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Article: From fake to fabulous: Redeeming fakes at the Walters Art Museum

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## **FROM FAKE TO FABULOUS: REDEEMING FAKES AT THE WALTERS ART MUSEUM**

Terry Drayman-Weisser

### **Abstract**

Many objects in American museums have no documented provenance or have incomplete, discontinuous or unverifiable histories. In the past, museums depended on experienced curators and art historians to evaluate the authenticity of such objects. Today, many museums have added the conservator and conservation scientist to their professional teams. Often this has led to the re-evaluation of earlier conclusions regarding the authenticity of objects and to the “redemption” of some objects previously declared spurious. This paper presents several case studies of objects in the Walters Art Museum whose authenticity had been questioned, including a Renaissance terracotta sculpture, a Gothic ivory, a medieval Limoges enameled plaque, and two Renaissance enameled pendant jewels. Conclusions and the methods used to re-evaluate the objects are discussed.

### **Introduction**

As most art historians and conservators know, when the authenticity of an object has been questioned, the object can lose its place in history and its status in a collection. There are consequences which can range from labeling the object dubious, to taking the object off view, to the most extreme action of deaccessioning the object. In addition, questioned objects sometimes are handled or stored using a lower standard of care.

There can be many reasons for questioning the authenticity of an object. Most commonly there are issues of style or iconography, or inconsistencies in materials or methods of manufacture. There are many ways, from simple to complex, of evaluating authenticity and arriving at conclusions with confidence, although absolute certainty may be an impossible goal. For this reason, labeling an object a forgery or fake should not be taken lightly. Once questioned, it is extremely difficult to bring respectability back to a piece, since there will always be those who will continue to doubt later evidence supporting authenticity. On the other hand, efforts made to evaluate an object can be of great benefit, since in the end, both the object and its original context are better understood.

The following are some examples of objects questioned and redeemed at the Walters. Each object has its own story to tell.

### ***Joseph***

In 1987 the Walters put on an exhibition called “Artful Deception: The Craft of the Forger.” One of the objects the curator selected for the show was a painted terracotta figure of Joseph, a

seated, two-thirds life size sculpture that seventeen years earlier had been declared a fake (Fig.1). This piece has an interesting history. It was originally thought to be by the late 15th century Tuscan sculptor Matteo Civitale, but it was condemned as an early 20th century fake by a noted curator from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (Lewis 1970). The basis for the condemnation was that the Walters' *Joseph* had appeared in a photograph published in 1914 in *Art in America* while in the home of collector, Thomas Fortune Ryan. In the photograph, *Joseph* formed part of a nativity group along with two other terracotta sculptures, a kneeling Madonna and a Christ Child, propped on a cloth pillow (Fig. 2). At some time after the 1914 photograph, the Madonna and Child were united on contiguous bases and the cloth pillow under the Child was replaced by one of terracotta. It was in this new configuration in 1943 that the sculptural group titled, *Madonna Adoring the Child*, entered the National Gallery's collection. The Walters acquired *Joseph* in 1949. In 1970 the National Gallery's curator determined that both the Madonna and Child were fakes (Spicer 1990).

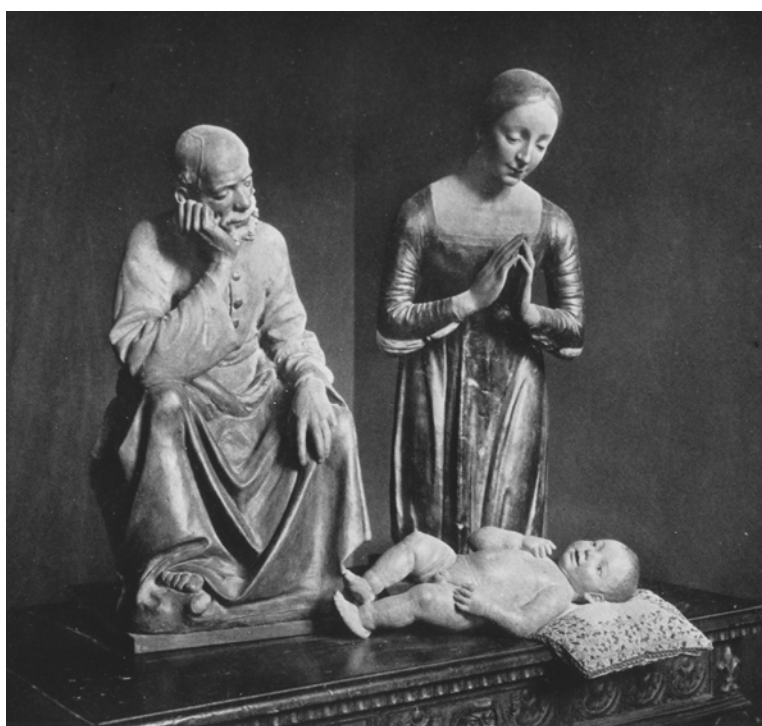


Fig. 6. MATTEO CIVITALE: THE NATIVITY.  
Collection of Mr. Thomas F. Ryan, New York.

Figure 1 (left). *Joseph* (WAM 27.531). This Renaissance terracotta was declared a fake in 1970.

Figure 2 (right). Photograph of Walters' *Joseph* as part of a nativity group while in the home of Thomas Fortune Ryan. Published in *Art in America*, 1914. Madonna and Child figures later purchased by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

The National Gallery had arranged for thermoluminescence (TL) dating to be carried out on their sculptures from this group. The results gave a last firing date around 1900. (Lewis 1970; Spicer

1990) Although the Walters' *Joseph* had not been tested, the fact that it had been documented in 1914 in the company of the now condemned pieces was enough to condemn it as well. *Joseph* was taken off view and relegated to storage, where it remained until it was selected for inclusion in the "Artful Deception" exhibition.

It was *Joseph's* new prominence, although in the negative context of an exhibition on fakes, that stimulated renewed interest in him. Since *Joseph* had not been tested, there was a possibility, even though thought to be remote, that *Joseph* could be the one genuine piece in the nativity group. Rather than officially labeling the terracotta figure a fake, the author approached the curator of the exhibition about carrying out TL dating. The curator was concerned that the results would not be available until after the exhibition opened, but in the end he was persuaded that there would be public interest in the results during the exhibition and that information on the testing method could be incorporated into the text panel. Visitors would be encouraged to return to discover the results. Two samples for TL dating were taken from *Joseph*, one from the top half and one from the bottom, and sent to the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art at Oxford for testing.

*Joseph* was installed in the exhibition along with a copy of the 1914 photograph showing *Joseph* with the National Gallery's Madonna and Child sculptures. The wall label heading was "Guilty by Association" and the text stated why *Joseph* was almost certainly a twentieth century fake. The results came back in the middle of the exhibition period. The TL testing yielded a firing date range of 1407 to 1607, placing *Joseph's* manufacture date firmly in the Renaissance. The curator draped a banner across the wall label proclaiming the verdict: "Not Guilty!" Today *Joseph* commands a prominent place in our newly reinstalled Palazzo galleries.

But that is not the end of the story. As reported by Michael Belman, then a Mellon Fellow in objects conservation at the National Gallery, *Madonna Adoring the Child* was requested for loan in 2004 and the Gallery's curators requested that the TL dating be repeated. One of the original TL samples taken in 1970 was from the base of the Madonna. The other was from the pillow beneath the Child, apparently taken as a reference, since it was known that the pillow was a modern addition. More recently, upon further examination, it was determined that the base of the Madonna, obscured in the 1914 photograph, was also possibly a recent addition. New samples were taken from the Madonna, avoiding the base, and also from the Child. The TL results show that the Madonna is indeed twentieth century, while the results for the Child place it in the seventeenth century (Belman 2005; Belman 2007). So it seems that *Joseph* is Renaissance, the Child may be somewhat later, but the Madonna was made shortly before it was sent to the collector Thomas Fortune Ryan, likely to create a more enticing and complete nativity group for sale.

### ***Vierge Ouvrante***

The Walters' ivory *Vierge Ouvrante* (or opening Virgin) is 43.5 centimeters tall and has wings that open in the middle to reveal interior carvings of scenes of the life of Christ (Figs 3 and 4). This impressive object was photographed by A. Aubrey Bodine and published on January 25, 1931 in the *Baltimore Sun*, where it was referred to as a fourteenth century treasure in Henry

Walters' collection. In 1995, it was requested for loan for an exhibition of Gothic ivories to be held at the Detroit Institute of Arts that would subsequently come to the Walters. Consequently, the object was examined by Donna Strahan, at that time an objects conservator in the Walters conservation laboratory, to determine whether it could travel safely. Due to insecurities around the hinges and extreme cracking, the object was not recommended for loan.



Figure 3 (left). *Vierge Ouvrante* (WAM 71.152). The ivory sculpture in its closed position.

Figure 4 (right). *Vierge Ouvrante* (WAM 71.152). The ivory sculpture in its open position.

To the surprise of the Walters, the organizers of the exhibition challenged the decision by saying that our concerns were mitigated by the fact that the object was a fake. In fact, the intention was to exhibit it in a room of questioned pieces, and it would be labeled “dubious” in the exhibition catalogue. This view was supported by a previous director of the Walters, Richard Randall, an expert on Gothic ivory, who was so convinced of the object’s spurious status that he left it out of

his 1985 comprehensive catalogue of the Walters' ivory collection. The reasons for questioning the authenticity of the object were inconsistencies in iconography and style, and the fact that there were only a few other pieces known of this size, type, and style made in ivory, all known to be fakes made in the early 19th century in Europe (Randall 1995).

After discussions with Richard Randall concerning his doubts about the authenticity of the *Vierge Ouvrante*, the author agreed to carry out a technical study. Since ivory contains the organic component collagen, the possibility of Carbon14 (C14) dating was investigated. Permission was granted to sample the object for testing. It must be emphasized that taking a sample for any type of analysis can be damaging to an object; but taking a large enough sample for C14 dating is especially intrusive. The decision to proceed with sampling was based both on the knowledge that without testing, the object would be labeled a fake and relegated to storage or possibly be deaccessioned, and that the object was large enough to accommodate sampling from a hidden area.

It was found that the amount of sample required for C14 dating varied according to which laboratory was doing the testing. Dan Kurtz, an intern in the objects conservation department at that time, was assigned to survey C14 laboratories to ask about sample size, sampling techniques, turn-around time, and cost. Based on the information and feedback he received, we chose the Oxford Research lab for Archaeology and the History of Art. Dan removed a 500 mg sample from the bottom of the central section of the ivory figure (Figs. 5 and 6). When the results came back, everyone was stunned. The ivory could be dated to between 1020 and 1220 with a 95.4 percent degree of confidence. This was exactly the right time frame for this object.

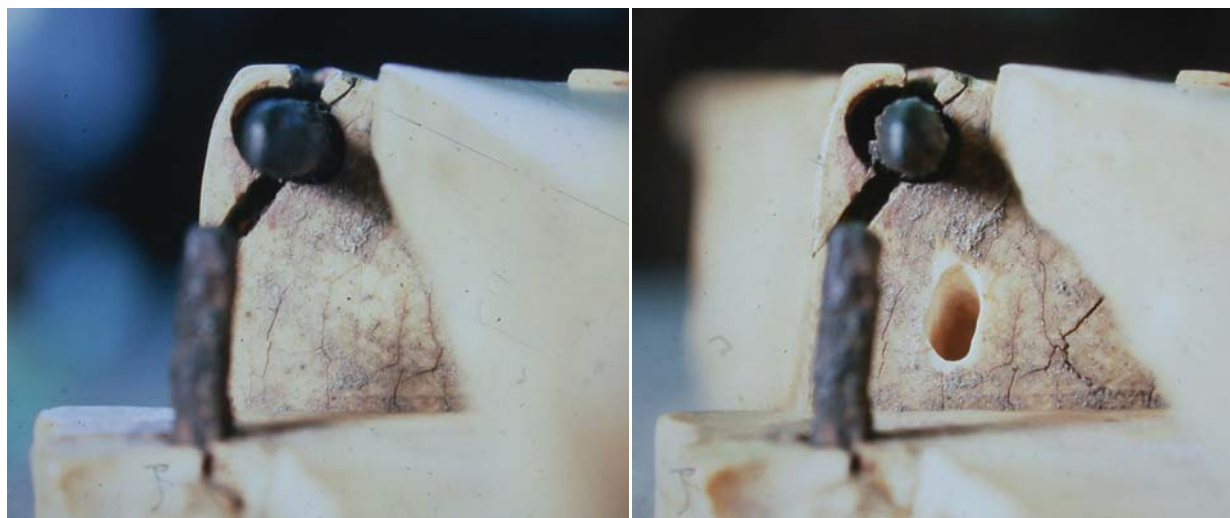


Figure 5 (left). Bottom of middle section of *Vierge Ouvrante* before sampling for C14 testing.

Figure 6 (right). Bottom of middle section of *Vierge Ouvrante* after sampling for C14 testing.

Of course, this is the date the elephant died and does not prove that the ivory was carved at that time. So, alternative scenarios at least had to be considered. Could the *Vierge Ouvrante* have

been carved from an earlier damaged object? Considering the large size of the object and the way the shape of the object follows the form of the outer part of the tusk, it does not appear to be recarved from an earlier damaged object. Could a forger have carved the *Vierge Ouvrante* from a previously uncarved old tusk? The interior surfaces of the statuette are patinated with age to the same degree as the exterior surfaces. If an older tusk had been recently carved, the interior would show less aging than the exterior. The only parts that show evidence of artificial aging are some ivory repairs done before the object entered the Walters collection in 1903. These repairs have incised, tinted artificial cracks on their surfaces. Another strong argument against a recently carved older tusk is that it would be highly unlikely that a forger would have come across a 600 year old specimen of such a large size. And, if for the sake of argument, he did, how would he have known to carve it in the style of the exact date of the tusk? Certainly no one at that time ever dreamt that in the future dating of ivory would be possible. It seems too fantastic that a forger should have unerringly chosen to copy the correct style for the date of the ivory.

Based on the C14 date, scholars began to re-evaluate the *Vierge Ouvrante*. An article was written by art historian, Kelly Holbert, supporting its new C14 date, tracing the object's unusual and circuitous history and describing how its parts had been separated and later reunited. It is even possible that the 19th c. fake *Vierge Ouvrante* figures currently in European collections were inspired by the Walters' *Vierge Ouvrante*, since the fakes may have appeared on the market around the same time the Walters object was sent to Paris for restoration (Holbert 1997/98).

Since the results of the C14 dating have been known, the Walters' *Vierge Ouvrante* has taken on even greater prominence and is now a highlight in the Gothic art galleries. Its uniqueness, that once condemned it, now is the very attribute that makes it again one of the great treasures of the Walters.

### **A Medieval Limoges Enamel Plaque**

In 2005 a striking Limoges enameled plaque with an appliqué of a female figure caught the attention of the Walters' current director (Fig. 7). The plaque, catalogued as 12th to 13<sup>th</sup> century, is in the shape of a terminus of the proper right arm of a cross and is made of gilded copper decorated with incised lines and blue opaque enamel in the *champlevé* technique. Holes at the borders of the plaque indicate where nails were used to secure it to a wooden cross. The appliqué figure also is made of gilded copper and has incised lines and glass inset eyes and collar decorations. The director, a medieval specialist, had begun to question the object's authenticity for several reasons. At 26.4 centimeters in height, the object is substantially larger than other known similar pieces. In addition, he had questions about the iconography relating to the applied female figure. And, finally, the object's condition is unusually good for its supposed age (Vikan 2005). The director brought the object to the conservation laboratory for examination and asked the author to see if there was any evidence to condemn or support the object's authenticity.

The first task was to determine how an object of this type would have been made, and what the compositions of the materials would have been. Fortunately, a very detailed technical study of medieval Limoges *champlevé* enamels had been carried out by Isabelle Biron, Pete Dandridge, and Mark T. Wypyski. The study was published by the Metropolitan Museum in a catalogue in

1996 at the time of a major exhibition of this material. The technology and material compositions published in this catalogue served as a reference during the examination of our object as described in the following section of this paper (Biron et al. 1996).



Figure 7. Medieval Limoges enamel plaque with appliqué (WAM 44.22).

Copper plates for plaques from this period were not cast directly. They were made by hammering from a previously cast ingot. Indentations, folds and delaminations in the metal, visible on the reverse of the Walters piece, indicate that the copper surface expanded and deformed due to repeated hammering to thin it into a sheet (Figs. 8 and 9). An X-radiograph confirmed that the object was formed by hammering as it revealed that the metal is uneven in thickness with some thinner areas taking a rounded shape from hammer blows.



Figure 8. Uneven surface, folds and delaminations on the reverse of the Walters medieval Limoges enamel plaque as evidence of forming by hammering.

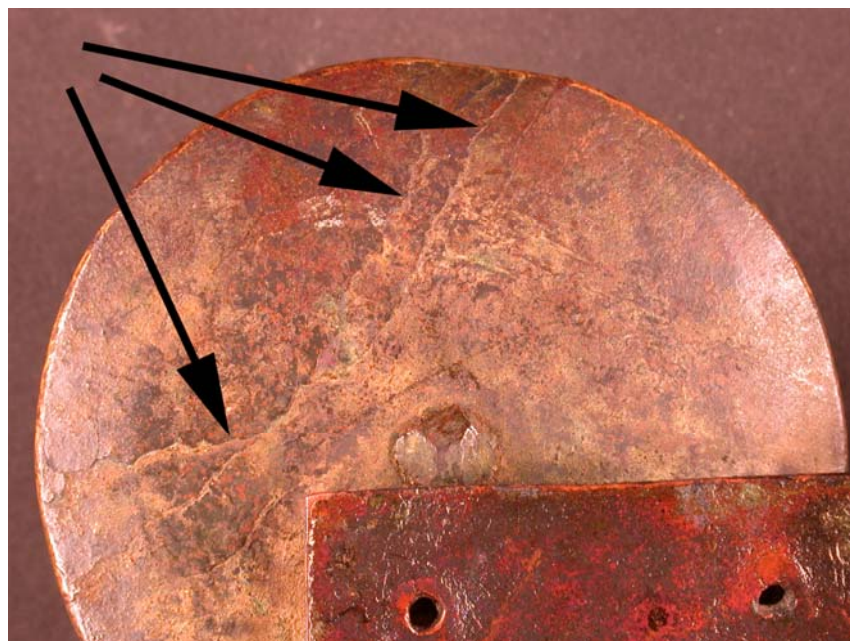


Figure 9. Uneven surface, folds and delaminations on the reverse of the halo attached to the appliqué on the Walters medieval Limoges enamel plaque as evidence of forming by hammering.

In the *champlevé* enameling technique, cells for the enamel are recessed below the metal surface either by casting them in or gouging them out. The cells are then filled with enamel to a level even with the original metal surface. The method of preparation of the cells for the enamel on the Walters plaque is consistent with that described in the Metropolitan catalogue. On works of this period each cell was cut away around the edges first to create a trough. Then the center of each cell was scraped away with a sharp tool such as a scorper or graver, but to a shallower depth than the trough at the perimeter of the cell. The cells were filled with colored glass frit and fired to melt the glass. The resulting enamel was polished smooth and level with the original metal surface. A damaged corner of the Walters object where enamel is missing reveals the scorper marks from scraping away the center of the cell and a deeper trough around the perimeter of the cell (Fig. 10). The X-radiograph was examined to determine whether the preparation of the cells overall was consistent with this technique. Darker lines surrounding each cell were visible in the X-radiograph, confirming that the metal at the perimeter of each cell is thinner than at the centers of the cells (Fig. 11).



Figure 10. An area where the enamel on the Walters medieval Limoges plaque is missing, revealing a deep trough at the perimeter of the cell and scorper marks from removing metal from the center of the cell.

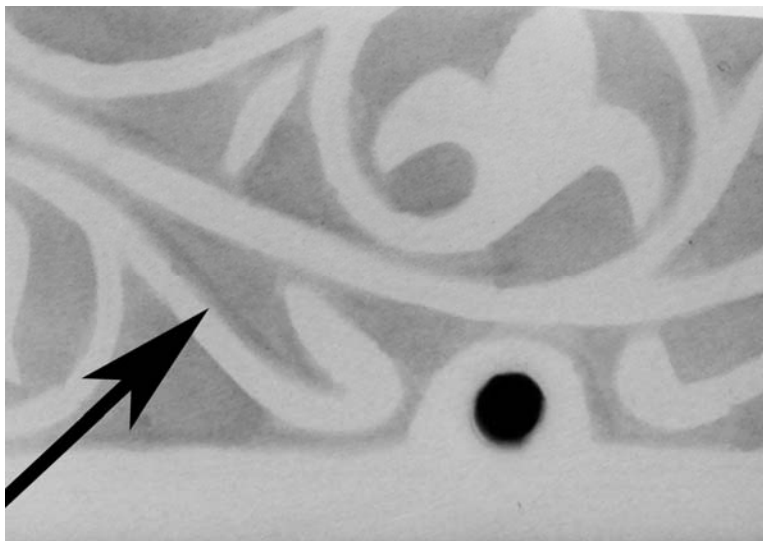


Figure 11. Detail from an X-radiograph of the Walters medieval Limoges plaque revealing dark lines at the perimeters of the cells confirming that the metal is thinner in those areas.

It has not been determined definitively whether incised surface details were created before or after the enamel was fired in the medieval period. What is known is that the lines were created with a graver. The surface details on the Walters plaque appear to have been created with such a tool. According to the Metropolitan catalogue, after engraving, burrs and high spots were removed from flat areas and from appliquéés by pulling a curved-edge or straight-edge tool with rounded corners across the surface. Such tools created a rippled effect, especially visible on the broad surfaces of appliquéés. By using raking light on the Walters object, it was possible to see the undulating, rippled appearance and parallel markings left by such a technique (Fig. 12).



Figure 12. In raking light the parallel marks and ripples left from scraping and finishing the surface of the appliqué are visible on the Walters medieval Limoges plaque.

During this period, separate parts such as plaques and appliquéés were joined mechanically with copper rivets. The rivet heads either were incorporated into the surface decoration or made to stand proud of the surface. On the Walters piece, the female figure appliqué was joined to the plaque with two rivets, although only one original survives. The halo on the figure was also separately made and attached with a rivet. Decorative materials such as glass cabochons and semi-precious stones were sometimes added to medieval objects of this time period. These additions were often held in place by creating a punched socket, applying the decoration, then burnishing the socket edges around the decoration to secure it. The attachment of glass cabochon eyes and collar decorations on the Walters object is consistent with this technique (Fig. 13).



Figure 13. Glass cabochon eyes and collar decorations are set into punched sockets with burnished bezels on the appliqué on the Walters medieval Limoges plaque.

According to the Metropolitan catalogue, after finishing and smoothing, exposed metal surfaces of enameled plaques and appliqués were brushed with an amalgam of gold and mercury. They were heated to drive off the mercury, and the gold was then burnished to a smooth, reflective surface. Gold in the incised lines could not be burnished and remained mat. Since the gold did not adhere well to the enamel, it could be brushed off easily from these surfaces. Finally, stippling with a pointed punch was done over the gilding on the undecorated surfaces of the plaques. Indications of these techniques are present on the Walters object (Fig. 14).



Figure 14. Detail of gilded and stippled area on the Walters medieval Limoges plaque.

It was concluded that the Limoges enamel plaque and appliqué in the Walters is consistent with medieval methods of manufacture when compared to the technical observations in the Metropolitan catalogue. But another issue had to be addressed: were our plaque and appliqué originally made to go together or were they put together at a later date from parts of two different objects? Medieval practices again would help answer this question. The layout for a medieval plaque was planned in advance. If an area was to be covered by an appliqué, that area was not enameled or decorated, likely due to the unnecessary expense and labor involved in decorating an area that would not be visible in the end. Also, since gilding was carried out after the appliqué was attached, the area beneath the appliqué should be bare copper, and the area left in reserve should mimic the shape of the appliqué. Fortunately, one of the rivets on our piece had been replaced with a screw held in place on the reverse with a nut. We removed the screw and this allowed us to carefully rotate the appliqué figure to view the surface of the plaque beneath. We discovered that the surface had been left in reserve in the exact shape of the appliqué. We concluded from this that the two parts were made to go together (Fig. 15).

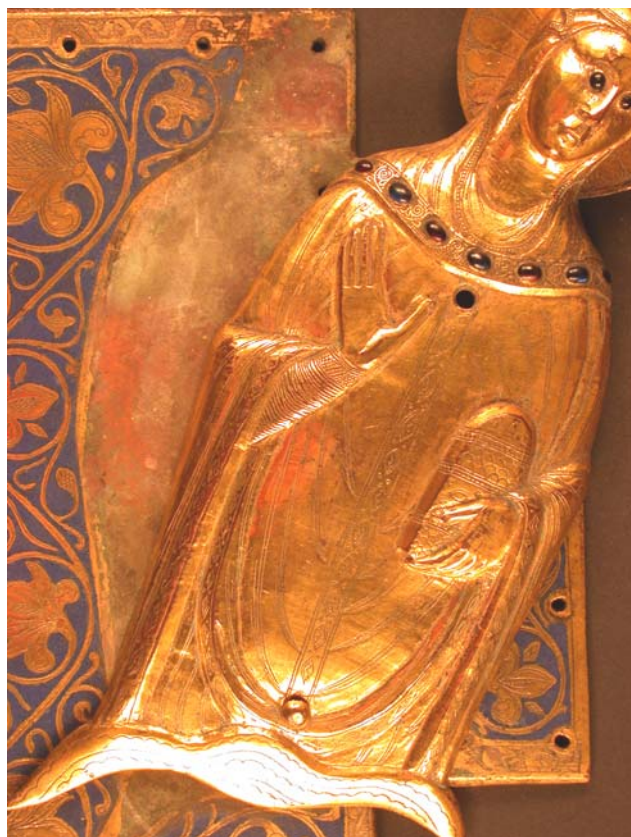


Figure 15. The area of the Walters plaque left in reserve beneath the appliqué is visible after rotating the appliqué on one of its rivets. The reserve area mimics the shape of the appliqué, confirming that the two parts were made to go together.

The technical examination indicated that our piece was likely of medieval manufacture. However, we could not confirm its date through visual examination alone. We know that the compositions of enamels have changed over time, and that the level of impurities in copper metal decreased with improvements in refining techniques after the industrial revolution. Therefore we felt that analysis of the copper plate and the enamel might confirm whether our object was truly medieval and might even help pinpoint a timeframe within the medieval period.

Mark Wypyski, research scientist in the Department of Scientific Research at the Metropolitan Museum, agreed to analyze samples from the Walters' object and to compare the results to known compositions from the medieval period through the 19th century. Samples of blue enamel were taken from fragments that previously had broken away but were lodged in crevices on the surface. Samples were also taken from two inconspicuous spots of raised copper on the reverse. The samples were quantitatively analyzed using a combination of energy dispersive and wavelength dispersive spectrometry in the scanning electron microscope.

Wypyski reported that the analysis of the scrapings from the metal substrate was consistent with medieval copper (Wypyski 2005). The blue enamel was found to be a soda-lime-silica glass with low magnesium and potassium. The sodium source was natron and the opacifier was calcium antimonite. These results showed that it was a Roman glass composition produced through the end of the 4th c. AD. According to Wypyski, technical studies of medieval Limoges enamels indicate that glass tesserae from Roman period mosaics were re-used in the medieval period up until the early 13th century. In the 13th and 14th centuries a locally made soda-lime glass that was higher in magnesium and potassium using plant ash as the sodium source and tin oxide as the opacifier was more typical. 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century forgeries of medieval enamels generally are lead alkali glasses that are high in potassium, but with no magnesium, and are opacified with lead arsenate. Therefore, we were able to conclude that the enamel is no later than the early 13<sup>th</sup> century.

While perusing the curatorial file relating to this plaque, the author came across a photograph of another plaque with appliqué in the Victoria and Albert Museum collection. A likely association already had been proposed between the Walters' plaque and theirs due to the presence on both of pseudo-Kufic inscriptions and the similarities in the background color and decoration. Both plaques are large for their type and would have been attached originally to a wooden cross, ours at the end of the proper right arm and the V & A's at the foot of the cross.

If indeed the two plaques came from the same large cross, which seems very likely, Dr. Audrey Scanlon-Teller, Kress Post-doctoral Fellow at the Walters, has identified the patronage under which these enameled objects were made. Based on an inscription along the bottom edge of the V & A's plaque, Scanlon-Teller has been able to associate the plaque with Saint Stephen of Muret, the founder of the Abbey and Order of Grandmont, and with other similar objects made for the high altar of the Abbey church there in the 1200 style (Scanlon-Teller 2007).

So, although the Walters medieval Limoges enamel was once questioned, it is now back on display labeled without reservation. By combining the technical observations with the results of the analysis of the metal and the enamel, as well as research on an inscription, we have been able to show not only that the Walters' object is medieval, but also that it was produced in the 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century likely in association with the Abbey of Grandmont.

## Renaissance Jewels

Discoveries related to the authenticity of Renaissance jewelry have brought new scrutiny to many collections, including that at the Walters. Of particular concern was the re-discovery in 1978 of over 1000 drawings at the Victoria and Albert Museum attributed to the 19th c. German goldsmith Reinhold Vasters (Truman 1979). The drawings were thought to be Vasters' renderings of magnificent Renaissance objects, including many pieces of jewelry; however, notations on the drawings specified what colors to use when enameling the objects.

These drawings, it was suddenly realized, were in fact production drawings for objects in the Renaissance style. This in itself would not have raised great alarm, except that a number of the drawings corresponded to supposedly Renaissance objects in a number of well-known collections (Hackenbroch 1986). At this point every object for which there was a corresponding Vasters drawing was suspect. Even Renaissance objects for which there were no drawings were being carefully scrutinized, since the drawings at the V & A might not represent the entirety of Vasters' work. There also was the realization that there were likely other goldsmiths producing Renaissance-style works in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In fact, to further complicate matters, it was revealed in 1993 that Alfred André, the highly regarded 19th c. Parisian restorer, also had been making Renaissance-style objects, including jewelry (Distelberger 1993). Distelberger reported that André's family still retains many of the models and casts he had created, some related to purportedly Renaissance objects in collections around the world.

It was in this climate that Hugh Tait, a scholar from the British Museum was invited to review the Walters' extensive Renaissance jewelry collection. He questioned a number of the pieces and stated they were in fact works of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The suspicions he raised were to impact a project being planned for the reinstallation of the Walters Palazzo building. The curator of Renaissance and Baroque art, Dr. Joaneath Spicer, decided that no questionable objects were to be installed. This compelled us to do a focused study on the Renaissance jewelry. The study, generously funded by the Richard C. von Hess Foundation, involved a technical examination of materials and techniques and an analysis of the enamels to see if they were consistent with the Renaissance. Mark Wypyski, research scientist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, agreed to do quantitative analysis using a combination of energy dispersive and wavelength dispersive spectrometry in the scanning electron microscope.

Two of the objects from that study are presented here. One is a hat badge depicting Adam and Eve in the Garden (Fig. 16). Tait had stated that although this piece was not included in any 19<sup>th</sup> c. drawings or models that had come to light, it was clearly 19th century. For the Walters' study, the hat badge first was reviewed from the point of view of its method of manufacture. It is made of gold, partially enameled, with attached diamonds and rubies. The central medallion is made from two layers of sheet gold that together form the image seen from the front. The upper layer is decorated with a scene of Adam and Eve created either by using the repoussé technique from the reverse or by working the gold sheet over a relief model from the front, followed by chasing. The negative spaces around the image elements in the upper layer were cut away to reveal the lower layer of gold. Finally, the lower layer of gold visible from the front was worked using a punch to create a matte texture around the figures. The medallion is encircled by a decorative, partially enameled gold frame.



Figure 16. Renaissance hat badge (WAM 44.266) thought to be a 19<sup>th</sup> c. fake.



Figure 17. Reverse side of Renaissance hat badge showing construction details.

From the reverse one can see the punched areas that correspond to the negative spaces of the medallion's top layer (Fig. 17). This demonstrates that the punch work was done after the two layers were joined. The two layers of gold are joined with strips of gold from the back of the upper layer inserted through slits in the lower layer. The ends of the strips are splayed out like butterfly wings on the reverse of the lower layer. The final steps were enameling, and attaching the gems. This system of construction is typical of Netherlandish Renaissance goldsmiths work (Hackenbroch 1979).

The results of the analysis of all colors of enamel on the medallion were consistent with Renaissance date, as opposed to the results of analysis for the frame, where all the enamels were consistent with 19th century compositions. Especially significant was the analysis of the green enamel on the frame. The colorant was identified as chromium, which was not used until the 19th century. Copper and iron oxides were identified as the colorants in the green enamel on the medallion, which is consistent with Renaissance period enamel (Drayman-Weisser and Wypyski 2007).

Based on the method of manufacture and the analysis of the enamels on the medallion, and the analysis and lack of any evidence of re-enameling on the frame, it was concluded that the medallion is indeed Renaissance, but in the 19th century the frame was added or replaced. Calling the object a fake would be like saying that a 16th century painting is no longer 16th century if it is in a 19th century frame. The object is now accepted as a 16th c. object and it has now been put on display in our newly installed Palazzo.

The second object from the Walters' jewelry study to be discussed here is the *Personification of Fortitude* pendant, made of gold that is partially enameled and set with pearls and a large diamond (Fig. 18). This object was immediately labeled a fake when a Vasters drawing of it came to light (Fig. 19). There are some differences between the actual jewel and the image in the

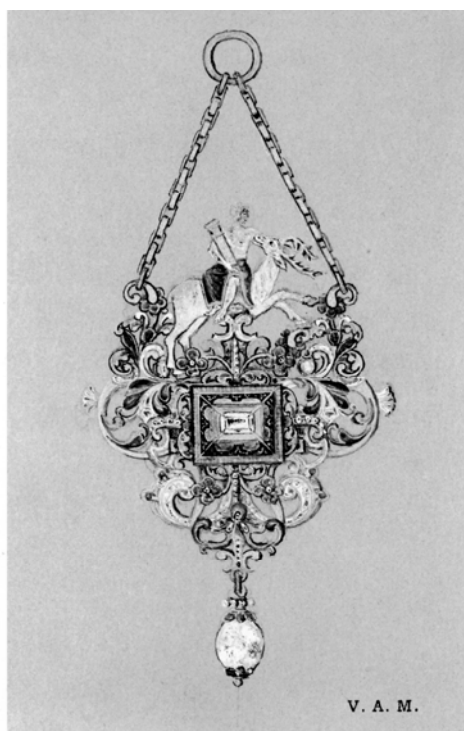


Figure 18 (left). Renaissance *Personification of Fortitude* pendant (WAM 44.622) thought to be a 19<sup>th</sup> c. fake.

Figure 19 (right). Reinhold Vasters, drawing for *Fortitude* pendant, Victoria and Albert Museum. E.2801-1919. © V&A Images Victoria and Albert Museum, London

drawing, e.g. the chain and decorative element at the top, the shape of the pearl at the bottom, and the angle of the stag on which *Fortitude* rides all differ, but there is little doubt it is the same object. Again, the approach was to study the method of manufacture and to analyze the enamel to determine whether it was consistent with 16th century composition. The first surprise came when the reverse side of the pendant was examined (Fig. 20). It was clear that the pendant had been damaged, repaired, and some new parts possibly had been added at a later time (Fig. 21).



Figure 20. Reverse side of *Personification of Fortitude* pendant.



Figure 21. Detail of reverse side of *Personification of Fortitude* pendant showing damage, repairs and additions.

The colorant in red enamel used during the Renaissance was copper. In the late 18th century there was a change to antimony oxide. Thus analysis of red enamel can help distinguish Renaissance from later works. In addition to analysis, one visual clue we began to look for as a sign that an object was Renaissance was fairly reliable, but subtle. If there was copper-based red enamel on an object, a white halo could be seen under magnification where the red enamel touched the gold (Fig. 22). If antimony was the colorant, there was no halo (Drayman-Weisser and Wypyski 2007). It is possible that the halo is caused by the copper diffusing into the gold wherever it is in contact during firing, leaving behind a copper depleted fringe in the enamel.

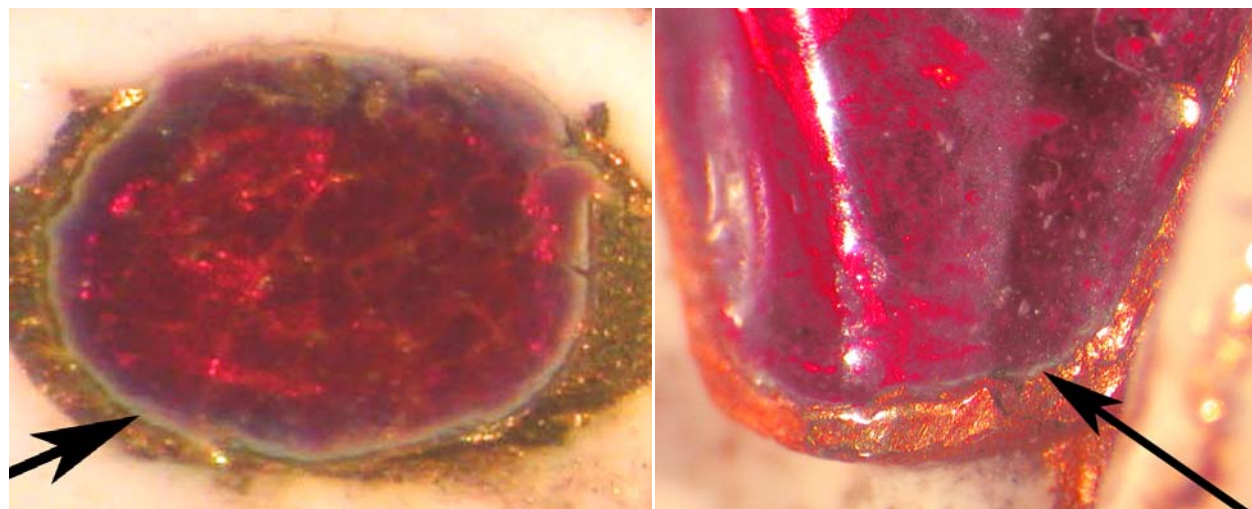


Figure 22 (left). Red enamel with white halo at the edges indicating that the enamel is copper-based and consistent with the Renaissance (WAM 44.464).

Figure 23 (right). Detail of red enamel with white halo on *Fortitude*'s garment indicating copper-based enamel consistent with the Renaissance.

When examining the *Fortitude* pendant, a white halo at the edges of red enamel was found in many places, including at the edges of *Fortitude*'s red garment (see Fig. 23). Therefore, we began to suspect that at least parts of the object were made in the Renaissance. However, one must be cautious since it is possible that some enamellers continued to use older glass recipes into more recent times. In some areas the red enamel did not exhibit a white halo, e.g. on the chain, the floral embellishments associated with the chain attachment points, and four small projections behind the bezel-set diamond. The analysis of the rest of the enamels confirmed that only the enamels in the areas with no halos have compositions consistent with the 19th century. Samples from all other areas were consistent with 16th century enamel.

Based on the repairs evident on the reverse and the differences in the enamel compositions in different parts, it seems likely that the object was manufactured during the Renaissance, but was damaged, repaired and embellished in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The changed angle of the stag appears to have occurred when the pendant was damaged, as what appears to be a metal fatigue crack in the gold can be seen in one of the stag's legs near its hoof.

These findings may shed new light on the nature of Vasters' drawings. Many scholars had assumed that the drawing of the *Personification of Fortitude* pendant was a design for production. But this study shows that it represented an embellished Renaissance pendant. It is not certain whether the jewel was repaired before or after the drawing was made. For some the question still remains: Is this a Renaissance object? a fake? a repaired jewel? For the Walters the issue was clarified, and the pendant can now be displayed with a label that clearly distinguishes those parts that are Renaissance from its 19<sup>th</sup> century embellishments.

## Conclusion

All of the objects presented here had been considered dubious or outright fakes at one time. In each case this led to intensive study and analysis by conservators and conservation scientists. Although it may not always happen this way, each of the objects studied here has been redeemed. Because they now have been so thoroughly studied, these objects have become the examples against which others can be compared, and they are more highly valued than before they were questioned. For those who have been involved in these studies, these objects have been transformed from fake to fabulous.

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