

Addendum 5 - Part I - Second Draft

The Holbein portraits of Henry VIII, a dating sequence using precious stones and their settings

Connections:

The German artist Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/8 - 1543) came to England in 1526 from Basel under the patronage of Sir Thomas More the speaker of the House of Commons with a letter of introduction from Holbein's most important European patron their mutual friend Erasmus. On arrival he was invited to paint members of the More family and their circle of friends while living in their family home in Chelsea.¹

After the portrait of More, now in the Frick collection in New York, (Plate 16) one of the most important surviving paintings produced on this visit is that of his fellow German, the mathematician, astronomer and horologist, Nicholas Kratzer (1487 -1550?) now in the Louvre. Kratzer came to England in 1516 as tutor in mathematics and astronomy to the More children, (Plate 1) moving to Oxford becoming a fellow at Corpus Christi college in July 1517. While visiting Erasmus in Antwerp in 1520 he was recommended to Henry VIII as his astronomer a position he accepted. He was one of Holbein's oldest friends. Despite this close connection with both More and Kratzer, Holbein did not succeed in gaining the confidence of the King or an appointment at court, he returned to Switzerland in 1528.

Holbein visited London again in 1532 to find Sir Thomas More at odds with the King over the annulment of his marriage to Katherine of Aragon resulting in his resignation as Lord Chancellor. More's refusal to attend the marriage of the King to Anne Boleyn made him persona non grata at court. It is of interest that there is only one possible portrait of Anne Boleyn by Holbein a sketch in the Royal Collection suggesting the artist was excluded from court as a result of his close association with More. More's animosity to the queen and the queen to him lasted until his beheading for high treason on 6th July 1535.²

On his return Holbein approached his compatriots in the Hanseatic League many of whom would have been friends of the Bavarian Kratzer. The mainly German speaking merchants working within a walled enclave on the north side of the Thames known as the Steelyard,³ they were, rich powerful and close knit.

One such merchant was the goldsmith, Hans or as he was referred to by Cromwell in his *Book of Payments* John of Antwerp whose portrait Holbein painted in 1532. (Plate 2) Holbein painted at least seven other important Hanseatic Steelyard merchants: Georg Gize - 1532, Hermann Wedigh - 1532, Derich Born - 1533, Dirk Tybis - 1533, Cyriacus Kale - 1533, Derick Berck - 1536 and Barthel Bruyn - 1539.⁴

According to the erudite writer on matters silver E. Alfred Jones, Antwerp was closely associated with Cromwell: "*Thomas Cromwell appointed Master of the Jewel House in the Tower of London in 1532 (created Earl of Essex in 1540) in recommending Antwerp for the Freedom of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths in 1539 he added that Hans had lived in London for 26 years.... he was active in the supply of gold, enamelled and jewelled collars and Georges of the Garter bestowed by the King on men of distinction some of which may be seen in portraits by Holbein*".⁵

Fittingly it is a portrait by Holbein of the goldsmith John of Antwerp bearing the painted date July 26 1532⁶ that provides the first record of Holbein's return to London. Antwerp was then the financial centre of Europe controlled by the German Augsburg Catholic banking family of Jakob Fugger a banker and dealer in metals ten living in Antwerp, his father a patron of Durer

and he of Titian. Henry VIII was to borrow the enormous sum of nearly a million pounds in Antwerp much of it from the Fugger bank and to die virtually bankrupt owing them a very large sum. Thomas More completed his first tract of *Utopia* in Antwerp in 1515 while acting for six months as Henry VIII ambassador representing the London merchants in their quarrel with the Steelyard and its Hanseatic merchants in an effort to more fully protect English commercial interests in the Low Countries. As a result More was in a position to maintain good mercantile and financial connections in both London and Antwerp.

The painting of Antwerp has recently been cleaned and reservations have been expressed over the previously accepted name of the subject based on his expensive clothes and the writing on the painted letter. A Tudor goldsmith was also a banker and by necessity therefore one of the richest men in the City as indicated by his clothing, the gold coins on the table, his newly revealed gem set ring and possibly even the key to his strong box with the blade carefully omitted in case of copying.

Cleaning has revealed that the name on the letter is possibly Johannes with the scissors covering an alphabetical letter in the surname given by Holman as *An[t]werp* [at the] *Stallhof* ... – Steelyard... The intaglio merchant's mark on the seal has been revealed as matching the seal impression on the letter. No maker's marks used by a foreigner working as goldsmiths in the City of London at this date are known so it is difficult to confirm the possible usage of a merchants mark as a makers mark on London made silver.

Assuming this is a portrait of the goldsmith it provides evidence of a working relationship between John of Antwerp, the appointee and confident of Cromwell the Master of the Jewel House and Holbein the designer of the Queen Jane Seymour gem set gold cup a wedding gift from the king in 1536. As further confirmation of the extent and closeness of Holbein to Antwerp he witnessed Holbein's will administration of which was granted to him as a legatee and a goldsmith. (Christina to get copy of will and check all relevant details)

If this magnificent object had not been melted it would have been confirmed as one of the finest examples of the Tudor goldsmith's art.

In late 1532 or early 1533 after the King's visit to Calais, Holbein painted a portrait of Cromwell who was intent on engineering the King's divorce and then an ally of Anne Boleyn. (Plate 3)⁷ The painting depicts Cromwell as the Keeper of the Kings Jewels with a letter addressed to him as such on his desk. Cromwell was made Master of the Jewel House on 14 April 1532 and Chancellor of the Exchequer on 12th April 1533. Many consider this portrait of Cromwell is seen as the least flattering of all his known portraits and the most viciously mocking.

During the first half of 1533 Holbein was also working on his most important surviving English oil painting, *The Ambassadors*, a now much loved icon at the National Gallery in London. (Plate 4) This portrait is believed to be of the then French ambassador to Henry's court Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve bishop of Lavaur whose father had been raised by the French king to the highest political office in France, President of the French Parliament. Both men would have been present at the recent Calais meeting between Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn and the French king Francis I a turning point in British history. This is not a portrait of an individual whereby the person depicted commissions or is given the painting and retains ownership. With two subjects the commission presumably owes its existence to a third party who in this case could be either Gilles de la Pommeraiie who received a gold cup from the king for his services in Calais or Cromwell who demanded it as a perquisite of office from the French.

On their return from Calais in December 1532 the French ambassador Gilles de la Pommeraiie accompanied the King and Anne Boleyn to the Tower of London to choose a gift from the Jewel

House to commemorate their successful visit to Calais in late 1532 to meet the French king Francis I. In a diplomatic triumph for Pommeraye Francis agreed to support the annulment of Henry's marriage to Katherine of Aragon and promised to do his best to enlist the Pope's support for the proposed marriage to Anne Boleyn. Pommeraye had been specifically sent to London to negotiate a treaty of friendship between the two kings, he would have been sorely tested. In a rare honour Pommeraye was allowed to enter the Jewel House where he was presented with a gold cup by the king.⁸

In the sixteenth century the office of Master of the Jewel House was an important royal sinecure granted for life with many lucrative perquisites to include the right to appoint the goldsmith to the king and his queen, each warrant carrying a heavy fee to be paid to the Master. Also the Master had the right to receive a present from any envoy or ambassador rewarded with a gift of jewels or plate supplied through the Jewel House as a gift from the king. This I suggest is the connection that caused Cromwell to accept a Holbein painting as a gift from the Ambassadors, doubtless paid for by their king as a perquisite of his office.

I suggest that Holbein used objects and instruments from his own collection some made by his friend Kratzer in possibly the first European vanitas painting *The Ambassadors*, a painting inspired by the teachings and philosophy of Holbein's mentor Sir Thomas More. Holbein has imbued the painting with More's deeply held views regarding the fragility of earthly life and vanity in the sense of futility here described using the three key elements in vanitas art: The passage of time, a ten sided sundial, the brevity of life, the fleeting note from the broken string of a musical instrument and the inevitability of death a skull.

Amongst the scientific instruments there is another timekeeper, a shepherd's dial, a cylindrical portable sundial from which the time is read by turning the cap with its attached gnomon on the lid to line up over the date of the proposed observation as shown on the scale at the bottom. This scale suggests the time was to be read on Good Friday, 11th April 1533, (Plate 5) the day the Royal Council was ordered by Henry VIII to recognise Anne Boleyn as the new Queen of England and the day before Cromwell was made Chancellor of the Exchequer.⁹

I suggest that the inclusion of the shepherds dial in the painting concludes Holbein's pictorial narrative in a way that would be understood by the erudite catholic Sir Thomas More and is instrument maker Kratzer, instruments that are recorded in his own portrait by Holbein. It is possible that the ambassadors themselves realised that the catholic cause was lost on this momentous day. The vanitas of the image may not have been lost on either Cromwell or the King.¹⁰

In 1536 thanks to the influence of Cromwell Holbein was appointed King's Painter from a studio in the palace at Whitehall where he commenced work on the Tudor family mural at a salary of 30 pounds a year

Seven design drawings for goldsmiths work, by or copied from Holbein originals are recorded and illustrated by John Hayward in his magnum opus *Virtuoso Goldsmiths 1540 – 1620*.¹¹

Particular attention should be paid to two of these objects both in gold set with precious stones¹², a tazza and the Seymour cup.

Firstly the magnificent enamelled gold tazza dated by Hayward to circa 1536, set with diamonds and rubies which Hayward suggests is number 45 in the 1574 Inventory of the Royal Plate of Queen Elizabeth I. (Christina to provide copy of Inventory) A drawing which nearly matches the inventory description is to be found in Holbein's English sketch book now in the Oeffentliche Kunstmmlungen, Basel. (Plate 6)

The 1574 Inventory describes a tazza the maker of which is unknown thus:

Item one proper Bolle of golde the bryme of the foote parte enamelid blacke the bolle having in the middest a faire squarid Diamounde with a pointe set in a collet of golde. The Couer wrought with braunches of trees knit together and terin are set six rowes of Diamoundes being in noumber fourescore and sixteen Diamoundes having within the Couer a woman pictured the head and Shoulders graven in a Camew and three Lozanged Diamoundes set in Collettes of golde parte of the knoppe of the couer set with nyne Diamoundes in Collettes of golde and a Roose of Diamoundes vpon the the knoppe poiz together xlvj oz

The second gem set item is the documented gold cup probably made in the workshops of John of Antwerp as the King's goldsmith as a gift from the king to his wife to celebrate the wedding of Henry VIII to Jane Seymour on May 30th 1536. This is known from two surviving original Holbein drawings, the first a concept drawing that once belonged to William Beckford now in the British Museum, the other the finished signed drawing by Holbein depicting the Tudor rose engraved circles surrounding the 'collette' set stones is now in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford. (Plate 7, Detail 7a)

The cup is described in the 1574 inventory as:

One faire standing Cup of golde garnished about the Couer with eleuen table Diamoundes and two pointed Diamoundes about the Cup Seventene table Diamoundes and thre pearls pendaunt vpon the Cup with this worde bounde to obeye and serve and H and J knitted together in the toppe of the Couer and the Quenes Armes and Quene Janes Armes holdone by two boys vnder a Crowne Imperiall.

The cup was melted by order of Charles I in 1629 and the gold sold to the Bank of Amsterdam. *The Crowne Imperiall* acting as the handle to the lid is a rare illustration of the Westminster Abbey gold St Edward the Confessor's crown with a cross below each arch and a trefoil fleuron between each cross. The word Imperial at this date refers to a closed crown as distinct to an open coronet. The king divested himself of the Westminster Regalia before leaving the Abbey and from then on wore his balas ruby set imperial crown as shown in the portrait attributed to Mytens of Charles I, a crown kept in the Jewel House at the Tower controlled by Cromwell as the Master.

The principal difference between the settings as drawn on the tazza and the cup and the gem set buttons and rings in the portraits, is the use of enclosed traditional collets to hold the stones on the goldsmiths work when compared with the claw four petal gold mounts to the jewellers work in the buttons rings collars necklaces and clasps portrayed in Holbein's paintings from 1536. I suggest therefore that this is a Holbein specific design, a setting found only in his portraits of the King or his wives, Jane Seymour or Katherine Parr painted between 1536 and his death in 1543. The portrait of Anne of Cleves makes the contrast as it was painted in her father's continental court and she is dressed and jewelled in his fashion with no input from the artist.

The design of the petal claw set gold mount enhanced the size of the gems set within may have pleased Henry helping to cement Holbein's position as both painter, designer of silver, weapons and even I suggest a section of his clothing with the gem set doublets and sleeves with either silver or gold thread woven into the fabric to create the drama that is the Holbein royal persona.

As Henry is believed to have said: *I tell you, of seven peasants I can make as many lords, but not one Holbein.....*

Another jeweller and goldsmith working at court recorded by Jones was Cornelius Hayes/Heyes/ Heyss, who is recorded in 1535 as dealing with a large number of gems

presumably removed under the King's orders during the Dissolution resulting from the Act of Supremacy passed by Parliament in 1534. Jones mentions some: "... 60 great pearls of one sort and 440 small and great of another sort", possibly the difference between Scottish river freshwater pearls famous from Roman times and the saltwater pearls from the East? He continues without giving a reference: "Three years later more gems came from the same treasury some to be set in caskets, buttons etc"

It is therefore the gold claw settings to the accoutrements, gem set buttons, rings and clasps sewn into the clothes of Henry VIII in his portraits that are of interest. Who designed the settings, are the stones royal by descent or monastic and can the design of the settings be used to authenticate or date the paintings is the quest?

The portrait of Queen Jane Seymour which is by Holbein is the key painting to introduce the subject of a *Holbein setting*. (Plates 8 & 8a). Her head dress, dress, the two necklaces and the pendant are faced with rubies in settings designed around the petals of a Tudor rose by Holbein .

The doublet a form of wide shouldered waistcoat with a skirt attached at the waist was always supplied with a separate matching pair of detachable sleeves tied with laces, or points to eyelet holes concealed under the coat.

From the surviving portraits it seems that Henry had at least three matched suites of sleeves and doublets with one in silver another in gold each set with sewn on buttons of emeralds, sapphires and rubies over the silver or gold interwoven fabric. (Plates 9, 9a.) The sleeves and doublet were often slashed in the German fashion and the fur, ermine, sable or miniver from an attached under garment pulled through.¹³ I suggest that the designer of these doublet and sleeve suites and the Holbein settings for the buttons, chains and pendants in the portraits of Henry VIII from 1536 is the royal image maker Hans Holbein.

Confirmation of Holbein's involvement in jewellery design can be found in two groups of surviving drawings for gem set and enamelled pendants in the British Museum. Two pendants each of a different design can be seen in the portraits, a single stone pendant being the earliest and a five stone pendant the latest. They must date from 1537 due to the change from a collet setting to a Holbein setting. (Plates 10, 10a, 10b)

When Henry VII defeated Richard III in 1485 the Wars of the Roses came to an end and his marriage to Elizabeth of York in 1486 united the Houses of Lancaster (red rose) and York (white rose). To mark this important occasion Henry VII father of Henry VIII created as a new family heraldic badge the Tudor Rose. This ancient badge can still be seen paired with the Beaufort portcullis in the decorations to the old Palace of Westminster then the home of the Tudors in London. (Plate)

Evidence of Holbein's first association with the Tudor rose as the heraldic badge of the Tudors is to be found in his portrait of Sir Thomas More painted in 1527 where More wears an Esse chain collar centred by a simplified Tudor Rose pendant. This collar was the personal gift of the king made to More as a mark of his esteem and respect. (Plate 16 and detail Plate 16a). On the evidence of this collar the Tudor rose heraldic badge previously of many petals was redesigned for Henry VIII and simplified by 1527 with three diminishing rows of petals. I suggest it was Holbein who finally redesigned the badge removing the outer third ring to make two circular petal rings, the white rose of York to the centre encompassed by the red rose of Lancaster.

A book of Jewellery designs drawn in black ink with a grey wash by Holbein once in the collection of Sir Hans Sloane and now in the British Museum contains 6 variations on a theme for setting a jewel in a single rose petal mount using six different borders. The single design, (Plate) SL,5308,18 shows a square stone with four claw mount in a Tudor rose petal setting first used as the settings to the jewels in the Seymour portrait painted in the latter half of 1536.

For purposes of comparison from the same book the pendant (Plate) SL, 5308,95 is in a standard collet setting showing the accepted fashion for mounting stones prior to this date.

It is the correct interpretation of this change of setting by the designer that is indicative of an authentic Holbein Painting.

¹ A contemporary drawing by Holbein of the now lost painting of the More family circa 1527 believed to have been annotated by Kratzer which if so would suggest his hand in the production or oversight of the clock to the centre of the back wall which bears similarities to the now much altered so called Anne Boleyn clock in the Royal Collection. RCIN 30018.

² More for his refusal to accept the Act of Succession which vested the crown in the future children of Anne Boleyn, for refusing to take an oath that would impugn the pope's authority and or assume the justice of the divorce was tried before Parliament and found guilty of high treason and beheaded.

³ Today approximately site of Cannon Street railway station

⁴ Thomas Holman *Holbein's Portraits of the Steelyard merchants, the Metropolitan Museum of Art Journal, Volume 14/1979 pp.139 -158.*

⁵ E. Alfred Jones *Apollo, 1942, Two Foreign Goldsmiths and Jewellers of Henry VIII pp.85, 86.*

⁶ This painting has recently been cleaned and the Royal Collection still consider this to be a portrait of Hans of Antwerp. RCIN 404443.

⁷ National Portrait Gallery London

⁸ Alison Weir *Henry VIII the King and his Court*, p. 325

⁹ Three of the instruments with the decahedron sundial under construction are to be found in the Kratzer/Holbein portrait, which poses the question was Kratzer as depicted in his portrait making the unfinished decahedron sundial as a gift for his friend Holbein in part exchange for his portrait?

¹⁰ When Cromwell suddenly lost office and was beheaded in 1540 his goods were listed and immediately sold as the property of a traitor. Is his portrait by Holbein on the list? If not as with this painting did Holbein retrieve them and on sell to the former French Ambassador in whose family collection it later appears? [Christina to investigate sale of Cromwell's goods and if possible find the inventory.](#)

¹¹ Plates, 38,41,42,43,44,45,46, to include two drawings now in the British Museum; for a combined sandglass/compass and sundial and a timekeeping machine. These drawings were used after Holbein's death by Sir Anthony Denny to construct a gift to be presented to the King on New Year's Day 1545, possibly like the cups the drawings were for presentation of this time a Kratzer invention.

¹² J.F.Hayward, *Virtuoso Goldsmiths 1540 - 1620*, Plate 41 signed by Holbein and Plate 45 for their precious stone and enamelled settings.

¹³ Jones gives the name of the royal embroiderer as Stevin Howmbill.



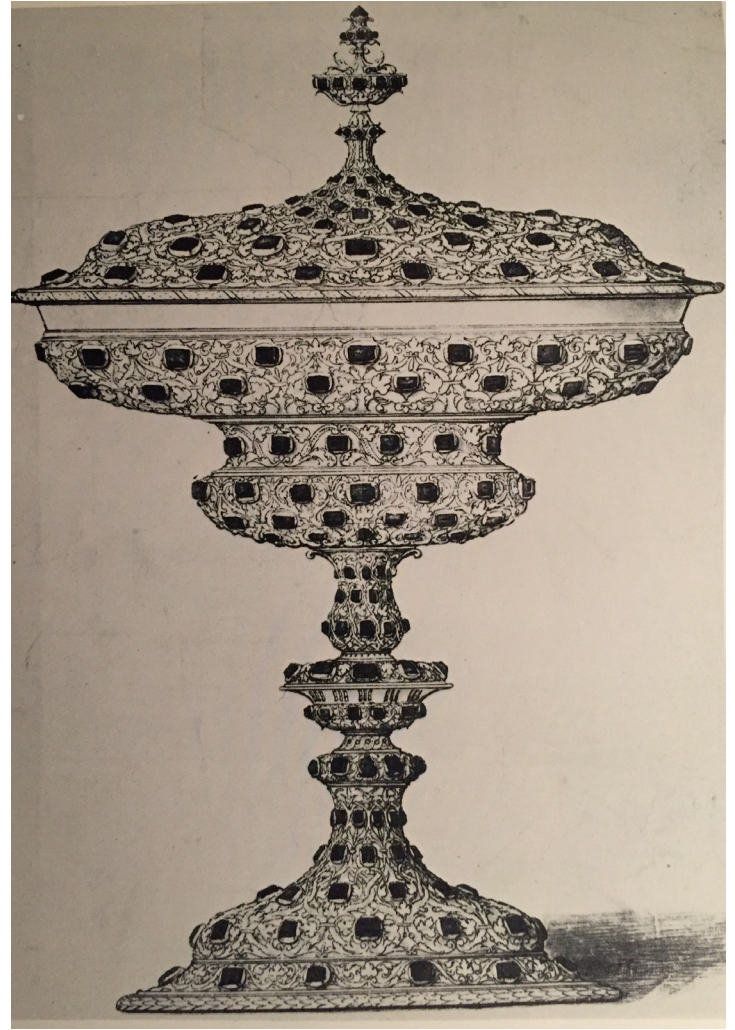


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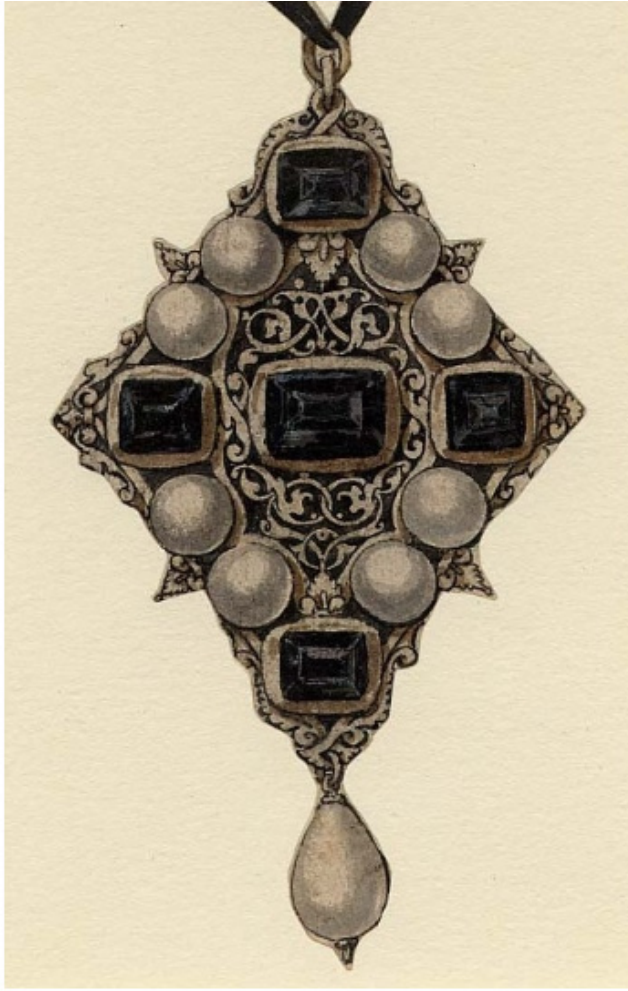
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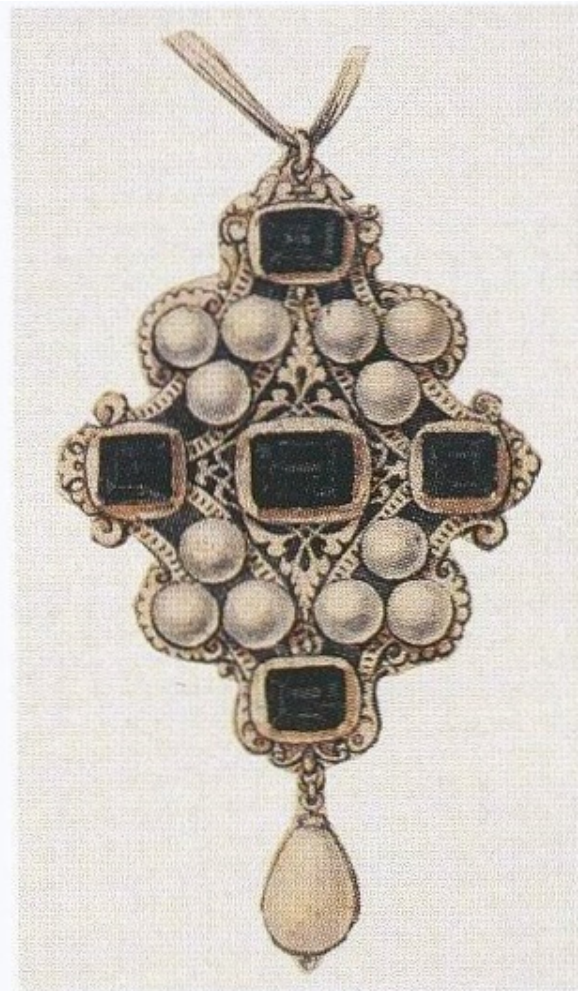
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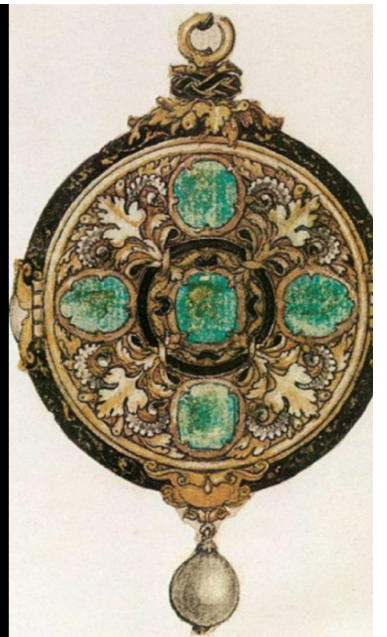
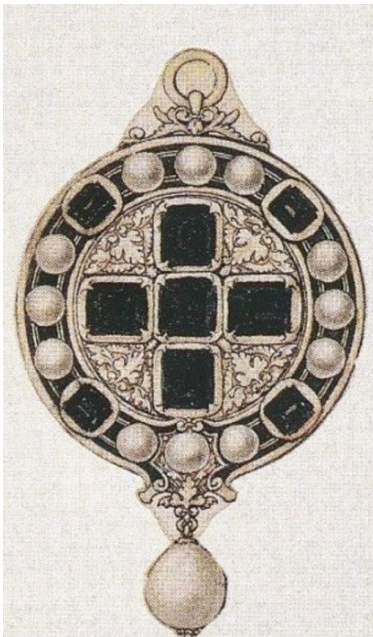
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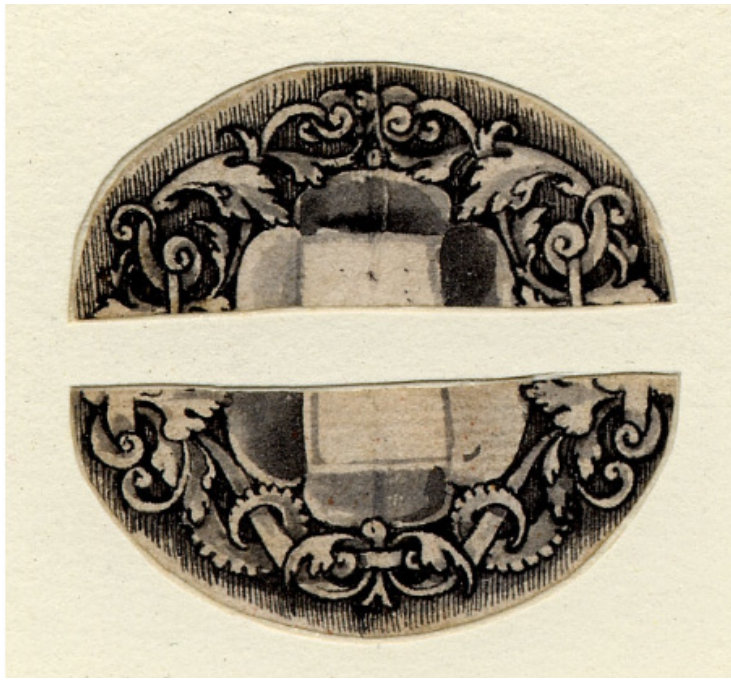
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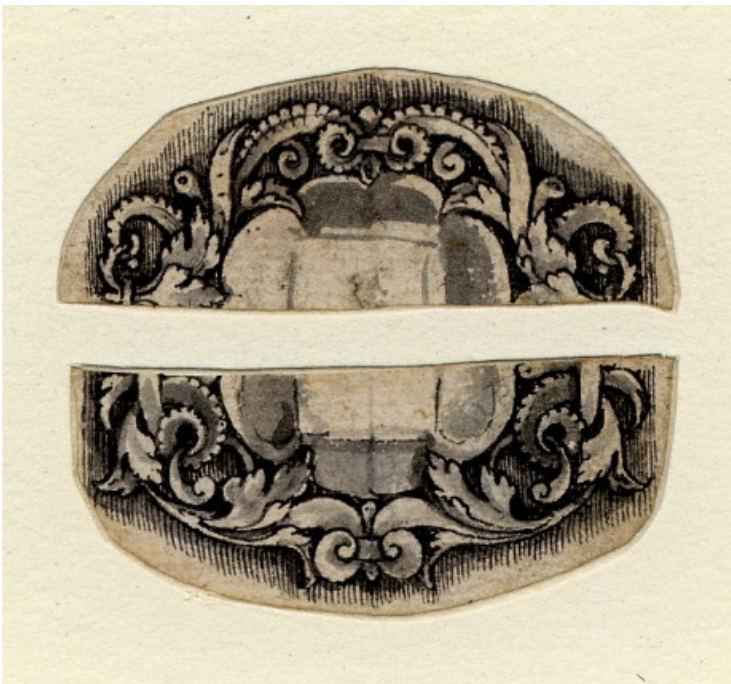
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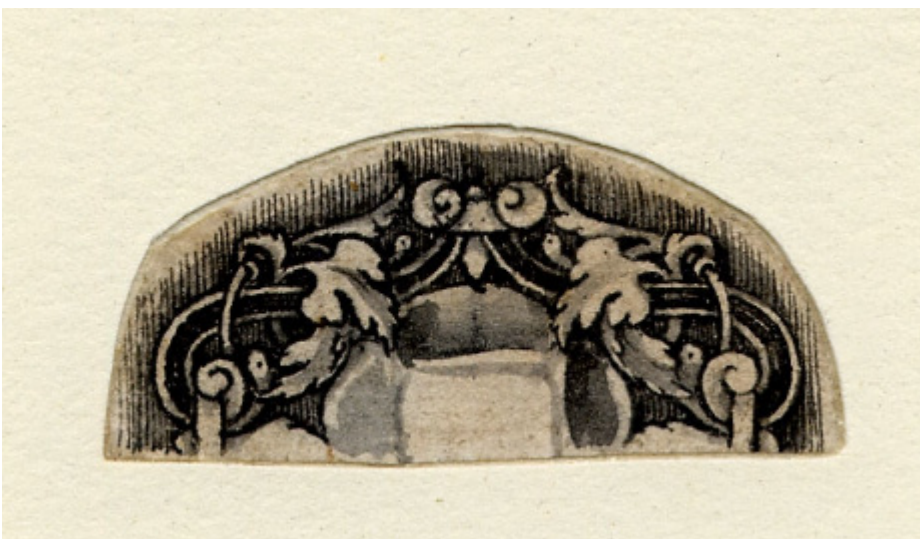
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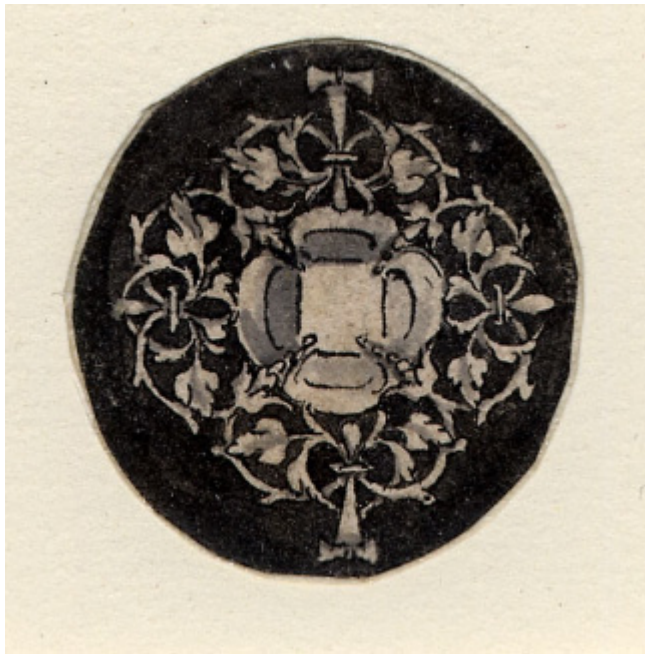
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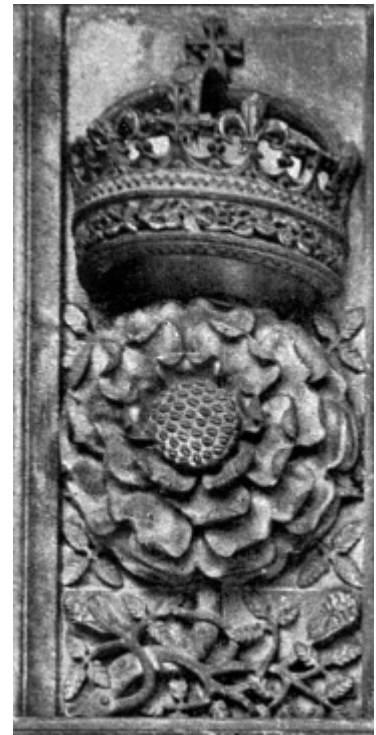
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