

Creative Living

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DUANE BURLISON/staff photographer

Mark Belchenko with some of his creations, including his version of a rattle and jewelry that he classifies as statues.

Bridging gap of sculpture and jewelry

By C. L. Rugenstein
special writer

MARK BELCHENKO doesn't make jewelry, he creates wearable works of art.

Delicate, diamond-flecked gold crescents can be worn as pins, or returned to their pedestal bases to be displayed like miniature sculptures. Likewise a free-flowing gold pendant that, when set on its base, is very reminiscent of British sculptor Henry Moore's works — large, free-flowing human figures.

Moore was the inspiration for the pendant sculpture. It (titled "Homage to Henry Moore") reflects Belchenko's background and training in fine arts, and the philosophy he tries to bring to his work at Alexander Bongiorno's Gallery in Somerset Mall, Troy.

"I'VE BEEN trying to do something over the past four years — to bridge the gap between sculpture and jewelry," Belchenko said. Primarily a painter and sculptor, his jewelry-making training was on-the-job experience.

"As a result, I felt that all the jewelry I produce has to conform (to fine arts standards)," he said.

The challenge, he explained, lies in creating a piece that's not only visually balanced, but also physically balanced: as in when it's being viewed right side up as sculpture or worn inverted like a pendant or pin.

"Most jewelry . . . has a flat or back side in which a lot of things can be hidden, or unfinished. These don't have that," he said.

The view has to be from 360 degrees, like any piece of sculpture. There can't be any "dead spots."

The diamond and gold crescent pin and the pendant that Belchenko brought out were only two pieces from his collection available at Alexander Bongiorno's Gallery.

Like works of art, each piece is made in a limited, numbered edition (10 each for the jewelry-sculptures) with Belchenko's hallmark and the gold content mark on the back.

"THE PIN (which was especially made for his wife, and titled "Moons and Mountains") could be made without the diamonds," he said.

The pin would run some \$600.

Adding four or five .03 diamonds would add another \$200.

Another limited edition piece available for special gift-giving includes one entitled "Mother." Set on a pyramid-shaped, bronze base (patinated to give it a green, weathered look), it's a tribute to the "ancient" profession of motherhood, Belchenko said with a smile.

A free form, like an ice cream cone with one side open, it's of 14 karat white gold with a black cultured pearl resting on mother-of-pearl background.

Prices for the jewelry-sculptures range from \$400 to \$1,200.

But Belchenko has come up with another innovative and charming jewelry form that's just as exciting as a gift idea — the "Baby Rattle."

"It's just a 'catch' phrase" for the small, egg-shaped sculptures, Belchenko said with a laugh, but it's an attempt to give them a little more functionality — and whimsically.

He brought out three of the "rattles" to demonstrate.

"FRET OF LIFE" utilized a length of ebony, formerly a violin neck. Five fine platinum wires simulating a music staff curved up from its base over a brass bridge just below the small, silver, egg-shaped rattle.

It also came with a base to be displayed, but, Belchenko said, it was meant to be handled, as a rattle is.

"Jewelry has such a tactile quality that's compounded with these pieces, because of the combination of metal and wood," he said. "It's important (that they be) picked up."

Another, titled "Lifecycle," composed of a silver walnut, bracketed by a wishbone, and gripped handle-like at the wishbone's stem by an almond, invites viewers to play with it.

They even rattle — and that's another story. Even the inside of the rattles contain jewels.

"It's Greek folklore," Belchenko said, "that if babies or children wear coral beads it's a sign that luck will be with them the rest of their lives."

The three rattles he displayed were one-of-a-kind pieces he would not duplicate, Belchenko said. But they are available to be bought, and with others range in price from \$475

Please turn to Page 8

DREAM assignment



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Things are back to normal in the Sherwood Studios of Mark Morganroth, but earlier this year the pace was what you could call a wee bit hectic when the Southfield designer took on a quarter-of-a-million-dollar renovation of a home in Arizona.

By Marie McGee
staff writer

WHEN THE phone call came last May, Mark Morganroth's first inclination was to say no.

"It came at my busiest time," the Southfield interior designer recalled.

But then he had second thoughts.

The offer was almost too good to be true. It came from a one-time client who wanted Morganroth to completely redo a large portion of his house from top to bottom, including furniture and accessories — the whole shot.

"And don't worry about costs, he told me," Morganroth recalled. "How often do you get a commission like that? It was like a dream come true."

BUT WAIT — there's more to the story with some slightly overtones.

The offer came from former Bloomfield Hills resident Bobbie Singer, who now lives outside of Scottsdale, Ariz., and owns a successful video production company, Twin Star Productions Inc.

(Readers may recall that Singer was featured in an O&E Street Seen section story in July on his success as a blackjack player — so successful that he amassed a fortune, which allowed him to retire at age 38. Singer has been asked by casino owners not to play blackjack at their establishments. So he's done the next best thing — he teaches other people how to play via video tapes and seminars.)

"Arizona is where the house was that he wanted me to redo," said Morganroth. And while "money was no object" time was an important factor.

"I had to have the whole thing done by the first of September — in time for the Singers' son's wedding."

Needless to say the project presented a challenge that Morganroth had never faced in all his years in the design business that he literally learned at his father's knee.

HE ACCEPTED the job in June after he flew out to the Singer home and took stock of the 20-year-old three-bedroom ranch that is in an area known as Paradise Valley.

"At first, that name threw me. I wondered what I was getting into," he said with a smile.

The house was colonial in style and furnished in early American.

Morganroth, who owns Sherwood Studios on Telegraph Road, drew up plans, which called for completely changing the look to contemporary and concentrating on "bringing the outside in" through the use of colors and wide expanse of windows.

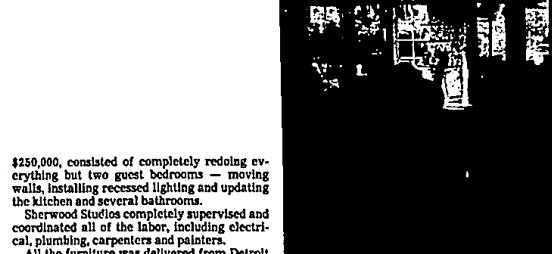
It was a natural thing to do, Morganroth said, because the Camelback Mountains "are practically in their backyard."

The Singers approved all the changes and cost estimates without exception, Morganroth said. What remained to be done was to get everything done — including getting all the furniture from Detroit to Scottsdale on time.

THE RENOVATION, which cost in excess of



Above is the Singer dining room as it now looks. Colors are soft shades of green, peach and pink. Inset photo shows it before the renovation.



\$250,000, consisted of completely redoing everything but two guest bedrooms — moving walls, installing recessed lighting and updating the kitchen and several bedrooms.

Sherwood Studios completely supervised and coordinated all of the labor, including electrical, plumbing, carpenters and painters.

All the furniture was delivered from Detroit to Arizona via trucks Morganroth rented. He personally installed all the custom pieces that were part of the renovation.

"It took us about 50 hours of driving time to make the deliveries," Morganroth said. "And amazingly everything arrived without a nick or a scratch — that doesn't happen when you're delivering locally. But I want to tell you every time we hit a bump, we worried."

Once the deliveries were made, Sherwood and his crew worked 36 hours non-stop to meet the Sept. 1 deadline, "but we made it."

The Singers were so satisfied with Morganroth's work that Bobby Singer ran a full-page ad in a local newspaper saying just how pleased they were.

The ad was a trifle embarrassing, Morganroth admitted, "because some of my friends thought I had put it in."

But this wasn't the first time the Singers have been pleased with Morganroth's work. He did their former home in the Wabek section of Bloomfield Hills about 15 years ago and were pleased.

"He told me then that if he ever hit the big time, he would have me do his house," said Morganroth. "I guess he meant it."