

## Selling Art Nouveau in the capital: The Nancy School in Paris

**Robert Proctor**

Glasgow School of Art

### Abstract

The Art Nouveau products created by the Nancy School were conceived of in relation to their market, a market conveniently provided by the branches of the Magasins Réunis department store in the Lorraine region, operated by Eugène Corbin. From 1894, the company opened three very different stores in Paris, designed and created by architects and craftsmen from Nancy with the intention of selling their work to a wider public. This article examines these buildings, as far as the limited sources and surviving structures allow, and by placing them within a wider context of architectural ideas in the capital, will suggest the extent of their influence upon contemporary architects. These buildings also allow us to see how the Nancy craftsmen placed their work in relation to its audience, both in the microcosm of the store building, and within the city: it is significant, for example, that Gallé refused to sell in these stores, and sent his work to a specialist shop near the Opéra to attract an international clientèle. That three stores were felt to be necessary was partly a consequence of their locations, each intended to appeal to a different market, a fact which may partly explain their distinctive designs. Finally, the paper will look briefly at related work in Paris by Henri Sauvage, particularly his workshops for Louis Majorelle, from the period of transition towards Art Deco, and perhaps in response to Corbin's fateful change of taste after the First World War.

---

It is now well established that the commercialisation of the decorative arts was an important concern of Art Nouveau craftsmen, artists, and critics. When a workshop was converted into a factory through the use of machines and rationally-organised labour, its greater rate of output required a wider market. Cheaper vases or chairs, in large quantities, and in batches of identical models, produced for the middle classes by skilled craftsmen under Louis Majorelle, Émile Gallé or Antonin Daum, needed to be sold quite differently to the spectacular one-off creations made by the artists themselves. Customers would not naturally flock to Nancy for their new sets of furniture; rather, they had to be sought out and persuaded, and the obvious place to do this was Paris, the largest marketplace in France, and an international centre of consumption. The craftsmen of the Nancy School presented their work at the Universal Exhibitions and at various exhibitions of the decorative arts within the city, and established permanent shops and wholesale offices there. This article investigates the latter, as these were the sites of normal exchange between buyer and seller. The



urban context into which these establishments were inserted reveals much about their commercial strategies, and allows significant conclusions to be drawn about the Nancy School artists' perceptions of the cultural value of their work.

We may begin by looking at the existing outlets that could have provided, for commercially-minded craftsmen, convenient means of reaching the Paris marketplace – the great Parisian department stores. It is telling that Émile Gallé, from the beginning, rejected department stores entirely, and it is particularly notable that he refused to allow the Magasins Réunis department store to sell his work, considering that its owner, Eugène Corbin, was a principal supporter and patron of the Nancy School.<sup>1</sup> This might appear to contradict Gallé's own explicit intentions. In his submission to the 1889 Universal Exhibition in Paris, he appealed to the jury to recognise him as 'un vulgarisateur de l'art,' since the industrialisation of his factory had allowed him to make glassware available at moderate prices for popular consumption.<sup>2</sup> Such a statement should immediately raise suspicion: it is not necessarily a genuine account of Gallé's faith in the democratic promotion of art for the masses, but is designed to elicit reward from an institution that was invented for the good of industry, at a time when craftsmen had few other opportunities for recognition.<sup>3</sup> If Gallé was serious about popularising his work, why would he refuse to sell in a department store?

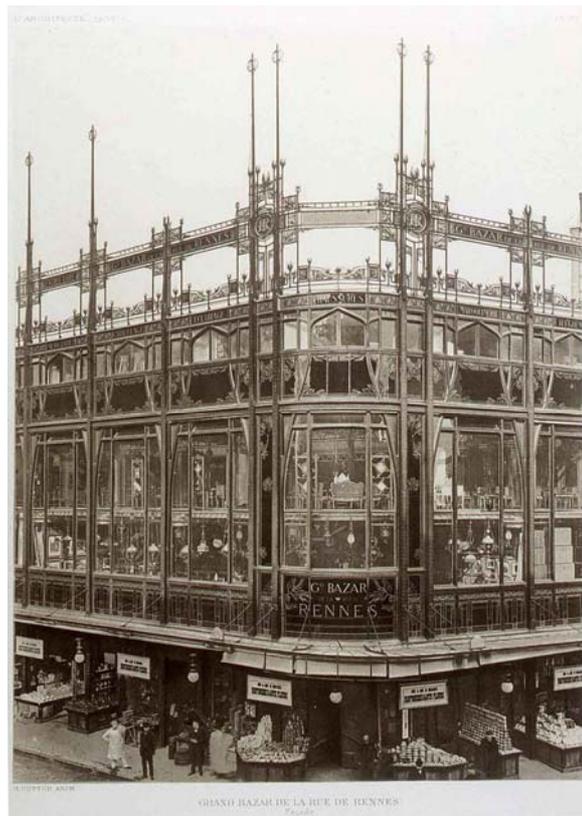
The department stores worked by centralising and concentrating commerce, to ensure a large clientèle; continuous expansion allowed them to make economies of scale, buying with greater clout from producers who offered discounts and selling with small profit margins to keep their prices low.<sup>4</sup> Corbin's Magasins Réunis department store in Nancy followed these principles, but was one of the earliest stores to have a policy of opening branches rather than relying on a single well-placed building to capture a market. In Paris, three branches were opened, in a city in which other department stores capitalised on monumental size and central locations. The geography of the Magasins Réunis's establishment in the capital reveals its strategy. The first branch was opened in the place de la République, in an existing building, in 1894; the second shop was specially built on the rue de Rennes, in the south of the city, near the Gare Montparnasse, in 1907; and finally, the third branch was opened in the well-to-do area north of the Étoile, on the avenue des Ternes, in a takeover of an existing store with a recently completed building in 1914.<sup>5</sup> Each of these shops served a local area, well connected to the rest of Paris, but nevertheless peripheral in comparison with stores like the Samaritaine and Grands Magasins du Louvre on the rue de Rivoli, or the Printemps and Galeries Lafayette on the boulevard Haussmann, whose competition was thereby sidestepped. Here is a very good reason why Gallé would not have wished to give his vases and furniture to Corbin: the Magasins Réunis was simply not capable of attracting a sufficiently varied national and international clientèle; indeed, it deliberately avoided this market to pursue that of the local district. The timing was no doubt also critical: Émile Gallé inherited commercial contacts in Paris from his father, Charles, in the 1870s, while the Magasins Réunis made little impact within the city until after his death in 1904.

These arguments about Gallé's rejection of the Magasins Réunis do not apply to his relations with other department stores, however, which targeted provincial and foreign tourists as energetically



as they did Parisians. Not only did Gallé keep his work away from the commercial giants, he even pursued them when they tried to imitate his style or sold his goods without permission, entering litigation with the Grands Magasins du Louvre in 1901.<sup>6</sup> There is another reason for his decision, to which Gallé's contribution to the Universal Exhibition of 1889 gives another clue. This clue is his use of the word 'pacotille', or shoddy goods; the word is employed twice in Gallé's submission to the furniture section of the Exhibition. He uses it the first time in association with an argument over the state of French craftsmanship: 'In exhibiting my series of smaller items of furniture at modest prices, I am particularly concerned that they retain a moral appeal, the fabrication of false luxury having no attraction for me, as little as, I think, the future of French cabinetmaking is assured by shoddy goods'.<sup>7</sup> The word 'fabrication' is translated from Gallé's French 'confection', which does not mean manufacture, but rather the assembling of standard products, and was specifically associated with the goods in department stores (more usually, ready-made clothes). Gallé's use of these terms, 'pacotille', 'confection', 'faux luxe', and their context in his argument, links him immediately to the contemporary anti-department store discourse.

Department stores liked to present themselves as natural allies of industry: their brash iron construction and decorated warehouse exteriors associated them with a popular image of the efficient industrial factory, an image made potent by Dutert's Palais des Machines of 1889 and its hypnotic contents. This idea of the department store as a natural outcome of industrial production was supported by Émile Zola's novel *Au Bonheur des Dames* of 1883, which constructed the myth of the store as an unstoppable juggernaut of capitalist progress.<sup>8</sup> Partly in reaction to the myth, there emerged a discourse of criticism, focused on the threat to small-scale commerce and industry, and, amongst other complaints, denouncing department stores for reducing the great French crafts and artistic traditions to the unskilled mass-production of junk, for sale to the ignorant masses at the cheapest price.<sup>9</sup> There was increasing awareness, too, of the 'sweating-system', whereby production of finished objects from raw materials was organised by the department store, using individuals or small workshops paid by the piece to make articles of clothing or furniture to

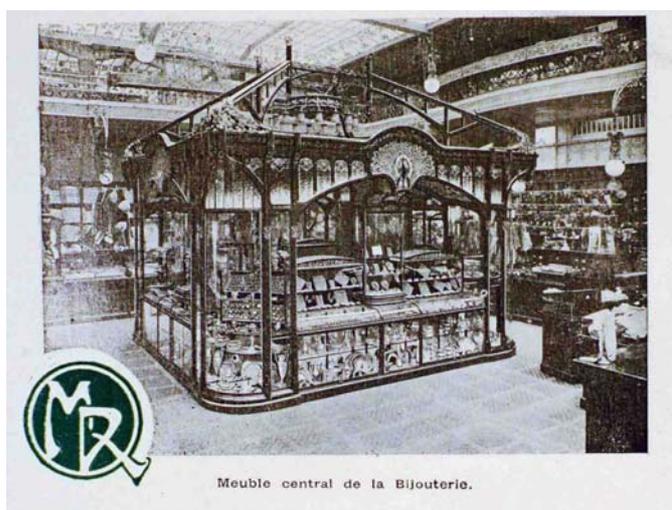


**Figure 1** Henri Gutton, *Bazar de la Rue de Rennes*, Paris, 1907, from *L'Architecte*, 1907 (Library of the Faculty of Architecture and History of Art, Cambridge University)

standard patterns. The debilitating effects of this system upon manufacturers were noted by Pierre du Maroussem.<sup>10</sup> Gallé's rejection of the department store may be seen in the terms of this discourse, as part of a considered effort to resist debasement and maintain high standards of workmanship.

Corbin, in his support for the Nancy School, considered the Magasins Réunis to be a valid outlet for high-quality craftsmanship. The store buildings in Paris were opportunities to commission works of decorative art. The Bazar de la Rue de Rennes was designed by the Gutton firm of Nancy, probably with the assistance of Joseph Hornecker, a partner in the practice, and the architect responsible for the Magasins Réunis store in Épinal, also in 1907, with a very similar motif of iron crests (figure 1).<sup>11</sup> The internal decoration of the Paris store, limited mainly to a frieze of plaster pine-cones, has not been ascribed to any particular artist, so it is not possible to say how much further involvement the Nancy School had with this building. At the branch in the place de la République, however, various Nancy artists were apparently involved in the store's extensions within the older building in 1910, including a new atrium with stained glass, and sumptuous display cabinets, under the direction of the Paris architect Marcel Oudin (figure 2).<sup>12</sup> The Étoile building had been built in 1912, also by Marcel Oudin, for the Économie Ménagère, a department store that sold household goods; alterations and extensions were made by the Magasins Réunis after it took over in 1914, including the stained-glass windows, which are not present in earlier photographs.<sup>13</sup> The Paris stores followed the model of the flagship building in Nancy, designed by Lucien Weissenburger, and containing work by Louis Majorelle, Jacques Gruber, and others.<sup>14</sup> These richly endowed buildings were created as backdrops for the goods sold within them, intended perhaps, like Frantz Jourdain's Samaritaine of 1905-1910, to educate the public in good taste, and to inspire them to buy objects of similar quality for the decoration of their homes.<sup>15</sup>

Investigating the actual contents of the Magasins Réunis department store, however, is made difficult by a shortage of sales catalogues or other information.<sup>16</sup> A customer diary of 1913 is sprinkled with advertisements for some of the products on sale, and most are predictably mundane: stoves,



**Figure 2** *Magasins Réunis, Place de la République, Paris, Interior, jewellery department, c1912, from Agenda Buvard de la Maison des Magasins Réunis (Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris)*

lightbulbs, curtain rails, and so on, shoes and stationery made by Nancy companies, are the type of mass-produced product we would expect to see advertised by independent manufacturers, while the fashion and furniture that made up the bulk of most department stores' sales were not separately advertised.<sup>17</sup> If the Magasins Réunis is comparable with other department stores, it is likely that, if it sold anything of Art Nouveau design at this period, it did so in a

very limited way: like the Grands Magasins Dufayel, for example, which typically had a 'Gallery of Styles' exhibiting historicist furniture, or the Bon Marché, which contained a salesroom 'radiant with all the wonders of the past and the originalities of the modern,' where cheap and fashionable Art Nouveau furniture doubtless took its chances alongside more conventional items.<sup>18</sup> It was only in the early 1920s, when Corbin established the Art Réunis range of decorative arts, that any serious attempt was made to bring designers into the Magasins Réunis; this was in imitation of all the other major department stores, which set up similar specialised sections, some of them much earlier.<sup>19</sup> The fact that this exceptional line of high-quality goods was sold as a popularisation of modern decorative art appears to confirm the point: that until then, the reputation which department stores acquired for selling shoddy and unimaginative goods was largely justified.

The Magasins Réunis did, however, act as an outlet for both of the well-known Alsace-Lorraine crystal manufacturers Baccarat and Saint-Louis.<sup>20</sup> Neither of these produced work of Art Nouveau design, but both made objects of outstanding craftsmanship on an industrial scale. To find them selling in a department store, in the absence of competition from Gallé, gives a telling illustration of their differing commercial attitudes.

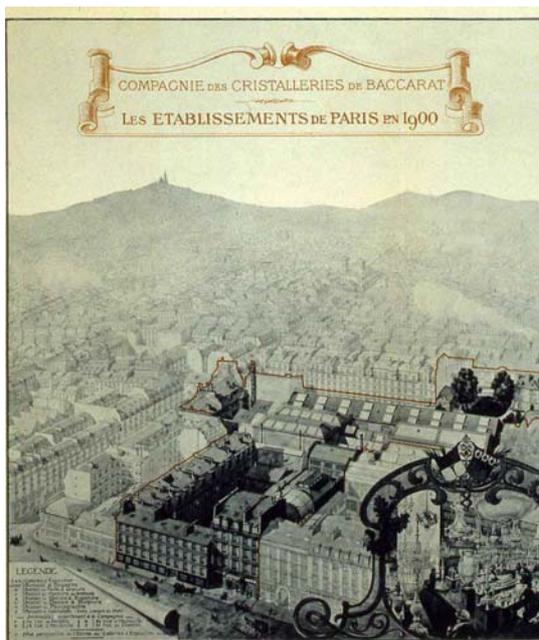
How, then, did Gallé sell his work? It is now well known that he used an agent in Paris, Marcelin and Albert Daigueperce, who, from a 'dépôt' or 'cabinet d'échantillons', sold Gallé's work to shops for retail. Most of these shops were small specialists in high-value goods of artistic interest, including jewellery; several at least were located on the rue Royale, a prestigious street connecting the place de la Concorde to the Madeleine and the boulevards.<sup>21</sup> Gallé also sold at the Escalier de Cristal, which was located in the Palais Royal until 1872, when it moved to the corner of rue Scribe and rue Auber, immediately opposite the west side of the Opéra, and therefore also connected to the

boulevards and the Madeleine.<sup>22</sup> This area was dedicated to international tourism (the Escalier de Cristal was in the ground floor of the Grand Hotel), and to the luxury consumption that went with it. Gallé's target market here was therefore not the average middle-class Parisian, seeking to decorate her interior, but more likely the rich gentleman looking for an extraordinary gift.<sup>23</sup>



**Figure 3** *View of rue de Paradis c1900*  
(Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes)

This impression is reinforced when we look at Gallé's own establishment in Paris. The nature of this establishment needs some investigation. It seems reasonable to suggest that what was called a 'dépôt' or 'cabinet d'échantillons', while it now refers almost exclusively to a wholesale office, and appears to be thought of as such by recent writers, was, in the late-



**Figure 4** *Baccarat showrooms in Paris, 1900, from Exposition Universelle de 1900. Économie Sociale. Notice sur la Cristallerie de Baccarat. Ses ouvriers – ses institutions* (Nancy: Berger-Levrault, 1900) (Ville de Paris, Bibliothèque Forney)

nineteenth century, publicly accessible, and a retail outlet in its own right. There are several pieces of evidence that suggest that this was the case. One is a photograph of around 1900 showing such an institution, the 'seul dépôt' for the Saxe porcelain manufacturer in the rue de Paradis (figure 3).<sup>24</sup> There is nothing particularly remarkable about this image, except for the fact that the 'dépôt' looks like a shop, with a shop window to display its goods to passers-by, surely a redundant feature if it sold only to retailers, for which a cheaper office would suffice. Further evidence comes from the Baccarat showrooms, at number 30bis on the rue de Paradis, immediately next to the 'dépôt' of Saint-Louis, with which it had shared an agreement until the latter found itself in German-annexed territory in 1871.<sup>25</sup> The buildings fronting the rue de Paradis may date to the late 1850s, when the two crystal manufacturers took over the premises of their former

wholesale agents in Paris.<sup>26</sup> By 1900, the Baccarat 'dépôt', as it was called, occupied a complex of buildings extending far back from the façade, including workshops where products were finished with bronze mounting, engraving, cutting, and gilding (figures 4 & 5).<sup>27</sup> Significantly, this complex included large 'exhibition galleries', to which the public were admitted, and presumably where items could be purchased. Besides such occasional visual evidence, there is linguistic evidence too: the meaning of the word 'dépôt' as a commercial outlet for a manufacturer was first given in the sixth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* in 1835, where no mention of wholesale was made, and indeed a retail function was clearly implied.<sup>28</sup>

Daigueperce father and son were therefore Gallé's shopkeepers in Paris as well as his salesmen, and their premises were one of Gallé's principal means of selling his creations to the public. The location of his shop tells us more about his intended market. Sited in a very ordinary building at number 12, rue Richer, it was not where we might at first expect: at the border between the 9th and 10th arrondissements, three blocks to the north of the boulevard Poissonnière, it appears distinctly removed from the crowds pursuing business and pleasure, tourism and consumption in the New Paris. A closer, historical look at the urban context of the rue Richer shows that there was a strategy in Gallé's placement. This area



**Figure 5** *Former Baccarat showrooms, rue de Paradis, Paris, in 2005* (Robert Proctor)



**Figure 6** View of rue de Paradis, taken in 2005 (Robert Proctor)

of the faubourg Poissonnière, either side of the rue du faubourg Poissonnière, but particularly to the east, had become during the nineteenth century an area dedicated to crystal and porcelain shops.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps it was the establishment of Baccarat and Saint-Louis on the rue de Paradis which attracted their competitors here. The Saxe porcelain shop; another 'dépôt' designed in 1908 for a Madame Caillet; Ebel & Cazet ceramics; the extraordinary ceramic façade of the Choisy-le-Roi faïence company building; and, from 1900, the Paris outlet for Daum, were all located on this street alone.<sup>30</sup> Similar shops clustered around it, on the rue du faubourg Poissonnière, and the rue Martel, and there are many crystal shops there to this day (figures 6 & 7). Gallé was clearly appealing to the kind of consumer who would come to this area specifically for goods of this type, in establishing himself a few steps from the windows of his more conventional rivals. Were the shoppers who came here, then, tourists, connoisseurs and collectors, middle class men and women buying occasional presents, or ordinary people buying tableware and decoration for their houses? The answer may be that the passing trade consisted of a little of each of these types, as further evidence shows that this area contained a diversity of activities.



**Figure 7** Typical crystal shop near the rue de Paradis, 2005 (Robert Proctor)

Gallé's situation to the west of the rue du faubourg Poissonnière brought him a short distance away from the crystal shops, and further towards another distinctive area. This was the rue Drouot, on and around which congregated, as they still do, a large number of antique dealers. The reason for this second specialist cluster of shops was the presence since the mid-nineteenth century of the Hôtel des Ventes, the auction house for all kinds of antiques, including paintings, furniture and decorative objects, contained in a building designed especially for it in the early 1860s.<sup>31</sup> There is a different kind of consumption that would have taken place here: that of the collector, the wealthy and cultured individual seeking to compose an eclectic artistic interior. Such an élite consumer might have stopped at number 34, rue de Provence, just the other side of the rue Drouot, to visit the private exhibition gallery of Mr Denman Tripp, after paying his entrance fee. Here, from its opening in 1883, he could browse eighteenth-century engravings, in what was billed as 'the meeting-place and intimate club of that Parisian set which admires, sells, and buys prints or paintings', a set which was already there to be tapped into by the owner.<sup>32</sup> From 1895, slightly further down the rue de Provence at number 23, was Siegfried Bing's famous shop, L'Art Nouveau. Bing began his career selling porcelain and glass

on the rue Martel, before becoming enamoured of Japan and opening shops at 19 rue Chauchat and 13 rue Bleue to sell exotic oriental goods to his élite clientèle.<sup>33</sup> L'Art Nouveau may have differed in its products, but evidently not in its commercial type, from these earlier luxury shops. Gallé's position midway between the artistic market of the rue Drouot and the luxury crafts of the rue de Paradis suggests a similar conception of his own work, as floating between the luxury of art for its own sake, and the artistic interpretation of the useful.

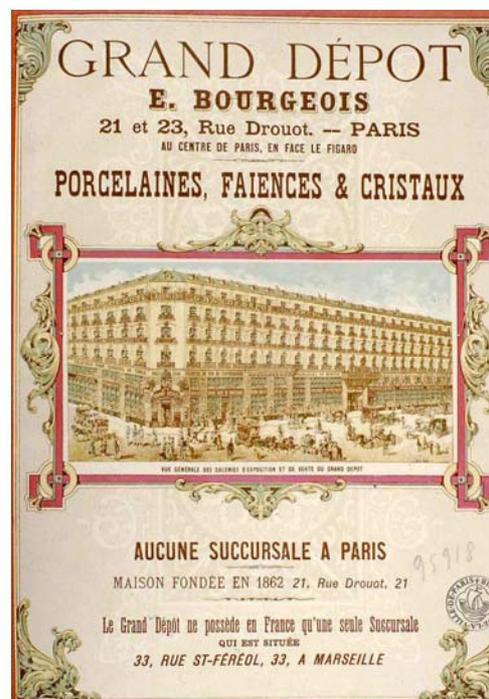


**Figure 8** Former Grand Dépôt, rue Drouot and rue de Provence, Paris, 2005 (Robert Proctor)

by advertising and catalogues (figures 9 & 10).<sup>34</sup> This was surely where lower-middle-class window-shoppers strayed from the rue de Paradis to consummate their inflamed desires. Around 1900, the commodities in its catalogue appear as conventional as they would have done ten or twenty years earlier (and indeed the same catalogues seem to have been issued over long periods); but there is the occasional inclusion of an anonymous piece described as 'Art Nouveau', typically designed as a fusion of cabbages and women.<sup>35</sup> A page of vases includes one called 'Lacryma', a plain imitation of Gallé's 'Petits Sourires et grandes larmes', and a few which might be less experimental versions of pieces by Daum, although no designers are credited.<sup>36</sup> It was at the lowest end of this luxury market, both in price and innovation.

The most extraordinary thing about this shop, however, is that it reveals in microcosm the commercialisation of the Nancy School in Paris: on the second floor, least valuable in commercial terms, but where an attraction could draw customers deeper into the space, was a special artistic section, including an 'exhibition gallery for artistic glassware from Nancy'

There is another piece of evidence, however, which qualifies this interesting theory, and that is the magnetic presence since 1862 of the Grand Dépôt on the corner of the rue Drouot and the rue de Provence (figure 8). This institution appears to have been a sort of department store of ceramics and glassware, its goods piled high and sold cheap in three floors of galleries and over 30 metres of shop windows by 1900, and backed



**Figure 9** Grand Dépôt, catalogue cover, undated (Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris)



**Figure 10** *Grand Dépôt*, typical catalogue page, undated (Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris)

alongside 'inspired artistic stoneware; fired pottery and all the fine works of modern art, the superb collection of which, presented each year in time for December gifts, attracts to the Grand Dépôt the élite of Parisian art-lovers.'<sup>37</sup> Within this shop, the Nancy glassmakers were thus neatly labelled and packaged for consumption as a minor, novel interest outside the clutter of commodities for daily use. This district around the rue Drouot and faubourg Poissonnière therefore attracted the middle-class household consumer as well as the rich collector, although the evidence tells us that the Nancy School may have appeared to the former as aimed rather at the latter.

A further complication comes from the Folies Bergère, also located on the rue Richer since 1869. This centre of Parisian entertainment added another aspect of bourgeois consumption to this commercial district, bringing it culturally closer to the boulevards – this was 'boulevard theatre' at its

most extravagant, where, as Manet's well-known painting of its bar implies, the glitter of lights and costumes accompanied a combination of indulgent consumption and exploitation.<sup>38</sup> The Folies Bergère's immediate effect upon its surroundings is difficult to determine; but it may be imagined as a regular nocturnal disturbance which irrupted into this district after the shops had closed their shutters, briefly transforming it into a bright and bustling extension of the boulevard, and returning it to its somnolent darkness before business began the following day.

Gallé's shop thus inserted itself into an urban context populated by a diverse range of potential customers, but with a particular, identifiable character linked to the trade in certain artistic and luxury goods. This, along with his relations with other shops, must lead us to question Gallé's attitude to the democratisation of art: he clearly aimed his work at those with the money and inclination to buy high-value decorative objects for their own sake, rather than seriously engaging with the aesthetic improvement of the average person's surroundings.

Much the same can be said of Louis Majorelle, through a similar analysis of the marketplace within which he sold his goods. It is significant that his most obvious decision was to eschew the faubourg Saint-Antoine, the district of Paris traditionally favoured by furniture makers. Many of these, by the end of the nineteenth century, were manufacturing for the department stores, while others retained a high quality of craftsmanship. In a 1905 competition for economical furniture, exhibited at the Grand Palais, and consisting of a variety of Art Nouveau and other designs, the entrants were



dominated by Parisian manufacturer-designers; of the twenty from Paris, twelve were from the area immediately east of the place de la Bastille.<sup>39</sup>

Majorelle, rather than market himself as yet another furniture manufacturer in Paris, established his first shop by 1898 on the rue de Paradis, alongside the many porcelain and crystal shops there.<sup>40</sup> Such a location may seem incongruous, but reveals Majorelle's conception of his own products as above the level of ordinary furnishings, and within the higher realm of artistic craftsmanship; indeed, by the 1920s the firm was styled 'Majorelle Frères et Cie. Meubles d'Art'.<sup>41</sup> It is also revealing that after his arrival in Paris, Majorelle, like Gallé, dealt with the Escalier de Cristal (which Gallé had called a 'permanent exhibition of art'), selling not his own furniture, but the models for it, to be executed by the shop's own craftsmen – an early example, perhaps, of the designer label.<sup>42</sup>

Majorelle tends to be considered primarily as a furniture maker, but it is significant that his catalogues, while containing many examples of both complete room furnishings and individual pieces, do not give precedence to this aspect of his work in their written titles. One catalogue announces the firm as providing 'Interior Decorations. Furniture – Cloth – Bronze – Ironwork'.<sup>43</sup> A later example precedes the mention of furniture by listing Majorelle's glasswork, lighting and ironwork.<sup>44</sup> Majorelle appears to have thought of his business, like that of Morris & Co. in London, as supplying above all complete bespoke interiors, while the sale of individual pieces of furniture or lighting was almost an accidental, though inevitably far more profitable, by-product of this activity. His first shop, however, may not have been sufficient for an appropriate form of display, considering the restricted sizes of other shops on the street, and may therefore have concentrated on smaller articles of furniture and lighting.

Majorelle's acquisition of the L'Art Nouveau building on the rue de Provence in 1904 must have been considered a triumph. This shop had been conceived to show a series of complete interiors rather than stacks of similar goods, and Majorelle immediately adopted this method, using the building not only to sell his own interiors, but also the various elements that could be supplied by other Nancy craftsmen to complement them.<sup>45</sup> This shop offered a means to display these total interiors, while permitting small parts of them to be acquired by the majority of visitors who admired, but could not afford, a complete renovation. It provided, for the decade of its existence, a showcase for the Nancy School in Paris, within this district dedicated to art and luxury.

In 1913, when Majorelle had decided to move to Paris, he commissioned Henri Sauvage, the architect of his villa in Nancy, to design a new building for the shop (figure 11).<sup>46</sup> The location of this building may mark a shift in Majorelle's commercial attitude: at the western end of the rue de Provence, opposite the Printemps department store and visible from the boulevard Haussmann, it suggests a move towards both a mainstream, middle-class market, and a potential tourist clientèle. It perhaps reflects an increasing attention to serial production at this time, something the plain façade of the building (in contrast to the elaborate exterior of Bing's former shop) appears to confirm. The plans give no clues to the display methods, since the open-plan galleries around a central glazed atrium



**Figure 11** Henri Sauvage, *former premises of Louis Majorelle*, rue de Provence, Paris, 1913 (Robert Proctor)

gave flexible exhibition spaces. It was during this period, however, that Art Nouveau was beginning to decline in favour of a revival of a less distinctive Empire style; and only the year before, in 1912, the Printemps had instituted its Primavera range of decorative goods. These shifts could have affected Majorelle's commercial strategy, which might explain this costly investment in a new building.

Concerning Majorelle, then, we can say that at least until his move west, his concept of the artistic value of his work was similar to Gallé's, since both put their work on show to a similar, distinctive public. His commercial strategy changed after 1904 to embrace a collaborative approach to interior design addressed to a discerning audience; and may have changed again from 1913 to respond to a decline in the value of these customers' purchases.

In conclusion, it seems that at the period of Art Nouveau's greatest popularity, the Nancy School upheld the distinction of its work as 'art' through a strategic commercialisation.<sup>47</sup> The popularisation of good design may have been held to be desirable, and for a profitable business had to be addressed; but it was not to be carried out at the expense of quality in craftsmanship, and above all at the risk of a debased reputation. While diffusing the knowledge of art, through the education of the consumer within the city, Gallé, Majorelle, and others held their beautiful creations above the reach of the majority of onlookers, to maintain a rarefied cultural status.

<sup>1</sup> Catherine Coley, 'Les Magasins Réunis: From the Provinces to Paris, From Art Nouveau to Art Deco', in Geoffrey Crossick and Serge Jaumain (eds), *Cathedrals of Consumption: The European Department Store, 1850-1939*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999, pp 225-251 (241); see also, Philippe Thiébaut, 'Rêves et réalités dans l'oeuvre d'Émile Gallé', in *L'École de Nancy, 1889-1909: Art Nouveau et industries d'art*, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, 1999, pp 67-85 (73).

<sup>2</sup> Émile Gallé, *Notice Remise au Jury sur sa fabrication de verres et cristaux de luxe, par Émile Gallé à Nancy*, Imprimerie Coopérative de l'Est, Nancy, 1889, pp 19-20; 'vulgarisateur' is best translated as 'populariser'.

<sup>3</sup> For the political background to the Expositions Universelles, see Miriam R Levin, *Republican Art and Ideology in Late-Nineteenth-Century France*, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, 1986; Richard D Mandell, *Paris 1900: The Great World's Fair*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1967.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the department store, see Robert Proctor, *The Department Store in Paris, 1855 to 1914: An Architectural History* (doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2002); David Chaney, 'The Department Store as a Cultural Form', in *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol 1, no 3 (1983), pp 22-28; Rosalind H Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late-Nineteenth-Century France*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1982; Michael Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1981; John William Ferry, *A History of the Department Store*, Macmillan Co, New York, 1960.

<sup>5</sup> Proctor, pp 46-47; Bernard Marrey, *Les Grands Magasins des Origines à 1939*, Picard, Paris, 1979, pp 141-147; see also below, notes 11-14.

<sup>6</sup> Thiébaut, 'Rêves et réalités', p 73 and note 45, p 84.



<sup>7</sup> 'En vous présentant une série de petits meubles de prix modestes, je me suis attaché à ce qu'ils gardassent une allure bienséante, la confection du faux luxe ne me présentant aucun attrait, pas plus, je crois que la pacotille n'offre d'avenir à l'ébéniste français': Émile Gallé, *Notes Remises au Jury sur sa production et catalogue de ses envois, par Émile Gallé*, Imprimerie Coopérative de l'Est, Nancy, 1889, p 7.

<sup>8</sup> Émile Zola, *The Ladies' Paradise*, (trans by Brian Nelson), Oxford World's Classics, Oxford, 1998; see also Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola*, Methuen, London, 1985.

<sup>9</sup> Eg, Modeste Anquetin, 'L'art, la bienfacture et la pacotillage', in *La Revendication*, 16 August 1888, p 3; E Guillaume, 'Les fabricants et les grands magasins', in *La Revendication*, 23 August 1888, p 2; for more on this see Philip G Nord, *Paris Shopkeepers and the Politics of Resentment*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1986.

<sup>10</sup> Pierre Du Maroussem, 'Les grands magasins tels qu'il sont', in *La Revue d'économie politique*, 7 (1893), pp 922-962 (934-6, 940-1); see also, O'Mahony's article in this special issue.

<sup>11</sup> Coley, 'Les Magasins Réunis', p 239; Marrey, p 142; Joseph Hornecker: *architecte à Nancy, 1873-1942*, Presses Universitaires de Nancy, Nancy, 1989, pp 6, 35; *L'Architecte*, 2 (1907), pp 27-28; A-L-R, 'Bazar de la Rue de Rennes', in *La Construction Moderne*, 22 (1906-1907), pp 281-283.

<sup>12</sup> Marrey, p 147 (who credits Émile Robert and Edouard Schenck with the metalwork); application for *permis de construire*, Archives de Paris, VO11/3028; *Agenda Buvard de la Maison des Magasins Réunis*, Buvard, Paris (1912), Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris.

<sup>13</sup> Marrey, pp 147, 152; Paul Chemetov and Bernard Marrey, *Architectures à Paris, 1848-1914*, Dunod, Paris, 1980, p 159; image in *Magasins Réunis Agenda* (1924), Magasins Réunis, Paris, (1923), Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, p 5.

<sup>14</sup> See Émile Nicolas, 'Un grand magasin moderne', in *L'Art décoratif*, 20 (January-June 1909), pp 143-153.

<sup>15</sup> See Meredith L Clausen, *Frantz Jourdain and the Samaritaine: Art Nouveau Theory and Criticism*, Brill, Leiden, 1987.

<sup>16</sup> There appear to be none in public collections in Paris; Catherine Coley seems to have found several (she does not give her source), but notes some disappointment at their contents: Coley, 'Les Magasins Réunis', p 248.

<sup>17</sup> *Agenda Buvard* (see note 9 above).

<sup>18</sup> *Une Visite aux Grands Magasins Dufayel*, Grands Magasins Dufayel, Paris, (c 1912?), p 12; 'un salon resplendissant de toutes les merveilles de l'art ancien et des originalités du «modern»': *Historique des Magasins du Bon Marché*, Bon Marché, Paris, (n d), p 21.

<sup>19</sup> Coley, 'Les Magasins Réunis', p 243; *Magasins Réunis Agenda*, pp 105-108 (see note 10 above); on the other stores, see Nancy J Troy, *Modernism and the Decorative Arts in France*, Yale University Press, London, 1991, pp 170-177.

<sup>20</sup> *Agenda Buvard*, pp 187, 173.

<sup>21</sup> See Thiébaud, 'Rêves et réalités', pp 71-73.

<sup>22</sup> Philippe Thiébaud, 'Contribution à une histoire du mobilier japonisant: les créations de l'Escalier de Cristal', in *La Revue de l'art*, 85 (1989), pp 76-83 (77); Flavier, 'Les nouveaux magasins de l'Escalier de Cristal', in *L'Illustration*, 7 December 1872, pp 363-365.

<sup>23</sup> See Françoise Thérèse Charpentier, 'La clientèle étrangère de Gallé', in *Stil und Überlieferung in der Kunst des Abendlandes*, Gebr Mann, Berlin, 1967, vol 1, pp 256-265.

<sup>24</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes, Va-289(5)/H072753.

<sup>25</sup> Dany Sautot, *Baccarat: Une histoire*, Baccarat, Paris, 1993, pp 26-28.

<sup>26</sup> Sautot, p 28.

<sup>27</sup> *Exposition Universelle de 1900. Économie Sociale. Notice sur la Cristallerie de Baccarat. Ses ouvriers – ses institutions*, Berger-Levrault, Nancy, 1900, image opposite p 46.

<sup>28</sup> 'Un lieu où quelqu'un fait débiter, permet de débiter ce qu'il récolte, ce qu'il fabrique, etc': *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, Firmin Didot, Paris, 1835, vol 1, p 518; the word 'débiter' implies retail rather than wholesale – 'Employé absolument, il se dit presque toujours d'une vente en détail': *ibid*, vol 1, p 477.

<sup>29</sup> Pascal Étienne, *Le Faubourg Poissonnière. Architecture, élégance et décor*, Délégation à l'Action Artistique de la Ville de Paris, Paris, 1986, pp 275-276, 300.

<sup>30</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes, Va-289(5)/H072752, H072754-72759; Ebel & Cazet catalogue [n d], Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, BC 18/359; Mireille-Bénédicte Bouvet, 'La verrerie Daum: une production industrielle au service de l'art pour tous', in *L'École de Nancy, 1889-1909: Art Nouveau et industries d'art*, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, 1999, pp 239-247 (242).

<sup>31</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes, Va-285(14)/H070144-H070193.

<sup>32</sup> 'Le rendez-vous et comme le cercle intime de tout ce monde parisien qui aime, vend ou achète des estampes ou de la peinture': unidentified article of 1883, in Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes, Va-285(12)/H069708-H069710.

<sup>33</sup> See Gabriel P Weisberg, *Art Nouveau Bing: Paris Style 1900*, Harry N Abrams, New York, 1986, pp 13-20.

<sup>34</sup> Undated Grand Dépôt catalogues: Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, In-fol 95/918; Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Br 962 and T 929.

<sup>35</sup> Eg Grand Dépôt catalogue, Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, T 929, plate 40 (left), no 5667, 'Vasque de Trois Femmes. Majolique. Art Nouveau'.

<sup>36</sup> Grand Dépôt catalogue, plate 80.



---

<sup>37</sup> 'Le salon d'exposition pour les verreries d'art de Nancy; les grès artistique grand feu; les poteries flammées et toutes les belles oeuvres d'art moderne, dont la superbe collection réunie chaque année en vue des cadeaux de décembre attire au GRAND DÉPÔT l'élite des amateurs parisiens': *ibid*, p 3.

<sup>38</sup> Ruth E Iskin, 'Selling, Seduction and Soliciting the Eye: Manet's *Bar at the Folies-Bergère*', in *Art Bulletin*, vol 77, no 1 (March 1995), pp 25-44.

<sup>39</sup> *Le Concours du mobilier à bon marché exposé au Salon du Mobilier, au Grand Palais des Champs-Élysées*, Armand Guérinet, Paris, 1905; the only firm representing Nancy was Gauthier-Poinsignon, which had been founded specifically to pursue industrial production – see Frédéric Descouturelle, *Eugène Vallin: Menuisier d'art de l'École de Nancy*, Association des Amis du Musée de l'École de Nancy, Nancy, 1998, p 63.

<sup>40</sup> It is given as number 28 in Alastair Duncan, *Louis Majorelle: Master of Art Nouveau Design*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1991, p 48, and as number 56 in Roselyne Bouvier, *Majorelle: Une aventure moderne*, Serpenoise, Paris, 1991), p 74.

<sup>41</sup> Undated catalogue [1920s?], Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, Réserve BR 15103.

<sup>42</sup> Thiébaud, 'Contribution', pp 77, 79-81.

<sup>43</sup> Undated catalogue [between 1904 and 1914], Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, Réserve BR 15103.

<sup>44</sup> Undated catalogue [1920s?], Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, Réserve BR 15103.

<sup>45</sup> Bouvier, pp 87-88.

<sup>46</sup> Jean Baptiste Minnaert, *Henri Sauvage, ou l'exercice de Renouveau*, Norma, Paris, 2002), pp 227-229; Lise Grenier, Maurice Culot and others, *Henri Sauvage, 1873-1932*, Archives d'Architecture Moderne, Brussels, 1978, pp 50, 135.

<sup>47</sup> The idea of 'distinction' used here is taken from Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, (trans by Richard Nice), Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1984; this paper does not, however, rely exclusively on Bourdieu, whose central idea is taken from earlier theories of consumption.