

‘Émile Friant, le dernier naturaliste?’

Musée des Beaux Arts de Nancy, 4 November 2016 - 17 February 2017

Three works by Émile Friant from the Collection have gone on loan to a monographic exhibition on the artist at the Musée des Beaux Arts located in the splendid eighteenth-century complex Place de Stanislas in Nancy.

Although Friant was not born in Nancy, he grew up there from the age of nine and trained at the atelier of Théodore Devilly (1818-1886) where he met Victor Prouvé (1858-1943) who like Friant moved to Paris to study at the École des Beaux Arts under Alexandre Cabanel. Both artists remained close and the portrait of his friend in the painting ‘Le coin favori’ is a testament to their friendship.

Friant maintained his connection to the École de Nancy and the Art Nouveau artists associated with it such as Prouvé and the older Émile Gallé (1846-1904) throughout his career. All three were strong advocates of naturalism. This is apparent in the glass created by Gallé or the Daum brothers, as well as the furniture designed by Louis Majorelle (1859-1926) or Prouvé.

The collection owns a work by Victor Marec showing Émile Gallé at work on the glass for which he was renowned.



Figure 1 Installation of Émile Friant, ‘Self-Portrait’, 1892, oil on panel, 17.4 x 14.7 cm.



Figure 2 Émile Friant, ‘Le coin favori (Portrait of Victor Prouvé)’, 1883, oil on panel, 54.7 x 45.5 cm

While the applied arts of the École de Nancy have received much attention, the visual arts have not been considered within the context of this movement that aimed towards a 'Gesamtkunstwerk' typical of the period.

The exhibition certainly provides a good reason to visit Nancy to see the work of an artist who has not had an individual show since 1988 and to see Friant in the context of the city of Nancy and its collections.



Figure 3 Victor Marec, 'Émile Gallé in his studio', oil on canvas, 33 x 46 cm.