

LE CLAIRE

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RAOUL DUFY

1877 Le Havre - Forcalquier 1953

La Danse ou Le Voyage aux îles

Gouache and pencil on paper; executed c.1910.

Bearing the stamp 'RD BIANCHINI FÉRIER' lower right.

1200 x 1150 mm.

PROVENANCE: Manufacture Bianchini-Férier, Lyon – Private collection, Europe (acquired from the above c.1980) – Gallery Jan de Maere, Brussels – Private collection, France

EXHIBITIONS: *Raoul Dufy, Collection Bianchini-Férier*, Galerie Jan de Maere, Brussels, 1985 (repr. on the cover of the exhibition catalogue).

Raoul Dufy met the legendary French couturier Paul Poiret (1879-1944) in 1910. With Poiret's encouragement and financial backing, he created a series of bold monochromatic textiles, hand block-printed in a manner suggestive of both eighteenth-century 'toiles de jouy'¹ and the abstract geometries of modern painting. Poiret used these principally, but not exclusively, for clothing [Fig.1]. They soon attracted the attention of the leading French silk manufacturer Bianchini-Férier, who subsequently co-opted their production² [Fig.2].

A particularly strong relationship between fashion and decoration developed in France during the Art Deco era. The Art Deco style reached its apogee at the 1925 World's Fair³ and its enormous commercial success ensured that designers and manufacturers throughout Europe continued to promote this style until well into the 1930s.

Exoticism played an important role in the conception of Dufy's works. During the 1920s and 1930s, the French government encouraged designers to take advantage of resources – such as raw materials and a skilled workforce – that could be imported from the nation's colonies in Asia and Africa. The resulting growth of interest in the arts of colonial countries in Asia and Africa led French designers to

1 'Toile de Jouy' [lit.: cloth from Jouy, a town in the suburbs of Paris], sometimes known simply as 'toile', is a type of patterned fabric with a white or off-white background printed with a repeat pattern depicting a fairly complex scene, generally a pastoral theme such as a couple picnicking by a lake or an arrangement of flowers. The pattern itself consists of a single colour, usually black, dark red or blue. 'Toile' is usually associated with furnishing fabrics, although 'toile' wallpapers are also produced.

2 The silk manufacturer Bianchini-Férier was founded in Lyon in 1888 when a designer - Charles Bianchini - a technician - François Atuyer - and a financier - François Férier - went into partnership. Bianchini promoted collaboration with artists. The longest of these collaborations is certainly that of Raoul Dufy who signed an exclusive contract and was to be the draughtsman and artistic director from 1912 to 1928.

3 In 1912, the French government voted to sponsor an international exhibition of decorative arts, promoting French pre-eminence in the field. The exhibition, scheduled for 1915, was postponed on account of World War I and did not take place until 1925. It was this World's Fair, the great 'Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes', that gave its name to the decorative style now commonly known as Art Deco. Held in Paris between April and October 1925, the Fair drew over 16 million visitors.

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explore new materials, techniques and forms that evoke faraway places and cultures. Among the most popular and recurring motifs in their works are the human figure, animals, flowers and plants.⁴

As Fanny Guillon-Laffaille has noted, 'Working in the Bianchini-Férier studios and being able to implement new techniques gave Dufy complete creative and expressive freedom. In addition, given the assurance of financial security, he could diversify his approach and undertake more extensive research, as is shown by the extraordinary depth of his inventiveness. Experimentation led him to engage personally with abstraction before the advent of 'pure abstraction'.⁵

Fanny Guillon-Laffaille has confirmed the authenticity of this work.



Fig.2: A La Perse coat: fabric by Raoul Dufy, design by Paul Poiret.



Fig. 2: Raoul Dufy, *Les Toiles de Tourmon*, 1925, lithograph.

⁴ Jared Goss, 'French Art Deco', in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (internet resource, 2000), <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/frdc/hd_frdc.htm> (June 2010).

⁵ Fanny Guillon-Laffaille, *Raoul Dufy et la mode*, Galerie Marcel Bernheim, Paris, 26 November-28 December 1985, p. 1 ff.