

Corner Vitrine 'Aux Nénuphars'

By **Louis Majorelle** (1859-1926)
Circa 1900

An Art Nouveau corner vitrine, with the incredible gilt bronze *Aux Nénuphars* mounts. These mounts represent *waterlilies*. The cabinet is made from mahogany and rosewood, with marquetry panels above the two side sections. The corners above the side bronze mounts are large lily-pad shaped shelves, in keeping with the theme of the cabinet.

Dimensions : 165 cm high, 165 cm wide

Marks : *LM* etched on back of a few of the bronze mounts.

Reference : (i) Alistair Duncan, *Louis Majorelle – Master of Art Nouveau Design*, Thames & Hudson, 1991, settee pictured pg 59, fig. 17 and 18.
(ii) Alistair Duncan, *The Paris Salons 1895-191, Volume III : Furniture*, Woodbridge, The Antique Collectors' Club, 1996, *Nénuphars* pictured pg 391.



The gilding on every bronze mount is original, it just required professional cleaning. The gilding was originally done by the electrolysis method (circa 1900). This is the reason it has lasted so well, and only needed a cleaning and re-sealing for it to look as though it was done yesterday.

Of all the furniture made by the master cabinet maker, Louis Majorelle, it is his pieces with gilt-bronze mounts that are the most sought-after today. They are rarely found on the open market, as they were made only in limited series, and as a result achieve high prices when they do appear on auction.

The two main ranges of gilded bronze mounted furniture that Majorelle designed and produced were :

Aux Nénuphars – waterlily

Aux Orchidées – orchid

From around 1870's, Majorelle produced furniture in Nancy. As the end of the 19th century grew closer, he started to produce his own brand of Art Nouveau furniture, in the very same city where Emile Gallé and the Daum brothers produced their offerings as well. He in fact collaborated with both glass makers to make table lamps, light fittings, etc.

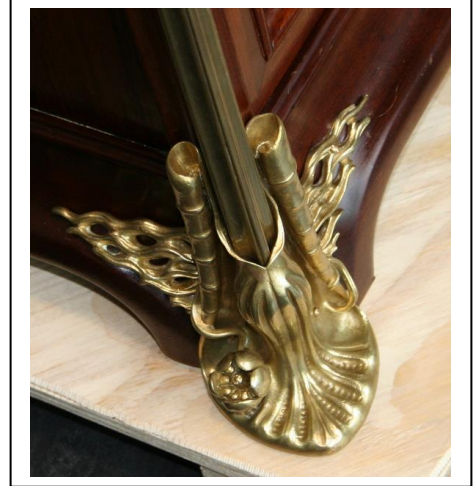
The book references above :

- (i) Pictures referenced : Fig 17 is a corner cabinet with *Aux Orchidées* gilt-bronze mounts. Fig 18 is a vitrine with *Aux Nénuphars* gilt-bronze mounts.
- (ii) Pictures referenced : Top right-hand corner shows an *Aux Nénuphars* desk, and below it an *Aux Nénuphars* cabinet, both were exhibited at the Exposition de l'Ecole de Nancy, Paris, 1903.

In 1900, Majorelle unveiled his *Aux Nénuphars* range, at the Exposition Universelle in Paris. Below is a section quoted from Alastair Duncan's book - *Louis Majorelle—Master of Art Nouveau Design*, pages 33&34. He wrote :

“No commentator, however, seemed to have anticipated the importance, and the subsequent impact of his (Majorelle's) display, which swept all contenders aside, both in Nancy and Paris. No doubt this was in part because Majorelle managed to maintain a veil of secrecy over those pieces which he had designed specifically for the Exposition, several of which, in the intricacy of their hand-crafting, showed evidence of enormous, and lengthy, preparation.

Pride of place in the display was reserved for the series of library and salon furniture which he (Majorelle) had embellished with gilt-bronze mounts modelled as life sized waterlilies, *nénuphars*. The spectacular scale and grace of these mounts astonished the visitors to the Exposition.”



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