

# Théodore Rivière: Sculpture



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Théodore Louis Auguste Rivière (French, 1857–1912) was born in Toulouse and received his art education there at the School of Fine Arts. He then attended the National School of Fine Arts of Paris. As a young man, Rivière studied under François Jouffroy (French, 1806–1882), Antonin Mercié (French, 1845–1916), and Alexandre Falguière (French, 1851–1900)—who had been a student of both Jouffroy and Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse (French, 1824–1887). Carrier-Belleuse is known to Maryhill Museum of Art patrons through his *Diana, Goddess of the Hunt* (1886), which stands opposite the museum's public entrance.

Rivière is remembered for his bronze sculptures, but he also worked in other mediums. His creations are generally associated with the Art Nouveau style and he was a leading French sculptor of Oriental subjects. Rivière drew inspiration from Greek and Roman mythology, biblical narratives, literary texts, and his travels in North Africa, the Far East, and elsewhere. He lived for a while in Carthage (Tunisia), and there completed two Orientalist groups based on Gustave Flaubert's 1862 novel about Salammbô. These were exhibited to acclaim at the 1894 and 1895 Paris Salons.

Maryhill Museum of Art's Théodore Rivière collection has an interesting—even unusual—history. In 1949, Alma de Bretteville Spreckels wrote to the museum's director and reported that she had acquired the sculptures in 1915, through Loïe Fuller. Chicago businessman and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald (1862–1932), who was an owner and executive of Sears, Roebuck and Company, was also interested in them, but Alma “begged” Loïe to let her have the works. Although she was an important arts patron by this time, she recalled that, “I had no money, only an allowance, so I paid so much a month on it.”

Alma gave the sculptures to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco in 1937. In 1948, she sent them to Maryhill Museum of Art and hoped that they would “remain at Maryhill permanently,” noting that “of course, the Riviere collection belongs legally to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor.” The following year, that museum agreed to a “long lease” loan and the works have now been at Maryhill for more than 70 years. In total, the collection includes almost 40 figures, of which 25 are bronzes and the remainder are works in marble, plaster, ceramic, and other mediums.

Steven L. Grafe, Ph.D.  
Curator of Art



Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), *Rivière (Self Portrait)*, before 1905, bronze, 14" x 5½"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-03



Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), *Loïe Fuller in the Lily Dance*, 1898, partially gilded bronze with stone pedestal, 10½" x 4"

Gift of Mrs. May Bachman and Alma de Bretteville Spreckels, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1938.4.1



Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), ***Seated Sphinx***, 1886, bronze and red granite, 15½" x 9½" x 6½"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-16





Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), ***Sphinx Resting (fountain motif)***, before 1905, bronze and red marble, 10" x 5" x 10½"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-23



Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), ***Bacchus and Bacchante***,  
c. 1900, bronze, 15" x 6½" x 7"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion  
of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-05

Bacchus was the Roman god of agriculture, wine, and fertility. His  
Greek counterpart was named Dionysius. Both figures were  
associated with drunken revelry. Bacchante was a female devotee of  
Bacchus.



Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), ***Adam and Eve***, 1905, bronze, 12" x 4½"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-19





Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), *Women Bearers of Sacred Vessels*, 1900, bronze, 10¼" x 6¼" x 4"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-17



Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), ***Mary, Martha, and Mary Magdalene, or The Three Mourners***, 1899, bronze, 12" x 8" x 11"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-18



Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), ***Group of Holy Women***, 1900, bronze with black patina, 14" x 18" x 10"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-10



Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), ***Group of Doctors***, 1900, bronze, 12½" x 13" x 9"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-09





Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), **Arab Horsemen**, before 1899, bronze, 12" x 10" x 10"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-38



Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), *The Courtesan's Triumph, or Thaïs*, before 1905, bronze with gilded patina, 10" x 8" x 5"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-06

Thaïs was a Greek courtesan who accompanied Alexander the Great (356 BCE–323 BCE) during his campaigns—and instigated the burning of Persepolis. After Alexander's death, she became the wife or mistress of Ptolemy I (c. 367 BCE–282 BCE), who succeeded Alexander as ruler of the Hellenistic kingdom of Egypt. She appears as a character in a variety of later literary works.





Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), **Salammbô**, 1895, terracotta, 12½" x 5½" x 6½"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-30

Salammbô is the title character in a best-selling 1862 novel of the same name by Gustave Flaubert (French, 1821–1880). The story is set in Carthage during the 3rd century BCE. An opera that was based on the novel received its initial performance in Brussels in 1890.



Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), *Woman of Martinique*, c. 1900, bronze, 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 7"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-26



Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), **Louis Oscar Roty**, 1901, bronze, 14" x 4"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-02

Louis-Oscar Roty (French, 1846–1911) was an esteemed medalist of the Art Nouveau period. An inscription on the back of the hexagonal base says, "Hommage au maître O. Roty, affectueusement THEODORE RIVIERE"



Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), *Disdain, or Vivian*, 1903, bronze, 14½" x 5" x 6"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-35



Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), ***Head of a Woman***, 1895, marble, 12<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" x 11" x 7"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-07



Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), **Fallen Fairy**, c. 1900, marble, 10" x 12" x 7"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-31





Théodore Rivière (French, 1857–1912), *Peacock on Perch*, c. 1905, ivory and wood, 14" x 6"

Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, L-14-22