



Edgard Maxence

1871-1954

The Soul of the source

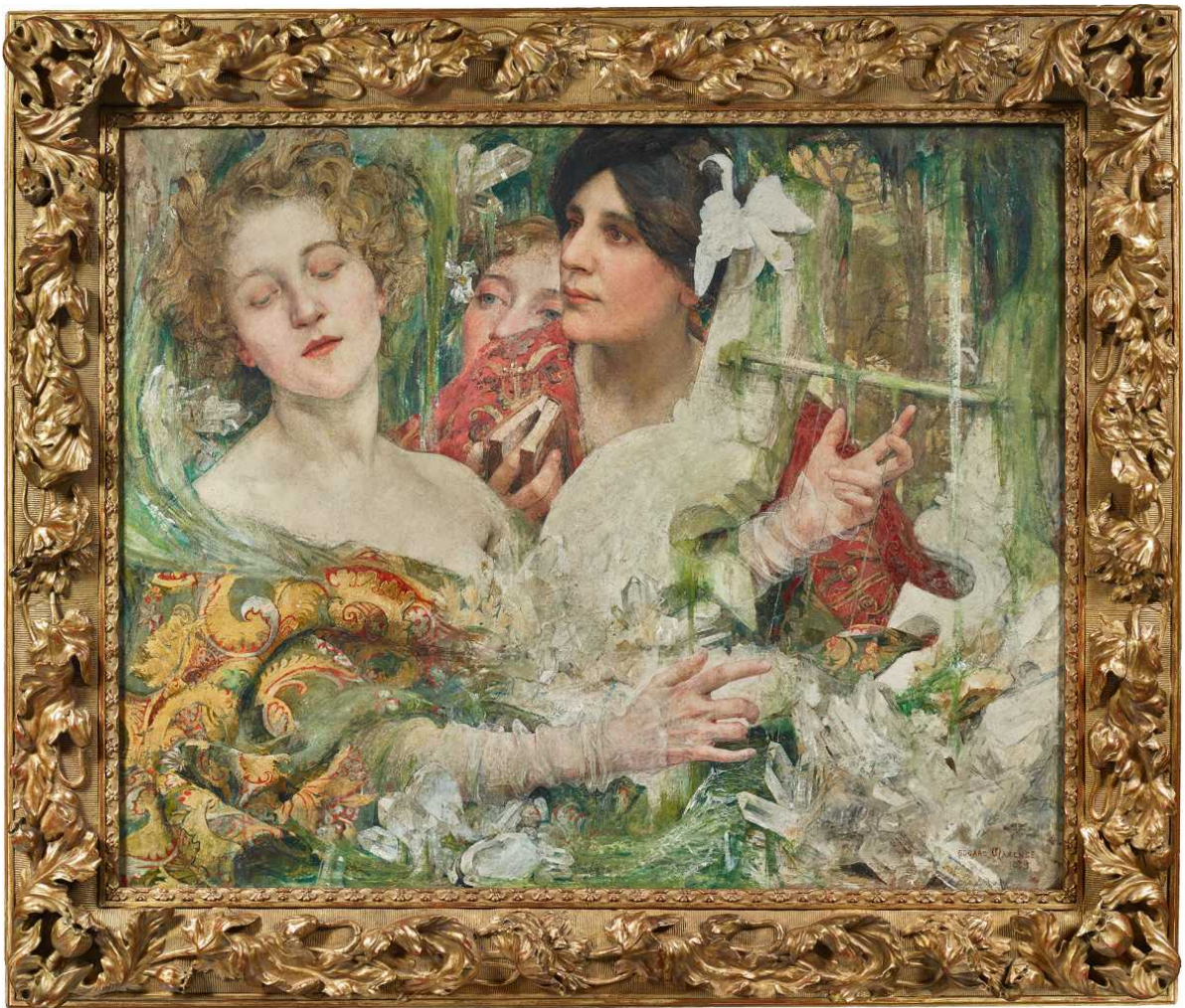
Tempera heightened with gold on panel signed and dated 1899 lower right

Dimensions : 80,5 x 100,8 cm

Dimensions : 31.50 x 39.37 inch

Exhibition : Salon des artistes français 1899





Dimensions with frame : 104 x 123 cm  
Dimensions with frame : 40.94 x 48.43 inch

In a mysterious place, swirling of foams and crystals, a young woman with diaphanous skin and half-closed eyes plays the lyre from which a torrent seems to gush out. Near her, two others women come from nowhere, as if they were attracted by music. This painting has been exhibited at the Salon of French Artists in 1899. The Soul of Source is executed with a brilliant and light palette, and in the specific technique of the artist who used to work with a mix of wax and oil painting. This wonderful painting is one of a set of four works dedicated to nature. The Soul of Forest is now hold in the fine-arts museum of Nantes and shares the same Celtic atmosphere specific to the symbolism movement.

## Biography

Edgard Maxence was born in Nantes in 1871 in a family of landowners. Nothing predestined him to become an artist. But his mother, Estelle Boquien, with the cultural environment of Nantes helped him to choose an artistic career. During his schooling at the "Externat des Enfants Nantais", he followed the drawing lessons of Abbot Sotta (the first master of Elie Delaunay) who certainly was at the beginning of his artistic vocation.

In 1891, Maxence was a successful candidate at the School of Fine Arts in Paris. He first went to Elie Delaunay's studio, and after to Gustave Moreau's. The meeting between Maxence and Moreau was absolutely decisive for the young artist who stayed in his master's studio until 1896, and remained faithful to his teaching all along his life.

Maxence's studies at the Fine Arts School were brilliant: in 1893 he obtained the prize of "Premier Logiste" and won the first prize for expression faces in 1894. Despite these prizes, he was eliminated from the first round of the 1895's Prix de Rome. This failure certainly determined his future artistic way.

When he was a young painter, Maxence distinguished himself by his taste for portraits. Since 1893, he regularly exhibited at the Salon of French Artists and took part at the Salon of Rose-Croix between 1895 and 1897. His paintings were very attached with the Symbolist movement to whom he took his subjects. He was inspired by the Breton legends, ambiguous and dark subjects, dreamy processions. He was simultaneously fed by his Christian traditions and his Celtic influences.

His palette was varied : he used garnet-colored, emerald green, muffled yellow. He also used very varied mediums, either oil, either wax, from time to time both together. The tempera, piece of gold, gouache and charcoal gave a singular appearance to his art works and accentuated the primitive appearance of his mystic scenes, despite of the realistic treatment of the faces.

In 1900, he was awarded with a gold medal at the World Fair and gained the Legion of honour. After the WWI, he decided to turn towards more lucrative subjects. Then he continued a brilliant career of social portraits painter, creating some still lifes and landscape paintings too.

Chevalier of the Legion of honour, he was promoted Officer in 1927 ; he was elected at the Institut in 1924 in lieu of the painter Fernand Cormon.

" The Soul of the Spring " perfectly illustrates the main features of Maxence's art. With an outstandingly symbolic subject, the painting shows the usual bright colors of the painter. The celtic influence emphasizes the mysticism of this work

## Museums

Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Brest

Musée Sainte-Croix, Poitiers

## Bibliography

"Edgard Maxence 1871-1954, Les dernières fleurs du symbolisme", 2010

E. Bénézit, "Dictionnaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs", Editions Gründ, Paris, 1999