

Australian Enamel Newsletter

Issues 71 Feb 2002



JIMMY LIM



Even as a child, I always had a love of art and the beauty of nature.

My introduction to enamelling came via the Lapidary world. I learned stone cutting at the Bankstown Lapidary Club. Here I saw the enamelling work of Norma Alce and her class. Initially concentrating on lapidary, I entered the competitions with some success, eventually deciding to try for the overall championship trophy. As enamelling was one of the categories that contribute to the overall point score I joined Norma's class in 1995.

Impressed by the potential beauty of the work and the scope for expression in enamelling, it soon became my preferred medium. I joined the Enamellers Association which paved the way for my attendance at their workshops and enabled me to meet other enamellers.

Fay Rooke's workshop taught me many different techniques and opened up my horizons to the many possibilities. In particular, the use of plique a jour, cloisonne, shaping of the copper base and the use of silver foil. Debbie Sheezel, in her workshop, taught me the use of glycerine and fine lines. My most recently attended workshop was Jenny Gore's. She taught me about stenciling, the use of lustres, oxide and gold and silver leaf.

With Norma Alce's encouragement and help, I submitted three of my pieces to the 33rd International Enamelling Art Exhibition in Japan. All three were included in the 1999 catalogue

I try to incorporate and combine the techniques learned in the various workshops to develop my own style and to achieve the effects I desire. Most of my work is based on nature, particularly fishes, birds, flowers and trees. I prefer mostly to use transparent colours often over silver foil. Prior to my introduction to lapidary, I completed a TAFE course in wood turning. My lapidary work included silver working and the fabrication of jewellery. I am able to create composite pieces containing combinations of woodturning, lapidary, silverwork and enamels.

Most of the work I do is for my own pleasure and for occasional competition. I have given a few pieces to family and friends but have not attempted to sell any major pieces. (I can't bear to part with them yet) There are so many concepts to learn and achieve, I'm trying to grasp and apply them as much as I can to create items of beauty.

Another year of enamelling begins and who knows where it will lead us. Hope it's a good journey for you all.


Editor

NEWS

☞ "Muriel Wattinne will be going to France for an extended period. While she is away Enamels Art Rite Products will be minded by Cath Large. Although all contact numbers will be transferred to Cath it is better that you put your orders directly through to her number: (07) 3371 8670. Very soon she will also be connected to Powerup to receive e-mails. So keep putting your orders through and go on enjoying enamelling."

☞ From the pen of Jenny Gore
"I have now almost finalised the schedule for my trip to the States.

I will be leaving Adelaide on the 24th or 25th March, arrive in LA and start the workshops in Miami, (painting enamels), then go to New York where their annual conference is held in New Jersey. I will show slides there and give a workshop on reticulation, then the following weekend, one on stencils in New York. From there to Washington, reticulation, and to Wisconsin for some R and R with a friend I met on the India trip. Next stop, Houston Texas, subject undecided, then Tempe Arizona, also undecided. In San Diego it's back to reticulation, Then LA, undecided, and Palo Alto, also reticulation! (Glad it's my favourite thing at the moment!) Back to LA to come home and collapse in a heap.

So, if anyone has some suggestions on 'must see or do' places etc, I would be delighted to hear from you!

I have been asked if I have slides of contemporary Australian enamellers. I have fairly recent ones of the participants of the India exhibition, but if you would like to sent others I will be happy to show them, or if you have never sent me slides, please feel free to do so, just 2 or 3 would be fine.

I will be back in Oz by late June, hopefully with some interesting enamel news!

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THANK YOU

Jimmy Lim, Jenny Gore, Rex Steele Merten, Antonia Lomny,

☞ **The deadline for material** for the next issue is March 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

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXHIBIT

COLOR, LIGHT AND ILLUSION: GLASS ON METAL – a juried exhibiton presented by the San Diego Enamel Guild.

The Exhibition will be held at the Spanish Village Art Center, Balboa Park, San Diego CA. It's open to all artists with the primary emphasis in the work being enamel and having been made within the last 2 years. Slides are due by May 15th. The exhibiton runs from August 17 to August 30, 2002.

Send SASE to AEN for a copy of the prospectus.

BOOK REVIEW by Antonia Lomny

Here's a gift idea for someone starting out in enamel - a new book on the basics of enamelling on copper simply called "**Enamelling**". It is by Joan Bolton King and is part of The Art of Crafts Series published by Crowood Press, UK.

Dedicated to the Guild of Enamellers (UK), this new book on enamelling techniques is well presented and full of colour photographs, with clear explanations of the various stages involved in craft or hobby enamelling on copper, small "mini-project" ideas and special technical and safety tips that should help the novice avoid some of the more avoidable errors when starting out enamelling.

In fact the instructions are well written and pretty thorough, guiding the reader through each essential step of enamelling as if on a guided visualization. For ease of following the instructions, the book is ring bound, so that it's easy to leave open when working on a selected project.

The mini-projects look fun, doable, and appear to be well graded, the only potential down side of the book being the use of illustrations that feel a little bit old fashioned, with emphasis on the traditional though charming arrangements of birds, flowers, ducks and puppy dogs, not to mention the occasional ruined castle landscape and the obligatory teddy bear.

Miscellaneous Resources

Daniel Smith Inc.(^)
(800) 426-6740, <http://danielsmith.com>
large mail-order art supplies

Resources on the Web

www.ganoksin.com
a must for any metal worker. Home of the
Orchid chat site and all kinds of information

www.pmclay.com
site for all info about pmc

www.frantzbead.com
gold, silver foil and leaf

www.waleapparatus.com
glass working supplies

www.elexp.com
pnp blue resource, etching and plating supplies

www.sheltech.com
inexpensive custom dies

www.thistothat.com
answers all your questions about adhesives

www.etchall.com
B & B Products
site for a fairly safe glass etching product

www.softflexm.com
source for colored wires

www.smallparts.com
source of all kinds on tools, copper tubing

www.jckgroup.com
publication for everything pertaining to jewelry
industry. Publishes an annual sourcebook.

Tips and Tidbits

Some Notes on "Controlled Breakup"
(Reprinted with permission from the Northern
California Enamel Guild, Dec 2001)

Note: Contrary to some expectations the following is not about relationships containing human beings but rather what follows is a summary of a "break out" session hosted by Bill Helwig at the Enamelist Society Conference this past October at Arrowmont. Thanks to Roxane Riva for taking notes and to Judy Stone for trying to transcribe them.

Controlled Breakup, as opposed to uncontrolled breakup, is merely experimentation with over firing and pull through (the process by which a layer of enamel is broken up and pulled through an over layer of enamel) until it is controlled to the enamelist's satisfaction. Bill discovered that he liked the effects of the break up he got quite by accident one day when he over fired a piece he was working on.

These are the steps involved in controlled breakup:

1. "Anneal to green" a piece of copper sheet. This is the process of placing copper in a hot kiln only long enough to burn off the grease and turn the metal grey/green.
2. After degreasing, Helwig brushes on Thompson LCE-2 on the back of the metal and sifts a similar colored enamel over the back that he will be using on the front.
3. Fire and file edges.
4. He then pours some liquid white (533) on the front of the piece starting at the top edge and letting it drip down to evenly coat the front. The surface can be masked with masking tape to prevent enamel from covering the whole piece. He then dries the piece and sgraffitoes his image through the 533. Bill calls this "making a cartoon." Any color liquid enamel can be used but Bill prefers the white. The piece is then fired.
5. Color is first introduced onto the image with a wash of acrylic enamel or painting enamels or oxides. The piece is fired.
6. The next step to creating texture is to make a stencil and mask off the areas you don't want textured. You can put masking tape tabs on the back of the stencil to help pick up the stencil from the piece. Sift or sprinkle a thin layer of coarse particles (60/80 mesh) of a lead free flux (2030) over piece. Particle size and viscosity determine the amount of break up. The thicker the coat the greater the texture. The longer you fire the more the break up. Next sift to various thicknesses other lead free transparents 80 mesh. Carefully remove the stencil. Fire. Bill says that an average firing of enamel to copper is 5 minutes at 1450 and for enamel to enamel, 2 minutes at 1450.

However, the "gallery" section at the back of the book provides more inspiration of what an enameller can aspire to, with some beautiful illustrations featuring the work of UK enamel artists, such as Jane Short and Sarah Wilson.

All in all a well presented and illustrated book, worthy for all first timers (including me)!

Val Aked's Plique-a-Jour Workshop, January 2002. - by Rex Steele Merten

I was privileged to attend Val's latest five day workshop with nine other participants where we were introduced to the beauty, mystery, and frustration of this challenging technique. We were a mixed lot. Some had already been introduced to plique-a-jour by Val in prior workshops. Others, like myself, had done some cloisonne and champleve enamelling either with Val or at one of Caroline Delzoppo's inspiring workshops, or as part of previous studies. A few were absolute neophytes, never having done any enamelling at all.

Many of us had some idea of the challenge of plique-a-jour from previous experience with cloisonne and champleve. For me, at least, the idea of making enamel flow, then stay, across open spaces was quite daunting. Having done stained glass work, I had some idea of the charm of plique-a-jour and looked forward to applying some of the same aesthetic principles that I had applied in macro to the micro world of jewellery.

Val, as many of us know, is an experienced teacher who inspires confidence by both her preparation and her calm patience. Always positive, Val soon dispelled any anxiety or doubts with her clear explanations of technique and anticipatory advice as to what to expect during the practical processes of charging and firing (and firing, and firing, and firing...) the cells. One of the most heartening elements of Val's workshop was her real-world practical expertise which was manifested in the beautiful plique-a-jour jewellery which she herself had made. These pieces were an inspiration which, although sometimes expressed through gritted teeth, helped us to believe that "if Val could do it, so can we."

The five days went, as they always do, all too quickly. A surprising variety of works and concepts were explored - the majority, to Val's credit as our mentor and inspiration, successfully completed. Finished pieces ranged from spectacular bowls to pendants, earrings, objet-d'art, and lids. Some of the pieces were breathtaking, leaving me as an experienced working jeweller in awe of the artistic ability and practical perseverance of my fellow participants. Having attended a number of Val's workshops, I am always impressed by their format and seemingly effortless flow. Everyone comes away satisfied.

Practical knowledge, aesthetic inspiration, a valuable summing-up and "show 'n' tell", completed by a very pleasant wind-down at the local pub, made this an excellent workshop and one to be recommended when it runs again.

Post-Plique-a-Jour.

After Val Aked's plique-a-jour workshop I rushed home and fired up my kiln while my enthusiasm was still at 850 degrees. I fired a number of trial pieces as an outcome of my new-found confidence and I thought some of my fellow enamellists might be interested in the results. Some of what I've done may be as new for them as it was for me.

One of the materials we used was Kaowool. I found that its soft, slightly furry surface tended to let the enamel sag a little within the cell. Wetting and rolling the Kaowool flat helped, but I couldn't but wonder if there wasn't something better, more resistant. (By the way, if anyone has any sure-fire suggestions... please?)

My father had used graphite blocks for setting up soldering jigs, so I cleaned one of these and tried it as a base upon which to fire the plique-a-jour cells. This worked OK, but the surface of the graphite broke down into a thin layer of powdered graphite which was messy. It came off the enamel satisfactorily, but it stuck all over me. One advantage of the graphite was that it acted like a heat sink, so that it took ages for the enamel to cool. This could be useful where slow, controlled cooling of annealed glass is required (this is probably already well known to many, but hey, I'm on a steep learning curve here).

Some years ago, I had experimented with transparent enamel layers over pave set diamonds in platinum. This worked quite well, but I discovered that the enamel easily slid away from smooth polished platinum. It occurred to me that perhaps a very thin, smooth shim of platinum resting on the Kaowool could be a good way to keep the enamel from sagging through the cells. My platinum scrap tends to mount up over the years, so I scratched around and found a few pieces that I could roll out to shim thickness - less than 0.1 mm. It worked!

I've now done a number of test pieces, resting them on very, very thin scraps of platinum. The platinum heats up quickly with the enamel. Firing times are critical, depending on the size of the piece. My test pieces were only small (largest was about 10mm square in area), and I found that firing seemed to average around 50 seconds to a minute at 850 degrees C. They turn out well. The enamel fuses nice and flat against the platinum and a small tweak is all that is required to separate the work from the platinum once it has cooled. Grinding-back times are much shorter and I don't seem to have as many subsequent fillings and firings, although this remains to be proven

in the longer term and with larger, more ambitious pieces.

Several things have really jumped out at me during this steep learning curve.

1.. Plique-a-jour enamelling is more challenging than anything I've done, jewellery-wise.

2.. Keep written records of firing times and temperatures as you go. Enclosed is a guide I devised for keeping such records. My mistake is only allowing for 8 firings!

3.. Colours change dramatically according to depth of cell. Being innately cautious, I started my first piece using 1.5mm thick fine silver. This depth made my colours too dense. 1.2mm was better, but this would depend on the over-all size of the piece, area of the cells, and strength of colour. Being used to cloisonne and champleve, this factor really surprised me. (hey, I'm just a beginner)

4.. Do Val Aked's next workshop on plique-a-jour enamelling.

5.. Be thankful for any feed-back and sharing of knowledge.

www.enamelingclasses.com Is Coming

(Reprinted with permission from the Vitreous Voice, Enamel Guild West December 2001 Newsletter.)

Construction is nearly finished on www.enamelingclasses.com. This really exciting resource for enameling classes has been made so any facility or teacher may list directly on the site. The site is independent of any commercial or organizational ties. Its sole purpose is to promote enameling by expanding awareness of the class opportunities available.

It is expected that the site will be running between Christmas and New Years. If it's not ready the day you check in - check back.

It is considered very acceptable to tell EVERYONE you know about this site. Tell Art Department Deans. Tell newsletter editors. Make a link from YOUR site.

Announcing a unique new book for everyone interested in the art and techniques of enameling

ENAMELING with PROFESSIONALS

Edited and published by Lilyan Bachrach, enamelist of Bachrach Art Enamels since 1970

More than 20 of the leading enamelists describe the working method they have developed for their specialized enameling techniques.

Topics include: Cloisonne with fine silver and/or gold wires on fine silver, sterling, copper and steel, Karat

golds, champleve, crayons, watercolors, large scale Mosaics, portraits, grisaille, deep bowls, overglazes, Riso, screen-torch, firing, foils, basse taille, PMC enameling, plique-a-jours, electroforming, ferric chloride and nitric acid etching and charts. Also a beginner's course in enameling.

Over 200 pages, including 32 pages of color photographs with a preface by Woodrow Carpenter of Thompson Enamel. Prepublication price of the first 100, limited edition, 5x10 inch, sewn, clothbound book is \$49.

Publication scheduled for summer 2002
Order now and save. Or reserve your copy.

ENAMELING with PROFESSIONALS makes a valuable addition to your library and a wonderful gift for enamelists, art lovers, jewelers and collectors. Noted enamelists such as June Jasen, Jean Jenkins and Audry Komrad have written chapters for this book.

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☞ this flyer is from the Enamel Guild south newsletter and refers to the book, *Enamelling with Professionals*, which was mentioned in the previous issue of AEN. - 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

