

findings

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An enamelling adventure

Ravstedhus (Denmark) 4-9 July 2016

Lieta Marziali

Last July I enjoyed a brilliantly stimulating residential week enamelling in the Danish countryside with the Guild of Enamellers.

The collaborative workshop – with no appointed tutor and a proposed theme of Maps ahead of this year’s Guild Conference – saw 10 members, six from Denmark and four from the UK, take over the Ravstedhus house and jewellery studio to explore each other’s practice and share skills while progressing their own projects.

As a new member of the Guild for whom enamelling is not the primary medium, I was both daunted and thrilled at the challenge of confronting myself with so many specialist practitioners as an equal contributor to the exchange. In fact, this shared challenge was the driving force behind much of the work produced during the five days we shared.

To facilitate bonding and promote communication, on the first evening we created five mixed teams of two people, matched from the Danish and UK cohorts, to share the double benches in the studio and also the various kitchen duties needed at each mealtime. The facilities at Ravstedhus are superlative, not only in terms of the airy and light and incredibly well-stocked studio – certainly one of the best I’ve had the privilege to work in – but also for the welcoming atmosphere of the living quarters. The communal kitchen in particular offered great opportunities for cultural exchange, political discussion, especially in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum, and debate on



Lieta Marziali, panel.
Photo: Lieta Marziali



Ravstedhus studio space 2
Photo: Lieta Marziali

the future of enamel (including several late nights and the consumption of, at times, generous amounts of wine!).

Participants' projects varied immensely, from wet-packing and cloisonné on silver to sifting on spun bowls, from painting and sgraffito work on pre-enamelled steel to experimental work using a playful combination of techniques. Not having a tutor meant that our personal investigations were naturally led by a curiosity to explore other ways of doing things, all encouraged not only by a cooperative spirit but also by the great variety of tools and materials at our disposal, including a whole range of Thomson enamels from the US, to which some of us had never had access before.

And it is exactly this spirit and an appreciation of the many different reasons that drive people to enamel that fuel my enthusiasm for this material and keep me wanting to experiment with it as part of my jewellery vocabulary. From the more tradi-

tional techniques steeped in centuries of craftsmanship to the most experimental contemporary applications, enamel encourages such personal approaches, allowing the development of individual playgrounds in which to engage with the material and accept the challenges it throws back at us, all on our own terms. In my view, there is no right or wrong in enamel other than what enamel itself

dictates in each of our experiments: every project we tackle will be different and will require a new dialogue with the material, and it is up to us to find our own way with it.

For information about the Guild, visit www.guildofenamellers.org.

Dorothy Cockrell, panel.
Photo: Lieta Marziali

Tom Lundsten, earrings.
Photo: Lieta Marziali

