

'Beyond Bling': Exhibit of jewelry made from unusual stuff

By SOLVEJ SCHOU

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A brooch in the shape of a dung beetle, made out of a gray metal teaspoon. A bracelet resembling a koi fish, with scales of glistening red, white and blue thumb tacks. An enormous yellow, black and white statement necklace made entirely out of tiny Lego pieces.

These and other 20th and 21st century works in the exhibit "Beyond Bling: Jewelry from the Lois Boardman Collection" at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, are not only created from unusual materials, using creative techniques; they're each whimsically unique.

The exhibit features 50 pieces by jewelry designers from the United States, Europe, Australia and New Zealand from the 300-piece collection recently donated to the museum by Boardman, a Southern California collector.

"The unifying element of all the pieces is that they all seem to express an idea, and not just adorn a body," said Bobbye Tigerman, the exhibit's co-curator. "These jewelers are making things that are reflecting political ideas and personal experiences, and not just reflecting wealth and status." The exhibit runs until Feb. 5.

The rings, bracelets, necklaces and brooches on display combine precious materials such as gold and silver with non-precious materials such as feathers, leather, glass and plastic.

A 1969 red-white-and-blue Plexiglas breastplate by the late East Coast jeweler Carolyn Kriegman has saucy, bright-red stars covering the chest. Swiss jeweler David Bielander's 2007 "Dung Beetle" brooch — which Bielander created by bending and slicing



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The "Beyond Bling: Jewelry from the Lois Boardman Collection" exhibit at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Los Angeles features 50 jewelry pieces made from unconventional materials that belong to Southern California collector Boardman's 300-piece jewelry collection, recently donated to the museum. The exhibit opened on Oct. 2, and runs until Feb. 5, 2017.

a spoon — and his 2013 thumb tack-decorated "Koi" bracelet imaginatively use everyday materials.

Dutch artist and jeweler Paul Derrez's 1985 "Pebble Collar" is made out of potato-size ovals of cork, lightly spray-painted pink and strung with a red cotton cord.

For his striking 2010 "Smoky Quartz on Countersink Nail" ring, Swiss jewelry designer Bernhard Schobinger shoved a nail he forged out of white gold through a large quartz stone faceted like a diamond, but intentionally chipped and imperfect, said Tigerman.

"The idea of avant-garde jewelry is not new. As far back as the 19th century, people were experimenting with unconventional materials," she said. "In the 1960s, (artists in) the U.S., Germany and other countries took it to a new level. The exhibit documents that shift, beginning in the '60s and continuing to today."

San Francisco jewelry artist Emiko Oye, 42, patterned her bold 2008 "Maharajah's 6th" Lego necklace after French

jeweler Louis Boucheron's diamond-and-emerald necklace for an Indian Maharajah in 1928. She first started making Lego-based jewelry in 2007 after visiting a new Lego store and getting hooked on the Danish toy building bricks.

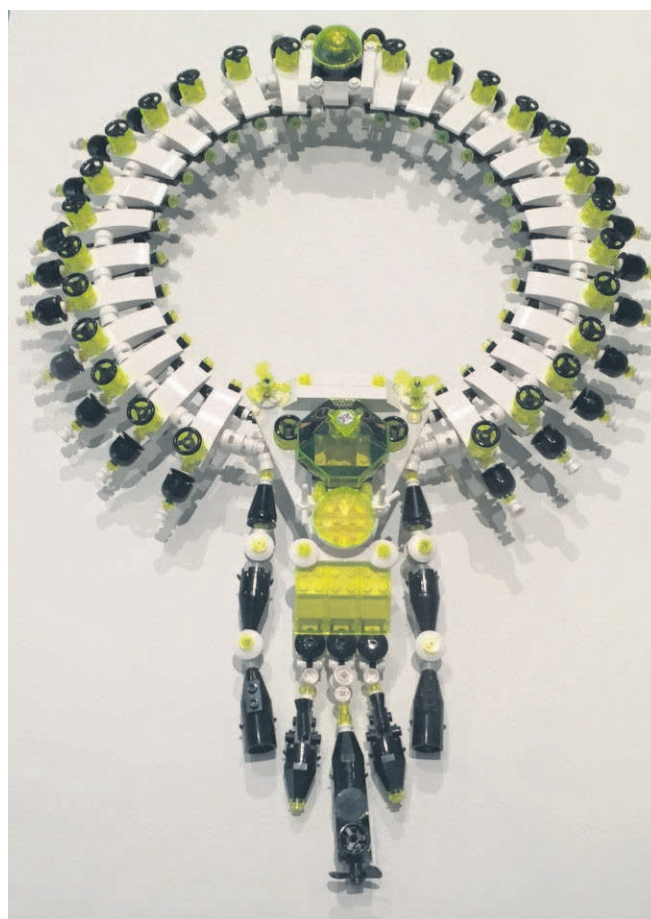
Boucheron's use of white platinum, and his departure from flat, two-dimensional jewelry design, inspired her, Oye said. She used hundreds of Lego pieces from donated sets as well as used, rare, vintage pieces from collectors. She started by taking Boucheron's original sketch of his necklace, enlarging it and putting it on her wall. Then she traced over the drawing, and used it like a map.

"I dumped all the white, black and yellow Legos on the floor and started to play, to see what shapes could mimic the design of the original necklace," she said. "One thing I love about using Lego is how it reaches every part of the social spectrum — male, female, old, young — and across cultures. It's a great way for people to connect with the jewelry."



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This photo taken on Dec. 2, 2016 at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Los Angeles shows late East Coast jewelry artist Carolyn Kriegman's 1969 red-white-and-blue Plexiglas breastplate.



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This photo shows San Francisco jewelry artist Emiko Oye's 2008 "Maharajah's 6th" necklace, made entirely of Lego pieces.

On a recent day at the exhibit, museumgoers excitedly milled around Oye's necklace. Others gravitated

to a wall of beautifully strange, sculptural brooches and items, including German jewelry artist Gerd

Rothmann's "Die Goldene Nase" nosepiece, cast in gold from Boardman's own nose.

"This exhibit elevates what we do as crafts artists," Oye said. "People have no idea you can make jewelry from these materials, such as thumb tacks and Legos, as art."

Sandra Enterline, 56, a jeweler in San Francisco, began making jewelry in high school before going to art school to learn jewelry as a craft. Her 1998 "Queen Bee" brooch is fabricated out of 18-karat gold, on a bed of real flower pollen, with a real queen yellow jacket fixed in the center and covered by a dome of low-magnifying glass.

She originally created the brooch for a 1998 traveling exhibit honoring then U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who loved brooches.

"I was thinking about Madeleine, because she was the queen bee," Enterline said. "Contrasting the fragility of the bee with the gold shows the brooch's high-low value. The bee is on the same type of pin you would have in a butterfly collection."

For those interested in making jewelry using unusual materials, Oye and Enterline recommended amassing a collection of interesting items, and taking a basic jewelry-making workshop. Most of all, have fun!

"Go into your kitchen junk drawer. Get a glue gun, get some wire, get some pliers and start playing," said Oye. "I would collect board games, and all the little colorful pieces that came with them. That's also a great place for people to start."

Los Angeles County Museum of Art: <http://www.lacma.org>