



Lamp base

Daum

Not on display

Title/Description: Lamp base

Artist/Maker: Daum (Daum Frères)

Born: 1910 c.

Materials: Glass

Measurements: h. 508 x w. 200 x d. 200 mm

Inscription: Cameo mark 'D.N.' with cross of Lorraine

Accession Number: 21021

Historic Period: 20th century

Credit Line: Donated by Sir Colin and Lady Anderson, 1978

This elegant French Art Nouveau glass lamp base was manufactured by the Daum Frères' workshops and is marked with the Daum Nancy cameo signature, which comprises the initials D.N. with a cross of Lorraine. Antonin Daum (1864-1930) used Louis Majorelle (1859-1926) sinuous glass lamp base designs with cavities for electric cable from the early 1890s, and the firm also worked with the designers, Henri Bergé (1870-1937) and Almaric Walter (1870-1959). [1]

At the time that this lamp base was manufactured, the supply of AC electrical current for domestic use was a relatively new invention, having been developed throughout the 1880s and 1890s. For this reason, the lamp base can be viewed as a symbol of technological progress and modernity. [2]

Advances in furnace technology and glass chemistry in the late 19th century resulted in the production of innovative, brightly coloured, glass forms. [3] The lamp base was manufactured by blowing yellow glass overlaid with green glass into a mould, and its two-tone decoration produced by etching through the glass layers (F. *verre doublé*).

To achieve the naturalistic design of a eucalyptus branch, skilled craftsmen applied resist wax to the surface before repeatedly dipping the glass in hydrofluoric acid. Finer details were engraved using wheels and drills.

This carving or etching through of fused coloured glass is known as 'cameo glass', after a Roman technique for engraving glass vessels and semi-precious gemstones that was developed in the 1st century. [4] Attracted to the process of antique cameo glass, and inspired by the aesthetics of Qing-dynasty Chinese glass [5], designers of Art Nouveau revived cameo glass with some modifications, choosing to substitute Classical motifs with contemporary botanical designs.

Enthusiasm for exact naturalistic depictions of flora on glassware had been kindled by the glassmaker-artist and trained botanist, Émile Gallé (1846-1904). Also from Nancy in the province of Lorraine, Gallé's expressive Art Nouveau designs exercised a huge influence on the glass production of the Daum Frères. [6]

The decoration on the Daum's lamp base speaks to 19th century advances in the application of scientific knowledge. The eucalyptus tree, shown winding diagonally around the slender, cylindrical form of the lamp base, is indigenous to Australia and was first introduced to Europe in 1774.

Seeds of the Eucalyptus tree were collected by Tobias Furneaux during Captain Cook's second voyage to Australia and cultivated at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. [7] Although the leaves are toxic when ingested, they have long been known to possess antiseptic properties. Botanist, Ferdinand von Mueller (1825-1896) promoted its disinfectant quality [8], and by the 1880s European surgeons were using steam-distilled eucalyptus oil as an antiseptic. [9]

Vanessa Tothill, November 2020

[1] Amanda Geitner and Emma Hazell, ed., *The Anderson Collection of Art Nouveau* (Norwich: Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, 2003), pp. 130-31.

[2] <https://americanhistory.si.edu/lighting/19thcent/comp19.htm> [accessed on 16 November 2020]

[3] Paul Greenhalgh, ed., *Art Nouveau, 1890-1914* (London: V&A Publications, 2000) p. 209.

[4] <https://www.britannica.com/art/cameo-glass> [accessed 16 November 2020]

[5] https://www.suntory.com/sma/exhibition/2018_2/display.html [accessed 16 November 2020]

[6] Paul Greenhalgh, ed., *Art Nouveau, 1890-1914* (London: V&A Publications, 2000) pp. 210-12.

[7] F.J. Silva-Pando and R Pino-Pérez, 'Introduction of *Eucalyptus* into Europe', *Australian Forestry* 79:4 (2016), pp. 283-91 (Abstract).

[8] Maude Grieve, *A Modern Herbal* (London: Jonathon Cape, 1931), p. 287.

[9] Joseph Henry Maiden, *The Useful Native Plants of Australia* (Sydney: Turner and Henderson, 1889), p. 255.

Further Reading

Mario Amaya, *Art Nouveau* (London: Dutton Vista, 1966)

Vivienne Couldrey, *The Art of Louis Comfort Tiffany* (London: Quarto Publishing, 1989)

Amanda Geitner and Emma Hazell, eds., *The Anderson Collection of Art Nouveau* (Norwich: Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, 2003)

Paul Greenhalgh, ed., *Art Nouveau, 1890-1914* (London: V&A Publications, 2000)

Paul Greenhalgh, ed., *The Nature of Dreams: England and the Formation of Art Nouveau* (Norwich: Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, 2020)

Joseph Henry Maiden, *The Useful Native Plants of Australia* (Sydney: Turner and Henderson, 1889)

Maude Grieve, *A Modern Herbal* (London: Jonathon Cape, 1931)

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