

Paul Follot Service Now On Display at V&A Wedgwood Collection

The V&A Wedgwood Collection announced the acquisition of a rare tea and coffee service designed by Paul Follot for Wedgwood, and formerly owned by fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld. WIS Recording Secretary and Wedgwood Society of Washington DC Newsletter Editor Sophie Guiny dives deeper into the history of the service and Paul Follot's designs.

In December 2021, Sotheby's in Paris auctioned the [eclectic art collection of legendary fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld](#). Among the many lots were a rare Wedgwood Art Deco [part coffee and tea service](#) designed by Paul Follot, and the [accompanying preparatory drawings](#), which sold for a combined total of approximately \$20,000. At the time, the buyer was not known but it has now been revealed as the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum, and the set has been put on display at the [V&A Wedgwood Collection](#) in Barlaston. According to the [V&A website](#), the set was purchased "with the support of the V&A Americas Foundation through the generosity of the A. Alfred Taubman Foundation at the recommendation of William and Ellen Taubman, The Friends of the National Libraries, a legacy donation from Jacob Holt, The Decorative Arts Society 40th Anniversary Fund, and Simon Wedgwood."



Wedgwood 'Campanula' tea and coffee set, designed by Paul Follot, 1923. Museum nos. WE.26-2021 to 29-2021, WE.31-2021, WE.34-2021, WE.38-2021, WE.42-2021, WE.43-2021. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The [announcement from the V&A](#) underlines how important the acquisition is: the set is the only known example of the *Campanula* pattern and shape in existence. It appears that Karl Lagerfeld used the service, as the museum's conservation team needed to do some minor work

prior to the set going on display, including cleaning some tarnishing to the gold decoration, removing caffeine stains, and repairing a small crack. The small teapot is missing a lid, and the museum is in talks with the Wedgwood factory at Barlaston to determine whether a replacement lid could be made based on the drawings (below).



Design by Paul Follot for the small teapot (“petite théière” in French) in the ‘Campanula’ line. Museum no. WE/PF/1/3. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The collaboration between Wedgwood and French designer Paul Follot (1877-1941) stemmed from Wedgwood’s interest in the continental market. As recounted by Maureen Batkin in her 1983 article [Wedgwood Ware Designed by Paul Follot](#) (published in [The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society 1890-1940](#)), Wedgwood opened a Paris showroom in 1901, and at the same time struck an agency relationship with one of the leading French retailers, [Georges Rouard](#). Rouard worked closely with Wedgwood art director John E. Goodwin to develop new lines, in both traditional and modern styles. It was Rouard who introduced Paul Follot to [Cecil Wedgwood](#).

Paul Follot was primarily known as an interior decorator. He exhibited in Paris at several decorative art salons, and used his own home as a showcase for his talent. Follot worked across multiple media, from [wallpaper](#) to [furniture](#) to [silver](#) and ceramics. While it is difficult to envision from black and white pictures such as the one below, a 1914 article titled *The Home of Architect-Artist Paul Follot* described his talent for working with vivid colors to create opulent interiors, like in [his Parisian house](#).



Paul Follot's living room, c. 1914, from a photo published in The Wall - Paper News and Interior Decorator, 1914

Batkin quoted an agreement signed by Follot with Josiah Wedgwood and Sons, as the firm was still known, in 1912. The agreement stated that Follot would design exclusively for Wedgwood several shapes and patterns for a period of two years, and that Wedgwood would mark each piece with the words 'Modèle Paul Follot,' along with the Wedgwood mark. World War I prevented the designs from going into production and Cecil Wedgwood was killed in action in 1916. Georges Rouard visited Etruria in 1919 and persuaded Frank Wedgwood, who had succeeded his cousin Cecil at the head of the firm, to resume the collaboration with Follot.

Factory records kept at Barlaston and quoted by Batkin include the following designs by Follot: *Oceania*, *Campanula*, *Sylvia*, *Cecilia*, *Galbia* (2 versions), *Calida*, *Pomona*, and a 'Service à Thé et à Café.' Follot's designs proved very challenging to manufacture: being primarily a furniture designer, his designs featured a lot of high relief and carving, which were not easy to replicate in ceramics. Batkin wrote that Bert Bentley, one of Wedgwood's most talented modelers, was given the task, but most of the surviving examples of Follot designs exhibit firing cracks.

Since Batkin's article in 1983, new examples of surviving Follot designs have come to light, which allow us to have full color images rather than just the black and white pictures from Wedgwood catalogs from the early 1920s. In 2006, [Bonhams sold the tea set below](#), which is in the *Sylvia* pattern. Several pieces in the *Sylvia* pattern are also in the collections of the [Musée d'Orsay](#) in Paris.



Wedgwood 'Sylvia' tea set designed by Paul Follot (credit: Bonhams)

Based on the drawings reproduced in Batkin's article, the vase below, [for sale by a British dealer](#), appears to be from the *Pomona* range. The second photo shows the distinctive back stamp that was agreed upon by Wedgwood in their contract with Follot.



Wedgwood *Pomona* vase designed by Paul Follot, c. 1920 (credit: Justin Evershed-Martin)

Wedgwood and Follot did not collaborate after 1920. Follot continued his career as an [interior and furniture designer](#), serving as director of the [Pomone Studios](#), Paris department store Le Bon Marché's interior design studio and as co-director of French furniture at [Waring & Gillow](#). His designs can be seen in [several museum collections](#).



Cafetière and Sucrier from the 'Campanula' tea and coffee set, 1923. Museum nos. WE.26-2021, WE.29-2021. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The acquisition of the *Campanula* service by the Wedgwood V&A Collection sheds some light on the history of Wedgwood in the 1910s and 1920s, and on their interest in hiring international designers. But Follot's designs were too elaborate and ornate to be produced on a large scale, which makes them very rare and interesting today.