

The making of the *Les Nabis* collection at the Orsay Museum

Masaya KOIZUMI

Les Nabis were a rebellious group of young artists who, through their wide range of activities, exerted a considerable influence on the art produced in France during the fin-de-siècle. Their name derived from the Arabic and Hebrew word for “prophet”, *nabi*.

The Orsay Museum houses the largest, most comprehensive collection of artwork by *Les Nabis* in the world. It includes over 450 paintings, pastels, and sculpture in addition to prints, drawings and photography.

The collection by the State began modestly in 1903, and developed gradually throughout the twentieth century. It greatly increased after the inauguration of Guy Cogeval as president of the Orsay Museum in 2008. He paid much attention to paintings by *Les Nabis* depicting daily life, especially the work of Edouard Vuillard, who accounts for one-third of the collection. However, artwork representing mysticism, an important subject of the group, are comparatively lacking in the collection. This paper suggests that because of the Orsay Museum’s prominence in the world of modern art, it has a responsibility to address the imbalance in its *Les Nabis* collection.