

## **Penny Murphy - Art Autobiography**

I left school early to do art and spent two years full-time studying commercial art at Central Technical college in Brisbane. During my course we had only one painting class which was with Melville Haysom, but it was in oils which I did not enjoy very much. After Tech I worked in a small advertising agency as the only artist and on an hourly rate, which they came to regret, as I took time off to go to technical college again, one morning a week to do pottery with Carl McConnell. During that time, I joined up with the ladies in Melville Haysom's Saturday morning class. We would meet at different places in the centre of Brisbane and painted on site.

During this time, and later when I was governessing at Talwood, I started producing pen and watercolour paintings of local old buildings. I then returned home for a year before getting married and in that time, again attended Melville Haysom's Saturday morning classes. I visited him on his property a couple of times, and he came to our wedding.

After getting married and moving to Meandarra I joined up with a few other interested local 'would be artists' and we became the Glenmorgan Art Group, and then became one of Mervyn Moriarty's earliest groups receiving tuition from The Flying Art School.

When he included a potter as one of the tutors, I immediately changed to that. One of the potters was Phillip McConnell, the son of Carl McConnell. Keven Grealy was another wonderful pottery tutor I had.

I started attending McGregor Summer Schools in 1981 when they had a pottery course with Kevin Grealy as tutor and later studied silver jewellery making and cloisonne enamelling there for 20 years with Val Aked and Carolyn Delzoppo before changing to printmaking classes. I have attended McGregor schools fifty times as it is a wonderful place to learn. I continue now with watercolours and printmaking.

## **PRINTING METHODS**

### **EMBOSSING**

A stiff cardboard or matboard is used to make an embossing plate. The design is cut into the card to different depths or even right through. The deeper the cut is made the higher the impression will be when printed. The card is then given a couple of layers of lacquer to waterproof it as the paper used to print must be damp when put through the press on top of the plate. If no colour is used it is called a 'blind embossing'. Colour can be added by using a roller to apply etching ink across the plate before printing. The colour will be in the background areas of the print when finished and the cut-out areas will be white and raised.

### **ETCHINGS (INTAGLIO PRINTING)**

*ACID ETCHING & DRYPOINT* are both forms of *INTAGLIO* printing.

When *ACID ETCHING*, a metal plate cut from copper, zinc, steel or aluminium can be used. The surface of the metal plate is covered with an acid-resistant ground which is like a thin bitumen into which the image is drawn with a fine point to expose the metal below. The plate is then put in an acid bath which eats into it where the metal is exposed. Shades of grey can be introduced using many fine lines or Aquatint. If using aluminium any larger exposed area put in the acid will give an even shade of grey with the tone depending on the length of time in the acid bath.

To print the etching plate, it is coated with ink which is forced into the lines and etched areas with a scraper which is usually a small square of matboard. The ink used is the texture of oil paint. The surface is cleaned off with a coarse type of cheesecloth and polished clean with pages from telephone books and tissue and it is then ready to print. The printing paper which is dampened is placed on the plate with a thick blanket on top. All are then 'pulled' or rolled through the press by hand and the pressure required to pick up the ink leaves a visible plate mark on the edge of the print. This process must be repeated for each individual print or even more times if colours need to be printed separately. Several colours can be used on the one plate or additional plates can be made and used to provide the different colours.

*DRYPOINT* when the is drawn or scratched directly into the plate surface (metal or plastic) with a sharp pointed metal scribe and inked and printed the same as an acid etching.

### **MONOPRINTS AND SOLAR PRINTS**

*MONOPRINTING* is a form of printmaking that has lines or images that can only be made once, unlike most printmaking, which allows for multiple originals. There are many techniques of mono-printing.

*SOLAR PRINTS* can be made from photos, drawings in pencil or other mediums, or even photocopies of feathers or leaves etc. The image must then be scanned to the computer and a printout made on acetate. This is placed on the face of a special plate whose surface reacts to light. These are clamped together under glass and exposed to sun for just a few minutes or to another special light source. The areas on the plate protected by the dark areas on the acetate remain soft while the sun has hardened the rest. It is then sponged in warm water which washes out the softer areas. After this it is returned to the light source to harden the entire plate. It can then be inked up in the same way as an etching and printed.

### **JEWELLERY**

*MOKUME* is small sheets of different metals (copper and fine silver in mine) are stacked together and then heated with a large gas torch flame till soldered together. This stack is then thinned by hammering and putting through a rolling mill. When thin enough it is hammered from the back with a ball punch on wood so that there is an uneven surface on top. When this is filed off a lovely pattern of the layered metals is revealed, and this can then be used in jewellery making.

## **LINOPRINTS AND WOODCUTS (RELIEF PRINTS)**

*LINOCUT* is done, as the name suggests on lino, usually on a special type sold in art shops. For a one colour linocut the areas you want to print are left untouched and the rest is cut away and the ink, usually black is applied with a roller to the surface.

*REDUCTION LINOCUT* is the method used for a multi coloured linocut. For a start only the areas to be left white are cut out and the lightest colour is rolled over all the remaining areas. This colour must be printed on every sheet in the edition. If you want to end up with 10 prints, then ten must be printed with that first colour and possibly a few extra to allow for mistakes along the way. Next cut out the areas on the plate that you have just printed that you want to remain the lightest colour and roll the next palest colour you are going to use over the remaining area and print again all the sheets in the edition. You continue to repeat this until you have used all the colours needed, getting darker each layer.

If you wish you can use a second piece of lino and introduce a different colour, printing it alternately with the other colour of the same depth or tone.

*MOKUHANGA* is a traditional Japanese printmaking (Wood Cut) method which uses multiple carved wood blocks for inking separate colour portions of the printed image. It is a method of hand printing, and no press is needed. More than one colour section can be carved on a wood block but only one colour will be hand printed at a time. The block will be inked up with a sumi ink (black), or watercolour or gouache for the colours. Carved registration marks called kentō are used to ensure the registration is exact between the application of each block.

Water based colours are applied by special brushes to the block over which the damp Japanese paper is then placed face down and rubbed with a handheld barron to transfer the ink to the paper. This process is repeated for each separate colour and to achieve graduation of colour. As a colour is applied on each sheet of paper printed it is put aside and covered to keep damp until all sheets have been done with that section of the carved block, then the next colour is applied to all sheets and so on until all sections carved have been printed.

## **COLLAGRAPH (INTAGLIO PRINTING)**

A *COLLAGRAPH* is an Intaglio technique in which objects (cardboard, fibres, fabrics and organic materials etc) are added to the surface of the plate which is usually heavy cardboard until a low relief is achieved. Layers can also be cut out of the cardboard adding additional depth. The plate is then sealed with several coats of shellac. Once the plate is dry it can be inked, wiped and printed in the same manner as an etched metal plate. Collagraph can also be printed as relief images with the ink rolled on the top surfaces only or without any ink as a blind *EMBOSSING*.

## **ENAMELLING in JEWELLERY and PICTURES**

*CLOISONNE' ENAMELLING* is done with transparent leaded enamels on pure silver sheet. Stirling silver will go black in the firings. Special fine flat silver cloisonne wire is used to make the design. The wire must stand on its edge. After the silver sheet is cleaned very well, the wire which has been shaped with fine pointed tweezers is placed on it. The enamel which is like fine sand and is damp from washing is put into place within the wire design with a fine pointed artist's brush. When all the silver sheet has been covered with enamel for the first layer it is fired in an electric kiln at about 820 degrees centigrade for approximately one and a half minutes for a piece 2"x1". It is put in when the kiln has reached that temperature and taken out as soon as the enamel is melted.

This process of adding enamel is repeated many times until the level of the enamel has reached the top of the cloisonne wires or a little above. After that it is filed back by hand with a diamond file exposing the top of all the cloisonne wires. This makes the surface of the enamel dull, so the piece is then put back into the kiln one last time until the enamel is again glossy.