

Modern and rococo in an elite residence

analyzing Eufrásia Teixeira Leite's dilemmas through her interior decoration choices and artwork possessions during the Belle Époque (1898-1930)

Uma residência de elite moderna e rococó: uma análise dos dilemas de Eufrásia Teixeira Leite através de suas escolhas para decoração de interiores e seus objetos de arte durante a Belle Époque (1898-1930)

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ABSTRACT

This paper maps some artworks and personal objects from the collection of Brazilian investor Eufrásia Teixeira Leite (1850-1930) as indicators of her taste and perspective as a liberal woman during the Belle Époque. The main sources are the postmortem inventory of her *hôtel particulier* in Paris, auction sales catalogs, and magazines, which were grouped with secondary sources, including specialized literature. This set of documents was analyzed under a qualitative approach, following the premises of documentary analysis. Among a vast list of possessions, furniture, tapestry, and valuable objects are highlighted as the main elements of a preliminary activity as an art collector and the connection of this practice with other sides of her life. The presence and distribution of the objects in her home allow us to interpret Eufrásia as a conservative woman with classical taste, with a focus on 18th century rococo, but with dilemmas concerning the traditional role of the *bourgeois* woman, especially about family and work practices.

Keywords: interior decoration; Eufrásia Teixeira Leite; French Third Republic; art collection; rococo.

RESUMO

O artigo mapeia obras de arte e objetos pessoais pertencentes à coleção da investidora brasileira Eufrásia Teixeira Leite (1850-1930), como indicadores de seu gosto pessoal e sua perspectiva como uma mulher liberal durante a *Belle Époque*. As principais fontes utilizadas são a lista de objetos de seu *hôtel particulier*, em Paris, disponível no seu inventário *postmortem*, catálogos de leilões de arte, e revistas; material esse agrupado com fontes secundárias. O conjunto foi analisado numa ótica qualitativa, seguindo as premissas da crítica documental. Em meio a uma vasta lista de bens, mobiliário, tapeçaria e objetos de valor, destacam-se os principais elementos de uma atividade inicial como colecionadora de arte e a conexão dessa prática com outras facetas de sua vida. A presença e a distribuição dos objetos no edifício nos permitem interpretar Eufrásia como uma mulher de base conservadora e gosto clássico, voltado sobretudo para os séculos XVII e XVIII, mas com dilemas sobre o papel tradicional da mulher num cenário burguês, especialmente com relação à estrutura de família e trabalho remunerado.

Palavras-chave: decoração de interiores; Eufrásia Teixeira Leite; Terceira República Francesa; coleção de arte; rococó.



Introduction

Until the 1990s, Brazilian investor Eufrásia Teixeira Leite (1850-1930) was mostly mentioned in historical literature as the *fiancée* of politician Joaquim Nabuco (1849-1910) (Benzaquen, 2009). Recent works stress her undeniable talent and success as a financial investor¹ during the Belle Époque; by her death, she had multiplied her family's fortune and was a millionaire (Catharino, 1992; Falci; Melo, 2021; Sá Corrêa, 2010). However, recent approaches also attribute Eufrásia a bold profile, as a pioneer in several *facettes* of her life, and an individual who wasn't afraid to question the traditional gender roles in a *bourgeois* structure (Ribeiro, 2011), by choosing a financial career over marriage, children and family life. Was this the case? To what extent?

This paper interprets Eufrásia's personality on a deeper level through an analysis of her interior decoration choices at her main adult residence: a *hôtel particulier* at 40, rue Bassano, 8^e arrondissement, Paris. Eufrásia's selection of artworks, souvenir collections, and decorations will therefore be used to break the "wall of private life" (Perrot, 1999a) and better understand her perspectives and dilemmas during the Belle Époque.

The *hôtel particulier* at 40, rue Bassano and Eufrásia's postmortem inventory

Eufrásia's *hôtel particulier* was bought for 395 thousand francs in 1898, from the original builder of the place, Peruvian businessman Juan Manuel de Osma², "according to a contract received by Maîtres Courcier and Legay, clerks in Paris" (Archives Nationales, 1934)³. The acquisition was made by Eufrásia and her older sister, Francisca (1845-

¹ Eufrásia's trajectory in finance became the topic of an itinerant exhibition at B3 Museum – the museum for the Brazilian stock exchange in São Paulo – in April 2024 (Mayrink, 2024).

² Juan Manuel de Osma y Ramírez de Arellano was born in Lima, Peru, in 1833, to a Spanish father and a Peruvian mother. He moved to Paris, where he worked in finance. He died in Paris as a bachelor, in 1901 (Moreno Ramírez de Arellano, 2019).

³ In French, "suivant contrat reçu par Mes. Courcier et Legay, notaires à Paris".

1899), who then became the *hôtel*'s owners. The property, with 659 m² in total, was built in 1874 (Archives de Paris, 1935) and was distributed between a basement, the house (the connection of two buildings, with two to three stories), a party salon, a winter garden (with a metallic greenhouse structure), and a court. Although there are no pictures of the building, one architectural plant indicates the general division of the place and its street location (figure 1). While officially the address was at number 40, the structure was a mix of numbers 38 and 40.



Figure 1. The *hôtel particulier*'s architectural plant and location in Paris.

Eufrásia Teixeira Leite (1931).

The *hôtel particulier*'s façade was made of *pierre de taille*; the interiors had wooden floors (oak) in “point de Hongrie” and “à l’anglaise” and two oak staircases⁴. This description, even pictureless, converges with the ideal of a classical Parisian building, during and after the Haussmanian renovations of the city (Daumard, 1964, p. 4-5). Moreover, the address left no doubts: living on the corner of the Champs Élysées, the Teixeira Leite sisters were at the very core of Paris' financial and elite perimeter⁵.

⁴ Rapport d'expertise concernant un hôtel particulier situé 38-40, rue Bassano, Paris par M. Pierre Caziot (Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, 1931).

⁵ In 1884, the sisters' street neighbors were the Baron of Lamberterie (n. 28), the Count and Countess de Waldner de Freundstein (n. 50), Mr. And Mrs. Gouttenoire (n. 54), M. De Osma (n. 54), the Duchess of Grammont (n. 56) and the Viscount Gouy d'Arcy (n. 56) (Rue Bassano, 1884, p. 284).

Due to this curious absence of almost any visual source concerning this building or its owners, Eufrásia's postmortem inventory is, by far, the best documentation for us to (partially) reconstitute the house's interior decoration⁶. It lists more than 1.224 items in 410 different entries, with a total value of 700,122 francs (Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, 1931)⁷. Among the pieces, we find a detailed selection of paintings, tapestry, several statues, silverware, and China collections.

A few milestones contributed to what can be seen as a stellar trajectory, that resulted in Eufrásia landing in one of Paris' most prestigious neighborhoods, and, as we will see, with all the classic symbols of success for this timeframe. Born in Vassouras, in the Brazilian region of the Paraíba Valley (120 km from Rio de Janeiro), to a wealthy family connected to coffee production, Eufrásia and her sister Francisca could at first be seen as fine ladies from the rural elite. Traditionally, the expected trajectory for this position would include marriage, children, and keen management of domestic tasks. Although no piece of evidence points out that the Teixeira Leites were radically against this model, the girls' upbringing had considerable twists.

First, Joaquim José, the girls' father, earned a Law Degree from the Faculty of São Paulo and distanced himself from traditional rural labor in coffee plantations; he worked as a factor (*comissário de café*), thus managing the planters' fortunes and payments. Moreover, he built a long trajectory as a politician, dividing his time between Vassouras and Rio de Janeiro, the country's capital at the time. The fact that the family had manors in both cities is a strong indicator that his wife and children might have also lived, at least partially, in both places (Soares, 2024a).

Second, Francisca suffered from an unknown disease and the Teixeira Leites spent two years in Europe (1857-1859), seeking treatment for her (Correio [...], 1858). This period abroad allowed the

⁶ The central role of the *postmortem* documentation for the entire research concerning Eufrásia and her family was discussed in Soares (2024a; 2025).

⁷ This sum was the total estimation attributed by the inventory writers – the final selling prices were different and sometimes the pieces were not sold, but we do not know their destination (Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, 1931).

girls to be direct witnesses of European modernization, which was constantly mentioned in Brazilian newspapers as an example to be followed (Barman, 2022). In Brazil, the girls received a modern education, attending Madame Grivet's school, a comprehensive institution that began its operations at Sebastião Lacerda, a town next to Vassouras, and later moved to the carioca neighborhood of Botafogo (Rio de Janeiro, 1858)⁸.

The family expectations faced another turnover when, between 1870 and 1873, Eufrásia and Francisca lost their parents and their grandmother. They received a wealthy inheritance that, in an unlikely scenario for this timeframe, was mostly liquid, composed of cash and stock options. They were young, independent women who not only were free to choose their next move but also had solid material means to live a comfortable life overseas⁹; they moved to Paris in 1873.

Although this decision might sound very bold for Brazilian standards of the second half of the 19th century, the sisters were strategic in choosing Paris. The City of Lights was one of the most important political, economic, scientific, and social hubs of the time; it was also known for its cosmopolitan approach, and its tolerance toward female independence (Fey; Racine, 2000). The city hosted a relevant South American population, with an over-representation of elite members of different countries of the continent. The sisters were familiar with the local language and belonged to a selected network, including the Brazilian Imperial family and its close supporters, such as the Baron of Estrela (Soares, 2025), who also lived in Paris.

On the other hand, by the 1870s, coffee production at the Paraíba Valley suffered an undeniable decline; the search for virgin land to keep on planting new crops moved further west, eventually contributing to the development of the region that, today, is the state of São Paulo (Stein, 1985). In this sense, the sum of the local conjuncture – where the sisters' relatives would likely still expect them to comply

⁸ Marie-Françoise-Barbara Stoecklin was born in Freiburg, Switzerland, in 1817. She married fellow Adrien Grivet, who, among other things, wrote a grammar book in Portuguese. The school moved from the Paraíba Valley to the city of Rio de Janeiro in 1862 (Suisse, 1817).

⁹ See Falci and Melo (2021) for a discussion about the family's financial possessions.

with traditional norms – and their educational, social, and material skills made the journey towards France an intelligent move.

Eufrásia and Francisca's approach as (privileged) immigrants is little known. However, they clearly had an excellent adaptation and developed strong ties with an elite and aristocratic network, both with French people and foreigners. The *hôtel particulier*, bought 25 years after they arrived in Paris, can be seen as a physical coronation of their financial success, as well as the confirmation to enjoy a lively neighborhood, with strong social and commercial appeal¹⁰. Before, they lived in Versailles and at 1, rue d'Albe (Fernandes, 2012, p. 64)¹¹, also in the 8^e arrondissement.

This type of building has a special relevance in Parisian geography, not only because of its architectural imponent but also because it represents the lifestyle and taste of the family who lived there. It is not unusual to call a specific *hôtel particulier* by its name, such as the Hôtel de Brunoy, the Hôtel de Villemaré or the Hôtel Salé, stressing their uniqueness. The strong ties between this architecture and finance are also neat. Not only many owners of *hôtels particuliers*, such as the Pereire or de Camondo families, founded banks or financial institutions, but eventually the *hôtels* became the modern headquarters for companies such as J.P. Morgan (at the Hôtel de la Fare), the Banque de France (at the Hôtel Gaillard), and similar. The grandiosity of these buildings often led them to be well taken care of, even after the death of the main owner (Gady, 2011). Curiously, the home of the Teixeira Leite sisters had another fate.

After Francisca died in 1899¹², Eufrásia lived with her domestic staff at rue Bassano until 1925, when she moved back to Brazil. Although the initial idea was to stay in Rio and Vassouras only tem-

¹⁰ Eufrásia and Francisca were often mentioned in newspapers as participants of social events. See Gil Blas (1884); Gil Blas (1889); Le Figaro (1891); Le Matin (1891); La Liberté (1891).

¹¹ The rue d'Albe was renamed rue Lincoln in 1879.

¹² Document from the Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty, under the custody of Escritório de Representação do Ministério das Relações Exteriores no Rio de Janeiro, belonging to the fonds of the Brazilian consular office in Paris for the year 1899, located at shelf 260, section 2, bundle 12.

porarily, she became too frail to travel back to France, something she wished with all her heart, and died in Rio in 1930¹³.

After her death, her attorneys, brothers Antonio José and Raul Fernandes, began a very detailed postmortem inventory of her possessions. Eufrásia's will stated that most of her fortune should be donated to charity and her hometown of Vassouras, under the condition that schools and hospitals be built (Sá Corrêa, 2010). One major exception was the destiny of the Ivy House, the sisters' childhood home in Vassouras. Shortly before their departure to Paris in 1873, Francisca and Eufrásia decided that the house should be kept exactly as it used to be when their parents, and especially their father, were alive. This was only possible due to the dedicated efforts of the housekeeper, Manoel Rebello, and other people; the entire management was organized through overseas correspondence until Eufrásia's comeback in 1925. After she passed away, the place was donated to a Catholic sisterhood and eventually was converted into a public house-museum, thanks to Raul Fernandes' initiatives to do (Soares, 2024b).

If the Ivy House's maintenance could be seen as the sisters' attempt to "[...] fight against the cold of death" (Perrot, 1999a, p. 7), the *hôtel particulier* was in a mediocre state by 1930. It suffered from Eufrásia's distancing, since she was not in France anymore; for all purposes, this big manor was filled with objects but empty of humans between 1925 and 1930. The main documentation from the postmortem inventory analyzes the house's goods and general situation with a keen purpose: to prepare a selling procedure, as soon as possible. Pierre Caziot, the real estate specialist hired by the Fernandes attorneys, bluntly stated that the house's belongings were "old-fashioned according to current taste" and that renovation works would be mandatory for a new owner to enjoy the place. He recommended demolishing the building, while the location was seen as "excellent"¹⁴.

¹³ See a short message from Eufrásia to her agent, Albert Guggenheim, August 1930, in Umbelina Teixeira Leite dos Santos Silva et al. (1932).

¹⁴ See Caziot, report available in Eufrásia Teixeira Leite (1931).

Nevertheless, when Raul Fernandes was officially made Eufrásia's representative abroad, the house was sealed; driver Paul Valade and his wife, Lucie Fosses, became the *gardiens des scellés* or guards of the seals¹⁵, that is, responsible for the housekeeping during the listing of the postmortem inventory. Its description is slightly biased, according to the value attributed to the objects by the document's authors. First, the entries sometimes consider "batches" of goods, instead of systematically detailing each piece. In this sense, one single entry might include a large volume of items that would be sold together, and to which an estimated price was calculated. This was the case of "a small set of carpet rugs (used)"¹⁶, listed for 25 francs, or "circa forty items, glasses, cups, saucers, *bonbonnières*, [...] etc."¹⁷, listed for sixty francs.

While artworks, silverware, tapestry and furniture could be described in detail, even considering their origin, materials, and possible artist, the lack of value of other goods (in the specialist's perspective) led the description to be much vaguer. In one of the *hôtel particulier's* rooms, the postmortem inventory noticed "a set of bed bases, chairs, armchairs, closet, 'toilette' bed and some objects in bad shape, which do not deserve to be described"¹⁸ that was listed for 150 francs.

Since the house sale was imminent, curator Fernand Lair-Dubreuil was hired to analyze the artwork and select the most valuable pieces to be sold in auction sales. He was a respected professional, who eventually became president of the *Chambre des commissaires-priseurs du département de la Seine*. His Parisian headquarters were at 6, rue Favart (2^e arrondissement)¹⁹. In this sense, the

¹⁵ The inventory procedures were turbulent. On September 19, 1930, less than a week after Eufrásia died, Raul Fernandes sent a telegram to N L T Fernandes, stating that it was "impossible to seal the house closed lifeless ignoring trustees Keys Will seal exterior entries Telegraph João Lopes" (Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, 1931). The next day, Fernandes sent another telegram to the same person, saying "got keys sealed all rooms dot House guardian declared Judge existence titles Money deposited Paureau et Briel – João Lopes" (Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, 1931).

¹⁶ In French, "un petit lot de tapis en moquette (usagés)" (Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, 1931).

¹⁷ In French, "environ quarante pièces, verres, tasses, soucoupes, *bonbonnières* [...], etc" (Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, 1931).

¹⁸ In French, "un lot de sommiers, chaises, fauteuils, armoire, lit toilette et quantité d'objets en mauvais état ne méritant pas description" (Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, 1931).

¹⁹ Étude de Me. Lair-Dubreuil, commissaires-priseurs, December 21, 1931, to the Succession of Miss Teixeira Leite (Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, 1931).

objects considered valuable enough to be included in these auction sales are seen in two parallel lists: the general compilation of the postmortem inventory, and the curator's own selection.

The first listing of furniture ("objets mobiliers"), prepared by the inventory's authors, was done during the implementation of the seals in September 1930, but a final inventory was prepared between July 9 and July 17, 1931²⁰. However, Lair-Dubreuil died on October 21, 1931 (Institut national d'histoire de l'art, 2017), and the auction preparations were resumed by another curator - Maurice Ader²¹. The main list of artworks and objects indicates that they were sold at the end of the same year, on two rounds: November 6-7 and December 7-8 (Lair-Dubreuil; Bottolier-Lasquin, 1931a; 1931b). The sales total was 406,975 francs, after considering the entire sales costs (table 1).

Service	Price
Catalog reproductions	4000 fr
Sales commission	45291 fr
Insurance and keeping tapestry in the safe, mounting the tapestries on frames for presentation	1500 fr
Paying Kratz, the cabinetmaker	190 fr
Maintenances at Rue Bassano	400,75 fr
Transportation of the objects to the office and to the photo booth	233,80 fr
Transportation of the objects to the auction sales' <i>hôtel</i> (Invoice from Paulin & Détrés)	200 fr
Stamp and registration of discharge	18,60 fr
Total	52,834 fr

Table 1. Sales costs from the auction sales of Eufrásia's selected items. Built by the author with info from Eufrásia Teixeira Leite (1931) and Lair-Dubreuil and Bottelier-Lasquin (1931a, 1931b).

²⁰ Maître Léon Vigier confirmed the inventory on August 22, 1931. Vigier was then replacing Maître Louis Bossy, who was the process' main clerk, for a short time (Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, 1931).

²¹ Letter from M. La Francesca, from the Banque Française et Italienne pour l'Amérique du Sud, December 21, 1931, probably to Raul Fernandes (Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, 1931). The Ader company still exists today (Ader, [2022]).

Other gestures of this attempt to “empty the *hôtel particulier*” are the shipping of different items to Brazil in September/October 1931, via the vessel *Jamaïque*²². Besides, a set of worn clothes was sent to Brazil in 1932²³. Albert Guggenheim, Eufrásia's agent, expected another auction sale by January 1932. He mentions that some paintings, such as “Tantin, Latour, Vernel etc.”, as well as “valuable objects”, are already kept by the company Lair-Dubreuil after the two first rounds of auction sales²⁴. On March 14th, 1932, the Banque Française et Italienne stated that eight paintings were sold four days before, for 12,210 francs; moreover, Ader was responsible for selling other artwork, the *hôtel's* furniture, and even Eufrásia's car²⁵. The sum of this third-round sale reached 259,236.45 francs²⁶.

However, the emptying procedures of the building seemed to be never-ending. By the same date of March 14th, the Banque observes that “boxes containing clothes and other personal objects” still are at the *hôtel*. The institution wants to know which will be the fate of these goods, possibly expecting the place to be clear and available for any interested buyer as soon as possible. Little did they know that the *hôtel particulier's* sale would be a failure. Back in 1930, Pierre Caziot lamented the drastic context of the financial crash: a few

²² Invoice of several items demanded by dr. Raul Fernandes – Legacy of Mrs. Euphrasia Teixeira Leite a Vaz de Carvalho e Filho, September 30, 1931 (Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, 1931). The following items were shipped: 1 box 69 x 69 x 131 cm, gross weight 171 kg; 1 marble statue “Virgin with child”; 1 box 98 x 69 x 123 cm, gross weight 229 kg; 1 female bust in marble; 1 box 168 x 168 x 48 cm, gross weight 225 kg; 1 large silver frame with female painting; 1 golden frame made of wood; 1 “do.” with a picture of a woman; 1 “do.” with a watercolor fan; 1 pack of saint images and fans; 2 sets of pictures; 1 “do.” on frames and other; 1 “do.” books and other; 1 “dr.” prayers; 2 “do.” pictures; 1 “do.” books about general measuring; 1 “do.” mother-of-pearl and ivory; 1 “do.” pictures on frames + books (2 broken glasses); 1 “do.” saint images and “chapelets”. The total weight of the objects listed after the 3rd box was 36.5 kg. Total cost, including packing, boxes, 1 box no.4557, marine insurance policy, theft insurance, war insurance, a consulate invoice, shipping price: 3368 francs. The entire shipping was sent by A. Vaz de Carvalho & Filho, from Paris, on October 7, 1931. The meaning of the words “do.” and “dr.” are not clear.

²³ Correspondence to Raul Fernandes, June 24, 1932. Document available in Eufrásia Teixeira Leite (1931).

²⁴ Letter from Albert Guggenheim, December 12th, 1931, probably to Raul Fernandes. Document available in Eufrásia Teixeira Leite (1931).

²⁵ The postmortem inventory indicates the presence of an “automobile Delage (coupé) 1924 11 HP”, estimated at 8000 francs in 1931 (Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, 1931).

²⁶ Letter of the Banque Française et Italienne pour l'Amérique du Sud, March 14th, 1932, probably to Raul Fernandes. Document available in Eufrásia Teixeira Leite (1931).

years before, the manor's m² could reach 6000 francs. However, the house's state (considered poor by this specialist), the decoration, and the shadowy vibe perceived by Caziot reduced his estimation by half. The best-selling price would be somewhere between 2.3 and 2.6 million francs.

Soon, the sellers would realize that such a price was unreachable. The *hôtel particulier* was finally put on sale in 1935, at first for 1.7 million francs²⁷; then its price was reduced to a million francs, and then to 500 thousand francs. It would be finally bought by Belgian Jacques Maxime Wittouck²⁸ (1882-1987) in 1936 (Archives Nationales, 1931; 1934), for 550 thousand francs²⁹. The sale was the final gesture to disjoint Eufrásia's interior decoration collection.

The art of living with art: interior decoration strategies at the end of the 19th century

The postmortem inventory's long list of refined objects should not be a surprise: during the 19th century, the organization of an "interior curation" was a common practice among the Parisian elite. In France, the monarchie de Juillet (1830-1848) was "the golden age of the archeological cabinet, of the interior museum [...]. The collector privileges the antique object; he ambitions to 'save history' and does not consider reselling. By his death, the curator will dis-

²⁷ "À la séance de la chambre des notaires du 28 janvier [...] revient un hôtel particulier 38-40 Rue Bassano, successivement mix à prix 1,700,000 francs le 22 janvier 1935, puis un million de francs le 2 avril 1935, enfin 500,000 francs soit 759 francs le mq droits non compris" (Le marché [...], 1936, p. 6).

²⁸ Born at Lev St Pierre, Belgium, Wittouck was a descendant of Belgian nobility. He was a lieutenant in artillery, and manager for several industries belonging to his family, including the sugar industries of Pontelongo, Romania (1910-1948) and the artificial silk industries in Tubize. This Society had a strong impact on the Russian production of artificial silk. Wittouck was also vice-president of the Clabecq Ironworks (1946-1948), a representative of the Banque du Hainaut (1915-1934), and a consul for Belgium in Monte Carlo. In 1929, he had already earned the titles of Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, Officier de la couronne de Belgique, Chevalier de l'Ordre de Léopold, and was a honorary consul of Peru in Monaco, where he resided at the hôtel des Anglais. In 1936, he lived in Monte Carlo, at the Boulevard de l'Observatoire, 40 (Eymin, 1929, p. 3).

²⁹ Wittouck also had other buildings, including the Théâtre Daunou, in Paris, which as co-property with his mistress Jane Renouardt. The Théâtre was decorated by Jeanne Lanvin (Musée des Arts Décoratifs, [20--]).

tribute all his treasures” (Corbin, 1999, p. 457). This was exactly the case with Eufrásia’s artwork set – which we might attribute mostly to her since she outlived Francisca for 31 years. Even if Francisca might have contributed to the general decoration choices, the fact that Eufrásia chose to keep a specific arrangement might also be a pathway to explore how she dealt with memory.

Ideally, this impressive collection would be easier to interpret through visual material, that is, the objects and their depictions; with the scarcity of pictures and personal documents from Eufrásia, our better guides were the postmortem inventory and the selected items from Lair-Dubreuil and Ader. The two auction sales catalogs provided some detailed descriptions of the selected goods, with a few pictures. Eufrásia was not directly mentioned in the catalogs; rather, her collection items had the following warning: “Depends on the succession of Mme. T.L.” (Lair-Dubreuil; Bottelier-Lasquin, 1931b, p. 5). Therefore, this information had to be crossed with the objects’ distribution in the different rooms of the *hôtel particulier* to confirm that both sources discussed the same goods, since the inventory described most entries according to the building’s architectural plant³⁰ (table 2). We can see this distribution as following the idea of an “organic ensemble” (Silverman, 1989, p. 28) with the composition of the spaces, the artwork and the furniture as parts of a single repertoire, while reflecting, to some point, the variety of *facettes* from the house owner. In this sense, if the woman was an *objet d’art* in the rococo perspective (Silverman, 1989, p. 29), this case could see the development of intimacy in a home as an artwork as well.

³⁰ The *postmortem* inventory also listed the items found inside closets, over the tables and in similar situations.

House floor	House rooms
Basement	Kitchen
Ground floor	Entry hall, party salon, room behind the party salon, small living room, dining room, tiny closet under the stairs
Stairs	Stairs leading to the first floor
First floor	Antechamber, large salon by the left, bathroom, tiny piece, driver's room, guardian's room, two storerooms, staff room, kitchen, large room on the right of the antechamber, tiny office next to the large room
Second floor	Room on the right, antechamber, first room on the left, second room on the left, storeroom, hall, three rooms
Items listed by category found either inside a cupboard or a safe	Pieces in fur, linen, silverware, jewelry, personal items (clothing, shoes, etc)
Exterior of the house	Stable/garage

Table 2. Listing of the *hôtel particulier*'s rooms according to the floors. Developed by the author with data from Eufrásia Teixeira Leite (1931).

This art of “living with art” (Levy, 2023, p. 112) was very present in the typical decoration of the *hôtels particuliers* and the Teixeira Leite sisters were no exception. In these cases, objects and milieu create a specific scenography, derived from “a conscient intention from an author” (Levy, 2023, p. 115) – in this case, the homeowner(s). The collection represents and idealizes aspects of the owner(s)’s personality, as well as his or her feats to obtain the chosen items; the curation of the house can be extended to a curation of the self, in a theatre of sociability and a theatre of memory. In this sense, the objects are a “witness of the survival of a taste” (Higonnet, 2003 *apud* Silveira, 2023, p. 409) since they surpass the collector’s life-time, but they might also indicate the different uses of the space to reflect tastes, milestones, affections and other relevant points for an individual. Curiously enough, the house converted into a post-mortem house-museum was not the *hôtel particulier*, with the main collection of artworks, but the Ivy House, where the regular home

was expected to become a “frozen tridimensional version” of a cherished period: the sisters’ youth.

One paradigmatic case of Parisian interior decoration with artwork can be seen at the Hôtel Gaillard (figures 2-3). The small living room, the big living room, and the painting gallery of the building show Émile Gaillard’s selection as an example of a bourgeois art collection in the late 19th century. The ensemble was sold after his death in 1902 and the hôtel Gaillard was put for sale in 1904. It was acquired by the Banque de France in 1919 and used as the institution’s headquarters until 2006. Today, the *hôtel* hosts the Cité de l’Économie – Citéco³¹. This distribution of artwork has a strong tendency to fill every space of the walls or the rooms; the number of items listed in Eufrásia’s postmortem inventory indicated that she possibly followed the same ideal. This could explain the striking contrast between Pierre Caziot’s expectations – at the beginning of the 1930s, surrounded by clean features and new art tendencies – and his perspective of “old fashioned” items.



Figure 2. Hotel Gaillard, Grand salon, Galerie of modern painting and art space with furniture. Picture taken on July 08, 1919.

Banque de France, code BIN000703.

³¹ See Cité de l’Économie (2019b).

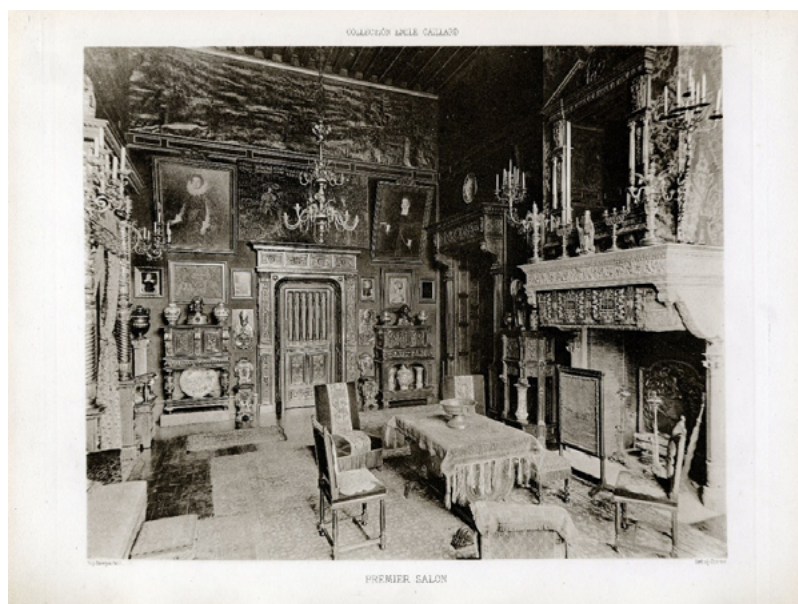


Figure 3. Gravure printing of the hôtel Gaillard's premier salon, circa 1904. Current office of the Contrôleur. Fireplace of venitian origin(16th century) in Istrian stone. Printer: Georges PETIT; engraver: CHAUVET. Banque de France, code BIN000518.

Eufrásia probably worked at home and led an intense social life, including regular receptions at the *hôtel particulier* – there is no better indicator for this than the party salon³². Therefore, the building's rooms should consider professional, social, and private uses and the distribution of furniture, small items (such as statues), and tapestry reinforces this premise. It's important to stress that these main events were probably destined for other members of the elite, “[...] insulated in a ‘closed, gilded world’ where politics was replaced by ‘a government of manners’” (Silverman, 1989, p. 25).

There is no concrete indication of Eufrásia's, or the sisters', art collection strategy. Eufrásia is only mentioned twice at the *Gazette de l'Hôtel Drouot*, an auction sales newsletter related to this prestigious sales place. In 1908, she bought the painting *Vue des bords du Rhin*, by Schütz, for 500 francs (*Revue [...]*, 1908, p. 2). This artwork could have been painted either by Christian Schütz the Elder (1718-1791), or Christian Schütz the Younger (1758-1823) – both were German painters, who enjoyed depicting the Rhine borders and land-

³² The sisters held at least one *matinée musicale* and one *soirée musicale* during the 1890s (Soares, 2025).

scape³³. In 1912, she bought a miniature by Claude Bornet: *Portrait de femme aux rubans violets* (Revue [...], 1919, p. 2) for 2,950 francs. Bornet (1733-1804) had a reputation as a portraitist and favored miniatures, as shown in figure 4. Several princesses of the French nobility, and even writer Denis Diderot, sat for him. He also illustrated Le Sage's novel *Gil Blas* (1795)³⁴, and possibly some of Marquis de Sade's works.



Figure 4. Portrait of Unknown Woman.

Claude Bornet, lithography, undated.

Bornet, [17--].

Those two choices found in Drouot's newsletter anticipated part of the artwork listed by Lair-Dubreuil/Ader. Amongst the 22 entries of the items selected to be sold in auction sales, eight are paintings, with a high representation of the 18th century French school (particularly gouache) and similar artwork (table 3). At the time, the gouache technique referred to a modified version from watercolor, intending to be opaque (Doerner, 1977, p. 113).

³³ The painting's current price was estimated at 5-7 thousand euros (Lempertz, 2022).

³⁴ Copies of the 4 volumes are available at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, object numbers 9.a.2.3, 9.a.2.4, 9.a.2.5, 9.a.2.6.

	Name / description	Description coming from the sales catalog ³⁵	Size	Sales price
1	Gouache, French school, 18 th century: "La baigneuse"	A half-naked woman, with her bust inclined to the right, with one foot into water, sits over a rock and holds a pink scarf in her right hand	17 x 12 cm	1200 fr
2	Gouache, French school, 18 th century: "Allégorie de la peinture"	N/A	13 x 22 cm	1150 fr
3	Gouache, attributed to Lavreince	"Je ne veux pas voir"	20 x 15 cm	700 fr
4	Gouache from Lavreince: "Le Lever des ouvrières en mode" ³⁶	A window on the left illuminates a room lit up by the talks, the giggles and the games of nine girls who are waking up. A tiny messenger brings a note for one of them; she reads it while he waits and watches one of her fellows combing her hair in front of a mirror. A young woman, sitting in the middle, puts her tights on, and, on the right, two sassy workers open the pint curtains of a bed, where a lazy woman lays, being surprised by the daylight and that implores them [to rest some more] Signed and dated: 1783. Extra comment: "This beautiful gouache seems to be one of the famous compositions engraved by Dequevauviller".	28 x 35 cm	110.000 fr
5	Painting attributed to Debucourt: "L'école indisciplinée"	In a school room where the pupils show rather some distracted attitudes than a zeal, a teacher wearing a houppelande, and holding a stick in his hands, give his students a lesson and tries to bring the order back. On the right, one student cries, over his knees, and wearing a dunce's cap. Extra comment: "Certainly an artwork from the time where he was inspired by the Dutch masters".	37 x 50 cm	4800 fr
6	Painting by Drölling: "La Cueillette interrompue"	A young woman, wearing a brown corselet, a red skirt, a gaze scarf loosely knotted over her breast, walks through a lawn path. She seems to fear some danger and puts, with her left hand, some freshly picked roses in her muslin apron. One of them is lying on the floor, near her feet. In the second plan, a village woman shows up in front of a farm.	32 x 24 cm	8300 fr
7	Painting by Von Huisum: "Vase de fleurs"	Some flowers decorate a jar, that is put over a rock support where a snail is climbing: tulips, iris, anemones, primula, myosotis, wallflowers. On the right, marigolds and stems of open peonies.	79 x 64 cm	29000 fr
8	Painting attributed to Lawrence	"Child's bust". Blond hair, blue eyes, in a ¾ facing the right, bust coming from mist.	30 x 22 cm	5200 fr

Table 3. Listing of selected paintings for auction sales in 1931. Built by the author with info from Lair-Dubreuil and Bottelier-Lasquin (1931a, 1931b).

³⁵ The original comments were in French. All translations were made by the author, unless noticed.

³⁶ Lavreince also painted *Le coucher des ouvrières em mode* in 1788.

Of the eight artworks, two are not attributed to any artist. The other 6 are associated with the following painters: Nicolas Lavreince or Niklas Lafrensen (1737-1807), Philibert-Louis Debucourt (1755-1832), Drölling (either the father, Martin, the son, Michel Martin, or the daughter Louise-Adéone), Jan Van Huysum (1682-1749) and Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830).

Lavreince's life was not deeply explored by art historians. Pierre Lespinasse's 1928 catalog about this itinerant artist stresses a few points:

Born in Stockholm, Lavreince arrived in Paris around 1760 to hone his skills in the art of miniature painting. Back in Sweden, he worked at the royal court as a portrait painter but eventually decided to return to France where he became the first gouache painter of his time. The catalogue's essay insists on the contradictory nature of the artist, who often painted sensual scenes, but lived a rather austere life. Even though Lavreince never exhibited at the Salons and was ignored by Diderot, his work was well-received by the public, and his paintings were often engraved or copied. Indeed, Lavreince was amongst the most successful artists of his time (Lavreince, c2025).

Debucourt was a pupil of Joseph Marie Vien. He produced mezzotints and aquatints. Debucourt's own pupil was his nephew, Jean-Pierre-Marie Jazet (Fenaille, 1899).

Martin Drölling, the father (1751-1817), moved from Alsace to Paris, where he became somewhat successful due to his prolific painting. His works *Interior of a Kitchen* and *Interior of a Dining Room* were exhibited in the city's Salon of 1817, bringing him formal validation as an artist. However, he died just before this event and never saw the success of his work – he would even be mentioned by Balzac in short stories like *Pierre Grassou*, from the *Scènes de la Vie Parisienne*, in the *Comédie Humaine* (Balzac, 2007). Two of Drölling's three children were also painters. Michel Martin Drölling (1786-1851), the son, was a pupil of Jacques-Louis David and received the Prix de Rome in 1810; he developed a reputation as a history painter and portraitist. His painting *Death of Abel* was exhibited in the same Salon of 1817. Finally, Louise-Adéone Drölling (1797-1834) produced only circa a dozen paintings but exhibited her work in the Salons of 1820 and 1831 (Levrat, 2010; Siffer, 2013).

Jan van Huysum also belonged to an established family of artists, from which he currently is the most notable member. He became a great reference for still life, especially compositions of flowers and fruits (Mitchell, 1981).

Finally, Englishman Thomas Lawrence became a very well-known Regency portraitist. After receiving his first royal commission in 1789 (a portrait of Queen Charlotte), he was a major reference to this style until his death, in 1830 (Levey, 2005), and even posthumously.

Although most of these names are not that famous nowadays or were not recognized by the Academy of their time, they were all popular painters of trendy subjects of their period – generally one considered rather uninspired when compared to other contexts, particularly in France. Indeed,

The art of France in the eighteenth century is still one of the most unjustly neglected periods in the entire history of art. Ignored by the general public, omitted from the academic syllabus, despised by the arbiters of fashion, the French eighteenth century seems irremediably tainted as a chocolate box art of powdered *marquises*, gallant abbés and frivolous eroticism. [...] The achievements of French art under Louis XIV, Colbert and Lebrun, though temporarily eclipsed at the height of the Rococo fashion, were never entirely forgotten and continued to provide the standard against which eighteenth-century painters measured their abilities. Indeed, the nostalgia for the Grand Siècle runs like a persistent undercurrent throughout the eighteenth century (Wakefield, 1984, p. 11).

The general topics of the selected artwork are the main subjects of the “*peinture de genre*” of their time, a moment during which the retrieval of rococo was thriving, particularly due to the influence of the Goncourt brothers and their effort to offer “[...] primers of rococo design principles to the nineteenth century” (Silverman, 1989, p. 23). The category “*peinture de genre*” dealt with topics that were neither religious nor historical (Levrat, 2010, p. 73). In the case of Eufrásia’s collection, topics such as allegories, sometimes in rural scenarios; domestic and intimate scenes with hints of sensuality; still art and a portrait of an idealized child (figures 5-10) might be superposed. Although the research found no versions of the paintings listed for

Debucourt, or Drölling, other popular works from these artists, such as *La promenade publique* (figure 8) and *Young Woman in An English Garden* (figure 9), respectively, enhance the style similarity concerning themes and expressions for this selection. The works selected by the curators are mainly from the very turn of the 18th century, sometimes just after the French Revolution.

Figure 5. Lavreince Nicolas (1737-1807) (d'après). Chapuy Jean-Baptiste (1760-1813). *Je ne veux pas voir*. Paris, musée du Louvre, collection Rothschild. Musée du Louvre, 2024a.



Figure 6. *Le lever des ouvrières en mode*, par Lafrensen, Niklas (Nicolas Lavreince ou Lavrince) (1737-1807). Oil on wood, size: 27 x 39 cm. Private Collection. Lavreince, [17--].



Figure 7. Le lever des ouvrières en mode, after the painting by Nicolas Lavreince (1795). Etching by François Dequevauvilliers. Lavreince, 1795.



Figure 8. La promenade publique. Etching by Philibert-Louis Debucourt, 1792. 6153 LR/Recto. Département des Arts graphiques. Musée du Louvre, 2024b.

Figure 9. Martin Drölling, Young Woman in an English Garden, c. 1795, oil on canvas or paper.

Clark Art Institute, 1955.725.
Clark Art Institute, c2024.



Figure 10. Tableau par Von Huysum: Vase de fleurs. Lair-Dubreuil and Bottelier-Lasquin, 1931b, p. 10.



Von Huysum's painting, described as a representative of the "école de Van Dael"³⁷, was in the dining room (on the ground floor), with other artworks that were not selected by the curators for the two first rounds

³⁷ Jan-Frans van Dael (1764-1840) was a Flemish painter established in Paris, well known for his still life technique (Suykerbuyk, 2023-2024).

of the auction sales. This included two paintings by Joseph Vernet³⁸ (1714-1789), *Paysage maritime* and *Naufrage* (figures 11-12), which worked as “pendant”³⁹, estimated at 20,000 francs; one by Corrodi (1844-1905)⁴⁰ – *Venise – l’adoration de la Madone*, estimated at 300 francs, and one from the École de Watteau – *Réunion de personnages dans un parc*, estimated at 3,000 francs. The estimations may be very biased since Von Huysum’s *Vase of Flowers* was estimated at 4,000 francs. Corrodi painted at least two well-known versions of the *Madonna shrine near Chioggia*, which we can see in figures 13 and 14.



Figure 11. Moonlight. Claude-Joseph Vernet, oil on canvas, 115 x 163 cm, 1772.
National Gallery of Art, Accession Number 2018.13.1. National Gallery of Art, c2025a.

³⁸ The National Gallery considers Vernet as “[...] the leading French landscape painter (with Hubert Robert) of the later 18th century”. Although Vernet was not selected in the curators’ first listing, it could possibly be the “Vernel” name mentioned by Guggenheim in a 1932 letter mentioned above, therefore stressing that the values of the paintings were known and eventually the artwork was duly sold as well (National Gallery, c2016).

³⁹ Two paintings that complement each other and are expected to be shown together. According to the National Gallery of Art, the two paintings were commissioned by Lord Arundell in 1771 and kept in the Arundell family until they were sold in a 1952 sale at Wardour Castle. However, the description of the paintings in Eufrásia’s postmortem inventory matches with this artwork, so it would be interesting to understand if more than one copy of this work exists (National Gallery of Art, c2025).

⁴⁰ Hermann Corrodi was an Italian painter known for his landscapes and orientalist scenarios. He traveled widely, won a gold medal in Wien, worked in Rome and in Paris, and also received commissions from the British Royal Family to paint historic scenes (Juler, 1992).



Figure 12. The Shipwreck. Claude-Joseph Vernet, oil on canva, 114 x 163 cm, 1772.
National Gallery of Art, Accession Number 2000.22.1. National Gallery of Art, c2025b.



Figure 13. A Shrine to the Madonna on the Venetian Lagoon near Chioggia.
Hermann Corrodi, oil on canvas, 175.5 x 86.1 x 2.9 cm. 1887?
Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 406667. Royal Collection Trust, 2022⁴¹.

⁴¹ According to the Royal Collection Trust, "The safe channels into and within the lagoon at Venice were made by small lighthouses on steaks, usually housing an image of the Virgin (to protect sailors). This is a view of one of these wooden shrines supported on stilts on the Laguna di Chioggia; two boats are moored in front of it, with fishermen and women conversing; a girl has climbed the ladders and is lighting a votive lamp in the enclosed shrine to the Madonna" (Royal Collection Trust, 2022).



Figure 14. In front of the Madonna Statue at the Harbour of Chioggia off Venice. Hermann Corrodi, oil on canvas, no date. MutualArt, 2017.

Debucourt's, Drölling's and Lavreince's paintings were in a large room on the 1st floor, on the right of the antechamber. The space seems to have been used as an "art room", filled with different works, including one other sanguine attributed to Lavreince - *Deux femmes dans un intérieur*, and the gouache *Allégorie aux arts*.

Moreover, the postmortem inventory mentions, in the same room, two engravings - *Fête à Cérès* and *Fête à Bacchus*; one work attributed to Raouse - *La missive*; several works from Fantin Latour⁴² (1836-1904) - *Verre et fleurs*, *Fleurs*, *L'amour grondé* (figure 15), *Jeune femme dansant*, *Baigneurs*; one portrait of a lady with a veil, attributed to one painter from the Van Loo family⁴³; two small engravings (one with a gallant and one young lady making flower bouquets); one work from Du Jardin - with a character and its horse close to a hose; one modern try-

⁴² Henri Fantin Latour was a painter and lithographer, very well known for his still lifes (Lucie-Smith, 1977).

⁴³ The Van Loos were high profile painters, especially during the 17th and 18th centuries. Each male member of the family specialized in different painting styles.

tic with a golden frame; one modern engraving attributed to Charlier⁴⁴ (1883-1975) – *La comparaison*, and another work attributed to the same artist – *Baigneux*; one copy of a watercolor by Casway – *Tête de jeune femme*; a few gouaches – *Petit port italien*, *Paysage italien*, *Paysage italien au bord de la mer*; one etching in black – *Le lever*; two engravings – *La cruche cassée* and *La jeune bergère*; one *Étude* by Girodet (1767-1824)⁴⁵; one *Marine* by Ziun; two other English engravings “en coule”; *Hussard à cheval* by one of the Detaille brothers⁴⁶; one colored drawing – *Vase de fleurs*, attributed to Monnoyer; and, finally, a gouache from the École française – *Scène mythologique*.



Figure 15. L'Amour grondé. Henri Fantin-Latour, oil on canvas, 1877. Artsy, 2026.

Noticeably, the same period represented by Eufrásia's sample depicts an “horreur du vide” concerning interior decorations, as we can see in Watteau's *L'enseigne de Gersaint* (figure 16)⁴⁷. Amongst her collection, we see a majority of 17th and 18th century names, with few exceptions: Corrodi, Fantin Latour and Detaille witness a budding 19th century, whereas Henri Charlier is the only modern name of this selection. However, if his style belongs to the 20th century, Char-

⁴⁴ Modern artist closely associated to a catholic expression (Henri, 2021).

⁴⁵ Just like Michel Martin Drölling, Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson was a pupil of David. He was best known for a romantic approach of painting with the inclusion of eroticism, but he also made portraits of the Napoleonic family (Smalls, 1996).

⁴⁶ The two Detaille brothers, Charles (1852-1894) and Édouard (1848-1912), were painters.

⁴⁷ Antoine Watteau was one of the major artists of the Rococo movement (Roland Michel, 1984).

lier produced several artworks with classical catholic themes. We cannot underestimate the role of seaside landscapes in this room composition, since several paintings with converging topics were concentrated in a single place.



Figure 16. L'enseigne de Gersaint. Watteau. Oil on canvas, 163 cm x 308 cm.

Charlottenburg Palace, Berlin. Wikimedia Commons.

The curators' selections were not limited to painting. They also included decorative objects, such as plates, clocks and similar (table 3). The main techniques mentioned are faience (tin-glazed earthenware), with a preference for the 16th century Gubbio⁴⁸ ones, and bronze items from the Louis XVI (1754-1791) period. They dialog directly with the selected painting's epoch.

⁴⁸ This Italian city, located in the Umbrian region, became well known for its pottery production (Unioncamere, [20--]).

	Name / description	Description coming from the sales catalog	Size	Sales price
9	Faïence plate, Gubbio, 16 th century	Deep plate in old Gubbio faïence, with metallic reflections, decorated with an eagle looking at the right and outstretched wings. On the board, leaves and oak balls alternate.	21 cm (diameter)	1600 fr
10	Faïence glass, Gubbio	Small glass with edges in old Gubbio faïence with metallic reflections, decorated with a young woman's bust with her profile facing left. Over the edges, shining motifs alternate with foliage. 16 th century.	17 cm (diameter)	5100 fr
11	Surtout de table in 3 parts, bronze, Louis XVI period	Surtout de table divided in 3 parts, with rounded extremities, sides in silvery and golden bronze, edges with <i>vannerie ajourée</i> , decorated with molding and Greek motifs; weight distributed by ten paw feet.	90 cm (length)	2810 fr
12	Clock, bronze, Louis XVI period	Clock in golden chiseled bronze, marked as <i>J.-S. Chauvet à Paris</i> , with musical decoration, a flower and fruit ensemble on the sides, based upon openwork foliage of arched oblong shape with, below, base of acanthus leaves with seeds, angles with volute feet, flowers and fruits.	39 cm (height)	11000 fr
13	Marble clock after Falconet, Louis XVI period	White marble clock, after Falconet, decorated with gilded bronzes, the subject representing two young naked women lightly draped, in the attitude of embracing and leaning on an oval terminal in which the movement is embedded, marked Robin H g r du Roi; oval base, on a molded base, decorated with twists of cords, interlacing fleurons and a row of pearls.	38 cm (height)	20000 fr
14	Pair of candelabras in old Lorraine clay, Louis XVI period	Pair of candelabra, each composed of a group in old Lorraine earth, presenting a statuette of a young naked woman standing leaning against a cloud on which is a cupid, she holds in her right arm a drapery and, in her left arm, a cornucopia from which escape two branches of tulips and a branch of carnations in gilded bronze; round base with large bronze pearls.	57 cm (height)	3100 fr (the object was returned)

Table 4. Listing of selected decorative items for auction sales in 1931. Built by the author with info from Lair-Dubreuil and Bottelier-Lasquin (1931a, 1931b).

The two clocks and the chandelier were depicted in the auction catalog from December (figures 17-18). Not only the objects' materials (bronze, marble) are refined and reflect a cautious understanding of their artistic and concrete value, but their heavy decoration has a synergistic compatibility with the entire *hôtel particulier's* description. Natural motifs and allegories are present in the different items. Moreover, the mentioned (proto)brands (Alexander; Doherty, 2021), J.S. Chauvet and Robin, refer to two consolidated

clockmakers from the Louis XVI period⁴⁹. Falconet (1716-1791) was one of the main sculptors of this period, and his creations were often adapted to clocks, as was the case in this Robin one. Chandeliers were a complement to the decoration and often showed refined techniques as well. Decorative objects were clearly omnipresent both in the Ivy House and in the *hôtel particulier* – they are largely mentioned in different points of the postmortem inventory, often in large collections of China, metal items and similar. The marble clock (figure 18) was in the *hôtel particulier's* small living room, on the ground floor.

Figure 17. Bronze clock selected for auction sale, JS Chauvet à Paris, Louis XVI period.

Lair-Dubreuil and Bottelier-Lasquin, 1931b, p. 62.



Figure 18. Marble clock after Falconet and pair of chandeliers selected for auction sales. Lair-Dubreuil and Bottelier-Lasquin, 1931b, p. 65.



⁴⁹ A Christie's description states that "Robin was one of the finest clockmakers of 18th Century France and highly regarded for both the excellence and ingenuity of his work. [...] Robin was received as a master clockmaker in November 1767 by decree of the Council, which exempted him from the apprenticeship qualification, probably because he had already displayed exceptional talent. In 1778 he was appointed Horloger du Duc de Chartres and that same year he was honoured by the Académie des Sciences, who approved two of his inventions. [...] Other appointments included Valet de Chambre-Horloger Ordinaire du Roi in 1783 and Valet de Chambre-Horloger Ordinaire de la Reine in 1786. In 1794 he was made clockmaker to the Republic and in 1796 to the Directoire" (Christie's, 2018).

Finally, the curators' choice included different tapestries sets, which were, by far, the largest and most valuable items of the entire selection. Just as the gouache technique is highlighted for the paintings, in the case of tapestries the curators label it as "Savonnerie". This highly respected tapestry workshop from France was used as a metonymy to the use of a knotted stitch technique on high warp looms (Mobilier National, [20--]). Their period estimation stretches between the 16th and 18th centuries.

	Name / description	Description coming from the sales catalog	Size	Sales price
15	Louis XVI style gilded wood screen and 18 th century tapestry	Louis XVI style gilded carved wood screen, with fine 18 th century tapestry leaf, decorated with a cone of fruit surrounded by flowers held by a pink ribbon bow suspended from flower falls; background in an "Havana" tone ⁵⁰ .	86 x 62 (height x length) – screen dimensions	3500 fr
16	Flemish tapestry, first of a set of 3 items, 16 th century, "Le repas champêtre"	In the middle of a wooded garden, peasants are gathered, sitting on the ground, eating and drinking, surrounded by dogs, sheep, and ewes. Inscriptions in French verse, placed in cartouches, comment on the scene: "I – Alison c'est plaisant boutin / De tenir ton ferme tétin / Et baiser ta bouche vermeille; II – Mais d'où vient cet avertin / Retirez votre main sottin / Et gardez que Robin ne s'esveille; III – Venez boire mon gentillhome / Et manger ung morceau de pomme / En notre banquet pastoral; IV – Sans soucy vinons et sans somme / Dor ou d'argent joye nous somme / De vivre sans penser en mal; V – Il te tarde bien Rigole / Que tu nembrasse ce godet / Pour faire à Bacchus sacrifice ; VI – Pastourreaux vivans sous les ailes / De bon temps avec pastourelles / A vingt cinq ans sont plus aises / De gros pain bis d'eau et de fraises / Que gentils hommes et damoiselles". At the bottom of the tapestry, in the foreground, various birds frolic among flowering plants; at the top of the panel, a landscape background animated by small figures and horsemen. Borders with a light background, decorated with bouquets of flowers and fruit, cups and flowered vases, and rural trophies.	3,15 x 3,45 m (height x length)	45000 fr

⁵⁰ This is certainly a reference to the famous Havana cigars, therefore indicating a shade of brown.

17	Flemish tapestry, second of a set of 3 items, 16 th century, "Les fiançailles"	In the middle of a landscape, shepherds and shepherdesses attend the engagement of Gombault and Macée; inscriptions in French verse placed in four cartouches comment on the scene: "I – le Reny Saint Gry, nous en serons / Des noces et sy danserons / Puisque Macée est fiancée ; II – Par la vertugoy nous irons / Pour mener Gombault et rions / Alizon vous serez dancée ; III – Gombault tu promets dépenses / Et defaict espouser Macée / Que voie et la prendre afamme ; IV – Et vous Macée Lahousée / Vous ne serez pas couroussée / Se Gombault vous veult pour sa dame". At the bottom of the tapestry, turkeys and a large bird frolic among flowers. The borders have a light background, decorated with bouquets of flowers and fruit, flower bowls and vases, and country trophies. Some parts of the border have been redone.	3,60 x 2,40 (height x length)	25000 fr
18	Flemish tapestry, third of a set of 3 items, 16 th century, "Le Loup"	In the middle of a wooded park, at the end of which a castle can be seen, a shepherd chases a wolf. At the center of the composition, a group of two shepherd boys and two shepherdesses. One shepherd, his leg caught in the nets, has fallen to the ground. Macée tries to lift him up. The other figures contemplate the scene. Inscriptions in French verse, placed in five cartouches, comment on the topic: "I – Hélas il était tant huppé / Mais mariage lha happé / Tellement quil est prins es lez ; II – Macée vous avez souppée / Pour vous trancher me suis coupée / Si trsfort que ien crie hélas ; III – Pour avoir trop pris ses esbats / Il en est tombé sy bas / Que jamais il ne s'en rira. ; IV – Macée ne le laissez pas / Soutenez le dessus le tas / Ou aultrement il périra ; V – Voylz comment en fin ira / Ainsi tout plaisir finira / Lhomme devient malade ou vieux / Mais sil peut parvenir es cieux / Aprs la mort lors suffira." The final stanza provides the moral of the subject depicted. At the bottom of the tapestry, various birds, including an owl, frolic among flowering plants. The borders have a light background, decorated with bouquets of flowers and fruit, flowered cups and vases, and rustic trophies. Some parts of the border have been redone.	3,50 x 3,40 (height x length)	

19	Gobelins tapestry, Louis XIV period, from the series "Chasses de l'empereur Maximilien", "Le Repas des Chasseurs"	In a forest clearing, in the foreground, servants prepare food on a rustic hearth and on a table made of branches. In the background, hunters sit around a laid table, covered with a tablecloth, a large fire lit behind them; huntsmen are around. Very beautiful borders with a red background, decorated with garlands of flowers and natural fruits, interspersed with parrots and various birds. In the center of the top border, the zodiac sign Sagittarius, corresponding to the month of November. The bottom border with a brown background represents a frieze of tritons and marine divinities in monochrome. This series of tapestries, executed in Brussels in the 16 th century, based on Van Orley's cartoons, was copied at the Gobelins at the end of the 17 th century, under the name "Les belles chasses de Guise".	4,25 x 3,35 m (height x length)	102.000 fr
19	Tapestry from the Manufacture de Paris, woven from colored wools and silks and metal, workshop of Jean Lefebvre, late 17 th century, "Bacchante"	In the middle of a wooded park with a landscape and houses in the background, behind a balustrade, we see, in the foreground, a gathering of satyrs, bacchantes, and children, seen half-length, some crowned with flowers, others holding bunches of grapes, or playing the tambourine or panpipes. In the center of the group, a bearded satyr sits, his legs outstretched. Very beautiful borders on a yellow background, decorated with interwoven scrolls of small genies caressing dogs, busts, caryatids garlanded with vine branches, shells, and quivers. In the center of the upper border, a double coat of arms, supported by swans, is stamped with a count's crown.	3,10 x 3,45 (height x length)	41400 fr
20	2 Flanders tapestry panels, 16 th century	On one panel, a sumptuously costumed woman advances to the left near a naked man seated at the foot of a tree. The other panel depicts a monumental chariot drawn by a horse and ridden by three figures. The subject is probably taken from the story of Artemisia. Each of these tapestries is framed by a border featuring mascarons, dolphins, shells, and fruit. These two tapestries complement each other to form a large panel. Antique borders have been added to one side of each panel; one of them bears the mark of Brussels.	2,70 x 2,90 m each (height x length)	3600 fr
21	Two 17 th century tapestry borders	Two high tapestry borders with a yellow background, finely woven and decorated with draped child caryatids, supporting vases and cups with mascarons. Above, among branches, storks and little genies.	2,95 x 0,24 m (height x length)	3500 fr
22	Two 17 th century tapestry borders	Two high tapestry borders, each simulating a carved and gilded wooden column, fluted and ornamented, topped with a leafy capital.	3,40 x 0,50 m (height x length)	850 fr

Table 5. Listing of selected artworks for auction sales in 1931. Built by the author with info from Lair-Dubreuil and Bottelier-Lasquin (1931a, 1931b).

The tapestry selection includes three items of the series *Les amours de Gombault et de Macée* (figures 19-20). This set was originally composed of eight tapestries, based on eight “tableaux”, which tell the story of Gombault, a man, from his childhood until his death. The idea was to “represent the joys and sorrows of rural villagers and was very popular since the 16th century” (Lair-Dubreuil; Bottelier-Lasquin, 1931b, p. 84). However, the final tableau, depicting death, was possibly never woven by the different ateliers. They usually divided seven scenes of the story into eight tapestries - one of the scenes was distributed into two rugs. The entire series was done by several ateliers, including Brussels and Aubusson, with a richer final quality, and other copies with a poorer result, such as the Saint-Lô series. Identifying the origins of each piece is challenging, so the final quality and the woven indications (marks, monograms, size of the rug) are good evidence for this procedure (Guiffrey, 1882). Due to its details, Eufrásia’s version of the tapestries was identified by the curators as the Brussels one.



Figure 19. Picture of the tapestry *Le repas champêtre* in the auction sales catalog from December 1931. Lair-Dubreuil and Bottelier-Lasquin, 1931b, p. 75.

Figure 20. Tapestry: Le repas.
Couvent Sainte-Cécile, Grenoble,
France. Les éditions Glénat, 2024.



The other tapestries also come from prestigious ateliers, including Jean Lefebvre's and the Gobelins, in Paris. *Le Repas des Chasseurs* (figure 21) dates as a work from the Louis XIV period, possibly the oldest item of this curator selection. This piece was also a part of a wider set, that depicted different hunting scenes from Emperor Maximilien's court. The set order can be easily stated since the twelve tapestries show different Zodiac signs, thus following an entire year's dynamic.

Figure 21. Picture of the tapestry Le repas des chasseurs in the auction sales catalog from December 1931.
Lair-Dubreuil and Bottelier-Lasquin,
1931b, p. 88.



The original set of tapestries, probably based upon drawings from Dutchman Bernard van Orley, was commissioned by a member

of the Habsburg family in the 1530s (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, c2000). It was part of the duke of Guise's collection in 1589 and belonged to his family's possessions until 1654, when it was transferred to Mazarin's collection. Louis XIV eventually bought the set in 1665, allocating it in the Garde Meuble (current Mobilier National) (Ribou, 2020).

Louis XIV himself ordered three extra sets of tapestries. The two first ones were a complete set of twelve tapestries: one for the castle of Versailles, in 1685 (where the items have the number "157"); one for the castle of Fontainebleau (where the items have the number "172"), in 1691. The third one was a mixed set ordered in 1704 and delivered in 1708, where six pieces were destined for Versailles (items have the number "186") and the other six were destined for Fontainebleau (items have the number "187"). The tapestries from this 3rd set were created as window panels (*entrefenêtres*) and therefore divide the scene in two parts. After the popularity of these versions, five other sets were prepared: a 4th one with a single item, a 5th one ordered in 1723 and offered to the duke of Charost (the King's governor), a 6th one ordered by the princess of Conti, a 7th one ordered for the duke of Antin and finally one ordered by the count of Toulouse.⁵¹

The standard version of this tapestry measures 4,32 x 5,83m (figure 23). Eufrásia's version is smaller: it measures 4,25 x 3,35m. It seems to be an *entrefenêtre*, as ordered in Louis XIV's 3rd and final set. The Galerie Pellat de Villedon ([20--]), from Versailles, detains a very similar copy, which measures 4,20 x 3,37m (figure 22). Indeed, in this format, the scene is somewhat reduced when compared to the wider version of the tapestry.

⁵¹ The three original sets, ordered by Louis XIV are available at the Metropolitan Museum de New York, the Mobilier National, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in New Brunswick (Canada) (Galerie Pellat de Villedon, [20--]).

Figure 22. Tapestry from the manufacture royale des Gobelins, "November: boar hunt, hunting meal". Galerie Pellat de Villedon, [20--].



Figure 23. Le mois de novembre ou Le signe du sagittaire ou Le rapport, de la tenture dite des Chasses de Maximilien. Circa 1531. Made in Brussels after (possibly) Bernard Van Orley / Guillaume Dermoyen. OA 7322. Département des Objets d'art du Moyen Age, de la Renaissance et des temps modernes. Musée du Louvre (2024).

The tapestries show a profusion of allegoric scenes, *fêtes galantes* and detailed natural themes. Some can be raw, such as the *Bacchanale* (figure 24) or the hunting scenes, the latter a very classic topic for this object category. Generally, they seem to anticipate the styles of the paintings and decorative objects. They also show that whoever bought them had an accurate knowledge of these items and selected exclusive versions of the goods.



Figure 24. Picture of the Bacchanale tapestry in the auction sales catalog from December 1931. Lair-Dubreuil and Bottelier-Lasquin, 1931b, p. 86.

Two of the Flemish tapestries, described as related to “great characters of the 17th century”, were located at the *hôtel particulier*’s entry hall, on the ground floor. This same space had an oak coat rack, two patinated bronze floor lamps, a pair of Louis XV style gilt bronze sconces, a pair of columns on colored marble – each supporting a chandelier with patina and gilded bronze (Empire style), and a white marble group of “Dolce Ferita”, which was on a cylindrical marble support base.

The other tapestries were all in the same room – a big one, on the first floor, where there was also a piano.

Conclusion: Eufrásia, an iconoclast?

This selection of paintings, tapestries and decorative objects indicates a sharp preference for rococo styles and themes, with a deep synergy with the *hôtel particulier*’s general composition. The items are set in particular rooms, hinting that each space of this large mansion was prepared for specific purposes, or, at least,

reflected specific elements through the chosen artwork for each place. Moreover, the selection of materials followed a “classical grammar”, that included noble woods, and a profusion of objects.

Amongst furnitures in oak, wicker, mahogany, and beech, mostly in Louis XVI style, the house had chandeliers in golden bronze and crystal pearls in the party salon, leather chairs, mirrors, music boxes, carpets in Smyrna and Oriental styles, curtains, tea sets, cups in crystal and finishing in mother-of-pearl, silverware, folding screens in Coromandel lacquer, a considerable volume of bed linen (over sixty items), and countless small statues with “sujets gallants”, made, among others, in Saxe porcelain and biscuit de Sèvres. Some of these tiny statues depicted gardeners, fruit sellers, one set of a bacchant, a bacchante and Amour, a duo of a violin player and a dancer, one flute player, and even an Apollo char.

The little living room on the first floor, particularly, was deeply decorated with furniture and tapestries. This included a high-backed armchair, Louis XIV style, in carved walnut and red plush; a chaise longue, Regency style, in gilded caned wood, and in poor condition; a small gilded wooden bench upholstered in blue silk; a low armchair, in gilded wood upholstered in brocaded silk on a pink background; the marble clock selected by the curators; an Aubusson tapestry. Next to the large living room, where the main tapestries faced the piano, the antechamber was decorated with a portrait of Eufrásia by Hellen, amongst a table in white wood, a desk in Louis XVI style, a sofa and textile elements in silk. The party salon also held a bust of Eufrásia in white marble.

This intense profusion of decoration, somewhat excessive for someone who lived with her domestic staff and no longer had close family members, was also present at the Ivy House, in Brazil. There, the furniture was based in jacaranda, mahogany, leather, and woven straws. Items in marble, religious paintings (the Holy Family, the Virgin in the ruins and the Christ with two disciples are three scenes depicted in different artworks), glass sconces, and mirrors with frames share the space with a bronze clock with a table statue, and even a copy of a painting by Rembrandt. There are several por-

celain sets⁵², glasses and pots in Baccarat crystal, as if the house were prepared to receive an imperial banquet at any moment. In this sense, artwork and decorations seem to walk together, by creating an interior context that, although related to bourgeois reference, is far from the “*manière de vivre confortable et calfeutrée*” (Levrat, 2010, p. 89) of the Biedemeyer style.

Indeed, the sensuality of the materials and of several allegories suggest that she was not an overly devout that fought against the pleasures of life, while dealing with the controversial ideal of the *femme nouvelle* that sprung in the 1890s – “a [...] woman seeking independence and education rather than marriage and life at home” (Silverman, 1989, p. 67)⁵³, who was increasingly frequent in the Parisian panorama. This model of a New Woman was even compared to the tension of electric energy during a conservative Third Republic that intended, among others, to “[...] confront the challenge of socialism” (Silverman, 1989, p. 73) and therefore was not very open to female independence either. The connection between interior designs, an individual psychology and the public communication of female ambitions was not restrained to France; Lenita, the main character from the Brazilian naturalist novel *Flesh*, first published by Júlio Ribeiro in 1888, projects her future after her father's death. As a wealthy inheritor, her world perspective concerning success and establishment, at least materially, is strikingly like Eufrásia's home decoration:

“[...] she would go to São Paulo and settle there for good; she would [...] build an elegant townhouse in the oriental style, graceful, decorated with fretwork. [...] She would furnish in black jacaranda, with matt carving.

⁵² One of the pieces mentioned in Eufrásia's postmortem inventory as part of the Ivy House's collection is “a set of White China with golden line, with the initials J.J.T.L., composed of the following items: 267 plates, including deep plates and platens and small and large, five fruit baskets, seven salad bowls, five plates for stews, five plates with feet, for sweets, four sauce bowls without a cover, six with cover, three soup bowls, four plates with cover, four deep plates for beans, with a square format, six large dishes, five smaller dishes, eight olive bowls, two services with fourteen plates with cover for whipped cream”. The estimated price was 1:200\$000 (“1 conto e 200 mil réis”). The initials refer to the Teixeira Leites patriarch, Joaquim José (Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, 1931).

⁵³ The ideal of *femme nouvelle* considered this type of individual would come from the middle-class. While Eufrásia came from a very wealthy background, and, therefore, working was not a necessity, she seems to have molded her own version of the concept.

She would buy genuine Boule desks and side tables in the sales in Paris, using an agent who knew his business. She would have Cordova leather, Persian and Gobelin tapestries, *fukusas* from Japan. On the pier tables, the *dunkerques*, in glass cases; in filigreed ironwood cabinets, in *étagères*, on the walls, everywhere she would scatter a generous profusion of porcelain – milky white or cream from China, in cheerful colours, subtle, but very vivid; scarlet and gold from Japan, magnificent, provocative, luxurious, fascinating; stoneware from Satzuma, artistic work, Arabian in style, almost European in the correctness of its design. She would seek out vases and plates of tender Sèvres, painted by Bouchet, Armand, Chavaux père, the two Sioux; she would contrast them with porcelain from the royal works in Berlin and the imperial factory in Vienna, the former royal blue, the latter blood-red tinged with rust; she would have a wealth of Saxe figurines, idealized, perfectly finished, delightful. She would feast her eyes on the oily patina of Japanese bronzes, on the absolutely real, human forms of Greeks statues, on mathematical miniatures by Colas and Barbedienne. She would have marbles by Falconet, terracotas by Clodion, marvelous, ancient *netsukes*, with microscopic filigree. She would look at herself in Venetian mirrors, keep her perfumes in little flasks of Bohemian cut glass. She would fill her jewel-cases and *vide-poches* with old jewelry, chrysolites and brilliants set in silver and old gold reliquaries from Oporto.

She would have expensive horses [...]

She would travel all over Europe, spend a summer in St Petersburg, a winter in Nice, she would climb the Jungfrau and gamble in Monte Carlo.

Then she would return, give banquets; [...] her guests would drink Johannisberg, Tokai, Constanza, Lacrima Christi, Château d'Yquem, all the delicious, expensive wines.

She would have lovers – why not? [...]

Then, when she grew older, when she wanted to become respectable and live like anyone else, she would marry. It was so easy; she had money, she wouldn't lack for aspirants, educated men who would acquiesce in the appearance of marriage which she would impose on them at her fancy. It was only a question of asking, of choosing” (Ribeiro, 2011, p. 38-39).

Although Eufrásia did keep a social life, including receiving visits for teatime every Wednesday when she became older (Soares, 2025), the *hôtel particulier* seems over prepared for large social meetings just like the ones dreamed by Lenita, but that did not happen

anymore. As an older woman with clear catholic practices⁵⁴, Eufrásia probably did think about the fact that she did not marry or had any issue. Even if no piece of evidence shows that she faced a familiar solitude as “the price to pay” (Perrot, 1999b) for her independence and professional success, the allegories concerning a lively day-by-day, the different stages of life and mythical characters, such as Amour, suggest that Eufrásia at least enjoyed wondering about the sense of life and its pleasures. In her domestic routine, the “[...] ensemble of emotions [...] related to family, to intimacy [...] [led to] the home as an incorporator – not just a shelter – of those feelings” (Rybczynski, 1999, p. 85).

Moreover, the research for these pieces of evidence can potentially expand a personal archive that, until now, was limited to physical documentation. Curiously enough, we know less about her adulthood than about her childhood, and it is still difficult to separate Eufrásia's achievements from Francisca's, since they shared central decisions about how they would tackle life. While the analysis of homes and interiors can bring irreplaceable information about an individual, this retrieval of memory is challenged by the demolition of the building and the entire dismantling of Eufrásia's possessions in Europe. Paradoxically, the Ivy House was maintained, highlighting its connections to the sisters' youth, while their adult life is still in shadows.

This is a somewhat recurrent challenge during research, where the exceptional situation is to find a “frozen apartment” that works as a partial time machine. Cases such as Marthe de Florian's, whose forgotten apartment in Paris was closed during World War II and reopened in 2014 (Bourgade, 2024), are very rare. Usually, researchers rely upon different materials to rebuild this mosaic of memories. In this sense, Eufrásia's case is, at the same time, extraordinary and very usual. This analysis of the artwork and decorative objects indicates that she was a Catholic with very classical taste and prone to collect traditional selections in noble materials. This suits other aspects of her personality, such as her preference for established

⁵⁴ One main sign of Eufrásia's relationship with her religion is the fact that she chose Catholic sisterhoods and similar institutions as the main receivers of her state (Soares, 2024a, 2025).

fashion brands from Paris, like Charles Worth and Hellstern. However, if her general dressing choices led her to classic references that are still known today, the preferred painters seem to have a fading popularity during the Belle Époque. “À peine si l’on a retenu le nom de Drölling”, would observe writer Louis Aragon (1981, p. 165).

Some researchers expect to see Eufrásia as an overt pioneer, that consciously refused the main elements of a bourgeois life – marriage, children – and that her work in finance was a liberal speech *per se*. Or even, she would be a visionary in all aspects of her life. These features would be reflected in her taste, by investing in artists such as Picasso, by understanding that they would be highly valued in the future. In short, a social pioneer would be someone to enjoy an iconoclast scenario. The high proportion of rococo art indicates the opposite. In this sense, if the Goncourt brothers “[...] used an aesthetic measure from the past to judge the deformations of the industrial and commercial present” (Silverman, 1989, p. 23-24), Eufrásia might have chosen to follow the aristocratic tendencies while thinking about her own past. Although the interior decoration elements are connected by major artistic axes (gouache, tapestries from the same period), it is hard to state whether Eufrásia was an actual collector (Verlaine, 2014)⁵⁵ or an investor that also bought artwork, which had become increasingly valued during the century (Monnier, 1995), but did not specialize in this sector, besides picking works that suited her personal taste and could be resold after her death. Either way, she seems to be somewhat romantic – something interesting to contrast with her relationships with potential husbands, given that she refused at least one wedding proposal (Soares, 2025). While her portfolio can be seen as a valuable collection, these items seem to have been chosen for her internal pleasure, as an art observer. Would she possibly, by getting older, revisit her own milestones by looking at these pieces?

⁵⁵ Debora Silverman (1989, p. 111) highlights that collectors can be seen as “[...] specialists in a particular period, connoisseurs and scholars of the objects in their collections, recognized for their superior sensivity and taste as much as for their often-illustrious social positions”.

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