Emile Gallé
and the Origins of Art Nouveau

Howard Coutts
An exquisite treasure of The Bowes Museum is an elegant fluted glass vase, engraved with two amorous pigeons on a branch in a tree. The inscription, in 18th century French, deux pigeons s’amovant d’amour tendre is composed of letters formed of single flower petals and identify it as being from a fable by the French author La Fontaine. The fable is about two pigeons, one of whom decides to travel to the heartbreak of his mate and damage to his own personal health. Like many objects in the Museum, it may have had a personal resonance for its first owner, the French actress Joséphine Bowes, who bought it directly from the glass maker Emile Gallé in 1871. She and her husband John Bowes met him at an International Exhibition in London, having escaped from the Franco-Prussian War, while continuing work on, and collecting for, the great museum in Teesdale that bears their name. Joséphine was often in bad health and did not enjoy the seacrossing to England. She found it hard to join her husband on his business journeys to County Durham. When they died (Joséphine in 1874 and John in 1885) they left enough money for the Museum to open in 1892 and continue its existence into the first half of the twentieth century.

By the end of the Second World War, The Bowes Museum was exhausted financially, but recognised as having the major collection of European fine and decorative arts in the North of England. It was then that the administration was taken over by Durham County Council, perhaps with the discreet prompting of John Bowes’ kinswoman Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, a keen supporter throughout her long life. When in turn the direct role of the County Council came to an end in the year 2000, it fell to me as the Chairman of the new Bowes Museum Trust to develop its full potential into the 21st century.

The exhibition, *Emile Gallé and the Origins of Art Nouveau* is one of a number the Museum has organised in recent years under its Director, Adrian Jenkins, that take a theme from The Bowes Museum’s origins and history and develops it through loans and research into a topic of wider national and international significance. The staff of The Bowes Museum work with enthusiasm making their contribution to the local, national and increasingly international cultural scene. There is no doubt that they will continue to reveal the importance of The Bowes Museum to the people of North East England, and lovers of fine and decorative arts everywhere.

Viscount Eccles
Chairman, Trustees of The Bowes Museum
Among the many treasures of The Bowes Museum is a beautiful engraved glass ‘cabaret’ set for scented orange water, called by the French a ‘verre d’eau’ (literally ‘glass of water’), that has been in the Museum since its foundation in the 19th century. During the 1970s letters were found in the Museum archives that identified it as one of the first known commissions from the famous glass maker, Emile Gallé, by the Museum’s foundress, Joséphine Bowes, in 1872. Gallé’s letters to Joséphine, reproduced in an appendix at the back, contain some of his first known writings on art and in them he states that when I pick a flower, I pick a model and an idea. When I model a new project, I am really dreaming of some unknown flower. When it is considered that Gallé became famous twenty years later as the leading exponent of the sinuous botanical style called ‘Art Nouveau’, it will be seen that Joséphine’s taste was way in advance of that of most of her contemporaries.

Oddly enough, another source for the botanical form of Art Nouveau survives in the Museum’s archives: the cover for a book on Streatlam Castle, the English home of the Bowes, commissioned after Joséphine’s death by her grieving husband John Bowes in 1879-1880. The device of an elongated and sinuous arum lily (Zantedeschia aethiopica) and wilting flower on the cover – reproduced opposite – suggests the French were not the first to devise the elongated botanical style that became known as ‘Art Nouveau’ throughout Europe in the 1890s. The designer of the cover is not known, but the trial copy of the cover in the Museum archives is inscribed ‘wrapper not ordered’, suggesting that it is simply a device from the printers, Harrison of Pall Mall. This would suggest that continental ‘Art Nouveau’ did indeed owe a great debt to the English ‘Aesthetic Movement’ of the 1880s, as has often been supposed, but in England it was an altogether more populist affair.

We have taken these sources as the inspiration for this publication and the exhibition Emile Gallé and the Origins of Art Nouveau held at The Bowes Museum in 2007. This is not a topic that the Bowes Museum could develop from its collections alone, and we are most grateful to many lenders, headed by the Anderson Collection of Art Nouveau at the University of East Anglia, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery & Museums, Brighton & Hove, the British Museum and many other museums, and private collections headed by Victor and Gretha Arwas, who made the exhibition possible. I am grateful to the curatorial team headed by our curator of ceramics, Dr. Howard Coutts, and our exhibitions team, headed by Vivien Reid, for the time and effort they put into this. Dr. Coutts did much of his research as a Visiting Scholar at St.Catherine’s College, Cambridge, in 2005. In turn they have benefited from much outside help, including that of Alex Carlson for labelling, and Jo Angell and Margaret Harley for research and translation of the archive material. We are particularly indebted to Professor David Ingram, former Regius Keeper of The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, and then Master of St.Catherine’s College, Cambridge, for his interpretation and discussion of flowers and plants depicted. We hope that The Bowes Museum has been able, through its unusual mixture of objects, and documents held in its archives, to throw new light on a subject that has attracted much attention in recent years.

Adrian Jenkins
Director, The Bowes Museum
French decorative arts

French decorative arts dominated European taste throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. The impetus was led by the state factories of the Gobelins (for tapestries) and Sévres (for porcelain), set up to furnish royal palaces and provide royal gifts for the King and his court. When royal patronage was abolished at the time of the Revolution, the impetus continued with public exhibitions of decorative arts at the Louvre and elsewhere, exhibiting the very best of French craftsmanship and industrial production, and included the finest wares made or commissioned for private patrons and retailers alike.

The court under Napoleon I (1804-1814) and his successors Louis XVIII (1814/15-24), Charles X (1824-1830), Louis Philippe (1830-1848) and Napoleon III (1852-1870) continued state support for the Gobelins and Sévres, and furnished the palaces to a high standard.

It is not easy to find any common aim in this production. Though the court might apparently promote a single strand of taste – most obviously, Classicism at the Court of Napoleon I – a desire for novelty and demonstration of skill seem to have been the overwhelming purpose. Design sources might be ‘mixed and matched’ to reflect different centuries and cultures. A major aspect was the use of fine materials – gilt bronze, marquetry, porcelain, ivory, and semi-precious stones – in such a way as to bring out the individual qualities of the material, even if it was at the expense of a visually harmonious whole. Refinement of execution mattered more than practicality or construction. These were expensive items, made in small quantity. When, in the mid 19th century, the French were called upon to exhibit at the great international exhibitions of the day – London in 1851, Paris in 1855, London in 1862 and Paris in 1867 – they were well-equipped to send a superb variety of national and local production that was the spoken and unspoken envy of the rest of Europe.

These luxury items marked a standard for all to aspire to, and for no-one more so than the china and glass dealer Charles Gallé (1818-1902). He worked in the historic but provincial town of Nancy on the border of eastern France, best known for its refurbishment by its 18th century King, Stanislas Leszczynski, who reconstructed the main square with magnificent wrought iron gates. Gallé’s marriage to Fanny Reinemer (1825-1891) in 1845, daughter of a ceramics dealer, strengthened his place in the world of china-dealing and he used their names together. A particular line was the production of individually monogrammed or decorated services for the rich. Nancy was in the major manufacturing area of Lorraine, on the borders with Germany, and he had the advantage of being able to work with the local glass firm of Meisenthal, as well as other local firms such as Baccarat and Saint Louis. Much of the decoration was done in his own workshops of glass cutters, using factory blanks of standard form. He also commissioned models from the local pottery factory of St. Clément, utilising or reviving 18th century designs in the prestigious but old-fashioned technique of ‘faience’ (tin-glazed earthenware). The firm produced a pierced dessert service in the style of ‘Good King Stanislas’ as early as 1846. The highpoint of his career was a commission of a service of glass with the royal monogram for Napoleon III, exhibited at the Paris International Exhibition of 1865, as well as a ‘verre d’eau’ for the Empress Eugénie in 1861, comprising a casket for perfumed water, one or two glasses, a flask for orange water and a sugar bowl, all on a matching tray. In 1866 he was appointed fournisseur (supplier) to the Emperor. The delicate styles of the late 19th century were being revived, and the following year Eugénie devoted a special exhibition to Queen Marie-Antoinette (executed in 1793) at her former home of the Trianon at the palace of Versailles, to coincide with the international exhibition of 1867. The Empress had recently paid the vast sum of £2400 at auction in 1865 for a desk that had belonged to the unfortunate Queen, which was part of a general interest in collecting antiques and objets d’art from the Pre-Revolutionary era in this period.
Into this enterprising and cultured family, Emile Gallé was born in 1846. He learnt to read from Grandville’s Les Fleurs Animées, a volume of written and visual personifications of flowers which instilled in him a sense of the expressive possibilities of plant forms. From his earliest days he was aware of the beauty of flowers, and later in life he wrote of his memories of his father’s house and showroom that overlooked the flower market in Nancy. He could also have studied plants at first hand at the Botanic Garden in Nancy, founded in 1752. It was run by Dominique-Alexandre Godron, author of the six volumes Flore de France, who reorganised and re-arranged the gardens. When Gallé was sent across the border to study botany at the University of Weimar in Germany from 1865 to 1866, he copied illustrations from Godron’s work, and throughout his career was acutely interested in local flora and fauna, which he saw as inspirational as exotic plants.

On his return to Nancy, Gallé worked in ceramics with his father, supplying innovative and novel designs, and assisting him in displays at the Paris International Exhibition of 1867. His first glass came in 1867, a goblet enamelled with dots and ribbons in the Venetian style. Many of his designs reflected his interest in botany, and his use of botanical forms in decoration. Flower designs were often used in pottery patterns, such as the Service herbier (plant service) of 1868-1876, where the plants trail across the plate, and seem to have a life of their own. The plant images are sometimes inscribed with rather whimsical mottoes, which gave voice to the flowers, so to speak. A plate from the Allégorie service of 1871-1876 is decorated with a yellow rose, and the inscription M’a piqué la plus belle (The most beautiful one pricked me), a reference to the ambiguities of love as much as the dangers of gardening.

In 1871 two major events affected Gallé’s life. The first was the partition of France after the Franco-Prussian war, with the resulting annexation of Alsace-Lorraine (though not the town of Nancy itself) to Germany. This was a grievance for all Frenchmen, and Gallé in particular, till redress came after the First World War. The second was the London International Exhibition of that year, at which the firm of Gallé Reinemer exhibited. The French section was opened by Joséphine Bowes, Countess of Montalbo, a former Parisian actress who had married the English landowner and businessman, John Bowes. She had formed a large collection of paintings and objets d’art, and was building a huge Museum with the help of a French architect to house her collection in her husband’s home town of Barnard Castle in the North of England. She was especially interested in ceramics and particularly French faience, of which she formed a large and varied collection.

Joséphine Bowes and the young Emile Gallé seem to have had an instant rapport, and Joséphine purchased from him a quantity of items, including a pottery cat, a plant pot, an inkstand and a mirror frame, which sadly are no longer in the Museum. Letters in the archive show he also advised her to raise the roof of the Museum for a more elegant design, which was done at a cost of £200. Though there is a certain element of flattery in his dealings with Joséphine, he seems to have found her a sympathetic patron, and felt free to express his interests and aims. He wrote to her that ‘when I pick a flower, I pick a model and an idea. When I model a new project, I am really dreaming of some unknown flower’ ‘(quand je cueille une fleur, je cueille un modèle et une idée. Quand je modèle un projet nouveau, c’est que je rêve bien sûr à quelque fleur inconnue.’ Letter of 18th September, 1871). Much of Gallé’s later production thus seems encapsulated in this statement made nearly twenty years before he was creating vases of floral form in the style that became known as Art Nouveau.
With time the young Emile came increasingly to wish to design not only the decoration, but also the shape of the glass or pottery himself, which led to the production of numerous quartz or decorative items. From 1872 he commissioned the blanks from St. Clément, and also began a workshop for final decoration, with his signature, in the family home in 1873 on its move to La Garenne on the outskirts of Nancy. In about 1877 he became designer manager of the firm, and ended the relationship with Saint Clément, finding another supplier at Raon-l’Étape in 1879. The models were not always his own personal design, and throughout his career Gallé commissioned models for pottery and glass from his own team of designers, led by Victor Prouve (1858-1943).

Court cases

Most interestingly, Gallé’s relationship with some of these pottery factories was unsatisfactory, in that he accused them of pirating his designs. The problem seems to have first appeared with the factory at St. Clément, that sold designs and models, commissioned by Gallé, as their own, without the additional Gallé mark, though no court case resulted from this. In 1879-80 he prosecuted Keller and Guérin of Lunéville for copying the designs of the Clairefontaine factory in 1880 for utilising moulds of his that they claimed he had rejected. The interest for us is that for the Herbier case, he had to write down in detail how he conceived his designs. He told his lawyer about how his work was based on the French term herborisation on the French term herbier, or creating a book of plant specimens and ideas through walking in the woods, collecting plants, and studying them under a microscope, before adapting them to a design for ceramic. Unlike most designers, Gallé’s knowledge of plants was based on living or growing specimens, and gave a personal slant to his plant designs, which he could truly claim to be his own work.
Gallé was a prolific writer, but most of his writing in his early days were devoted to botany. In 1877 he became secretary of the newly-founded sociétè centrale de horticulture de Nancy, along with local experts Victor Lemoine, Léon Simon and François Felix Crousse. Gallé’s choice of plant was grown in the ‘small mountain’ (petite montagne) there, where grew the huge umbels (ombelles/feuilles géantes) of members of the plant family Umbelliferae, that much influenced him. This large and complex family of aromatic plants includes many vegetables and herbs, such as parsnip and parsley. Moreover, the feathery-leaved cow parsley (Anthriscus sylvestris) that thrives in the hedgerows and woodland margins of Britain and much of northern Europe in spring, and the larger, coarser hogweed (Heracleum sphondylium) that also flourishes in hedgerows and on bare ground later in the summer, would both have been familiar to Gallé, as would the later flowering rough chervil (Chaerophyllum temulentum), and possibly hemlock (Conium maculatum). The huge, highly invasive giant hogweed (Heracleum mantegazzianum) was introduced to Europe from the Caucasus and south-west Asia as a garden plant in the 1890s, only later spreading to the wild, notably along water courses. In 1880 Gallé edited the société’s catalogue of an exhibition and south-west Asia as a garden plant in the 1890s, only later spreading to the wild, notably along water courses. In 1880 Gallé edited the société’s catalogue of an exhibition and was appointed to the committee of the local botanic garden, in place of Dominique-Alexandre Godron.

Japan and the East

However, another source of inspiration was in the ascendant that revolutionized all Western art, both fine and decorative. This was the fashion for all things Japanese. It had already started with the coming over of Japanese woodcut prints used as wrapping paper in the 1860s. Josephine Bowes bought a volume of these, as well as some small Japanese cabinets, possibly from the Paris exhibition of 1867. In decorative arts the influence was seen most famously in 1867 with the pottery service designed by Félix Bracquemond (1833-1914) exhibited at the Paris International Exhibition, which used motifs from Japanese prints. This was highly successful, and represented competition for Gallé’s production at Nancy. In glass it was represented by Auguste Jean (worked c.1855-c.1885) and Eugène Rousseau (1827-1891), both of whom had already been patronized by Joséphine Bowes. They produced some strange compressed shapes that might be the starting point for much of Gallé’s later production. It should be emphasized that one of the attractions of Japanese art was its apparent naturalism and spontaneity.

Another strong influence of the time was Islamic art, which led to an emphasis on strong colours and pattern-making, with experimentation in colours and techniques in an attempt to emulate historic techniques. The lead here was given by the ceramists Léon Parvillé (died 1885) and Théodore Deck (1823-1911), and in glass by Philippe-Joseph Brocard (died 1896).

Gallé’s interest in Islam, as well as his study of the philosophy of Symbolist poet Charles Baudelaire, helped to explain some of the symbolism of his work. Gallé was interested in the ‘pâte-sur-pâte’ technique, which he used to create his coloured and decorated glassware. He was also interested in the use of ‘verrerie parlante’, or glass that speaks, to awaken sentiments or ideas. The Magazine of Art (1887) wrote about Gallé’s work as ‘the beauty of things that must die’, from Falize entitled ‘the beauty of things that must die’.

More exhibitions

The exact dating and development of Gallé’s work can be difficult to trace, as dateable models are rare, and much has to be reconstructed from his writings. He showed at the Paris International Exhibition of 1878, where he won a bronze medal. An innovation was the colour clair-de-lune (moonlight) blue in glass, produced from cobalt oxide. In 1884 he won a gold medal at the Paris exhibition of the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs. This was an organisation set up for the improvement of decorative arts and manufactures in France, and led eventually to the founding of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in a Pavilion of the Louvre Museum. Gallé wrote about his wares, describing new techniques such as double and triple-layered ‘cameo’ glass, which could be cut on the wheel to show the colour below, or ‘acid-etched’ to the same effect. He was also working on imitations of stones, and metal leaf inclusions and air bubbles. He also showed items decorated with the more traditional techniques of coloured enameled and enamels. Some vases actually had specific themes, with names reflecting their subject matter – ‘Le Nuit’ (night), ‘Le Sommeil’ (sleep) – the last with intaglio figures under clouds of black glass. He made great use of flowers and botanical forms and decoration, sometimes with the appropriate fauna, and showed one vase on the theme of the creation of insects, depicting the life cycle of a butterfly.

These vases were obviously far beyond what had been created before in the sense of flower or decorative vases. They were essentially attempts to create poetry in glass, creating a mood through the use of colour and decoration. The link was made clear by his use of lines of poetry etched on the glass from Symbolist and other poets, such as Francois Villon (15th century) or Maurice Rollinat (1853-1903), creating the so-called verriëre parlante or glass that speaks, to awaken sentiments in the soul. Gallé wrote later that ‘symbols are the points where ideas materialize themselves’ (les symboles sont les points ou se concrétisent les idées).
Gallé’s use of plants and flowers was not mere copying and imitation of existing illustrations, but an attempt to create new forms through his understanding of plant growth and the study of living specimens. (he hated the use of flowers in ‘battles of flowers’, recognising them as living things). This gives a living, vibrant quality to his work, and an element of the unexpected in the design, as it the decoration or form might grow or change with the days or seasons. Above all, he saw his work as an artistic and spiritual thing. The ornamental decoration was always symbolic, but not in the way the English books devoted to the ‘language of flowers’ veer towards the figurative. There are always a few exceptions here and there, but in general, Gallé’s decorative technique was not based on a direct translation of plant forms into glass, but rather on the symbolic meaning of plants and flowers. The use of flowers and plants was therefore not merely a matter of copying and imitating the natural world, but rather a way of conveying deeper meanings and ideas through the medium of glass.

Success at the 1884 exhibition led Gallé to develop his own production in workshops on site at Nancy in the rue de la Garenne. In 1885 an oven was set up for full ceramic production, and a furniture workshop was installed. The workshops were close to the family home on the outskirts of Nancy, and even had their own gardens as inspiration for the workers. For, however, from the moment the production of glass continued, using specially commissioned blanks from the firm of Meisenthal, though finishing took place at Nancy itself. Ceramic production of routine items continued at Raon-l’Etape until 1900.

The peak of Gallé’s achievement came in 1889 with the Paris International Exhibition of that year. It showed his style (or styles) at its most fully formed. Though many of his pieces still looked to the past, or to other countries, the dominant theme was by now clearly botanical, with the free flowing plant-like form, both in shape and applied design, known today as Art Nouveau. He wrote at the time “I have formed at my factory a workshop for composition and special design for my glass production. Under my direct supervision, this workshop is the dynamo for others. There are executed the turning of wooden moulds for glass blowing, and designs or cartoons for enamellers, engravers and painters. Numerous natural specimens, dead or alive, are at disposal of the workshop, thanks to the factory garden and its collections of natural history. My personal involvement consists above all in devising ideas for glass that are both sublime or tender, of carefully composing friendly or tragic faces for it, of assembling the different elements, of preparing in advance the realisation of my future works, of matching the technique to the preconceived work, of balancing the risks between success and failure, whilst carrying out the decisive operation that would have been called the main work”.

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Gallé's production of furniture had now taken off along the same lines. The general inspiration was the French 18th century, with much use of marquetry, but the effect was so suffused with his knowledge of botany that many of the pieces look as though they had grown rather than been constructed. He did indeed imitate the structure of the plants, such as that of the umbel, in some of his pieces. He made much use of the fruit woods of Lorraine, which he preferred to wax rather than polish. He was acutely conscious of the materials he used, and in 1889 wrote that, whereas he used to burn wood to make ceramics and glass, now he used it to make furniture. However, he had no truck with the English ‘Art and Crafts’ obsession of handicraft throughout and was happy to use machine tools where necessary to get precise effects by his skilled craftsmen.

Gallé was by now part of the artistic scene in Paris. He met and knew Comte Robert de Montesquiou (1855-1921), who was to be a demanding and tempestuous patron for the next few years, introducing him to Parisian society, before a split in 1897. A major supporter was the critic Roger Marx (1859-1913), also from Lorraine, who was for the next few years, happy to use machine tools where necessary to get precise effects by his skilled craftsmen.

The 1900 exhibition

By now, Gallé was not just seen as the leading craftsman and maker in late 19th century France, he had created a sinuous, botanical style that was imitated in virtually every country in Europe. His international fame was highlighted at the Paris International Exhibition of 1900, where he won a gold medal and was recognised as the leading exponent of the ‘new art’ or Art Nouveau. The term Art Nouveau came into general use in 1895, when Siegfried Bing, a dealer in Japanese items, opened a gallery called L’Art Nouveau in Paris devoted to the work of new designers. The style was propagated by means of the periodicals, and exhibits in Paris. It had the support of government officials as being based on a home-grown French style (the Rococo), French botanical forms, and the superior skills of French craftsmen.

Salon Exhibits

The development of decorative arts in France, under the influence of Gallé, was such that they were recognized as an art form in themselves. The public breakthrough came in 1890, when they were shown alongside painting and sculpture at the Salon, the public exhibition of painting and sculpture. Gallé was a keen contributor to these exhibitions, and in 1895 submitted three new vases entitled Le Baumier (balsam), Le Coudrier (hazel) and L’Epave (a wreck, set in the sea, surrounded by plant life) which he described in an article in the art magazine ‘La Plume’. In 1898 Gallé sent to the Salon nineteen pieces of glass with the new technique of glass inlay, the so-called marqueterie de verre. In his article on his submissions (Mes Envois au Salon) in the Revue des Arts Décoratifs of that year, he claimed to be making an ‘anthology of flora’ (flora anthologique) through his use of floral motifs.
In the 1900 exhibition Gallé showed different vases, including the Granges (‘barns’, on wheat), Repos dans la Solitude (‘repose in solitude’), and the ‘Amé de l’Eau (‘the soul of water’). He wrote at the time an article on symbolism in the decorative arts (‘Le décor symbolique’, commenting on the need to create or adapt naturalist motifs to personify them, as ‘the most exact botanical depiction does not move us, because the human soul is absent’ (‘le document naturaliste le plus scrupuleux ne nous émeut pas, parce que l’amé humaine en est absente’). He continued to quote from the Symbolist poets such as Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949): his vase engraved Les Feuilles des douleurs passées (‘the leaves of past suffering’) was based on the following lines from the poem ‘Séries Chaudes’ (‘Hothouses’) of 1889 ‘Through the flight of crystal blue, I see your pale flowers of past suffering forming’ (‘Et je vois éclore au travers/De la fuite du crystal bleu/les feuilles des douleurs passées’). The result was a smoky blue vase, inset with leaves falling down, with great beauty and elusiveness of colouring which defies any description as a utilitarian piece.

Gallé was now a recognised figure in the Parisian art world, a recipient of the Légion d’Honneur, who had supplied glass as French diplomatic gifts to the Czar and Czarina of Russia. Some of his most ambitious and complex works were made as presentation pieces; for instance, a vase or goblet for the chemist Louis Pasteur of 1892 featuring the very microbes relating to cholera and pneumonia that Pasteur sought to eradicate, and a vase La Soude (soda) featuring smoky factory chimneys in a cloud of white dust for the owner of a firm that made soda crystals, a vital part of glass production. A ‘geological’ vase of the same date for a member of the faculty of sciences at Nancy showed crystals growing within the glass body. The Coupe Rose presented in 1901 by the Société d’horticulture de Nancy to its retiring President, Léon Simon, decorated with sprays of roses against a pinkish ground, was a reversion to the botanical theme that Gallé knew so well, having designed the cover for the glass body. The ‘ Cameo’ vase of 1892 featuring the leaves of past suffering (‘les maîtres lorrains modernes ont été des premiers à faire admettre que les maîtres lorrains modernes ont été des premiers à faire admettre’). The use of wild flowers, or even weeds such as dandelions for the specialist ceramic shops near the rue du Paradis in Paris. Despite his fame, he never turned his back on the town where he was born, and always tried to foster local industry. There were by now rival manufactures, led by Louis Majorelle in furniture, and the firm of Daum in glass. However, they worked together to promote the Nancy style or botanical style throughout France and the world. In 1901 a special tribute to him, with his portrait by Prouvé on show. His inspiration continues today.

However, Gallé was not opposed to what he called ‘vulgarising’ or popularising his art in order to reach a wider market. In addition to the exhibition pieces and the special commissions, he developed a wide range of vases that were made by the firm of Meisenthal, some finished off at his workshops at Nancy, until full glass production was commenced at La Garenne in 1894. They were mostly of botanical form in ‘cameo’ glass with which he is forever associated, signed with his name in floral lettering. Mass production was facilitated from 1889 by the development of hydrofluoric acid to ‘acid-etch’ these vases to replace the more expensive cutting on the wheel. However, he was not keen for his work to become too generally available, and he rejected sales via the Réunion stores in Paris and Nancy, and prosecuted the Grand Magasin du Louvre in 1901 for selling his work. He preferred to sell through his own showroom in Paris (cabinet des échantillons) and the well-known shop L’Escalier du Cristal, one of the specialist ceramic shops near the rue du Paradis in Paris.

39. Emile Gallé. Artic Vase. Wheel carved glass with enamelling. This vase, featuring birds in a winter landscape, treats the same theme as Monet’s painting of ‘The Magpie’ of 1869. Like Monet, Gallé is able to find colours in the cold and ice of a winter’s day. Victor and Gretha Arwas, London
40. É.Béler, ‘artiste céramique’ à Sèvres. Print from La Vérité sous l’émail, 1900
41. Emile Gallé. ‘Coupes de France’ presented to Léon Simon in 1901. ‘Cameo’ glasses with enamel and engraved decoration. Height 11.7cm. Musée de l’Ecole de Nancy, Nancy
42. Emile Gallé. ‘Cameo’ vase decorated with leaves of sacred lotus (Nelumbo nucifera). Height 7cm. The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, County Durham
44. Advertisement for Gallé’s new showrooms in London, from The Magazine of Art, 1904
45. Saint Denis vase of brown and gilt frosted glass, c.1900. The use of wild flowers, or even weeds such as dandelions, is generally available, and he rejected sales via the Réunion stores in Paris and Nancy, and prosecuted the Grand Magasin du Louvre in 1901 for selling his work. He preferred to sell through his own showroom in Paris (cabinet des échantillons) and the well-known shop L’Escalier du Cristal, one of the specialist ceramic shops near the rue du Paradis in Paris.
Further reading


Katharine Morrison McClinton ‘Documented Gallé Glass’, Apollo, April, 1985, pp.262-265

Philippe Thiébaut, Les Dessins de Gallé, Paris, 1993


Nancy, le 11 juillet 1871
Madame Bowes, Streatlam Castle,
Darlington

Madame,

Vous m’avez fait l’honneur dès l’ouverture de la section française à l’Exposition, de me confier vos ordres à moi transmis par les soins de mon fils, Monsieur Emile Gallé. J'ai immédiatement mis en réserve ici les divers objets qui se trouvaient préparés, et j’ai mis en commande les autres; puis j’ai pris note de ceux choisis par vous parmi mes modèles figurant à l’exposition, les quels étaient devenus votre propriété.

Or j’apprends que malgré mes sévères recommandations, mon agent à Londres, contrairement aux ordres de mon fils, a livré à une autre Personne une bouteille par vous achetée. Je viens, Madame, vous exprimer ici tous mes regrets pour cette action tout à fait contraire à mes principes qui reposent tout autant sur le droit que sur la délicatesse. Je vais en hâte exécuter une nouvelle pièce tout aussi parfaite que l’échantillon, et elle vous sera expédiée sans délai, autrement dire le plus tôt possible.

Reposez-vous Madame, je vous en prie, sur l'assurance que je vous donne ici que Qui que ce soit ne prendra possession en votre place des modèles exposés que vous avez acquis.

Ces modèles du reste ne sont destinés à tromper Personne, et ma première préoccupation est celle de laisser dans tous mes rapports la trace et le souvenir de la plus parfaite loyauté unie à toutes les qualités qui en Angleterre distinguent le Gentilhomme.

Daignez croire, Madame, à mes sentiments respectueux et dévoués,
Gallé Reinemer

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Nancy, 11th July 1871
Madame Bowes, Streatlam Castle, Darlington

Madame,

You have done me the honour, since the opening of the French section of the exhibition, of sending me your orders through the good offices of my son, Monsieur Emile Gallé. I immediately put on reserve here the various objects that were already prepared, and put the others on order; I then noted those chosen by you from my models in the exhibition, which had become your own property.

Sadly I have learnt that, despite my strict instructions, my agent in London, contrary to the orders of my son, delivered to someone else a sweetmeat bowl bought by you. I wish, Madame, to express here my deepest regret for this action, which was totally contrary to my principles, based as they are on fairplay as much as personal feelings. I am going to execute with all haste a new piece as perfect as the original, which will be sent to you without delay, that is to say as quickly as possible.

Do set your mind at rest, I beg you, with my promise given here. No-one else, no matter who, will take possession of the models that you acquired.

These models are really not intended to upset anyone, and my first care is to make sure that all my dealings give evidence of the most complete loyalty, united to all the qualities that in England distinguish a gentleman.

I remain, Madame, your devoted servant,
Gallé Reinemer
Nancy, le 12 septembre 1871
Madame Bowes, Streatlam Castle, Darlington

Madame,

La masse vraiment extraordinaire de nos travaux m’empêche de prendre cette année des vacances en Ecosse; je n’aurai donc pas l’honneur de vous rendre visite à Darlington, suivant la toute gracieuse invitation que vous avez bien voulu me faire. Je le regrette vivement, mais je n’y renonce pas, et j’espère pouvoir retourner l’an prochain en Angleterre, vu les intérêts qui m’y appelleront, et, de Londres, pousser une pointe jusqu’à votre beau musée... Qu’allez-vous encore penser de nous, Madame?, que nous sommes des gens sans foi!

Avant de quitter l’Exposition, j’ai suspendu à toutes les pièces qui vous appartiennent, des étiquettes à votre nom, et il a été bien entendu que rien ne serait distrait de cette collection.

Si vous ne pouvez faire prendre ces objets par occasion, nous ferons venir à Kensington un ouvrier emballer habile, afin que tout vous parvienne en bon état.

Je m’occupe ici des objets commandés par vous; j’en soigne tout particulièrement la fabrication; j’ose espérer que la grande cruche vous satisfera.

Quant aux assiettes pour le musée, Monsieur Gallé vous prie, Madame, de bien vouloir patienter; nos agents anglais sonts incompétents et ignorants; il vaudra donc mieux traiter cette affaire directement. Quand le moment sera venu de prendre une décision, nous vous soumettrons des modèles parmi lesquels vous ferez un choix; nous tâcherons de nous en tirer à votre honneur, et au nôtre.

Nous travaillons de toutes nos forces pour créer dans notre malheureuse Lorraine une industrie nouvelle, et bien française. Monsieur Viollet Leduc (sic), l’architecte de la Ville de Paris a bien voulu, dans le Journal des Débats, rendre à Mr. Gallé cette justice, qu’il n’a pas désespéré de son pays, pour lequel il a vaillamment combattu à Londres.

J’ose présenter mes compliments bien respectueux à Monsieur Bowes, en vous priant de croire, Madame, votre reconnaissant très dévoué Serviteur,

Emile Gallé

Nancy, 12th September 1871
Madame Bowes, Streatlam Castle, Darlington

Madame,

The quite extraordinary quantity of work in progress has prevented me from taking my holidays in Scotland this year; so I will not have the honour of paying you a visit in Darlington, in accordance with your kind invitation extended to me. I keenly regret it, but I do not despair of it, and I hope to return to England another year, given the various interests that call me, and, from London, travel as far as your Museum...what will you think of us, Madame? That we are people who don’t keep their word!

Before leaving the exhibition, I applied labels with your name to all the pieces belonging to you, and it was well understood that nothing would be separated from this collection.

If you do not have a chance to collect these objects, we shall have a skilled packer come to Kensington so that everything gets to you in good order.

I am busy here on the objects you ordered; I am taking special care on their making; I am daring to hope that the large jug will please you.

As to the plates for the Museum, Monsier Gallé begs you, Madame, to be very patient; our English agents are incompetent and ignorant; it will be better to deal with this matter directly. When the time comes to make a decision, we will submit to you models from which you can make a choice; we will do our utmost to be a credit to you, and ourselves.

We are trying with all our might to create in our unhappy Lorraine a new industry, one that is truly French. Monsieur Viollet Le Duc, the architect of the City of Paris, has had the kindness to pay Mr. Gallé the compliment of saying in the ‘Journal des Débats’ that he had not despaired of his country for which he competed valiantly in London.

I present my most respectful compliments to Monsieur Bowes, Your humble servant,

Emile Gallé
Emile Gallé and the Origins of Art Nouveau

Emile Gallé and the Origins of Art Nouveau

Emile Gallé

Madame, votre respectueux et dévoué,
continuez à nous mériter votre haute protection; je le désire, et reste,
espérons nous produire à Vienne. D’ici là , nous avons fait bien des progrès, qui
Du Sommerard aura pour nous un petit coin vide l’an prochain, mais, en 1873, nous
cause du flot de commandes anglaises qui nous submerge...Je ne sais si Monsieur
mettre aujour (sic) aucune des nombreuses idées que j’ai (‘en ce moment’ erased) à
Je suis très (bien?) ennuyé en ce moment, je ne puis rien produire de neuf, ni
merveilleuses.

fayences, à Darlington, il m’arrivera de les prendre pour une collection de fleurs

inhivore, de n’y voir que des vases, et peut-être qu’un jour en visitant vos belles

idée. Quand je modèle un projet nouveau, c’est que je rêve bien sûr à quelque fleur

chasse que les plantes. C’est la passion qui dispute ma vie à celle, peut-être moins

je n’ai jamais porté que le chassepot...En ma qualité de botaniste enragé, je ne

Point de théâtre, point de concerts, point de bals, point de chasse...Pour tuer vos

hiver nous allons passer dans ce(sic) tôle avec notre garnison exécrée! nous n’avons

triste à voir; les brouillards d’Octobre vont ajouter encore à ce tableau sombre; quel

D’ailleurs, notre malheureuse Lorraine démembre, occupée par l’ennemi, est fort

modification ajoutera plus encore au grandiose de l’ensemble.

lest, gagneront à être exhaussés (un faîtage? ou une galerie); cette

Je suis très (bien?) ennuyé en ce moment, je ne puis rien produire de neuf, ni

merveilleuses.

Je me hâte de vous remercier pour votre très gracieux envoi : avez
vous donc voulu reconstituer nos pauvres Tuileries en Angleterre?
C’est tout à fait le pavillon de Marsan. Quelle habitation princière et
royale pour nos humbles fayences! Quel encouragement pour les
fayenciers de S’nt Clément!

Je suis de votre avis Madame: les toits, surtout ceux des pavillons
extrêmes, gagneront à être exhaussés (un faîtage? ou une galerie); cette
modification ajoutera plus encore au grandiose de l’ensemble.

Je ne vous conseille point de visiter la fabrique de S’nt Clément, ni nos magazins
to Nancy. Nous remercions la fabrique, nous ajoutons des ateliers; mon père se
fait construire en ce moment, à la porte de Nancy, une habitation que nous nous
environnons de rendre intéressante pour les artistes et les amateurs de fayence.

D’ailleurs, notre malheureuse Lorraine démembrée, occupée par l’ennemi, est fort
triste à voir; les brouillards d’Octobre vont ajouter encore à ce tableau sombre; quel
hiver nous allons passer dans ce(sic) tôle avec notre garnison exécrée! nous n’avons
pour armes que notre mépris pris à vis de nos vainqueurs; nous allons les faire périr
ici d’ennui pendant l’hiver, et la haine que nous leur portons nous empêchera d’en
mourir en même temps qu’eux.

Point de théâtre, point de concerts, point de bals, point de chasse...Pour tuer vos

perdreau, Madame, c’est à mon père qu’il me faudrait remettre la carabine; moi
je n’ai jamais porté que le chassepot...En ma qualité de botaniste enragé, je ne
chasse que les plantes. C’est la passion qui dispute ma vie à celle, peut-être moins
heureuse, de la céramique: quand je cueille une fleur, je cueille un modèle et une
idée. Quand je modèle un projet nouveau, c’est que je rêve bien sûr à quelque fleur
inconnue. Il m’arrive parfois en tournant les pages de mon herbier dans les soirées

Je suis très (bien?) ennuyé en ce moment, je ne puis rien produire de neuf, ni

merveilleuses.

Madame, votre respectueux et dévoué,
Emile Gallé

Emile Gallé and the Origins of Art Nouveau

Emile Gallé and the Origins of Art Nouveau

Emile Gallé

Madame Bowes, Streatlam Castle,
Darlington

Nancy, le 18 septembre 1871
Madame Bowes, Streatlam Castle,
Darlington

Madame,

Je me hâte de vous remercier pour votre très gracieux envoi : avez
vous donc voulu reconstituer nos pauvres Tuileries en Angleterre?
C’est tout à fait le pavillon de Marsan. Quelle habitation princière et
royale pour nos humbles fayences! Quel encouragement pour les
fayenciers de S’nt Clément!

Je suis de votre avis Madame: les toits, surtout ceux des pavillons
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triste à voir; les brouillards d’Octobre vont ajouter encore à ce tableau sombre; quel
hiver nous allons passer dans ce(sic) tôle avec notre garnison exécrée! nous n’avons
pour armes que notre mépris pris à vis de nos vainqueurs; nous allons les faire périr
ici d’ennui pendant l’hiver, et la haine que nous leur portons nous empêchera d’en
mourir en même temps qu’eux.

Point de théâtre, point de concerts, point de bals, point de chasse...Pour tuer vos

perdreau, Madame, c’est à mon père qu’il me faudrait remettre la carabine; moi
je n’ai jamais porté que le chassepot...En ma qualité de botaniste enragé, je ne
chasse que les plantes. C’est la passion qui dispute ma vie à celle, peut-être moins
heureuse, de la céramique: quand je cueille une fleur, je cueille un modèle et une
idée. Quand je modèle un projet nouveau, c’est que je rêve bien sûr à quelque fleur
inconnue. Il m’arrive parfois en tournant les pages de mon herbier dans les soirées

Je suis très (bien?) ennuyé en ce moment, je ne puis rien produire de neuf, ni

merveilleuses.

Madame,

I hasten to thank you for your very gracious dispatch: is it really your wish to
re-erect our poor Tuileries in England? It is a veritable ‘pavilion of Marsan’ (part
of the Tuileries). What a princely and royal setting for our humble faience! What
encouragement for the faience makers of Saint Clément!

I agree with you, Madame, the roofs, especially those at the end, would benefit from
being raised with a higher roof or gallery; this modification would add greatly to the
splendour of the ensemble.

I really do not advise you to visit the factory at Saint Clément, or our showrooms at
Nancy. We are reconstructing the factory; we are adding workshops; my father is
at this very moment building a house on the outskirts of Nancy that we are trying to
make a centre for artists and collectors of faience.

Moreover, our unhappy Lorraine, dismembered, occupied by the enemy, is very
sad to see; the October mists are going to add still further to this gloomy picture;
what a winter we are going to have in this prison with our despised garnison! Our
only weapon is our disdain for our conquerors; we are going to make them die of
boredom here this winter; and the hate that we bear them will prevent us from
dying too.

No theatre, no concerts, no balls, no hunting… As for killing your partridges, I have
to yield the shooting gun to my father; I have never carried anything other than a
‘chassepot’. As an ardent botanist, I hunt only plants. It is the passion that competes
in my life with that, perhaps less happy, of ceramics; when I pick a flower, I pick
a model and an idea. When I model a new project, I am really dreaming of some
unknown flower. Sometimes, when I am turning the pages of my herbarium on a
winter’s evening, I seem to see only vases, and perhaps one day, when I visit your
beautiful faience collection at Darlington, I will think it is a collection of marvellous
plants.

I am very bored at the moment; I cannot create anything new, nor work on any of the
ideas I have, because of the huge numbers of orders from England that overwhelm
us. I do not know if Monsieur Du Sommerard will have a spare corner for us next
year, but, in 1873, we are hoping to show at Vienna. From here to there, we have
made good progress, which continues to be worthy of your support, which I ardently
desire, while remaining, Madame,

Your devoted servant,

Emile Gallé

Nancy, 18th September 1871
Nancy, 17 mai 1872

Madame Bowes, Streatlam Castle, Darlington

Madame,

Si vous avez pensé quelquefois à la faïence de Nancy, vous avez du (sic) croire qu’elle vous oubliait; il n’en a pourtant rien été. Je me suis occupé de remplir le reliquat de vos ordres donnés à Kensington:
1. un verre d’eau style Marie-Antoinette, commandé dans le genre de votre bonbonnière à dentelles et semis de fleurettes de l’époque
2. Pour votre musée, une cruche de Lorraine, en faïence, de dimensions amples et dessin bien décoratif.

Je vous envoie le verre d’eau, qui est terminé: veuillez le regarder avec attention, et, si vous voulez bien lui faire une petite place dans votre palais, je do believe it merits this honour. You will appreciate, I hope, that this fine example of French engraving amply justifies the suggested modest price.

Ayant composé le dessin des formes et de la décoration, exécutée sous mes yeux par mes graveurs, j’ai cru pouvoir signer l’œuvre.

Les deux gobelets Louis XVIII, placés sur leurs soucoupes, sont de petites merveilles, tout garnis de flots de vieux points de Venise, et, au teint, tout un monde de papillons et fleurettes. Le sucrier est habillé d’une Valencienne; des fleurs d’oranger et guipures sur le carafon à liqueur; sur la carafe, des nœuds de vieux rubans à picots et du chèvre-feuille.

Quant à la cruche, la faïence nous a trahis! J’ai fait tourner, il y a 6 mois, deux cruches, chacune d’un mètre de haut. Au bout de deux mois, ces cruches étant sèches, je les ai fait passer au feu; elles y ont péri; j’ai recommencé, et n’ai obtenu qu’un désastre nouveau et définitif. Nous permettrez-vous, Madame, de recommencer sur des proportions moindres, 0 m 75 par exemple?

Le sujet du décor serait tout Lorrain (sic), et vous qui, comme Marie Stuart, restez une amie de la France en Ecosse (sic), ne trouverez-vous pas quelque satisfaction à la devise suivante, tournant autour de la pièce: Metz défendu contre Charles Quint, Empereur d’Allemagne, par François de Guise et 6,000 Français. 1er Janvier 1553. Cette scène serait traduite en quelques traits, avec bordure Renaissance; mais il nous faudrait du temps. Un beau tournoi de céramistes français s’ouvrira le 2 Juin à Lyon. Puis-je espérer que vous, Madame, et l’honorable Monsieur Bowes viendrez nous y voir combattre? Nous aurons une large place, et beaucoup de choses intéressantes (sic).

Je demeure, avec un profond respect, Madame, votre dévoué serviteur,

Emile Gallé
Nancy, le 19 mai 1872

A glass ‘verre d’eau’ in the Louis XVI style. Engraved with lace of the period of Marie-Antoinette.

Composed of:
- 90" 1 square tray on feet
- 70" 1 water flask
- 30" 1 orange flower water flask
- 50" 1 sugar bowl
- 55" 2 cups (25") and saucers (28")

Box and packing francs 0.00
Total francs 350.00

Nancy, le 19 mai 1872

(On reverse of letter, in John Bowes’s handwriting:
Mr Gallé Reinemer Payé. 21st July 1872. Fr 500.00 (see below))
Nancy, le 24 mai 1872

Honorable Madame Bowes

Madame,

Je viens réparer l’oubli que j’ai commis en ma dernière de la remise de la facture aux objets préparés depuis longtemps et formant le solde de vos ordres. Ces objets voyagent avec le verre d’eau et j’espère que, Comme lui, ils arriveront sans avarie et absolument à la satisfaction de votre personne. Une fois de plus, acceptez Madame, l’assurance de mes sentiments les plus dévoués,

Emile Gallé

24 mai 1872

Débit

Madame Bowes

faïence
1 nid d’hirondelle, de coin, gris & rose 40“
1 encrier 3 pièces Louis XV, la marguerita 24“
2 plaques à tartine (castine?), Callots 8“ 16“
1 jardinière de foyer verte & blanche 46“
cristal
1 bonbonnière L.16, dentelle & fleurs 18“
2 caisses 7“

francs 150.00

Deux caisses
No. 2 et 2 bis
Branly
Boulogne

Honorables Madame Bowes

Madame,

I am just repairing the omission in my last letter of not sending the bill for the objects already prepared and forming the balance of your orders. These objects will travel with the ‘verre d’eau’ and I hope that they will also arrive without damage and to your liking.

Once again, Madame, accept my warmest regards

Emile Gallé

24th May 1872

To Madame Bowes

faïence
1 swallow’s nest corner ornament, grey and pink 40“
1 inkstand, 3 pieces Louis XV style, ‘la marguerita’ 24“
2 bread and butter plates, Callot figures 8“ 16“
1 hall jardinière, green and white 45“
crystal
1 ‘bonbonnière’ L.16, lace & flowers 18“
2 boxes 7“

francs 150.00

Two boxes
No. 2 et 2 bis
Branly
Boulogne
Nancy, le 23 juillet 1872

Monsieur John Bowes, 7 rue de Berlin, Paris

Monsieur,

Je m’empresse de vous accuser réception de votre Estimée du 22.
renfermant un chèque de Fr 500 en solde de mes fournitures.

C’est me payer vraiment trop tôt que de ne pas attendre que votre vérification ne sanctionne pas le prix accusé.

 Aussi je reçois comme supérieur à ce paiement cette preuve de Confiance donnée par Madame Bowes et par vous même, et je vous en remercie sincèrement.

Ne pensez pas, je vous en prie, que ma sollicitude s’arrête à la production des objets, et que l’œil du maître ne veille pas sur les emballages. C’est avec des soins minutieux et non ordinaires, que les objets ont été emballés ici, et c’est précisément parce que j’ai pris ces soins personnels que je puis vous affirmer qu’ils ont été tels comme cela est mon devoir autant que mes intérêts.

Mais tenez compte, je vous prie, des vérifications en douane - surtout au temps d’alors de la peste bovine; certainement que le droit de vérification amène des accidents involontaires même de la part de ceux qui les occasionnent sans en avoir conscience.

Quant aux souffrances qui ont pu être subies par envoi de Londres, je n’en suis pas étonné, car ces sortes de travaux se font dans les expositions par des mains quelconques quoique l’on proteste d’ailleurs.

Il se pourra, et je le désire, qu’à son retour d’Italie fin de l’hiver prochain, mon fils aille en Angleterre pour parfaire son instruction et il ira, si cela lui est permis, examiner les merveilles qui décorent une de vos résidences, et pansera les blessures qui ont été faites à l’émail de certaines objets.

Daignez agréer Monsieur, l’assurance de mes respects,
Gallé Reinemer
Nancy, 10 mars 1874

Monsieur,

Vous avez eu la bonté de penser à moi au moment de l’épreuve douloureuse qui vient de vous frapper, par la perte de Madame Bowes de Montalbo.

Je suis profondément touché, Monsieur, que vous avez bien voulu me permettre de m’associer à ce deuil, immense pour vous, et pour tous ceux qui ont eu le bonheur de connaître Madame.

Vous êtes souvenu que je suis de ceux-là, et vous vous êtes dit que je ne manquerais pas de regretter, moi aussi, cette générosité qui savait trouver si vite le chemin du cœur, cette haute intelligence du beau, cette exquise délicatesse de goût, ce vif sentiment de l’art, qui faisaient de Madame de Montalbo une protectrice éclairée et aimée des artistes. Je suis très-honoré, Monsieur, de penser que quelques-unes de mes modestes œuvres resteront pour vous des souvenirs de Celle que en avait fait le choix; de même, je garde avec vénération la vue de Streatlam Castle et la gracieuse lettre qui l’accompagnait.

Daignez croire, je vous prie, Monsieur, au vif sentiment de respectueuse sympathie avec lequel je suis votre serviteur dévoué,

Emile Gallé

Nancy, 10th March 1874

John Bowes wrote to his agent Dent from Paris, January 6th 1873; ‘Mrs. Bowes wishes you to open the case sent by Gallé Reinemer & to place the jug it contains in safety in the West Top Front Room. It is a specimen of his Manufacture which he presented to Mrs. Bowes for the Museum, and she is anxious to know before writing him whether it has arrived in safety, and without injury. As it is ornamental, it is no doubt delicate please therefore be careful in the unpacking.’

Joséphine Bowes died suddenly on the 9th February, 1874, and John Bowes must have written to Emile Gallé to tell him of the fact:

Monsieur,

You have had the kindness to think of me at this time of the sad blow occasioned by the loss of Madame Bowes de Montalbo.

I am profoundly touched, Monsieur, that you have allowed me to be associated with this mourning, immense for you, and for all those who had the good fortune to know Madame.

You remembered that I was amongst those, and you told yourself that I should not be denied the chance of expressing my regret for the loss of this generous spirit that could find so quickly the way to one’s heart, this high appreciation of the beautiful, this exquisite delicacy of taste, this lively love of art, which made of Madame Bowes an enlightened patron, beloved by artists. I am very honoured, Monsieur, to think some of my modest works will stay with you as souvenirs of the one that chose them; equally, I shall keep with veneration the view of Streatlam Castle and the gracious letter that accompanied it.

I remain, believe me Monsieur, with deepest sympathy, your devoted servant,

Emile Gallé
Much of Gallé's pottery at The Bowes Museum was included in a sale at Anderson and Garland, Newcastle, 4th December 1917. Catalogue of a Collection of Duplicates from The Bowes Museum, with an alleged provenance from the 1867 exhibition.

14 Two coloured Nancy ware chamber candlesticks
15 Two coloured Nancy ware ewers, from Paris Exhibition, 1867
16 A Nancy ware flower vase, painted with flowers and spinning wheel, and a triple flower vase, with medallions and scrolls of flowers (chipped)
17 A Nancy ware double inkstand with tray, Paris Exhibition, 1867
18 A similar inkstand
20 Two Nancy ware hanging flowers baskets, Paris Exhibition, 1867
27 A Nancy ware ever and cover decorated with scrolls and flowers in relief
77 A pair of Nancy ware corner wall brackets of architectural designs, decorated in colours with a representation of house martin's nest and young
87 An earthenware dish and cover in the form of a lamb, said to be faience of Castelli and a 'Nancy' ware model of a cat
89 A small table mirror in a Nancy ware frame, Paris Exhibition, 1867

Detail from a Sèvres porcelain vase 'de Blois' 1901, decorated with birds and flowers by Gèbleux. The vase was described as being decorated with couleurs sous couverte repris en couleurs sur couverte grand feu (colours under and above the glaze, fired at a high temperature). It was presented by the French government to the University of London in August 1906, when it was valued at 2,250 francs.