

1904 Egg: Repetition, Imitation, and Provenance Review – In Search of Historic Truth

“Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, that mediocrity can pay to greatness.” Irish Poet Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)

Part 1 By DeeAnn Hoff (USA) and Part 2 By Christel Ludewig McCanless (USA)

For centuries, artists in a broad spectrum of genre have garnered inspiration from those who created before them. Inspiration is something most artists court. Objects from Fabergé’s workshops, traced to antecedents preserved in the Grünes Gewölbe (Green Vault) in Dresden, Germany, provide but one example. Marina Lopato in her article addresses the phenomenon of Fabergé in our modern age, with both its blessings and curses. She writes, “Fakes, imitations and repetitions represent the most acute problem faced by Fabergé scholars and collectors.” A perusal of the exhibition catalog, *Fabergé, Jeweller to the Imperial Court*, and a [video presentation](#) accompanying the temporary exhibition (November 25, 2020 - March 14, 2021), on display at the historic Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, brings such descriptive terms to the fore. My essay, “Digital Colorization of Imperial Photographs: A Case Study of Time-Line Inconsistencies” (*Fabergé Research Newsletter, Spring 2020*) shows comparative historical photographs, whose modern colorations found their way onto a 1904 egg first seen in *Fabergé Style. Excellence Beyond Time* at the Museum and Exhibition Complex, Istra near Moscow, Russia, in 2018-2019.



1904 Fabergé Egg

(*Fabergé Style: Excellence Beyond Time*, 2019, p. 23;
Fabergé, Jeweller to the Imperial Court, 2020, pp. 50-51)

While the egg is variously labeled *The Tenth Wedding Anniversary* or *The Jubilee Egg*, the year 1904 was not only the 10th wedding anniversary of the Emperor Nicholas II and Alexandra Feodorovna, but also the sorrowful anniversary marking the death of Nicholas II’s father, Emperor Alexander III. The Emperor’s death at the old Maly Palace in Livadia (the Crimea) was devastating to Nicholas, ill prepared to assume the throne of Russia. Entries from his diary reveal this event would not be one he or the court jeweler Fabergé would have chosen for the annual Easter egg – even IF one were commissioned for that year.

- On the day of his father’s death, Nicholas recorded in his diary: Oct. 20, 1894 (November 1, 1894 NS) - “It was the death of a saint ... I felt as if I were dead too.” (Maylunas, Andrei, and Sergei Mironenko, *A Lifelong Passion: Nicholas and Alexandra, Their Own Story*, 1997, p. 99)

- Ten days later he recorded: "... I cannot yet believe that my deeply passionately adored and beloved Father has been taken away from us!" (*Ibid.*, p. 102)
- Nicholas wrote in a letter to his brother George in January 1895: "It still seems to me that everything that has happened is a terrible, revolting dream and that our *unforgettable Papa* is somewhere on a long absence and that he is bound to return to us! I somehow have the impression that I am only carrying out his duties temporarily this winter." (*Ibid.*, p. 123)
- His suffering and laments continued onward, most especially in his correspondence with his mother [Maria Feodorovna].

Historical photographs were used by Fabergé's miniaturists employed in the creation of some Easter Eggs for the Imperial family. More recently miniatures created after digital colorizations of these Imperial photographs appeared on the Internet and then on the afore-mentioned 1904 egg without consideration for their historical context. Visual samples with time-line inconsistencies explain the progression from black and white photographs taken during the reign of Emperor Nicholas II onto the 1904 egg with time-line inconsistencies now on display at the Hermitage:

A. Photograph of Grand Duchess Tatiana Nicholaevna, daughter of Emperor Nicholas II and his wife Alexandra Feodorovna, at a formal sitting in 1906 (left) compared to a post-2000 colorized version (right), show the details of Tatiana's traditionally white dress, shoulder bows and cummerbund depicted in blue on the miniature portrait of Tatiana on the 1904 egg.



A. Tatiana Nicholaevna (1897-1918) in a **1906** archival photograph taken at a formal sitting dressed in white.
([Wikimedia Commons](#))



Miniature portrait of Tatiana depicted in blue in a post-2000 colorized version. The original photograph used for this 1904 egg was not taken until **1906**.
(*Fabergé, Jeweller to the Imperial Court*, 2020, p. 53)

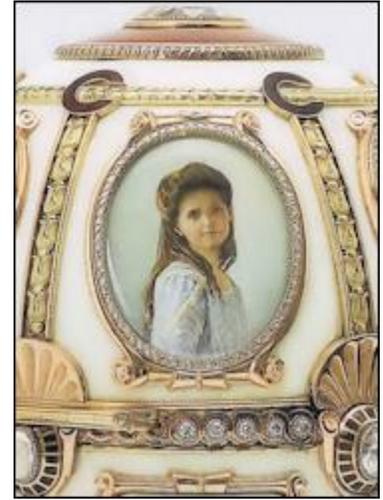
B. The archival photograph of Maria Nicholaevna was taken at a sitting in 1910. Imperial miniaturist, Vasilli Zuiev (1870-1941), appears to have used this photograph for his Maria miniature painted on ivory for the Fabergé's *1911 Fifteenth Anniversary Egg* – whose design, the 1904 egg imitates, sans any delicacy or refinement, never mind the missing progression of its timeline accuracy.



B. Maria Nikolaevna (1899-1918)
Photograph from a **1910** Sitting
(Bokhanov, A.N., Editor, *et al. The Romanovs: Love, Power & Tragedy*, 1993, p. 126)



Maria
Miniature by Vasili Zuiev on the **1911**
Fifteenth Anniversary Egg



Maria
1904 Egg with the Post-2000 Blue
Colorization Focus
(*Fabergé, Jeweller to the Imperial Court*, 2020, p. 53)



(Muntian, Tatiana. *Fabergé Masterpieces from the Collection of the Link of Times Foundation*, 2016, p. 148)

Zuiev held to the traditional white hue of the dresses, customarily worn by the four imperial sisters, when he painted their miniature portraits. Colorized versions of this image can be found on the internet in various colorized hues. The one of interest here is the blue version. In this example, Maria's dress is tinted blue, and the accent binding at the neck and upper arms in a contrasting ivory tone. Yet again, the miniature portrait of her on the 1904 egg reflects these modern Internet coloration details. Additional examples of the six modern miniatures of the parents and daughters in the last Imperial family are discussed in "[Digital Colorization of Imperial Photographs: A Case Study of Time-Line Inconsistences](#)" by DeeAnn Hoff.

There has been recent suggestion of a possible repair and replacement of original miniatures by Alexander Blaznov (whose work, however, was primarily ecclesiastical) with those by Vasilli Zuiev in 1908. The substitutions on the 1904 egg currently are certainly not the work of Zuiev! We can see

comparisons between the delicate works of Zuiev on Fabergé's 1911 *Fifteenth Anniversary Egg* as well as his miniatures for other Imperial Eggs: *Peter the Great Egg* (1903), *Napoleonic Egg* (1912), *Tercentenary Egg* (1913), and more. This purported Blaznov 'swap out' would imply the modern computer colorists somehow saw the images on the 1904 egg when it emerged per its current provenance into western hands ca. 1951, and then during the late 1990s and after 2000 copied in exacting detail into Internet miniatures images on various websites??? Quite IMPOSSIBLE!



C. [1901 Fabergé Basket of Flowers Egg](#)
(Courtesy Royal Collection Trust)



Surprise, Surprise!
C. Wildflower Basket Surprise with the Dates "1904" and "1894"
Added to the 1904 Egg
(*Fabergé, Jeweller to the Imperial Court*, 2020, p. 52)



The surprise of the 1904 egg is clearly modeled after the Fabergé *Basket of Flowers Egg* presented at Easter in 1901 by Emperor Nicholas II to his wife, Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. It simply cannot be even remotely imagined Fabergé's workmasters would produce such an imprecise rerun of the elegant 1901 Basket of Flowers Imperial Easter Egg to be used as the surprise in a later egg (1904?). Most especially not for the same Imperial recipient, in this case Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. It would hardly be a Surprise!

Beyond the timeline inconsistencies and the redundant surprise, there is an Imperial Easter Egg, created by Fabergé and marked 1904, namely the *Moscow Kremlin Egg*. A synopsis of historical facts based on research by Fabergé scholars in recent years yields more specifics, esp. for the years, when no Fabergé eggs were made for the Imperial family due to the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War:

1997 Fabergé, Tatiana, Proler, Lynette, and Valentin Skurlov. *The Fabergé Imperial Easter Eggs*, p. 170:

- The *Moscow Kremlin Egg* "was probably made to commemorate the Easter 1903 visit by the Emperor and Empress to the ancient capital of Moscow, which was regarded by all Russian society and Muscovites in particular as a significant event." The visit marked the first occasion that the Emperor and Empress visited Moscow following their coronation in 1896.
- "Although the egg had been produced at an earlier date, the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 delayed its presentation until 1906." In their description of this egg, the authors state: "A music box plays the melody of Tsar Nicholas II's favorite traditional hymn, *Izhe*

Kheruvimy [Like Cherubim], triggered by a button at the back of the egg. At the bottom, the egg is dated 1904 in white enamel and it sits upon a white octagonal onyx base.”

2001 Statements disavowing any Fabergé invoices for Imperial Easter Eggs for the years 1904 and 1905 due to the Russo-Japanese War are also cited in Lowes, Will, and Christel Ludewig McCanless, *Fabergé Eggs: A Retrospective Encyclopedia*, 2001, p. 85. Similar information is on the Miek's Fabergé Eggs website.

2020 Queries on the quantum propagation of Lopato's “fakes, imitations and repetitions” are reflected as well in the text box caption of the 1904 egg published in *Romanov News*, edited by Ludmilla and Paul Kulikovsky, #152, November 2020, p. 21:

Many experts have raised concerns regarding this Easter Egg, if it at all is a Fabergé. The miniature portraits on it are not from the same year and also some of the children are from a later year than egg is estimated to be from (1904). But here the State Hermitage has it on display in this exhibition!?

Provenance Review

The French word *provenir* (provenance in English) meaning to come from is a critical component in research and authentication of historic art objects, and applies to this 1904 egg case study based on two exhibition catalogs:

- *Fabergé Style. Timeless Excellence* (December 15, 2018 - March 24, 2019), New Jerusalem Museum and Exhibition Center in Istra, northeast of Moscow, Russia.
- *Fabergé, Jeweller to the Imperial Court* (November 25, 2020 - March 14, 2021), Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Serious Fabergé scholars over the ages have used archival research to find the history of an object complete with documentation to allow future researchers to review, learn from, and add new facts as they are verified. The introduction by Mikhail Piotrovsky, General Director of the State Hermitage, in the 2020 Hermitage Museum catalog succinctly summarizes the task at hand:

“Documents, receipts, the presence of a maker’s mark are no more than a partial help. The consensus of the expert community is not easy to obtain and is often lacking. That is why any kind of new publication is accompanied by discussion. And it is quite right when every new exhibition brings with it, round tables discussing general and specific issues.”

Unfortunately, the provenance data in both exhibition catalogs for the two temporary venues list very few solid details for the 1904 egg. For example, the egg, the surprise and the egg’s stand were made by Mikhail Perkhin (active 1886-1903) and Henrik Wigström (active 1903-1917), both Fabergé workmasters known to scholars since the 1950’s. Perkhin died under very sad circumstances on August 28, 1903, and his assistant Henrik Wigström continued the studio. Forty-three of the known 50 Fabergé eggs made and authenticated have been examined in great detail since the Christie’s London, March 15, 1934 auction, but none of the eggs have ever been attributed to two Fabergé workmasters.

Hermitage catalog provenance attributions are stated in **bold** font followed by research findings in regular font:

1904-1917 Property of Empress Alexandra Feodorovna

- A generic statement for a period of 13 years needs more detail to be a useful research tool.
- The published Fabergé literature introduces the provenance of an Imperial egg in unique ways and illustrates it with original Fabergé invoices and other visual examples, i.e., Fabergé, Tatiana, Proler, Lynette, and Valentin Skurlov, *Fabergé Imperial Easter Eggs*, pp. 156-157:

“1901 Basket of Wild Flowers Egg – Presented by Emperor Nicholas II to his wife, the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna Easter 1901 (1 April). History: 1901-1917 Kept in the study of Her Imperial Majesty Alexandra Feodorovna at the Winter Palace. It was displayed on the second shelf from the top ...”

- In the [Fabergé Imperial Egg Chronology](#) on the *Fabergé Research Site* the pattern is similar.



[1901 Fabergé Basket of Flowers Egg](#)
(Courtesy Royal Collection Trust)



1904 Egg
(Istra Catalog: *Fabergé Style. Timeless Excellence*, 2019, p. 22)

- The Istra catalog entry presents a typed invoice dated June 10, 1904, without a Fabergé letterhead or logo (a tradition never used by the Fabergé firm) with this text, “An egg with portraits and an egg bouquet of wildflowers. P. [rubles] 16,200 rubles”. This would place the 1904 egg 3,800 rubles above the expense of the 12,400 rubles for the 1909 *Standart Yacht Egg* (ranked 10th in cost, Alexandra Feodorovna Easter gift) and 3,400 rubles above the 1911 *Bay Tree Egg* (ranked 9th in cost, Maria Feodorovna Easter gift) costing 12,800 rubles. Handwritten invoices with the Fabergé’s firm letterhead for the 1909 and 1911 eggs are published in Fabergé, Tatiana, Proler, Lynette, and Valentin Skurlov, *Fabergé Imperial Easter Eggs*, 1997, pp. 188 and 197, and studied in detail by Riana Benko in a financial analysis, “Cost of Easter Eggs, 1900-1915” in the *Fabergé Research Newsletter*, [Winter 2014](#).

Egg	Year Purchased	Rubles
1904 (?) Egg	1904	16,200
Ranked 10 th <i>Standart</i> Yacht Egg	1909	12,400 (3,800)
Ranked 9 th Bay Tree Egg	1911	12,800 (3,400)

- DeeAnn Hoff in an earlier newsletter essay in the Search of Historic Truth series explained why the surprise for this egg is an imitation of the elegant Fabergé Spring Flowers Imperial Egg presented to the Empress Alexandra for Easter 1901. These unique Imperial commissions were crafted by the Fabergé studios firm during the prior year (1900) for the Easter presentation of 1901. She concludes that the design of the 1901 Spring Flowers Egg might be dusted off and altered negatively to appear in an Imperial Easter Egg surprise in 1904 as a gift for the same recipient would seem quite impossible.
- Fabergé scholars over the years have known and accepted that the Imperial family did not present or give Imperial Easter eggs during the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War. (Fabergé, Tatiana, Proler, Lynette, and Valentin Skurlov, *Fabergé Imperial Easter Eggs*, 1997, pp. 58-60)

1920-1932 In the Armoury Chamber of the Moscow Kremlin

- A 1904 egg has never been mentioned in the numerous scholarly publications and exhibition catalogs thoroughly researched and beautifully presented in oversize books always complete with stunning photographs under the leadership of Tatiana Muntian, who for many years has been the Fabergé expert with the Armoury Museum in Moscow.

The next four provenances suggested for the 1904 egg need to be reviewed as a group with the inclusion of a letter (only illustrated in a sidebar in the Hermitage Museum catalog), but not in the chronology:

- 1932-1933 In the Collection of Armand Hammer
- 1934 Owned by Lord & Taylor Firm, New York
- [July 5, 1934 Letter, New York, Lord & Taylor, sidebar illustration only]
- 1934 In the collection of X.Y. (*sic*) Hoover (Mrs. H.W. Hoover), Ohio

1932-1933 In the Collection of Armand Hammer

- Hammer Galleries catalogs are extant, where is the published evidence?

1934 Owned by Lord & Taylor Firm, New York

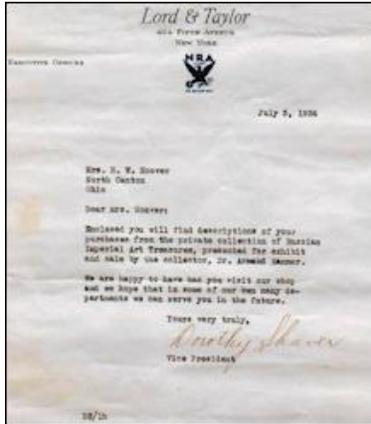
- The leading New York department store, Lord & Taylor, did not “own” Fabergé objects.

Instead, the department at the time¹ exhibited and sold art treasures acquired from the Soviet regime. In January of 1933, Dr. Armand Hammer, the American art dealer and super salesman

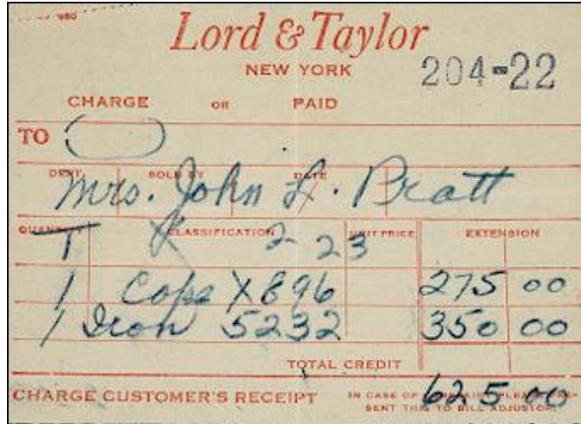
¹ Georgian Room, Lord & Taylor department store exhibition, Jan 3 – Feb 21, 1933, extended twice, ended March 14, catalog reprinted and used at the Marshall Field and Co. venue in Chicago, (IL) till October 31, 1934 (“three eggs – Danish palaces, Tsarevitch and what may be the lost 1988 Imperial Easter egg. No other eggs are listed in the catalog, which features items related to elegant table settings with unverified Imperial provenances, and an icon exhibition. (McCanless, Christel Ludwig, *Fabergé and His Works: An Annotated Bibliography of the First Century of His Art*, 1994, entries #29-30, 34)

who for years attributed Imperial provenances and palaces (not always accurately) to Russian art objects, entered into a 2 1/2 (or 3 year) relationship with Lord & Taylor. (Hammer, Armand with Neil Lyndon, *Hammer, Witness to History*, 1987, pp. 209-210; Williams, Robert C., *Russian Art and American Money, 1900-1940*, 1979, pp. 220-225).

Purchase documents for objects sold by the Hammer Galleries when they were affiliated with Lord & Taylor are known from the Pratt Archives, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts:



A. July 5, 1934 Lord & Taylor Letter Signed by Dorothy Shaver
(Hermitage Museum Catalog, 2020, p. 50)



B. Lord & Taylor Receipt for a Specific Purchase by Mrs. John L. Pratt
([Pratt Archives](#) at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts)

Item	Price
Photograph frames	
Mikhail and Alexandra	\$ 1,500
Alexandra and Tsar Nicholas	500
Alexandra on a chair, sewing	200
Album	200
Grand Duke Mikhail	200
Imperial egg (small)	\$ 4,000
Gold	400
Ring	
red enamel cigarette case	\$ 200
gold watch box	200
gold and silver box	200
Laboratory instrument box	400
enamel cigarette box	400
Ring	\$1,000
The Lady of Berlin	1,000
In. Parthenon	1,000
Machete and shield	100
Diadem of the Virgin	400
St. Mary, Nicholas, and Alexander	200
Machete of Nicholas	4,000
In. George	50
Machete, Child, and Saint	2,500
Holy Virgin and Child Enthroned	200
The Lady and Saint Christ	2,000
Machete	
table personal	\$ 100
crystal case	100
crystal personal	100
enamel personal	100
enamel case	200
Handwriting	
Alexandra's gold watch	\$ 1,000
gold cigarette case	1,000
enamel pin	1,200
1904 Russian watch	200
other watch	200

C. Summary of items purchased from the Hammer Galleries by Mrs. Pratt
(Williams, Robert C., *Russian Art and American Money, 1900-1940*, 1979, p. 223)

- The Lord & Taylor letter, dated July 5, 1934, is out of sequence if the provenance of the object is to serve as a chronology. The geographic location of the buyer listed on the form letter is North Canton, Ohio. It leads a researcher with a bit of Wikipedia detective work to Mrs. H.W. Hoover (probably more correctly, “Sr.”), residing in North Canton, Ohio, and is possibly a member of Herbert W. Hoover family of the well-known American vacuum cleaner manufacturing [company](#).
- The Lord & Taylor form letter signed by *Dorothy Shaver*², Vice President, states it includes a “description of your purchases”. What were the specific purchases?
- Archival examples of the Lord & Taylor receipts and descriptions of specific articles sold are extant in the archives of Mrs. Lillian Thomas Pratt, a Fabergé collector who acquired many objects from the Hammer Galleries. Where are the receipts and the itemized account from a first-class American department store for the 1904 egg sold to a Mrs. Hoover?

² Biographical details for Dorothy Shaver (1893-1959) are known. In 1931, she became a vice-president at Lord & Taylor, and by 1937, she was elevated to first vice-president.

- Lowes, Will, and Christel Ludewig McCanless in *Fabergé Eggs: A Retrospective Encyclopedia*, 2001, pp. 15-16, footnote 83, “have pieced together most of the twenty or more cities to which Armand Hammer took his traveling department store exhibition from January 1932 to December 1934 ...” Lord & Taylor does not appear until 1933.

New York, New York: Lord & Taylor, January 3 - February 21, 1933
 Chicago, Illinois: Marshall Field & Company, June 14-28, 1933
 Palm Beach, Florida: Store name unknown, February 1934

Does the July 5, 1934 letter fit in here?

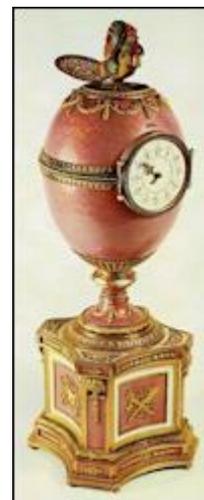
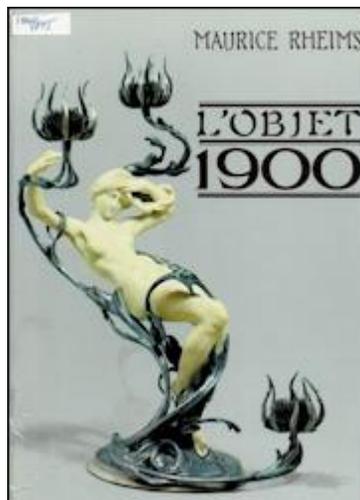
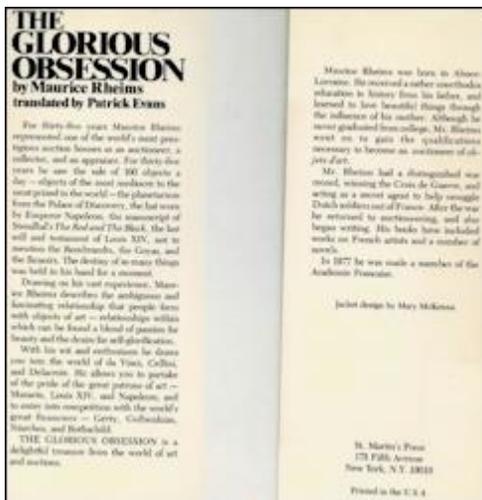
Chicago, Illinois: Marshall Field & Company, July - October 31, 1934
 New York, New York: Lord & Taylor, November 3 - December 1, 1934 (extant hard-bound Hammer Galleries catalogs do not list a 1904 egg. Additional archival files of the Hammer Galleries for the 1930's time period is not known, and it has been suggested the archives were destroyed.)

1934 In the collection X.Y. (sic) Hoover Mrs. H. W. Hoover, Ohio

- Name of a possible owner cited twice with two different first names, and no further identification in the provenance text. Last name of Hoover appears in an illustrated letter [July 5, 1934 Letter, New York, Lord & Taylor], but why not part of the provenance listing?

19 March 1951 Sold at Auction by Maurice Rheims, Paris

- Rugs were sold during the March 19, 1951 French auction. (Research Courtesy Andre Ruzhnikov)



Rheims, Maurice, *The Glorious Obsession*, 1980, and *L'objet 1900*, 1964

Illustration #29 is the 1902 Rothschild Egg Clock by Fabergé

(McCanless Library)

- Two books in my personal library, the autobiography of Maurice Rheims (1975, translated into English in 1980), and by the same author, *L'objet 1900* (1964), suggest the French auctioneer probably did not sell a “1904” egg. The 1902 Rothschild Clock Egg by Fabergé is shown

without any caption nor mention in the 1964 text. Fifty years later in 2014, the clock egg (not Imperial) was donated to the Hermitage Museum.

1951-2008 Western Europe

- After a sixty-eight (68) year gap without any listed provenances the 1904 egg is cited as an Imperial (?) Easter egg and appears at the 2019 Istra exhibition, a location near Moscow Russia, with only minor details in two scant two paragraphs. The gap would not qualify as archival research in Marina Lopato's posthumous article, [Fabergé - A Cultural Phenomenon of the Modern Age](#). In 2020/21, the egg is highlighted in a Hermitage Museum exhibition in St. Peterburg, Russia, again with above-discussed meager bits and pieces of provenances cited in this text in **bold**).

Readers interested in more research complete with substantiating archival documents as suggested by Lopato's and Piotrovsky's writings will find the [case study](#) on the 1904 egg by Andre Ruzhnikov, Fabergé and Russian art dealer in the United Kingdom, of interest.