



'Cambray Ware' vase

Liberty & Co. Ltd.

Not on display

Title/Description: 'Cambray Ware' vase

Artist/Maker: Liberty & Co. Ltd. (Merchant)

Born: 1900 c.

Object Type: Glassware, Metalware, Vase

Materials: Copper, Enamel, Glass

Technique: Enameling, Hammering, Metalworking

Measurements: h. 242 x w. 8.7 x d. 8.7 mm

Inscription: 'Cambray Ware' trademark

Accession Number: 21018

Production Place: Britain, England, London

School/Style: Art Nouveau

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

The 'Cambray Ware' vase is manufactured from contrasting materials and forms, which when combined present a well-balanced and innovative structure. The vase comprises a blue-green, opalescent glass bowl, with an organic, undulating rim, supported by a tall metal pedestal. The undulating rim of the bowl draws inwards at four points, complementing the four faces of the rectangular vase. A cylindrical shaft is concealed within its tapering square section, enabling the design to function as a vessel.

Made from hand-hammered copper that is secured with side rivets, the pedestal is ornamented with four dark blue, oval-shaped, enamel medallions. The design of the vase, inspired by Gothic revivalist metalwork and enamelling, successfully unites the Art and Crafts handmade aesthetic with the sinuous lines and symmetry associated with English Art Nouveau.

Retailed exclusively by Liberty & Co., the vase was manufactured by Best Lloyd, situated in Cambray works Handsworth Birmingham. The underside of the vessel is stamped with the trademark: 'Cambray Ware'. Many of the designers of Liberty's metal wares were students working for the firm of William Haseler in Birmingham. [1]

Founded by Arthur Lasenby Liberty (1843-1917) on Regent Street in central west London, Liberty & Co. grew out of a small venture called East India House that he started in 1875, retailing art objects from Japan and East Asia. Moving to different premises on Regent Street in 1883, Arthur Liberty expanded his range of products to include costume, carpets, furniture, clothing and furnishings. [2] Liberty upheld a policy of not identifying the artisans who designed products for his store, choosing instead to promote the company brand over individual artistic personalities. [3]

The 'Cambray Ware' vase dates from the period when Archibald Knox (1864-1933) and Rex (Reginald C.) Silver (1879-1965) were commissioned by Liberty to produce jewellery and silverwares. [4] Knox and his colleagues established the company's signature style with goods that bridged the Arts and Crafts, Celtic Revival and Art Nouveau movements. Knox is best remembered for his development of the Cymric and Tudric lines in silver and pewter. These were introduced in 1899 and 1901 respectively. [5]

Vanessa Tothill, November 2020

[1] Mario Amaya, *Art Nouveau* (London: Dutton Vista, 1966) p. 65; Amanda Geitner and Emma Hazell, eds, *The Anderson Collection of Art Nouveau* (Norwich: Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, 2003), pp. 65-66.

[2] Geitner, p. 135.

[3] Amaya, p. 65

[4] Geitner, p. 135.

[5] Geitner, p. 135.

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)
