the art and influences of

Kent State University School of Art Gallery

14 October - 13 November 1996
Acknowledgements

Since becoming Gallery Director in 1985, I have helped organize seven enameling exhibitions in three separate gallery spaces at Kent State University. This focus on enamel art is appropriate since northeastern Ohio has been a significant center of enameling for the past sixty years. However, an exhibit honoring J. Mel Someroski is even more appropriate since he has been influential in maintaining the area's reputation for craft production.

Many individuals and institutions helped make this important project possible. I am especially grateful to Deanna Robb who worked with me in organizing the exhibition and related activities. Elizabeth Turrell and Faye Rooke wrote catalogue essays and provided enthusiastic support. Their help was invaluable. I would also like to thank the Gallery Staff, especially our designer, Michele Hudak, who maintained her calm in the face of demanding deadlines. Michele was able to produce quality products with very little time allocated. Mel’s sister, Jacklyn S. Vittimberga, and his entire family need to be acknowledged for without them, this exhibition would not have been possible.

It is also necessary to thank our various financial supporters. These include the Ohio Arts Council and Kent State University’s College of Fine and Professional Arts. In addition, special support came from the exhibition benefactors who are listed at the end of this catalogue. They made the catalogue possible, and I am grateful to them.

Fred T. Smith, Director
School of Art Galleries
I first met Mel Someroski when he invited me to be one of the visiting artists for the new Large-Scale Enameling Blossom Summer workshop in 1990. I had known of Mel and the Enamels Program at Kent for a number of years, so I was particularly pleased finally to meet him. We became firm friends.

His legacy to enameling has many standards: his students, many of whom are now teaching and producing work; a tradition of enamels at Kent State University enhanced by a continuing commitment, and the Large-Scale Out-Reach program. He was a key player in raising the profile of enameling, both at the national and international level, through sheer enthusiasm and dedication. He was widely known and respected for his role as curator of “The Cleveland Enamelists 1930-1955”, “Fireworks: Enamel on Metal” in 1990, and “Contemporary American, British and European Enamelists” in 1994; and, of course, his commitment to the Enamelist Society.

Through his teaching, he instilled not only an appreciation for values of tradition, but also he encouraged his students to see the rich potential of enamel as a contemporary medium for expression.

It is entirely fitting and appropriate that this memorial exhibition “The Art and Influence of J. ‘Mel’ Someroski” should be organized and held at the Kent State University School of Art Gallery. Although his horizons and interests were broad, I know that Mel felt the program at KSU was his life’s work and that Ohio was his home. I suspect that of all possible venues for this exhibition, Kent would have been his first choice.

Elizabeth Turrell, President
British Enamel Society
J. Mel Someroski: Colleague, Friend, and Mentor

Nearly a year ago in October 1995, 250 people gathered to pay tribute to Mel Someroski and his family at the memorial service in his honor at The Kent State University Museum. Students, colleagues, friends, and family were in attendance because he had touched their lives in a personal way. October 14, 1996 through November 13, 1996, the School of Art Gallery celebrates the art and influences of this talented man. In showcasing Someroski’s work, the Gallery pays tribute to a man dedicated to his art, his students, his family, and his ideals.

When selecting the work for this exhibition, Fred Smith and I were constantly reminded of the exceptional breadth of Mel’s talents, from his drawings throughout his career to the plique-a-jour enamels in progress at the time of his death. It was drawing and enameling that he was teaching just before he retired in 1993, after 32 years at Kent State University.

While, Someroski enrolled in an Amigos De Las Americas program that took him to the Nicaraguan highlands and the Amazon basin where he assisted with immunizations. “The sites were beautiful, spectacular with natural wonders. The plights of the people living there with whom I worked were desperate and tragic.” These thoughts were the beginnings of Someroski’s Fibre Performance Ensemble, a group of international recognition which gave workshops and performances in Poland, Australia, Japan and the United States.

In 1988, Mel was invited to be the artist in residence at the Ferro Corporation and when he was interviewed about the gift of a 20 foot gradient furnace, he said “Not only will it expand the scale and the potential for enameling students, there’s a possibility of cooperation with painters, interior designers and architects—possibly workshops and residences for professionals. We are very hopeful that it will have meaning beyond the immediate classroom.” During his last four years at the University he worked to see these goals attained.

The Agnes Gund Memorial Award Traveling Scholarship from the Cleveland Institute of Art, the Ohio Designer Craftsmen Achievement Award, Kent State University’s Distinguished Teaching Award and Fellow of the American Craft Council highlight Someroski’s long list of honors. His work is in many museum collections including the Cleveland Museum of Art, the North Carolina Museum of Art, and the Johnson Wax Company Collection. He designed the Founder’s Scholarship Award for the University and created three university presidential medallions.

In an article Mel wrote for Dialogue Magazine in 1984, he explained how his ideas emerge for a performance...

“Think about it, Dream about it, Write about it, Sketch about it....”

More than strictly the basis for a good performance, this credo fashioned his life’s work. Through his art and his sensibility, Mel Someroski deeply touched the lives of thousands. It is with great respect and admiration that I participate in this tribute to my mentor—a fine artist, friend and colleague.

Deanna R. Robb, Coordinator
Large Scale Enameling OutReach Program
J. Mel Someroski: Friend and Colleague

In “Education and the Significance of Life, Krishamurti suggests that from the educational process the individual should emerge and the teacher should disappear. I like that idea.” (Someroski, J.M. Glass on Enamel, Vol.11, No. 6, December 1992, p.123) J. Mel Someroski, Emeritus Professor of Art at Kent State, will (in spite of his “liking that idea”) never disappear. His life has been one of great significance and with this retrospective exhibition we will know and respect him even more.

I can't remember exactly when Mel Someroski first entered my life. He was certainly there peripherally during my early enameling years...a far-off star in a distant constellation one of the most respected educators who taught at Kent State University (Ohio), at Penland School of Crafts ( North Carolina) and at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Tennessee. His artistic reputation and teaching influence were evident in several studio arts: enamel, metal smithing, weaving, ceramics, and drawing. Performance Art was still to come.

Years passed, enamelists became more numerous and more active and, in 1987, The Enamelist Society was formed. As a Board Trustee, I had many opportunities to meet members at the biennial conferences. At a round table on education, there he was participating...just like everyone else...only more what you wanted everyone else to be. Later, on the Educational Committee, his sincere interest, solid involvement and years of experience contributed greatly to the substructure of the Society. Many of the objectives and procedures of the young organization were initiated by Mel. An indication of his recognized abilities was his 1994 nomination, by acclamation, to vice-president of the Enamelist Society.

Mel was a man of vision who could set goals and achieve them. His hard work and enthusiasm were catalysts to supporters. Capitalizing on the creative energy of northeastern Ohio and the availability of manufactured enamels, enameling facilities, and enamel instructors, Mel was pivotal in sustaining the region's reputation as the center for enamel in the United States. This was most evident in the realization of the Large-Scale Enameling Outreach Program at Kent State University, which developed, out of the donation of a 7000-pound, nineteen-and-one-half-foot gradient furnace by the Ferro Corporation. Ferro's continued support of the kiln and Mel's 1988 appointment to artist-in-residence at Ferro raised the international profile of enamel in the worlds of both craft and fine art. Mel's commitment to and excellence in crafts was further acknowledged when he became a fellow in the American Craft Council in 1992.

On several occasions, students from the Ontario College of Art, Toronto, were fortunate to participate in the Large Kiln Program. The facility is remarkable, as are the faculty. This opportunity to test techniques and then to work on larger-size steel...to move from concept to an expanded reality...“is a lively engagement with materials, techniques and ideas.” This stimulating experience heightened the students' appreciation of the scope and creative potential of the enamel media. It also provided several personal glimpses of Mel Someroski that I would like to share with you:
To the students
"This work is wonderful! Such energy! You’re an inspiration to us all!"

About the students
“They really must see the University and the Kent area...you’ll just have to lock them out of the studio or even turn the kiln off.”

About recommending restaurants
“You could go here, or here...I’ve got it...just follow me.”

Quietly, to stressed waitress
“What would you recommend as your best vegetarian..”

And my favorite recollection...in the claustrophobic, clamorous, hi-energy atmosphere of an over-crowded van... Mel.. serenely meditating.

We will always be grateful for his wisdom, his perception, sensitivity, gentle humour, his openness, patience, reliability, understanding and dedication.

“Enamel has reached across the ages with its seductive colors and surfaces, and with a history that suggests that it will be with us long into the future.” (Someroski, J.M. Contemporary American Canadian, & European Enamelists, Kent State University School of Art Gallery exhibition catalogue, P.30)

You’ll be with us too, Mel. Miss you!

Fay Rooke,
Toronto, Canada

J. Mel Someroski: Colleague and Teacher

James Melvin Someroski - born 13 March 1932 in Piney Fork, Ohio - has influenced many people in Ohio and beyond as teacher, arts advocate, humanitarian, organizer, concerned citizen, and artist. I have been fortunate to have known Mel in a number of these capacities. Mel’s career reflects a diverse range of interests and a strong commitment to sharing his expertise and enthusiasm for life with students and colleagues. Mel Someroski received a B.F.A. from the Cleveland Institute of Arts and a B.S. and M.A. from Kent State University. He also studied at Cranbrook Academy of Art and the Cape School of Art in Provincetown, MA. Throughout his life, Mel received many honors and awards such as the Distinguished Craftsman Award from the Ohio Designer Craftsmen. In 1992, J. Mel Someroski was made a Fellow of the American Crafts Council, at which time he observed that “a life of crafts has been a spiritual awakening and enlightenment.” And in 1985, Mel was honored by Kent State University with a Distinguished Teaching Award. While aware of his many achievements, Mel considered himself to be first and foremost a teacher. It is, therefore, appropriate that a selection of work by some of his many students be included in this exhibition. As a faculty member at Kent State University since 1956, Mel was, in large part, responsible for the early development of the School of Art’s Crafts Division. Over the years, he taught courses in weaving, ceramics, metal smithing, drawing, design, as well as enameling. Mel also taught at Penland School of Craft in North Carolina, at Arrowmont School in Tennessee, The Art Institute of Chicago, the University of Warsaw in Poland, and the Government College of Arts and Crafts in Sri Lanka. A few years ago, Mel wrote:
"In over 35 years, one of the most constant things in my life has been teaching arts and crafts. Teaching forges links between past and present, and I see my students continuing that work."

For Mel, teaching involved much more than the classroom experience. He was a strong advocate of the need for both special learning opportunities and a variety of workshops to benefit students, fellow artists, and community members. In response to this need, Mel established exciting art programs at Stonington on Deer Isle, Maine, and at St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. At Mel’s Barber Shop in Stonington, two or three Kent students set up a production studio and marketed their crafts, each summer beginning in 1976. In the Gallery’s 1988 catalogue featuring Stonington enamelists, Deanna Robb noted that:

"Kent State University’s summer proprietors, usually two advanced enamelists, are completely responsible for the shop, including equipment, sales, and upkeep. Practicing these skills in tiny Deer Isle in Stonington, enhances the students experience, making it unique."

Mel also involved students from Kent’s Theodore Roosevelt High School in the design and production of murals for the MetroHealth Medical Center in Cleveland and the city hall annex in Kent. Both of these murals were made on the large scale 7000-pound kiln that Mel convinced the Ferro Corporation of Cleveland to donate to the School of Art.

With the large furnace at Kent, Mel along with his former students - Deanna Robb and Kathy Taylor - established the Enamel Outreach Program. This ambitious program allows artists and students from all over the world to utilize this large scale furnace. The artists included in this exhibition have all participated in the outreach program. Finally, Mel was committed to the educational importance of art exhibitions, and I worked with him closely in this particular area. Together, we curated two major exhibits for the School of Art Gallery: The Cleveland Enamelists 1930-1950 (1989) and Contemporary American, Canadian, and European Enamelists (1994). We also organized two enamel exhibits (1991 and 1992) for the Eells Gallery at Blossom Music Center. Although Mel had proposed the Cleveland Enamelists exhibition to two previous School of Art Gallery Directors, I am glad that I was able to work with him on that project. It was both a pleasure and an all consuming experience. More importantly, I got to know Mel and we became friends - in spite of the difficulties of fund raising and organizing a fairly complex exhibit. His enthusiasm, insight, and strong sense of design produced an exceptional installation. In addition, his strong belief in the Gallery as a teaching institution resulted in a series of valuable educational programs. Mel will be missed by all of us who believe in the value of art and education in our society. I still feel the loss of a good friend, dedicated teacher, and concerned human being.

Fred T. Smith, Director
School of Art Galleries
Contemporaries

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C
a. **Babs Bannenberg** Netherlands

**Exhibitions:**
Tokyo, Japan; Coburg, Germany; Barcelona, Spain; Laval, Canada

**Memberships:**
V.E.S. (Dutch Design); Dutch Enamelist Society (U.S.A.)

b. **Harlan W. Butt** United States

**Solo Exhibitions:**
1995 Twenty Year Retrospective University of North Texas Art Gallery, Denton, TX
1994 Twenty Year Retrospective University Museum S.I.U., Carbondale, IL

**Select Group Exhibitions:**
1996 International Metalsmiths Exhibition University of Wisconsin, La Crosse, WS
1995 International Exhibition of Enameling Art Ueon Royal Museum, Tokyo, Japan

c. **Amal Ghosh** United Kingdom

**Exhibitions:**
1994 *Contemporary American, Canadian & European Enamelist*, K.S.U. School of Art Gallery, Kent, Ohio
1993 Kunstverein Coburg, Germany
1993 CCA Galleries, Cambridge, United Kingdom

**Awards:**
1986 *L’Art de l’Email*, Limoges, France
1988 Enameling Competition, Barcelona, Spain

d. **John Puskas** United States

**Exhibitions:**
1994 *Contemporary American, Canadian & European Enamelist*, K.S.U. School of Art Gallery, Kent, Ohio
1991 *Fireworks by John Puskas*, K.S.U. Eells Art Gallery, Blossom Music Center, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

**Awards:**
Cleveland May Show; Nursing Careers National; Wichita Museum, Wichita, Kansas

e. **June Schwarz** United States

**Exhibitions:**
1994 *Contemporary American, Canadian & European Enamelist*, K.S.U. School of Art Gallery, Kent, Ohio

f. **Fay Rooke** Canada

**Exhibitions:**
1994 *Contemporary American, Canadian & European Enamelist*, K.S.U. School of Art Gallery, Kent, Ohio
1994 *Containment: The Space Within*, Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery, Waterloo, Ontario
1993 *Enamel Contemplation*, Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery, Waterloo, Ontario

g. **Jean Tudor** United States

**Exhibitions:**
1996 Three-person exhibition, The Columbia Club, Indianapolis, IN
1995 Association Mexicana de Esmaltistas, A.C. Invitational, Mexico City
1995 Email 3, Coburg, Germany
1994 *Contemporary American, Canadian, and European Enamelist*, Kent State University

h. **JoAnn Tanzer** United States

Professor Emeritus of Art, San Diego State University; B.A./M.A. Michigan State University Ed.D. Columbia University

Dr. Tanzer has developed a degree program at San Diego State University and helping to establish Enamel Guild: West and Studio Five of San Diego.

**Exhibitions:**
Tokyo, Japan; Limoges, France; Coburg, Germany; Barcelona, Spain; as well as many national juried and invitational exhibitions

i. **Elizabeth Turrell** United Kingdom

**Exhibitions:**
1996 The Works Gallery, New York
1994 *Contemporary American, Canadian & European Enamlst*, K.S.U. School of Art Gallery, Kent, Ohio
1993 The City Art Gallery, Leicester, U.K.
1993 Kunstverein Coburg, Germany

**Awards:**
1986 *L’Art de l’Email*, Limoges, France
1987 Chairman’s Award, Enameling Art in Japan
1989 Enameling Art in Japan
a. Carol Adams  *Peninsula, Ohio*  
M.F.A. 1976

RTA Waterfront Station, Cleveland, Ohio  
Laser Show, 100th Birthday Celebration-  
Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania  
One Person Show-9th Street Studio-  
Cleveland, Ohio  
Elanvital Gallery, Boston  

_Graffiti V_  
17 1/2" x 14" x 4"  

b. Karen Schulze-Alexander  *Creston, Ohio*  
B.S. 1988, M.A. 1997

Gordon Beall Frank Gallery 1996  
Blue Moon Gallery 1994  

_Box 1995, 3"x 3"x 17.5"_  

Rebecca Brannon  *Worcester, Massachusetts*  
M.F.A. 1985

Worchester, MA Center for Crafts Exhibitions 1996  
Lexington Society for Arts and Crafts workshops  
DeCordova Museum workshops  
Horizons Center for Crafts, Sunderlend, MA workshops  

c. Marlene Byer  *Rocky River, Ohio*  
M.A. 1975

Art Teacher (K-5) Cleveland Public School  
Greater Columbus Arts Festival 1980s  
Invited artist Penland School of Craft, North Carolina, and Arrowmont School, Tennessee 1980s  
Summer Art Shows, Ann Arbor, Michigan 1987-96  

d. Maureen Cole  *Kent, Ohio*  
B.S. 1968

Ohio Designer Craftsman: Best of 1996  
Ohio Crafts Museum Columbus, Ohio 1996  
The 25th Ohio Crafts Invitational,  
Mansfield Art Center 1995  
The 5th Juried Enamelists Society Exhibition:  
Great Expectations 1995  
Contemporary American, Canadian & European Enamelists  
Kent State University Gallery 1994  

_Fishes & Loaves, 10"x 13.5"_  

e. Rick Curtner  *Hiram, Ohio*  
B.S.A. 1990, M.F.A. 1990-present

Silvia Almond Gallery, Cleveland, Ohio 1995  
Mid-Town Gallery, Cleveland, Ohio 1995  
Mathers Mansion, Cleveland, Ohio 1992  
Penland School of Craft Scholarship, North Carolina 1989  

f. Paul C. Davis  *Cincinnati, Ohio*  
B.S. 1976, M.F.A. 1979

Shippo Conference, Tokyo, Japan 1996  
International Enamel Exhibition,  
Coburg, Germany 1995  
Contemporary American, Canadian & European Enamelists,  
Kent, Ohio 1994  
16th Annual Competitive Exhibition, Art Consortium,  
Cincinnati, Ohio 1992  

g. Andrea Dockery  
University Heights, Ohio  
University Hospital & Case Western Reserve University Cleveland  
Bicentennial Mural 1996  
Williams Gallery, Washington, D.C. 1994-96  
Art Teacher, Louis Pasteur Elementary School  
Stress, 5 7/8" x 5 3/4"

h. Diane Whitmer-Francko  
Oxford, Ohio  
B.S.N. 1974  
Quilt National - Traveling Exhibit 1995  
Visions: Quilt Art, Quilt San Diego 1996  
Quilts, Fitton Center, Summer 1996  
Greater Hamilton Art Show Spring 1996  
Many Moons Over Serpent Mound

i. Abby Shindler Goldblatt  
Silver Spring, Maryland  
Faculty Show, Montgomery College, Rockville, Maryland 1982, 1983  
National Enamelist Gild Shows  
Washington D.C. Metropolis Area 1973-1983  
Other Spaces, 12"x 12 3/4" x 6 1/2"

j. Gretchen Goss  
Cleveland Heights, Ohio  
Contemporary Metal: Northeast Ohio Artists William Busta Gallery  
Glass on Metal: Contemporary Enamels  
Tempe Art Center Tempe, Arizona  
Metals Invitational University of Akron, Akron Ohio  
Comforts of Home Fava, Oberlin, Ohio  
Farm Series, 1995, 6" x 23"

k. Brian Harvey  
Akron, Ohio  
Taught Jewelry, Canton Art Institute 1989-91  
Young Ohioans Show 1990  
Taste of Stow Art Exhibition 1996  
Student Annual, Kent State University 1989  
Enamel Exhibition, American Enamel Symposium, Virginia 1995

l. Michael Jaszcak  
Parma, Ohio  
M.F.A. 1994  
Great Expectations, Juried Show 1995  
Great Expectation Juried Student Show 1995  
Channeling New Technique in Enamels, published Feb. 1992  
Glass on Metal  
Kennedy Prize for Excellence in Art, Western Reserve College  
Pinecone, 8cm x 6cm x 1.5cm
m. Joan Parcher  Providence, Rhode Island
   B.F.A. 1979
   National Endowment for the Arts 1990
   Solo Exhibition- Susan Cummins Gallery
   Mill Valley, California 1995
   Contemporary American Jewelry, Edinburgh International
   Festival, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland 1996
   One Person Exhibition Mobilia Gallery,
   Cambridge, Massachusetts 1996
   Polka Dot Brooch, 1996, 2 1/2" x 2 1/8" x 13/16"

n. Deanna Robb  Hudson, Ohio
   M.F.A. 1987
   Coordinator Large Scale Enamel
   Outreach Program
   Present, The Enamelist Society
   Juried Enamelist Society Exhibit, Northfolk,
   Virginia 1995
   Ohio Metals: A Legacy, Ohio Designer
   Craftsmen Traveling Exhibit 1993-94
   Brandywine II, 11 7/8" x 13 1/8"

o. Ursula Ryan  North Olmstead, Ohio
   M.A. 1988
   The Shippo Conference, Juried Exhibition, Tokyo,
   Japan 1996
   'Email International Juried Exhibition, Coburg
   Germany 1995
   Best Of Ohio 95 Columbus, Ohio
   Best Of Ohio 94 Columbus, Ohio
   Sanibel Blossom, 11 1/2" x 9" x 1 1/4"

p. Sidney Scherr  Sedon, Arizona
   B.F.A. 1978
   American Jewelry Design Council Award 1994
   Sidney Scherr Jewelry 1985-1995
   Wright-Scherr Goldsmith Gallery 1994-present
   Two Person Show, Relative Visions, Akron Art
   Museum 1995
   Exit Wounds

Kathy Simone  Chagrin Falls, Ohio
   B.F.A. 1991
   Founder of Blue Moon Gallery, Chagrin Falls;
   Artists in Residence at Chagrin Falls High School and
   developer of enameling program
   Fairmount Art Center 1995-1996
   Valley Arts Center, Chagrin Falls 1992/1993/1995

q. Cathy K. Taylor  Lake Milton, Ohio
   M.F.A. 1989
   Juried Enamelist Society Convention Show Northfolk,
   Virginia 1995
   Fireworks, Enamels on Metal, Eells Gallery, Blossom Music
   Center, Cuyahoga Falls,
   Ohio 1990
   Contemporary American, Canadian & European
   Enamelist Society 1994
   Temporary Part-time, Asst. Professor, Kent State University,
   Large Scale Enamels
   Inside Out, 20" x 20"

r. Marge Widmar  Westlake, Ohio
   M.A. 1975
   Ohio Designer Craftsman, Best of 1996
   N.E.H. Grant to study Renaissance
   Humanism in Florence, Italy 1994
   Ohio Crafts Invitational, Mansfield Art Center 1994
   May Show, Cleveland Museum of Art 1993, 1988,
   1987, 1983
   9th Street Gallery, Cleveland One Person Show 1991
   For Mel, 8" x 20"
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