Some Seventeenth-Century French Painted Enamel Watchcases

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The watchcases made by French enamels of the seventeenth century include some of the most magnificent examples of the art ever produced. The technique involves coating the various parts of a gold case, including the cover and the center of the dial, with a pure white enamel ground and then applying opaque colored enamels in such a way that the resulting image closely resembles miniature painting on paper, parchment, or ivory.1

The invention of the technique has long been credited to Jean I Toutin (1578–1644) of Châteaudun (and, after 1632, of Paris). The earliest watchcases with this type of enameling probably originated in Blois, a city known for both enameling and watchmaking,2 but Paris, too, was an early and important center of production.3 While the skill of the painters varied, some were capable of exquisite work. An increasing number of sources from which these enamel painters took their designs have been identified, and it now seems safe to say that most if not all were content to reproduce in miniature the work of other artists. Prints were often the medium of transmission, but in some cases it seems that the enamelist must have had direct access either to an original painting or to a colored drawing of it.

One of the painted enamel scenes on a gold watchcase at the Metropolitan Museum depicting Europa and the Bull (Figure 1)4 was recognized a few years ago as a remarkably faithful representation of a painting (Figure 2)5 by the French grande manière artist Simon Vouet (1590–1649). While an engraving of Vouet’s painting was made by his son-in-law Michel Dorigny (1617–1665), the facts that the figures on the cover of the watch are not reversed as are those in the engraving and that the colors of the painting, with the exception of one detail, closely match those of the enamel suggest that the enamel painter either had access to Vouet’s painting or was acquainted with someone who did. This assumption is further sup-

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Figure 1. Watchcase with a scene depicting Europa and the Bull, French (probably Paris), ca. 1645. Painted enamel on gold, diam. 2 1/2 in. (6.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.1413)

Figure 2. Simon Vouet (French, 1590–1649), Europa and the Bull, ca. 1641–42. Oil on canvas, 70 1/4 x 55 3/8 in. (179.1 x 141.6 cm). Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Lugano (photo: Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection)

Figure 3. Back of a watch with a scene depicting the Virgin and Child with an Angel, French (probably Paris), ca. 1645–50. Case of painted enamel on gold; movement signed “Goullons Paris,” diam. 2 1/4 in. (6.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.1557)

Figure 4. Pierre Daret (French, 1605–1678), Virgin and Child with an Angel, dated 1642. Engraving (after the painting in Figure 5), 9 1/4 x 7 in. (24.8 x 17.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1945 (45.97)
The scene on the front of the watch cover, which depicts Joseph Awakened by the Angel (Figure 6), preserves the same orientation of the two figures found in another engraving after a Vouet painting, this one by Michel Dorigny (Figure 7).14 Two other religious scenes, the Rest on the Flight into Egypt and a Virgin and Child with Saint John the Baptist, are represented on the interior of the case and on the cover of the watch, respectively. The origin of the composition of the Rest on the Flight into Egypt so far remains unidentified, but the Virgin and Child with Saint John will be discussed later in connection with a scene on another watch in the Museum’s collection.

Initially, the two infants enameled on the center of the dial of the watch (Figure 8) seemed strangely incongruous with the religious nature of the other scenes, but an etching of the Infant Saint John the Baptist Embracing the Christ Child (Figure 9) helps to explain their significance. The etching, by the Parisian artist Laurent de La Hyre (1606–1656)15—who, in 1648, became one of the founding members

Figure 5. Simon Vouet (French, 1590-1649). Virgin and Child with an Angel, ca. 1641-42. Oil on canvas, 32⅝ x 25⅝ in. (81.5 x 64.5 cm). Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen (photo: Martine Seyve, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen)

Figure 6. Front cover of the watch in Figure 3, with a scene depicting Joseph Awakened by the Angel

Figure 7. Michel Dorigny (French, 1617-1665). Joseph Awakened by the Angel, dated 1640. Engraving (after a lost painting by Simon Vouet), 12⅝ x 8 in. (31.1 x 20.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1945 (45.97)
Figure 8. Watch in Figure 3, with the cover open to show the center of the dial with a scene of the Infant Saint John the Baptist Embracing the Christ Child.


Figure 10. Watch with a scene depicting the Virgin and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist, French (Paris or Blois), ca. 1645–50. Case of painted enamel on gold; movement signed "Goullons AParis," diam. 2¼ in. (5.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.1627).

Figure 11. Watch in Figure 10, with a scene on the back of the case depicting the Holy Family with the Infant Saint John the Baptist. See also Colorplate 4, right.
of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture—is far from an exact prototype of the enamel, but a comparable print must have provided the inspiration. The movement of the watch, about which more will be said, is typical for the second quarter of the seventeenth century.

Another watch in the Metropolitan Museum’s collection with a movement by the same watchmaker has an enameled gold case depicting the Virgin and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist (Figure 10) on the cover and the Holy Family with the Infant Saint John the Baptist (Figure 11 and Colorplate 4, right) on the back. The level of artistry of these two enamels is comparable with that of the two enamels derived from the engravings after Vouet just discussed; however, they are quite different in character. The figures
after Vouet's prototypes are painted in glowing flesh tones; they wear clothing of rich vermilion, golden yellow, pale lavender, pale blue, and cornflower blue. The flesh tones of the figures on the second watch are much drier looking; the same basic colors were used for the clothing, with the addition of olive green for the belt and the inside of the sleeve of the Virgin's robe, echoing the color of the fabric of the table cover in the scene of the Holy Family, but these colors, too, are drier than those of the Vouet-inspired watch.

Most immediately noticeable are the large areas of the pure white enamel of the underlying coat left visible in the clouds and in the wool of the sheep in the scene of the Virgin and Child with Saint John (Figure 10), and on the sleeves of the Virgin's robe, the sheep, the pages of the book, and the base of the second column behind Saint Joseph in the scene of the Holy Family (Figure 11). Here, the use of the white enamel ground corresponds with the technique employed by the enameler of the watchcase with the Vouet-inspired scene of Europa and the Bull (Figure 1), but the similarity ends with the handling of the white ground: the figures in the mythological scene are softly modeled in colored enamel using hundreds of tiny dots rather like those in a Pointillist painting. The figures on both sides of the watch with the Virgin and Child with Saint John are hard-edged, in contrast to the reproduction both of Vouet's mythological painting and of his religious scenes.

When compared with religious figures inspired by Vouet, those on this watch display a sweetness of character that is quite unlike the gravity of Vouet's figures. In the scene of the Holy Family with Saint John (Figure 11), a delightfully domestic vignette, Saint Joseph looks up from his book toward the Christ Child astride a lamb being enticed by the handful of flax proffered by the infant Saint John and urged on with a twig wielded by the Child, who is steadied by the Virgin's protective hand. The scene recalls an engraving (Figure 12) by Gilles Rousselet (1610–1686)\(^{17}\) that, in turn, reproduces a painting by another French artist of the generation of Vouet, Jacques Stella (1596–1657), probably the version now in the Musée Thomas Henry in Cherbourg (Figure 13).\(^{18}\) Like Vouet, Stella spent the early years of his career in Italy before returning to France in 1635. As peintre du Roi, he was given the twenty-fifth lodging in the Grande Galerie du Louvre, which he occupied until his death in 1657;\(^{19}\) although less well known than Vouet, he was among the proponents of the French classicizing style that ultimately distinguished the work of the artists who in 1648 founded the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture.

In the enameled Virgin and Child with Saint John (Figure 10), the playful gesture of the Child and the sweetness of the Virgin, as well as their straight noses—which one associates with antique sculpture—strongly suggest their origin in another of Stella's images. In fact, an almost identical figure group exists in an engraving, again by Gilles Rousselet (Figure 14),\(^{20}\) after a painting by Jacques Stella that was published as recently as 1960 but is now not to be found.\(^{21}\) In neither case has the engraver reversed the

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Figure 15. Watchcase in Figure 10, with a scene of a landscape and tower on the interior of the case

Figure 16. Nicolas Cochin (French, 1610–1686). Landscape with a Tower, possibly ca. 1640–45. Engraving, 4 ¾ x 6 ¼ in. (11.5 x 15.6 cm). Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (photo: Bibliothèque Nationale)
images in the Stella paintings, but the engravings and the paintings differ from the miniatures on the watchcase in one very striking way: both the Holy Family with Saint John and the Virgin and Child with Saint John have been given quite different settings. It is tempting to think that the enamel painter dispensed with the relatively dark interiors in favor of light-filled landscapes in order to permit the exposure of large areas of his pristine white enamel ground.22 The style here, however, is largely that of Stella, just as the enamels on the first two watches largely reflect the style of Vouet. This effacement of the enameler’s own artistic personality would seem to be characteristic of the best French enamel painters of the period, making it very difficult to associate individual watchcases with any known enameler except in the extremely few instances in which the watchcases are signed.

The enamel painters of the watchcases discussed thus far achieved a certain unity of style—at least for the enamels on the backs of the cases and on the exteriors of the covers—by utilizing the work of a single artist. Since the work of different artists provided the prototypes for the enameler, the enamels on the insides of the cases and covers are often stylistically unrelated to the exterior enamels. Sometimes the subject is quite unrelated as well. For example, the two religious scenes that were adapted from engravings based on paintings by Jacques Stella or engravings of

Figure 17. Back of a watch with a scene depicting Meleager and Atalanta, French (probably Paris), ca. 1645–50. Case of painted enamel on gold; movement signed “Auguste Bretonneau /Paris,” diam. 2 3/8 in. (5.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.1626)

Figure 18. François Chauveau (French, 1613–1676). Meleager and Atalanta, dated 1643. Etching (after a painting by Laurent de La Hyre), 12 x 15 3/8 in. (30.5 x 39 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1953 (53.600.294)
them are accompanied inside the case by a landscape
with a tower (Figure 15) taken from a print (Figure 16)
by Nicolas Cochin (1610–1686).23

This enamel, which functioned as a particularly
beautiful counter-enamel, would have been visible
whenever the movement, hinged to the top of the
case, was lifted to permit the winding of the main-
spring of the watch; this was achieved by means of a
hollow-barreled key that fit over a post, or square,
which projected through the back plate of the mecha-

nism. As these watches usually kept time for little
more than a day, the enameled scene inside the case
was quite regularly seen by the owner or whoever may
have observed the watch being wound.

While the practice of employing a single artist’s
designs for the exterior of a watchcase was often the
rule, it was far from invariable. The painter of the
case of still another watch in the Metropolitan
Museum’s collection24 chose to unify the exterior of
his watchcase by subject alone, excerpting Meleager
and Atalanta (Figure 17), of Ovid’s Metamorphoses,
from an etching (Figure 18) by François Chauveau
(1613–1676), a pupil of Laurent de La Hyre, after a
presumed-lost painting by La Hyre.25 The cover (Fig-
ure 19) is a highly condensed version of an engraving
(Figure 20) of 1609 from a series illustrating Ovid’s
Metamorphoses by the Italian artist Antonio Tempesta
(1555–1630).26 The enamel painter has shown more

than a little ingenuity in modifying his prototypes to
fit the circular shape of the watchcase, leaving out the
entire left side of La Hyre’s scene as well as the putti
playing at the feet of Atalanta, and, instead, inventing
a putto to fill the empty space behind her right shoul-
der. The figures in the rectangular Tempesta print,
too, have been consolidated quite cleverly to fit the
circle and given greater immediacy than in Tem-
pesta’s energetic representation of the killing of the
Calydonian boar. The enamelist also managed to
blend fairly satisfactorily the very different styles of the
two prints. Still another type of adaptation of an
engraving can be found on the interior of the watch-
case (Figure 21) that reproduces Vouet’s religious
scenes on its exterior (Figure 3). The Virgin and
Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist can be
recognized as having been derived from an engraving,
after Jacques Stella, of the Holy Family with Saint John
(Figure 12)—the same print that was a model for Fig-
ure 11. Here, Saint Joseph has been eliminated from
Stella’s scene and an airy landscape with mountains in
the distance has been substituted for the base of the
column that defines the space inhabited by the Holy

Family with Saint John in Stella’s composition. In all
but the first of these four watchcases, the enamelist
have not hesitated to crop their figures whenever it
was necessary to fit them into the circular format, in
the way that modern photographers crop their prints.
More ingenious are the well-integrated designs of diverse floral specimens that appear on the back of the case (Figure 22) and on the front of the cover (Figure 23 and Colorplate 4, left) of still another watchcase in the Metropolitan Museum’s collection.\(^7\) Individual flowers have been adopted from examples found in a series of thirteen engravings signed “Cochin” and thought to be the work of either Nicolas (1610–1686) or Noël (1622–after 1685). The series was published in Paris in 1645 with the title *Livre nouveau de fleurs tres utile pour l’art d’orfèvrerie, et autres* (New book of flowers [that are] very useful for the art of goldsmiths’ work and other [things]; Figure 24).\(^8\) Several prints from the series provided individual models for two flowers on the bottom of the case and five on the cover. The designs on both the case bottom and cover were arranged so that if a line were drawn through the diameter of the circular case from the loop at the top to a point directly below the loop, but on the opposite edge of the case, that line would pass through the center of three flowers, one painted above another. Four large flowers and several small ones flank those on the central axis of the cover, and six large flowers and a number of smaller ones flank those on the central axis of the back of the case. The peony in the center of the cover as well as the flower at the top right come from one of the engravings (Figure 25). On the back of the case, models for the poppy at the bottom and for the rose on the lower left side were provided by two other prints, while the iris at the top is taken from a fourth Cochin print (Figure 26) and the carnation in the center of the back from a fifth (Figure 27). Whether or not the enamel painter invented the remaining flowers in the design or used

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**Figure 21.** Interior of the watchcase in Figure 3, with a scene of the Virgin and Christ Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist

**Figure 22.** Watchcase, French (Blois or Paris), ca. 1645–50. Painted enamel on gold, diam. 2½ in. (5.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.1583)

**Figure 23.** Front cover of the watchcase in Figure 22. See also Colorplate 4, left

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\(^7\) Whether or not the enamel painter invented the remaining flowers in the design or used...
Figure 24. Nicolas Cochin (French, 1610–1686) or Noël Cochin (French, 1622–after 1685). Title page of the *Livre nouveau de fleurs tres vtil pour l'art d'orfvererie, et autres* (Paris, 1645). Engraving, 3¼ × 4⅞ in. (8.4 × 12 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1953 (53.600.261[1])

Figure 25. Third leaf from the series of engravings in Figure 24. The peony on the right and another flower, second from the right, appear on the cover of the watch in Figures 22 and 23 (53.600.261[3])

Figure 26. Ninth leaf from the series of engravings in Figure 24. The iris on the right appears on the top back of the watchcase in Figure 22 (53.600.261[9])
models from other Cochin engravings, he combined them into an extraordinarily pleasing design.

The painting of the Massacre of the Innocents on the interior of the watchcase in Figure 28 is another example of the skill with which this enamelist took elements from prints and incorporated them into what are presumably his own compositions. In this enamel he has adapted an architectural setting from a print of the same subject (Figure 29) by Jacques Callot (1592–1635) as well as three of Callot’s figural groups: a soldier swinging his sword above his head, at the lower left; a helmeted soldier tearing a child from the arms of its kneeling mother, at the lower center; and a mother attempting to restrain a soldier who is slinging an infant in the air by its foot, at the lower right of the enamel. The origin of the Rest on the Flight into Egypt painted on the interior of the cover has thus far eluded identification.

The colors employed in the enameling of this watchcase are the by-now familiar vermilion, brilliant blues, golden yellow, olive green, and pale manganese purple that contrast with the pristine white ground. The outlines of the floral, figural, and architectural elements are linear and they are drawn in color, a technique that is wholly different from those employed in the enamels on the three other watches from the Metropolitan Museum discussed here.

The enamels on this watchcase are not signed, and the movement was missing at least as long ago as when J. Pierpont Morgan acquired the case. George C. Williamson, the author of the catalogue of Morgan’s collection of watches, attributed the watchcase to Christophe Morlière (1604–1643/44), one of the best of the acknowledged masters of enameling, who worked in Blois. Perhaps Williamson’s attribution was based upon the supposition that only one of the finest enamel painters in Blois could have been responsible for a watchcase of this quality, but it presents an object lesson in how difficult it can be to match unsigned enamels with recorded enamel painters. Morlière died before October 1644—or at least a year before the publication of the floral designs by Cochin that are so skillfully depicted in the enamels on this watchcase. Even if the painter of this case remains anonymous, he undoubtedly was one of the more accomplished French enamelist working either in Blois or in Paris, probably in the 1640s. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century Geneva became the center of watchcase enameling, but the Swiss rarely achieved the excellence of their French predecessors.

Three of the five watchcases in the Metropolitan Museum’s collection discussed above still contain their original movements, and all typify the work of the leading French watchmakers of the second quarter of the seventeenth century. The engraved signature “Auguste Bretonneau, Paris” appears on the back plate of the movement of the watch with enamels depicting Meleager and Atalanta (Figure 30). The signature “Goullons, Paris” is engraved on the back plates of the movements in the cases with enamels based on Vouet’s religious imagery (Figure 31) and on Stella’s (Figure 32).

More is known about the watchmakers than about the enamelist, but still it is not a great deal. Auguste
Figure 28. Interior of the watchcase in Figure 22, with a scene of the Massacre of the Innocents


Figure 30. Auguste Bretonneau (French, recorded 1658–58). Movement of the watch in Figure 17. Gilt brass; steel, partly blued; and silver, diam. of back plate 1 3/4 in. (4.4 cm)

Figure 31. Jacques Goullons (French, recorded 1626–d. 1671). Movement of the watch in Figure 3. Gilt brass; steel, partly blued; and silver, diam. of back plate 2 in. (5 cm). The balance spring and the figure plate used to regulate it are later additions
Bretonneau is recorded as having worked in Paris between 1638 and 1658.32 Aside from the Metropolitan Museum’s Meleager and Atalanta watch, examples by Bretonneau with painted enamel cases exist in the collection of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford,33 in an Italian private collection,34 and in the Museum der Zeitmessung Beyer in Zürich.35 Still another was formerly in the Howard Marryat collection in the 1930s.36 A very small watch (diam. 3.1 cm) formerly in the Luigi delle Piane collection in Milan, signed on the back plate “A. Bretonneau Paris,”37 represents a somewhat later period of seventeenth-century watchmaking, as does a small square watch with a gold-and-enamel case, now in the Historisches Museum, Basel, that can be dated not long before about 1660 on stylistic grounds.38 Finally, the Metropolitan Museum owns a large (diam. 11.1 cm) silver-cased, hour-striking, traveling, or coach, watch with an alarm (Figure 33), which probably dates to somewhere between 1650 and 1660.39 Like the other watches by Bretonneau, this one has only a single hand. The chapter ring on the dial is divided into hours and quarters, rather than into the hours and half hours of the earlier watches, and the movement (Figure 34) has a technical improvement: a tangent screw and wheel setup for the mainspring (at the top of the back plate), rather than the earlier type of ratchet wheel and click setup that is visible at the top of the backplate of the Museum’s Meleager and Atalanta watch (Figure 30).40
In the same decade, an item in an inventory of the possessions of Louis XIV’s minister Cardinal Mazarin (1602–1661) states that a large striking watch by Goullons, with a red leather carrying case, was owned by the cardinal.\(^1\) Goullons was also the maker of movements for a number of watches with painted enamel cases besides those mentioned earlier, including a watch in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, with portraits of Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu;\(^43\) one now in the Musée International d’Horlogerie, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, discussed above;\(^43\) one now in the Historisches Museum, Basel;\(^44\) and one in the Musée d’Horlogerie, Le Locle, Switzerland.\(^45\) Another was in the Luigi delle Piane collection in Milan in 1954,\(^46\) and the Metropolitan Museum has an additional two.\(^47\) Still another enamel-cased watch, in the collection of the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, is smaller in diameter than the others (4.2 cm) and has an enameled case believed, perhaps mistakenly, to be Swiss.\(^48\)

Other watches signed “Goullons \(\mathcal{A}\)Paris” that do not belong to the same category include one, in the collection of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers in London, that has a relief-ornamented gold case enameled predominantly in opaque white and black. The movement of the Clockmakers’ Company watch has a tangent screw and wheel setup for the mainspring, and is considerably smaller in diameter (3.1 cm) than most of the watches with painted enamel miniatures on their cases.\(^49\) A similarly small watch with a comparable movement, but with a painted enamel case, was formerly in the collection of Lord Sandberg.\(^50\) In addition, there is a large (diam. 40.4 cm) coach watch in a gilt-brass case, with a movement signed “Goullons \(\mathcal{A}\)Paris,” now in the Historisches Museum, Basel, that apparently dates from somewhat later in the seventeenth century,\(^51\) and another, in a silver case, with a dial and hands modernized in the eighteenth century, formerly in the Sandberg collection.\(^52\)

All of the aforementioned watches are signed only with the surname of the maker, but a small watch with a gold case ornamented with champlevé enamel and with a pre-spring balance movement (indicating that the latter was made sometime before about 1675) bearing the signature “Josias Goullons \(\mathcal{A}\)Paris” on the back plate appeared at auction in 1971.\(^53\) While at first it seemed plausible that the maker who signed his name “Goullons \(\mathcal{A}\)Paris” was the same one who signed himself “Josias Goullons,” further reflection suggested that perhaps by the time the watch auctioned in 1971 was made, there were two watchmakers in Paris named Goullons, thus necessitating that the second use his full name in his signature.

Unfortunately, there is no written document that records the existence of Josias Goullons, but a Jacques Goullons, or Coullons, is documented several times. Jacques is mentioned in 1626; in 1656 as “Coullons, horloger du duc d’Orléans” (clockmaker to Philippe, the duc d’Orléans [1640–1701], the brother of Louis XIV, who was known as Monsieur); and again in 1668, as the late Jacques Coullons, “horloger du Monsieur.”\(^54\) The probable date of the watch in the Victoria and Albert Museum is not much earlier than 1642. The two portraits on the case are of Louis XIII, who died in 1643, and of Cardinal Richelieu, who died in 1642; the watch was quite likely a present from the former to the latter. The two prints after Vouet’s paintings that are reproduced on one of the Metropolitan Museum’s watches are helpful, too, in the dating process; the engravings are dated 1640 and 1642, and that watch probably was not made very much later. Finally, all of the watches signed “Goullons \(\mathcal{A}\)Paris” predate the introduction of the balance spring in 1675; now, whenever balance springs are found in them, they are recognized as later additions, introduced because of the enormously improved timekeeping properties of the device. Thus, from the evidence provided both by the watch movements and their cases, a work period from about 1640 to 1660 can be proposed for the watchmaker who signed himself “Goullons \(\mathcal{A}\)Paris.” He was probably a certain Jacques Goullons, or Coullons—or, as cited in the inventory of Cardinal Mazarin’s possessions, Goullons. It is highly likely that he was the same man mentioned as early as 1626, and who died in 1671.\(^55\)

Although there is firm evidence that Bretonneau and Goullons were established watchmakers in Paris, it cannot be assumed that the enameled cases of their watches were necessarily made there. A surviving document records the discovery of a stockpile of more than thirty watch movements signed with the names of some of the best watchmakers in both Blois and Paris that was found in 1636 in the possession of a certain Isaac Gribelin, a goldsmith and enamel painter in Blois.\(^56\) Gribelin probably was not the only one who fit ready-made movements into enameled-gold cases of his own manufacture.

If, as a rule, it is not possible to identify the individual who enameled a given watchcase or even to determine with certainty whether it was painted in Blois or in Paris, one can make some pertinent observations about the way in which these enamel painters worked. When a patron commissioned a watch, the subject of the enamel was probably chosen as well and the enamel painter given access either to an original work of art or to a very close copy to use as a model. More
often the enamelist worked from prints, perhaps sometimes even hand-colored examples, and produced fairly faithful reproductions in miniature of the original artwork. Occasionally, however, the source did not lend itself to more or less exact reproduction, and the enamelist was required to make extensive modifications to the design. Finally, some enamelists borrowed elements from prints that they modified or rearranged quite radically to meet the demands of their format, either by themselves or by relying on another artist or copyist to supply the requisite designs, though there is no evidence to support the latter supposition. Further study of these enamels and their sources will undoubtedly provide new insights into the working methods of the seventeenth-century French painters of these pocket-sized masterpieces.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Bibliothèque Nationale 1939–54

Brusa 1978
Giuseppe Brusa. L’Arte dell’orologeria in Europa.

Camerer Cuss 1998

Cardinal 1984a

Cardinal 1984b

Cardinal 1989

Cardinal 2000

Deville 1913

Galeries Nationales 1990

Galeries Nationales 2002

Leopold and Vincent 1993

Paris 1954

Rosenberg and Thuillier 1988

Williamson 1912
NOTES

1. Some authorities prefer to call the technique "painting on enamel," in order to distinguish these seventeenth-century enamels from earlier forms of enamel painting, but the distinction seems more than a little forced. For a spirited defense of the term "painting on enamel," however, see Cardinal 1989, p. 138. See also Catherine Cardinal, Splendeurs de l'imagier: Montres et horloges du XVIIe au XXe siècle, exh. cat., Institut l'Homme et le Temps (La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, 1999), pp. 33–35.


4. See Leopold and Vincent 1993, pp. 103–6, figs. 2, 3, 6; Galeries Nationales 2002, p. 311, no. 201.


6. See Leopold and Vincent 1993, pp. 117 n. 35. The scene on the back of the case is also based on a Voyet painting, now lost, of Mercury and the Three Graces. The image preserved in reverse can be found in an engraving by Michel Doreigny. See Leopold and Vincent 1993, pp. 104, 106, 107, figs. 8, 9.


8. These include a watch with a movement by Johann Jacob Muller of Strasbourg (inv. no. 18.291) now in the Musée Paul Dupuy in Toulouse (see Ville de Toulouse, Horlogerie et instruments de mesure du temps passé [Toulouse, 1978], pp. 68–70, no. 56); two watches, one with a movement signed "Gouillons Paris" (inv. no. 551) and the second with a movement by Barthélemy Mace of Blois (inv. no. 10), both in the Musée International d'Horlogerie in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland (see Cardinal 1984b, pp. 22–23; Collections du Musée International d'Horlogerie, Une sélection parmi 3100 objets [La Chaux-de-Fonds, 1974], p. 21, no. 551, p. 25, no. 10; and Hans Boeckh, Emailmalerei auf genfer Taschenuhren vom 17. bis zum Beginnenden 19. Jahrhundert [Freiburg im Breisgau, 1982], p. 443, pl. 6, figs. 10, 11); two watches in the Musée du Louvre, one (inv. no. OA 8428) with a movement by Josias Jolly of Paris (see Cardinal 1989, pp. 146–47) and one (inv. no. OA 6224) with a movement by David Bouquet of London (see Cardinal 2000, p. 138, no. 122; one (inv. no. E. Cl. 29091) with a movement by Guillaume Ferrier of Paris, in the Musée National de la Renaissance (see Musée National de la Renaissance, Château d'Écouen, Catalogue de l'horlogerie et des instruments de précision du début du XVIIe au milieu du XVIIIe siècle by Adolphe Chapiron, Chantal Meslín-Perrier, and Anthony Turner [Paris, 1989], p. 69, no. 53; Galeries Nationales 2002, p. 308, no. 198); and one with a movement by François Baronneau, formerly in the collection of Lord Sandberg (see Camerer Cuss 1998, pp. 68–69).


10. See Williamson 1912, pp. 47–48, no. 45.

11. See Bibliothèque Nationale 1939–54, vol. 3, pp. 256–57 no. 60; Galeries Nationales 1990, p. 316, no. 53. The same scene is repeated on the interior of the cover of a watch, with a movement by Baronneau, in Blois that appeared in an advertisement for an auction in Hong Kong held on May 24, 1982, by Antiquorum (see Apollo, May 1982, p. 29).

12. Inv. no. 80.9.2. See Galeries Nationales 1990, p. 316, no. 53, p. 317, fig. 53.

13. While prints usually reverse the images on which they are based, the rule is not inallible. In fact, a copy of the engraving of this same painting exists in which the composition is again reversed, in effect preserving the orientation of the painting. An example in the Cabinet des Estampes at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (inv. no. Est. Ed 107, l. p. 3) is signed "Paris Chez Bazin" (probably Nicolas Bazin [1666–1710]). See Bibliothèque Nationale 1939–54, vol. 1, p. 318, no. 9. As the Daret engraving is dated 1642, it is evidently the earlier of the two. In addition, artists sometimes made prints after their own paintings and did not reverse the compositions. For instance, Laurent de La Hyre (1606–1656) produced an etching of his own painting of the Virgin and Child, now in the Musée du Louvre (inv. no. 5355), that is not reversed. An enameled medallion in the Musée Paul Dupuy in Toulouse depicts the subject in reverse, unlike either the painting or La Hyre's etching. See Rosenberg and Thuiller 1988, pp. 235–37, nos. 193, 193c(f), 194. The answer probably lies in the fact that at least two other prints exist that are copies of the subject and reverse the composition (Bibliothèque Nationale, inv. no. Da 26, in-fol., fol. 1 verso, fol. 20 recto). Perhaps one of these copies provided the model for the enamel.


16. See Williamson 1912, p. 46, no. 43, where it is noted that the watch was previously number 1,388 in the Marfels collection before being acquired by J. Pierpont Morgan. For more about Carl Heinrich Marfels, the German dealer and collector, see J. H. Leopold and Clare Vincent, "An Extravagant Jewel: The George Watch," Metropolitan Museum Journal 35 (2000), pp. 146, 149, n. 29.

17. See Véronique Meyer, "Gilles Rousselet (1610–1686), un graveur d'interprétation," Nouvelles de l'estampe, 82/3 (October 1985), p. 6, where the author notes that Rousselet worked until 1698 for the publisher of this print, Jean Leblond.

18. There are minor differences in the pose of the lamb and of the infant Saint John, but the painting in the Cherbouin museum is much closer to the engraving than is another painted version of the subject in which Saint Joseph leans on a piece of paper rather than on an open book and in which a genre detail of a woman by a fireplace has been added at the right side of the composition. This painting is now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Dijon (see Century of Splendor: Seventeenth-Century French Painting in French Public Collections, exh. cat., Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rennes; and Musée Fabre,
Montpellier [Paris, 1903], p. 248, fig. 1). A third version of the subject, but with the Virgin holding the Child in her lap, Saint Joseph standing behind the Virgin’s chair, Saint John and the lamb in altogether different positions, and an added putto, is reputed to be signed “Ja… es Stella fecit/1633.” The painting appeared in Old Master Paintings, sale cat., Sotheby’s, London, July 5, 1984, lot 387; and again in Old Master Paintings, sale cat., Sotheby’s, London, July 4, 1990, lot 70.


20. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes, inv. no. Da 20 [vol. I], p. 24. See Véronique Meyer, “The Inventory of Gilles Rousselet (1610–1686),” Print Quarterly 2, no. 4 (December 1985), p. 305, fig. 190. In the inventory, which was made on July 22, 1686, the print is described as “John the Baptist Presenting a Sheep to Little Jesus Accompanied by the Virgin.”


22. There exists another watchcase with enameled scenes taken from the same paintings by Jacques Stella but with stagelike settings of draped curtains quite similar to those in the original paintings, as illustrated by T. P. Camerer Cuss, The Camerer Cuss Book of Antique Watches, rev. ed. (Woodbridge, Suffolk, England, 1976), p. 67. The movement, signed “A. Hoevenaar, Arnhem,” is said to have been made for the case in the early eighteenth century. An additional example, with the Virgin and Child and Saint John, signed “Goufflos /Paris,” is in the Musée d’ Horlogerie in Le Locle, Switzerland (see Catherine Cardinal and François Mercier, Musées of Horology: La Chaux-de-Fonds, Le Locle [Zürich, 1993], p. 111). Still another enameled of the Virgin and Child and Saint John in a setting similar to that depicted on the Metropolitan Museum’s watch appears on the cover of a watch with a movement signed “Solomon Plaivas”—a Blois watchmaker unknown to Deville 1913—that was formerly in the Howard Marr yat collection (see Frederick J. Britten, Old Clocks and Watches and Their Makers, 3rd ed. [London, 1911], pp. 176, 179, fig. 218; Howard Marr yat, Watches, vol. 1, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries [London, 1938], pp. 50–52, fig. E3).


27. See Williamson 1912, p. 84, no. 78, pl. XXXIV; Galeries Nationales 2002, p. 314, no. 206.


30. See E. Deville, Peintures en émail de Blois et de Châteaudun (Blois and Orléans, 1894), p. 36, and p. 36, n. 1. A few years later Deville gives the date of Morlière’s death as 1643, this time without documentary support. See Deville 1913, p. 91.


34. See Fulgido Pomella, Orologi dal 1500 al prima ‘900 (Ivrea, 1986), pp. 58–59, fig. 5.


37. See Paris 1954, pp. 21–22, no. 22, pl. X.


39. See Williamson 1912, p. 45, no. 42.

40. The original balance for this watch has been replaced by a spring balance, held in place by a circular balance bridge with tripartite, pierced, foliate scroll ornament that can be dated to the late 1670s or 1680s—a substitution that would have enormously improved the accuracy of the watch.


42. Inv. no. 75.43.61. See T. P. Camerer Cuss, Camerer Cuss Book, p. 66, pl. 18; Cardinal 1989, pp. 152–53; Galeries Nationales 2002, p. 310, no. 200.


44. See Montres françaises, no. 26.

45. See Cardinal and Mercier, Museums of Horology, p. 111.

46. See Paris 1954, pp. 19–21, pl. 1, figs. 202–204. The case of this watch is signed “Vauquer Fe” (probably the enamel painter Robert Vauquer). The scene on the front of the cover is a direct copy of the central portion of the fresco, after a design by Raphael, of the Victory of Constantine over Maxentius, in the Sala di Costantino in the Vatican. The miniature on the back of the case is a somewhat freer adaptation of the left side of the fresco. Robert Vauquer (1625–70) was an apprentice in the workshop of Christophe Morlière and is believed to have spent his entire working life in Blois. See Deville 1913, pp. 92–93.


48. Inv. no. 3–17137. See Larissa Yakovleva, Swiss Watches and Snuff-
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7th-20th Centuries (Saint Petersburg, 1997) p. 16.
49. See Catalogue of the Museum of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers of London, 2nd ed. (London, 1902), p. 34, no. 133, where it is stated that the watch has been in the collection since 1828. See also Cecil Clutton and George Daniels, Clocks and Watches: The Collection of The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers (London, 1975), p. 14, no. 32, colorpl. II.
53. See Uhren-Auktion, sale cat., Galerie am Neumarkt, Zürich, October 8, 1971, lot 159, pl. 33, fig. 159; Richard Meis, Les montres de poche: De la montre-pendentif au tourbillon (Paris, 1980), p. 80, figs. 76–77.
54. Paris, Archives nationales, Minutier Central, fichaire, 1626, 1656, and 1698. There is also a Jacques Goulon listed as working in Paris in 1643, according to Tardy, Dictionnaire, vol. 2, p. 682.
55. In the exhibition catalogue entry for a watch by Goullons (see Galeries Nationales 2002, p. 310, no. 200), Catherine Cardinal states that he was a master clock maker in Paris from 1626 and that he died in 1671. Her information is based on an unpublished manuscript about the artist Sébastien Bourdon (1616–1671) by Jean Rivet.
56. See Deville 1913, pp. 70–71.