Occult Symbolism In France: Josephin Peladan And The Salons De La Rose-Croix

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Today, I googled Joséphin Péladan—the salons' leader—and some sixty thousand references appeared. Back then, Symbolism was largely understood to be a literary movement. Now we recognize that Gauguin was all but unknown at century's end, while the myriad figures of Rose+Croix of the Temple and the Grail were all the rage. These salons, presided over by the thaumaturge Péladan in his magnificence as Sâr, keyed into the period passion for the esoteric—a moment when artists (and the public, too) were drawn to a classical myth anticipatory of Freud, to a syncretic Catholicism that allowed for certain Asianisms to drift in, and to a new quattrocentism hyperbolized in the androgynous angels depicted in Leonardo. da Vinci's two variants of Virgin of the Rocks.