

ORDRUPGAARD

PRESS RELEASE

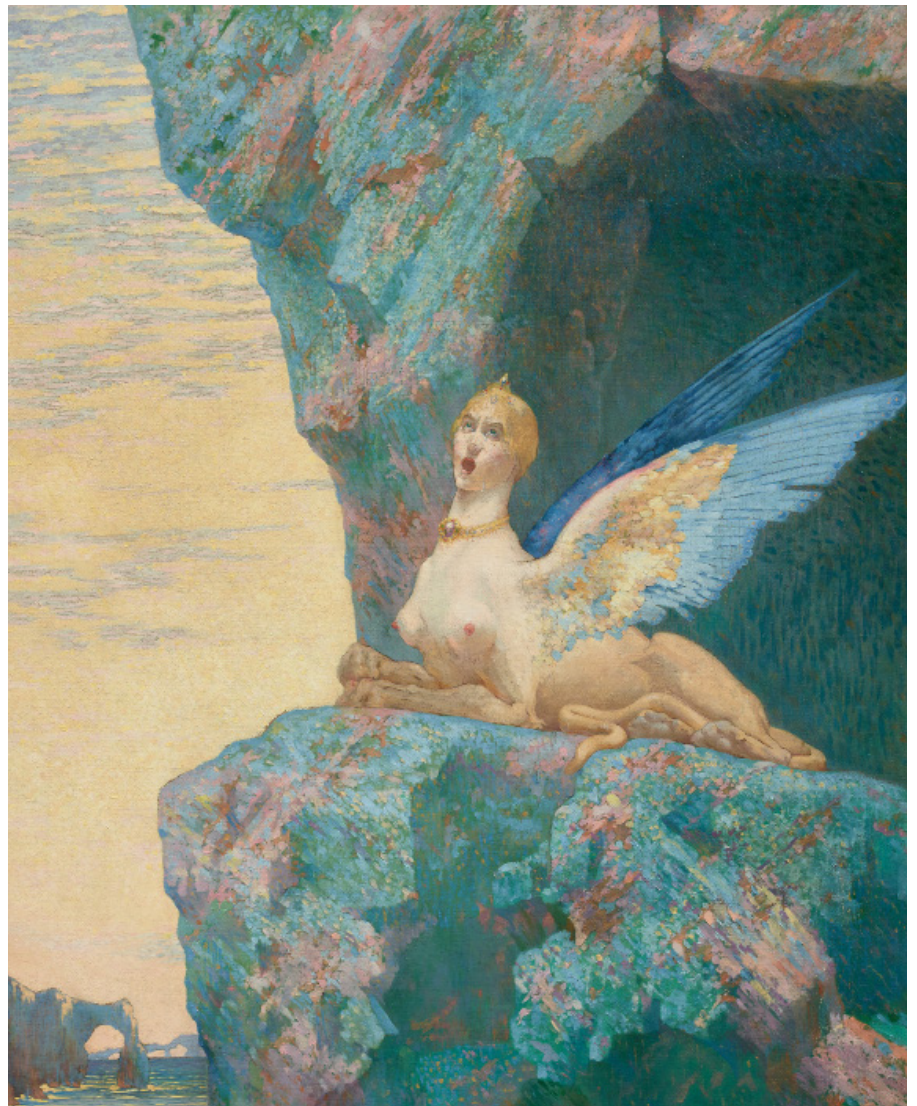
16 January 2025

Exhibition dates

5 February- 15 June 2025

Press meeting

4 February 10am-12am



INTO THE DREAMS. SYMBOLISM

5 FEBRUARY - 15 JUNE 2025

ORDRUPGAARD
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With focus on spirituality, mysticism, and gender, idealistic symbolism moves into Ordrupgaard in the spring of 2025. The exhibition is realised through an extraordinary collaboration with the French art collector Lucile Audouy, who has agreed to loan the museum a total of sixty-three works by thirty-six artists. The exhibition features works of art by the most acclaimed symbolist names, like Gustave Moreau, Maurice Denis, Odilon Redon, and Fernand Khnopff, as well as other artists, now presented in a Danish context. Symbolists were driven by an urge to expose the deeper meaning of existence. The movement emerged towards the late nineteenth century as a reaction to modern society in which Nietzsche had asserted that God was dead and where conditions were largely dictated by the gains achieved by industrialisation and science.

'They [the symbolists] were interested in transcending superficial reality through mystical, dreamlike, and allegorical pictures to reveal the deeper truths that harbour the unfathomable essence of life itself.' – Jørn Boisen, senior lecturer at the University of Copenhagen.

IDEALISTIC SYMBOLISM

The poet Jean Moréas's manifesto, published in the newspaper *Le Figaro* in 1886, marked the beginning of symbolism, which existed as a movement until the years preceding World War I, when it dwindled. Most of the artists were French but, as an international movement, it drew artists from many countries to the Parisian melting pot. Here they flocked, for example, around the legendary and virtually occult *Salons de la Rose+Croix* (1892–97), to which leading philosophers, poets, artists, and composers were also invited.

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Quintessentially, thinking and the interconnection of artforms formed the core of idealistic symbolism. The exhibition title *Into the Dreams. Symbolism* is borrowed from the symbolist poet Marcel Schwob's collection of short stories *La Porte des Rêves (The Gate of Dreams)* from 1899.

For the artists, it meant moving away from the everyday motifs and shimmering impressions of light and shade favoured by naturalism and impressionism. Stories from conventional urban life gave way to symbolist pictures with hints of a deeper existential meaning to which the artists, as self-proclaimed prophets, had specific access. Their inspiration came from anything from ancient legends to mythology, Catholicism, and other more occult aspects of spirituality. They reverted to the stylistic expression of the gothic and early Renaissance periods, which they felt offered them a more spiritual expression.

The exhibition is divided into three themes: *Tales and Legends*, *Into the Underworld*, and *Mystical Landscapes*, each of which highlights important aspects of idealistic symbolism. Sparks fly between the sexes when androgynous figures and *femmes fatales* offer new perspectives on identity and sexuality. Moreover, the boundary is blurred between the inner and outer world in animate landscapes pointing down into the abyss and into eternity.

PRIVATE ART COLLECTION COMES TO ORDRUPGAARD

'Lucile Audouy's collection provides a glimpse of the atmosphere that prevailed at the beginning of the twentieth century. It entices viewers to open the gate of dreams and enter the secret, ideal, and mystical world of symbolism.' – **Marion Sergent, art historian, lecturer at the University of Strasbourg and assistant to Lucile Audouy.**

Lucile Audouy's remarkable collection is usually kept behind closed doors in her private home and is the result of more than fifty years of impassioned collecting activities and pioneering work to allow idealistic symbolism a more prominent position in art history. Comprising more than three hundred works – including paintings, drawings, lithographs, sculptures, decorative art, poems, novels, and posters – it has, on several occasions, formed the cornerstone of profiled exhibitions at leading museums worldwide from the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York.

With the exhibition *Into the Dreams. Symbolism*, Ordrupgaard's collection of impressionist and post-impressionist art, created as a private initiative by the

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founding couple Henny and Wilhelm Hansen, will now be joined by another private collection. The two collections, both the result of an avid collector's spirit, represent French art from the same period; however, the focus of Audouy's collection differs from that of the founding couple, and the loaned works thus nuance and add new perspectives to Ordrupgaard's collection.

SYMBOLISM IN A NEW LIGHT

Paul Gauguin is represented by eleven works in Ordrupgaard's collection, and the museum has addressed Gauguin and synthetism, another branch of symbolism, in earlier exhibitions. Whereas art history has typically deemed the simplified shapes of synthetism, the large colour planes, and sharp contours modern and visionary, idealistic symbolism has, for years, tended to be overshadowed by the colourful art of synthetism.

The exhibition *Into the Dreams. Symbolism* brings idealistic symbolism back into focus as its beliefs seem to resonate with today's world, where spirituality is back on the agenda and gender roles and identity are truly open to question.

CURATORS

The exhibition is curated by Dorthe Vangsgaard Nielsen, senior curator, and Malene Anthon, museum registrar. Scenographic assistance by Fie Reffelt and light design by Arthur van der Zaag.

CATALOGUE

The exhibition catalogue (in Danish) contains articles by leading experts including Rodolphe Rapetti, Marion Sergent, Jørn Boisen, and Kasper Opstrup.

The introductory article on the idealistic branch of symbolism is written by Rodolphe Rapetti, director of the national heritage castles in Compiègne and Blérancourt in France. Marion Sergent, lecturer, discusses Lucile Audouy's collection and its specific themes. Jørn Boisen, senior lecturer, elucidates symbolism in visual art and its close links with contemporary literature, while Kasper Opstrup, senior lecturer, examines symbolist connections to occultism.

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FOUNDATIONS

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Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansens Fond
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