

# SOFTENING METAL'S EDGE

Female artists mold, shape medium into malleable creations

**By Peter Tonguette**  
For The Columbus Dispatch

Artworks made using metal might suggest hard surfaces, sharp angles and chilly emotions.

Happily, a new exhibit at the Riffe Gallery reveals the medium to be far more malleable than the cliché.

“Women To Watch Ohio – 2018” presents pieces by 10 female artists in Ohio whose work makes use of, or reference to, metal. In pieces selected by curators Ann Bremner and Matt Distel, the medium is used to evoke everything from a bird-like mask to a circular object on which fungus-like growths emerge.

The show is a stunning study in eclecticism.

Among the most imposing and impressive works in the show is “Shield for Queer Kin: Protection” by Llewellynn Fletcher, working with Amanda Curreri, both of Cincinnati. The piece presents an enormous raised fist, crafted in rich, warm cedar, that is hidden behind lengths of cotton affixed to a steel frame; the fabric acts as a kind of barrier to the huge hand, which cannot be seen when the work is viewed head-on. The piece communicates a sense of calm protectiveness.

Equally surprising is “Interspecies Power Portrait,” Fletcher’s work in lead, flocking, graphite, enamel, plaster and plywood. At first glance, the piece appears to depict the head and neck of a bird. Beneath the feathers and curved yellow beak, however, hides a human face. In fact, the work is an elaborate mask, reflecting the artist’s interest in things concealed.

Pleasingly unclassifiable are a pair of pieces by Carol Boram-Hays of Columbus. “Exsanguinate” and “Eviscerate” present smooth shapes in cast concrete (one resembling a squished version of the state of Ohio) from which tentacle-like metal coils dangle. The loose, fun pieces might remind some viewers of the likeness of the villain Davy Jones from the “Pirates of the Caribbean” movies.

At once more orderly and

**At a glance**

• “Women To Watch Ohio – 2018” continues through July 7 at the Riffe Gallery, 77 S. High St. Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursdays and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays. Call 614-644-9624, or visit [www.riffegallery.org](http://www.riffegallery.org).

more abstract are works by Kelly Malec-Kosak of Columbus. In “Shaped Space,” the artist offers a series of copper shapes arranged like puzzle pieces against a neutral background. A similar effect is achieved in “Hard/Soft,” in which sterling silver forms share a canvas with colored vinyl shapes. These are two jigsaw puzzles without solutions, however; none of the pieces seem to fit together.

Nature takes a front seat in several works. Mary Jo Bole of Columbus impresses with “We Will Go to Nature,” an enamel-on-steel oval piece on the border of which is an ornate floral design; at the center, two female hands carefully clasp bunches of flowers. Meanwhile, Susan R. Ewing of Oxford suggests a different sort of organic matter with “Memento Mori Series: Form With Fungus (Blackening Polypore).” The work — in bronze, corroded steel, graphite powder, mica powder and epoxy seal — appears covered in fungus.

Several artists represent their works in metal by taking photographs of them. For example, Olga Ziemka of Cleveland places her enormous sculptures in natural settings; the juxtaposition is preserved in striking photographs. Meanwhile, striking, pop art-like brooches by Marissa Saneholtz of Bowling Green are included in the show alongside photographs of people holding the items in their hands.

Such works are a testament to the many uses of metal. The artists spotlighted in the exhibit consistently enliven the medium with their imagination and innovation.

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**ABOVE: “We Will Go to Nature.”**  
by Mary Jo Bole



**BELOW: “Memento Mori Series: Form With Fungus (Blackening Polypore)”** by Susan R. Ewing