

MAKING POTTERY ART

The Robert A. Ellison Jr. Collection of French Ceramics

NEW YORK CITY — Following a dream, aspiring painter Robert Ellison Jr., left his home state of Texas in 1962 bound for New York City to make his mark on the world as an artist. Despite possessing the eye of a well trained painter, Ellison's works found favor with few. Virtually every gallery that Ellison approached refused to show his work. It was then that Ellison discovered what would become a driving force in his life - ceramics.

Ceramics collector Bob Ellison at a 1980s Arts and Crafts auction conducted by David Rago at the Puck Building in New York City.



Ellison began exploring antiques shops, galleries and auction halls when he was not painting. One afternoon, he found himself “in a shop on way-West Bleeker Street and was mesmerized by this blue and white plate with rabbits decorated all around the border,” recollected Ellison. “As I recall my hand just reached for it, took it without my permission.” And so began a journey that manifested within the young bohemian artist, laying the groundwork for what would become one of the foremost collection of American, European and English Art Pottery in existence today.



Jean-Joseph Carriès' "Flask with Face," French (Saint-Amand-en-Puisaye), circa 1890, glazed stoneware. The crudely made handles contrast sharply with the intricately carved and molded face decoration. Robert A. Ellison Jr

MAKING POTTERY ART
THE ROBERT A. ELLISON, JR.
COLLECTION OF FRENCH CERAMICS
—CA. 1800–1950—



Celebrating the recent acquisition of Ellison's European art pottery collection, The Metropolitan Museum of Art has launched a major retrospective "Making Pottery Art: The Robert A. Ellison Jr. Collection of French Ceramics." On view in the main floor's Wrightsman Exhibition Gallery, the exhibition is on view through August 18. The 40 examples represent iconic examples of French pottery and porcelain,



This most recent donation also included a major collection of English and European ceramics which have yet to go on view, and comes on the heels of his 2009 donation nearly 300 pieces of iconic pieces of American Art Pottery that remain on display in the mezzanine of the new American Wing.

[1] Square vase by Ernest Chaplet (French, Sèvres 1835–1909 Choisy-le-Roi), oxblood glaze over white ground, circa 1889, porcelain, 15³/₈ inches tall. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert A. Ellison Jr Collection, purchase, the Isaacson-Draper Foundation Gift, 2013.



A star of the show is the monumental “Vase des Binelles” by Hector Guimard. While Ellison claims to have no favorites, he does concede that the 52-inch-high porcelain vase by Guimard is the piece he is asked about the most. There are five known examples; this was the last one that remained in private hands, until gifted to the Met. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert A. Ellison Jr Collection.

“What makes Robert Ellison’s collection of European art pottery so special is that it offers a complete story of the art pottery movement in Europe, particularly France, in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century,” stated curator Elizabeth Sullivan, The Met’s research associate in European Sculpture and Decorative Arts. “All the major artist-potters of the period are represented, including Ernest Chaplet, Auguste

Delaherche, and Jean Carriès — what makes Bob’s collection particularly unique is that he sought out truly exceptional examples of these artists’ work — those of the highest quality, technically and artistically, and in monumental sizes.”

“Bob is a truly remarkable collector,” she added, “passionate and informed, he sought out really beautiful pieces with wonderful surfaces and glazes.”

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~ Elizabeth Sullivan