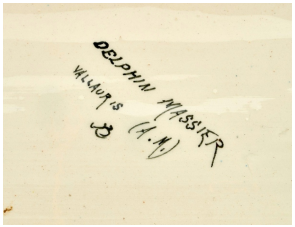
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Signature "Delphin MASSIER Vallauris A.M.".

Delphin Massier belongs to the famous dynasty of Vallauris potters, of which he is one of the three great representatives alongside his brother **Clément** and his cousin **Jérôme**. Less well known than Clément, who gave his name to **metallic lustre**, he distinguished himself through pieces of a different kind: large **planters on pedestals**, vases with floral decoration and animal models in **barbotine**, where polychrome enamel picks out the relief.

A child of Vallauris

Honoré Delphin Massier was born in **Vallauris in 1836**, into a family of potters established in the town since the seventeenth century. He was the elder brother of Clément and, like him, grew up in the workshop of their father, **Jacques Massier**, who gradually steered the factory towards decorative ceramics. The history of this dynasty and of the artistic revival of Vallauris is told in the entry on Vallauris ceramics.



Delphin Massier, jardinière stand, c. 1900. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

From the family workshop to his own house

When Jacques Massier died in **1871**, Delphin went into partnership with his brother Clément. The partnership lasted until Clément left Vallauris in 1883 to found his own manufactory at Golfe-Juan. Delphin stayed in Vallauris and, according to the Musée d'Orsay entry, **founded his own firm in 1889**. The two brothers then followed separate paths: Clément devoted himself to research on iridescent glazes, Delphin to a more sculptural repertoire of forms and decoration.

An Orientalist inspiration

Part of his output belongs to the Orientalist taste then running through the European decorative arts. The Vallauris ceramicists found in Hispano-Moorish and Persian art a repertoire of forms, deep blues and geometric motifs. Delphin gave it a monumental version in his **large Orientalist planters**, around 1880: an earthenware vase set on a pedestal with small columns adorned with **muqarnas** (the stacked honeycomb cells of Islamic architecture), the whole covered in abstract floral ornament in shades of **peacock blue**. This range of blues remained one of the hallmarks of the Massier workshops.

Barbotine, flowers and animals

The other side of his work belongs to **barbotine**: the term refers to the liquid clay slip with which relief motifs are modelled or applied before being covered in coloured enamels. Delphin Massier drew on it for a naturalistic repertoire of **plants** and **animals**: irises, thistles, water lilies, birds, frogs or cockerels, depending on the catalogues and collections. The decoration is treated in polychrome enamels, sometimes iridescent, and ties his pieces to **Art Nouveau**.

A typical group combines a tall column decorated with a pink flamingo among reeds and a cachepot with iris flowers, both in polychrome enamelled barbotine ceramic: an example of how he put nature at the service of the interior and the winter garden.



Delphin Massier, jardinière stand, c. 1900. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

The planters of around 1900

The collections of the **Musée d'Orsay** hold several of his pieces, dated to around 1900. They include a **planter on a pedestal**, one of a pair, in earthenware with polychrome underglaze decoration, 140 cm high, combining flowers, foliage, poppies, heads and female nudes; and a **planter stand** 135 cm high with a floral theme. These works entered the museum through gifts in 2008 and 2012. Their scale shows the period's taste for large ceramic decoration, intended for vestibules, conservatories and winter gardens.

Signature and mark

Delphin Massier's pieces generally bear his signature together with the place of manufacture, in the form *Delphin MASSIER Vallauris A.M.* — the initials standing for the Alpes-Maritimes département.

Legacy

Delphin Massier died in **1907**. His work, long overshadowed by his brother's, is today recognised as one of the most spectacular expressions of Riviera art ceramics in the late nineteenth century. The Musée d'Orsay holds several of his planters, and the Ceramics Museum in Vallauris, housed in the château, presents the output of the period in which the Massiers made the town a centre of art pottery.

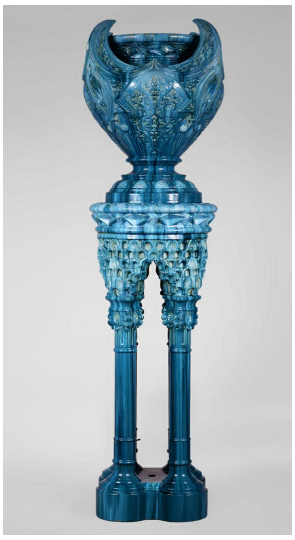


The Château de Vallauris, home to the Ceramics Museum.

See also

Vallauris — Clément Massier — Jérôme Massier fils — Art Nouveau — The Gréber family — Émile Müller

See our ceramics, faience and porcelain



Delphin Massier, large Orientalist faience jardinière, circa 1880. Galerie Marc Maison.



Pedestal with columns decorated with muqarnas. Marc Maison Gallery