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## Exhibit Review

# Israeli jewelers who take their work home

By **Haley Edwards**

*Seattle Times staff reporter*

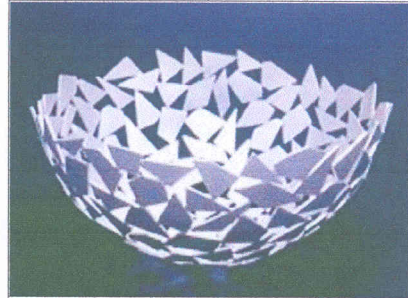
You won't see diamonds at the jewelry exhibition at Bellevue Arts Museum. But you will see a collection of eccentric, emotive works of miniature sculpture. A pendant. A brooch. An impossibly intricate necklace made of aluminum, netting, semiprecious stones and found objects.

The artists, all four of whom were educated in Europe, stride into the abstract world of the contemporary New Jewelry movement. For the most part, they abandon precious gems in favor of feathers, recycled materials and an array of ready-made objects, while keeping a footing in traditional metalwork.

As a result, the collection sometimes feels caught between cultures and epochs. Bianca Eshel-Gershuni's feathered earring on the one hand recalls Native American designs but is bedizened with the yellow-gold gilding reminiscent of 18th-century Versailles. Esther Knobel's brooches are intricately sculpted pieces, made from recycled tin cans and what could have been the contents of the \$1 bin at Nordstrom Rack.

But the 127 works in this exhibit are ultimately unified thematically. Each of the four artists creates her jewelry as a means to express her complex relationship with her homeland, Israel: its wars and tenuous accords; the significance of its soil; the Promised Land.

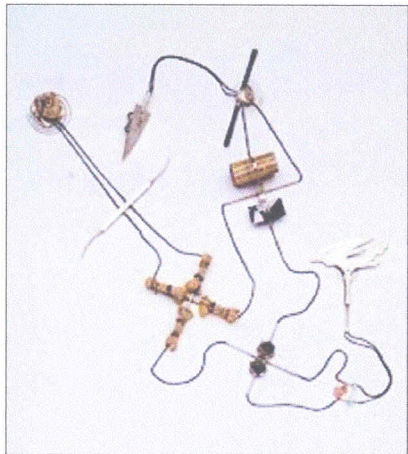
Artist Vered Kaminski's work draws heavily on themes of warfare in the 60-year history of Israel's nationhood. Her copper and silver bracelets, perfect cylinders of woven metal, look like a medieval knight's armor. Eshel-Gershuni's fish-shaped brooches suggest the chassis of combat planes, with missiles tucked beneath their fins. She created this series while listening to the air-raid sirens howl outside her Israel home in 1991.



MICHAEL TROPEA, CHICAGO  
Vered Kaminski's "Bowl," 1996. The artist draws on themes of warfare in Israel's 60-year history.



MICHAEL TROPEA, CHICAGO  
Bianca Eshel-Gershuni's "Turtle," brooch, 1998.



MICHAEL TROPEA, CHICAGO  
Deganit Stern Schocken's "Body"



While some of the works closely chronicle the tenuous politics of peace in Israel, a walk through the four-room exhibit feels less like a history lesson and more like stealing a glance into the artists' most intimate diary entries.

Each piece of jewelry or sculpture (some of the pieces are not meant to be worn) provides a window into the artist's heart. Some of the most compelling capture the mundane activities of the daily lives of these women — mothers, daughters, wives and lovers — but cast them in the shadow of an ever-precarious peace.

#### Exhibition review

**"Women's Tales: Four Leading Israeli Jewelers"** 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Thursdays, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Fridays, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Saturdays, 11 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Sundays, closed Mondays, through June 17, Bellevue Arts Museum, 510 Bellevue Way N.E., Bellevue; \$5-\$7, free from 5:30-9 p.m. on the first Friday of the month

(425-519-0770 or [www.bellevuearts.org](http://www.bellevuearts.org)).

Knobel's necklace, "Pine Tree Needles," which

imitates the shapes of looped pine needles in anodized aluminum, was inspired by the artist's childhood memories of playing outside her Israel home. She created the necklace in 1977, when her nation was negotiating its first substantial peace accord with Egypt.

Eshel-Gershuni's palm-size turtle brooches look as if they were kept underwater for a decade, having accumulated the heavy, mottled growths of a tide-pool creature. Perhaps a woman, living too long in a war-torn land, would find her soul similarly burdened with death and cynicism. Eshel-Gershuni lost her young husband in the Sinai Campaign of 1956.

Deganit Stern Schocken's brooches — two-dimensional labyrinths of silver and gold — reflect the hard, architectural lines of Tel Aviv's skyline. They look as if they would be able to fly, if the artist had filled in the spaces between their thin, skeletal frames. In one of the most quietly powerful pieces in the show, "Tulip Brooches," Knobel molds a series of tulip buds from enameled copper, each the length of a man's forefinger outstretched. They're simple, mottled turquoise with corrosion, but they make you want to hold your breath and wait. For war to stop. For peace to come. For these flowers, forever frozen in their metallic wombs, to bloom?

Haley Edwards: 206-464-2745 or [hedwards@seattletimes.com](mailto:hedwards@seattletimes.com)

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Piece (City)," 1993.



MICHAEL TROPEA, CHICAGO

Esther Knobel's "Daisy Wire," 1993.