

Australian Enamel Newsletter

Issue 5
December 1990

Helen Parker — and the early days of enamelling in Sydney.



Helen Parker, who writes in this issue about the early days of enamelling in Sydney, is an accomplished enameller with wide experience in many crafts.

Helen is an Estonian who grew up in Russia and Estonia. She had graduated in music and art and spoke five languages when she came to Australia in 1925 with her mother. Her first job was painting flowers, blue wrens and kookaburras on suede cushions and table mats. After this vogue passed she then became an assistant in an artists materials and framing business. In 1929 she married but continued her creative pursuits at home, painting, making batik scarves and French flowers while raising three sons. She also had a millinery business for a time. Later she learned pottery and china painting, becoming a teacher of the latter for several years.

Helen started enamelling in 1963 and became so absorbed with it that she gave up her other crafts and painting.

Now after 28 years, enamelling has not lost its attraction for her. The glowing colours and the great variety of techniques still give her great satisfaction.

In 1986 Helen's work was accepted into the Juried Enamel Exhibition in Laval, Canada and was awarded an honorable mention.

She writes about her first introduction to enamel, "Late in 1962 some delightful small enamelled dishes appeared for sale in Sydney and I was given a present of two by my son. I had never seen enamelled dishes before and was fascinated by the glowing colours and appealing abstract designs. They were made by Kubasck and Schiller, Australia. My son and I became enthusiastic about learning to enamel after he purchased a book 'Simple Steps to Enameling' by Walter F Foster. I had a pottery kiln and was sure we would be able to enamel in it.

We tried craft supply outlets for enamels without success, but were able to order from the Americal Art Clay Co in the U.S. In February 63, my first shipment arrived comprising: an instruction book, firing fork and racks, cleaning agent, amacote for preventing fire-scale, lacquer and some 2oz bottles of enamel powders in various colours.

I clearly remember the trepidation and eager anticipation when after cutting some copper shapes for pendants, dusting them with enamel, we placed the pieces in the kiln. We were surprised and thrilled with the results.

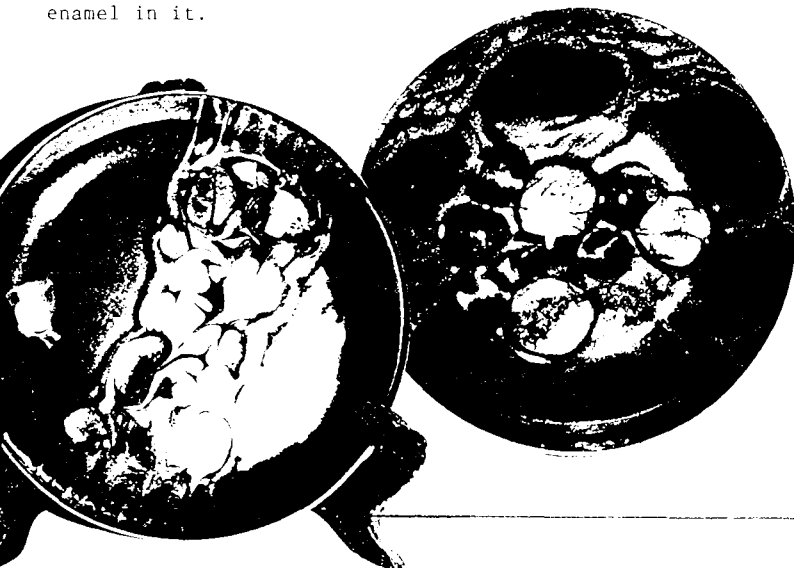
My pottery kiln worked well but had some disadvantages in that it took a long time to heat and had to be switched off when being used. The exposed elements were very dangerous. It was large, 12"x12"x10", and I had to wear padded gauntlets to avoid being burned by the great blast of heat when I opened the door. In 1965 I was able to buy a Ward E2 enamelling kiln from Austral Engineering in Rydalmere, and now 28 years later am still using the same kiln, despite having melted the elements onto the bricks several times. The elements are on the floor covered with a 3mm kiln bat. It has a temperature control and I also bought a pyrometer.

We enamelled on shapes we cut from scrap copper bought from plumbers supply shops like Fox Bros in Pitt St and from scrap metal merchants. At that time the enamel pieces were not counter enamelled, even the dishes by Kubasck and Schiller had highly polished backs.

Gradually enamels became available in Sydney and more people started enamelling. Jewellery, craft and menswear shops sold enamel jewellery especially earrings and cufflinks. I think that almost every man in Sydney owned a pair of enamel cufflinks at that time. I alone made hundreds.

On reflecting back to those days, I remember them as being very exciting. Enamellers were learning from books and experimentation. Of course there were many failures but it thrilling to see the variety of interesting results being obtained.

I continued to import Amaco and Bergen enamels from the U.S. until Thompson enamels became available from Ceramic Craft Co in S.A., and Schauer enamels from TE Kneebush in Melbourne. Later Australian Silvercraft Centre sold Schauer enamels and copper bowls and shapes. I was pleased to be able to give up importing enamel as it was becoming progressively more difficult. Each consignment had to be collected from Redfern Customs Office, with long waits, sometimes half a day. Blythe and Degussa enamels also became available and I found that all the brands had some colours that appealed to me, with Amaco and Thompson the most trouble free.



Editorial

Lead free Lead bearing Lead free

The expected information on enamelling with leadfree enamels has not arrived from the U.S. in time for publication. I hope to have it for the February issue, meantime I've gathered some random bits and pieces on leadfree that may be helpful, plus I have a reply to a question posed in the last newsletter. It seems that a few enamellers are having this problem with leadfree on silver.

Subscriptions, which will be due after Issue 6 are on the move unfortunately. Earlier this year I calculated costs for postage and for photocopying of one double-sided A3 sheet. Things have expanded since then and it seems that most issues will be two A3 or at least one A3 and one A4. So, to cover this and PO charges (about to rise again when copper coins run low), the 1991 sub will be \$16.00 per year. Fulltime student subscriptions will continue to be subsidised at half price. I hope you will all resubscribe, the numbers are needed to keep the newsletter viable.

Please write and let me know if you have any ideas or requests for future issues. Of course contributions, news, exhibition info, photos are always welcome.

Best wishes for a enjoyable and relaxing holiday season.

Carolyn DePoppo Editor

Helen Parker
continued



Now I come to the present day. I have been using Thompson lead free enamel and have obtained some interesting results when combining lead free with lead bearing. Other enamellers may like to try the following experiment:

Take a small coaster and dust a thin coat of Bluebell 110 directly onto the copper. Repeat this three times. Then cut a design in a sheet of silver foil and fuse it onto the enamel. Using leadfree enamel then wetcharge a thick layer onto the foil area, wiping any excess from the background. Fire at 800 degrees for 1½ minutes. The leadbearing enamel spreads and pushes the leadfree enamel, leaving an attractive rim of exposed silver around the cutout shape."

In response to a question posed by a subscriber in the previous issue of AEN (why do leadfree enamels seem to yellow around the edges after about 3 firings?), Tom Ellis th editor of Glass on Metal replies:

A few things come to mind. First, and most importantly, overfiring is the most likely culprit here. Temperatures greater than 1450F should not be used, and the number of firings and firing times should be minimised. Higher temperatures and numerous firings increase the amount of silver being dissolved into the enamel which results in a yellow tint. This is true for lead bearing enamels as well.

The metal oxide content of a specific enamel colour can also be related to yellowing on silver. Some gold bearing transparent enamels such as reds and oranges will yellow over silver because of the gold content. The silver is dissolved into the gold bearing enamel and reacts with the gold. This is true of gold bearing lead bearing enamel as well. To minimise the yellowing, gold foil can be used under the area where these colours are desired, or a clear flux for silver can be applied under the colour. In the lead free line 2020 is the clear enamel which does not yellow over silver.

Another factor to consider is whether the metal base is fine or sterling silver. Sterling may affect the transparent colours more so than fine silver.

Lead free trials

Heron Fiedler, a Brisbane enameller, has been trialing the lead free range. He writes of his experiences:

"Some of my findings may be common knowledge but perhaps they'll be useful to some. I use a kiln without a pyrometer, but the estimated temperature is around 900C. I fire exclusively on fine silver with no flux. The problems have been with the transparent. They become translucent to opaque, sometimes grainy with the colours not 'developing'. There is no evidence of burning, no black edges. At first I thought the enamel was being overfired, but in repeat trials (cooler kiln, shorter firings), the colours performed the same. The problem was overcome by firing over a layer of flux. The graininess disappeared and the colours achieved their hue. My conclusion is that these enamels cannot be fired directly onto fine silver.

Recently I received my first enamels directly from Thompson, including some opaques which I had rarely used. My tests with these produced the yellow edges mentioned in the previous newsletter. It seems that again these enamels are failing where they contact the metal. Building a thicker layer reduces the discolouration except when it is overfired. These colours seem to be very fickle with their firing times and temperatures.

At this stage I decided to try to identify any similarities between the failing enamels. It seems there is one. At the back of the Thompson catalogue, in the Dilatometric Softening Point column in the Physical Properties of Enamel table, the failing enamels occur in the range of 460C-480C. The suspect colours are the yellows, purples, reds and pinks. The blues, greens and clears are OK. I haven't used any browns, but would be cautious if they fall within this range. There is one transparent green dark that needs caution.

Lead bearing Lead free Lead Classes

p.3

As Thompson recommend firing at 300c above the Dilatometric Softening point, it would seem that my enamels are burning. This may be so given my primitive equipment however in all cases I have tried cooler kilns and various firing combinations without much success. The lower temperature enamels are not for me with my present equipment.

I would be very interested to learn of other peoples experiences and any remedies for these problems.

Lead bearing safety.

Enamellers continuing to use lead bearing products should be aware of the following safety practices;

- use wet enamel techniques where possible.
- use your enamels in a well ventilated work area. Wear a protective dust mask if using dry enamel powders. The major health hazard of enamel is long term lead poisoning chiefly through ingestion of enamel dust.
- rigorous attention should be paid to housekeeping. Bench areas should be wet swabbed regularly. Floors should be wet mopped not swept.
- do not eat or drink in the workshop. Wash hands before handling food.
- professional enamellers and prolific hobbyists, especially those who sift enamels, should get their blood lead levels checked annually. Pregnant women or those anticipating pregnancy should eliminate all exposure to lead bearing materials. Prior to conception, both men and women are at risk as lead is known to affect reproductive systems in both sexes. Fetal exposure to low levels of lead was found to adversely affect childrens mental development in the earlier years of life.

The Workers Health Centre publish a Factsheet of Information for Lead Workers, which explains how lead enters the body, the health effects of lead exposure - including early symptom and the signs of acute lead poisoning. It explains the tests which are available to determine lead poisoning and lists steps that can be taken to prevent exposure.

Cost; \$1.50 plus \$1.00 postage
Send cheque or MO to The Workers Health Centre,
27 John St, Lidcombe NSW 2141. Tel. 02 646 3233.

Many other sheets and publications are available, including information on tenosynovitis and overuse injuries, asbestos, hazardous chemicals, reproductive hazards and respiratory protective equipment.

In 1991 the Randwick College of TAFE, Randwick NSW, will be offering a course for individuals who wish to extend their jewellery making skills and concepts into the specialised area of enamelling.

The course will run over one year, 6 hours per week for 36 weeks. Jewellery making skills are required as an entry qualification. The tutor will be Barbara Ryman who is well known for her fine quality enamel jewellery.

For more information, contact the College Course Information Officer on 02 398 0540.

The College also offers a course titled Metal Manipulation for students with a background in jewellery making and design. Students will extend their skills in metal forming and in design. This course runs for 6 hours per week for 36 weeks.

Conference - U.K.

The British Society of Enamellers will be holding their first international conference on the 5 - 7th April 1991. The venue is Wadham College in Oxford. They are hoping that enamellers from around the world will attend. As a first step in planning this international event, the Society has invited two prominent officials of the Union of the Soviet Artists and five Soviet enamel artists for a 10 day cultural exchange in Britain. Bureaucratic problems with visas and tickets mean that confirmation of their attendance will take some time. The Society is hopeful that the Soviets will participate in the planned workshops and give demonstrations during the conference.

Workshops

Metal Techniques for Enamellers. Soldering, jointing, settings and findings. Tutors -Hali Baykov & Sarah Le

Imagery to Panel. Transposition of imagery into panels by appropriate enamelling techniques, wet, dry, silk screen, stencilling and use of gold and silver foils
Tutors - Amal Ghosh and Edward Heath.

Plique-a-jour. Exploration of design and constructional considerations appropriate to various traditional and experimental plique-a-jour techniques. Tutor - Alexandra Raphael.

Deadline for bookings and payment of fees is December 31 1990.

Telephone or write to the editor Australian Enamel Newsletter for further details and booking forms.

Thankyou

Thankyou to the following people for their contributions to this issue;

Helen Parker, Linda McGuire, Heron Fiedler, British Society of Enamellers, Enamellers Association, Mary Raymond, Barbara Ryman, Tom Ellis and Joan Millton.

Suppliers & Supplies

Good news!

Australia has a new agency for Thompson enamel.

Joan and Stephen Millton who run the The Milltons, a supplier of imported lapidary and jewellery making equipment, have recently become Australias sole agency for Thompson products. They have spent a considerable amount of time and thought compiling this initial order which is based on their own experience as enamellers and on their past fulfillment of customer needs when they had a similiar business in California.

They now have a great deal of stock on hand including:

- leadfree enamels
- stamped copper pieces
- copper bowls and trays
- copper tubing
- enamelled iron tiles
- ivets
- copper and fine silver cloisonne wires
- books

Joan Millton studied enamelling in the US many years ago and has participated in numerous exhibitions in New Zealand. She is now a sculptor and writer.

Stephen is a master mould maker and caster who shares a studio/workshop at the rear of the business with their daughter Anna Margot.

Anna Margot, whose work is displayed in the shop, is a jeweller and enameller. She also holds seminars and classes. Earlier this year she was able to spend time working with Professor Jean Jenkins in Palo, Alto California. Jean Jenkins, a family friend, is one of the noted enamellists in the Bay area of California, and is renowned for her enamelled door sized panels.

It was the family's admiration and respect for Jean Jenkins work and incredible knowledge of enamel, plus her decided preference for Thompson enamel that influenced The Milltons to stock these enamels. They hope to arrange for Professor Jenkins to visit Australia and perhaps give one of her remarkable workshops in Brisbane sometime in the future.

A stock and price list is available apon request.

The Milltons

Phone 07 268 5998
Fax 617 268 5047

Shop
49 Stevenson St,
Ascot
Queensland 4007

Postal
G.P.O. Box 1850
Brisbane
Queensland 4001

Blythe Enamel

Thompson Enamel in the U.S. are now agents for Johnson Matthey's Blythe jewellery enamels, leadbearing. 96 colours are available, 33 transparents and 63 opaques. A sampler pack of the 96 colour powders is available for \$US40.00. Fired colour boards are \$US50.00.

A new colour card of the leadfree Thompson range is also available. The leadfree enamels have new product numbers which must now be used when ordering locally or overseas.

New lead free numbers

OLD NUMBER NEW NUMBER

LF100	1020	LF160	1995	LF324	2760
LF104	1910	LF162	1996	LF325	2780
LF105	1920	LF171	1850	LF326	2530
LF107	1940	LF172	1860	LF327	2420
LF118	1520	LF173	1870	LF328	2660
LF119	1522	LF174	1880	LF330	2115
LF120	1608	LF175	1890	LF331	2120
LF121	1605	LF180	1240	LF332	2130
LF122	1615	LF181	1237	LF333	2170
LF123	1645	LF182	1238	LF340	2410
LF124	1650	LF183	1239	LF342	2340
LF125	1685	LF184	1810	LF343	2350
LF126	1510	LF185	1211	LF344	2325
LF127	1415	LF186	1820	LF345	2520
LF128	1420	LF188	1224	LF346	2430
LF130	1124	LF226	1830	LF347	2335
LF131	1125	LF300	2010	LF348	2435
LF132	1140	LF302	2020	LF372	2825
LF134	1150	LF303	2030	LF373	2820
LF135	1175	LF304	2625	LF375	2810
LF136	1190	LF305	2615	LF377	2830
LF137	1170	LF310	2880	LF380	2110
LF140	1308	LF312	2850	LF389	2320
LF141	1315	LF313	2840	LF390	2720
LF142	1360	LF314	2210	LF391	2745
LF144	1390	LF315	2215	LF392	2740
LF145	1380	LF316	2910	LF500	1050
LF150	1710	LF317	2915	LF502	1202
LF152	1715	LF318	2610	LF514	1515
LF153	1750	LF320	2620	LF880	2835
LF154	1745	LF321	2650	LF1321	1465
LF156	1720	LF322	2680		
LF157	1780	LF323	2715		

Sell/swap/buy

This is a new service for subscribers to advertise to find wanted enamels or dispose of unwanted stock, either by sale or swap. As stocks of lead bearing Thompson run out, enamellers may want to stock up on favourite colours or start anew with other enamels. Other items can also be advertised.

Wendy Hall wants to buy stocks of leadbearing Smoke 834. Has stocks of other colours prepared to swap or sell. Contact at 121 Denison St, Camperdown 2050. Phone 02 517 1105

Carolyn Delzoppo desperately needs stocks of leaded Sapphire 111 in good condition. Will pay current prices and postal expenses. Contact C/- Aust. Enamel Newsletter. or phone 066 84 1772.

Around the magazines

Metalsmith Fall 1990 Vol 10 No 4

Harold Hasselschwert - Materialisation of the Exotic. pp22-25. Three page article, jeweller enameller using engraved champleve and enamelled cast silver.

Harlan Butt - Garden Analogies. Enamelled vessels and panels that speak of his fascination with the Japanese tea ceremony and the Eastern aesthetic. pp26-29.

American Craft Oct/Nov 90

Edward Arbra. Two page profile of this Californian panel artist who works in monotone Limoges technique. pp54-55

Graduating enamellers

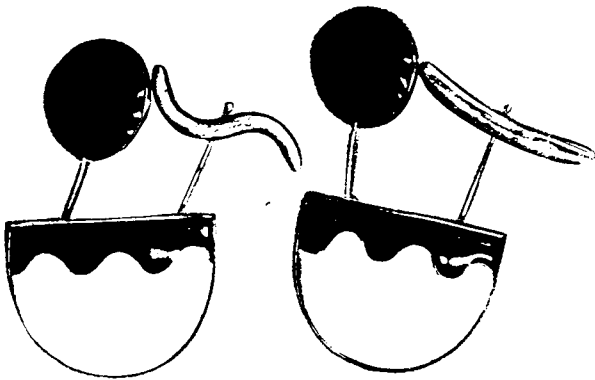
Randwick College of TAFE Jewellery Design students held their annual exhibition in November at the Woolloomooloo Gallery. The exhibition included some interesting enamel pieces which were inspired by the Australian environment.

The enamel course was taught by Sydney enameller Barbara Ryman, who encouraged the students to consider colour, design, texture, surface treatment and shape as well as their emotional responses and political opinions in conveying the essence of part of the Australian environment.

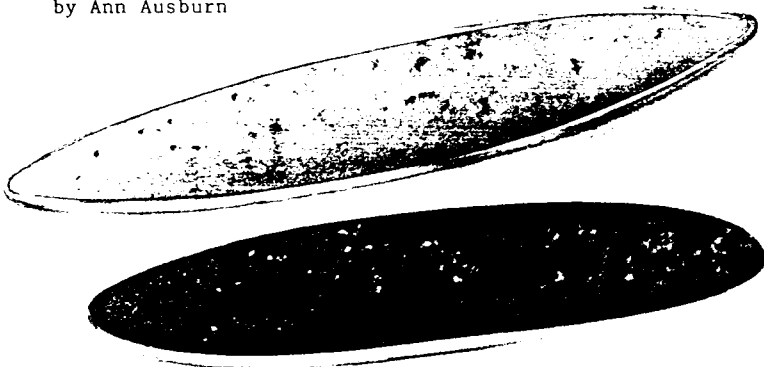
Agnes Nagy's green, yellow and blue etched, limoges earrings were inspired by the treasured gift of a small tree which she was given the day she became an Australian citizen.

The enamelled picture frame done by Carol Bogard was set on dried salt marshes. Carol experimented with water clear to achieve her shimmering opalescent colour. Some interesting effects were also achieved using lead pencil on enamel.

Ann Ausburn has a love of worn surfaces, rock forms, textures and colours of sea glass and the fragments she finds on Australian beaches. Ann mixed several colours of leadfree opaque enamels to achieve her lovely subtle effects. Ann uses a free, spontaneous approach as she feels that cloisonne work is far too precise for her. After three firings and a final sprinkle of enamel, her brooches were stoned back to a soft matte finish.



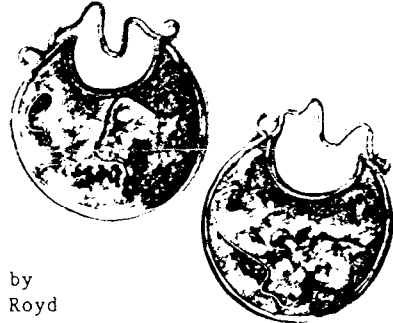
Earrings and brooches
by Ann Ausburn



Jenny Barton's deep green cloisonne enamel and sterling brooch had oil slicks on water as her consideration. Her piece conveyed her concern for the fragile environment.

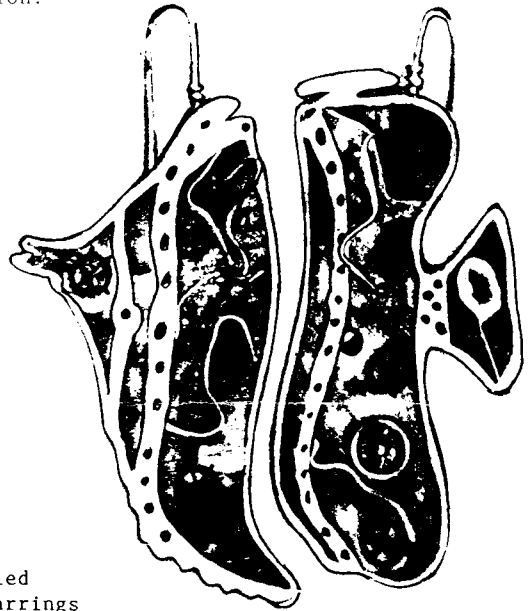
Rust and corrugated roof tops stimulated Patricia Broome to experiment with red and brown opaque enamels on copper. She achieved some very unique effects.

Lorraine Royd's bezel set, blue-grey earrings were a going away present to herself. Lorraine is moving to Singapore and she wanted to take a small piece of Australia with her. Her work is influenced by the swirling, winter mists rising in the valley below her house.



Earrings by
Lorraine Royd

Linda McGuire's stylized champeve fish earrings were embedded with tiny watch parts. Linda thought about the fragility of our Great Barrier Reef and hoped to make the statement that time is running out, and we must do something about the horrendous problem of ocean pollution.



Enamelled
fish earrings
by Linda McGuire

The students work not only expressed a sensitivity and appreciation of nature, but also deep feelings and concerns for the preservation of our Australian environment.

Randwick College of TAFE
Cnr Darley Road and King Street
Randwick NSW 2031

Australian Exhibition of Enamels

Prouds Exhibition 1990

The March issue of Craft Arts will contain a two page article on the upcoming Australian Exhibition of Enamels. Ken Lockwood, the editor has been very impressed with the high standard of the slides submitted to him and has chosen 17 images for the magazine.

Closing date for entry of slides for jury selection is 15th February 1991. Entries will be limited to six items per entrant, with a fee of \$15.00 per person. Three slides of each image will be required for the jury. Results will be posted 18th March 1991.

Further information and entry forms are available from Mary Raymond at 7 Ailsa Close, East Lindfield, NSW 2070.

Australian Enamel Newsletter
P.O. Box 418,
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Australia

Subscriptions:
Regular \$16.00
Fulltime student \$8.00
Overseas airmail \$18.00

The ninth annual exhibition of enamels by the members of the Enamellers Association will be held from 6.12.90 until 24.12.90 at Prouds Gallery, Cnr King and Pitt Streets, Sydney. Telephone 239 2651.

