

Carpenter



**Enamel
Center**

NO. 2

***CARPENTER ENAMEL
CENTER***

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WELCOME TO OUR

Monthly Newsletter

Carpenter Enamel Center – Newsletter No. 2

Welcome to the second edition of the CEC Newsletter. As we continue building this space for storytelling and connection, we're thrilled to bring you another edition of insights from the enameling community. In this issue, we explore the unexpected encounters, artistic journeys, and shared histories that enrich our center and the field at large.

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A Story of Connection in the Enameling World

The enameling community is known for its tight-knit relationships, and few people embody that spirit more than Tom Ellis (see image below), a respected figure whose enamel life experiences reach far beyond Thompson Enamel and the CEC. This month's feature traces a remarkable chain of encounters that illustrates how artists, places, and stories intersect in ways that result in continued development in our center and by extension, the greater enameling community.





Encounter

In the late 1980s, Tom Ellis received a call from his friend Steve Kistler, owner of The Shaker Seed Box in Old Town Mariemont, Ohio. Two visitors who had wandered into the shop mentioned they were enamelists, and Kistler immediately thought of Tom. The visitors were Joel and Pamela Sansone, who recognized Ellis's name from conversations with him through Thompson Enamel. They were vacationing in the area and had simply stumbled upon Kistler's shop, leading to their first in-person meeting with Tom. Their friendship has continued for decades.

A similar coincidence came up years later through an enamelist from England who had attended several Enamelist Society conferences and remained in touch with Tom. While traveling through California's wine country, she wandered into a small town and noticed a sign for an enamel shop tucked down a side street. The shop turned out to be Sansone Studio, owned by Joel and Pamela, the same artists Tom had met in Ohio not long before and with whom he still keeps in contact. The discovery created an unexpected double connection: two enamelists who both knew Tom Ellis, from entirely different parts of the world, had crossed paths by sheer chance. Encounters like this highlight just how closely knit and far-reaching the enameling community truly is.



From Television Screens to Prestigious Collections

Joel Sansone shared with Tom Ellis that some of his work had been acquired in the mid-1990s by buyers in the Los Angeles entertainment industry. One of his large enameled copper bowls, formed by hammering sheet copper over a hollowed palm stump, annealing it repeatedly, and finishing it with enamel, was purchased by NBC as a prop. The bowl appeared on the coffee table in the Manhattan apartment of Rachel and Monica on the long-running sitcom Friends (see image below). It remains one of the most widely seen pieces of enameled art in television history.



Beyond the world of television, Joel's work has been acquired by distinguished private collectors, including members of the Saudi Arabian royal family and the Jackson family, as well as public institutions such as UC Santa Barbara, where a large-scale installation of his enamel work is on view. His rich repertoire of stories and techniques is so vast that we plan to feature him again in a future newsletter.

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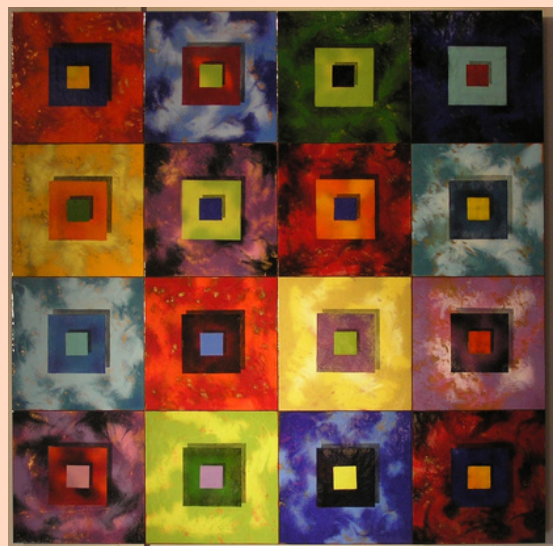
Early Development

Joel discovered enameling while studying art at Bowling Green State University. After two introductory courses, he committed fully to the medium.

In 1977, he and Pamela moved to San Pedro, California, where Joel established a studio within a Los Angeles cultural center. Among roughly 50 artists, he was the only enamelist.



Stellarscape
8' in diameter
by Joel Sansone



Glass Quilt
4' x 4'
by Joel Sansone



Sansone Studio/Gallery



Growth and Expansion

The couple exhibited widely in both art and craft galleries throughout Los Angeles.

Eventually, they relocated to California's central coast and opened their own studio/gallery in Los Olivos, a thriving town known for wine tourism.

From this location, they have introduced thousands of visitors to the art of enameling and had customers in 36 countries and 49 states.

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A Lasting Connection to Our Center



**Face the Lion
by Joel Sansone**

The relationship between Tom Ellis and the Sansones extends directly to our own community. Joel Sansone's work can be admired in the CEC museum, generously donated by the artist (see image to the left).

This piece not only enriches our collection but also serves as tangible reminder of how the interconnectedness of encounters, and shared passion shape the legacy of enameling.

The Sansones' story reflects the values at the heart of our center: artistic curiosity, global connection, and the belief that every piece of art carries with it a journey worth sharing.



Looking Ahead

Preserving the world of enameling is work that extends far beyond storytelling. Woodrow Carpenter devoted his life to collecting, researching, and developing knowledge about the craft, and much of what he documented exists nowhere else. Today, safeguarding this irreplaceable material rests in the hands of a small group of dedicated volunteers who keep the museum and the Carpenter Enamel Center moving forward.

One of the most vibrant pieces of Woodrow's legacy lives on through Glass on Metal magazine. For decades, it served as the heartbeat of the enameling community, capturing techniques, artist profiles, innovations, and stories that enriched the field. These issues remain an invaluable resource for artists, collectors, and anyone curious about the craft. We are fortunate to have a limited number of original issues available for purchase. Once they're gone, they're gone. You can explore them [online](#) or in our museum store. Bringing one home not only gives you a rare piece of enameling history, it directly supports the preservation of Woodrow's legacy.

As we continue sharing the stories and connections that are part of the enameling world, we also want to speak about the work happening behind the scenes. The Carpenter Enamel Center is maintained by only a handful of volunteers who manage the museum, care for the collection, and keep our programs moving forward. Their dedication is remarkable, but the scale of the work requires broader support.

If you believe in the importance of preserving enameling's history and ensuring its future, we invite you to consider supporting the CEC this month. Your contribution directly strengthens the center at a time when community investment truly makes a difference.

You may make your contribution [here](#), or follow the link below:
<https://carpenterenamelcenter.org/donations>