

Australian Enamel Newsletter

Issue 12

February 1992

Enameller profile Flora Kelton



I started enamelling after having constructed large decorative wall sculptures in copper for several years. My art school training prepared the way for a future direction into sculpture, metal work and design. It has always been exciting to

beat, shape, cut, saw and solder metal into interesting shapes. The warm glow of copper fascinates me. A persistent compulsion to work large and make positive statements boldly and vigorously has developed and always driven me on. When seeing a blank wall anywhere my mind goes into over-drive and the ideas flood in fast and furiously. A lingering sadness is the fact that in one's lifetime we rarely develop and execute, to our absolute satisfaction, the first joyous inspirations which come to mind.

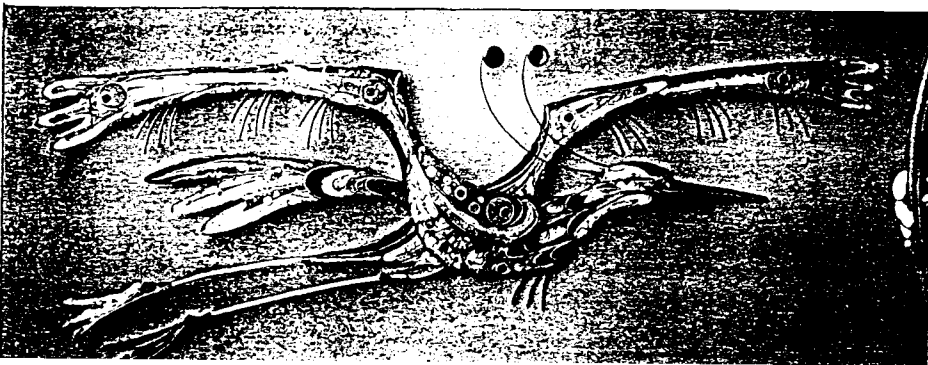
I have worked for 25 years or so with copper and enamel and still love these materials. Modest success at times has been encouraging and several solo exhibitions in Wellington and Auckland have been satisfying. My large wall sculptures are accepted by the NZ Academy Of Fine Arts, and commissions for commercial and business premises have extended the challenges I enjoy. Introducing enamel to the wall pieces was a natural progression really. Colour seemed to complement the metal and enhance the decorative quality I was searching for. I studied many books on techniques. There are no workshops or schools teaching enamelling in NZ so I have had to improvise with equipment and methods. However, the best teacher is experience and one never ceases to discover new mysteries in this delightful media.

Most New Zealanders think of enamel as house paint, so it has been quite an uphill battle to become established in this craft here. When starting a large design, (some have been up to 15ft long) I usually work from a small original sketch which I enlarge to the required dimensions. Paper patterns are cut from this drawing and divided into suitable sized sections which will later fit into my kiln. These paper patterns are then laid on 20 gauge copper sheet, to be cut out and the edges finished before being shaped or beaten to give texture and form.

The total design must be fully planned before work begins; any errors in construction cannot be corrected after the enamels are applied. This means drilling holes for screws, or leaving flaps on some sections which will be needed to join the pieces together finally.

The various pieces are now enamelled. I have always used lead-bearing enamels in a great variety of techniques. Sometimes cloisonne, dusting or wet-packing over foils, or a combination of any other methods which will give the desired effect. Several firings are necessary and it is tricky to keep the large sections in shape. However, I find a little distortion in the right direction can be quite effective in gaining a more three dimensional quality. Finally, constructing the piece entails long hours of careful soldering and screwing the sections together. The work is then mounted on a textured fabric and framed. Sometimes I make a beaten copper frame, or if the design includes copper rod or sheet I hang these directly on the wall to become an integral part of their surroundings.

I suppose, like so many people, my main inspiration stems from observing nature, but a feeling of movement and rhythm really dominates my thinking and I long to express a 'reaching-out' and expansive sharing in my work. The hope too is to produce an object which enhances its surroundings, intrigues and satisfies the viewer and has a colourful and exciting life of its own! If the piece doesn't 'sing to me', then I have failed and have to try again.



Editorial

Best wishes to all enamellers for a productive and happy 1992.

This issue features a New Zealand enameller on the cover for the first time. I met Flora Kelton when she was in Australia late last year and was impressed with the scale and scope of her work, and thought you would be interested too.

For those who subscribed to AEN from Issue 1, its now time to renew subscriptions. If your sub is due you'll find a form inside and a green reminder on the back page. Subscriptions have been held at \$16 for another year. AEN just scraped through financially, but its continued viability does depend on keeping the numbers of subscriptions up. Please resubscribe and help keep this network for Australian enamellers open and operating. Suggestions for future issues are welcome.

Apologies for the typing errors that continue to be a feature of this newsletter. My two-fingered typing and the lack of time when putting the material together combine to create some good ones. It's odd how typos are never apparant until after they're printed. I have made an extra effort with this issue so here's hoping for a perfect result.

Regards

Carolyn Delzoppo

Editor

Win!!

AEN has a copy of a new booklet 'Assorted Pearls and Gems' to be won by a lucky subscriber. The booklet is published by Enamel Guild South in the US and is a valuable and comprehensive collection of helpful information and tips on cloisonne, enamel colours, finishing, glazes and oxides, problems and solutions.

To be eligible for the draw, just send in your own original enamelling tip by March 25. If you have a simple natty fantastic sure-fire-hot-tip, now is the time to let us all in on it. All tips will be compiled into a full page in a later issue.

'Assorted Pearls and Gems' is available from Donna Buchwald, 8100 SW 92 Avenue, Miami, Fl 33173, USA for US\$4.85 including postage.

Thankyou

Thankyou to the following people for their help and cooperation in getting this issue together:

Flora Kelton, Mary Raymond, Lemel magazine and the Jewellers and Metalsmiths Group of Australia, Mary Chaduk, Craft Council of NSW magazine, Allan Heywood.

Cover photographs -

Top - Uello di Monterosso (Bird of the Red Mountain). Silver foil, cloisonne enamel and copper, in eight sections. 1 metre x ½ metre.

Bottom left - Sea and Sky. Beaten copper with brass rods and cloisonne birds and fish. 5ft x 2.5ft.

Bottom right - Muse. Cloisonne enamel with

JMGA Conference and Exhibition

The Seventh Biennial Jewellers and Metalsmiths Group Australia Conference.

This event, 'Connections 92' will be held in Perth, WA from August 15 to 16 1992. Members and non members are welcome to attend. Conference fees are \$145, \$165, \$195. The conference is timed to coincide with three other important craft events; the International Crafts Triennial, the Australian Crafts Council Conference and the City of Perth Craft Awards.

Conference workshops of four days duration are being offered by -

Jamie Bennett (USA) - To explore enamel on both two and three dimensional forms. Emphasis will be on painting techniques and the use of enamel in a gestural manner.

Helen Shirk (USA) - Colour/Form/Texture.

Birgit Laken (Holland) - Metal in Motion.

Sheridan Kennedy (Qld) - Survival Techniques

Robyn Backen (NSW) - Body as Site.

George Lucas (WA) - Raising and Flatware.

The cost is between \$160 and \$200 and available only to members and conference participants. JMGA welcomes new members at \$35.00 per year.

Exhibitions organised as part of the conference include 'Graduate Metal V' and the 'W.A. Australian Newspapers Neckworks Awards'. Entries are invited for this competition to be exhibited at the Freemantle Arts Centre. Generous prize money of \$3500 has been made available, 1st - \$1500, 2nd - \$1000, 3rd - \$500, with two awards of \$250 for student works.

The theme of the neck allows considerable scope to utilise creative concepts. The organisers hope that artist craftpeople who work in a variety of materials will participate. The only criterion for 'Neckworks' is that each piece must originate from, terminate at or radiate around the neck. A high quality and comprehensive catalogue will be produced.

'Graduate Metal V' offers prize money to the value of \$1900 and is open to all 1990/91 graduates.

Entries close Monday 30 March, work to be forwarded by Friday 19 June. Further information on the conference and workshops is available from Imogen Smyth on 09 399 4222 or AH 09 474 2034.

After the conference Jamie Bennett will be in Brisbane and Melbourne to give lectures only.

Reprinted from Lemel, the magazine of JMGA:

If you have had problems with galleries and shops not paying up, then going into receivership, you will want a copy of a document prepared by the Crafts Council of South Australia. It explains how you can ensure the return of your work in the event that an outlet goes into receivership before you have been paid for goods supplied and your work is held as part of the assets of that business. To obtain a copy contact Heather on 08 363 0383.

Request

Carolyn Delzoppo would like to obtain copies of any old books or texts on enamelling, especially 'Preparation of Metals for Enamelling' by De Konigh. If anyone has a copy for sale or who would be prep-

In January members of the Enamellers Association were invited to submit ideas or samples of work to Helen Lewis at the Craft Council Of NSW for selection into an exhibition of local 'Russian theme' work to accompany the Russian Gold and Silver Exhibition which will be travelling to the State Galleries of New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria during 1992.

The proposed Sydney workshop by Harold Balazs, arranged by the Enamellers Association has been cancelled unfortunately. The March workshop by JoAnn Tanzer on silk-screening techniques is now filled.

Camden Workshops in London are offering non-residential weekend enamelling courses in the first half of 1992. With a maximum of 4 students, intensive individual tuition is available for beginners and experienced enamellers. Courses are: Introduction to Jewellery Enamelling; Cloisonne, Plique-a-Jour and Champleve; Introduction to Art Enamelling, and Painting Enamelling including Miniatures and Grisaille. Details available from AEN or Camden Workshops, 84 Camden Mews, London NW1 9BX, UK.

Supplies

Sturdy well-built kilns, custom made to your specifications. Fire brick or fibre. Reliable service. Contact - Hi-Fire Kilns
60 Garden St, Narrabeen, NSW

Thompsons Silvercraft are having a clearance sale to end 14th February 1992. Most stock is reduced, including base-metal and precious metal findings, gemstones and semi-precious beads, sterling silver and gold chain, sterling silver sheet, wires, chain and granules, all carats of gold in sheet, wire and solder.

Milltons the Brisbane suppliers of Thompson enamel are now in the capable hands of Anna-Margot and Christopher Collins. Stephen and Joan Millton have returned to the US. Milltons will continue to stock all enamelling supplies as before.

Nasco West
1524 Princeton Ave, Modesto, Ca 95352-3837, US.
-Copper foil, 36 and 40 gauge (US sizes), in 12inch or 16 inch widths, plus a variety of other craft materials. Catalogue available.

Symposium

The 1992 Pacific Enamelling Symposium will be held from Sept 11 to 15 at the University of Washington, School of Art, Seattle, Washington. A juried show for professionals, and a separate show for non-professionals are planned. There will also be workshops, lectures and demonstrations by professions working in enamel.

AEN will print further details of the exhibitions and programme as they become available, or send self-addressed envelope to the convener, Cheryl Leo-Gwin,
Enamellers Association Inc

This is how the local newspaper reported Allan Heywood's terrific Grand Prize win at the Sixth Annual International Exhibition of Miniature Art in Toronto, Canada. Once again, congratulations to Allan. A tremendous achievement.

Skipton artist wins grand prize

A self-taught enameller from Skipton has won the grand prize in a major international art exhibition from 6000 entries.

Allan Heywood, who taught himself the rare art of enamelling after viewing a Japanese exhibition seven years ago, said he thought notification of his win had been from "mates playing a joke".

The sixth annual International Exhibition of Miniature Art in Toronto drew submissions from 2000 artists in 66 countries.

Heywood said it was an achievement to be among the 1000 artists selected to show their work at the exclusive Del Bello Gallery "on the most fashionable and trendy section of downtown Toronto".

The exhibition in Toronto is continuing and the catalogue will feature Heywood's work on the front cover. As his prize, Heywood has opted to let the gallery finance his own exhibition in Toronto.

The winning entry was a miniature version of a larger *Bottlenose Dolphin* work -- a copper base layered with silver and powdered glass which is fired at high temperatures to produce a shimmering, opalescent underwater scene.

The larger work was fired 40 times in a kiln and took 150 hours to complete.

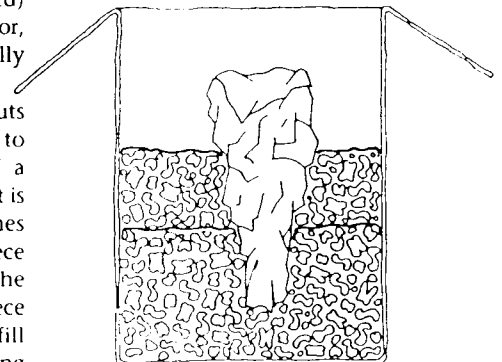
This tip on packing fragile artworks was originally printed in *Ceramics Monthly* and reprinted in 'Crafts' the journal of the Crafts Council of NSW.

Foolproof packing and peanuts

When packing a fragile ceramic or glass object for shipment, first wrap the piece in plastic (recycling grocery or dry cleaning bags, bread or magazine wrappers - whatever works). Next, spread Styrofoam peanuts (preferably recycled) on a table or the floor, and squirt liberally with white glue.

Pour these peanuts into the bottom (4 to 6 inches deep) of a plastic-lined box that is at least four inches bigger than the piece on all sides. Place the plastic-wrapped piece in the box and fill with the remaining peanuts, placing a

layer of plastic or paper at each undercut so that the resulting custom-fit Styrofoam packing will separate into easily removed sections. (from *Ceramics Monthly*).



'Crafts' is an excellent publication jam-packed with news, information and thought provoking writing about crafts in NSW and Australia. It is free to members of the NSW Craft Council or costs \$2.50 per

CLOISONNE

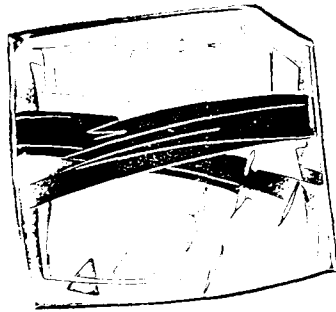
There are many excellent texts available on the technique of cloisonne, so I don't intend to repeat here what many authors have done so well. What follows is a brief explanation of the ways of cloisonne that I have evolved which work best for me.

There are many variations on how to do cloisonne, but there's no absolute right way. The right way for you is the way that suits your temperament, and gives the kind of results you want. Some enamellers use round cloisonne wire, others use flat strip. Some fire a thin base coat of flux onto their metal before placing wires. Some enamellers like to solder their wires to the base plate, others are horrified at the idea of introducing solder into their work. Do whatever works well for you.

Enamel initially attracted me because of the potential of the intense colours but increasingly I'm more interested in the qualities of the cloisonne line itself. My work is becoming more and more monotone - black, white and tones in-between with mere hints of colour, and the line the dominant element. I love the subtlety of silver lines in flux on a silver base. White on white. Now you see it, now you don't, as the silver lines catch the light or recede into the background. The subtlety invites intimacy as the piece needs to be looked at closely to reveal itself.

All the information below relates to transparent enamels on a fine silver base using fine silver cloisonne wire, as this is mostly how I work and what I know best.

I'm unable to recommend enamels as I'm still not settled myself since the demise of my favoured Thompson Lead-Bearing. I've been testing Christallerie (Soyer), Schauer and Latham, trying to find a good range of colours and fluxes that will suit my work. It's irritating and exciting all at once. Irritating because I had grown to know and trust my Thompson colours and with them could concentrate on expression rather than technical matters. Exciting because it has forced me out of my comfort zone to experiment and discover all over again, and that must be a good thing in the long run.



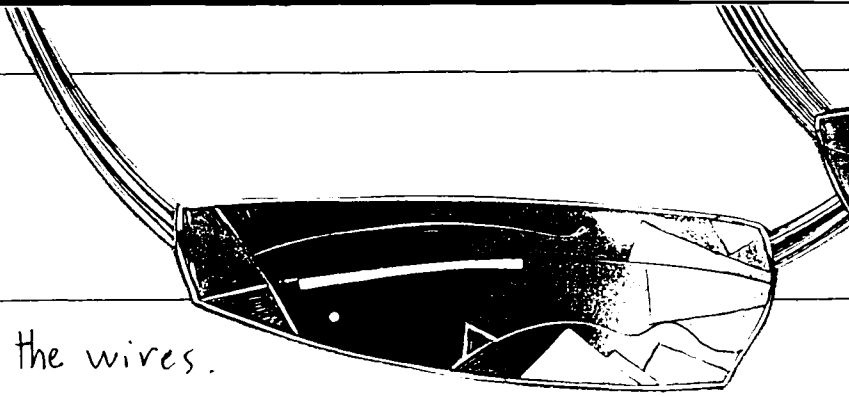
Metal preparation

I do very little to prepare my metal apart from making sure it's not dirty or greasy. It doesn't need to be annealed as this will happen during counter enamelling anyway. This firing will also burn off any residual grease from the front at the same time.

Counter enamel

I usually counter enamel the back before beginning on the front. The piece will warp a little but this can be gently straightened with the fingers or left to correct itself in the next firing. It can be difficult to place complex cloisonne wires on a shape that has concave warpage - so much easier to straighten it first. Though the counter enamel will crack, it usually stays put and heals in the next firing.

I try to use blue-coloured counter enamel of the same brand as I'll use on the front, to reduce risk of stressing. If blue counter enamel was good enough for the Chinese for hundreds of years, then its good enough for me. If the back will be seen, and blue doesn't look good



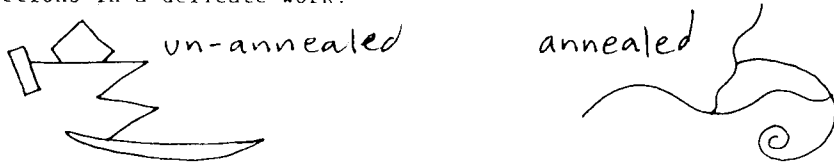
Bending the wires.

I always work out my line drawings exactly and will have done countless design variations before starting with wire. I use cheap pads of white paper so I can keep putting a clean page over the top and drawing the design through, trying this, moving lines, making bits bigger or smaller. I enjoy this part very much, -the challenge of interpreting a spontaneous pen drawing into painstaking cloisonne. Cloisonne has limitations and characteristics that are fun to work around and try to solve.

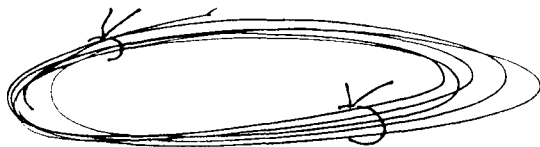
Depending on the design, I use one or both of the two standard gauges of cloisonne wire available from Thompsons Silvercraft Centre. Though, if like me you use lots then its cheaper to order it in bulk from Johnson Matthey.

I use fingers and small pliers, round and flat nose, to shape the wire. For sharp corners, I use the cloisonne wire un-annealed. It is almost impossible to get a sharp right angle in a softened wire, - it will always be rounded. After shaping I then anneal the wires with a gentle flame on my torch. They move about and distort as they relax but can easily be gently manipulated back into shape. If the shapes aren't annealed before firing with enamel they will distort in the kiln. Difficult, though not impossible to fix. Wires can be pushed about in the molten enamel for a few seconds after the first firing if only minor adjustments are needed. If major movement has taken place, then it may be better to pull that wire off and place another in the correct position in the next firing.

For flowing curves and intricate shapes its better to use annealed wire as they retain their shapes and are softer to bend. Annealed wires are very soft and can become kinked and dinged very easily. If a wire starts to look harassed then its better to discard it and start again. The line should look confident, assured and as though it knows where its going. If a wire has had a lot of bending, it can be wise to reanneal it. All this can be painstaking and at times a bit of a bore, but in a complex piece extra care at this stage can save disappointment later on. Small faults can take on gigantic proportions in a delicate work.

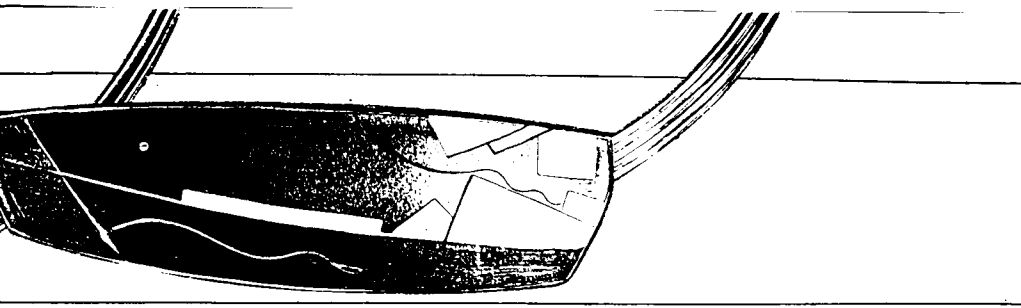


To anneal cloisonne wires, shape into a loop, tie with discarded wire and put into the kiln until it stops wriggling about. Watch closely, but wear infra-red protective glasses while looking into your kiln.



Adding colour

After getting the placement of the wires absolutely correct and as flat to the metal as possible, I then start adding the colours for the first layer. I use a small sable brush and well washed 80 mesh enamel. The colour plan will evolve as I go. I love to grade colours softly and to use subtle variations of tones. To grade from one colour to another, apply rather wet enamel making a smooth and level gradation from thick to thin. Remove the excess water from this layer. Using not-so-wet enamel pull the second colour over the first taking care not to disturb the original colour. This first firing of graded tones is the most crucial to achieving a perfect grade, so it pays to take time to get it right.



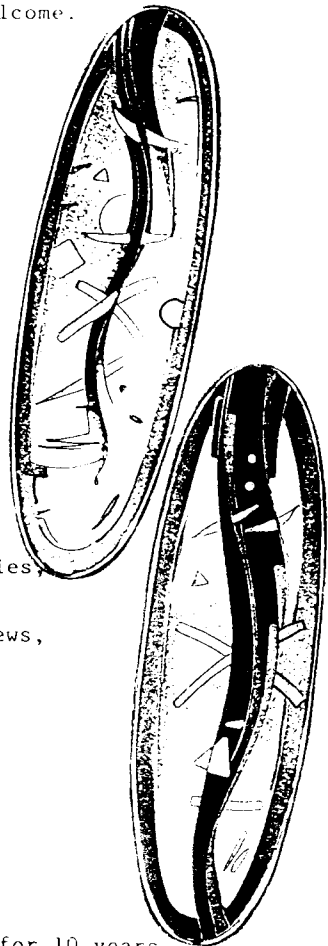
After this first firing and while the enamel is still molten, with the heavy end of your tweezers gently tap the wires down to ensure all are in contact with the base plate. This can help reduce problems with cracking later on.

I usually fill the cloisons in 4 or 5 firings, making sure all areas are up to the level of the wires before starting the finishing process.

Finishing

I use diamond files in two grades to grind my enamel as these are much faster than carborundum or alundum stones. The diamond can be harsh on cloisonné wires so a light attentive touch is required. Scratches on the surface of the cloisonné wires can be smoothed with a fine grade carborundum stone. A thorough scrub with a glass brush, a dunk in a mild ammonia/water bath, and a second scrub under running water before the final firing to a smooth surface. The silver wires can then be polished on a buffing machine with tripoli and rouge. If a matte surface is required, the finished surface can be cut back with a soft wet-and-dry paper or etching solution.

In a rather large nutshell, that is my method of cloisonné enamelling. Perhaps these notes will be of help to other enamellers, or perhaps you have other ways of achieving the results you want. If your way differs greatly from mine then please write in and share your methods with everyone. Short or long pieces are most welcome.



Below is a list of the texts on cloisonné enamel that I have found most helpful:

The Art of Enamelling by Margaret Seeler,
Published by Van Nostrand Reinhold.

The Enamelists Handbook by Elizabeth Fraser-Davies,
Published by Pitman.

Enamels, Enameling, Enamelists by Glenice Matthews,
Published by Chilton.

The Enamelist by Kenneth F Bates,
Published by Wooden Porch Books.

Step-by-Step Enamelling by William Harper,
Published by Golden Press, but now out of print.
Second hand copies are sometimes available.

About the author

Carolyn Delzoppo has been a full-time enameller for 10 years, exhibiting regularly both in Australia and overseas. She produces a range of production line cloisonné jewellery, and one-of-a-kind enamel jewellery and wall miniatures for exhibition. For the last four years, she and her partner Paul Laidler have enamelled the

Diary

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| Sunday | SEPTEMBER | | | 11 18 25 | 8 15 |

- March 30 Entries due 'The West Australian Newspapers Neckworks Award Exhibition'. See this issue for details.
- April Deadline for entries Annual Alice Craft Acquisition Award. AEN does not yet have 1992 details. Entry forms and information available from Crafts Officer, Craft Council of Northern Territory, PO Box 85, Alice Springs, NT 0871. Telephone 089 524 417.
- June 19 Deadline for delivery of work 'Neckworks Award Exhibition' and 'Graduate Metal V', JMGA Conference. See above and inside pages.
- July Deadline for entries 'National Craft Acquisition Award, Northern Territory Craft Council. Details in later issue of AEN.
- July Deadline for entries 'Seventh Annual International Exhibition of Miniature Art', Toronto, Canada. Details in later issue of AEN.
- Aug 14 - Sept 13 Exhibition dates, 'Neckworks Award Exhibition'.
- Aug 15 - 16 Conference JMGA, 'Connections 92', Perth, Western Australia.
- August Deadline for delivery of work, 'National Craft Acquisition Award', NT. See above.
- Sept 11 - 15 1992 Pacific Enamelling Symposium, Seattle, Washington. See this issue, exhibition details in a later AEN, as they become available.