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"THE ENAMELLER AS PAINTER" - Pictorial Images in Enamelled Jewellery and Metalwork from the Arts and Crafts Revival to the Present Day

BY

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INTRODUCTION

My thesis is intended to give an insight into the art of pictorial images in enamelled jewellery and metalwork. The use of enamel as a medium is a fascinating subject, the various techniques creating different results yet each having a delicate, fragile appearance, for example, the technique of plique à jour resembles stained glass while finely worked cloisonné and Limoges enamelwork resembles an oil painting or illustration.

I have chosen to discuss the Arts and Crafts period, and the late twentieth century from the 1970s to the 1990s in particular. These two periods are important to me in the history of enamelwork because artists in the Craft Revival movement experimented greatly with techniques and images. Phoebe Traquair's mystical cloisonné jewellery illustrates a strong religious preoccupation while Alexander Fisher's and the Dawsons' love of organic forms are typical of this period. The enamelwork of this time has a rich quality regarding its style. Its colours are vibrant yet subtle, but above all, its narrative content is its strongest point. These miniature paintings of fused glass powder have a powerful aesthetic quality of their own.

The enamelwork of the late twentieth century is just as usually exciting as that of the early 20th century Craft Revival period. There are similar qualities which connect the enamelwork of these two periods, such as the revived interest in nature as a theme for pictorial work, the strong use of

colour, the use of the same techniques such as cloisonne, Limoges, and plique a jour, and their narrative content. Modern day contemporaries include Colette, an American enamellist, who paints her dreams and fantasies in miniature jewellery pieces using the cloisonne technique. Fred Rich also has a love of vibrant colour and uses animal and organic forms as themes, and Alexandra Raphael similarly uses nature as a narrative theme in her work.

There are a number of reasons why I have chosen this topic to research. The narrative theme of these artists has intrigued me as has the fragile delicate appearance of the medium and the permanent use of colour incorporated into metalwork and jewellery. Perhaps it is also the fact that metalworkers can achieve aesthetic pleasure through pictorial subject matter in a fine art manner through the use of enamels, which is traditionally a craftworkers medium, and that through the art of pictorial enamelling, jewellery and metalwork can transcend the traditional category of "craft" into the realm of fine art.

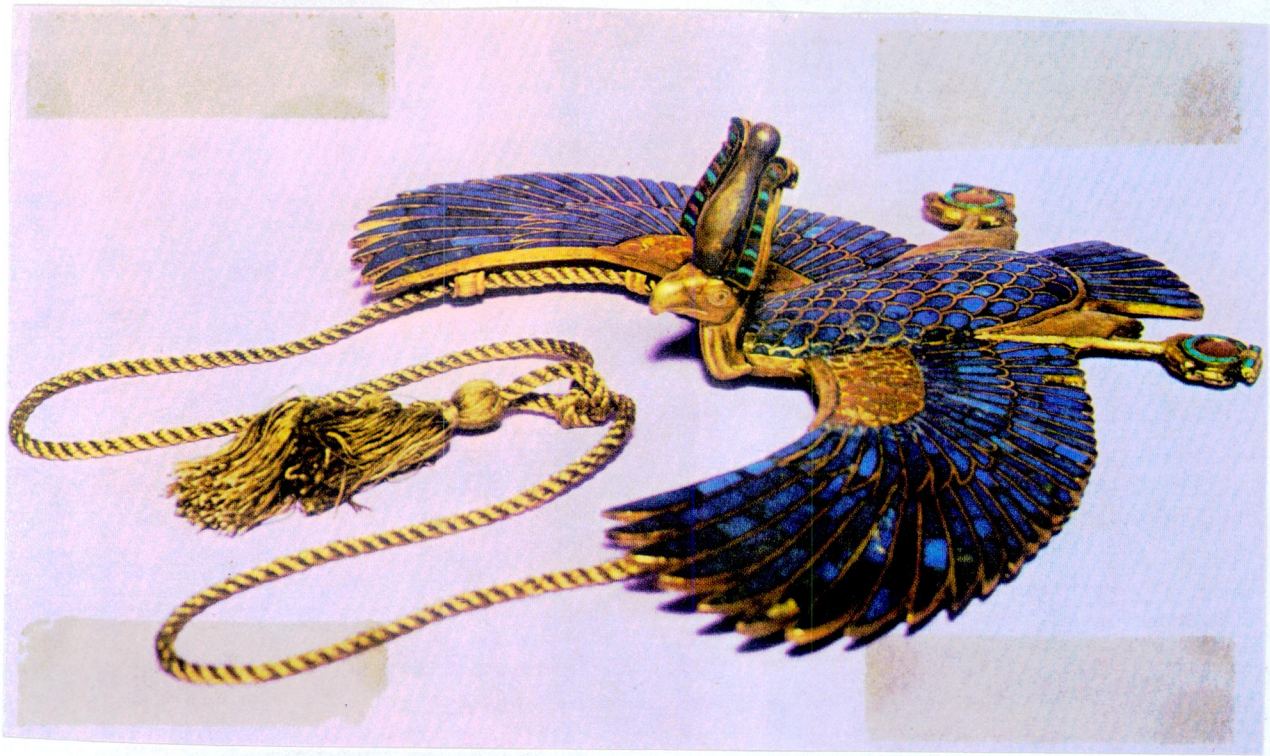
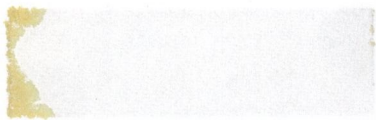


Fig. 1 Pendant of Tutankamun in the form of a vulture, from Thebes 18th Dynasty (c. 1336-1327 B.C.)

Fig. 2 Vulture Pectoral of Tutankamun representing Nekhebet, from Thebes 18th Dynasty (c. 1336-1327 B.C.)



CHAPTER 1

A Brief History of Enamelling from its origins to the Arts and Crafts Revival Period

Enamelling is the process of applying coloured powdered glass to metal, namely gold, silver, copper and bronze and is an ancient art form used in the decoration of metalwork and jewellery. Its genesis is lost in the ancient records of early civilisation so it is not known exactly when this technique was first used. Gold ornaments have been found in ancient Egyptian tombs which are decorated with fused glass panels enclosed in strips of gold. An example of this is a pectoral in the form of a vulture which was worn by Tut-Ankh-Amun, made of gold and inlaid with blue, red and green fused glass presenting the feathers and wings of the bird.[1] (Fig. 1) But is this an example of the origins of enamelling or did the Egyptians cast glass stones, and set them in the same way as semi-precious stones? Archaeologists have not agreed over this.

From the time of the new kingdom in ancient Egypt c. 1559-1085 B.C., inlays in metal jewellery which were originally formed from precious and semi-precious stones were now being made from glass. (Fig. 2) In Tutankhamen's burial jewellery, many of the stone inlays which appear to be turquoise, jasper and lapis lazuli are actually glass, coloured to imitate these semi-precious stones.

From using glass as an inlay within metal cells to using the enamelling technique seems a small progression, however there seems to be no definite evidence of enamelling in Egypt before the late period i.e. 1300 B.C.[2] The technique of enamelling was used elsewhere in the ancient world as early as the mid-second millennium B.C. where enamel first appeared in the Middle East. This was a period when glass production technology came into full spate. The earliest use of enamelling appears in Mycenaean metalwork from about the 14th century B.C. where a basic form of the champleve enamelling technique was used in some gold jewellery.[3] By the twelfth century B.C., filigree enamelling, a simpler form of the cloisonne technique was used in Cyprus[4] and examples of rings were found to have a form of openwork enamel used as decoration. At the same time in Egypt, enamels and glass inlaying in jewellery was being replaced by semi-precious stones, and enamelling on the whole declined in use during this time.

It reappeared in the Southern Mediterranean region during the early centuries of the first millennium B.C., an example of a jewellery piece being an enamelled diadem from North West Persia of the seventh and eighth centuries.[5] This example is in filigree enamel and this technique continued to be the most popular until Roman times. In the fifth century B.C., filigree enamelwork can be found in jewellery from Southern Russia, Greece, Cyprus and Italy, and example have been found in Northern Europe at this time. It is thought that the Phoenician traders were involved in spreading this technique from Western Asia to the Mediterranean region of Europe.[6]

In the Roman civilisation c. 3rd century B.C., filigree enamels are uncommon in gold jewellery but were used in limited areas of the Empire such as Egypt and Britain, where the Greek craft tradition was still popular. In Europe during this time enamelled bronze items and jewellery were quite popular. It is widely known that the Greeks and Romans were masters of the craft of enamelling. Although the Greeks often used the filigree enamel technique, the Romans used a different method of champleve; this technique was used to a great extent in Romano-Celtic bronze ornaments, principally brooches. These brooches were attractively set with brightly coloured enamels, many of them patterned in mosaics similar to contemporary glass vessels of that time.

In the first century B.C., evidence of cloisonné enamelwork was found in Nubia, having probably originated in Egypt.[7] This technique would later dominate the pictorial enamelwork of the Byzantine era exclusively. This technique is quite similar to the filigree enamels of the ancient Greeks. Cloisonne enamels were predominantly used in Byzantine metalwork, although relief enamelwork was also used, which consisted of repoussé metal reliefs whose surfaces are covered with a thin layer of enamel.

The beginnings of Byzantine enamels are obscure as, from the period 726-842 A.D., innumerable works of art connected with the church were destroyed.[8] As in so many branches of early Byzantine art, only a few fragments of enamelwork have survived. Most of the surviving enamelled

Fig. 3 School of Byzantum 11th Century, Gold Plaque with cloisonne enamel figures of Christ enthroned between Mary and St. John. Vatican Museum, Rome

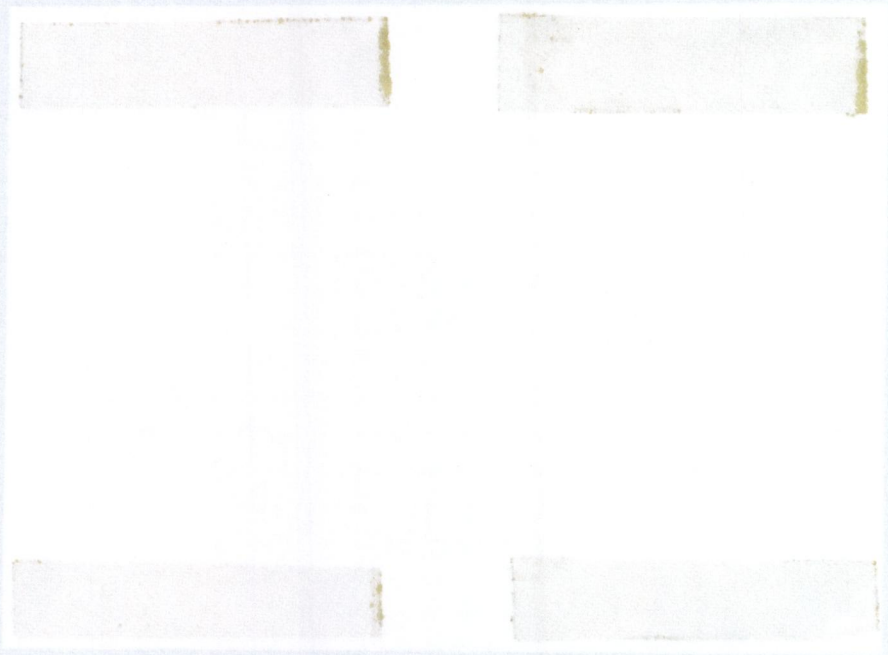


Fig. 4 Byzantine art, 12th century, Bookbinding in silver gilt, gems and cloisonne enamels. Biblioteca Marciana, Venice

relics of the late Byzantine period were made and used for ecclesiastical purposes. (Fig. 3) As time went on, independent metalworking and enamelling workshops sprang up all over Southern Europe within the Byzantine sphere of influence, for example, in Georgia, in the Sicilian court of the Normans and in Venice. (Fig. 4)

The enamelwork of the early middle ages was used as containers for relics, icons and as decorative triptychs commissioned and used by various religious orders of the Church of Rome. Up until the fifteenth century, enamel was used as an inlay, and it functioned as a colour coating, the cloisonne technique often making up two-dimensional pictures or images, with the metal cell wires making the outline of the image.

In the fourteenth century translucent enamel was laid over chased metal, worked in relief, the intensity of the colour increasing with the thickness of the enamel layer, so that even monochrome panels could produce the effect of a painting. After the end of the fifteenth century, coloured enamels were replaced with painted enamels. The metal of each plate was covered with a layer of white opaque enamel and, after firing, the painter drew figures or images in different colours of enamel which had been ground to the finest powder and mixed with gum.

These painted enamels had to be fired many times, starting with the darkest colours and working up to the lightest. Silver and gold foils were also used

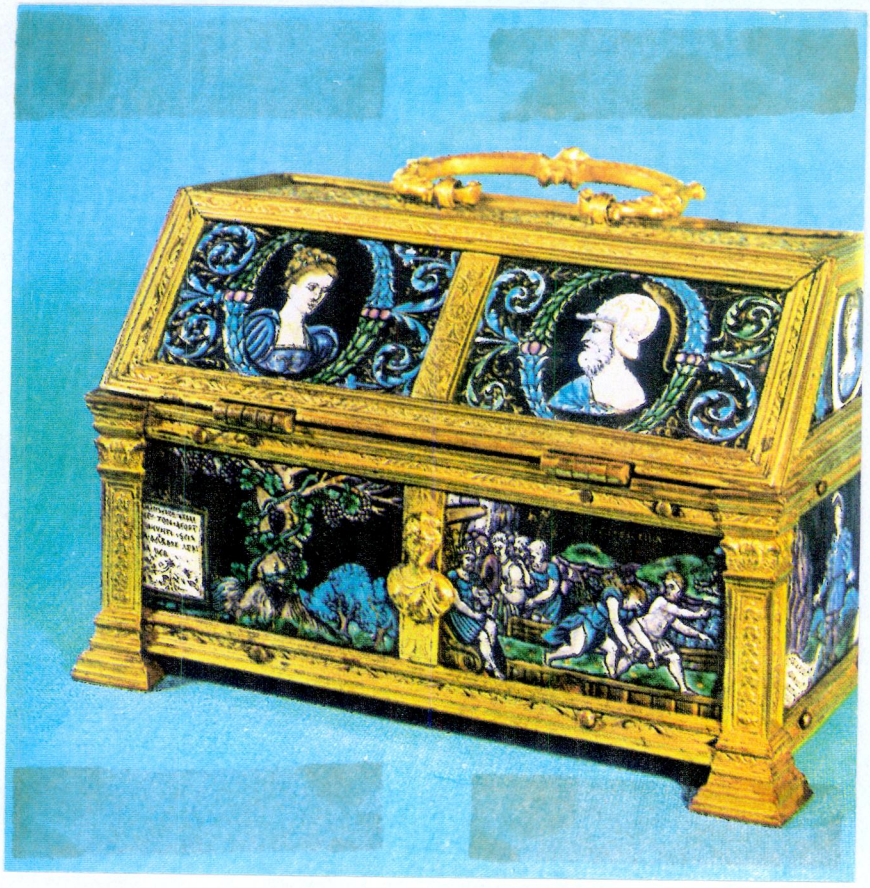
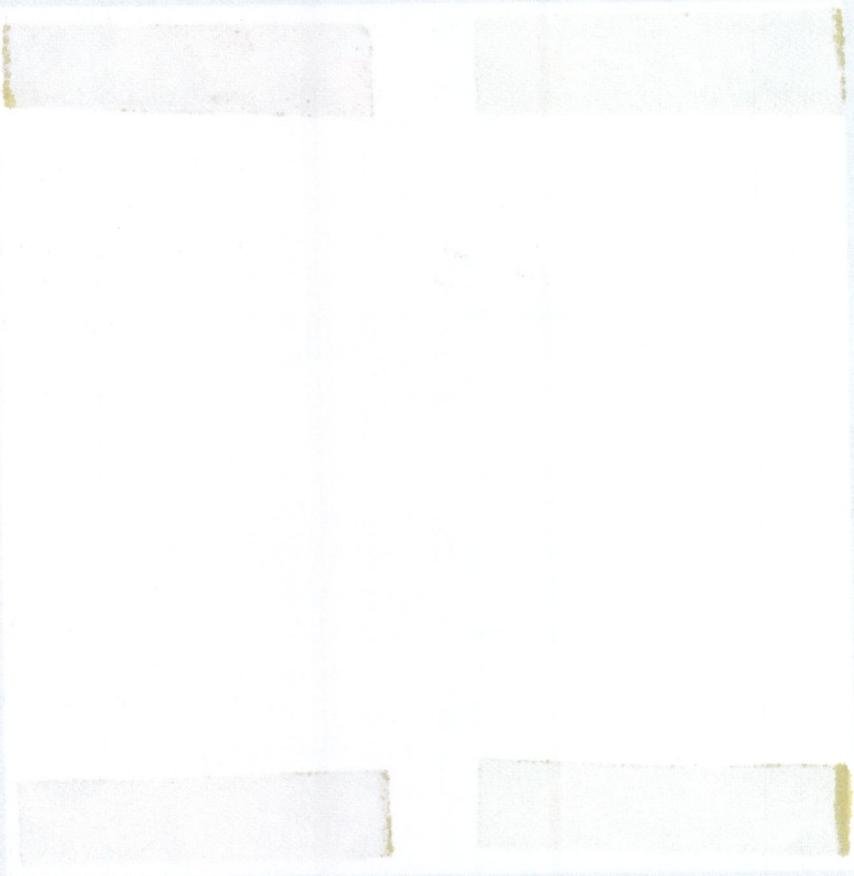


Fig. 5 Limoges School 16th Century, Gilt Bronze and Enamelled Casket, Bargello Museum, Florence



in this enamel technique to create brilliant hues which shimmered under light. This technique was called Limoges after the town in France, where painted enamels developed from the middle of the eighth century A.D. until the second half of the seventeenth century. The name Limoges as applied to enamels is used to explain the specific development which occurred during the Renaissance period.[9] Limoges enamelling was popular in most precious jewellery of Western European courts from the 1600s. (Fig. 5) Enamels were also applied to small cast jewellery pieces and statuettes in the round, but this technique had many problems, according to the shape and size of the piece, and the relief of the shapes on to which the enamel was to be fused, which tended to slide off during firing. Therefore it was necessary to apply the enamel paste only partially and in successive stages, depending on how intricate the design was.

In the mid-seventeenth century the technique of painting with enamels changed to painting on enamel. In this technique, various colours are applied simultaneously on a base of white enamel. This technique is very similar to that of porcelain painting. The small miniature paintings in pendants, brooches and other jewellery pieces of this time are common examples of this technique.

The decline in enamel art was due to various circumstances, such as changes in public tastes, and different production techniques which cased the termination of ancient guild and apprenticeship systems. This, in turn,

meant the end of the old personal relationship between the craftsman and his apprentice, which was one of the fundamentals of the craft.

Although enamelling as an art form still existed to an extent in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, it was merely used as a means of colour decoration, as in the Fabergé eggs commissioned for the Tzar's court in Russia in the late nineteenth century. It was not until the Arts and Crafts Revival during the 1890s that the medium of enamelling on metal with its various techniques returned to fashion and was used, not as a means of pure colour decoration, but as a means of pictorial narrative expression, the use of the medium being as important as the precious stones and metal into which it was incorporated.

CHAPTER 1

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CHAPTER 2

The Enamellers of the Arts and Crafts Revival Period

The Arts and Crafts movement in England started towards the end of the 19th century, as a reaction against the rise of mass produced items caused by the Industrial Revolution. New techniques in jewellery and metalworking such as stamping and pressing metal, machine milling and electroplating had been gradually introduced into the larger metalwork and jewellery studios during the mid 19th century. One statement from the Arts and Crafts movement in jewellery and metalwork design was that an object or piece should be created entirely by one craftsman from the initial drawing to the finished piece. This rule could not always ben adhered to however. In theory the statement sounds ideal, but most of the metalwork designers were too inexperienced in some techniques of metal production, so work was usually handed over to an assistant or another craftsman to finish. Examples of this shared work are the partnerships of Arthur and Georgina Gaskin and Nelson and Edith Dawson, where one was the jeweller/designer while the other was the enameller.

Arts and Crafts jewellery was usually in the guise of necklaces, pendants, brooches and belt buckles. These jewellery items were highly fashionable at this time, and were in demand by the public. Rings and bracelets were also made but to a far lesser extent. Earrings were very rarely produced as

they were not in fashion at this time. In enamelled jewellery, pendants and necklaces were usually designed around enamel panels with a decorative framework surrounding them. Enamelled metalwork such as plaques, caskets and triptychs were usually executed in the same manner.

A number of influences were responsible for the style and form of Arts and Crafts metalwork. A revived interest in the medieval approach to metalwork as well as the natural themes of animal and plant motifs, myths, fables and historical stories were all used as sources of imagery. Also the new interest in Japanese art played a major role in the influence of many craftsmen. Because Japan was isolated from outside Western influence for centuries, the art and design of Japan remained a mystery in Europe until the mid-nineteenth century. New agreements in trading between Europe and Japan opened an influx of Japanese art into the West, which was exhibited widely in Europe such as at the exhibition of the Old Watercolour Society in London in 1854. The simplicity of Japanese woodcuts and prints and their close affinity to nature impressed many designers and craftspeople of the time.

> Simplicity was the keynote to all Japanese design; an economy of line perfectly spaced and proportioned asymmetrical compositions that did not overpower the main outlines, and just one carefully observed detail of a leaf, a flower, a bird; these were the elements needed to create the atmosphere and beauty that captivated the West.[1]

Enamelling became one of the most popular elements in Arts and Crafts jewellery and metalwork. This was due to current aesthetic interest in

portraying colour and image in metalwork design. Various enamelling techniques were used, the most popular being cloisonne, champleve and Limoges. These were the long standing traditional enamelling techniques used throughout history, and because of the revived interest in medieval metalwork techniques, it was fitting to reintroduce these into metalwork design of the period. Plique a jour enamelling was less often used as part of the Arts and Crafts tradition but would later dominate the majority of enamelwork in Art Nouveau metalwork and jewellery, particularly the jewellery of the French designer Rene Lalique. Although plique a jour enamelling is an old enamelling technique, it never became popular in the Arts and Crafts movement, perhaps because it is more fragile in appearance and execution than the other enamelling techniques.

Many enamellers of the Arts and Crafts period were self-taught and often they helped and taught each other. The foremost master enameller of this time was no doubt Alexander Fisher who taught many other craftspeople and jewellers. Other craft designers of this time who used the medium to create exceptional pictorial panels in both jewellery and metalwork were the Gaskins, Phoebe Ann Traquair and Nelson and Edith Dawson.

Alexander Fisher (1864-1936) is perhaps the most important Arts and Crafts enameller as his work and teachings influenced many other craftspeople of his time, such as the Dawsons and the Gaskins. Fisher became interested in the various techniques of enamelling after he attended a series of lectures

by the French enamelling expert Louis Dalpayrat in London in 1886. Previous to this, the enamelling of pictorial images was not practised in English metalwork of the 19th century when the medium was used solely as a means of colour decoration. Fisher studied the art of enamelling in Paris and later set up a school of enamelling in his Warwick Gardens studio in London, where he taught the art to the other eager enthusiasts, including private lessons to Nelson Dawson. Jewellery by Fisher is rare as he is famed for his boxes, caskets, and triptychs, all of which contain intricately designed enamel panels of the highest quality. His enamelwork appears complicated, often using both the cloisonne and Limoges techniques in a single enamelled panel.

Fisher wrote extensively about the art of enamelling in various issues of The Studio magazine, the influential arts periodical established at the end of the 19th century. In Volume 28 of The Studio, dated 1903, Fisher wrote about the art of painted enamels. The following passage from Fisher in this issue sums up the artists love and obsession with the medium:

> The high quality of enamel as differentiating it from all other substances employed in the arts, is the great power of its unrivalled colour and the unlimited variety of its qualities. All the bewildering surfaces, all the depths and loveliness that lie darkly in the waters of sea caves, all the glistening lustre of gleaming gold or silver back and fin of fish, the velvet of the purple sea anemone, the jewelled brilliance of sunshine on snow, the hardness greater than that of marble, the flame of sunset, indeed the very embodiment in colour of the intensity of beauty - these are at hand waiting for expression in enamel.[2]

Fig. 6 The Virgin and the Doves, enamel panel designed and executed by Alexander Fisher (1913)

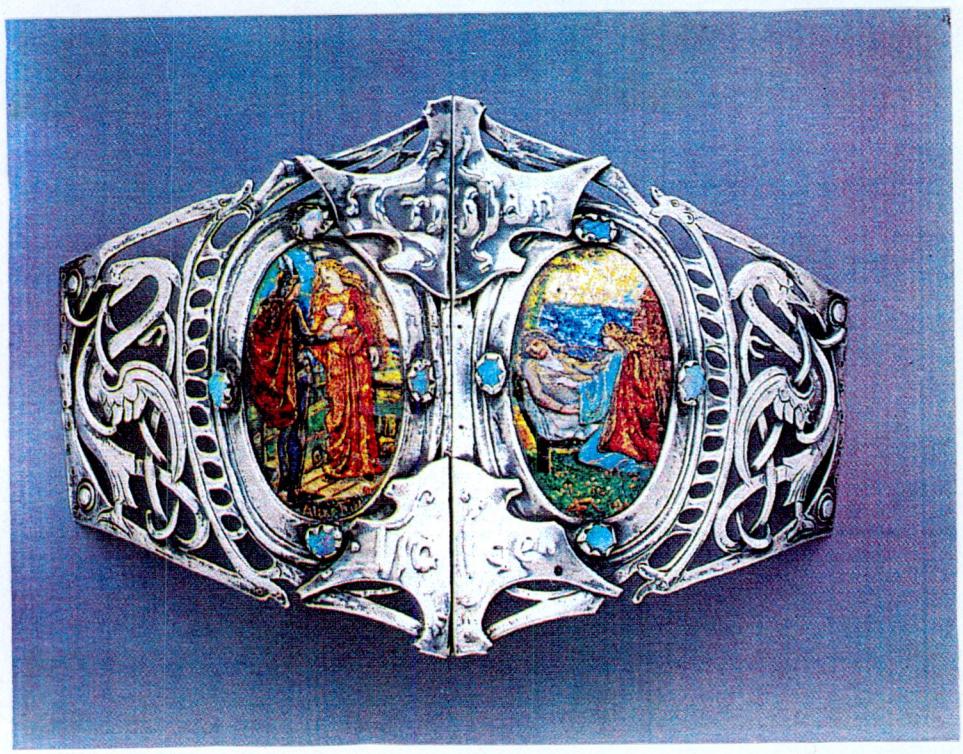


Fig. 7 Tristan and Isolde, enamelled belt buckle, Alexander Fisher (1896)

Fisher made the greatest possible use of enamel in his work, using various shades of both transparent and opaque colours with gold foil to create pictures of a dreamlike quality with both depth and movement. The majority of Fisher's pictorial enamels were figurative, many with an historical and ecclesiastical appearance, such as The Virgin and the Doves, (Fig. 6) a panel designed and produced by Fisher in 1913, depicting a woman in blue clothing with four doves surrounding her upper torso and executed in the Limoges technique. Fisher achieves a great sense of perspective in the figure through the folds and pleats of her garment. In this panel the background is obscure and does not seem as important as the figure, which is the main focus of attention to the viewer.

Another of Fisher's pieces, The Wagner Girdle, an enamelled belt now in the possession of The Victoria and Albert Museum, depicts the legend of Tristan and Isolde from the famed Wagner opera, which he executed for Lady Horniman in painted enamels in pre-Raphaelite style. The enamel panels are set in steel mounts pierced with Celtic zoomorphic designs. Another enamel belt buckle, (Fig. 7) dated 1896, is clearly related to The Wagner Girdle and may have been made previously to it.[3] It also depicts scenes from the Tristan and Isolde legend, the two pictorial enamel panels set in silver with opal settings. The metal clasp has pierced celtic knotwork designs depicting stylised griffins and foliage, and the words 'Tristan and Isolde' can be seen in repousse on the top and lower halves of the buckle.

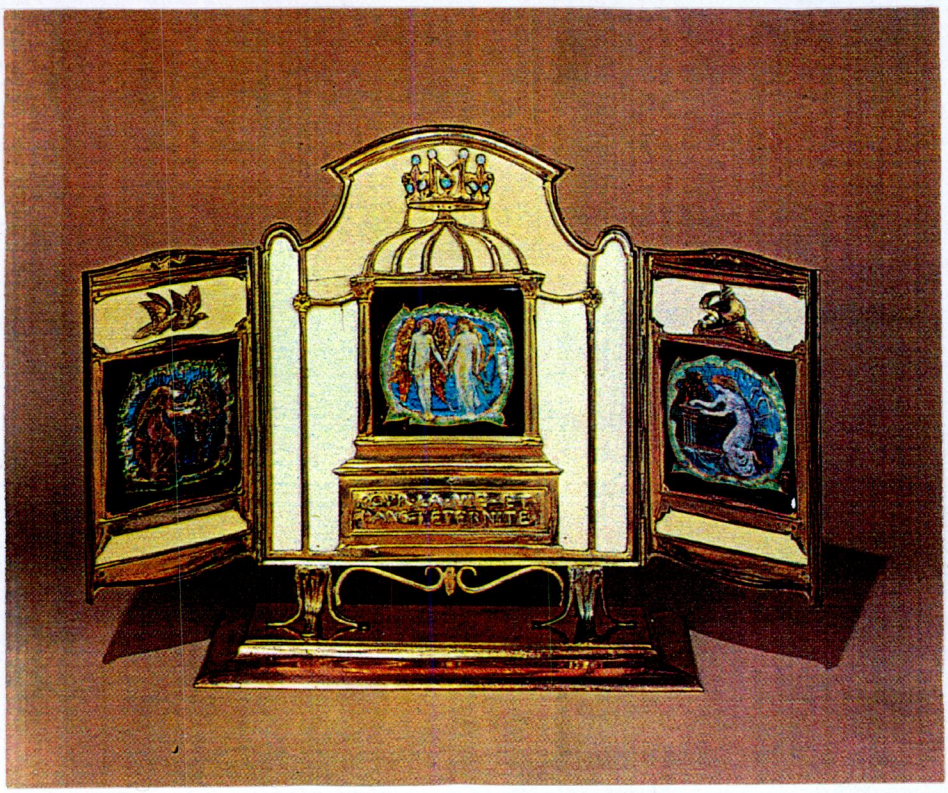
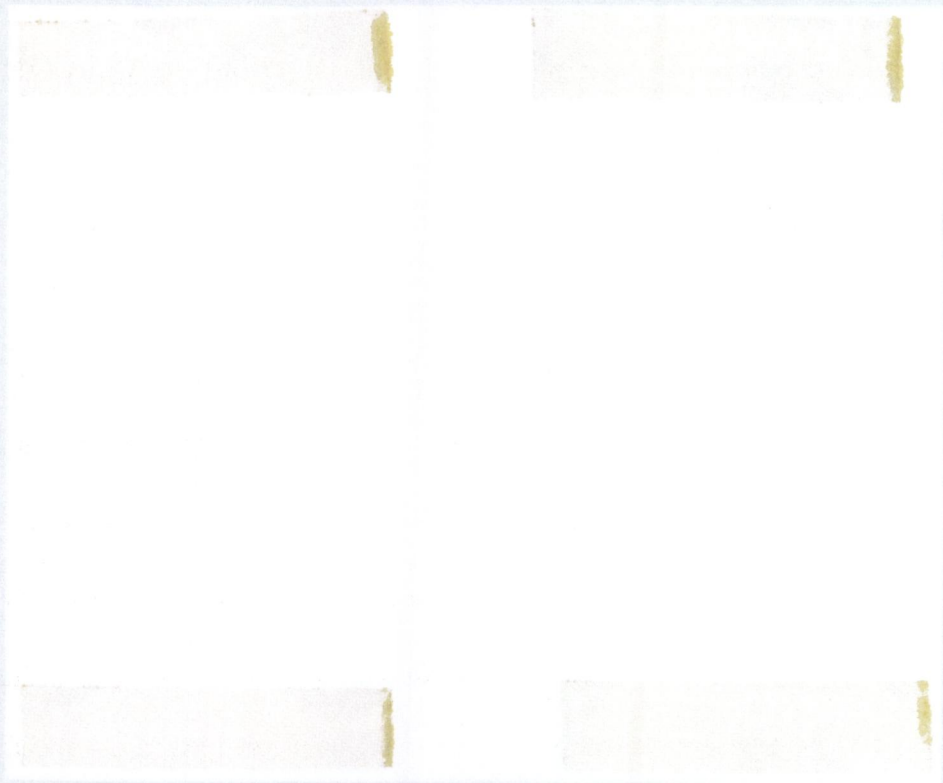


Fig. 8 Pour La vie et dans l'Eternite, triptych, silver gilt and ivory set with opals set on bronze base, Alexander Fisher (c. 1904)



Fisher stressed strongly to his pupils that the technique of enamelling was an excellent medium for ecclesiastical metalwork and that the process of enamelling was very fitting for decorative caskets and triptychs. This is because enamelling is a permanent medium both for colour and for image techniques. Fisher produced a number of Limoges portraits commissioned by various patrons. His triptych, entitled Pour la vie et dans l'eternite (Fig. 8) is typical of his excellent level of artistic craftsmanship. This copper gilt and enamelled piece contains pictorial panels symbolising knowledge, life and the unity of man and woman. The use of gold foil and the contrast between opaque and transparent enamels can clearly be seen.

Phoebe Anna Traquair (1852-1936) could be described as the female equal of Alexander Fisher. Her enamelwork is very reminiscent of Fisher's as she was taught by Lady Gibson Carmichael, who studied the art of enamelling under Fisher in the 1890s. In researching Traquair's work I have to acknowledge Dr Elisabeth Cummings for her catalogue on Phoebe Anna Traquair 1852-1936, as there is little information otherwise on the life and work of Traquair.

Traquair was born and educated in Ireland but lived and worked in Edinburgh for most of her life. Traquair is famed for her enamelwork but she was also a renowned illustrator, painter, bookbinder and embroiderer.

Traquair studied the art of enamelling after she was married and had raised

Fig. 9 Altar Cross, brass cross with six enamelled copper plaques, 50 cms, Phoebe Traquair, (1901)

her family. Her earliest enamels had an ecclesiastical theme such as the Altar Cross (Fig. 9) made in 1901, executed by herself and Lady Carmichael and purchased by the de Vesci family. It consists of six figurative enamel panels set into a Celtic Cross 50 cms high, made by a J. M. Talbot. The panels, depicting various aspects of the Life of Christ, were produced using strong colours of blues, greens, reds and white,with gold lines to highlight and outline the figures. This colour theme would later reappear in most of Traquair's enamel panels. Her son, Ramsay, often worked with her, designing settings for her enamelled panels. They researched medieval metalwork techniques for various forms to suit her designs and enamels.

Traquair believed that decorative art should unite the past with the present, and be a mixture of realism and symbolism. To achieve this, she claimed that work should bear a moral message. She was a great admirer of the pre-Raphaelite artists, Rosseti and Burne-Jones and the colours and primitive style of Fra Angelico. Because of this, she studied early Italian paintings,manuscripts and metalwork. The beautiful intense colours that could be achieved in enamel fascinated her and after experimenting in the medium during the year 1901, they began to dominate her work.

Traquair designed and executed pictorial enamel panels which could be bezel set into pendants, necklaces, caskets and triptych's. She quickly established a colour pattern in her landscape enamel panels, using recurring colours for her back, mid and foregrounds. The sky was a mixture of yellow, gold and

Fig. 10 Denys Casket, copper, gilt casket set with 12 enamel plaques (19.5 x 16.4 x 8 cm), Phoebe Traquair, (c. 1906)

Triptych: *The Red Cross Knight,*

Fig. 11 Red Cross Knight, triptych, enamel on copper, set in an electroplated frame, the waist of stem set with eight enamel cabochons (26.5 cm), Phoebe Traquair, (1906)

amber for the rising or setting sun, while the top of the sky was ultramarine blue; the mid and foregrounds were green, symbolising the earth, dotted with miniature red flowers outlined in gold. Gold foil was added to the layers of enamel flux to highlight colours.

Traquair's work, although always pictorial in content, was not always obviously religious in appearance, as in her Ten Virgins casket, depicting one of Jesus Christ's parables which he preached to his disciples. Other themes for her work derived from various myths and legends, such as that of Cupid and Psyche, the legend of King Arthur, and Walter Pater's story of Denys l'Auxerre in his book Imaginary Portraits.

Traquair's Denys Casket (Fig. 10) was designed and made around the year 1906 for her brother William, for whom she had executed two earlier triptychs, The Red Cross Knight, (Fig. 11) (c. 1904-14) and St Patrick (c. 1906).[4] The casket of copper gilt is set with twelve enamel panels with gold foil in the Limoges technique, with a fixed bar handle set with moonstones at either end. It measures 19.5 x 16.4 x 8 cms. The casket is supported on four cast satyrs which act as legs for the casket. The title "The Story of Dennis de Auxerre", is engraved on the lid. The scenes on the casket, like her Ten Virgins Casket, are read from left to right. Traquair presented the casket to her brother along with a handwritten summary of the scenes depicted on the enamel panels.

Begin right end panel/Denis (the promethian) [sic] fire)/enters the world a rainbow/at the back behind the earth/clad in a leopard skin, panpipes/the vine for wine behind him, a/satyr child on his shoulder/a stream springs at his feet.

Right hand front panel/Denis selling his rich wares to/mankind, one stretches out a hand/for his satyr child holds up a rabbit/beside him is a tamed lion/he sits under his vine/peacock/fruits in panel in lid above/an angel dances with a satyr.

Left hand front panel/Denis finds new notes on the/organ two lovers kiss beside him/building goes on behind/two figures/examine his wine, religion (the monk) and the satyr dance together/above on the lid an angel and/satyr make music.

Left hand end panel/the triumph of Denis, humanity/has recovered and delights in him/on the lid God sends down/an angel with divine fire/

Right hand back panel/after getting all they can, humanity/turns against Denis, who escaped/for the meantime into a monastery/the child satyr hiding the/petticoats of a monk on the lid/the angel and satyr still play.

Left hand back panel/Denis is torn to bits even the/Church turned against him, but/he lies full of peace, the human/fury may kill but can't injure/his satyr child lies with him/the priests even jeer at his death/and point to his true and burning/heart - above on the/lid his soul is carried to/heaven -

The idea is taken from Walter/Pater's story - but not strictly kept to. However I believe I/have the spirit of it both/the Denis story and also in/Apollo in Pichardy [sic].[5]

The coloured enamelled panels were carefully executed to tone in with the copper gilt casket. The theme in the Denys Casket is closely related to her previously embroidered panels entitled The Denys Series (1895-1902). These embroidered panels (180.7 x 71.2 cms x 2), (184.7 x 74.9 cms x 2) represent in a symbolic way the four stages of man:

Fig. 12 The Passing of Arthur, enamel on copper set in an electroplated frame and stand, the centre of which bears three enamel cabochons (height 22.2 cms), Phoebe Traquair, (1908)

Fig. 13 Collection of enamel jewellery, Phoebe Traquair, Fine Art Society, London

1. Hope, enthusiasm with innocence and ignorance.
2. The destruction of all that is cherished and dear by evil.
3. Frustration, despair and disillusionment.
4. Ultimate salvation by higher powers than mortal.

These four stages are also inspired by the story of Denis de Auxerre in Walter Pater's book Imaginary Portraits.

Other triptychs that Traquair produced were The Passing of Arthur (Fig. 12) (c. 1908) (22.2 cms) depicting the life of the medieval king. This is one of Traquair's finest enamelled triptychs, inspired by Tennyson's Idylls of the King, a narrative epic poem based on the legendary king. This triptych was exhibited with the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, London in 1910.[6] The Red Cross Knight (c. 1905) (27.6 cms), depicting images taken from Edward Spenser's poem The Faerie Queene, was mounted in a frame and stand designed by her son Ramsay and made by J. M. Talbot, it was exhibited in London in 1906 at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. Another triptych entitled St Patrick (1906) (27 cms) depicts various aspects of the Saint's life; the vision of Patrick, Saint Patrick's Blessing and The Abduction of Patrick and his Arrival in Ireland, and was made as a companion piece to The Red Cross Knight triptych which she made one year previously. Traquair's enamel jewellery depicts various themes from the legend of Cupid and fragile winged angels playing musical instruments. (Fig. 13)

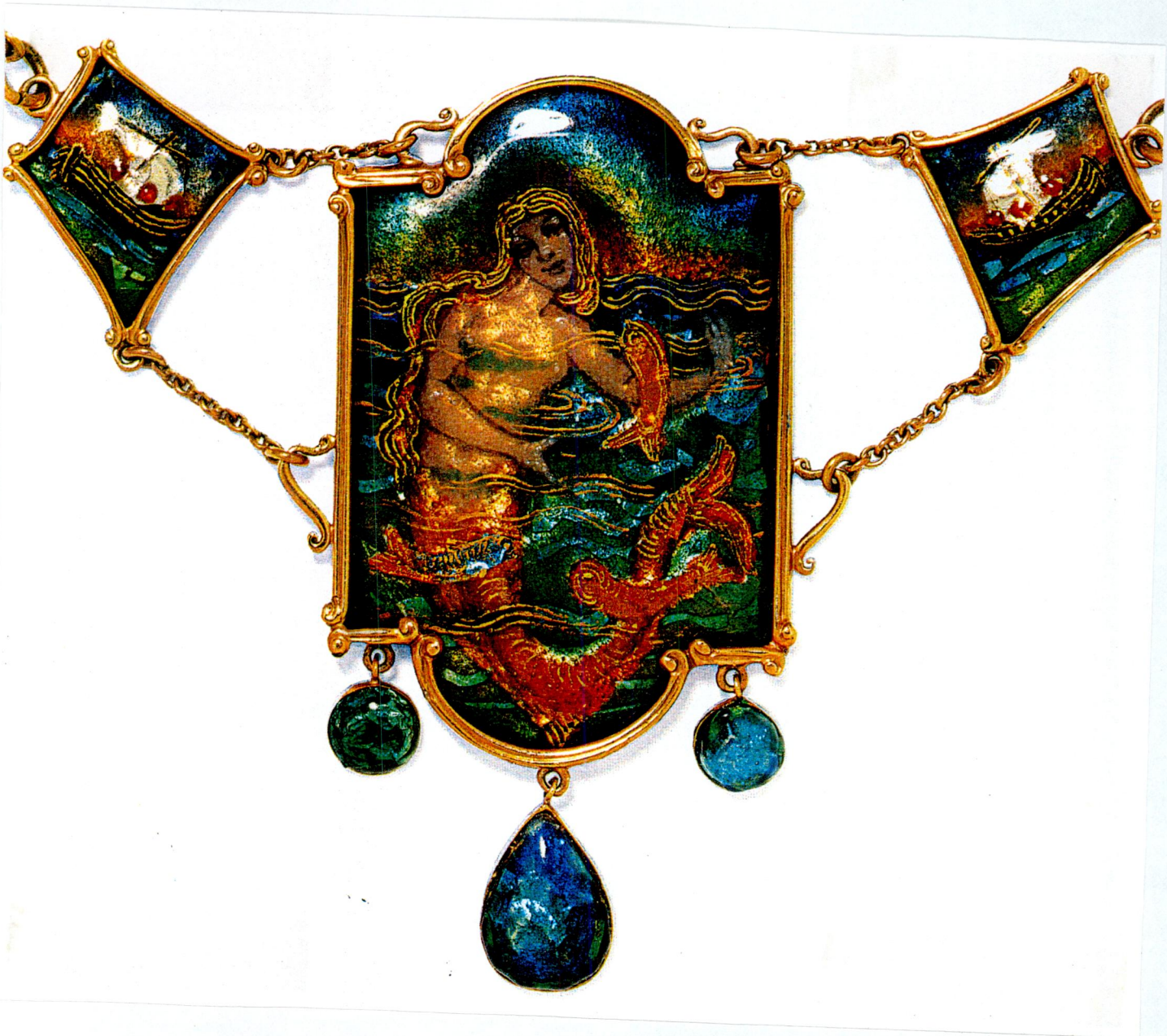


Fig. 14 The Mermaid, necklace, central plaque (4.9 x 3.3 cms), Phoebe Traquair, (1905)

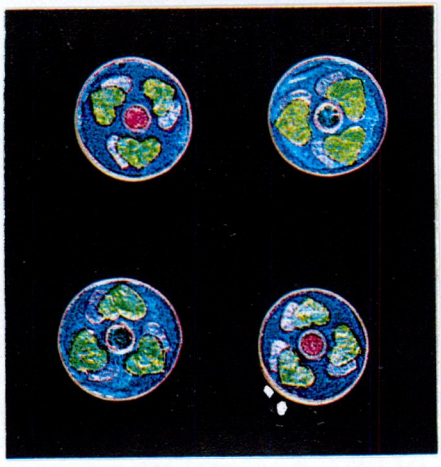
Fig. 15 Enamelled Pendant, Iris Design, silver, Nelson and Edith Dawson

Fig. 16 Enamelled Pendant, Rose Design, silver, Nelson and Edith Dawson

Traquair, through her art and skills in enamelling, painting and illustration gained the highest respect from fellow craftspeople, patrons and art critics alike. The art critic James L. Caw wrote about Traquair's work in The Art Journal in 1900:

> Her art is the spontaneous efflorescence of her imagination, her religion, and her love of beauty, and these are of no common order. So that despite defects of technique and drawing, her work possesses the elusive yet abiding elements of charm and the indefinable yet authentic marks of a noble passion and an exalted inspiration.[7]

Two married couples who are renowned for their enamelwork and jewellery are the Dawson's and the Gaskins. Nelson Dawson (1859-1942) learned enamelling from the established teacher Alexander Fisher around 1891, and later taught the technique to his wife Edith. They set up a jewellery studio in Chiswick producing silverwork and jewellery. With Edith Dawson's colour sense, she later took over the entire production of enamelling in their work. Edith excelled at this art because she was a perfectionist in her work. They both experimented with various types and techniques of enamel and searched for different colours which would be adequate for their designs. They used cloisonné, champlevé, and the Limoges techniques in their work. They agreed that the use of transparent enamels would work best for their needs as it creates a jewel-like brilliant appearance, enhanced by the surface of the metal base underneath. The use of deep colours, and the granular textured effect achieved by a dull surface, rendering the enamel panels slightly opaque, is typical of the Dawsons' enamelwork.[8] (Figs. 14, 15, 16)



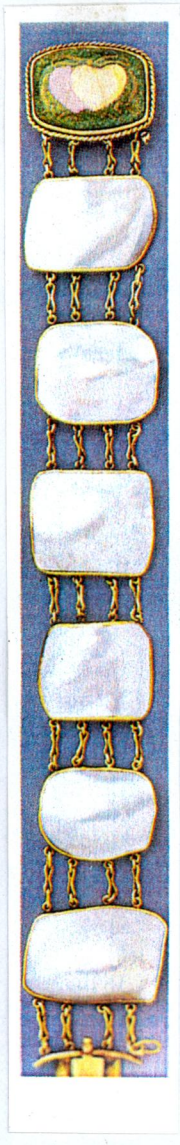


Fig. 17 Set of Enamel Buttons, Heart motifs, silver, Nelson and Edith Dawson

Fig. 18 Enamel and Steel Belt Buckle, with swan designs in corners, Nelson and Edith Dawson

Fig. 19 Blister Pearl Bracelet, yellow metal with enamelled heart clasp, Nelson and Edith Dawson

Fig. 20 Enamel Peacock Box, white metal, Nelson and Edith Dawson

Fig. 21 Belt Buckle, white metal with pansy design, Nelson and Edith Dawson

The themes of the Dawsons' work were heavily influenced by nature and included colourful, fragile floral motifs along with stylised birds and insects. They created both large and small scale enamel work including jewellery. Buckles, brooches, pendants and necklaces were typical of their jewellery pieces. (Figs. 17-21) Their larger scale work included cups, caskets and candlesticks. In 1896, the Dawsons were asked to present samples of their work to Buckingham Palace for the Queen's inspection. Queen Victoria bought a small copper bowl on a stand with a cloisonne enamelled lid with the inscription 'Nelson and Edith Dawson made me' on it.[9] A number of the Dawsons' enamelled pieces are described in various issues of The Studio magazine. They received numerous commissions, including a memorial plaque for the public library in Oxford, and a trowel in silver and enamel with a steel and silver presentation box for Queen Victoria on the ceremony of her laying the foundation stone for The Victoria and Albert Museum.

In 1896, The Studio magazine published an article devoted to the Dawsons. Nelson seems to be the main interviewee as Edith is hardly mentioned but he is quoted as saying "my wife and I work together in this".[10] Although Nelson Dawson was probably responsible for the designs of their metalwork creations, Edith probably did most of the actual enamelling. Rhoda Bickerdike (nee Dawson), the first born daughter of the Dawsons, said in an article for Apollo that:

> Certainly enamelling would seem to be one of the few crafts unsuited to Nelson Dawson who could turn his hand to almost

> anything creative. It requires immense patience, measureless persistence and precise method none of which were in Nelson's make-up; to bring off a good enamel also requires artistic sensibility not always concomitant with the other requirements. Edith had them all.[11]

Nevertheless, their two names were always used in respect of their enamelled metalwork wherever they exhibited pieces. In 1905 both of the Dawsons were asked to write books. Nelson wrote his on Goldsmiths and Silversmiths Work, published in 1907. Edith's on Enamels, published in 1906. In her book on enamelling Edith acknowledges Alexander Fisher's genius, but also deplored the fact that she had no real enamelling teacher herself.

Edith Dawson gave up enamelling during World War I, because there was no demand for it. By this time, Nelson had already tired of metalwork and was concentrating instead on painting.

Arthur (1862-1928) and Georgina Cave Gaskin (1866-1934) are the second metalworking couple who incorporated enamel work in their jewellery pieces. Of the pair, it is noted that Georgina was the jewellery designer of the couple while Arthur did the enamel work. They married in 1894, and within five years established a reputable metalwork design studio in Acocks Green, Birmingham. Arthur also taught at the Vittoria Street School for Jewellers and Silversmiths in Birmingham until 1925, when he retired from teaching. Plant drawings were a requirement at this school, and this

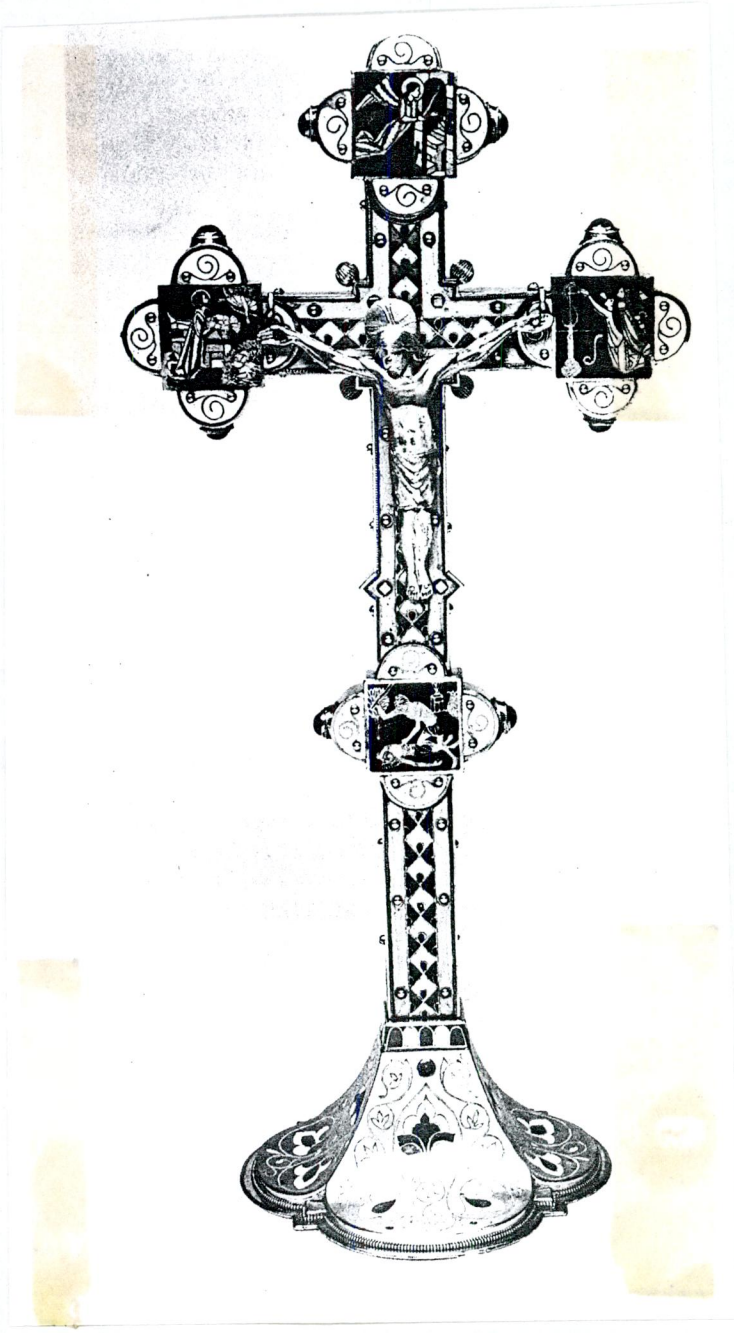


Fig. 22 Altar Cross, silver, enamel and semi-precious stones, A. J. Gaskin, 1903

naturalistic influence can be clearly seen in the Gaskins' work.

Their jewellery and enamelled metalwork, like Fisher's and the Dawsons' enamelled work, were illustrated in issues of The Studio magazine at the time. The fact that Arthur Gaskin became interested in pictorial enamels is no surprise; as a painter and book illustrator, his drawings were linear, narrative and literary. These elements in drawing can easily be carried out in the medium of enamel. Both Arthur's and Georgina's metalwork designs seemed to derive from Middle Eastern Arabesque motifs. This style which they used was similar to the champleve enamels of the Middle Ages; a number of jewellery pieces from that period were on display at The Victoria and Albert Museum. It is probable that the Gaskins had viewed these historical enamels at some stage and used the Middle Eastern style as inspiration for their own work.

The scrolling patterns of these enamels are similar to the champleve enamels which Arthur made in the early 1900s. Such an example is the Altar Cross for Madresfield Court Chapel, Birmingham, which the Gaskins produced in 1902-3. (Fig. 22) The champleve enamelwork is riveted to the main body of the cross depicting sacrificial scenes from the Old Testament, along with scrolled flower motifs in white, blue and black on the base of the cross. The cross has a strong medieval appearance.

Overall, the Gaskins' jewellery pieces were based on delicate wirework and

Fig. 23 Enamel Plaques, painted enamel on copper of Georgina Gaskin, 1913, by Arthur Gaskin

elaborate stone settings with some enamel settings. The majority of their jewellery pieces does not contain any enamelwork on pictorial themes. Arthur Gaskin produced some fine painted enamel plaques in the Limoges technique, which he produced around 1913, such as his portraits of his wife, Georgina. Two enamel plaques depict Georgina - one wearing a large hat covered with red roses, the second a three-quarter pose with acanthus leaves decorating her dress, lending a Venetian theme to the portrait. (Fig. 23)

Many of the Gaskins' designs were executed by assistants, some being Vittoria Street students. This was necessary at the start of the Gaskins' business, as they were quite inexperienced at the start of their careers, but became very efficient later. When they became well established, their reputation created excessive work, far more than they could personally handle.

A discussion of these craftspeople proves that at the turn of the century, the medium of enamel was well executed and explored. The craftspeople mentioned in this Chapter have a connection with Alexander Fisher, either through his teachings or his influence. Nelson Dawson learned the art from Fisher himself, Traquair through Lady Carmichael, who was also a former student of Fisher. The Gaskins were also greatly influenced by the work of Fisher.

On the whole, the Arts and Crafts designers and enamellers proved very successful in using the various techniques of the medium, which was held in the highest esteem. It has not been until the 1970s that pictorial enamelwork has again been taken up to the same extent as it was used in the Arts and Crafts period.

CHAPTER 2

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7. Cumming, (1993), p. 47.

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CHAPTER 3

Pictorial Enamellers from the 1970s to the 1990s

Between the Arts and Crafts revival period and the 1970s, pictorial images in enamel jewellery and metalwork were not fashionable. Images in the enamel jewellery which was so popular during the Arts and Crafts revival declined in popularity after the first World War. Design aesthetics in jewellery looked to other sources of inspiration for decoration, such as architecture, which inspired the minimalism of Art Deco design. Enamel was still used in jewellery to a certain extent as a means of colour decoration but semi-precious stones gradually replaced the medium of enamel as a colour decoration in metalwork. Many enamellers who had worked as part of the Arts and Crafts movement gave up the art of pictorial enamelling in jewellery and metalwork, as pictorial and illustrative enamels were not in demand. The dawn of the Art Deco period brought new changes to jewellery and metalwork design during the 1920s. The aesthetic design of jewellery became simpler, geometric and minimalist. The naivety and organic fussiness of enamel jewellery and metalwork, such as the designs of the Arts and Crafts period gave way to the simplified minimal designs o the Art Deco period.

One factor that brought about a change in jewellery design was the introduction of machine technology introduced into metalwork production

in the mid 19th century creating a much more profitable and efficient means of mass production in all aspects of metal design. New technologies and materials developed during the first World War which changed the traditional aesthetic design of jewellery and metalwork to a modern preference of simplicity and minimalism. Hence the execution of enamel, even as a means of colour decoration was classed as old fashioned compared to new found materials such as plastics and resin, paste and diamante jewels used in jewellery from the Art Deco period onwards.

During the 1970s American artists such as the designers William Harper and Colette began to emerge as leading cloisonne enamellers, using the medium not merely as a form of colour decoration in jewellery, but using the technique to transform jewellery pieces from craft objects into pieces of fine art. The jewellery of these American enamellers evokes sensations of mystery and magic which let the pieces of jewellery speak for themselves, making the enamelled jewellery of these designers pieces of art and not just mere jewellery which was then classed as a craft tradition. The enamellers of this period evolved from craftspeople into exceptionally talented artists, breaking down the barriers between craft and fine art.

William Harper could be described as the late 20th century equivalent of Alexander Fisher, as he has brought the medium of enamelling into recognition in late 20th century jewellery design. Harper was born in Bucyrus, Ohio in 1944 and studied painting at Western Reserve University,

Cleveland, Ohio and enamelling at the Cleveland Institute of Art. Harper's work is an exploration of the unknown, his jewellery pieces are influenced by the primitive folk art of Africa, and the symbolism of fertility in art, which makes his work potent and connects it to the mystical and magical aspects of primitive art, religion and mythology.[1]

Harper felt that the medium of enamelling was perfect for creating the sense of mystery associated with his jewellery pieces, specifically cloisonne which gives life and form to his jewellery pieces. On talking about using enamel as a medium to work with, Harper states:

> I do not think of my work as enamel per se; that is I am not primarily motivated by technique, but by an idea. The technique of cloisonne enamel happens to be one with which I feel extremely comfortable and facile, and can therefore draw upon to express visual thoughts.[2]

Harper incorporates such natural forms as shells, coral, bone, feathers, hair, porcupine quills, freshwater pearls, as well as man-made objects such as scraps of lead, plastic reflectors, beads, nails and precious and non-precious materials, used in his work. Lead is set beside intricate cloisonne panels, teeth are set alongside pearls and other precious stones. This amalgamation of the precious with the non-precious is an aspect of Harper's work whereby he creates his talismanic amulets, which evolve from otherwise conventional found objects.

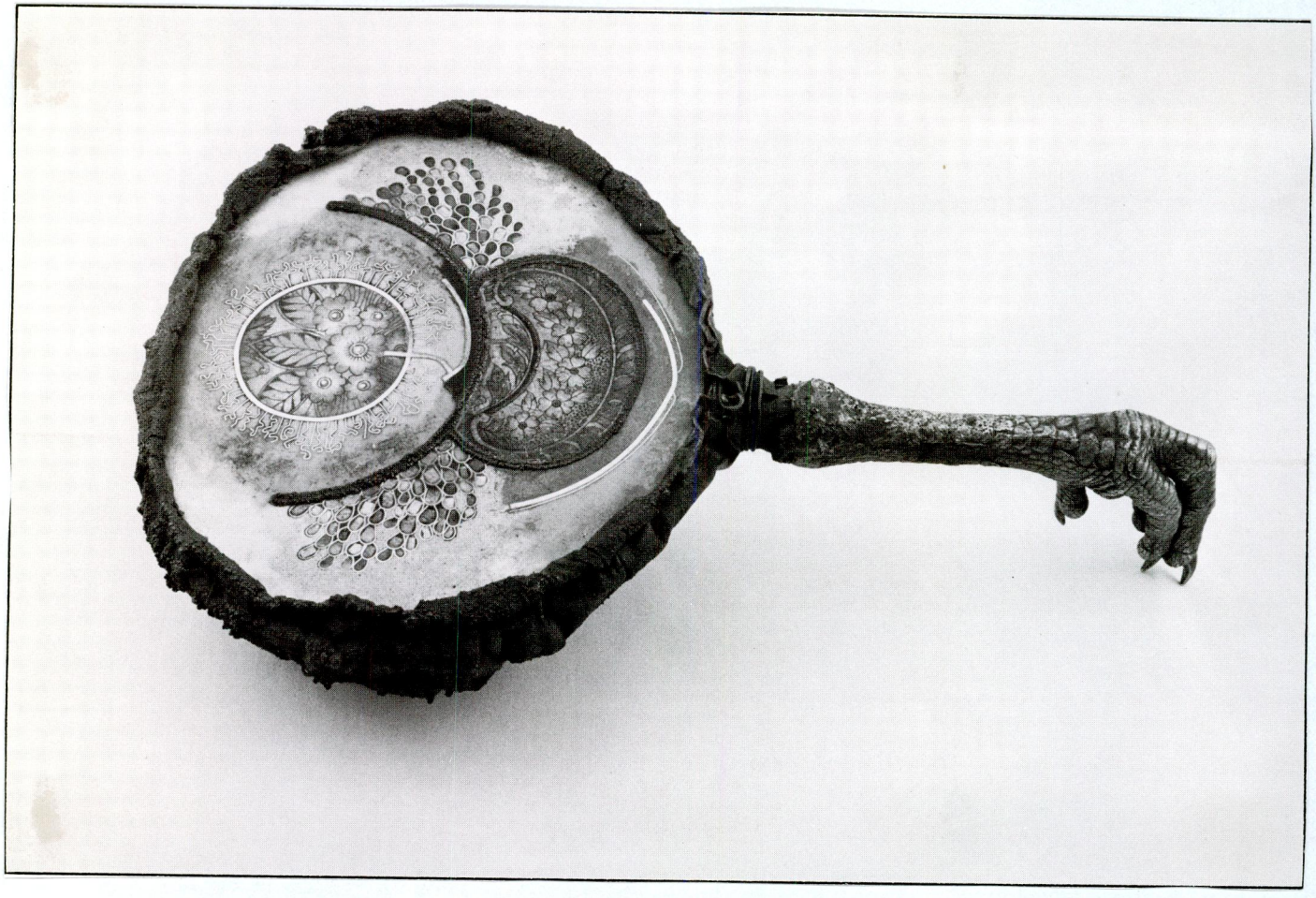


Fig. 24 Rattle for a White Witch, gold and silver cloisonne enamel on copper (5 x 30.5 x 12.7 cms), William Harper, 1972

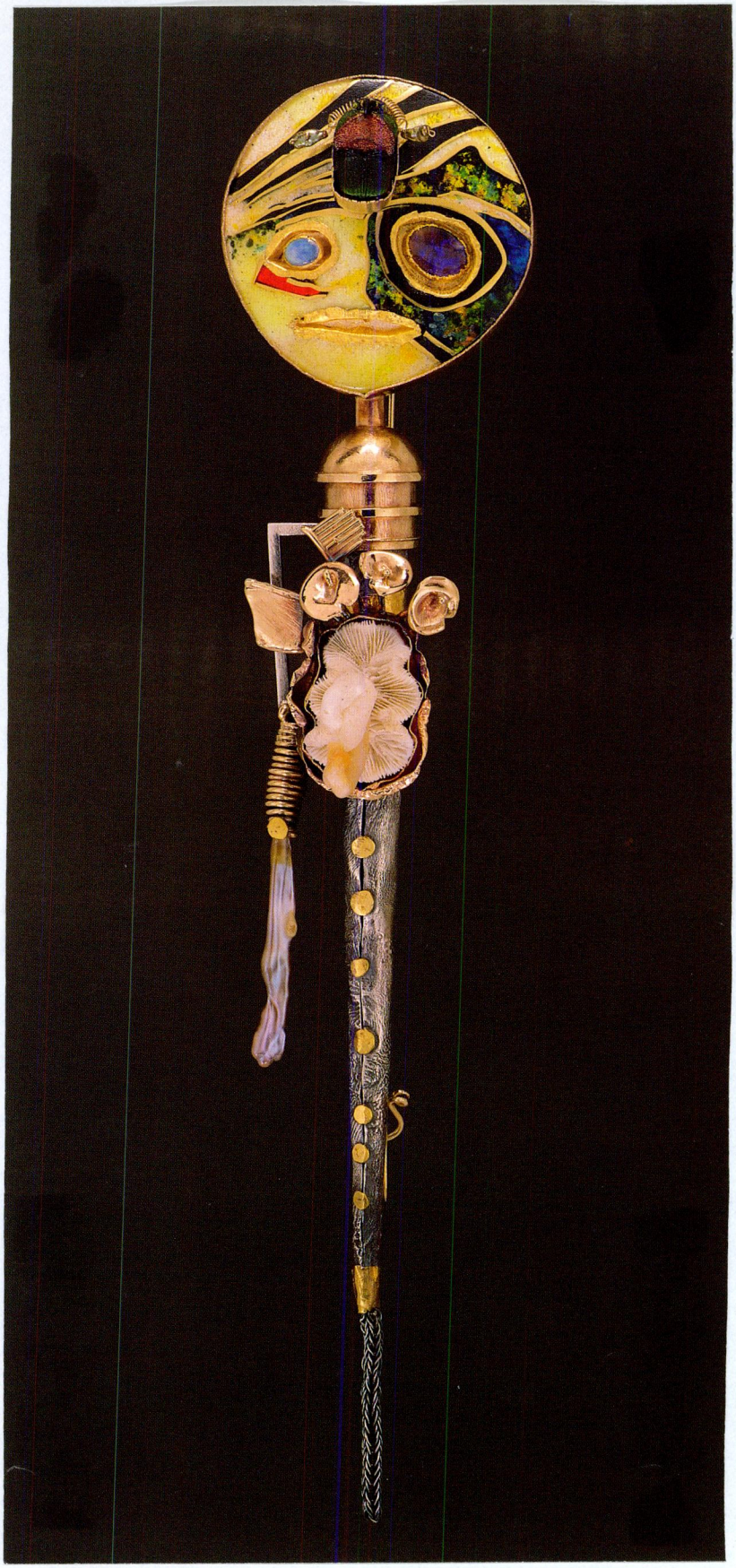


Fig. 25 Self-Portrait of the Artist as a Haruspesc, gold cloisonne on fine gold and silver, (29.4 x 6.5 x 4.8 cms), William Harper, 1990

Harper's cloisonne enamelling is very abstract in terms of pictorial imagery in his work. Both transparent and opaque enamels with gold foil and fold cloisonne wire adorn his colourful panels which he sets into an array of different shapes. Though most of Harper's enamels concentrate on colour, he has executed pieces which are pictorial in theme, such as his Rattle for a White Witch (Fig. 24) (2 x 12 x 5 cms) made in 1972, which has an enamelled floral pattern, set into an electroformed copper rattle with a bronze cast chickens leg as handle. Another example of Harper's pictorial enamels is his Self Portrait of the Artist as an Haruspesc (Fig. 25) (29.4 x 6.5 x 4.8 cms), made in 1990, with a cloisonne panel representing an abstract face.

Because Harper's pictorial images in enamel are very abstract in comparison to other artists using the same medium, I am not going to discuss this work in great depth; nevertheless because of his excellent technique in the medium, and because he has brought the art of enamelling to the frontier of jewellery as art, he well deserves a brief mention as he has inspired many other enamellers and jewellers in the profession.

The American enamellist Colette was born in 1937 in San Francisco and is known only by her first name. She is renowned for her pictorial cloisonne which are intricate representations of her dreams and fantasies. These are set into jewellery pieces such as necklaces, brooches and pendants. A self-taught artist, Colette never attended art college, but from an early age has

always painted and drawn. She tried various different careers before discovering the art of enamelling.

> Following an all-too-short childhood was self-employment, artists model and photographers model, astrologer and caster of charts, Tarot reader, belly dancer, weaver, textile artist and cloisonne enamellist. My first enamel was intended as a clasp for a ceremonial appliqued cloak. The clasps was less than I'd hoped for, but enamelling seduced me. Over the last two decades that initial allure has transformed itself into enchantment.[3]

Colette became fascinated with the art of cloisonne enamelling when she learned the minimum essentials of the technique from a colleague. After a few lessons she was on her own, to experiment and literally teach herself. Now over twenty years later, her work is renowned throughout the United States and Europe.

To Colette the use of colour is the most exciting, challenging and even the most difficult aspect of the enamelling process. She avoids getting into colour ruts, i.e. the repeated use of the same colours in pieces, by trying variations of different colours in each piece she executes. She works out new colour schemes by working with coloured pencils on tracing paper over the initial line drawings of her design.

On talking about her art, Colette claims that she focuses on the things in her life which are most important to her "because it is that which you love most, that you see best".[4] The cloisonne wires she works on represent her

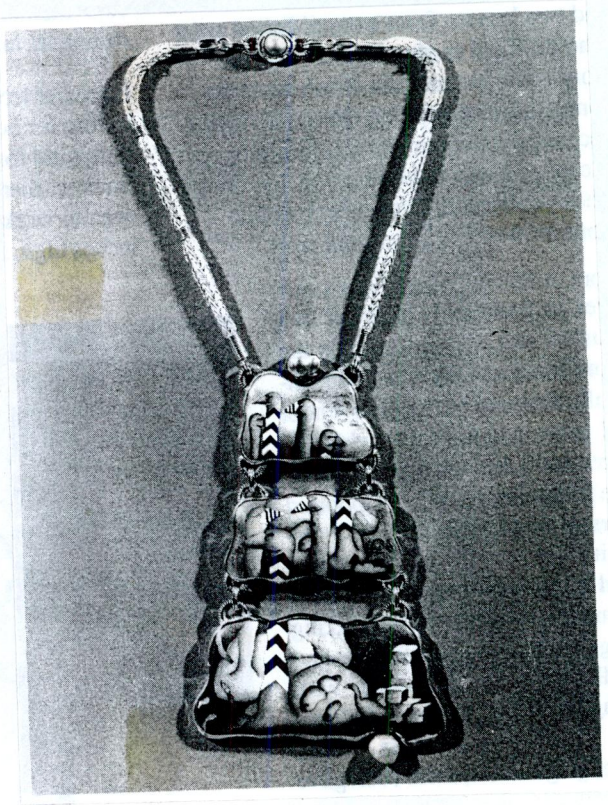


Fig. 26 Five Piece Procession, enamel on fine silver, 24 carat cloisonne, 2.5" centre piece, Colette

Fig. 27 Horizonal Neckpiece, enamel on silver, gold, baroque pearls (5" high excluding chain), Colette

drawing and these wire cells express the same emotion as the initial line drawings for her designs.

Like Harper, Colette has a love of primitive art and her way of using such natural found objects as feathers, hair, natural stones and bone in her jewellery pieces is very similar to that found in Harper's work. The amalgamation of the natural with the intricate refined cloisonne enamel panels transforms mere decorative objects into charms and amulets of an archaic, mystical and magical quality. They become more than just mere objects of adornment, representing something more powerful and spiritual than jewellery in it usual guise.

For Colette, her artistic creations are a highly personal quest. She insists that she is not a jeweller but a maker of objects.[5] Many of her pieces have an appearance of fragmentation about them; for example, the symbol of the hand recurs in a number of her pieces. Colette says "she didn't want to make jewellery in traditional shapes but wanted her pieces to look like a fragment out of her own personal history."[6] See Five Piece Procession and Horizonal Neckpiece. (Fig. 26 and 27)

Colette's designs are full of half buried symbols, creating images and elements of a mystical dreamlike quality. Colette claims that the mystery within each piece is similar to the mystery which everybody finds in their own lives; as she states "people are a mystery to themselves".[7] Images in

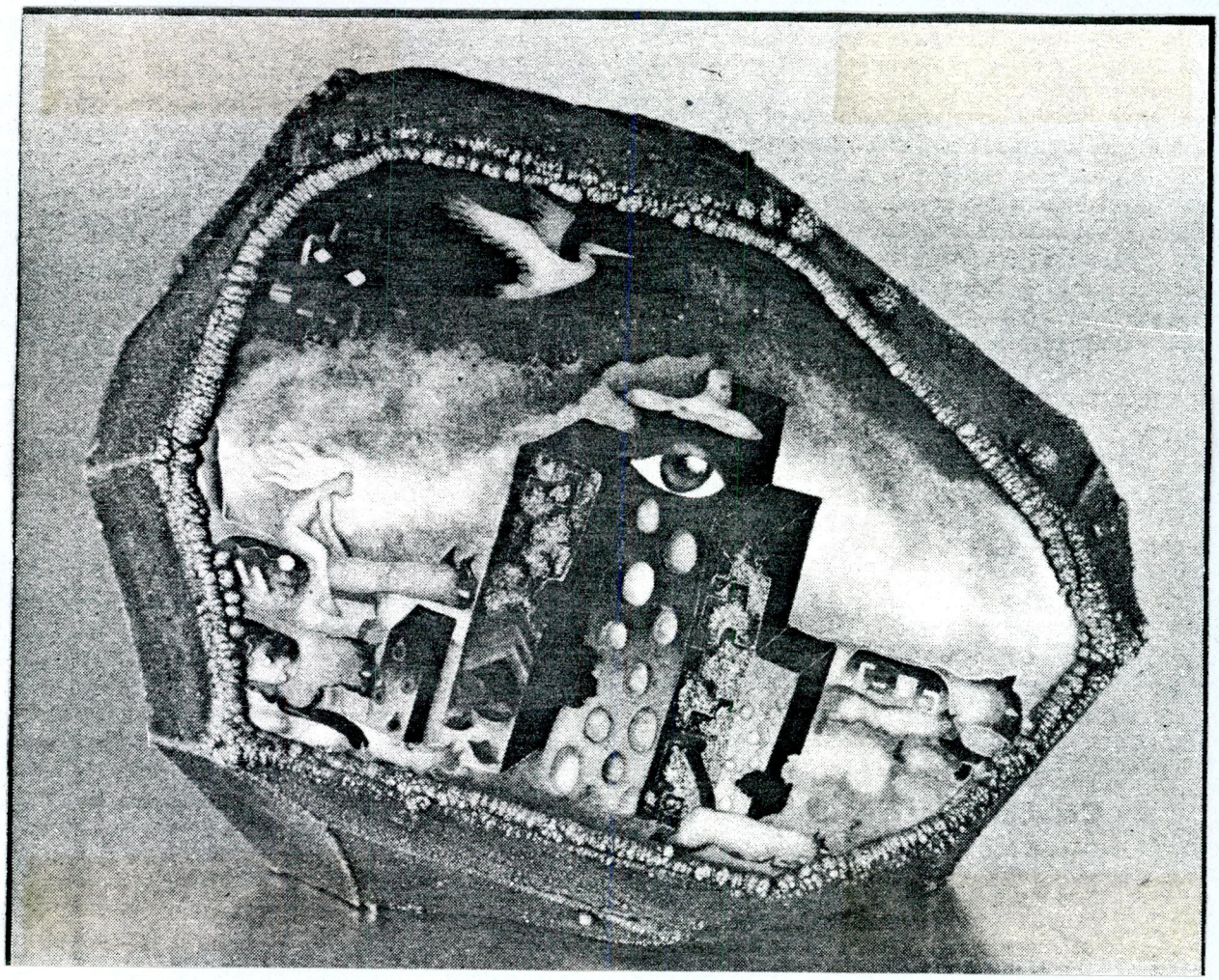


Fig. 28 Procession #2, enamel on copper, with electroformed copper frame, Colette, 1979

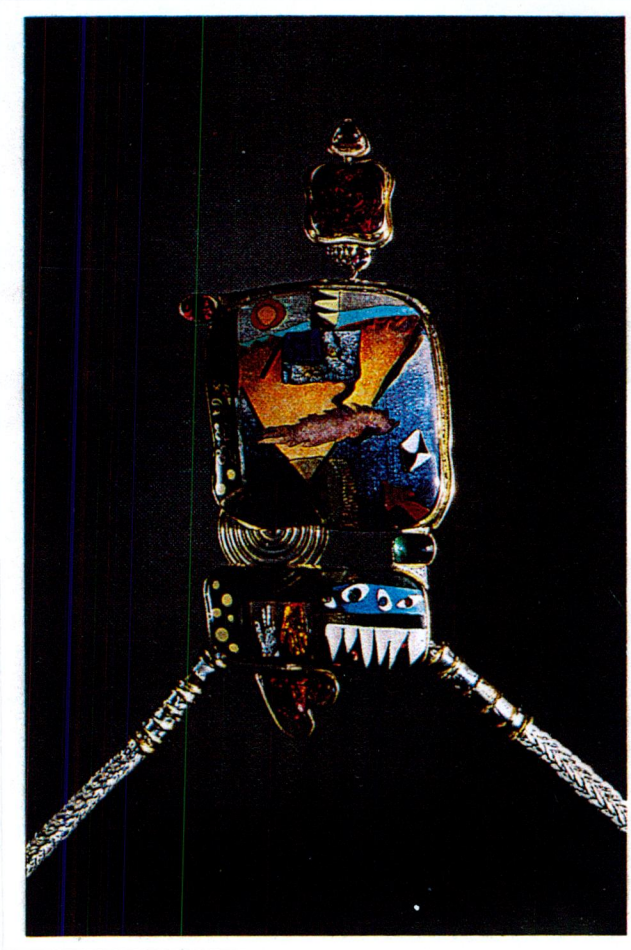


Fig. 29 Pectoral #10 - "From the Deep", enamel on fine silver, gold, semi-precious stones, Colette

Fig. 30 Pectoral #8, enamel on fine silver, gold, semi-precious stones, Colette, courtesy of Aaron Faber Gallery, New York

her pictorial cloisonne panels depict animals, fish, birds, naked females mounted on animals, symbolic images of hands, eyes, lips, sperm and magnified views of protozoa and amoeba floating in brilliant colours of transparent and opalescent colours (see fig. 28).

Intricate hieroglyphics are also incorporated into Colette's work and are an important aspect of her mysterious jewellery. This secretive symbolism in her work is a private language and is untranslatable. Runic symbols represent her emotional self, although to the wearer of the jewellery piece, they may just appear to be a decorative feature. The individual can decipher the code if they want and, whatever the interpretation, the meaning can vary from person to person: "Once I take my work into the outside world, it takes on a different meaning to the individual who buys and wears it."[8]

Colette's one-off pieces sell for $1,200 to $40,000 to private clients and various galleries such as the Aaron Faber Gallery in New York which holds a permanent display of her work. Her enamels, set in bases of fine silver with gold bezels, are perfectly executed. Many of her enamel panels require from 12 to 25 firings for maximum effect of the opalescent and transparent enamel. Gold foil is also used under transparent enamel for a glistening effect which compliments the semi-precious stones, set around the edges. (Fig. 29 and 30) For variety, as a change from working so intricately small, Colette makes sculptural forms as a housing or setting for her enamelled jewellery. These were originally designed as frames, then as receptacles for

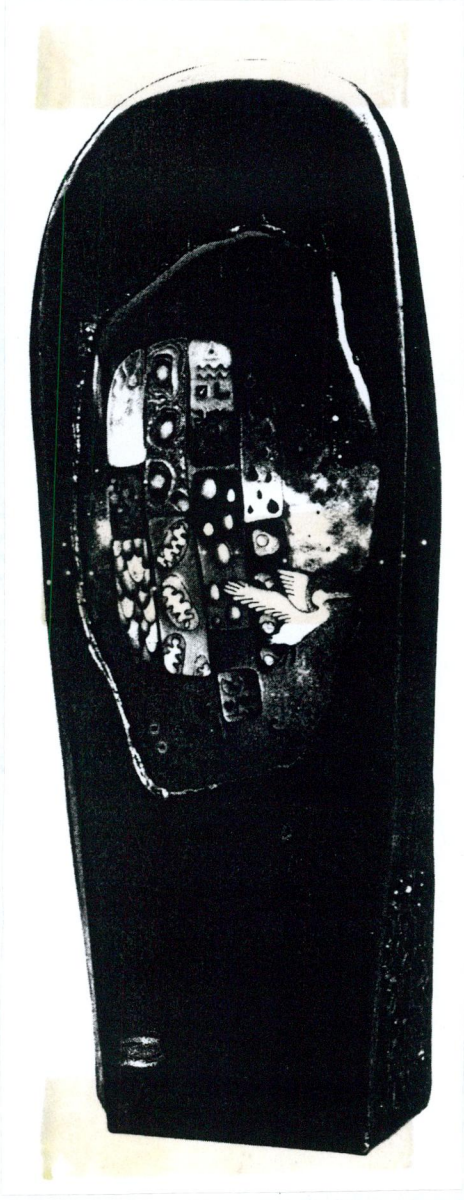
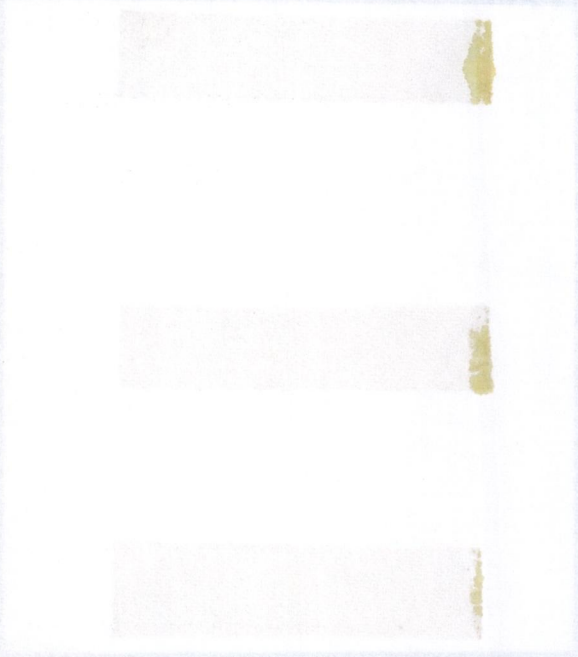


Fig. 31 Column #2 with Coyote, Raven and others, aperture series, transparent enamels on fine silver, gold, electroformed copper (3.5" x 3"), Colette

Fig. 32 Column #3 with Cellular Form and Pelican, aperture series, enamel on fine silver, gold cloisonne wire, electroformed copper (7.5" x 3.75" x 3"), Colette

Fig. 33 Ideogram Bracelet, enamel, silver, semi-precious stones, Colette, (c. 1990)

Fig. 34 Ideogram Brooch, enamel, silver, gold baroque pearl, Colette, (c. 1990)



the enamel work. They range in size from one to two feet high and are made out of various materials such as electroformed copper, bronze and gold plated bronze, anodised black aluminium and wood. The jewellery pieces are held in place inside these frames with an ingenious spring mechanism. (Figs. 31 and 32)

In 1990 Colette suffered from meningitis. She was in hospital recuperating when she came up with the concept of her Ideogram series of jewellery pieces. (Figs. 33 and 34) From her sick bed, all she could see was the clinical white colour of the room and the blue sky through the window. Hence her colour scheme in this series of enamelled pieces is predominantly white, sky blue, blood red, grey and black. The images and symbols in these pieces are haunting and reflect her recuperating mood, cats wrapped or mummified in white burial shrouds, while a raven or bird of death looks menacingly on. Racoon-tailed cats, blood red hearts, nooses and large dominating hour glasses measuring time are also used as symbols of life and death, and the passing of time, in this collection of jewellery pieces.

Colette's Pictogram jewellery series, designed and made after her Ideogram pieces, consists of a series of separate images, fragmented in appearance and connected together to form single pieces of jewellery. Examples of these are her Five-Piece Procession #4 and her Horizonal Neckpiece (see figs. 26 and 27) which is five inches high, in three connecting pieces, depicting a group of geese with geometric, striped necks.

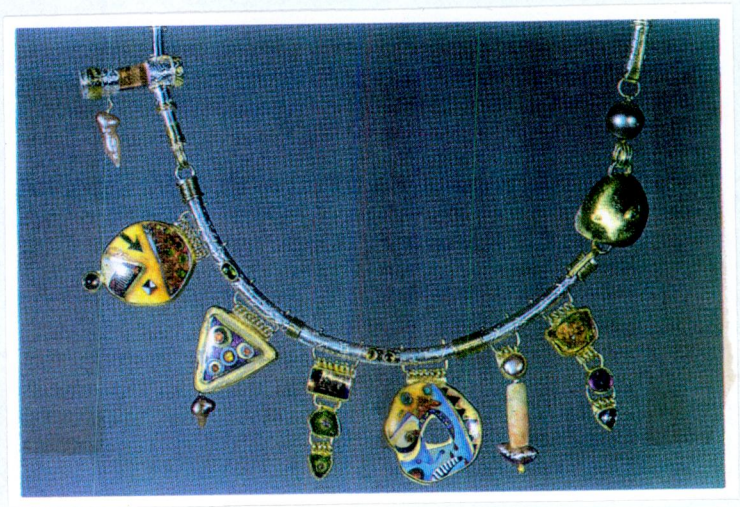


Fig. 35 Necklace Series #3 Blue Mask 2, pre-Columbian bead, Chinese pearl, precious and semi-precious stones, silver, gold, enamel.

Fig. 36 Queen Cat Series #3 - The Warrior, enamel on fine silver, gold, Chinese pearl (2½" x 2⅛"), Colette

> The forms that most compel are ancient steles, monoliths, megaliths. And the writing, the ideograms which speaking as they do, not from words, but from feelings, can be articulated only by indirection, symbolising not the name of the thing, but its idea. Hence also the imperative for images of animals, truth in being. Wandering the ruins of some civilisation adrift in sometimes menacing sky, they become unwitting observers of testimonials to our condition. Dreamlike, veiled, these images become clear only as they are achieved.[9]

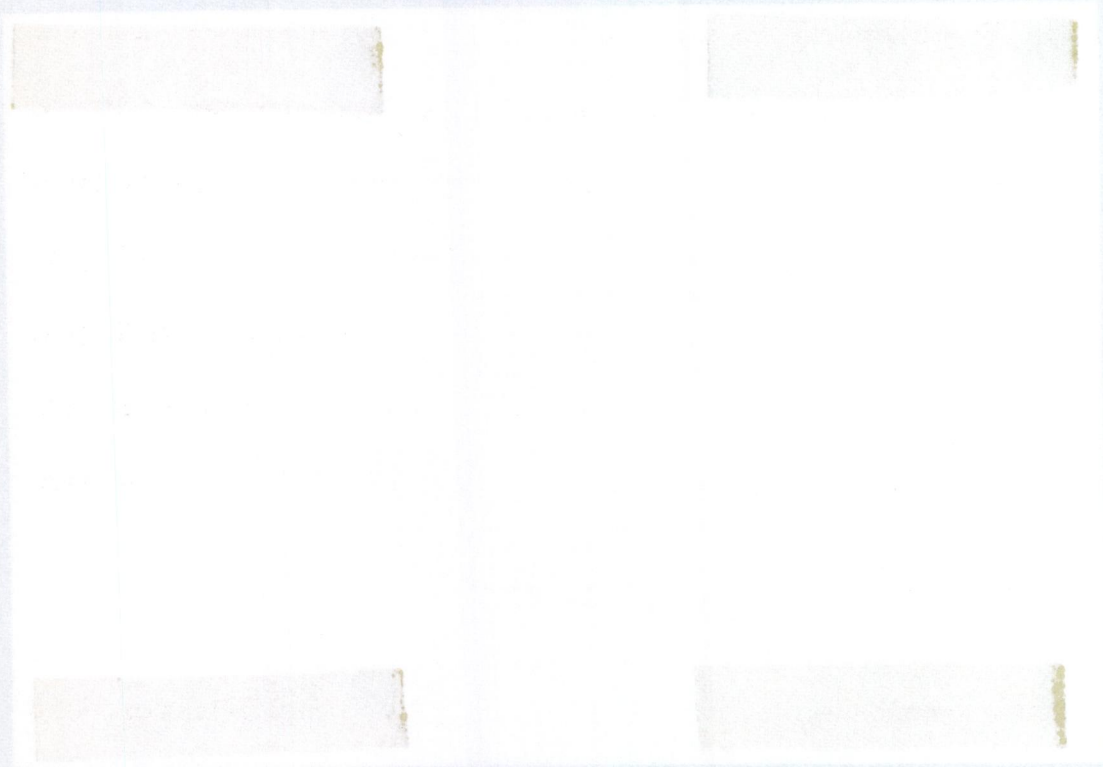
Colette has won numerous awards for her enamelwork, which is on display in both public and private collections in the United States and Europe. She won the prestigious enamel Prix d'honneur du jury in Limoges, France in 1978, and has had both solo and group exhibitions too numerous to mention.

This extract from a statement from the artist sums up an emotional and aesthetic explanation of her art:

> My work derives from my desire to state in visual and palpable terms the paradoxes of our life, exaltation and sorrow, tension and relief, rationality and passion, the physical and the metaphysical. There is one other paradox that is central to my pieces, for all the intense care and focus I must give when I work, it is when I am able to transcend the limitations of the mechanics that I feel most creative and better in touch with artists who for generations have best expressed themselves in enamelling.[10] (Figs. 35 and 36)

Another American-born enamellist, currently living and working in London, is the well respected artist Alexandra Raphael. She was born in Pittsburg and studied art and photography in college; it was here that she became

Fig. 37 Amulet and Talisman, neckpiece, enamel on silver, coral, crystal and assorted semi-precious stones



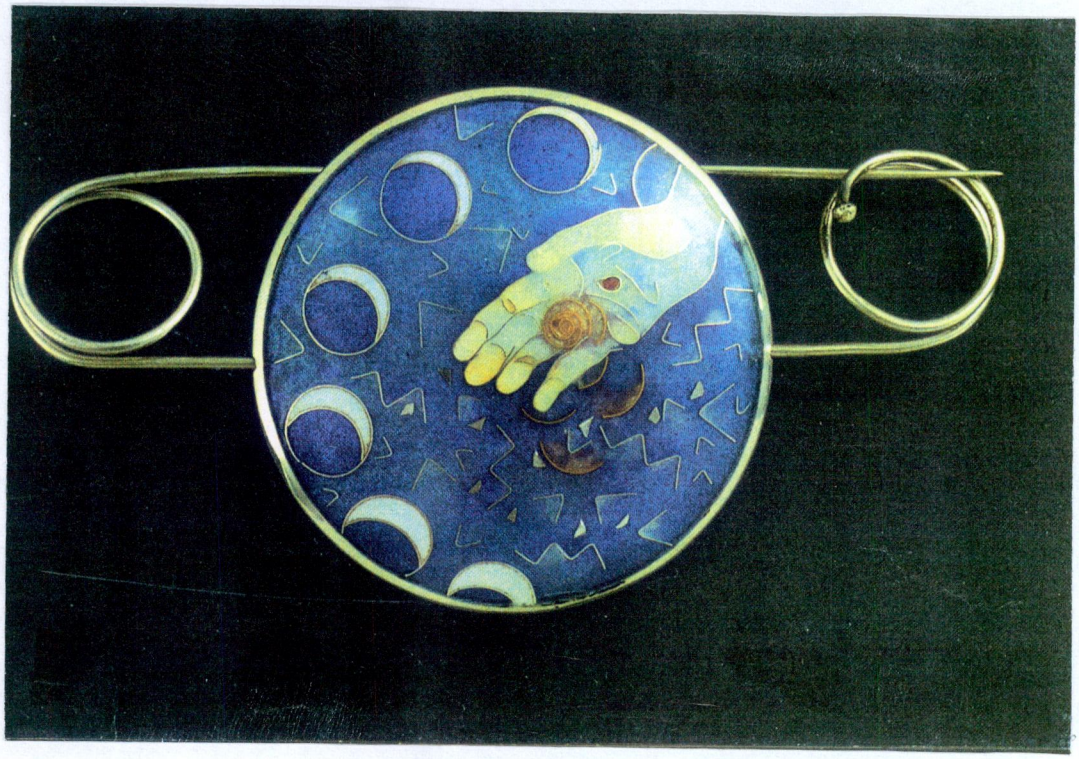
interested in enamel as a medium to express colour and images in her work. Raphael moved to West Cork in 1967 where she stayed and practised working in enamel for 14 years. She executes her work in both the cloisonne and plique a jour techniques, and makes one-off jewellery pieces and translucent, delicate plique a jour vessels.

Raphael states that living near the coast in West Cork inspired her work greatly. The theme of the sea is often portrayed in her work. Delicate shells and fossilised sea forms along with natural sea colours are portrayed in some of her jewellery pieces. Animals and insects as well as other pictorial images like the moon and the sun are used in both her cloisonne jewellery and her plique a jour vessels. Like Colette and William Harper, Raphael believes in the talismanic power of jewellery and amalgamates natural objects like shells, coral and semi-precious beads in her enamelled necklaces.

Her enamelled neckpiece entitled Amulet and Talisman (Fig. 37) is described by the artist as having

> Silver and gold cloisonne enamel beads depicting ancient symbols and hidden messages, the elements, fossils, life and death, with coral, amber, rose quartz, agate, cornelian, crystal, garnet, amethyst, tourmaline, marble and shell.[11]

The elements of fire, earth, air and water, the ancient symbols of the zodiac, the hand symbol of peace, the skull of death, are all depicted in cloisonne



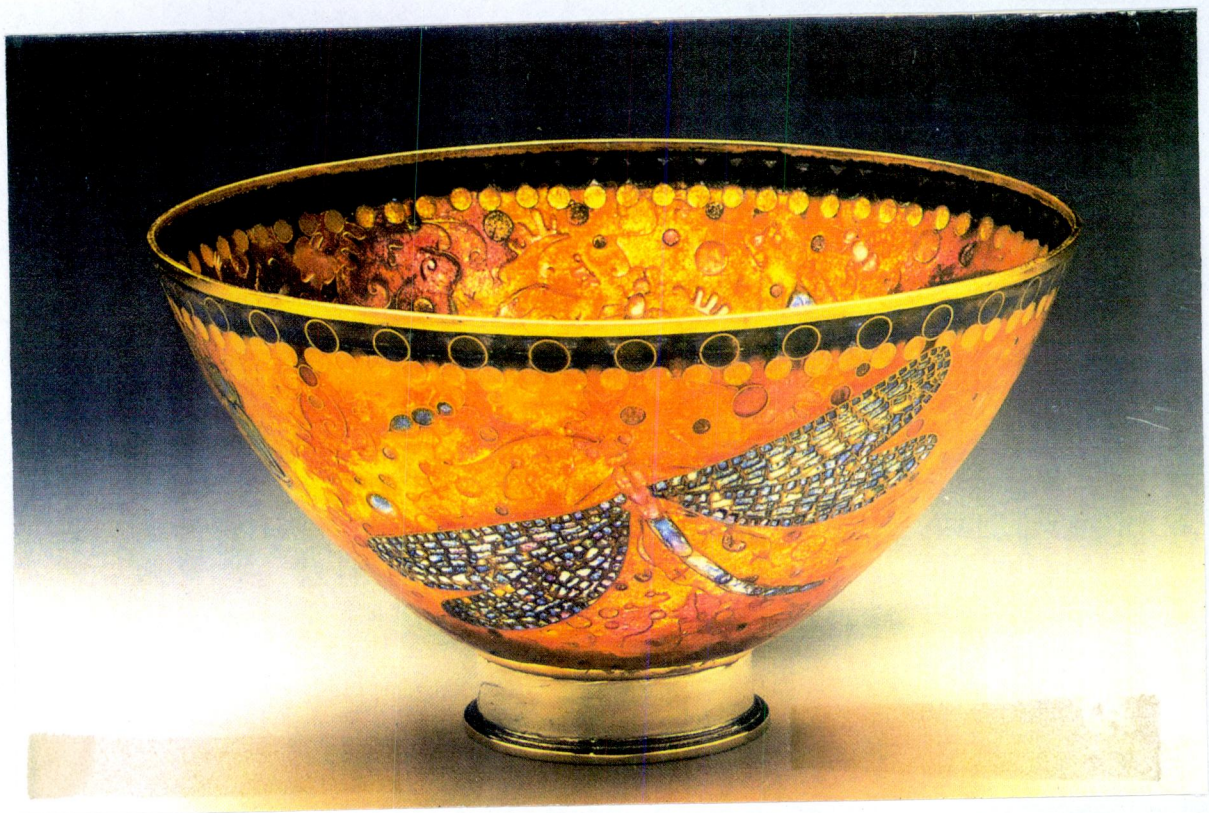
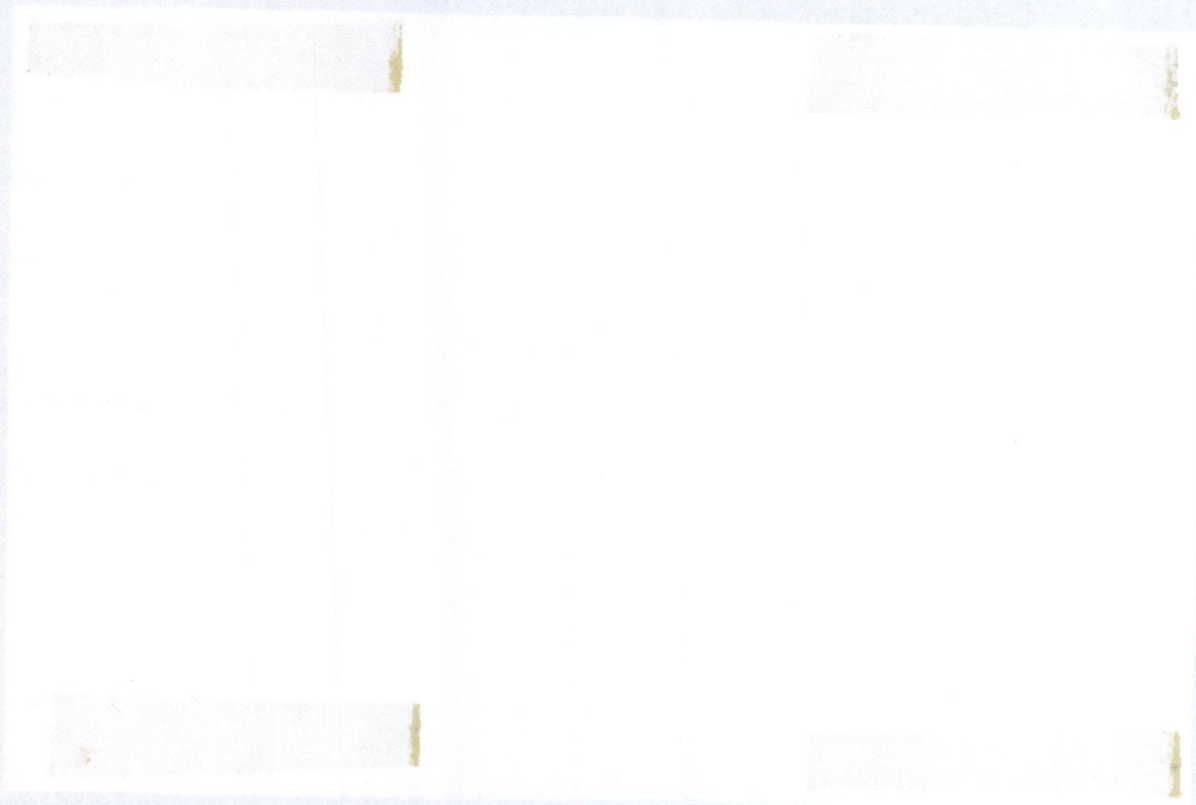


Fig. 38 Silver and Gold Cloisonne Bead Brooch, (3" x 2"), Alexandra Raphael, (1988)

Fig. 39 Butterflies, plique a jour enamelled bowl, silver, gold (6" x 4"), Alexandra Raphael

Fig. 40 Insects in Amber, plique a jour bowl, silver, gold, enamel (5.75" x 3"), Alexandra Raphael



in this neckpiece. Raphael, like Colette and Harper, uses the recurring hand symbol in her pieces. The moon, sun and starts are also pictorially represented in many of her pieces. (Fig. 38)

While living and working in Ireland, Raphael received numerous awards form the Irish Crafts Councils' annual craft competition held at the R.D.S. She was also commissioned to make an enamelled presentation bowl for President Erskine Childers in 1974, and a presentation plaque for World Colleges in 1976. In 1981 Raphael moved to London to live and work. As there are practically no enamellers working and living in Ireland, Raphael wanted to keep in touch with other enamellers who are more numerous in England. As a result of moving to London, Alexandra Raphael became a co-founder of the British Society of Enamellers which was established in 1984, and has remained its honorary secretary since.

In her plique a jour vessels Raphael has aimed to use natural themes in her work. Insects such as butterflies ((Fig. 39) and dragonflies, and other transparent-winged creatures are to Raphael ideal images to be executed in the stained glass qualities of plique a jour enamel. Her fascination with petrified insects in amber influenced her plique a jour bowl Insects in Amber (5.75" x 3"), (Fig. 40) a beautifully executed enamelled bowl mounted on a silver and gold base. The delicately winged dragonflies glisten in reflected light, highlighted by the golden amber transparent enamel which surrounds it.

Since she moved to London, Raphael has participated in numerous enamel exhibitions including The Art of Enamelling, an exhibition in Dublin's exclusively jewellery gallery, The Design Yard, from December 1993 to January 1994, where she exhibited a collection of cloisonne jewellery pieces along with the Irish-born enamellist Joan Mackarell and Jewish enamellist Tamar Winter.

Raphael still exhibits her enamelled jewellery regularly in The Design Yard. To see these beautiful pieces in reality one can recognise the time and patience that Raphael spends in making them.

A colleague of Alexandra Raphael, the noted enameller Fred Rich, lives and works in Surrey in England. Rich has mastered the art of cloisonne and Limoges enamelling and works for commissions and exhibitions. Rich was born in Riotinto in Southern Spain in 1954, his father English and his mother Spanish. When he was five his family returned to England but they still have a strong family connection with Andalusia.

Rich did not attend art college until his thirties, but became interested in jewellery through adult education classes. Through these classes Rich was inspired to go to art college full time, and did his foundation and degree courses in jewellery and metalsmithing at the Central School of Art. He graduated in 1981 with a first class honours degree in jewellery design. Rich ran his own jewellery shop and workshop for a number of years in

Fig. 41 Koi Carp Vase, enamel on silver and gold plate, Fred Rich

Fig. 42 Horses Heads, rose bowl, enamel on silver and gold plate, Fred Rich

London after he left art college. He then moved to Brighton and after three years moved to Surrey where he now lives and works.

What Fred Rich wants to express in his work is colour and three-dimensional relief. Hence enamel is a fascinating medium to him, and he likes to highlight coloured enamel with precious and semi-precious stones to give a powerful, luxuriant effect. He also executes work in cast relief, producing models which are humorous and imaginative from seemingly boring briefs. Because of this, Fred's happiest medium is a combination of relief work and vibrant colour tones, enamelling on a base of repousse. This technique is very laborious and time-consuming; nevertheless it gives Rich the desired effect, which justifies the long, intensive hours of work put into each piece.

Rich's enamelled vessels are perfectly executed in the medium of enamel. His mixture of Limoges and cloisonne creates the pictorial images he requires in his work. An example of this can be seen in his Koi Carp vase (see fig. 41). Made in silver and gold plate, it depicts an underwater pond scene in transparent and opaque enamels. Water lilies extend from underwater to support their white flowers above a blue sky-line. The fish dominate most of the panel, along with fresh-water plants which appear to flow with the current. His use of painted enamels on the scales of the fish is meticulously executed. Enamelling in the round is a difficult technique but Rich achieves this with excellence, creating a three-dimensional pictorial image in both senses of the word. His Horses' Heads rose bowl, (Fig. 42)

Fig. 43 a View of Tree Frogs vase, transparent and opaque enamel on silver and gold plate, Fred Rich

Fig. 43 b View of Tree Frogs vase, transparent and opaque enamel on silver and gold plate, Fred Rich

again made in silver and gold plate proves Rich's excellent execution with painted enamels. The images of horses, some appearing to stampede, is humorous. Some horses have teeth bared, others seem to converse under beautifully painted oak leaves, while one horse head in particular has its main swirling in a gust of wind.

Although Rich's work has strong representational qualities, he is far more interested in evoking an emotional response in his work, putting as much work on the back of a piece as on the front. Rich states that he cannot define his inspiration to creativity on any single theme and says "that almost anything can be visually stimulating given the correct context".[12] However, one area which gives Rich much pleasure is music in all of its guises. Rich also has a strong love of nature and the sea, and this theme has greatly influenced some of his pictorial enamelwork. Many of his designs are based on natural forms.

The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths in London held The Art of Enamelling exhibition in Foster Hall, London from the 25th May to 24th June 1994. In this exhibition Rich had on display two of his award-winning enamelled vases, as well as a number of pieces of enamelled jewellery. His Tree Frog vase (Figs. 43a and 43b) and Octopus vase, executed in shimmering colours of transparent and opaque enamels, are pictorial representations of natural themes with animal images.[13]

Most of Fred Rich's clients and patrons are private individuals who commission work. Clients vary from famous celebrities like pop singer David Bowie, to institutions like De Beers, the Wellcome Trust and the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths in London.

These artists, Harper, Colette, Alexandra Raphael and Fred Rich execute the medium of enamel in a naturalistic way either in Limoges, cloisonne and plique a jour techniques, creating pictorial images in panels or in the round. The use of enamel to execute painted pictorial images is the appropriate means of using the medium. The use of enamel as a substitute for stone-setting or pure colour decoration will never project the medium to its maximum potential. Enamellers such as those I have mentioned in this chapter let the medium speak for itself in their jewellery and enamelled metalwork. In an age where design in all aspects has a tendency to be sparse and minimalist in form and decoration, these enamellers have chosen to portray in their jewellery and metalwork the exuberant use of enamel in a pictorial way.

CHAPTER 3

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CONCLUSION

Enamelling, since its origins in ancient history, has always revealed itself as a medium of remarkable nature; the hardness, durability, fragile appearance and brilliant colour hues generates a special, magical fascination found in few other crafts connected to metalwork and jewellery production. By focusing on the work of selected enamellers from both the Arts and Crafts movement and the period from the 1970s to the 1990s, it seems that the use of pictorial images in enamelling is once again very popular and a fascinating medium used in the metalwork design of today. Pictorial images in enamelling are like every other aspect of art and design, susceptible to fashion trends. However, in the two periods I have chosen to discuss, it is clear that the technique and execution of the medium has flourished.

With enamellers such as Alexander Fisher and Phoebe Traquair who worked as very successful enamellers during the Arts and Crafts movement and modern day contemporaries such as William Harper and Colette, who still use the same techniques of cloisonné and Limoges, the art of enamelling has truly evolved from a craft tradition into the realms of fine art.

GLOSSARY OF ENAMEL TECHNIQUES

1. Cloisonne Enamel - In this method of enamelling a thin wall of metal or wire is used to separate different colour enamels.

2. Guilloche Enamel - This form of enamelwork is done by working the metal with an engine-turned lathe to form a patterned design and then enamelling over the pattern.

3. Limoges Enamel - This is a method of enamelling where the enamel is painted on the surface of an object.

4. Plique a jour Enamel - This method is similar to the cloisonne method of enamel except that the back of the enamel sections are left open to allow light to pass through. This is achieved by creating jewellery with a backing to which the enamel will not adhere when it's fired, and which is then removable.

5. Champleve Enamel - This method of enamelling is done by digging out part of the metal and filling it with enamel and then firing the piece of jewellery.

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