

The Little Gallery

He things big, works small

Story: CORINNE ABATT
Photos: STEPHEN CANTRELL

The watercolors, jewelry and sculpture on display at Little Gallery through January are all the work of one person, Doug Barthel. And as expected, there's a pleasant relationship between Barthel's approach to all of these media.

The jewelry is a very classy blend and butter occupation. Sculptural, contemporary and dramatic, Barthel works with and without precious stones, shaping gold and silver into stretched, elongated forms which have a carressing quality in spite of their almost architectural elegance.

Many of these would be effective at 20 or 30 times their size. A gold pin, for

instance, of four equal and related parts, forms a hyperbolic paraboloïd (for those who remember geometry). In fact, the interest in geometric forms is a constant in Barthel's jewelry.

Yet in his hands, metal becomes a soft, malleable substance, which looks as though it could move easily from one shape to another.

THE SAME IDEA is seen in his sculpture, much of which is quite small, but could be just as effective much larger.

"I'd like to do some big ones," he said, explaining how many of his pieces have the metal rolled out like a pie crust, then a section cut away and the edges rejoined, much as a dart in a jacket is engineered by a seamstress or

tailor, leaving a shaped surface.

He said that in this technique, "I'm accentuating the softness of metal."

In many pieces, Barthel works the metal into following a natural form such as shells or plants, but it is a sleek abstracted approach that he uses.

In some of his sculptures, he uses a Japanese technique, mokume, (accent on the last letter) which is sandwiching layers of metals of different colors together, cutting into the sandwich and flattening the cut to expose a wood-grain effect.

Barthel works small surfaces with fine detailing. The back of a gold pin set with tourmalines is finished as completely as the front. In the hand, the piece feels complete from any angle. His sculptures are the same; the workmanship is always total to the smallest detail. The mokume technique gives

another finely wrought dimension to his sculpture.

In many of his pieces, Barthel mixes metals to achieve interesting color and subtle textural variations.

SEVERAL "HUMAN SCALE" free-standing pieces were inspired by the transmission of energy. They are, said Barthel, graphic representations of energy flow. They have a lightning bolt quality to them as the steel appears to be a moving line of unleashed energy.

Barthel did his undergraduate work in jewelry and metal at Wayne State University, studying with Philip Fike. He later taught at Wayne State, Wayne County Community College and in Mt. Clemens. But it is the studio work which he likes and plans to continue to pursue in spite of the inevitable uncertainties which go with it.

Support group meets

Oakland Community College WomenCenter on Orchard Ridge campus sponsors a support group for women considering, in the midst of, or recovering from divorce.

The group meets from 8-9:30 p.m. on Mondays in Room 308, J Building on the campus.

Group facilitator is Robin Cohen whose aim is to assist participants in gaining confidence and clarity in order to give new direction to their lives.

Inquiries will be taken by calling WomenCenter, 478-9400.

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