

Autumn 2007

'Out of the Fire' Report: Skill, Art and Experimentation

by Pat Johnson



The view that met the eye of the visitors entering the Garden Gallery at the Oxford Museum.

At the time of writing, the current BSOE exhibition 'Out of the Fire' is still running at the Garden Gallery, Oxford Museum, in Woodstock. This is a splendid looking show of work, with 24 members exhibiting a total of 188 pieces, completely filling both of the gallery's rooms.

The Private View was very well attended and attracted commendable sales for the exhibitors. Since then, an article about 'Out of the Fire' has appeared in the Oxford Times, and the exhibition has been mentioned on the radio, during a program featuring the Oxford Museum. The staff at the gallery comment that the numbers of visitors has been exceptionally high. Results like this show us that there is interest in and appreciation of enamelling by the public and that we have somewhat of a following. Such a response is a great encouragement for the BSOE to stage such events in the future.

In addition to the standard of work that members would normally send to an exhibition of this importance, the exhibitors were also asked to submit experimental pieces – to take a risk in the interests of developing their own profile and that of the BSOE. Ten of the twenty four exhibitors responded and sent work that they considered to fall into this category, but which is also of the highest quality.

Originally the committee intended to show the experimental pieces as a group, but Penny Davis, Penny Gildea and Nike de Bellaigue, who set up the displays in the cases, moved away from the usual practice of keeping everything belonging to each exhibitor in one place and instead distributed the work of those members, who were represented with a relatively large number of pieces, throughout the gallery. The intermingling added an element of variety and excitement to the show, and the integrating of the experimental and established work increased the liveliness of the exhibition.

The images that accompany this article are the best photographs taken at the exhibition. Although the gallery was very well lit, some areas responded better than others to the camera. Additional images from exhibition can be seen on the BSOE website, www.enamellers.org.

Five exhibitors especially have taken steps in completely new directions. Hali Baykov sent two brooches featuring exciting, boldly coloured triangles, a complete departure from her usual, nature based jewellery. Janine Greenberg, in addition to showing two handsome champlevé necklaces, also exhibited three collages, featuring enamel painted nude figures, one with a comment to make about



Arrow Brooch/Necklace by Hali Baykov
 Silver, silver and gold foil, enamel, and gold backed
 carnelians
 9cm long

the relationship between men and women. Rosemary Zeeman experimented with using screens to produce images on small copper panels. Five of these, showing variations that could be achieved using just one image, were mounted in a row and inset near the bottom of a 1 metre square black, wooden panel. An image of this handsome piece could not be included in its entirety in the newsletter, but a detail is shown at the top of page 3. Rosemary incorporated some of the enamelling effects she discovered when making these panels in a handsome set of pendants, which were also in the exhibition (see the middle image of page 3). Ruth Ball sent a set of delightful brooches, showing very small screened images of urban scenes, and Sheila Macdonald exhibited a stunning collection of neck pieces, brooches, and earrings, unusual both in colour and form (page 3).

Why did the executive committee decide to ask the members to produce experimental work for this exhibition? The answer to this is that all producers who want to attract attention must continuously evolve in order to keep their customers coming back – think of the Paris fashion shows and the new models of cars that appear every year. A certain amount of development is essential to every maker's career although, in order to maintain the maker's position, it is important that changes are seen to relate to previous work.. For the committee, asking exhibitors to show experimental pieces was their way of encouraging the expression of excitement in enamelling.

The experimental work shown at 'Out of the Fire' was innovative rather than boundary breaking. In most cases it



Brooch by Phil Barnes
 Silver champlevé enamel with dark
 amethyst drop
 5.5 x 3.5cm



Brooches by Bonnie Mackintosh and Louise O'Neill
 Enamel on silver
 The largest brooch is 10cm long



A detail from 'Sequence' by Rosemary Zeeman
Enamel on copper
Each panel is 14 x 10cm



Pendant by Rosemary Zeeman
Enamel on copper
10cm long



Brooch by Sheila McDonald
Copper, silver, fine gold, fine gold leaf and enamel
5 x 6cm

was a matter of each individual enameller's personal move forward within the context of their previous work. This is to be expected because we have all worked hard, and for a substantial period of time, to be able to make enamels that are admired, desirable, and successful in attracting customers. Its not possible to be both ground-breaking, in the sense of finding ways of using enamel that have not been thought of before, and to have spent time working with the incredible potential that enamel offers makers to develop their own way of expressing their individuality and artistic insight. 'Develop' is the key word here. Boundary breaking is an opening step, but when the new effect is taken forward, the goals become the same as established enamellers.

Over the years this newsletter has contained many articles about groundbreaking enamelling, many of the examples being technically and artistically fascinating indeed. But these works are invariably produced very early on in the career of a particular artist, before the battle between enamel and maker has been truly joined. Once the opening skirmishes are over, the relationship between the two begins to settle down and grow into a partnership.

Practical realities have to be taken into account, and a certain amount of control, both aesthetic and technical, becomes desirable. The intention- to create something beautiful, whether in the most austere or in the most expressive way - becomes the same for new innovators as well as for experienced enamellers. Of course, aren't all makers, by definition, in a quest for beauty? We might have to ask the fine artists for the answer to that.

This is not to say that the contribution of new enamellers is unimportant. Theirs has the virtue of causing excitement and surprise and is the work that will get enamelling noticed by the forces for progress in the arts and crafts. It is a privilege to be able to write about new enamellers and to publish the articles in this newsletter. For more experienced enamellers, however, the value of experimentation and innovation, within the confines of their practice and level of skill, is to bring new life and vitality to their work. 'Out of the Fire' has benefited from contributions of experimenters which accompanied the stunning accomplishments of the exhibitors in general. The effort to stage this exhibition has certainly been worthwhile and it is hoped that we can stage more events like this in the future.

'The Nude': A Report from Salou

by Evangeline Long



Princess by Rafael Arroyo
Copper, enamel, glass eyes and beads, iron wire, paper
30 x 26cm

On the evening of 16 June, in the open-air courtyard of the Torre Vella in Salou, the inauguration of the VIIIth 'World of Enamelling International Exhibition' was under way. The event followed the Catalan tradition of a gathering of invited guests attending a ceremony of speeches and presentation awards for the biennial competition. It had been preceded by a brief preview of the works and, after the ceremony, refreshments were served, Catalan music was played and the exhibits could be viewed once more.

The exhibition set the theme of 'The Nude' and specified that the entries must be unframed panels only, with one dimension at least being 10cm. Selected by a jury of four, representing the Corporation of Salou in collaboration with the Spanish enamelling organisation CIDAE and the Museum of Contemporary Enamel

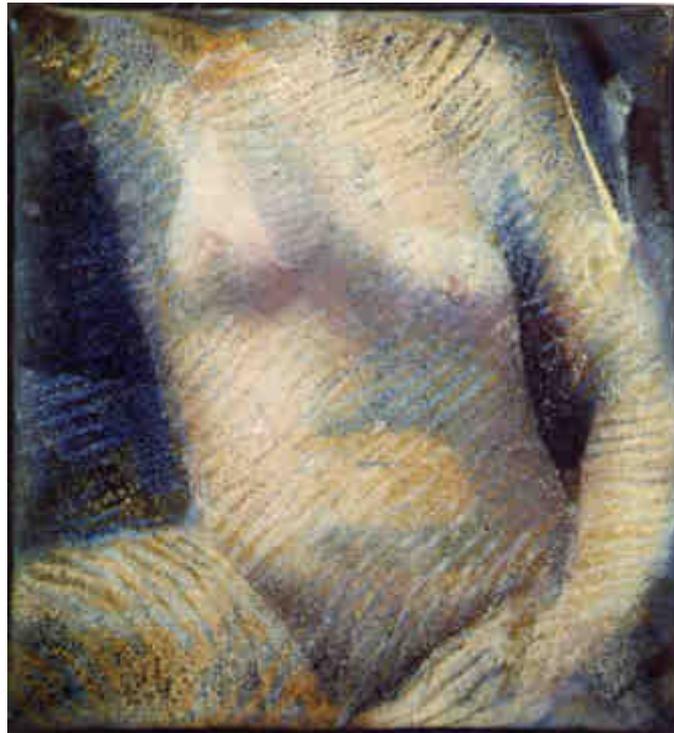
(MECS, located in Salou), 125 enamellers from 22 countries showed 175 works.

The organisers are to be complimented on their choice of theme 'The Nude', for it proved to be a most challenging yet rewarding subject with less of a constraining influence than its predecessor of 2005, 'The Plate'. In selecting 2007 theme, the organisers had in mind the long history of the presentation of the nude figure, as some of the earliest art objects known to us refer to the human form. In his address, Andreu vilasis (Director of MECS, President of CIDAE and curator of the competition) referred to times past, often in Spain, when many nude works remained hidden due to 'exaggerated chastity' or timorous thought'.

I would echo Jean Tudor's thoughts about themed shows. She wrote in the previous newsletter (Summer 2007, p 10,11, asnd 12) 'A theme provides the public with an idea on which to hang what they see.' But additionally, a theme means setting a boundary, making a restriction. When confronted by this challenge, it seems to me that a richer seam can be mined: the

artist/maker is both tested and stimulated at the same time and the outcome can become more, not less original and inventive. One could therefore have predicted that this show would be diverse and very personal in response.

Some enamellers presented their work in 3-D form, some in relief, and the majority in 2-D within the dimensions stipulated. The main prize-winning piece by Rafael Arroyo was technically outstanding and very expressive with its beautifully formed parts attached by copper wire, which itself became hair where required. Its jewelled collar, gravitational bosoms, slightly coy stare, and incongruously casual pose, lent it a sort of humour and very much a presence.



Torso by Evangeline Long
Copper and jewellery enamel
22 x 25cm

Most enamellers' works were recognisable for the employment of their known styles, but the diversity of the show was enhanced by the situations in which the figures were presented (there were a large number of narrative works) and by the methods employed - cloisonné, cut forms, screened images, high-fired effects, painted - the full gamut of enamel handling seemed to be present. It was easy to pick out the enamellers less familiar with the life class and the inexperienced in drawing skills. Yet some of these exhibitors were nevertheless able to make convincing statements by their dramatic use of colour, line, tone and texture, or by clever use of decoration or pattern, with the figure referred to only as an impression. Some pieces moved from the realm of realism to the abstract. We are all familiar with pictures of the 'ideal' female form, sometimes with attendant flowers, and these were in evidence too, some more or less convincing. The least interesting exhibits were straight drawings with little or no recognition of the fact that an enamel medium was being employed.

Six members of the British Society of Enamellers were represented: Evangeline Long, Jean Tudor, Pat Johnson, Janine Greenberg, Emma Fernandez, and Louise Richards. Evangeline Long and Jean Tudor were awarded Special Mention by the Jury and Pat Johnson received Honourable Mention. More images from this interesting and thought-provoking exhibition can be seen on the BSOE blog: www.bsoenews.blogspot.com.



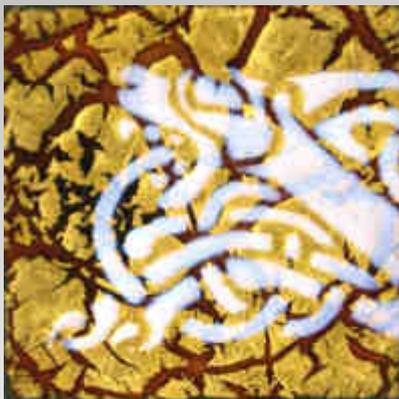
Granny On the Beach by Jean Tudor
Copper, silver cloisonné wire, cut out figure bolted to a raku-fired background, with metallic wire stitching
8 x 8"

Working With Gold Leaf

Ruth Ball and Pat Johnson shared a Summer School course at West Dean College which featured working with gold leaf and foil. Much experimentation was needed to establish the correct firing times and temperatures for the variety of kilns available, and during this process a great deal was learned about the behaviour of gold leaf and enamel. Guided by Ruth Ball, the class produced many interesting test pieces and discovered new techniques.



Here is the basic effect of applying one layer of gold leaf to a transparent red enameled background and firing it five or ten seconds longer than would be required to get the leaf to adhere to the enamel. This produces the crazing. The solid form on the upper left hand side was probably caused by a fold in the leaf.



An enamel image can be screened on top of a fired layer of gold leaf; the leaf will not burn out before the enamel vitrifies. Applying several layers of leaves, one on top of another with no firing in between, will ensure that the gold is thick enough to withstand the relatively high heat required to get the enamel to melt.

Basic information: Gold leaf for jewellers can be applied to an enamelled surface by first wetting the surface lightly, either with water or a thin coating of diluted Klyr-fire or wallpaper paste, and then laying the enamelled piece face down on top of the leaf, which is resting on its page in a book of leaf squares. This removes the need to handle the leaf by removing it from its paper support. To get a thicker application of gold, the layer of leaf that is already adhering to the enamelled surface is carefully re-wetted and the process repeated with another section of leaf. Once the gummed leaf has been dried, shapes or lines can be produced by scraping away the gold.

A student discovered that gold transfer leaf, normally used for gilding, can also be applied to enamel. This foil cannot be separated from its paper backing, which makes it possible to cut out precise shapes for application to enamel. The leaf and paper backing are fired together onto the enamel surface. A very thick paste (wallpaper paste) is required to hold the paper in place when the work is first placed into the kiln and the paper burns away. Very small cut shapes do not have enough surface to be held in place by gum. The fired leaf will retain its shape if not left in the kiln too long. Otherwise fragmentation occurs.



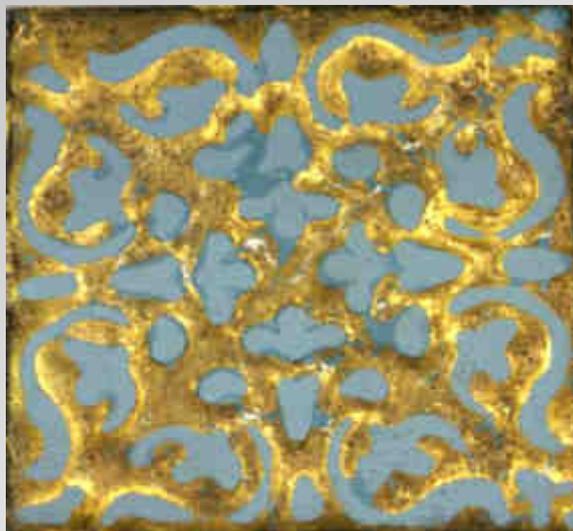
Ruth Ball produced this bowl by applying transparent red over transparent yellow Soyer 30 (two firings) to the inside and an opaque dark grey to the outside. She then applied white gold leaf to the outside and yellow gold leaf to the inside and fired both applications together. The thicker layers of gold are where the sheets of leaf have overlapped on application.



This handsome test piece was made by screening and firing opaque cream dots on to copper, firing a layer of flux over the top, then gumming and firing on a large ragged piece of gold leaf. The heart was applied at the fourth firing, with the heart shaped scraped out of a several layers of applied leaf before firing.

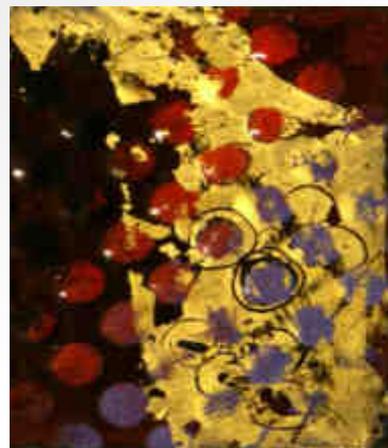


The interaction with thin gold leaf and its enamelled background is shown in this sample by Ruth Ball. Here the leaf is applied to a screened and fired white enamel, which has produced a copper oxide pattern. When the leaf is fired on, the oxide pattern can be seen through the gold.



Wonderful affects can be achieved by texturing the enamelled surface before applying the leaf. Careful firing is required to ensure that the texturing does not flatten out. This piece was created by firing on a base layer, a dark turquoise blue, and then stencilling on a light turquoise design, and firing very carefully to leave the stencilled layer raised. After the firing, gold leaf is applied over the whole piece, and fired when dry. Then the surface was lightly stoned back to reveal the stencilled pattern in relief.

A damp paper stencil which masks the shape of the figure was laid down over the fired gold leaf and a fine layer of flux sifted over the whole piece. With the stencil removed, the flux layer was then intentionally underfired. Interestingly this seemed to brighten up the gold leaf, except where the stencilled form of the figure protected the leaf from the flux.



This sample shows the effect of drawing through gold leaf to create design details. The red and blue dots were first screened and lightly fired on to a black enamelled base layer; then the leaf was applied. The leaf was scraped off of the dots and circular accents drawn in.

Beryl Turpin: The Enameller To Whom So Many of Us Are Indebted

by Pat Johnson

Thanks to the development of enamelling as a leisure pursuit in the second half of the 20th century (due to the ready availability of kilns and enamels) many people discovered for themselves the delights of working with enamel, leading to an expansion of the knowledge about the medium. Particularly new to this post-war period, at least as far as I know, was the emergence of enamelled pieces employing transparent golds on copper and copper oxide. Beryl Turpin completely independently discovered these effects, best revealed by the 'sliding' of enamel on surfaces that were not flat, and she has influenced countless enamellers ever since she began showing her work. Generous in teaching, Beryl allowed her discoveries to be passed on to many others, resulting in numerous handsome enamelled vessels being produced in the UK, but the work of Beryl Turpin, the originator of the technique of working with transparent gold enamels and copper oxide lines, has remained unsurpassed.



Dish by Beryl Turpin, ca 1960
Enamel on copper
20cm diameter

Evacuated to rural Kent with her school, Beryl Turpin returned to London in early 1940, when the city was in complete chaos. By sheer good fortune, the art mistress from her original school was there and made it possible for Beryl, age 13, to enrol at St Martins School of Art with a Junior Scholarship. Here she received a general education, but also learned painting and, particularly important for her future, drawing, and studied under, amongst others, Ruskin Spear. Trips to the V&A allowed Beryl to become familiar with enamelling.

At 18 Beryl left art college to get married and spent the next fifteen years raising her family. Once the children were all in school, she took up painting again, but found that her style was dated. Looking to change direction, she found that there was a local class in enamelling. Here, after a very brief introduction to the basic techniques, Beryl realised that enamelling was going to be important to her and she bought her own kiln. Assisted by the book *The Techniques of Enamelling* by Geoffrey Clarke, her period of experimentation began. Because of her background in drawing, Beryl was drawn to the sgraffito technique, realising her designs in transparent gold and turquoise



Bowl by Beryl Turpin, ca 1960
Enamel on copper
8 x 8cm

enamels and the black and red of the copper oxide line. She had never previously seen work like she was producing but reached her established style after a year of development.

Beryl's early work was done on tiny copper dishes, which she eventually started to sell in order to recoup her expenses. She also began to take part in private exhibitions and to produce enamel designs on larger dishes. But literally just a year after starting to learn to enamel, Beryl decided to go straight to the top. She made appointments to show her work to buyers in Harrods, Heals, Liberty and Co. and the Peter Jones group, and she received orders from them all.

On her dishes, Beryl frequently drew birds and other stylised but realistic subjects, which she was able to depict in very fine detail with the sgraffito technique. She also extended her range by developing techniques for enamelling bowls and goblets. On these vessels, her designs, usually patterns, were hugely enhanced by the wonderful effect of the enamel sliding down the steep sides. This was probably the first time that enamel was allowed to behave so freely, revealing the true wonders of the colours and the interactions between enamel and copper oxide.

It was her use of subjects on the dishes that led Beryl to the next stage of her work. After several years of producing dishes and bowls, she wanted to return to painting in order to address a broader range of subjects. Beryl



Geese by Beryl Turpin; 2007
Enamel on copper
23 x 25cm

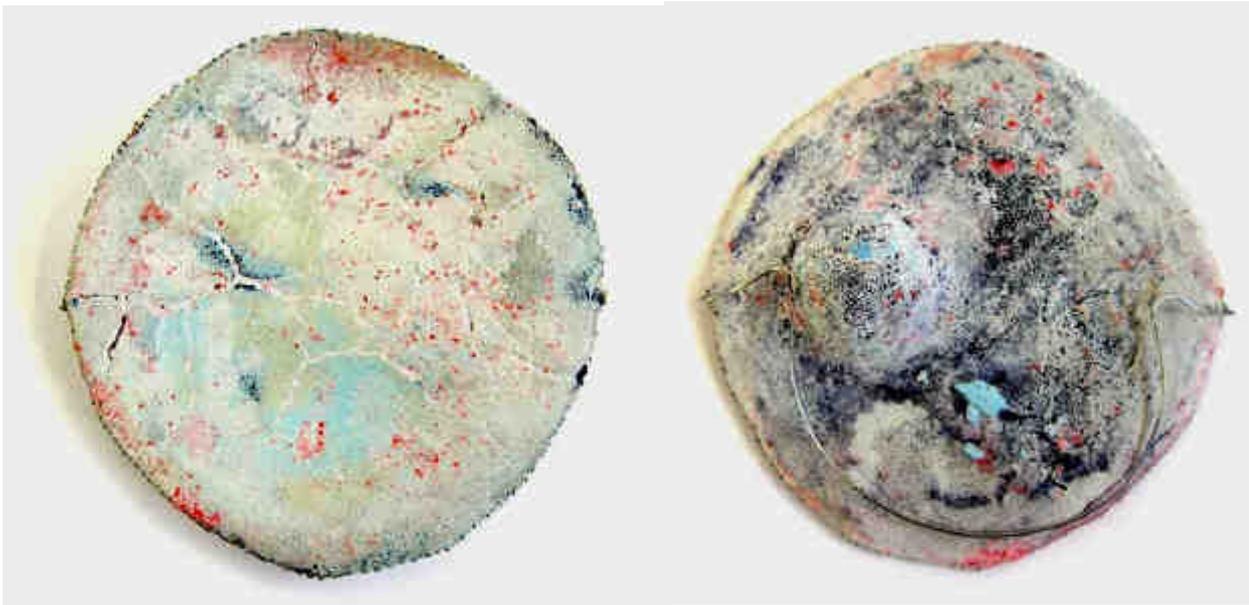
began to enamel panels using the full range of colours, working with opaques as well as transparent enamels. With more painterly concepts in mind, she depicted, domestic scenes, animals, and life in the English countryside. At this point she began exhibiting her work at the Peter Dingley gallery and has been showing her enamels galleries in England and abroad ever since. Latterly, Beryl and her husband spent twenty years living in rural Spain. This influenced her colour palette and designs, which are now bold and colourful, in contrast to the more gentle tones of her previous work. She continues to exhibit in several galleries in the UK; her enamels can be seen at the Alexander Gallery in Brighton, Primavera in Cambridge, Workshop Wales in Manoren, Fishguard, and Euston Rooms in Rye, East Sussex.



Ram by Beryl Turpin, ca 1973
Enamel on copper
28 x 18cm

New Graduate: Liana Pattihis

Having evolved her own style of enamelling right from the beginning, Liana Pattihis describes the processes involved in discovering her new techniques.



Kandinsky Reversible Brooch by Liana Pattihis
Copper mesh, silver, enamel, stainless steel
Diameter is 8cm

With the background of a first career as an interior designer, Liana Pattihis began her four year Jewellery Design course at Middlesex University with an open mind as to the kind of work she would make; at that point she had had no more to do with enamelling than to collect Chinese vases, including some cloisonné. In Liana's second year, Ros Conway, a tutor at Middlesex University, gave a one week introduction to enamelling, focusing on traditional jewellery methods. Although Liana found enamelling to be a beautiful and intriguing process she was a perfectionist by nature and felt frustrated that she was unable to get this method of enamelling quite right in the short period of time allocated. But when Elizabeth Turrell, a visiting lecturer, introduced the technique of sifting, Liana found that this was the area of enamelling that suited her.

Interested but not yet committed, it was a workshop with Bettina Dittlman, (see the Summer 2006 newsletter, pages 1,2, and 3), that opened up the way

of making jewellery that Liana wanted to pursue. Bettina brought in a bunch of fresh flowers as a point of reference and directed the students to reproduce organic forms using copper foil and enamel. There was a 'lightness and a sense of freedom' in Bettina's work which really intrigued Liana and inspired her to continue experimenting with fine copper mesh and enamel for the following six weeks. A particular feature of Bettina's own practice, where enamelling takes hours and hours and time flies quickly, also exerted a great appeal. The result of all the hard work was a display of 38 enamelling samples arranged as an Imaginary Necklace in a group exhibition 'Wear It?' at the Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture, in Hertfordshire, in May 2005.

Liana was not able to immediately begin developing her own approach to enamel because the third year of her course was devoted to work placement, and only in the final six weeks of her fourth year could enamelling become her main point of focus. This did

not cause a problem because Liana had approach in her work that enabled her to produce finished pieces in time for New Designers. Her main pre-occupation at this point was to make wearable jewellery. This meant developing ways of incorporating fixings for the pins on brooches that were simple to use and, at the same time, did not interfere in any way with the design. Although initial sources of inspiration guided Liana, for her the aim was not replication. Each piece was treated as a 'final' - what started out as an experiment kept on evolving until something satisfying was achieved. The possibility of failure was not considered; discovery was the goal. Although Liana kept detailed notes and

layers of copper mesh were put through a rolling mill, a different mesh surface was created that affected the texture and appearance of the enamelled surface and even the resulting colour. This accounts for the grey colour which is, in fact, black enamel. Sifting blue flux over the surface produced the variations in the



Mesh Link Necklace (detail) by Liana Pattihis
Copper mesh and enamel
Each link is 8 cm diameter; length of necklace is 128cm



The Grey Kandinsky Brooch by Liana Pattihis
Copper mesh and enamel
8 cm wide

grey. The layers of enamel were applied thinly in order to allow the texture of the mesh to show.

Also through experimentation, Liana found a way of producing thin sheets of enamel, which she refers to as 'leaves'. These she applies, using Klyr-fire, to a previously enamelled surface. The orange areas of the brooch were made by the use of such 'leaves'.

The 'Kandinsky Reversible Brooch' (see previous page) was inspired by the same painting. Here Liana applied layer after layer of enamel, sometimes brushing on the grains like watercolour on paper and sometimes using enamel 'leaves'. She doesn't know precisely what caused the distinctive cracks to appear on the surface. As it was a very complicated piece to make; one can only assume that the cracks were

photographic references, she had no intention to repeat any of her pieces. Of her approach, Liana says 'The appeal to me is that each is unique. The new discovery in one piece is the starting point for the next. This enables my work to progress.'

Continuing from her earlier experiments, for her final year's work Liana used two layers of copper mesh to create The Grey Kandinsky Brooch, (see above right) inspired by Wassily Kandinsky's painting 'Yellow, Red, and Blue' (1925). A layer of fine mesh was folded over the edges of a layer of medium mesh, with the two being bonded together to create a border. Through her experimenting Liana discovered that when two



Iris Stamens by Liana Pattihis
Copper, enamel, stainless steel
Length 23 cm

caused either by the thickness of the enamel or by shrinking or movement of the mesh.

After finishing the brooches, Liana began work on neckpieces. Initially she made two-dimensional, interlinked, circular mesh forms (see previous page, left). The necklace was then enamelled in its entirety (usually by sifting but at one point by rolling the necklace into dry enamel) and fired in the kiln in one piece, a complicated and difficult process. The results, however, were more interesting than if the links were enamelled separately because there was a uniformity in texture, colour and pattern in the finished item.

For another necklace, Liana made links by twisting silver wire and then covering parts of the necklace with copper mesh. When the enamel was fired on to this piece, it appeared to her as if the whole surface of the necklace had once been covered in mesh, and that somehow the mesh had rusted and fallen off to reveal, in places, the silver underneath. This was a turning point. From then on Liana's interest switched to being concerned with what was under the enamel and she began work on a series of pieces entitled 'Hidden Treasure'.

The first of these was made from 6.5 metres of continuous silver Snake Chain, which was twisted and covered in places with copper wire until it was reduced in length to 1.2 metres. It was then enamelled in its entirety. Other necklaces followed, starting from different lengths of

continuous Snake Chain as she tried to see how much silver she could hide under the enamel.

Following her Hidden Treasure series, Liana addressed the fact that her enamelling had an earthy quality that caused her neckpieces look as if they were made of stones. In particular, before they were enamelled, the necklaces reminded her of the appearance of excavated jewellery, dug up during the explorations of Heinrich Schliemann and pictured in the book 'The Gold of Troy: Searching for Homer's Fabled City' by Vladimir Tolstikov and Mikhail Treister. This inspired another series of necklaces, entitled 'Unearthed'. Here, Liana reproduced the necklaces from Troy, but then covered them with enamel so that they would look as if they had just come out of the ground.

In her final six weeks of her course at Middlesex, Liana created 25 pieces, fourteen of which were exhibited at New Designers in July. They attracted a great deal of interest, with Galerie Marzee choosing to take nearly all of her brooches, as well as some of the necklaces, for the International Graduation Show 2007, at their gallery in Nijmegen in the Netherlands. Eight of her

pieces were sent to Studio Fusion in London which will be part of their exhibition Rising Stars.

Before graduation, Liana had already set up an enamelling studio in her home, and will, after New Designers, immediately begin to produce new work.
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Hidden Treasure Necklace 4 (detail) by Liana Pattihis
Silver, copper mesh, enamel
Total length of necklace is 122cm

Everyone is welcome to submit articles, information and letters to this newsletters at any time. Due dates for the spring, summer, autumn and winter issues the middle of February, May, August and November respectively.

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