



Slides 53A, 53H



Slides 53E, 53F



Slides 54C, 54K



Slides 54H, 54L



Slides 55C, 55D, 55L



Slides 55J, 55H, 55M

More shaded enamel salts (Slides 55C, 55D, 55L; Slides 55J, 55H, 55M; Slide 56A; Slide 57B; Slides 58C, 58D, 58F; Slides 58G, 58J, 58K), including two of tulip-form (Slide 56A; Slide 57B), were shown, the later ones moving toward the Pan-Slavic design (Slides 58C, 58D, 58F; Slides 58G, 58J, 58K) that was popular in the period of 1908-17, with the best pieces after 1912. As it became more highly desirable, only the best enamelists did it.

Feodor Ruckert was the best enamelist to ever work in Russia. A number of his salts were shown, beginning with his earlier designs (Slides 59G, 59H, 59J; Slides 59K, 59L, 59P), many of which were copied by his competitors. A particularly wonderful, whimsical salt had two ducks on a lake with the sun setting over the mountains behind them (Slides 60C, 60D, 60G, 60H).

His Pan-Slavic designs, on the other hand, were very different (Slides 61A, 61E). The color palette of the salts changed, becoming darker and more muted. Shapes became more geometric, and he developed a new cross-hatching technique that was copied by others (Slides 62C, 62D, 62K; Slides 62H, 62L).



Slide 56A



Slide 57B



Slides 58C, 58D, 58F



Slides 58G, 58J, 58K



Slides 59G, 59H, 59J



Slides 59K, 59L, 59P



Slides 60C, 60D, 60G, 60H



Slides 61A, 61E



Slides 62C, 62D, 62K



Slides 62H, 62L



Slides 63A, 63B, 63E



Slides 64A, 64C, 64E

These highly stylized, art nouveau designs are very desirable, especially to collectors in Russia. Ruckert made all sorts of objects, including kovshi, tea sets, and punch bowls, producing 90% of the cloisonné enamel that was sold by Faberge. John showed a kovsh salt cellar in dark enamel colors that had a Faberge inventory number scratched in the base and a Faberge mark overstriking the Ruckert mark (Slides 63A, 63B, 63E).

The next slide showed a shaded enamel salt with panels of *plique-a-jour* (French, meaning "light of day") around the top rim (Slides 64A, 64C, 64E). The panels look like miniature stained windows



Slides 65D, 65E, 65K



Slides 65H, 65L



Slides 66L, 66N



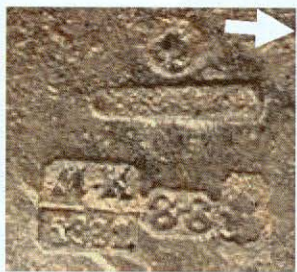
Slides 67H, 67J, 67K



Slides 67C, 67E, 67F



Slides 66E, 66D, 66H, 66G



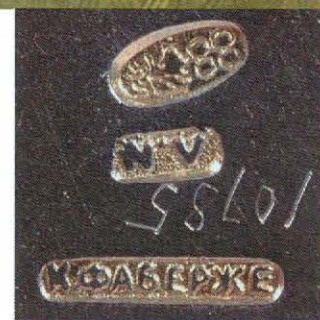
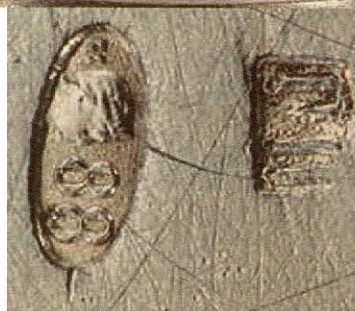
Mark for 67H, J, and K

Slide 67M

when backlit. Plique-a-jour is filigree work, filled with transparent enamel and made in a way similar to cloisonné work, but you can see through it when it is lit from the back. There are several different ways to produce plique, but it is one of the most difficult techniques for an enamelist to master, especially free-form plique. This is done with open work wires with no backing. Enamel paste is put into each cell, then fired just enough to melt and adhere to the edges, but not long enough to have the enamel pull itself apart and leave a gaping hole in the center. The process must be repeated with each enamel color. As John said, "Good luck!" Other plique work is done with wires and a copper backing. After the enamel is in place, acid is used to take the copper away. Two free-form plique salts (Slides 65D, 65E, 65K; Slides 65H, 65L) and two kovshi (Slides 66E, 66D, 66H, 66G; Slides 66L, 66N) were shown.

Another technique, very rarely used in Russia, especially in salt cellars, is painted enamel. The two examples shown by John are small bowls (Slides 67M, 67H, 67J, 67K; Slides 67C, 67E, 67F) because he couldn't find any pictures of painted enamel salts. The enamel colors are painted on with no wire between the colors.

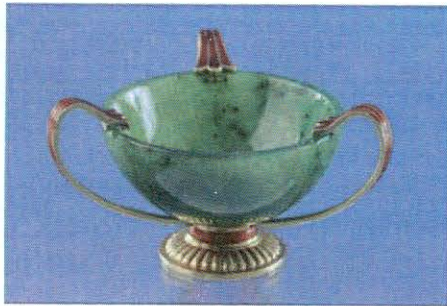
Another enamel process is guilloche enamel. The silver salt body goes through an engine-turning machine to engrave (like a lathe) a pattern in the silver, then the body is enameled with a variety of different colors. Faberge was the best with a color palette of 144 different colors while most of his competitors used 10, 20, or 30 colors. At times 4-6 layers of enamel were used to produce more depth in the enameling. Varying the colors can also produce an opalescent effect or a look totally different from the first enameling. John showed two salts by other makers (Slides 68C, 68D, 68L; Slides 68J, 68H, 68N) and an apple green salt by Faberge (Slides 69A, 69B, 69D) who was known for his use of unusual colors, although these colors are very rare in salts.



Slides 68C, 68D, 68L

Slides 68J, 68H, 68N

Slides 69A, 69B, 69D



Slide 70A



Slides 71C, 71E, 71L



Slides 71G, 71J, 71M



Slide 72B

Another Faberge piece, highly unusual, was made of carved nephrite (Siberian jade) mounted with 14K gold that is chased and hand-cut in a moiré pattern (**Slide 70A**). The gold handles are finished with a strawberry-red translucent enamel. John is sure that it is strictly an exhibition piece, not made for use.

After the Revolution in 1917, most silver production ceased and Faberge went out of business in 1918. There were several reasons. Many workers were killed in the fighting of World War I, and the new Soviet government did not support silver production. Very importantly, formerly wealthy customers could no longer buy needless baubles. After a while, simple, common silver items began to be produced again, mostly for the tourist and export trade, with the height of this production in the 1930s and 1940s. The complexity of the pieces is very different, however, as illustrated by two salts (**Slides 71C, 71E, 71L; Slides 71G, 71J, 71M**). A third, very familiar looking Russian salt (**Slide 72B**) was made from the 1970s until now.

To further illustrate the plique-a-jour technique John showed two Norwegian salts, one unmarked (**Slides 73C, 73E**), but probably by Joseph Tostrup, and one marked by Marius Hammer (**Slides 73G, 73H, 73K**) and. Both are bowls on 3 legs with plique around their upper edges. The best plique-a-jour work was done in Norway, mostly between 1890-1910. He also showed a pair of English plique salts with cobalt blue enamel in the bowls (**Slides 74E, 74F**). The only English plique salts he has seen are these—they must be extremely rare. Also extremely rare is the larger salt he showed, an unmarked shaded plique probably by David Anderson of Norway (**Slides 75A, 75C**). In this five-lobed salt, individual cells contain multiple colors of enamel. Only the best enamelist could do this, and David Anderson did it on several of his pieces.



Slides 73C, 73E



Slides 73G, 73H, 73K



Slides 74E, 74F, 75A, 75C

Finally, there were three plique Viking boat salts, all marked by Marius Hammer. The first was a silver-gilt boat with a plique-a-jour border all around (Slides 76A, 76D). The others were more complex salts with all but the bottoms composed of plique and the inner side of each bottom enameled on a solid base (Slides 77M, 77C, 77E; Slides 77G, 77J, 77K).



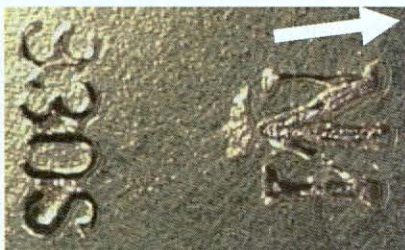
Slides 76A, 76D



Slides 77C, 77E



Slides 77G, 77J, 77K



Slide 77M, Mark on 77C, 77E

Answering a question about cleaning enameled salts, John said that there is no one answer—it all depends. Sometimes a baking soda paste is good, rinsed over and over with soap and water, but even it can destroy an object if used incorrectly. He wouldn't recommend it on a delicate item. If you don't know for sure how to clean it, don't clean it.

He was also asked if the quality of enameling is the best way to tell an old piece.. Unfortunately, John's answer was "No." The people doing reproductions today are highly skilled and can make near perfect pieces. Twenty years ago you could tell that something was not right with a reproduction. Now you must know which artist worked in what style with what color palette during which years in which city. It can be risky to buy from a dealer who is not entirely knowledgeable about Russian enamels.

John's presentation ended with a long round of enthusiastic and grateful applause. We had been treated to a glorious display of beautiful salts while John shared his knowledge of them. He gave us a new appreciation of the history and development of Russian salts, especially of the enameled pieces. We were armed with the keys to identify a maker, a town, and a year or span of years in which a salt was made. Now when we see a wonderful Russian silver or enamel salt, we can appreciate it not only for its beauty, but also for the incredible skill that was required to create it.

Thank you, John Atzbach!

The following images were all taken from the website of the Hermitage Museum, www.hermitagemuseum.org: 5A, 6A, 7A, 8A, 9A, 26B, 28A, 29A.

The following image came from an ebay listing: 72B

The rest of the images are from John Atzbach's web site, www.atzbach.com. John's inventory changes over time, but many of the salts shown above as well as others may be viewed on his website.

John Atzbach is the author of the "Russian and Plique-à-Jour" section in *The Open Salt Compendium*. He is a collector and dealer specializing in Imperial Russian antiques and art. His collection includes enamels and works by Faberge, as well as porcelain from factories such as the Imperial Porcelain Factory, Gardner, Popov, and Batenin. He is frequently mentioned on the Open Salt Chat Page of www.opensalts.info one of the most trustworthy dealers in Russian art. John Atzbach Antiques is in Redmond, WA, and his web site is at www.atzbach.com.

Thank You!

The 11th National Convention was a rousing success because of the dedication of all who attended and all who helped to put it on. Thanks to all the main speakers, the workshop speakers, the contest participants, donors of door prizes and other goods, and all who served on the convention committee. Thanks also to the several non-members who donated their time and talents. Special thanks to Linda Drew and Mary Kern, co-chairwomen who fashioned it all in such grand style.