GEMS AND MINERALS IN THE MCFERRIN FABERGÉ COLLECTION:

A STUDY

Presented by

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Fabergé International Symposium

Houston, Texas

January 31, 2013

Organic Materials from Trees and the Oceans

Gems and Minerals Mined from the Earth

Rock Stars Demonstration Team, Houston Museum of Natural Science

Tours – Cullen Hall of Gems & Minerals and the Smith Gem Vault, Docents

All illustrations are courtesy of the Artie and Dorothy McFerrin Collection, unless otherwise noted.

Fabergé Sorting Loose Stones

ca. 1915

- 1908 Lapidary workshop at 44 Angliskii Prospekt, St. Petersburg, employing 30 craftsmen by 1912.
- Hardstone animals and Russian folkloristic figures are not always marked Fabergé, unless they have added gold or silver decorations.
- Study goals: Gem and mineral identification and discovery of historical details.

Brown Agate, 18 ct. gold, diamond eyes,
H.W. Henrik Wigström (1862-1923)
(The Hodges Family Collection)

Zarnitza Sailor
(Virginia Museum of Fine Arts)

Research Clues:
London Sales Ledgers, October 14, 1913
Milky White Agate, Onyx or Chalcedony?

I. Organic Materials from Trees and the Oceans

Silver Birch
(Wikipedia)

Karelian Birch – Hard wood with bulbous growth, caused by a genetic defect of a tree growing in a sub-arctic climate

Karelian Birch Cigarette Case
with Souvenir Appliques
(not by Fabergé)

Insights on the Appliques:

Possibly a present from a woman closely connected to the man on the photo, perhaps a soldier going back to the battlefield after a vacation in July 1915 …

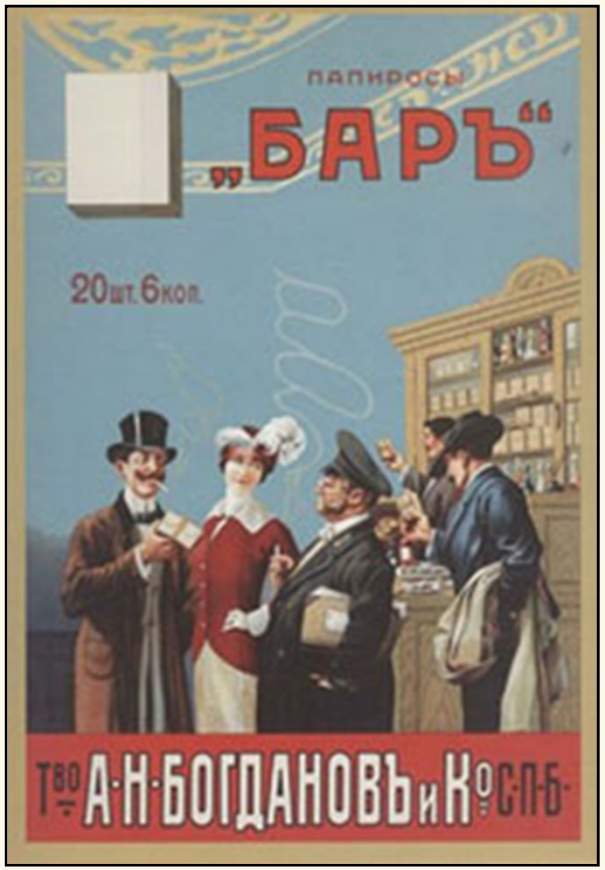
Presented by Lyusya Messalineta, possibly a diminutive version of name Messalina, who was famous for her flirtations.

Phrases: *Nice fellow*, *I am I*, *don't pay attention*, *let's forget it together*, *we shouldn't reason* …

Symbols: In fan language an open fan may mean *Wait for me*, a fly is a symbol of sin, a fir tree is a symbol of bravery, courage, fidelity and immortality …

(Courtesy of Galina Korneva and Tatiana Cheboksarova)

Palisander (Rosewood) – Hard dark, black-streaked wood from Brazil



Palisander Cigarette Case with Empress Elizabeth Petrovna of Russia (1741-1762) Coin

Bogdanov Cigarettes with an Advertisement for the Popular Russian Brand of Cigarettes (Right Photo, Wikipedia)

Holly Wood – Used in presentation cases, frame and casemaker – Simon & Matilda Käki

Fabergé Cases from the McFerrin Collection

1913

Ice Crystal Pendant in a Holly Wood Presentation Case

1900-1914

1915-1918

Selection of Lining Stamps in Fabergé Cases (*Fabergé Research Newsletter*, Spring 2011)

What kind of wood is it?

Decorated Fabergé Hardwood Guards

Oscar Pihl OP, Moscow Workmaster, late 1880's

(Further Reading: McCarthy, Kieran. "Luxury in Wood: Forgotten Fabergé," *Antique Dealer and Collectors Guide*, May/June 2004, 40-2)

Tortoise Shell

Shell of the Hawksbill Sea Turtle

(Wikipedia)

Lorgnette

Lace Fan with Tortoise Shell Guards

Fabergé Clasp Opening Down (Sotheby's London)

Sea Shells – Cameo carving began in the 15th – 16th centuries, replacing hardstones

Sea Shell Cameo Brooch

Edwardian Woman Wearing a Cameo on a High Lace Collar (Wikipedia)

Mother of Pearl/Pearl

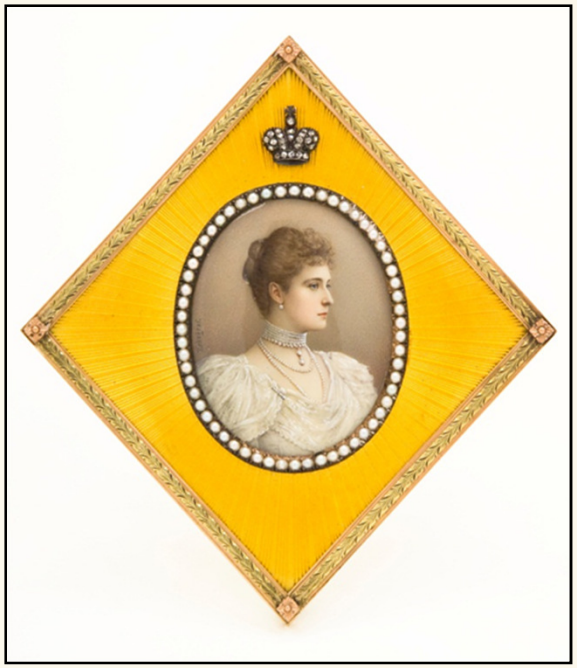
Empress Marie Feodorovna, 1880

(Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, Russia)

Fêtes galante Fan with Mother of Pearl Sticks

Mother of Pearl Cigarette Case, Monogram *WA* for Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich (1847-1909), Brother of Emperor Alexander III (Private Collection, Photograph - Sotheby's London)

Seed Pearl [China, India, Japan]

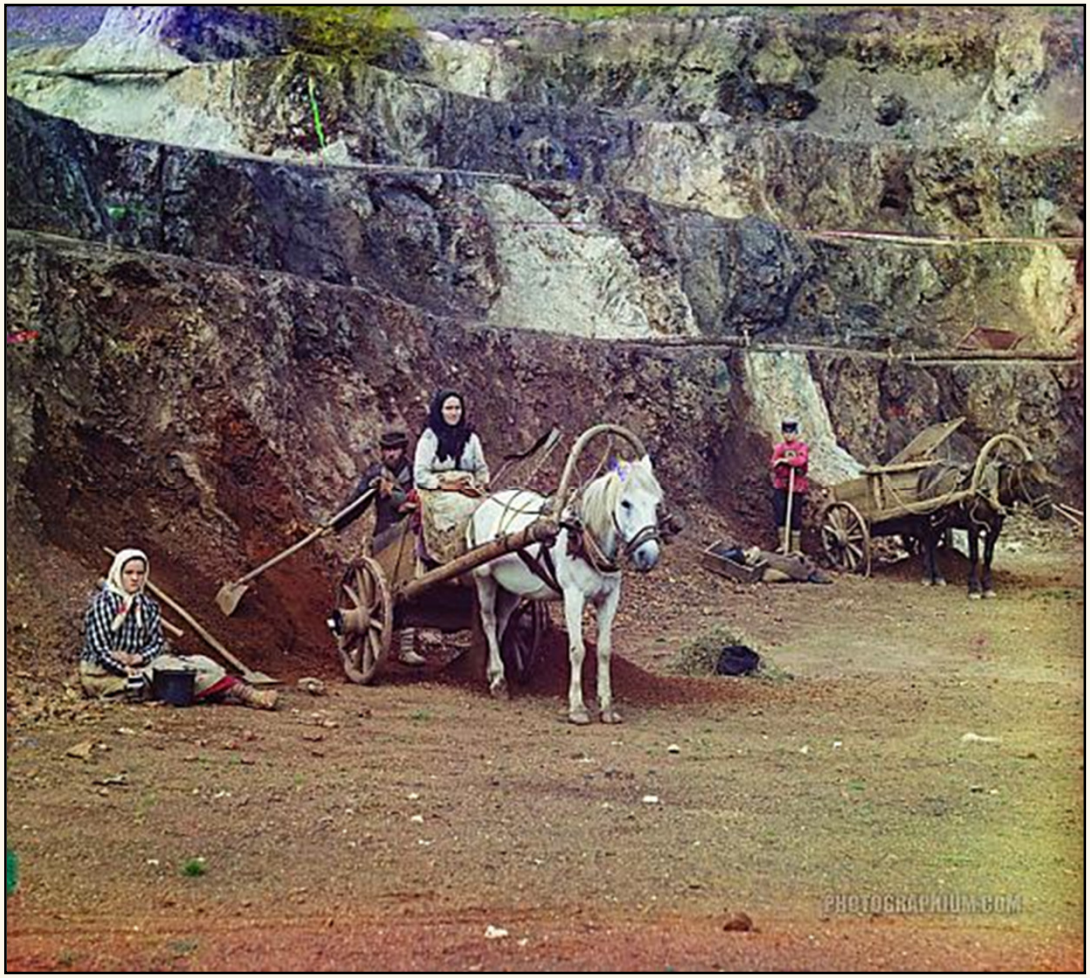


Imperial Presentation Frame with
Johannes Zehngraf Miniature of
Empress Alexandra (Height 3¼”)

Closure Detail
Nobel Ice Egg

II. Gems and Minerals Mined from the Earth

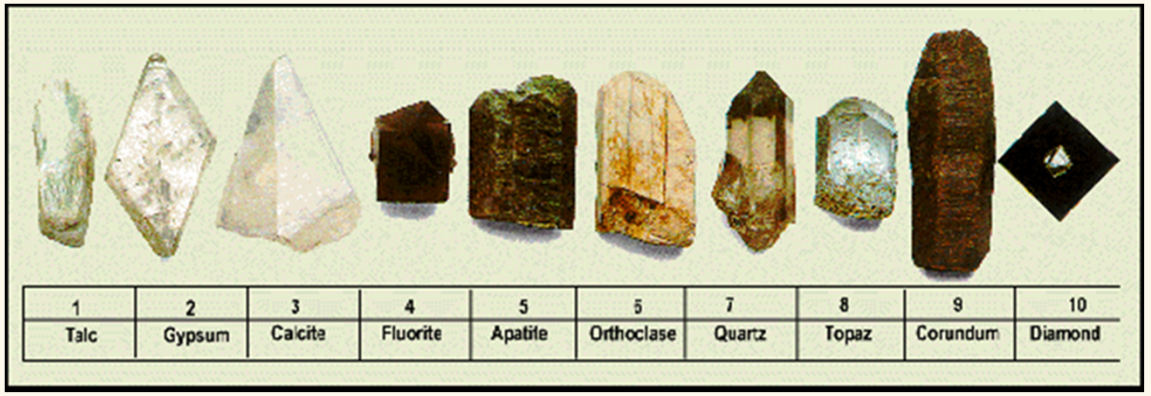
Geographic Mining Locations and Karelian Birch Forests (Wikipedia)



Mining in the Ural Mountains, 1910

Photograph by Sergey Prokudin-Gorsky (Wikipedia)

Mohs Scale of Hardness characterizes the scratch resistance of various minerals through the ability of a harder material to scratch a softer material. [Legend: Average Range Values from the Mohs Scale, Geographic Mining Locations]



GOLD [2.5 Ural, Caucasus, and Altai Mountains in Russia, Siberia]

Multi-colored golds – alloying of gold with other metals to change the natural yellow color:

- Green = 75 parts of pure gold + 25 parts of silver
- Red/rose = 75 + 25 copper
- White = platinum, palladium, nickel, silver, chromium, and zinc are used to "bleach" gold white
- Yellow = gold, copper, and silver, often 80 gold/20 copper/silver

(Lowes and McCanless, *Fabergé Eggs: A Retrospective Encyclopedia*, 2001, 275)

Fire Screen Frame in the Louis XVI Style (ca. 1910)

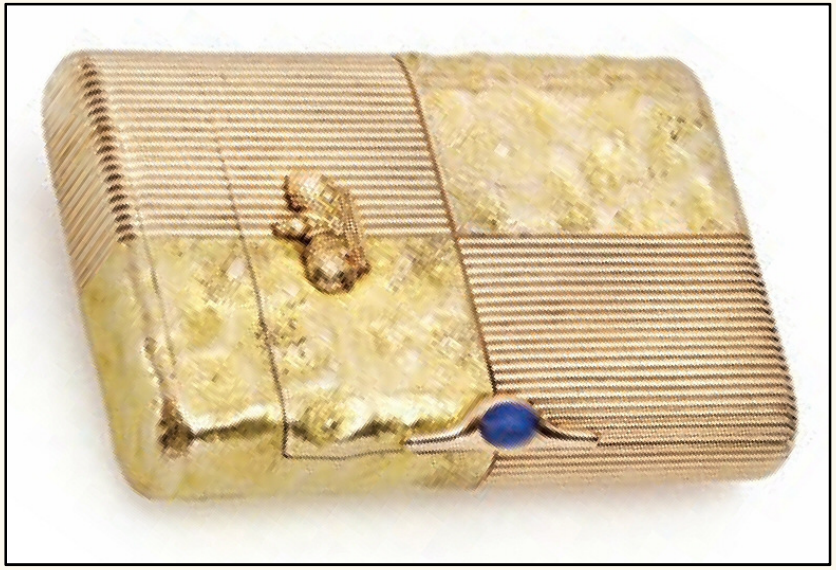
Photographs of Nicholas II (1896) and Alexandra Feodorovna (1906)

Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna in Court Dress, 1906 Opening Ceremony - First Duma in St. George's Hall, Winter Palace, St. Petersburg, Photograph by Karl Bulla

Self Portrait of Karl Bulla (1855 or 1853-1929), before 1917 (Wikipedia)

Gold Nugget, Houston Museum of Natural Science

(McCanless)



Imperial Presentation Case with “Samorodok“

(Gold as it is born), 56 standard (14 ct.)

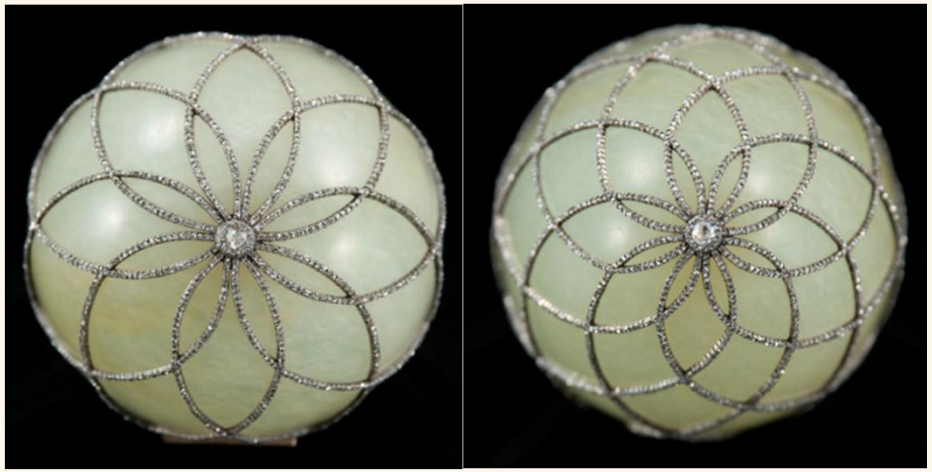
SILVER [2.5 Ural, Caucasus, and Altai Mountains in Russia, Siberia]

Chasing and Repoussé – Jeweler's technique of adding intricate details to metals by working the front (chasing/drive out) and the reverse of an object (repoussé/push up) with very fine tools.

Silver Red Cross Box (pre-1912)

Widow's Mark for Anna Ringe (1832-1912), Widow of Independent Workmaster Theodor Ringe (1824-1882)

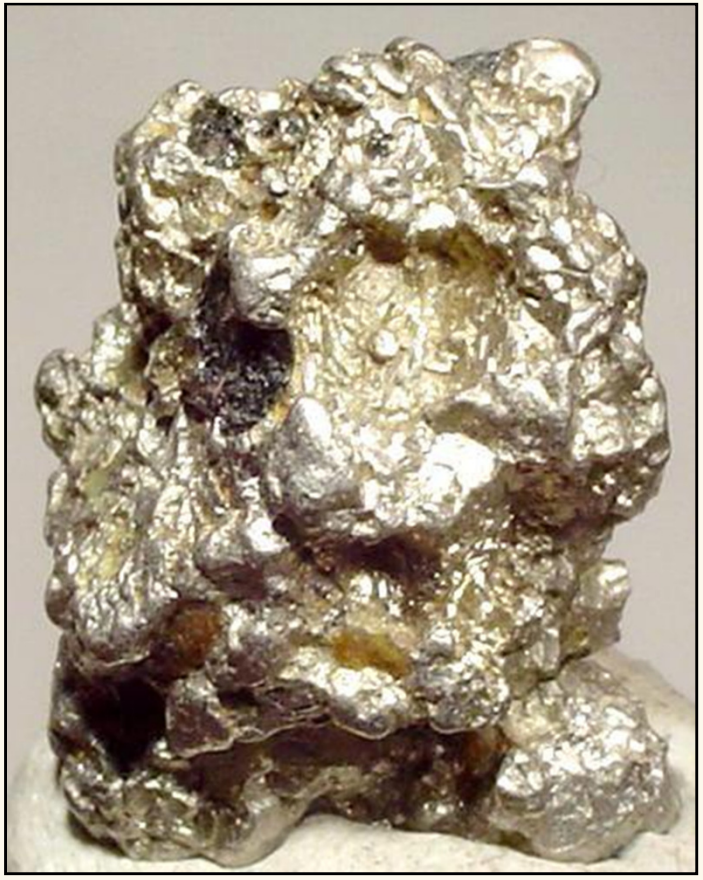
BOWENITE [3 Ural Mountains in Russia, Siberia, Afghanistan, China, USA] often mistaken for jadeite or nephrite. Named after G.T. Bowen, an American mineralogist, who identified the mineral as part of the serpentine family.



1892 Diamond Trellis Egg,
Gift to Marie Feodorovana
from Emperor Alexander III

MOTHER OF PEARL/PEARL [3.5, organic material discussed above, pearl is the birthstone for June]

PLATINUM [4 Ural Mountains in Russia]



Platinum: 10 Tons of Ore + ca. 5 Months of Labor = 1 Ounce of Pure Platinum

(Wikipedia)

Ice Crystal Pendant and Sketch from Holmström's Design Albums

Wedding Present to Andriette "Andri" Nobel from Dr. Emanuel Nobel in 1913 (Photograph Wartski, London)

Snowflake Designer Alma Pihl (1888-1976)

(Wikipedia)

Illustrious Client, Dr. Emanuel Nobel (1859-1932)

(Wikipedia)

(New Historical Information: “Snowflakes from Russia” by Dr. Ulla Tillander-Godenhielm in *From a Snowflake to an Iceberg: The McFerrin Collection*, 2013)

NEPHRITE [5 Ural and Altai Mountains in Russia, Siberia, China], the most widely used semi-precious stone by the House of Fabergé illustrates *Carving*, *Polishing*, and *Engraving* techniques.

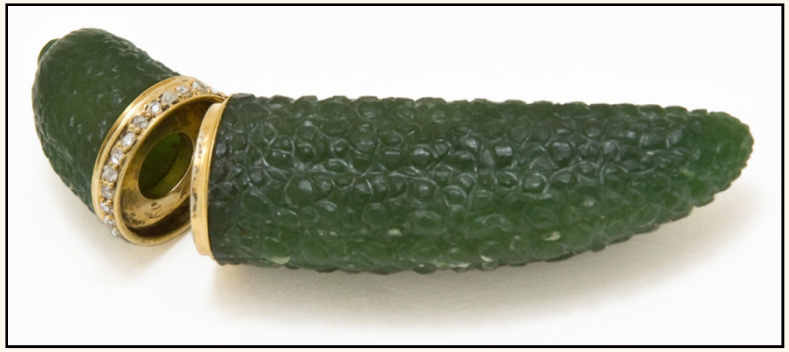
Nephrite Boulder (Wikipedia)

Nephrite Elephant

Cigarette Case with a Diamond Thumb Push

Bell Push with Scratched Inventory Number 9252, Decoration Similar to the Apple Blossom Egg

1901 Apple Blossom Egg Detail and
2011 Postage Stamp Honoring Adulf Peter Goop's Gift to the Fürstentum Liechtenstein



Nephrite Scent Bottle
Estate of King George of the Hellenes

OBSIDIAN [5 Caucasus and Altai Mountains in Russia, Siberia, Afghanistan] is natural volcanic glass.

Obsidian Seal on Rock Crystal Floe

Policeman (Gorodovoi) in Obsidian Sold for Over $1.5 Million in 2005

(Right Photograph: *Fabergé at Wartski: The Famous Group of Ten Russian Figures Composed of Carved Stones of Colour Designed by Carl Fabergé*, 1973, No. 10)

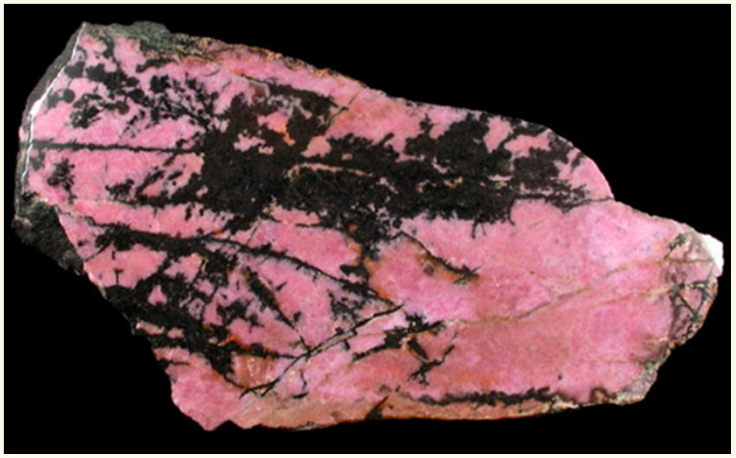
LAPIS LAZULI [5.5 Ural and Altai Mountains in Russia, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan]

Lapis Lazuli Coachman (Izvoschik) with Long Robe (Wartski, London)

Model (Wikipedia)

Lapis Lazuli Hand Seal with Monogrammed *A*, Scratched Inventory Number 4415

RHODONITE [6 Ural Mountains in Russia, Siberia] also known in Russia as ‘orletz’, the name comes from the Greek word *rhodo* meaning pink, state gem of Russia in 1913.



Natural Rhodonite (Wikipedia)

- Frost-Mounted rhodonite card (or cigarette) case with French inscription, *L’ámitie vous l’óffre* (Friendship offers you this) based on a Wigström design sketch, production number 12581, completed on October 28, 1911.
- The case has a St. Petersburg inventory number of 21771, purchased by Lady Arthur Paget in London on November 20, 1912, for £68.

Owners thru the ages:

- Lady Arthur Paget (Mary Fiske Stevens (b. 1853-1919), known as Minnie, the daughter of a wealthy Boston hotelier, was one of Fabergé's first patrons in London. She arranged an exhibition of his wares at a bazaar held at Albert Hall on June 21-23, 1904.
- Lansdell K. Christie (1903-1965), mining industrialist, philanthropist, and collector of Fabergé
- Artie and Dorothy McFerrin in 2012

QUARTZ and its varieties [7 Russia, world-wide] are the world's most abundant minerals in a rainbow of colors, and are the basic materials for the glass and ceramic industries.

Faceting – Fashions a stone by cutting its surface into a number of flat faces, or facets.

Amethyst [Ural and Altai Mountains in Russia, Siberia, South America, Africa, birthstone for February]

Amethyst Geode

Houston Museum of Natural Science (McCanless)

Faceted Amethyst Mounted in a Brooch

Rock Crystal [Russia, Brazil, Switzerland]

Fabergé Pleurant in Rock Crystal, Rhodonite, and Nephrite (McFerrin Collection, A La Vieille Russie, New York)

Pleurant (Mourner) Sculpted by Jean De Cambrai for the Tomb of Jean duc de Berry, Early 15th Century (Wikipedia)

Lilies of the Valley Stem
in Rock Crystal Vase

Rock Crystal Stamp Box

Smoky Quartz [Ural Mountains in Russia, Brazil, India, USA]

Smoky Quartz Scent Bottle

(Size: 1½” x 1”)

Smoky Quartz Shell Bonbonnière

Gem and Mineral Handles in the McFerrin Collection:

- "*… parasols and walking-sticks carried by Russian ladies and gentlemen of discrimination were generally topped by one of the exquisite conceits from Fabergé's*." (A. Kenneth Snowman, Wartski, London)

- Defined by the width of the mount - parasols usually have very fine stems since they were not required to take the weight of the owner, however, canes were. (Geoffrey Munn, Wartski, London)

Parasol Handles

(under ½" diameter at the mount)

Smoky Quartz

Nephrite

Enamel

Bowenite

Cane or Walking Stick Handles

(more than ½” diameter at the mount)

Citrine

Bowenite

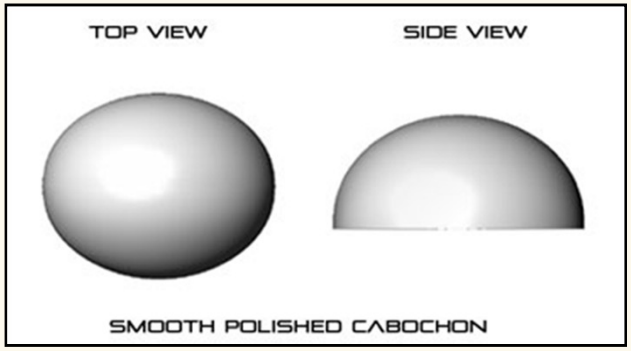
Agate

Bowenite and Enamel

Bowenite and Rock Crystal

CHALCEDONY [7 Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, India, Iran, Europe, Scandinavia]

Cabochon-cut – Unfaceted gem cut and polished to a smooth domed upper surface, often used as a thumb push on Fabergé's pieces.



Dyed Chalcedony Pin

Cabochon Chalcedony Brooch

Ring Box with Cabochon Moonstone Top

Cigarette Case, Cabochon Ruby Thumb Push (Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna Collection)

Agate [Ural and Altai Mountains in Russia, Brazil, Germany, China, India, USA]

Agate Bonbonnière Egg, French Inscription

I like to be loved as I love when I love

(Lower Photograph: Wartski, London)

Van Pelt Agate Chair on View

Houston Museum of Natural Science (McCanless)

Brown Agate Bonbonnière with Empress Elizabeth Petrovna Coin (1756)

Moss agate with inclusions resembling tree branches, seaweed, and ferns.

Cigarette Case Side in Moss Agate
Bordered by Rose-cut Diamonds

Dendritic designs are painted onto enamel to emulate moss agate

Triangular Clock with Dendritic Design Purchased
by Nicholas II and Alexandra Feodorovna in 1901 for 215 rubles.

Enameling – powdered glass with metal oxides → metal (gold/silver) → fired at 600-800° Celsius (1300° Fahrenheit) = hard glossy finish in rainbow colors

Varieties:

Opalescent (rich, milky appearance)

Opaque (so dense light cannot penetrate)

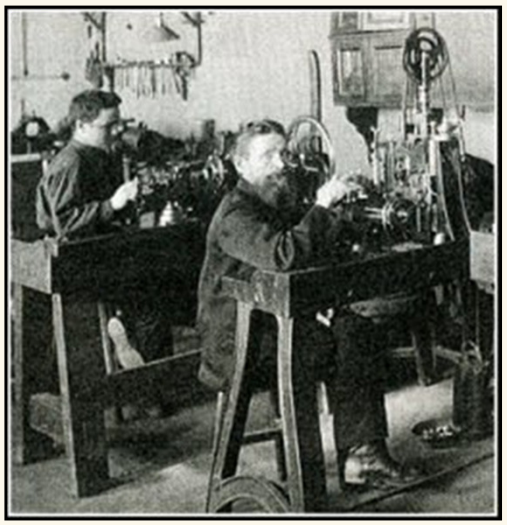
Translucent (allows light to shine through the new material, 600° best results)

Enamel Firing Furnace (Wartski, London)

Moiré-Patterned Cigarette Case

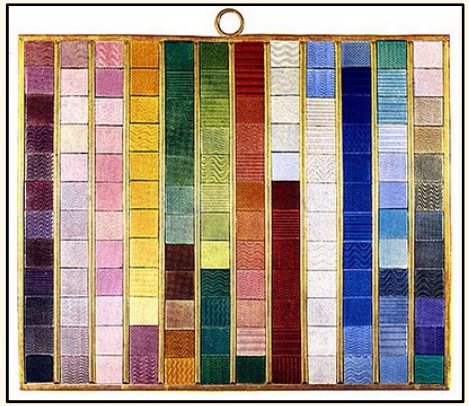
Guilloché – Engraving of repetitive patterns on the surface of a metal → firing process of several layers = translucent enamel

Patterns: *Moiré* (water-like pattern), sun-rays, and swag pattern

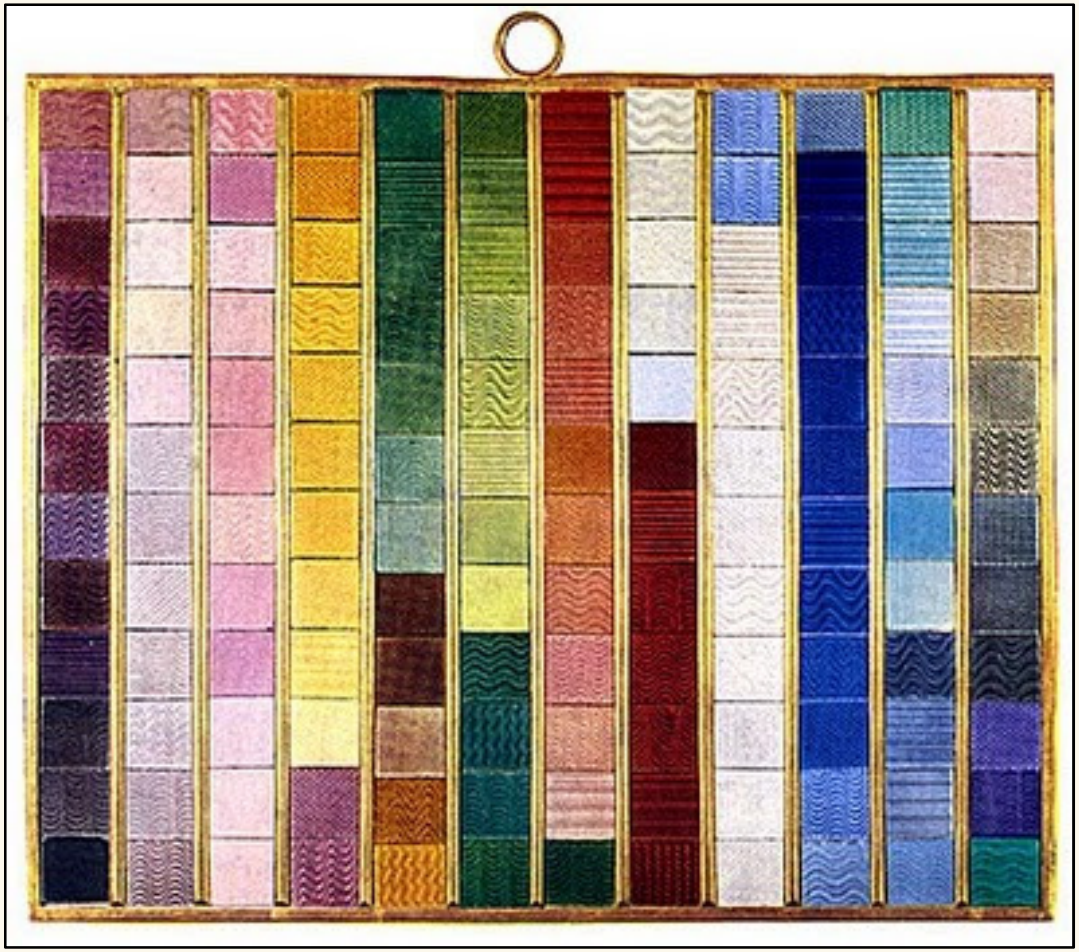


Fabergé's Guilloché Workshop

Guilloché before Enameling (Courtesy of the Artist, Lawrence Heyda)



Palette with 144 Fabergé Enamel Colors (Wikipedia)



Rococco-style Cigarette Case (Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna Collection)

Fan Box with Alexandra Feodorovna Monogram (Provenance: Safra Collection)

Cloisonné – Wires are soldered onto a metal surface, forming cells (cloisonnes), filled with enamel to create a decorative poly-chrome pattern.

Cigarette Case by Feodor Rückert
in the Pan-Slavic Style

Jasper and its varieties [Ural Mountain in Russia, Kazakhstan, Crimea, Ukraine]

Shell-shaped Jasper Box

Varya Panina in
Jasper Varieties
(A La Vieille
Russie, New York)

Purpurine (man-made, a lost art) is a heavy, deep red, vitreous compound produced by crystallizing lead chromate in a glass matrix.

Purpurine Charka, Gift from Alexander III to Queen Olga of Greece on the Occasion of His Coronation in 1883

Emperor Alexander III Portrait by A. N. Shilder (Wikipedia)

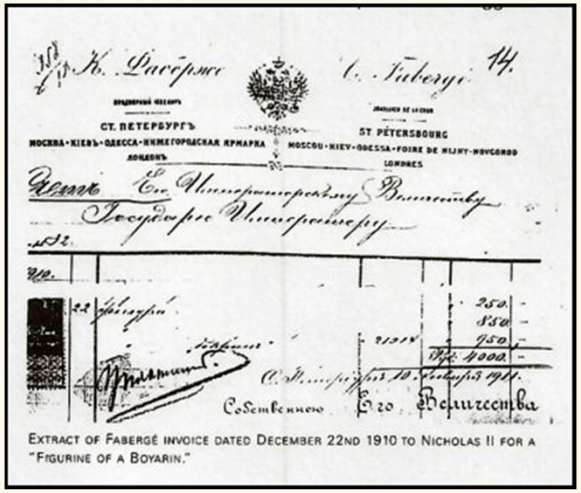
Queen Olga of Greece (Wikipedia)

Boyar – Nobleman

1910 – 950 r.

2005 – ca. $2 million

(Wartski, London)



Extract of Fabergé invoice dated December 22nd 1910 to Nicholas II for a "Figurine of a Boyarin."

Boyar Invoice to Nicholas II

(Sotheby's New York)

Dancing Mujik – Peasant

1910 – 850 r.

(Forbes Magazine Collection, New York)

AQUAMARINE [8 Ural and Altai Mountains in Russia, Siberia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Brazil, Africa, India, birthstone for March]

Aquamarine Necklace

SAPPHIRE [9 Ural Mountains in Russia, Burma, China, India, Thailand, birthstone for September]

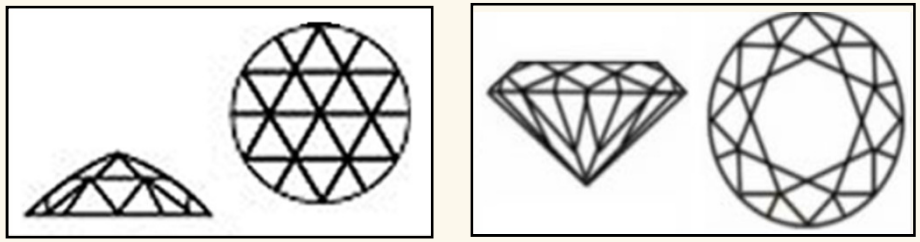
Multi-colored Sapphire Necklace

DIAMOND [10 Ural and Caucasus Mountains in Russia, Siberia, India, Africa, birthstone for April]

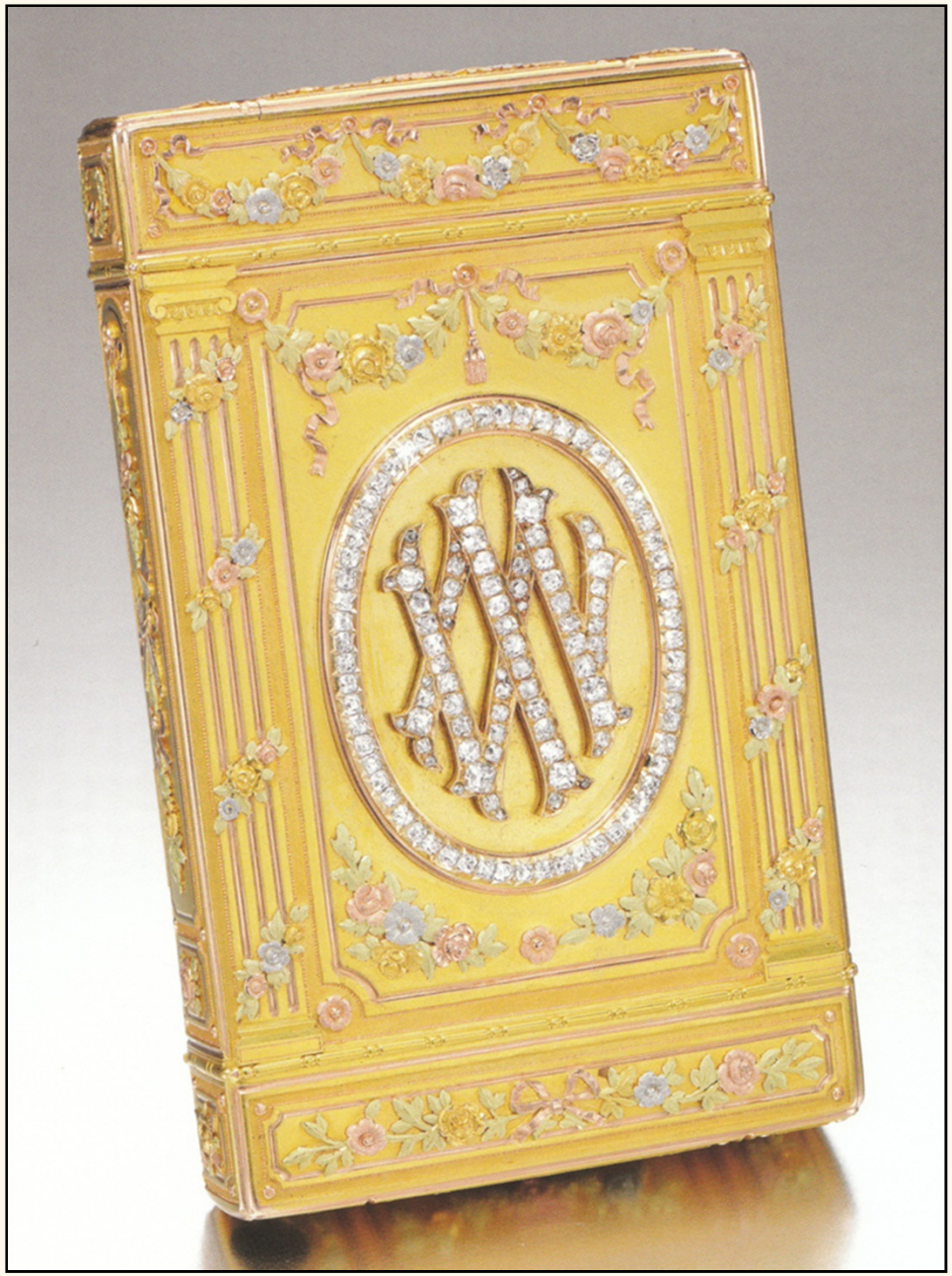
Graded by the four C's:

- Color
- Cut
- Clarity
- Carat (weight)

Two types of faceted diamonds from the Fabergé era:



Rose-cut Diamonds and Brilliant-Cut Diamonds



25th Anniversary Cigarette Case and Pendant

(Provenance and Miniatures:

Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich (1847-1909) and

Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna (1854-1920))

“Empress Josephine” Tiara

Fabergé: A Brilliant Vision

“Empress Josephine” Tiara

The Zenith of the Russian Art of Hardstone Carving –

Russian Folkloristic Hardstone Figures (Wartski, London)

Compilers: Christel McCanless, Annemiek Wintraecken, and Tim Adams have a research study underway on 50 rarely seen Russian folkloristic hardstone figures made by the Fabergé firm after 1908, and eagerly collected by Emperor Nicholas II. We enjoy working as a team located on the two coasts of the United States and in The Netherlands! Contact: christel@fabergéresearch.com

Our thanks to:

- **Artie and Dorothy McFerrin for allowing us to study their collection**
- **Carlton and Martha Els, C&M Photographers**
- **Kimberly Breiland, 22 Graphics, Inc.**
- **Lisa Rebori, Amy Potts and Daniel Burch, Houston Museum of Natural Science**
- **The organizations credited individually who shared their images, and Inda Immega and Jill Moffitt, who encouraged us to learn about their gem and mineral passions.**