

FINE ARTS

Jewelry exhibits send modern message

BY MARY KLEMC
STAFF WRITER

To artists of the American modernist jewelry movement, a piece of jewelry was much more than a finishing touch to an ensemble or a sentimental item. To these artists, jewelry was art. Rather than jewelry adorning the body, the body was something on which jewelry was to be shown.

Examples are on display at Cranbrook Art Museum in Bloomfield Hills in "Messengers of Modernism: American Studio Jewelry, 1940-1960" and "Signals: Late 20th Century American Jewelry." The exciting exhibits continue to Jan. 5 at 1221 N. Woodward (call (810) 645-3312).

"Messengers of Modernism" is making its international premiere at Cranbrook. It will travel around the world between March 1997 and July 2002, with scheduled stops in New York City, Tacoma, Wash., Washington, D.C., Belgium, Canada and Italy.

The development of American

modernist jewelry took place after World War II. Like their counterparts in the Arts and Crafts movement, studio jewelry artists pursued mass production. Many started as sculptors or painters and were self-taught, and they brought new techniques to the art of making jewelry. They preferred less expensive, irregular materials — including glass, pebbles and pieces of jewelry — over costly precious stones.

Jewelry was portable art to Earl Pardon, whose pieces incorporate silver inlaid with wood and ivory. They may be whimsical, as his "The Little King" brooch featuring a little crowned figure; others include a bracelet of circular shapes and a necklace that suggests a tribal emblem.

Irena Brynner's jewelry was sculpture for the body. Fingers were meant to be armatures for her gold ring; the ring seems confining, but the finger can move freely as the segments aren't longer than finger joints.

Sam Kramer called his works

"fantastic jewelry for people who are slightly mad." They are surreal, expressive, often humorous, with shells, fossils and taxidermy eyes among the materials. (The artist was upset when his wife mislaid her recently removed gallstones. He had planned to make them into a bracelet for her.) His "Trumpeter" pendant appears joyous and spontaneous.

Art Smith's bold and dramatic jewelry both caresses and springs from the body. It is both primitive and sophisticated, often with an asymmetrical design that curves around a neck or an arm.

Alexander Calder is known for his sculpture and his mobiles; his brass brooch and pendant share that linear economy and mobility. They have a feeling of fluidity, and resemble life forms.

Harry Bertoia ventured into many fields. His aluminum ring features a grid of tiny cubes. The artist's brass and silver brooches and earrings have parabolic or concentric patterns. His silver

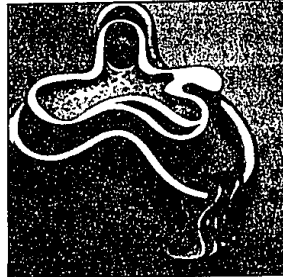
hat pin resembles a little universe with orbiting planets.

Margaret DeFatta blended white gold, silver, quartz and mesh into dynamic pieces that seem to float. A brooch by Carlton Ball consists of little silver arms wrapping and piercing an ebony shape; a sleek one by Betty Cooke is made of silver and a pebble. Elsa Peretti incorporates colorful glazed earthenware in works; the hues sing like stained glass or a kaleidoscope.

Marianne Strengell formed a necklace from discarded metal washers from an auto plant in Pontiac. The washers look like seed-studded pods. Earrings made from silver and nylon fishing line by Everett Macdonald make the viewer feel like a gargantuan visitor to a lilliputian art collection.

Paul Lebel formed miniature cubist pieces resembling works by Picasso. "Stradivarius" is a silver, violin-shaped brooch with different sides visible at once.

"Signals" focuses on works by 15 contemporary jewelry makers. The show features pieces



On display: Brooch Amoeba by Frank Rebajas is featured in the "Messengers of Modernism" show at Cranbrook Art Museum.

with issues including materiality, feminism and AIDS.

Kathy Buszkiewicz comments on the power of money, with works made from U.S. currency and wood. Sandra Entlerline punctures bone until it resembles lace. Jan Yager pays tribute to nature that survives in harsh conditions, with brooches that

feature tiny blossoms.

Other jewelry exhibits are through Jan. 4 at The Wetmore Collection, 132 N. Woodward in Birmingham (call (810) 645-6212), and "Contemporary Thought in Jewelry" to Jan. 11 at The Sybaris Gallery, 202 E. Third in Royal Oak (call (810) 544-3388).

Films from page E1

the soul of a small Texas border town. When a young sheriff started digging into a long-oldest murder case, all evidence points to his hero father having been a part of it. For me this had the best-scripted surprise in movies this year.

"Swingers" Los Angeles' rediscovered cocktail lounges were the focus of this dead-on depiction of single guys trying to make it in Hollywood. Though it knocked around various suburban theaters with middling success, watch for this one to gather a deserved cult following.

"Paradise Lost: The Child Murders of Robin Hood Hills." Further proof that documentary

filmmaking is alive and well and usually playing only at the Detroit Film Theatre. Directors Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky followed their Oscar-nominated "Brothers" concept with this powerful study of a grisly triple murder and the heavy metal-listening teens on trial for it. An unexpected bonus was having Sinofsky there on opening night to answer questions about people who allow themselves to be filmed at the most awkward moments.

"The English Patient." I can't imagine a better screen treatment of Michael Ondaatje's novel. The illicit love affair between an archaeologist and a rich married woman in World War II-era Cairo isn't usually my cup of tea, English or otherwise, but the actors (Ralph Fiennes and Kristin-Scott Thomas were

the leads) and writer/director Anthony Minghella turned this into one of the richest, most satisfying film experiences of the year.

"Emma." Last year "Sense and Sensibility" and "Persuasion" made my top ten, so I was surprised at how yet another Jane Austen adaptation could work its magic on the big screen. Gwyneth Paltrow's performance certainly helped as a 19th-century busybody with a handle on everyone's romantic affairs but her own.

"Rumble in the Bronx." So what if there were mountains behind New York harbor? This Hong Kong actioner, set in New York and filmed in Vancouver, almost made Jackie Chan a household name. More than a little corny, it showcased the amazing stuntwork and endearing

personality of one of the world's most popular stars. Let's just hope Hollywood figures out what to do with him now that he resides here.

"The Umbrellas of Cherbourg." Another re-release, this time of Jacques Demy's 1964 musical about an impossibly young Catherine Deneuve who must decide between her handsome, prospective lover and a rich, very available jeweler. The DFT exclusive was so popular in the spring, that the theater brought it back for an encore.

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