



The sculptural agglomeration of naturalistic fish and reptiles veritably wriggles across the plate as rich ceramic decoration on a cobalt-blue ground. The Mannerist attention to detail identifies the decorative plate as a typical product of Achille Barbizet (ca. 1825–1890).

Barbizet has piled up fish seemingly at random here on a bed of a few herb leaves, while a lizard, tortoise, frog, and snake dance around the edges of the oval form. Every detail of nature is modeled in clay with painstaking accuracy, each fish scale, each rolling eye, each leaf rib. An astounding illusion, even including the usual insects indicating decay! The ceramic manufactory Maison Barbizet in Paris specialized in the production of Mannerist pieces like this one, responding to the nineteenth-century taste for these Renaissance-style rustiques figurines. Working with his father, Victor Barbizet, and Victor's brother-in-law Claude Ponet, Achille Barbizet produced platters like this one in large numbers, in sizes and shapes that underscored their purely decorative character. The ceramicists were following the model of the famous Renaissance artist Bernard Palissy (ca. 1510–1589/90), whose pieces enjoyed

great popularity in the nineteenth century. The platter was one of the early acquisitions for the Museum für Gestaltung Zürich's Decorative Arts Collection, which was inaugurated in 1875. It may have been purchased at the 1878 International Exposition in Paris, where Barbizet was awarded a silver medal for his piece. (Sabine Flaschberger)

Zierplatte, um 1880
Entwurf/Ausführung: Achille Barbizet
Material/Technik: Irdenware, glasiert
12.7 × 67.5 × 50.5 cm
Eigentum: Museum für Gestaltung Zürich / ZHdK

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