

Omega Constellation Fake '14 Karat' Cases

The watch reviewed here is one of a number of 14K fakes now entering the market. This one was featured on eBay listing 330327061209 and sold for USD\$ 2376.51. In other words, for more than USD\$2000 over what it was actually worth! These watches originate from both China (who would have guessed?) and Vietnam and are circulating in a number of different countries.

The first and quickest test to apply when determining authenticity of a case purported to be genuine is to remove the case back and assess it against known information. The first thing that stands out on this case is that it is numbered 341717. In following up on a previous fake cased Constellation with this number, I approached the Omega Museum after determining that no such number existed on the Omega Vintage Database. I was advised that the case number 341717 was never produced by the Omega company: a very big red flag as you would appreciate, but let's continue.

You will notice opposite that there are two pictures of case backs – the first a magnified snap I took of the listing by the eBay seller **sound_of_time**, and the second a picture of a verified fake listed by eBay seller **lolo-dealer**. You will notice that the stamped marks are identical and even the spaces between various marks share the same distances.

First take a look at the mark to the left of the 14K purity mark. This mark is a facsimile of the case makers 'responsibility mark' and shows a key with the number 12 engraved within. This mark is indeed registered with the Union Suisse pour l'Habillage de la Montre (USH) and indicates that the case maker was Genex SA, based in Chene-Bourg. According to the Omega Museum, the Omega Company never, repeat never, commissioned Genex SA to produce cases for the Omega Constellation or any other Omega line – red flag number two!

Given the above inconsistencies, we can conclude with a high degree of certainty that the case in the listing by **sound_of_time** is a fake. But, for the exercise, let's carry on examining the case back. To the right of the 14K purity mark is a stamp that contains a squirrel. This is an official part of the case back and constitutes the Swiss assay mark that is stamped on the case by the assay office to confirm that the case has been tested for gold content and is genuine. Compare the magnified picture opposite with the officially designated mark and you will notice that it has (a) no three dimensional effects, (b) looks nothing like the genuine squirrel, and (c) contains no assay mark (Notice the X between the head and tail of the squirrel where the assay office mark should appear). Red Flag number three!

Red Flag number 4 has to do with the finish of the inner case back. It is somewhat roughly perlagged. Omega finishes on the inner case backs are consistently grained in cases of this period. Notice also the fake watchmakers'



marks that have been scratched on the inner case back, designed to deceive potential purchasers into thinking that movement and case have been together for a long period of time.

Let's persist with further examinations of the case. Please examine the pictures opposite, the first of which is the fake case and the second of which is a close-up of a genuine 14K gold Omega case back.

Blind Freddy would have little difficulty in spotting the differences. The first difference is of the positioning of the stars. Notice how the fake model shows the stars higher in the sky and the third and fifth star (clockwise) are incorrectly positioned.

The most glaring difference, however, is the absence of the brickwork observatory. All Omega Constellations powered by mid-500 series movements featured a brickwork observatory on the case back medallion. The plain observatory was only featured on gold capped and stainless steel models.

The observatory itself in the top picture is also roughly cast. It does not have the sharpness of a genuine example and it appears as though an impression has been made by the fakers of an observatory belonging to a stainless steel or gold capped model.

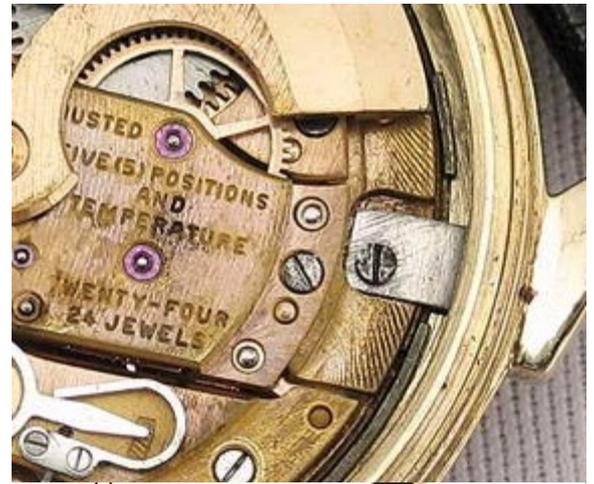
The seller of the watch in question described the case lugs as 'beefy', whereas I would incline to describe them as brutally out of place on a case design as balanced and streamlined as the dog-leg lugged Constellation models of the period (See the picture below it and observe how the lugs integrate cleanly into the overall case design). In the picture opposite you will also notice the absence of a proper chamfer between the top and side of the lug, a telltale sign of the departure from the original Omega design.

To the right of the picture, observe the poor soldering job done when attaching the lugs to the case. Such lack of workmanship would never have been tolerated by Omega quality control specialists. The picture below of the underside of the lugs illustrates the appalling workmanship even further. The arrow points to the uneven finishing of the join and a lack of the customary canal that accommodates the case back.



Now let us look at how the movement is fixed to the case. The first picture shows how the filthy, rusted and hopelessly corroded movement is attached by a roughly made case clamp with a burred and rusted screw. Observe the incorrect spacers used on either side of the case clamp. Review the case clamp used on a genuine case and observe how the movement fits snugly into the recess.

A further comparison that can be made is that of matching the absence of a crown recess in the fake case, whereas the second picture of a genuine case below shows a recess that allows the crown to fit more comfortably.



I also believe the crown to be a non-genuine Omega part. It does not have the shape of the correct 2mm pipe sized crowns. The crown pipe size on the fake case appears to have a diameter that exceeds 2mm. Genuine crowns have an aperture of a little over 2mm allowing the crown to fit tightly around the pipe and contribute to the hermetic sealing system.



Finally, we come to the dial of the watch in question. It most certainly is not an original factory printed dial and may be a redial or a complete fake. Firstly, it fails the MOY test, where a line can be drawn through the uppercase script that intersects at the first peak of the M, goes straight through the middle of the O and passes marginally to the right of the Y. While a limited few Omega dials didn't pass the MOY test, a combination of incorrect date surround, suspect minute index that should be printed marginally away from the pie pan facet and poorly printed parts of the upper case lettering indicates that this dial is not one of them.

With so many fake gold cases emerging from the Orient, it has become imperative that prospective purchasers undertake very close examinations of gold Omega Constellations from this period. Fortunately the fakers who manufacture these hideous copies have not even got close to a faithful replication.

They say the devil is in the detail. In the example of these faked cases, it is the detail that will save you from the clutches of these devils and those who knowingly attempt to pass them off as the real thing.

Below is a further example of a fake 14K gold case and dial showing the same ugly lugs and incorrect case clamps.

