

SECTION 4 – ENAMELS

By Tom Barrans

Refer to page 31 for definitions. 4-0 Enamels Assorted. Enamel, not to be confused with paint, is a decorative finish (DF) of glass fired onto metal. In this section, the enamel is the focus. Buttons with metal as the focus with enamel finish or enamel border are appropriate in section 10 (Metal) and/or section 23 (Borders).

The dyes used are metal oxides :

- of selenium (in the absence of lead) for a yellow coloring;
- of uranium to a bright orange color;
- of iron for blue, brown, black;
- of chromium for green and pink;
- from copper to green, red and blue;
- of cobalt for a deep blue and green;
- of manganese for purple;
- the gold metal for a steady red (purple of Cassius).

4-1 Construction assorted. Refers to the basic enameling technique(s) used to create the overall design of the button. Specialized examples of these techniques may be used under the appropriate major class. For example, painted Limoges or pâte go under Émaux peints, assorted.

4-1.1 Basse-taille. Transparent enamel is applied over base metal that has been chased, engraved or engine-turned so the design in the metal is visible.



Another term used under the Basse-taille class is guilloche (Gee-osh). The name comes from the French inventor Guillot who designed a machine which would create geometric grooves in metal. These patterns then became known as guilloche as well as the enamel work done by Faberge.

4-1.2 Champlevé. The metal base is grooved or hollowed out with a die or stamp to accept the enamel. The stamping may be seen on the back of thinner buttons. The surface designs are never completely coated with enamel because the framework remains part of the finished design. Opaque and transparent enamels are both used, often together. Surfaces under transparent colors are sometimes stamped to resemble basse-taille.

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The lady in the garden (center button) and the floral on the end are examples of champlévé borders.

4-1.3 Cloisonné. Thin metal bands or wires of uniform thickness are placed onto the metal surface of the button to create separate compartments (cloisons), which are filled with enamel, fired and polished.



4-1.4 Émaux peints assorted. Enamel is applied to the surface of the button to form a base upon which the design is painted with fine brushes and then fired. **En grisaille. Div. I.** Multiple layers of white enamel are applied to a base of dark enamel (usually black but sometimes *red*, blue, green or tan). As coats of enamel are added and fired, gray tones are created that act as shadows and give a three dimensional, almost sculpted effect.



4-1.4.1 Monochrome. Painted design utilizing shades of a single color and white. These buttons appear shaded but are less dimensional than En grisaille.

4-1.4.2 Polychrome. A painted design incorporating more than two colors.

4-1.5 Foil Techniques. **Foil enclosures** consist of pieces of metallic foil that are laid in place and covered by transparent enamel. **Pailions** are small precisely cut, shaped, (often realistic) foil enclosures. They may occur singly, or in multiples.



4-1.6 Gin-bari/*gin-jippo*. A style of Japanese cloisonné which uses lightly tinted clear enamel over a very thin sheet of detailed silver (*gin-bari*) or over a thicker sheet of silver (*gin-jippo*). The wires separating the design elements may be present, or they may have been dissolved or hidden to create wireless *gin-bari*.

4-1.7 Plique-a-jour. A design made of soldered wires or openwork metal filled with transparent, translucent or opaque enamel that is not backed by metal. It resembles stained glass.



4-2 Decorative finishes (DF) assorted

4-2.1 Enamel encrustations. Div. I as An area of enamel built up from the surface. Div. I encrustations often imitate small gemstones in a border effect, being applied directly to the metal portion of the button.



Div I. Pierreries. A specific form of encrustation built up on foil pailions embedded in the surface enamel, resembling precious stones/gems (transparent or otherwise).



4-2.2 Matte finish. The enamel is immersed in acid resulting in a dull, rather than a glossy, finish.

4-2.3 Transfer. Transfer designs or photographic processes are applied to a smooth enamel surface.

4-3 Other Material Embellishment (OME) assorted

4-3.1 Metal

4-3.2 Rhinestones/paste



4-4 Openwork. Openings are surrounded by enamel. An enamel button with a border that is pierced, but not enameled, does not qualify here.

4-5 Shapes

4-6 Unlisted. Includes: 1) background (the enamel is used exclusively as a background to the main design), 2) combined techniques, 3) mounted in metal, 4) **plaquettes** (an enameled metal piece of any shape mounted in/on metal), etc.



Mickey and Minnie were done by Motiwalla.



These three would get disqualified in competition for not being enamel buttons. The background of the eagle is a glass disk, the center button is mounted on shell and the enamel border is a great border button but not an enamel button.