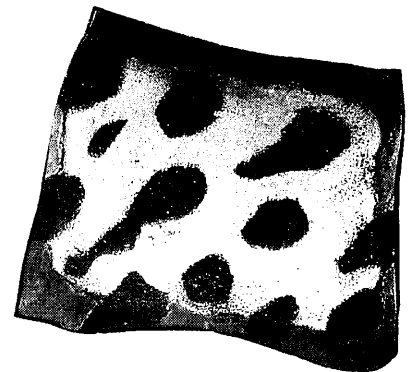
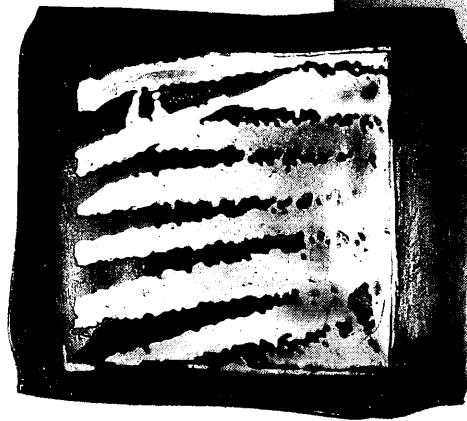


# Australian Enamel Newsletter

Issue 51 - August 1998



**JENNY WHITMORE**



I was born in New Zealand. I travelled for 12 years through South Africa, Australia, North Africa, Europe, England, Thailand, India and Indonesia. I travelled across Australia before finally settling in Fremantle.

In order to formalise my growing interest in jewellery, I enrolled at Curtin University and completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts and Post Graduate Diploma. Whilst at University JMGA were holding their Jeweller's Conference in Perth. Luckily enough Curtin University students were approached, as there were some limited spaces in some of the workshops. Because we students had to take "pot luck" I found myself in an enamelling course run by USA Artist Jamie Bennett. At the time, I wasn't that enthused. I thought to myself: "I don't know if I want to do all those red, yellow and white swirls". My preconceptions about enamelling couldn't have been proved more wrong. In Jamie's workshop we learnt some excellent techniques. We frosted, matted, introduced craters, lumps, bumps, curves, curls, stencils, painted, foiled and textured- in fact anything but flat enamelling.

Inspired by this experience, I continued to explore enamelling in my final years at Curtin. I used animal motifs and patterns: although it wasn't always straightforward. It was certainly a challenge to develop a method to get enamel to stick onto 3D tubular forms. What had seemed fairly effortless in Jamie's workshop proved harder to achieve on my own. In the end I had to compromise by using flat-ish forms, so that at least I could present some completed work.

Since leaving Curtin, I have continued to attend workshops. Specifically those run by Hiltrud Blaich and Jenny Gore. I never come away from a workshop empty-handed; I always learn new methodologies, new techniques to enhance my own skills. In addition, for the past two years I have been studying gemology and have just qualified as an Australian Gemologist.

In my work I like to use colour: As with my enamelling, I like to use many coloured stones. If I had to describe my work I would say it was "Byzantine meets Tribal".

My next major exhibition is planned at Gallery East in the year 2000 and my focus will be to complete the many pieces required for that. I have also moved my studio from my lounge room to a jewellery studio in Fremantle. As we all know when you work from home it is all too easy to get side-tracked!

Hiya enamellers,

After great stress and struggle (mostly by my long suffering partner), I have at last made it into the 20th Century. You can **write me, fax me, phone me and e-mail me!** I've had a ball playing with my new toys and hope they will make my life and yours easier by giving you more ways to send me news and information.

I also have this 'brill' scanner so that mostly I don't have to type up the articles and info, just scan them in, adjust some odd things, then convert them to the AEN layout. This is fabulous for someone who is basically a two finger typist.

Here is some information to help you compose your contributions into a user friendly (ie me) format.

☞ Typed or word-processed stuff is best.

☞ No paragraph indents.

☞ One space between each paragraph.

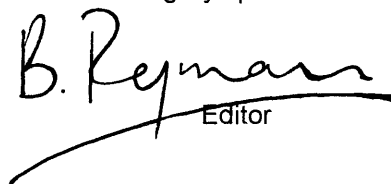
☞ When e-mailing contributions, just remember to attach the info as a word processing file.

**Note:** Of course hand written work is always welcome.

Phone/Fax - 02 4267 2939 - I will leave my computer on all day on Fridays ( 8am - 10pm) to receive faxes and if you want to fax me at other times, you just need to ring first so I can turn the computer on.

E-mail - bryman@ozemail.com.au

I'm sure heaps of you have e-mail so if you'd like to get a bit of enamel dialogue flying through the lines, send me your numbers and I'll print them in the next issue. And here's hoping to see as many of you as possible in Brisbane at the Enamelling Symposium

  
Editor

## NEWS

• Jenny Gore is working on pieces for a Bauhaus inspired house in Springfield Adelaide. "It is a large white painted brick building and nominated for heritage listing. There are 2 sets of 3 niches in the outside walls in which the panels will be mounted. They are 340 x 340mm; are quite abstract with very bright colours, some gold foils and gold leaf. I am really enjoying using my large kiln again and have finished the first 3 plus a trial piece which will be hung inside."

"In May I was invited to exhibit with the Korean Enamel Artist Association in Seoul. I had planned to go and give workshops, but decided to postpone due to economic problems in the region. I sent 2 pieces and the work was included in the beautifully produced catalogue and poster. They have 36 members in their

growing association - are interested in my watercolour techniques - so hopefully I'll get there at some later stage."

• Betty Wilson, Pat Halcombe and Sandra Kerr had work exhibited in the 24th Alice Craft Acquisition in Alice Springs NT. Congratulations to Pat who had a piece acquired.

• Sandra Kerr has work in the GLASS + METAL exhibition at In Sight Gallery, San Francisco, California.

• Pierre Cavalan will be teaching at Haystack Mountain School of Craft, Summer School, Maine, USA and he will also be visiting lecturer at various U.S. Universities, Aug '98 - Sept '98.

• Pierre has also been selected to represent Australia in Scotland in a major retrospective of contemporary international jewellery: "Jewellery Today" National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, August '98 - Jan '99.

• Florida Society of Goldsmiths announces a workshop on Precious Metal Clay (PMC) and Enamels. The instructor is Mary S. Reynolds and the workshop will be held on Sept 5-6 in Tallahassee, Florida and is US\$165. To register, ring Sandi Jones: (850) 656-1148 or Mary Reynolds: (850) 925-6043 or e-mail msr@nettally.com

• From Jeanne Neilson in South Africa: "We enjoy your Australian News Letter and are envious of the many activities reported from across the continent.

Our little Guild is very small and young - it was started in 1991 by our enthusiastic Chairlady Margaret Fairhurst who is also a member of the British Guild. We meet on the last Sunday of every month when we try to have either a demonstration or a workshop or a video or slides. We are learning all the time. Our Secretary brings out a small quarterly magazine with interesting articles and helpful hints, often culled with kind permission from magazines from USA, the UK and Australia etc. We recently had a stimulating visit from enameller Vivian Kline from Ohio, USA.

If any enamellers ever visit our beautiful Cape Town, we would be delighted to meet and have them talk to us! Greetings and best wishes to you and all enamellers in Oz.

Below are some of the activities our Group has run lately.

\* Panel Project - We are producing some 100 mm sq, or 4 X 50 mm units which, when completed, we plan to show in a public display.

\* Cloisonne Workshop by Valerie Twentyman-Jones.

\* Offset Transfer Printing by Ellalou O'Meara.

\* Intentional Fire Scale in Enamelling by Jane McIlleron."

## THANKS

AEN would like to thank Debbie Sheezel, Catherine Large, Skakira Watts, Betty Wilson, Jenny Gore.

☞ The deadline for material for the next issue will be mid October; later than normal, as I will be at the conference. We'll have a combined big issue for October and December.

## AUSTRALIAN BIENNIAL SYMPOSIUM BRISBANE, QUEENSLAND

The 1998 Australian Biennial Enamel Symposium is moving along nicely. There are still places available in all the workshops, though only a few. Painting with Fire, the Exhibition is gaining a lot of new exhibitors with people from Italy, Switzerland, and the USA being represented as well as many Australians. Some of them regulars and many new faces.

Speakers for the symposium will cover many and varied topics including *framing, new ideas of looking at the medium. How to display and mount your work for gallery display*, by Michele Sourgnés, the director of the gallery where we are displaying *Painting with Fire. Photographing enamels part 2* with Mary Raymond. Janet Baker will be *taking us through her workshop and inspirations*. Liz Shaw, President of JMGQ will be presenting a talk on *marketing yourself as a craftsperson*.

Our *key note address* will be Valeri Timofeev and our *closing address* will be Fay Rooke, as well as other topics and some hands on demonstrations.

For a registration form contact Anna-Margot Collins on Ph:07 3367 3277, Fax: 07 33673266, e-mail: amo@powerup.com.au, or GPO Box 1850 Brisbane, Qld 4001.

## ENAMELLING AS A SOCIAL TOOL

Prior to enamelling classes I had never thought of cloisonné as being pivotal to a social experience. I always thought the concentration required for the detailed work of enamelling would prevent all but fleeting social contact. This was certainly true of the time I had already spent in silver jewellery making classes.

To prove a point, I had worked my way through two years of jewellery making managing to make a grand total of one casual friend and a handful of acquaintances who temporarily remembered my name. Through observation I would say that I wasn't the only one who didn't form lasting bonds of friendship. Don't get me wrong, making silver jewellery is a fantastic and rewarding pursuit and I don't think I am a particularly unsociable person, something just didn't click.

Then I started enamelling, and things have been different. To be fair, starting in a class where enamel colours are shared and there is only one sink for washing those colours, is a huge kick in the shell for anyone, even the hermit crabs amongst us. You must converse if you are to have any hope of securing that gorgeous shade of blue that everyone else is after; that or take up telekinesis. Seriously though, a couple of classes of "who has the flux?" and "are you finished with that aquamarine?" and the ice thaws pretty quickly. Not to mention the great bartering skills you can acquire.

Empathy. If I had to narrow down what it is about enamelling that fashions such lasting friendships and reduced it to one element, its empathy in pain. Your loved ones, no matter how much they try to understand, can't fathom the misery of packing a piece for two hours only to bump it, blow on it, or drop it, but your class mates can. Nothing builds camaraderie like a room full of silent cloisonné students punctuated by the occasional expletive, usually coming from the direction of the kilns. Everyone knows what you are feeling when you drop your just then flash fired piece face down on the kiln floor. Sharing a fellow enamellers' grief and frustration is a remarkably strong social lubricant.

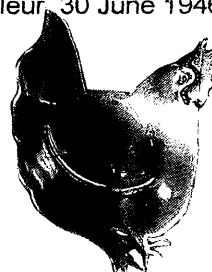
After sharing each others lows, partaking of each others highs can also bring new friends together. There is something special about a room full of people immersed in creativity together. It's intangible but definitely, dare I say it, magical. Even the shyest enameller will open their mouth if it means finding out how you achieve that shading effect or for an opportunity to peruse the latest colour charts from Japan. I must say that placing group orders of enamel is an excellent way to start the swapping of names and phone numbers.

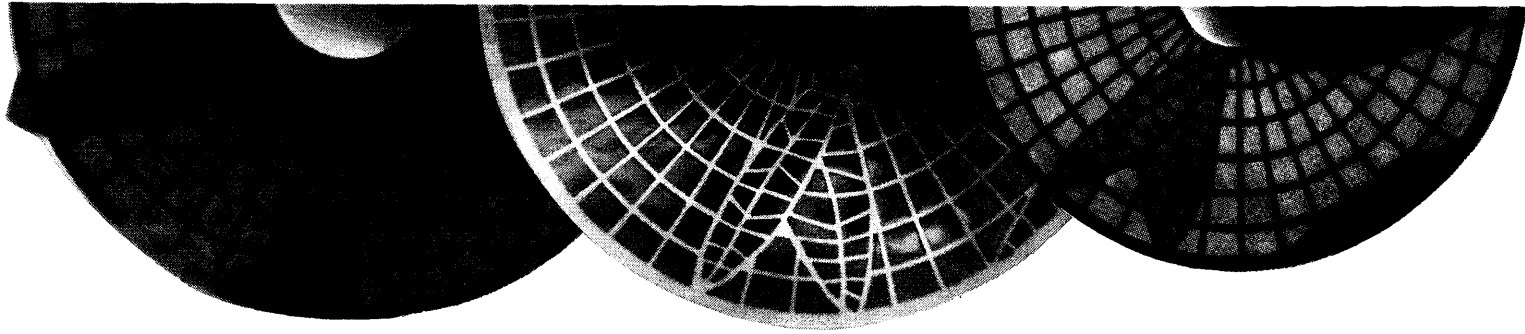
There is certainly something special about enamelling that promotes long lasting friendship although you wouldn't know it from looking from the outside. My advice is even if you do your enamelling on your own try inviting a like-minded friend over to your studio every now and then, or even better someone you wish was like minded friend. Fellow enamellers make excellent social partners. Who'd have thought 'enamelling as social tool.'

Shakira Watts

Dedicated to Jo whose good humour, friendship and determination helped teach me to value my own work, I will always be grateful.

Josephine Vandeleur, 30 June 1946 -13 July 1998





## PLIQUE - A - JOUR, MERILYN BAILEY STYLE.

Plique-a-jour - or backless enamel. 'Plique', refers to the holes, 'a-jour' means by day. Put together I think you could describe it as holes that allow daylight to pass through it.

Plique-a-jour enamel was first developed in the fourteenth century Byzantium. Traditionally, the enamel is packed into preformed cells that have either been soldered or saw pierced. This can then be placed onto a variety of different backing materials, eg mica, plaster of paris, titanium (this has a very thick layer of oxidation which allows the enamel to be lifted off). These mediums are all good for flat work. To make 3 Dimensional work, there are also many methods; you can treat the plique-a-jour as you would cloisonné and etch off the back after you have finished; fire onto an oxidised iron form, this is then covered with a thin layer of clay, powdered charcoal and rouge dissolved in alcohol. The wires are then placed and soldered if necessary onto the form. After enamelling the iron form can be lifted out.

My method is quite different and came from my exposure to *hot glass* techniques and materials whilst attending Sydney College of the Arts. I put these two techniques together and came up with the procedure described below. The backing material I use for plique-a-jour is Kaowool. This is a Morganite product and is available in many forms, from quite thin sheets eg 2mm to blanket thicknesses and even thick boards. Kaowool is spun ceramic fibre and is able to take very high temperatures without breaking down. You have probably seen it as the white lining in large kilns. You can buy Kaowool already soaked with hardener or you can buy the hardener separately. If I am making work that is raised or curved I use the hardener to make a mould, if the work is relatively flat I just place the metal straight onto the Kaowool.

The enamels I most often use are Thompson enamels, in the beginning mainly because of the fact that in general they all fire around the same temperature. However, since they took the lead out they don't seem to behave quite as well, I have had more trouble with oxidation and colour burn out. Especially in the yellows. You can get some very nasty looking brown rings if you accidentally overfire (which I do quite regularly). The beauty of plique-a-jour is that you can use all the red colours. Yes, they will oxidize, however, this is only seen as a colour change next to the silver. Not a problem in most cases.

I have used both Sterling Silver and Fine Silver for Plique-a-jour. I always believed that for the kind of work I was making I needed the strength that Sterling Silver provided. I very rarely soldered any findings onto my work, but rather made the finding an integral part of the piece. If you do use sterling silver I would recommend depleting the surface of copper first e.g. anneal, pickle then scratch brush, do this several times until no oxidation occurs after annealing and the metal looks white. Lately, I have been using fine silver because of its ease - no fire scale. So long as the metal is thick enough, eg 1mm or 1.2mm, you achieve a good result. For my bowls I started with 1.6mm thickness. I always saw pierce my plique-a-jour, I am sure I would melt something if I tried to solder them together.

### THE TECHNIQUE - (Simply put - I hope!)

**Step 1** Assemble or saw pierce the metal structure observing the size limitations to pliques (holes not to be much larger than about 8mm maximum, you can always try them larger though).

**Step 2** Bend or curve your metal to the desired shape - nearly any shape is acceptable as the Kaowool can mould to any shape using the hardener.

These first two steps are interchangeable depending upon what you are making. Sometimes it is easier to bend the metal first, whilst in other cases the design has to be cut before it is bent:-

**Step 3** Turn the metal over and place the Kaowool against the back of the metal framework. Saturate the Kaowool with hardener using a paint brush. The Kaowool is then dried, either in a drying cupboard or on top of a hot kiln. Drying time varies on the size of the mould. Drying too rapidly brings the hardener to the surface.

**Step 4** When the mould is dry turn the mould over and gently pry off the metal structure. This is so you can wash the hardener off the metal. (I don't know if the hardener would affect the enamel, I just think it's a good idea to get rid of it). It is at this stage that I fire the mould in a relatively hot kiln, approximately 800 degrees Centigrade for a few minutes. This removes any traces of the binding material in the Kaowool. If you don't prefire your mould the enamel can go cloudy. According to the manufacturer these fumes aren't toxic - I would ventilate the room.

To make sure there are no gaps in the mould, a thin layer of Kaowool is placed on top of the mould and the metal placed back on top. This is a precautionary measure, yet in most cases a sensible thing to do, as one of the advantages of this process is that there is a minimal amount of cleaning up to do on the underneath side of the metal after it has been enamelled.

**Step 5** Carry out the procedure of packing and firing. This can vary from 3 to 6 firings depending on the thickness of the metal and the complexity of the design. I keep the kiln fairly hot approximately 1000 degrees Centigrade (I haven't had a pyrometer for the past 15 years). If something happens within the enamel, for example dirt or air bubbles are trapped, you can just lift the piece off the mould, repair what is wrong and place it back on the mould.

This is also where a major difference occurs between using mica or having a back on the piece. The water that is used to wet pack, becomes sucked from the brush as you pack. In my mind., the process of packing becomes more like that used for pate de verre. It is like packing crushed glass. You still use a lot of water to make the enamel travel into the corners etc, in fact you use more water than normal. The mould starts to look quite saturated with water yet it doesn't lose its rigidity. The most important thing is that you adequately dry the enamels before firing. the result if you don't is a cloudy effect after firing. This is because the steam travels through the grains and possibly takes some of the mould hardener with it.

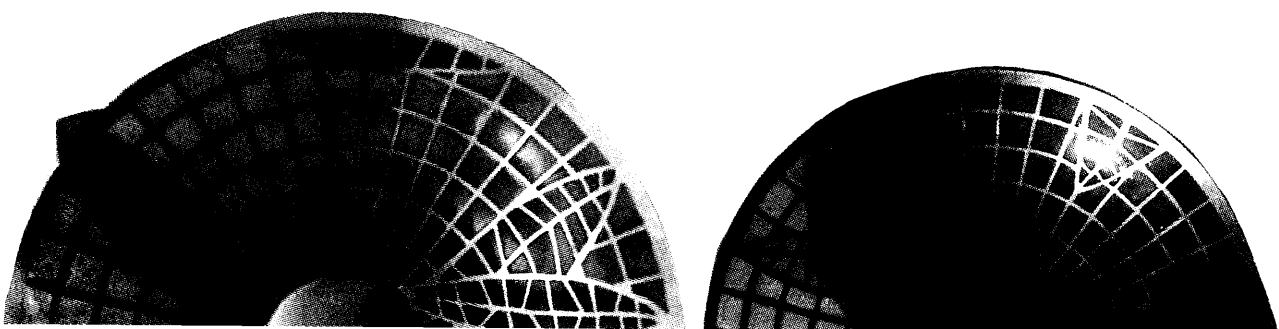
**Step 6** Having successfully filled the cells the excess enamel is ground off. In most cases there should only be a textured look to the underneath side that was resting on the mould, so it often doesn't need a lot of attention. This texture should disappear in the final firing. Attention needs to be paid mainly to the top side. I grind off my enamels (thanks to Val Aked) with a diamond hone, under running water. Hones come in varying grades. I then travel through the necessary grades of emery paper to 1200 under water. If necessary I also use my flexible shaft with a diamond burr and running water. I don't polish at this point (in fact I very rarely highly polish plique-a-jour).

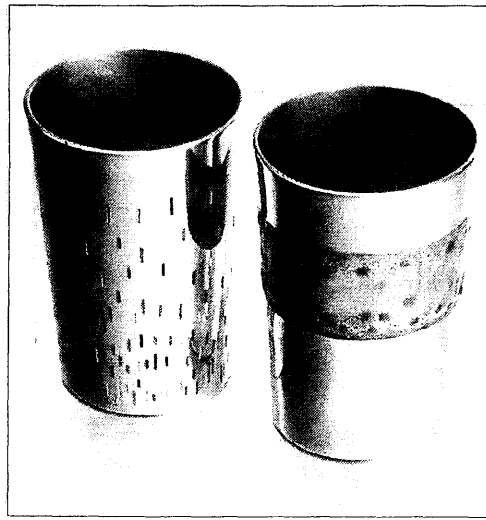
**Step 7** The enamel is re-fired so that it regains its glossy/glassy character. This also repairs any cracks which have occurred through the grinding process. The piece must be extremely clean before it is re-fired otherwise dirt or emery dust will be trapped within the enamel. This is usually done with a glass brush and copious amounts of running water. Sometimes with a little ammonia.

To re-fire, you can place the piece back onto the mould, with some Kaowool strategically placed to raise it above the mould. Otherwise you can arrange it on metal supports. Either way nothing should touch the glass. Great care must be taken in the final firing. If left in the kiln too long the enamel will run just as glass would and drop out of the pliques. This should be the end of the enamelling component of the piece. You can then polish using tripoli and rouge, or as I do, use a brass brush to finish.

As in any technique there are always certain inadequacies; I have learnt to either accommodate them or forget about them. Issues such as stress cracking is always a consideration when initially designing a piece. Having pliques that are next to very large sections of metal will always result in a hairline crack in the enamel. The best shape for holes are those that are round or amorphous. I ignore this entirely and always tend to go for squares and rectangles, as a result I always get stress cracks in the corners or along an edge. The enamel is still often perfectly stable. A slower cooling process will often alleviate or reduce stress cracking. It's all to do with the coefficient expansion and contraction rates of glass and metal.

When using plique-a-jour, a successful piece will only come from thoughtful and comprehensive planning. The main objective is to realise your idea whilst also conquering the technical challenges.





## STERLING USE OF ENAMELS COURIER MAIL, TUESDAY, MAY 12, 1998

A keen eye and a bower-bird approach to her work has made Brisbane silversmith Catherine Large a shining success, as Jeff Shaw reports.

ENAMELLING on precious metals is a craft skill as rich in tradition as in appeal but seemingly practised by too few in this state since the 1970s, when Margaret Hastie and Don Ross were producing a superlative range of work.

Now local silversmith Catherine Large is becoming increasingly well known on the Australian scene for her controlled but rich employment of enamels on precious metals for jewellery and tableware.

Perhaps most recently noted for her contribution to Jewellers and Metalsmiths Group exhibitions, Large seems at times to have fluctuated stylistically between the sedate and the flamboyant, reminiscent in materials and style of Peter Tully's *Urban Tribal Ware*.

That element of delight in found objects is still evident in this latest work, now selected for southern markets, but the finding has been more purposeful, with components such as mother of pearl and gold leaf replacing the earlier plastic and rubber. The more traditional materials are seen as a complement to the featured enamelled ware.

It was the latter range of work and the desire to create more substantial items in a major body of work for Large's first solo exhibition (previewed recently at Crafts Council of Queensland) which attracted a \$10,000 grant from the Queensland Arts Office. Such sustaining support in the preservation and development of serious crafts is an investment in education and the arts and to be applauded in this case.

Without doubt, Large's more spectacular pieces are her neck ornaments. Precious and seemingly fragile, they are outrageously colourful, distinctive and appealing. They consist of an amazing selection of precious and semi-precious components, some found

and others manufactured but all combining with energy.

A keen eye and a bowerbird inclination might well be the key to the development of these neckpieces. The most dramatic of this series, for example, is the neck ornament, assembled from around the world; from old Indian beads, part of an old Victorian mother-of-pearl fan and with cut and tumbled links of old Sydney bottle glass.

A series of finely designed, functional, silver objects has as its source a range of hollow spun forms of bowls and beakers.

The bowl form displays to their fullest the qualities inherent in transparent enamel surfaces. Large has worked the glazes subtly with well-controlled techniques, even introducing an element of spaciousness into the transparencies by the inclusion of layers of 24-carat gold foil at varying levels. It is as though a visible structure is given to the surface.

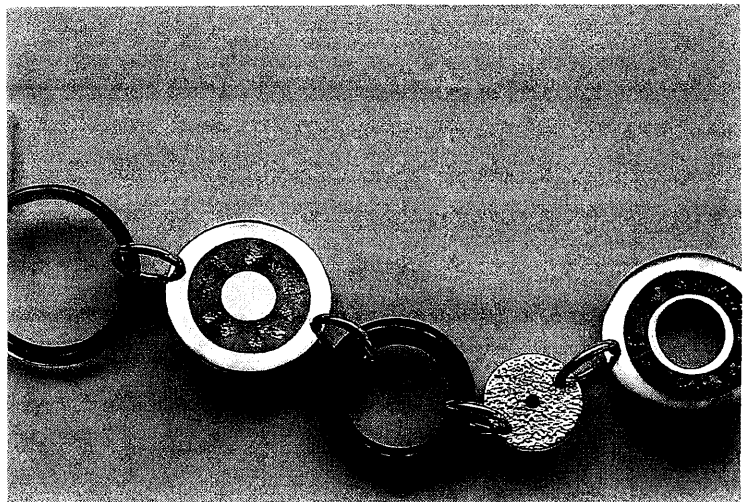
The resultant variations of colour and visible depth by inclusions and by surface texturing add great richness to what are seemingly simple and finely crafted objects. That apparent simplicity also belies the complexity of multiple firings, the arduous mixing and the grinding so necessary to achieve these clean and bright results.

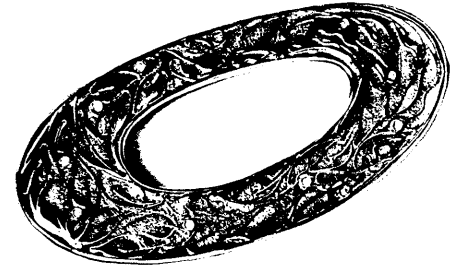
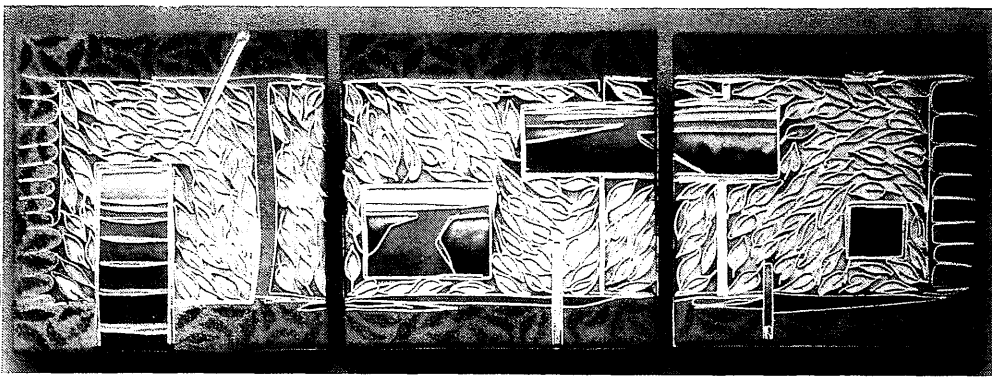
With advanced skills, Large also shows her design at its best in a pair of sterling silver beakers. As with all her pieces, enamelled colours provide the linking theme and element. Series of short rectilinear channels are engraved into the silver walls and filled with rich colour. Both beakers are enriched with gilded interiors.

These pieces are eminently collectable and instant heirlooms. Anyone heading to Melbourne or Sydney will be able to view them at Makers Mark from May 9-30 and July 8-31 respectively.

In Brisbane, Large's work can be seen at Mary Marks Contemporary Art and Design Gallery.

Jeff Shaw is director of the Queensland Arts Council Open College of the Arts.





**CAROLYN DELZOPPO - MAKERS MARK GALLERY June 12 - 30, 1998.**

To have had the opportunity to see the exhibition at Makers Mark in Melbourne of the enamels of Carolyn Delzoppo was an experience of absolute delight. This is the first time that Carolyn has exhibited a large group of her framed cloisonné miniatures in Australia. Some of these pieces are from a solo exhibition of the panels held in Germany in September 1997, and some are new works created in the last few months.

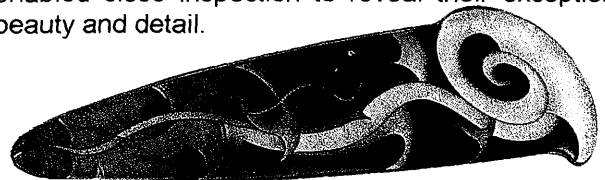
The exhibition consisted of 33 highly detailed, framed miniatures, mostly single panels but also included several triptychs and diptychs. There was also a small collection of new brooches in cloisonné and champlevé enamel, which were complimentary to the theme of the wall pieces.

The exhibition was titled "Precious Detail" having dual meaning. It refers both to the inherent preciousness of the materials and workmanship, and to the subject matter - that details on our environment are of great value in the ecological balance of life forms on our planet. Carolyn is passionate on environmental issues and her use of subtle hues in her plant and seed pieces of urgent growth, lull one into a sense of well being, but the message is that world food production is at great risk- Layers of leaves decomposing and preparing the soil for another cycle of lush beauty (exhibition title triptych - "Precious Detail") is endangered by the draining of the wetlands and the overdevelopment of the coastal areas of northern New South Wales.

The contrast of Carolyn's linear shapes in the series depicting the overdevelopment, are chaotic and warning, and her colours are stronger and stark in "Monument to Asphalt" and "Monument to Greed". And yet they are, each and every piece, beautifully designed jewels in themselves. Carolyn's transparent colours are so clear and clean and without blemish.

Needless to say her brooches are exquisite, again depicting the seed and growth. A couple with, it seems, miles of silver wire crammed into a tiny area and still showing beautiful colour between the wires.

The gallery space at the rear of Makers Mark Gallery created a small and intimate setting for the works and enabled close inspection to reveal their exceptional beauty and detail.



Carolyn's absolute control of the medium, her techniques of application, wire bending, firing and finishing of her work leaves no doubt that Carolyn is a Master Enamellist.

Debbie Sheezel. 

**ENGLISH ENAMEL BOXES**

- by Susan Benjamin

**BOOK REVIEW** by Marilyn Tendrich.  
(Reprinted with permission from Enamel Guild South Newsletter, Vol xix, no. 5, Summer '98

"Enameling is not a cut and dried process learned as one learns how to assemble a wireless set: it is rather an empirical affair of the emotions and instincts, requiring a marvellous marvelous of the gardener's green fingers and the touch of a successful pastry-cook to bring off a perfect job." From Kenneth Snowman's description of enamel in his book on Faberge ...quoted in English Enamel Boxes.

English Enamel Boxes, by Susan Benjamin is a well documented history of the commercial production of English copper enamels dating from the late 1740's through the 20th century. The author begins with an overall history of enamel art, beginning with possible 13th century cloisonné fragments found in Koukolia, Cypress, and covering Byzantine and Chinese cloisonné, champlevé, en plein of France and Europe, and the spread of painted enamels from Limoges (dominant throughout the 17th century) to China (18th century).

Benjamin traces English enamel history back to Roman and Celtic objects excavated from the 1st century. She notes that prior to the 18th century, most of these were useful or religious objects fired on gold which was later melted down by plunderers for the precious metal content, accounting for the lack of surviving pieces.

Copper based enameling began in England in the 1700's. Basic painted enamel watch dials were made in the beginning of the century, and commercial production of many adult trinkets or "toys" and boxes began in the 1740's.

Benjamin traces the development of the manufacturing processes in England. She includes

many interesting facts, though much of it tends to be rather dull reading, evidently not enough information to make it more interesting. Some of the processes described appear to be written by an author who really didn't know how to achieve the various effects but really appreciated them, nonetheless.

The natural development of enamel manufacturing in the industrial centers of England: Battersea, London, Bilston, Birmingham, Wednesbury, South Staffordshire and Liverpool are traced. The author explains the various developments, applications for patents for production of enamels and the transfer printing process. While most associate English boxes with Battersea, the venture, York House, lasted only three years, 1753 to 1756. However, the author traces the dispersal of their inventory and the craft to other areas, documenting artisans, styles and factories, as well as their successes and failures. She describes hallmarks and identifiable styles or themes of each, to aid collectors in spotting originals and copies, dating them and tracing their histories.

With 80 color plates of approximately 230 objects, and a detailed section of notes, bibliography, index and acknowledgements, the book provides a good guide and some inspirational ideas. Ms. Benjamin has aided in the revival of the craft with her association with Halcyon Days, antique store in London's Brook Street, and the company, Bilston and Battersea Enamels, since 1970.

I like the book despite the fact that it is somewhat wordy at times and often hard to follow. The pictures, however, are quite good and if you are really interested in the subject matter and history, English Enamel Boxes would certainly be a good addition to your library.

## **REPORT ON THE BRITISH SOCIETY OF ENAMELS - 4th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 3rd -5th April 1998**

by Jack & Sheila Heard

"The Conference was held at West Dean College, W.Sussex. It was followed on 5th - 7th April by a Workshop.

The principal organisers were Joan MacKarell and Gudde Skyrme, but of course many others were heavily involved. The organisation was highly efficient and voluntary and we were very impressed. Eighty five people attended, Included were:- from the Netherlands (3 people); Germany (2); France ( 1 ); Denmark (2); Finland ( 1 ); Ireland (2); Israel (3); Canada ( 1 ). and a number of Americans now living in UK

The facilities at West Dean include a very large main workshop, small studios, lecture hall and library. The rooms, meals and service were excellent.

An exhibition of the work of delegates was set up. There were three shops - The Camden Workshop, The Society Bookshop and West Dean College shop. There were two main speakers. Cynthia Cousens spoke of her search for design in the countryside and showed slides of her outdoor drawing, maquettes made of twigs and of the enamelled jewellery resulting from her studies.

Ros Conway spoke of her collaboration with Diana Hobson into the techniques of Pate de Verre, which is allied to glass making. Many of the techniques have been lost. The moulding of shapes was causing great difficulty.

As an introduction, the delegates were each allowed to show and talk about three slides. Irene Cockroft, an enamelling historian, showed lovely slides of work of (a relative) Ernestine Mills from about the turn of the last century.

Spread over the two days, delegates, in groups of 20 or less, were given the chance to attend each of the following demonstrations for 1-1 1/2 hours.

1. Innovative Materials and Approaches (given by Pat Johnson)
2. Press Forming (Louise O'Neill and Bonnie Mackintosh)
3. Bead Stringing (Alexandra Raphael and Sarah Wilson)
4. Photography and Presentation (Howard Coles)
5. Enamel Screen Printing (Peggy Hitchcock)
6. Carving for Enamelling (Phil Barnes)
7. Precious Metal Clay (Jean Wedge-Hartley)
8. Creative Surfaces using Liquid Enamels (Elizabeth Turrell)

All this was extremely well organised and carried out and for the two of us was the jewel of the Conference. From the social view there was a bar and a dance. There was a Silent Auction of items donated by delegates. This raised more than £1000 in aid of Enamelling in Education.

The Conference was followed by a 2 day, hands-on, workshop run by Pat Johnson and Joan MacKarell. Sixteen stayed for this, including nearly all of the foreign delegates. The main aim was to try the techniques which were new to us during the 8 demonstrations. It was a good opportunity to get well acquainted with the foreign visitors as we worked, ate and drank together.

Joan MacKarell and Gudde Skyrme led a brief discussion about problems caused by the take-over of the word 'enamel' by paint manufacturers and others. This will be continued by the General Committee of the B.S.O.E."

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