



colouring book john richardson



called to the colours



Cloisonné cardinal ring: pyrope garnet, silver

I am in the colouring business – I'm playing with colour associations and interested in the way colour combinations can transport us through time by provoking the memory. It's a cliché that a piece of music can remind the listener of the exact time or place in which it was first heard, even after decades and the same thing happens to me with colours and shape. I was one of those kids who 'saw' ideas and concepts in colour (Friday was red, Thursday; green) and could easily visualise colours. I can see them clearly without having them in front of me – I like to think it's a visual equivalent of the musician's perfect pitch. I don't suppose this is a particularly rare thing and it's not much of a special power, in fact I could argue that it comes with a touch of mental chaos which prevents my working in a measured, cerebral way and relegates me to the impetuous and visceral division of left-handed makers (I do not absolutely assert that left handedness is crucial, but the suspicion is there).

I have been a jeweller since I was sixteen and always interested in metal and stones, but it took me some time to recognise enamel as my route to colour. The sheer brightness that enamel offers is what I need and when you consider the choice of opaque and translucent varieties, then throw in the coloured stones, it is a huge palette to work with. Everyone is an expert on colour, they have *their* colours so when a person or couple commissions a piece, we can weave a code of those colours into the jewel, piling on the personal significance... his colour on the inside of her ring, etc. This turns jewellery into talismans and I don't believe it can be overdone. The other, main ingredient in my stew is shape. I am constantly returning to the bombé (Fr. 'domed') ring. All my core collection of ring styles are based around this one shape and are either domes with settings on, domes split by settings

or domes with the tops taken off, boiled egg-like. Now from a structural point of view the rigid dome is a great vehicle for the fragile enamel, but it is not just that. The swelling, pregnant shape is practical and simple and can be a canvas for a whole riot of decoration or a plain, smooth curve of say, beige... the only colour anyone is shocked by, these days.

It is a consolation to be able to throw many interests into the aforementioned stew and in order to minimise any misunderstandings I am happy to list some of the smaller ingredients, herewith:

Fish, 'Ant & Bee' books (especially 'Kind Dog's Birthday'), sponges, fungus, chillies, Napoleon, Ethiopia, VW Karmann, olives, kelpies, old kitchen appliances.

All these are reasons to be cheerful and all find their way into my work.



Bombé ring: garnet, silver



Chinoiserie cardinal rings: sunstone, blue topaz, amethyst, silver

cloisons nouvelle



Cloisonné bombé ring: amethyst, silver

When I was about five years old somebody showed me how to take a line for a walk, weaving it over and under to create a series of sections which can then be coloured in to create a lovely pattern – no two the same! This made a big impression on me and is largely what I do in my cloisonné pieces.

The pencil-line has become silver or gold wire and instead of wax crayons I am using coloured enamels to fill up the sections (called cells or cloisons) The wire is fired into a clear enamel (flux) background, then the colours are added, ground smooth, refired and there you are. You never know exactly what you are going to get and (as I may have mentioned) no two are the same. You can aim for particular effects but it is not a perfect science. It is risky and exciting – takes the place of hang-gliding, in a quiet life.



Cloisonné earrings: amethyst, silver; cloisonné cartouche brooch: silver



Cloisonné cardinal rings: cream moonstone, pyrope garnet, grey moonstone, silver



Chinoiserie cuffs: smoky quartz, grey moonstone, silver

opals and jelly crystals



Ovum pendant: crystal opal, tsavorites, 18ct gold

I am very attracted to opals and consider they are consistently undersold as a tourist souvenir in Australia. In addition, they seem to have picked up a veneer of dowdiness which makes them unattractive to contemporary designers, here. This is an excellent state of affairs and I am happy to add my own modest efforts towards a renaissance in their appreciation.

There is so much potential for combining opals with enamel – most opals exhibit a predominant colour which I can complement. The danger lies in trying to duplicate the subtlety of colour-interplay that the stones have. It is easy to blow the stones away with chunks of brightness, but I can usually pick a single or possibly a pair of colours that will leave the opal as the centre of attention. This betrayal into subtlety does not come easy, but I like to think of it as y'know, making me a better person. I am using jelly and crystal opal from Coober Pedy and Andamooka, because South Australian stones are the best, right?



Bombé ring: jelly opal, silver; cloisonné bombé ring: jelly opal, silver

my inner frog



Couchant frog brooch: silver; flat frog brooch: silver

Enamel, I thought, could do some justice to the colour and texture of frog's skin. I wanted to make some more sculptural and figurative work and everybody loves frogs. So here we are. It is quite a challenge to do justice to the subject, the modelling processes are very time consuming, and that is just the beginning. The enamel can be very choosy about the relief that it sticks to, it hates an edge and does not like a ridge, so I am pushed towards a sketchiness that doesn't necessarily come naturally. I try to make each one a portrait of a prominent frog-personality – the chairman of the frog council or some leading lights of the frog Masonic Society. I'm aiming to reveal the frog's essential dignity and noble bearing.

These are serious frogs – kind to tadpoles, but prudent and conscious of their responsibilities.

It is an evolving project which will extend to other suitable creatures.

Fish anyone? Beetles?



Noble frog rings: silver



Three-stone bombé rings: pink sapphire, Ceylon sapphire, grossular garnet, diamonds, 18ct gold



John Richardson, jeweller

I have been based in South Australia since re-locating from the UK in 2004.

I make a range of rings, earrings, cufflinks, brooches and bracelets in silver and 18ct gold. I am always interested in working to commission and specialise in individual enamelled pieces.

I can be contacted by e-mail: john.van@internode.on.net or through the website: www.johnrichardson.com.au



Government of South Australia
Arts SA

This project was assisted by the South Australian Government through Arts SA
All photography by Grant Hancock except on pages 3, 10 and 12

Front cover: Cloisonné cardinal ring: fire opal, silver