

Biography

Born in 1877 in Le Havre, Raoul Ernest Joseph Dufy comes from a family devoted to art. Indeed, among his nine brothers and sisters, six of them are engaged in artistic practice. His parents, who came from a relatively modest social background, had him join a coffee importing company in Brazil. However, from 1892 onwards, the young man, particularly attracted by art, chose to attend evening classes at the Municipal School of Fine Arts. He began his training under the direction of Charles Lhuillier, a painter who headed the commission for the purchase of works of art for the museums of the city of Le Havre. In this context, Raoul Dufy frequented Raimond Lecourt, famous for his depictions of Normandy. The artist also became friends with René Saint-Delis, famous for his seascapes, painted in Le Havre. He also met one of his most faithful friends, Othon Friez, a French painter and engraver, a pioneer of the fauve movement. In this artistic context, Raoul Dufy multiplied his academic watercolours, which he drew from landscapes of Le Havre and Honfleur. From 1895 to 1898, he also devoted himself to the portrait genre, depicting members of his family. He is also known to have painted a few self-portraits.

Subsequently, the artist obtains a scholarship given by the city of Havre. He therefore left his native region to continue his apprenticeship at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris, which he joined in 1900. He settles in a studio in Montmartre, which he shares with his faithful friend Friez. He trained alongside Léon Bonnat, a French painter, engraver and art collector, director of the National Museums renowned for his numerous portraits. Deeply marked by the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist currents, the artist developed his own plastic identity: in the course of his drawings, he presented scenes of manners, inspired by the work of Toulouse-Lautrec. He draws Parisian landscapes, whose construction is close to Pissaro, and indulges in representations of Norman beaches, in the taste of the work of Monet, Manet, or Boudin.

The artist's work, quickly noticed, will be presented at the Salon des Artistes Français in 1901. Two years later, he presented two paintings at the Salon des Indépendants. One of them seduces Maurice Denis, a painter belonging to the Nabis group, who hastens to buy it. Dufy's work will be assimilated into the Fauvist movement - a movement of painting that had a considerable influence on the 20th century. The latter, renowned for its particularly vivid colours and this free touch by an art critic, is associated with Dufy's work by an art critic. Dufy's artistic productions were, according to him, in the line of Braque, Matisse, Derain, or even Vlaminck, Van Dongen or Rouault.

Indeed, at the 1905 Autumn Salon, the artist discovered a painting by Matisse entitled *Luxury, Calm and Voluptuousness* and wrote: "I understood all the new reasons for painting and impressionist realism lost its charm for me when I contemplated the miracle of imagination introduced into drawing and colour". It is in this context that he joined the Fauvism movement, getting closer to Albert Marquet, famous for his landscape painting, who was also in solidarity with the Fauve movement.

However, in 1908, in contact with the work of the precursor of Cubism, Paul Cézanne, Raoul Dufy discovered a much more structured approach to composition. This artistic encounter remained decisive for the artist: he abandoned pure colours in favour of large studies of trees, horses and still lifes, in which he developed a new management of volumes. On this occasion, the painter's palette darkens. However, his figuration of *La grande baigneuse*, marks a break with the cubist style and the more personal work that the artist later explored. Indeed, Dufy explores a style of his own, where the colours express themselves: they are no longer limited to a predefined area, but escape from the contours of the elements presented. In other words, they dissociate themselves from the design, to impose themselves freely.

A few years later, in association with Paul Poiret, a particularly renowned couturier, Raoul Dufy diversified his

production: he created a series of designs to be printed on fabrics, using engraved wooden stamps. Decoration, fashion... all of these motifs are then projected on hangings and fabrics, which increase Paul Poiret's fame. This collaboration considerably widened the professional circle of the artist, who obtained a position at the Lyon silk house Bianchini-Férié, for which he created a multitude of motifs: naiads, animals, birds, flowers, butterflies, intended for weaving on Jacquards looms - the latter probably remaining one of the first programmable mechanical systems, with the use of punched cards. This collaboration continued until 1930.

The artist follows in the footsteps of Fernand Léger or Robert Delaunay. Indeed, he received a commission for a monumental decoration of 624 m, to be placed on the Champ-de-Mars, within the Palais de la Lumière et de l'Électricité, designed by Robert Mallet-Stevens, on the occasion of the 1937 exhibition. The latter is now on display at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. He also made large panels for the Palais de Chaillot, located in the 16th arrondissement of Paris and created for the 1937 Universal Exhibition. The artist, recomposed with the rank of Commander of the Legion of Honour, also took part in the Venice Biennale, where he presented more than 40 subjects.

His paintings are today presented at the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris and London, in the Tate Gallery, the Musée de l'Annonciade in St Tropez, the Musée Henri-Martin in Cahors, the Musée du Petit Palais in Geneva, the Fondation Bemberg in Toulouse, and the National Gallery in Prague. They have also been presented at the Marmottan Monet Museum and at the Palais Lumière, on the occasion of temporary exhibitions.

Museums

Musée National d'Art Moderne de Paris

Musée National d'Art Moderne de Londres

Tate Gallery

Musée de l'Annonciade, Saint-Tropez

Musée Henri-Martin, Cahors,

Musée du Petit Palais, Genève

Fondation Bemberg, Toulouse

Galerie nationale de Prague

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