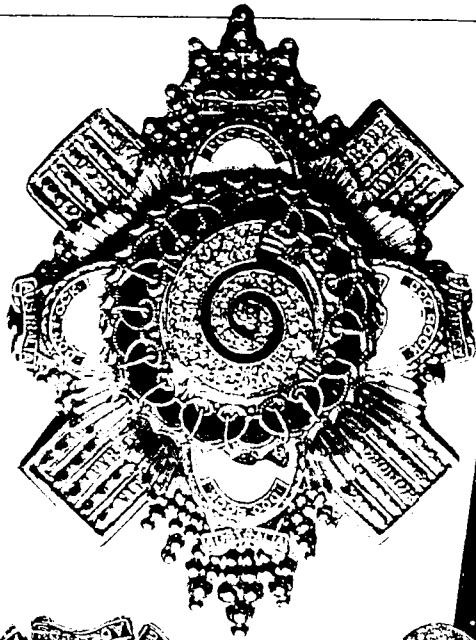


Australian Enamel Newsletter

Issues 40 and 41

November 1996



*Pierre Cavafan
- enamel as found-object*

From early times, seeds, shells, pods and feathers have been used as body ornaments. I don't want to elaborate on jewellery's social identity or status, or to re-iterate the magical and spiritual power of jewellery.

The hunter would wear the teeth of the tiger or the teeth of the bear around his neck as a sign of personal prowess and achievement. The gatherer would collect bird feathers and colourful shells and use them as a sign of personal victory. These were trophies worn with pride., and also indicate to people, culture, respect and rank.

In modern times, wearable trophies look very drab and remote from the natural world. Diamonds, as we have been told by the monopolising and despotic corporation are to be worn forever, however a diamond is like a car in that it loses half of its value once purchased.

Tourist jewellery and souvenirs are also the symbols of personal trophies.

I am interested in military decorations. though the term decoration seems forever ambivalent in this context. Man seems quite happy to wear elaborate decorations and regalia, with no inhibitions. Ann Stevens wrote in Object Magazine #1 1995, "Perhaps there has always been an element of clandestine, cross dressing behind the tightly policed and gendered sphere of feminine jewelley and that of ceremonial medals."

I believe that the spirit of personal trophies of the hunter and gatherer lives well within civil and military decorations. It also lives well in my practice.

Walking along the beach connects me with the ocean, and reminds me of the 'tyranny of distance' from other cultures and within our Western Civilisation. More importantly, while my feet are getting wet and the sand gets between my toes, it connects me with the earth, that physical contact of gathering shells and pebbles which makes me part of the universe. I become that grain of sand in the cosmos.

"The artist is a receptacle for emotions that come from everywhere - the sky, the earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing shape, from a spider web. That is why we must not discriminate between things, where things are concerned there is no class distinction". Pablo Picasso.

More recently I have been interested in more urban discoveries. On my daily walks, taking kids to schools or getting the shopping, I have brought to my workshop mountains of detritus - a broken piece of glass, a bottle top, copper wire, etc. Many of them find their way eventually into my jewellery. I also incorporate enamel badges. Soft solder such as silver/tin binds the badges together, and the plating covers the joint and adds extra strength to the amalgamation.

This is a double bumper issue!

I have combined Issues 40 and 41 together, including the special coverage of the Enamel Symposium held in Brisbane in September.

Changes are afoot at AEN.

This is the last issue that I will prepare. Barbara Ryman will be taking over from the first 1997 issue. I have been editor now for almost 7 years and feel that I have become a little stale and to tell the truth a little tired too. It does take a lot of energy to compile all the material for each issue - letters need to be written, contacts made, articles written. That two-month deadline comes around awful fast. I feel the newsletter will be better served with a dose of new energy and a new vision. I wish Barbara all the best in her new task, and hope that she finds it as rewarding as I have. I have made some wonderful friendships through AEN contacts.

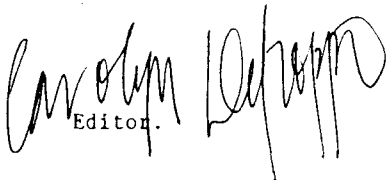
Please support Barbara's efforts by letting her know of any enamel doings or news in your area. Articles and contributions are always welcome and make the editors job a lot easier. It is your newsletter and depends on your input to make it worthwhile. From letters and comments I have received, I know that it is a valued means of communication for us all.

When I printed Issue No 1 (one sheet A3) back in April 1990, I expressed the hope that the newsletter would become a forum that would be received and used enthusiastically by Australian enamellers, who at that time had no national means of communication. Since then a lot has happened. We have a regular National Exhibition organised by the Sydney Enamellers Association, and this year the first ever Enamel Symposium was held in Brisbane. Many more Australian enamellers participate in international enamel events and exhibitions. Enamel is alive and very well.

Subscription numbers are strong - at present around 140, including 16 international subscribers. In addition about 25 complimentary copies are sent to international Enamel Guilds, to Craft Councils and organisations nationally, as an aid to the promotion of Australian enamelling.

So... thanks to all those enamellers who have generously contributed to the newsletter over the last 7 years. It has been a pleasure to have had contact with you all. I can honestly say that enamellers are a great bunch of people.

Best wishes


Editor.

The deadline for material for the next issue will be January 23 1997. Articles, comments, news are all welcome. Send to Barbara Ryman at 71 George St, Thirroul NSW 2515.



AEN editors new and ex

News

The 9th International Exhibition of Enamelling Art held in Tokyo October 23-30, has travelled to also be exhibited in Hiroshima November 6-10. Australian enamellers who have works included are: Norma Alce, Val Aked, Sandra Kerr, Barbara Ryman, Catherine Large, Lisa Pohlman and Carolyn Delzoppo.

Norma Alce travelled to Japan to attend the seminar which was held in conjunction with the exhibition.

Sandra Kerr has taken over editorship of the newsletter of the Enamellers Association - and has produced two issues choc-full of information. The current issue has a technical article on different enamel products such as crackle enamel, liquid flux, over and under glazes.

For information about membership of the Enamellers Association contact the treasurer Margaret Siddall on 02 9918 6878.

Lorane Larter and Catherine Large recently presented a collaborative enamel wall piece to BP, to be hung in BP foyer in Brisbane.

From the BSOE newsletter:

The Society has received a letter from the Musee de l'Eveche in Limoges, France, announcing that following a judicial decision the 'Biennale International de l'Email de Limoges' is no longer in existence. The Biennale archives are now deposited in the Museum.

Catherine Large exhibited two pill boxes of sterling silver and enamel in the Makers Mark (melbourne) exhibition of Collectible Boxes.

Enamels will again be a feature at the Australian Craft Show, 19-24 November at RAS Sydney Showground.
Hours - 10am - 10pm weekdays
10am - 7pm weekend

Odds and Ends

Opportunities to Exhibit

Toowoomba Biennial "Contemporary Wearables" Jewellery Award.

Submissions of Expressions of Interest from jewellery artists are currently being sought for the Contemporary Wearables 97 Jewellery Award and Exhibition.

There is a First Prize of \$5,000, Second Prize of \$3,000 and \$7000 for acquisitions for the collection.

Conditions of entry and application forms can be obtained from the Toowoomba Regional Art gallery. deadline for receipt of entries, including transparencies and fees is 16 May 1995.

Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery
PO Box 2350, Toowoomba Qld 4350
Ph 076 316 652

For Sale

Norma Alce has enamels for sale:
Thompson lead bearing opaques and transparents, hard and soft firing flux, hard and medium black, hard and medium white, lumps and threads.
Amaco lead free opaques and transparents.
Ring Norma on 02 9744 6081 for more information and prices.

Around the Magazines

Glass on Metal

Volume 15 No4 October 1996

Magazine of the US Enamelist Society

This issue contains the usual interesting reports and reviews of enamel events and doings, profiles of enamellers, historical information, as well as an illustrated technical article on the Use of Solid and Patterned Carefree Lustre Decals.

The magazine costs US\$62.60 per year.

Send name and address to Enamelist Society, PO Box 631704, Cincinnati OH 45263-1704 US

Visa and Mastercard accepted.

Ornament

Summer 1996

Contains article with colour photographs of the enamel jewellery of Susan Demski and Falcher Fusager
Ornament is offering an introductory 1 year subscription for US\$27.00 for 4 issues.

Visa and Mastercard accepted.

Ornament

PO Box 2349, San Marcos, Ca 92079-9806, US

Supplies

For ceramic materials, lustres, china paint, kiln bats, kiln wash, etc -

Mona Vale Pottery Supplies

Shop 18, Bungan Court,

Cnr Waratah and Bungan Streets,

Mona Vale 2103 Phone 9997 2112.

A little bit of trivia from Betty Wilson:

"Some of us were discussing the meaning of Symposium, so when I got home I got the dictionary out.

The first definition was -

Ancient Greek drinking party

then: philosophical or other friendly discussion, set of articles on one subject from various writers and points of view.

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD
SATURDAY, JULY 6, 1996

planned in this town.

THE Fabergé show at the Powerhouse Museum is splendid, beautifully installed and magically lit. The items on display, prime examples of conspicuous consumption, will not be to everyone's taste, embodying as they do an excess that borders on, indeed often topples over into, vulgarity. Hard to imagine that these costly trinkets were being produced at the same time as those Kandinskys over at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. At last Monday's packed opening, most of the guests were gob-smacked. Not Harry M. Miller. "It's a good thing," he told me, "that they shot those Romanovs, otherwise the world would be filled with this s---."

T TOWS this for a generous gesture?

From a review of an exhibition of paintings of Arthur Boyd, by Joanna Mendlessohn published in the Australian newspaper October 25.

Boyd's art manages to highlight the absurdities of a society where the capitalism of an unregulated art market seizes with glee objects that criticise greed, slaps a gold frame on them and resells them at a profit.

Who is the person who gets to name new enamel colours? I think I could do a better job than they do. Grass green? Mid Blue? A bit ordinary. How about a colour called Slime for one of those acidic make-your-teeth-ache greens? Or Mud. Or Barbara Cartland for that musk-stick lolly pink. Or Dishwater (ivory), Grime, Winter Thighs (off white), High Blood Pressure, Ear Wax, Envy. It's all in a name.

Carolyn Delzoppo

Thank you.

AEN would like to thank the following contributors to this issue:

Pierre Cavalan, Debbie Sheezel, Barbara Ryman, Norma Alce, Lisa Pohlman, Betty Wilson, Edmund Masow, Hiltrud Blaich, Jeff Shaw, and Barbara Ryman.

Thanks also to Sandra Fussell, Debbie Sheezel, Heather Calnan and Barbara Ryman for copies of photographs of the Symposium.

Cloisonne enamel on by Edmund Masow and Hiltrud Blaich



Edmund writes "Not so long ago, Hiltrud Blaich, an enameller well known in Australia, visited me and we worked a few days in my workshop. Together we prepared this technical article for AEN. We wrote it step-by-step, believing that is the best way to understand the procedures. In the article we assume that basic enamel techniques such as bending wires, wet-inlay, sieving, etc are known.

Annealing the Object (beaker, vase, box)

Place the object on a trivet into a hot kiln, 700-750 C.

When the object is dull red, remove it from the kiln and let it cool until it changes to black. Hiltrud: it is important that the object is quickly put under water so that it doesn't warp. Also it is easier then to remove the firescale. Edmund: let the object cool in air so that there is definitely no warpage. This is very important if you have a lid.

Cleaning the Object

Care must be taken because the object is now very soft, and can easily warp.

There are different possibilities for cleaning and removing the firescale. Hiltrud: remove coarse fire-scale with a hand wire-brush. Edmund: use a circular wirebrush on an electric drill.

If the object is small, it can be helpful to have a flexible shaft and small circular wirebrushes for the inside. After that, rub with coarse (80-120) sandpaper until all firescale is removed. Here an electric drill would also be helpful. Use eye protecting glasses if using electrical machinery.

When all firescale has been removed, clean the object inside and out under running water with a little brush with hard bristles such as a toothbrush. It is helpful to use a household cleaner or pumice powder on the brush, but it is very important that it does not contain any chloride. wear rubber gloves because grease from hands can make the enamel pop off the surface later. The surface is clean if a film of water will sit evenly over the surface without dry areas or drops forming. Dry with a clean cloth.

Another way is to put the object in a solution of 10% sulphuric acid and 90% water. Be very careful while mixing the acid. Always put the acid in the water, never the water in the acid, otherwise the acid will become very hot and splash. When working with acids,

always wear eye protection, rubber gloves and a rubber apron.

Place the object in the solution after fastening it with copper wire for easier handling. When the firescale is dissolved the surface will be dull red. Remove the object from the acid using brass, plastic or stainless steel tongs, and flush very well under running water.

A third possibility to remove firescale is to clean the object with a solution of vinegar, salt and water. This solution is safer than sulphuric acid but is slower to work and more time-consuming. Place the object in the solution for 10 minutes or so, and then rub the surface with the solution and a cloth. It is helpful to put the towel from time to time in salt crystals.

It is important to all the firescale, otherwise it can pop off during firings and leave ugly spots on the enamel-surface. the surface can then be polished with fine sandpaper. This step is not necessary if opaque enamels are to be used. Rinse with water as described before.

Groundcoating

There are also different possibilities for ground coating.

Warm the object, so that you can hold it in your hand. Wear cotton gloves so that grease does not get on the clean surface.

Pour liquid enamel (eg. Thompson BC Liquid Clear transparent BC-303L or BC 1070 medium fusing white) into the object, turning it so that the whole inside is evenly coated with a thin layer of the enamel. The copper should gleam through the enamel coat. Pour out the excess. turning the object the whole time. It is helpful to do this in front of an open kiln so that the liquid dries more quickly. Then dry the enamel completely.

Dip the outside in liquid enamel, or spray with gum tragacanth (Hiltrud), wallpaper paste (Edmund), or Klyre-Fire, AgarMix or another glue. To mix wallpaper paste, put 1 teaspoon in half litre of water, and then put 1 tablespoon of this solution in 1 litre of water for spraying. Spray only a very thin film of water on the whole surface. Hold the object with gloved fingers or on a suitable tool on the inside. Then sieve a very thin layer of flux or colour of choice over the whole surface. Turn the object during sieving. Let dry and repeat the procedure a second or third time.

After the last sieving, and when the object is dry, place it vertically on a suitable trivet and fire until it is 'orange-peel'. Orange-peel means that the surface is not highly glossy, but is a little rough like the skin of an orange. The kiln should be 750-800C. During the firing the object must be watched so that the enamel does not slip.

Remove from the kiln and let cool. If at this stage the enamel surface is not perfect, it is no problem. The sieving or use of liquid enamel on the inside can be repeated. If there are only small black spots, these can be repaired in the next step.

steep-sided vessels

Fastening the wires for cloisonne

Place the object on a suitable tool or trivet. It is helpful to make a stand using wooden dowel that is almost the same circumference as the inside of the object. A steep walled object can hang horizontally on this stand.

Bend the annealed wire to the design. If bent over a second object the same form as the enamelled object, the wires will connect very well to the surface. Any ends sticking up can be pressed down with fingers or with a suitable tool such as tongs, small hammer or tweezers.

Dip the formed wires in a thick solution of glue, being careful not to apply any pressure. Edmund: recently I got the new glue 'blu-stick' from Thompson. The first tests are promising but I haven't really tested it yet. glue the wires onto the pre-enamelled object, and continue bending and glueing until a third of surface is covered.

Let dry very well. If some wires aren't perfectly connected, they can be pressed down now. If the wire falls off, it can be reglued.

Applying enamel and firing

In the wet-inlay technique, the cloisons are filled with colours. The wet enamel should include a bit of glue so that the enamel doesn't fall off during handline and firing. Use the wet enamel as dry as possible. If it is too thin it will run. Let the enamel dry thoroughly.

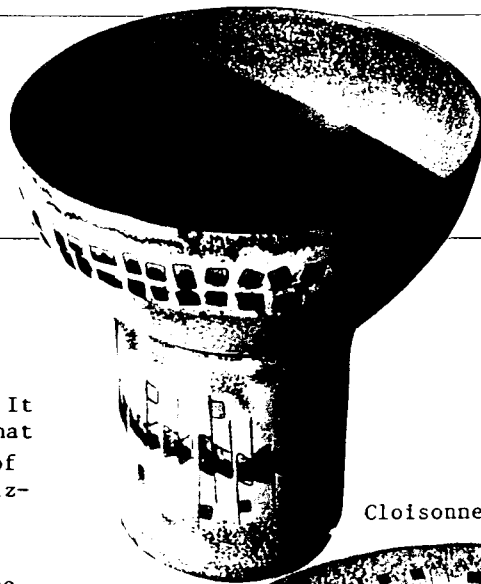
If the design fills only a third of the circumference of the object, glue can be sprayed on the remaining two thirds and enamel then sieved on. At this stage the inside of the object can also be repaired if necessary.

Place the object, cloisonne side up on a suitable trivet. The trivet should only touch the rim of the object. Fire to orange-peel stage.

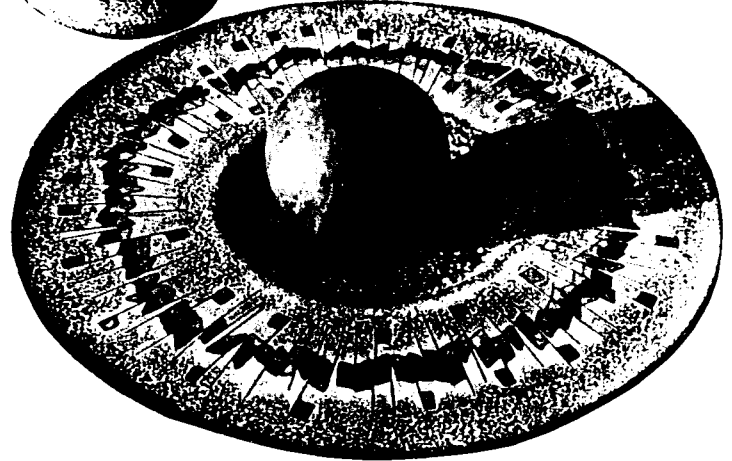
Attention! All firings must be done very carefully. Before putting the object in the kiln, it should be warmed thoroughly so that the enamel doesn't crack or even fall off from the thermal shock.

When fired, take the object out of the kiln and while it is still very hot, carefully rub over the wires with a small hammer or suitable tool to press them down into contact with the base metal. Cool.

If copper wire has been used for cloisonne, the fire scale must be removed before more enamel is added. Place the object in a solution of salt and vinegar (or sulphuric acid if the enamels are acid resistant). neutralise the acid with household bicarbonate and rinse with a glass brush or hardbrush under running water. Remove the firescale from the rims also. Dry.



Cloisonne vessels by Edmund Massow



In the same manner, work the second and third parts of the circumference. During firings the new design area should always face upwards.

Edmund: unlike Hiltrud I glue the wires not only over a third of the circumference, but all over. Then after drying, I spray a very light film of 'glue-water' all over and then sieve a thin layer of flux or ground colour. After drying I fire carefully with the object standing vertically. The wires are thus fastened and ready for wet-inlay after cleaning.

Now all cells of the design can be filled with wet-inlay technique. Use a little glue in the wet enamel. The object can be fired on the bottom or upside down if that is better. The firings must be watched carefully so that the enamel or the wires don't slip. During the following firings it is helpful to change the position of the object from firing to firing - upside down, downside down. Don't fire too high. the higher the temperature, the more liquid the enamel becomes, and the more the enamel and wires can move.

Check the inside of the object between firings. Sometimes the enamel on the inside can pop off, and must be repaired before the next firing. To repair, clean the bare place, refill with enamel in wet-inlay or by powdering.

For the last firing, overfill all cells so that no bare wires show. Edmund: I prefer a thin overlay of very clear flux as the last firing. Schauer W1, or, if you work with Thompson laed free enamels, one of their beautiful fluxes.

There are many possibilities for grinding the surface. It would be a good article for AEN. You can choose to grind by hand with a carborundum stone, with alumina oxide or diamond files, with grinding machines or lathe, polishing by fire or with cer-oxide and limewood wheel. And so on.

Australian Enamel Symposium '96

What a terrific time we had at the first ever Australian Enamel Symposium in Brisbane September 26th - 29th. All up, workshops included, the event stretched to 14 days of enamel activity.

Thirty enamellers attended, representing most states, and we had three international visitors - from New Zealand, the Netherlands and the US. As well as that others attended just one or two workshops.

The Symposium programme was interesting and varied. There were slide shows on enamels from around the world, a practical session on photographing enamel, an amusing session about the love-hate relationship between enameller and material, a round-table discussion about health issues, a slide-show walk through the US Thompson factory showing where and how enamel is manufactured, a showing of Debbie Sheezel's video of the making of the huge enamelled 'Daintree Mural' as well as a bus trip out to the airport to see the mural in situ, and much more.

There were hands-on tool and technique demonstrations every day. We were able to try presses for shaping metal, shears, cutters (big ones), plating equipment, and all sorts of natty smaller tools.

The organisers of the Symposium, Anna Margot and Chris Collins are to be congratulated on organising this opportunity for Australian enamellers to get together to exchange knowledge and ideas. For many of us it was a chance to meet familiar names for the first time. The work was familiar, the name too, and now I have a face to go with that. What a pleasure it was to meet everybody.

I feel that the personal contacts and friendships that are formed are the most valuable and enduring legacy of an event like this. Long after the highlights have faded to memory, these contacts will remain, making it possible for greater contact between us, for visits when in each others towns and cities, for emergency "I need some advice" phonecalls, for a real and supportive enamel community to exist.

Thank you Anna-margot and Chris for your initiative in making it happen and for your generosity of time and spirit in making us all feel so welcome.

It's possible that another one may happen in 1998. Stay tuned.

Carolyn Delzoppo



Anna Margot and Chris Collins



Julie Purdy



'Expressions in Glass' - Review

This review of the Expressions In Glass Enamel exhibition is printed here with the kind permission of Jeff Shaw, craft writer for the Brisbane Courier Mail. He is director of the Arts Council Open College of the Arts. The review was prepared for the Courier Mail but not used. Jeff has worked as a freelance consultant, valuer and writer in arts and education and was awarded a 1991 Churchill Fellowship to study advances in art education in Europe and North America. This fellowship led directly to the establishment of the Open College of the Arts in Australia.

It is not often that Brisbane is treated to such a varied specialist craft exhibition as 'Expressions in Glass', now showing at Metro Galleries in Edward Street. This exhibition owes its existence to Anna-Margot Originals of Red Hill who sponsored the display to coincide with the First Australian Enamelist Seminar and workshops held in Brisbane.

The enamelling aficionado and the normally curious gallery goer should both find plenty of interest and pleasure in the exhibition. The title, however, is something of a misnomer as only two enamel artists are glass-based exhibitors, and the show is really all about 'The Art of Enamelling' which is described fairly full in the accompanying colour catalogue. The display provides viewers with a good glimpse of a very broad variety of techniques, expressive styles and skills exhibited by international and Australian artists.

In a state where craft studies may still be hard to find, and with a tenuous history of fine enamelling, it is comforting to observe such a progressive initiative as the present focus on enamel. The organizers deserve full credit for the enterprise which now promises to be staged as a biennial event. The value and significance of the occasion were also noted by several interstate and overseas visitors at the formal opening.

Visiting US artist Tom Ellis officially opened the exhibition to a crowded and appreciative first night audience at the Metro Galleries. With over a hundred exhibits on display from twenty seven varied exhibitors it was unfortunate that a baggage mix up denied a viewing of his own work on the opening night, but his hollow-ware pieces employing separation techniques on copper are now on display.

Carolyn Delzoppo, already well known for her sophisticated studio work and who also enamels the Order of Australia insignia, exhibits three wall miniatures on panels. These cloisonne on fine silver pieces derive great strength from comparatively simple designs. They show magnificent enrichment from a balance of broad shapes and from madarabesques of minute detail. Such fluency in the medium coupled with control and restraint are notable amongst the variety of Australian and international works now on display.

Interestingly another local artist, trained at RMIT and Sydney College of the Arts, Catherine Large also presents strongly with her rich but restrained champleve dish employing sterling and fine silver and fine gold. Individual jewellery items complement the hollow ware.

At the other end of the physical scale are the assertive and comparatively tall, sculpturally oriented works of Hungarian born Brisbane artists Joseph Pinter. Pinter's fabricated and somewhat geometric brass and copper 'Space Station' is enriched by enamelled panels.

On a similar scale, much of the work of Hungarian born Judit Mikola (wife of Pinter), is also of a strongly fabricated nature with wooden supporting structures carrying enamelled copper. Her large 'Mirror' and 'Cabinit' pieces contain allusions to barbaric and antique themes. Two miniatures complete the group.

RMIT trained and now studio based in Castlemaine, enamel artist Janet Baker comes closest to reconciling this antique craft form with a lively contemporary image. Her set of brooches with the title of 'The Nineties Woman' shows a series of popular style images of women brilliantly fashioned in champleve and cloisonne using sterling and fine silver and fine. Deceptively simple, cheerful and clear, these pieces are central to the exhibition in more ways than one.

With more of a baroque Romany flair or the style of a theatrical stage opal, the granulated neckpiece by Queensland College of Art graduate Lorane Larter stands out for its sheer robustness and florid individuality. Larter also recently completed a collaborative enamelled work with Catherine Large for BP Pinkenbah.

Melbourne based graduate of Alexander Mackie and Raudwick Tech, Barbara Ryman displays a magnificent knife and a range of cloisonne brooches inspired by and including shoreline findings with fine and sterling silver.

It is perhaps significant that Australian artists present so strongly in this exhibition; but the work of overseas artists is welcome and vital in this fairly small craft community. The sheer flamboyant vigour of Californian Alana Clearlake's very expressive and accomplished neckpieces is a tribute to the individual artist and an inspiration to others. These cloisonne pieces in sterling and fine silver also combine a range of semi precious stones.

The fantasy masks for five different queens by Hannah Loeks of the Netherlands are an equally exciting enterprise in colour and form, while Edmund Massow of Germany displays strong design in his highly wearable jewellery.

Many other overseas professionals and most techniques are strongly represented in this very welcome enamel arts exhibition. It has provided an excellent start in what promises to be a biennial series in a very undervalued craft.

Jeff Shaw

4/10/96

Enamel Exhibitions

'Expressions in Glass' - exhibitors

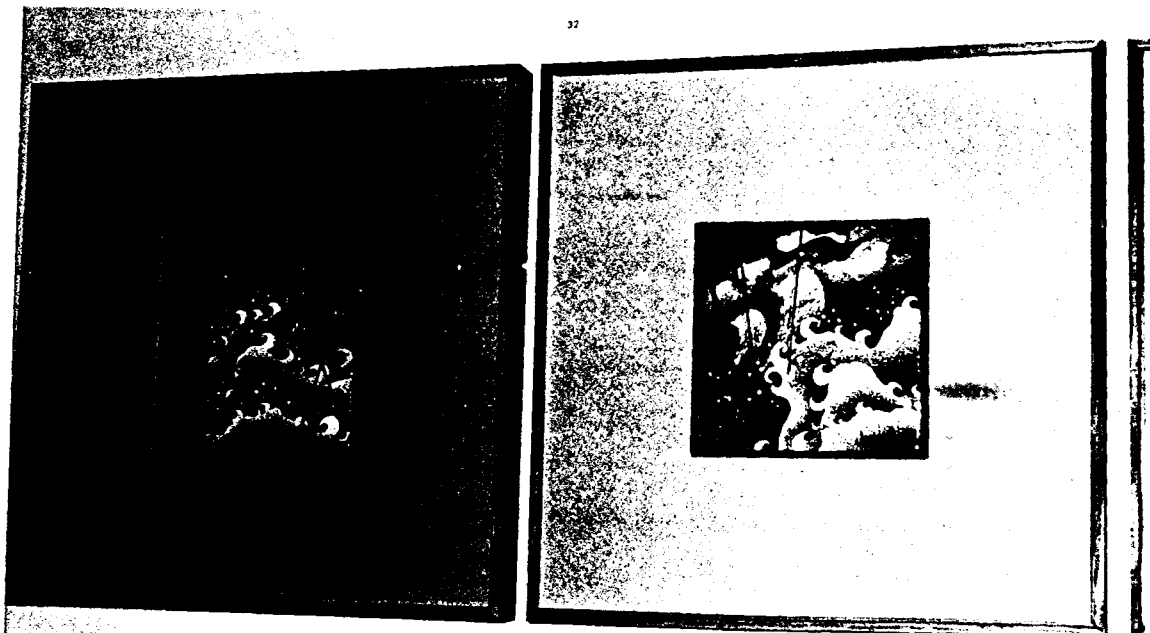
Janet Baker - Castlemaine Vic
Marleen B Berg - Netherlands
Hiltrud Blaich - Germany
Rose Messenger Burke - Brisbane Qld
Alana Clearlake - USA
Carolyn Delzoppo - Mullumbimby NSW
Durban Giullera Montse - Spain
Tom Ellis - USA
Jenny Gore - Adelaide SA
Sandra Kerr - Sydney NSW
Lydia Kruger - Germany
Catherine Large - Brisbane Qld
Lorane Larter - Brisbane Qld
Hannah Loeks - Netherlands
Karin Luz - Melbourne Vic
Edmund Masow - Germany
Erna Metz Messenger - Brisbane Qld
Annelies Michel - Switzerland
Judit Mikola - Brisbane Qld
Jozsef Pinter - Brisbane Qld
Jill Parnell - Perth WA
Debbie Sheezel Edwards - Melbourne Vic
Jacquie Sprogoe - Perth WA
Margaret Valentine - Orange NSW
Helen Fitzhardinge - Albany WA
Plancheria Farre Margarida - Spain
Mary Raymond - Sydney NSW
Barbara Ryman - Thirroul NSW

Tom Ellis opening Expressions in Glass



Helen Fitzhardinge has contacted AEN because she arrived home from the Symposium with an extra unprocessed film that isn't hers. It has photographs of the Tom Ellis Painting Enamel workshop. AEN has the photos now if anyone would like to claim them and reimburse Helen for the processing costs.

Concurrent with the Symposium, Jenny Gore exhibited her miniature panels at Gallery 482 in Fortitude Valley in Brisbane.



Experimental Painting Techniques

- three day workshop with Tom Ellis

Pack the car, clean the windscreen; tyres, water, oil, petrol, food, cassettes.....Blast off! The adventure begins and I drive north; Taree, Kempsey, Macksville, Nambucca, Bellingen, Dorrigo, Mullumbimby - magic names of the countryside of my youth. I am enjoying a tremendous feeling of lightheartedness and anticipation. A Monday morning dash to Brisbane with traffic jams on all main roads to town. I arrive breathless at Red Hill just in time to hear Tom's introduction. Whew! Made it.

The next three days were spent trying out many painting techniques, but I have to say I concentrated on a couple of things to see if I could really get something solid going.

1. One of the first experiments was to roughen up an enamelled steel tile (white side) with some diamond paper and draw on it with a variety of pencils-derwents, lead pencil, graphite, an artline pen, pastels, aquarels, silver and copper wire, a nail. Some of these left very strong lines. Get a tile and give it a try.

2. Next we tried out the water colour enamels. These are solid lumps of paint. We took some copper shim, domed or worked the edges over with a burnishing tool to give some structural strength.

a. The front was painted with scalex and the back was counter enamelled.

b. Clean in acid, coat front with gum and sift on a layer of Th. White 1010.

c. Fire, clean up edges then sift on a layer of Th. White 1040. This gives a nice translucent white as a background.

d. We layed out a palette of water colours on a tile. The crayon like paint can be mixed to be quite thick or thinned out to a wash. I picked out a fish and a figure in thin washes of colour and built up an image with various thicknesses of paint over about four firings. We were firing slowly at approximately 700C and over firing tends to break up the paint into a rattled effect.

e. A final light coat of clear flux Th. 2020 was sifted on (no gum needed) and this layer adds a little depth to the image and the colours. Note: it seems that these paints are more likely to break up on heavy gauge metal due to expansion. To minimise stress, heat up the trivet first then put enamel into a very hot kiln and then bring the temperature down. Less problems with cracking. I think you would just have to try this out!

3. Acrylic Enamel Paints. These are a new Thompson product as not yet released and I think they are still sorting out a couple of prolems so they may not be on sale for a while. The paints are already moist (rather like poster paints) and can be used watered down to form a wash or used thick to give solid colours and a raised surface. Allow to dry and you can carefully add more on top to build up the work before firing. We used a pre-enamelled steel tile this time. The paints can go over lead free or lead bearing, and the water colours can be used in conjunction with them. We even mixed the acrylic whites with the water colours. Some people got some very painterly effects. A coat of flux to finish if you like.

4. Painting Kit - ceramic pigments. These powdered pigments don't gloss on their own but must be mixed with enamel to get a gloss when they fire. A special organic oil (very viscous) is used to mix the colours into a stiff paste using a palette knife. You mustn't overdo the oil as in the heat of the kiln the oil will spread. These is a mixing white 913 and a Painting flux PFl that are mixed together 50/50. These are used to mix with the other pigments to get tonal variations (though I've gone a bit vague on this now). There are three lavender colours though there is only a little difference in their colours. Don't build up the colours too heavily. I think it's a bit like building up paint on porcelain.

5. We tried some repousse in copper shim and you can use transparents with some of the new lustres on that or coat the front with whites and paint on the moulded surface. To give the shim some strength, about a 4mm edge was turned over and flattened all the way round the rectangle. The corners had been cut diagonally to allow the edges to sit down flat. The folded metal is at the back of the piece.

Needless to say, every one worked away madly trying out lots of new ideas and products. I particularly enjoyed the water colour enamel and would like to work with the acrylic ones when they come out. The only thing I was troubled by was the lack of a full palette of colours. That is I felt the need for a carmine red and cobalt or warm blue. With these two added, one could mix a much greater range of colours. As with any new technique, it takes some long term experimentation to make the most of it and to get it to speak for you.

Thanks Tom for a stimulating workshop with lots of great technical detail and thanks to my fellow students, many whose work I'd set up in the National Enamel Exhibition and others who I'd read about in AEN. It was a great pleasure to meet you and even greater pleasure to work along side. A whole room of enamellers?! A rare opportunity.

Barbara Ryman



Mary Raymond and Barbara Ryman

Champleve Enamel - two day workshop with Tom Ellis

For me, workshops are a precious and rare opportunity to put aside what it is that I usually do with enamel, open my mind and see what happens with a new technique, new materials, different environment. TomEllis' workshop on Champleve Enamel offered just that. Time out from the familiar.

We used acid to etch the champleve instead of the fabrication I usually do, copper instead of silver, and an exciting new product called PnP paper as an acid resist.

Other possible resist materials were suggested and some were tried over the two days, but most of us concentrated on preparing a design and working with the PnP, through to the enamelling stage.

PnP offers exciting possibilities. The PnP sheet is actually fed into a photocopier as though it is blank paper, so that the prepared design is printed onto it exactly. Photographs, sketches, line drawings, collages, can be reduced or enlarged with interesting results. Very fine detail is possible, though some can be lost in the etching process. The PnP paper comes out of the photocopier with the design printed onto the dull side. Or at least it should. When the PnP paper is carefully ironed onto the clean copper plate, the inked areas will transfer becoming the resist material. Thus, the black areas of your design become the final exposed metal, the white areas of the design become the champleve recesses.

Because time was short and there were lots of us, we used a strong nitric acid which was faster acting than is ideal, but the resist material did not budge. After 20 minutes or so of such active acid activity, other resist materials were not so good.

Some design ideas used by participants were - cropped sections of enlarged medieval engravings, enlarged line drawings of butterfly wings, free-form drawings cut up and reassembled at random to make loose pattern work, enlarged print of a feather.

Method for using PnP.

1/ The copper plate should be very clean. Tom recommends putting the copper into the kiln until it forms a light bluish-green iridescence, and then without touching the metal, transferring it to the pickle. The heating burns off any surface grease and impurities.

2/ Prepare the design sheet the same size as the PnP paper, but leave a border of about 5mm all around as exact registration when printing is difficult.

3/ Put design on top glass area of photocopier, and feed the PnP paper through the photocopier so that the design is printed onto the dull side. The copier should be set so that it prints as dark as possible without printing shadowy smudges on the white areas. Some machines require a piece of paper behind the PnP paper so that they will feed through smoothly.

4/ A household iron is used to transfer the design from the PnP to the metal. We used an iron set on the Silk setting, just below Steam. Use the pointy bit of the iron to attach one corner of the sheet first, so that the sheet does not slip while its being ironed, and then use a circular motion to attach the

whole sheet. The process took us several minutes. It is better to iron for a little longer than to be impatient and risk the material not transferring properly. It can be checked by gently lifting a corner - if done the blue material will have been transferred in a solid denseness, if not yet done, it will be grainy with some blue material on the copper and some still on the PnP sheet. Iron some more. When corner tests show the design is transferred, remove PnP backing sheet.

5/ The edges and back of the copper sheet need to be taped/sealed so that the acid cannot get to them. Masking tape is no good, but brown plastic packaging tape worked well if well pressed down and generously overlapped.

6/ The plate is then etched to the desired depth.

7/ The resist material is then removed with acetone, and the copper scrubbed clean ready for enamelling.

I was interested to see if this method would have potential for production line jewellery. At present I fabricate and sweat solder all my champleve pieces because I prefer the crisp neat edge between silver and enamel that this method gives me. I have not yet had the time to experiment with PnP paper and silver, or with suitable acids, but I am very optimistic about possibilities. Any method that can reduce the time spent in metal preparation is worth pursuing.

Thank you Tom for your patient and guiding hand over the two days of the workshop, I really enjoyed it very much. Hope you had a great time up North where you were heading for a well-earned break from all things enamel.

Carolyn Delzoppo



Karin Luz



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Autumn 96

Use of Nitric Acid:

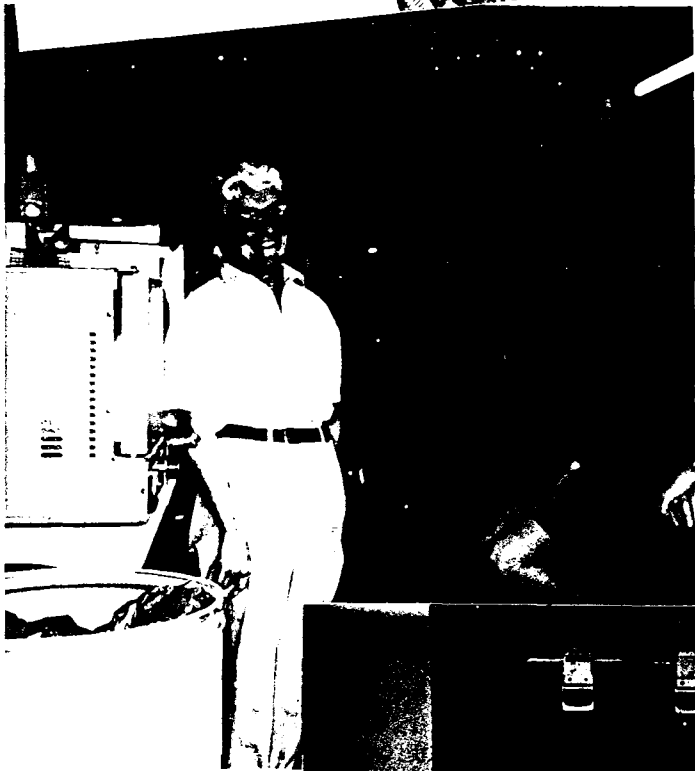
Unfortunately you can etch silver only with nitric acid, but it is a very dangerous chemical. Not only can you get a very painful burn which is difficult to heal and lose your eyes if you get a splash in them, but also the fumes are very toxic. If you breathe in too much of it, you can die very quickly and painfully (the fumes block oxygen transportation in the blood and you suffocate). Avoid working with nitric acid if you possibly can.

If you want only to make a rim around your piece, it is better, quicker and easier to solder it on before enamelling.

However, if using nitric acid is unavoidable (for real champlève) be very, very careful. You must protect your eyes with protective glasses, wear rubber gloves and a rubber apron, and work only under an extractor or outdoors especially during the etching. The fumes are really toxic.

Never pour the acid or used etching material into the garden or down the kitchen sink!! It is illegal and dangerous too. In the garden it is dangerous for your children and grandchildren, your plants (even those metres away can die) and animals and birds can burn thier feet. If you pour it down the sink, it can eat away the sink and let toxic fumes into the house and, if many do it, it is very bad for the municipal sewage plant. At least you must neutralise the acid with a low-priced salt like bicarbonate of soda. Do it in an enamelled or strong plastic container. Check with litmus paper that the mixture is neutral. Let the water evaporate outdoors until there is a salt in the bottom of the container. This is nearly harmless, but in Germany it is forbidden to put it down the sink, you must take it to a chemist or to a special collection point.

Edmund Masow



Tom's birthday cake.

Taking a Risk

-5 day workshop with Jenny Gore

Jenny Gore, a wonderful enamellist, specialises in small, delightful and masterly executed paintings using a variety of techniques and materials to express herself in her work. After seeing her superb exhibition, we were all (eleven of us) very enthusiastic in the beginning and gratified in the end. It was all about taking risks and using one's imagination and experimentation. It was a long workshop with many techniques to try and conquer, by 4 o'clock each day we were all very tired - but well worth it!

The first day was spent on learning the use and variety of stencils. Jenny prepared her piece of copper by first cleaning it with Amway Metal Cleaner which she says eliminates the firing of the copper to rid it of grease. She then gives it a clean with a scour of detergent. She then counter-enamels her piece, and then before the first front firing she paints Scalex on the counter-enamel, lets it dry and then proceeds to apply her first two layers of her chosen white. The Scalex prevents slipping off the trivets and works well.

Jenny uses all sorts of materials for her stencils, but mostly the negative film from a local newspaper and drafting film (acetate). This she can re-use. She tears her shapes at random, applying them with her artistic eye and sifting any desired colour over the stencils. What amazed me was that Jenny prefers to use a stocking over her container to sift as I had always believed strainers were used, but it makes sense with no loss of precious enamel. After each firing Jenny stones the edges of her work to prevent firescale specks. She usually fires at approx 700-725 degrees for 3 minutes and her pieces are fired many times.

We all went off to try our hand with this technique.

Day 2.

This day was about using liquid white (pre-mixed Thompson) which is also very useful for counter-enamelling bowls or to swish around on difficult areas that can't be reached for sifting. Jenny uses it by pouring a drop on to the prepared copper and letting swirl over the surface or giving it a helping hand. The excess is tipped off. She taps it around a little to smooth out the surface. This, when dried, can then be sgraffitoed or manipulated in any way one chooses, then fired. This produced some interesting varieties of colour to the copper when fired over with a soft flux. She experiments for the desired effects while the liquid white is wet with scrunched foil, film, gladwrap etc and you can use the firescale if any develops. Jenny puts her transparencies through a series of sieves first and then washes them. Her colour was brilliant as was seen in her pieces at the exhibition. With all her different options, Jenny makes many, many samples (she calls this playing) and all the information she gleans is recorded in notebooks.

Day 3.

Today was water-colour enamel day, and I was really looking forward to trying out some of these products (new to me). They are the BWC series of Thompsons. There is a must about these enamels. They must be

fired at a low temperature. Jenny says that a longer firing at a lower temperature is much better than a fast firing at a higher temperature. She suggested 700 C. for about two minutes depending on the size of your piece. Hers was 4ins. by 4ins. She softened the pots of colour with a drop of water then off she went! If the colour is applied thinly you can give it another coat, but it can burn out if applied too thinly. She says the reds and oranges had to be watched. On a grainy underfired white surface you can get the effect of watercolour on paper with the dappling. She uses it freely with different application of other techniques such as splattering, sgraffito, swirling, and what is nice about these colours is you can mix them! Again you can make a textured effect by using gladwrap, foil, etc. At the end a separate firing of a thin coat of soft flux to prevent cracking lines underneath. Jenny also mentioned that she felt that the painting colours worked better on lead free base.

Day 4.

We were approaching some sort of understanding of her techniques and it was great to look around at everyone's different approaches. We were going back to semi-finished pieces and re-working them. The order of the day was foils (gold and silver) and gold leaf. When she had reached the stage when she was ready to apply some foils she decided where they were to go, placed some acetate on the piece and with a felt tip pen drew in the shapes. She then very carefully cut out the shapes in gold and silver foils keeping the foils between two sheets of paper, then applying them to the piece after it had been sprayed with gum. She manipulated the silver and gold until it was in the right position then dried it on the kiln and fired it. To apply the transparent colour over the foil, Jenny laid the acetate over the piece and traced the shapes to be covered, cut them out carefully and used these stencils to block out areas not to be covered. Jenny prefers to use gold foils rather than silver as she says they are much easier to fire and she loves the brilliance. She uses the stencils on the larger areas and wet-packs the smaller. Great fun! By this time we had all produced some really interesting pieces. Our numbers were dwindling as some of us had to get home, but we had been taught so much we were all dying to get home to our own workplace to continue to experiment on our own.

Day 5.

We were introduced to Thompsons Oxides and Lustres on our last day. I found this tremendous because this was a great way to embellish ones work and to highlight areas one wishes to. The oxides were mixed to a watery consistency (a little goes a long way) and can be re-used if dried on the palette or spoon. Jenny loaded a pen and nib with the oxide and writes or draws thin lines. Her favourite colours were H-16 Blue, 50 Black, 83 Brown, 169 Tan Yellow. After application the work is dried and then fired, followed by a thin firing of soft flux. The lustres were beautiful and had a transparent silvery quality. They were mixed with hairspray to a thin paste then brushed or applied in any way you chose.

Comments

After five days of working together in Anna Margot's workshop, friendships began and some grew. It was wonderful to have met such a nice group of people. Anna Margot did a fantastic job catering for our hungry tummies, yummy sandwiches, loads of fruit and biscuits, quiches and on-going tea and coffee. To have had the opportunity of attending Jenny's workshop was fantastic as I am sure all the other participants agree. Jenny and her work is an inspiration, and her generosity of knowledge and of herself was deeply appreciated. Our thanks go to Jenny and Anna Margot for organising this wonderful workshop. It was my first workshop and has whet my appetite for more....Happy experimentation!

Debbie Sheezel

This workshop has been for me quite an experience, and a lovely one too. It has taken me into areas where I do not go usually - has forced me to look at things in a different light and change my approach to looking at things. I have felt completely lost several times but no panic! I am here to learn new trick and Jenny lavished them on everyone by bucket-load. She is very generous with her knowledge and delightful as a person. It was also lovely to meet everyone else. I loved every minute of it!

Muriel Wattine, Brisbane

Having been asked to comment on Jenny's workshop, I would like to say how much I appreciated how generous Jenny has been with her knowledge of enamelling. Twenty-three years of experience for us to draw on. My other comment must refer to her quiet patience as she went through techniques in a logical and easy to follow manner. I will take away from this workshop a new confidence and purpose in the art field I am moving into.

Janet Baker, Castlemaine

Being the first workshop I have attended, I have no comparison. I use my impressions here. We were shown a new way of looking at enamelling. Using new products and ways of applying paints, oxides, lustres, foils and gold leaves. In all, a very comprehensive and varied workshop. Well done Jenny! Our bags are full of new ideas waiting to be put into practice. I am looking forward to another one like it.

Karin Luz, Melbourne

A wonderful workshop which lived up to its name - we were encouraged to experiment, to take a risk, and enjoy the results. It was a good opportunity to try new products - for me the most interesting were the watercolour paints and oxide. The liquid white was a struggle. All in all, enough information to last us years and years. Thanks to a generous and extremely organised tutor.

Helen Fitzharding, Albany

'Taking risks' was a wonderful experience for me. Jenny is a good teacher and she introduced us all to new ways of using enamels and a different way of designing. It has opened up many possibilities for me, and I will be much more experimental with my work in future. It was also a great pleasure to meet the other participants, who were very helpful and supportive to me. The wide diversity of work produced was very interesting too.

Betty Wilson, Alice Springs

As an adjunct to a developing expertise in silver and gold jewellery, Jenny Gore's Brisbane workshop has shed a vast light on the whole field of enamelling. A new design concept breaking all the traditions of planning, research and design development has moved to a new dimension of taking some inner essence and letting it flow to the tile, not being afraid of the colours and shapes that appear through each new application. Further freedom of expression could have been available to this enameller had the pressures of the workshop environment and lack of planning been less. Congratulations to the organisers on their first tentative steps into such a venture.

Sandra Fussell, Kalgoorlie



Jorgen de Voss, Jenny Gore and Muriel Wattine

Catherine Large - 'Mad Ethos' Marketing

This is an extract from a talk given at the Enamel Seminar by Catherine Large. She told about a collaborative marketing project she has been involved with in Brisbane.

I am a jewellery designer and maker, an enameller and a silversmith. I consider myself a craftsperson. I work alone in a small studio that overlooks the back garden of my house. When Anna Margot asked me to speak at this Seminar, I felt that it was partly to show that, although we may be considered to have taken leave of our senses, there are indeed practitioners who enamel through warm winters and hot summers, quietly sweating at our craft.....

.....The last 18 months have been particularly busy for me. I have been the recipient of funding from Arts Council for two different projects, have travelled to England for my first Enamel Conference, and tried to maintain my practice, exhibit and experiment throughout all this. No doubt I'm telling a tale that is familiar to many of you. Time always seems too short.

One of the projects funded by Arts Queensland was a Professional Development Grant. This grant enabled me to take some 'time-out' from the day to day running of my practice, and to concentrate on developing new ideas and processes, enabling me to develop a range of objects and tableware incorporating the use of enamel.

The second Arts Queensland funded project I was involved in was as one of six recipients of a Promotions and Marketing Grant. The six included 2 furniture makers, and 4 jewellery/object makers - myself, Sandra Appleby, Elizabeth Shaw and Christopher Stoker. We have worked together over the course of the last two years towards producing and distributing a promotional package, under the name M.A.D. (Marketing Australian Design) Ethos.

Many of our meetings, which took place about once a week, were spent meeting to exchange ideas, to develop an understanding of peoples' various skills, and to find common ground so that we could emerge with a collective vision for Mad Ethos. We also needed to research more mundane aspects such as locating an appropriate graphic designer, writer and photographer who would be sympathetic to the needs of six practitioners working in different disciplines, and who could project the image we were looking for. It has been a steep learning curve for all of us, I believe, as Mad Ethos remains a promotional logo, not a brand name, and we all maintain our individual practices. Working within a group in this way is something that was new to all of us.

For myself, it has been satisfying to get my enamel work into a larger public arena through distribution of our catalogue. So many people have so little understanding of enamel. When it is not totally foreign to them I have lost count of the times someone has responded "Oh, I did that in Primary school".

It's great though to get positive feedback from people delighting in the visual impact of your work, who would otherwise not have seen it.

It has been a challenging time working with Mad Ethos, working across disciplines and discovering strengths

and weaknesses within the group. Of course, time spent on the project was essentially time away from our practices, though of course to the benefit of us all.

Finally taking delivery of the finished catalogue was exciting after all the work: spending two evenings compiling the catalogue - a cover and 7 loose sheets - was not. The hard work really started at this point. We targeted galleries, both commercial and non-commercial, the media in its various forms, architects, interior designers, government and arts bodies, the list goes on. The initial mail out of 800 or so catalogues has resulted in a good response. We have taken up 3 offers to exhibit our work under the Mad Ethos banner, the first of which was the Crafts Council of Queensland in Brisbane. The five week run brought a lot of interest and some good media coverage. We also will be exhibiting in Sydney and Adelaide.

As the grant funding we received was well and truly stretched to its maximum extent and was exhausted by the time we began mailing the catalogue to our target audience, the members of Mad Ethos have each been committed to an on-going financial input. We have the usual expenses that are involved with exhibitions - invitations, postage, etc, as well as up keep and modifications to the Mad Ethos display units developed by Marc Harrison. As a group we have well and truly established realistic boundaries about where and how our money should be spent.

Meeting to collaborate for promotional purposes certainly requires more than a financial commitment, a lot of time is spent dealing with paperwork and keeping the books up to date. I believe it has however increased our confidence as individual practitioners and will have a positive long term and far reaching impact for us all.

For anyone who is interested in approaching marketing in a collaborative way, it is important to consider the commitment of time and money will require of its participants, as well as the ability to work and communicate well with others. Also be aware that the initial promotion will only be the first step. Follow up is all important, and for Mad Ethos, the fact that we are having an 'exhibition season' allows us to contact for a second time all those people we initially targeted with the catalogue.....

....I find it most interesting that in these times, as we race towards the end of the millenium and are under constant barrage from the electronic media and computer generated images and artwork, that enamel is experiencing a resurgence of interest and popularity. In this era of rapid change, a remarkably traditional craft that still used much the same techniques as were employed 2000 years ago is managing to maintain its integrity and be used in very contemporary contexts. People obviously still want memorable pieces and keepsakes, not just transient images projected onto a wall.

Enamellers need to work in hope, not trepidation: objects of beauty and interest will always be needed if only as an aid to memory. Increased interest in a technique that is not only lasting but heavy with the weight of history is perhaps a reaction to the consummate disposable society in which we live.

Faces at the Symposium



Lillian Jackson



Karin Luz



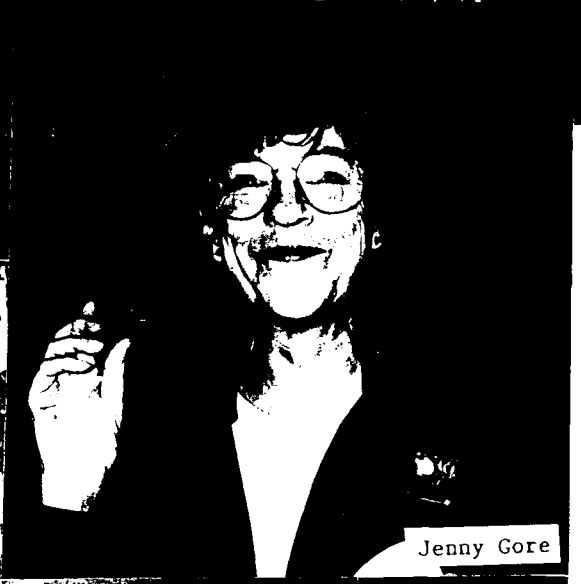
Betty Wilson



Jill Parnell



Heather Calnan



Jenny Gore



Louisa Clifford



Catherine Large



Lorane Larter



Judit Mikola and Jozsef Pinter

More on Precious Metal Clay

Previous issues of AEN have reported the arrival of this exciting new material - Precious Metal Clay.

PMC is a revolutionary new precious metal product that has been developed in Japan. It looks like clay, feels like clay, and can be rolled, squeezed and marked like clay.

The clay is made up of a non-toxic water based organic binder which has dispersed in it thousands of small particles of metal which have a diameter of less than 20 microns. When the clay is fired in a furnace at 900C for silver and 1000C for gold, the tiny particles fuse together and the binder is burnt away. This leaves behind a piece of metal which can be drilled, sawn, polished, soldered or joined to another piece of jewellery.

The clay is available in either sterling silver, fine silver, 18ct yellow or rose gold, and platinum. The clay can be mixed.

Because the clay binder is burnt off when the object is being fired, the clay object will shrink 28% in size and 63% in volume. The shrinkage factor is always the same which means that the correct size of the finished piece can always be calculated.

After firing, the item is a solid metal object, but is porous in structure. This means that it will be approximately 80% lighter than a similar item made from sheet or wire.

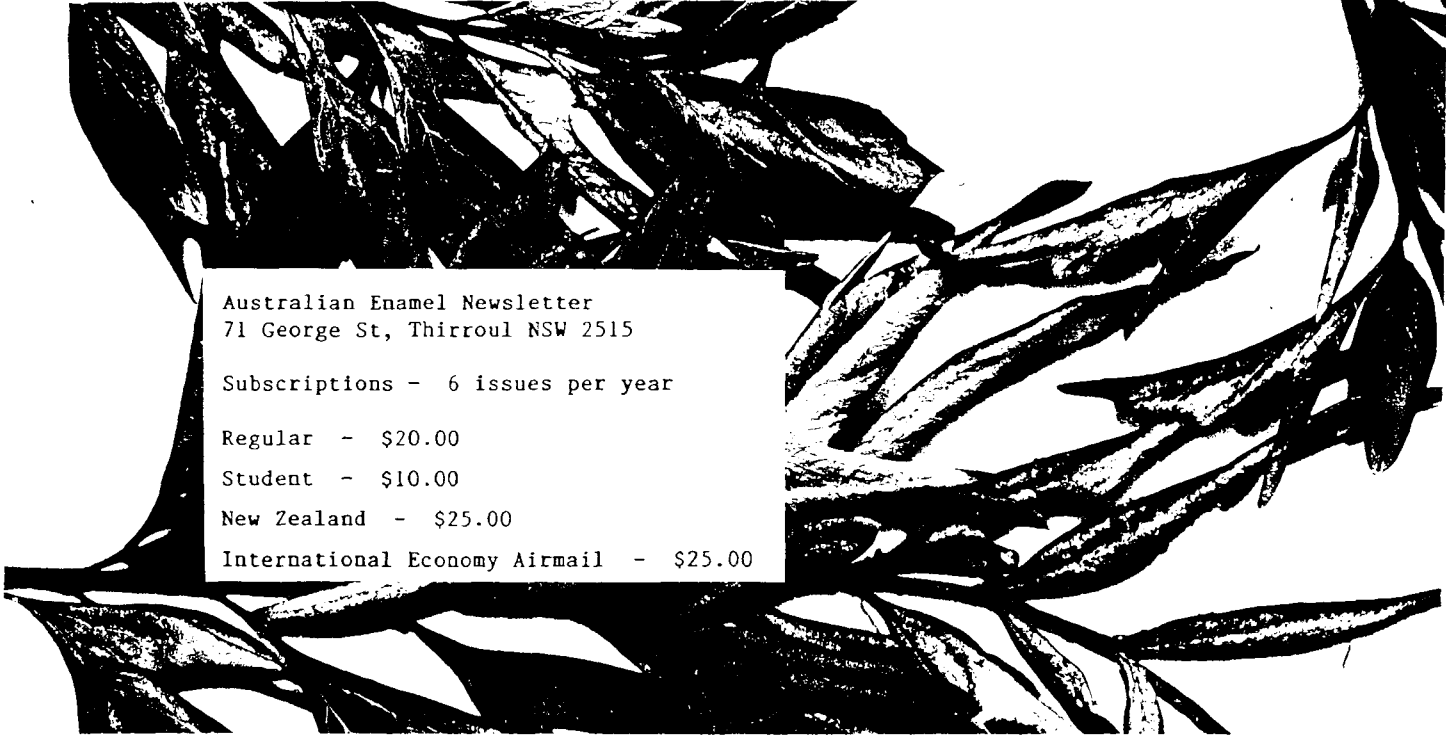
Australian Jewellers Supplies in Brisbane, phone 073 229 4955, and Fordells Jewellers Supplies in Brisbane are the exclusive distributors for Australia and New Zealand.

The fine silver clay is available in 20gm packs for \$40.00 plus tax.

Fine gold is available in 10gm packs for \$450.00 plus tax.

The Autumn issue of the Newsletter of the British Society of Enamellers reports that a British enameller who made and sold 30 items of PMC jewellery, some of it enamelled, has said she would not use it again. She had particular difficulty with the enamelling, that the PMC was too porous, and that enamel blew off the surface during firing, and that the surface bonding was weak even when the enamel did adhere. Furthermore, on a small scale the manipulation of the material was somewhat hit or miss. If the price came down however, she would like to experiment further with larger PMC forms.

AEN is interested to hear from any Australian enamellers who have any experience of this new material.



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