

The American Jewelry Revolution 1940-1960

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The status and acceptance of jewelry as an art form have increased over the years, but there are still barriers to be broken. There is a continuous struggle against a public perception that has been established by the commercial jewelry industry that disconnects jewelry from culture and artistic association and is responsible for the attitudes and barriers regarding jewelry today. Jewelry has been misunderstood as a legitimate art form for centuries. This paper presents the American studio jewelry movement that happened from the 1940s to the 1960s, the Modernist Jewelry Movement, as it is officially called. This small group of studio jewelers were responsible for a change of attitude toward jewelry in the 1940s and are an important part of the history of jewelry in the United States. The American studio jewelers expressed their frustration about industrialization and commercialization of the jewelry industry and changed the attitude of society towards jewelry as a wearable art form. It is important that these artists become better known, because their work, which is virtually unknown, has influenced contemporary jewelry today.

In introducing the Modernist Jewelry Movement of the 1940s to the 1960s, it is necessary to compile a brief history of the movement. This history includes the sequence of events that led to the jewelry revolution. It explains the transition of metalsmithing in the United States from pioneer, rebel, and studio jeweler. I will discuss the status and acceptance of jewelry as an art form, starting with the attitudes both before and after 1940, and what happened during the 1970s and 1980s that removed the movement from the history of metalsmithing until recently. Finally, I will discuss the status of this movement today and attitudes towards jewelry as an art form. Some of the pioneers of this movement that I will introduce are Alexander Calder, Harry Bertoia, Margaret De Patta, Sam Kramer, Art Smith, Earl Pardon, and Ed Weiner.

The American studio jeweler of the 1940s was untouched by jewelry tradition in the United States, unlike his or her European counterpart ( Wolf 27). The works these jewelers created bore little resemblance to the past but paralleled the modern art, which resulted in breaking the barriers of public perception of jewelry. It was a mark to the future and represented open-mindedness and adventure. Their belief was that the choice of a piece of jewelry reveals much of the character and personality of the individual. A piece of jewelry should be the embodiment of trends of our times (De Patta 8):

Critical examination of the jewelry of any particular period cannot fail to be practically a chapter of the history of culture...Every time has the jewelry it deserves...for the ornaments worn, whether on the dress, the hair, or the person of the wearer, have always reflected in a marked degree to the taste of their period, and are very distinctly differentiated from those of any other time, so that changes in fashion imply changes of a more radical description in popular feeling (Greenbaum 5).

This sentiment, written in 1901, was as applicable to the modernist jewelry of the mid-twentieth century as it was for the Art Nouveau jewelry in which these sentiments were originally addressed ( Greenbaum 15). American studio jewelry design in its seminal stages, c. 1936, had continued the trend of the anti-historical and rejected traditional design conventions begun by the Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts Movement some forty years earlier (Uchida 6).

The chaotic undoing that resulted from the great Depression at the 1930s seeded a Marxist and Socialist ideal which was gaining ground and offering hope, only to lead to consequences that were humanly questionable and emotionally frustrating. This disillusionment was brought about by the Depression and World War II and the internal conflicts of social responsibility which made all values dubious for artists of the time (Bennett 26). Beginning about 1940, a revolutionary jewelry movement began to emerge in the United States. This revolution was a result of the enormous social and political events of World War II, the holocaust, fear of the atomic bomb, politics of prejudice, industrialization, and commercialism. In the time following the 1940s there was an expectation of revolution and reform. As part of

the political, economic, and social upheaval following World War II there was the need to return to a simpler life. There was a desire for more personal involvement and caring for people in the community by improving the standard of living through better craftsmanship. Eating from a hand-thrown bowl, drinking from a hand-blown goblet, and walking on a handwoven rug was considered more emotionally satisfying than using comparable objects from industry (Greenbaum 20). Wearing a one of a kind hand-made piece of jewelry also established a social and political response to what industry did to jewelry. American artisans thus expressed their frustration with society through their jewelry which they considered to be the most intimate art form. They were held up as rebels and outsiders, and also as the first artists to form the nucleus of a new direction in jewelry, which was jewelry as an art form (Levin 31). Each of the studio jewelers of this time period are important to the history of contemporary jewelry, the jewelry they made is the origin of contemporary jewelry style, their efforts being disregarded and lost in the history of American jewelry until recently.

Between the 1930s and 1950s, American modernist jewelry presented itself as a significant force in the decorative arts. The intention of the American modernist jeweler was to present art on a more personal level. This art was worn close to the body, as in the nature of jewelry breaking barriers and changing the status of jewelry. The limitations of wearability did not diminish the importance of the work. This jewelry served as an emblem for art loving humanists in an age of alienation (Greenbaum 45). Small groups of artists aiming to steer jewelry into the realm of art at the end of World War II generated this concept of working in the medium of jewelry (Montgomery 2). New impulses began to be developed in the United States which fundamentally changed the art of the second half of the twentieth century (Schadt 189).

After World War II, the United States was ready for a craft revival using such media as clay, glass, fiber, wood, and metal. Some of the reasons represented by this craft revival were the desire to explore a new artistic expression and a simpler less stressful way of life. It was also a reaction to the barren and anti-human machine aesthetic that influenced the product designs of the late 1920s and 1930s. Before the war, several factors contributed to the craft

revival. Political turmoil in Europe in the 1930s brought many artists and craftspeople to the United States for safety and freedom. The fact that the world was living in an age of precision in machine production also had an effect on jewelry design. The American studio jewelers believed that the vital element necessary for good design was the interaction of the tool and the material upon the designer, and the interaction of the designer upon the tools and material. They felt this was lost by mass production (De Patta 8). People throughout the country were awakening to the importance of individual creation and many were no longer satisfied with mass-produced articles. This meant that there was a market for the craftsperson's work (Arts 23). The status of jewelry as an art form began to be recognized, and the public's perception of jewelry began to change which resulted in the breaking of existing barriers.

Margaret De Patta, one of the forgotten pioneers of the American modernist jewelers was shopping in jewelry stores in San Francisco in 1926 and was surrounded with the traditional stars, clusters, rosettes, floral motifs, and other shapes that have been used for centuries (Uchida 6). De Patta was frustrated with what she discovered and felt that the mass-produced jewelry in the jewelry stores did not parallel what was happening in the art world. She was one of the first to begin the concept of jewelry as an art form and to initiate the change of attitude and status of jewelry in the United States. A pioneering spirit spurred craftspeople on at this time in their exploration of dynamic forms, asymmetry, and ornamental approach to structure. These new ideas, along with creatively observing the Modern Art movement of the early 1920s with simple geometric and abstract forms depicting inner feelings or creatures from every day objects led post World War II studio jewelers to redefine jewelry and started to change how jewelry was viewed. An expressive energy is very evident in the resulting studio jeweler's work during this time period (American 6).

American artisans of the 1940s chose to express their frustration with society's conventions through their jewelry, which they considered to be the most intimate art form. Each artisan had his or her own form of expression, but each was unified in his or her desire for social change (Greenbaum 15). The American modernist jewelers worked separately in private studios,

mostly on the East and West coasts, and formed a loose movement, that was united by their universal agreement to the canons of modern art, thus changing the attitude towards jewelry as a wearable art form (27). Studio jewelry was made for both the liberals and intellectuals who were on the fringes of the American middle class. They were the young, free spirited champions of modern art (20). The jewelry created by the modernist jewelers was not gender biased, and the creators and proponents were ethnically and culturally diverse as America itself (15). Their work, which was neglected for over thirty years, was important in the history of American jewelry because of its diversity, which was a catalyst for contemporary jewelry.

New impulses began to develop in the United States which fundamentally changed the art of the second half of the twentieth century. Craftspeople and artists working in jewelry reacted against old limitations, and responded to new and dynamic influences which could scarcely be ignored. Artists Pablo Picasso, Alexander Archipenko, Salvador Dali, and Joan Miró were rushing through violent experimental phases, including Cubism, Surrealism, and Non Objectivism, yet the art of jewelry continued to plod along, still preoccupied with the ideas of past centuries which kept jewelry out of the art world (Kramer 31). Identifying jewelry as art became the principle doctrine of the Modernist Jewelry Movement. Margaret De Patta considered her work to be "wearable miniature sculptures and mobiles" (Foley 39). Modernist jewelers now appeared to have formed a conscious and voluntary affiliation with the fine arts, which resulted in breaking the attitudes and barriers of jewelry and changing the status of jewelry.

While the arts became more complex, jewelry revitalized and defined itself as a field that was engaged in the ideas of decorative techniques as a strategic means of making more meaningful and socially relevant jewelry. Art was no longer seen as a solitary act, it was seen instead as a set of changing acts, engaging the body of the participants which broke the barriers and changed the attitudes of jewelry as an art form (Bennett 33). American artist and craftsman, Charles F. Bents, said, "Art appreciation is a most subtle thing, and no one may dictate to his neighbor as to what he should or should not admire" (E.B. 9).

The theme that bound these modernist studio jewelers together was their desire to use

ideas of Modernism, Primitivism, and Constructivism to jewelry. Mid-twentieth century American modernist jewelry is a combination of animal and plant forms, and in some cases, even the substance of Cubism, Constructivism, Surrealism, Dada, and Abstract Expressionism. Modernist jewelry corresponds to Cubist and Dada art in its use of everyday objects and depicted them in the form of jewelry, images of daily life taken out of context or flattened to show all the different sides simultaneously (Greenbaum 27). Modernist jewelry is not merely jewelry, or even art. Each piece serves as an indication of the jeweler who created the piece with the individual use of symbols and the lay out of images used by modernism. The individual styles of the modernist jewelers was lost from the history of American jewelry until recently, but many of the styles will not be recovered and recorded in history. Its range included wanting to bring art into daily life, such as the Bauhaus, and to take an ordinary object out of its original context or to create strange creatures out of everyday objects, as the Dadaists and Surrealists did. As art and artifact, modernist jewelry redefined jewelry as an art form and portrayed the forces that produced the dynamic of Modernism (Foley 39). Jewelry as an art form was significant in beginning to change the status and break the barriers about jewelry during this time period. This redefinition of jewelry as an art form and aligning jewelry with the modern art movement was the catalyst and an important change in the history of American modern jewelry from the 1940s through the 1960s. This movement was started by a small group of artists that are still virtually unknown today.

The intersection of the traditions of jewelry making and modern art can be seen in the various materials used for modernist jewelry. This change began at the turn of the century when René Lalique introduced unorthodox materials into his Art Nouveau jewelry. He combined precious metals and stones with exotic natural objects such as tiger claws and animal horns, and dramatically expanded the parameter of jewelry (Greenbaum 27). Modernist jewelers of the 1940s were frequently incorporating such valueless organic and inorganic substances such as wood, pebbles, glass, and ceramic shards to their jewelry. This was a reaction to the conventional expression of so called "fine jewelry", which was often little more than the vehicle

for a vulgar display of expensive gems, with hardly a thought for design (Northern-27). The designs of the modernist jewelry was exciting and innovative which resulted in breaking the tradition of conventional "fine jewelry" and changing the attitude towards jewelry as art.

The materials used by modernist jewelers were diverse. Gold, silver, copper, bronze, brass, wood, enamel, bone, ivory, and steel, with or without precious or semi precious stones were all used. The tools used were as traditional as most of the materials, but it was the expanding use of various metalsmithing techniques with which modern jewelry is associated and the jeweler's continual search for new images and forms through experimentation that gave it status in American crafts and changed the attitude and acceptance of jewelry as an art form (American 24). The modernist jewelry incorporation of beach pebbles, wood, and other found objects corresponded to the geometric, abstract, and ordinary everyday objects associated with the Cubist and Dadaist art. This was also a philosophical response to the traditional association of diamonds and other precious gems with the wealthy elite (Greenbaum 28). The jewelry of the 1940s was a product of the experience of working with materials and the experimentation of techniques to create jewelry, where the jewelry became an art form. To do this, it was believed, the jewelers of the 1940s created jewelry that was an art form but also a social and political statement through their jewelry, thus changing the status and the acceptance of jewelry as wearable art (Bennett 26).

The American modernist jewelers were frustrated with the jewelry being made in the late 1930s and being presented to the public in the United States. The modernist jewelers found that they could express their frustration and despair in their work through echoing the images of Surrealist and Abstract Expressionist. The abstract forms freed the modernist jewelers to produce one of a kind art jewelry that was more expressive and allowed the experimentation of process and materials they chose to incorporate into their art work which created a change of attitude towards jewelry as an art form. The Surrealist allowed the modernist jewelers to create uncomfortable creatures and not make recognizable forms in jewelry which was associated with mass-produced forms, such as floral motifs, stars, and clusters which were in abundance and sold

in jewelry stores during the 1920s and 1930s.

Constructivism was as powerful an influence upon the American Modernist Jewelry Movement as was Surrealism. The Constructivism roots in the United State began with the Institute of Design in Chicago, a school founded by Hungarian Constructionist Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, in the late 1930s, which was referred to as the "New Bauhaus". It spread Constructivist theories to students who included Margaret De Patta, Merry Renk, and Frances Higgins, the pioneer studio jewelers who created wearable art jewelry of this time period and are virtually unknown in the history of American jewelry (Greenbaum 35).

In the United States prior to World War II, formal metalsmithing education was limited. The few places where it was taught were regional high schools, industrial arts classes, and teacher training schools, and as a result, the metalsmiths of the 1940s and 1960s were mostly self-taught. This resulted in the change of attitude toward their work as unprofessional and invalid and is why these jewelers were dismissed from the history of American jewelry until recently. They would visit dentists to learn the basic techniques of casting, shipyards to observe forging, and apprenticed with some industrial jewelers to learn the basic jewelry-making techniques. De Patta struggled through apprentice-like programs to learn the jewelry techniques with a professional jeweler in San Francisco. However, she was mostly self taught, because her apprenticeship was only for two months. She then established her studio and started to make modern jewelry which mirrored what was happening in the art world and to experiment with different techniques (24). De Patta, who was neglected in the history of America Jewelry was a powerful influence in changing the status of jewelry as an art form. She designed and made jewelry as wearable art, which she successfully sold during the 1940s and 1960s.

Some museums in the United States encouraged the growth of the American Modernist Jewelry movement. In 1946, the Museum of Modern Art in New York had the first exhibition of modern jewelry with "Modern Handmade Jewelry", an exhibition of jewelry made by painters, sculptors, and art jewelers. This was one of the first major acknowledgements of wearable art as a movement in America. This exhibit brought together the artist as jeweler, and the jeweler as

artist, a concept that had been neglected since the turn of the century. Renowned artists Alexander Calder and Jacques Linchpin were exhibited next to the pioneering studio jewelers, such as De Patta, and Sam Kramer, but despite this exhibit, modern jewelry was still fighting for identification as art. Subsequent shows of modern jewelry at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, first in 1948, then 1955, and finally in 1959 indicated the acceptance and status of modern art jewelry had achieved by the American modernist studio jewelers (Levin 11).

At the close of the 1950s, modernist jewelry became an official movement. It was taken up by universities and museums, patronized by the luxury market, established publications, associations, traveling exhibitions, and juries. As Foley relates, the modernist jeweler became "the jeweler in the gray flannel suit" (39). Many women of the time sought out and needed the individuality of adornment that handmade jewelry offered. Art historian Blanche Brown recalled:

About 1947 I went to Ed Wiener's shop and bought one of his silver spiral pins...because it looked great, I could afford it, and it identified me with a group of my choice, aesthetically aware, intellectually inclined and politically progressive. That pin was our badge and we wore it proudly. It celebrated the hand of the artist rather than the market value of the material. Diamonds were the badge of the philistine. (Greenbaum 20)

It is difficult to understand the consequences of wearing a piece made by Art Smith, Margaret De Patta, or Sam Kramer in the 1940s and 1950s. The wearer's participation and endorsement signaled that they were as much pioneers as the maker. This continued the romantic heritage of the avant-garde and spread the catalyst for changes of attitude and status of jewelry as an art form. The modernist jewelers aspirations for the jewelry they created was to elevate it into an art form and to change how the consumer viewed jewelry thus changing the status of jewelry in the 1940s and 1950s. The process of creating their jewelry with a concept is crucial to understanding the acceptance of modern jewelry in the late twentieth century. People did not buy it out of need, but out of love which indicated the change of attitude and acceptance of wearable art in the form of modern jewelry (Metcalf-40).

By the early 1960s this earnest undertaking collapsed. From jewelry to architecture, the

entire social basis of art was being transformed. Art was no longer an act of advocacy or rebellion, despair or idealism on the fringe of society looking in with a spotless vision. Art and craft were being normalized as a professional act with professional societies springing up. Craft fairs were established, and modern lifeless steel and glass buildings were being piled up in cities with their unvarying forms throughout the United States. Our nation saw a political and economic crisis. The emergence of third world nations, the women's movement, increasing restrictions in socio-economic life, and ecological destruction, which exposed the separation of direction by people (Bennett 26).

Art jewelry of the 1970s moved to universities, art schools, and colleges throughout the United States, creating the institutionalization of jewelry making. Along with this institutionalization came disassociation of the jewelers of the 1940s who were considered hacks by metal instructors and had little to do with the tradition of jewelry and goldsmithing, or of the future. They were clearly out of favor and replaced with professional jewelers and jewelry that was more individualized in style, technically executed with more skill, and jewelry that reflected the diversity of the culture in the 1970s and early 1980s (Bennett 27). This disregard of the work of the modernist jewelers from the 1940s through the 1960s, and the ignorance of it in the 1970s, kept it from the history of American jewelry, and as a result contemporary jewelers did not utilize the information as a resource. The forgotten modernist jewelers and their jewelry of the 1940s and 1960s was the most important movement in the history of American jewelry and still effects the contemporary jewelers today. The choice of non precious material by the jewelers of the 1950s, for example, opened the door for the unique variety of the materials used in the jewelry of the 1970s. This idea started with the modernist jewelers of the 1940s, such as Kramer, who used taxidermy eyes for much of his work. When jewelry entered academia, the teachers became the models of the profession through their teaching and jewelry. The fact that the initial idea of jewelry as an art form was presented by the American modernist jewelers and not the jewelers from the 1970s and 1980s adds to the history of American jewelry. The modernist jeweler from the 1940s through the 1960s were not being introduced into the American history

of jewelry, but now with this addition the history is more accurate.

The American modernist jewelers of the 1940s through the 1960s were a colorful lot. They were artists, war veterans, and entrepreneurs. Each of the American studio jewelers is important to the modernist movement. These are just a few of the key studio jewelers from the 1940s to the 1960s, but there are many more who helped to contribute to the American Modernist Jewelry movement. It is important to introduce the most influential figures of the time period. They were the leaders, the pioneers, and the rebels that initiated the change in the status of jewelry as an art form. Their philosophies, training, and purpose paralleled each other, which aided in the development of the modernist jewelry movement. It is important to note that several of these studio jewelers influenced many contemporary jewelers through their work and the philosophy attached to their work. At this time I will introduce some of the studio jewelers working from the 1940s to the 1960s, who were responsible for this movement. It is important to know about these artists because of their philosophies about modern jewelry and because of the fact that they are virtually unknown in the history of American jewelry. They introduced the concept of jewelry as an art form and initiated the change in status and acceptance of jewelry as an art form, and for generations their work and philosophies were ignored by the institutional jewelers.

Contemporary jewelry made its first appearance in 1936, with Sam Kramer's work. He was the most notorious, most prolific, and the very best of his generation. Yet today, he seems to be unknown (Foley 11). He was one of the first craftsmen to use forms of jewelry as a means of personal expression. His wildly imaginative, often bizarre, forged and cast silver forms, were sometimes set with offbeat items such as glass eyes, moose teeth, and old bones (Fig. 7). He started by taking a job with a manufacturing jeweler to learn the trade and to make a few pieces of his own. In New York he took a course in gemology at New York University, and then set up a studio in Greenwich Village in 1939 (Kramer 11). The purpose behind his work was that jewelry was to be as expressive as sculpture or painting. He experimented continually with welding and casting methods (Foley 14). His style evolved from various sources; his techniques

from courses at universities, work experience, trial and error (15). He placed an emphasis on the accidental, which shares a relationship with the Surrealist's automatic drawing and drips and blobs of the Abstract Expressionists. In this, Kramer related to Joan Miró, Salvador Dalí, and René Magritte (Greenbaum 35) ( Fig. 8). Kramer was a legend working in the " new Jewelry " tradition. He demolished conformity with surrealism ( Fig. 9). The power of his life and work was never compromised by new movements or styles, and his jewelry reflects critical junctures in twentieth century art (Foley 11). He was the first to initiate the change of attitude, acceptance and status of jewelry as an art form.

Earl Pardon also belongs to the first generation of jewelers and metalsmiths who spawned the studio jewelry movement in America. His work is very honest. He produced hard-edged sculptural metalwork in an abstract style that was clearly influenced by his studies in Zen painting (Ettagale 29). The spectator may read many meanings into the form, thereby participating in Pardon's own interpretation of his work ( Fig. 12). The variety of material Pardon worked with is as diverse as his techniques with gold, silver, ivory, ebony, colored gemstones, copper, enamel, wood, and abalone shell appearing regularly in various combinations. He says, " I get a certain kind of enjoyment out of each material, but you've got to handle the material with as much honesty as the techniques" (Goldberg 44). Enameling provided a venue for unifying Pardon's activities as a painter and jeweler (Church 19). Pardon, like many of his contemporaries, was primarily self-taught (18). His work appears simple, but is the most difficult to execute. It takes the utmost skill to solder components into a harmonious pattern (Ettagale 29). Pardon sees jewelry as just as important an art form as painting, sculpture, and printmaking (Goldberg 47).

Not only were media deeply indebted to the conventions of painting and sculpture, but also the styles of modernist jewelry. Much of the new visual vocabulary was due to Alexander Calder, who revolutionized sculpture in Paris during the 1920s and 1930s. Calder was primarily a sculptor of abstract Surreal forms and he applied the principles of linear economy and mobility to jewelry. Throughout his career, Calder made an enormous amount of jewelry, most of which was created between 1933 and 1952. He made pieces of jewelry originally as gifts, not for

commercial sale. His art and jewelry expressed spatial animation and movement, either realized or implied (Greenbaum 30) (Fig. 1). He was interested in the free play of jewelry with regard to materials that change by the movement of the wearer (Schadt 193). He used inexpensive materials, perhaps because of economic necessity, with gold and silver pieces outnumbered by brass ones (Mattick 56). The only tools he used were hammers and pliers. The results of this basic setup are anything but simple. Only with Calder's wit and play on movement is it possible to bring about harmonious art with very little technique (Oppcensky 18). Ed Levin, Irene Brinier, Henry Steig, Art Smith, and Ed Wiener all acknowledge Calder as having a profound influence on their work (Greenbaum 30).

There were a number of artists who crossed the boundaries between "artist" and "craftsman" during this time period, including Harry Bertoia. Born in 1915, in San Lorenzo, Italy, he emigrated to Canada when a teenager, then moved to Michigan. Bertoia was a metalsmith, furniture designer, sculptor, printmaker, artist and craftsman. He seemed to be self-taught in metalsmithing, which is an extraordinary accomplishment because of the technical skill evident in his work. The jewelry he created was extraordinary in design, concept, and craftsmanship and helped to change the status and acceptance of jewelry as an art form. Bertoia is not considered a traditional metalsmith, his work is inextricably involved with the essence of metals and the fine craftsmanship of the material. He moved easily across boundaries between art and craft and between media, borrowing and adapting the techniques of one to suit the other (Montgomery 26). Unconcerned with the barriers that existed between art and craft, aesthetic and function, creativity and commercial success, he balanced a subtle evocative aesthetic vision with practical design solutions (23). Bertoia made most of his jewelry in the late 1930s and early 1940s. He was interested in the manipulation of light, space, and movement (Greenbaum 30) ( Fig. 2). His work is an abstraction or extraction from nature, suggestive of fields of grains, shooting stars, or plant forms with multiple interpretations relative to scale, color, and movement (Montgomery 23). The reference to natural forms is broad and can never quite be grasped or identified. The designs are abstract and non-representational, triggering a half forgotten distant

memory. They relate to the humorous and unsettling vision of Paul Klee ( Fig. 3) or Calder (24). Bertoia created expressive jewelry but he is known mostly for his sculpture and unknown for his jewelry, which contributed to the American Modernist Jewelry Movement.

Margaret De Patta was the first contemporary jeweler on the West Coast. She was working in the San Francisco Bay area and was a guru to most studio jewelers during the 1940s and 1950s (Greenbaum 18). Starting in 1926, she rebelled against conventional interpretations of jewelry, and she brought a fresh impulse to the craft through inventive experimentation and a creative spirit (Uchida 10). She set out on a revolutionary path, an artist's craftsperson accepting the challenge of widening the gap between the craftsperson and the production jeweler (De Patta 8). De Patta was totally committed to the exploration of nonobjective visual and spatial concepts in jewelry. ( Fig. 4) She was the quintessential translator of bringing the Constructivism principle into practice with her jewelry (Greenbaum 36). Although her pieces appear simple, they were actually complex structures requiring extreme technical proficiency. Her craftsmanship was meticulous. The most important development in De Patta's work and the one that has had the greatest impact on American metalwork and jewelry was her development of new concepts in working with gemstones, not only in her designing cuts never before employed, but in her opening a new area of experimentation by using transparent qualities of gemstones. She also discovered the potential of stones such as rutilated crystals (Uchida 10). De Patta worked in lapidary with Frances Sperisen of San Francisco to design new cuts of stones. She used stones like crystal, smoky quartz, and topaz as vehicles for embedding or enclosing smaller gemstones (Uchida Jewelry Margaret De Patta 22) ( Fig. 5). De Patta's use and development with gemstones was revolutionary for this time period, but her contribution to the concept of jewelry as an art form with unique gemstones was forgotten in the history of American jewelry until recently.

In 1940 De Patta met and worked with Moholy-Nagy ( Fig. 6). His commitment to Constructivism and its basic tenets of the rigorous structuring of space through the use of line, light, and color had an effect on De Patta. Maholy-Nagy would say, "Catch your stones in the

air. Make them float in space. Don't enclose them" (Cardinale 12). She experimented freely, but never lost sight of the function of jewelry, its size, weight, durability, and the relationship of body structure. She felt the artistic value of jewelry should not be any less than that of sculpture (Asmus 46). Her legacy was a body of work that clearly defines her approach to modern design based upon the principles of abstract art (Cardinale 11). De Patta began her career at a pivotal time for American crafts, when the field as we know it today did not exist (15).

Another important member of the modernist jewelry movement equally neglected for his pioneering role in the change of status of jewelry as an art form is Art Smith. He never wanted to be identified with any particular style or technique and was a self-taught metalsmith. He worked with jeweler Winifred Mason for several years, which taught him the technical skills necessary to practice his craft, while his innate sense of how to combine form and space resulted in his art (Wolf 22). The main materials for his work from about 1946 until his death in 1982 were sheet metal, wire, and space (Fig. 10). His emphasis on space and its implications of human structure are essential to understanding Smith's designs (21). He created biomorphic forms, using language similar to what Miró used (Fig. 11) to create sculptural mobile jewelry, and viewed the body as an armature for his work. This idea was unprecedented for this time period (Lewin 35). Smith reinterpreted the biomorphic forms seen in the painting and sculpture of the Surrealists in his metal imagery. Drawing with wire in space, Smith created graceful neckpieces, intensely asymmetrical, yet visually balanced. A strong element in his designs was always air replaced by skin. Smith says, " Things should really play with each other and they should play with the body. It should be fun, an exploration, an investigation" (Wolf 22). Smith had a flair for the theatrical and he often designed jewelry for the dance companies of Tally Beatty. This was a special challenge, because the jewelry had to be large, but light enough not to encumber the dancers, and the dancer's quick costume changes resulted in and placed emphasis on the fasteners for his work (Wolf 22). Smith was subjected to racial prejudice because he was a black man, and social apathy because he was an artist. His work made a new personal statement that depicted the wearers as adventurous and in touch with their bodies and their visual

presence (25).

Since the late 1940s, Ed Wiener made jewelry that combined the influences of African Art, the Bauhaus, and Abstract Expressionism in a simple and unaffected style (Obituary 68). His work influenced mid-twentieth century jewelers to align their work to modern art movements. Like many of the modernist studio jewelers, Wiener was essentially self-taught. According to Wiener, jewelry had two functions; to adorn, and to modify the human figure. His belief in the role of scale in jewelry and its relationship to the human form kept him from making purely sculptural work. He believed that sculpture exists only for itself and is suspended in its own space, whereas jewelry needs a person's anatomy to find its resolution (Lesser Wolf 29). Wiener was interested in Calder's wire drawings and mobiles ( Fig. 13) and explored new stone mounting by piercing the stones with wire. The "Abacus" brooch is an example of this influence from Calder ( Fig. 14): the wire is strung freely through shards of glass to create a mobile (Greenbaum 30). Kramer and De Patta were well established when Wiener came on the scene in 1946, but no other jeweler of that generation explored so many different approaches so successfully. He had a brilliant sense for shape, surface, and volume ( Wolf 31).

The status of jewelry as an art form has surfaced again today and how we determine the role of visual representation and the function will influence the perception of how contemporary jewelry is accepted. What the jewelers of the 1940s through 1960s began, and the jewelers of today have revived, is a concern with the nature, effectiveness, and eloquence of contemporary jewelry. Jewelers today must be concerned with how things look, the craft of making convincing work and work that is visually effective (Bennett 33). To achieve this, the artist must turn inward, ritualizing the practice of making jewelry. Beyond the need for justification of jewelry as an art form, the jewelry is the result of interactive activity of material, process, and expression, a new beginning all jewelers can reach through the experience of art. Craftspeople have selected a life that does not follow standardization and conformity and they depend on a strong individual feeling. Too much standardization is a fault of totalitarianism, so the very presence of an independently expressive artist in our country is healthy. Art jewelry of the 1940s through the

early 1960s had greater unanimity and philosophical continuity, and most studio jewelers from this time period were headed in a single direction and had a sense of moral and social rightness than today (27). As an art, jewelry is free of all the disciplines of practicality. Its single purpose is to decorate human forms, and contemporary jewelry is completely unrestricted in its choice of design elements. The American contemporary jeweler is an artist working in the medium of metal, and jewelry is an art form much like a miniature sculpture.

The American studio jewelers of the 1940s through 1960s were an interesting group of artists. Their courage in creating their jewelry when the idea of mass production was gaining popularity should be applauded. They emphasized the fact that jewelry is an art form and worked to change the opinion of society regarding this. It has been over thirty years since the concept of jewelry as an art form was introduced in America and we still struggle with the status and acceptance of jewelry as an art form.

In conclusion, there are still many barriers and misconceptions about jewelry as a legitimate art form. The revolution that happened in the early 1940s thru 1960s was that American studio jewelers addressed public perceptions about jewelry, perceptions that were established by the industrialization and commercialization of the jewelry industry. We can see how the American jewelers expressed their frustration and changed the attitude of society toward jewelry as a wearable art form by examining a brief history of the movement and the sequence of events that followed; for example, the cause and effect of World War II and a need to return to a simpler way of life brought about a craft revival. These pioneers were forgotten and removed from the history of American jewelry in which they were the main catalyst for our thinking about contemporary jewelry.

The modernist jewelry from the 1940s through 1960s paralleled what was happening in the art world as metalsmiths and studio jewelers responded to modern art. Modernism, Primitivism, Cubism, Constructivism, Surrealism, Dada, and Abstract Expressionism were all influential to modernist jewelers during this time period. The American studio jeweler rejected traditional forms and made non-traditional jewelry that was viewed as art. This increased interest

resulted in the growth of the American studio jewelry movement during the 1950s. Modernist jewelry at this time received status through exhibitions and public acceptance of the work. The movement collapsed however, during the 1960s, and it was not only modernist jewelry, but also art which was becoming a professional activity with the establishment of societies and craft fairs that influenced the collapse. The teaching of art jewelry moved into universities, art schools, and colleges throughout the United States in the 1970s. This resulted in discrediting the studio jewelers of the 1940s through 1960s. The reputation of this group of jewelers became annihilated and lost in the history of American modern jewelry, only to recently resurface. Each of the studio jewelers of this time period are important to the history of contemporary jewelry. The purpose of this paper was to show that the American studio jewelry movement from the 1940s thru the 1960s was important in the history of American jewelry, and to change attitudes about jewelry as an art form. The reader should have a better understanding of the American jewelry movement and an ability to be able to identify and distinguish jewelry as an art form.

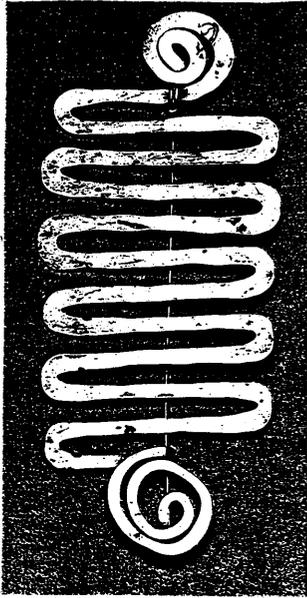


Fig. 1. Alexander Calder, (Untitled) brooch, 1940. Brass, 5 5/8 x 2 3/8 x 1/8 inches.

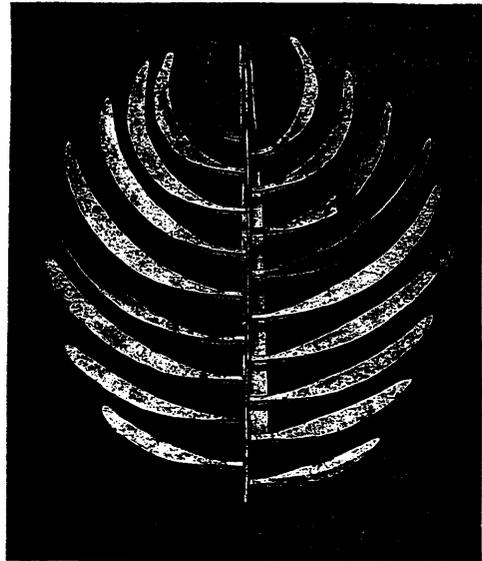


Fig. 2. Harry Bertoia, (Untitled) brooch, 1942. Brass, 3 5/8 x 3 1/8 x 3/8 inches.

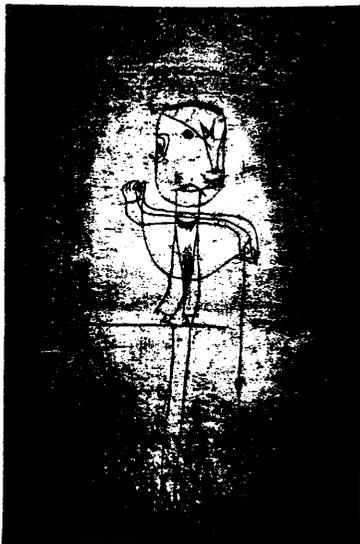


Fig. 3. Paul Klee, The Angler, 1921. New York. The Museum of Modern Art, John S. Newberry Collection.



Fig. 4. Margret De Patta, (Untitled) pendant, 1948. Yellow gold, onyx, and rutiled quartz.

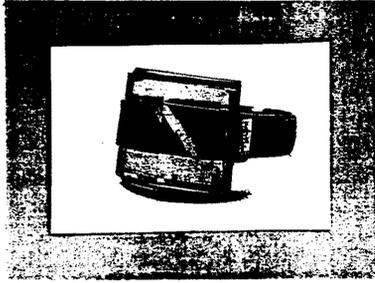


Fig. 5. Margret De Patta, (Untitled) ring, 1948. Silver, gold, quartz, 5/8 x 7/8 x 1 1/8 inches.

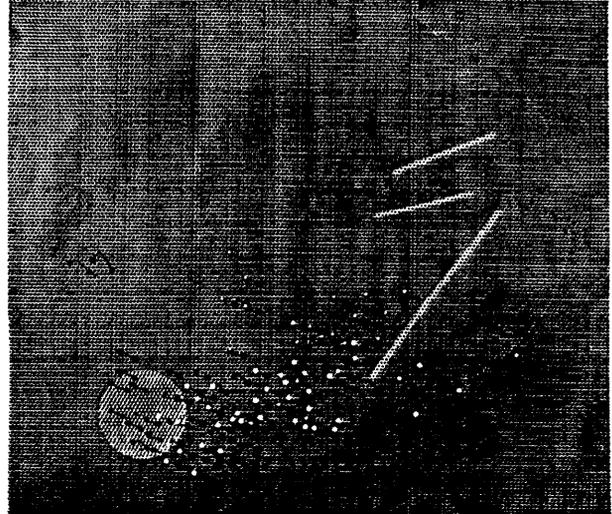


Fig. 6. Laszlo Maholy-Nagy, Space Modular L3, 1936. New York, The Museum of Modern Art. Purchase.

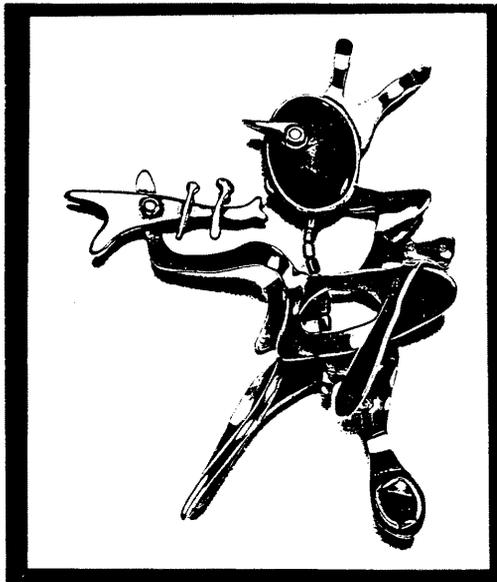


Fig. 7. Sam Kramer, Trumpeter, pendant, 1952. Silver, gold, chrysacolla chalcedony, Burmese ruby, labradorite, 5 3/8 x 4 1/8 x 3/4 inches.

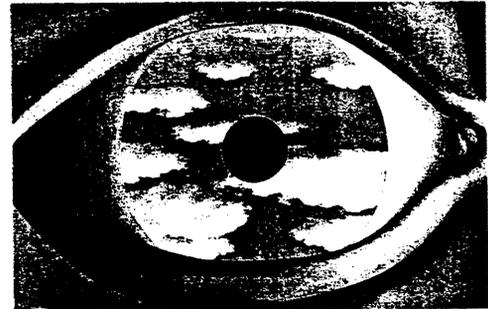


Fig. 8. René Magritte, The False Mirror, 1928. New York, The Museum of Modern Art. Purchase.

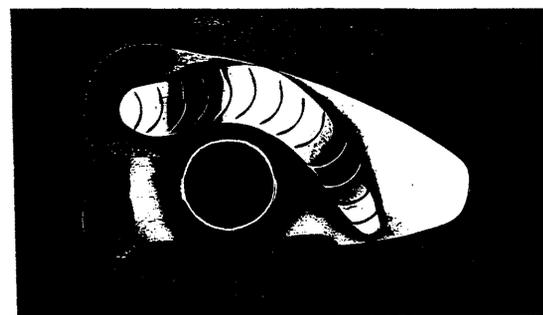


Fig. 9. Sam Kramer, (Untitled) brooch, 1948. Silver, glass taxidermy eye, 1 5/8 x 2 7/8 x 5/8 inches.



Fig. 10. Art Smith, Modern Cuff, bracelet, 1948.  
Copper, brass, 4 1/8 x 2 1/2 x 2 3/4 inches.

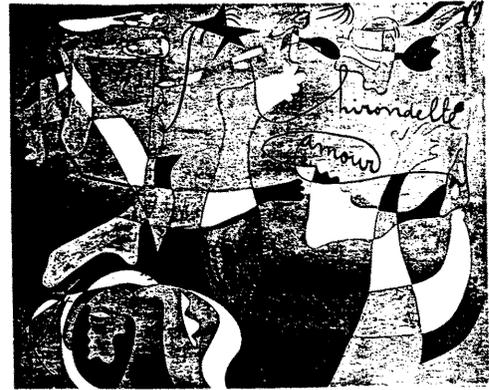


Fig. 11. Joan Miro, Swallow/Love, 1933-34.  
New York, The Museum of Modern Art,  
gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller.

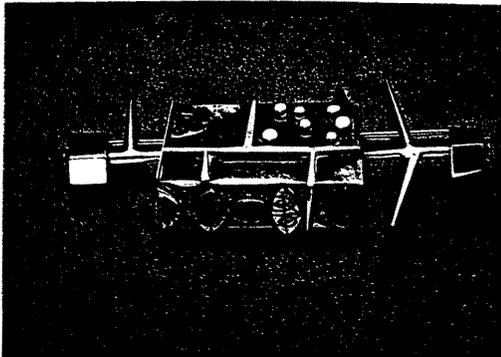


Fig. 12. Earl Pardon, (Untitled) brooch, 1956.  
Silver, ebony, rosewood, ivory, enamels on  
silver, 1 3/8 x 3 1/8 x 1/2 inches.

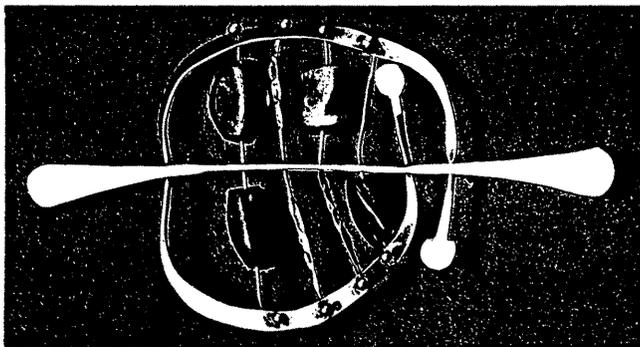


Fig. 14. Ed Wiener, Abacus, brooch, 1950.  
Silver, tourmaline, amethyst, beryl,  
2 x 4 1/4 x 1/8 inches.

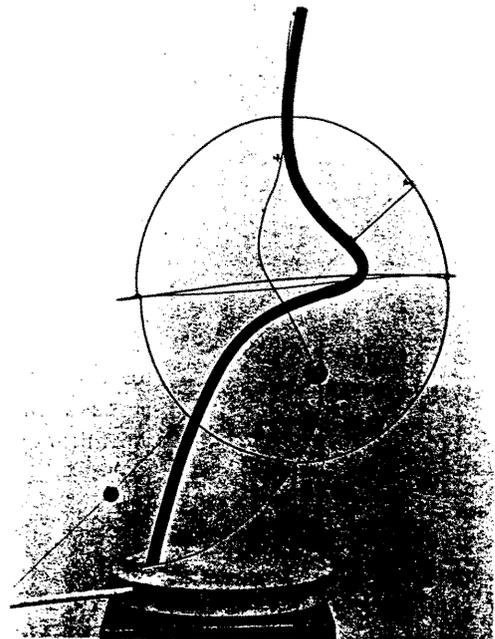


Fig. 13. Alexander Calder, A Universe, 1934.  
New York, The Museum of Modern Art,  
gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, by exchange.

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