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## Gertrude Stein's Brooches

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A deep orange-red brooch worn by Gertrude Stein produces a rare spot of color in the predominantly brown portrait that Pablo Picasso painted of her not long after the two met, probably in late 1905 or 1906 (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> The oval brooch, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (Figure 2), is made of a gently domed coral set within a silver border decorated with a design of alternating round and square shapes. Picasso omitted the silver setting, painting instead a darker orange border. In the painting, the brooch clasps together the two sides of a white scarf that Stein wore in a number of photographs over the years.<sup>2</sup> As countless images of women from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries attest, wearing a brooch at one's neck was much in vogue. Stein, however, wore no other jewelry, shunning rings, earrings, and other decorative ornaments.

Stein claimed that her brooch was the first thing her life-long partner, Alice B. Toklas, noticed when they were introduced to each other in Paris in 1907. She included Toklas's supposed description of their meeting in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (written by Stein herself): "There I went to see Mrs. [Michael] Stein who had in the meantime returned to Paris, and there at her house I met Gertrude Stein. I was impressed by the coral brooch she wore and by her voice."<sup>3</sup> In her own memoirs Toklas included a similar account:

In the room were Mr. and Mrs. [Michael] Stein and Gertrude Stein. It was Gertrude Stein who held my complete attention, as she did for all the many years I knew her until her death, and all these empty ones since then. She was a golden brown presence, burned by the Tuscan sun and with a golden glint in her warm brown hair. She was dressed in a warm brown

corduroy suit. She wore a large round coral brooch and when she talked, very little, or laughed, a good deal, I thought her voice came from this brooch.

When at Stein's invitation Toklas visited her at her studio on rue de Fleurus the next day, Stein "was very different from the day before. . . . She was now a vengeful goddess and I was afraid." By the time she had changed her clothes and was ready to take Toklas for a walk, however, "a smile had broken through the gloom and she laughed again from her brooch."<sup>4</sup>

The coral on the brooch fits tightly within its silver border, which on the reverse (see Figure 2) has lines radiating outward that only roughly match the divisions of square and round shapes on the front side. The silver setting, so clearly handmade, was cast and then finished by hammering. It has been said that the pin was a gift to Gertrude from her brother Leo, who was two years older than she, and that it may have been made either by Leo or by his and Gertrude's older brother, Michael (who was nine years Gertrude's senior).<sup>5</sup> Michael Stein opened a jewelry-making establishment in Paris sometime between 1906 and 1908. But Gertrude clearly owned the brooch long before that, for she is wearing it in two photographs taken in the summer of 1903 (see Figures 3, 4), when she was traveling in Italy with Claribel and Etta Cone, her friends from Baltimore who were to become great art collectors.<sup>6</sup> It is more likely, therefore, that the brooch was made by Leo, with whom she had made several trips to Europe between 1896 and 1903 and into whose studio at 27, rue de Fleurus in Paris she was to move in the fall of 1903.<sup>7</sup> That Leo was the brooch's creator is borne out by the fact that there are no photographs of Gertrude wearing it after she and Leo became estranged. The rift between the siblings had broadened since December 1910, when Toklas also moved into the rue de Fleurus studio; Leo moved out in 1913.<sup>8</sup> In later photographs Gertrude frequently wears instead a round lapis lazuli brooch, much

1. Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881–1973). *Gertrude Stein*, 1905–6. Oil on canvas, 39 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 32 in. (100 x 81.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Gertrude Stein, 1946 (47.106). ©2010 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



2. Leo Stein (American, 1872–1947). Brooch (front and back). Coral and silver, 1 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (3 x 3.8 cm). ©Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge (M.4-1970)



larger and heavier than the coral brooch, that is also now in the Fitzwilliam Museum (Figure 5).<sup>9</sup> The silver border of the round brooch forms a spiral rope pattern that encircles the beautiful pyrite- and calcite-speckled cabochon lapis. The join of silver to stone is not nearly so tight as on the coral brooch. The lapis lazuli brooch might well have been made in the Paris studio owned by Michael Stein (although he was not himself the jeweler, but rather the entrepreneur who put up the money).

The brooches were donated to the Fitzwilliam in 1970 by Mrs. Louise Hayden Taylor, a close friend of both Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas. Louise had met Alice as a girl in Seattle in the 1880s and Gertrude in California in 1899. Later, after they were all expatriates in Paris, the three of them became fast friends.<sup>10</sup> Although they were about the same age, Alice eventually adopted Louise, who then became Alice's heir.<sup>11</sup> This undoubtedly explains how Louise came into possession of the brooches. In 1939 Louise married an Englishman (her second husband) and moved to England, where she lived until her death in Suffolk in 1977. At the time she donated the brooches to the Fitzwilliam, Louise Taylor, clearly a good authority, recorded that Leo had made the coral brooch for Gertrude.



5. Brooch. Lapis lazuli and silver, diam. 1 5/8 in. (4.2 cm). ©Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge (M.5-1970)



3. Claribel Cone, Gertrude Stein, and Etta Cone in Fiesole, Italy, June 26, 1903. Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta Cone Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, Baltimore Museum of Art (CG.12)



4. Gertrude Stein, Etta Cone, and Claribel Cone in Vallombrosa, Italy, July 1903. Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta Cone Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, Baltimore Museum of Art (CG.10)

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## NOTES

1. On the portrait, see, most recently, Tinterow and Stein 2010, pp. 108–15. For a closeup of the brooch in the painting, see *ibid.*, fig. 1, facing p. 3, and for an even closer view, see Autin Graz 1999, p. 75.
2. She wears the scarf, or a similar one, for instance, in a series of photographs Alvin Langdon Coburn took of her at the rue de Fleurus studio in about 1914 (Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; reproduced in Stendhal 1994, pp. 76–78).
3. Stein 1933, p. 5.
4. Toklas 1963, pp. 23–24.
5. Giroud (2007, p. 23, fig. 22) says that the brooch was “a present from Leo and possibly his or Michael’s own creation.” The Fitzwilliam Museum website ([www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/opac/search/cataloguedetail.html?&preref=81968&\\_function\\_=xslt&\\_limit\\_=10](http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/opac/search/cataloguedetail.html?&preref=81968&_function_=xslt&_limit_=10)) reports that when the brooch was accessioned in 1970 it was “said to be ‘by Leo Stein.’ It might have been by her other brother, Michael Stein, who set up a jewellery business in Paris possibly as early as 1906 and [was] certainly operating in 1908 and 1909.”
6. Hirschland and Ramage 2008, pp. 9, 44, figs. 1.3, 3.6.
7. See Scarisbrick 1980, p. 19. She describes it as “the brooch in silver and coral created for Gertrude Stein by her brother Leo, circa 1900.”
8. On the breakup with Leo, see Wineapple 1996, pp. 362–64.
9. The brooch appears, for instance, in a photograph taken by Carl Van Vechten in 1934 (Addison M. Metcalf Collection of Gertrude Steiniana, Denison Library, Scripps College, Claremont, California; reproduced in Stendhal 1994, p. 140). Stein also wore different brooches in other photographs.
10. Stein and Van Vechten 1986, p. 189n2.
11. Robert Graves Resources ([www.robertgraves.org/trust/persons.php?group\\_id=0&p=33&search=](http://www.robertgraves.org/trust/persons.php?group_id=0&p=33&search=)), the website of the St John’s College Robert Graves Trust, a clearinghouse for research on the life and works of the English poet and novelist, lists Louise Redvers Taylor (née Hayden) as “an American and the adopted daughter and heiress of Alice B. Toklas, the companion of Gertrude Stein. She had been formerly Mrs Emmett Addis, and clearly first met Graves and Laura Riding in Mallorca in the 1930’s. By 1948 she was married to Lt Col R. H. Redvers Taylor (1900–1975). Louise Taylor died on 21 July 1977 at a Nursing Home in Suffolk.”

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