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Press Release

"PARIS 1900: la belle époque"

**An exhibition designed by the Petit Palais for the Espace Musées
at Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport
1st July 2015 - 4 April 2016**

For its fifth exhibition in the Espace Musées – a museum space located in hall M of terminal 2E at Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport –, Aéroports de Paris is hosting the Petit Palais, which proposes to immerse travellers in the Paris of the *Belle Époque* era. The Petit Palais, a masterpiece of the Universal Exhibition of 1900 and now home to the Paris Museum of Fine Arts, boasts magnificent exhibits from *fin-de-siècle* republican Paris in its collections. An anthology of sixty works, paintings, sculptures and *objets d'art* illustrates the wealth of the collections of this Parisian museum, and breathes new life into a number of major personalities from the arts.

The exhibition focuses on four themes evoking artistic life in Paris at the turn of the 20th century.

A visit to the Petit Palais

Built to coincide with the Universal Exhibition of 1900, the Petit Palais is in an ideal location between the Champs-Élysées and Pont Alexandre III bridge, and is part of the tradition of great Parisian monuments. The city council made it the home of the Paris Museum of Fine Arts in 1902.

The diversity of the collections built up from works purchased from artists, and donations, made it possible to plot an artistic journey that stretches from antiquity to the early 20th century and showcases all the creative techniques. This dialogue between the arts is particularly characteristic of the *Art nouveau* movement that spread through France in 1900.

Parisian portraits

The Petit Palais' collections are especially rich in the field of portraiture, which enjoyed a true golden age as a genre around 1900.

Exhibited at the Salon, the ceremonial portrait commissioned by the Parisian *bourgeoisie* applied the codes of the great aristocratic portrait, while adopting a more modern feel. The artist portrait bears witness to the importance of artistic creation in Paris, the capital of the Arts. Attracting universal attention, the female form dominated the imagery of the Belle Époque, which celebrated the Parisian lady, a mythical urban dweller of innate distinction.



Auguste Renoir, *Portrait of Madame de Bonnières*

Place de la République and monumental statues

The 1880's saw "*statuemanía*" at its height, as the streets and gardens of Paris were covered in sculptures celebrating the glory of the Republic and its great men. Jules Dalou, who was at the time as well-known as Auguste Rodin, based his entire career on producing great republican monuments. His sculptures, which include the monument to Levasseur, continue to adorn the streets of Paris to this day.

In 1879, a major competition was organised to erect a monument on Place de la République. Jules Dalou was one of the participants, but the winning project was that of the sculptor Léopold Morice, whose highly classical project was more in keeping with the times.

Place de la République soon became a republican meeting place, and the first celebration of 14 July was held there in 1880, the year when it was declared to be a national holiday. Alfred Roll, leader of the Naturalism movement in art, commemorated the event with a painting that was presented to the Salon in 1882 and offers an excellent vista of popular jubilation.



Alfred Roll, *14 juillet 1880: inauguration du monument à la République*
(14 July, 1880: inauguration of the monument to the Republic)

The Hôtel de Ville and great republican decoration

Paris city council directed its cultural activity to commissioning artists to decorate the symbolic addresses of the capital. The Hôtel de Ville, which was burned down during the Commune in 1871, was rebuilt in neoclassical style. The city called on dozens of artists to decorate the great reception rooms, including Puvis de Chavannes, Henri Martin and Henri Gervex.

They prepared their work by producing a sketch (in the case of paintings) or a model (for sculptures). Paris city council kept these reduced-format works, which showed the creations that were to come, and they now form part of the collections of the Petit Palais. They help give the visitor an idea of the splendour and great diversity of the styles used in republican decorations.

Espace Musées

Every six months, supported by Aéroports de Paris and in partnership with the biggest museums in Paris, Espace Musées organises an exhibition displayed at the heart of Hall M of Terminal 2E at Paris-Charles de Gaulle airport.

Founded by Francis Briest, Espace Musées has the mission of promoting the cultural and artistic heritage of France among the millions of passengers who travel through the airport.

Espace Musées is managed by a public interest financial endowment, enjoys the support of the Artcurial auction house, and brings together many talents that are together contributing to the success of this ambitious project.

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