



Vase

Emile Gallé

Not on display

Title/Description: Vase

Artist/Maker: Emile Gallé (Designer)

Born: 1880 - 1890

Object Type: Glassware, Metalware, Vase

Materials: Bronze, Enamel, Glass

Technique: Blow moulding, Enameling, Gilding, Metalworking

Measurements: h. 254 x w. 117 x w. 83 mm

Accession Number: 21055

Historic Period: 19th century

Production Place: France, Nancy

School/Style: Art Nouveau

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

This glass vase has been attributed to Émile Gallé (1846-1904), the celebrated Art Nouveau artist-designer and founder of the École de Nancy in France. The vase was made in the 1880s, at a time when Gallé had achieved success and international recognition for his award-winning art glass. In the following decade Gallé opened shops in Paris, London and Frankfurt, embracing methods of industrial production to keep pace with demand. [1]

Gallé's family were involved in the trade and manufacture of glass and faience in Nancy. The family owned a factory in Saint-Clément (Lorraine region), the Maison Gallé-Reinemer, which came under Gallé's direction in 1874 after his father retired. [2]

Enamel decoration on the vase demonstrates Gallé's interest in the natural sciences and his skill as a draftsman. After attending the Lycée Imperial in Nancy, Gallé received training in German, philosophy, botany and mineralogy in Weimar (1864-66). [3] This was followed by an apprenticeship at the Burgun, Schwerer & Cie glassworks in Meisenthal, France. [4] From early in his career, Gallé depicted stylised flora and insects in designs that were informed by his passion for botany. In this example, Gallé has depicted dragonflies in flight.

Straight sided with a waisted neck and base, the vase is formed from blow-moulded opaline glass. The four faces of the vessel are decorated with stylised waves and the scaly patterns of insect wings in raised relief, over-painted with polychrome enamels and gilt.

The combination of purple, reddish brown, blue, and green enamel colours against a white ground subtly references Japanese porcelain, such as Satsuma ware, while the intricate relief work create a visual effect that is similar to cloisonné enamels. The East Asian aesthetic of this design is heightened with the addition of a square, bronze Chinoiserie stand of pierced decoration.

Gallé's glassware took inspiration from many non-European artistic styles and manufacturing techniques. In 1871, when attending to family business in London, Gallé' took the opportunity to familiarize himself with the Chinese, Japanese and Islamic objects at the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum). [5] The legacy of this encounter is evident in Gallé's glass and furniture designs.

Vanessa Tothill, January 2021

[1] Paul Greenhalgh, ed., *Art Nouveau 1890-1914* (London: V&A Publications, 2000), p. 210; Amanda Geitner and Emma Hazell, ed., *The Anderson Collection of Art Nouveau* (Norwich: Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, 2003), p. 132.

[2] http://naturalisticspoon.com/Emile_Galle.html [accessed 14 January 2021];

Geitner (2003), p. 132.

[3] http://naturalisticspoon.com/Emile_Galle.html [accessed 14 January 2021]

[4] http://naturalisticspoon.com/Emile_Galle.html [accessed 14 January 2021]

[5] Geitner (2003), pp. 131-2.

Further Reading

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

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)
