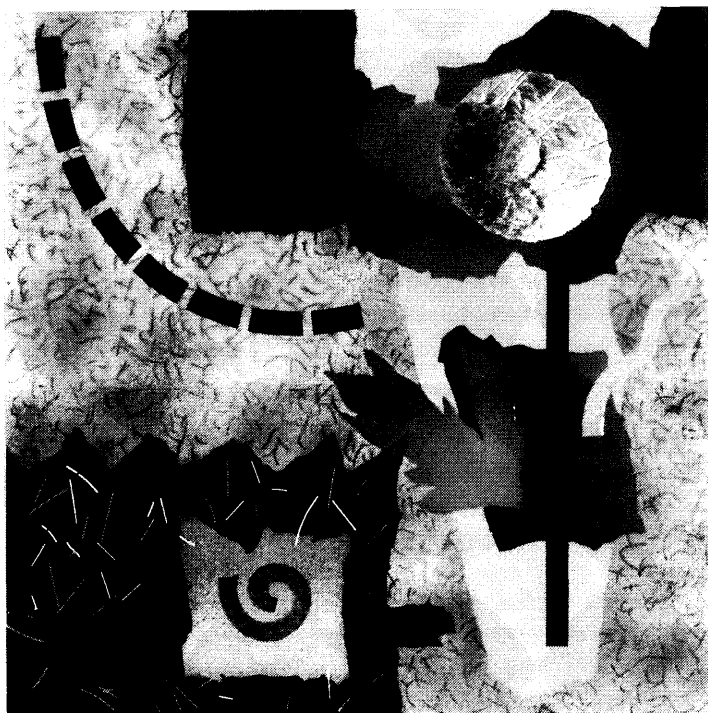


Australian Enamel Newsletter

Issue 55 - April 1999



JENNY GORE

Since returning from the Enamelist Society Convention in 1997 I have been mainly working on commissions. I find this a strange phenomenon, how for a period of time, one after another will appear, usually with manageable timing, then, just as suddenly, dry up! So – after a few pieces which came as a result of the Conference and associated travel, I was very pleased to be offered an interesting commission in the Adelaide suburb of Springfield.

In a Bauhaus inspired home, built at the end of the 40's and designed by architect Russell Ellis, well known at the time, the house had included two sets of three niches in two separate outside areas. It had been planned to have bas reliefs installed in these but as nothing had eventuated the owner, Mr Charles Wright, decided that enamelled panels would be the answer!

The house is large and painted white, with a shady garden of green lawns bordered by colourful flowerbeds. I decided to try and design something semi-abstract appropriate to the house, bright 'jewels' to reflect the intensity of the colours in the garden – hence the flower pieces for the front area. From the back the house overlooks a swimming pool so I thought that water pieces in blues and greens would be appropriate.

For some time I have been trying to work intuitively, without pre-designing, but this is a somewhat daunting idea for a client. So I played with torn paper collage to find the imagery, from which I made colour roughs covered with shiny clear film to look a little like enamel, and this worked fairly well. Unfortunately the colours of the available enamels don't always correspond to the coloured paper, and I still wanted the freedom to change elements and colours as I worked, so the finished result would still differ from the designs.

This required a good deal of trust on the part of Mr Wright who was quite wonderful to work for. I think he was expecting something quite soft and painterly - not hard edge, but he generously placed himself in my hands and said "you're the artist Jenny!"

We decided that I should make a sample piece and this worked out really well, but seemed a little small in the space so the finished size was decided – 342 x 342mm. For the underlayers of colours I thought I would use some colours – Degussa, Schauer, Blythe and use these as a base on all the panels. I found that this was a waste of time and effort as these enamels never fire as smoothly as my favourite Thompson leaded opaques, and I had to spend much time covering them. Mr Wright liked the look of the 'slick' enamels he had seen on one of my small

Cont back page...

I'm a very excited and busy editor as I am preparing to go to the 7th Biennial Conference of the Enamelist Society in Canada. I'm so looking forward to the workshops and joining all those enamellers from around the world.

I would like to hear a bit more about what's happening out there in enamel land so please send me news and information; go completely wild and send me an article.


Editor

NEWS

☞ Exhibition of framed panels and jewellery by Carolyn Delzoppo at Lake Russell Gallery, Woolgoolga, from 14th May to 7th June.

☞ Barbara Ryman will be teaching a Cloisonné enamelling workshop at the Sturt workshops in Mittagong on the first 4 Saturdays in May. Call Megan Paety on ☎ 02 4860 2083

The enamelling classes that were to be held at Sydney Community College in Term 2 will now be held in Term 3. For a College brochure ring ☎ 02 9555 7411.

☞ Carolyn Delzoppo will be teaching two enamelling workshops at Valerie Aked Jewellery Studio at 2/982 Victoria Rd, West Ryde. Enquiries ☎ 02 9975 3734

22nd and 23rd May - Cloisonné,
29th and 30th May - Champléve

☞ After nearly twenty years supplying enamellers worldwide with equipment and materials, Gudde Skyrme of CAMDEN *Workshops* has decided to return to her roots as a designer-enameller.

From April 1999, continuity of service to enamellers will be offered by Sarah Wilson, who will be trading from her central London workshop as Vitrum Signum, at 9a North Street, Clapham Old Town, London SW4 OHN

Sarah is an experienced enameller and has run her own enamelling business for the past four years. She now wishes to offer her practical experience as an enameller to assist you in your choice of equipment and materials.

Shortly, Sarah will have available a new catalogue, which will also be accessible on the world wide web and you will be able to place orders by mail, telephone, fax and Email. Personal callers will be welcome by appointment.

TO EXHIBIT

THE 33RD INTERNATIONAL ENAMELLING ART EXHIBITION of the Japan Enamelling Artist Association.

The exhibition will be held at the Ueno Royal Museum in Tokyo from 4th to 9th November, 1999.

Three pieces of any form of enamel expression made in the last two years may be entered with a US\$50 fee.

The works and entry form are due no later than the 5th August 1999.

Send a large stamped and self addressed envelope to AEN if you want the entry form and other details.

RETIREMENT HEAVEN by Geoffrey Winter

I have been sent particulars of a unique specially designed sheltered housing complex for creative people in the village of Bere Regis in Dorset. It is a complex exclusively for retired artists, craftspeople, musicians and writers. For creative people of retirement age to actively create in a stimulating atmosphere of mutual understanding and encouragement in the heart of the village. It comprises 20 sheltered flatlets at economic rents (including 6 for double occupation) together with an art studio, pottery and small-craft studio workshops, a dark room and a delightful large community centre with grand piano for exhibitions, concerts, group activities, meetings etc. The youngest resident is not yet 60 and the oldest is still a very active 90 It looks great. If interested, I will send you details.

(Doesn't this sound interesting. I think many of us in the near and distant future would enjoy retirement in such an encouraging and thoughtful atmosphere. Has anyone heard of any retirement home of a similar nature in Australia? - Ed)

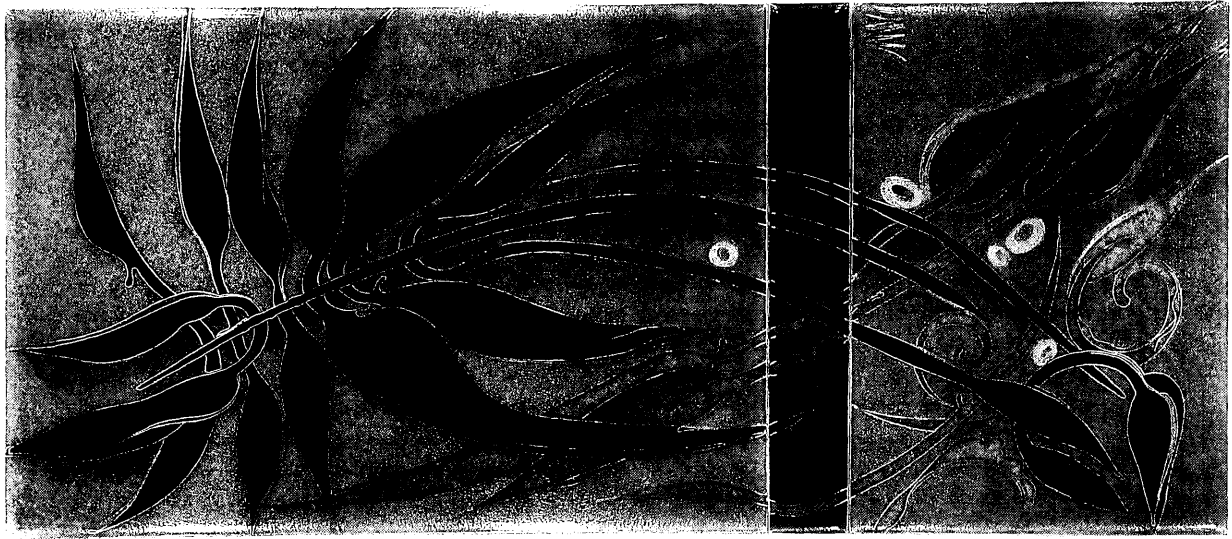
(Reprinted with permission of The Guild of Enamellers, Summer 1998 Journal.)

THANK YOU TO

Jenny Gore, Carolyn Delzoppo, Jill Parnell.

☞ The deadline for material for the next issue will be May 14th, 1999 (as I will be leaving Australia at the beginning of June). All articles, comments and news are welcome. Send to Barbara Ryman, 71 George St, Thirroul 2515 NSW.

Ph/Fax 02 4267 2939 (fax available on Fridays)
Email bryman@ozemail.com.au



EXHIBITION BY CAROLYN DELZOPPO

It is exciting to have the time to make some new miniature cloisonné panels, and it takes a looming exhibition deadline to force the issue. Generally, there is always so much else that is more pressing and more urgent. Making a living mostly.

In May, I am having a small exhibition of framed panels and jewellery at Lake Russell Gallery in Woolgoolga, near Coffs Harbour. The gallery is, in my opinion, one of the best craft galleries in the state, having been purpose designed by the architect husband of the owner, Janette Ransom. It is well worth a visit if you are travelling up the east coast of NSW.

It is interesting to start to think 'large' again (as against small, ie jewellery), and see what evolves from the end of my pencil. I think I must be missing my garden, because what has evolved is a series in bright colours with plant forms.

I have used leaf and stalk forms to create dynamic designs in blues, greens and reds.

The work is a continuation of previous panels which were commentary about the ecological problems facing us through loss of plant and seed diversity. I think however this work is less gloomy - not that the problems aren't as severe as before - but just that sometimes it is also OK to just enjoy flowers, plant details and forms for the wonderful pleasure they can give. The garden has had only minimal attention this past year, but even so has given a great deal. There is always something new happening - a plant flowers for the first time, new growth of a startling colour suddenly appears, plants get tall enough to make interesting silhouette patterns against windows. The garden has been the quiet inspiration for this work.

Carolyn Delzoppo Lake Russell Gallery, Woolgoolga, May 14 - June 7

AROUND THE MAGAZINES

craft arts INTERNATIONAL Issue 45

On page 67 there is a very interesting article on an a Swiss-born artist called Beat (pronounced Bay-ut) Urfer. He and his wife have been residents in Australia since 1980 and live in the Atherton Tableland in north Queensland. He has had a few exhibitions in Australia but mostly exhibits in Basel, in Switzerland.

Through his work as an industrial chemist he came into contact with enamel and saw its potential as a medium for art.

His work is quite unusual and combines glowing smaller sections of cloisonné embedded in a canvas surface. The canvas is painted to create an image that combines the two mediums into an integrated whole.

(Has anyone seen his work in real life? Let me know - Ed)

Australian Enamel Newsletter
 71 George St Thirroul NSW 2515

Subscriptions - 6 issues per a year

Regular - \$20.00 Student - \$10.00
 New Zealand - \$25.00
 International Economy Air Mail - \$25.00

BEND AND STRETCH

by Barbara Ryman

When working long hours at a workbench it is easy to become absorbed and lose track of time. If you do this for too many years, it's easy to wind up with some chronic muscle and postural problems. It's obviously best to learn good habits right from the outset but if it's too late for that, (and lets face it, we tend to notice our bad practices as we get older and our bodies start to ache) it's not too late to take a good look at your workshop set-up and your working habits.

Adjust bench heights, set chairs at correct height and angles; how's the lighting and ventilation? And pay close attention to your posture and how long you are slogging away in a fixed position. It's vital to build good habits into your work routine. Learn to monitor your position, watch for any aches or pains and loosen and ease those muscles that are reacting. Do you find one of your shoulders hitched up under your ear? Drop it! Get up from your bench at least once an hour. Do some stretches, get some good deep breaths of air.

From my own experience, I have found physiotherapists to be terrific in identifying problems and devising excersizes to build up some of those muscles that may be letting your posture slump and showing you excersizes to ease tension and allow you to dissipate that tension instead of letting it build up into serious and sometimes debilitating pain. I suppose with a physio's help, I can visualize the nuts and bolts of my system and therefore I can see in my mind what muscle or joint each excersize is working on. For me that seems to increase my ability to make these excersizes an effective part of my life.

Below is an extract from the JMGA NSW February Newsletter, reprinted with their permission. There are two sources for the excersizes shown -

ROBYN GANT

B.App.Sc.Phys, M.App.Sc.Phys, MAPA
PHYSIOTHERAPIST

and

The Stretching Handbook
10 Steps to Muscle Fitness

by Francine St George
Simon and Schuster, Australia.

"Robyn Gant gave a talk to JMGA members last year and has kindly given her permission, along with Simon and Schuster, to republish these excersizes which we will all benefit so much from.

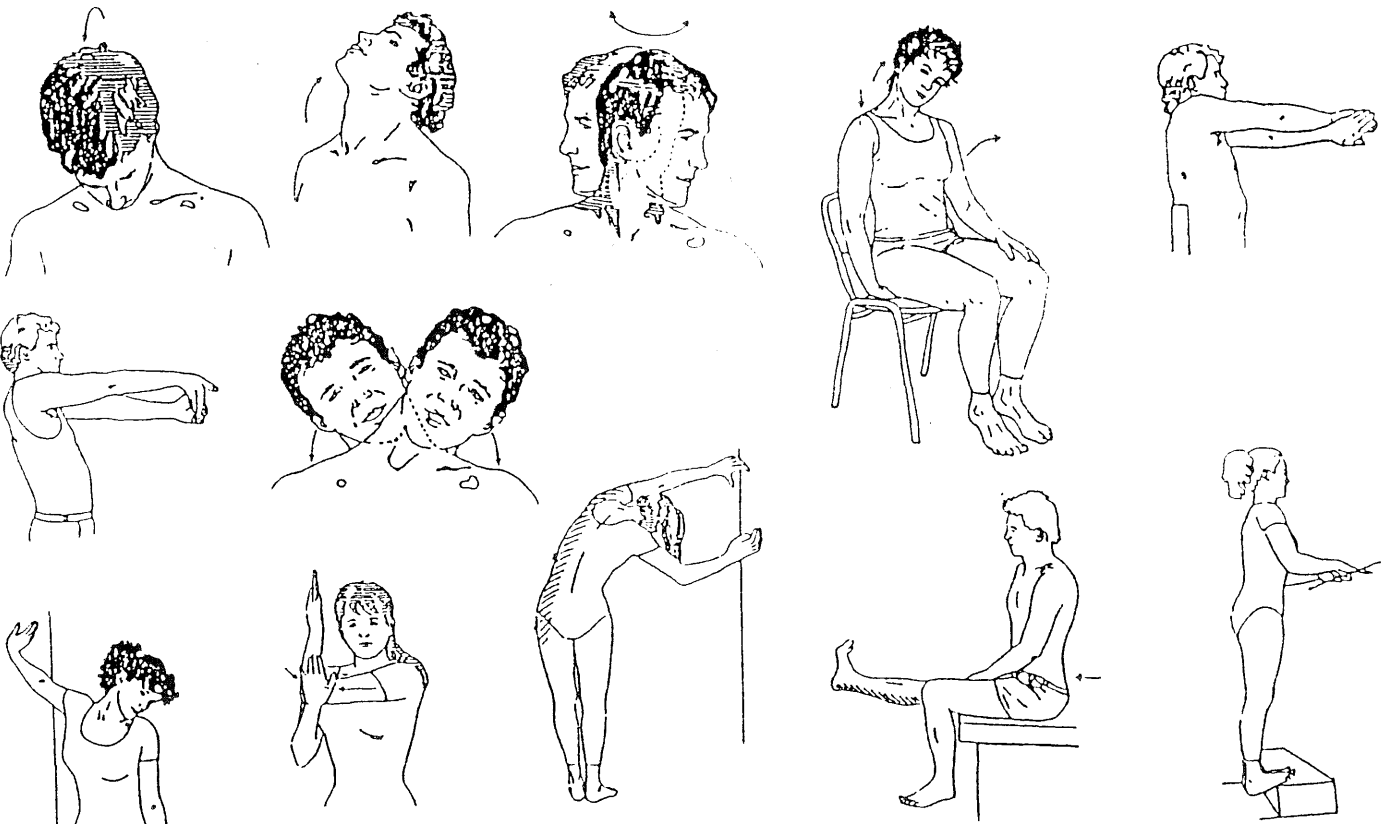
JEWELLERS - DON'T GET YOURSELVES IN A TWIST!

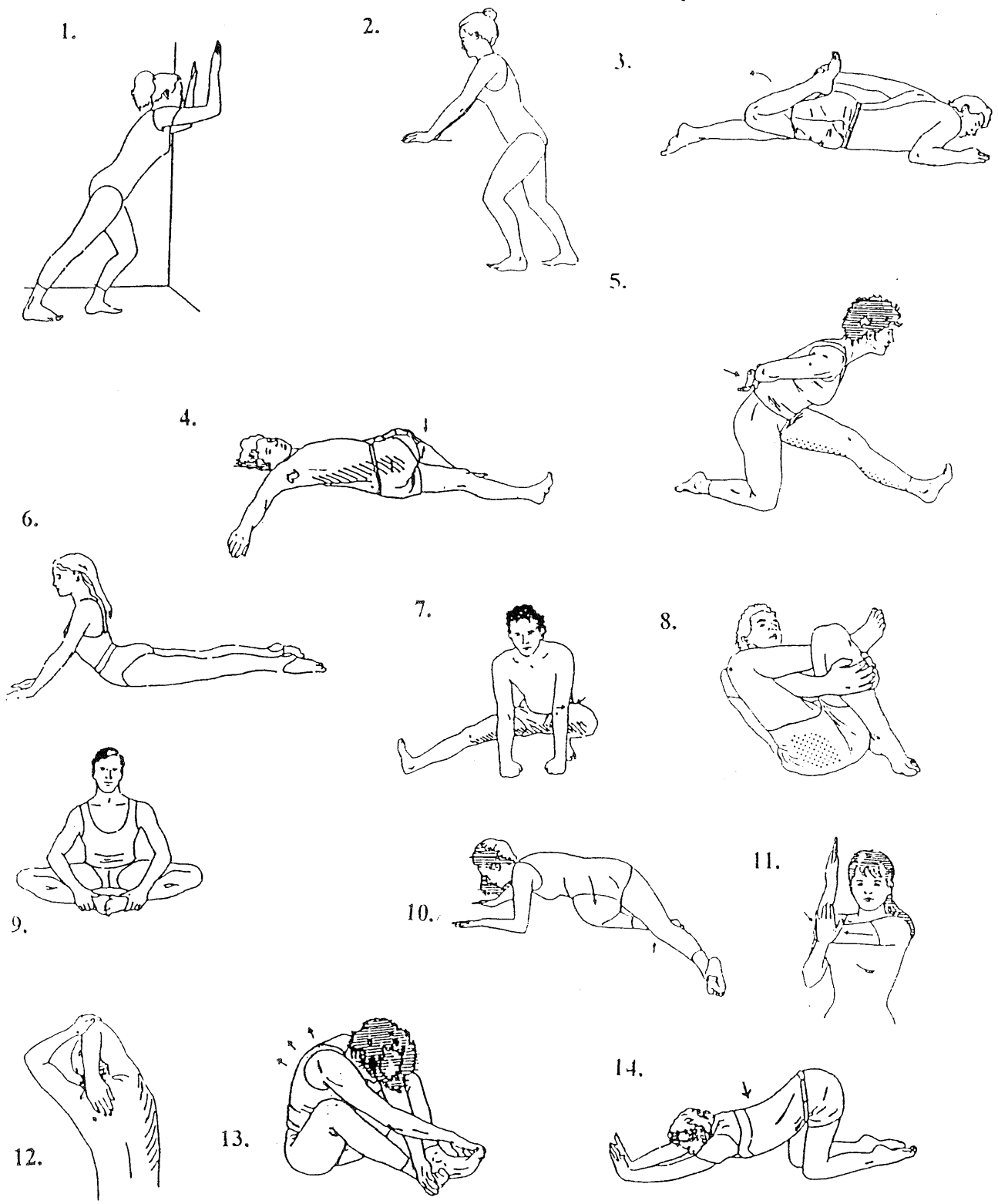
The sustained postures and repetitive movements involved in your craft can lead to stress in muscles and joints. You may experience this as muscular discomfort, tiredness, headache or pain. Overuse injuries can be avoided by:

- modifying the task or your posture
- taking frequent breaks
- regular stretching
- regular massage

Try these stretches during your work day to relieve the stress on your overworked muscles. Be careful not to stretch to the point of pain and hold the stretch for 15 seconds repeating each stretch 2-3 times."

STRETCHES





TRY THESE AT HOME TO REVERSE THE EFFECTS OF PROLONGED SITTING ON THE BODY:

TRICKS & TIPS: Part I

Ideas collected by E Massow and published in the Newsletters of Kunstverein Coburg E.V., Coburg, Germany.

Translated by Otto Gerendas-Gianonc (Initials at the end of a tip identify the source of the German original) and Reprinted with permission of The Enamellist; The Canadian Enamellist Association.

☞ It has two advantages when you place silver/gold foil between two sheets of strong transparent paper. Firstly, you see exactly what you are cutting or tearing, secondly transparent paper can be torn straight, omnidirectionally. (A.V.)

☞ When you press silver/gold foil between 2 sheets of emery paper, 400 or rougher, you create a large number of small holes and so avoid movement of the foil during firing. (A.V.)

☞ Most marking pens, both permanent and washable, leave a gold coloured line under flux following firing. (S.A.)

☞ Instead of distilled water, you can use water processed in an ion exchange machine. With the appropriate attachment, these machines are also used to produce soft water for steam irons, etc. (P.B.)

☞ Use the finest available enamel when dusting bowls with steep sides, with the resulting lighter packing of the fine enamel, you can decrease the sliding tendency of the enamel during firing (P.B.)

☞ It is easy to make sieves of different forms, sizes and fitness. Cut a plastic bottle close to the neck and cut a piece of metal screen (available in hardware stores, Thompson Enamels, etc). Heat the metal screen to about 150 C and place the already cut plastic piece on the screen. The metal screen will melt the plastic and the two parts will permanently joined. A piece of heavier wire can be formed to be used as a handle.

☞ Pump style refillable hair spray and other bottles can be used to apply gum to pieces before or after sifting the enamel. The mist thus produced is fine and the pressure slight, so the spray won't wash away the enamel already sifted.

☞ Write/draw on an already enamelled surface with glycine mixed with a few drops of ink. The enamel already fired must be clean and free of grease. You can use a fountain pen filled with that mixture. Soft a light coat of enamel on the still wet writing/drawing, wait a few seconds, turn over the piece and shake off the loose enamel. Burn off the glycine outside the kiln and then fire the piece.

☞ There are several advantages of using a stainless steel plate instead of a ceramic one as the bottom of a kiln. Firstly, one gains at least 10 mm vertical space: secondly, stainless steel is easier to clean of any enamel remaining following firings as it can be removed when cold with a hammer.

☞ Treatment/Repair of Already Fired Surfaces

- Small holes in an already finished surface can be repaired using a diamond drill bit in a handpiece. Dentists (at least in Germany) give away diamond drill bits they would discard otherwise.

- Diamond files are more efficient than stones.

- To precisely repair small imperfections use separating disc in a handpiece. Five discs mounted on a single shaft replace a small stone. With felt or heavy paper inserted between the separating discs you have a handy wetgrinder (DP. W. L.)

TIPS From Jill Parnell.

☞ Instead of using expensive liver of sulphur (which tends to go off quickly) for patination, try using Lime Sulphur Spray available from nurseries. It is an inexpensive substitute that lasts for ages. Just mix a little in cold water and apply as normal.

☞ Sparex substitute - Sodium bi-sulphate available from pool chemical supplies.

PRECIOUS METAL CLAY (PMC)

by Ellen Goldman

(Translated by Mrs. Ingrid Flood from July-August 1998 Issue of Newsletter of the Association of Enamellists of the Netherlands and Reprinted with permission of The Enamellist; The Canadian Enamellist Association.)

I'd never heard of PMC and couldn't quite get a picture of it... Good precious metals and clay, but a combination of the two of them was a mystery, until I took a workshop in Chichester, England at which they demonstrated PMC.

PMC is a contemporary new material that is 60% precious (at the workshop they worked with silver, but there is also a PMC based on gold) which is bounded by a material that feels like clay and can be also shaped like that. While working with it, the hands have to be greased with olive oil, so the material won't stick to them. Also the sheet of Perspex and all the used material needs to be greased. The PMC that wasn't used, was saved under clingfoil or under water.

You have to realize that the material shrinks while it is heated in the oven. It loses 1/3 to 1/2 of its volume. When fired in the oven, the material is porous. Before putting the enamels on it, you have to close the pores by polishing the piece. To clean it you can put it in soda for a while.

It is possible to solder on PMC, but it is not easy. Certain parts for closures can be attached by little pieces of "SLIBKLEI" (small rests of PMC softened by water) before going into the oven. They will be cooled as well and dry hard afterwards.

Take an object (for example an earring) of PMC. Let the air dry it (not the sun) until it's "hard" at the degree of leather. Once this point is reached, it is possible to give the finer details. Put it in the oven, temperature for silver 900 degrees (gold 1000 degrees) for 2 - 3 hours.

If you don't have that much patience, it is possible to reach the "hard as leather" point a bit faster: put the piece in your kitchen oven at 350 degrees, as described before.

A third option is to heat the PMC to 900 degrees right after it is shaped and leave it there for 2 - 3 hours at that. I'm sure you've noticed that the oven temperature is the same as the "standard" silver. It is obvious that in the last case there is no possibility to work the material when the PMC is "Hard as leather"

You can, of course, put enamels on it. The piece has to air dry after it comes out of the oven and be put in cold water. After cooling down, it will look white and can be worked as silver. This material is not cheap, but goes a long way (it lasts a long time).

BETTY BUTLER'S STENCILLING GROUP

By Christopher Bull

(Reprinted with permission of The Guild of Enamellers, Summer 1998 Journal.)

With ten students to teach, all equipment was ready and laid out together with wall-mounted photographs of work Betty had done previously illustrating the various processes she was going to teach us. Items required, apart from the usual copper blanks and powders, were stiff card (from a cereal packet), masking tape, a scalpel and spare blades, Polycell Classic 5blue and spray, a flat unwashed "chisel" shaped artist's paint brush and a small wooden stick pointed at one end and chiselled at the other. Also a firm surface for cutting out on. The processes Betty described were:-

1. CARD STENCILLING (a) straight b) 'jigsaw'
2. HIGH FIRING
3. NEWSPAPER MASKS
4. USES OF ARTIST'S MASKING FILM.

1.a) STRAIGHT Cut card to a manageable size, place the cleaned copper blank on it and pencil round the edge to register the position. With the knife cut out a diagonal window at two opposing corners, so that the blank can be seen. Next, draw the pattern on the card and, using the knife as you might attack an uncooked steak, keep the blade firmly pressed all the time along the line of pattern, moving the card and your arm as

you cut round the corners. Lift off the cut-out pattern. Then put a tag of masking tape at each side of the main card with which to lift it off after powdering with enamel. Have the enamel and sieves ready, place the copper on a sheet of paper, place the card over, aligning the corners that can be seen. Sprinkle the enamel while holding the card down, then lift it off with care. Trim any excesses with the chisel brush and then fire.

1.b) JIGSAW i.e. where there are multiple parts. Determine which is the dominant one and cut this first, then the others in numbered sequence. If there is to be shading, do No 1 first, giving a dominant edge, then the others in sequence.

2. HIGH FIRING (sometimes up to 1000°C on copper) Draw pattern as above with say three eccentric shapes. Cut them out, number and tag them. With a copper blank sift a soft opaque all over and fire at a normal temperature. Place cards, leaving out No 1 of pattern and sift enamel on, remove cards and fire as before. Repeat the process for Nos 2 and 3. using soft colours. Then at the centre use a hard flux that fires at about 800°C (T700 was recommended) and fire at a high temperature - at least 900°C. Soft colours will tend to bubble through, but the hard flux will hold the whole pattern together.

Still using card, stripes of transparent colours were fired over the whole diagonally.

NEWSPAPER STRIPS torn at one edge and cut along the other gave contrasting outline. Glue had to be sprayed with these strips before sifting enamel. Before firing the whole was inverted and the paper pulled off downwards.

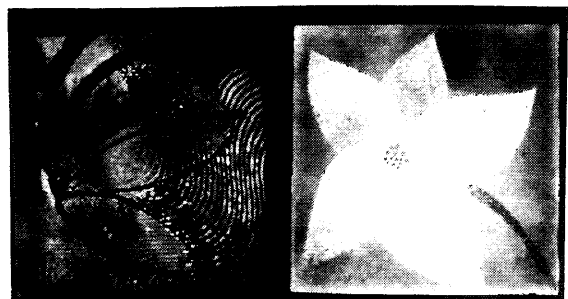
MASKING FILM from art supply shops.

Use a background of a transparent hard enamel. Then cut out a piece pretty well to size of this 'expensive' material, place it over the blank with matt side up and draw the pattern with fine fibre tip pen (white if on dark ground). Pad the film down with a firm cloth and cut out with the knife. Prise off the unwanted bits. Spit on the bare spaces and paste glue over the parts to be enamelled, put on the enamel, invert the piece and peel off the film leaving the enamel in place. Trim and fire.

These were the various processes, but I have not mentioned Betty's patient support and attention to the numerous cries for help and the way she taught us to experiment and not to be too fearful of "mistakes". Altogether a most enjoyable and instructive day.

Note:

Sheets of small star and other shaped holes, useful for stencils, can be bought from Asian dress fabric shops. They are what is left over when sequins are stamped out.



pieces so I planned areas using them, firstly to illustrate my title "up the garden path' on the sample piece, but later as general textural areas. A red line of dashes became the pathway instead.

The techniques used were my favourite of sifting using stencils with some sgraffito, then fine gold foils cut into various symbols and wet inlaid with transparent colours. The final firings were the discs of gold leaf which always crazes in an unexpected fashion. The number of firings for each piece varied between 17 and 24 as I tried to achieve a colour balance between the three on each set, fortunately the slight differences in size as they 'grew' didn't matter in the situation.

Michael designed a neat solution for fixing them in the wall niches. He first mounted them on heavy gauge aluminium which had long aluminium bolts attached - those were threaded and guided through four holes drilled through two layers of brickwork to the outside of the free-standing walls - a tricky task. Nuts were screwed on the back, the holes filled and painted; almost invisible - so the pieces were removable if necessary - but not without difficulty. The final result was well received and I had the satisfaction of knowing that my largest kiln had a good workout again!

A few weeks later I was visited by the people from Taj Enterprises, Japan, to exhibit for 'Creative Australia '98'. I was asked if I could make six small brooch pieces in the same style as the panels for the house. This proved more difficult than I imagined. They were to be small ovals, 53 x 40mm, and were to 'read' horizontally as well as vertically so they could be mounted as both a brooch and a pendant. This was 'done' in gold in Japan - so I didn't get to see the finished result. The whole exercise was worthwhile however, as I sold some of my small wall pieces and a large one during the series of exhibitions.

Finally I found some time to play and experiment with the various colours and Karats of the gold, palladium, and silver leaf that I had bought in New York - what a luxury! I made many test pieces to see how far I could control the elusive leaf, and came up with some surprising, exciting results. Then came the opportunity to go to Vietnam and meet up with Michael on his way back from Germany. We spent three weeks in Hanoi - a fantastic experience! There is no evidence of any enamel in the North of the country, the main medium besides gouache on paper or board is lacquer. This is used quite loosely as a painting medium with additions such as crushed eggshell for added colour and texture. The process is long and laborious. Many layers are built up and this has some parallels to the process of building up layers of enamel.

Hopefully the many images I have of this interesting city and its friendly people will form the basis for a future exhibition which I hope to get started on NEXT!



Mr. Wright and his Bauhaus house.

