

Maurice Denis (1870-1943) illustrateur. Pratique d'un artiste du livre, acteurs et réseaux

Clémence GABORIAU

[Former member](#)

[PhD](#)

Thesis director

[Marianne GRIVEL](#)

Additional information

Year thesis started

2016

Status of thesis

Defended

Defense date

09/12/2023

Research theme

[4. Actors, institutions, networks: socio-cultural conditions of artistic activity](#)

[5. Materials, techniques, crafts: theoretical and practical approaches to artistic making](#)

Thesis

Summary

Maurice Denis (1870-1943), key artistic figure of the late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, was a multi-talented artist who worked as a painter, decorator, theoretician and illustrator. He was very prolific and he left behind a considerable number of works, including nearly three hundred prints in his own hand, and almost a thousand engravings made by others based on his drawings. Many of these were intended to decorate literary, religious or historical texts. Dozens of illustrated books were published throughout his entire career. They are representative of the evolution of his pictorial production, from his early symbolist works to his final religious creations.

As well as examining the mechanics of the illustrated book production process, set in the context of the artist's life and work, this thesis explores in depth Denis's relationships with the publishers and collaborators who helped to shape his status as an illustrator. This was the result of significant connections he made, with Jacques Beltrand (1874-1977), a wood engraver who was nearly the exclusive interpreter of Denis, but above all with Gabriel Thomas (1854-1932), a bibliophile and patron of the arts, whose combined action enabled the creation of some of his most notable editions. This study, based on a great amount of documents mostly held in private collections (including hundreds of letters and preparatory sketches), provides a new perspective on Denis's illustrative practice and examines the human and material conditions under which his books were conceived.

PhD jury

M. Jean-Paul BOUILLON – Professeur émérite d'histoire de l'art contemporain, université Clermont-Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand, Membre honoraire de l'Institut universitaire de France

[M. Jérémie CERMAN](#) – Professeur d'histoire de l'art contemporain, université d'Artois, Arras

[Mme Marianne GRIVEL](#) – Professeur émérite d'histoire de l'estampe et de la photographie, Sorbonne Université, Paris

Mme Isabelle SAINT-MARTIN – Directrice d'études, École pratique des Hautes Études – Université Paris Sciences & Lettres, Paris

Mme Fabienne STAHL – Attachée de conservation du patrimoine, musée départemental Maurice-Denis, Saint-Germain-en-Laye; co-responsable du Catalogue raisonné Maurice Denis