

## Seven Lalique enamelled jewels created between 1895 and 1897

- **The Symbolist *Hydra Jewel*. An enamelled Masterpiece Cabinet Jewel. Circa 1895. The Gulbenkian Museum, Portugal.**

While in Australia on her world tour Bernhardt befriended the Australian sculptor Edgar Bertram Mackennal, then married and in his late 20s, strongly advising him to return to Paris. He borrowed money and arrived in Paris in 1891 with letters of introduction from Bernhardt.<sup>1</sup>

Bernhardt a sculptor of repute in her own right had exhibited *After the Storm* at the 1876 Paris Salon and receiving an Honourable Mention, a sculpture shown in the centre of Marie-Desiree Bourgoin's painting of Bernhardt's studio in 1879.



**Sarah Bernhardt bronze *Après la Tempête* (*After the Storm*) exhibited at the 1876 Paris Salon.**

Her finest work is a white marble possible self-portrait sold at Sotheby's London 16 February 2017 for more than 300,000 pounds, a sum indicative of her skill and talent. The frame with a title plaque inscribed: *OPHELIA / PAR / SARAH BERNHARDT* the marble signed: *SARAH. BERNHARDT*: 70 by 59cm.<sup>2</sup>



Despite being the most famous actress of her day, Sarah Bernhardt had never performed the role of Ophelia at the time her marble was conceived – it was not until 1886 that she appeared as Ophelia in a production of *Hamlet*, followed by a controversial turn as the eponymous male character of Shakespeare's tragedy in 1899.<sup>3</sup>



It seems Mackennal, like many before and after him was seduced by Bernhardt's charms, for on Bernhardt's return to Paris in 1893 and before her tour to London, he produced arguably his best and most famous sculpture, *Circe*. A plaster version was exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1893 and the following year a bronze at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. How influential was Bernhardt in the creation of this figure? The subject is interesting; Circe is the goddess of magic, an enchantress; was this how Mackennal viewed Bernhardt, with himself as one of Odysseus' sailors cast under her spell? The actress was known to throw her hands forward from under her chin on the final curtain call, in the position captured here by Mackennal. Bernhardt was ... *the queen of the pose and the princess of the gesture*, as declared by Rostand when praising her in verse as one of the poets on *Bernhardt Day* in 1896.



**It is the multi headed *Hydra* that *Circe* wears in her hair that is of interest to this essay. I suggest that this was the inspiration for the Symbolist enamelled *Hydra Jewel* created by Lalique no later than 1895.**

Mackennal would have attended a Bernhardt performance in Australia and seen how the actress thanked her audience with her distinctive curtain call. After her first performance in New York, she took 27 curtain calls and her pose was noted: ...*she received a thunderous ovation, she thanked the audience with her distinctive curtain call; she did not bow, but stood perfectly still, with her hands clasped under her chin, or with her palms on her cheeks, and then suddenly stretched them out to the audience...*<sup>4</sup>

It is more than conceivable that Sarah was Mackennal's muse for the naked figure of *Circe*. A similar image is included in Mackennal's very personal 1893 bronze relief of Bernhardt, which captures her commanding presence and powerful character. This image incorporates Bernhardt's monogram in the top left corner, her name in full in decorative lettering running down the right-hand margin and a small full-length nude relief of the actress holding the masks of *Comedy* and *Tragedy* in the lower left margin. The masks have been taken from Bernhardt's bronze inkwell of 1880 and they appear again in the Lalique bronze portrait of Bernhardt presented to her in 1896 by her theatre company.



**Bertram Mackennal's *Circe*.**

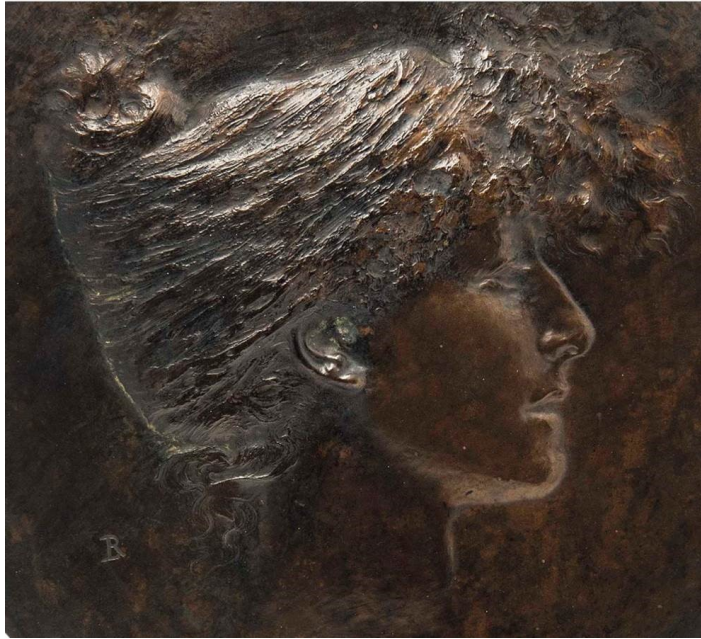
**Circe was the considered image of the *femme fatale* in nineteenth century Symbolist art. This is a reduced bronze cast, taken from the life size plaster of 1893, exhibited by Mackennal the following year at the Royal Academy, London, where the Hanging Committee, offended by the overt sexuality of the reliefs, placed the work on display with the base covered. Collection Art Gallery of New South Wales Australia.**



A portrait plaque by Mackennal of Sarah Bernhardt cast in 1893. This image of Bernhardt bears many close similarities to the 1896 Lalique portrait plaque reduced for his ivory and silver medals. The masks of *Comedy* and *Tragedy* were first used by Bernhardt in her *Chimera Inkwell* of 1880 and by Lalique in his portrait bronze of Bernhardt, 1896.

Ex Collection J.B. Hawkins Antiques



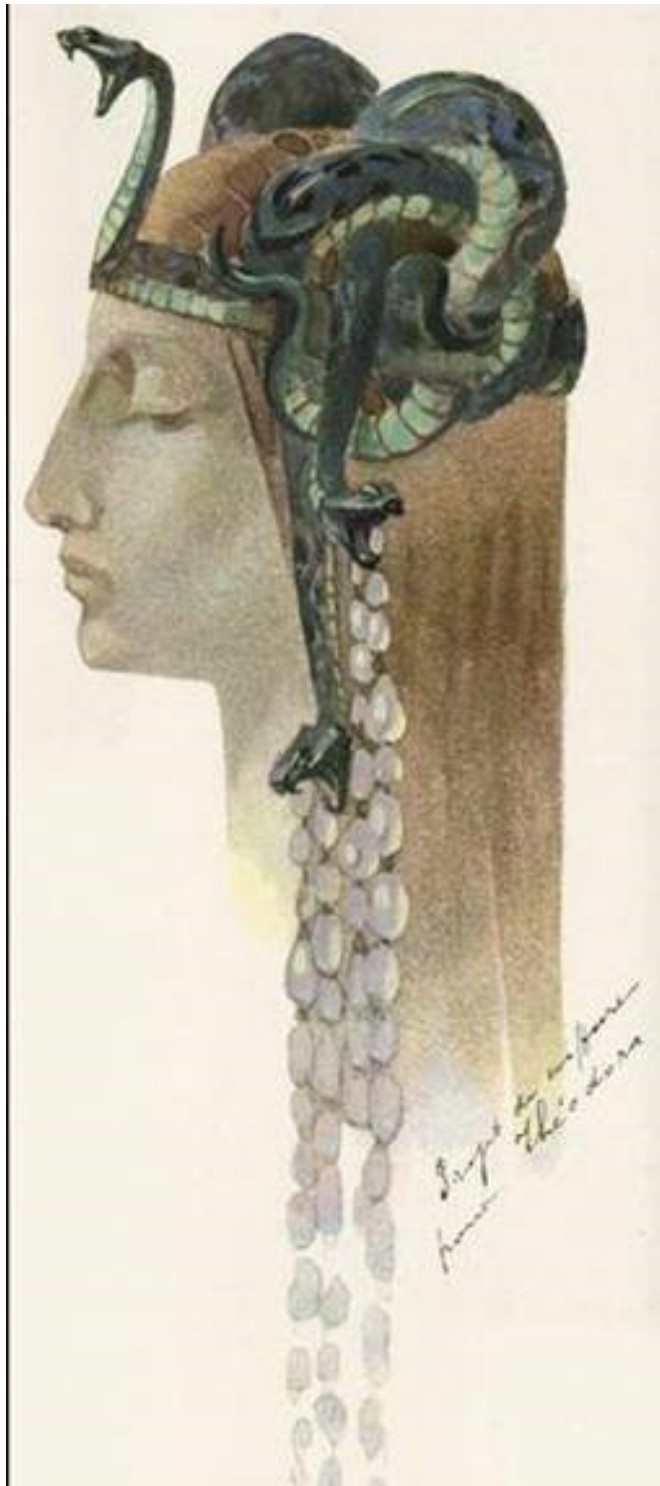


**Detail from the 1896, life size cast bronze and patinated plaque depicting Sarah Bernhardt in profile, impressed mark RL for Rene Lalique, diameter 47 cm. Sold, Christies 26 October 2016, Lot 33. This image was reduced by his patented copying and reducing machine to produce a series of Bernhardt silver medals and a single ivory example now in the Musée d'Orsay.**

The Hydra of Lerna was a fabulous water serpent with nine heads, killed by Hercules in the second of his twelve labours. Hercules found that if he cut off one of the heads, two new heads grew back. A hydra incorrectly painted with seven heads about to be slain by Hercules was painted by the leading French Symbolist painter Gustav Moreau in 1876.



**Detail of the Symbolist oil painting by Gustave Moreau of Hercules and the Lernaean Hydra painted in 1876. Collection the Art Institute of Chicago.**



Left The 1894 Lalique drawing of a multi headed hydra headdress<sup>5</sup> owes a lot to the hydra on the head of the Mackennal bronze of *Circe* of 1893. Lalique's now close association with Bernhardt resulted in the creation of the *Hydra Jewel*, the first of his two important Symbolist jewels of 1895/6.

Right An original photograph of Lalique's *Hydra Jewel* as exhibited in St Petersburg in 1903 when it was still complete with the graduated strings of blister pearls. The magazine image has been printed by mistake in the reverse here now flipped by me. National Library Canberra.





**The *Hydra Jewel* by René Lalique, champlevé and plique-à-jour enamelled by Eugène Feuillâtre and inspired by *Circe* the bronze of Sarah Bernhardt. It has lost the blister pearl hangings as displayed in Paris in 1900, Turin in 1902, St Petersburg in 1903. London in 1903 and Agnew's in 1905. It was purchased by Gulbenkian in 1908 and appears to have been damaged around the neck of the central hydra which has been reset at a different angle. The late date of this sale suggests that although difficult to sell it was one of the last of the early jewels still in Lalique's possession, presumably sold without the pearls in a negotiation relating to price. The Gulbenkian Museum Lisbon.**



**Detail of the plique-à-jour translucent enamelling to the underneath of each Hydra body. Koch states that the heads of the Hydra are articulated. Overall 20.8 by 14.3 cm.**

It has been suggested by Koch <sup>6</sup> that there are two versions of both this jewel and the cockerels head, I do not believe this to be so. I suggest that the confusion has arisen as a result of damage and repair, Lalique never made two versions of the same subject, both items have been stripped of their pearls and diamonds respectively the possibly once articulated head of the hydra may have been damaged and replaced incorrectly.



- The Symbolist *Chimera Jewel*. A Plique-à-Jour Masterpiece Cabinet Jewel. Circa 1895/6. The Gulbenkian Museum, Portugal.



The *Chimera Jewel* is Lalique's second Symbolist masterpiece this time with articulated wings, designed by René Lalique, enamelled by Eugène Feuillâtre and directly inspired by Sarah Bernhardt. Completed late in 1895 or early 1896 the enamel and sapphire body is representative of Lalique's past as a designer of precious stone jewels. If the background is white or black the translucent plique-à-jour enamelling not in graded colours, picks up that background. 25 cm. square. Gulbenkian Collection

It has been described by the Lalique historian Vivienne Becker as: *The most shocking and memorable of Lalique's jewels...* An opinion borne out by all those who have had the pleasure of viewing this, never to be forgotten work of art<sup>7</sup>

On the evidence of surviving jewels when Lalique changed tack in 1892 from designing and creating precious stone jewels to creating jewels of a similar subject matter in enamel he could only progress using the undoubted skills of his enameller Eugène Feuillâtre. The evolution of their designs from diamond or precious stone set traditional jewels, to evocative enamelled Symbolist, or Art Nouveau masterpieces may be tracked using as examples five enamelled jewel linked to the evolving and improving skills of Feuillâtre after his appointment by Lalique in 1890.



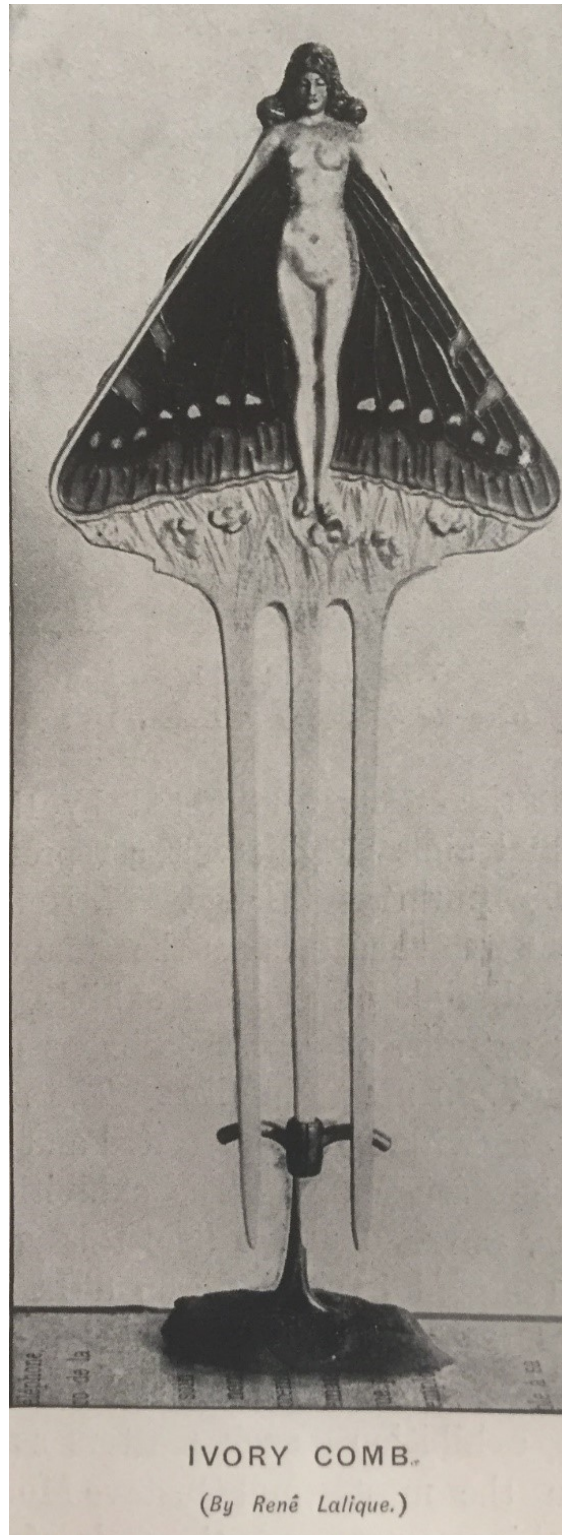
A Lalique designed and Eugène Feuillâtre enamelled diamond, gold and silver traditional butterfly brooch of circa 1891/2 inspired by the Tiffany & Co. multi-coloured orchids, on silver as shown in the Paris Exhibition of 1889. By comparing the wings of the butterfly to those of the *Chimera Jewel* the dramatic change wrought in Lalique's oeuvre by the introduction of plique-à-jour enamelling is immediately apparent.



A preparatory drawing by Lalique for a Symbolist enamelled chimera butterfly (1893)



A Symbolist chimera butterfly with a damselfly tail, her arms now elongated into coarsely wired diamond set plique-à-jour wings (1894).



From the *Magazine of Art* September 1897, this Symbolist ivory comb which precedes the use of horn was made in late 1894 or more probably early 1895 and exhibited in Brussels 1897 and Paris in 1900.<sup>8</sup> It appears to be plique-à-jour enamelled but possibly not in translucent colours. It is amongst the first examples of Lalique's winged jewels. The arms portrayed as butterfly wings are soon to be damselfly and the massed hair may be associated with Bernhardt.





**Possibly the first damselfly winged Symbolist chimera jewel with experimental nearly translucent, plique-à-jour enamelled wings (1895) with Bernhardt's massed red hair in gold.**

From this sequence of jewels it is possible to trace the design changes from the standard butterfly jewel now enamelled (1891/2) to a series of Symbolist jewels - the preparatory drawing by Lalique for a chimera butterfly (1893), to a chimera butterfly with a damselfly tail, her arms now elongated as wings (1894), to an ivory chimera comb with winged arms, (1895) to a damselfly chimera with experimental, plique-à-jour enamelled and diamond set wings (1895) and finally to the Exhibition *Chimera Jewel* of late 1895 early 1896.



**A side view of a gold and diamond set diadem from an illustration in the *Magazine of Art*, 1897, dating from early 1895.<sup>9</sup> The eye nearly shut profile is linked to Bernhardt through the hydra headdress drawing of 1894 and her massed red hair is now much in evidence. More importantly it is another in Lalique's rapidly evolving Symbolist designs.**

I consider the *Chimera Jewel* to be Lalique's second oversize Symbolist masterpiece. It is unlike any other jewel in his oeuvre before or after. It is a chimera not a sphinx and Chimera is a Symbolist word here used by Lalique, Bing and Bernhardt to describe these creations. The fact that it was not shown by Bing in his 1895 exhibition nor in Brussels in 1897 would suggest the possibility that it was commissioned by Bernhardt from Lalique after the first flush of their initial meeting. Bernhardt was perpetually short of money, so it may have been sold back to Lalique at the time of her takeover of a larger Parisian theatre in 1899.



**The final leap, the ultimate Symbolist, *Chimera Jewel*, enhanced by the translucent plique-à-jour enamelled damselfly wings. The wings are articulated on the line of the dragon's feet the early experimental thicker edge to the wings as the border provides the strength.**

The term chimera is defined in Wikipedia as: *Any mythical or fictional animal made up of parts taken from various animals; or anything composed of very disparate parts; or perceived as wildly imaginative, implausible, or dazzling.* The Symbolist *Chimera Jewel* depicts Bernhardt imaginatively set into the body of a damselfly trapped within the jaws of a Japanese dragon; her arms replaced with a single pair of dazzling damselfly plique-à-jour wings supported by the feet of an implausible but exotic Japanese three-toed dragon.

It is believed that Bernhardt introduced Lalique to Calouste Gulbenkian, a connection cemented before the 1900 Exhibition as Gulbenkian's first recorded purchase is the veneered opal, *Wooded Landscape Choker* in 1899.<sup>10</sup>

The concepts used by Lalique in the creation of this jewel, as distinct from the skills of the enameller have been distilled from four principal sources: Lalique's close observation of Bernhardt's Chimera bat winged inkwell of 1880; an understanding of Japanese art through an association with Samuel Bing, the persona of Sarah Bernhardt as an actress, artist and sculptor, and finally the well-known tomb of another femme fatale Diane de Poitiers which is supported by four sphinx like figures.



The Bernhardt Chimera inkwell was created when Bernhardt was playing the role of Berthe de Savigny in *Le Sphinx* by Feuillet, others have called this her sphinx inkwell, terminology not used by Bernhardt.



A bronze oil lamp by Andrea Riccio (1470 -1532) made in Padua in the first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the Landes Museum, Germany.<sup>11</sup> Such an object seems at odds with Bernhardt's known persona suggesting her interests and knowledge of the arts was considerable.



The Riccio bronze was adapted by Bernhardt to create a Symbolist self-portrait bronze she titled: *Autoportrait en Chimère*. Marked SARAH BERNHARDT 1880, with the foundry mark: THIEBAUT FRERES/FONDEURS/PARIS, this cast is one of five so far recorded. Collection Museum of Fine Arts Boston<sup>12</sup>

Bernhardt exhibited a version of this bronze in London in 1880 under the patronage of the Prince of Wales with whom she was closely associated, which accounts for the presence of a version in the Royal Collection. In that year Clairin produced<sup>13</sup> a now untraced drawing that relates to the masks of *Comedy* and *Tragedy* as worn on her shoulders. These theatrical images derived from Greek mythology are the symbols of the ancient Greek Muses, Thalia and Melpomene symbolising the right of the wearer to express their emotions freely and without restraint.

131 — Clairin (Georges). *Sarah Bernhardt entre la Tragédie et la Comédie*. Aquarelle gouachée en forme d'éventail. Signée à gauche, en bas : G. Clairin, 1880, avec une dédicace à son amie Sarah.

Haut., 27 cent.; larg., 57 cent.



Front view of the *Chimera Inkwell* with its remarkable bat wings and claw feet that show obvious links to the Gulbenkian *Chimera Jewel*. The masked horned devil at her chest is to be found in Lalique's display at the 1902 Turin Exhibition.

The *Autoportrait en chimère*, is a fascinating and important Symbolist document of taste and mystique in the last decades of the nineteenth century. I suggest that Lalique depicted

Bernhardt as she saw herself using her self-portrait inkwell as the initial concept for his iconic *Chimera Jewel*.



**This exotic portrait by Clouet, now known as the *Lady in the Bath*, long considered to be a portrait of Diane de Poitiers, is now in the National Gallery Washington, the gift of the Kress Foundation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.**

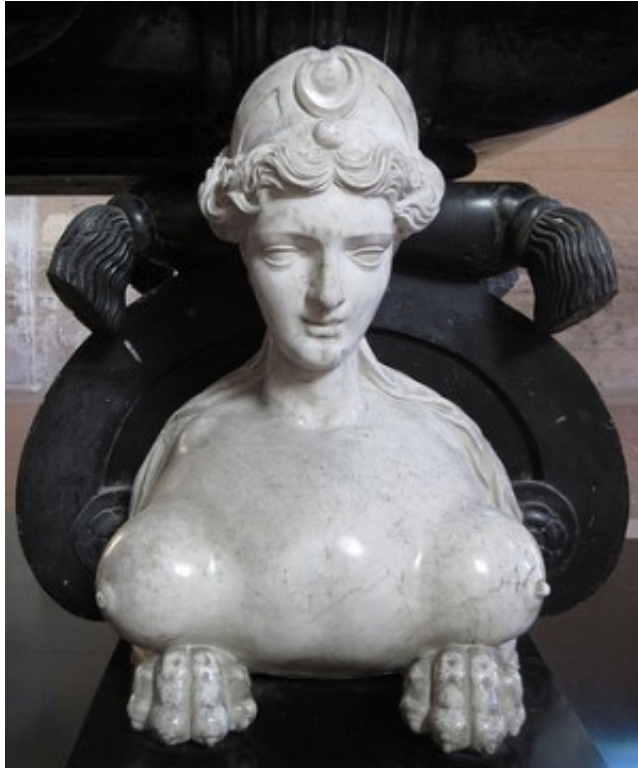
Another link to the *Chimera Jewel* is this sensational portrait of Diane de Poitiers, mistress of the King of France. It can be shown that the portrait played a part in Bernhardt's life in the crucial early years of her association with Lalique between 1894 and 1895. The painting was exhibited in the *Fair Women* Summer Exhibition at the Grafton Galleries, London, in June 1894 as the *Portrait of Diane de Poitiers, Duchesse de Valentinois*.<sup>14</sup>

Remarkably Bernhardt would have seen the painting and probably posed under it as her company from Paris was playing in London from June 18<sup>th</sup>. Bernhardt gave a reception at the Grafton Galleries on July 17<sup>th</sup> which raised 600 pounds for the French hospital where her portrait by Spindler, later copied by Lalique as a bronze, was an added exhibit.<sup>15</sup>

If Bernhardt's interest was piqued by the portrait it would have been a minor diversion, if she had been unaware of its existence to visit the tomb of Diane de Poitiers in the chapel at the Chateau d'Anet on the way back to Paris from London in 1894 and mention this visit to Lalique.

Lalique brings all these concepts together in his oversize, dramatic, uncommercial and unwearable masterpiece the exotic *Chimera Jewel*, the apotheosis of the Symbolist jewel.





One of four marble sphinx supports from the 16<sup>th</sup> century tomb of Diane de Poitiers at Chateau d'Anet in the Loire valley which bear a close physical relationship with her green chrysoprase bust in the *Chimera Jewel*.



A Lalique jewel in the Walters Art Museum of a naked lady with enameled flaming red hair of circa 1895, another Symbolist image inspired by the massed red hair of Sarah Bernhardt.



This side view encapsulates Lalique's vision of the 19<sup>th</sup> century *femme fatale* Sarah Bernhardt who, in 1895, was at the peak of her international career. Her fascinating personality, avant-garde way of life and skills as an actress, artist and sculptor inspired Lalique. Within 12 months he was to cast a portrait bust of Bernhardt and create an 18-inch portrait bronze reduced for a commemorative medal which the actress distributed on her *Bernhardt Day*.<sup>16</sup>

The attribution of the face in the *Chimera Jewel* to Bernhardt comes from various sources, principally the two drawings with eyes virtually closed made by Lalique for the proposed *Theodora* head dresses of 1894 and the two images below, where even in death Bernhardt skin shows not a wrinkle.



A powerful and evocative image of Sarah Bernhardt from an original drawing by Jean Alexandre Coraboeuf, the face of the actress should be compared with the Chimera Gulbenkian jewel. Bernhardt is wearing a choker, the ruff stops the choker biting into the neck, a feature of her self-portrait in the *Autoportrait en Chimère* inkwell. I would suggest the original of this image may date to circa 1885.



A photograph of Bernhardt taken after her death in 1923, a rare image of the actress with her eyes closed, the image used by Lalique in her earlier portrait jewel



- **The Art Nouveau *Dragon and Damselfly Jewel*. A Plique-à-Jour Masterpiece Cabinet Jewel. Circa 1897. Private Collection.**

This is the third and the last of the oversize, enamelled masterpiece jewels by Lalique. A case could be made that this is Lalique's finest Art Nouveau jewel possibly inspired by the interests of his youngest daughter by his first marriage, Georgette. Until recently its existence was only known from Lalique's original drawing still in the possession of his descendants. It is conceivable that the jewel was retained within the family as the finished gouache once belonged to his granddaughter Marie-Claude Lalique who died without issue. Interestingly, when Lalique designed a collection of moulded glass boxes in 1921 he named the dragonfly example after his late daughter, 'Georgette' who died in 1910 aged twenty-two. The glass box shows three dragonflies in flight suggesting that the image of the dragonfly provided a remembered connection for Lalique with his daughter. The other glass boxes in this series are seemingly named after the subjects depicted.



**An original Lalique design for the third great masterpiece of the period 1895-1897, the Art Nouveau, Plique-à-Jour, *Dragon and Damselfly Jewel* made as drawn but in blue not yellow circa 1896/7. The diamonds set into the wings are denoted in white. The stones finally used were Australian opals then just becoming available in some quantity rather than the as drawn yellow sapphires. Collection of the late Marie - Claude. Lalique.**

This gouache may have been one of the exhibited drawings sent by Lalique to the Salon in 1895.<sup>17</sup> Brunhammer states that Lalique gave these gouache master drawings to the purchasers of his jewels, the drafts in their thousands he would keep for himself.<sup>18</sup>



**The Lalique designed out of period glass dragonfly ‘*Georgette*’ box of 1921.**

At this stage, it is important to draw a distinction between the dragonfly and the damselfly for Lalique used both for purposes of perfecting a design. The dragonfly has aircraft type fixed wings that remain and flap in the horizontal. A damselfly has more pointed wings where they join the longer thinner body, these may be raised vertically above its head.



**A damselfly specimen caught and mounted at *Bentley* in Tasmania in 2010. The wings are more pointed at the junction with the body, which is longer and thinner than that of a dragonfly. All specimens lose most of their wing colour on death or after mounting.**



**A dragonfly, the wings are broader before the junction with the body, which is shorter and fatter than that of the damselfly.<sup>19</sup> It is this standard of delicacy in delineation that Lalique and Feuilletré, aspire to in the wings of the *Dragon and Damselfly Jewel*.**

The *Chimera Jewel* is arguably the first plique-à-jour jewel to use the wings of a damselfly. It was soon followed by this now pure Art Nouveau oversized, plique-à-jour *Dragon and Damselfly Jewel*, probably the last and certainly the finest of this rapidly evolving series of oversized masterpieces, enamelled by Eugène Feuilletré between 1895 and 1897.

The first Lalique dragon or damselfly jewels seem to have been set with yellow precious stones and not enamelled as evidenced by the dragonfly jewel, number 503, exhibited by Bing in 1895. The yellow gem set jewels were followed by the yellow plique-à-jour enameled jewels as illustrated below. Yellow is not a good colour for wearing in the hair when these translucent jewels may be backlit. Lalique soon changed the colour from yellow, seen in the concept drawing and early dragonfly jewels through green to variations in a semi translucent blue.

This recently discovered jewel previously known only from the contemporary gouache shows how rapidly Lalique was moving from Symbolism to Art Nouveau and from precious stone jewellery to bijouterie, where the jewel is esteemed for the delicacy of the work rather than the value of the materials<sup>20</sup>.





**Detail of a fine quality Lalique/Feuillâtre, yellow pique-à-jour dragonfly necklace of 1895, probably later fitted to a pressed horn comb that would have required dark to black hair to set off the colour, hence difficult to wear. Sold Sotheby's 15 May 2018 lot 339. Photograph Sotheby's.**



**The *Dragon and Damselfly Jewel*. A Plique-à-Jour masterpiece and one of, if not the finest Art Nouveau jewel ever made. Designed by René Lalique, enamelled by Eugène Feuillâtre, the double-sided gold mounts cast and chased by Pierre-Georges Deraisme no later than the end of 1897. 15 cm. square.**

The power that these fragile, unwearable masterpieces of the jewellers art have over the viewer is a result of the impact on the discerning eye of the plique-à-jour translucent enamelling to their wings, which in the case of the *Dragon and Damselfly Jewel* convincingly appears to enhance nature. This very difficult skill, the peak of the enameller's art, has been executed here at the very highest level, a level attained by only the gifted few. Each pair of wings can be seen, as in nature, to have a different *fingerprint* or design to the other pair on the same insect, all highlighted using muted, translucent coloured enamels ranging from yellow to green to blue and held within the thinnest of the thin gold wire allowing no room for error.



In 1895 the only man in Paris with the talent to design these exceptional jewels was Lalique and the only person who could enamel them for him was Eugène Feuillâtre.



**Detail of the superb underside gold work by the workshop goldsmith and chaser Pierre-Georges Deraisme, as expertly executed to the back as it is to the front.**



**Detail of the enamel work of Eugène Feuillâtre. This jewel is almost impossible to make using repeated firings, it is a triumph of the enamellers art. The borders to the wings ape nature as they are particularly thin and fragile and seemingly unique to this delicate and unwearable masterpiece with its different matched pairs of ‘fingerprint’ wings.**

As Lalique masterpieces these three jewels were created to be admired in the round by the cognoscenti thereby promoting Lalique’s skills as the leading, innovative Parisian jewellery designer at International Exhibitions.

As the first of Lalique’s Art Nouveau masterpieces the *Dragon and Damselfly Jewel* is more commercially appealing, more accurately drawn, more feminine and importantly more restrained than the two masterpiece Symbolist jewels. It would have been very difficult for



Lalique to let this superb object out of his possession and it appears to never have been exhibited or sold in his lifetime.

In the words of Vivienne Becker this jewel is: *A spectacular work of art showing René Lalique, poet-goldsmith and genius of Art Nouveau at the height of his powers, the height of his imagination and ingenuity. This jewel is a rediscovered masterpiece of great historical and artistic importance....*<sup>21</sup>

- **An Exhibition Art Nouveau Plique-à-Jour *Poppy Hat Pin*. Circa 1896. Collection Musée d'Orsay**

The year 1897 was an eventful and important one for Lalique. It was in that year that the magazine *Art et Decoration*, in a review entirely dedicated to his work then on exhibition in Brussels, congratulated him on the results obtained. It was the year he won first prize at the annual Salon in Paris, which prompted the first acquisition of his work by an important museum, a purchase noted by the magazine *Le Monde Artiste* and it was the year Lalique received the Croix de la Legion d'Honneur for his contribution to the Brussels World Fair of 1897.

The purchased work was this plique-à-jour *Poppy Hat Pin*, enamelled by Eugène Feuillâtre.



**The plique-à-jour *Poppy Hat Pin* enamelled in Lalique's workshop, to his design by Eugène Feuillâtre. The use of the stronger gold rim is of interest and is a common factor to Feuillâtre work presumably to give more rigidity and strength to a jewel intended to be worn.**



**Detail of this important Exhibition, Art Nouveau, Feuillâtre, plique-à-jour, curved surface jewel, purchased by the Musée de Luxembourg from the Salon Exhibition in 1897, now in the Musée d'Orsay, © RMN.**

Illustrated in the same issue of *Art et Decoration* is another remarkable hat pin, again in plique-à-jour, by Feuillâtre who seems to have received no acknowledgement by Lalique for his almost unbelievable skilled work, that alone enabled their creation.

I suggest that this lack of acknowledgement by Lalique in printed reviews of his impressive skills caused Feuillâtre to leave his employment in 1897.

- **An Exhibition Art Nouveau Plique-à-Jour Pansy Brooch. Circa 1896. Collection Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland.**

Henry Walters, a wealthy Baltimore liquor trader and railroad man, purchased two important exhibition Lalique plique-à-jour jewels at the World's Fair in Missouri in 1904. The original purchase document suggests that Walters chose eight jewels from at least fifty-three others exhibited by Lalique for a total cost of US\$ 8,100. Walters died in 1931 leaving his house and contents to the City of Baltimore to create what is now the Walters Art Museum.

World's Fair Saint Louis

St. Louis, U.S.A. 1904

Office of the  
French Government Commissioner  
of Fine Arts

Mr. H. Walters Esq.  
New York City

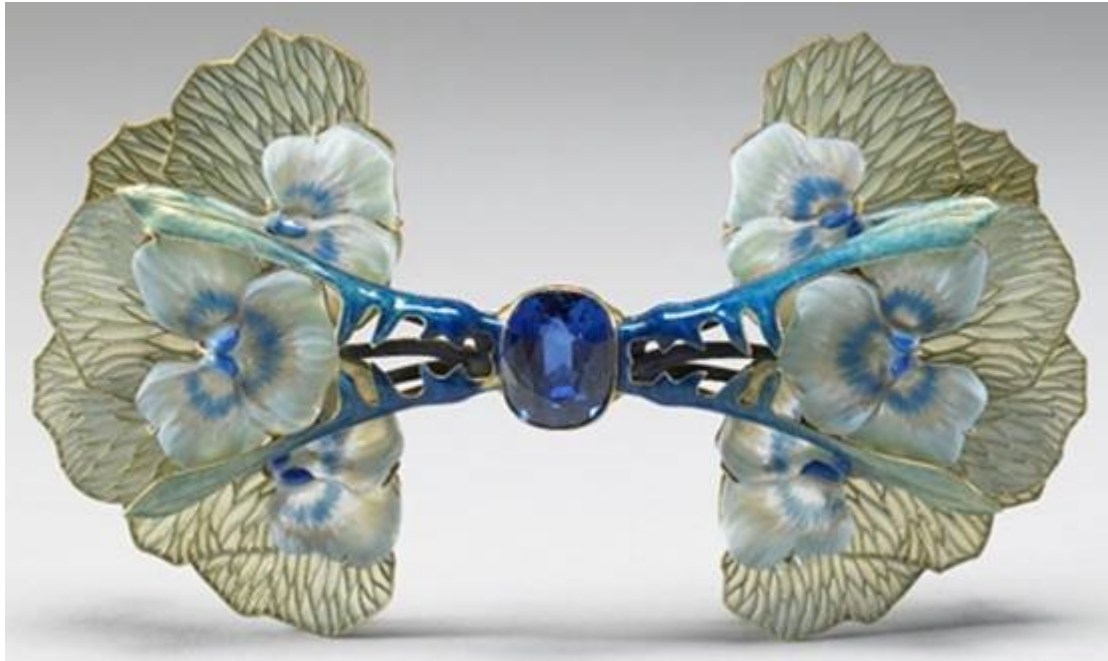
Jewels by M<sup>re</sup> Rene Lalique

No.	Description	Price
No. 1	Diadem representing an orchid carved in ivory, leaves of transparent enamel and brilliant setting	\$1000 <sup>00</sup>
" 22	Pendant - little gold figure and brilliant setting	350 <sup>00</sup>
" 24	" - representing laurel seed of mother of pearl - one round pearl	1800 <sup>00</sup>
" 53	" - representing an ivory figure and mistle flower	600 <sup>00</sup>
" 38	Corsage ornament representing snowballs colored with enamel - one yellow sapphire	700 <sup>00</sup>
" 32	Pin representing fantasies carved in rock crystal - leaves of transparent enamel - one blue sapphire	2000 <sup>00</sup>
" 34	Pin representing ferns leaves and stalks in transparent enamel - brilliant set one opal	900 <sup>00</sup>
" 42	Necklace - representing winged grapes leaves of rock crystal & enamel	750 <sup>00</sup>
total 8 pieces amounting to		\$8100 <sup>00</sup>

The Lalique/Walters account. As the exhibits were sequentially numbered Lalique exhibited at least 53 items. The prices should be considered carefully, the most expensive item was No. 32, a plique-à-jour jewel. No. 24, a pendant with pearl, was expensive because of the pearl not the size or the work. The pendant No. 22, little gold figure is the Symbolist Sarah Bernhardt jewel depicting her leonine mane of flaming red hair illustrated above.

Collection Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.





**The *Pansy Brooch* an Exhibition, Art Nouveau jewel with superb plique-à-jour enamelling by Feuillâtre before his departure from the firm in 1897. The glass flowers probably cast by Lalique. Collection Walters Art Museum Baltimore. Invoiced as: No 32. Pin representing pansies carved in rock crystal – leaves of transparent enamel, one blue sapphire. US\$ 2000**

The Walters Museum Collection notes read: *This magnificent brooch is an outstanding example of Lalique's floral jewellery creations which, due to their sheer size and delicacy, were probably never intended to be worn. Here, three overlapping pansies on either side of a central, simulated step-cut sapphire combine moulded glass blossoms with openwork enamelled petals growing out of stems also covered with translucent blue enamel. Henry Walters bought this piece from Lalique in 1904 at the World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri. This realistic brooch with its symmetrical design and use of glass and "plique-à-jour" (openwork) enamel for the petals anticipates Lalique's future work. Within several years, the artist abandoned both jewellery and the Art Nouveau style to devote himself to the production of glass moulded in the Art Deco style. Circa 1903. H:8.1 × 13.34 × 2.2 cm.*

The introduction of coloured glass into the design adds style and a point of difference from those less talented. It is a speciality of the House of Lalique and glass and its casting for use in a jewel was his particular interest. In the hands of someone less technically adept this new avenue of expertise could prove a disaster with clashing rather than these perfectly merging colours.

- **An Exhibition Art Nouveau Plique-à-Jour *Orchid Diadem*. Circa 1897. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland.**



**Designed by René Lalique, possibly to depict *Cattleya gaskelliana alba*, the leaves plique-à-jour enamelled by Feuillâtre. Paris. Circa 1897. Made in ivory, gold, horn and diamonds, 5 1/4 x 7 in. The size and fragility make this another exhibition only jewel. Collection Walters Art Museum Baltimore Maryland.**

The museum caption reads: *Lalique's studio rendered the highly naturalistic orchid at the centre of the comb out of a single piece of ivory; diamonds play a supporting role, picking out the veins along three slim leaves in glowing plique-à-jour enamel. The stem is attached by a gold hinge to a three-pronged horn, not ivory, comb...*

The original purchase document invoiced to Walters: *No 1 Diadem representing an orchid carved in ivory, leaves of transparent enamel and brilliant setting. US\$ 1000.*

- **The unfinished Exhibition Plique-à-Jour Cockerel Diadem. Circa 1896/7. Gulbenkian Museum Portugal.**

In 1897, Lalique exhibited at the Salon in Paris before taking his collection to the International Exhibition in Brussels. In the *Magazine of Art* September 1897 four of his jewels and two drawings are illustrated to include this concept drawing for a cockerel pendant below. The magazine contributor and author Henri Frantz comments regarding the process of creating a jewel in Lalique's workshop as may be illustrated from surviving material that I have gathered from various sources:

*Frantz "...The jewel slowly evolved from the artists mind, is first sketched on paper...*





*...He draws in the form in pencil and then with watercolour he experiments in the mixture of hues, studying which tones are best suited to certain shapes; but still only in a general way...*

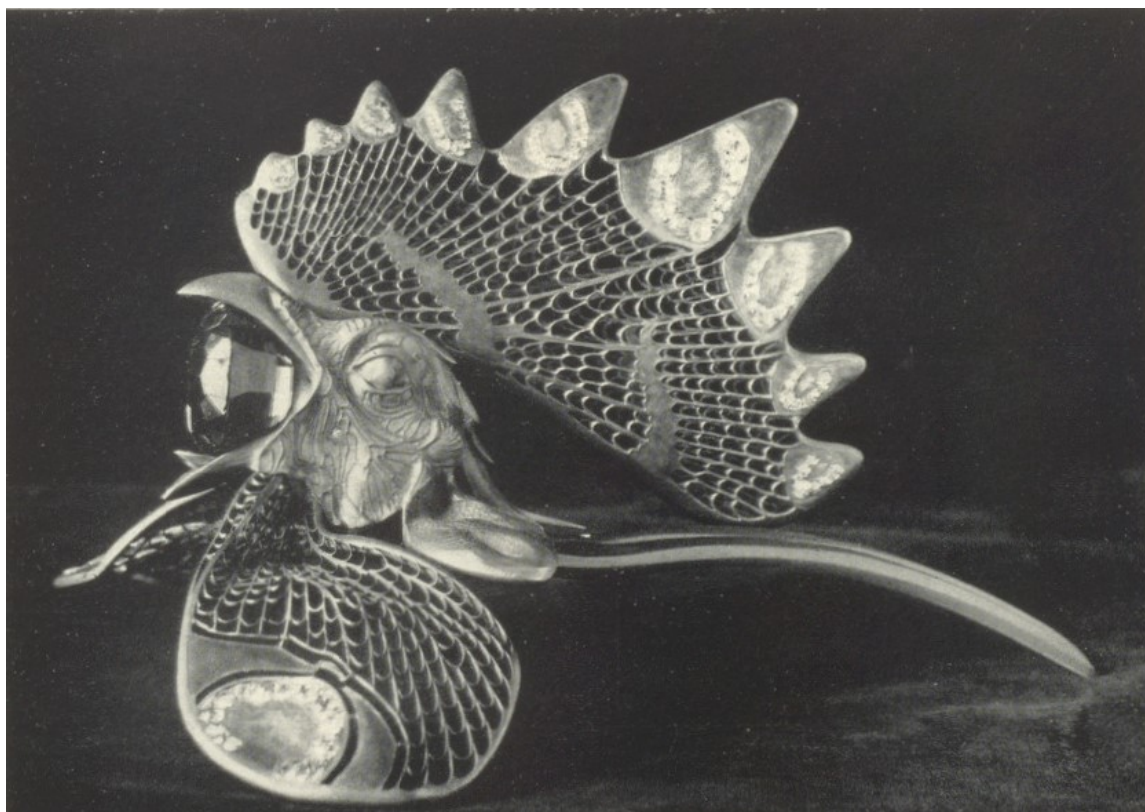


*...He next rough casts the work and tries to plaster the effects he can produce...*



*...Finally, he sets to work in the metal. On a sort of anvil, which however, can be turned to suit his convenience, he hammers and chases the silver or gold with various forms of gravers and punches, finishing this part of the work in the finest detail, before inserting the stones, with which he tries various combinations till each contributes to the general effect of the whole..."*

This partly enamelled, but unfinished plique-à-jour, *Cockerel Diadem* is now in the Gulbenkian Museum, purchased in 1904 after it had failed to sell in St Petersburg or London the previous year.<sup>22</sup> It was constructed using the above sequence, the comb was fret cut from a sheet of gold rather than soldered, the strongest way for plique-à-jour enamelling; the thicker border is self-evident. On close examination when exhibited in St Petersburg the jewel is still diamond set, yet when sold to Gulbenkian the diamonds have been removed suggesting another possible argument over a price for this time an unfinished object.



**Contemporary photograph from *Mir Iskusstva* of the then diamond set *Cockerel Diadem* as exhibited in St Petersburg in 1903. Illustration National Library Canberra.**

On the departure of Lalique's plique-à-jour enameller in 1897 this jewel was never finished. Frantz makes no comment during his visit to the enamelling workshop and one can presume he was not shown around what up to this point had been the key to Lalique's fame in business. A case could be made that this is the last, but unfinished of the Exhibition Lalique plique-à-jour jewels. It remains a great work of art, yet it is interesting to reflect that Lalique was happy to despoil the jewel by removing the diamonds from their settings for purposes of sale, suggesting that he was unhappy with the unfinished state of the jewel without its plique-à-jour enamelled finish.

Katherine Purcell has explored in detail the inner workings of the Falize family jewellery business in Paris and notes how their workshop was divided into resident employees and external freelance collaborators.<sup>23</sup> External collaborators such as the enamellers Louis Houillon or his other pupil and Feuillâtre contemporary, Etienne Tourrette, maintained their own workshops. When they worked on a jewel submitted by Falize for exhibition this was noted as the work of a specific collaborator who in turn could be awarded a collaborator's medal.

The same applied to the Falize resident employees such as Lucien Hirtz who became the firm's in-house enameller and Chardon employed as a foreman who received a collaborator's bronze medal in 1876 and a silver in 1878. He may have been, or be related to, the Chardon who worked for Lalique.

Other leading French jewellers including Baugrand, Boucheron at the 1867 Exhibition in Paris also listed their collaborator's. Feuillâtre worked for Lalique until 1897 as an employee and not a collaborator hence Lalique was possibly under no obligation to submit his important contribution to the relevant authorities for an award. Feuillâtre, appears to have received neither medals nor recognition, presumably it was the friction that this precipitated that caused his departure to start his own business

Feuillatre worked for Lalique until 1897 as an employee. It is not apparent that he was ever publicly identified by Lalique as his collaborator and without this exposure he would never be awarded a prize for his major contribution to Lalique's growing international fame. Presumably it was this lack of acknowledgement that precipitated Feuillatre's departure and prompted him to start his own business as the Parisian *Art Enameller*.

These two geniuses the designer and the enameller needed each other to create the three above masterpieces which are amongst the greatest achievements jeweller and enameller in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Hutchison, Noel S (1973). *Bertram Mackennal*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2017/erotic-passion-desire-117322/lot.1.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/4710/> For a detailed discussion her sculpture and her of the relationship with Abbema

<sup>4</sup> Cornelia Skinner *Madame Sarah*, p.163

<sup>5</sup> Barten, Sigrid *Rene Lalique Schmuck und Objets d'art 1890 – 1910* \_ illustrations No's. 5 and 6 where they are also dated to 1894

<sup>6</sup> Koch, Michael and Rosemary Fitzgibbon. "The Rediscovery of Lalique's Jewellery" *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, vol 10, 1988, pp.28-41

<sup>7</sup> Barten numbers 946 and 946A dated 1897-1898 first traced illustration *Art et Decoration* 8. 1900

<sup>8</sup> Duncan, Alastair *The Paris Salons 1895 – 1914 Jewellery Vol II The Designers L-Z Lalique*: p.24

<sup>9</sup> It is illustrated from the front, Duncan Vol II p. 28

<sup>10</sup> Illustrated Leite M.F.P. *Rene Lalique au Musee Calouste Gulbenkian* p.41.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mfa.org/collections/object/fantastic-inkwell-self-portrait-as-a-sphinx-54054>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.kilgoregallery.com/usr/library/documents/main/bernhardt-sarah-self-portrait-as-a-chimera-bronze-.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Op cit. Lot 131 in her estate sale of 1923

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.46112.html#provenance>

<sup>15</sup> British Newspapers Online: Grafton Bernhardt 1894.

<sup>16</sup> Lalique patented his reducing machine which would have allowed him considerable leeway to copy portraits in various jewels. Patent 1885 number 171.791

<sup>17</sup> Barten, No. 1111 dated 1904 – 1905

<sup>18</sup> Brunhammer, Yvonne *The Lalique Epoch* Chapter One, *Jewels of Lalique* endnote 9, page 214

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8RQV\\_Dah-8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8RQV_Dah-8)

<sup>20</sup> This jewel was the centrepiece of a small collection of five important jewels described by Vivienne Becker in a specially commissioned catalogue for the London jewellers S.J. Phillips from whom it has been purchased.

<sup>21</sup> Becker, Vivienne *Catalogue for S.J. Phillips*, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Another *cockerel head enamelled in brilliant yellow* is referred to in the Lalique account book for the 1900 Exhibition as being sold for 37,000 francs. Brunhammer endnote 41, p. 215

<sup>23</sup> Purcell, Katherine *Falize a Dynasty of Jewelers* pp.167 – 197