

Carpenter



**Enamel
Center**

NO. 5

***CARPENTER ENAMEL
CENTER***

JULY 2026

Monthly Newsletter

Carpenter Enamel Center – Newsletter No. 5

In this issue, we're sharing a historical feature from the enameling archives - an opportunity to revisit a moment of artistic exploration and craftsmanship.



Normand Fillion

Thirty Years of Research in Enamel

Originally documented in Glass on Metal, 1991

As part of our ongoing effort to preserve and celebrate the history of enameling, we revisit the remarkable career of Normand Fillion, an enamelist whose dedication to experimentation and craftsmanship shaped decades of work. The following profile is drawn from a 1991 feature published in Glass on Metal and offers a historical look at his artistic development and contributions.



Glass on Metal Cover
1991



A Foundation Built Across Three Countries

Fillion was born in Ste-Anastasie-de-Lyster in 1938 and lived and worked in St-Joachim, Quebec. His formal training reflects an artist deeply committed to mastering his medium. His studies included:

- École des Beaux-Arts, Quebec (1954–1958)
- Istituto d'Arte Per La Ceramica Faenza, Italy (1961–1962)
- Istituto d'Arte Di Pesaro, Italy (1961–1962)
- Central School of Art and Design, London, England (1966–1968)

From 1958 onward, he participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions across Canada, England, Japan, and the United States, steadily building an international presence.



Early Work: Ceramics, Copper, and Contrast

Upon graduating in 1958, Fillion's interests were divided between ceramics and enamel on copper. His early enamel work explored contrasts; matte oxidized surfaces as opposed to brightly colored transparents. He painted abstracts as well as open, atmospheric landscapes of ice and flooded terrain. Alongside these pieces, he produced jewelry and hammer-wrought plates, demonstrating a broad technical range.



A pivotal moment came in 1961, when a grant allowed him to study ceramics in Italy. Within months, he abandoned ceramics entirely, finding the medium too restrictive for the innovation he sought. Instead, he enrolled in an enameling program, where he learned:

- Hammering complex forms
- Mechanical and acid engraving
- Welding
- Advanced shaping techniques

Equally influential were his encounters with primitive and early Renaissance painting, which would surface in his work years later.



Science Fiction, Celestial Worlds, and Technical Curiosity

After returning to Quebec, Fillion began experimenting with cut and hammered shapes, often creating bas-relief pieces, sometimes with religious themes.

In 1966–67, he traveled to England intending to study glassmaking, but enamel remained his central passion. During this period, he produced an exhibition of enamel works inspired by science fiction; a theme that continued to animate his work upon returning home. Suns, planets, comets, and other celestial phenomena became recurring motifs, reflecting both his imagination and his technical preoccupation with light and transparency.

The Italian Influence and the Human Figure

By the 1970s, the Renaissance influence from his time in Italy became unmistakable. Fillion turned increasingly toward the human figure, exploring presence, gesture, and expression through enamel's luminous surfaces.



Image Shown Left

Untitled

Sifted Enamel on Copper

23" x 19"

1977

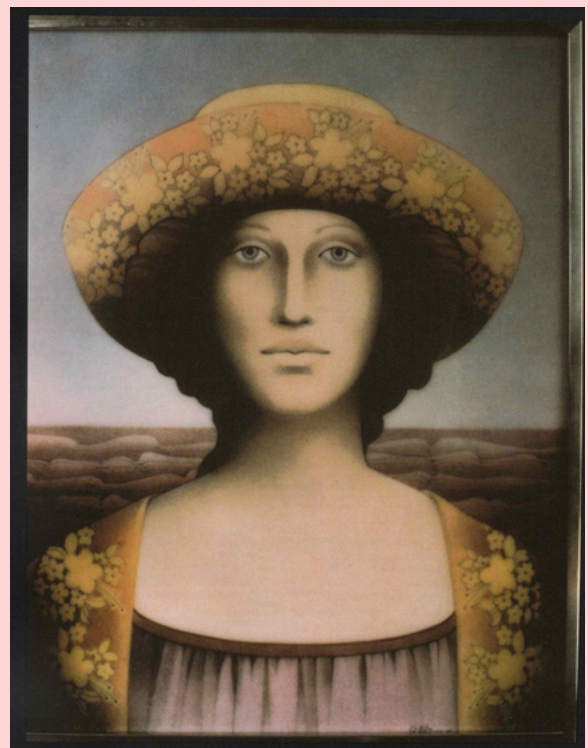
Image Shown Right

Untitled

Sifted Enamel on Copper

16" x 13"

1979



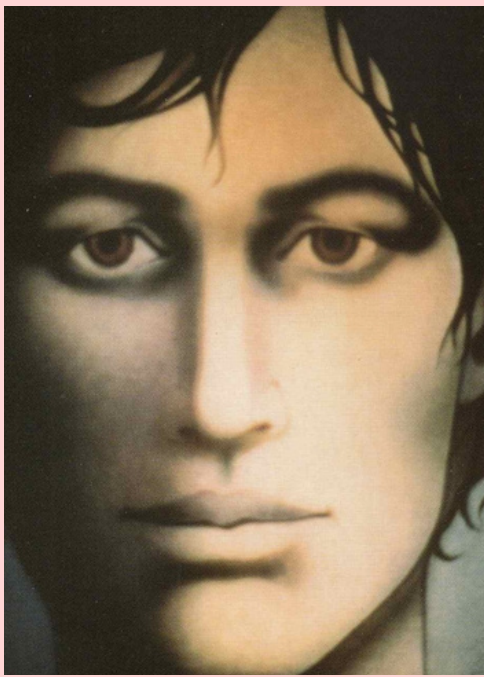


Image Shown Left
 "Jeune Homme"
 Sifted Enamel on Copper
 10" x 13"
 1975

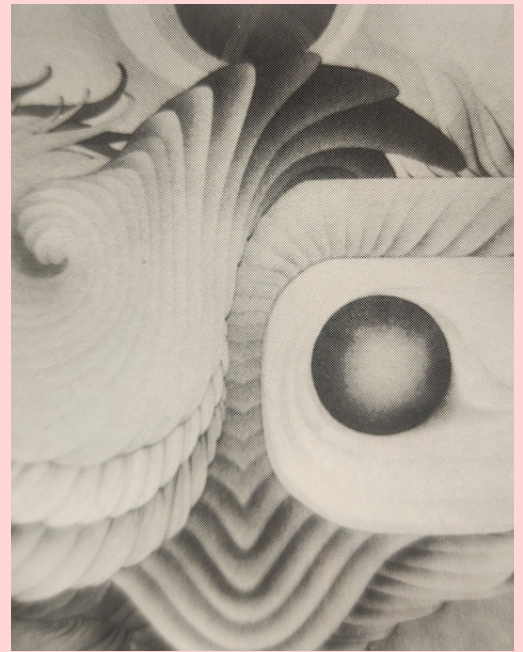


Image Shown Right
 Untitled
 Sifted Enamel on Copper
 19" x 16"
 1981

In 1976, he moved to the countryside, where the long Quebec winters inspired a new direction. He painted on white backgrounds, capturing snow, people, and winter landscapes. He pushed the technique of dry-sifting enamel toward the subtlety of oil painting, seeking softness and nuance rarely associated with enamel.

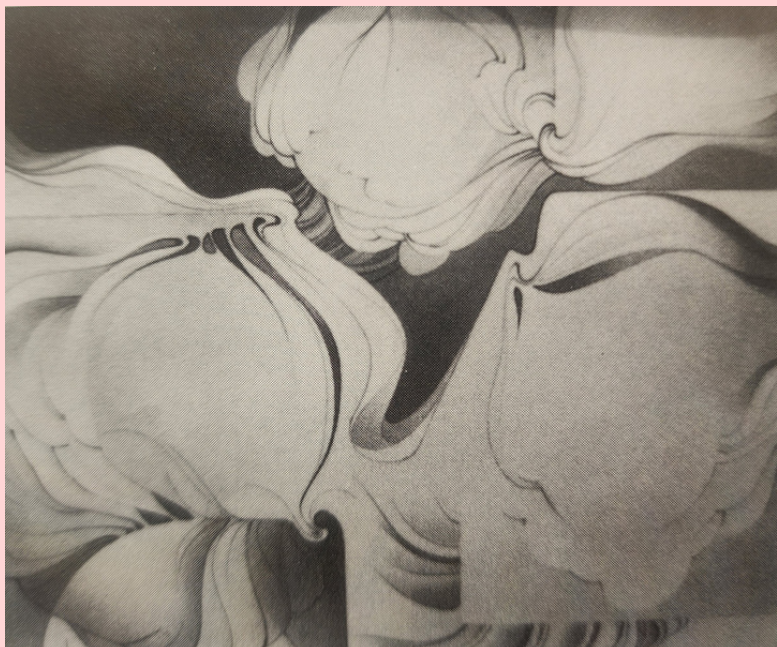
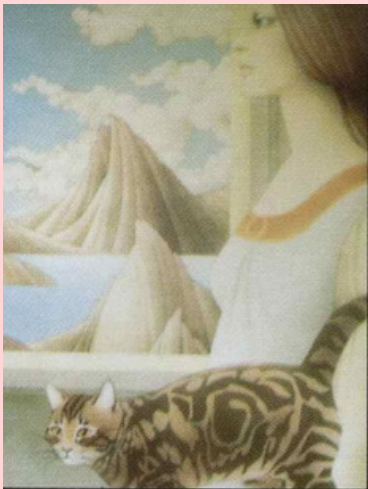


Image Shown Right
 Untitled
 Sifted Enamel on Copper
 13" x 16"
 1979

Myth, Mystery, and the Esoteric

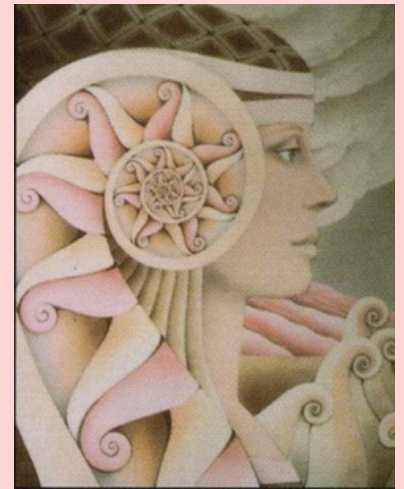
Entering the 1980s, Fillion's figures became less tied to a specific time or place. They appeared mythical, archetypal, or even otherworldly; ambassadors from imagined realms. His palette softened, and shell forms emerged as a recurring symbol, suggesting themes of protection, origin, or transformation.



Untitled
Sifted Enamel on Copper
27" x 19"
1982



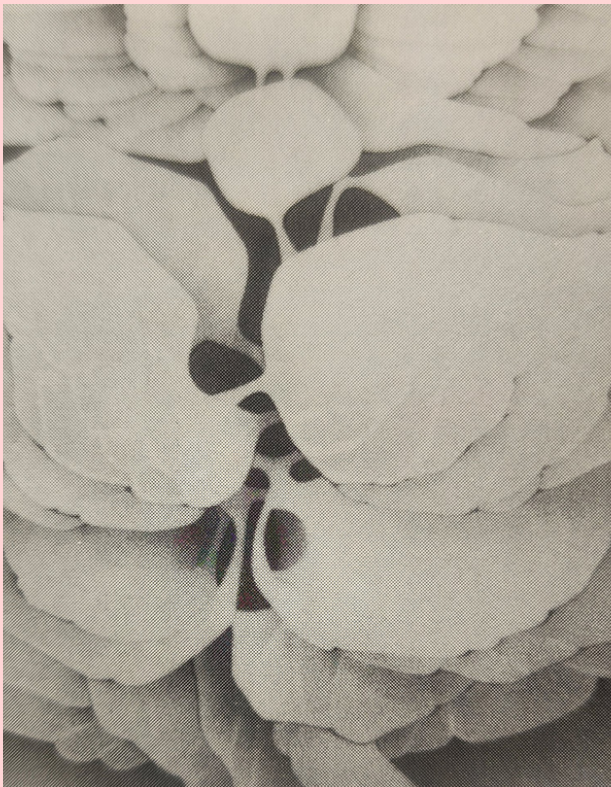
Untitled
Sifted Enamel on Copper
19" x 16"
1984



Untitled
Sifted Enamel on Copper
19" x 16"
1988

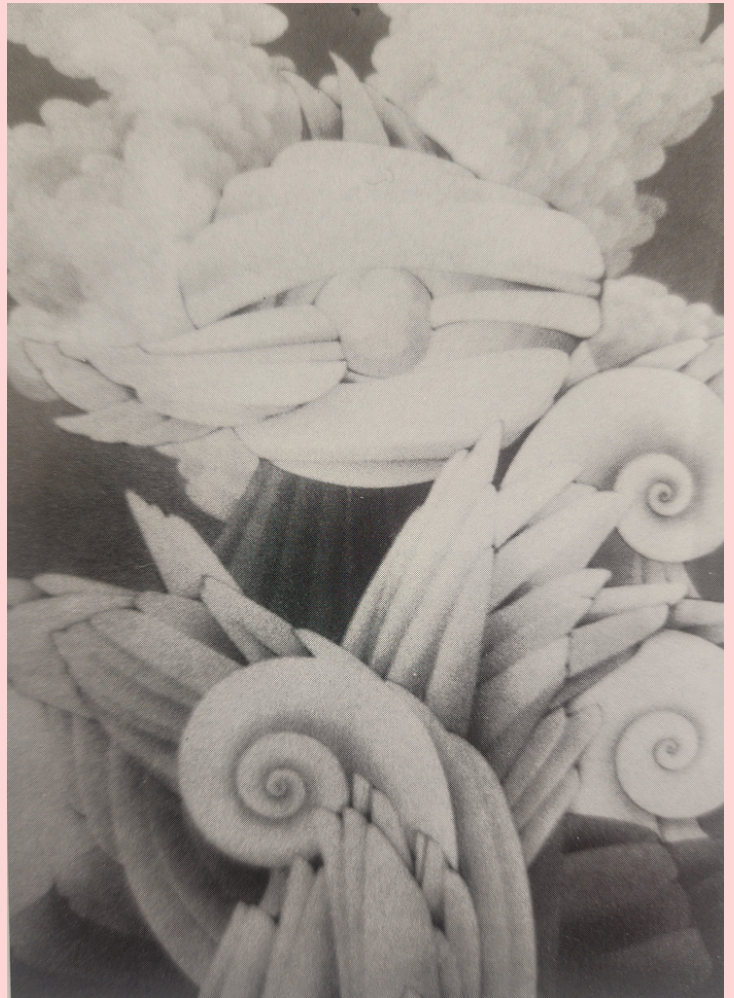
A New Direction

By the early 1990s, Fillion expressed readiness to explore new artistic directions, with shape once again returning to the center of his concerns. His decades-long journey, spanning continents, techniques, and thematic evolutions, reflects an artist continually seeking the next frontier of expression.



26" x 23"

Both Images
Untitled
Sifted Enamel on Copper
1990



23" x 26"



Legacy

The 1991 Glass on Metal feature captures an artist driven by inquiry and technical mastery, always reaching toward new possibilities. Normand Fillion's work remains a defining chapter in enameling, especially his unparalleled command of dry-sifting, a technique he elevated to a level of subtlety and precision rarely seen in the field. His ability to create soft transitions, atmospheric depth, and painterly nuance through sifting alone stands as a testament to how the medium can mirror vision, rigor, and the landscapes that shape us.

A piece by Normand Fillion was acquired by Woodrow Carpenter and is now part of the permanent collection at the CEC Museum, where it remains an example of his distinctive approach to enamel.

Image Shown Right





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>