



Roundel

Not on display**Title/Description:** Roundel**Born:** 1220 c. - 1225**Object Type:** Ornament**Materials:** Champlevé enamel, Copper, Gilt**Measurements:** diam. 83 x d. 7 mm**Accession Number:** 878**Historic Period:** Early 13th century**Production Place:** Europe, France, Limoges

This roundel, depicting a dragon attacking a serpent set within a brilliant blue and gold floral enamel border, is typical of mid twelfth-century Limoges production, in form, style and function. Situated on an important pilgrimage route to Santiago, Limoges developed a highly successful metalworking industry. Workshops churned out products using champlevé enamel, where powdered enamel was poured into a design engraved into the copper surface, and fired. Brilliant blue was particularly characteristic of Limoges production, as was openwork metalwork similar to the central scene, particularly on plaques which would be applied to decorate larger objects.

Very similar roundels, also with enamelled blue and gold borders surrounding openwork gilded beasts, can be seen still in place on several small wooden chests or coffrets, including one now in the Palazzo Madama-Museo Civico d'Arte Antico, Turin (inv.402), indicating the probable original use of this roundel. [1] Numerous related roundels survive independently of their original objects.[2] A few, including examples in the Louvre and S. Sebastiano, Biella (Piedmont), have such similar designs that they may possibly be from the same mould. [3]

So ubiquitous were these roundels that nineteenth-century fakers felt it worth their while to create new versions, which can still prove highly convincing. [4]

Eleanor Townsend, March 2022

[1] S. Castronovo and C. Descatoire, *Les émaux de Limoges à décor profane: autour les collections du Cardinal Guala Bicchieri*, exhibition catalogue: Musée de Cluny, Paris and the Palazzo Madama-Museo Civico d'Arte Antica di Torino, Turin (Paris, 2016), fig.9; M. Campbell, exhibition review: 'Limoges enamels. Paris and Turin', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. CLVIII (August 2016), pp. 662-4, fig.60. Other examples include the one now in the Museo Leone, from the Cathedral of St Eusebio, Vercelli: M-M. Gauthier, *Émaux du Moyen Âge Occidental* (Fribourg, 1972), no. 138; another example in The Glencairn Museum, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania (12.EN.89): E. Taburet-Delahaye, B.

Drake Boehm, *Enamels of Limoges: 1100-1350*, exhibition catalogue, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, 1996), cat. no. 38; the coffer presented to St Paul's Cathedral, London, by Bishop Fulcus (d. 1259): S. Hooper (ed.), *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection* (New Haven and London, 1997), cat. no. 366 (gives no further reference).

[2] See S. Castronovo, *Collezioni del Museo Civico d'Arte Antica di Torino: Smalti di Limoges del XIII secolo*, Savigliano (Cuneo), 2014, cat. nos. 11-19, pp.118-53, for excellent illustrations of not only the nine roundels in the Turin collection, but also twelve in the Louvre, two in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, two (ex Keir Collection) whose current location is unknown and eighteen from S. Sebastiano, Biella (Piedmont). A similar example is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (M.333-1956) <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O383758/roundel-roundel/> [accessed 1 March 2022]

[3] Louvre: inv. OA 9470, see Castronovo, *Museo Civico*, p.125; Biella: see Castronovo, *Museo Civico*, p.132 (top left). Hooper, cat. no. 366. states that another almost identical example is in the D. Sierro Collection, Sion, Switzerland, but without further reference.

[4] See for example, Castronovo, *Museo Civico*, cat. no. 38. See also discussion in Castronovo and Descatoire, *Guala Bicchieri*, pp.31-2.

Further Reading

S. Castronovo and C. Descatoire. *Les émaux de Limoges à décor profane: autour les collections du Cardinal Guala Bicchieri*, exhibition catalogue: Musée de Cluny, Paris and the Palazzo Madama-Museo Civico d'Arte Antica di Torino, Turin, (Paris, 2016)

M. Campbell, exhibition review: 'Limoges enamels. Paris and Turin', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. CLVIII (August 2016), pp. 662-4.

S. Castronovo, *Collezioni del Museo Civico d'Arte Antica di Torino: Smalti di Limoges del XIII secolo* (Savigliano (Cuneo), 2014)

E. Taburet-Delahaye, B. Drake Boehm, *Enamels of Limoges: 1100-1350*, exhibition catalogue, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, 1996)

M-M. Gauthier, *Émaux du Moyen Âge Occidental* (Fribourg, 1972)

S. Hooper (ed.), *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection* (New Haven and London, 1997), no.366.

Provenance

Acquired 1983
