

Strauss Allard Meyer

“Some might think they are fashion accessories; some would say that they are technical marvels; some could say that they are pieces of history; others that they are bejewelled art. They are indeed all of the above...Jewellery and in particular the art of *necessaire*, is no exception being a mirror of all these influences,” *A Vanity Affair: L’Art du Necessaire*¹.

French jewellery house Strauss Allard Meyer was founded in 1909 by Jean Gustave Maurice Allard (1882-1949) and Albert Emile Meyer (n.d.) in Paris; Raphaél Strauss (b. 1879) later joined the partnership in 1919². The workshop’s name ‘Strauss Allard Meyer’ is taken from the three founders’ last names, and their mark is displayed as S.A.M. as seen in figure 1. With their elegant design and superb craftsmanship, Strauss Allard Meyer quickly became one of the top Parisian jewellery houses in the 20th century.

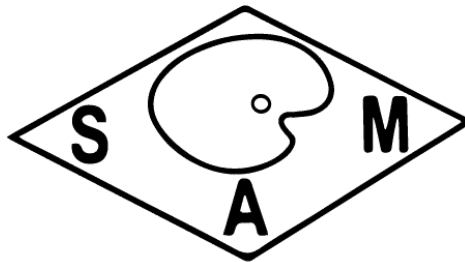


Figure 1. Strauss Allard Meyer’s mark, c. 1909-1950³.

Jean Gustave Maurice Allard was born on the 21st June, 1882 on 108 Rue du Ranelagh of the 16th arrondissement in Paris⁴. He lived there until 1934, when he moved to 4 Rue Clemenceau in Saint Gratien. According to Laurence Mouillefarine in her book *Lacloche Joailliers* (2020), Allard’s father had a significant influence on his taste⁵, who left in 1861 to live in Saigon and Yokohama. When he returned to France, he began to import Chinese porcelain, Japanese screens and lacquer furniture from Tonkin⁶, and

¹ Rose 2016.

² Antique Jewelry University 2022.

³ Antique Jewelry University 2022.

⁴ Jean-Jacques 2021.

⁵ Jean-Jacques 2021.

⁶ Jean-Jacques 2021.

Allard came into contact with these exotic art pieces from a young age, inspiring his designs later at the Strauss Allard Meyer workshop.

Allard's military service was postponed in 1904 due to 'weakness', but he was conscripted in 1914 into the artillery division anyway during World War I (1914-1918). Allard was an excellent draughtsman who drew landscapes and representations of the trenches during the war, and this is also where he met Raphaél Strauss who joined the workshop of Allard and Meyer in 1919⁷. Strauss was born on the 24th September 1879 to Jules Strauss (n.d.) and Caroline Kaufmann (n.d.) in Rue de Lancry, Paris. He initially received training as a shoemaker, then he enlisted in the army voluntarily for three years until 1901⁸.



Figure 2. Lacloche advertisement in *Vogue* newspaper, featuring vanity sets made by Strauss Allard Meyer, 1923.

Albert Emile Meyer was in charge of the commercial aspects of Strauss Allard Meyer, while Strauss, who joined the partnership later, soon proved to be an outstanding

⁷ Jean-Jacques 2021.

⁸ Jean-Jacques 2021.

salesman⁹. The partnership formed by Strauss, Allard and Meyer led to one of the most successful jewellery houses in Paris. The workshop received orders from Cartier, Janesich and Lacloche in 1909-1914, including paper cutters, cigarette cases, lighters and business card cases, creating fine objets de vertu for the upper-classes¹⁰.

In the collection

Liang Yi Museum is home to a series of vanities made by Strauss Allard Meyer from the 1920s to 1940s. This rectangular blue enamel compact, made for Lacloche (fig. 4) is set with jade, a rectangular raised carved lapis lazuli, and attached with single-cut diamond accents.. The terminals of this vanity case are decorated with openwork diamond detail, the diamond button opening to reveal a fitted mirror¹². The enamel compact contains two covered compartments and a lipstick holder mounted in gold. The simple yet elegant design are typical of the 1920s Art Deco style, which emphasised clean shapes and a streamlined look.



Figure 4. Compact, Signed: Lacloche, Maker: Strauss Allard Meyer, c. 1925, Materials: Gold, diamond, lapis lazuli, jade and enamel, Height 1.1 x Width 4.5 x Length 9.2 cm, Liang Yi Museum Collection.

⁹ Jean-Jacques 2021.

¹⁰ Jean-Jacques 2021.

¹² Christie's 2007.



Figure 5. Compact, Maker: Strauss Allard Meyer, 1925, Materials: Yellow gold, diamond, enamel and lapis lazuli, Height 1.3 x Width 8.5 x Length 4.5 cm, Liang Yi Museum Collection.

Likewise, this blue enamel compact (fig. 5) is decorated with a rectangular panel depicting a colourful floral pattern with diamonds and gemstones. Oriental motifs were popular in jewellery and necessaire designs in the 1920s as a result of expanding trade and cultural exchanges with Japan and China. The natural floral decoration on this blue enamel compact (fig. 5) reflects the prevalence of Orientalism in the 1920s.

In the early 20th century, geometric styles and bright colours such as blue and green were popularised by Louis Cartier, and soon spread to other jewellery houses, including Strauss Allard Meyer's works.





Figure 6. Compact, Maker: Strauss Allard Meyer, c. 1930, Materials: Lapis lazuli, jasper, diamonds, pearls and platinum, Height 1.8 x Width 5 x Length 8.4 cm, Liang Yi Museum Collection.



Figure 7. The everlasting chrysanthemum (Toshigiku), Maker: Utagawa Hiroshige, 1843-1847, Polychrome woodblock print, Materials: Colour, ink, Height 23.7 x Width 30.2 cm, Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr, RISD Museum Collection.

This compact (fig. 6) - inlaid with lapis lazuli and jasper - was produced in the 1930s. It creates a harmonious yet sharp visual contrast between the blue and red. At the centre of the compact, two chrysanthemums are carved from lapis lazuli and paired with diamond fittings. The push button of this compact is made from a pearl as well. The compact presents traditional Orientalism motifs alongside the chrysanthemum pattern. A woodblock print '*The everlasting chrysanthemum (Toshigiku)*' (fig. 7) made by Japanese Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858)¹⁴, illustrates a chrysanthemums motif with toothed leaves, similar to the one found on the compact (fig.6), showing how Japonisme remained a dominant trend well into the 1930s.

¹⁴ RISD Museum 2022.



Figure 8. Compact, Maker: Strauss Allard Meyer, c. 1945, Materials: Nephrite, malachite, coral, mother-of-pearl, diamond and platinum, Height 1.9 x Width 5 x Length 9 cm, Liang Yi Museum Collection.

Another notable work from Strauss Allard Meyer is this rectangular green compact (fig. 8), set with nephrite. The inlaid malachite, coral as well as mother-of-pearl is what makes up the floral pattern. The inscription within this compact reads ‘To my loving wife Helen 1945 - Dave’. This compact (fig. 8) was made in 1945 after World War II (1939-45), at a time of gradual economic recovery and cautious optimism. Materials such as gemstone and gold were no longer rationed, resulting in more luxurious compacts than those commissioned during the wartime period. The vanities designed in the 1940s-50s tend to utilise dramatic settings with bows, flowers and animal motifs, as seen here.

In 1949, Allard sold the company to Emile’s son, Jean Meyer (n.d.)¹⁵. The timeless designs of the French jewellery house Strauss Allard Meyer remains an inspiration to present-day artisans, and its extraordinary art pieces continue to see high demand from collectors.

¹⁵ Antique Jewelry University 2022.

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