

# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

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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.1920.

Bearing the stamp 'RD BIANCHINI FERIER' 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)

*Mes dessins sont aussi des desseins, aucun d'eux n'est fait pour lui-même.<sup>1</sup>*

Raoul Dufy was a French Fauvist painter. He developed a colourful, decorative style that became fashionable for designs of ceramics and textiles. He was also a draftsman, printmaker, book illustrator and scenic designer.

Dufy met the legendary French couturier Paul Poiret in 1910. Poiret gave Dufy encouragement and financial backing, and used his designs for clothing [Fig.1]. Dufy's designs soon attracted the attention of the leading French silk manufacturer Bianchini-Férier - from 1912 until 1930 he designed woven and printed textiles for this prestigious manufacture. He created a range of lively colours, many of which were bought by further leading couturiers such as Lanvin and Patou, and Poiret, of course.

Bianchini-Férier was anchored in the Lyon region, where all phases of silk production took place: texturizing in Givors, weaving in Tour-du-Pin, dyeing and printing in Tournon.

Dufy created in the 1920s a series of bold monochromatic textiles, hand block-printed in a manner suggestive of both eighteenth-century 'toiles de Jouy'<sup>2</sup> and the abstract geometries of modern painting: Dufy called these series *Toiles de Tournon* [Fig.2]. The title reflects his aspiration to produce a modern day furnishing fabric in the same vein of Christophe Philippe Overkamp's 18<sup>th</sup> century *toiles de Jouy*, and evidently refers to the domicile of the manufacture Bianchini-Férier.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Raoul Dufy (*My drawings are also designs, none of them is made for himself*)

<sup>2</sup> '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.



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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.<sup>3</sup>

Dufy was a master of the whole process of design, from preliminary sketch to the perfected fabric. For the *toiles de Tourmon*, often created for furnishing, the artist illustrates in bichrome designs long journeys, and country scenes of hunting, fishing, harvest.

The furnishing fabric called *La Danse*, [Fig.3] is a slightly modified version of our gouache. There are some minimal differences in the illustration, probably made to simplify the pattern for the fabric.

Further fabrics from the *toiles de Tourmon* series readopt singular motifs of our gouache, such as the vessels and the palms, but we could not find a fabric with an identical illustration.

Fanny Guillon-Laffaille noted that ‘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.’<sup>4</sup>

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



Fig.1: A La Perse coat: fabric by Raoul Dufy, design, by Paul Poiret.



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

<sup>3</sup> 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](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/frdc/hd_frdc.htm)> (June 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Fanny Guillon-Laffaille, *Raoul Dufy et la mode*, Galerie Marcel Bernheim, Paris, 26 November-28 December 1985, p. 1 ff.



Fig.3: Raoul Dufy, *La Danse*,  
furnishing fabric of woodblock printed cretonne, c.1920  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London