

Remembering Deborah Sheezel Edwards



Deborah Sheezel Edwards (1946–2023), who also went by Debbie Sheezel, is remembered as one of Australia’s most influential enamel artists; an innovator whose curiosity, discipline, and unmistakable sense of color shaped a career that reached far beyond her Melbourne studio.



Early Discovery & Self-Taught Mastery

Her introduction to enamel came by chance. While taking a night class in gold and silversmithing, she discovered an unused enameling furnace tucked away in the school studio. As she later recalled, “her first effort was to fire a coat of opaque white enamel on a piece of copper. She immediately fell in love with all the alluring aspects of the process of enameling.”

(Glass on Metal, 1994)

With no formal instruction available, she taught herself through experimentation and the classic texts of Bates, Seeler, Untracht, Dutton, and Speel. Before long, classmates gathered around her bench, eager to learn from her discoveries.

Building a Studio, Building a Life in Enamel

As her practice grew, so did her ambition. When she and her husband built their home, they designed a dedicated enameling studio filled with natural light, windows on three sides, generous workbenches, a library, and a custom Ward kiln large enough to fire her signature 18–20 inch copper bowls. This studio became the heart of her creative life.



Two views of Debbie's enameling studio in Australia

Later Achievements

By the 1980s, Sheezel's painterly enamel bowls and wall pieces had become widely recognized for their luminous transparencies, textural surfaces, and imagery inspired by nature, Japanese design, and the landscapes of Australia.



Enameled Bowl,
Large Format (20" x 6")

Her career soon expanded to major commissions, including works for the Australian Prime Minister's Department, a 4' x 8' panel of a space vision for Atari Computers, and the monumental Tree of Life mural, 37 enamel panels with 442 swiveling silver leaves, created for Montefiore Homes for the Aged.

In the decades that followed, Sheezel's career continued to flourish. She became a multi-time Saul Bell Design Award winner, one of the most prestigious honors in contemporary jewelry and metals, and her work was permanently installed in the Brisbane International Airport, introducing her vibrant enamel artistry to millions of travelers each year.



“Daintree,” large-scale enamel on copper mural (3.5m × 16m),
Brisbane International Airport

Her work traveled internationally as well. She represented Australia at the First International Biennial of Enamel in Laval, Canada, and her pieces appeared in national and international exhibitions throughout the 1980s and 1990s.



Connection to the Ohio Valley Enamel Guild

During her visit to the United States in the late 1990s, Sheezel became the first featured speaker for the newly renamed Ohio Valley Enamel Guild (formerly the Cincinnati Enameling Guild). Her lecture, given after days spent working at Thompson Enamel and visiting local studios, left a lasting impression on the region's enameling community.



Enameled Bowl with coral motif,
Large Format (20" × 6")

A Lasting Legacy

Debbie Sheezel's life was defined by curiosity, discipline, and a profound love of color. She built her studio, her practice, and her reputation through persistence and joy, qualities that continue to inspire enamelist around the world. Her passing marks the loss of a remarkable artist, but her work, her teaching, and her influence remain vibrantly alive.



Queensland Rainforest:

Watercolor Proposal for Brisbane International Airport (1996)



Looking Ahead

Preserving the world of enameling goes far beyond the stories we share each month. Woodrow Carpenter devoted his life to collecting knowledge found nowhere else, and today that legacy is upheld by a small team of volunteers who keep the museum, workshops, and the Carpenter Enamel Center running.

Glass on Metal magazine remains one of the brightest parts of that legacy. We still have a limited number of original issues available, once they're gone, they're gone, and each purchase preserves a rare piece of enameling history while directly supporting the CEC.

As we continue sharing the stories and connections that make this craft extraordinary, we also want to recognize the quiet work behind the scenes. The CEC relies on community support, both financial contributions and volunteer time, to sustain its programs and care for the collection.

If you believe in preserving enameling's history and future, we invite you to support the CEC in whatever way feels right. Every contribution and every hour of help truly makes a difference.

You may make your contribution [here](#), or contact us if you're interested in volunteer opportunities by following the link below:

<https://carpenterenamelcenter.org/who-we-are-1>