



Our cover displays a selection of enamelled buttons and cufflinks from around the world and they show a variety of techniques. Just a small newsletter this time; I'm madly busy before I go away so it's handy to be able to put together a petite AEN. I know you will be compensated when I return from the Canadian Conference loaded with information, workshop reports, news and enthusiasm and a credit card bill though I don't suppose you can help me with the latter.



Editor

## NEWS

☞ Congratulations to Fiona Knox on the birth of her baby girl called Elodie Frances, born in mid February this year.

☞ Sandra Kerr is selling off some of her excess enamel, copper shapes and bead stocks. She has made up a catalogue that she can post to you if you send her a stamped, self-addressed C5 envelope PO box 1665, Warriewood Square 2102.

☞ Pat Holcombe will be travelling to China with an international group of Enamelling Delegates to tour various enamelling sites in the country. They will go to the large producers and also visit enamel artists and craftspeople.

☞ The Cloisonné enamelling classes at the Sturt workshops in Mittagong are going well with much enthusiasm and great lunches.

There will be a Winter school in July at Sturt so if your interested, contact Megan Paety on ☎(02) 4860 2083 for more details.

☞ Thanks for the replies from Mary Raymond and Ann Thomson to my enquiry about Beat Urfer (see last issue). He had work in the 1st National Enamel show held in DJ's in Sydney. In fact I remember the smallish framed panel which depicted a beautifully executed carnival scene that exuded a lively atmosphere.

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## 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.

PLEASE NOTE: This information was in the last issue but as I'm going to be away for a while I suggest you make your work and I will be able to post entry forms to go with it when I return - Ed

## AROUND THE MAGAZINES

**glass on metal** - vol 18, No1 April1999

articles on

-Hydraulic die forming for enamellers by Carol Holaday

-Enamelling news from Japan

-Enamel Jewelry and Vessels: a review by J E Jasen on an international exhibition in Germany

-Hiltrud Blaichs exhibition in Heilbronn-Sontheim, Germany. Review by J E Jasen

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articles on

-OWNERSHIP by Ivor Lewis; a discussion on the problems of artists and craftsmen in the area of plagiarism and copyright

-The New Metals of Contemporary Jewellery by Eric L. Stevens

-Crackle Enamels by Sandra Kerr

-Hydraulic Press - Conforming Die by Christopher Collins

## REQUEST FROM THE EDITOR

In the past I have received postcards from some enamellers. These post cards are ones they've had made up especially and show their own enamel work.

I'm wondering if those of you who have some spares could donate them to AEN and I will redistribute them through the newsletter as little surprises.

The other thought is, perhaps you have some spare postcards of enamel work from your travels and such, you could send those in too. Thank you.



## ALEXANDER RAPHAEL AT OUR 1998 CONFERENCE

( Reprinted with permission from the Spring Journal 1999 of The Guild of Enamellers )

(Note: although this article is describing a slide show, you can imagine the slides quite well and I think it's very interesting and amusing to recognize that the art of enamelling can be unpredictable and testing for new or experienced enamellers - Ed)

At our 1998 Conference we were all entranced by Alex Raphael's talk, with slides, on the development of her own work. Her commentary and slides were so beautifully married that it's impossible to give it in full here - we would need far more coloured pages than our budget can stand.

What follows is a very condensed transcript to remind those who were present and to give others a flavour. We are much indebted to her for the loan of some of her slides as illustrations.

"My Mother was an artist and went to university to study painting. When she came out in the 1940s, she decided to start an art gallery in Pittsburgh, it was there that she met my father who had gone to the Bauhaus in Chicago and studied furniture making and design. So it was inevitable that I ended up being interested in the arts and, surrounded by almost beatnik parents, there wasn't much way I could go. I did decide for one while to be a biologist, it soon stopped. Here is a drawing I did of my mother - she's covered in rubies and diamonds and sapphires and she never wore jewellery, but I thought she should have it, so I decorated her up.

I went to University for a couple of years, ended up marrying a painter and we moved to Ireland. This is where I spent 14 years on top of a mountain, which had great advantages and disadvantages. I was isolated, getting a lot of time to work and develop a very individual style, but not much technical help.

In 1981 I moved to London and here's some of the work that I've made subsequently. Some beads, some

of you will have seen them - most pieces of work that I make have two sides to them. These are all cloisonné enamel. I just love making beads, it gives you an opportunity to do two different pictures for the same piece. You get two for the price of one.

In 1988 I started making things with hidden messages in them, secret words and meanings, developing my own pictorial language. I like people to find things hidden inside them, little messages and little words and to spend time looking at and holding them. They're very tactile pieces.

I found a Japanese plique-a jour bowl in an antique shop, upside down, in about 1978 and I looked at it for two years and I said to myself, "I'm going to be able to do this." But no book tells you exactly how they're put together and no-one that I knew was doing anything quite like this. So I decided that the only way to start it, and not chicken out, was to write my name backwards in cloisonné enamel and so it had to be plique-a jour or you couldn't read my name. I started making my first bowl in Ireland in 1980 and I actually finished it in 1983. I used just 4 colours and a very simple design of daisies, it turned out OK. I had a lot of problems, but I learned a lot and you could read my name.

People keep saying "how do you make these plique-a jour bowls?" and I keep telling them, "I'm not quite sure", which is actually very fair - I make each one completely different from the next, because with each one I'm trying to figure out what went wrong the first time and correct it - and, of course, what went right the first time doesn't necessarily go right the second time. So it's a continual learning process.

I work on a copper former and cloisonné enamel the outside and the copper gets eaten away with nitric acid. The rims are added afterwards, sometimes they're enamelled in and sometimes they're soldered onto the copper - I haven't found a perfect way of doing it yet. I had a lot of trouble with the nitric acid that I used. Peter Wolfe gave me another idea for another acid to eat away the copper bowl and you can see the result - it didn't quite work ! The thing that really annoyed me was that it seemed to separate the silver wires from the enamels so it came out like little puzzles - it came out like a lot of little candies. The whole thing could be put back together again in little tiny pieces. I didn't try that acid again !

This bowl was the next one that I made and I absolutely loved this one and it now belongs to a collector - the base is also enamelled on and has little cloisonnés of seashells at the base. It's all silver - took about 10 firings, I try to fire it as few times as possible - when it goes wrong it can often go wrong in the kiln, especially if you're working with silver. It doesn't take more than a few seconds to over fire. Here are two more - one of them fell on the floor and the other I overfired.

This bowl was made in 1987 through '88. Made for Limoges, purchased by the Museum there and this base is silver so it was glued on afterwards. This has a base about 2.5 inches tall with silver & gold wire. I wouldn't recommend doing the base as you can't see through it very well, it doesn't have large enough openings. It got a 'Commended' at the Goldsmith's Craft Competition. It was extremely difficult to do and as you can see on my trivet this is the cloisonné that stuck and a lot fell off.

Here is one of the first using all gold wire, to get the inside nice and shiny. Because there is no danger of eutectic effect, I used gold wires direct on the copper. The only problem was that one of the colours was very yummy and the nitric acid ate little holes and it became a colander and I had nitric acid spraying out all of the little holes, which I then had to fill up. "

The creation of Alex's beautiful plique-a jour bowl, "Frog and Tadpoles with Fish" was filmed from start to finish over a 2 month period for "Collectors' Lot" on Channel 4.



## TRICKS & TIPS: Part 2

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

☞ You can save time when after the last firing and before stoning or filing (diamond), you grind away any cloisonné wire sticking out of the enamel with a grinding wheel.

☞ Following final grinding with a stone or diamond filing of at least 600 or finer, CFR-Oxid applied with a wet cork provides a very pleasant finish.

☞ When waxing an already polished surface, use a colour-free wax only, such as a compound to polish

stones, a colour free shoe polish or a floor wax: bee's wax provides a dirty-looking yellow finish.

☞ Several US publications praise hairspray as an alternative to tragacanth. The recommended approach is the following: Spray the hairspray well over a small part of the piece. Sift a thin layer of enamel over the wet surface. Repeat the process, small part by small part until the whole piece is lightly coated. Repeat the whole process to increase the enamel's thickness for the last firing. Spray the whole piece lightly again. Dry it a few minutes, then fire. '

Disadvantages: - as the hairspray dries quite fast, you have to sift the enamel in several layers over a larger piece - as the first shift must be applied as a thin coat, you have to work fairly fast.

Advantages: - As the hairspray dries pretty fast, the enamel, even when sifted several times and so becomes thick, sticks well and there is no danger of it running down when fired. You have to experiment which hairspray is the most appropriate: the Editor of the Rundbroke, Kunstverein Cobourg is interested in your findings.

☞ Another good adhesive is the standard wallpaper paste. Its complete mixture includes compounds which prevent fomentation and mould, thus it has a longer shelf life than tragacanth. Highly thinned in distilled water and applied even to steep surfaces, it produces a sticky layer which binds well with sifted enamel. On the other hand, it is not the choice of adhesive to attach wires to steep surfaces, in that case, tragacanth is superior.

☞ Superglue has several advantages attaching cloisonné wires to its base - it binds immediately even in difficult positions - it is waterproof, hence it is not affected by wet packing - it burns in the kiln without leaving any trace unlike epoxies.

☞ It is not accidental when one finds old enamelled pieces counter-enamelled in blue: all blue enamels are particularly hard.

☞ You can use brass wire for cloisonné work on copper base: after grinding and polishing they look like gold and a light wax finish will prevent oxidation. They are not recommended to be used over a silver base.

☞ Transparent rose enamels over a silver foil produce, as the result of a chemical reaction, a beautiful transparent gold. As not all enamels react equally, experiment to find the most appropriate enamel. Black opaque is a dead colour. According to Dr. Rother, mixed with a transparent green or blue, the black becomes alive.

NOTE: These tips have not been tested so proceed at your own risk. Be careful and let us know if the tips were helpful.

