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Louis Malard, "Ramses-style" bedroom suite, solid walnut carved and highlighted with three shades of gold, 1889 World's Fair. Galerie Marc Maison.



Detail: pylon-shaped headboard, Ramses II on his chariot at the Battle of Kadesh. Marc Maison Gallery.



Detail: one of the two female figures serving as a bedside table. Galerie Marc Maison.



Detail: lions wearing the nemes headdress. Marc Maison Gallery.

Louis Malard belongs to that category of nineteenth-century Parisian craftsmen known through their works rather than through their biography. His firm, on the rue de Maubeuge, produced furniture in every style; a single piece, shown at the 1889 Universal Exhibition, was enough to make his name last: an Egyptian-style bedroom known as the "Ramesside" suite, which ranks among the most spectacular creations of French Egyptomania.

The Malard firm

Louis Malard ran a furniture manufactory and showroom at **9 bis, rue de Maubeuge** in Paris, in the district of the Gare du Nord — that is, away from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, where most Parisian cabinetmaking was then concentrated. His activity is documented between **1886 and 1903**. By 1908 a certain **Oudard** had succeeded him at the same address.

The firm designed and sold furniture in all styles, with a marked preference for **historical revivals**: its repertoire ran, according to its own advertising, from the age of Dagobert to the Louis XVI style. This practice of period furniture, dominant in Parisian furnishing at the end of the century, did not exclude invention, as the 1889 suite would show.

The 1889 Universal Exhibition

At the **1889 Universal Exhibition**, in **Group III, class 18** devoted to furniture and accessories, Malard showed a complete Egyptian revival bedroom comprising a bed, a canopy, a bench and two chairs. It earned him a **silver medal**.

The suite is executed in **solid carved and waxed walnut**, heightened with three golds — yellow, red and green. The canopy evokes the entrance to an Egyptian temple; the headboard takes the trapezoidal form of a pylon and carries a battle scene in which Ramesses II fights from his chariot, a motif taken from the reliefs of Abu Simbel; two life-size female figures, seated in a hieratic pose, flank the bed and serve as bedside tables; two lions wearing the nemes headdress guard its foot.

This is not an archaeological reconstruction but a free evocation, favouring monumental effect over accuracy. That approach places it squarely within nineteenth-century **Egyptomania**, a current born of the Egyptian campaign and revived by the great excavations and by the opening of the Suez Canal.

A contemporary account

The work was talked about as soon as it was shown. *Le Figaro*, in its exhibition column of **1 July 1889**, devoted a passage to it, written by the journalist and author **Georges Grison** (1841-1928). He notes that he had seen it roughed out in Malard's workshops before finding it finished in class 18, which confirms that the piece was conceived specifically for the exhibition. He describes the two almost life-size lions holding in their jaws a rail around which a bronze-green and nasturtium-red drapery is wound, then the Egyptian scenes of the smaller panel: the chariot, the archer, the warrior and the fantastical birds.

Provenance

At the close of the exhibition the suite was acquired by the **Comtesse Bathilde Ducos** (1851-1927), who kept it until 1896. It then passed into the private collection of **Charles Henri Duquesne** and remained with his descendants until it reappeared publicly in Paris in 2019.

The 1900 Universal Exhibition

Malard exhibited again at the **1900 Universal Exhibition**, where he showed a bedroom of an entirely different kind, combining **wood and wrought iron**. The jury found it curious and interesting for its utilitarian intention — a telling judgement at a moment when the question of function was beginning to rival that of style. That search for a balance between historical reference and use was already legible, in its own way, in the Egyptian suite of 1889.

Legacy

Documentation on Louis Malard remains thin: his dates of birth and death are unknown, and his work has never been the subject of a comprehensive study. His output is known through exhibition catalogues, through the press of his day, and through the furniture that resurfaces on the market. The Ramesside bedroom remains his best-documented work, and one of the major pieces of the Egyptian taste in French furniture of the late nineteenth century.

Louis Malard, lit rhamsésien

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The baldachin, evoking the entrance to an Egyptian temple. Galerie Marc Maison



Louis Malard, carved walnut bedroom suite (ref. 15735). Galerie Marc Maison.

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Egyptomania — The 1889 Universal Exhibition — The 1900 Universal Exhibition — Gabriel Viardot — Paul Mazaroz — Leroux — The Louis XVI style

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