



Light fitting

Not on display

Title/Description: Light fitting

Born: 1900 c.

Object Type: Lamp, Metalware

Materials: Brass, Enamel, Glass, Mother of pearl

Technique: Enameling, Metalworking

Measurements: h. 380 x w. 130 x d. 180 mm

Accession Number: 21114B

Production Place: Britain, England

School/Style: Art Nouveau

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

This unsigned light fixture in the Sainsbury Centre Collection is an example of English applied design in the Art Nouveau style. This item is one of a pair of light fittings with wall brackets (see object: 21114B) inspired by Gothic revivalist metalwork and enamelling.

Drawing inspiration from medieval coats of arms, the artist has modelled the shape of the lower wall bracket after a heraldic shield. Bordered with decorative brass strips, the heart-shaped bracket is made the focal point of the wall light. Inset with a red enamelled panel flanked by cabochons of mother-of-pearl, this functional element of the design is transformed by its luxurious ornamentation.

From the top of the lower bracket, a brass arm sweeps upwards to support the electrical flex and suspended glass shade. At the point where arm and bracket connect, the arm divides to create a kite-shaped opening. This small structural detail complements the angular qualities of the lower bracket and unifies the design.

The light shade completes the ensemble. Bell-shaped with a flaring rim, the shade has been blow-moulded in an opalescent glass. Lobed decoration at the top of the glass shade partially conceals the light bulb fitting within. At the time that this lamp base was manufactured, the supply of AC electrical current for domestic use was a relatively new invention, having been developed throughout the 1880s and 1890s. For this reason, the lamp base can be viewed as a symbol of technological progress and modernity. [1]

Although the manufacturer of this object has not been identified, the work was evidently influenced by the Arts and Crafts aesthetic as promoted by the successful London retailer, Liberty & Co. Liberty's designed decorative objects for domestic interiors and explored the potential of combining different materials and manufacturing processes in a single mixed-media product (see object: 21018).

Vanessa Tothill, January 2021

[1] <https://americanhistory.si.edu/lighting/19thcent/comp19.htm>

[accessed on 16 November 2020]

Further Reading

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

Couldrey, Vivienne, *The Art of Louis Comfort Tiffany* (London: Quarto Publishing, 1989)

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)
