



## PHOTO EXHIBITION /

### A WALK WITH MARCEL PROUST'S FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Starting in 1854, Félix Tournachon, also known as Nadar, opened a photography studio and welcomed the most important of his time (members of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, artists, and politicians), attracted by the development of photography. The invention of photography completely revolutionized the art of traditional portraiture. This new artistic medium made it possible to capture the features of portrait subjects in a different way than drawing or painting.

Paul Nadar, son of Félix Tournachon, was trained by his father and took over the family studio in 1886, at the very moment when photographic techniques were improving, and studios were multiplying.

All of Paris came to Paul Nadar, who was known for his artistic eye, attentive to the character of the model, and a more refined composition that gave rise to strikingly lifelike photographs.

Among his clients, we find the acquaintances and friends of Marcel Proust, whom he observed and from whom he drew inspiration for the characters in his work *In Search of Lost Time*. Proust was known to ask his friends, sometimes relentlessly, for their photographs, which he kept in albums.

While strolling in the gardens of the Villa, you can discover the portrait of a society representing a somewhat “lost world.” Dig deeper into the representation of each of these leading figures of the Belle Époque, the features, and the characteristics of the Proustian universe, which gives it a depth and an additional literary life. The portraits of Marcel Proust can be discovered in the Belle Époque Exhibition of the Villa.

This exhibition was made possible with the photographic collection of the Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine (MAP).

## FRONT GARDEN

### Jeanne Proust (born Weill)

Mother of Marcel and Robert Proust

1849-1905

*The Narrator's Mother*

Jeanne Weill, a member of the Jewish upper middle class, received a cultivated education from her mother, one open to the world, which she passed on to her eldest son, Marcel. It was she who made him aware of literature and the arts and who introduced him to the pleasures of sea bathing on the Côte Fleurie in 1881.

One of Proust's greatest sorrows was her death in 1905, and he chose to make the mother figure immortal in his work: the Narrator's mother accompanies him throughout the novel and represents a fundamental character of *In Search of Lost Time*.

### Robert Proust

Brother of Marcel Proust

1873-1935

*Not present in In Search of Lost Time*

Two years younger than Marcel Proust, Robert was passionate about mathematics and followed his father's example by becoming an eminent surgeon and professor at the Faculty of Medicine. Though Marcel Proust was close to his brother, Robert did not inspire any key character in *In Search of Lost Time*.

When Marcel Proust died in 1922, only four of the seven volumes of *La Recherche* were published.

Robert collected the writer's manuscripts and helped structure the last volumes, thus allowing the completion of his brother's immense novel.

### Madeleine Lemaire

Friend of Marcel Proust

1845-1928

*Sidonie Verdurin and Marquise Madeleine de Villeparisis*

Every Tuesday in her brilliant salon or in her studio, all of Paris met at Madeleine Lemaire's house. Proust visited her for

the first time in 1893 and became an intimate friend of hers, to the point that he often visited her with Reynaldo Hahn

in his villa in Dieppe and asked her to illustrate his first collection, *Les Plaisirs et Les Jours (Pleasures and Days)*, in 1896.

Through her energetic and authoritarian character and the importance of her [Adrien Proust](#)

**Father of Marcel and Robert Proust**  
**1834-1903**

*The Narrator's Father*

Son of modest shopkeepers from Illiers (Eure-et-Loir), Adrien Proust had a brilliant career as a medical practitioner and professor of medicine. He published reference works on the circuits of

salon, she inspired the character of Madame Verdurin, and through her pictorial practice she inspired the character of Madame de Villeparisis.

epidemics and international hygiene following trips to Persia and Russia.

Marcel was far less close to his father than to his mother, with whom he shared his taste for art and literature.

## BACK GARDEN

[Élisabeth de Riquet de Caraman-Chimay](#)

**Countess of Greffulhe, Proust's social acquaintance**  
**1860-1952**

*Duchess Oriane de Guermantes and Princess of Guermantes*

A member of the French high nobility, the Countess of Greffulhe had a very intertwined relationship with the arts, which she practiced herself. She took photography lessons from Paul Nadar and played the piano and as well as the guitar. Her outfits and her elegance inspired the artists of her time like Paul-César Helleu.

Fascinated by this socialite personality, Marcel Proust was finally introduced to her in 1894 through Robert de Montesquieu, cousin of the countess. The writer made her the main model for the character of the Duchess of Guermantes—a keen painter who was very elegant and spiritual. This character nevertheless presents a certain cruelty.

[Reynaldo Hahn](#)

**Musician and Friend of Marcel Proust**  
**1874-1947**

*Mr. Vinteuil*

As a student of Jules Massenet at the Paris Conservatory, Reynaldo Hahn was a composer, conductor, singer, and music critic known for his compositions of piano melodies.

Hahn met Marcel Proust for the first time in 1894 at Madeleine Lemaire's home. They became very close and traveled together to Venice in the spring of 1900, a trip that left a deep impression

on the writer and which is reflected in his work. With Claude Debussy, Camille Saint-Saëns, Gabriel Fauré, César Franck and Vincent d'Indy, Reynaldo Hahn is among the composers who inspired Proust to create the character of Monsieur Vinteuil, a musician misunderstood during his lifetime, whose sonata accompanies Swann's and Odette's love affair, as well as the feelings the narrator has for Albertine.

### Count Robert de Montesquiou

Social acquaintance of Marcel Proust  
1855-1921

#### *Baron Palamède de Charlus*

Extravagant member of the aristocratic world, Robert de Montesquiou is better known for his eccentricities and his taste for splendor than for his symbolist poems, characteristic of the "fin de siècle" movement.

A fascinating character, he inspired the writers Karl Joris Huysmans and Jean Lorrain to write aesthetic novels, and he posed for the great portraitists of his time, such as Giovanni Boldini, James

Abbott Whistler, and Jacques-Émile Blanche. Proust met him in 1893 at Madeleine Lemaire's house, and they maintained a complex friendly relationship throughout their lives, mixed with admiration and antipathy.

Montesquiou inspired Proust to create Baron de Charlus, one of the most present and most complex characters of *In Search of Lost Time*.

### Marie de Benardaky (born de Lebrock)

Mother of Marie and Nelly de Benardaky, childhood friends of Proust  
1855-1913

#### *Odette de Crécy, wife of Charles Swann*

The Benardaky couple, owners of an immense fortune built on the tea trade, represent a nobility enriched by trade,

very different from the great families of the Parisian Faubourg Saint-Germain.

Madame de Benardaky liked to be photographed by Paul Nadar in sumptuous disguises, like this Valkyrie costume designed by Worth. As a child, Proust was greatly impressed by the boisterous luxury of her home.

### Charles Haas

**Marcel Proust's social acquaintance**

**1832-1902**

*Charles Swann*

Charles Haas was a very prominent social figure of the Second Empire, frequenting the artists of his time and showing great artistic erudition. He frequented the salon of Geneviève Straus, where he met Proust, with whom he kept a very distant relationship.

She lends her taste for pomp and pageantry to the demimondaine character of Odette Swann.

He was nevertheless Charles Swann's main model, according to Proust's own admission, who borrowed from him his great knowledge of the arts, his interest in artists who were not yet well known, and his sentimental life, punctuated by a long affair close to the one Swann had with Odette.

### Lucie Faure

**Childhood friend of Marcel Proust**

**1866-1913**

*Gilberte Swann*

Daughter of the former French President Felix Faure, born in Le Havre where she spent her childhood, Lucie became Marcel's playmate through her mother, a friend of Jeanne Proust. It was her sister Antoinette who gave the teenager a page from her album "Confessions" to fill out, which is now

famously known as "The Proust Questionnaire".

Inspired by their meetings and games on the Champs-Élysées, Lucie is one of the models of Gilberte Swann, daughter of Charles and Odette Swann, with whom the child narrator is in love.