



Bowl

Gabriel Argy-Rousseau

Not on display

Title/Description: Bowl

Artist/Maker: Gabriel Argy-Rousseau (Designer)

Born: 1920 c.

Object Type: Bowl

Materials: Glass, Pâte de verre

Technique: Blow moulding, Pâte de verre

Measurements: h. 108 x w. 115 x d. 115 mm

Inscription: 'G. Argy-Rousseau' incised on the side; '4236' on the underside

Accession Number: 21038

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: France

School/Style: Art Nouveau

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

This small glass bowl was designed by Gabriel Argy-Rousseau (born Joseph-Gabriel Rousseau; 1885-1953) and manufactured using a technique known as *pâte de verre* or 'glass paste'. Using this process, finely crushed glass bound with gum arabic is applied as a paste to the inside of a ceramic mould and fired in a kiln. Oxides and metal salts can be added to the powdered glass to produce different colours in the firing.

The *pâte de verre* technique developed from Roman frit casting that used moulds and chips of glass. It is likely that Argy-Rousseau first modelled the bowl form in plaster and clay before developing the moulds needed to cast a positive model in wax. This piece of kiln-fired glass relied on the lost wax casting method to create a cavity within a refractory ceramic material. Once the wax had drained out, glass paste was applied to the walls of the cavity and fired. [1]

Decorated with flowering branches in moulded relief, the rim of the bowl is festooned with purple and magenta blooms. Tubular in form, the frosted grey glass bowl sits on a generous foot. This piece has been incised with 'G. Argy-Rousseau' on its side and '4236' on the base.

Argy-Rousseau admired Classical Greek civilization. However, the shape and decoration of this particular vessel resembles a Japanese tea bowl, revealing the influence of non-European artistic styles, specifically Japonisme, on Art Nouveau design.

From 1902-1906, Argy-Rousseau studied at the Ecole Nationale de Céramique at Sèvres where he earned a diploma in ceramic engineering. [2] During this period, Argy-Rousseau's classmate Jean Cros introduced him to mould-cast glass production [3]. Jean Cros was the son of César-Isidore-Henri Cros (1840-1907) who had rediscovered the *pâte de verre* technique in 1893 and developed his own method for kiln-firing powdered glass in clay moulds [4].

Joseph-Gabriel Rousseau adopted the name Argy-Rousseau in 1913 when he married Marianne Argyriades, the year before he presented his designs at Le Salon des Artistes Français in Paris. [5] Argy-Rousseau founded the company 'Société des Pâtes de Verre' in 1921 [6] and formed a partnership with Gustav Moser-Millot who marketed Argy-Rousseau's art glass. [7] Over the next 15 years he produced between 200 and 300 wax models for lamps, vases, and bowls. [8] Blighted by the

economic crisis of 1929, series production ended with the dissolution of Argy-Rousseau's company in 1931. [9]

Vanessa Tothill, January 2021

[1] *Keith Cummings, Contemporary Kiln-formed Glass (A&C Black, 2009)*, pp. 34-37.

[2] <https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-gabriel-argy-rousseau-1885-1963-a-jeunesse-vase-circa-5978726/> [accessed 4 January 2021] references Janine Bloch-Dermant, *Argy-Rousseau: Glassware as Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991).

[3] <https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-gabriel-argy-rousseau-1885-1963-a-jeunesse-vase-circa-5978726/> [accessed 4 January 2021] references Bloch-Dermant. (1991).

[4] <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/195144?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=C%c3%a9sar-Isidore-Henry+Cros&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=3> [accessed 4 January 2021]

[5] <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG64679> [accessed 4 January 2021]

[6] <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG64679> [accessed 4 January 2021]

[7] <http://argyrousseau.com/history/> [accessed 7 January 2021]

[8] <https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-gabriel-argy-rousseau-1885-1963-a-jeunesse-vase-circa-5978726/> [accessed 4 January 2021] references Bloch-Dermant (1991).

[9] <https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-gabriel-argy-rousseau-1885-1963-a-jeunesse-vase-circa-5978726/> [accessed 4 January 2021] references Bloch-Dermant (1991).

Further Reading

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Cummings, Keith, *Contemporary Kiln-formed Glass* (A&C Black, 2009)

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

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

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