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19th century firescreen, Louis XV style, gilded bronze, Marc Maison Gallery.



“Ears of wheat” furniture ensemble, from Marie-Antoinette’s bedroom in the Petit Trianon, by Georges Jacob, featuring a firescreen, 1787.



The Princess’s oval room, Hôtel de Soubise, 1735.



Eugène Delacroix, A corner of the studio, the wood stove, 1st half of 19th century, Louvre Museum, inv. RF2058.



Pierre-Benoît Marcion, Firescreen, 1800, palais de Compiègne.

An essential accessory to prevent from blaze, the *“pare-étincelles”* firescreen made of **wire-mesh** and set on bronze is typical of the **Second Empire**. It figures among the fireplace screens, also named fireguards. In 19th century, it was tirelessly recommended for the children and lady’s safety, “*whose clothes might so easily ignite*”. Protecting from the projections of the fire, it has the advantage of being an elegant decoration element when the fire has died out, and allows to **gaze at the roaring fire**, not being dazzled. It figures more broadly among mantel ornaments, as well as andirons, spades and tongs, ashtrays, etc.

18th century princely furniture knows the**carpeted firescreens**, beautiful cloths set on wood frames, but those are still very flammable and hide the comforting show of fire burning in the hearth. Georges Jacob, the most renowned carpenter of the Grand Style, let several beautiful examples, including the screen of **Marie-Antoinette**’s Room in the Petit Trianon.

In the beginning of 19th century, the carpeted firescreens still prevail, sometimes only humble canvas arranged by the stove like that of Delacroix’s *Corner of the Studio*. The Directoire takes this decorative vocabulary again, imposing its more severe style, as testifies Marcion’s firescreen, created in 1800 and held in the **Compiègne Palace**.

But the notion of “*pare-étincelles*” suddenly appears in the middle of 19th century, industrially fast-growing, about a new form of wire-meshed screens. An inventor named Delacour patents in **1854** his “anti-sparkle blind-screen”, of uncoiling silk mesh, adapting to every fireplace. He gets a medal of honor for this invention in 1855, and supplies the **Emperor Napoleon III**. This event seems to open a new market and creates and emulation of **creativeness** about the “*pare-étincelles*”.

On one side, the functional “*pare-étincelles*”, a simple iron-mesh or pierced sheet metal, spreads in the public buildings, administrative offices and schools in particular, in the 1870 decade. On the other side, **decorative models** of “*pare-étincelles*” compete in luxury to seduce the customer and replace the carpeted screens. In 1862, Jules Vuigner, bronze maker, patents a “sort of mobile anti-sparkle fireguard”, when in the meantime at the **World's Fair of 1867** , Desbordes exhibits his lavish mantel ornaments of**gilded bronze**, varnished bronze and polished brass.

Private mansions get from now on modern “*pare-étincelles*” firescreens of bronze or brass, which styles evoke the splendor of **Louis XV** and **Louis XVI**’s reigns. In the shape of a fan, or with baroque outlines, many display ornaments such as branches or symbols of love. The **Hotel of Pontalba** on the faubourg Saint-Honoré, housing nowadays the USA Embassy, held before 1876 a “pare-étincelles firescreen in gilded bronze and openwork”. Such objects garnished before 1877 **Cora Pearl**’s private mansion in Chaillot street, a notorious *demi-mondaine* close to Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and the Duke of Morny.

The firecreen doesn’t escape from the Art Nouveau esthetic experiments in Sérurier-Bovy’s mind, which shows its importance in **modern interiors**.

See also

Louis XV style — Louis XVI style — Directoire style — The rocaille ornament and the Rococo style— Napoleon III style — Art Nouveau — 1867 World's Fair — The andirons — The cast-iron hearth — The fireback

See our antique fireplaces



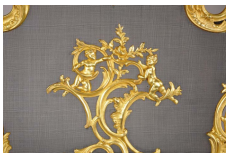
Advertising for the invention patented on December 10th, 1854, in the 'Imperial Almanac', 1858.



Sketch of a firescreen, published in 1875. In pierced sheet metal, it is recommended for public schools by Ernest Bosc, Encyclopédie générale de l'architecte-ingénieur, Paris, Morel, 1875.



Reconstitution of the Hôtel de Varengeville in the Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New York. The Rocaille firescreen, wonderfully imitating the taste of 18th century, was shown by mistake and then withdrawn, being in fact a 19th century artefact.



Ornamentation detail of a firescreen in gilded bronze, 2nd half of 19th century.



Hôtel de Pontalba, Paris. This prestigious home held gilded bronze firescreens before 1876.



Cora Pearl, born Emma Élizabeth Crouch, a major Second Empire courtesan, had aquired gilded bronze firescreens for her Hôtel in Chaillot street.



Gustave Sérurier-Bovy, firescreen, 1905-1910, sheet metal, wrought iron, copper, Orsay Museum, inv. OAO1282.



Louis XVI style firescreen, second half of 19th century. Marc Maison Gallery.



Firescreen in the shape of a fan, second half of 19th century. Marc Maison Gallery.