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FINEART

L'ÉCOLE DE VALLAURIS

ROGER CAPRON

JEAN DERVAL

PABLO PICASSO

01 JUIN 2024
SAINT-TROPEZ

Summary

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Introduction



Vallauris, a town located a few kilometers from the beaches of the French Riviera in the south of France, has distinguished itself over the decades as the emblem of ceramics. From the Latin Vallis Aurea, meaning the Golden Valley, this charming village of potters has risen to prominence thanks to significant sunlight that allowed creations to dry quickly, a wooded environment that provided easy access to fuel for the kilns, but above all, due to the abundance and quality of its clay deposits.

The story begins in the 16th century. While the plague devastated entire regions, a lord ordered seventy families from Genoa to settle in Vallauris. A common and utilitarian production thus emerged. The arrival of rail lines in 1862 enabled the large-scale export of these creations. Vallauris extensively supplied the region with earthenware pots and pans that were highly heat-resistant.

However, following World War I, industrialization and the advent of materials such as aluminum and stainless steel challenged local production.

But Vallauris retained its splendor thanks to local potters who gradually turned to craftsmanship. Vallauris became an artistic hub. Decorative, sculptural, and architectural ceramics began to fill the workshops, and the town soon hosted the greatest artists of the 20th century.

In 1968, the first international biennale of ceramics was established in Vallauris. This was followed by the creation of the Ceramics Museum and the conversion of many workshops into places for sharing and history.

The 1950s represented the golden age of Vallauris. Architects, intellectuals, and artists from art schools converged on Vallauris. Suzanne and Georges Ramié facilitated and materialized this artistic enthusiasm. Designed as a place for meetings and exchanges, the Madoura workshop became the welcoming ground for Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, Henri Matisse, Jean Cocteau, Roger Capron, Jean Derval, and many others.

Technique was not paramount. Many of these great names had sometimes never even touched clay before. Freed from methodological constraints, the productions became increasingly innovative and daring, thus enhancing their uniqueness. Two general trends emerged: interest in animal subjects and in geometric designs.

Roger Capron

Roger Capron

Roger Capron was born on September 4, 1922, in Vincennes. He studied at the School of Applied Arts in Paris until 1943. Alongside Robert Picault and Jean Derval, he contributed to the revival of ceramics in Vallauris. In 1952, he founded the Atelier Capron, a factory employing about fifty workers. This allowed him to apply his expertise to semi-industrial production and achieve international fame.

From 1955 onwards, Roger Capron focused on the creation and production of ceramic tiles and tables, thus perpetuating the motto of his mentor René Gabriel: “making beauty accessible to all.”

A multifaceted figure, Roger Capron was the only French ceramicist of his era to achieve significant artistic work while founding a leading industrial enterprise. After being taught by the decorator René Gabriel, he established the Callis workshop in Vallauris with Robert Picault in 1946, where he developed the iconic shapes and designs of his work: stylized figures, suns, branches, and geometric motifs. Modern and timeless, his creations have stood the test of time and remain today as benchmarks in design and decoration.





Sun fresco

In the shimmering world of Roger Capron's ceramics, the sun emerges as an emblematic motif, radiating its rays of warmth and joy throughout his creations. Beyond its aesthetic aspect, Capron's sun motif reveals a deep connection with nature and a celebration of life. It becomes a symbol of renewal and optimism.

DUMAS+LIMBACH's series of seasonal sunglasses invites you to discover the winter and summer sun. Blue and brown tones contrast with the luminosity of Azur and green.

Fresque soleil d'hiver, late 20th century,
Glazed ceramic, 106 x 83 cm





Fresque soleil d'été, late 20th century,
Glazed ceramic, 106 x 83 cm



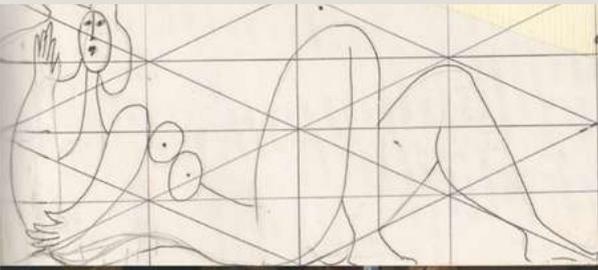
Masks and totems

Roger Capron has created many pieces with a primitive aesthetic, notably around the totemic figure. The Raku technique, to which he was introduced by his son Philippe in 1987, lends a rough appearance that contrasts sharply with the glazed slip technique described above. Speed of execution and strength of expression are at the heart of his creations. He also uses Indian ink to color the porous shard base black.



Left: Totem face with circles, late 20th century, 45 x 25 x 12 cm
Middle: Mask, late 20th century, 21 x 16.05 cm
Right: Archive of a drawing by Roger Capron





© Capron archives.
Reclining woman with tights, Late 20th century, 50 x 105 x 30 cm



Roger Capron's radiant personality makes him one of the most notable figures of Vallauris. He organized and participated in numerous festivities within the town. He explored all aspects of ceramics, both industrial and artisanal. Around 1990, Roger Capron ventured into a completely new realm, creating unique pieces akin to sculptures. With the help of his wife Jacotte and his long-time collaborator Jean-Paul Bonnet, he opened a small workshop in Vallauris and created fired pieces (using the smoke-fired clay technique) for galleries worldwide.

During the 2000s, Capron's aesthetic language was increasingly captured by three-dimensional sculpture. In 2003, a major retrospective exhibition, "Les Capron," was held at the National Ceramics Museum in Sèvres.

Roger Capron passed away three years later, leaving behind a considerable body of work recognized worldwide.





© Capron archives.

Bold and colorful

The bold use of color, daring approach, and originality of the subjects represented are all characteristics that give Roger Capron's work its unique aspect. Emblematic of the 1950s, his creations embodied the joy of living and the long-desired hope of the post-war period.

When asked to speak about Capron, Derval, and Picault, Jacotte, his wife, says: "They brought their youth, freshness, and fantasy at a time when classicism was prevalent."

Through his creations, Capron breaks away from austerity, realism, and classicism.



■
Roger Capron,
Rhinocéros, late XX century
35 x 78 x 17 cm



Roger Capron,
Porteuse d'oiseau, Fin XXe
120 x 30 x 20 cm



His inspiration is mixed: the colorful ceramics of the four potters, the human representation of Jacques Innocenti, and the casting technique of Pol Chambost.

The themes of his work include the bestiary, the rooster and the bull beloved by Picasso, a fascination with the sun, the female body, and hybrid beings (woman-bird or mermaid). Mythology and African art, with series of masks, further complete the iconography of his production.

As he entered his sixties, Roger Capron decided to make a fresh start and ventured into sculptural ceramics, creating unique pieces with his signature themes: the bestiary, the female body, and hybrid beings. He continued to work until the end of his life in 2006.



Top: Woman on a bench, Late 20th century, 70 x 42 x 30 cm

Right: Checked rooster, Late 20th century, 77 x 40 x 25 cm

The raku

Raku is a Japanese firing technique (meaning "happiness in chance"). The sculpture is first fired in a traditional kiln at about 980°C (1796°F). It is then covered with glaze and fired a second time at about 1000°C (1832°F) in a Raku kiln. At this point, the piece is removed from the kiln and undergoes thermal shock, causing the glaze to crackle: the artisan uses grogged clay, which is more resistant to thermal shock. The sculpture is then quickly covered with natural flammable materials (such as wood chips or sawdust). In contact with the molten piece, this material ignites, and its combustion is then restricted by limiting the oxygen supply, leading to a concentration of carbon that infiltrates the cracks and reveals them. Finally, the piece is cleaned with an abrasive material to remove all soot and ash residues.

This gives the piece a rough and tactile appearance. This technique was extensively used by Roger Capron, particularly in his sculptural production.



Capron



Jean Derval

Jean Derval

Jean Derval is a French ceramist. After graduating from the École des Arts Appliqués in Paris as a graphic designer and poster artist, Jean Derval discovered his vocation for ceramics while designing stoneware services for the Christofle goldsmiths.

It was while working in the Maubrou-Pigaglio workshop in 1945 that he learned the craft of ceramics, introducing himself to various techniques and throwing. In 1947, the artist joined fellow ceramists Robert Picault and Roger Capron in Vallauris, and in 1949 joined the famous Madoura workshop, where he worked alongside the Andalusian master for two years.

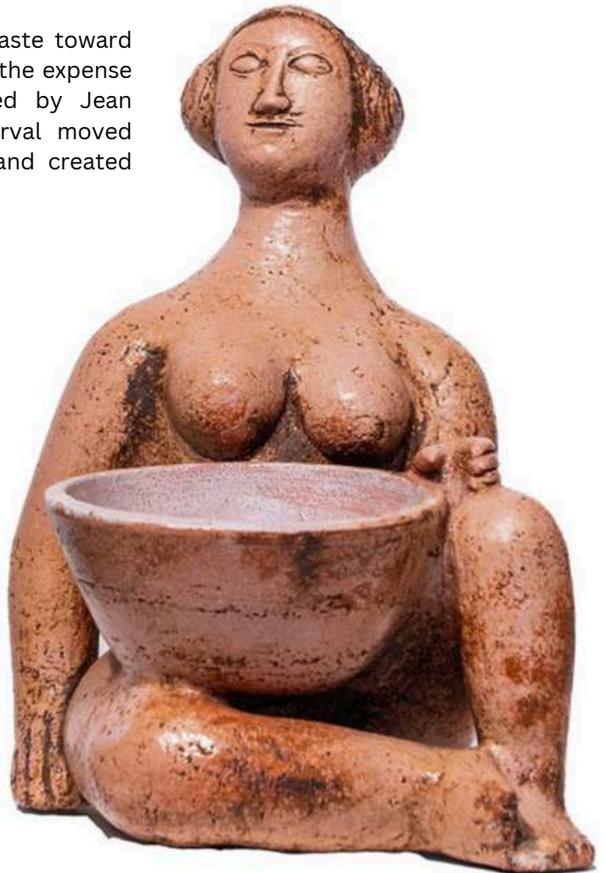
It was in 1951 that Jean Derval chose the difficult path of the one-off after founding his own studio, Le Portail.



The shape

By reinterpreting the lessons of Cubism and Abstraction, the artist then offers a vast repertoire of domestic pottery, mainly inspired by anthropomorphic and zoomorphic themes, but also includes religious subjects driven by his Christian fervor, while still leaving significant room for Greek mythology, which resonates with his Mediterranean roots.

The late 1960s saw a shift in taste toward stoneware in austere shades, at the expense of the colorful faïence favored by Jean Derval. During this period, Derval moved toward architectural ceramics and created his works with a sculptor's vision.



Jean Derval,
Sculpture Femme à la fontaine, 1966
32 x 30 x 30 cm





Jean Derval, Princesse Europa, 2001, 42 x 55 x 14 cm

Derval transcends the judgement of time. His timeless vocabulary makes his creations exceptional works. His mastery of drawing allows him to be an accomplished ceramicist, building an almost perfect synergy between the two disciplines. Before becoming a ceramicist, Derval was indeed a draftsman. Throughout his life, he continued to view himself as such.

After obtaining his school certificate, Derval enrolled at the National School of Applied Arts to Industry. It was there, in 1922, that he met Roger Capron and Robert Picault. Unbeknownst to them, this emerging friendship was, in fact, sealing the artistic destiny of three men.

“The Three Roosters,” as they liked to call themselves, would indeed be dependent on their respective talents in Vallauris.

He revitalizes aesthetic fields that had sometimes been extensively explored by artists of previous generations. Religious and mythological subjects are among the most eloquent examples.

Bold and refined, his production aspires to technical complexity. Based on geometric forms, which he calls “geometrals,” Derval sketches all the shapes he brings to life from a drawing board. He then derives volume from the lines, with volume being subordinate to a composition initially thought out and designed for the third dimension.



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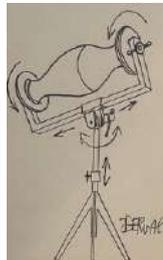
Derval, for family reasons, couldn't accompany Roger Capron and Robert Picault to Vallauris. However, on August 2, 1947, Derval finally joined his comrades at the Callis workshop. He then broke away from the austere stoneware of Paris and indulged in glazed pottery and faience, which were more playful. However, the picturesque setting and Mediterranean sweetness soon darkened, leading to deteriorating relations among the three roosters. Each desiring a more assertive independence, they headed towards different aesthetic paths. Their separation became official in the spring of 1948. In October 1948, Suzanne Ramié expressed her desire to integrate Jean Derval as a collaborator at the Madoura workshop. It was during this experience that Derval met Picasso. The ceramist then endeavored to feed his technique into the voracity and spontaneity of the Catalan artist's creative spirit. He particularly focused on issues of shrinkage and fusion, as well as color changes induced after firing.

This is how Derval devised the ingenious system of the Japanese turntable. Two turntables, linked together by a belt, in order to replicate in facsimile Picasso's original editions. This also allows the glaze to be applied horizontally, thus avoiding drips. The many solutions provided by Derval led Picasso to nickname him "The Mechanic."

When asked what it was like to see Picasso at work, Derval confided: "Exciting and terrifying. He succeeded at everything. Picasso was strength, determination. While Chagall started his canvas at the bottom left, finishing at the top right, Picasso set up his space, his main directions, and off he went without regret... The result was always impressive. I never saw him unhappy with himself. If he had doubts, he projected them onto something else, we broke quickly. A completely round vase, he would spin it before painting, saying 'I'm looking for the middle.' With him, you never knew if it was just a word or if it corresponded to something very deep in his mind."

After his marriage to Liliane Mathieu, Derval settled in Place du Portail in Vallauris. A new transitional era for the artist, who would open his own workshop there.

Regarding themes: "What we do, what we want to say, and how to say it": JD Creation is therefore primarily an iconographic proposition with a trajectory controlled by knowledge of its beginnings and its ends: the only random factor is the play of fire. A truly well-studied program by Derval to which he adds his creativity and unique expressiveness.



Jean Derval,
Drawing of the Japanese spinner



101099

The subjects

Derval uses decoration to support the volumetric dynamic of each piece through articulated geometric shapes that make the entire material vibrate with a shimmering signature. A constructivist dynamic. From the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Derval offers us astonishing sophistication. Known for being periods of artistic shadows, he turns them into a lush and elegant motif. His Mediterranean touch shapes his creations. Then it's the turn of the great ancient myths, which he treats with great originality despite the exhaustion of the motif by many of his colleagues. Over the course of commissions, he tackles those of Icarus, Oedipus, the Minotaur, and even the abduction of Europa, of which he will produce several versions.



Jean Derval,
Sculpture L'enlèvement d'Europe, 2001,
41 x 33 x 10 cm







Jean Derval, fresque exceptionnelle, 1975, 140 x 287 cm

the architectural turning point

The overproduction of decorative pieces, often labeled kitsch, however, leads to the decline of the splendor of Vallauris during the 1960s. Ironically, Derval and his friends organize "The Burial of the Unique Piece," an exhibition spanning three weeks aimed at a true mourning procession for visitors.

But the crisis persists. Derval then decides to steer his production towards new horizons: those of mural ceramics and architecture. For him, it is a revelation and a true period of artistic flourishing. He recounts: "It was the happiest period of my life. The villas had considerable surfaces and the budgets matched them."

He also takes pleasure in the construction of several fountains.

Then it's the turn of mural frescoes to invade Derval's production. Thus unfolds a succession of zoomorphic, vegetal, and anthropomorphic motifs, all structured by geometric shapes.

The culmination of this period will undoubtedly be the adventure of the Hotel Byblos, which will reunite Roger Capron and Jean Derval once again. Following this commission, the two partners repeat their fruitful collaboration.



Jean Derval
Fresque exceptionnelle, 1975
(détail)

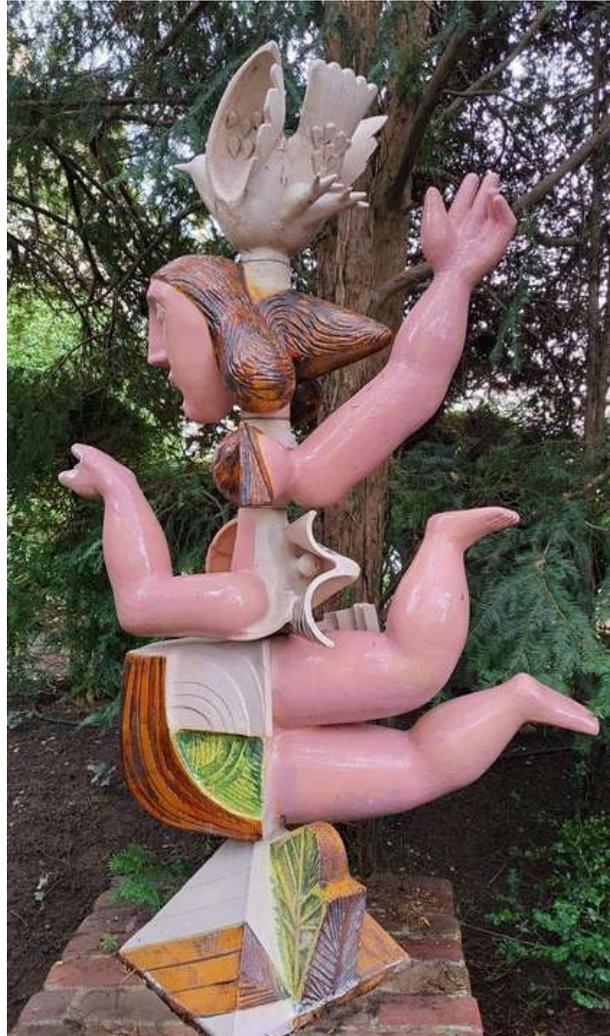


A wink at Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, this sculpture was presented at the 10th Biennale in Vallauris. It bears witness to a strongly Cubist treatment of volumes. The complexity of its forms, its imposing format, its skilful chromatic work and its luxuriant ornamental motifs, all combine to make this work the synthesis of an abundant, sophisticated and technical universe.

Jean Derval,
Sculpture monumentale, 1989
170 x 79 x 79 cm

Jean Derval,
Sculpture la Femme à l'oiseau, 1989
172 x 126 cm

The unique piece





Jean Derval,
Vase femme, 2005
25 x 20 x 30 cm

"I don't believe in working 'for oneself'. The visual artist must situate himself in people's lives, not for the museum or virtual experimentation. I believe in art for 'living with' in everyday life".

Jean Derval

Pablo Picasso

Pablo Picasso

An artist of multiple talents, Pablo Picasso is commonly referred to as a prodigy. A legend emerges: he knows how to draw before he even learns to speak. Born in 1881 in Málaga, Spain, the Catalan atmosphere and everyday life rigorously influence the themes of his early works, such as the theme of bullfighting. The charismatic aura of Picasso catches the attention of his father. Dazzled and admiring, his father takes charge of his artistic education and enrolls him in 1896 at the School of Fine Arts in La Coruña, then in Barcelona. The artist leads a fairly free life there, frequenting bohemian circles and cabarets. In 1901, the painter settles in Paris, and it is at this moment that his work undergoes considerable evolution, dividing into several periods.



Visage cubiste
1960

42 cm

Round dish

E.O. White earthenware, partial underglaze engobe
decoration in ivory, yellow, blue, brown and matte
black.

Edition of 100 numbered

B.152 .Va

R.632.VA

Cachet "Madoura Plein Feu" et "Empreinte originale de
Picasso".

Presented in number 445 of the "Catalogue de l'oeuvre
céramiques PICASSO".

By Alain RAMIÉ

Editions MADOURA



Joueur de flûte et chèvre
1956

25 cm

Convex wall plaque

White earthenware, underlined etching and oxidized
kerosene, ivory and brown glaze.

Edition of 450. Engraved with "Madoura Plein feu" and
"empreinte originale de Picasso" stamps on the back.

Present in "Picasso, catalog de l'oeuvre céramique
édité", Alain Ramié, 1988 reproduced on page 198 lot
382



Picasso et les Ramié



In late July 1946, Picasso attended the annual pottery exhibition in Vallauris. The encounter with Georges and Suzanne Ramié, the proud owners of the Madoura Studio, piqued the artist's curiosity, and he dedicated himself to ceramics. Thus began a period of intense production. Clay brought him freedom, new perspectives, and endless creative possibilities. While ceramics could be shaped, once dried, they allowed no room for error. Pablo Picasso played with techniques, painting on the surface, and engraving the clay. The deep, intense, and vibrant colors of the Mediterranean inspired the artist, who would create over 633 ceramic editions between 1947 and 1971. Initially, he crafted decorated utilitarian objects such as plates and bowls. Then he turned to complex ceramics with grandiose forms, ultimately producing pitchers and vases with iconic anthropomorphic and zoomorphic shapes.



Femme du barbu
1953

39.5 x 20 x 23 cm
Pichet en terre de faïence,
Private collection
from the edition of 500, inscribed 'Edition Picasso',
partially glazed and painted, with the Edition Picasso
and Madoura stamps

totemic



His unconventional creations reveal his exploration of concepts such as form, appropriation, space, and void (three-dimensional still lifes with filled plates, plates turning into masks, bottles transforming into women, with black features and white glazing emphasizing anatomy). These appropriations infuse the work with the totemic power of the object. Picasso's ceramics have surpassed the million-dollar mark at auctions seven times in the last fifteen years, thereby elevating the status of ceramics in the art market. Surprisingly, this increase in value does not only apply to the ceramicist's unique pieces. Plates produced in editions of 500 copies can sometimes fetch very high sums, as evidenced by "Tête de Chèvre," which reached \$250,000 in November 2023. The ceramics of Vallauris are the work of a giant of the 20th century; as witnesses to his genius, they are collected by all.

Cruchon hibou
1955

27 x 13 cm

White earthenware, knife-engraved
gold oxides on white, black, brown and
blue enamel

Pitcher turned,
Edition of 500,
R.711

P° 152 from Alain Ramié's catalog of
Pablo Picasso's published ceramic work
1947-1971.





Assiette visage de Faune,
1955, 28 juin

24 cm

Unglazed round plate/square in white earthenware with relief decoration and dated 28.6.55.

Issued in an edition of 150 numbered copies.

On the back, debossed "Madoura Plein Feu" and "Empreinte originale de Picasso".

Present in the catalog "Picasso Catalogue de l'oeuvre céramique édité" by Alain Ramié, 1998, reproduced by 145, lot no. 283.



Profil de taureau
1956, 22 février

25 cm
Convex wall plaque
E.O. White earthenware, engraving highlighted with oxidized kerosene, glaze bath
Ivory, brown, green
Edition of 450
B.83
Presented in n°317 of the "Catalogue de l'oeuvre céramiques PICASSO".
By Alain RAMIÉ
Editions MADOURA

Bouquet à la pomme,
1956, 22 janvier

25 cm
Round square ceramic plate, Atelier Madoura
E.O. white earthenware, decoration highlighted with oxidized kerosene, underglaze oxides
Avoir, brown, blue
Edition of 400
B.66
R.414
N°305 of the catalog First edition of "Catalogue de l'oeuvre céramiques PICASSO", Alain RAMIÉ, Editions MADOURA.





Cruchon hibou
1955

27 x 13 cm

White earthenware, knife-engraved gold oxides on white, black, brown and blue enamel

Turned pitcher,

Edition of 500,

R.711

P° 152 from Alain Ramié's catalog of Pablo Picasso's ceramic works 1947-1971.





Scène de Tauromachie
1959, 11 juin

42 cm
Round dish
D.42

E.O. white earthenware, oxidized kerosene decoration, glaze bath
Ivory, black

Edition of 100 numbered
B.125

Presented at number 412 of the "Catalogue de l'oeuvre céramiques
PICASSO". By Alain RAMIÉ, Editions MADOURA



Joueur de flute, Bouquet à la pomme, Visage de faune, Scène de Tauromachie, Profil de taureau

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VALLAURIS.

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