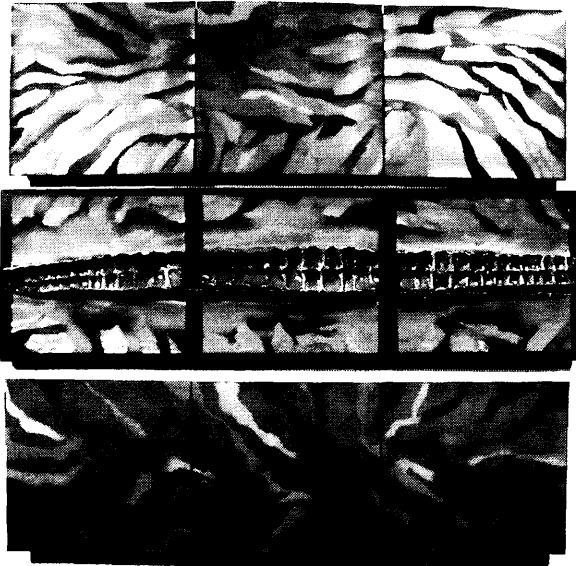


Australian Enamel Newsletter

Issue 72 April 2002

Rocky Ridge



Terra Australis



MARY RAYMOND - working on a larger scale

Some years ago I had just returned from an Enamelist Society conference in Cincinnati when I received a phone call from a woman who had bought some of my work in the past. She told me she was an art consultant and could she please come and see what I was doing at the moment because she needed some different pieces for a client. When I said "yes, when would you like to come?" she replied "in half an hour"! You've all seen the ad. of the woman madly cleaning the bathroom as the in-laws walk up the front path – well that's what I was like tearing round cleaning up the studio!


The work I showed her was based on the fold-forming workshop I had just done with Charles Lewton-Brain. She declared that it was just the sort of thing that she was looking for so Arch (my husband) and I hastily mounted the triptych on a piece of slate for approval by the client. That got me my first big commission (2 wall pieces .9 x .9 metres each), for Smiths Snack Foods, and the triptych hangs proudly in our family room never to be sold. For the commission I was shown the space – 2 alcoves 5ft square in a corridor opposite the lifts in an office – and given a piece of the fabric used to cover office partitions. I was to work within those colours which gave me plenty of scope and the rest was up to me as long as I incorporated the fold-forming as part of it. I made the pieces very bright since they were to hang in a featureless passageway. – "Rocky Ridge".

The next commission, from the same consultant, was for the reception area of an office in the city. It was to hang at the back of the stairwell next to the reception desk. I inspected the area, determined the size that the piece should be 1.4 m. wide x 2.24 m. high. The only brief that I was given was that the piece should have an Australian feel to it. I prepared a maquette in 1 to 5 scale for the client because I felt that I could not convey the feeling of enamel any other way. The design was accepted and I proceeded with the work – "Terra Australis". Having never made anything so large I was waking up in the middle of the night worrying about whether the whole thing would come together, how the separate pieces of the design (40 28cm tiles) would fit and ultimately whether it would look good. Arch devised a brilliant hanging system for the mural which was mounted in 8 horizontal sections on marine ply. Once the framework went up on the wall it took us 10 minutes to install the mural! We were very pleased with our efforts and Arch commented that installing the next one would be a piece of cake!

How wrong he was! The next job was for a hospital foyer at St George Private Hospital.

Cont... back page

Such a busy time preparing for an exhibition. I always find the last stretch excruciating 'cause you're just so worn out and sick of looking at the same old stuff. But it does make the opening loads of fun!!


Editor

NEWS

⇒ **Merilyn Baileys and Barbara Ryman's** exhibition of Enamel Works will be showing at the **STURT gallery**, Mittagong. The exhibition opens at 11 am on Sunday 12th May and goes to 2nd June.

THANK YOU

Mary Raymond

⇒ **The deadline for material** for the next issue is May 23rd, 2002. All articles, comments and news are welcome. Send to Barbara Ryman, 71 George St, Thirroul 2515 NSW.

Ph/Fax 02 4267 2939
Email: bryman@ozemail.com.au

ENAMELLING ON VESSEL FORMS

Printed with the permission of Sarah Perkins and reprinted from Enamel Guild South Newsletter Vol xxiii, No4, April 2002

.....

It is easiest to enamel on seamless copper or fine silver forms. This means that you must either raise or spin the metal form. You may also be able to purchase simple spun good forms in copper which can be altered or used as they are. It is also possible to enamel a seamed piece, but as enamel doesn't like to adhere to solder, the seam must get special attention and is a complication you don't want to start out with. (The 3 ways I deal with the seam are: soldering a square wire over the seam which will extend through the depth of the enamel; covering the seam with metal foil and enamelling over that; and making a very clean solder seam and using a high lead content enamel as a base coat over it). Any forming or altering of the shape must be done before the next step.

If you want an attached rim and/or base, or any other additions, they should be soldered at this point. When enamelling whole forms it's helpful to have attached rims and bases to rest them on when firing. They also protect the vulnerable edges from chipping and give a finished look to the piece.

Medium and Easy silver solders have a low enough melting temperature to reflow when fired so only Hard or IT solders will work, but any solder fired in the kiln will be subject to eventual breakdown. This breakdown is much slower with IT. It is possible to successfully complete a piece with multiple firings using Hard solder on unstressed joints, but you must be very careful not to overfire the piece or the solder will break down and endanger the enamel around it.

When soldering fine silver to fine silver with IT or with Hard solder, use a high temperature white paste flux containing fluorides such as Handy Flux (use in well vented area; it puts out toxic fumes but unfortunately, the safer fluxes don't work at these temperatures). When soldering copper to copper or copper to silver with IT, mix about half-and-half Handy Flux and black flux (available at any Indian Jewelry Supply or many welding supply stores). You can use straight black flux but it's opaque when active and hard to see when the solder flows. When soldering silver to copper be sure the seam doesn't get oxidized before the solder flows. If you keep heating to try to force it to flow after the seam area is dirty, the copper and silver will fuse instead of soldering. Once this fusing process has begun, it will continue each time the piece is heated, causing the silver to "disappear" by alloying with the copper. Enamel will also tend to pop off on the alloy, as the metal moves every time it is fired.

If soldering on a protective rim, it's advisable to have it extend to form an overhang on both the inside and outside of the piece. To ease fitting and soldering, make the rim wider than necessary and trim it later. If you want heavy cloisonne wires or other fairly large metal elements on the surface, you should tack them on with solder. Large or heavy pieces are hard to get to stay on a steep wall with just enamel holding it in place.

After the soldering is completed, remove excess solder thoroughly and rinse in water and baking soda to neutralize the pickle. This step is essential for any metal which has been in pickle at any time, or the enamel will tend to be bubbly and porous.

The kiln may need to be turned up 50 degrees or so if your piece is large because the kiln will take a while to recover. Never allow the kiln to drop below 1350 F when there is a piece in it, or the metal will oxidize before the enamel flows, and the enamel will stick to the oxide which will flake off when the piece cools.

Whichever area is hardest to get to for stoning is, generally speaking, the area which should be enamelled first. This gives it a chance to even out in the kiln, as it will flatten a little each time the piece is fired. Usually, this is the inside of a vessel. If the top is necked in to form a bottle shape, mix Klyr fire and water about 1:3 and pour it in. Roll it around to cover the whole inside surface and dump out the excess. Dry thoroughly and fire to maturity. (You can put a

dab of enamel on the outside to use as a firing key if you can't see the inside.) The inside takes a little longer to mature than the outside so give it a few extra seconds. If there are bare spots after firing, wetpack over them and refire, repeating until the whole inside is covered. If the piece is more open but the walls are fairly high and steep, you'll probably want to wetpack the inside. Use Klyr fire and water mixed 1:4 to wet the 80 mesh enamel. Proceed to wetpack leaving a narrow bare metal line (fire line) about every 3 inches on steep walls. Leaving this line will prevent the weight of the enamel at the bottom from pulling the enamel further up away from the wall and into a pile at the bottom of the piece. You will need 2 to 3 coats of enamel on the inside, so on the layers after the first one, either stagger the fire lines or you may be able to cover the whole inside with no fire lines after the first coat because enamel sticks better to enamel than it does to bare metal.

If the piece is open and shallow, you can wetpack with a 1:6 mixture of Klyr fire and water, or sift on - your choice. Wetpacking takes longer and is lumpier at first, but if you have a rim, it may not be possible to sift evenly.

You are now ready to enamel the outside (or other side of your piece). You can use pretty much any techniques you like, but in most cases you'll need a binder like Klyr fire to hold the dry enamel on. This can be applied by wetpacking, spraying the piece with binder and water and applying the enamel dry, or painting the liquid on and applying the enamel dry, whatever gives you the effect you're after. It's generally a good idea to apply a base coat to the whole surface to be enamelled, especially when working on copper, and then go back and work in partial or full coats as desired.

After you've fired 1 or 2 complete coats on both sides, trim the overhang of the rim on the side you enameled first. This will give time and lots of firings for any scars to heal. It also prevents the enamel on that side from pooling around the rim and becoming too thick if you do most of the later firings with the piece upside down. If you use cloisonne wires, first fire a base coat. You may want to fire this layer 2 or 3 times to get it extra hard before you put in the wires. If the walls are steep, you may have to fire on the wires in 3 or more sections, rotating the piece in the kiln so a different area is facing up for each firing. Stick the wires onto the fired base coat with undiluted Klyr fire or wetted Japanese Kudzu root powder and dry thoroughly before firing. If the wires that were fired fall off in subsequent firings, pack a layer of enamel around them and fire before rotating the piece in the kiln for the next area.

From this point on, enamelling a vessel has pretty much the same demands and possibilities as enamelling flat. The only thing that is hard to do is getting a consistent under fired surface, as the back

of the piece tends to fire faster than the side facing front. Stone and finish the piece as you would any other enamel. Finish trimming and putting a final finish on the metal just before the last firing.

Assorted Pearls and Gems

Using magic marker, write the grit number all over your alundum stones. That way you'll never get them mixed up.

If enamel is dry sifted 150 mesh, it will stay on if sifted perpendicular to the piece.

To keep enamel from moving away from the edge, sift a thin coat of 200 mesh on first (thin enough to see the metal through it). Then sift on your regular enamel.

To use contrasting colors next to each other (i.e. very dark and very light) and keep them from blending together: This works well with opaques: wetpack the first color. Use a dry brush to push up against the edges of the color, creating a small "cliff". Wetpack the opposite color, putting it down near the first color. With a brush, gently push this color up against the "cliff" of the first color. Be sure brush is not very wet. This will give a sharp demarcation between a dark and light opaque.

After piece is completed, polish with Renaissance Wax. It fills in tiny pits so humidity can't get in and cause cracks.

Sarah Perkins

When sawing a very thin piece of metal, put another piece of thicker metal behind it and saw them together. This keeps the thin metal from distorting.

Jean Stark



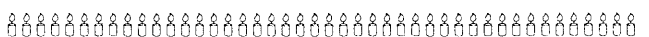
Australian Enamel Newsletter
71 George St Thirroul NSW 2515

Subscriptions - 6 issues per a year

Regular - \$20.00 Student - \$10.00

New Zealand - \$25.00

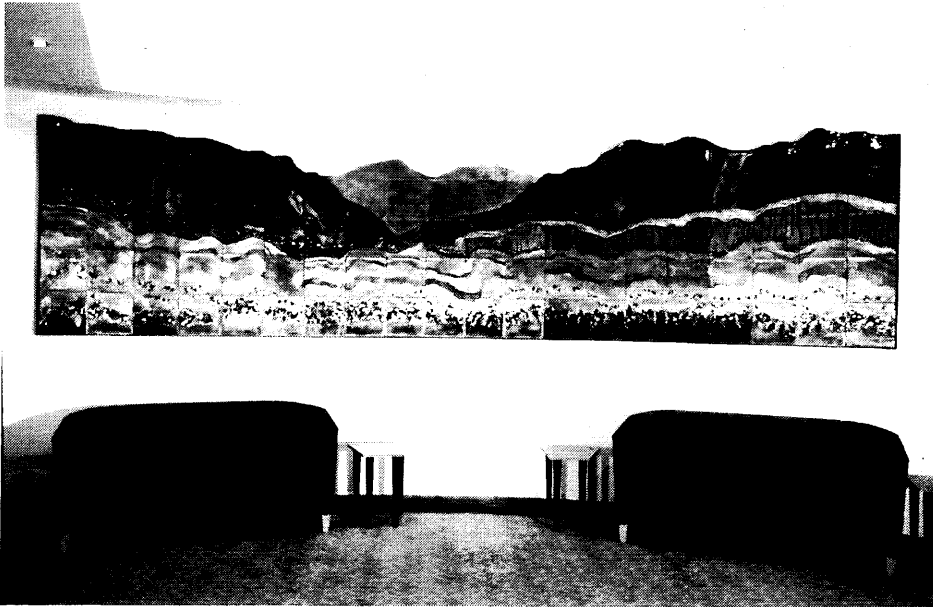
International Economy Air Mail - \$25.00



The mural was 1.5metres high by 6 metres wide and it had to hang on a curved wall! It was called The Escarpment. Needless to say, Arch solved this problem beautifully as well and the piece went up without a hitch, this time 20 vertical sections each 30cm wide. The time from getting the commission to having the piece ready for hanging was 5 1/2 months. The assembly took just as long as the design and enamelling.

In the last 12 months I have had work from a consultant in Queensland who found my hospital mural in an old Craft Arts magazine.

The Escarpment



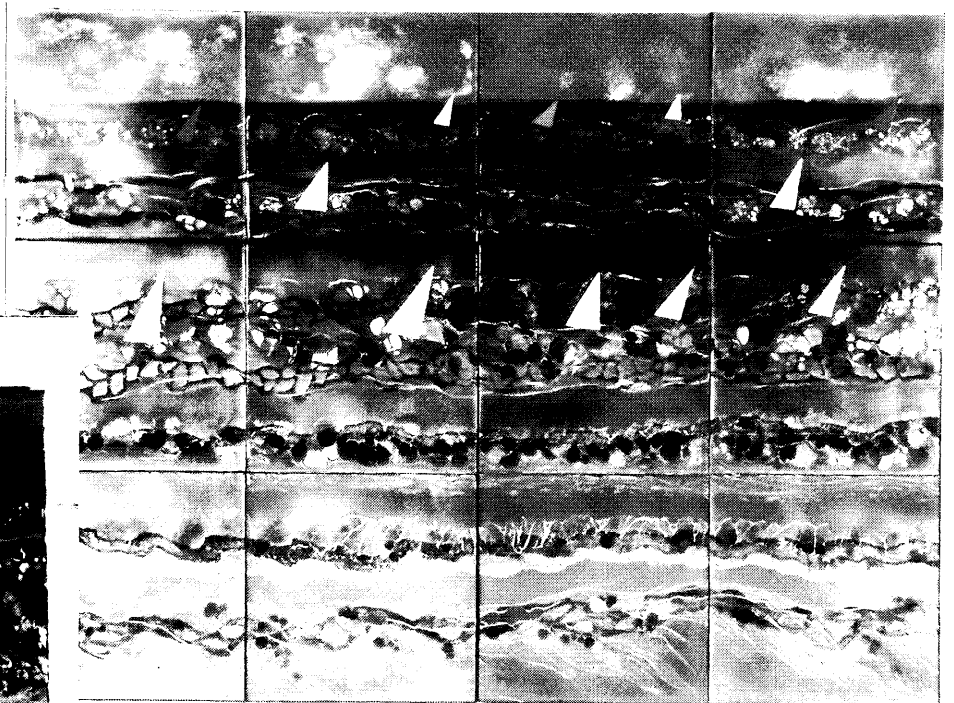
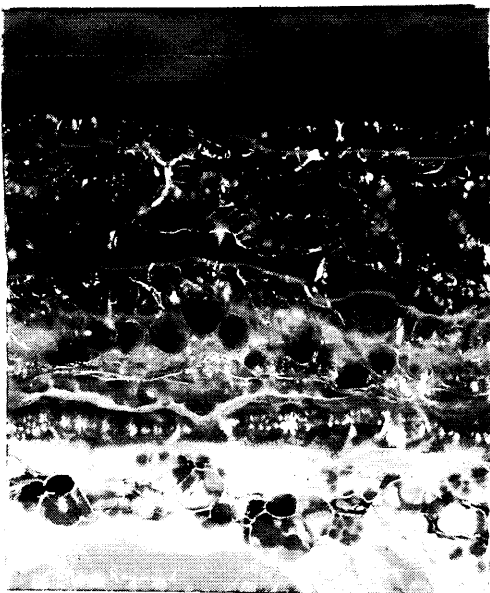
The first piece was 740 x 1120mm for the hotel on Daydream Island and they chose a seascape with sailing boats as the theme – “Sails” .

The second job was given to me the week before Christmas with a deadline of middle of January! This was to be 12 wall sculptures, all hammered and textured seascapes, each piece 280 x 350 mm. for Jupiters Casino on the Gold Coast. – “Sand and sea themes” .

I didn't sit around over Christmas I can tell you!

Sails

One of the Sand and Sea Themes



In addition to these I was asked by some people I met in Canada last November to make them a wall piece for their apartment in Calgary. This was 740 x 1120mm in blues & greys to fit the room. It's called “The Waterfall”. I hope they like it – at the time of writing the piece is still in transit and will hopefully arrive safely in the next few days. .