



La Fleur de Gentaine

Emile Gallé

Not on display

Title/Description: La Fleur de Gentaine

Artist/Maker: Emile Gallé (Designer)

Born: 1890 - 1900

Object Type: Vase

Materials: Glass

Technique: Blow moulding

Measurements: h. 190 x w. 96 x w. 96 mm

Inscription: Engraved 'Gallé' on the side and with etched factory on the underside 'Cristallerie d'E Gallé Nancy forme déposée'

Accession Number: 21064

Historic Period: 19th century

Production Place: France, Nancy

School/Style: Art Nouveau

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

This blow-moulded glass vase was designed and manufactured by Émile Gallé (1846-1904), the celebrated Art Nouveau artist and founder of the École de Nancy in France. Engraved Gallé on the side and with the mark of the factory etched on the base (*Cristallerie d' E. Gallé Nancy forme déposée*), the object was produced between 1890 and 1900 at Gallé's glassworks. By this time, Gallé had achieved success and international recognition for his award-winning glass, and in both 1889 and 1901 Gallé earned medals at the Paris Exposition Universelle for his innovative designs. [1]

Gallé expressed a passion for the natural world from a young age, and enjoyed drawing and painting flora and fauna. After attending the Lycée Imperial in Nancy, Gallé went on to study German, philosophy, botany and mineralogy in Weimar (1864-66). [2] His keen interest in horticulture can be observed in this design for a vase, the form of which resembles the trumpet-shaped flower of the gentian studded with small turquoise-coloured beetles.

The cylindrical body of the vase is lobed from the base to the rim. Lacking applied decoration,

horizontal bands of colour that change from purple to white to golden yellow add a sense of dynamism to the vase's vertical symmetry. To great effect, the edge of the purple band flicks up into points and creates the illusion that the form is twisting.

It is possible that the shape of the vase was influenced by ancient Chinese bronze vessels, such as Shang-dynasty ritual wine vessels (Ch. *gu*). 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). [3] The legacy of this encounter is evident in Gallé's glass and furniture designs.

Vanessa Tothill, January 2021

[1] 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]

[3] Geitner, pp. 131-2.

Further Reading

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

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)
