

the restoration of the house, and a Reading Room on the first floor where they may join the Walpole Society or read Mark Girouard. The central experience, however, is of the sensible luxury and display of the house; particularly for those who harbour Whig (or Knellerish) sympathies, it now affords a rare and rich pleasure.

JOHN INGAMELLS

Paris

L'art en France sous le Second Empire

This exhibition, at the Grand Palais until 13th August, and previously seen, with differences, at Philadelphia and Detroit, is a further report upon that measured reconsideration of the socially accepted art of nineteenth-century France which has been proceeding now for some ten or fifteen years: the catalogue, a bibliographical gold-mine for students of the period, lists many of the one-man exhibitions which have rescrutinised individual artists.

What the Grand Palais offers is a synoptic view of the taste of these years: its range is wider than that of earlier surveys like *Equivoques* (1973) or *Le Musée du Luxembourg en 1874* (1974), for most of the arts and crafts of the period 1852 to 1870 are represented. There is no book illustration, but, fashionably and quite reasonably, a considerable photographic section.

This display of nearly 400 objects, the latest of a series of Franco-American co-operative projects, should have grasped every advantage that magnitude could give; but all the signs are that no single mind has directed it, and it has vaporised into a costly dazzle of diverse themes and forms.

The contributors of survey-texts to the catalogue are themselves at great pains to affirm that multifariousness which was a historical fact of the period itself. *L'art et ses critiques: une crise de principe* effectively cites Mérimée (referring to the London International Exhibition of 1862) on 'strange combinations of different styles brought together by accident, which denote on the part of their authors nothing but an absence of ideas and a lack of reasoning'. The charge might fit a good number of the decorative arts objects at the Grand Palais, such as the fountain for perfumed water by Marchand, Piat and Meyer, which, if not accidentally, conjoins Gothic and Renaissance forms (Fig. 100).

Almost half of the exhibits are thus *objets de luxe* utilising medieval, or renaissance, or rococo vocabularies. A considerable group at the beginning of the exhibition has close associations with the Imperial family, so that, near Carpeaux's affecting marble figure of the Prince Imperial, aged nine, with his dog Nero (Louvre), mass-produced copies of which made the sculptor's fortune, is not only His Highness's cradle (with Sèvres

enamels after Flandrin) but also his rattle, designed by Charles Rambert, fabricated by Honoré-Séverin Bourdoncle, and constituting a pioneer use of aluminium.

Indeed, it must surely be in their technical resourcefulness that the real interest of these objects lies. Though Louis-Constant Sévin, designer of a daunting collaborative work, the Hope Coupe, asserted that '*Si j'emprunte aux styles du passé (. . .), j'interprète toujours*', the fine distinction between prototype and variation in most of these specimens of design must be for the specialist's eye alone.

The Hope Coupe itself is for strong stomachs, but the exhibition does present such dazzling and enjoyable feats of craftsmanship as the huge block-printed wall-paper, *Le Jardin d'Armide*, designed by Edouard Muller and printed in Jules Desfossé's factory, looking like the largest and prettiest silk-screen print imaginable (Fig. 101); or the complex of enamel plaques by the restlessly curious Popelin, set in a black wood frame, and celebrating the Caesarian qualities of the Emperor.

The craft objects of the exhibition make no general point: but their assemblage here in large numbers will be of great professional use to historians and connoisseurs of a wide gamut of decorative skills.

But it is with the fine arts that issues of artistic significance and of intrinsic quality become most pressing for any born doubter brought up on recent or penultimate accounts of the course of nineteenth-century art.

The immediate effect of the paintings and drawings, and to some degree of the sculptures scattered throughout the exhibition, is again of enormous stylistic diversity. This is a little different from the eclectic variety of the applied arts shown, for, though derivations from, say, the painting of Ingres, or from Spanish painting, leap to the eye, the interval between model and follower is not the narrow one of mere imitation. Ribot's *Le Supplice des Coins* (*Le Supplice d'Alonso Cano*) (1867, Rouen, Musée des Beaux-Arts) is in execution as much as subject a brilliant consequence of the Hispanic fashion of the period, with a quite distinctive grainy and dashing handling. The curious *Comédie humaine* of the *néo-grec* Jean-Louis Hamon (1852, Compiègne, Musée national du Château) follows Ingres at some distance, but is totally personal in its tri-modal style – fully coloured in the foreground, monochrome in its remoter figures, and with brief salient passages of painterly realism in lantern and child's toy: its imagery of mawkish baby-figures and personages of hollow-eyed Ossianic grandeur may be enjoyed, but not perhaps openly. (Fig. 99).

The distinctiveness or otherwise of Second Empire styles is discussed in the extremely useful catalogue text on painting by Geneviève Lacambre and Joseph Rishel which, after an account of evolving Salon policies, surveys the styles. The

traditions of Ingres, Delacroix, Courbet, and Couture are characterised as pre-conditioning the period: but the conclusion on Second Empire art proper, as elsewhere in the catalogue, is that, however varied, it displayed, not distinguishable stylistic streams, but only changes in the genres attempted (with history-painting in decline).

Even if this is the present view of specialists in the period, visitors to the exhibition may quite properly ask whether, in its organisation, it might not have refrained from making again, and expensively, through the displayed interpenetration of styles and media, the fairly simple point about diversity. The loose thematic grouping at the Grand Palais – '*La Cour*', '*L'art religieux*', '*La pression du passé*', '*L'exotisme*', and so on – does no more than illustrate some well-known facets of patronage and subject-matter.

The most urgent issues, for anyone concerned with the period, are still: whether the socially accepted fine arts of the régime, so long a prejudged or an undiscussable subject, have intrinsic merit, high, low, or intermittent; and what precisely was their relationship to that approved sequence of avant-gardes into which art-history has at times shrunk the entire nineteenth-century chronicle.

The difficulties facing the organisers of all large travelling exhibitions, and the diplomatic and cultural character of the present occasion, must of course be acknowledged. Nevertheless the decision to adopt a panoramic format, and to represent very large numbers of artists and craftsmen, takes the major critical and historical questions no further forward. The decorative arts of this period surely raise problems distinct from those in the fine arts, and requiring a separate exhibition. A smaller and utterly different show could have elicited the real links between fine art and design.

But to allow a proper consideration of artistic merit, there could have been a denser representation of the principal fine art currents and, in particular, of the major 'official' personages of the art world. One would have been grateful for ten or fifteen works by Cabanel, rather than four. Among only three works by Bouguereau, there is a subtle and elegiac *Le Jour des morts* (1859, Bordeaux, Musée des Beaux-Arts); one of the two by Jules-Elie Delaunay is the *Mort de Nessus* (1869–70, Nantes, Musée des Beaux-Arts), which in this context looks like a very good painting indeed, and, if palpably the result of a traditional training and a period in Italy, is full of wild feeling, evidently experienced, and in no way compromised by its expression through the pondered processes of academic picture-making (there are twelve preparatory drawings at Nantes, and a painted sketch in private hands) (Fig. 104).

The benefits of a denser and more documented illustration of personalities

and themes are visible in a small ancillary show, of didactic character, at the Musée d'Art et d'Essai in the Palais de Tokyo. Entitled *Autour de quelques oeuvres du Second Empire*, and arranged by pupils of the École du Louvre, this contains key works notably lacking from the larger display. In particular, at the centre of a consideration of the Second Empire nude, more pointed and more accessible than the corresponding ill-lit section at the Grand Palais, there is that famous Civil List purchase of 1863, *La Naissance de Vénus* of Cabanel (Louvre), the enjoyment of which has been forbidden by *bien-pensants* for the past hundred years. Another major Delaunay, *La Peste à Rome* (1869, Louvre), is shown with rich documentation, and, around Belly's *Les Pèlerins allant à la Mecque* (Louvre), a further sub-section outlines the whole course of orientalism.

The *Pèlerins* was seen in the Salon of 1861, as were no less than seven more paintings now shown at the Grand Palais. It was upon this Salon that the young Cézanne in a letter to Joseph Huot wrote some famous verses. We are reminded that interaction between official art and the recently preferred avant-gardes cannot have been other than extremely lively: there is much to this effect in the catalogue, and the final section of the exhibition, '*Tendances et perspectives*', illustrates fragmentarily the beginnings of the decisive break with almost all that is seen in the preceding rooms. It is hard, at the sight of Monet's *Le Jardin de l'Infante* (c.1867, Oberlin College), of the Manet still-life from Washington (c.1866-67, National Gallery) (Fig.103), or of the Degas *Edmondo et Thérèse Morbilli* (1867, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts) (Fig.102), which indeed, in combining Ingrism and a freer manner embodies the transition, not to feel a raising of the spirits before a more direct and dangerous way of painting. But a lucid demonstration of the real virtues of what was being relinquished still awaits its exhibition.

MICHAEL DORAN

The Netherlands

The 150th anniversary of the Leyden University Herbarium inspired both this institution and the **Lakenhal Museum** to display a bewitching collection of botanical drawings, 'Flora Illuminated', from the end of the seventeenth to the early twentieth century (5th April-20th May). The drawings, water-colours, etchings and lithographs were originally executed as illustrations for botanical books and most of the exhibits show the entire plants, or sections thereof, buds, flowers, fruit and seeds. They are the first selection from a vast and, until recently, neglected collection which, for almost 150 years, was looked upon as material for use by undergraduates. In fact, apart from being most accurate

illustrations, most of the exhibits are also works of art.

The earliest specimens shown here, signed SM or SDM, and dated 1690, are delicate water-colours by an as yet unidentified craftsman-artist; but the most impressive examples are those made by Laurens van der Vinne (1712-1742), a member of the Haarlem family of painters who moved to Leyden in 1735. He painted these brilliant 'flower portraits' at Leyden in 1736 and 1737, possibly in the garden of the Academy, for Professor Van Royen (1704-1779). In addition he made water-colours after sketches made at the Cape by an unknown explorer-draftsman (Fig.107). With the aid of these (most accurate) sketches Van der Vinne also composed a unique and fascinating painting in oils of an imaginary Cape landscape full of examples of the local flora in the foreground.

No wonder that, with examples like Bosschaert, Van der Ast and Rachel Ruysch to inspire them, various Dutch botanical illustrators learned to combine science and art so successfully. In this field too, of course, styles and techniques changed with the times; all the printing techniques are represented here too. Yet, it is noticeable that a very strong tradition of botanical illustration is adhered to by all these craftsmen-artists, such as C. B. Voet (a member of the famous family of silversmiths), P. Cattell, J. van der Spyk, B. Hoola van Nooten, P. J. Redouté, Van Arckenhausen and Q. M. R. Verhuell, to mention only the more important. (It says something for the quality that one has to seek out the Redouté specimens - deliberately mushrooms have been selected rather than roses.)

Plants and flowers, once exotic, from the Near and Far East, the Dutch East Indies, Africa and South America, are now familiar, partly thanks to the success of the botanical books and prints, which inspired both explorers and growers to bring back cuttings, seeds and bulbs and to try to grow these newly discovered, and newly named, species in Dutch soil - particularly Dutch bulbs, fuchsias and amaryllis, orchids and lilies.

The Rijksmuseum Print Room, Amsterdam has a display of works by R. N. Roland Holst (1868-1938), the artist's own bequest to the State of the Netherlands with a clause that it was not to be exhibited until thirty years after his death. The selection shown now consists of nine etchings, eighty-seven lithographs, 172 drawings, eighteen paintings and eleven designs for windows and murals. The exhibition is not, therefore, a proper retrospective collection; nevertheless, it is sufficiently representative to confirm this artist's gifts, especially as a draftsman and etcher. His work is a true reflection of the new trends and techniques of his greater contemporaries, both in the Netherlands and in Britain, interesting nowadays especially to the younger generation. R. N. Roland Holst

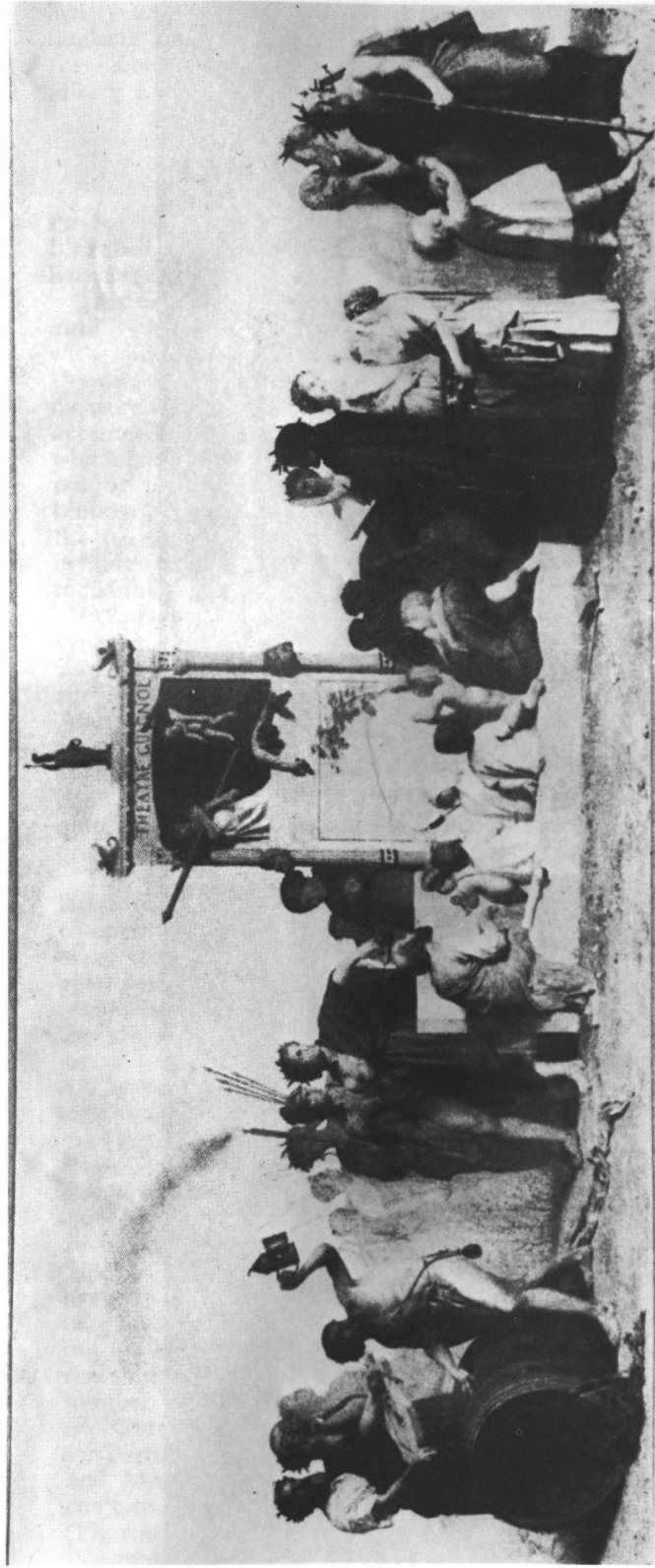
was also Director of the Amsterdam Academy. The family name, Roland Holst, however, owes its fame mainly to artist's wife, Henriette (Fig.108), one of the foremost poets of the era, and to their nephew, Adrianus (1888-1978), the leading poet and essayist of his time.

Pewter made in Amsterdam, Antwerp and Rotterdam from the fifteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century was shown at the **Willet-Holthuysen Museum** in Amsterdam until 10th June. Over one hundred specimens display the excellent quality and the wealth of designs of Dutch and Flemish pewter. The authorities in these rich seaports frequently used pewter objects - flagons, candlesticks, salts and chargers, etc. - for official receptions. It would be wrong to think of pewter as the poor relation of silver, only owned and used by the less well-off. It may not have been used for the grandest occasions, but every well-to-do family was sure to have pewter as well as silver objects for everyday use and festive occasions. Contemporary paintings, some of which are included in the exhibition, show how beautiful well-made pewter looks against oak and walnut, and many an old City Hall to this day proudly displays its pewter treasures.

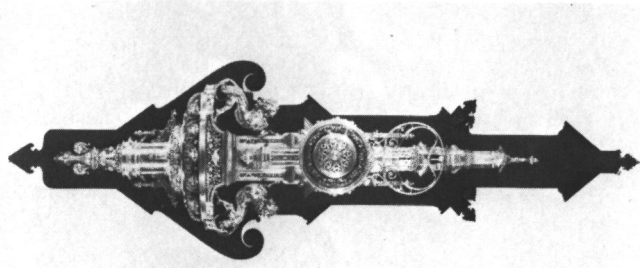
Among the specimens in this exhibition, there is, for instance, one example (Fig.109) which features many of pewter's best qualities as to design, craftsmanship, usefulness and endurance. This is a measure with a handle and a beautifully hinged lid which was made in Amsterdam in the second half of the seventeenth century by the master G.V. for the Amsterdam Chamber of the V.O.C. (Dutch East India Company). Its assay marks show the Amsterdam coat of arms plus a bird in an oval. The inscription on the lid shows the V.O.C. initials. This measure was discovered in 1973 among the treasures in the hold of the *Prinses Maria*, one of the V.O.C.'s ships which was sunk off the Scilly Islands in 1686.

The catalogue of the exhibition constitutes the first comprehensive publication on Dutch and Flemish pewter, from about 1450 to c.1900.¹ Revived interest in pewter, among private collectors as well as in professional circles, in Belgium as well as in the Netherlands, gradually led to more research and when looking at the list of sources, one is struck by the fact that it contains only two books on pewter, almost all the other titles referring to archives. One of the reasons why so little has been published in a reasonably accessible form, is the fact that,

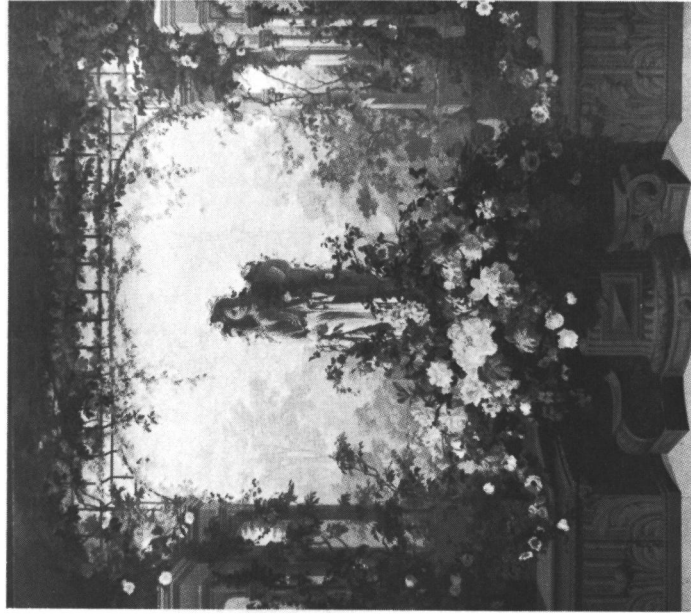
¹ *Keur van tin uit de havensteden Amsterdam, Antwerpen en Rotterdam*, published by the Willet-Holthuysen Museum, Amsterdam, the Provinciaal Museum Sterckshof, Antwerp, and the Boymans-van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam; 350 pp. + about 400 illustrations. Dfl.22.50.



99. *La Comédie humaine*, by Jean-Louis Hamon. Signed, 1852. 137 by 316 cm. (Musée national du Château, Compiègne; exh. Grand Palais, Paris).



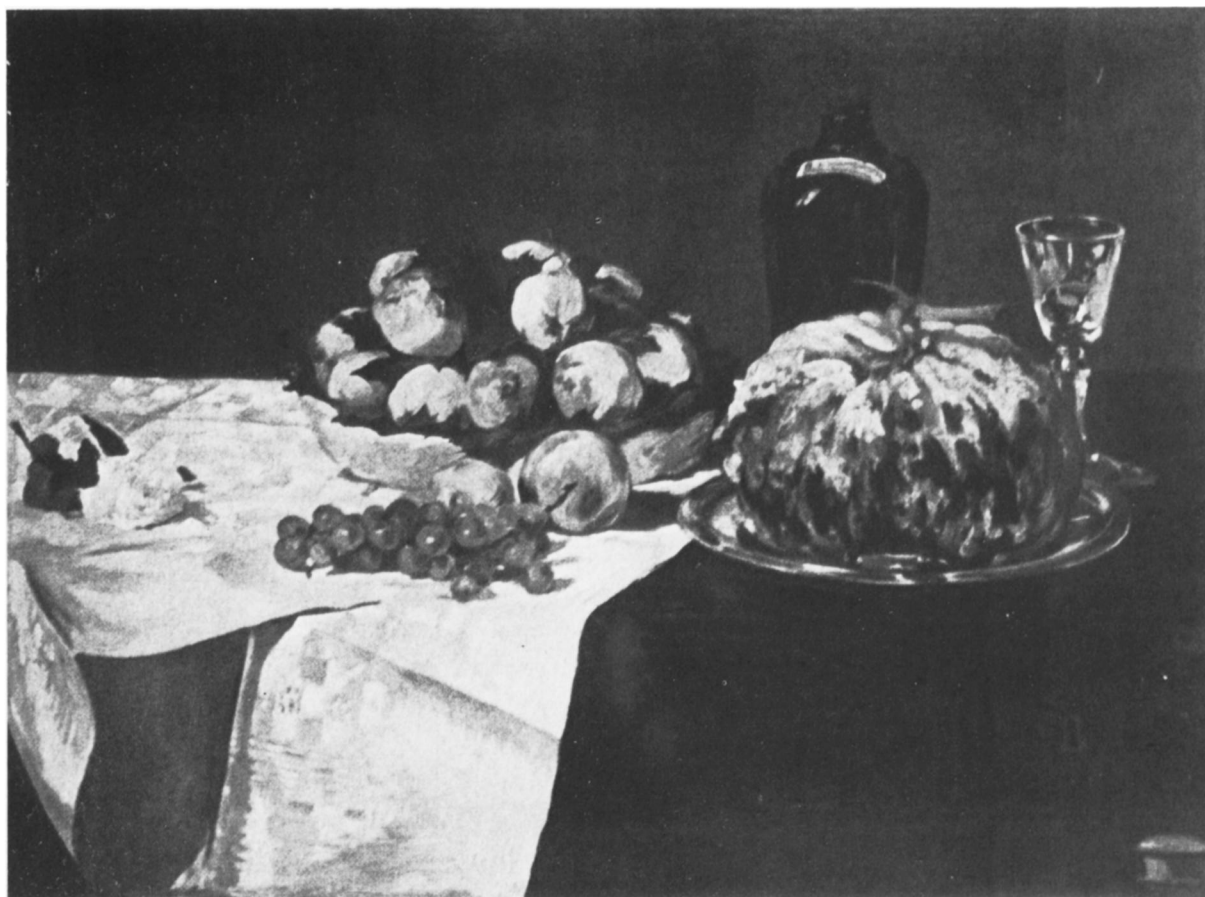
100. Fountain in silvered bronze, by Léon Marchand, designed by Léon Marchand, Frédéric-Eugène Piat, and Bernard-Alfred Meyer. 1867. Height 196 cm, width 62 cm (excluding support). (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Troyes; exh. Grand Palais, Paris).



101. *Le Jardin d'Armide*, designed by Edouard Muller, printed by the Manufacture Jules Desfosse. Block-printed wallpaper, 386 by 377 cm. (Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris; exh., central panel only; Grand Palais, Paris).



102. *Edmondo et Thérèse Molliti*, by Edgar Degas. 1867. 115 by 89,5 cm. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; exh. Grand Palais, Paris).



103. *Fruits et melons sur un buffet*, by Edouard Manet. Signed. c.1866–67. 69 by 92.2 cm. (National Gallery of Art, Washington; exh. Grand Palais, Paris).



104. *Mort de Nessus*, by Jules-Élie Delaunay. Signed. 1869–70. 95 by 125 cm. (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes; exh. Grand Palais, Paris).