

## Napoleon Box Treatment Report

<b>Owner:</b> [REDACTED]	<b>Conservator:</b> S. Goel
<b>Date:</b> 05-08-2021	<b>Lab no:</b> 3772
<b>Object:</b> Trinket Box	<b>Material:</b> Porcelain and Brass

### Description:

This heart-shaped porcelain trinket box is 6 cm by 5 cm and 2.2 cm tall. It is made of porcelain with a brass frame, hinge, and clasp that are adhered to the edges of the porcelain with an unknown adhesive. The box is glazed a dark green with thick gold overpaint with a floral motif and an “N” in script on either side. The lid of the box depicts Napoleon I of France. The base has a maker’s mark that reads “M.*IMP*<sup>le</sup> de Sevres”. However, it is likely that this box is an imitation of Sevres ware, as the darker green glaze and thick overpaint is distinctive of imitations (Burn, 2019). Faux Sevres wares grew in popularity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (ibid). This trinket box in particular is probably from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the client’s grandparents lived in France around 1920 to 1930 (Brooks, pers. Comms).

### Condition:

The box has broken into seven individual pieces of varying sizes. The whilst the lid of the box is still held in the brass frame, it has cracked in several places and is likely unstable. A small area at the base of the box is missing, and there is light chipping in the body and lid as well which can be seen when trying to reassemble sherds. There is some evidence of a previous repair, with a smeared plaster-like substance apparent on the inside of the box. Some of the outer glaze and overpaint has chipped however the soiling hides the extent of the damage, as well as the overspill of old adhesive.

Both the porcelain and the metal frame are extremely soiled. The frame has come away from the main body of the box and has deformed. The hinge is loose and is lightly corroded. Some adhesive remains on the metal fittings, which is thick and severely degraded. This would cause an ill fit when re-adhering the frame to the body of the box.

### Conservation Treatment:

The goals for treating this box are to clean and reassemble the box in order to make it useable once more, and stable enough to be displayed in a home without many environmental controls.

First, all the sherds of porcelain were cleaned. Mechanical cleaning using a cocktail stick and a scalpel was used to remove surface soiling and remains of previous repair. This was further aided by wet cleaning using 50:50 ethanol and deionised water with a few drops of 10% Synperonic N on cotton swabs to assist in living ingrained dirt from the body. This process also removed much of the original adhesive, which demonstrates that it was soluble in water. It also caused the pieces of the lid to come apart from the frame. This however, allowed both the porcelain and the brass pieces to be cleaned easier. The brass frame was cleaned mechanically with a scalpel and a dental pick to remove corrosion from the ridges and around the hinges. It was also wet cleaned with ethanol swabs in order to pick up remaining soiling.

Following this, the sherds of porcelain were adhered together using 40% Paraloid B72 in acetone and were left to dry for 24 hours. After this, missing areas and larger chips on the inside of the box were filled with Flügger acrylic filler, a butyl methacrylate and calcium carbonate mix that is soluble in water (Conservation Resources Ltd.). These fills were colour matched to the white body of the

porcelain using acrylic paint and coated with water-based Golden restoration glaze gloss. Chips and cracks in the green glaze were also matched in order to restore the aesthetic of the object.

Then, the brass frame was coated in Renaissance microcrystalline wax, a chemically inert, moisture resistant mixture of Cosmolloid 80 hard and BASF A waxes (Museum of Fine Arts Boston, 2020). This was applied to the surface using a small microfibre cloth and left on the surface for 2-3 minutes before being buffed with a clean microfibre cloth. This should help limit further corrosion of this element.

Finally, the frame was readhered to the porcelain body of the box using 40% Paraloid B72 in acetone. During this process, it was noted that the frame did not fit cleaning back onto the box. Thus, pliers were used in order to help reshape the metal frame in order to be flush with the majority of the porcelain, allowing the adhesion to be cleaner, and better support the box.

#### Storage Recommendations:

The box can be stored at general ambient temperature and RH (c. 15°C and 50-60% RH) and can be left at almost any light level. However, it is recommended to be kept in the bespoke box with acid-free tissue in order to limit possible physical damage or dust accumulation on the surfaces. However, on display it should be placed somewhere with limited vibration so as to ensure no repeat physical trauma.

#### Handling Requirements:

Gloves are recommended for opening/closing the body, as oils from hands may negatively affect the brass fittings. The hinge of the box remains slightly loose, therefore the lid should be rarely opened and closed, as this may further strain it.

#### Bibliography

Burn, M. (2019) *Collecting guide: Sèvres Porcelain*. [Online]. December 2019. Christie's. Available at: <https://www.christies.com/features/Sevres-porcelain-collecting-guide-8706-1.aspx>.

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Before Treatment:



After Treatment:





