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Edmond Lachenal, vase with floral decoration, matte-glazed, circa 1900.

Edmond Lachenal (Édouard Achille Lachenal, known as Edmond), born in Paris in 1855 and died in Paris in 1948, is one of the major figures of French art ceramics around 1900. Trained with **Théodore Deck**, and in business on his own from 1881, he became known for his **matte, velvety, frosted surfaces** in pastel tones, and for his collaborations with many sculptors, among them **Auguste Rodin**, **Hector Guimard** and **Agnès de Frumerie**. His work is held at the Musée d'Orsay, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Musée des Arts décoratifs and the Petit Palais in Paris.

Training with Rouvier and Deck

Édouard Achille Lachenal was born in Paris on 3 June 1855. From 1867 he was an apprentice potter with Victor Rouvier at Vaugirard. In 1870 he volunteered for the National Guard (127th battalion). He then entered the workshop of **Théodore Deck**, whose technical innovations he continued: at the Vienna Exposition Universelle of 1873, his decorating work for Deck received an honourable mention. By 1875 he was workshop head.

His own workshop (1881-1904)

In **1881** Lachenal founded his workshop at Malakoff, then moved it to Châtillon-sous-Bagneux and later to 22 rue de Verneuil in Paris. His early productions, close to Deck's, drew notably on Iznik-style faience. At the Exposition Universelle of **1889** he received a gold medal, according to several sources notably for a service decorated with animals made for Sarah Bernhardt. He then turned to stoneware, including flambé stoneware, while continuing his earlier productions.

He exhibited at the Salon of the Société nationale des beaux-arts from 1891, took part in the Exposition Universelle of **1900** and was an active member of the Salon des artistes décorateurs in 1904.

Edmond Lachenal, piece from the "Gui" (Mistletoe) dinner service (Musée d'Orsay)

Matte, pastel, frosted surfaces

Lachenal's contribution was a **matte enamel** in pastel, velvety and frosted tones, much appreciated by sculptors. Specialists point out that this effect was obtained by a surface treatment (with hydrofluoric acid, according to one source) rather than by a true matte glaze. He was influenced by Japonisme and Art Nouveau.

Sculptors and designers

From 1894 Lachenal cast sculptors' works in stoneware. The principle was constant: the sculptor gave the form, Lachenal glazed and finished it. **Auguste Rodin** bought stonewares from him from 1895 and collaborated with him;*La Pleureuse* (1896), after a plaster of 1885, is in the Musée Rodin. He also worked with Georges de Feure and in 1902 made faience editions of vases by **Hector Guimard**. His best-known collaborator was the Swedish sculptor **Agnès de Frumerie** (1869-1937), with whom he worked until at least 1907.

He also collaborated with the Daum firm, from the time he was still at Deck's, and made a table service for the newspaper *Les Annales politiques et littéraires*, with a mistletoe motif, a cup from which is kept at the Musée d'Orsay.

Edmond Lachenal after Auguste Rodin, The Mourner (La Pleureuse), 1896 (Rodin Museum)

Retirement and honours

In **1904** Lachenal gave up ceramics and handed his workshop to his son **Raoul**. He turned to the theatre, where he played with Sarah Bernhardt, and to painting and pastel. His other son, Jean-Jacques, was also a ceramicist. Knight of the Légion d'honneur in 1900, he was promoted officer in 1933 according to some sources. He died in Paris in 1948. Among his pupils was **Émile Decœur**.

In collections

The Musée d'Orsay holds by Lachenal a three-handled vase, pieces from the "Gui" service and other works. He is also represented at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, in the Louvre according to some sources, the Musée des Arts décoratifs, the Petit Palais, the Musée Rodin and the Maison du Patrimoine in Châtillon. The catalogue *Edmond Lachenal and his Legacy* (New York, 2007) is devoted to him.

Edmond Lachenal, stamp or signature “E. Lachenal”.

See also

Pierre-Adrien Dalpayrat — Art Nouveau — The 1900 Exposition Universelle — The 1889 Exposition Universelle

See our ceramics, faience and porcelain