou Séon et Germain ont-ils ‘rêvé’ et idéalisé, en la théorisant, une œuvre, celle réapparue, très belle mais pourtant déjà fort éloignée de l’esthétique à caractère néo-impressionniste défendue avec le Désespoir de la chimère, et qui, après eux, devait pourtant aller encore plus loin ? Nul ne peut encore le dire de manière définitive.” Jumeau-Lafond, “Le néo-impressionnisme idéaliste d’Alexandre Séon,” 76. He also argues that the work diverges too extensively from the catalog illustration. He overemphasizes the differences between the catalog illustration and the recently auctioned painting when he writes that the painting is “very different” and that “Everything, in effect—the position of the head, the arched format, the character of the trees, the absence of the imposing halo symbolizing the voices—differs from the print.” (“L’apparition en vente publique, en 2009, d’une Jeanne d’Arc, très différente de la gravure publiée dans le catalogue du Salon de la Rose + Croix, ne laisse pas d’intriguer. …Tout, en effet—position de la tête, format cintré, nature des arbres, absence de l’imposant halo symbolisant les voix—diffère de la gravure.”) Jumeau-Lafond, “Le néo-impressionnisme idéaliste d’Alexandre Séon,” 75. There are significant variations between the works, but everything is not different—specifically, the pose, clothing, and general composition remain the same. The placement of the figure on the left side of the work and the general format remain similar, although, as Jumeau-Lafond notes, the composition diverges since the painting is not rectangular but arched at the top.

For more on the differences between these works in terms of Neo-Impressionism, see Jumeau-Lafond, “Le néo-impressionnisme idéaliste d’Alexandre Séon.”

Her bodice includes laces in the painting which are not apparent in the print, yet she wears the same gathered skirt and hip-length, long-sleeved tunic opening at the neck. Also, in the exhibition catalog, the figure tilts her head upward, whereas in the painted version, she merely raises her eyes.
voices that she heard and the physiological impact of a hysterical attack on the eyelids and hands, writing: “This spasm of the eyelids, the upper arches high above the iris reflecting some unknown ether, the hands clenched, the thumbs outside, are of a hysteric in ecstasy.” At the same time, in discussing the pose, he built on descriptions of the contraction of the muscles in hysterical states, writing that the figure was “Standing, hypnotized in an extreme contraction, her arms extended...” Thus, in this image, the rigid arms, the eyes raised to the left, and the clenched hands recall contemporary conceptions of hysteria. The same contraction of the arm muscles and fingers is depicted in a photograph showing a “Hystéro-Épileptique” attack (Fig. 4.14). The medical description reads: “Her eyelids close and are still; the eyes are moving up and to the left; the pupils appear to retain their dimensions; the jaws contract; the upper limbs lengthen, become rigid.” These hysterical sources so strongly influenced Séon that, even when he re-created this work without the same Neo-Impressionist influences, he depicted the same rigid, extended arms, raised eyes, and clenched fists. This is not the only painting in which Séon depicted a female figure in a pose characteristic of hysterics at the Salpêtrière—the angel in his Pense (Fig. 4.15) solemnly crosses her arms over her chest in the same manner as those figures


130 Part of the description of this attack reads: “les paupières se ferment et sont immobiles; les yeux se dirigent en haut et à gauche; les pupilles paraissent conserver leurs dimensions; les mâchoires se contractent, les membres supérieures s’allongent, deviennent rigides.” Désiré Magloire Bourneville and Paul Regnard, Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière, service de M. Charcot (Paris: Aux bureaux du Progrès médical, V.A. Delahaye, 1879), 46.
Hysterical religious imagery also appears in Osbert’s *Vision* (Fig. 1.11). Incorporating similar sources, Séon and Osbert depicted the physical forms of hysterical contemporary women. The figures’ rigid poses and hands, as well as Joan of Arc’s upward gaze in Séon’s work, reveal the influence of the study of hysteria. In this way, these artists combined ideal, mystical, saintly figures with contemporary scientific theories regarding hysterical phases, poses, and visions, highlighting the differences between mystical, ideal saintly experiences and the material realm.

**Elemental Beings and the Astral Fluid**

Artists exhibiting at the Rose + Croix explored occult and scientific discussions regarding auras and the astral fluids and incorporated these theories into their work, highlighting their belief that religious experiences were tied to a higher, astral plane and not the material realm. Various interpretations of these concepts were associated with occult and alternative religions and references to them were widespread in popular and scientific literature. This discourse on astral fluids even appeared in supposedly scientific studies of the patients at the Salpêtrière, where, in addition to other diagnostic notes, doctors identified changes in the visibility of several patients’ auras. According to astral theories, people, animals, and plants were all

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131 See plate XXXVIII *Béatitude*. In contrast, Plate XXI *Attitudes Passionelles: Erotisme* also shows crossed arms, but here they are combined with a smile. Bourneville and Regnard, *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière, service de M. Charcot*.

interconnected by the fluid filling the air around them. Additionally, people apparently projected their auras onto it and it was capable of retaining impressions of the past. Based on these principles, human beings were not considered entirely separate from the natural world, but rather, were closely connected to it, and their personalities and attitudes could be transmitted into a hazy form or aura around their visible bodies. These ideas are apparent in a variety of artworks exhibited at the Rose + Croix, like Osbert’s Vision, which depicts a woman surrounded by a hazy aura or halo and integrates the color and patterning of the visionary figure into the landscape and vice versa. A variety of exhibited paintings similarly illustrate figures linked with the natural world in ways that reflect their kinship with it or depict the atmosphere as fluid.

Péladan considered the human form an essential component of painting and he opposed landscapes by arguing that one tree was no different from another. Yet, the Salons accepted several landscapes and a variety of figures tied to the Rose + Croix wrote on the connection between the human and natural worlds and the principle of the astral fluid. According to Larmandie, there were three worlds—the divine, the material, and the astral, the last an

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133 This interconnection is sometimes discussed as light, vibrations, or magnetism instead of fluid. The astral plane is often described as a realm in between the physical and divine. It is generally referred to as permeating the material world, but only being visible in certain conditions and to certain people (especially mediums and people who are hypnotized).

134 For one theory of the images projected onto the astral fluid, see Papus, Traité élémentaire de science occulte (5e éd., augm. d’une 3e partie sur l’histoire secrète de la terre et de la race blanche, sur la constitution de l’homme et le plan astral...), 338–342.

135 Magical theories, such as those of Eliphas Levi often maintain a hierarchy among beings, but they also insist upon reciprocal influence. According to Lévi: “L’idée d’un ordre parfait et immuable dans la nature, la notion d’une hiérarchie ascendant et d’une influence descendante dans tous les êtres, avaient fourni aux anciens hiérophantes la première classification de toute l’histoire naturelle. Les minéraux, le végétaux, les animaux, furent étudiés analogiquement, et on en attribua l’origine et les propriétés au principe passif ou au principe actif, aux ténèbres ou à la lumière.” Lévi, La clef des grands mystères, 203.

136 Péladan, L’art idéaliste et mystique, 128.
intermediary between the first two. Larmandie wrote that the artistic practice of depicting saints with halos was rooted in the astral fluids, since:

The astral fluid tends constantly to escape from the material body as a physical gas tends to escape from the container that contains it. It seeks sleep and the various nervous states routine or accidental, new or morbid. The complete rupture of the bond which links the astral fluid to the material body would cause immediate death of the latter. But the astral body, while penetrating the smallest molecules of the human body, projects the Aura, surrounds the body with a kind of buoyant nebulosity. This aura is especially visible in the head and hands; it is this which constitutes the aureole. The reality of the aura is now so recognized that scientific language is captured in the expression.

Similarly, the central artist Pierre-Émile Cornillier, who exhibited at every Salon, also wrote several books on séances, predicting the future, and the experiences of his mediums when viewing the astral planes. He published *La survivance de l’âme et son évolution après la mort* in 1920, which lays out his experiences with a medium named Reine during over a hundred séances. Cornillier considered the field of hypnotism and a belief in the astral fluid to be closely linked, since he thought that his hypnotized mediums were viewing the astral plane. In addition to this broader connection, Cornillier’s writing is significant because the artist included descriptions of the astral plane, noting that colors were less apparent to hypnotized people than


138 “Le fluide astral tend constamment à s’évader du corps matériel comme un gaz physique tend à s’échapper du récipient qui le contient. Il cherche le sommeil et les différents états nerveux périodiques ou accidentels, nouveaux ou morbides. La rupture complète du lien qui enchaîne le fluide astral au corps matériel entrainerait immédiatement la mort de ce dernier. Mais le corps astral, tout en pénétrant les moindres molécules de l’organisme humain, projette d’Aura, environne le corps comme une espèce de nébulosité flottable. Cette aura est surtout visible à la tête et aux mains; C’est elle qui constitue l’aureole. La réalité de l’aura est aujourd’hui tellement reconnue que le langage scientifique s’est empare de l’expression.” Larmandie, *Eōraka*, 93–94.


shapes, forms, light, and shadow and that in this higher plane, figures were elongated and more luminous.\textsuperscript{142} Cornillier’s descriptions reflect Lévi’s discussion of this realm as vague and shadowy. Lévi echoed Symbolist principles regarding the importance of mystery when he stated that these higher realms could never be fully known—although he based his arguments not on aesthetics, but on the principles of magic. Lévi’s emphasis on mysterious symbols, analogies, and allegories was tied to Symbolist principles, although his focus was on keeping dangerous truths from the multitude.\textsuperscript{143}

Osbert drew on the principles of the astral fluid by depicting his figures dissolving into hazy landscapes. A variety of scholars have noted the fact that Osbert harmonized his figures with his landscapes. For example, Blumstein writes that the artist incorporated ambient colors into his figures’ clothing and dissolved the edges of his lines with light.\textsuperscript{144} Blumstein also argues that the subjects and corresponding landscape elements fulfill similar compositional purposes,


\textsuperscript{143} He also emphasizes the importance of analogies, which are “the basis of magic,” since they “destroy that claim of absolute truth which every religion makes.” According to Lévi, since allegories and analogies will not be understood by the uninitiated, they will not reveal dangerous truths to the multitude, but will be understood only by initiates. Lévi, \textit{The Mysteries of Magic}, xviii–xix.

\textsuperscript{144} Blumstein, “Le Peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et son époque,” 34, 45.
since the women have the same vertical, anchoring function as the trees. Similarly, Dumas describes Osbert’s figures as dissolving into the landscape, with such slight contouring that they appear as “ghosts, immaterial beings, or even ‘spirits,’ giving the viewer the impression of being in a dream or belonging to an invisible world, to another universe.” In fact, rather than merely serving as unspecified ghosts or spirits, these figures and their hazy auroras are tied to the principle of the astral fluid, revealing the interconnectedness of people with the natural world. The scholar Isabelle Buatois specifically ties Osbert’s work to the concept of the astral fluid, questioning whether the artist knew Edouard Schuré’s theories and arguing that the women in Osbert’s paintings served as representations of hallucinations or astral embodiments. However, it is not necessary for Osbert to have learned of this concept from Schuré, since Larmandie discussed the astral fluid in his *Eôraka*—a book closely associated with the Rose + Croix. Presumably, Osbert read *Eôraka*, especially since Pierre de Lano discussed it in a letter to the artist, noting that Osbert would have read it.

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145 Additionally, Blumstein argues that they sometimes even have the same rigidity as the trees, such as in *Solitude*, where the figure’s upraised arms tie her to the two trees behind her. Blumstein, “Le Peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et son époque,” 35.

146 “Le peintre prête une attention particulière à la dissolution des formes rendue par un dessin synthétique. Dans ce tableau, les personnages présentent des contours peu accusés comme s’il s’agissait de fantômes, d’êtres immatériels, ou même d’‘esprits,’ donnant au spectateur l’impression d’être dans un songe ou d’appartenir à un monde invisible, à un autre univers.” Dumas, Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert, 145.

147 She uses the phrase “corporisations du fluide astral.” Buatois, “Le sacré et la représentation de la femme dans le théâtre et la peinture symbolistes,” 220.


149 BCMN 307 (1) Correspondence addressed to Osbert, Letter from Pierre de Lano to Osbert, June 30, 1891, fol. 127-128 bis; fol. 127 bis.
Several works exhibited at the Rose + Croix reveal different ways in which artists incorporated references to the astral planes, showing the interconnection of human figures with the natural and spiritual worlds and revealing the widespread impact of astral theories on the contributing artists. Yet these artworks also reveal differences between the exhibitors, since some artists depicted specific astral figures, while others, especially Osbert, painted more generally evocative and unclassifiable female subjects, showing that the participants interpreted ideas regarding the astral planes in a variety of ways. Two paintings which depict elemental figures tied to specific features of the natural world are Séon’s *Fée des Grèves* and Chabas’ *Vierges des Falaises* (Figs. 4.18, 1.3). Both depict the elemental fairies and virgins who apparently inhabited nature, personifying the natural forms of the beaches and the cliffs for their human viewers. These nymphs or spirits were associated with the material world, but inhabited the astral planes and were visible only to mediums or initiates. In these paintings, the astral aspect of the figures is indicated by the works’ titles, which show the figures to be non-human and associated with specific features of the landscape.

Osbert’s subjects are even more difficult to classify. Dumas discusses the figures in his paintings as ghosts and Buatois identifies them as embodiments of the astral fluid, but neither scholar classifies the beings more specifically. In fact, the figures could serve a variety of functions—as humans who are tied to the natural world through their auras, as allegorical figures, or as elemental beings representing nature. Rather than acting as specific allegorical figures, Osbert’s subjects all embody this interconnection with nature. They do this by incorporating ambient colors (revealing their auras and interconnection with the atmosphere) and repeating the forms of natural elements like trees (to show their close association with natural elements, opposing the idea of human exceptionalism). Two of these indeterminate female
figures appear in *Hymne à la mer* and *L’Adieu au soleil* (Figs. 4.19, 4.20, 4.21). These works feature similar compositions, gestures, and color schemes. In both cases, the women serve as evocative figures who are closely tied to nature, but are not specifically identified. In *L’Adieu au soleil*, the woman is a symbol of nature, repeating the vertical form of the tree as she bids good night to the sun. On the other hand, the woman in *Hymne à la mer* acts as a more mysterious symbolic figure whose lyre symbolizes her vocalization of her appreciation for the sea. She does not represent a specific concept or idea, but rather, serves a more general, Symbolist purpose, alluding to the widespread belief in the interconnection between women and nature, music and painting, and the material and astral planes.

In *Poète Evoquant les Formes* Chabas went so far as depict the role of the artist calling forth astral figures from nature, making previously hidden forms visible to the viewer (Figs. 4.22, 4.23). Rather than imagining his own subjects, synthesizing from nature, or translating the visible through his own temperament, according to Chabas, the poet or artist conjured the present (but heretofore invisible) divine or astral world for the wider public. Compared to the medium, who was able to view figures on the astral planes that were not visible to others, for

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150 Chabas exhibited *Poète Evoquant les Formes* at 1895 Champ de Mars and the 1897 Rose + Croix, while a study for the work was exhibited at the 1895 Rose + Croix. Myriam de Palma writes that the work was exhibited in 1893 at the Champ de Mars under the title *Puis adjuvante, le poète evoquant les formes* and 1895 at the Rose + Croix, but according to the catalogs, it was exhibited in 1895 at the Champ de Mars, with a study the same year at the Rose + Croix, and then shown in 1897 at the Rose + Croix. Palma, *Maurice Chabas, peintre et messager spirituel, 1862-1947*, 31. This work was included in the Champ de Mars illustrated catalog, while a fragment of a drawing for it was published in June 1895. Notably, the figures depicted in the fragmentary drawing do not appear in the final version as illustrated in the catalog. Since the drawing was published the same year as the study was exhibited at the Rose + Croix and this journal published another work exhibited by Chabas at the event that year, the drawing is presumably the one exhibited by Chabas at the 1895 Rose + Croix. Definitively attaching specific works to Chabas’ titles is difficult since the artist apparently created multiple works with the same titles and exhibited other works under various names. For example, Chabas exhibited a pastel titled *Vision Astrale* at the 1893, yet a watercolor and gouache carries the same title. Myriam de Palma includes an illustration of *Poète Evoquant les Formes* in her book, noting the size and medium but stating that the current location of the work is unknown. Palma, *Maurice Chabas, peintre et messager spirituel, 1862-1947*, 37.
Chabas, artists not only saw these hidden beings, but gave them visual form. *Poète Evoquant les Formes* reveals the process by which elemental figures and spirits became visible. Following Chabas’ conception of the role of the poetic artist, these virgins, fairies, and other elemental beings were not visible to all. Rather, they were astral forms who resided within another realm, one from which the artist or poet alone could draw them forth and reveal them to the world.

In the process of evoking astral forms, Chabas sought to improve society through depicting higher, transcendent ideas. Although he did not clearly lay out the process, he believed that the combination of science and art could improve society—later arguing that the artist served a social role, pushing society upward, forcing it to evolve. 151 Scholar Myriam de Palma, who wrote her dissertation on Chabas, 152 argues that science held a central place in Chabas’ considerations of art and society, writing:

Maurice Chabas relies on scientific development, and more particularly those of astronomy and physics. Astronomy shows him that there is no set time, no defined space. Astronomical distances are considerable … The fields of action of the senses are very limited and we do not see the X-rays that would give us a very different conception of the physical world. He also takes into account the

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151 Maurice Chabas, “Du Role Social de L’Art,” *The Herald of the Star* 3, no. 7 (July 11, 1914): 396–401. Despite the artist’s emphasis on social improvement and evolution, Myriam de Palma ties Chabas to Péladan’s statement that the Latin race would soon die. She does this by writing: “Maurice Chabas, like many of his contemporaries, felt anxiety to reach the end of a civilization and the premonition of disaster.” “Maurice Chabas, comme bien de ses contemporains, ressentit l’angoisse d’aboutir à la fin d’une civilisation et le prémonition d’une catastrophe.” Palma, “Maurice Chabas (1862 - 1947),” 204. However, in arguing for cyclical, pessimistic aspect of Chabas’ theory, she utilizes an article by Chabas from around 1918-1920 titled “L’art après la guerre.” She quotes from his “art after the war press cuttings…” which address the cycles and the move to corruption. Although this is undated, it clearly dates from after the war—it is titled “L’art après la guerre,” from *Le Petit Messager,* but it is clearly from after the war. Palma, “Maurice Chabas (1862 - 1947),” 204. Chabas may have believed in the cyclical nature of civilization and the then-current notions of degeneration and decline while he was associated with the Salons. He may have even combined his idealistic desire to move society forward with a belief that this was not possible. These seemingly contradictory beliefs were held by many of his contemporaries—for example, Péladan combined them in his platforms. Since much of Chabas’ writing dates from well after the end of the Salons, however, it is difficult to know whether he held this pessimistic view when he exhibited at the Salons or if he developed it only after World War I.

152 Palma, “Maurice Chabas (1862 - 1947).”
vibrations of atomic life [that are] invisible to the naked eye and concludes that extraordinary worlds are hidden from us.\textsuperscript{153}

For Chabas, religion, science, and concepts like the astral fluid were intertwined, as he sought to use modern scientific developments in his quest to improve the world: “Thus, new ideas are born, scientific inventions, artistic creations that are considered only as phenomenal manifestations of spiritual realities.”\textsuperscript{154}

Unfortunately, few of Chabas’ works exhibited at the Rose + Croix are currently known even in photographs or illustrations. Yet the artist’s titles, the responses of contemporary critics and scholars, and Chabas’ own later works all reveal his emphasis on combining occult, Catholic, and scientific principles, including the astral plane and elemental beings. For example, the titles of works exhibited at the Rose + Croix—like Celsa (Phase extatique), Esprit de Lumière, Vision astrale, and Voix de l’Au-Delà—reveal the artist’s combination of Catholic, occultist, and ecstatic hysterical concepts regarding elementals and the astral plane. Similarly, one contemporary critic connected Chabas’ works to the occult and the mystical, arguing that the artist “chose his models in the spirit world.”\textsuperscript{155} In his own later writing, Chabas incorporated a

\textsuperscript{153} “Maurice Chabas s’appuie sur les nouvelles scientifiques et, plus particulièrement, celles de l’astronomie et de la physique. L’astronomie démontre qu’il n’y a aucun temps déterminé, aucun espace défini. Les distances astronomiques sont considérables et comme la souligne Maurice Chabas, bien des univers sont considérables, à cette époque (et encore aujourd’hui) pour les méthodes de calcul et la vision de ce temps du début du XXe siècle. Les champs d’action de nos sens sont très limités et nous ne percevons pas les rayons X qui nous offriraient une toute autre conception du monde physique. Il prend en compte aussi les vibrations invisibles à l’œil nu de la vie atomique et en conclut que des mondes extraordinaires nous sont cachés.” Palma, “Maurice Chabas (1862 - 1947),” 78.

\textsuperscript{154} “C’est ainsi, que naissent les idées nouvelles, les inventions scientifiques, les créations artistiques qui ne sont considérées que comme des manifestations phénoménales de réalités spirituelles.” Palma, “Maurice Chabas (1862 - 1947),” 79.

\textsuperscript{155} “M. Chabas, abandonnant le peinture photographique des plus vulgaires de ses contemporains (sans doute pour se faire pardonner certaine décoration de mairie) a choisi ses modèles dans le monde des esprits cher à Allan Kardec; ce n’est pas moi, qui l’en blâmerai s’il y doit trouver l’inspiration. Curieuse, son erraticité, mais hélas, gâtée par une déplorable tonalité de papier peint.” Germain, “Le Salon de la Rose + Croix,” 1.
variety of scientific, occultist, and Catholic principles when he discussed the hierarchy of forms (from atoms to people) and legitimized his discussion by noting that with new scientific discoveries, one could see through the body with X-rays.\(^\text{156}\) He even argued that none of what one sees in the material world actually exists, using the discovery of atoms as support for his anti-materialist stance.\(^\text{157}\) This combination of scientific and religious principles is also apparent in Chabas’ later paintings, which incorporated contemporary photography of the moon and planets and were most likely influenced by the artist’s close friendship with astronomer Camille Flammarion.\(^\text{158}\)

Another repeat exhibitor at the Rose + Croix, Jean Delville, also responded to the principle of the astral fluids. In his book on esotericism, Sébastien Clerbois discusses Delville’s work, especially emphasizing ties between Delville’s paintings and Wagner’s operas. However, he does not address the depiction of the astral fluid in Delville’s *Ange des Splendeurs* (Fig. 1.6). Instead, he makes an important connection to Wagner’s works, considering whether *Ange des Splendeurs* may have served as part of a diptych with *Parsifal*, serving as the image of salvation that captivates the hero (Fig. 4.24).\(^\text{159}\) Problematically, he also argues that *Ange des Splendeurs*


\(^{157}\) “En réalité, le solide n’existe pas, il n’y a que la Force qui centralize, organizes les atomes, qui selon leur nombre et la loi d’attraction qui constitué les séries, produisent tel ou tel état apparent de la matière.” Chabas, *Psaumes d’amour spirituel*, 149–150.

\(^{158}\) Palma, “Maurice Chabas (1862 - 1947),” 41.

depicts “Eve who saves from sin an Adam whose lower body is in the grip of serpents”—although he does not discuss this point at length.\textsuperscript{160}

Delville’s \textit{Ange des Splendeurs} depicts an elongated angel rising through the air above a fantastical landscape of jagged pink cliffs. The angelic figure tows a nude man, who is entrapped in the angel’s rippling gown and pulled skyward away from the entangling serpentine branches and snakes ensnaring his waist and thighs.\textsuperscript{161} The angel’s crown produces a radiant glow that Delville painted not as an amorphous form, but as distinct rays. Significantly, the figure’s diaphanous gown floats, swirls, and ripples in movements that do not reflect speedy travel or correspond with the behavior of fabric in air. Rather, the garment acts like thin fabric traveling slowly through water. Fabric only ripples like this in a viscous fluid, rather than the thinner atmosphere. As a result, the garment does not behave like an angelic dress traveling through the physical, material atmosphere. Based on the depiction of the garment, the viewer can infer that that the angel is in fact pulling the man up through the viscous liquid astral fluid. A contemporary critic attacked this work on a variety of levels, including the depiction of the colors, the elongation of the angelic figure, the angular purple landscape, the angel’s facial expression, and the motivations of the serpentine travelers. At the same time, though, this reviewer also associated the work with scientific terms—specifically, the microbe and the microscope—and with the modern development of the balloon:

\begin{quote}
This process reflects the movement through the astral fluid described by some writers. For example, Swedenborg writes: “Je fus transporté, sous la conduite des anges, par les Seigneur vers une terre dans le ciel astral, où il me fut accordé de considérer la terre même.” Swedenborg, \textit{Des terres dans notre monde solaire qui sont nommées planètes, et des terres dans le ciel astral, de leurs habitants, de leurs esprits et de leurs anges, d’après ce qui a été vu et entendu}, 75.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{160} “L’œuvre représente Ève qui du péché un Adam dont le bas du corps est en proie aux serpents.” Clerbois, 2012, 90.

\textsuperscript{161} This process reflects the movement through the astral fluid described by some writers. For example, Swedenborg writes: “Je fus transporté, sous la conduite des anges, par les Seigneur vers une terre dans le ciel astral, où il me fut accordé de considérer la terre même.” Swedenborg, \textit{Des terres dans notre monde solaire qui sont nommées planètes, et des terres dans le ciel astral, de leurs habitants, de leurs esprits et de leurs anges, d’après ce qui a été vu et entendu}, 75.
The same Mr. Delville, who had accustomed us to expecting better things, shows us an *Ange des Splendeurs* that I will more accurately call upon first sight the Microbe of jaundice (seen through a microscope). On a purple background, blue and greenish hues where appear mauve sugarloafs,[—] I suppose, a view from a balloon, [—] a lemon angel, as long as a day without bread… brings along another stubborn wretch, disconcerted by disagreeable serpents who absolutely insist on making this aerial trip with him.162

In this passage, the critic simultaneously attacked Delville for his proximity and his distance—in the former case by arguing that the viewer sees the scene through a microscope and in the latter by claiming that the scene is viewed from a balloon. This critique shows that contemporary viewers connected these works to science and to modern inventions. At the same time, this critic’s wavering focus (between proximity and distance) reveals his uncertainty about where this scene could be situated above the material world. Even for a critic who did not identify this painting with the depiction of the mystical astral fluid, the scene nevertheless could not be situated in the everyday physical realm.

Central artists exhibiting at the Rose + Croix incorporated the principles of the astral fluids into their paintings, using the scientific and mystical concept to distance their works from everyday life. They did so in a variety of ways: by depicting ties between figures and the landscape, by painting elemental figures derived from the astral plane, by revealing how poets and artists evoked these beings, and by painting an angelic figure suspended in the fluid. For

162 “Le même M. Delville, qui nous avait habitués à de meilleures choses, nous montre un *Ange des splendeurs* que j’appellerai plutôt à première vue le Microbe de la jaunisse (va au microscope). Sur un fond violet, bleu et verdâtre où des pains de sucre mauve figurent, je suppose, une perspective à vue de ballon, un ange citron, long comme un jour sans pain, pour me servir de l’expression populaire, affligé d’un rictus étrange qui lui vient sans doute de se voir si maltraité par M. Delville entraîne un autre malheureux récalcitrant, embarrassé de serpents désagréables qui tiennent absolument à faire avec lui ce voyage aérien.” Kersant, “Le Salon de la Rose-Croix,” *Gazette de France* (March 21, 1895): 2.
these artists, the concept of the astral fluid served as a useful device to signal the idealized nature of the images, reminding the viewer that the works showed immaterial, ideal beings.

**Symbolic Paths to Heaven: Verticality, Symmetry, and Rosicrucian Diagrams**

A wide variety of artists exhibiting at the Rose + Croix utilized schematic compositions, repeatedly incorporating the same symbolic formats. Specifically, many works exhibited at the Salons adopted the symmetrical compositions of Rosicrucian concepts and diagrams. The use of symmetry was not unusual at the time, since balance was a key feature of academic art, but the artists exhibiting at the Salons placed a great deal of emphasis on symmetry. These artworks often feature a centered figure facing the viewer and emphasize the vertical, building on Rosicrucian diagrams and designs like *The Philosphic Seal of the Society of the Rosicrucians* (Fig. 4.25). In addition to its role in diagrams, this focus on the vertical is key to many Rosicrucian doctrines—theories that Péladan personally built on in his opposition to the horizontal. For Péladan, the horizontal referred to instinct, the movement of animals, and the negative feminine focus on love instead of elevation. Symmetrical and balanced works were not unusual, but it is significant that they appeared so regularly at the Salons, as in works like Delville’s *Idole de Perversité* and Bouy’s *Sacrifice* (Figs. 4.26, 4.27).

Other contributing artists utilized similar compositions with full-length frontal depictions of female figures, such as Osbert’s *Vision* and Séon’s *Pense*. These works all built on

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163 “On peut dire encore que l’horizontale est la ligne de l’instinct; elle marque la direction du mouvement chez l’animal; et la femme initiée, s’il en pouvait être, qui attend pour l’amour, devrait esthétiquement attendre dans une posture où cette ligne prédominerait; au contraire, elle se lève, pour aller au-devant de l’attendu, en retarde l’expression animale de l’homme. A l’inverse, une femme qui ne veut pas céder arrêtera Presque toutes les entreprises, à moins qu’elle se tient debout, sans appuyer à rien, car, si elle s’appuie, elle rappelle à l’homme sa faiblesse.” Péladan, *L’art idéaliste et mystique*, 68.

164 Although the woman in *Thinking* turns to her right, her wings, hands, and arms all emphasize her vertical, centered pose and location.
Rosicrucian, occult, and alchemical treatises and illustrations which emphasized the formal and theoretical significance of lines, directions, balance, and specifically vertical symmetry. A wide variety of occult emblems, diagrams, and illustrations feature a central rose, tree, figure, snake, cross, or other symbolic element, accompanied by other symbols, such as letters or figures. These motifs are often placed symmetrically opposite each other in pairs (Figs. 4.28, 4.29). One example is the illustration from the title page of an early Rosicrucian work, in which the rose bisects the image vertically, surrounded by bees and a landscape, under an inscription which reads: “The rose gives honey to the bees” (Fig. 4.30).¹⁶⁵ Even more clearly related to the balanced figures exhibited at the Rose + Croix is the aforementioned The Philosophic Seal of the Society of the Rosicrucians, which features the same centrally located figure, with a pose that emphasizes duality and balance. Bouy utilizes similar imagery in his Sacrifice, where the cross divides the positive and negative space, highlighting the geometrically balanced design.

Group diagrams similarly emphasized balance. A collection of sketches, drawings, prints, and other preparatory materials for these symbols are preserved in Péladan’s archives (Figs. 4.31, 4.32).¹⁶⁶ Similarly, a diagram by Point in these archives shows the rose and the cross, revealing this emphasis and the artist’s knowledge of arcane symbols (Fig. 4.33). This group emphasis on symmetry is especially significant for the cropped version of Antoine de La Rochefoucauld’s Ange de la Rose–Croix that was published in the 1892 catalog (Fig. 4.34). Pincus-Witten bases his discussion of this work on the illustration, which he describes as “a brusquely drawn female

¹⁶⁵ The work, Summum Bonum, was published by Robert Fludd in 1629, and the inscription is: “Dat Rosa Mel Apibus.” McIntosh, The Rosicrucians, 8–9.

¹⁶⁶ These documents are housed in the Arsenal Library, Ms 13412, Press cuttings and other graphic documents concerning Péladan, see for example, fols. 90 and 91.
head whose halo is decorated with arcane, Christian and Rosicrucian symbols.\textsuperscript{167} This illustration features a centrally located figure, whose embellished halo and decorated neckline emphasize the compositional balance. However, a contemporary caricature depicts the original painting (Fig 4.35; from the bottom left, the second image in the second row). This caricature shows that the illustration of this work was actually cropped from a larger painting (even though this is not noted in the catalog). In fact, the angelic figure was only a detail of a larger work which included a dragon and a large sword and featured a slightly off-center angel.\textsuperscript{168} Thus, the catalog illustration increased the level of balance in the image, turning it into an even more symbolic, symmetrical work.

Upward movement also plays a significant role in artworks that were exhibited at the Rose + Croix, revealing the importance of progressing toward the divine. In Rosicrucian and theosophical systems, the higher planes (the astral and divine levels) were simpler and were often conceived of as more geometrical than the material world. As depicted in Schwabe’s poster for the second Salon, each woman becomes less physically substantial, having less shading and three-dimensionality as she progresses toward the divine. Here, the women become increasingly simplified, reduced to their primary forms, in this case, retaining only an outline.\textsuperscript{169} Similarly, in the artist’s \textit{Jour de la Morts}, the divine plane is symbolized by the geometrical, simplified pyramid within the sun, which stands in stark contrast to the more complex material realm in the

\textsuperscript{167} Pincus-Witten, \textit{Occult Symbolism in France}, 129.

\textsuperscript{168} The caricature may inaccurately represent the placement of the figure, but the addition of the dragon on the figure’s right without a corresponding element other than the thin sword on her left certainly makes the image less balanced than the illustration.

\textsuperscript{169} For more on the poster, see Hand, “Carloz Schwabe’s Poster for the Salon de la Rose+Croix.”
foreground. Revealing the group emphasis on geometrical vertical progression and balance, many participating artists centered their subjects and created symmetrical compositions, often abstaining from the depiction of cropped figures or objects placed in the periphery.

Although Trachsel only exhibited at the first Salon, his works reflect the Rosicrucian principle that the higher planes were more simplified and geometrical. At this Salon, he exhibited at least thirty-two works which received a widespread and highly varied critical response.¹⁷⁰ One of Trachsel’s exhibited works, La Sirène, depicts an elemental figure who seduces sailors not with her voluptuous human form, but rather, with circular orbs for eyes and breasts (Fig. 4.36). Her eyes and genitals entice victims through symmetrical rays extending out across the sea. One critic noted that Trachsel created the work using only lines and that, in addition to the seductive rays emanating from her eyes, “from the half-open sex of the monster equally spring mystical rays.”¹⁷¹ This reviewer argued that Le Regard sur l’infini was a masterpiece even compared to works by Redon or Blake, noting that the image shows the artist’s attempt to use geometry to depict religious principles (Fig. 4.37).¹⁷² Another writer criticized the artwork, but effectively restated the Rosicrucian principle that the higher planes were increasingly simplified and

¹⁷⁰ The catalog lists thirty-two works, but one number most likely referred to multiple artworks, since number 109, Vision, is listed as “aquarelles.” Péladan, Catalogue du Salon de la Rose-Croix, 33–34.

¹⁷¹ “Du sexe entrebâillé du monstre jaillissent également de mystiques rayons, et à sa droite comme à sa gauche flamboie un lampadaire dont la phosphorescente lueur révèle à l’esprit la flore et la faune des profondeurs inexplorées de tout regard humain.” Stuart Merrill, “Le Salon de ‘La Plume,’” La Plume, no. 91 (February 1, 1893): 54.

¹⁷² Merrill, “Le Salon de ‘La Plume,’” 54–57.
geometric, writing that “according to him [Trachsel], passions and sentiments can be represented by diversely colored circles, triangles and parallelograms.”

While most artists contributing to the Rose + Croix did not display the same extreme focus on geometry seen in Trachsel’s fantastical palaces, a variety of their works do reflect the focus on verticality, balance, and symmetry. Séon explored the symbolic use of lines, especially the religious importance of the vertical. According to Delouche:

In *The Passante* a young ethereal woman in a long dress who wanders between close birch trunks, Alexandre Séon enhances the opacity of the background by the clarity of the bark, to better suggest the symbolism of the vertical, the elevation and the spiritual aspirations of the human being.

In addition to depictions of centered, vertical female figures, several artists highlighted symmetry in portraits and literary works (Figs. 1.2, 4.38, 4.39). In many of these images, the artists emphasized the importance of balance by placing a figure in the center of the composition, surrounded by either balanced or symmetrical objects and figures. While a focus on balance was common in academic art, and thus, this was not an unusual practice, it is notable how much emphasis the artists exhibiting with the Rose + Croix placed on this symmetry.

Osbert simultaneously developed both vertical and horizontal schemas. Discussing this, Dumas ties Osbert’s vertical works to religious principles:

Osbert considers nature as a reflection of his state of mind. The trees are seen as living beings possessing a soul. The flow and ebb of the seas, the changing seasons or all natural phenomena are the image and colors the artist designs

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inspired by nature. The tree becomes a symbol of verticality, of elevation toward God.  

Yet in addition to this emphasis on verticality, the artist simultaneously developed a horizontal schema. Several scholars have discussed Osbert’s tendency to lay out some of his compositions in horizontal layers, each composed of separate natural elements—usually the sky, water, and earth. Specifically, Blumstein argues that the artist developed a schematic formula of horizontal layers which only varied in terms of the relative volumes of each band. Additionally, both Blumstein and Dumas argue that in Osbert’s works, the horizontal lines and divisions of the landscape emphasize rest, harmony, and serenity, whereas the vertical lines depict elevation toward God. This horizontality is especially significant because by associating this format with rest and harmony, Osbert broke from Péladan’s negative conception of this

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175 “C’est bien ainsi qu’Osbert considère la nature, comme le reflet de son état d’âme. Les arbres sont perçus comme des êtres vivants possédant une âme. Le flux et reflux de la mer, les changements de saisons ou tout autre phénomène naturel sont à l’image et des couleurs que l’artiste conçoit en s’inspirant de la nature. L’arbre devient symbole de verticalité, d’élevation vers Dieu. La ligne verticale qu’il dessine a donc un caractère religieux: elle est le symbole des sentiments qui élèvent l’homme vers le ciel et vers Dieu…. La formule utilisée par Henri Degron pour désigner les nouvelles préoccupations de l’artiste envers la ‘psychologie de la nature’ trouve en effet toute sa justification.” Dumas, Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert, 24; Degron, “Alphonse Osbert,” 141.

176 Blumstein, “Le Peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et son époque,” 30–36; Dumas, Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert, 126–127. Blumstein also ties this tripartite strategy to Osbert’s color theory, arguing that the artist often divides his color palette into thirds, including two thirds cold hues, and one third warmer ones. For example, in Les Chants de la Nuit, the warmer hues are found in the earth and in the moon. Blumstein, “Le Peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et son époque,” 30. For more on Osbert’s color theory, see the next section.

177 Blumstein also notes that the vertical trees and figures oppose the horizontal bands argues that the artist generally includes groups of female figures on the right of the canvas and divides his works in thirds, tying his images to the golden mean. Blumstein, “Le Peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et son époque,” 31–33, 44–45. Dumas argues that Les chants de la nuit as very characteristic of his Rosicrucian works, since the composition is divided into horizontal layers of natural elements, offset by the trees and vertical female figure. Dumas, Le peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert, 160.

Despite building on Péladan in his development of a composition focused on verticality and elevation, Osbert simultaneously deviated from the writer’s conception of the horizontal as base, materialistic, feminine, and bestial.

In addition to focusing on simplification, verticality, and symmetry, Rosicrucian principles called for duality, which the artists depicted in a variety of ways that highlight balance and upward movement. The illustration of Antoine de La Rochefoucauld’s Ange reflects the drive to create dualistic symbols on the right and left of a figure. This impetus is seen in the symbolic forms on either side of the figure in the philosophic seal and the flowers situated on either side of the central cross above the angel’s head in the illustration of Ange. In the caricature of the full version, the artist similarly opposed the dragon with the large sword. Although the forms are not compositionally balanced due to their different sizes, they are symbolically opposed. Delville depicted duality in a different manner in his Symbolisation de la Chair et de l’Esprit (Fig. 1.7). Here, within a central form, writhes a binary, seething mass of Flesh and Spirit. The Rosicrucian focus on upward movement is seen in the complex, dark mass of material forms writhing toward the simpler, brighter, disintegrating higher plane. In this work, Delville associated the feminine figure with the material world and tied the carved marble masculine form to the spirit, depicting the widespread contemporary theory that there was a constant struggle between the idealist masculine push toward the eternal, spiritual realm and the parasitic, dialectical feminine form that would cling to it, pulling it downwards toward a physical, sensual focus.

\[\text{Péladan, L’art idéaliste et mystique, 68.}\]
Similarly, several of the works that Raymond Marchand (Joris-Karl Huysmans\textsuperscript{180} secretary) exhibited under his own name and using a pseudonym—Jean de Caldain—emphasize symmetry and upward movement.\textsuperscript{181} One of these works, \textit{Je regardais et je vis}, depicts a similar swirling push upward—although here, the female body is swallowed by her animalistic nature, symbolized by the monkey above her (Fig. 4.40). In this work, the serpentine form above the monkey’s head and the swirling tail reflect the evil, materialistic focus. Yet, rotating with this tail, and pushing the animalistic mass upward are angelic wings.\textsuperscript{182} This ascension and the dualistic division of the figure is also apparent in Marcius-Simons’ depiction of Joan of Arc (Fig. 3.44). This is one of the only exhibited works by this central artist that has been identified. In this image, the diminutive and feminine Joan of Arc gazes up at the strong, masculine winged statue and sword, revealing her progression from feminine weakness to masculine strength.\textsuperscript{183} A later depiction of Joan of Arc by the same artist similarly depicts this upward progression—in this case, as the armored figure rises from the burning corpse (Fig. 4.41). All of these works highlight the symbolic Rosicrucian movement toward heaven or the eternal idea, revealing the artists’ focus on ascension and progression as the goals of humanity.

\textsuperscript{180} Joris-Karl Huysmans was a major figure in Symbolist literature, for more on him and his broader impact, see for example: Robert Baldick, \textit{The life of J.-K. Huysmans} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955); G. A Cevasco, \textit{The breviary of the Decadence: J.-K. Huysmans’s \textit{A rebours} and English literature} (New York: AMS Press, 2001); Gamboni, \textit{The Brush and the Pen}.

\textsuperscript{181} His pseudonym was Jean de Caldain.

\textsuperscript{182} The two forms swirling below the female form could both be identified as the tips of the wings. Yet, the one clearly attached to the wing on the right curves only slightly. The other form, presumably, the serpentine tail rather than the tip of the other wing, swirls in a full circle.

\textsuperscript{183} Although figure in the statue has long hair, the shading on the chair and face are reminiscent of a light mustache and beard. The statue is placed upon a pillar against which rests an elongated shield.
By integrating scientific and religious color and line theories, hysterical gestures, depictions of the astral fluid, and symmetrical and vertical compositions into their works, the artists exhibiting at the Rose + Croix developed related stylistic techniques in the absence of specific directives from the group. In the process, they responded to the contemporaneous integration of some religious and scientific theories, developing new methods to depict idealized spaces outside of everyday life. Their individual subjects will reveal further divergences from the founder—even in areas where Péladan issued strict directives.
Chapter 5: The Role of Literature and Female Subjects and Exhibitors

The range of subjects exhibited at the Rose + Croix reveals a variety of successes and failures in Péladan’s attempt to create an idealist school with a shared emphasis on mysticism and Catholicism. Two common subjects at the Salons which exemplify these divergences are the various depictions of female types and the widespread incorporations of literary themes. Additionally, the group expressed conflicting attitudes toward women, and at least five female artists showed works at the Salon despite a key rule prohibiting their exhibition. Péladan argued for the importance of focusing on positive, ideal types, but his own writing includes a range of female figures, such as femmes fatales and other dangerous, sexually active, or otherwise imperfect women. The artists exhibiting at the Salons, like those at other contemporary events, depicted women in a variety of competing, conflicting, and often contradictory ways. Many of these images combine different tropes and types because Péladan and the artists utilized references to sexual purity, active or passive sexuality, androgyny, religious faith, and other concepts to create characters that often allowed for a variety of complex viewer responses. The artists also integrated and connected the genres in a variety of ways, revealing a range of interpretations of the hierarchy of the arts and the nature of their relationships—especially in terms of literature and the visual arts. One major issue relates to the question of whether the genres were interrelated and interdependent or, as Péladan claimed, whether the visual arts were clearly subservient to the higher art form of literature. By creating direct illustrations, generally poetic or evocative scenes, and by exhibiting artworks that served as the inspiration for literary works, these artists allowed for a more fluid and interactive relationship between the genres,

1 Péladan, Salon de la Rose-Croix: règles et monitoires, 7–9.
compared to the founder’s focus on hierarchies. In many other areas, such as in terms of style, Péladan issued several contradictory or broad mandates, but in regard to subject matter and the role of women, he published strict rules and clearly delineated many of his own theories and principles. Yet, despite the founder’s clear directives, the group deviated from these principles, developing more complex and varied responses to the roles of women and literature.

**Breaking Péladan’s Rules: Women Exhibitors**

According to the group’s Constitution, a woman could become a partial member of the Rose + Croix if she agreed to be a “server,” but any such woman would be banned “if she exercise[d] her perversity on the knights.”

Even more emphatically, in the group’s rules, Péladan specifically prohibited the exhibition or creation of artworks by women artists, writing: “Following Magical Law no work by a woman will ever be exhibited or executed by the Order.”

Yet, women actually contributed to the Salons as exhibitors, organizers, supporters, and musicians. Additionally, Péladan was tied to a group of women artists, *L’Œillet Blanc*, for which he reportedly served as the chaplain-confessor. Péladan allowed a variety of women writers and musicians to contribute to the Rose + Croix in supportive roles, but in his theoretical works, he opposed the participation of women in the public sphere, writing that women always lost their reputation when they sought any form of glory; in fact, he argued that if they became politically

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2 “Si elle exerçait sa perversité sur les chevaliers et les faisait tomber en passion.” Péladan, *Constitutions de la Rose-Croix, le Temple et le Graal*, 35–36. Specifically, such women can only be involved in the Rose + Croix portion of the group, and not the association Temple and Grail aspects. Exactly how this occurs or what place women may take once they become “Zéatrices” and “Dames” in the order is unclear, because they are not included in the hierarchy of figures. Péladan, *Constitutions de la Rose-Croix, le Temple et le Graal*, 32, 35.


active, they were no longer even capable of prostitution.\(^5\) The Rose + Croix’s strict prohibition against any exhibitions by female artists was written in the group’s manifesto, added as a postscript to its twenty-seven fundamental rules, and included in the rules each year.\(^6\) This emphasis on the rejection of women artists has continued in the literature. In 2013, Valentina Anker even considered the lack of women exhibitors a central aspect of the Salons, introducing the group by writing: “The Salon de la Rose + Croix took place at the Durand-Ruel gallery in Paris from 10 March to 10 April 1892, with sixty-nine exhibitors. No women artists were allowed to take part.”\(^7\) Although in an essay in the same exhibition catalog, Jean-David Jumeau Lafond notes that two women exhibited at the events,\(^8\) in fact, at least five women showed works at the Salons: Maggie Boehmer-Clark, Delphine Arnould de Cool, Hélène Cornette, Judith Gauthier, and Antoinette de Guerre.

This female presence reflected the exhibitors’ varied attitudes toward women artists and Péladan’s own vacillation on the role of women in the arts. Several male artists participated in other ventures with these female artists and their identities must have been known to other participants—including, in the case of Antoinette de Guerre, even Péladan himself, because he


\(^6\) The format and numbering of the rules changed from year to year—for example, in the second year, this statement was included as rule seventeen, out of a total of nineteen—however, the wording generally remained the same: “Suivant la loi magique, aucune œuvre de femme ne sera jamais ni exposée ni exécutée par l’Ordre.” This rule even appears in the rules for the planned seventh event. Péladan, *Ile Geste esthétique*, XLV; Péladan, *VIème geste esthétique*, 35.

\(^7\) Anker, “Swiss Symbolism at the Heart of Europe,” 28.

had previously published her exhibited work. Additionally, Péladan varied in his attitudes towards women, since in one brief early announcement of the group, he framed the Rose + Croix as an outsider movement, an intellectual order associated with “Romans, artists, and women.”

Moreover, Péladan’s justification for the rejection of women on the basis of magical law contradicts the practices of other Rosicrucian, alchemical, and occult societies. Some such movements allowed women a great deal of power and leadership. Scholar Anne Delgado even argues that opposition to the patriarchy and the development of women’s authority and autonomy played a major role in the movements of Theosophy, Occultism, and Spiritualism.

La Rochefoucauld must also have known that Guerre was associated with the group, since he identified her as one of the exhibitors. Two years before her participation, he diverged from Péladan’s public position on the issue of female exhibitors; in an article in *La Chronique des Arts* in 1891 he included “Mme Antoinette de Guerre” in his list of artists who had agreed to participate in the Salon. His list includes many artists who never showed works at the Salon—of the fifteen artists he mentioned, only eight exhibited. Specifically, like Péladan, he listed well-known artists who never participated—including Puvis de Chavannes, Odilon Redon, and Luc-Olivier Merson. The general inaccuracy of the list explains why before Beaufils’ book was


published in 1993, scholars did not discuss Antoinette de Guerre as an exhibitor, but La Rochefoucauld’s inclusion of her is a major break from Péladan, who did not publish her name in his catalogs.

Despite this publication of a female exhibitor’s participation, Guerre’s use of a pseudonym effectively kept her involvement secret. Even scholars who address La Rochefoucauld’s article list her as a non-participant. For example, although he writes that Guerre’s medallion of Barbey d’Aurevilly was included in one of Péladan’s works, Pincus-Witten argues that she did not exhibit at the Salons, writing: “She, nonetheless, would have been refused in any case, since women were excluded from the Salons de la Rose+Croix.”

In the group’s rules, the dictate regarding the role of women at the Salons was clearly worded and placed so as to draw attention to it. In the group’s published constitution, the discussion of women similarly relegates them to a lesser position, but it is lengthier, more

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13 Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 98.

14 Péladan broke from his own policies regarding women, but his rule rejecting women was aligned with his other statements, thus indicating its seriousness and revealing that it was not a parody, as has been suggested by Sarah Sik Joy. Sik, “Satire and sadism,” 112. Unfortunately, when Sarah Sik Joy questions whether Péladan’s statute regarding women artists was satirical, she does not contextualize this with a larger consideration of the role of women in Péladan’s work; instead writing: “If we consider Péladan’s activities with the Rose+Croix as an elaborately staged parody, we are able to consider in a different light the addendum he added in the form of a postscript to the society’s exhibitions rules: “P.S. Following magical law, no work by a woman will ever be exhibited or executed by the Order.” Was this citation of “magical law” a satiric comment on the divinely posited grounds of gender inequality or was it merely a reaffirmation of the concept of woman as incapable of attaining the spiritual enlightenment of which her body was often in the Occult figured as the means?” Sik, “Satire and sadism,” 112. Sik supports her emphasis on parody by arguing that contemporary critics questioned the seriousness of the venture—but in reality, they did not question the intent, but rather, their own responses, asking whether they should take the events seriously, not whether Péladan intended them as parody. Auguste Dalligny focuses on the response when he asks: “Should we take seriously the artistic attempt of the Salon de la Rose + Croix or view it as audacious puffery, skillfully mounted, and such a success only thanks to a public that desires curiosities?” This is the quote Sik uses to support her claim that contemporaries questioned whether the events were parodic. Sik, “Satire and sadism,” 14. This question is significantly different from Sik’s, since Dalligny asks not whether the Salon or its rules were intended as a parody, but rather, whether the emphasis was on advertisement, “puffery,” and curiosity instead of art.
elaborate, and buried within a larger text.\textsuperscript{15} Yet in the rules the exclusion of women was clearly aimed at increasing publicity, by highlighting the group’s opposition to modernity with a simple, straightforward statement in the postscript excluding all women and utilizing the attention-grabbing, mysterious “magical law” explanation. The placement of this rule at the end of a lengthy list including a variety of dull details sought and received a great deal of critical attention, remaining a key descriptor of the group in scholarly discussions, despite the fact of their participation.

Like Péladan, one-time exhibitor Vallotton wrote negatively of contemporary female artists. However, he still criticized the group’s exclusion of women. Vallotton saw the creation of intimate works like fans as the female artist’s natural domain, and opposed her movement into the realm of serious masculine art.\textsuperscript{16} After visiting the Salon des Femmes artistes in 1893, he wrote that in previous eras, female artists had focused on the soft and sensual works where he believed their talents lay and to which they were suited, such as the painting of charming amateur works, noting that “feminine art reigns in this domain and is without contest.”\textsuperscript{17} He complained that in his own time, while men often painted works focusing on feminine beauty and the eternal, female artists went against their own nature and overemphasized power.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15} In the Constitution, Péladan addresses the role of women in four rules in the middle of the text, instead of adding a single rule as a postscript. Additionally, he notes that women can serve as “Zélatrices” and “Dames,” noting that they must agree to be servers, and then, can only join the Rose + Croix, and the not the Temple or Grail orders within the group. Péladan, \textit{Constitutions de la Rose-Croix, le Temple et le Graal}, 35–36.


Despite the artist’s own opposition to contemporary female painters, however, in his lengthy commentary and quotation from the original rules, he criticized the founder for excluding the most ideal humans from the exhibitions: “The last of these chapters and the shortest is a straight shot, launched by the Knight of beauty, at those who, until his coming, represented the most ideal part of the human race: ‘Following Magical Law, no work by a woman will be exposed, or executed by the order.’”\(^{19}\) Vallotton explained the rule by noting that the goal of the Salons was not to affect a female audience, yet he nevertheless referred to this rule as a rejection of the most ideal humans.\(^{20}\)

Although Péladan publically opposed the idea of women exhibitors at the Salons, he allowed for and acknowledged the broader contributions of some women at the Salons as musicians—and several others played key roles as organizers. Specifically, Péladan publicized the appearance of several female musicians at the musical events associated with the Rose + Croix. He celebrated the fact that Mme Saillard-Dietz was scheduled to perform on the piano and Mme Corrylange Moogenboom was to play the violin at events tied to the second Salon.\(^{21}\) Péladan’s ties to Mme Saillard-Dietz actually developed even before the first Salon, as he wrote an article related to her in 1888.\(^{22}\) Similarly, Baroness Rosenkrantz played a role in the Salons of

\(^{19}\) “Le dernier de ces chapitres et le plus bref est un coup droit, lancé par le chevalier du beau, à celles qui, jusqu’à sa venue, représentaient la plus idéale fraction du genre humain : ‘Suivant la Loi Magique, aucune œuvre de femme ne sera ni exposée, ni exécutée par l’ordre.’” Félix Vallotton. Unspecified document responding to Péladan’s manifesto. Quoted in Hahnloser-Bühler, *Félix Vallotton et ses amis*, 177.

\(^{20}\) “Les splendeurs de la Rose-Croix ne sont pas pour elles, tout se fera entre hommes, si tant est toutefois qu’il s’en trouve dont les œuvres soient compatibles avec l’énoncé ci-dessus.” Félix Vallotton. Unspecified document responding to Péladan’s manifesto. Quoted in Hahnloser-Bühler, *Félix Vallotton et ses amis*, 177.

\(^{21}\) Péladan, *IIe Geste esthétique*, XLI.

the Rose + Croix by convincing her son, Baron Arild Rosenkrantz, to participate in the first Salon.\textsuperscript{23} Significantly, rather than writing directly to the artist, La Rocheffoucauld corresponded with the Baroness to invite her son and to inform her that the Baron’s pastel \textit{La Sainte Vierge Enfant} had been accepted for the first exhibition. In addition to the fact that this acceptance was addressed to the mother, and not the son, Arild Rosenkrantz’s scrapbook reveals his own negative attitude toward the venture, showing how influential his mother was for his participation.\textsuperscript{24}

Like the Baroness, Judith Gauthier aided in the development of the Rose + Croix—yet she broke the group’s rules by also exhibiting works at two Salons. Although Beaufils discusses Gauthier’s ties to the group and notes that Prince Bojidar Karageorgevitch exhibited with the Rose + Croix as a result of his association with Gautier, the author does not reference the fact that Gauthier herself actually exhibited two artworks at the Salon in 1895 and another two works in 1897.\textsuperscript{25} In 1895, she showed both \textit{Primitive Diablesse} and \textit{Kundry, Rose d’enfer} and two years later, she exhibited \textit{Peau d’Ane} and \textit{Wagner}, all under the pseudonym “Walter.”\textsuperscript{26}

\[\text{\textsuperscript{23} Antoine de La Rocheffoucauld corresponded with the Baroness, a Swedish occultist, regarding the group’s desire to unite all noble and aristocratic artists. The Baroness responded with a silver rose and a musical piece, which de La Rocheffoucauld described as a “sequence of divinely symphonic chords imagined by angels and seraphs.” Letter from Rocheffoucal to Baronness Rosenkrantz dated Dec 6, 1891, cited in PW, according to him, this series of letters is preserved in a scrapbook held at the Rosenkrantz seat in Rosenholm, Pincus-Witten, \textit{Occult Symbolism in France}, 116–117.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{24} According to Pincus-Witten, in the scrapbook, Arild Rosenkratz replaced Péladan’s nickname “Sâr” with the word “sale” and described Péladan’s portrait using the Danish word dreadful—“daarlig.” Pincus-Witten, \textit{Occult Symbolism in France}, 117.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{25} Beaufils, \textit{Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)}, 271. Beaufils clearly differentiates between Gauthier and the artists who exhibited at the Salons when listing those who had places of honor at an event held for subscribers and the press on May 21, 1894. Beaufils, \textit{Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918)}, 284.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{26} Péladan, \textit{Le catalogue du IVe Salon}, 10; Péladan, \textit{VIème geste esthétique}, 28.}\]
A range of evidence supports the fact that Gauthier exhibited these works at the Salon, including the fact that her presence at the Salons is obliquely referenced in Remy de Gourmont’s book on Gauthier, published in 1904. The writer indicates that her works _Kundry_ and _Peau d’Ane_ were exhibited at the Salons:

- _Kundry_, haut relief, cire colorée (Exposition de la Rose-Croix, galerie Georges Petit), app. à l’auteur.
- _Peau d’Ane_, Statuette à mi-corps (Exposition de la Rose-Croix, galerie Georges Petit), app. à l’auteur.

Goncourt also notes that Gauthier used the pseudonym “Walter” when publishing her _Livre de Jade_ in 1867. In addition to this evidence, Gauthier used her own address when exhibiting at the Rose + Croix in 1897, listing it as “30, rue Washington.” Beyond showing her own artworks, Gauthier also convinced other artists to participate and exhibited at least one work from her collection—a portrait by Gustave Déloye depicting her father crowned by Glory, which was created in 1867 and which she exhibited at the Salon in 1893.

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30 In 1895, her address is listed as “à Saint Tunaire (Côtes-du-Nord)” which may refer to a summer house in Saint Lunaire, on the Northern Coast of France. Péladan, _Le catalogue du IVe Salon_, 10; Péladan, _VIème geste esthétique_, 28.

31 According to Boucher, the work was commissioned from Déloye by the poet’s friend, M. Dreyfus, later owned by the poet’s sister, Zoé Gauthier, and was in Judith Gauthier’s possession by 1912. Boucher, _Iconographie générale de Théophile Gautier_, 86–87. It must passed into Judith’s possession before the exhibition at the Rose + Croix since Zoé Gauthier died in 1885. Gauthier and Cottin, _Voyage pittoresque en Algérie_, 25 n. 20.
Like Gauthier, Delphine Arnould de Cool (née Fortin) exhibited works at the Rose + Croix, albeit at just one Salon. An enamel-worker from Limoges, Cool exhibited eight pieces under her late husband’s name “Arnould de Cool” at the 1896 Salon. These enamels consisted of *Communiate*, *La Morte C’est La Vie*, and six untitled works.

In addition to showing these works at the Rose + Croix, she exhibited some of these enamels at other venues under more complete names. In addition to exhibiting *La Mort c’est la Vie* at the Salon de la Rose + Croix in 1896 under the name “Arnould de Cool,” “Mme Arnould de Cool” showed a work with the same title at the Salon de l’Union des femmes peintres et sculpteurs. Additionally, she may have exhibited the same six enamel-works in 1890 at the Salon de l’Union des femmes peintres et sculpteurs, where her works were identified as: “Six

32 Delphine Arnould de Cool was born in Limoges in 1830, began exhibiting in Rouen in 1858, at the Salon in 1859, and in the Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs in 1884. Pierre Sanchez, *Dictionnaire des céramistes, peintres sur porcelaine, verre et émail, verriers et émailleurs, exposant dans les salons, expositions universelles, industrielles, d’art décoratif, et des manufactures nationales, 1700-1920*, vol. 1 (L’Échelle de Jacob, 2005), 358; Pierre Sanchez and Chantal Beauvalot, *Dictionnaire de l’Union des femmes peintres et sculpteurs répertoire des artistes et liste de leurs œuvres: 1882-1965*, vol. 1 (Dijon: L’Échelle de Jacob, 2010), 100–101. She had a son, Gabriel de Cool, who also exhibited at the Rose + Croix. In addition to exhibiting artworks for decades, she wrote several books and taught many students. She published treatises on enamel painting under the name “Madame Delphine de Cool.” An incorrect date stamp on one of these makes dating the work difficult. *Traité de peinture sur porcelaine dure et tendre...* is stamped 1866, yet Arnould de Cool’s first wife only died in 1886, and this treatise is published under Delphine de Cool’s married name, so it must date after 1886. Delphine de Cool, *Traité de peinture sur porcelaine dure et tendre, émail, faïence cuite et crue et sur lave, par Madame Delphine de Cool (Mme Arthur Arnould)...* (Paris: V. de St-Martin et frères, c1886); Delphine de Cool, *Traité de peintures vitrifiables sur porcelaine dure et porcelaine tendre, sur émail, émail genre Limoges, émail or gravé, faïence grand feu sur émail et sous émail* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1890).

33 She routinely exhibited works under the names “Delphine Arnould de Cool” and “Mme. Arnould de Cool.” For example, see: Sanchez and Beauvalot, *Dictionnaire de l’Union des femmes peintres et sculpteurs répertoire des artistes et liste de leurs œuvres*, 1:100–101.


35 Salon de la Rose + Croix (Paris) and Galerie des Arts Réunis, *Salon de la Rose + Croix: catalogue des œuvres exposées*, 1896, 10–11; Sanchez and Beauvalot, *Dictionnaire de l’Union des femmes peintres et sculpteurs répertoire des artistes et liste de leurs œuvres*, 1:101.

Although Delphine Arnould de Cool exhibited works using her husband’s name, he did not publish under his own full name, instead utilizing the names “Arthur Matthey,” “Arthur Arnould,” and “A. Matthey.” He died in 1895, the year before Cool exhibited at the Salon of the Rose + Croix. Cool’s status as the creator of these artworks has not been discussed in literature on the Rose + Croix, but it has been mentioned in Denis Andro’s discussion of Arnould de Cool. Since Arnould de Cool did not publish works under his own name and was not an artist, Andro believes this name clearly refers to his wife.

Like Cool, Maggie Boehmer-Clark used her husband’s name in exhibiting works at a single Salon of the Rose + Croix. Maggie Boehmer-Clark was a German painter who lived in Paris and continued to use her American ex-husband’s name after her divorce—which occurred

36 This year, her address was listed as 97 rue de Rennes—the same as her address for the Salon de la Rose + Croix. Sanchez and Beauvalot, Dictionnaire de l’Union des femmes peintres et sculpteurs répertoire des artistes et liste de leurs oeuvres, 1:101.

37 Arnould de Cool had been involved in the Commune and wrote about it in exile beginning in 1872. During the 1880s, he became increasing involved in theosophy, after meeting Helena Blavatsky in 1884. He served as the president of a French chapter of the society Hermès beginning in 1888, and in 1890, he became the director of the Lotus Bleu. Delphine de Cool was Arnould de Cool’s second wife—they married sometime after the death of his first wife in 1886. Denis Andro, “De la Commune au Lotus Bleu. Une évocation d’Arthur Arnould (1833-1895),” n.d., http://raforum.info/spip.php?article5509 (accessed April 16, 2013).

38 In a single sentence devoted to Delphine Arnould de Cool, Denis Andro mentions that she exhibited at the Rose + Croix. However, he does not address the restriction against women at the Salons or further discuss her artwork. Andro, “De la Commune au Lotus Bleu. Une évocation d’Arthur Arnould (1833-1895).”

39 Boehmer is better known for her Salons than her art. Her meetings reportedly attracted Paul Valéry, Marcel Schwob, and Marguerite Moreno, as well as Willy and his wife, Colette, Jean Lorrain, the poet from Toulouse, and Maurice Magre. “Dans son salon, elle accueille volontiers les jeunes écrivains—and plus tard un ami de Jarry, Gaston Roig, se rappellera y avoir vu, outre Colette et Willy, Jean Lorrain, le poète toulousain Maurice Magre, qui écrit dans La Coupe, le peintre Marcel Châtelaine, compagnon de Maggie, ainsi que Valéry.” At this time, her companion was Marcel Châtelaine—which is the pseudonym of Paul Grollier. Michel Jarrety, Paul Valéry (Paris: Fayard, 2008), 186. Maggie killed herself with chloroform shortly after Grollier died at the age of 26 of tuberculosis (Paul Grollier’s death was reported in 1902). Jarrety, Paul Valéry, 186–187.
sometime before 1896.\textsuperscript{40} She showed two pastels at the 1893 event under the names “John M. Clark” and “S. Clark.” One of these works, \textit{L’Illusion}, is illustrated in the catalog, where it is attributed to “John Clark” and includes the signature “John M. Clark.”\textsuperscript{41} In the written portion of the catalog, however, both artworks are attributed to “Clark (S.).”\textsuperscript{42}

Significantly, these two artworks actually received some critical note, unlike most of the pieces exhibited by women at the Rose + Croix. A critic referenced these pastels in a review in which he noted a variety of artworks at the Salon, stating in regards to these:

I finally discover, [in the] section of new arrivals, many recommended themes traced by an elegant pen by Mr. A. des Gachons (our readers without a doubt recall this name), and two pastels signed Clark, one which is quickly distinguished by the strangeness of the concepts and the feminine subtlety of his imagination.\textsuperscript{43}

This review is significant because it reveals that the medium of the works was pastel and it specifically refers to the works as appearing feminine. It is also one of few reviews to note specific aspects of the show’s organization, implying that at least this year, the artworks were divided into sections.

Like Cool, Boehmer-Clark also exhibited her submissions at other venues, showing two works with the same titles at the Salon des Indépendants under the name “Mme John Clark” in 1895.\textsuperscript{44} Additionally, Maggie Boehmer-Clark’s connection to a repeat exhibitor at the Rose +

\textsuperscript{40} Jarrety, \textit{Paul Valéry}, 186.

\textsuperscript{41} Péladan, \textit{Ile Geste esthétique}, 157.

\textsuperscript{42} Péladan, \textit{Catalogue du Salon de la Rose-Croix}, XI.

\textsuperscript{43} “Je découvre enfin, section des nouveau venus, maints thèmes idéiques tracés d’une plume élégante par M. A. des Gachons (nos lecteurs sans nul doute ont retenu ce nom), et deux pastels signés Clark, un qui se distinguera vite par l’étrangeté de ses concepts et la subtilité féminine de son imagination.” Ermite, “Les Arts,” 295.

\textsuperscript{44} Dominique Lobstein, \textit{Dictionnaire des indépendants, 1884-1914}, vol. 1 (Dijon: Echelle de Jacob, 2003), 415.
Croix—Gachons (who exhibited at every Salon except the first)—implies that at least one key artist did not fully support the rule forbidding all female exhibitors. In 1895, at the Salon des Indépendants, “Mme John Clark” also exhibited a portrait of Gachons.45 Using her husband’s name, Boehmer-Clark included five illustrations in Jacques des Gachon’s publication Le Livre de Légendes in 1895—which featured works by several artists who exhibited at the Rose + Croix, including André des Gachons.46

Far less is known about a Belgian woman, Hélène Cornette, who exhibited two sculptures at the final Salon, both titled Tête d’expression and shown under the name “Cornette.”47 Eleven years later, in 1908, Hélène Cornette exhibited two works, a Bust of Rommelare and a Tête d’enfant at the Salon des Printemps, under a similar address to that which she used at the Rose + Croix—“77, chaussée de Vleurgat, Bruxelles” in 1908, compared to “87, chaussée de Vleugliat, Bruxelles” in 1897.48

Antoinette de Guerre’s participation with the Rose + Croix is far more complicated, since Péladan previously used her exhibited work to illustrate his novel La Victoire du mari.49 She exhibited her Médallion de Barbey d'Aurevilly at the Rose + Croix in 1893 under the name “G.

45 Lobstein, Dictionnaire des indépendants, 1884-1914, 1:415.

46 Some of these works include occultist themes and they vary from illuminated letters to a scene of three fairy creatures over the body of a fourth. These works are signed “J. M. C.” and are attributed to “John M. Clark.” Two other works included in another edition of this work reveal the artist’s occultist themes. See for example, the illustrations in: Lautrec, “Poèmes en prose: l’âme obscure des coffrets d’or”; Weyl, “La Neige.”

47 Cornette was born in Ypres, debuted in 1890, showed at Brussels Salons and in Munich, and is known for her Death of a Child, Destitution, and Prostration. E. Bénézit, Dictionary of Artists, vol. 3 (Paris: Gründ, 2006), 1415.

48 Société royale des beaux-arts, Le salon de printemps (Brussels: Société royale des beaux-arts, 1908), 25; Péladan, Vlôme geste esthétique, 16.

49 Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918), 271.
Tonio.” Beaufils notes that Antoinette de Guerre had illustrated works for Péladan before 1893 and writes that she participated in the second Salon. For Beaufils, Péladan’s personal ties to the artist and to another group in which she participated, L’Œillet Blanc, explain the artist’s inclusion. According to Beaufils:

> The Médallion de Barbey d’Aurevilly, a plaster by Antoinette de Guerre that was illustrated in la Victoire du Mari, was received in clear contravention of the article outlawing “following magical law,” the works of women. In the absence of the rebellious Archonte, the discrepancy can only be explained by the affection that Joséphin felt for this devotee of the L’Œillet Blanc, who, to preserve appearances, borrowed the pseudonym Tonio.  

Other than this brief discussion, Beaufils does not address Guerre’s exhibition, and he does not mention the other women who exhibited at the Salons.

Although Beaufils does not address the participation of other women in the Salons, he does discuss Péladan’s ties to a group of female artists—L’Œillet Blanc. This group is significant because it reveals that Péladan was not completely opposed to women artists. L’Œillet Blanc was composed of women and was led by the artist Louise Abbèma. Jean Lorrain claimed that he refused Louise Abbéma’s direct request that he join and become the group’s chronicler. He referred to the group as “ultra-elegant and feminist,” and noted that it was “composed of socialites, women of the theatre and female painters, all united in the goal of glorifying the

50 “Le Médailon de Barbey d’Aurevilly, plâtre d’Antoinette de Guerre dont avait été illustrée la Victoire du mari, fut accueilli en contravention évidente de l’article bannissant, ‘selon la loi magique,’ les œuvres de femmes. En l’absence d’un archonte rebelle, l’écart ne s’explique que par l’affection que Joséphin portait à cette fidèle de l’œillet blanc qui, pour sauver les apparences, emprunta le pseudonyme de Tonio.” Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918), 271.

51 Abbèma was a portrait artist, who claimed to descend from aristocracy, and was always surrounded by scandal. “Péladan n’hésita pas à entrer dans ce sillage pour devenir l’un des membres les plus priés de l’œillet blanc, au point de s’en prétendre le ‘confesseur’ et l’‘aumônier;’ régnant sur la ‘conscience esthétique’ de ses ouailles, il les engageait à respecter leur plus noble devoir: ne vivre qu’en ‘se mouvant en beauté.” Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918), 108.
female.” Lorrain also wrote that Guerre was a member, but stated that Sarah Bernhardt refused to join or take on the proffered title of master. According to Jean Lorrain: “Mr. Joséphin Péladan, Mage, Sâr and éthopoète, led the aesthetic consciousness of these ladies as chaplain-confessor,” arguing that the member’s lives and psychology later became fodder for Péladan’s novels.

The name Tonio had a special significance for Péladan as the name of one of his characters and that of a beloved pet. According to the founder’s widow, Péladan disliked nature, and especially hated looking at trees or flowers, but he loved cats throughout his life and he reportedly cried when a pet gray chinchilla, named “Tonio” died. His widow noted that this death occurred “much later” than the founder’s youth, but did not give an exact date. Although the pet was probably named after the end of the Salons, Péladan’s strong attachment to the name increases the likelihood that the creation of the pseudonym and the name of the chinchilla were connected.

Two contemporary reviewers associated Péladan even more closely with Antoinette de Guerre, claiming that this was the pseudonym of the writer’s first wife and that this information

52 Lorrain, Poussières de Paris, 97.
53 Lorrain, Poussières de Paris, 97–98.
54 “M. Joséphin Péladan, mage, Sâr et éthopoète, dirigeait la conscience esthétique de ces dames comme aumônier confesseur; car c’était un régiment de beauté, se mouvant en beauté et se devant à lui-même d’évoluer en beauté, bien avant les théories d’Ibsen. Et tout un roman à cycle du sâr raconta en détail la vie et la psychologie de ses ouailles.” Lorrain, Poussières de Paris, 98.
56 Latzarus, “Revue des études péladanes,” 8. Beaufils argues that Péladan probably owned the chinchilla around 1912, and notes that the name also refers to an adolescent, androgynous character in Péladan’s Prince de Byzance. Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918), 409–410.
was included in the official press release.\textsuperscript{57} While there is no evidence for their claim and these reviewers did not support their problematic assertion, they did point out the strong ties between Péladan and Guerre—specifically in his descriptions of her in a preface that he dedicated to her. In one of these press clippings in Péladan’s archives, the journalist tied the ardor of this preface to the woman’s decision to marry Péladan, writing:

\begin{quote}
It is a real novel[,] that [of] this marriage announced the other week. In one of the prefaces of his work, addressed to Mme la comtesse de Guerre, Sâr Péladan, mystical and evocative stylist, delivered in these terms to the initiates the secret of his heart… [Is it] the mode, for a woman, after reading here, not to fall in love with the author? How cruel to resist him! The noble lady of the name de Guerre, subject of this Babylonian and gallant dedication, is ‘in the world of forms’ the very charming Countess Raoul de Bard, born Josephine de Mallet Roquefort, whose marriage to Mr. Joséphin Péladan has been official for a few days.\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

Similarly, the other writer also noted the enthusiasm of the dedication:

\begin{quote}
Le Figaro announced the other morning, claimed the \textit{Débats}, a marriage that one can without exaggeration characterize as sensational: it is that of Sâr Peladan with Mme la comtesse de Guerre. Those who carefully work on the literature of the Sâr had already observed in the preface to one of his works a kind of dedication whose enthusiasm seemed more than magic.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

Due to the lack of evidence, there is little reason to believe Guerre was actually Péladan’s wife, yet these writers did highlight the fact that Péladan described Antoinette de Guerre in glowing

\textsuperscript{57} The marriage was announced on January 11 in \textit{Le Figaro} referring to the bride as: “la comtesse de Le Roy de Barde, née de Malet-Roquefort.” Ferrari, “Le Monde et la Ville,” \textit{Le Figaro}, no. 11 (January 11, 1896): 2.

\textsuperscript{58} “C’est un vrai roman que ce mariage annoncé l’autre semaine. Dans une des préfaces de son œuvre, s’adressant à Mme la comtesse de Guerre, le Sâr Péladan, stylist mystique et suggestif, livrait en ces termes aux initiés le secret de son cœur… Le moyen, pour une femme, après avoir lu ça, de ne pas tomber amoureuse de l’auteur? Quelle cruelle lui résistera! La noble dame au nom de Guerre, objet de cette dédicace babylonienne et galante, est ‘au monde des formes’ la très charmante comtesse Raoul de Barde, née Joséphine de Mallet Roquefort, dont le mariage avec M. Joséphin Péladan est officiel depuis quelques jours.” N.A. “Le Mariage du Sar Péladan.” Arsenal MS 13415 fol. 116, third clipping.

\textsuperscript{59} “Le \textit{Figaro} annonçait, l’autre matin, disent les \textit{Débats}, un mariage que l’on peut sans exagération qualifier de sensationnel: c’est celui du Sar Peladan avec Mme la comtesse de Guerre. Ceux qui cultivent soigneusement la littérature du Sar avaient déjà remarqué dans la préface d’une de ses œuvres une sorte de dédicace dont l’enthousiasme semblait plus que magique.” N.A. Arsenal MS 13415 fol. 116, fourth clipping.
terms in a preface dedicated to her and these notices reveal that some contemporaries closely associated him with her.

Although the group’s rejection of female exhibitors has become one of its key descriptors, the presence of at least five women at the events shows that the Rose + Croix diverged from the founder’s mandates. Additionally, the presence of these female exhibitors at the Salons highlights the group’s varying attitudes toward the role of women. Similarly, the widespread images of women exhibited at the Salons will show a range of divergences from the founder’s conceptions of feminine roles.

**Fées, Saints, Androgynes, and Femmes Fatales**

For Symbolists, women could serve as terrifying *femmes fatales*, dragging men down from their search for the eternal toward a lustful focus on sexuality and materiality. Yet they could also act as asexual pure women, *fées* (fairies), or saints, supporting men in their quest. For most Symbolists, androgynes were sexless, but Péladan used the term to apply to androgynous male figures, arguing that only men could serve as the highest level of pure androgynes. Péladan believed that their dangerous androgynous female figures were gynandres. Despite the seemingly broad divide between these varied tropes, among the artworks exhibited at the Rose + Croix and Symbolist artworks in general, the depicted women are not always easily identifiable as only a single type. They generally feature idealized bodies, lacking signs of work, age, or individuality, but their attitudes, degree of sexualization, associations with Symbolist themes and myths, and connections to popular tropes vary. Sometimes female figures served a clear function,

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as in Delville’s female personification of the “Flesh” in Symbolisation de la Chair et l’Esprit (Fig. 1.7) who grasps at the man, tearing him down, while the androgynous angel in the same artist’s Ange des Splendeurs (Fig. 1.6) lifts him up. Yet how does one categorize the nude women in Point’s Au Bord de Eurotas, Osbert’s Adieu au Soleil, and Vallgren’s Consolation (Figs. 1.13, 4.21, 1.16)? These works incorporate a variety of tropes, revealing the conflicting themes and types at an idealist Salon where several critics accused the events of celebrating debauchery with a multitude of “pornographic” female nudes.  

In a key book on Symbolist depictions of gender, Patricia Mathews divides these figures into the three tropes of the femme fatale/whore, the pure woman/virgin, and the male androgyne.  

Although she notes several combinations of these tropes, Mathews generally focuses on dividing them and argues that there was “little resemblance” between figures like the pure woman and the androgyne.  

These types were important for a variety of Symbolists and played a central role at the Rose + Croix, yet Mathews occasionally overemphasizes the divisions between these themes, since these figures were often combined and modified. In one instance, when discussing Armand Point’s La Sirène (Fig. 5.1), Mathews writes that this is “a more academic image of the femme fatale” who has a winged, “monstrous body.” Problematically, she claims that this painting depicts a femme fatale who is not threatening to the male viewer, writing: “The sexuality of this image, or in this case, lack of erotic charge, lies in

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63 Mathews, Passionate Discontent.

64 Mathews, Passionate Discontent, 115.

65 Mathews, Passionate Discontent, 107. This work was not exhibited at the Salons of the Rose + Croix, but Mathews discusses it while addressing the group.
the full body view rather than in a sultry and seductive gaze. She is on display like the other academic nudes of the period and carries little threat to male sensibilities. Yet, I would argue that even if this female creature’s body is fully in view, if she is not threatening in some way, she cannot truly function as a *femme fatale*. In addition to this concern with definitions, Mathews’ argument is problematic since these tropes were constantly repeated and actually overlapped, producing a continuum of sexuality, threat, and purity, never effectively resolving the anxieties to which they responded.  

In discussing depictions of women at the Rose + Croix, Mathews overemphasizes both the distinctness of her categories and the importance of the androgyne at the Rose + Croix when she argues that “the disembodied androgyne as well as the *femme fatale* were particularly fashionable among the Rose + Croix.” Although the Salons did feature *femmes fatales* and androgynes, throughout the exhibits depictions of saints as well as combinations of these tropes were also very common, making her use of distinct categories problematic.

While Mathews argues for the central role played by androgynes and *femmes fatales* in Péladan’s Salons, Michelle Facos focuses on saintly women at the Rose + Croix, arguing that these works generally showed “women as devout and ethereal beings, safely ensconced in imaginary spaces remote from modern life.” Guy Cogeval also argues for the centrality of the androgyne at the Rose + Croix in the exhibition catalog *Lost Paradise: Symbolist Europe* and he


67 Mathews notes that these tropes did not resolve the anxieties, but still focuses on defining and separating the three types. Mathews, *Passionate Discontent*, 125.


clearly differentiates between female types by dividing “The Cycles of Life” into sections on “The Femme Fatale,” “Adolescent Awakening,” ‘Motherhood,” and “In Search of Innocence.” Yet, in his section addressing the adolescent and the androgyne, Cogeval does not actually discuss any works exhibited at the Rose + Croix and he describes Péladan as dressed in “the flowing garb of a woman”—probably referring to what were actually supposed to be religious robes. In fact, insisting that any one of these tropes was central at the Rose + Croix is problematic, especially since a large number of the works exhibited at the Salons have never been identified.

Other scholars discuss the place of depictions of women in Symbolist art, but Mathews is unusual for her in-depth research on the issue. In Michael Gibson’s survey of Symbolism, he writes that the idealized woman “is one of the most characteristic aspects of Symbolism,” but he does not clarify how this idealism was associated with what he considers the widespread depictions of femmes fatale or address how images of women combined these tropes, making the figures difficult to categorize. As with other Symbolists, for the artists exhibiting at the Rose + Croix, women were a common subject and variations on the tropes of femmes fatales, saints, androgynes, mothers, and elemental beings all played a role.

Péladan, the artists exhibiting at the Salons, and the doctrines characterized women in a variety of ways. The rules and constitution often emphasize the ideal, beautiful, asexual, supporting role assigned to women. Péladan sometimes supported the depiction of love and


72 Gibson, Symbolism, 40–41.
sexual nudity, writing that it could be a very important way of communicating with the viewer. In his doctrine of the Rose + Croix, he wrote: “The only poetic form understandable to all men is love: and in love they feel above all the concupiscence. … it is not then [necessary] to slander against sexual nudity, since it constitutes the means of expression which permits ordinary people to imagine beauty.” 73 Péladan’s varying statements, the group’s support of and continued exhibition of nudes, and the range of artworks depicting dangerous, sexualized, idealized, pure, symbolic, nude, and naked women were associated with an anxious and unstable attitude towards women and sexuality that often combined a variety of tropes and attitudes.

Péladan clarified that even though he supported depictions of ideal beauty, nudity, and love, he was opposed to sexual imagery, which he believed detracted from the religious emphasis. He argued that love and beauty should not be vulgar or passionate, but focused on the ideal, writing that in the place of physical, material love, one should “substitute the love of beauty, the love of the idea, the love of mystery,” and arguing that unlike vulgar passion, the ecstasy for beauty, the idea, and mystery were “supported by an incessant activity of realization, by an uninterrupted development of ideology.” 74 In this manner, Péladan counteracted his occasional acceptance of the depiction of sexuality with diatribes against the sexual sphinx, tying love to sadness and writing that only once the “enigma of the sexual sphinx” has been resolved

73 “La seule forme poétique compréhensible à tous les homme c’est l’amour: et dans l’amour ils sentent surtout la concupiscence. En face de l’œuvre d’art ils se comporteront comme vis-à-vis de la réalité: il n’y a donc pas à clabauder contre la nudité sexuelle, puisqu’elle constitue le truchement qui permet au commun de soupçonner la beauté.” Péladan, L’art idéaliste et mystique, 195.

will “the reign of the Holy Spirit become possible.” For Péladan, ideal love and beauty served as a means of expressing larger ideas and connecting with the audience, while more explicit depictions of sexual love symbolized torture and pain, so that one could only focus on the Holy Spirit once one moved beyond sexuality.

For Péladan idealized love, sexuality, and nudity could serve as important means of expression, yet contemporary critics sometimes characterized the inclusion of nudes and sexualized women as a violation of the group’s rules, viewing these works as focused on sexuality, rather than idealism. Arguing against the exhibition of these types of works, one critic wrote that unfortunately, Péladan, “despite the mystical tendencies, has received, in this Salon two or three works where the nudity was not redeemed by any artistic merits.” Another reviewer argued that “the exposition of the Rose + Croix certainly does not respond to …the principles of the Order and the hopes of M. Péladan. … Besides, this does not prevent a pure realist, M. Maurin, from slipping into the troop of the elect, and exhibiting, last year, an Aurore of an unchaste nudity.” Thus, several contemporary critics argued that some of the exhibited works broke from Péladan’s guidelines by depicting sexualized, rather than idealized, love and nudity.


76 “Regrettons en terminant que le Sar, malgré ses tendances mystiques, ait accueilli dans ce salon deux ou trois œuvres dont la nudité n’est rachetée par aucune mérite artistique.” Kersant, “Le Salon de la Rose-Croix,” 2.

77 “L’exposition de la Rose-Croix ne répond assurément pas à idée que l’on s’en fait, d’après les principes de l’Ordre et les espérances de M. Péladan. … Ce qui n’empêcha pas, d’ailleurs, un pur réaliste, M. Maurin, de se glisser dans le troupeau des élus, et d’exposer, l’an dernier, une Aurore d’une peu chaste nudité.” N.A., “Variétés : Quelques Artistes,” 2.
The group’s incorporation of beauty and desire as central idealist elements was also reflected in Péladan’s writing. The literary scholar Alain Mercier argues that Péladan used litany and incantation to create desire, although Mercier writes that he does used the term “desire” not “only in the erotic sense, but in a broader way in the sense of longing for beauty, for the ideal, for perfection; sensuality is mingled with mysticism in this sometimes delirious search … for a more aesthetic than metaphysical absolute.” In this way, in his own writing, Péladan attempted to combine desire with an aesthetic and sensuous striving toward the Absolute. Thus, the depiction of both physical beauty was a means of approaching the ideal, as long as it did not serve purely erotic, material desires.

In addition to claiming that one needed to transcend sexuality and material desire, Péladan also argued for the importance of what he referred to as sexual charity, indicating that idealist women should suppress their own sexual natures, but be available to sexually and financially support idealist poets, writing:

To the world, the woman must be a coquette, who smiles only at idealities, and, guardian of taste, fights everything vulgar, so that her sexual personality is surrounded by prestige and … capable of giving Happiness to the simple following the law of charity that does not contradict the benefit of beauty and healing power of exterior grace.

Just as these theories combine seemingly divergent attitudes in regards to sexuality, Péladan’s novels similarly conflict, conflate, and confuse the roles assigned to women. In these works,

78 “Le mot désir n’est pas pris ici uniquement sous son acception érotique, mais d’une manière plus vaste dans le sens d’aspiration à la beauté, à l’idéal, à la perfection; la sensualité se mêle à la mysticité dans cette recherche parfois délirante (ce qui la valorise poétiquement) d’un absolu plus esthétique que métaphysique.” Mercier, “Revue des études péladanes,” 10.

79 “En face du monde, la femme doit être une coquette, qui ne sourit qu’aux idéalités, et, gardienne du goût, combattre tout la vulgaire, afin que sa personnalité sexuelle s’entoure de prestige et le rende apte à donner du Bonheur aux simples selon la loi de charité qui ne contredit point à la bienfaisance de la beauté et à la faculté curative de la grâce extérieure.” Péladan, Amphithéâtre des sciences mortes. Comment on devient fée, 83–84.
beautiful, ideal, bestial, imperfect, and even handicapped women engage in sexual behaviors that are described in simultaneously fetishistic, aesthetic, and idealized terms. And these women do so with men who are above any interest in the banal and worldly. Péladan argued for sexual charity, so he did not oppose all sexual activity—he just wanted women to repress their own sexual desires in favor of those of their poetic male consorts. Artworks that depict beautiful, nude, passive, available women are aligned with these theories. The nude, pure figures in Chabas’ *Vierges des Falaises*, while more sexualized than those in more heavily Catholic works like Osbert’s *Vision* or Séon’s *Jeanne d’Arc*, do not diverge from this approach. Not only are the figures presumably elemental beings, but they are idealized—physically beautiful, sexually pure, and non-threatening with their passive body language and gazes. As shown in his acceptance of *Vierges des Falaises*, Péladan did not seek completely pure or asexual imagery and even if a work’s nudity could result in a sexual response from the male viewer, this could still be acceptable for Péladan. Technically, male viewers would not be able to attain the highest human level in Péladan’s conceptions, because for him, the male figure of the androgyne was disinterested in sex—in fact, in one of his novels, the title character of the androgyne dies and becomes a mere man when he engages in sex. At the same time, even though Péladan frequently described his idealized poets as being above an interest in sex or the banal, this did not prevent them from engaging in sexual acts.

Comparisons to contemporary events sometimes reveal the boundaries of the Salon more effectively than the group’s own platforms. For example, Péladan claimed that other than subject

80 See, for example: Péladan, *Mélusine*.

matter, one of the Salon’s central concerns was its opposition to deformation, especially in terms of the body.\footnote{‘Quoique l’Ordre ne prétende décider que de l’idéalité d’une œuvre; il repoussera cependant, le sujet fut-il mystique, toute œuvre où les proportions du corps humain, les lois de perspective, enfin les règles techniques seraient insolemment violées.’ Péladan, Organe trimestriel de l’Ordre: 1re livraison, 27.} But, as discussed by several contemporary critics and addressed in Chapter Four, the Salons actually showed a variety of works with elongated bodies—such as Delville’s \textit{Ange des Splendeurs}. This reveals that Péladan was not expressly opposed to all forms of deformation. Similarly, while Péladan sought to depict positive, idealized types, denounced the enigma of the “sexual sphinx,” and rejected active female desire, he also accepted depictions of \textit{femmes fatales}—as in Delville’s \textit{Idole de la Perversité}. Yet one female type that was not shown at the Salons of the Rose + Croix, but was exhibited at other contemporary events, was the combination of disfigurement and active female sexuality—as in Eugène Laermans’ \textit{Perversité} (Fig. 5.2).\footnote{Patricia Mathews argues that Séon’s \textit{Chimera} features distortions in the shoulders and neck and Point’s \textit{Siren} features a “monstrous body” because it is winged. Mathews, \textit{Passionate Discontent}, 104, 107. These bodies are deformed by human standards, but neither of these creatures is human, and both feature beautiful, smooth skin, in contrast to the wrinkles, sagging skin, and swollen joints of a deformed female figure as painted by Laermans.} This triptych features a \textit{femme fatale}, actively staring out at the viewer with crossed arms. She does not look out seductively, but neither does she cover herself. In the central panel, ignoring the other woman’s hesitation, she actively pulls her in for a kiss. In these images, not only is the woman the aggressor, but her perversity has ravaged her body, revealing her skeletal form, with swollen joints and sagging skin. In the background of the image on the left, the ruined landscape and guillotines symbolize the effects of perversity on larger society, while a platform elevates what appears to be a sculpture of the central image, highlighting the cause of this destruction. The ravaged body reveals the physiognomic concept that the outward appearance reflects internal characteristics, illustrating the negative physical and social effects that

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apparently occurred when the “sexual sphinx” was set free. In the process, this trope combines disfigurement and female sexuality in a way the Péladan could not accept. The beautiful *femme fatale* in *Idole de la Perversité* was exhibited, but disfigured *femmes fatales* were not shown at the Rose + Croix, revealing that although some types of deformations were acceptable and *femmes fatales* were exhibited, the two could not be combined in the same work at this venue.

In addition to saints, angels, and *femmes fatales*, one important female type for the Rose + Croix was the *fée* (fairy)—according to Péladan, this complex figure was both pure and sexually active, because she engaged in charitable sexual activity while renouncing sexual desire.84 In his guide book for women, Péladan framed the *fée* as the panacea for the evils afflicting contemporary women. For him, the *fée*’s elemental—rather than human—nature gave her a magical quality that positively differentiated her from human women, just as a mage—like himself—was superior to regular men. Detailing these ideas, he wrote instructional guides for men, women, and artists, titled “How one becomes [a] mage,” “How one becomes [a] fairy,” and “How one becomes [an] artist.”85 For Péladan, a woman did not need to forgo sex entirely, but she needed to form her own “sexual personality” around charity, focusing on male desire and renouncing any personal sexuality.86 This sort of character could blend aspects of Mathew’s *femme fatale* (since she was sexually available) with her pure ideal woman (since her own lack


“En face du monde, la femme doit être une coquette, qui ne sourit qu’aux idéalités, et, gardienne du goût, combattre tout le vulgaire, afin que sa personnalité sexuelle s’entoure de prestige et le rende apte à donner du bonheur aux simples selon la loi de charité qui ne contredit point à la bienfaisance de la beauté et à la faculté curative de grâce extérieure.” Péladan, *Amphithéâtre des sciences mortes. Comment on devient fée*, 83–84.
of sexual desire made her non-threatening). In this way, Péladan’s theories and some of the artworks tied to them combined multiple tropes and conceptions of women.

Breaking from Péladan’s concept of her, Séon did not depict the fée as an improved version of a contemporary woman. For example, in his Fée des Grèves (Fig. 4.18), the fée serves as an elemental fairy whose non-human nature releases her from social restrictions, allowing her to become a seductive siren. This figure is not the role model Péladan suggested for contemporary women. She does not forgo her sexual, physical nature to focus on supporting the mage in his quest for the eternal. Instead, she distracts him from this focus, so that he gazes downward, away from eternal ideas and toward the flesh. She frames her breasts with her hands, offering them to him as she gazes up expectantly at the male figure. This fairy of the beach extends the offering of her breasts in a manner akin to the artist’s later depiction of La Sirène proffering her pearls and coral (Fig. 5.3). In both cases, the elemental being’s idealized body lacks pubic hair and her gaze appears passive, rather than aggressively threatening. Yet, just as the Siren offers her jewels to seduce and trap the man, the fairy of the beach’s offering of her breasts does not illustrate the form of sexual charity that supposedly served to improve the poetic male, but rather, the fairy acts to keep him focused on the base, material world. In contrast to Péladan’s concept of the fée, Séon did not depict the Fée des Grèves as an elemental figure that had evolved beyond her bodily, sexual desires to become more spiritual and magical. Instead, Séon’s fée serves as a warning that because of her sexual nature, this idealized elemental being with a passive gaze remains a threat to the mage’s quest for spiritual focus.

Another image of a fairy that reveals divergences between Péladan and Séon is the water-spirit Mélusine. Péladan wrote a novel titled Mélusine and Séon created two extant images of the
water spirit, including a frontispiece for Péladan (Figs. 5.4, 5.5). Séon exhibited one of these works—probably not the frontispiece—at the Rose + Croix. These artworks and Péladan’s novel built on the lengthy literary and artistic tradition of Mélusine, as described in Jean d’Arras’ fourteenth-century Roman de Mélusine (Figs. 5.6, 5.7). Traditionally, Mélusine lived on land, but had the lower body of a fish or water-serpent, which was revealed when she bathed. A variety of medieval artworks depict her bathing, with a serpentine tail and sometimes fins. Séon’s frontispiece Mélusine built on this tradition, showing the title character in a pond, revealing to the viewer (and the man discovering her) the fact that her feet broaden into flippers. Notably, however, even though the frontispiece corresponds with the legend and earlier artworks, it breaks from Péladan’s novel. In the novel, Mélusine does not have flippers. Instead, she is a modern woman who suffers a different type of defect, having lost her feet in an accident.

Péladan sought to begin a new cycle of novels with Mélusine, but he never wrote the rest of the series and this work has been called “incontestably minor”—nevertheless, it incorporates a significant combination of female tropes. In Péladan’s novel, the title character, Mary Lusine, suffers through an accident that results in the loss of her feet at the age of eight. She hides this

87 Péladan, Mélusine.

88 Beaufils refers to this work as the frontispiece, but the catalog entry for 1895 lists the work as simply “La Fée Mélusine.” Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918), 298. Séon does not always refer to his exhibited frontispieces specifically as “frontispieces”—for example, he exhibits “Androgyne” and “Victorie du Mari” without this reference in the titles. Yet, in these cases, he does not change Péladan’s title, so his exhibition of the frontispiece as “La Fée Mélusine” instead of merely “Mélusine” would be unusual, and thus, it is more likely that he exhibited the other artwork in 1895.

89 Arlette Bouloumié and Henri Béhar, Mélusine: moderne et contemporaine (L’Age d’homme, 2001), 8, 103.

90 “Ce roman, incontestablement mineur, n’est pourtant pas sans qualités. Outre l’agréable couverture de Séon exposée au quatrième Salon de la Rose + Croix, on y apprécie le goût de Joséphin pour une manière très personnelle de marivaudage lyrique…” Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918), 298.
deformity throughout her adolescence and at twenty, begins communicating with an idealist poet using the pseudonym Mélusine. When the poet kisses her feet and discovers their truncation, this only adds to their love and they marry. His attraction to her stumps (they sleep with his head by her legs so he can embrace them) is contrasted with the reaction of her friend Jenny, who is repulsed by Mary’s body. 91 According to Beaufils, the title character “is a fée in the most Péladanian sense” and scholar Jonathan Krell writes that in the novel she turns into “a true ‘fée.’”92 This is because she financially supports the idealist poet by paying critics and the director to make the writer’s tragedy successful.93 Yet, even though she fulfills this key financial, supportive function of a fée, she is not pure, because her barbarian (Yankee) beauty, sexual nature, intelligence, gaze, and audacity associate her with Péladan’s concept of the threatening gynandre.94 Despite her physical disability and deviation from Péladan’s focus on idealized, perfect female bodies, Mary Lusine actually combines a variety of female tropes, revealing how, in his novels, Péladan’s character development is often more focused on drama and intrigue than on easily categorizable idealism.

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91 Jonathan Krell discusses the problematic fetishistic incorporation of the stumps and the role of Mary’s friend Jenny. He explains that when the couple travel by boat to discover Europe, they bring Jenny, a third figure who undresses and moves the couple into noble, loving, and caressing—but apparently, idealized, non-vulgar—poses. Thus, in one scene, “Cette loyale impudeur apaisait l’érotisme en eux, ils s’impressionnaient de leur caractère de bas-relief, et craignaient un mouvement qui corrompait leur belle ligne. Leur imagination vibrait de souvenirs classiques; ils se caressaient comme des dieux, sans fièvre, sans lascivité.” Krell, “Une Mélusine Décadente: La Fée Selon Joséphin Péladan,” 105.

92 Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918), 299; Krell, “Une Mélusine Décadente: La Fée Selon Joséphin Péladan,” 100.


Péladan developed a range of female types, including the gynandre and the féé, but the author’s female characters certainly do not exist outside of the male frame of reference and they are never the equals of his idealistic male poets. Péladan’s argument that women could serve as important, positive figures in the lives of idealist poets implies that féees could fill active roles beyond that of femme fatale or the passive pure women—yet their main functions are still financial and sexual support. Additionally, although women play an important role in Péladan’s work, the author rarely addressed his writing to a female audience—with a few notable exceptions, such as Comment on Devient Fée. After Péladan’s death, his widow claimed that despite liking women, he never actually wrote for them, saying “Péladan loved women, although he affected to despise them, but what he wrote [was] not addressed to them.” This statement also reveals the presence of a split attitude toward women. Like many Symbolists, his female figures do not exist outside of male desire and attitudes—love, adoration, fear, or hatred are all central themes and are often mingled into works where women are often portrayed as saints, féées, and sphinxes.

Revealing yet another contradiction, given Péladan’s general emphasis on idealism and opposition to sexual activity, Péladan also published erotic and artistic novels under various masculine and feminine pseudonyms. These works include his “quasi-erotic” Femmes Honnêtes published under the pen name le Marquis de Valognes in 1885 and 1888 and his Autour du

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95 Beaufils argues that the author’s attitude toward women was always negative, writing that Péladan never saw female beauty as a central source of “philosophical and social harmony.” He contrasts this attitude to that of Péladan’s former associate, Papus, who he argues, saw women more positively: “...Papus, lequel vint définir la Femme d’un point de vue opposé à celui de Péladan; en elle résidait pour l’auteur de Peut-on envoûter? ‘toute beauté comme toute harmonie sociale et philosophique.’” Beaufils, Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918), 279.

96 According to Latzarus, while visiting Péladan’s widow, “Quand j’ai dit mon désir de parler à nos lectrices de celui qu’elle pleure, Mme Péladan m’a répondu d’une voix basse et profonde : ‘Péladan aimait les femmes, bien qu’il affectât de les mépriser, mais ce qu’il a écrit ne s’adresse point à elles.’” Latzarus, “Revue des études péladanès,” 7.
Péché, ostensibly written by “Miss Sarah,” “an erotic ABC” that also incorporates religious themes, such as an erotic book of hours. 97 He even published Étrennes aux Dames: le Livre du désir in 1885 under the pen name Princesse Anna I. Dinska. 98 This book is supposedly aimed at a female audience and focuses on art—its illustrations include a variety of artworks that were exhibited at the 1893 Rose + Croix Salon. 99 These erotic works, the comments made by his widow, and his characterization of Mélusine as simultaneously a fée and an active, sexualized gynandre reveal conflicting tropes and attitudes towards women and sexuality. These issues also diverge from some of the depictions of women exhibited at the Salons. Specifically in terms of his characterization of Mélusine, Péladan was unusual in terms of his emphasis on active sexuality and his choice to bring the medieval legend into modern times.

Like the frontispiece Mélusine with its armored knight, Séon’s other depiction of Mélusine also situates her outside of contemporary times. Unlike the fées in Péladan’s guidebook, neither of Séon’s figures was crafted to serve as a specific example for women and unlike the characters his novel, these women do not combine multiple tropes in the guise of a contemporary figure. While Séon’s frontispiece illustrates the legend, closely following established precedents, his Fée Mélusine is more evocative and generalized, eliding the male

97 Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 56.


99 Pincus-Witten notes that some of the works he terms “Old Master” works, which were exhibited in 1893, were also used as illustrations of Péladan’s Étrennes aux Dames, Le Livre du Désir. Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 55–56. There are actually a wide variety of works by Rosicrucian exhibitors included in this book, such as: Charles Moreau-Vauthier, La Liberté; Gustave Charpentier, La Liberté; Alexandre Séon, La Poésie; Henri Martin, Peines d’Amour; Prouha, Frontispiece du Zodiaque Parisien; Pierre Rambaud, Uranie Symbolique (Cited as Raimbaud); Baccio Bandinelli, Le Modèle; and Sébastien Leclerc, Anges de la Renommée. Péladan, Étrennes aux dames. Le Livre du désir, par la princesse A. Dinska, 23, 29, 33, 81, 82, 96, 111, 152.
observer and the figure’s lower body. Since this figure’s feet are not visible, the viewer is unsure whether this Mélusine has a tail, fins, or missing feet. An additional level of mystery is created with the inclusion of the wand and tiara—neither of which is a traditional attribute of Mélusine. These elements add an esoteric focus that deviates from some legendary versions of the fairy which characterize her as a devout Catholic who built churches along the banks of the Poitou. Séon depicts a magical figure within a natural setting, but elides the clear attributes and narrative allusions of his frontispiece. Beginning with the same legend as Péladan, Seon envisioned a magical, mysterious fée, in contrast to the author’s sexualized, fetishized description of a contemporary one.

Séon’s œuvre includes a variety of female types, such as the pure or saintly figure, the elemental fée, and the dangerous chimera or sphinx. Yet, Delphine Montalant argues that Séon’s works mostly feature positive depictions of women, albeit ones where the uncommunicative women look away from the viewer. She argues that for Séon:

Woman is the favorite topic, the main concern of the whole creation. She is represented in all ages, and takes different forms: teenage mother, fairy, old woman … The femme fatale or cruel woman transposed as a chimera or a siren is present only in rare compositions. … His female figures are always very chaste, pure, and most belong to the race of angels than that of humans. … The impressive number of profiles, closed to all communication, and those elusive gazes fixated on a point outside of the composition, weigh as evidence of the incommunicability which lies in his relationship with her. The painter seems bothered or even frightened by the frank and direct gaze of a human face.

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100 Krell, “Une Mélusine Décadente: La Fée Selon Josèphin Péladan,” 103–104.

101 “En parcourant l’œuvre de Séon, il apparaît nettement que la femme est le sujet de prédilection, la principale préoccupation de l’ensemble de sa création. Elle est représentée à tous les âges, et prend différents aspects: adolescente, mère, fée, vieille femme initiatrice … La femme fatale ou cruelle transposée en chimère ou en sirène n’est présente que dans de rares compositions. … Ses figures féminines sont toujours très chastes, pures, et appartiennent plus à la race des anges qu’à celle des humains. … Le nombre imposant de profils, fermés à toute communication, et ces regards fuyants fixant un point hors de la composition, pèsent comme des preuves de l’incommunicabilité qui réside dans son rapport avec elle. Le peintre semble gêné, ou même apeuré, par le regard.
Indeed, as expressed by Montalant, the artist depicted many of his female subjects as angelic, saintly, and pure. Yet, his fées are sometimes impure or seductive and his chimeras and sirens clearly lure men to their base, sexual death. Although Montalant seeks to emphasize Séon’s focus on purity, the artist’s combination of these different themes connects his works to the multiplicity of Symbolist crosscurrents in the depiction of women.

Critics and scholars highlight the role of the femme fatale for Symbolists, sometimes arguing: “The femme fatale is at the center of Symbolist imagery.”

This dangerous, aggressive, sexually charged female figure played a significant role at the Salons, despite Péladan’s assertions that the events would focus on positive, idealized images. These depictions of femmes fatales illustrate the terrifying figure that idealist poets sought to escape in their quest to avoid all that was base, material, and sexual. They do not light the way forward, aiding society in its reformist, idealist progression, but they serve to highlight or warn of the terrifying danger of female sexuality. Péladan himself incorporated a variety of dangerous, sexual, and threatening female characters into his writing and stated: “Man[,] puppet of woman, woman[,] puppet of the devil.”

One key depiction of a femme fatale from the Salons is a frontispiece for Péladan’s Istar by Fernand Khnopff (Fig. 5.8). Péladan’s Istar (1888) was the fifth novel in his Latin Decadence

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103 “L’homme pantin de la femme, la femme pantin du diable.” Péladan, La décadence esthétique: L’art ochlocratique, salons de 1882 et 1883, 93. According to Pincus-Witten, the writer believed that “the greater the power of the female in a culture, the greater its decadence.” Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 58.
series and its title refers to Ishtar, the Babylonian goddess of love and war. Khnopff’s emphasis on danger and sexuality clearly builds on Istar’s role as the Babylonian goddess of love and war and is especially apparent when comparing this figure to Séon’s bound victim. Pincus-Witten refers to Khnopff’s etching as “a female nude seen to the waist, her hands bound above her head, beneath an ornamental panel.”

Péladan’s 1888 description of Khnopff’s artwork:

Nude against a column of the pillory, her hands tied to a bronze sign that reads Calibani justitia, Istar, the incarnation of the Chaldean Venus is unconscious or dead, her eyes closed, her mouth shut, her noble body resplendent again, the soul parted: on her belly, a head of an old toothless provincial medusa, whose hair is made of octopus tentacles, flattened dishonorably and profanely on the divine bosom.

Péladan’s description is problematic on several levels. In Khnopff’s work, the woman’s hands and wrists are not visible, leaving the interpretation of her bound or unbound state up to the viewer. If the viewer understands her to be unchained, then Istar is allowing the phallic serpentine form to overtake her by choice. On the other hand, the work clearly references depictions of the crucified Christ, which implies that the woman should more likely be


105 Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, 65.


107 While most writers build on Péladan’s description, Fabienne Claire Caland emphasizes the nakedness and the serpentine figure, rather than addressing the arms and wrists. According to her, this work shows “la déesse nue, offre ainsi, au regard, ses cuisses entre lesquelles surgit la chevelure serpentine d’un visage grimaçant, aux crocs acérés.” Fabienne Claire Caland, “Méduse dans l’Art Nouveau et la littérature fin de siècle,” in Le Mythe et Les Avant-Gardes (Clermont-Ferrand: Université de Clermont-Ferrand, 2003), 325. Jeffery Howe describes the figure as a shackled Chaldean Venus. Howe, The Symbolist Art of Fernand Khnopff, 64.
interpreted as bound.¹⁰⁸ Uncertainty becomes a key aspect of the image. This can be usefully compared to Rops’ *Temptation of Saint Anthony* (which was not exhibited at the Rose + Croix) (Fig. 5.9), which shows a woman visibly tied to the cross. Yet she is bound very loosely with silk ribbons that do not impede her hands or carry her weight, so she is simultaneously bound and yet able to remove herself from the cross—allowing Rops to depict her as a dangerous, active *femme fatale*, while incorporating the fetishistic depiction of the bound woman. Khnopff’s *Istar* is in an even more ambiguous position. Contrary to Péladan’s description, she is not clearly tied to a pillory—but neither can she definitively be interpreted as unbound, suggesting a much more complicated and multivalent series of associations.

A second problem with Péladan’s description is the fact that he refers to Istar as either “unconscious or dead.” If she were dead or unconscious, she would hang straight down, with her weight supported by her wrists and her knees bent. Otherwise, she might slump forward, with her arms bent and her upper back and shoulders hanging away from the pillar. Yet, her arms do not bear her weight, her head is pushed back, and her back is slightly arched, revealing that her muscles are contracted and her legs are supporting her. Despite the fact that her pose reveals that she is conscious, Péladan sought to remove any active sexuality and agency from Istar by referring to her as unconscious or dead and definitively stating that she is bound. If she was unconscious, he could safely view her as not accepting the dishonorable touch of these tentacles and as a result, he could appreciate her beautiful, “resplendent body” as ideal and noble. With his description, Péladan sought to limit Khnopff’s artwork, removing the ambiguity from the image to avoid the fact that this idealized body is actually that of a sexual being. In order to turn her

¹⁰⁸ Péladan’s description also serves to connect the work more closely to the novel, tying it to the narrative in which she is bound, instead of allowing it to exist separately from the literary work.
into his concept of an ideal woman, he needed to remove all sexual desire and agency from her, which he accomplished in his description by referring to her as dead or unconscious.

Khnopff’s *Istar* is conscious, but a comparison to Delville’s *Symbolisation de l’Esprit et la Chair* reveals that despite the combination of danger and sexuality that ties Istar to the figure of the *femme fatale*, Istar is also not as actively in control as Delville’s characterization of the *Chair*, or “Flesh.” In his work, Delville depicted the woman actively entrapping the male figure. Both the earthly brambles and the woman’s serpentine hair ensnare the man. This woman’s eyes are not closed—rather, despite her apparently broken neck, she gazes out at the viewer, retaining control and power in a manner that Khnopff’s *Istar* does not. While Istar accepts lust, sex, and base materiality, Delville’s figure actually embodies the “Flesh,” actively overpowering the man as he seeks only to rise upward to the higher eternal planes.

A third concern with Péladan’s description is the fact that he referred to the head in the lower portion of the image as that of a medusa. Yet, based on the position of the tentacles, the head cannot be a medusa. Instead, it must be that of an emaciated figure who has been overtaken and encompassed by the enveloping mass. Since the forms grow from below the head, rather than emanating from its scalp, it cannot be a traditional medusa. This is especially apparent in the trunk growing up the left side of the image, which clearly originates from a source other than this head. Thus, the head is engulfed by the forms rather than in control of them. In this way, the head serves a role analogous to that of the male figure in Delville’s *Ange des Splendeurs*, rather than acting as a powerful medusa. As with Péladan’s description of the woman’s consciousness,

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109 Evanghélia Stead refers to this as the decomposing head of a man: “Racines bouffies ou intestins gorges, les entrailles s’entortillent autour d’une tête d’homme en voie de décomposition chez Khnopff.” Evanghélia Stead, *Le monstre, le singe et le foetus: tératogonie et décadence dans l’Europe fin-de-siècle*, Histoire des idées et critique littéraire 413 (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 460.
this link to the figure of the medusa simplifies and limits the image. If this were a depiction of a medusa and an unconscious, pure woman, the stakes and characterizations would be clear. Instead, Khnopff depicted two figures engulfed by the tentacles of a hidden form. The gaunt head screams in terror despite being fully surrounded, while the woman accepts the touch of the tentacles, arching her back in pleasure. These divergences between Péladan’s description and Khnopff’s image are especially significant because the writer used this work as a frontispiece, described it in his 1888 Salon review, and then most likely, the artist exhibited it as one of his unspecified “frontispieces” in the 1892 Rose + Croix exhibition.

Significantly, in Khnopff’s image, even though the woman accepts the sexual touch of the tentacles, she is not the source of sexual aggression. In Istar, Woman may be weak and she may be dangerous because of this weakness. Yet she is not the source of base materiality—she does not symbolize the “Flesh” as she does in Symbolization de la Chair et de l’Esprit. In Khnopff’s image, instead of serving as the source of lust and passion, the slithering serpentine form rises from the earth, encompasses the head, and surrounds the woman’s loins. Istar accepts the serpent and the pleasure it brings, revealing her essential weakness—unlike the head, which screams despite being fully surrounded, she does not oppose the lustful, sexual advances. Yet, at the same time, this sexuality derives from an external source, rather than emanating from the woman herself—she gives in to the passion, but the lust does not derive from her. As with Eve and the serpent, the woman is weak, but the sexual desire, like the idea to eat the apple, derives from an external source and not from the woman herself. This work implies that sexual, base desire is not the inherent, natural state of Woman, as many Symbolists described and depicted her, but rather, lust is merely an external force to which she often succumbs. In this way,
Khnopff, like many of the artists exhibiting at the Rose + Croix, revealed complex attitudes toward women and combined contemporary tropes in a variety of ways.

In his description of Khnopff’s image, Péladan simplified Istar, removing many possible interpretations by referring to her as bound and unconscious. Yet in his novel, Péladan developed Istar into a far more complex figure—showcasing how much more comfortable he was with literature than with the visual arts. Péladan’s own Istar is linked to the sacrificial figure of St. Sebastian, but, according to one writer, at the same time, she “is in love with violence. She plays the disorder of experienced passion as deliverance, miracle, absurdity, suffering and the hallucination of being possessed.” Péladan’s own female characters—but not necessarily his descriptions of visual imagery—allow for complex combinations of repulsion and attraction.

Similarly, when describing Khnopff’s image, scholar Robert Delevoy argues for the significance of the dialectic of perversity, which simultaneously pushes the viewer away and pulls him in:

The image revolts and subjugates. It troubles and disturbs. …following the dialectic of perversity: it opposes the contradictory experiences of the forbidden and transgression, of sense and nonsense, of homogeneity and rupture, of functionality and disfunctionality; it aims for the clash of ineffable beauty and unspeakable horror, of unspeakable terror and the triumphant break-in.


This dialectic complicates the image—although Péladan sought to simplify the work by clearly dividing the resplendent ideal form from the sexual tentacles, the woman’s pose reveals that she is not dead and her muscles are contracted. Compared to Péladan’s limiting interpretation of the visual image, the work itself and Péladan’s own novel actually incorporate a far more complex series of meanings and associations, combining female sexuality with violence and linking desire and repulsion.

Several scholars have argued for the centrality of the androgyne at the Salons of the Rose + Croix, but few of the exhibited works actually depicted Péladan’s version of the androgyne. For Péladan, the androgyne could only be an androgynous male figure—he referred to androgynous females as gynandres and considered them dangerous. The androgyne played a key role in Péladan’s theories—he argued that androgynous male figures were superior to overly masculine ones and even wrote: “I propose this aesthetic theory: The androgyne is the plastic ideal.”

Yet despite Péladan’s focus on the androgyne, based on the works that have been identified, the Salons focused on depictions of women, including only a comparatively small number of androgynous male figures along with a few male portraits.

One androgyne who was included at the Salon was Séon’s frontispiece for Péladan’s *Typhonia* (1890) (Fig. 5.10). Significantly, this male figure recalls the woman in the artist’s

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114 “Je propose ce theorem esthétique: L’androgyne est l’idéal plastique.” Joséphin Péladan, “L’Esthetique à l’exposition nationale des beaux-arts (3e et dernier article),” *L’Artiste* (December 1883): 433. Another important figure is the gynandre. Thus, Jonathan Krell argues that two of Péladan’s novels, “L’Androgyne and La Gynandre treat the two usual incarnations of the androgyne—on the one hand the ephebe or the young effeminate man, who has a positive value for Péladan, on the other the virile woman, [a] cheater [who is] always negative.” Krell, “Une Mélusine Décadente: La Fée Selon Joséphin Péladan,” 99. Pincus-Witten considered the androgyne “one of Péladan’s principal esthetic obsessions” and described Péladan’s androgyne as neutral, divine, and the “least imperfect definition of God.” Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*, 43–44.
earlier frontispiece for Péladan’s *Istar* (1888) (Fig. 1.14)—the name of the Babylonian creation goddess who represented both love and war. The androgynous figure’s pose in *Typhonia* repeats that of the bound female figure in *Istar*. In *Typhonia*, the androgyne is associated with Saint Sebastian, bound for martyrdom, standing before the viewer and averting his eyes. As he looks down and to his right, he allows the viewer to gaze upon his idealized, androgynous form, as his shoulder-length curls frame his cherubic pouting face. *Istar*’s body is open to the viewer, but she turns her gaze to her right, her flowing unbound hair framing her bound body. Unlike Typhonia, *Istar*’s hands are tied in front of her, with her arms framing her breasts. As with *Typhonia*, the viewer’s gaze is not inhibited by the figure’s pose or glance. The androgy nous male has long hair, an indented waist, and a slightly raised left hip, while *Istar*’s long hair and breasts clearly identify her as female. In contrast to the androgyne, *Istar* does not represent any single trope—her lack of mystical ties or a threatening manner or gaze means that she cannot clearly be labeled a *femme fatale*, a gynandre, or a *fée*. Séon and other exhibitors at the Rose + Croix incorporated a variety of themes regarding androgynes, women, and sexuality, but as they continually repeated and combined these tropes in various ways, they created images that eschew easy categorization.

Gaston Bussière exhibited several depictions of Sainte Wilgefortis at the Salons, depicting the typically androgynous, bearded female saint as a beautiful girl within the context of a love story. The catalog entry does not state how many of these images Bussière exhibited at the Rose + Croix, but, a few months before they were shown at the Salon, Bussière’s illustrations for
Le Mystère de Sainte Wilgeforte appeared alongside a poem by Jean de Baralle and music by Maurice Cottenet in Le Monde Moderne (Figs. 5.11-5.16).¹¹⁵

Bussière’s illustrations deviate wildly from the story of Saint Wilgefortis, a bearded female virgin saint who was crucified and whose cult was important during the Middle Ages.¹¹⁶ Crucifixes of Wilgefortis sometimes featured androgynous clothing, the saint has been discussed in terms of the history of transvestite saints, and she was often called upon by victims of rape, incest, and forced marriage (Fig. 5.17).¹¹⁷ Despite her beard, the traditional Saint Wilgefortis cannot be considered an androgyne in terms of Péladan’s definitions because she is female. She also should not be categorized as a gynandre because she is typically associated with religious purity, rather than the masculine, aggressive sexuality that Péladan considered typical of the gynandre. In this way, the traditional saint occupies a complex position outside of any clear type. Bussière clearly responded to this complexity and specifically to the history of bearding the saint, since he covered her face with her hair (in the image of her crucifixion) or with her hands (in the final scene), alluding to the beard without actually depicting it. However, by referencing

¹¹⁵ Péladan, Le catalogue du IVe Salon, 4. In this periodical, Bussière included illustrations on eight out of ten pages, creating works that range from devices and borders to narrative compositions. The narrative portions depict her suitor below the castle, Wilgeforte reaching out to him through the bars, the Saint crucified while the knights fight, and then her beloved kneeling above his foe’s body as he gazes upward. Additional semi-narrative images depict Wilgeforte praying and surrounded by angels. Several of the works reveal the influence of stained glass windows, while others incorporate dragons, knights in a tournament, and mosaic patterning. Specifically, the second image includes a dragon in the lower border and two knights on horseback fighting with lances, the fourth page which begins the musical composition features a stained-glass-inspired image of the Saint praying, surrounded by a mosaic-arched-border, the seventh page includes another image of her praying, this time within the form of a gothic-rose-window, while the final work is heavily influenced by stained glass. Jehan de Baralle, “Le Mystère de Sainte Wilgeforte,” Le Monde Moderne: Revue Mensuelle Illustriée 1, no. 1 (January 1895): 43–52.


¹¹⁷ Friesen, The Female Crucifix, 2–4.
the beard without actually incorporating it into the image, he removed the saint’s key attribute and instead, highlighted her beauty and focused on the love story.

Baralle’s Wilgeforte aligns effectively with Péladan’s view of the ideal woman—a virgin who dies telling the singer-knight to forget her while she will be thinking only of him and of God. In the poem, Wilgeforte is martyred for her religious beliefs, leaving behind her faithful suitor. When he speaks to her through the tower-window, she tells him to forget her, but emphasizes the fact that only he and God matter to her. Despite this emphasis on purity, in one Bussière’s images, she is depicted nude on the cross. According to Baralle’s description:

She is dead, the virgin with clear eyes!
For all time, wind of the night, song of sad things;
She is on the cross, the virgin with clear eyes!
Her beautiful body is twisted on the knots of the black wood.
Standing out against the nude,
And her hair which is lifted by the wind of the night
Floats on her nude throat.119

In the illustration, the wind blows her hair over her thighs and one breast, but leaves one breast conveniently exposed for the viewer. Péladan limited Khnopff’s depiction of Istar by referring to her as dead or unconscious, thus allowing the idealized, sexualized body to remain free of any active sexual desires. Bussière depicted a traditionally clothed, bearded, androgynous female saint as a beautiful, nude, dead girl with her long hair flowing over her face, framing her breast for the viewer while, like Péladan, he distanced the idealized body from any active sexuality.


In addition to making images of fées, femmes fatales, and androgynes, a variety of artists exhibiting with the Rose + Croix depicted women as pure and noble muses, allegorical figures, or idealized types. These works vary in terms of the extent to which each figure is individualized, sexualized, or depicted as androgynous. Blumstein argues that Henri Martin’s singing and lyre-playing muses are symbolic and that Aman-Jean depicted women not as individuals, but as the “eternal feminine”—as thoughtful women who dream while looking into the distance.120 Blumstein also associates these figures with Péladan’s concepts of Beauty and purity since they are often either nude or classically draped.121 Additionally, he argues that these symbolic types correspond to Péladan’s emphasis on removing individualization to create more effective, generally representative types—especially in terms of wearing drapery so as to avoid references to a specific time and place.122 Problematically, Blumstein also ties these women’s purity to Péladan’s emphasis on androgyny.123 A focus on renouncing sexual desire would certainly align with Péladan’s concept of the ideal female figure. However, within Péladan’s framework, desexualized female figures can be referred to as saints, virgins, or muses—but not as androgynes or the more masculine, sexual gynandres.

Some artists at the Rose + Croix specifically highlighted religious purity in their positive depictions of saints and other female figures. Marcel Lenoir only exhibited at the last exhibition,

121 Blumstein, “Le Peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et son époque,” 56, 151, n.51. Blumstein specifically ties Osbert’s works to Péladan and problematically, argues that the author has a coherent artistic doctrine, based on his opposition to contemporary decadence and the ugliness of reality. Blumstein, “Le Peintre symboliste Alphonse Osbert et son époque,” 121–123. While Péladan does espouse these ideas, his lack of specificity makes it difficult to describe this as a “coherent artistic doctrine.”
but he revealed his continued devotion to Péladan with two later dedications to the writer. The artist’s *Minuit Chrétien* incorporates a range of female types and variations, contrasting these to the single young, virginal girl who represents hope (Fig. 5.18). In this work, as the artist’s early biographer Émile Bossier noted, the artist depicted a variety of negative and terrified reactions in the female crowd, including the naked woman who hides her face. According to the author, this “prostitute, shamed by being a woman, because she came to take possession of Jesus, weeps over her degeneration.” Bossier wrote that, even though she is a prostitute, it is not her career, but the fact that she is a woman that leads to her shame. Among the other various figures he identified in this work are the sorceress, the courtesan, the mondaine, and the hysterical figure in the back. These varied contemporary female types are all depicted negatively, as gray figures who cannot reach toward the head of Christ, serving as foils for the single white feminine figure—described by Bossier as a “chaste child.” This type clearly responds to the common


125 In contrast to this more positive and varied image, two of the four works that Lenoir exhibited at the Rose + Croix focus on the terrifying power of women—one is titled *Le Monstre*, and according to Boissier, the woman in *La Vie* is a “sphinx of sadness.” In addition to describing her as a “sphinx de tristesse,” he also notes her gesture of blessing or initiation: “sa main dresse vers nous le signe des initiés.” Émile Boissier, *L’enlumineur Marcel Lenoir: l’homme et l’œuvre* (Paris: A. Arnould, 1900), 37–38.


Symbolist trope of the pure woman—yet the range of other specific contemporary types in the work reveals an unusual breadth for the Rose + Croix. Adding another layer to this work is the artist’s description, which focuses specifically on the threat of base feminine desire to the masculine quest for Hope and purity. Boissier quoted Lenoir’s description of Christ’s role in the scene: “His weary, unsatiated, curious flesh, inflamed by desire of sacrilege, dreamt of trembling with the unattainable embrace. But his heart, corrupted by carnal memories, dropped on the earth, in tears. And his soul, enflamed, remounts toward Hope, toward the mystical purifying Union.”

Based on the artist’s description of this work, despite the seemingly positive message of the chaste girl and the ascension of Christ’s head, even Jesus’ heart (in the lower right) is corrupted and remains tied to the earth by its base memories. For Lenoir, a wide range of women and even Christ himself were affected by this focus on the carnal. Nonetheless, Lenoir did depict the chaste pure woman as a sign of faith.

The nude played a higher role in the theories of some exhibiting artists than the position assigned to it by Péladan. Péladan considered the human form central in idealist art, arguing that figures should be either draped or nude and writing that depictions of love could serve as an important means of expressing the ideal. Péladan focused on the human body, but the nude form in particular plays an even more central role in both Delville and LaLyre’s theories. According to Delville, the ideal nude was the highest art form: “It is by the nude alone that the artist can express the essential character of life, the impersonal ideas, universal beliefs, and general

sentiments of humanity.” Similarly, the four-time exhibitor Adolphe LaLyre discussed the contemporary importance of depicting the nude from nature, referring to Péliadan as one of the modern figures who had written on the subject of the nude. For LaLyre:

Aesthetics is nothing other than the search for beauty, in general, so it is responsible for making us understand [beauty] and from ...[beauty] it is inseparable; it must generate in us the intimate feeling which at one time is pleasing to the eye, to the mind and to the senses; it must always accompany the ‘Nude’ and especially, the ‘female Nude,’ to which it is an essential addition. Aesthetics makes Ideal Beauty perceptible in its essence and in its effects on the soul, and we learn to feel, it provokes in us a higher vibration which affects indifferently the woman, the learned and the illiterate. Aesthetics is the abstract doctrine which teaches that the choice of subject, the superior and sympathetic execution of pure forms must have for the goal the transmission of high sensations, such as: the impression of Beauty on the human mind. Aesthetics is ... in the words of the Platonic philosophy, ‘the splendor of truth.’

Like Péliadan, LaLyre emphasized the importance of beauty for the expression of higher, idealized concepts. Yet, unlike Péliadan, he highlighted the role of both execution and subject matter. Furthermore, he believed that through this idealized means of expression, any audience, even the illiterate and women, could experience this effect, which could impact everyone equally. In this way, despite the similarity between these doctrines, LaLyre’s is rooted in the idea that beauty would inherently, physically affect all, therein raising the consciousness of those who


131 La Lyre, *Le nu féminin à travers les ages, chez tous les peuples ...*, 10. In terms of his references to Péliadan, see for example: La Lyre, *Le nu féminin à travers les ages, chez tous les peuples ...*, 11.

132 “L’Esthétique n’est autre chose que la recherche du Beau, en général, qu’elle est chargée de nous faire comprendre et dont elle est inséparable; elle doit faire naître en nous le sentiment intime qui, à la fois, plait à l’œil, à l’esprit et aux sens; elle doit accompagner le ‘Nu’ toujours et surtout le ‘Nu féminin’ dont elle est, de plus, le complément indispensable. L’Esthétique fait percevoir le Beau idéal dans son essence et dans ses effets sur l’âme, et, nous apprenant à sentir, elle provoque en nous une vibration supérieure qui atteint indifféremment la femme, le savant et l’illettré. L’Esthétique est la doctrine abstraite qui enseigne que le choix du sujet, l’exécution supérieure et sympathique des formes épurées doit avoir pour but la transmission des sensations élevées, telle: l’impression du Beau sur l’esprit humain. L’Esthétique est ... au dire de la philosophie platonicienne, ‘la splendeur du vrai.’” La Lyre, *Le nu féminin à travers les ages, chez tous les peuples ...*, 11.
looked upon the artwork, even if the viewer was illiterate. Péladan, on the other hand, maintained the importance of hierarchy. For him, even if an ideal artwork could reach all viewers, it would not affect them indifferently. Rather, some esoteric, occult, or learned concepts and secrets would always remain hidden from non-initiates, therein lessening the significance of the work.

Osbert’s concepts of the nude, the muse, and the ideal woman are more closely associated with LaLyre’s emphasis on expression than Péladan’s focus on narrative. Dumas writes that the female figure in Osbert’s work “is only a symbolic element in the landscape and can sometimes be integral to the construction of the painting.” Similarly, Blumstein ties the artist’s depictions of women to literature, noting the fact that several Symbolist poets dedicated works to Osbert. Blumstein observes that Osbert’s women become muses through their simple poses and lack of individuality, so that “pure and chaste, clothed in white dresses, alone or in groups, they are the epitome of all that is beautiful in life, physical and spiritual beauty, eternal beauty expressed by inertia, emblem of inspiration, of fertile genius and creator of order and harmony.”

Chabas’ female figures serve a similar purpose, but in 1986 Gilles Almy argued that these women are not muses, and instead, serve to mediate between the viewer and the landscape: “Placed in idyllic


landscapes, they walk, bathe or contemplate the panorama. But they are rarely muses or allegorical figures. Instead, they play the role of intermediary between the viewer and the landscape, inviting contemplation and meditation.” Yet these roles differ only slightly, since both artists depicted generalized types tied to the landscape, usually without ties to specific allegorical narratives or concepts. Additionally, these muses, intermediaries, nymphs, and nudes were all associated with idealist principles that framed these women as personifications of general idealized concepts or as invitations leading toward spiritual elevation.

These depictions of muses, mediating figures, pure women, nudes, sexualized women, *femmes fatales* and *fées* reveal that the female subject played a major role at the Salons. They also show how the exhibiting artists built on Péladan’s doctrines. Yet, the exhibitors split from Péladan in terms of their development of such a wide range of figures. While the author’s own characterizations of female figures varied, his descriptions of visual imagery and the narrower focus on his doctrinal works allowed for fewer types. The artists associated with the Rose + Croix deviated from this limited range and lack of breadth in Péladan’s doctrines on the visual arts.

**The Paragone: Illustration, Evocation, Hierarchies and Reciprocity**

Many of the painters who exhibited at the Salons were heavily influenced by Symbolist ideas regarding the interrelated nature of the arts. Specifically, they often incorporated musical and poetic themes, approaches, and subjects to add depth to visual imagery. Generally, artists

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and theorists associated with the Rose + Croix also believed that this relationship was a reciprocal one and that visual imagery could beneficially influence music and literature. Sometimes Péladan noted inherent similarities between the art forms to support this concept of the interconnected nature of the genres, but generally, he argued for the importance of utilizing literary themes and subjects in the visual arts since he considered literature superior to the visual arts because it was based on the idea, rather than sensory experience. Rather than viewing the genres as reciprocally aiding and adding depth and variety to each other, Péladan focused on the ability of literature to elevate painting. Despite his own close association with the visual arts, Péladan continually highlighted the importance of literature over painting and sculpture, writing, “In every era, the arts reflect literature.” Many of the exhibiting artists incorporated musical and literary themes and subjects into their works, building on Péladan’s ideas and on Symbolist doctrines. However, they generally focused on the reciprocal nature of these arts, instead of Péladan’s hierarchical structure. While some works exhibited at the Rose + Croix rely so heavily on music and literature as to be illustrations, many artworks exhibited at the Salons focus on more evocative ties to these genres.

Péladan argued that literature was completely separate and higher than the other (seven) art forms, not even including it in his hierarchy of these lower arts in the doctrine of the Rose + Croix. Péladan held that literature was based on the idea, the visual arts were based on vision,

136 “A toute époque, les arts reflètent les lettres.” Péladan, Salon de la Rose-Croix: règles et monitoires, 25. Péladan believed literature had such a strong hold over the visual arts that he even blamed the literary world for visual failures, as when he argued that naturalist authors were to blame for Manet and Huysmans was responsible for Seurat. Péladan, Salon de la Rose-Croix: règles et monitoires, 25.

137 Péladan divided the visual arts into the arts of personality (including diction and elocution) and the extrinsic arts (including sculpture and painting). Péladan, L’art idéaliste et mystique, 49–161.
and the lowest arts, like music, relied on peripheral senses. In contrast to many of the exhibiting artists, he developed a very strict hierarchy of the genres, clearly situating each type of art in a specific niche. Yet, he also argued that beauty was absolute and must have parallels throughout the hierarchy. In this way, Péladan combined an emphasis on integrating the genres with an anxious insistence that literature must remain separate from the other arts.

Ties between the genres, ideas of synesthesia, and the concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk played key roles for Symbolists who viewed the genres and the senses as interconnected. In her dissertation on the one-time exhibitor François-Rupert Carabin, Sarah Joy Sik argues that Symbolists were generally opposed to artistic hierarchies, boundaries, definitions, and separations between the visual arts and literature. As a result, Symbolists routinely sought to destroy some of these boundaries and to incorporate other genres into their own. Despite this widespread emphasis on ties between the genres, questions regarding the hierarchy between them and fears that one genre would become subservient to another were also common.

According to Dario Gamboni, the ties between literature and art were one of the major disagreements among Symbolists. To support this, Gamboni notes that Émile Bernard opposed the term “symbolism” because it “had a literary origin and could be regarded as a pawn in the

138 Péladan also argued for this lower categorization of music because it was mobile, rather than static and it was superficial, because it placed listeners in a passionate and nervous state, rather than having a more meaningful impact. Despite this denigration of music, Péladan also referred to the nineteenth century as the century of Wagner. Péladan, L’art idéaliste et mystique, 152, 154.

139 Péladan, L’art idéaliste et mystique, 155–157. Péladan even laid out a clear hierarchy of specific artworks, which he referred to as a catechism, so that artists would have a guide for their sense of taste. Péladan, L’art idéaliste et mystique, 187–188.

140 For example, Dario Gamboni argues that the varied attitudes towards the relationship between art and literature are one of the “crucial issues” debated Symbolists and their contemporaries. Gamboni, The Brush and the Pen, 255.

hands of writers.” Additionally, Gamboni writes that Maurice Denis expressed his anxieties about the integration of the genres by arguing that there was an important distinction between allegorical, mystical, or literary painting—which impacted the viewer through subject matter—and Symbolist painting, wherein the meaning was expressed through color, line, and harmony. Artists like Bernard and Denis revealed some fears regarding the possibility that their genre could become subservient to another, but Péladan went much further in creating complex hierarchies explaining the overarching importance of his own field, while simultaneously seeking to create a venue for the other art forms.

Music played an important role at the Salons, as the events routinely included musical and theatrical performances. Additionally, many artists depicted musical subjects and illustrations. For example, five-time exhibitor Gachons showed a drawing for an illustration of a folk song from the Vendée at the second event, titled La Guillaneu. A version of this work was later included in La Plume (Fig. 1.8). In this illustration, Gachons depicts the imagery


144 In particular, Erik Satie played an important role at the first Salon, composing “Sonneries” and other compositions. As a result, some scholars have emphasized his ties to the events—but he actually left the group with Antoine de La Rochefoucauld. Louis Bénédictus, the pianist/composer/conductor who played a significant role in La Rochefoucauld’s choice to leave, remained with the group over a long period of time, continuing to appear on the musical programs and being referred to as a member of the septenaire. However, despite Péladan’s early framing of the group as equally tied to art, music, theater, and conferences, these later musical events did not and have not received the same critical and scholarly level of response as the salons.


146 In *La Plume*, the words are translated from the local dialect by Marcel Bailliot: “La Guillaneu: I. Il y a une arbre en la forêt / Qui passe les crêtes des chênes, / Comme les vergnes et le frênes / Passant le roseau et le genêt. / Oh! bergers et bergères, / Ah gui l’an neuf vous fait chanter (bis) / Puis entre nous venez danser / Danser sur les
described in the song, showing Christ as the trunk of a tree in the forest, with the apostles as his branches and water springing from a source by his feet. This work highlights not just the prevalence of musical ties, but also the emphasis on exhibiting vertically symmetrical works tied to Rosicrucian diagrams, which was discussed in Chapter Four.\textsuperscript{147} Just as this artwork directly illustrates a song, another piece exhibited by Vincent Darasse not only depicts a scene from the opera \textit{Lohengrin}, where the knight’s boat is pulled by a swan, but even includes a portion of the musical score in the foreground (Fig. 5.19). These exhibited works utilize direct illustration while revealing a close association with music. In \textit{Les Cloches du Soir}, on the other hand, Carlos Schwabe incorporated musical ideas more broadly, depicting multiple moments in time, as he used angels to personify a series of movements of bells (Fig. 5.20).\textsuperscript{148} A contemporary review highlighted the significance of music for this painting:\textsuperscript{149}

\textit{fougères, / II. Le rossignol y cache son nid, / Au milieu des fleurs les plus belles; / Les roitelets, les hirondelles / Le soir y cherchent un abri. / III. On n’y voit pas le geai des bois / Et le vauteur ne s’y hasarde / Le noir corbeau, la pie bavarde / N’y font pas entendre leurs voix. / IV. Notre Seigneur en est le tronc / Les apôtres en sont les branches, / Chaque ange de ses ailes blanches / Fait des feuilles autour son front. / V. De ses pieds sacrés, doucement / Dévale la source de vie, / Si claire qu’elle donne envie / De vous y baigner un moment. / VI. Celui qui veut être juste et fort / Doit boire à sa soif de cette onde / Pour lui nulle douleur en ce monde / Et nulle crainte de la mort.” Marcel Bailliot, “La Guillaneau,” \textit{La Plume}, no. 93 (March 1, 1893): 105.\textsuperscript{147}

Similarly, Rogelio de Egúsquiza exhibited a variety of works featuring characters and events from Wagner’s works.\textsuperscript{148}

In addition to the importance of music, Valentina Anker ties this depiction of multiple moments in time to the chronophotography of Étienne-Jules Marey. Anker, \textit{Le symbolisme suisse destins croisés avec l’art européen}, 192. She also notes the unusual depiction of space: “Les anges sortent du clocher, dans l’air, et bien plus bas se profilent le village et les champs dans un contexte spatial étrange, car d’habitude c’est le village qui est peuplé.” Anker, \textit{Le symbolisme suisse destins croisés avec l’art européen}, 192.\textsuperscript{149}

The catalog from 1892 includes a \textit{Chant du Soir} by Schwabe, but a contemporary review describes this work and cites the title correctly as \textit{Le Cloche du Soir}. N.A., “Au Salon de la Rose-Croix,” Arsenal, Ms 13205, Dossier on the Rose + Croix, folio 375; Péladan, \textit{Catalogue du Salon de la Rose-Croix}, 30. The painting is also caricatured in an illustration of the first salon—with the addition of a cat stalking the angels from the roof. Arsenal, Ms 1412, fol. 9, 11 and N.A., “Quelques-uns des Gestes Esthétiques du Salon de la Rose Croix,” \textit{Le Monde Illustré}, no. 1826 (March 26, 1892): 207. According to Catherine Kulling, there are two versions of \textit{Le Cloche du Soir}, one of which is currently housed at the Musée National des Beaux-Arts de Rio de Janiero. Kulling, “Jalons pour une biographie,” 27–28 n19.
Le Cloche du soir … is imprinted with the melancholy poetry of the soft and fresh voices that ring from the old church towers, at the moving hours of dusk. The white and fine figures which descend toward the peaceful earth—slow, emotionless, their hands with tapered figures, joined for prayer or extended in the gesture of blessing—are the exquisite symbols of the mysterious ringing of the bells.  

This painting reveals a Symbolist integration of the arts, as Schwabe utilized musical elements to create multivalent meanings and experiences of the work. This method builds on Péladan’s conceptual interest in integrating the arts, but does not reflect his hierarchical organization of them.

Vallgren’s sculptures generally depict women, often incorporating musical ideas and influences, but like Osbert’s paintings, Vallgren’s works rarely include specific musical narratives. Vallgren only exhibited at three events, but his artworks were often discussed in the press and some critics specifically complained about the sculptor’s “defection” from the fourth and fifth Salons.  

While Vallgren combined a variety of influences, his works were often tied to music and dancing and, according to Leena Ahtola-Moorhouse:

The peculiarity of Vallgren’s art is precisely in his manner of capturing many different sensory atmospheres in a single work. [His work] combines music, dance, poetry and the perfumes of the visual arts in allowing [for] the new


experience that Symbolist art is looking for and which is situated beyond everyday reality.\textsuperscript{152}

In addition to the influence of music, dance, and poetry, Vallgren focused on women in three-quarters of his works, but according to Ahtola-Moorhouse he rarely depicted “feminine weaknesses, … for him in relation to man, woman was always ultimately the stronger half.”\textsuperscript{153} In works like his funerary urn and his depiction of Ophelia, he integrated nature and femininity, often tying women to flowers and highlighting emotion with his figures’ drapery, poses, and evocative gestures (Figs. 5.21, 5.22). Yet, Vallgren did not depict these women as specific individuals, instead, showing them as emotional types, often with idealized bodies and poses inspired by dance.

Several critics denigrated artists associated with the Rose + Croix for their reliance on literary subject matter, arguing that artworks should impact the viewer more immediately, rather than relying on literary references. The same criticism was leveled at a wide variety of artists, even though they utilized literary sources in different ways. For example, the art critic Félix Fénéon argued that Khnopff’s works were too literary, since they often focus on narratives from literature, rather than relying on less illustrative themes and highlighting the means of expression. On the other hand, although he was similarly criticized, Osbert rarely illustrated specific literary works and relied more on poetic, evocative titles. Thus, although the critics used the same terminology in discussing these artists, they were actually criticizing the artists for


being too literary in different ways—since one used literary subjects, whereas the other tended to use poetic, evocative titles and generally avoided narrative subjects.

Félix Fénéon wrote that Khnopff used overly narrative, literary subject matter, arguing against the use of Wagnerian subjects and calling for a focus on simple subjects, like Paul Cézanne’s apples:

One will never make Mr. FERNAND KHNOPFF understand, nor a number of his co-exhibitors, that a picture must first seduce by its rhythms, and that a painter reveals an excessive modesty in choosing subjects already rich in literary significations, that three pears by Paul Cézanne on a tablecloth are moving and sometimes mystical, and that all the Wagnerian Valhalla is as uninteresting as the Chambre des Députés when they paint it.\textsuperscript{154}

Fénéon, like many of his contemporaries, considered Khnopff and some of his cohort overly reliant on allusions to literature. Fénéon preferred the use of expressive brushstrokes and colors to evoke a more personal or immediate response in the viewer. This criticism attacked the very core of Péladan’s aesthetic theories, which emphasize the importance of relying on narratives and subject matter to create meaning. Building on Péladan’s ideas, a variety of exhibitors at the Rose + Croix showed illustrative works.

Two of Pierre-Émile Cornillier’s artworks reveal an even greater literary emphasis than Khnopff’s works, since these compositions serve as illustrations. Additionally, they diverge from Péladan’s Catholicism since they illustrate works by Victor Hugo which critiqued organized religion—and Catholicism in particular. In Cornillier’s \textit{Pensif devant la nuit}, the Pope stands before the moon with crossed arms, clothed in his priestly garb, portraying a poem by Hugo (Fig. \textsuperscript{154} “On ne fera jamais comprendre à M. FERNAND KHNOPFF ni à nombre de ses co-exposants qu’un tableau doit d’abord séduire par ses rythmes, qu’un peintre fait preuve de trop d’humilité en choissant des sujets déjà riches de significations littéraires, que trois poires de Paul Cézanne sur une nappe sont émouvantes et parfois mystiques, et que tout le Wallahl wagnérien est aussi peu intéressant que la Chambre des députés, quand ils le peignent.” Fénéon, “R. + C.,” 1926. For a slightly different translation, see Pincus-Witten, \textit{Occult Symbolism in France}, 114.

\textsuperscript{154}
Cornillier illustrated the work directly, showing the moment when, while contemplating
the night sky, the Pope begins to question some of the Church’s practices. Although Cornillier
exhibited at every Salon, few of his works are extant. While the artist showed twelve illustrations
of Victor Hugo’s philosophical poems at the second Salon and six at the fifth event, the specific
subjects or titles of the works are not included in the catalogs. In 1891, the artist exhibited a
total of forty-eight illustrations of Hugo’s works at another venue, including twenty related to the
work Le Pape, thirteen tied to Religions et Religion, and fifteen based on L’Ane. Since none of
these sets include just six or twelve works, Cornillier’s contributions to the Salon may have been
subsets of any of these three sets or combinations of works from the entire series. Only two of
the forty-eight artworks shown at the 1891 exhibition are illustrated: Pensif Devant la Nuit, the
second to the last work related to Le Pape and Les Mains levées au ciel, the sixth illustration for
Religion et Religions (Figs. 1.5).

155 “Pensif Devant la Nuit: La prière contemple et la science observe. / Quand, dans le cloître noir de la sainte
épaisseurs de nuit profonde nous entourent. / Les mondes par des feux échangés se secourent; / Car, ciel sombre, on
ne sait quels gouffres sont ouverts. / L’astre fait des envois de rayons, à travers / L’espace et l’étendue immense, à
d’autres astres. / L’azur a ses combats; le ciel a ses désastres; / Parfois le mage, au fond des firmaments vermeils, / Distingue
effrayants naufrages de soleils; / À voir l’effrayement des pâles météores / On devine une étrange
extinction d’aurores, / Quelque part, dans l’horreur du zénith ignoré. / Dieu seul sait l’étiage et connaît le degré /
Jusqu’où doit croître ou fuir la marée inconnue. / L’univers n’est pas moins remué que la nue / Par un souffle; et ce
souffle a lui-même sa loi. / Le savant dit: Comment? le penseur dit: Pourquoi ? / La réponse d’en haut se perd dans
les vertiges. / L’ombre est une descente obscure de prodiges. / Sans cesse l’inconnu passe devant nos yeux. / Mais,
ombre, qu’est-il donc de stable sous les cieux? / La justice, dit l’ombre. Aucun vent ne l’emporte. / C’est pourquoi,
ous pasteurs, nous devons faire en sorte / Que l’homme reste bon et sincère au milieu / De tous les changements

156 Péladan, Ille Geste esthétique, XI; Péladan, Salon de la Rose + Croix: Galerie des Arts réunis: Catalogue des
œuvres exposées, 12.

157 Galerie Georges Petit, Catalogue illustré de l’exposition de dessins, peintures, aquarelles et gravures des
principaux artistes modernes pour l’illustration des œuvres de Molière, V. Hugo, Balzac, G. Sand, P. Mérimée, etc.
(Paris: Librairie de l’édition nationale, 1891), 80–83. Les Mains levées au ciel is a far shorter poem: “Ciel, laisse-
moi tout dire! O ciel, source des êtres, / Tu vois mon âme; il faut que je parle à ces prêtres.” Victor Hugo, Religions
the Rose + Croix, this entire series of Hugo’s poems deviates from Péladan’s Catholicism. For example, in *Le Pape*, the Pope makes major breakthroughs, but only in his dreams, waking up to return to his previous follies.¹⁵⁸ In contrast, although Péladan’s Rosicrucian beliefs were not actually aligned with Catholicism as expressed by the Catholic Church, Péladan insisted that he was a faithful Catholic, situating the group as supportive of the Pope.¹⁵⁹

While some exhibitors, like Cornillier and Bussière, exhibited direct illustrations, a variety of other artists created works with a more evocative relationship to nature. These artists often utilized poetic titles, without referring to specific literary subjects. In other cases, they incorporated themes and motifs from literature and music or exhibited symbolic landscapes. These landscapes were often tied to pantheistic views of the universe, which attributed a higher value to nature than that accorded to it by Péladan.

Osbert exhibited a variety of paintings associated with poetry, utilizing literary sources as an influence, but not according it the high rank that Péladan attributed to literature. As explained by Dumas, Osbert’s work is literary not in an illustrative sense, but in that the ideas it expresses are tied to poetry.¹⁶⁰ When a critic, Félicien Fagus, wrote a review in which he accused Osbert of being too literary, the painter drafted a series of letters responding to this critique and laying out his own aesthetic theories. Osbert’s belief that poetry and painting were similar played a key role in his refutation of this criticism. He believed that there was very little boundary between these


¹⁵⁹ See for example: Péladan, *L’art idéaliste et mystique*, 264.

genres and that they often expressed the same ideas, just using different means.\(^{161}\) While other artists associated with the group—like Schwabe, Séon, and Point—all illustrated literary works, Osbert only rarely referenced specific legends or myths.\(^{162}\) When Osbert responded to specific writers, he did not use direct illustration, but incorporated themes and motifs like the moon’s reflection on water, autumn, and the sunset.\(^{163}\) Additionally, Osbert derived many of his titles—but not his subjects—from poetry and sometimes he utilized evocative and poetic language not to tie his paintings to specific narratives, but to make the works more expressive.\(^{164}\) There are many points of agreement between Péladan and Osbert, yet within Péladan’s framework, the literary is accorded such a high role that it is not even included within the same hierarchy as painting. For Osbert, however, the criticism of being too literary produced one of his only explanations of his art. While he did claim that it was a positive thing for art to be literary, he did not argue that literature belonged in a higher realm, attaining heights that painting could never hope to match.

Osbert rarely illustrated specific literary or musical subjects, but he often included the symbolic motif of lyres in his paintings and incorporated references to poetry and music in the titles of his works. In discussing the lyre, Blumstein argues that in addition to ties to Orpheus, the lyre is also linked to pantheistic and natural religions, to a focus on creation and inspiration, and to adoration of the universe.\(^{165}\) This emphasis on religion is supported by contemporary reviews, such as one in which Osbert’s friend Degron argued that in addition to referring to music,


Osbert’s incorporation of the lyre served as a method of reinforcing the artist’s attempts at harmonizing and overlapping the figures and nature.\textsuperscript{166} This focus on ties between man and nature is associated with pantheism—a belief that Point also expressed, in an article where he suggested returning to the Greek pantheism of a religion based on nature.\textsuperscript{167} This term can be applied to a wide variety of religious and philosophical movements, but it generally incorporates the belief that God is not anthropomorphic, but rather, is in all of nature and the Universe.\textsuperscript{168} In this way, like Point, Osbert’s musical elements connected his paintings to a variety of discourses on the role of religion, poetry, nature, and man—including ones that diverged from Péladan’s Catholicism.

Like Osbert and Point, many of the artists who exhibited evocative works at the Rose + Croix relied on nature as a key symbolic element, revealing a significant break from Péladan’s Catholicism by integrating references to pantheism. While Péladan allowed for the exhibition of landscapes that were similar to those of Poussin, he argued that the human form was the essential symbolic element—in addition to the fact that he personally disliked nature.\textsuperscript{169} Several critics highlighted the Rosicrucian artists’ emphasis on nature and landscape by connecting the exhibitors to pantheism and emphasizing the extent to which these artists utilized natural elements for symbolic religious purposes. Although few works that the four-time exhibitor

\textsuperscript{166} “Et pour mieux définir l’accord des âmes avec les réalités, les Princesses du Soir ont pris la Lyre enchanteries...” Degron, “Alphonse Osbert.”

\textsuperscript{167} Point, “Primitifs et Symbolistes,” 15–16.

\textsuperscript{168} See for example, Michael P. Levine, Pantheism: A Non-Theistic Concept of Deity (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).

\textsuperscript{169} In the group doctrine, he writes that when painting a landscape, one can only effectively depict light and dark masses, since trees are all the same and cannot be individualized. Péladan, \textit{L’art idéaliste et mystique}, 128.
Pinckney Marcius-Simons showed at the Rose + Croix have been identified, contemporary descriptions highlight the artist’s pantheism and symbolic use of nature. Thus, one critic wrote:

In his studies, he copies nature less than he interprets it: he … humanizes the gestures that are made by the branches of the trees… Symbolizing the phenomena of nature … Marcius Simons lives in a type of pantheism; he sees the supernatural in all corners of life and he loves all the stories and all the dogmas which glorify the unreal. The Christian religion does not dominate by the beauty of its morality, it seduces by its mysteries …. Marcius does not have this precise and dogmatic faith;… The devotion of Marcius Simons would become close to that of this angel, who is one of a thousand small divinities that he loves to see in nature… Even when he treats Christian subjects, Marcius Simons remains then pantheistic. 170

Whereas Péladan wrote that all good Protestant art was actually Catholic, this critic argued that even when Marcius-Simons’ subjects were Christian, he was actually creating pantheistic works. Marcius-Simons’ lack of dogmatic attachment to Catholic principles is similar to Péladan’s loose interpretation of Catholicism, yet highly divergent from Péladan’s repeated argument that he was actually strictly applying Catholic ideas. Additionally, the artist’s specific focus on nature diverged from Péladan’s emphasis on human over natural forms.

Lenoir’s Le Monstre effectively reveals that artist’s reliance on a variety of female tropes, as well as reflecting a complex relationship with the literary world. Le Monstre serves as a femme fatale, showing that in addition to depicting chaste girls in works like Minuit Chrétien, the

170 “Dans ses études, il copie moins la nature qu’il ne l’interprète: il bleuit la demi-obscurité du crépuscule, vivifie l’éclat de la lumière, humanise les gestes que font les branches des arbres. … Symbolisant les phénomènes de la nature, reprenant des légendes qui ne sont que l’incarnation d’idées morales en des êtres imaginaires, Marcius Simons vit dans une sorte de panthéisme; il voit le surnaturel dans tous les coins de la vie et il aime tous les contes et tous les dogmes qui glorifient l’irréel. La religion chrétienne ne le domine pas par la beauté de sa morale, elle l’a séduit par ses mystères. … Marcius Simons n’a pas cette foi précise et dogmatique; … C’est que la dévotion de Marcius Simons irait bien plutôt à cet ange, qui est une des mille petites divinités qu’il aime à voir dans la nature. … Même quand il traite des sujets chrétiens, Marcius Simons reste donc panthéiste; il se sert de l’Evangile comme de la littérature ou de la musique, pour satisfaire son amour du rêve. Mais il a aussi créé un pays de songe ou sa pensée se promène, loin du monde ennuyeux et banal: c’est le pays des fées.” Weyl, “Les Artistes de l’Ame: Marcius Simons,” 101–104.
artist created a wide range of other types (Fig. 5.23). Additionally, a contemporary writer responded to this work with a poem—thus inverting the practice of direct illustration, since here, it is the artwork that served as impetus for the descriptive poem. The poem by Raymond Madelain highlights the woman’s dangerous sexuality, while directly responding to Lenoir’s artwork in a manner that deviates from Péladan’s strict hierarchy:

I am the beautiful monster, the dark ideal, the Woman; 
The queen of the Earth and of the decadent skies. 
The unattainable reflection of transcendent rays, 
The departure and the goal of mediocre souls.

My nonsense crowned in shadow is a balm 
And all, murderers, madmen, ascetics, exulting, 
Extend their soul and their breathless appetites 
Toward my throne, Unconsciousness that never starts.

I send brave heroism to sleep with the tantalizing pleats 
Of my dress, specious fabric of hypocrisy; 
I call myself eternal, and all forget the time.

And I assist, strangling the development of poems, 
With brotherly combats of the sexes moved by hatred 
And that ties the fatal serpent in their hell.

Lenoir’s work depicts the centered, highly symmetrical form of the femme fatale, an idol who draws all men to their deaths, speaking of the eternal, but making them forget their transcendent

171 According to Émile Boissier, this work is even more beautiful than the artist’s Minuit Chrétien, since “…elle le cède en beauté à l’œuvre qui la suit, une des plus curieuses selon nous, par sa hauteur de pensée et son symbolisme expressif. Le Monstre a pour idée directrice la domination de la Femme sur l’Homme.” Boissier, L’enlumineur Marcel Lenoir, 41.

172 “Je suis le monstre beau, l’idéal noir, la Femme; / La reine de la Terre et des cieux décadents. / L’attingible reflet des rayons transcendants, / Le départ et le but des médiocres âmes. / Ma sottise couronnée d’ombre est un dictame / Et tous, meurtriers, fous, ascètes, exultant. / Tendent leur âme et leurs appétits haletants/ Vers mon trône, Inconscience que nul n’entame. / J’endors les héroïsmes fiers aux plis tentants / De ma robe, spéculieux tissu d’hypocrisie; / Je me dis éternelle, et tous oublient le temps. / Et j’assiste, étranglant l’essor des poésies, / Aux combats fraternels des sexes mus de haine / Et que noue le serpent fatal en leur gehenne.” Boissier, L’enlumineur Marcel Lenoir, 41.
quests. In the left margin of this work, despite their suffering, men continue to gaze upon the Monster’s form, while on the right side, they do not yet suffer, but instead, offer her gifts of crowns, flowers, and ornate boxes.\footnote{Boissier, \textit{L’enlumineur Marcel Lenoir}, 43.}

Lenoir and Madelain’s process and the artist’s depictions of a variety of feminine types highlight the exhibitor’s dynamic, complex relationships to both female subjects and the role of literature. Unfortunately, little research has been done on the artist, but according to his biographer, Marcel Lenoir was a “convinced misogynist.”\footnote{Boissier, \textit{L’enlumineur Marcel Lenoir}, 41.} In contrast to the single animal (the male rooster) that symbolizes the man, four others—the peacock, the chimera, the snake, and the owl—are all tied the monstrous woman’s vices.\footnote{Stead, \textit{Le monstre, le singe et le foetus}, 87. Stead also discusses the feminine monstrosity, writing: “Cadre dans le cadre, l’animalité tissu un code allusif autour du corps. …Le camaïeu de Marcel-Lenoir est une synthèse exemplaire de l’écriture de la monstruosité féminine au moyen de l’animal, par comparaison, métaphore et création verbale interposées.” Stead, \textit{Le monstre, le singe et le foetus}, 87–88.} In this way, Lenoir combined an emphasis on the \textit{femme fatale}, a conception of the woman as bestial and base, and a use of literary, symbolic elements, without illustrating a specific work. Instead, he created an artwork that served as impetus for the writing of a poem, so that, in this case, the relationship between literature and the visual arts was a reciprocal one. Yet, in his doctrines for the group, Péladan framed literature as the art of the idea and the visual arts as a lower form based on vision. Lenoir, like many Symbolists, saw the relationship between these genres as more fluid. For him, literature was a form of inspiration, not something to be directly illustrated. Thus, he wrote much later: “The
sources of religious Art are not only in religious texts” and “One does not illustrate a religious text, one is inspired by it.”

These artworks reveal that a variety of artists exhibiting at the Salons built on Péladan’s focus on the importance of literature and music to the visual arts. Yet, the artists’ theories reveal divergences from Péladan’s emphasis on the overarching importance of literature. Additionally, some subjects, such as Cornillier’s depiction of an anti-Papal work, broke from Péladan’s specific doctrines. At the same time, the artists incorporated literary influences in a variety of different ways, ranging from direct illustrations of literature to more evocative works that do not depict specific subjects but merely utilize poetic titles and include mysterious instead of direct symbolism.

These varied literary evocations and illustrations, as well as the range of female tropes and subjects show that even in the one realm where Péladan issued a variety of specific mandates, the exhibiting artists broke from his principles. Several exhibitors built on Péladan’s concept of fées and on his emphasis on narrative subject matter and the illustration of literary and musical works. Similarly, a wide range of artists incorporated his ideas regarding the integration of the genres and his obsession with female sexuality. Nevertheless, in terms of their specific works, motifs, and subjects, the artists developed a wide range of female and literary subjects that extend far beyond Péladan’s doctrines.

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176 "Les sources de l’Art religieux ne sont pas que dans les textes religieux: on en peut découvrir dans l’inconscient ou dans le subconscient dont tout créateur est tributaire” and “On n’illustre pas un texte religieux, on s’en inspire.” Marcel Lenoir, Marcel-Lenoir, peintre et fresquiste, ses écrits (Paris: Cahiers de la douce France, 1928), 31–32.
Conclusion

Joséphin Péladan publicized the Rose + Croix as a united group of artists whose exhibited works responded to his multitudinous published rules, guidelines, and mandates. Stressing that the exhibited works were selected on the basis of their idealism, he framed the Salons as ideologically unified exhibitions at which works dedicated to spiritual quests, vaunted traditions, and beauty would engender social reform by encouraging a decadent society to focus on timeless poetic and mystical ideas.

Despite its founder’s grandiose vision and claims, in practice the Rose + Croix functioned mainly as an exhibition venue for artists whose work only loosely responded to the established platform. In contrast to collaborative circles and artists’ groups that formed on the basis of shared interests and evolved through the interaction of artists, the theories of the Rose + Croix were already determined when the artists were invited to participate. Péladan succeeded in bringing together artists with broadly idealist, anti-materialist ideologies, his Salons exhibited many mystical and religious works, and he met his goal of emphasizing historical subjects. While the exhibitors’ styles and subjects reveal some overlap with Péladan’s aims and projections, even the central ten exhibitors deviated from the leader’s published mandates in myriad ways, showing that the Rose + Croix was not an ideologically united group.

Identification of the Rose + Croix’s core members has solidified this claim. My use of statistical analysis has played an essential role in moving beyond anecdotal considerations to determine the central members and base conclusions about the nature of the group on analysis of the ideas and production of its main affiliates. Having identified the key members as Chabas, Cornillier, Delville, Gachons, Khnopff, Marcius-Simons, Osbert, Point, Séon, and Vallgren, and analyzed their work in relation to Péladan’s mandates, I have established that the ostensible unity
of the group was a crafted fiction, and that the leader’s published platform did not clearly correspond to the highly varied works he chose to show. While he regularly asserted his authority over the Rose + Croix and reiterated its ideological foundations, many of the artists who showed at the Rose + Croix saw it as one of many alternative exhibition venues and used it to display their production rather allowing Péladan’s mandates to shape their works. That Péladan accepted such a wide range of works reveals that he was more flexible in practice than on paper. Even the group’s highly specific and well-known rule outlawing the exhibition of works produced by female artists was broken by at least five women, highlighting the presence of significant divergences between the Rose + Croix’s theories and practices.

Péladan’s mandates are clearly those of a writer attempting to direct artists. Rarely discussing specific techniques, he focused on subject matter and general principles. If extremely attentive to detail when addressing acceptable subjects or the cost of Salon admission, he was rather vague about the implementation of his aesthetic guidelines, revealing a degree of ignorance about specific artistic practices. Even his overarching goals seem murky when, on the one hand, Péladan urged reformist art that would turn society around, and, on the other, described society as unsalvageable and called for works that would celebrate the end of Latin civilization.

The exhibiting artists of the Rose + Croix are for the most part understudied and very little information on central group members Pinckney Marcius-Simons and Pierre-Émile Cornillier exists. Exhibiting artists outside of the central ten are often even less well known, and some have yet to be clearly identified. Determining which of these artists exhibited their own works, showed their artworks under pseudonyms, or were historical exhibitors, and finding more and better images of the artworks listed in the Salons’ catalogs would allow future researchers to
more accurately analyze the central themes, subjects, and practices showcased by the Rose + Croix. The corpus of known works by participating artists shows a wide variety of responses to a society that many of the exhibitors disdained as overly positivist and materialist. Echoing Péladan’s preference for traditional styles and techniques, many of the artists looked to medieval and early Renaissance art for inspiration, as had the Pre-Raphaelites in England at mid-century. At the same time, some exhibitors embraced modern trends that Péladan disparaged. Myriad styles notwithstanding, the works known to have been exhibited at the Salons of the Rose + Croix attest to the prevalence of esoteric tendencies in the 1890s. Exploring a range of arcane sources and concepts, participating artists produced images that tapped the occult and paved the way for twentieth-century seekers after the spiritual, including Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian.
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### Tables

Table 1: Chart of reviews (Only artists who received at least three total mentions are included in this chart) (Split into two tables)

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Table 2: Ten Central Artists (Ten or more works exhibited throughout the six Salons, exhibited at least three Salons, and mentioned in at least fifteen of the fifty reviews in Table 1.)

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For Tables 2-4 only the published catalogs are used. Several other artists reportedly exhibited works and several exhibiting artists apparently showed works additional times, but this data remains incomplete since the number of artworks, titles, and even exact names of these exhibitors are not always known. For more on this issue, see pages 54-58.
Table 3: Artists who meet at least one of the qualifications to be central figures (10 or more works, 3 or more exhibits, and 15 or more reviews):

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