



The travellers with Ms Ohishi and Ms Kajikawa at BISO in Kyoto

MERILYN BAILEY AND BARBARA RYMAN IN JAPAN

We had informed the Japan Enamelling Artist Association of our itinerary and asked them if they could tell us where we could see any collections of Enamel work and also give us a contact at Biso enamels. We were delighted that the Biso premises were quite close to where we were staying in Kyoto. We headed off at our usual leisurely 9.30am and spotted a little café where we stopped and had a spot of breakfast to fuel us through the big morning ahead. I think we often surprised the locals by happily going into all the little local venues, but everyone was very polite of course, even when we tortured them with mangled phrases of Japanese from our phrase book.

Having talked to our contact at Biso, all we had to do was find them. We knew the general area but details were a little hard to sort out sometimes. With a helpful direction or two, we finally spotted their sign and scooted happily into the airconditioned rooms.

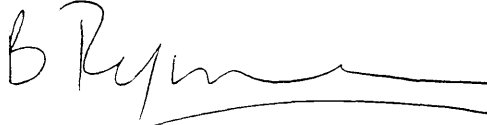
There we were met by Atsuko Ohishi, the translator, and Ms Kajikawa, who sorts out the orders. These two wonderful young women spent hours with us, showing and explaining the many works on display and for sale in the showroom. It was truly exciting and a bit exhausting, not least for Atsuko, who had the demanding task of translating for us all. At one stage, when we were all pale and flagging, a message came from the companies President asking us if we would like some lunch. Well, absolutely we did before we fell over!! Soon Marilyn and I were tucking into noodles and some delicious little accompaniments.

Our next pleasure was to look at many of the Biso products and buy some new enamel colours. By the time we left, Atsuko was laughing and holding her head from the effort of interpreting. It was a wonderful visit and we thanked the girls for all their time and assistance and asked them to convey our appreciation of all their generosity to their boss. We checked our map with them then set off to find the Kiyomizu Sannenzaka Museum which had been recommended to us by the Enamelling Artist Association.

Dear Enamellers,

A big thank you to Margo Carter for her help in producing AEN. She is moving on to other duties and Marilyn Bailey has kindly offered to take over her work, so thanks also to Marilyn. Please note NEW ADDRESS below for posting subscriptions.

Editor



☞ Subscriptions are still to be made out as usual to the Australian Enamel Newsletter, **and are to be sent to** Marilyn Bailey, 4 Koora Ave, Wahroonga 2076 NSW. Subscription enquiries also to be made to Marilyn, Phone: 9487 6333 and Email: m.bryman@ozemail.com.au (note: Marilyn wants everyone to remember that she checks her emails once a week)

☞ **The deadline for material** for the next issue is August 23rd, 2003. 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

THANK YOU

Helen Heap, Barbara Dennis, Mary Raymond, Michael Penck, Marilyn Bailey.

☞ here is some BIG news for you:

jenny was honoured yesterday by the Australian government for her artistic work, her workshops around the world and the influence she had and still has with her work. jenny was awarded the medal of the order of Australia and can add a 'little something' behind her name now: **jenny gore, OAM**

I thank everyone who has helped to honour jenny and loves her work.

spread the news...

michael penck.

☞ A request from Cath Large. "I am wanting to track down and buy Schauer 8 transparent red enamel, in LUMP form, in any quantity. It needs to be the original Schauer colour, not the one currently made under license at Milton Bridge in the UK. It is a red I use a lot, and the 'new' red simply does not cut the mustard."

Ph: 07 3371 8670 Email: cathlarge@ozemail.com.au

☞ There has been a small adjustment to the exhibition title for the National Exhibition and Symposium for 2004.

COLOUR FUSIONS -- GLASS ON METAL



The versatility of *enamel* and the mystery surrounding its use in art, craft and design, is the focus of this exhibition, which presents a wide range of works from all over Australia, including delicate jewellery, intricate table ware, bold wall pieces and complex murals.

Inside Mosman Art Gallery – It's a large space so plenty of work will be needed to make a good show.

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXHIBIT

Anti-War Medals - Artists Respond to the War.
Velvet da Vinci Gallery, San Francisco. November 2003.

"The War in Iraq is ending and are we any safer? Many in our field believe the US War in Iraq was a reckless and dangerous act. The Cradle of Civilization has become a funeral pyre. Will this "easy" victory lead to other conflicts? The US media sanitized the gruesome aspects of the war to make it more palatable for the US audience. We grieve for the tragic loss of life on all sides. The loss of Iraq's antiquities is irrevocable. The War has fueled hatred of the US around the world and weakened alliances built up over decades.

Artists have a long history of reflecting on the events surrounding them. We feel that this is one of those times. Open to all jewelers and metalsmiths around the world."

One piece per artist only. Work can be in any medium and no larger than three inches (3") across. Medals can be pinned, hung from a ribbon or hand held.

Piece should be for sale. The gallery will receive 50% of the retail price. Please let us know your intention to make a piece by August 1, 2003. Due to the large numbers of pieces expected in the exhibition, return postage is required for unsold work to be returned. If a piece sells, the return postage will be refunded to the artist. We will send confirmations of work received and communication about the show only by email. If you would like a confirmation by snail mail, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope with your piece.

Submit your piece with a description of materials and a statement about the medal if any, and please state both the wholesale and retail costs. Work must be received at the gallery by Oct 15, 2003. All unsold work will be returned by December 15, 2003. All pieces sold in the exhibition will be paid in US dollars, by bank check by December 15, 2003. Respond by email to any questions regarding the exhibition.

Please supply a digital image for online exhibition. Please respond to: medals@velvetdavinci.com
Mail pieces to: Velvet da Vinci - 508 Hayes Street
San Francisco, CA 94102.

TIPS

☞ From the desk of Heather Calnan – Heather says "I have been re-reading all my old text books and Glass on Metal magazines, AEN's and various gathered information.

In the light of playing with enamel for 30 odd years, I have found that a lot of information, instructions and directions which at the time didn't seem relevant, or were hard to understand, have only now become clear and pertinent to me.

It has inspired me to get into experimenting again!

☞ You can hide silver solder seams when soldering copper by placing the soldered piece into well used pickle, then placing an iron nail into the pickle which plates the silver seam with copper, thus hiding the seam - from Don Roberts, FSG Newsletter

☞ We all know how difficult it is to remix various liquid enamels. It helps to warm them, preferably in a microwave. Also remember the wire whip technique. Or better yet, the immersion blender. Either works faster and more efficiently than a stick – from Wuana B Stewart, NCEG newsletter

☞ When applying enamel to a large bowl it can be difficult to hold. Barbara Minor suggests you use masking tape on your fingers and the bowl will not slip – from Annette Clarke, Enamellers Association, Australia

NEW PRODUCTS

New series of Enamel Marking Pens – More Colours, Less Fire - from Thompson Enamel Inc.

A series of ball point pens with vitreous enamel ink in seven colours, plus black and white, which fuse at 1250 degrees F. Write or draw on a fired enamel surface and fire to make a permanent image.

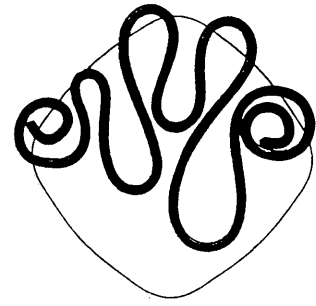
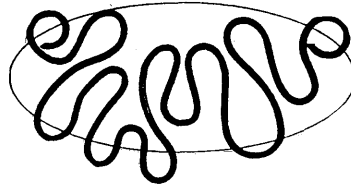
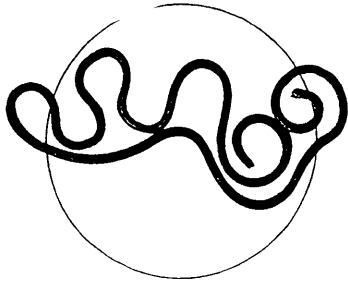
Have a look at the colour range on www.thompsonenamel.com.

Anna Margot's in Queensland has the black and white pens in stock and will be getting the coloured ones soon. She says the colour range is the same as the 900 overglaze series painting enamels. They are also stocking an Oil Pen. Apparently you can use this for drawing designs and then sifting on enamel colours. The excess is dusted off and when the lines are fired they create an embossed enamel line.

Also at Anna Margot's – A NEW range of spun copper beads for enamelling on. There are a variety of round, oval and acorn shapes.



☞ The Enamelist Society has a new web address www.enamelistsociety.org The info site will be faded out. Information on the August Conference is on the site.



Back to Basics - WIRE INLAY - Extending the Edge

by Kathleen Kay

(Reprinted with permission from the Guild of Enamellers, Great Britain, Spring Journal 2003)

Following the previous article on simple wire designs, the suggestions here show how more intricate shapes can be designed, extending beyond the boundary of the copper blank. The wire can be formed into a hanging loop, for a pendant or key fob; side loops, to link a necklace or bracelet; even loops top and bottom, linking parts of a mobile; or simply arranged for effect and crying something new. Most of the shapes shown here are made with quite thick, strong copper wires retrieved from unwanted pieces of electric cable, the formed line being most important to the design rather than the areas the shapes contain, as for instance in cloisonné.

The wire lines can be designed first on paper, and then the shape carefully copied. My Supported Learning students bend the wires a touch more randomly, and sometimes the wire needs a discrete tweak to ensure the loop shape overlaps the copper. A single wire can be fairly simple, or intricately formed to almost cover the shape. Several wires can be used together, each of them echoing the original shape. A thick feature wire can contrast with lots of thinner wires making up a background pattern.

The method of working can be quite simple: -Thick copper wire is not easy to form into shapes without first annealing. This is easy to do by loosely coiling a length, firing it on a wire mesh to a red heat, then immediately quenching the wire in cold water. The black firescale falls off into the water leaving clean, pinkish, copper wire, soft enough to be bent with round-nosed pliers.

The formed wire sections can be slightly flattened by hammering them on a steel surface, squeezing them in the jaws of a vice or in a hydraulic press, or even passing them through a rolling mill.

The chosen, clean, copper shape is sifted with flux, fired and counter-enamelled. The wires are gummed in position on the fired, fluxed surface; a further thin sprinkling of flux can be sifted over before firing. Any wires that haven't quite fused in place should be gently tapped down with the edge of a knife as soon as the work is taken out of the kiln.

Transparent colours can be sifted and shaded over the flux, carefully brushing unwanted grains from the wires, or the background areas may be wet-laid using opaque or transparent colours.

Variations may include tiny glass beads, placed in some of the powdered sections before firing, to give textured areas, or further siftings of enamel in selected areas can be partly fused at a lower temperature leaving a contrasting granular surface. If any of these pieces are made as pendants, for charity or school fairs, an inexpensive alternative to a chain is a length of fine ribbon, cord, or a shoe lace fastened through the wire loop. Although the wires shown here were demonstration pieces, simply formed to show students how to bend wires and arrange them on copper shapes, pieces more designed and controlled could well be developed with a little creative play.

PRECIOUS METAL FOIL - Techniques for Enamelling

Instructor-Coral Shaffer at CCAC, 1/2003.

Described by Nancy Goodenough. (Reprinted with permission from NCEG newsletter, May 2003)

In our two day class, held at CCAC after the NCEG Conference, Coral Shaffer covered many techniques using metal foils. I will give details on two major techniques: ginbari and silk screen printing.

GINBARI

Coral spent considerable time in Japan working with ginbari, creating enamel works with this special silver foil. With ginbari, the metal foil is applied to a base layer of enameled metal, such that lines and marks in the foil become raised areas, providing a similar but more subtle function Like cloisonné. Here's how:

First prepare the foil by making a sandwich of 200 grit sandpaper, ginbari foil and felt. Roll a brayer over the felt to create small even holes in the foil. Anneal the foil on mica at 1300-1400 degrees F for a couple minutes.

Make a sample piece of copper or silver to practice with. Use Penny Brite to clean piece and scrub with scotchbrite. Flux silver. Prepare base coat enamel. Mix 1/3 cup water and 1 oz dry Thompson base coat BCI070 with mortar or whisk to get crepe batter consistency. Stir base coat mix. Hold piece in tongs

and dip in mix twice, carefully placing onto a trivet, and dry under a heat lamp. Fire at 1500 degrees F. Stone if there is fire scale, but don't pickle. Dip, dry and fire a second time. Design your ginbari piece. Flowing lines work well with this technique.

There are three ways to make the base design of your ginbari piece:

1. Draw a design on a plastic sheet the size of your piece. Bend 28-24 gauge round copper wire pliers to follow design and super-glue it down onto the plastic sheet. Dry. Shake baby powder onto wire design as a release and knock off powder.

2. Another ginbari technique: Transfer design with carbon paper onto copper tooling foil. Draw the negative. With felt under the tooling foil, trace design with a pen. Turn foil over and enhance lines - without the felt. Fill in with epoxy, so lines don't collapse when rolled with ginbari foil.

3. Use Solar Plate from McClains at www.imcclains.com or 800-832-4264. Draw positive design using very opaque black ink on acetate. Set up a clip board, then plastic with black foam on it. Then clip solar board, then acetate with ink side touching emulsion together and expose to sun about 2 minutes. Run solar board under 68g degree F water. With a soft brush wash away lines, getting past yellow. Tool further. Put back in sun for 10 minutes to harden emulsion. If sticky, use baby powder.

Whichever technique you used, you now have your design translated into a 3-dimensional replica. The next step is to move the design onto the foil. Trace outline of piece on tracing paper, larger if piece is domed, and cut foil sandwiched between two pieces of tracing paper. Sandwich plastic (design side up), foil and felt, and brayer it, keeping finger on piece. Peek under felt to ensure embossing 'took'.

Slather base piece with enameling oil and put under a heat lamp until tacky. Place foil on piece. It is very susceptible to damage at this time. The trick is to push down only the foil parts that are not raised. The raised parts are the design, ridges that act as 'foil cloisonné'. A pointed rubber object is good to push down the lower areas that will later be covered with enamel. First dab the lower areas, then trace along both sides of the raised design lines. Tap, tap, tap around embossed areas, careful not to tear or move. Be sure edges are flat. Fire at 1450-1500 degrees F for 3 minutes, 5 minutes for switch plate size. You are now ready to enamel the piece.

To enamel ginbari piece: Flux fired piece first if using warm colors. Wash enamel in spoon. Tissue out moisture. Add drops of KlyrFire. Using a point or spatula, place enamel into depressed areas. Use an eraser point to clean enamel off all raised lines, creating a 'cloisonné' effect. Fire. If you want a thick

layer of flux, use 1 part Klyr Fire to 5 parts water in a Preval aerosol. Spray up, letting it drift onto piece. Sift flux for a protective layer and fire. If you want a thin layer of flux, swab enameling oil over the piece and rub it off. Sift flux over piece, turn over and fire.

SILK SCREENING

To make screens to fire black designs on your foil, you need Riso 100 mesh screen from _____ or 800-745-3255, or Photo-EZ 110 mesh from gwen@gwengibson.com, and a Riso machine - Gocco Printer. Create screen with desired design, using instructions with machine.

Do not anneal or puncture foil. Use painting enamel - Thompson 912E {3 minutes @ 1400 degrees F} or Reusche (1-1/2 minutes @ 1350 degrees F). Mix Thompson clear acrylic medium painting enamel, and a couple drops retardant from an art supply store into a thick batter, a little thinner than cold cream.

Take a clip board. Attach a piece of puffy foam a little larger than screen. On top of foam place foil, then screen with design, held with clips. Glop a thick line of the ink mixture across the top of the screen. Use a squeegee to move from top to bottom of screen in one firm swipe. Unclip and be careful to undo corner and pull carefully. Wash screen immediately under water. Fire foil 3 minutes @ 1400 degrees F (if Thompson 912E). You can use these foils - with black design fired onto them - to fire onto your enameled pieces.

The two days were packed with tips and techniques. Each person came away from the seminar with lots of samples and ideas.

All-Craft just started offering gold foil- 41/4" x 41/4" sheet 24k rolled to an optimum thickness for keum-boo (can't exactly what optimum thickness is, but ask Tevel at All-Craft, he'll be able to tell you). Contact info: 135 West 29th St., Suite 205, New York, NY 10001; phone (800) 645-7124 or (212) 279-7077. (They just started to advertise the foil and agate burnishers in Studio PMC, or I wouldn't know they had it!)

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Enamel Comparison

By Edmund Massow

(Reprinted with permission from the Coburger Emailrundbrief 7-98)

Many people see beautiful work and attribute the results to the material rather than the talent of the artist. So, at the moment a lot of people are enthusiastic about enamels from "Asia" because some well known and outstanding artists use it in their perfect work and in a perfect manner. So I tried to find out whether it makes a difference what enamel brand you use. I made some test tiles with European, Asia, North American and South European enamels. The first both are leadbearing and the others are both leadfree. The tests were run all under the same conditions. As bases I used copper, flux over copper, fine silver and flux over fine silver. From each brand I used a flux and five different transparent colours. The firing for all samples was about 800 degrees Celsius and all the samples were fired once and until the surface was glossy.

I showed these test plates to enamelling and non enamelling people. I asked them which samples were most bright and/or glossy. No one could find a significant difference. Some people preferred this or that colour, but all said that the brilliance and the gloss are the same.

We enamellers can't influence the gloss but we can influence the brilliance of the colours, because this is mainly a problem of preparing the metal ground and the preparing of the enamel colours. Most people don't polish the metal surface brightly enough and don't wash or sieve the enamels in the right manner. That's the problem. It isn't enough to use a glass-brush to "shine" the metal surface. No, you must polish the surface no matter whether it is copper, or gold - with polish compound and with a polishing buff to high gloss! And then you must clean the surface very well. If you grind (stone) the surface of the enamel after firing and you want to "fire polish" the work, it is very, very important to clean the surface of the enamel completely. A bit of carborundum abrasive left in a pinhole will make your enamel surface cloudy and dirty after firing. You can reduce this risk by using diamond files or cloths. But you must clean a diamond ground surface too. Cleanliness is the most important thing in enamelling.

Another problem many enamellers have is the porosity (pinholes). Some people believe that you only don't get pinholes with the "new" Asian enamels, whereas all other enamels build pinholes. That isn't true. The "poreproblem" comes mainly from old and/or clammy stored enamel powders. from the air bubbles in the wet inlay technique or from too much holding agent, etc. To test this, I made samples with old enamel (same brand and identification numbers)

which had been stored for 20 years but in lump form. I found that you get pinholes with the oldest enamel powders (more in opaque than in transparent colours) but nearly no pinholes if you grind the lumps fresh and not so finely as the commercial powder. My tests on causes of pinholes are certainly not scientific tests - for that you must make more samples and samples from different brands, but I think these tests give information about the possible cause.

Summary: In the tests there was found no difference in gloss and transparency between different brands, or (very important) between leadfree and leadbearing enamels. Which brand you prefer is more 1 question of price and the colour chart than of the brand. You can with no problem mix brands if you are in the same chemical field (leadfree or leadbearing). Don't use old enamel powders for enamel work which you want to grind; it is better to buy your leadbearing enamels in lump form and crush them yourself with the mortar and pestle if you want to grind the enamel surface after firing.

Mary Chuduk Workshop in WA

By Helen Heap

New Forms, New Functions For Enamelling
May16-20 2003

For 5 late autumn days which gave the 12 workshop participants and our American teacher a taste of most kinds of Perth weather, from brilliant sunshine to lightning storms and power cuts, we were enthralled to learn many new metal and enamelling techniques from our inspiring guest, Mary Chuduk.

Mary taught us to corrugate metal, sheet and mesh, using a TubeWringer and then to manipulate the resultant form using pliers, stitching, folding, hydraulic pressing, forging and whatever else we could think of, to produce interesting shapes and forms, which would later be enamelled using wet and dry enamel. The range of forms produced was amazing and inspiring and showed many possibilities for future exploration.

Mary also taught us to make relief moulds using a product called Jet Dry which could then be used as hydraulic pressing forms to create yet more interesting textures and patterns to either enamel or not as the fancy took us. We also had lessons in forging copper tube to transform the shape, in engraving, using a vibratory engraver, and in using many types of enamel to enhance the shapes we had made.

The workshop was exhausting and exhilarating for the group of Perth women jewellers who gathered at the home and workshop of Jill Parnell and at Curtin University and were lucky enough to cross the path of this most talented, energetic and generous teacher, Mary Chuduk.

A Report on the Workshop conducted by
Debbie Sheezel following the Australian Enamel
Symposium in Melbourne ...20-22 September 2002 ...

by Barbara Dennis

Over the years Debbie Sheezel has become renowned for the mammoth undertaking which had her prepare the huge mural in the International Arrivals Hall at Brisbane Airport, and for her large plates, and more recently smaller pieces and jewellery.

Besides giving access to her Melbourne studio to other instructors during the week that workshops were conducted in association with the Symposium, Debbie finished off this run of exciting days with a workshop of her own.

Those who have seen the quality and variety of her work could only look forward to the opportunity to join her workshop - principally aimed, in this instance, at imparting the skills involved in embellishing enamels using fine silver foils.

Those benefiting from her tuition were largely already accomplished enamellists and jewellers or otherwise skilled artisans. My companions turned out some really lovely pieces - being encouraged to experiment with novel and individual approaches.

Then there was me! I had already enjoyed the experience (as a rank amateur) of being introduced to the basics of enamelling by Caroline Delzoppo when she had conducted workshops in Western Australia in 2000. Then I was thrilled to move from knowing nothing to being able to produce silver jewellery with cloisonné.

Now, in this workshop, thanks to Debbie's patience as well as ability, I learnt what to do and what not to do in my first exposure to working with copper - with the added enhancement of the end result in using foils. I wouldn't claim any aesthetic merit in my final products, but I have evidence of how to achieve a number of different effects. Even doing things wrongly can produce interesting results.

As I am writing mainly for people who have the answers already I cannot give any useful clues, but you may be interested in learning of my slow progress over these three days. Our first lesson involved proper cleaning procedures, and I was later to discover (due to a lapse in number one rule), that enamels will not stick to a dirty surface - so scrub with Jiff, remember the acid bath, then wash and dry the piece. Then protect the work surface with Scalex, before proceeding with a light spraying with gum tragacanth on the surface to be counter-enamelled, dusting enamel on the edges first.

Debbie's initial demonstration was in consideration of the basic principles for applying enamels. To this end



Debbie Sheezel shows how!

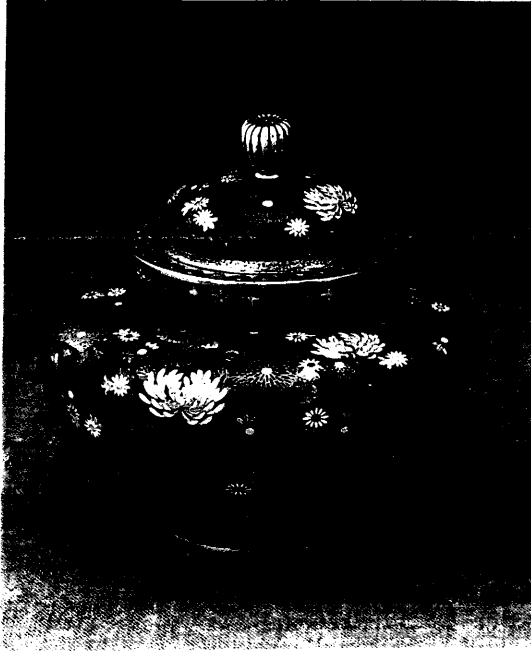
she followed a sea theme (corals, sponges and seaweeds) on a black background - which we were invited to mimic. I had to make two attempts to dust on enough of the base-coat in order to get a good cover. I also learnt from this specimen that different firing temperatures were necessary for some of the variety of enamels I chose to use, because some burnt out - and it is important not to overfire in the early stages.

Debbie was generous in supplying many of her enamels for our use. As I had some of my own enamels with me I fired up a selection of them as random spots in order to record their colours. In so doing I produced a number of interesting effects through over-firing some colours and not dusting on enough enamel in some areas - or perhaps not washing thoroughly after the acid bath, leaving permanent black spots when the specimen was then coated with a layer of clear enamel. It looks O.K. to me

When complete disaster over took one of my pieces Debbie gave it a proper coat and fired it at the correct temperature. Then a number of millifiore beads were applied, the only example to be seen in this class. With another small piece I used P3 outlining of a silver foil flower shape together with the use of lustres (mixed with hair spray).

The largest bowl I worked on ended up as an abstract red flower with (over-fired) silver petals outlined with P3 - effective enough (even though it started with my concept of a white magnolia against a sky blue background!) In this exercise we cut stencils from paper towelling which when wet makes an effective screen readily moulded to the contours of a bowl. Before the foil can be applied (while it is still between its protective sheets of paper) it has first to be pricked

so air trapped below the metal can escape and the metal will adhere to the underlying enamel. To this end Debbie uses a multi-array of sewing needles embedded in a cork block. After spraying with gum solution the foil sheet is wet so it can be readily moved into the correct position and smoothed flat. When dry, firing attaches the metal to the underlying enamel. Following the usual rule, if warm colours are to be applied over the foil, a protective layer of flux has next to be applied. Debbie helped us all to ensure that our major pieces would succeed by listing for us



We were looping back round the hillside into the temple, pottery and gallery area we'd had explored the previous two days. Let me remind you of the heat and humidity. After a bit of searching we found the Museum and gratefully walked into its coolness.

This Museum houses a large collection of 19th Century (Meiji-period) cloisonné, metal work and gold lacquer art. Most of the items were very small but oh so beautifully wrought. A step by step lacquer example was displayed and the enamel pieces were petite with the finest wires and details imaginable. The metal work pieces showed intricately carved and inlaid details. It was a fine collection and the gallery manager kindly gave us each two posters showing some of the work in the collection.

We continued our walking past shops, galleries, teahouses, gardens and Temples. Everything we saw was wondrous and stimulating. We were drunk from the aesthetic pleasures of being part of this culture.

We tried to stay another night in Kyoto but with the festival, all accommodation was booked up. We were just really getting into the swing of things and were horribly aware of what we hadn't yet seen. Oh well, lets go to Nara for a day. Marilyn managed to book a

the sequences we should follow for our different treatments.

Our final session was a revealing "Show and Tell" session at which all was revealed and every member of the group spoke about the pieces they had produced. I'm sure my fellow student are as grateful as I am to Debbie for sharing her knowledge and we wish her well in future endeavours, especially in her coming exhibition.



Cloisonné Enamel Jars by Namikawa Yasuyuki 1845 – 1927, at Kiyomizu Sannenzaka Museum

room over the phone (terribly brave that girl) and off we go the station and with no trouble get on a local train to Nara. Kyoto used to be the capital of Japan and before that, Nara was the capital. Nara is quite like Kyoto though much smaller, but it also nestles in a valley and is surrounded by hills dotted with amazing temples and gardens.

After booking into our little modern hotel, we had a rest and watched the Sumo Wrestling on TV. I'd love to go to that in real life! We highlighted some promising targets on our map then we were off again, walking our legs to stubs. In the centre of Nara are a series of large ponds and gardens – the ponds have carp and the gardens are famous for their deer. We saw a bunch of tiny school children (unbelievably cute) descend squealing upon a herd of deer that bravely stood their ground in expectation of food.

After and day and a half we were back on the train and off to Tokyo where we had some seriously classy accommodation booked up in the Century Hyatt. All we had to do was negotiate the terrifying Tokyo stations to find Shinjuku and then we could prepare ourselves for attending the Presentation Ceremony and go shopping!!