COMMON TYPES OF PINS

There are several ways to make an Olympic Games pin. Here are the most frequently used methods:

Cloisonné souvenir pin from St. Moritz Winter Games (1928).

CLOISONNÉ

Base metal: Die-struck copper.
Color composition: Colored powdered glass.
Surface: Hard, flat, and smooth.
Manufacturing: Each color is hand-applied and individually fired at 800 degrees Fahrenheit until the glass melts and hardens.
Advantages:
- Very highly valued by collectors.
- Very durable and scratch-resistant.

Disadvantages:
- Costs more.
- Designs can't be very detailed.
- Glass can chip if hit hard enough.
- Limited to fewer colors.
- Production time is longer than for any other process.

SOFT ENAMEL

Base metal: Die-struck copper or brass.
Color composition: Enamel paint.
Surface: Raised ridges are evident unless covered by an epoxy coating, which appears as a clear dome over the design.
Manufacturing: Each color of paint is hand-applied, but—unlike cloisonné—all colors are applied simultaneously and then baked until dried. An epoxy coating is sometimes applied to protect the paint from chipping.
Advantages:
- Less expensive than cloisonné.
- More colors available.
- Shorter production time.
- More detail in pin's design is possible.

Disadvantages:
- Perceived value is less than that of cloisonné.
- Paint can chip unless covered with a protective epoxy coating.
- White color may yellow over time.

Soft-enamel pin featuring Barcelona Games mascot, Cobi, fencing (1992).

PHOTO-ETCHED

Base metal: Several images of the same design are photo-etched onto a large brass sheet.
Color composition: Enamel paint.
Surface: Raised lines (though less evident than those on soft-enamel pins).
Manufacturing: All of the designs on the metal sheet are colored and then baked until dried. An epoxy coating may then be applied to protect the paint from scratches and peeling.

Photo-etched IZZY pin with epoxy coating (1996).

Advantages:
- Permits the most detail in a pin's design.
- Shortest production time.
- Least expensive.

Disadvantages:
- Thickness of metal is usually about half that of other pin types.
- Has lower perceived value than that of soft-enamel or cloisonné pins.
- Less durable than other types of pins.

Semicloisonné bridge pin (1994).

SEMICLOISONNÉ

(Colored epoxy)
Base metal: Die-struck copper or brass.
Color composition: Colored-epoxy resin.
Surface: Smooth, hardened epoxy.
Manufacturing: Very similar to that of cloisonné, but uses colored-epoxy resin instead of powdered glass.
Advantages:
- Has a perceived value similar to that of cloisonné pins.
- More colors available than for cloisonné pins.
- Shorter production time than for cloisonné pins.
- Colored epoxy offers natural resistance to scratches and won't chip like cloisonné glass.

Disadvantages:
- Can be easily confused with cloisonné pins.
- Less scratch-resistant than cloisonné.

PRECIOUS METAL

Base metal: Gold or sterling silver.
Color composition: Usually doesn't feature any color other than that of the base metal.
Surface: Multidimensional and multitextured.
Manufacturing: Melted precious metal is usually poured into a mold rather than stamped out.
Advantages:
- Valued highest among pins.
- Made in limited quantities, therefore very collectible.

Disadvantages:
- Costs much more than other pin types.
- Lacks the colorful designs possible in other pin types.

Sterling-silver commemorative pin with 24-karat gold overlay (1996).

designed by Malcom Grear, are the first to represent the muscled body of an athlete. • ***Too hot to handle:*** *After being fired at 800°F, cloisonné pins must be cooled slowly lest the cloisonné glass crack.*