



THE 2025 REX PROCESSION

“LA BELLE ÉPOQUE”

1. REX, KING OF CARNIVAL, MONARCH OF MERRIMENT

Rex's float carries the King of Carnival and his Pages through the streets of New Orleans each Mardi Gras. In the early years of the New Orleans Carnival, Rex's float was redesigned each year. The current King's float, one of Carnival's most iconic images, has been in use for more than fifty years.



2. HIS MAJESTY'S BANDWAGON

From this traditional float, one of the Royal Bands provides lively music for Rex and for those who greet him on the parade route. One of those songs will surely be the Rex anthem: “If Ever I Cease to Love,” which has been played in every Rex parade since 1872.



3. THE KING'S JESTERS

Even the Monarch of Merriment needs jesters in his court. Rex's jesters dress in the traditional colors of Mardi Gras – purple, gold and green. The papier mâché figures on the Jester float are some of the oldest in the Rex parade and were sculpted by artists in Viareggio, Italy, a city with its own rich Carnival tradition.



4. THE BOEUF GRAS

The *Boeuf Gras* (“the fattened ox”) represents one of the oldest traditions and images of Mardi Gras, symbolizing the great feast on the day before Lent begins. In the early years of the New Orleans Carnival, a live *Boeuf Gras*, decorated with garlands, had an honored place near the front of the Rex Parade. The *Boeuf Gras* returned in 1959 as a stately papier mâché sculpture.



5. THE BUTTERFLY KING

Since the earliest days of Carnival, butterflies have been popular symbolic design elements, their brief and colorful life a metaphor for the ephemeral magic of Mardi Gras itself. The invitation to the 1882 Rex ball added butterfly wings to the King of Carnival, creating the enduring image of “The Butterfly King.” The Butterfly King float, introduced in 2012, was the first new permanent float to join the Rex procession in many decades.



6. TITLE FLOAT: “LA BELLE ÉPOQUE”

Coinciding with the origins of the Rex parade, *La Belle Époque*, spanning roughly 1871-1914, was not only a period of peace, cultural flourishing, and technological progress in France, but also saw the advancement of political and social freedoms. With a very Parisian theme, Rex is delighted to present a lovely procession featuring some of the greatest known works of art, astounding innovations, and many of the groundbreaking women who helped to define the “Beautiful Era.”

7. LA BELLE ÉPOQUE

Rex introduces “The Beautiful Era” with scenes and styles emblematic of Paris in the late 1800s, featuring an iconic Alphonse Mucha-inspired beauty with waving, flower-filled locks heralding the procession. Adorning the sides are decorative ironwork panels and structures, reminiscent of Hector Guimard’s Art Nouveau *edicules*, characteristic of the first stations of the Paris Metro. Orchids, new to Parisian culture during the time and made possible by then-recent advances in climate control technology, add the requisite style, beauty and opulence necessary to introduce parade-goers to La Belle Époque.



8. CONQUEST OF THE SKY

Amidst the grand boulevards and glittering salons of La Belle Époque, France found itself at the dawn of a new era in flight. The skies, once the realm of birds alone, were being conquered by a new breed of daring inventors and engineers who brought to life what was once thought to be pure fantasy: the flying machine. The excitement in the air was palpable, and though some whispered of danger, the bold optimism of the time insisted that the heavens themselves were within the grasp of mankind.



9. RENÉ LALIQUE

René Lalique, a virtuoso of French design, rose to unparalleled prominence as one of the foremost artists of the La Belle Époque era, bringing an exquisite fusion of nature’s delicate forms and the elegance of fine craftsmanship to his glasswork, jewelry, and objets d’art. With his masterful manipulation of translucent materials, Lalique redefined the boundaries of Art Nouveau and offered a unique blend of symbolism and sensuality that spoke to the tastes of a society enamored with refinement and innovation.



10. A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

Streetcars are an important symbol of New Orleans, and this iconic float honors the best known of all New Orleans’ streetcar lines. This permanent float depicts “The Streetcar Named Desire,” made famous by the playwright Tennessee Williams. Self-powered, it is the only Rex float not pulled by a tractor.



11. VINCENT VAN GOGH



Vincent van Gogh, though his life was tragically brief, emerged as one of the most revolutionary figures in the art world, casting a long shadow over the cultural landscape of the Belle Époque era. His passionate use of color and bold, expressive brushstrokes reshaped the very language of painting, moving beyond the conventions of realism and into the realm of emotional depth and individual perception. With his vivid scenes of sunflowers, starry nights, and swirling landscapes, van Gogh has become a symbol of artistic innovation and a poignant reminder of the era's desire to break free from the constraints of tradition.

12. PELLÉAS ET MÉLISSANDE



"Pelléas et Mélisande," the haunting opera by the esteemed Claude Debussy, stands as a testament to the spirit of innovation that defined the Belle Époque, a masterpiece that both captured and challenged the aesthetic sensibilities of this golden age. Premiering to great anticipation in 1902, this work ushered in a new era for French music with its lush, impressionistic soundscape, eschewing traditional operatic grandeur in favor of subtlety and emotion. The opera's ethereal quality, coupled with its themes of love, mystery, and inevitable tragedy, resonated deeply with a society in transition, where art sought to evoke mood and atmosphere rather than merely tell a story.

13. LOÏE FULLER



Loïe Fuller, the dazzling American dancer, became an emblem of the Belle Époque's fascination with innovation and the pursuit of artistic expression that transcended traditional boundaries. With her mesmerizing use of flowing silk costumes and inventive lighting techniques, Fuller transformed the art of dance into a breathtaking spectacle, creating a fusion of movement and visual art that captivated audiences across Paris. Her performances at the Folies Bergère and beyond often likened to the graceful undulations of nature itself, broke free from the rigid conventions of ballet, and embraced a fluidity and abstraction that mirrored the era's embrace of the avant-garde.

14. GRAND PRIX



The French Grand Prix, first held in 1906, quickly became a monumental event during the Belle Époque, embodying the era's spirit of progress, innovation, and the thrill of modernity. This pioneering automobile race, held on the challenging roads of the French countryside, captured the attention of both the elite and the emerging industrial classes, symbolizing the rapid technological advancements that were reshaping the world. With engines roaring and speed records shattered, the race offered a spectacle of daring and skill that reflected the era's growing obsession with speed and mechanization.

15. NOUVEAU CIRQUE



The Nouveau Cirque, which first dazzled Parisian audiences in the late 19th century, became a hallmark of the Belle Époque, embodying the era's fascination with novelty, spectacle, and the blending of traditional entertainment with modern flair. Unlike the circuses of old, the Nouveau Cirque introduced a fresh approach, fusing acrobatics, clown performances, and daring feats with theater and music in a seamless display of creativity. Attracting a diverse audience, from the bourgeoisie to the bohemian set, it quickly became a cultural touchstone, symbolizing the era's penchant for vibrant, immersive experiences.

16. STRAVINSKY'S FIREBIRD



Igor Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, first performed in 1910, marked a defining moment in the cultural life of the Belle Époque, enthraling Parisian audiences with its bold orchestral innovation and captivating storytelling. Commissioned by Sergei Diaghilev for his Ballets Russes, the ballet's premiere at the Théâtre National de l'Opéra was met with rapturous acclaim, as Stravinsky's vibrant and enchanting score, steeped in Russian folk themes and lush orchestration, broke from the conventions of the time, offering a fresh and exhilarating sound that seemed to capture the very spirit of the modern age.

17. ISADORA DUNCAN



Isadora Duncan, the American dancer who captivated Parisian audiences with her revolutionary style, became a figure of undeniable significance during the final years of the Belle Époque. Rejecting the rigid structures of classical ballet, Duncan introduced a form of free, expressive movement that echoed the flourishing spirit of the era, mirroring its embrace of artistic innovation and individualism. Her performances, marked by fluid, barefoot movements and the grace of ancient Greek aesthetics, broke with tradition and were celebrated by both the avant-garde and the intellectual elite.

18. MADAME CURIE



Marie Curie, the brilliant Polish-born scientist, emerged as one of the most remarkable figures of the Belle Époque, her groundbreaking work in the field of radioactivity captivated both the scientific community and the public. In a time when women were seldom seen in the halls of scientific discovery, Madame Curie shattered expectations, becoming the first woman to win a Nobel Prize and the only individual to ever receive Nobel honors in two different scientific fields. Her tireless research on radium and polonium not only revolutionized medicine and physics but also embodied the era's spirit of intellectual curiosity and technological advancement.

19. EDGAR DEGAS



A founding member of the Impressionist movement, though often at odds with its aesthetic, Edgar Degas left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of the Belle Époque, with his innovative approach to painting and sculpture. Renowned for his intimate depictions of ballet dancers and everyday life, Degas broke free from the conventions of classical realism and offered a new, more dynamic view of the world. His use of unusual perspectives and mastery of movement captured the very essence of modern Parisian life, reflecting the rapid transformations of the city itself.

20. MOULIN ROUGE



The Moulin Rouge, that dazzling cabaret on the Boulevard de Clichy, became the very heart of Parisian nightlife during the Belle Époque. Since its opening in 1889, the iconic windmill has stood as a symbol of the era's hedonistic spirit, offering a stage for the city's most talented dancers, singers, and artists. The cabaret's lively cancan dances, performed by spirited, feathered dancers, became a sensation, drawing crowds eager to experience its joyous revelry and the charm of a world teeming with modernity and excess. The Moulin Rouge encapsulated the freedom and exuberance of the Belle Époque, cementing its place as one of the era's most significant landmarks.

21. MAXIM'S



Maxim's, the legendary restaurant on Rue Royale, became a symbol of elegance and excess during the Belle Époque, embodying the lavish lifestyle that defined the golden age of Parisian society. Since its opening in 1893, Maxim's quickly attracted the city's elite, from artists and aristocrats to businessmen and diplomats, all eager to indulge in its exquisite cuisine and glamorous ambiance. The opulent decor, featuring art nouveau designs, and the refined atmosphere made it a favorite haunt for those seeking both culinary delight and social distinction. Maxim's became a cultural hub, where the spirit of the era's fashionable decadence could be felt in every meal and conversation.

22. ORIENT EXPRESS



The Orient Express, that luxurious train which first began its journey in 1883, became the epitome of opulence and adventure during the Belle Époque, offering an unparalleled travel experience across Europe. From Paris to Constantinople, the train's plush interiors and impeccable service captivated the imaginations of the elite, who sought not only comfort but the thrill of exotic destinations. It was more than just a means of transport; it was a rolling palace, where aristocrats, writers, and diplomats could mingle in luxury as they traversed the continent; and it has come to represent the golden age of travel, where the romance of the journey itself was as significant as the destination.

23. ALPHONSE MUCHA



Alphonse Mucha, the Czech artist whose name has become synonymous with the Art Nouveau movement, undeniably shaped the visual language of the Belle Époque with his distinctive and elegant style. His elaborate posters, characterized by flowing lines, delicate color palettes, and ethereal women surrounded by intricate floral motifs, captured the spirit of the era's aesthetic revolution. Mucha's work, especially his famous posters for the actress Sarah Bernhardt, elevated commercial art to new heights, blending beauty with functionality in ways that had never before been seen.

24. LA FÉE VERTE



La Fée Verte, or "The Green Fairy," captured the imagination of Parisian society during the Belle Époque, becoming a symbol of both artistic inspiration and decadent excess. This mysterious, emerald-hued liquor, more commonly known as Absinthe, found favor among poets, painters, and bohemians who claimed it sparked creativity and provided an escape from the mundane. Often served in cafés and salons, its ritualistic preparation and intoxicating effects made it a central part of the city's nightlife. However, its allure was not without controversy, as its potent influence led to growing concerns about its impact on health and morality.

25. LE VOYAGE DANS LA LUNE



Le Voyage dans la Lune, the groundbreaking 1902 film by Georges Méliès, captivated the imagination of Parisians and ignited a new era of cinematic innovation during the Belle Époque. With its fantastical story of a journey to the moon, complete with whimsical special effects and imaginative sets, the film marked a pivotal moment in the evolution of cinema, blending science fiction with the magic of the stage. Its significance lies not only in its technical achievements but in how it encapsulated the Belle Époque's fascination with progress, exploration, and the unexplored realms of human imagination.

26. LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY



Louis Comfort Tiffany, the American artist and designer, became a towering figure in the decorative arts during the Belle Époque, transforming the way Parisians—and indeed the world—viewed luxury and craftsmanship. Renowned for his exquisite stained glass windows and intricate lamps, Tiffany’s mastery of color and light brought a new level of artistry to everyday objects, imbuing them with elegance and an otherworldly beauty. As the Belle Époque flourished, his name became synonymous with luxury, and his creations, coveted by the elite, elevated the American contribution to the global art scene, leaving an indelible mark on the aesthetic legacy of the era.

27. LA STATUE DE LA LIBERTÉ



In a grand gesture of friendship and shared ideals, the Republic of France presented to the United States the majestic Statue of Liberty, a monumental gift that captured the imaginations of both nations and the world. Unveiled on October 28, 1886, this towering figure, conceived by the visionary sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi and supported by the eminent engineer Gustave Eiffel, stands as a symbol of liberty, democracy, and the enduring bond between the two great republics. It marked the zenith of Franco-American cooperation and served as a beacon of hope for millions of immigrants arriving on American shores, reminding them of the freedoms they sought and the promise of a new life in the land of opportunity.

28. THE ROYAL BARGE



Reminiscent of a grand Viking ship, and complete with Royal Gryphon, the Royal Barge is one of Rex’s iconic permanent floats. This float is the last remnant of the Royal Navy, once a feature of each Rex Parade. This year, the Royal Barge has been rechristened “La Badine” (the vessel commanded by French explorers and brothers Pierre Le Moyne d’Iberville and Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville) to commemorate the 325th anniversary of the first celebration of Mardi Gras in what would become the United States of America at Ponte du Mardi Gras. On March 3, 2024 a Rex battalion celebrated this special anniversary by casting a wreath with purple, green and gold ribbons into the Mississippi River at the original landing site.



29. HIS MAJESTY’S ROYAL CALLIOPE

The Calliope provides a lively and traditional musical counterpoint and conclusion to the brilliant array of bands in the Rex Procession.

