



Thursday, November 29, 1984 O&E

(F)1E



MINDY SAUNDERS/staff photographer



Barbara Klein (right), Bloomfield Township Library's head of youth services, asked Carolyn Hall to create the soft sculpture bears for the library's 20th birthday celebration.

## Birthday bears

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

**L**ITTLE CHILDREN like to touch the bears' noses. Parents bringing their children to the Bloomfield Township Library Youth Room see them and smile.

The three soft-sculpture acrobat bears hanging above the shelves, made by Carolyn Hall of Beverly Hills for the Bloomfield Township Library, bring a warm, happy feeling to this pleasant room.

The idea for the commission took off when the Friends of the Library asked Barbara Klein, head of youth services, if there was anything she would like to do with some of their book-sale funds. Yes there was, she responded. How about commissioning Carolyn Hall to do soft sculpture for the 20th birthday celebration, held on Oct. 21?

Each of the three bears is about four-feet high. Little children like to be held up to touch their noses, and older ones give them friendly "high five" greetings.

Klein said, "I think the idea of having soft sculpture done by somebody local is very important. This is an important part of being in a community."

**SHE HAS KNOWN** Hall for a long time, been aware of her seven books all relating to soft sculpture, particularly the most recent, "The Teddy Bear Crafts Book," as well as her skills as a studio artist.

Hall made many teddy bears — 75 in all, counting bear-related items — in preparation for this book, which contains patterns and instructions for the readers. Some of the bears were small enough to hold easily in one hand; the largest was almost 6-feet tall.

The three bears at the library are about 4-feet tall. One is seated on a swing, another hangs from rings and a third hangs by his knees from a trapeze.

Klein said, "The Friends do a lot of things you don't see — they work with dusty books in the basement (in preparation for their annual book sale). This is something special and concrete. I think the bears are wonderful. We're going to have a 'name that bear contest' the end of March. We'll have a bear party and announce the winners on March 30."

As she commented on the populari-

ty and interest in teddy bears in the past few years, Hall said, "I think people are more open now and willing to admit they've saved their bears."

Each of the library bears is individually marked. They are made of 1 1/2-inch-thick brown coating fur with lighter coating fur around their muzzles.

"I trim the fur around the eyes, nose and mouth, otherwise they look mean," Hall said. "And when you trim their fur, you have to be very careful because it doesn't grow back."

"THE BEAR on the swing is in the book as 'Gare's Bear'; the others are new patterns," Hall said.

In talking about places to exhibit her soft sculpture, Hall said, "There is no place I would rather be."

She recalled doing a soft sculpture of a macaw for Avon Township Library. The name for that colorful creature, also chosen through a contest, was Mr. Macawbre.

Hall will have a new book on soft-sculpture animals out in another few months and is at work on still another.

Little children like to be held up to touch the noses of the bears, older children give them a friendly "high five" greeting. One thing is certain, these three bears evoke immediate and friendly responses from adults and children alike.

## Art: going places it hasn't been before

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

There is no such thing as two-dimensional art, said John Torreano whose one-artist exhibition is at Susanne Hilberry Gallery of Birmingham through Dec. 15.

He may be splitting molecules of paint of photographic fixer to make his point, but this belief that anything applied to a surface makes it three-dimensional is really the basis for his art. His sculptural, painted works, many with insets of faceted glass jewels, push into space with a vigorous, graceful presence that takes control of the immediate environment, yet they remain as much painting as sculpture.

Many of his sculptural forms are geometric inspired by crystalline forms or jeweler's cuts for precious stones. He uses both convex and concave forms, because the inside/outside concept intrigues him. Geodes, ordinary looking rocks until they are split apart like walnuts to reveal the crystalline forms within, have long captured his interest.

**BORN** in Flint in 1941, Torreano did undergraduate work in art at Cranbrook and completed his master's in art at Ohio State. He's lived in New York City since 1968 and frequently has been a visiting professor of art at a university in New Mexico for a term at a time.

He said, with a smile, "I've been showing and exhibiting in New York City since 1968, which is in itself a steady kind of basic continuum."

The importance of his work was reiterated this year at Whitney Museum where he was part of the "Five Painters in New York" exhibition there that included Brad Davis, Bill Jensen, Eliza-

beth Murray and Gary Stephan. It was a survey of the work each had done in the last 12 years.

Torreano uses jewels as other painters use brush stroke in an abstract painting. And one of the most beautiful mysteries that has captured man's imagination since the beginning of time — the night skies — captured his. His jewels lend themselves well to conceptualizations relating to time, space and dimension.

As Torreano moves through the inside/outside visual dialogue, he reaches from galaxies to gemstones and ancient, primitive rituals to the present, all the time carrying on a communication process with his viewer.

The column and cross shapes, painted and set with jewels, which Torreano exhibited in the Whitney show (one of which was in an exhibit at Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum last year) suggest infinity and like each of the works in the Hilberry Gallery exhibit, pull the viewer's sights and frame of reference in new directions.

**TORREANO** said that all art is communication between artist and viewer, with the artist as well as the viewer as a member of the audience.

"It's like the artists are taking themselves and everybody else who's willing to go along to places they haven't been before — like an opera singer who takes you soaring into a range you couldn't take yourself."

Since the gems refract light, Torreano's works are different from every angle — and certainly the properties of light and color are important considerations.

The one work in the exhibit closest to

a traditional painting, which the artist described as "sky above and mud below," is a striking large diptych with the jewels in the upper part arranged with paint to suggest cuts or open

wounds. There's this same feeling in another on board without paint.

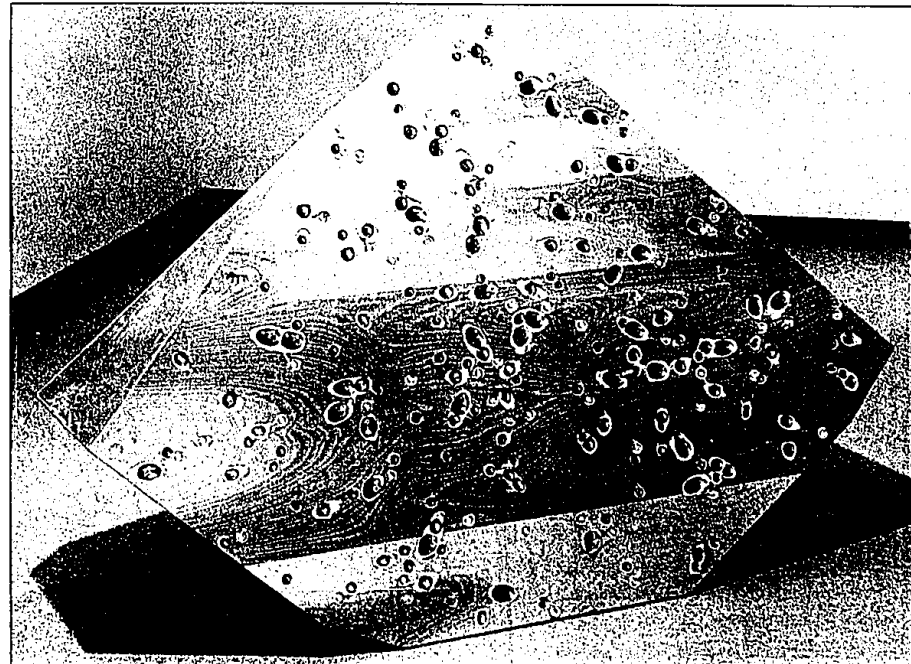
Torreano sometimes works with double meanings, the large blue octagon, set with diamond-like jewels, could be

the advancing "other world" or a symbol of body decoration worn by ancient warriors, as suggested by the artist.

"Transcendence is a part of what I've been into as a part of my work," he

said.

The exhibit continues through Dec. 15. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 555 S. Woodward, Birmingham.



At right: Standing Floor Gem 1984 — paint, glass jewels and wood, measures 40 by 60 by 2 1/2 inches. An exhibition by the artist, John Torreano, continues at Susanne Hilberry Gallery through Dec. 15.