

ALFRED DAGUET

FRANCE, 1875-1942

Alfred-Louis-Achille Daguet was a metalsmith who specialized in repoussé copper panels applied to hinged boxes, mantel clocks, picture frames, album covers, panels for portable chests, blotters, and other elements of desk sets. His delicately rendered images of flowers, birds, sea creatures, bats, peacocks, and gorillas are enriched with colorful cabochons, which give each work a somewhat medieval appearance.

Alfred Daguet's life is relatively unknown. He was a pupil of Jean Leon Gerome's and lived in Paris until 1910. His work was exhibited at the Société des Artistes Français in 1903 and 1904. He participated in the 1926 exhibition "Le Cuivre et le Bronze moderne" ("Contemporary Copper and Bronze") at the Galliera Museum. By then, he lived at a presbytery in Saint-Jean, in the Loiret region of France. Apart from this late exhibition, his best-known work is from before 1910. His name remains associated with Samuel Bing, for whom he made, in 1900, a box and a tea set in copper that reflect Bing's taste for Art Nouveau style. The box, which bears seahorse decorations, reveals a Japanese inspiration. Daguet's workshop was located above Bing's boutique.

The use of copper can be interpreted as Daguet's return to the Western tradition in the decorative arts. One of the jewelry boxes on view at the Galliera Museum exhibition recalls a medieval reliquary. Boxes seem to be Daguet's objects of predilection. In the case of these boxes and the ones that he exhibited at the Salon de la Société nationale des beaux-arts in 1904 (clocks, boxes, frames), copper only functions as a second skin, which is heavily adorned and affixed onto a rigid body – wood, in many cases. Daguet also worked with silver and tin. After sixteen years of absence between 1910 and 1926, Daguet presented works bearing new forms – namely, circular disks of steel and bronze, which were exhibited in 1926 at the Galliera Museum.

Famed actress and Art Nouveau collector Sarah Bernhardt owned pieces designed by Daguet.