

Fabergé Smoking Accessories: Materials and Techniques of an Art Form

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Unless otherwise noted all objects discussed in this study are courtesy of the McFerrin Collection on view at the Houston Museum of Natural Science.

All metalsmithing techniques used by Fabergé craftsmen and illustrated in this study (except those marked with an *) will be demonstrated by members of the Houston Museum of Natural Science Volunteer Guild in the afternoon symposium session.

Study Summary:

- The Artie and Dorothy McFerrin Collection containing over 100 smoking accessories made by the Fabergé firm are on loan to the Houston Museum of Natural Science in Texas.
- This study takes a closer look at a selection of cigarette and cigar cases, lighters (both table models and for personal use), and vesta or match cases. Tinder cords were used to light cigarettes and cigars before cigarette lighters became popular. Snuffboxes, usually Imperial presentation pieces, are not included.
- Materials and techniques of two major St. Petersburg studios of the Fabergé firm - Mikhail Perkhin (active from 1886-1903), and Henrik Wigström (active from 1903-1917), are discussed.
- Historical connections for a few accessories are highlighted.


Eye Witness Account from the memoir of Jalmari Haikonen, journeyman engraver in the Henrik Wigström workshop from 1915 until the workshop closed three years later:


“... ten men were concentrated on producing nothing but cigarette cases. Different models and shapes, most of them in 56 *zolotniks* (the equivalent of 14-carat gold), some in 72 (18-carat gold), some in multi-colored gold. Some were engraved by hand, others engine-turned. At times there were a good 40 cases waiting in our engravers' line. One man did the *guilloche* work, we engravers repaired and corrected the traces of the machines. The polishers gave the

cases a final rub.” (Tillander-Godenhielm, *et al.*, *Golden Years of Fabergé: Drawings and Objects from the Wigström Workshop*, 2000, 33-34)


Workmaster Marks in St. Petersburg:

AG Andrei Gorianov/Gur'ianov (active 1903-1917)


AH  August Holmström (active 1857-1903), August's son, Albert Holmström, continued using his father's mark (active 1903-1917). The 1890 Empress Josephine Tiara and the 1892 Diamond Trellis Egg in the McFerrin Collection are from this workshop.

A*H  August Hollming (active 1880-1913), August's son, Väinö Hollming, continued using his father's mark (active 1913-1916).

AN  Antti Nevalainen (active 1885-1917)

BA  Viktor Aarne (active 1891-1904)


BC Vasilii Feodorovich Soloviev/Solov'ev (active 1894-1917)

CB  Carl Blank (active 1882-1909), head workmaster for the jeweler Carl Hahn, later his partner, independent after 1911.

GN  Gabriel Nykänen (active 1889-1917)

I.P.  Julius Alexander Rappoport (active 1883-1908), succeeded by the First Artel.

MP  Mikhail Perkhin, second senior Fabergé workmaster (active 1886-1903)

H.W.  Henrik Wigström (active 1903-1917) inherited the Perkhin workshop after the death of his friend, and became the third and last senior workmaster responsible for most of the Imperial Easter eggs from 1904-1917.

Ф.Р. Feodor Ivanovich Rückert (active 1887-1917), produced cloisonné enamel objects as a supplier to the Moscow Fabergé branch from 1887. He was also the proprietor of a workshop and a silver factory in Moscow from 1910-1917. (More details, John Atzbach's essay *in* McFerrin, *From a Snowflake to an Iceberg*, 2013, 274-275)

Sources consulted: Lowes and McCanless, [Fabergé Eggs: A Retrospective Encyclopedia](#), 2001, 175-245, and Workmasters in [Fabergé Research Site](#). Tillander-Godenhielm, *Jewels from Imperial St. Petersburg*, 2012, 290-292.

Materials and Techniques:

Gold

- *Samorodok*. Gold and silver is heated close to its melting point, rapidly cooled down which results in a rough nugget or molten-lava look.
- *Hammered*. Texture is created by pounding the gold with a small hammer or blunt tool to make indentations across the surface.
- *Four-color**. An 18th century technique of alloying gold with other metals to change its natural yellow color. When it is alloyed (mixed) with copper, red or rose gold is created. Silver creates green gold, while a nickel, palladium or zinc mixtures produces white gold. (More details, Lowes and McCanless, [Fabergé Eggs: A Retrospective Encyclopedia](#), 2001, 275)

Gold - Silver

- *Reeding*. Ornamentation made up of a set of parallel grooves, such as those found on the edge of a coin, and often creating semi-circular "reeds".
- *Repoussé*. A technique of working sheets of metal from the underneath side with punches to raise a pattern which stands in relief on the top. Both sides show the beauty of the scene depicted.
- *Chasing* is carving a design into metal from the front using a tool with a rounded end so that the pattern is indented into the surface, often used along with engraving.
- *Embossing* creates a raised design in metalwork by using a die. A sheet of metal is placed between a positive (convex) and negative (concave) mold or die, then under pressure the design is imprinted into the metal sheet. Used in Fabergé's war production in silver, copper and brass after workers had been called to the front, and materials were hard to get.

Hand and Machine Engraving:

- *Hand engraving* is accomplished by using engraving tools which allow for a deeper cut into the metal and gives the craftsman room for creative interpretation of designs.

- *Machine engraving*: A pantograph machine assists in engraving by copying signatures and intricate designs. An engine turning machine or lathe is used for precise and identical repetition of lines and patterns.

Enameling: A vitreous mixture, usually lead-soda or lead-potash glass, fired at particularly high temperatures to a metal surface. Enamel colors are metallic oxides mixed with finely powdered glass. The actual color develops in the kiln. Enamel colors were originally opaque, but the transparent enamel so favored by Fabergé was developed in the 17th century. No one before or since has managed to match the standards of enameling or the range of colors achieved by the workshops of the House of Fabergé. Types of enamel favored by Fabergé included:

- *Opalescent*. A semi-opaque enamel with a rich, milky appearance achieved by reducing the amount of insoluble materials.
- *Opaque*. An enamel of a density through which light cannot pass. Insoluble materials are added to achieve this effect. Opaque enamel was used by the House of Fabergé largely for *champlevé* and *cloisonné* work.
- *Translucent*. A luminous, semi-transparent, colored enamel which allows light through to the base metal. It requires high-temperature firing of individual layers, a technique perfected for Fabergé in the Petrov enameling workshop.

Enameling Techniques

- *Guilloché*. A pattern engraved into a metal surface by means of engine-turning. Fabergé had the latest machinery, lathe-like machines called *tours à guilloché*, for such techniques. Some of the patterns - *moiré*, sunburst, zig-zag, wave-like - Fabergé's workmasters achieved are remarkable for their consistency and uniformity.

(More details, <http://www.fabergeresearch.com/newsletter-2009-2010-winter.php>)

- *Champlevé** is literally, a raised field. A technique, dating from Roman times, or perhaps even earlier, in which deep hollows are made in a metal surface, filled with enamel, and polished until the enamel is level with the metal surface. Fabergé was particularly fond of this technique for the borders of picture frames and the like.
- *Cloisonné*. An enameling technique in which the colors are kept in separate compartments by the use of thin metal strips or strands (*cloisons*), which are soldered to the plaque or backing.

The technique was used frequently in the so-called traditional Russian style of workmasters, such as Feodor Rückert. The first known use of cloisonné dates from the 6th century A.D.

Dendritic Design and Moss Agate: A fern or tree-branch design painted onto enamel to emulate moss agate, which is a semi-precious gemstone which is without organic matter and is usually formed from weathered volcanic rock.

Appliqué: Gold and silver is applied on top of an object made from a similar or different material. For example, an Imperial gold eagle or a gold monogram is added to a cigarette case. This study illustrates appliqués on nephrite, wood, and sandstone.

Sources consulted: Lowes and McCanless, [*Fabergé Eggs: A Retrospective Encyclopedia*](#), 2001, 273-279. Timothy Adams, "Select Glossary of Terms" in McFerrin, *From a Snowflake to an Iceberg*, 2013, 288.

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(4) Archival Photographs: Courtesy Wartski, London.

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