

DE VERRRE

savoir-faire

The know-how of Daum in the field of pâte de verre is widely acknowledged. The technique, which dates back to 5000 BC (with pieces found in the tombs of the Egyptian pharaohs), was, in fact, rediscovered in 1900 at the glassworks founded by Jean Daum in Nancy in 1878 and further developed by the company in 1960.

BY PETER FINCH

The creation of items in pâte de verre through the 'lost-wax' technique is a time-consuming process

requiring abundant skills. Apart from artistic creativity, and an extremely delicate and precise touch, the pâte de verre artist requires an intimate knowledge of the characteristics and behaviour of glass.

The results of the successful application of these skills are true works of art, possessing a unique translucency, texture and substance, as well as what Daum describes as a "softness of contour" which cannot be achieved with blown glass.

Pâte de verre, as a material, is a 30-percent lead crystal paste made from specially produced batches of granular crystal (groisil). The final colour and translucency depends on granule size, the proportions in the batch, the chemical reaction between certain minerals and metals, and the rate of increase and decrease in temperature inside the kiln. The melting of the groisil inside the final mould comes towards the end of what is a very complex and painstaking process.



Pâte de verre vase prior to finishing

PÂTE DE VERRE – THE LOST-WAX TECHNIQUE

1. The sculptor produces an initial model in clay, based on pencil drawings. This is used to produce an original model in plaster which is further worked by the artist to perfect volume, details and expressions.
2. This plaster sculpture is then used to produce a negative, hollow mould in elastomer.
3. Hot liquid wax is poured into the hollow elastomer mould. The wax

cools and sets, resulting in an original sculpture in wax.

The artist further refines this wax sculpture. When finished, it is encased in refractory plaster.

The entire assembly is then placed in a kiln. The wax melts and runs out of the refractory plaster casing through a drain hole.

The wax is said to be 'lost'.

4. The hollow refractory mould is carefully filled with different sized and different coloured particles of fragmented crystal (the 'groisil'), and is then placed in a kiln. The

temperature is gradually raised to 1,000°C for about ten days.

The groisil melts and flows into all the crevices in the mould.

The temperature is then gradually reduced.

5. Once cooled, the plaster mould is broken, revealing the sculpture in pâte de verre.
6. The colour, shape and quality are carefully checked, and various finishing operations are carried out (cleaning, polishing, buffing, burnishing).



A MAKER OF ART

One of the main inspirations for Daum's pâte de verre artistry is nature, with splendid vases, bowls, dishes and perfume bottles decked with flowers, fruits, butterflies. Other collections have been based on mythology, and on the history of France and ancient Egypt, with Daum artists sculpting some of the magnificent animals of the mythical world.

It was Jean Daum's son, Antonin, who actually inaugurated the company's art department in 1891, going on to rediscover pâte de verre in 1900, and with its first vases decorated with finely cut flowers prefiguring what was to grow into the Art Nouveau style.

The workshops mastered the artistic working of hot glass, acid-etching, wheel engraving, painting and the use of triple-layered glass to produce graduated colours. The company boasted numerous inventions and patents: Daum, for example, was the first glassworks to cloak electric lamps in glass, in association with artists like Majorelle and the designer Henry Bergé.

EVOLVING WITH STYLE

In 1920, under the direction of Paul Daum, pieces in an entirely new style emerged, heralding the arrival of the Art Deco style. Glass took on a

mineral aspect – frosted, crystallized, deeply cut and decorated in a cubist spirit. As with Art Nouveau, the House of

Daum imposed its name in this new form of artistic expression that was Art Deco.

Around 1930, Michael Daum, Antonin's son, perfected the company's lead crystal production. Daum crystal was soon being drawn and shaped to produce new glass treasures, including pieces in the organic forms which came to characterize the 1950s.

Daum's rediscovery of pâte de verre in 1968, reinforced an already international reputation for excellence. Close collaboration with leading avant-garde artists continues. Contemporary Daum creations include designs from Franck Evennou, Garouste and Bonnetti, Annabelle d'Huart, Hilton McConnico, Christophe Pillet, Eric Schmitt and Philippe Starck.

The history of Daum has, as the company says, been "intertwined with that of the great artistic movements, so vast has been the evolution in style of the pieces and the diversity of

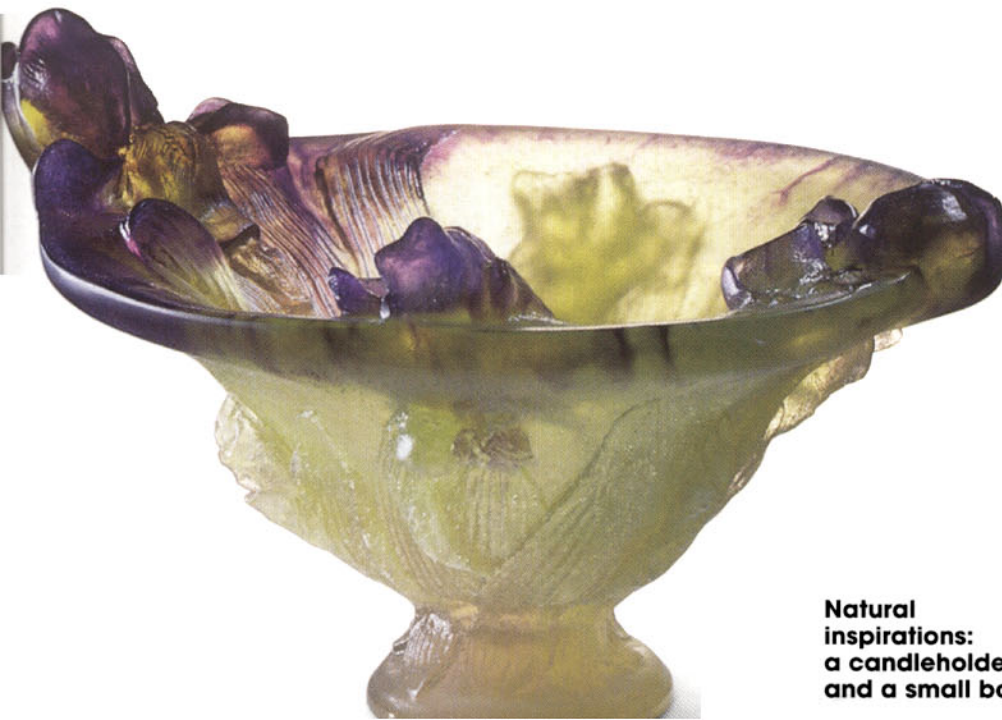


Daum's Jonquille
eau de parfum bottle



Daffodil vase

inspirations." Daum has remained open to external influences, thus greatly fostering renewal and creativity – the fame of the company's opera is also due to its relations with Arman, César, Dali, Dan Dailey, Lalanne, Mitoraj and others. Every year, Daum produces much sought-after limited edition sculptures, the Daum Art Editions, works of art which are fit to grace the very finest of tables.



Natural
inspirations:
a candleholder
and a small bowl

