Metal Rising: The Forming of the Metal Arts Guild,
San Francisco (1929-1964)

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS i

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 1: EMERGENCE OF MODERNISM IN JEWELRY 4
  Craft Revitalization and the Studio Craft Movement 12
  Studio Jewelry’s Maturation and Regional Distinctions 16

CHAPTER 2: METAL ARTS GUILD FORMATION AND HISTORY 24
  California Labor Movement 26
  California Labor School 29
  Artists Equity Association 33
  Formation of the Metal Arts Guild 35
  The Collective Output of the Metal Arts Guild 49

CHAPTER 3: CAREERS OF SELECTED METAL ARTS GUILD MEMBERS 53
  Margaret De Patta 53
  Peter Macchiarini 63
  Irena Brynner 72

CONCLUSION 82

ENDNOTES 86

BIBLIOGRAPHY 99

APPENDICES 111
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS


2. Claire Falkenstein inspired Irena Brynner to see jewelry as sculptural adornment. a) Claire Falkenstein, *Yolk* necklace, sterling silver, n.d.; b) Irena Brynner, forged and constructed necklace, various shades of black opals, n.d..


5. a) Marjorie Trumball (right), hostess of KRON-TV’s “Exclusively Yours” television program interviewing Merry Renk (right) on NBC San Francisco Affiliate Channel 4, 1952.

6. Cartoon appearing in the *San Francisco News* showing Labor officials strangling laborers in East Bay Communities for calling off an Oakland general strike too soon.

7. Tom Mooney Labor School catalog, Fall 1942.


9. a) California Labor School Artist Carnival flyer promoted jewelry by Margaret De Patta and Peter Macchiarni as door and costume prizes; b) Margaret De Patta and Eugene Bielawski at the Artist Carnival at the California Labor School; c) Carnival attendees.


12. a) Cover of the California Legislature Report of Joint Fact Finding Committee on Un-American Activities in which the California Labor School and its instructors were among the investigation, n.d.; b) California Labor School brochure on how they were being persecuted, n.d.

13. Images attributed to one of the early Metal Arts Guild meetings, c. 1951. From the Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco Archives, San Francisco, CA.


17. a) Nanny’s advertisement featuring Merry Renk; b) Pacific Shop advertisement featuring Margaret De Patta; c) Nanny’s advertisement featuring Margaret De Patta.

18. a) Catalog cover of the San Francisco Art Festival, 1955; b) Catalog cover from California State Fair, 1951; c) Metal Arts Guild Pre-Christmas sale at the Labaudt Gallery in San Francisco, 1952; d) Metal Arts Guild juried exhibition at the Grete Williams Gallery in San Francisco, 1956.

19. a) Irena Brynner, Merry Renk, and Petronella Swierstra in the Metal Arts Guild booth at the California State Fair, 1952; b) Irena Brynner, Merry Renk, Peggy and Bob Dhaemers in the Metal Arts Guild booth at the Sacramento State Fair.

20. a) Cover of San Francisco Art Festival catalog, 1951; b) First Annual Metal Arts Guild exhibition booth at the San Francisco Art Festival, 1951.

21. a) and b) Metal Arts Guild section of the 1951 San Francisco Art Festival.

22. a) and b) Metal Arts Guild cases at the San Francisco Art Festival, 1951.

23. a) Irena Brynner, and Merry Renk at the Metal Arts Guild booth at the San Francisco Art Festival, 1952; b) Margaret De Patta setting up the Metal Arts Guild booth at the San Francisco Art Festival, 1952.

24. a) Marguerite Segal at the San Francisco Art Festival, 1954; b) Merry Renk at the San Francisco Art Festival, 1954; c) Peggy Dhaemers at the San Francisco Art Festival, 1955.
25. a) Poster from MAG’s traveling exhibition *6,000 Years of Jewelry*, Richmond Art Center, Richmond, CA; b) Byron Wilson pendant shown in *Ancient to Modern* exhibition at the Henry Art Gallery in April 1957 at the University of Washington, Seattle, WA.


28. *Untitled Abstract Painting* by Margaret De Patta, n.d.

29. Margaret De Patta discusses how she started venturing into jewelry design upon not being able to locate a wedding ring to accommodate her artistic taste.


34. László Moholy-Nagy teaching during a Summer session at Mills College, Oakland, CA.

35. Margaret De Patta’s art projects at the School of Design under Moholy-Nagy experimenting with light, space, and volume: a) *Photogram*, n.d.; b) *Wood Sculpture*, 1940; c) *Wire Sculpture*, 1940; d) Margaret De Patta in *Wood Workshop* at the School of Design, 1940; e) *Sculpture*, 1940.
Margaret De Patta’s instructions to Francis Sperisen on a stone cut for a jewelry design.

Margaret De Patta sketch of design. She is relating the relationship between the structure and the visual quality of the stone in developing her design.

Margaret De Patta, *Opti-Cut Ring*, yellow gold, faceted citrine topaz, pearl, 1942.

Margaret De Patta, *Opti-Cut Pendant*, yellow gold, smokey quartz, pearl, n.d.
  a) front view; b) side view.

Margaret De Patta, *Opti-Cut Ring*, white gold, quartz crystal, n.d.

Margaret De Patta, *Cone-Shaped Opti-Cut Ring*, white gold, rutilated quartz crystal, 1947.

Margaret De Patta, *Brooch*, cabochon crystal, sterling silver, mesh wire, n.d.

Margaret De Patta, multiple exposure images with a negative of a brooch, sterling silver, coral, malachite, c. 1947; b) Margaret De Patta completed with Milton Halberstadt, multiple exposure images with a negative, *Three Position Pin in Movement*.

Margaret De Patta, *Pendant*, yellow gold, rutilated crystal, 1948.

Margaret De Patta, *Brooch*, white gold, black onyx, and gem inlays, 1962. Purchase Award San Francisco Art Festival by the San Francisco Arts Commission.

Margaret De Patta’s Metal Arts Guild membership card, c. 1962.

*De Patta,* *Arts and Architecture* 54, no. 7 (July 1947): 30.

Margaret De Patta’s Metal Arts Guild membership card, c. 1962.
52. a) WPA Marionette Vaudeville, *Diver and Mermaid*, 1937; b) Ralph Cheesse and assistant with puppets in the WPA Theatre, 1936; c) WPA Marionette Vaudeville, *Circus*, 1937.

53. Peter Macchiarini collaborated with Margaret De Patta on this mask piece. Macchiarini did the wood carving and Margaret De Patta did the metalwork, ebony and nickel silver, 1937.

54. Will Rogers (left) and Beniamino Bufano (middle) visit Peter Macchiarini in jail, c. 1934.


57. a) Peter Macchiarini, *Brooch*, oxidized silver, c. 1930s; b) Peter Macchiarini, *Cufflinks*, oxidized silver, c. 1930s.


59. Margaret De Patta visiting Peter Macchiarini’s 1422 Grant Avenue studio, c.1950-1960s.

60. a) Peter Macchiarini at the Upper Grant Avenue Street Fair, c. 1955; b) Grant Avenue Street Fair, c. 1950s.

61. Peter Macchiarini at a Metal Arts Guild exhibition, n.d.

62. Peter Macchiarini’s resignation letter to the Metal Arts Guild, June 7, 1952.

63. Irena Brynner in her San Francisco, California studio, 1951.


66. Irena Brynner, Yul Brynner, Cecil B. DeMille, and others at Brynner’s Beverly Hills show.

67. Irena Brynner catalog, n.d..

68. Irena Brynner in her studio, c. 1950s.


70. Irena Brynner, Neckpiece, forged and welded 18 karat gold, fine silver, and amber bead, c. 1970s.


72. Jennifer Shaifer (left) with Merry Renk (right) in San Francisco, California, November 2011.
INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the formation of the Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco (MAG) through the careers of three pivotal metalworkers: Margaret De Patta, Peter Macchiarini, and Irena Brynner, who were central figures in the American modernist studio jewelry movement. The date range for this study, 1929 to 1964, encompasses the careers of the founding members of MAG and the international reach MAG attained.

De Patta, who studied under constructivist László Moholy-Nagy, is considered by many as one of the icons of modernist jewelers; she was known for her use of light and line, and concern for structure in her designs. Macchiarini, who worked with sculptors Ralph Stackpole and Beniamino Bufano, blurred the lines drawn between sculptor and jeweler; his jewelry designs were experiments in layering techniques and studies of structure and form. Brynner, who apprenticed for jewelers Caroline Gleick Rosene and Franz Bergmann, is recognized for her innovative organically-shaped body jewelry forms and pioneering use of electronic welding.

Contemporary scholars chronicling the evolution of the American studio jewelry movement, modernist American jewelry, and the careers of pioneering metalworkers have recognized MAG’s influence on Bay Area jewelers and beyond. In Messengers of Modernism: American Studio Jewelry 1940-1960, a catalog published in conjunction with the exhibition at the Montreal Museum of Decorative Arts (now known as the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts), jewelry historian Toni Greenbaum referenced several of the founding jewelers of MAG, but did not elaborate on the background of the Guild or its breadth of influence beyond Northern California. In Greenbaum’s essay, “Body
Sculpture: California Jewelry,” in California Design: The Legacy of West Coast Craft and Style, she briefly described the purpose of MAG and states, “[t]here is little question that De Patta was the greatest modernist jeweler in California.”² Marbeth Schon, has addressed the formative years of American metalsmithing and acknowledged jewelers associated with MAG in Modernist Jewelry 1930-1960: The Wearable Art Movement, but failed to discuss the influence of MAG within the context of the American studio jewelry movement.³ Finally, Glenn Adamson’s essay, “Wearable Sculpture: Modern Jewelry and the Problem of Autonomy” in Thinking Through Craft, discussed the activity of “a group of abstractionist jewelers,” including De Patta, Macchiarini, and Merry Renk in the United States, but neglected to name the group and the connection they all shared – membership in MAG.⁴

Those scholars recognize the careers and contributions of individual MAG members to the American studio jewelry movement, and confirm the significance of MAG even if not doing so explicitly. Further, MAG’s contribution to the development of modernist jewelry is documented in numerous period publications. However, no attempt has been made until now, to reconcile the combined accomplishments of highly visible MAG members and the impact MAG as an organization had on jewelry movements during the mid-twentieth century.

This thesis is the first comprehensive and historical account of the formation of MAG, and places the Guild and its founding members within the context of the American modernist jewelry movement. It examines the socio-economic and political events giving impetus for a group of individual metal craftspeople to start organizing, the aims of
MAG, and the careers of three key MAG members. MAG believed its collective association would create a network of strength and advantage by providing artistic, commercial, and educational support. Sixty years later, the legacy of the Guild’s founding members still endures.
CHAPTER 1: EMERGENCE OF MODERNISM IN JEWELRY

Chapter one examines the historical context and milieu in which the Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco (MAG) developed into a pioneering metal arts organization. This section will review the conditions propelling the birth of the American studio jewelry movement by discussing the emergence of European, American and California modernism and the simultaneous revival and expansion of craft. Additionally, this chapter addresses the circumstances in which New York City and San Francisco became centers of activity for the cultivation of modern jewelry design in the United States.

The American studio jewelry movement grew out of a mid-century craft revival in the early 1940s, and was part of an artistic response to the socio-economic and political climate in the years leading up to and following World War II. Craftspeople sought social and economic reforms following the fallout from wartime. They used adornment as a means to connect with humanity and to address their concerns about commercialization of design, rapid industrialization, human suffering, and social conditions on a new world stage. Unlike the Arts and Crafts movement at the beginning of the late nineteenth-century, studio jewelers had no allegiance to a single unifying philosophy, aesthetic, or leader. Instead, an international assemblage of artists, craftspeople, and intellectuals utilized jewelry as a medium to reconcile the role of art, craft, and industry. A direct result of this understanding was the emergence of modernist jewelry.

Bearing witness to the age of the machine and the rise of the atomic era, some metalsmiths released any nostalgia for the past and sought inspiration from the present-day. While studio jewelers did not completely abandon traditional forms, artists started a
new phase in the applied arts. In the eyes of the modernist, jewelry was no longer
defined by standards of beauty, the fashion of the times, or the intrinsic value of the
piece, rather jewelry was characterized by individuality, intention, and self-expression.
Drawing inspiration from a multitude of resources, jewelers looked to photographers,
architects, painters, industrial designers, and sculptors for direction.

Studio jewelers often cited sculpture as a reference point for their work. MAG
artists Margaret De Patta, Irena Brynner, Peter Macchiarini, and Bob Winston all credit
modernist sculptors such as Ralph Stackpole, Henry Moore, László Moholy-Nagy,
Alexander Calder, Claire Falkenstein, and Pablo Picasso among those influencing their
artistic direction. These artists redefined traditional sculpture by focusing not
just on the solid object and the space surrounding it, but also on using negative and
voided space to create positive elements and planes in their pieces. The three-
dimensional nature of sculpture lends itself to be easily applied to jewelry; however, the
main difference between jewelry and sculpture are the considerations such as durability,
fabrication, function, form, and scale. Jewelers often describe their work as miniature
sculpture and/or wearable sculpture. The jeweler must study the relationship of the work
to the human form and account for the weight and use of the piece (i.e. bracelet, necklace,
or ring).

MAG founder Margaret De Patta believed that there were similarities between
sculpture and jewelry as she thought the “[p]roblems common to sculpture and
architecture are inherent in jewelry design, i.e. space - form - tension - organic structure -
scale - texture - interpretation - superimposition and economy of means ... each playing
Irena Brynner, another MAG founder, also had a realization of sculpture’s connection to jewelry after seeing someone wear the jewelry of sculptor Claire Falkenstein. Brynner advised, “[s]omebody had a band, a silver band, and here hung a completely free – what do you call them – mobile, you know? And I thought, my God, but that is sculpture! I don’t have to go away from sculpture, I just will change the size and approach, and it has to be in relation to the human body! That was a revelation to me.”

Merry Renk, another MAG artist, made both sculpture and jewelry; she began making large-scale sculptures for a brief period of time, in order to compensate for an eye injury she received from a car accident in 1974. These examples highlight the often blurred line between jewelry and sculpture as artists vacillated between the two media.

Modernist ideas found in the visual arts started to dictate the approach, philosophy, and aesthetic of metalsmiths. Jewelers applied modernist art principles, like abstraction and constructivism, to their work. Having few restraints regarding design, function, and structure and with the shortage of traditional raw materials, jewelers now featured found objects, moving parts, modern materials, and new technology to illustrate their design visions, developing a new modern jewelry tradition.

The initial wave of jewelers began their careers without any technical or formal training in traditional goldsmithing and metalsmithing. At the time, aside from available apprenticeships and high school industrial art classes, a void existed in metalwork at university art programs, and no guild system had been established in the United States. MAG founders such as Bob Winston, Margaret De Patta, and Pete Macchiarini were a
few of the noteworthy pioneering jewelers who began to embrace modernism in the
1930s. They laid the foundation for future American studio metalsmiths to flourish
during the 1940s and beyond. Such pioneers navigated an unconventional course in
metalsmithing by integrating their earlier vocations as engineers, sculptors, painters,
graphic designers and laborers, with their new endeavors in metalsmithing and jewelry
design. In addition to their unorthodox entry into the field of jewelry, the pioneers shared
an interest in the avant-garde and the newfound theoretical approaches to art and design.
Physical proximity to the leading modernists would begin to influence and shape the
work of American artist-jewelers (including several MAG members) as they were in a
position to work for, study under, and connect with the leading artists of the time.

Peter Macchiarini studied ornamental work, marble carving, and drawing at the Art
Academy at the Pietrasanta in Italy; later, he worked in the Works Progress
Administration (WPA) with modernists such as sculptor, painter, and muralist Ralph
Stackpole, and muralist Beniamino “Bene” Bufano.12 Irena Brynner studied classical
painting at the École Cantonale De Dessin et D’Art Applique (Cantonale School of
Design and Applied Art) in Lausanne, Switzerland. Following her immigration to the
United States, Brynner took sculpture courses under Ralph Stackpole at the California
School of Labor in San Francisco. Brynner was influenced by many of the MAG
founders, especially Margaret De Patta and Bob Winston.13 De Patta was a student of
both educator and sculptor László Moholy-Nagy and industrial designer Eugene
Bielawski (her future husband) at the School of Design in Chicago.14 Merry Renk, also
studied with Moholy-Nagy at the Institute of Design (formerly the School of Design).
Renk had also traveled extensively throughout Europe during which time she met Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi who looked at her hands and said, that she “had the potential [for sculpting].”\textsuperscript{15}

American jewelers began incorporating a reinterpreted version of European modernism. Translation of these modernist ideas was expressed through the use of abstract forms, smooth and textured graphic surfaces, interchangeable movements, and biomorphic shapes. Some artists went beyond applying the modern aesthetic and adopted the philosophical underpinnings behind the movement. Margaret De Patta, created a new visual language in the development of her jewelry designs though the interpretation of constructivist theory. (fig. 4) László Moholy-Nagy, a constructivist and former head of the Bauhaus metal workshop in Germany, helped shape De Patta’s philosophy of design. Merry Renk’s design aesthetic was also influenced by Moholy-Nagy’s principles of design, as she was a student at Institute of Design. Moholy-Nagy encouraged Renk to study the framework of natural forms and convert them into abstract design.\textsuperscript{16} Although Renk’s earlier works were non-objective, she later shifted to symbolic realism.\textsuperscript{17} She found her interest in the properties of material and experimented with metal and enamel. Other studio jewelers were influenced by their contemporaries’ use of modern design, but not the philosophical source behind their work. Irena Brynner, a painter by training, was largely interested by the aesthetic of modern jewelry. While her early jewelry pieces were dictated by her limited skill set and techniques; as she matured as an artist, she began to experiment with lost-wax casting and welding techniques that evolved into a new modern expression. During the mid-twentieth century, American artist-jewelers
adopted a diverse range of modernist ideas in their work. However, this American assimilation of modernism, did not occur in isolation; rather, its roots can be traced to Europe.

Prior to its arrival in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, European modernism was defined by several interwoven intellectual, political, and artistic movements and ideas throughout Europe. The activities within these movements varied from country to country, but the connecting force behind the modernist was the aspiration of creating a new utopian world in response to societies turmoil during the inter-war years. Seeking out this utopian concept entailed entwining oneself with the idea of rejecting historical references and ornament, embracing the machine, emphasizing function over form, and looking toward the future. A utopian world was not defined by a style, but rather a philosophical approach of how to improve everyday life through social, spiritual, and/or political reforms. As a result, architecture, art, and industrial design of the time was a vehicle for the expression of modernist principles in action. The integration of industry and mechanization altered the aesthetic output in various fields. Buildings, furniture, fashion, textiles, literature, film, and objects showcased new advances in science and technology, reflected order and utility, and incorporated the influence of the machine. Materials such as steel, glassware, plastic, and ceramics were prototyped for use in mass production. As European modernism made its way across the Atlantic to America, these ideas interacted with a dynamic political and socio-economic landscape that made it possible for an new International Style to take hold and crystallize into what would become known as American modernism.
As America transitioned from the Great Depression into a war economy and eventual recovery, the country was propelled into a burgeoning artistic center. As a consequence of warfare, Europe’s reign as an art and design powerhouse was diminished as its human capital, energy, and resources were depleted. The political atmosphere led, if not pushed, European artists to seek refuge in America before, during, and after the war, which was a catalyst to spread modernist principles to the U.S.

Émigrés included German painter Hans Hofmann, Hungarian painter and photographer László Moholy-Nagy, German architect Walter Gropius; German artist and educator Josef Albers, German textile artist Annie Albers, and Finnish architect Gottlieb Eliel Saarinen. These aforementioned modernists, highly respected in their own fields, were recruited to spearhead and teach at American educational institutions such as: Mills College in Oakland, California; Black Mountain College in Asheville, North Carolina; Cranbrook Academy in Bloomfield, Michigan; and the Institute of Design in Chicago, Illinois. While European modernism had made its way to America earlier in the century, these masters influenced art programs through teaching, and further spread modernism’s principles throughout the U.S.

Many of these artists were once connected to the Staatliches Bauhaus in Germany, a school founded by Walter Gropius, and served as conduit between art and industry. The Bauhaus’ believed in the unity of craft and the arts. They educated students on standards of craftsmanship as well as modernist principles and applied these ideas to industrial design. This provided an important connection between craft and modernism. This influence expanded to the U.S. as Moholy-Nagy and others mimicked much of the
Bauhaus curriculum and introduced new modernist theories of art, craft, and design.\textsuperscript{22} During the early 1940s, Margaret De Patta was one of the metalsmiths who benefitted from her close connection with modernists Moholy-Nagy, György Kepes, Milton Halberstadt, and Eugene Bielawski after she took courses at Mills College and the School of Design in Chicago. This allowed De Patta to think beyond what had been jewelry’s traditional limitations. As the tenets of reforming art and design movements established themselves in American art programs, several MAG members began teaching the next generation of students. Peter Macchiarini and Margaret De Patta began teaching metalsmithing and design at the California Labor School. In 1942, pioneering metalsmith Bob Winston taught jewelry at the California College of Arts and Crafts (now known as the California College of Arts).\textsuperscript{23} Among his students were future MAG members Florence Resnikoff, Irena Brynner, and Robert Dhaemers — all of whom went on to teach jewelry themselves.\textsuperscript{24}

While American artists and industrial designers were heavily influenced by the aesthetics of art and design that came from Europe, American design reflected a form of homegrown modernism born out of regional and national influences of the time. European modernism evolved into American modernism — a style rather than an idea. Following World-War I in America, artists, architects, and industrial designers considered the impact of the machine and technological advancements through the streamlining of design. The machine aesthetic played heavily in American design, as the leitmotif of European modernism flourished. This reflected America’s fascination with speed and the modernization of society. Industrial designers applied the streamlined design to
airplanes, cars, furniture, and metalware. From painting to architecture, industrial design to the decorative arts, modern style began to penetrate the American marketplace.

Spurred on by an emerging middle class and returning veterans, post World-War II America saw a boom in demand and mass consumerism for products to meet the needs of contemporary households. America’s newfound optimism permeated American design with bright colors, organic shapes, new materials, and products.\textsuperscript{25} Materials such as plastics, fiberglass, and polyesters (pioneered by Americans) were taken up by industrial designers and manufacturers. Mass production of goods met the rising middle class demand for modern design at affordable price points. However, the idea of machine-made, mass produced goods was contrary to the studio jewelers’ working philosophy; nevertheless, the interest of modern design supported the development of a new jewelry aesthetic.

\textbf{Craft Revitalization and the Studio Craft Movement}

Scholars agree that the America studio craft movement began in earnest during the mid-1940s. Spurred by government intervention and support of the middle class, craft revitalization in the United States was born out of a convergence of events that took place in the years immediately following World War II. Over 5,000 artists once employed under the umbrella of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) enacted by New Deal legislation now found those projects terminated as the government shifted focus to its post-war recovery. President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s signing of the Servicemen’s
Readjustment Act of 1944 (commonly known as the G.I. Bill), provided thousands of veterans with college tuition and an opportunity to obtain a higher education. Historians point to the G.I. Bill as one of the most significant policies in American history – immediately transforming the socio-economic and educational landscape. Economists John Bound and Sarah Turner conclude, “[t]he G.I. Bill was seen by many to have ‘democratized’ the collegiate population by making college a viable option for men from a range of socio-demographic backgrounds, including minorities, first generation Americans, and those from low income households.” Unlike any other prior point in U.S. history, government legislation indirectly augmented programs offered at educational institutions by giving money to individuals rather than schools.

A result of this increased access to higher education was the growth of art programs that created three distinct orientations for teaching students. Students were able to attend creative, vocational, and therapeutic programs based on their needs and desires. Now free from the commitments of service, returning veterans sought refuge in craft as a means to reconnect with humanity, and found they could apply their trade skills as engineers and mechanics to craft. Service members could decide if they were to attend collegiate institutions or non-collegiate programs. Art programs received a boost in both attendance and revenues generated by students on the G.I. Bill. This allowed schools to expand programs and open departments in the various genres of craft.

In the San Francisco area, G.I.’s could chose to attend degree granting institutions and non-traditional programs such as: the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, California; Mills College in Oakland, California; University of California at
Berkeley, the California School of Labor (various locations). MAG members, including Margaret De Patta, Peter Macchiarini, Bob Winston, Merry Renk, Byron Wilson, and Florence Resnikoff, headed these art departments and taught courses in design and metalsmithing. These artists and institutions exposed G.I.’s to modernist movements and ideas that coalesced in both the fine and applied arts. With the influx of students attending these programs, a renaissance using clay, glass, fiber, wood, and metal ensued. Craft afforded the students an opportunity to develop a means to make a living. Many of these programs that received additional funding through the G.I. Bill, also had the support of countless individuals and craft organizations.

One organization of particular importance was The Handcraft Cooperative League of America (later known as American Craftsmen Council, 1955, and American Craft Council, 1979). It was established in August 1940 in New York by philanthropist and craft advocate, Aileen Osborn Webb. Through Webb, a number of regional craft organizations came together to establish a national dialogue promoting handmade crafts in the public sphere. The organization accomplished this by: opening an “urban crafts store” called America House in New York City in October 1940; starting a publication called *Craft Horizons* (later known as *American Craft*) in 1941; founding the School of the American Craftsmen at Dartmouth College in December 1944; and establishing the Museum of Contemporary Craft (now known as the Museum of Arts and Design) in 1956.

The School of the American Craftsmen was created by the League’s education branch – the American Craftsman Education Council. The Council’s mission was, in
part, to train returning veterans. The school’s philosophy was to develop students critical thinking and to “create purpose, acquaintance with material and process as a basis for the expression of design, respect for skill and technical excellence, self-criticism and the belief by the student craftsman that the crafts are indeed art forms where creative imagination brings into coherent order material, process, and function.”

Another pivotal educational institution was the New Bauhaus (also known as the School of Design as well as the Institute of Design). The school was critical to the spread of modernism in American craft and design. Moholy-Nagy, formerly of the Bauhaus in Germany, founded the school with the intentions of teaching many of the tenets of its European predecessor. In fact, MAG founders Margaret De Patta and Merry Renk took classes with Moholy-Nagy at the school in Chicago.

Such initiatives moved craft beyond a mere vocation, and helped bring the American studio craft movement into prominence as other institutions emulated such philosophies. Traditional craft was rooted in social reform, historical reference, utilitarianism, and was limited to a cottage industry. However, starting as early as the 1930s, American craftspeople began incorporating modernist principals of design, embracing science and technology, developing an individual philosophical approach to their work, and seeing their objects as art. This transformation of craft became known as the American studio craft movement. Craftspeople found themselves reacting to the modernization and industrialization of society. There was a division amongst craftspeople as to which cannons of modernism to embrace. Like their European peers, American craftspeople sought social reforms; however, artists were divided as to the
acceptance or rejection of industry. While some craftspeople rejected late modernism’s embracing of industry, others applied modernist principles of design to their work. MAG artists like Peter Macchiarini often lectured about the affect of mass production on the craftsperson. However, Margaret De Patta, who also applied modernist theory to her work, felt that good design applied to both industrial designer and the craftsperson.

The influence of modernism on industrial designers, architects, and artists, brought about a new modern style. American households now found design not only fashionable, but also affordable and functional. Consumer demand for modern design forced studio craftspeople to incorporate modern style into their work. Combined with the influx of European artists, a prevailing modernist presence, the expansion of art programs, an invigorated student body, and consumer demand, momentum was building for the rejuvenation of craft in America.

**Studio Jewelry’s Maturation and Regional Distinctions**

The American studio jewelry movement emerged in the 1940s and reached its peak in the 1950s. Many of those who benefited from the increased access to metalsmithing programs capitalized on their experience, and sought new ventures to earn a living as independent artists, small manufacturers, or designers. This entrepreneurial spirit was a common thread between all studio jewelers, and provided the impetus for artists to regionally organize and form associations such as the Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco and the Artists Craftsmen League of New York.
In the years following World War II, artists found themselves caught in an era of consumerism driven by widespread advertising campaigns, mass production, and industrial innovation. The artists’ mission to sell handcrafted, one-of-a-kind, or limited series goods was somewhat counter to the consumer culture of the time; however, jewelers felt they could attract buyers by enticing them with quality work at affordable prices. Artist-jewelers became savvy marketers and began to use new media to advertise their work. While promoting jewelry at art festivals and fairs, they also sought to reach consumers through radio, television, and advertisements. MAG members such as Merry Renk, Irena Brynner, and De Patta went on television and radio to promote their work. Brynner and Art Smith had pictorial coverage in *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar*. Modern jewelry exhibitions such as *Modern Jewelry Design* at the Museum of Modern Art in 1946 and the traveling exhibition *Modern Jewelry Under Fifty Dollars* organized by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota helped broaden the public awareness of the field which “appealed to liberal, educated middle-class consumers.” New York retailers, such as Black, Starr and Gorham, Bloomingdale’s, and Georg Jenson, and California retailers and galleries, such as Gump’s, Nanny’s, Casper’s, and Fraser’s, responded by stocking these artists’ wares – bringing modernist jewelry into the mainstream. While the studio jewelry movement spread throughout the United States, major clusters of artists intentionally established their shops and studios in New York City and San Francisco.

New York City became one of the most important places for jewelers to establish themselves. As a cultural center, the city boasted a cadre of acclaimed museums,
galleries, and institutions. A magnet for the avant-garde, artsy Greenwich Village was home to many artists, writers, and musicians. The neighborhood catered to the eccentric and welcomed bohemians of the Beat Generation. Artist-jewelers such as Frank Rebajes, Paul Lobel, Art Smith, and Sam Kramer maintained their ateliers and apartments there as well. Although some artists like Irena Brynner (MAG founder) and Ed Weiner preferred their studios and shops near major museums in midtown, studio jewelers thrived in New York City’s open atmosphere, which permitted an organic exchange of dialogue about art, politics, and social issues of the times. This exchange not only gave way to similar characteristics in design, but also bestowed a conscious homage to prominent modernists – as fine art movements like American abstract expressionism, surrealism, fauvism, cubism influenced the New York art scene. Many of the New York studio jewelers often referenced Alexander Calder, Joan Miro, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, and Marcel Duchamp in their work. This is due in part to the fact that many of these studio jewelers lived in and around New York City, actively participated in the local gallery scene as well as in major Modern art and Industrial Design exhibitions that circulated among the city’s museums.

There were a number of exhibitions shown in New York that helped spread awareness in contemporary design. Some exhibitions included: Silver: An Exhibition of Contemporary American Design by Manufacturers, Designers, and Craftsmen (1937), Metropolitan Museum of Art; Contemporary Industrial Handwrought Silver (1937), Brooklyn Museum of Art; Contemporary Industrial Art (1934, 1940), Metropolitan Museum of Art; Building the World of Tomorrow at the New York World’s Fair (1939 -
1940); Modern Handmade Jewelry (1946), Museum of Modern Art; Form in Handwrought Silver (1949), Metropolitan Museum of Art; Designer Craftsman USA (1953), Brooklyn Museum of Art, and Craftsmanship in a Changing World (1956), Museum of Contemporary Craft.

Among these exhibitions, and the most crucial to the acceptance of modernist studio jewelry as an art form, was the traveling exhibition Modern Handmade Jewelry (1946) at the Museum of Modern Art. It was the first exhibition that acknowledged “wearable art as a movement in America,” and by exhibiting studio jewelers’ work alongside fine artists in such a venue gave credence to the emerging field of jewelry. Twenty-five artists and studio craftspeople made a total of 135 pieces of jewelry for the show. Some of the artists included weaver Anni Albers; sculptors Alexander Calder and José de Rivera; jewelers and metalsmiths Margaret De Patta (MAG founder), Harry Bertoia, and Paul Lobel; furniture designer Ward Bennett; painters Julio de Diego and Jacques Lipchitz; and art dealer and filmmaker Julian Levy. The handmade works exhibited contained a variety of avant-garde materials, such as plastic, jacks, safety pins, marbles, and stones and also a current of modernist design tenants. In fact, the museum heralded this new jewelry tradition in its press release for the exhibition: “the Museum of Modern Art shows that today’s jewelry need be neither the princely luxury of precious stones and metals nor the dubious glitter of production-line gadgets sometimes appropriately referred to as ‘junk jewelry.” With such an exhibition, the Museum of Modern Art validated the studio jeweler in an era of commercialized design and elevated jewelry as an art form.
Similar to New York City, San Francisco was an international cultural center steeped in a rich artistic history. In a sign of geographical diversity, artists, writers, and musicians lived in neighborhoods like North Beach as well as East Bay towns like Oakland and Berkeley. Throughout the city there were many concurrent movements influencing the art scene. The Beat Generation writers moved from New York to San Francisco in the 1950s. At the same time, American abstract expressionism made its way from the east coast to San Francisco where it was adopted and transformed into the Bay Area Figurative movement. Metalsmiths and artist-jewelers were not immune to the sweeping changes seen in the arts.

Mid-century California modernism was defined by its regional sense of self-reliance, novelty, innovation, and non-conformity.\textsuperscript{40} That being said, California craftspeople also assimilated modernist ideas into their work. Where New York was a center for high art, California was a “region far more laid back and earthy, provid[ing] a fertile ground for a ‘new craftsman’ movement to take root and grow.”\textsuperscript{41} California’s distance from the east coast allowed for resident artists to develop a distinctive approach to modern design. Los Angeles became a hub for the reinterpretation of the American dream and promoted a California lifestyle through art, architecture, film, design, media, and music - which filtered into the American national consciousness.\textsuperscript{42} California also played a dual role in that it supported the “anti-establishment and process-oriented ... value system necessary for the act of making that is the hallmark of craft.”\textsuperscript{43} As California’s population doubled in size between 1949 and 1965, a new sense of independence and confidence captured the region.\textsuperscript{44} Art historian Eudorah M. Moore
believes that California artists’ individualistic approach to their work stems from the population’s ambitious “frontier syndrome” — a need to be self-sustaining. This freedom and autonomy lent itself to the artistic diversity among Bay area jewelers.

Pioneering metalsmiths showcased this newfound freedom of expression through the development of their modernist approaches to jewelry design as well as by educating the next generation of jewelers. Through this instruction, a new cannon of modernist jewelry was formed. The aesthetic of both northern and southern California jewelry was as vast as the backgrounds of the jewelers producing the work. California jewelers’ collective output was strengthened by established metalsmith programs. In San Francisco, MAG founders Margaret De Patta, Bob Winston, and Peter Macchiarini taught courses and headed the art departments at the California College of Arts and Crafts, the California School of Fine Arts, Mills College, and the California School of Labor. As teachers, they encouraged their students to learn new techniques, use alternative materials, and develop an individual approach to craft and design. Additionally, San Francisco metal artists had the benefit of the newly established Metal Arts Guild headed by De Patta and other leading studio jewelers of the time. The Guild not only provided a source of training to metal artists, but also also was a resource to support their economic interests.

Unlike New York City’s artist-jewelers, very few Bay Area jewelers maintained shops. In fact, the vast majority of artist-jewelers worked in home studios and sold their jewelry through art galleries, outdoor art festivals, and local exhibitions as well as San Francisco contemporary craft shops and galleries such as Casper’s, Nanny’s, and
Fraser’s. MAG jewelers participating in such festivals and exhibitions, and two of the biggest festivals were the juried San Francisco Art Festival and the California State Fair. In addition, regional organizations, such as the San Francisco Society of Women Artists, the Designer Craftsmen of California, and the Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco organized independent festivals and exhibitions with local museums and institutions promoting the California artist-craftsman. During this time, Californians were exposed to modern design through exhibitions including: the Golden Gate International Exhibition at the World’s Fair in San Francisco (1939); Modern German Sculptors, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1939); Houses and Housing, De Young Museum (1940); Architecture by Mies van de Rohe, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1940); Silver Jewelry: Pinoda, De Patta, and Bergmann, De Young Museum (1944); Modern Jewelry Design, San Francisco Museum of Art (1947); Design In the Dining Room, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1949); California Designed, De Young Museum (1955); 20th Anniversary Exhibition: Collection of Modern Art in the Bay Area, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1955); and Designer Craftsmen of the West, De Young Museum, (1957). These exhibitions showcased the new modernist wave of influence in America and highlighted architecture, fine art, sculpture, and craft.

This chapter introduced the context in which the American studio jewelry movement developed during the mid-twentieth century as a result of the simultaneous emergence of modernism and revival of craft. Leading artists and educational institutions supported the application of various forms of modernism, which in turn transformed the aesthetic of jewelry. Driven by the rise of consumerism, studio jewelers across the
United States found their own paths to reconcile the role of art and industry. New York City and San Francisco became centers for artists to produce modernist jewelry and push for its broad adoption. Bay Area metalsmiths began to realize that there was no organization dedicated to the protection and advancement of studio jewelry. Thus, a group of pioneers came together to form the Metal Arts Guild, which will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 2: METAL ARTS GUILD FORMATION AND HISTORY

Chapter two surveys the conditions and events in the 1930s and 1940s that provided momentum for a group of studio jewelers to form the Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco (MAG). This chapter connects the evolution of the California labor movement and the California Labor School (CLS) to the expansion of the American studio jewelry movement in San Francisco. In addition, there is an examination of MAG studio jewelers associated with CLS and their interest in the Artist Equity Association (AEA). Finally, this chapter details the formation of MAG in the early 1950s.

The Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco, through its members, played an important role in the American studio jewelry movement. While craft organizations such as the American Craftsmen Cooperative Council led the charge in promoting craft to the American public, MAG was the first organization to focus entirely on jewelry and the metal arts. Although MAG maintained membership with various craft organizations, the Guild was not only formed to promote the metal arts, but also aimed to protect and develop its membership. Until MAG’s formation, artists faced a number of political, economic, and legal challenges as individuals. Founding members sought to organize metalworkers in a manner similar to the AEA who protected sculptors and painters.

MAG had a wide-ranging impact on the American Studio Jewelry movement. On a local level, this was felt at university art programs, as MAG members educated the next generation of jewelers and metalsmiths. The Guild actively promoted jewelry as an art form through exhibitions in galleries, festivals, and museums throughout California. In doing so, MAG stirred demand amongst the rising middle class, and provoked interest in
the marketplace. This is due to the fact that their members’ work was featured in both local and national publications as well as sold and collected throughout the United States and abroad. MAG members participated in pivotal national and international exhibitions that highlighted studio jewelers. The culmination of these efforts resulted in the acquisition of MAG members’ work by national and international museums. Such recognition confirms MAG’s importance in the historical accounts of the American studio jewelry movement.

Prior to the formation of MAG in 1951, there was a confluence of events that gave impetus for a group of metalsmiths to organize and specifically address the concerns of metalworkers in the Bay Area. In an era of political unease, several of the artists who were also laborers or teachers, faced an ideological assault on their social beliefs, and their art reflected this undercurrent. Similar to other workers, artists sought the means to earn a living. Many artists were hired to work on Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects and bore witness to some of the worker protest rallies, as they fought for better working conditions and livable wages. (fig. 6) While other organizations, societies, and unions addressed some of the needs of jewelers and craftspeople as a broadly defined group, no single entity covered all of the specific issues facing artist-jewelers and metalsmiths.

Organizations like the American Craftsmen Council focused on educating the craftsman and promoting craft to the American public. Artists unions, such as the AEA and the San Francisco Artist and Writers Union focused on the economic interests of painters, writers, and sculptors. Studio jewelers did not even qualify to be a member
of the International Jewelry Workers Union (IJWU) because they were independently working, and not affiliated with any industrial union shops. Metalworkers and artist-jewelers observed this disparity and soon realized that their economic interests were unprotected. Therefore, the genesis of artist-jewelers collective activity in San Francisco can be traced to the California labor movement.

**California Labor Movement**

The vibrant art scene in San Francisco greatly benefited from the influx of federal funds during the interwar years, as many artists went to work under WPA programs as early as 1934. In the eight years that followed, the WPA employed ten-thousand artists.\(^{47}\) Prior to these New Deal programs, approximately 20% of all California state workers relied on some form of public relief.\(^{48}\) During the recovery from the Great Depression, millions of people went to work on large public projects, such as the construction of the Golden Gate and San Francisco Bay Bridges. Undertaking such infrastructure projects galvanized workers and revitalized organized labor throughout the country.\(^{49}\) Under the Section 7(a) of the Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 and the Wagner Act of 1935, workers were “affirmed rights to bargain collectively.”\(^{50}\) Strikes were common as men, women, and minorities fought for the improvement of wages and working conditions. Artists employed under the WPA umbrella documented this struggle through the visual arts. Joshua Paddison addressed this in his essay, “The Great California Labor Art Movement,” in *At Work: The Art of California Labor*: 
The period’s dramatic labor struggles acted as inspiration for a diverse but remarkably likeminded group of California Visual artists. Committed leftists, these artists turned the course of California art away from the postimpressionist landscapes of the early twentieth century toward social realism. Heavily influenced by the Mexican muralists who visited the state during the late 1920s and 1930s, California artists strive to capture the often violent labor struggles they read about on the front page and witnessed with their own eyes. Many of these artists found support from the various public art projects of the New Deal, joining the hundreds of thousands of Californians who needed the help of the federal government to survive the depression.

Some of the federal programs that put artists to work included: the Public Works of Art Projects (PWAP), the Section of Painting and Sculpture (SPAS), the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP), the Federal Art Project (FAP), the Index of American Design (IAD), the Farm Security Administration (FSA), the Federal Writers Project (FWP), and the Federal Theatre Project (FTP). While President Franklin D. Roosevelt was hesitant to support the arts in the middle of the Depression, his advisor Harry Hopkins reminded him that “[artists] have got to eat just like other people!” Working on such projects, many of the painters, sculptors, photographers, and metalsmiths, found themselves involved with, and affected by, the labor and social movements of the time.

A number of important artists came to work in San Francisco under these federal projects. Painter Maynard Dixon, brother of coppersmith and MAG founder Harry Dixon (and was also the husband of FSA photographer Dorothea Lange), worked on many of the federal work programs in and around San Francisco. Muralist and declared Communist Diego Rivera, along with his wife painter Frida Kahlo, came to San Francisco in 1930 after being commissioned for the mural program under the PWAP.
While living and working out of Ralph Stackpole’s studio at 716 Montgomery Street in the North Beach section of San Francisco, Diego produced three works: *Allegory of California* (1931) at the Pacific Stock Exchange Club; *The Making of a Fresco, Showing the Building of a City* (1931) at the San Francisco Art Institute; and *Pan-American Unity* (1940) — created as part of the Art in Action section of the *Golden Gate International Exposition* on Treasure Island. The subject matter of these works encouraged American painters and sculptors to “engage contemporary and historical themes with an eye toward their social significance; which is to say, to link art, history, and public identity in the mural format.” Artists implemented this new model for American murals in the 1933 Coit Tower project. This project stirred controversy over its anti-American content, and even resulted in Congressional hearings. This would not be the last time Congress would get involved with matters related to art. Several artists involved in the Coit Tower project included: Ralph Stackpole, Lucien Labaudt, Bernard Zakhein, Mallette Dean, and Victor Arnautoff – who were self-declared Communists and also founding members of the San Francisco Artist and Writers Union (1933). Future founding MAG members Peter Macchiarini and Harry Dixon went to work as laborers on many of Stackpole’s projects. Many of the WPA artists, like Macchiarini, Dixon, and Arnautoff would go on to teach at the leading California art institutions, such as the California Labor School.
California Labor School

As funding for the federal art projects came to an end, the U.S. Government shifted its focus to vocational training programs for returning veterans. The G.I. Bill afforded servicemen the opportunity to return to school tuition-free. One school in particular that benefited from the influx of returning G.I.’s, was the privately financed Tom Mooney Labor School (which subsequently changed its name to the California Labor School (CLS), and had locations throughout California. (fig. 7) The school first opened its doors in 1942 in San Francisco, and received its accreditation in 1944.55 (fig. 8) CLS financing came from unions, wealthy residents of San Francisco, CLS Carnival Fundraisers, and the Communist party (a source which would later become a point of contention). (fig. 9) The CLS mission was to serve as the educational arm of the labor movement and train returning veterans, immigrants, minorities, women, and workers. Between 1942 and 1947, CLS trained over 75,000 students among all its locations.56 CLS welcomed every nationality, race, and religion. In a document entitled, “Role of the California Labor School In the Labor Movement and In the Community,” CLS made a clear statement:

The School recognizes and teaches the equality of all American minorities: The Negro, Mexican, Japanese-American, Jewish-American and Chinese-American in all fields. We are working and teaching against discrimination, both subtle and open, on the basis of religion, race, color or national origin. The California Labor School welcomes all democratic elements in the community as teachers and students, and devotes a large part of its curriculum to the understanding of minority problems and the development of unity among the American people.57
Ethnically diverse, approximately 40 percent of the school’s student body was African-American, and included poet Maya Angelou.58

The initial brochure of 1942, entitled “Education for Victory,” focused on the American labor movement and offered such courses as Trade Unions and The War; History of the California Labor Movement; Labor Journalism; The Struggle for National Independence; The Negro People; Life in the Soviet Union; Marxism; Civilian Protection; and English and Citizenship. By the Spring of 1944, CLS expanded to include social sciences, dramatics, dancing, radio writing and production, and arts and crafts to its curriculum. Eugene Bielawski, formerly of the School of Design in Chicago, came to San Francisco to head the CLS Art Department in 1945. The Art Executive Committee included Adelyne Cross, Bielawski, Margaret De Patta, Freda Koblick, Giacomo Patri, Mildred Rosenthal, and Henry Wachs. Throughout the Arts and Crafts Department’s existence, courses included Layout; Large Crafts; Modern Design for Small Crafts; Life Drawing; Experimental Stage Design; Basic Design Workshop; Color Workshop; Advanced Furniture Construction; Composition; Ceramics; Metal Workshop; Modern Homes and Interiors; Painting for Pleasure; Photography; Plastics; Sculpture; Figure Drawing; What is Modern Architecture; Color and Light; Silkscreen; Architecture and the Home; Art and the People; Social History of Art; Cartoon and Illustration; Dressmaking and Designing; Wood and Linoleum Cuts; Mural Painting; Arts and Society; Home Planning on a Shoestring; and Gardens – Planning and Planting.59  CLS offered these courses to students as a way to learn about “a functional approach to art and job training for new professions and industries.”60 (fig. 10)
Accomplished artists and craftsmen who taught at CLS included: designer, painter, graphic artist, Adelyne Cross; illustrator and painter, Giacomo Patri; sculptor, painter, and muralist, Claire Falkenstein; sculptor, engineer, and plastic designer, Frieda Koblick; furniture designer Louise Gilbert; graphic artist, Max Broeske; painter and printmaker, Pele deLappe; ceramist, Edith Heath; ceramist, Mary Tuthill; sculptor and jeweler, Philip Morton; painter, Victor Arnautoff; sculptor, Ralph Stackpole; photographer, Milton Halberstadt; jeweler, painter, photographer and MAG founder, Margaret De Patta; industrial designer, educator, jeweler and MAG founder, Eugene Bielawski; and sculptor, jeweler, and MAG founder, Peter Macchiarini. Many of the art instructors had international experience and connections to some of the most innovative art schools of that era. De Patta was student at the School of Design in Chicago, Bielawski and Cross were instructors at the Institute of Design, and Gustav Friedman studied at the Bauhaus in Germany. At the same time, instructors introduced modernism to CLS, they also advanced the California labor movement by training the next generation of skilled craftspeople. Historian Marc Dean Johnson refers to the labor school as, “among the brightest flashes produced by the combined chemistry of labor and art in California.”

By as late as 1945, at the request of the United States government, CLS hosted the labor delegation from the Soviet Union for the founding meeting of the United Nations held in San Francisco. Thereafter, with the rise of the Soviet Union at the end World War II, public sentiment for anything associated with the Communist Party declined rapidly. While once enjoying the support of both the local and federal governments, the
changing political atmosphere left CLS and its instructors vulnerable, as many were sympathetic to Socialist and Communist ideology.

As the Cold War began, CLS faced charges of being a Communist front organization. In September 1946, school directors David Jenkins and Holland Roberts were subpoenaed by the State Federation of Labor’s California’s Un-American Affairs Committee. At the same time, a group called the American Veterans of World War II asked that the Veterans Administration to investigate CLS and withhold G.I. Bill funding. Soon, the California Federation of Labor charged that the school contained Communists and taught Communist propaganda. Unions soon began withdrawing their support from the school. In July 1947, hearings were held before the California House of Representatives’ Committee on Un-American Activities to propose bills, H.R. 1884 and H.R. 2122 which would curb or outlaw the Communist Party. In doing so, many California organizations and individuals were labeled as “red,” and blacklisted. This included CLS, directors and instructors, and among them were Macchiarini, De Patta, and Bielawski – who would later go on to form MAG. The school eventually was closed in 1957 due to financial and political pressure facing the school in the McCarthy era; however, CLS never backed down from their beliefs and believed that they were being persecuted. (fig. 12)
Artists Equity Association

The Artist Equity Association (AEA), established in 1947 with the goal of serving painters, sculptors, photographers, and graphic artists, was an organization that inspired MAG’s founders. Faced with some similar economic and political challenges as the CLS, the AEA was founded as an apolitical organization despite the activism among many of its members. In 1946, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, an artist-activist, met with his contemporaries in Woodstock, New York, to discuss forming an organization to serve the economic interests of artists. It is during this time, that the American press, including Hearst newspapers and *Look* magazine, criticized contemporary art and artists who participated in the U.S. State Department-funded traveling exhibition, *Advancing American Art*. The artists were portrayed as, “leftist radicals who were set on destroying conventional artistic standards as part of their antidemocratic and radical egalitarianism.”

As the negative press spread and influenced opinion, the criticism reached the various levels of government, and the Republican party seized the opportunity to embarrass President Harry S. Truman. The State Department feared the outcome of the conflict and canceled remaining exhibitions. AEA’s founding members were, “[f]ully aware that they had learned something during both the [Great] [D]epression and the war about both generating public support and the need to band together, … [and] developed the structure of an organization that also scrupulously avoided any aesthetic allegiance and tried never to take public stands other than on matters of financial importance to its member artists.”
The AEA was an inclusive organization; however, artists needed to meet certain criteria before they were accepted as members. Instead of judging by aesthetic criterion or academic background, artists were accepted based on whether they were “recognized” in the field by being included in a major exhibition or one-person show. The term “recognized” was challenged from time to time. Additionally, members would include museum directors and artist organizations. The first AEA meeting held at The Museum of Modern Art on April 30, 1947, addressed the issues the organization would start to tackle in its inaugural year, which included: writing a constitution, developing a legal service to address copyright law and reproduction rights, setting up a welfare fund for members, establishing a group insurance plan, setting initiatives for getting artists covered by Social Security, and addressing public policy issues, among others. Some of these aims would be addressed and modeled in the forming of MAG’s initiatives and its constitution.

As a result of receiving positive press following this meeting, AEA membership grew steadily. Regional chapters were established to spread the AEA’s influence and reach throughout the United States. In 1952, AEA’s Northern California Chapter membership had over 100 members, and at some point during its existence, members included former CLS artists Victor Arnautoff, Ralph Stackpole, Peter Macchiariini, Irena Brynner, Margaret De Patta, and the Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco itself.
Formation of the Metal Arts Guild

In the Spring of 1951, a small group of metal artists, including Margaret De Patta, Eugene Bielawski, Peter Macchiarini, Harry Dixon, and Caroline Rosene, met in San Francisco to discuss the idea of developing an organization dedicated to the metal arts. Up until that time, there was no group or union in the United States that specifically addressed the unique needs of studio jewelers or metal craftspeople. Having already faced numerous obstacles, including being blacklisted by the U.S. government, these metal artists banded together to form an organization “which would do for them what Artists Equity was established to do for painters and sculptors.” After a few initial discussions, the group invited Bay Area metal artists to a meeting in order to gauge their interest in forming a non-profit organization. The meeting was held on March 28, 1951 in Room 139 of the Marina Jr. High School in San Francisco. (fig. 13) De Patta recalled that, “[t]he desirability of an organization was unanimously admitted and steps were taken to establish temporary officers until a formal election could be held and a committee was appointed to formulate the aims and objectives of the prospective guild.” Founding members documented their ideas for the shaping of the organization. It was the intent of the Guild that “[n]o person should be excluded because of their particular style or technique. Instead, the main consideration should be given to quality of workmanship.” It was also important that Guild members emphasize originality, creativity, and be open-minded to the exchange of all views. This included being an
all-inclusive organization that was “non-political and non-sectarian, and [that] no one should be excluded from membership because of color, race, or nationality.”

Organizing committee members included Neal George (President), Mayer Segal (Vice President), A’leen Runkle (Recording Secretary), David Loveless (Corresponding Secretary), Peter Macchiarini (Treasurer), Virginia Macchiarini, Marguerite Segal, Connie Grothkopp, Caroline Rosene, Roy Walker, Merry Renk, Vera Allison, Irena Brynner, Harry Dixon, Byron Menendez, Phyllis Menendez, Roxane Marden, Josephene Mount, Marguerite Kelly, Hal Davies, Loren Lee Davies, Fallie Lind, Margaret De Patta, Eugene Bielawski, Bob Winston, and Franz W. Bergmann. Over the next four months, these metalworkers, coppersmiths, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, lapidaries, and jewelers discussed their issues and concerns facing the contemporary artist-craftsmen in the field of metalwork, and outlined a constitution defining the principles of an organization that would become known as the Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco.

As early as May 30, 1951, the working name for the group was the “Jeweler’s Organization.” However, the founders wanted a more accurate name to describe the association. Everyone wanted the name to be inclusive of all metalworkers, and therefore did not want the term “jeweler” or “jewelry” in the name. Committee members began by writing words on a board, but they could not agree on a name. After this unsuccessful effort, Renk suggested that they combine individual words they like to describe the organization. The group chose “metal,” “arts,” and “guild.” Thus, the formal name of the Metal Arts Guild was proposed by Mayer Segal and adopted on June 27, 1951. That same day, the organizing committee elected its first slate of officers:
Margaret De Patta (President), Mayer Segal (Vice President), Vera Allison (Recording Secretary), Byron Menendez (Corresponding Secretary), and Peter Macchiarini (Treasurer). During this time, MAG’s constitution underwent changes and debate. The document was eventually approved with an effective date of July 1, 1951. The constitution detailed the organization’s objectives, members’ roles and responsibilities, and operational rules.

MAG’s primary aims were addressed in Article II of the constitution. Its mission statement stipulated that, “[t]he object of this Guild shall be to bring together the metal craftsmen, workers in jewelry, metal ware, or metal sculpture, in an association for their mutual strength and advantage.”\textsuperscript{82} MAG founders believed collectively that the organization would create a supporting network for metalworkers by providing artistic, economic, technical, and educational support. Aims included: establishing professional guidelines and standards between guild members and the business community; protecting the rights and interests of its membership; furnishing legal advice; providing a forum for the artists to exchange information and ideas; reducing costs of materials and supplies; and promoting metalwork as an art form through educational exhibits and lectures.\textsuperscript{83}

The program committee believed that in order to hold the interest of professional jewelers, MAG should establish trade practices and strive for the “possibility of having something like New York City’s America House,” which indicates that the committee was considering opening a shop to sell the members’ work.\textsuperscript{84} This concept never came to fruition; however, MAG supported individual jewelers efforts to sell their work through fair, galleries, and shops.
The notoriety of many of MAG’s committee members and officers within the American studio jewelry movement helped attract new members to the organization. Many artist-jewelers looked to De Patta as the icon of modernist jewelry. Founding member Irena Brynner recalled, “Margaret De Patta was really our goddess in this. She guided us and she helped us all a lot. We met regularly. We started meeting together and then we decided to call this group the Metal Arts Guild.”

Florence Resnikoff, a charter member, recalled, “Margaret De Patta, of course, was the leading person and she was anxious that this guild be started … we were all very much in awe of Margaret because she was so well known and her work was so [impressive] … she was a beacon that everybody followed and emulated.”

Expanding the membership was important to MAG’s financial stability and consistent with the aims of the organization. By the end of the first year, MAG had 45 members. Membership dues in 1952 were five dollars per year, and paid for the organization’s insurance, festival expenses, photography, awards, office supplies, and entertainment expenses. (fig. 14) MAG sought to establish a professional organization to attract established metalsmiths. In an effort to be an inclusive organization, MAG wished to welcome all metal artists, but chose to distinguish between the established craftsperson, student, and hobbyist. To achieve this, the Guild separated metalsmiths into two membership categories: full members and regular members. The membership committee determined the classification of membership by evaluating the artist’s experience. The Guild stated that one reason to differentiate members was to recognize established artists in the field and give impetus to emerging metalsmiths to achieve such
Borrowing from AEA guidelines, full membership denoted that the
individual “had work accepted for exhibition in an open juried show in a major museum
or gallery or shall have had an invited one-man show in a major museum, during the last
three years.” This requirement could be waived by submitting a minimum of 10 pieces
before MAG’s Jury of Acceptance committee who vetted the work based on
craftsmanship, quality, and design. Full members were also eligible to run for office
and vote on all matters. Although, regular members had access to all services, they could
neither vote nor hold office. The controversial division of membership was eliminated a
few years later.

As part of fulfilling some of its economic aims, MAG established professional
standards for artists when working with shops, galleries, and museums. As if taking a
page out of a union handbook, MAG set guidelines for its members to follow. These best
business practices with galleries, retailers, and exhibitors included: (1) establishing
acceptance of responsibility and/or insurance, (2) shipping costs, (3) special order
policies regarding designs submits and deposits to start work, (4) established standards
for pricing – wholesale versus consignment, (5) determining a fair price for repair work;
(6) establishing sales terms regarding payments and discounts; (7) running a small
business; and (8) seeking the Guild’s advice on legal matters. These guidelines
empowered the artists as individuals, because they knew they had the backing of the
Guild.

These guidelines were addressed during MAG’s monthly meetings, and
additional resources could be found in MAG’s library.
The Guild was very concerned about establishing proper commercial relationships with retailers. In fact, many of these guidelines were put in place so that the Guild could establish a universal practice within the field. One particular point of contention was whether or not jewelers should require outright purchase of work or allow their work to be on consignment. MAG members were concerned about making a livable income as independent jewelers; therefore, the subject of pricing and product placement was of great interest to its membership. In fact, the Organizing Committee, consulted with Bill Brewer, a manager of the interior design and furniture retailer Kneedler Fauchère, to discuss the problems that both the craftsmen and retailers faced. Brewer assessed the jewelry marketplace:

Where is the market for jewelry craftsmen! This is a problem because jewelry items are not useful, only decorative. The type of design does not fit into regular jewelry stores. The only place that is a market is in the small experimental shop. The cost of selling jewelry is high in relation to other things. It costs just as much to sell it as it does to make it. Therefore it is standard practice to mark up 100%. A store cannot operate on less.

When discussing putting work on consignment with stores, Brewer advised, “[t]here is no profit in taking articles on consignment at 33-1/3% [and Brewer] is opposed to consignment business because it is not profitable and does not treat the craftsmen correctly. Many small shops work on consignment basis because they do not have money to buy and therefore the market is limited.” MAG members shared these sentiments in the earlier meetings. “While it is difficult to have work purchased outright because of established agreements between craftsmen and retailers, it should be the aim of the
organization to work for and establish the trend for outright purchase by retailers.”

Members understood the financial burden they faced when putting work in galleries and stores on a consignment basis, but with limited venues to sell their work during this time, metalsmith’s often had no choice. Therefore, it was important for artist-jewelers to set specific payment terms and consider not only the materials when costing an item, but also labor, overhead, and profit. Artist-jewelers were so concerned regarding pricing that a special meeting was called on August 14, 1955, at the home of Margaret De Patta, for “the subject [of pricing] is of such scope and interest to its members that a more complete coverage is desirable. ... It is expected that some definite conclusions regarding pricing policies and methods will result.”

This makes it even more evident that MAG was trying to set policy standards between retailers, customers, and the artist-jeweler. MAG addressed the rationale behind charging fees for repair work:

Many craftsmen are called upon to repair jewelry items and are often at a loss as to prices to charge for such services. The organization’s function is to determine a fair price for such work, especially since there is a union for jewelry established by the A. F. of L. It is good policy to see that fair prices for such work be maintained. Our objective is to have and hold the welfare of other such unions.

MAG was clearly aware of the International Jewelry Workers Union and sought to better artist-jewelers’ circumstances. As individuals, very few artists had the power to dictate terms; however united as group, MAG had strength in numbers.

MAG’s influence went beyond pricing matters. Although it was not established as a political organization, the Guild was very active in protecting the economic interests of its membership. MAG encouraged letter-writing campaigns on a local, state, and
federal level. It supported the San Francisco Arts Commission Art Festival, and the backing of the bill H.R. 3541 calling for the formation of the Federal Advisory Commission on the Arts. MAG joined with other art organizations in challenging art festival organizers who were beginning to charge artist entry fees for the California State Fair in Sacramento. An all-points-bulletin went out to MAG members on June 24, 1955:

In keeping with established Guild policy of working toward eventual elimination of all entry fees for shows and exhibits— the following motions (2) were made and carried UNANIMOUSLY at the last regular MAG meeting, June 22, 1955.

Motion – ‘The Metal Arts Guild will take a definite stand against the newly established policy of charging entry fees for Art and Craft exhibits at the 1955 California State Fair and Exposition. This action to be binding on the total membership not to exhibit at the Fair.’

Motion – ‘All MAG members are to return entry blanks (Card #5) with the notation that they are not exhibiting because of the entry fee charged. Returned blank to be signed as individuals.’

In addition, Margaret De Patta, on behalf of MAG, drafted a letter to California State Senator George Miller expressing its position on the artist entry fees:

This letter is written officially representing the MAG of C—an organization of artist craftsman [sic] who have joined together to mutually aid one another in meeting the various problems facing the contemporary craftsman actively engaged in the field of metalwork. Our organization is five years old and in that period has sponsored numerous exhibits of museums and art shows and has participated as a group in the S[an] F[rancisco] Art Festivals. The cultural and educational activities of our group have proven of interest and of value to our community.

All feel very strongly that cultural exhibits at the State Fair should not require entry fees as was initiated at the 1955 State Fair. The worker in any of the
cultural fields, while adding profoundly to the richness and depth of his community, finds little commercial market for his efforts and therefore should not be additionally burdened by having fees set upon the public presentation of his work. We hope that you will be able to present our viewpoints whenever the opportunity presents itself. If this can be done we will be most grateful. The discouragement of artist participation in our State Fair can only damage the Fair’s value to the people as a whole.\textsuperscript{100}

These are but a few examples showing how MAG wielded its influence to support its members. Further, it is clear that what an individual artist could not accomplish, MAG as a collective could.

While MAG was able to provide its members with the power to effect change as a group, the Guild’s aim was also to cultivate the individual metalsmith. MAG created an environment conducive for the exchange of information between its members. The organization encouraged both artistic and professional development through Guild programs. Members participated in technical demonstrations, networking opportunities, group discount purchase of materials, and informational exchanges of commercial and exhibition opportunities, among others. Merry Renk felt, “[t]he Metal Arts Guild was a very wonderful organization for jewelers and metal people, because it was a very supportive organization.”\textsuperscript{101} This support was documented in MAG’s monthly newsletter, \textit{Guildletter}. (fig. 15) The publication reveals the interplay and communication between metal artists and the Guild’s activity over the years. Striving to meet its objectives, MAG held monthly meetings for both the board and its general membership. Meetings were held in various members’ homes to discuss Guild business, plan exhibitions, and participate in educational programs.
Fulfilling MAG’s educational aim, senior MAG members often held demonstrations on metalworking techniques and discussions on design philosophy. Margaret De Patta held seminars on fundamental principles of design. Victor Ries spoke on the subject of metal alloys and the endless possibility of metal coloring. Merry Renk lectured on methods and techniques of enameling. Classes were held concerning basic principles of electroplating. Eugene Bielawski explained casting techniques for production lines. Byron Wilson demonstrated the techniques for preparing wax models for casting. Giacomo Patri lectured on “The Study of Spontaneous Forms.” Bob Randolph gave a talk on principles of photography. Jack Craven, Jr. of Cratex Manufacturing discussed the use of abrasive wheels and polishing metalwork. Films were shown on Swedish Craft, and slides were shown of Margaret De Patta and Eugene Bielawski’s travel to Mexico and Japan. (fig. 16)

MAG members also continued their education with senior members who taught metalsmithing courses at institutions such as the College of Marin (A’leen Runkle), California College of Arts and Crafts (Bob Winston, Margaret De Patta), and Mills College (Peter Macchiarini). These classes were publicized in the Guildletter. In the Summer of 1952, metalsmith A’leen Runkle invited MAG members to take a class sponsored by Handy and Harmon for the first Silversmithing Workshop to be taught at the College of Marin.102 In attendance for the metal raising course were Vera Allison, Irena Brynner, Milton Cavagnaro, Margaret De Patta, Edward Fourtane, Neal George, Orrin Grossman, Helen Heick, Siegbert Lazar, Sgt. Henry Lienay, David Loveless,
Education was not limited to technical elements of metalsmithing. Artists were able to learn other aspects of working as a self-supporting craftsperson. This included critiquing each other’s works, learning the nature of the jewelry business, and providing one another with leads and other opportunities to showcase their work. Galleries such as Nanny’s, Pacific Shop, Amberg Hirth Gallery, and the Design Gallery are a few of the shops that showcased MAG members’ work. (fig. 17) According to Irena Brynner, “in Berkeley, there was a big outlet that both Merry [Renk] and I gave things to. And with Merry, it worked beautifully. Merry would find a new place, she would tell me, and I would go and immediately I would tell about her… So we kind of pushed each other.”

Merry Renk agreed that, “what [was] wonderful is we exchanged names of customers, we exchanged names of sources, we exchanged names of classes. We were able to just be as open with each other [in a way] that no guild that we have heard of [in] the past had. We had … exhibits that the group was invited to, or the organization accumulated cases and equipment that we could show [at] an open fair; the art festival was one. To me it was amazing.”

This type of mutual exchange and support laid the foundation for MAG members to successfully establish themselves within the studio jewelry movement.

In tandem with MAG’s educational and economic objectives, the Guild’s public relations committee worked to inform and promote metal crafts to the public. This was done through organizing traveling jewelry and metal arts exhibitions throughout California and the United States. Members were encouraged to participate and submit
work for solo and group exhibitions. Throughout the year, MAG organized and participated in several California exhibitions and fairs, including: the San Francisco Art Festival, the Metal Arts Guild Annual Show, the Metal Arts Guild traveling exhibition, the California State Fair in Sacramento, and the Annual Designer-Craftsmen of California Exhibition. (figs. 18-19) The jewelry and objects in these exhibitions were jury selected through either MAG’s Jury of Acceptance or through the sponsoring organization’s jury.

The San Francisco Art Festival began in 1946 and was “the first municipally sponsored Arts Festival[,] … a collaborative effort between the San Francisco Arts Commission [SFAC] and a group of artists frustrated by the scarcity of local museums and galleries, drew hundreds of participants and firmly established the viability of a highly democratized alternative to the relative exclusivity of existing exhibition venues.”106 The fair featured ceramics, graphics, sculpture, watercolor, weaving, painting, photography, and metalwork. Organizations such as the California Society of Etchers, the San Francisco Potters Association, the Professional Weavers Guild, the San Francisco Women Artists, the Marin Society of Artists, the Society of Western Artists, and the Metal Arts Guild had showcases at the fair. MAG used the platform of the San Francisco Art Festival, held at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco from October 16-21, 1951, as its first venue for its inaugural exhibition. (fig. 20) MAG members included: Irena Brynner (MAG award); Mabel Bush; Milton Cavagnaro (3rd Prize SFAC Award); Stella Chen; Hal Davies; Margaret De Patta (Co-First Prize SFAC award, MAG award); Margaret Dhaemers; Robert Dhaemers; Harry Dixon; Loyola and Edward Fourtane; Orran Grossman (award winner); Connie Grothkopp; Helen Heick; Leslie
Klepper (2nd Prize SFAC award, MAG award); Barbara Langford; David Loveless; Peter Macchiarini (Co-First Prize SFAC award); Virginia Macchiarini; Byron Menendez; Patricia Pope; Merry Renk; Victor Ries; A’leen Runkle (MAG award); Caroline Rosene; Mayer Segal; Patrick Sieler; Francis Sperisen; Roy Walker; and Byron Wilson.¹⁰⁷

MAG’s booth, set up in accordance with Festival plans by Frank Merwin, was installed and designed by MAG’s educational committee. MAG used photography as part of its exhibition design. Peter Macchiarini recalled, “[t]he photographs were mounted upon large cardboard backs set upon a large wall board suspended from the scaffolding. The entire exhibit, which included work benches and sales tables, presented a very effective display. The art festival jury declared it to be the most attractive of all the organizational displays.”¹⁰⁸ (figs. 21-24) This translated into a “great success by all,” as the jewelry sales totaled approximately $1,000, and generated public interest in contemporary art jewelry.¹⁰⁹ Such success led MAG to continue showing at the San Francisco Art Festival; however, the Guild eventually created its own separate exhibitions as well.

The Metal Arts Guild Annual Show typically followed the San Francisco Art Festival to give incentive to customers to purchase jewelry and metal items for Christmas gifts. Although finding a venue for the exhibition was often challenging, sites included the M.H. de Young Museum and the California Palace of the Legion of Honor. Clearly aware of an exhibitions impact on the perception of MAG, the Guild set its sights on achieving widespread acceptance among the public and in the arts. MAG emphasized this in its August 1958 Guildletter, “[t]he museum people will be watching our show with some interest. If it proves to be an attraction in its own right, we very possibly will have
found a permanent location for our Annuals and will not have to scrounge around trying to find some place to hold them. This is important to the Guild. The Palace of the Legion of Honor is a prestige location. Repeated showings in this location can do much for the members individually as well as for the Guild as a whole. Therefore, it is to our advantage to make this the best show we can.” The Guild strategically chose venues to expose both studio jewelry and its members not only to the public, but also to influential people in the arts to bolster credence to the field of contemporary art jewelry.

While MAG primarily focused on promoting Bay Area jewelers and metalsmiths in California, the Guild created traveling shows specifically set up to showcase MAG members’ work throughout North America. MAG’s first traveling show entitled *Jewelry: Past and Present* (a.k.a. *6,000 Years of Jewelry*) (1957), was circulated throughout the United States and showcased ancient and contemporary jewelry as well as metalwork. (fig. 25) The second exhibition (1958) eliminated the ancient pieces and consisted of six cases made “entirely of MAG members’ work” selected by a non-MAG jury. Due to the increasing public interest, the Guild’s second traveling show added more works by members Vera Allison, Marian Bassett, Margaret De Patta Bielawski, Florence Dixon, Harry Dixon, Philip Eden, Afton Giacomini, Connie Grothkopp, Tom Little, Jack Nutting, Margaret Willis, Robert Pearl, Margaret Randolph, Florence Resnikoff, Byron Wilson, and Sally Wilson. Exhibition venues included the Richmond Art Center in Richmond, CA; Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington in Seattle, WA; the Museum of Art in Long Beach, CA; the Art Department at the San Jose State College in San Jose, CA; the Art Department at San Francisco State College in San Francisco, CA;
Larsen Gallery at Yakima, WA, University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada and the Alabama Polytechnic Institute in Auburn, AL. Evidence also indicates that the show traveled to Spokane, WA; Bozeman, MT; Missoula, MT; Medford, OR. In addition it went to New York, Georgia, Florida, and the Carolinas. MAG described the first show as “enthusiastically received at its various stop-overs with particularly favorable comment on the contemporary jewelry.”111 MAG’s traveling shows helped expand its reach beyond California and validated MAG’s (and its members’) place in the studio jewelry movement.

The Collective Output of the Metal Arts Guild

The collective output of MAG was quite diverse. While there was no particular aesthetic that emerged from the Guild, artists were influenced by their peers, instructors, backgrounds, and their surrounding environment. The group was made a mix of blacksmiths, coppersmiths, goldsmiths, metalsmiths, and lapidaries, and their work and objects produced were as varied as their backgrounds. Some artists had strong ties to the Arts and Crafts movement, while others had shifted their focus to a more modernist approach.112 One defining characteristic that did unite many of the members of the Guild was their individual approaches to design. MAG members specialized in techniques that would distinguish themselves from other jewelers.

Margaret De Patta collaborated with MAG member and lapidary Francis Sperisen and realized her constructivist designs by incorporating opti-cut gemstones. Bob Winston
specialized in the lost-wax casting method to create his work and even wrote a textbook on the subject. Winston influenced the work of MAG members Robert Dhaemers, Florence Resnikoff, and Irena Brynner, among others. Robert Dhaemers utilized techniques and surface treatments such as patinas and engraving to give his jewelry a worn appearance. He didn’t believe in the “artificial maintenance” of keeping jewelry polished. Florence Resnikoff’s jewelry showcased her interest in color and metallurgy. She utilized several techniques to achieve her designs including casting, enameling, electroforming, and anodization of refractory metals. Franz Bergmann, an immigrant from Vienna, was one of the few jewelers in San Francisco who maintained an atelier. He forged wire and cut sheets to produce his works with a constructivist and/or surrealist designs. Irena Brynner, who apprenticed with Bergmann briefly, looked at jewelry as sculpture and applied techniques such as forging and piercing to realize her designs. Her later works simulated the appearance of the lost-wax casting techniques; however, she developed a new aesthetic using a tool called a water welder. Peter Macchiarini, another studio/shop owner, incorporated ideas of constructivism and anthropomorphism in his designs. His designs showcased internal structures with the use of patinas as well as found objects. Merry Renk replicated the geometric abstract structures found in nature. Her early works were nonobjective designs that emphasized the potential of metal by using interlocking forms, metal folding, and enamel. As she developed her design philosophy, she progressed into more realistic and less abstract forms. Milton Cavagnaro was a metalsmith who combined materials such as wood, bone, and shell into his designs — wood usually being the dominant material in his work. These are but a
few examples of the results that MAG members produced based on their collective learning and sharing, and many of these pieces would eventually end up in shows and exhibitions across the U.S. (fig. 26-27)

MAG artists were accepted into contemporary art jewelry exhibitions throughout the country, including *Designer Craftsmen U.S.A.* at the Brooklyn Museum of Art (1953), the *Contemporary Jewelry Exhibit on Paper*, published by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, MN (1955, 1959), *American Jewelry and Related Objects*, circulated by the Smithsonian Institution (1955-1957), *Designer Craftsmen of the West* at the M.H. de Young Museum (1957), *Brussels Worlds Fair* (1958), *Young Americans* at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts (1958), and *International Exhibition of Modern Jewellery 1890-1961* at Goldsmiths’ Hall in London (1962), among countless solo and group exhibitions throughout the United States and abroad.

In conclusion, this chapter addressed the confluence of events in 1930s and 1940s that set the stage for a group of Bay Area studio jewelers to come together to form the Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco in 1951. The chapter demonstrated the impact the shift in the socio-economic and political landscape had on future MAG founders as they worked for the Works Progress Administration and the California Labor School. Although MAG itself had membership with other craft organizations, Bay Area metalsmiths sought protection of their economic interests in a manner similar to the International Jewelry Workers Union and the Artist Equity Association. In doing so, MAG advanced not only the metalsmiths’ commercial interests, but also the American studio jewelry movement through the promotion of modern jewelry to the public. This
chapter showed how MAG members were actively engaged in the field of metalwork on a local, national, and international level; worked at educational institutions; participated in major exhibitions; and had their work acquired by shops, galleries, and museums. Additionally, the chapter illustrates the spectrum of work produced by its members. The following chapter explores MAG and the organization’s impact on both the American studio jewelry movement and its importance abroad through the careers of founding members and jewelers Margaret De Patta, Peter Macchiarini, and Irena Brynner.
CHAPTER 3: CAREERS OF SELECTED METAL ARTS GUILD MEMBERS

Chapter three investigates the lives and careers of three pivotal founding members, Margaret De Patta, Peter Macchiarini, and Irena Brynner, of the Metal Arts Guild (MAG). An investigation is conducted regarding their personal and educational backgrounds, artistic influences, careers, approach and philosophies regarding design and mass production. This review will highlight their involvement with MAG and their contributions to the American studio jewelry movement.

From its inception, the Metal Arts Guild has counted many influential metalsmiths among its members. Although each member has contributed to the Guild and the American studio jewelry movement in his or her own way, three of the founding members – Margaret De Patta, Peter Macchiarini, and Irena Brynner – are of particular importance. A study of these artists’ backgrounds and careers demonstrates the individual development of their design philosophies, their contributions to the shaping of modernist jewelry, and their impact on the American studio jewelry movement through their work at MAG.

Margaret De Patta

Margaret De Patta, a star in her own right, felt that there was a need for an organization to champion the cause of the studio jeweler and metalsmith. As a founding member of MAG, she had a far-reaching impact on the Guild and the American studio jewelry movement. She contemplated the contradictions confronting the artist-craftsman
who valued hand-wrought design, but faced pressure for a share in the marketplace in a consumer capitalist economy. Nevertheless, she revered good design in all cases. To put her significance in context, it is important to understand her background and early career to see why she made such an impact on modernist jewelry.

Born Mary Margaret Strong in Tacoma, Washington in 1903, and reared in San Diego, California, she began her foray into art as a painter. (fig. 28) De Patta attended the newly opened San Diego Academy of Fine Arts and studied painting from 1921 to 1923. She continued her studies in painting and sculpture at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco from 1923 to 1925, and later at the Arts Students League of New York in 1929. De Patta’s venture into jewelry design started by happenstance. She was searching for a wedding ring to be used for her pending nuptials to her third husband, Salvatore “Sam” De Patta.¹²⁰ (fig. 29) She wanted a ring that “would combine a special meaning with artistry of design.”¹²¹ Not satisfied with what was available, she met with Armenian jeweler Armin Hairenian at the Art Copper Shop to discuss her ideas and began to work as his apprentice for two months and made her wedding bands herself.¹²² During this time, De Patta studied ancient Egyptian, Pre-Colombian, Etruscan, Turkish, and Mexican artifacts and jewelry at Bay Area museums and libraries.¹²³ As early as 1932, De Patta began studying engraving and enameling techniques and her jewelry designs “consisted of arrangement of simple elementary forms.”¹²⁴ Her early metal works in the 1930s reflected her progression as a metalsmith, as she learned the fundamentals about material, process, and technique. (fig. 30) She realized her designs using materials such as silver wire, metal sheets, and semi-precious stones. These early pieces were based on
“natural forms, rhythms and harmonies such as found in the human figure, flowers, leaves, ferns, fish and scarabs.”125 (fig. 31) However, a shift in the appearance of her work appeared in the late 1930s, and can be seen in her transitional piece selected for the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island in San Francisco. (fig. 32) This oval brooch has a leaf motif, but is highly stylized indicating De Patta’s newfound interest in modern design. The exhibition recognized modernity in the Decorative Arts and showcased furniture, glass, lace, metals, rugs, wallpaper, textiles, bookbinding, liturgical art, enamels, costume design, architecture, interior design, and jewelry. Along with De Patta, participants included Marc Chagall, Alexander Calder, Max Ernst, Walt Disney, Henri-Matisse, Salvador Dali, Grant Wood, Pablo Picasso, Albert Giacometti, Glen Lukens, Victor Schreckengost, Russel Wright, Alvar Aalto, Marcel Breuer, Wharton Esherick, Kem Weber, Josef Albers, Rene Lalique, Harry Dixon (MAG Founder), Dirk Van Erp, Ansel Adams, Isamu Noguchi, Claire Falkenstein, Beniamino Bufano, Ruth Cravath, Naum Gumbo, Ferdinand Leger, Jean Miro, Man Ray, and László Moholy-Nagy, among others. At the fair, Moholy-Nagy’s Light Display Machine, shown at the 1930 Salon des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, was also exhibited.126 (fig. 33)

The following year, in 1940, Mills College offered a summer session in conjunction with the traveling Museum of Modern Art exhibition The Bauhaus: How It Worked. The college invited faculty from the School of Design in Chicago (later known as the Institute of Design), some of whom included: Moholy-Nagy; photographer, theorist, and painter György Kepes; painter Robert Jay Wolff; weaver Marli Ehrman; furniture designer Charles Niedringhaus; and artist, designer, and craftsman James
They taught classes such as drawing, painting, photography, weaving, paper cutting, metalwork, modeling, and casting. It is during this session that De Patta enrolled as a student and took a course with Moholy-Nagy (fig. 34).

Already an established jeweler, De Patta was interested in the modernist philosophy and decided to continue taking classes with constructivist Moholy-Nagy at the School of Design in Chicago. It was at this “Bauhaus-oriented” institution that De Patta began to fine-tune her design philosophy. De Patta began to explore constructivism and abstraction, and consciously developed a modernist approach to design. Taking courses in sculpture and photography, she gained awareness about the “broader spectrum” of materials. Through her work in sculpture and photograms, she studied the phenomena of light, color, and the nature of volume of space, lines, and planes. (fig. 35) De Patta discussed her studies at the School of Design and the evolution of her design philosophy:

The horizon to unlimited directions – experiment followed experiment in metal structure; new structural ways of fastening stones with the resultant need for differently shaped stones related to the structures. All surface texture or manipulation was strongly rejected as being superficial. Work with transparencies was developed but intuitively only until 1940 when a period of study at the School of Design – now the Institute of Design – with Moholy-Nagy in Chicago concretised feelings and ideas. The first mobile ring incorporating 5 types of movement was made at this school – was passed from hand to hand among students gathered for a lecture – with distracting effect. Problems posed for work in glass, plastics, mirror revealed principles of visual excitement, optical illusion and pointed a field of exploration that has proven inexhaustible. Work in sculpture, wood, clay, plaster, plastics, and stone carving, brought the volume and space understanding and the line of demarcation between fine arts, crafts, fine industrial design dissolved before my eyes.
As De Patta began incorporating ideas regarding light, movement, function, and production into her work, she looked to alternative materials and structure to capture her new design vision. In doing so, her jewelry aesthetically changed. De Patta admitted that her early jewelry pieces were primitive, “until one day the full knowledge came that the basic metal forms (line=wire, sphere=grain or dome, plane = sheet) integrated to shank and superstructure, were ‘architecture.’” She used materials not for their value, but for their viability in expressing space, volume and light – ideas shared by her mentor, Moholy-Nagy. He told De Patta to “catch your stones in the air … make them float in space, don’t enclose them.” De Patta began using gemstones in her jewelry not only to fulfill her structural vision, but for their refractory effects. She stated, “[t]he fascination of looking into or through an object or material is boundless ... add the excitement of optical effects such as magnification, reduction, multiplication, distortion and image reflection, and the function of the gemstone in jewelry becomes one to stimulate the ingenuity and imagination of the designer.” This was a clear departure from her earlier works that had applied ornament and historical references. De Patta’s new pieces embodied modernist principles of constructivism, removed references to the past, used restraint in use of materials, and incorporated light, movement, and linear and abstract forms.

De Patta began to collaborate with expert lapidary and metalsmith Francis Sperisen (also a founding MAG member) in designing gem cuts to achieve the optimal light effects she wanted in her designs. (fig. 36) De Patta would bring balsawood or aluminum models of the shapes she was interested in using, and Sperisen would combine
her ideas with his own to create the gem cuts.\textsuperscript{136} Often De Patta would use rock crystal, quartz, and black onyx. Sperisen introduced De Patta to rutilated quartz (also known as Venus Hair Stone). Rutilated quartz has mineral hair-like inclusions and range in colors from black, silver, gold, and gray.\textsuperscript{137} Sperisen’s most significant contribution to the evolution of De Patta’s design vision and the field of jewelry was the new development of unique stone cuts that captured various optical effects - which De Patta dubbed the “opti-cut.”\textsuperscript{138} No other lapidary or jeweler had ever developed these particular cuts before.

De Patta felt jewelry was a dynamic object and applied constructivist theory to her designs. (fig. 37) In a 1942 ring made of yellow gold with a faceted citrine topaz mounted over a pearl, the four circular facets of the stone make it appear that the ring has movement - as if looking through a fan. The four facets and concave base of stone magnify the pearl, creating a “multiplicity of images.”\textsuperscript{139} (fig. 38) In an undated pendant, De Patta designed a pear shaped opti-cut smoky quartz held with angular gold structure to magnify a pearl held in place behind the piece. (fig. 39) The same opti-cut is used with a crystal in an undated ring made with white gold to achieve maximum refraction. (fig. 40) Both the pendant and ring showcase a particular type of opti-cut called a double lens cut, which gave the quartz an optical effect of movement even as the structure is stationary.\textsuperscript{140} In a 1947 ring, made of white gold with rutilated quartz crystal, De Patta used a traditional prong setting for an opti-cut cone-shaped stone, and incorporated the supporting structure to serve as a design element in the ring. According to De Patta, the design was an example of structural interdependence of both the stone and the
mounting.141 (fig. 41) In a circa 1950 brooch, De Patta used a cabochon cut stone to
magnify the mesh-screen base. (fig. 42) These pieces show DePatta’s employment of
gemstones not simply for their form, but also using light as a functional element within
her designs.

De Patta was not only focused on light-play, but she also observed the importance
of structure, line, and functionality. Such interest paralleled her study of architecture. A
1947-1950 pin made with sterling silver with coral and malachite, allowed the wearer to
pivot a section of the pin to choose a desired form.142 (fig. 43) In a 1948 pendant made of
yellow gold with rutile quartz crystal slab, De Patta used the stone for its transparency
as well as for its asymmetrical emphasis as well as for dictating the lines of structure.143
(fig. 44) And finally, in her 1962 Pin, she used white gold wire to form a geometric cage
with a gemstone inlay to articulate structure line, space, line, and plane.144 (fig. 45)

While De Patta was exploring the properties of gemstones and developing a new
body of work, she went to teach at the California Labor School around 1944. (fig. 46) It
is here that she taught alongside future founding MAG members Eugene Bielawski
(whom she married in 1946) and Peter Macchiarini. It is interesting to note that De Patta
did not teach the Metal Workshop, but in courses such as Plastics, Home Planning,
Industrial Arts, Stage Design, Sculpture, and Basic Design. According to her lesson
plans and notes from CLS, it is clear that De Patta was applying what she learned at the
School of Design. She lectured on topics such as structure, space, line, planes, and
material. In her plastics class, she explored the visual qualities of plastic – its distortion,
magnification, reflective nature, and texture in order to “develop general principles of
design that could be used late in application in specific jewelry design projects.”

It is evident from the subject matter in which she taught, De Patta did not simply see herself a jeweler, but rather an artist-craftsmen-designer.

At the same time she was teaching at CLS, De Patta expanded her jewelry design offerings. In addition to her one-of-a-kind and custom order business, she started Designs Contemporary, with her husband, Eugene, out of their San Francisco home studio in 1947. This was a limited edition production line that produced handcrafted jewelry available for under fifty dollars. That same year De Patta’s work was exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art’s landmark exhibition, *Modern Handmade Jewelry*. In 1947, she wrote, “Jewelry for An Ever Increasing Minority,” an essay published under the title “De Patta” in *Art and Architecture*. The essay addressed the financial implications and dichotomy between making one-of-a-kind handmade works affordable to a few and developing a production line accessible to the masses. The following year, her production pieces were shown in the exhibition, *Modern Jewelry Under Fifty Dollars*, at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. And in 1949, she exhibited a ring and a set of earrings at the Detroit Institute of Arts exhibition *An Exhibition of Modern Living*.

As her contemporaries increasingly recognized De Patta’s jewelry, the value of her work priced some of her customers out of the market. Although De Patta felt that “the artist has a responsibility to relate to present society,” she had mixed feelings as to starting the production line. She understood the problems facing the craftsperson in an era of industrialization, but felt that an interchange between production designer and
craftsperson was good. De Patta believed that “a creative individual well-grounded in the fundamentals of color, composition, form relationships, and working with hand and machine techniques, is bound to produce articles of valid aesthetic value to fulfill the use needs of people.”

The combination of De Patta’s teaching and business experience led her to realize that metal artists needed an organization that could advance both the level of craftsmanship in her field as well as promote artists economic interests. She addressed the problem of the craftsman in her personal notes:

> The last number of years has brought widespread resurgence of activity in all hand processes – a recognition of the importance of intimate knowledge of materials gained through use of hand tools as the initial step in the training of industrial designers use in recreational and occupational therapy – a hobbyists activity and as a means of earning a livelihood through direct sales of work or through teaching - creative professional stands at the apex of this pyramid and along with creative problems faces the additional ones of production, marketing, and plagiarism [sic].

These ideas are part of the impetus for the founding of the Metal Arts Guild. De Patta, as a founding member, served as President of MAG twice (1951 and 1955). (fig. 51) As a component of achieving the educational aim of the organization, De Patta held a program for MAG members on the fundamental principles of design. The classes were well received among its membership, so MAG decided to add an additional lecture series led by De Patta. The goal of these lectures was to pass on De Patta’s understanding of her approach to design, garnered from her experience at the School of Design. Additionally, De Patta further spread the influence of modernism and the American
studio jewelry movement as she was invited to teach not only to students at the California Labor School, but also at the Shattuck School at the Portland Art Museum in Portland, Oregon as well as the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, California.

Prior to forming MAG, De Patta had already established herself in the arts, and was defined as a pioneer in the studio jewelry movement. However, her stature in the field helped elevate MAG’s visibility beyond the Bay Area. This was a benefit of De Patta’s academic work and the fact that her work was shown worldwide. De Patta continued to write for national publications and academic journals such as *Craft Horizons* and *The Palette* for Ball State Teacher College. She also lectured across the country, and in 1958 was invited as a panelist for the seminar on *Vision and Individual Response* at the Second Annual Craftsmen Council Conference, *Dimension of Design*, in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.

While she exhibited and sold her work through MAG’s booths at Annual Shows and San Francisco art festivals, De Patta’s were also being sold at retailers across the country, including America House in New York, Contemporary House in Texas, Georg Jensen in New York, among others. Additionally, De Patta’s work was selected for exhibitions such as: *Designer-Craftsmen U.S.A.* at the Brooklyn Museum of Art (1953); *84 Contemporary Jewelers* at the Walker Art Center (1955); *Creative Jewelry* at the American Federation of the Arts (1955-1957); *American Jewelry and Related Objects* which the Smithsonian circulated throughout the United States (1955); *The Arts of Western Living* at the Los Angeles City Fair (1955); *Jewelry by De Patta* at Ohio State University (1956); *Craftsmanship in a Changing World* at the Museum of Contemporary
Crafts (1956); Jewelry: Past and Present, traveling exhibition (1957); Expo 58: Exposition Universelle et Internationale de Bruxelles, also known as the Brussels World’s Fair (1958); Designer-Craftsmen U.S.A. 1960 at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts (1960); and the International Exhibition of Modern Jewellery 1890-1961 at Goldsmiths Hall in London (1962).

De Patta’s successful career is but one of the reasons that MAG should be considered an important organization in the American studio jewelry movement. Her work was exhibited around the world bringing notoriety not only to De Patta herself, but also to fellow jewelers of the Metal Arts Guild. She was able to intellectualize the field of jewelry like no one else before her, and transformed jewelry into an art form. Although De Patta’s life was cut short by suicide in 1964, her legacy lived on through the generations of artists she impacted because of her revolutionary ideas on craft and design as applied to jewelry.

**Peter Macchiarini**

Recognizing the need for artists to band together, Peter Macchiarini helped establish MAG as an organization designed to support the metal artist community. As a veteran of the WPA in the 1930s, he understood the plight of both the laborer and the artist. Macchiarini advocated for the economic interests of the craftsperson and the preservation of their role in a society now dominated by mass-produced goods. Although a founding member of MAG, Macchiarini’s support of the organization had its
complications. Nevertheless, his impact on the Guild and the contribution he made to the American studio jewelry movement cannot be understated.

Born in Santa Rosa, California on August 27, 1909 to Italian immigrants, Macchiarini lived in America until the age of fourteen when his parents moved back to Italy. It is there that Macchiarini began his foray into the arts. He entered the Art Academy at Pietrasanta where he trained in ornamental work, marble carving, clay modeling, architectural drawing, and general sciences. Following his years of study, Macchiarini carved names tombstones in a French cemetery for fallen American soldiers. In 1928, Macchiarini returned to San Francisco and worked for a terrazzo company, P. Graffi and Company, until the onset of the Great Depression. In 1931, unable to locate work in San Francisco, Macchiarini decided he needed a change of scenery. Jumping freight trains and hitchhiking, Macchiarini traveled across America, observing the use of marble and granite along the way. After he explored Boston and New York for three and a half months and unable to locate work on the east coast, Macchiarini returned to San Francisco. There, he was able to get a job through the Civil Works Administration (CWA), a precursor to the WPA and mainly focused on construction projects. Macchiarini referred to his work as a “pick and shovel job.” A few years later, after his marriage to Virginia, Macchiarini went to work for the WPA alongside painter, sculptor, and puppeteer, Ralph Chesse, in the Federal Theatre Project (FTP). Macchiarini would cast the heads of the puppets and sometimes filled-in for acting parts. He worked on various plays, The Sun and I, Mikado, Alice and Wonderland,
*Marionette Vaudeville, Hansel and Gretel,* to name but a few. (fig. 52) Macchiarini ascribes his progression into jewelry design to his tenure with the FTP.

On the theatre project while waiting to go on [stage], I used to nervously whittle on a piece of wood and I used to carve these masks, tragedy and comedy masks, and the girls in the theatre used to like them and at first I used to give them to [the girls]. Then the demand became so great that I felt that some of my expenses should be defrayed, like buying a rare piece of wood.¹⁵⁶

At the suggestion of De Patta, Macchiarini added pin backs to his miniature masks.¹⁵⁷ (fig. 53) As demand grew for Macchiarini’s creations, he started thinking about how he could turn his neurotic hobby into a line of business. Until that time, Macchiarini experienced first-hand the difficulties and challenges the laborer and craftsman faced in California. In 1934, the maritime workers and longshoreman had called a strike. In solidarity with the unions, students and other youths took to the San Francisco Embarcadero district on May 30, National Youth Day, to rally their support.

Unfortunately, the police swarmed the streets swinging billy clubs at everyone in their path. As a result of the police not being able to distinguish the bystanders from the protestors, many innocents were severely beaten, including Macchiarini. Journalist and witness Mike Quinn described the scene,

> A talented young sculptor, Peter Macchiarini, was thrown into the police patrol bleeding from the ears with a fractured skull. Despite the entreaties of other prisoners that he was dying, he was thrown in a cell and not removed to a hospital until many hours later, when his cellmates gave evidence that if something were not done about him they would shake the bars off the cage and scream the roof off the jail. It was many months before Pete’s head mended, and when he was able to get around again he had to face trial on charges of rioting.¹⁵⁸
Dominating the headlines during this time were the many labor struggles both San Franciscoans and Americans confronted. Such issues served as a catalyst for workers, artists and intellectuals to organize. Prior to Macchiarini’s unintentional involvement with the volatile labor situation, he had transferred from the FTP and went to work for modernist sculptor Beniamino “Bennie” Bufano under the WPA. Both Bufano and actor Will Rogers visited Macchiarini in jail, bringing much attention to his predicament.  

Bufano, a modernist sculptor and former pupil of American sculptor Paul Manship, was a colorful and controversial figure in the WPA. Bufano once cut off his finger in protest of World War I and mailed it to President Woodrow Wilson. Macchiarini worked for Bufano for a year and a half when Macchiarini worked on clay modeling sculptures in full-scale for a project called Sun Yat-Sen. Macchiarini worked on the wall section surrounding the sculpture of Sun Yat-Sen; however, due to Bufano’s removal from the WPA, the wall was never constructed. For a short period, Macchiarini also worked for sculptor, painter, and art educator, Ralph Stackpole and modernist sculptor, ceramist, and sculptor, Sargent Johnson. Macchiarini later went to work with ceramist and sculptor Johnny Magnani to make small-scale clay modeling sculpture. Magnani was a professional mold maker, ceramist, and kiln builder and once served as president of the mold-makers union. Under Magnani, Macchiarini would make bas-reliefs of animals. Shortly thereafter, he was transferred to a WPA Home Project, where Macchiarini was assigned to make and carve a chess set out of wood. Macchiarini
felt frustrated by the demoralizing work, and in 1938 started making jewelry to earn a living. Macchiarini did not receive a formal education or an apprenticeship in metalsmithing. Rather, he taught himself how to make jewelry by reading books on modern jewelry and the Bauhaus; and applied his background as a sculptor and stone carver to metalsmithing. His jewelry served as his sculpture in miniature. (fig. 55)

Macchiarini described his foray into jewelry making:

I saw some pictures of work they were doing and that first inspired me to go in that direction rather than to follow in the old traditional method of the academy where I had been taught, you see. So I went in the direction and later on I saw some of Moholy-Nagy’s work and I saw Margaret DePolta’s [sic] work, who had preceded me as a jeweler by some five years and she went into the direction of the Bauhaus and I was further inspired by her work.

Macchiarini considered himself a self-taught artist, and set up his studio and business full-time after World War II. His early works reveal his exploration of the fundamentals of metalsmithing along with his curiosity for modernist design. Utilizing materials such as silver, nickel, glass, ebony, copper, and acrylic stones, Macchiarini’s pieces during the 1930s represent an eclectic group. His earlier works border on a primitive aesthetic due to both his evolving skill set in metalsmithing and his increased familiarity with modernist philosophy. Macchiarini’s jewelry during this period “display anthropomorphism and displacement of body parts seen in African tribal artifacts and in Cubism.” (fig. 56) An example of such works was an oxidized silver brooch with undulating wire and a crudely cut pair of oxidized silver cufflinks showing an abstract image in profile. (fig. 57)
As Macchiarini became accustomed with his craft, he developed designs for which he would later be recognized - layered pods. A transitional example of this direction is Macchiarini’s silver pendant, which has a cut-out layered dome. (fig. 58) Historians liken this aspect to Macchiarini’s “experimentation with internal structuring through the use of fenestration that reveals pierced and layered metal planes … [and] provided visual symbols of the life force he perceived within the solid forms.” While Macchiarini looked to modernist design movements, such as streamlining, constructivism, and cubism, for inspiration, Bufano also influenced Macchiarini’s oeuvre. “Bufano believed that the exterior form was the most important element of sculpture. He liked to compare this concept to what he considered ‘nature’s most exquisite sculptural form – the egg.’” Many of Bufano’s modernist sculptures were smooth, rounded, and simplified. Macchiarini was attracted to Bufano’s notion of the egg; however, Macchiarini wanted to also explore the interior of the egg. Thus, Macchiarini’s signature contribution to the American studio jewelry movement was the “multi-layered creations he called ‘pods.’” Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Macchiarini would develop and explore these forms. Using a variety of materials, he would use patinas to emphasize the depths of excavations in his work.

Over the years, Macchiarini continued to explore other aspects of sculpture and metalworking. As his business grew and he developed his design principles regarding craftsmanship, Macchiarini began to share his newfound wisdom with students and his contemporaries. Many artists including Bufano, De Patta, Renk, and Stackpole frequented Macchiarini’s Grant Avenue studio in the North Beach neighborhood of San
Francisco. Artists would come by to observe Macchiarini work in his studio, while others would have long discussions about current events, modernism, art, and jewelry. (fig. 59) Macchiarini became a staple figure in his North Beach neighborhood and in San Francisco, and was instrumental in organizing the early San Francisco Art Festivals in 1939, 1940, and 1941, as well as starting the Upper Grant Avenue Street Fairs. (fig. 60) Macchiarini’s holloware, jewelry, and sculpture were exhibited at fairs, galleries, and galleries in and around California as well as featured in *Arts and Architecture* and *Art Week*.

Such exposure led Macchiarini to start teaching students metalsmithing out of his studio once a week in the 1940s. In 1944, Macchiarini began to teach at the CLS in Metals and Basic Design. His classes would give students an understanding regarding the “fundamentals in modern metal design and technique … [and] give students an understanding of the potentialities of material and enable them to design and work with metals.” Macchiarini’s design classes would discuss such fundamentals, but left it open to students to design anything from bookends to wood sculpture. During the 1950s, he taught jewelry and metal sculpture at Mills College (1952, 1955).

Macchiarini’s teaching gave him the opportunity to develop his ideas regarding mass production. As a lifelong craftsman and artist dedicated to handwrought design, Macchiarini was weary of the machine replacing the artisan. While he believed there was a place for industrial design, it did not serve the same purpose as art. Macchiarini believed that mass produced goods would never achieve the same soul or emotional pull of handcrafted wares. He argued that craftspeople pursuing the mass production of art for
financial gain were endangering their existence. He gave historical context to his argument – citing the consequences felt by guilds and artists following the Industrial Revolution:

The machine as such quite logically and methodically resulted in the rapid and certain destruction of the Guilds, leaving a huge mass of labor power personified by the unattached artisans who became the unskilled specialists of the machine. As time progressed it became apparent that while the machine was providing certain comforts of living, in its development there were many inconsistencies and deficiencies … This tremendous gap from the first onslaught of the Industrial Revolution to the beginning of the 20th Century amongst other things, brought to the attention the more romantically inclined that while it was true that a design could be made for the machine to produce a superior cooking utensil or a better pail, ax, etc., it did not speak for the soul.173

Macchiarini believed that the Industrial Revolution “liberated the artist to do his art work by taking over the production of functional items.”174 He argued that artists were not equipped to compete with manufacturers, and in doing so placed an unfair financial burden on the artist. Additionally, stores misrepresented the goods they are selling by not having proper labeling, allowing the customer to “mistake a mass-produced article for one handcrafted.”175 Macchiarini advised:

[I]t would be nice to be able to have a Cadillac. But being unable to afford it I should not have it. However, I can get along just as well with a Ford, but no one should sell me a Ford for a Cadillac. The artist doesn’t deprive the masses with high prices. In fact he gives to them even though they may not be financially able to own artwork. They are in contact with that which is sold and that which is displayed in the museums and galleries.176
Such arguments put Macchiarini at odds with De Patta. In fact, they often debated the role of production and accessibility of craft to the public. They agreed that quality workmanship and good design was important in all wares. However, they had differing opinions regarding the stature of the designer and the craftsman. Further, De Patta wanted her work to be available to a wider audience, even if it meant using a production line to accomplish this goal. That being said, De Patta was unwilling to sacrifice quality for the increased quantity. Her desire was that, “[p]roduction processes [would] someday be utilized for fine quality, rather than for cheapness and for the corrupted reproduction of handmade articles – and will then bring pleasure to the vastly greater numbers of people.”\textsuperscript{177} This was contrary to Macchiarini’s beliefs that production compromises the artist. According to Macchiarini, “I [did] not believe in the mass production of art or jewelry at all. That’s my philosophy; I’m stuck with it. It’s kept me poor. I’ve never made a lot of money.”\textsuperscript{178}

A member of MAG since its inception, Macchiarini knew there was a need for an organization to support the economic interests of metalsmiths. As both a businessman and artist, Macchiarini saw firsthand the challenges facing artists in the 1930s and 1940s. Having faced the clubs of policeman and blacklisting by the U.S. government, Macchiarini was a witness to the attack on open and free exchange of ideas. An artist-advocate, he recognized a lack of protection for studio jewelers and infused MAG with union-like qualities. His prominence in the San Francisco artist community provided additional credibility to MAG. Experienced as a community organizer, Macchiarini had
the background and the knowledge of how to technically establish an organization. Recognized by his peers, he was elected MAG’s first treasurer.

His tenure with MAG was short-lived. After serving as Treasurer for a year, Macchiarini resigned from the organization on June 7, 1952, citing irreconcilable differences. (figs. 61-62) Similar to his debates with De Patta, he disagreed with the direction MAG was going. Although evidence suggests that he later rejoined MAG in 1955, and served as juror for the organization, Macchiarini’s legacy to MAG and the American studio jewelry movement is evident in the endurance of MAG itself. He proclaimed in 1995, “I am proud to be one of its originators. Despite my differences, I do believe the [G]uild has performed many services for artists. I know that it can expand and improve for the benefit of art in general.”¹⁷⁹

**Irena Brynner**

Irena Brynner, an internationally recognized artist-jeweler, benefited the most through her association with MAG. A trained painter and sculptor, Brynner had less than two years of jewelry experience at the time of MAG’s founding. Her development as an artist-jeweler can be attributed to the successful implementation of the Guild’s mission and the dynamic milieu that surrounded her. Some of the most important modernist jewelers and artists of the era shaped Brynner’s oeuvre. While her initial contribution to MAG’s formation may have been limited, her move to New York City and subsequent
move to Switzerland spread MAG’s reach beyond the West Coast. In doing so, Brynner caused expanded MAG’s international reach.

Born in Vladivostok, Russia in 1917, Irena was the double cousin of the actor Yul Brynner. In 1931, her family fled Russia to Manchuria in Northern China where Brynner would begin studying art in Dairen and Harbin. Recognizing her talent as an artist, in 1936 Brynner’s parents sent her to study art and sculpture at the École Catonale De Dessin et D’Art Applique (Cantonale School of Design and Applied Art) in Lausanne, Switzerland. By 1939, Brynner and her family returned to Manchuria where she began teaching children at the Mary Knoll mission in Darien. She also taught private classes in painting and sculpture. Following the death of her father in 1942, a Swiss Consul General, Brynner and her mother found themselves in a very precarious situation. Posthumously, the Japanese denounced her father as a spy and caused Brynner and her mother to flee to Beijing. Following the end of World War II, Brynner and her mother left China and moved to San Francisco at the encouragement of their Darien friends who, by then, lived in the United States.

On her arrival in San Francisco, Brynner began teaching art at various private schools, including St. Paul, St. Vincent de Paul, and St. Bridget. Seeking more creative fulfillment, she continued her studies in sculpture under WPA veterans and sculptors Michael Von Meyer and Ralph Stackpole. Having already been trained in the classical tradition in Switzerland, Brynner was introduced to modernism and abstract art in California. She made small maquettes in clay and began for the first time working in stone. She described the sculpture she carved in stone as abstract art. During this
time, Brynner was trying to figure out ways to earn a better living. A Catholic, Brynner consulted a priest who told her, “[y]ou do sculpture! Well, that’s marvelous. People always die, so just learn to do lettering.”

She did not follow his advice, but instead enrolled at the California Labor School, where she took drawing and ceramics. Brynner thought ceramics would be a viable medium for her; however, she later felt that it was too restrictive. While at CLS, she discovered Claire Falkenstein’s sculpture and jewelry. Falkenstein’s jewelry showed Brynner that the relationship between the two media was intertwined. This realization set Brynner off on her journey toward becoming an artist-jeweler. In 1949, Brynner was hired by Caroline Rosene to work as her apprentice for 60 cents per hour. Due to personality conflicts and Brynner’s inexperience, the arrangement only lasted two months. Then Brynner went to work for jeweler and ceramist Franz Bergmann, whom she credits for introducing her to the fundamentals of metalsmithing. Bergmann hired Brynner only to prepare for the Christmas rush, so he could concentrate on his pottery. Step by step he showed Brynner how to make a piece of jewelry from start to finish. Unlike her experience with Rosene, Bergmann had patience and supported Brynner’s efforts. Although the position was also short-lived, Bergmann encouraged Brynner to continue studying jewelry-making.

In January of 1950, she began taking adult-education classes to garner technical expertise. This included taking a course with Bob Winston at the California College of Arts and Crafts where she learned the process of wax-working. Due to limited funds, Brynner set-up her studio with repurposed equipment including an ironing board used as a soldering bench, a washing machine motor for polishing, and a Bunsen burner and
small alcohol torch for a source of heat. Through trial and error, Brynner learned the art of jewelry-making. Three months later, Brynner was selling selected pieces of works at Casper’s, a local furniture store. Shortly thereafter, she began selling her work at Nanny’s, a contemporary jewelry store in San Francisco.

Brynner’s early works were made of the rudimentary materials that all novice metalsmiths used – silver sheets and wire. At first, she used simple forms and shapes, but as her work progressed, it became more of sculptural and abstract. She referenced architecture as her inspiration. Around this time, Brynner attended a meeting alongside Bergmann and Rosene, which would lead to the formation of the Metal Arts Guild. As a founding member, Brynner believed that the organization was “one of the most satisfying and successful craft organizations [she] ever belonged to.” She thought of MAG as a “real professional organization” whose many members supported efforts in her career. In fact, it was during a 1952 College of Marin silversmithing class for MAG artists that Brynner discovered forging. Brynner recalled:

In 1952 or 1953 a group of us from the Metal Arts Guild got together and decided to have a seminar in silversmithing on large hammered-out, or forged, hollow ware pieces. That was a great experience. I learned how, in the process of forging, one can force metal to stretch and shrink. I soon began applying this experience to my own jewelry-making.

Brynner’s insight into this new technique expanded the scope of her design options, and led her to develop a new direction in jewelry. Additionally, she began to use gold for its malleability. Her discovery led her to develop a series of forged necklaces. Brynner, no
longer limited by the gauge of wire and sheet, could now shape metal into new forms.

(figs. 65)

Brynner regularly participated in MAG’s outdoor art festivals, where she built up
her clientele and interacted with Bay Area artists. She discussed her interaction with
MAG members:

Margaret De Patta was our guide. And we would meet and we would discuss the
designs and how you come to the designs. And sometimes, we disagreed
completely, you know. Taking Margaret De Patta, Bob Winston, and myself and
Merry [Renk], we’re all very different. But we were all just the young ones, you
know. We didn’t have such a strong voice as Margaret had.

But she initiated us to start doing some forging and holloware. And really those
seminars of holloware gave me this idea that, you know, I want to hammer things
and I want to forge things. And we were really like a family. And all those art
festivals, you know, where we all got together to organize, to build the whole
thing, to put together to jewelry.

Although Brynner respected De Patta as a mentor and as resource on modernist design,
Brynner developed her own aesthetic based on the notion that jewelry was sculpture for
the body. Their view differed when it came to theoretical approach to design:

Margaret was very much a Bauhaus school person. And she always said, ‘Well,
you know, if you put a circle here and you put a triangle there, you have to be able
to explain why you are doing that.’ [Brynner] said, ‘I can’t, Margaret. I live by
intuition. I do my work by intuition. I can’t explain. I feel that’s where it
belongs. That’s why I do it. That’s all I can explain.’

This intuition led Brynner to develop her own unique ideas about jewelry, and she was
able to make innovative contributions to modernist American studio jewelry movement.

Brynner, believed in simplicity of line and form; however, she wanted to express
femininity and the organic nature of the material. Her jewelry enveloped the body. Brynner believed that modernist jewelry should be functional, but it should also “augment the attractiveness of the wearer.”

During this time, Brynner began to be recognized by leading educational institutions, art museums, and publications. She received her credentials from the California State Board of Education to teach adult education classes. By 1956, she participated in several solo and group shows in San Francisco including: the M.H. de Young Museum; Nanny’s Gallery; and the San Francisco Art Festival. By this time, two pivotal shows in Brynner’s career took place on opposite coasts, one in Beverly Hills and the other in New York City. In 1953, her cousin Yul hosted Irena for a solo exhibition, *Distinctive Design*, on the Paramount Studios set of *The Ten Commandments*. (fig. 66) It is there that she met Hollywood elites Cecil B. DeMille, Edward G. Robinson, Charlton Heston, and Anne Baxter. Because of this she “discovered the importance of gold because the public I met required a different standard of jewelry. In addition, it wasn’t difficult to calculate that gold jewelry, considering the price of gold at the time, was more profitable than silver. From that point on, everything I made was in yellow gold.” The exhibition remained on display for a week at the Beverly Hills Hotel. In 1956, *Craft Horizons* published an article on Brynner and her jewelry. At the same time, she was cataloging her work and selling it to 50 to 60 galleries and stores across the country. (fig. 67) Already selling in New York gallery Georg Jensen, she flew to New York City to find new venues for her work. She met with *Craft Horizon*’s editor Conrad Brown who introduced her to several buyers and stores. The jewelry shop, Walker &
Eberling agreed to host her first New York show in the Autumn of 1956. This particular store sold traditional jewelry, and they gave her beautiful gemstones and the freedom to design as she saw fit. She made close to 60 pieces.

By 1957, Brynner decided that she wanted to move to New York. She had already been well received there, and she loved the creative energy of the city. She and her mother left San Francisco for Manhattan. They moved to 46 West 55th Street, where she would open up her shop a year later. (fig. 68) David Campbell of Walker & Eberling sent her contractors, at his expense, to build her a little shop inside the lobby of her apartment building. The move not only changed her scenery, but changed the direction of her work.

New York fire codes prevented Brynner for using oxygen as fuel for her torch, so she had to use alternate sources and methods to make her jewelry. In 1957, she turned to wax casting as a solution. That same year, Brynner saw the retrospective exhibition on Spanish architect Antoni Gaudi at the Museum of Modern Art, and began appropriating Gaudi-like forms into her jewelry. Brynner’s work went from being geometric, contemporary, and architectural to organic in shape. This was a due in part to the subconscious influence of Gaudi and in part to her working in wax. (figs. 69) It is not until 1969, that Brynner found a new piece of equipment to solve her torch issue. She discovered the Henes Water Welder for electric soldering. The “tool allowed her to work directly with metal … results reminiscent of lost-wax casting, that is, lacy patterns, soft rolled edges, and melted forms. Consequently, her style became even more sensuous and
fluid, often connoting plant life.\textsuperscript{219} (figs. 70) Such work became an Irena Brynner signature.

Between 1958 and 1964, Brynner’s career exploded. Her work was in a solo exhibition at The Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York. She participated in the \textit{International Exhibition of Modern Jewellery 1890-1961} at Goldsmiths’ Hall in London, and her work was accepted into the Brussels World Fair for the American section. Additionally, by invite from Victor D’Amico, Director of Education at the Museum of Modern Art, Brynner taught metalsmithing and jewelry-making at the Museum’s Institute of Modern Art. She also taught at the Crafts Student League and lectured throughout the United States and abroad. In 1979, Brynner wrote \textit{Jewelry As An Art Form}, a book that chronicled her early career and provided instruction on design and techniques.

Continuing to be recognized for her work, Brynner was awarded the Gold Medal, Bavarian State Prize at the International Handicrafts Fair in Münich, Germany in 1963. Over the years, she participated in many solo and group exhibitions including: \textit{25 Worldwide Known Artists}, National Museum of Darmstadt, Germany (1964); \textit{American Craftsman}, Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York (1965); and \textit{Objects U.S.A.}, Various National and International Venues (1969), among others. Her work continued to be recognized at exhibitions in the United States as well as in Japan, Switzerland, Russia, and France. (fig. 71)

While Brynner’s work was acknowledged within the arts, she was also a darling of the gold and diamond industries. Her work was highlighted in the International Gold

Like Macchiarini and De Patta, Brynner developed her own views regarding the relationship between industry and art. She believed that industry needed the craftsperson more than the craftsperson needed industry; however, if there was to be a partnership than the craftsperson should be appropriately compensated:

> Something is happening now between craftsmen and industry which I think should be pointed out. Industry has become interested in the contemporary craftsmen. Specifically, costume jewelry firms are aware that their public is tired of old traditional unimaginative designs and so they have turned to craftsmen for new creativity. It would seems that this coming together is a great achievement. However, in truth the industry is experimenting with new designs at the expense of the craftsmen. Designs are purchased at a nominal fee without any credit given to the craftsmen for the creation. For $100 or $200 dollars the industry has any choice it wants of good contemporary designs. I think it is time for craftsmen to agree and stand firm on a code of ethics deadline with industry/craftsmen relationships.

It is evident that such views are a product of her involvement with the Metal Arts Guild. Not wanting to abandon industry all-together, Brynner fought for a balanced business relationship.

Although Brynner reached international acclaim early in her career, her biggest achievement is the contribution she made to the American studio jewelry movement. She was not the first to consider jewelry as miniature sculpture; however, Brynner made the body a functional component of her jewelry. In doing so, she redefined the meaning and aesthetic of modernist jewelry for a new generation of artists. Brynner’s success as both
an artist and businessperson must be attributed, in part, to MAG. It was because of the founding MAG members’ vision that younger artists, such as Brynner, were able to advance their careers with the support of the Guild in the crowded field of contemporary art jewelry.

Chapter three investigated the contributions of MAG members Margaret De Patta, Peter Macchiarini, and Irena Brynner, to MAG and the American studio jewelry movement. From their connections with leading modernists of the time, to the development of their approach to design, this investigation illustrated De Patta, Macchiarini, and Brynner’s artistic achievements and contributions to the field of jewelry. The chapter detailed why and how this trio of artist-jewelers were pivotal to the advancement of modernist jewelry and helped spread MAG’s influence beyond California.
CONCLUSION

As detailed through the careers of Margaret De Patta, Peter Macchiarini, and Irena Brynner, the Metal Arts Guild (MAG) played an important role in the advancement of the careers of California modernist jewelers as well as the broader American studio jewelry movement. While MAG’s enduring legacy can be attributed to the iconic magnetism of Margaret De Patta, the Guild drew strength from all its founding members — who believed that the Guild’s existence was important and necessary.222

The benefit of working together as a group can be traced to the founding members’ experiences of coming of age in an era of the expansion of workers rights. Standing at the crossroads of the California labor movement, the artists witnessed the tides of sweeping economic and political change throughout the interwar years. From their involvement with WPA programs and the California Labor School, artists realized that their social and economic interests were not adequately protected. Bay Area studio jewelers were inspired by organizations like the the Artists Equity Association, and established MAG as a platform for metalsmiths to come together to protect their commercial interests and relevance in the age of mass-production and industrial design. In doing so, the Guild promoted jewelry as an art form and established a historical precedent in standards for studio jewelers.

Although MAG formed as a regional organization, the Guild and its members had a much broader impact on the American studio jewelry movement. MAG’s reach extended into California institutions such as Mills College and the California College of Arts and Craft, where MAG members taught metalsmithing and jewelry programs.
Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, MAG members participated in major exhibitions throughout the United States and abroad, continuing the spread of its influence.

Museums, galleries, and collectors continue to acknowledge MAG’s importance in the decorative arts by acquiring the work of MAG members. They include: the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Museum of Art and Design, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Oakland Museum of California, and the Seibu Museum of Art.

Additionally, a few upcoming exhibitions are showcasing the work of MAG members. The Oakland Museum of California and the Museum of Arts and Design are currently collaborating on an Margaret De Patta retrospective exhibition *Space - Light - Structure: The Jewelry of Margaret De Patta* to open February 2012. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art recently opened the exhibition *Pacific Standard Time: Art in Los Angeles, 1945-1980* which showcases the work of Merry Renk, Margaret De Patta, and other MAG members. Finally, the upcoming Museum of Arts and Design’s exhibition *Crafting Modernism: Mid-century American Art and Design* will show the work of Margaret De Patta, Merry Renk, Bob Winston, Byron Wilson, Irena Brynner, and Carl Jennings. The recognition of MAG’s artist-jewelers at such prestigious institutions confirms the Guild’s important legacy within the studio jewelry movement.

This thesis addressed under-researched scholarship pertaining to the Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco and its significant role in the American studio jewelry movement. The continued existence of MAG today is a testament to the foresight of its founding
members. The organization’s goals and objectives are as relevant today as they were in 1951. Although this analysis ends in 1964, it is not a statement of the Guild’s decline, but rather a demarcation of both the passing of their iconic founder Margaret De Patta and the start of a new artistic period in jewelry. The 1960s marked a time in which studio jewelers were no longer confining themselves to modernist principles or a modern style. Instead, artist-jewelers pushed beyond jewelry as adornment, and experimented with techniques, materials, and radical ideas to develop another form of contemporary art jewelry. While other regional metalsmith organizations formed subsequent to MAG, a national organization for metal artists would not be seen until 1969, when the Society of North American Goldsmiths was established.

The death of De Patta on March 19, 1964, left a void at the Metal Arts Guild and the American studio jewelry community. Her contemporaries acknowledged her significance in the field of modern jewelry, as shortly after her death in 1964, memorial exhibitions were held at the San Francisco Museum of Art and the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York. A second show The Jewelry of Margaret De Patta: A Retrospective Exhibition was held at the Oakland Museum (now know as the Oakland Museum of California) in 1976. In addition, for a time, the Metal Arts Guild established a Margaret De Patta Design award to recognize selected works in co-sponsored exhibitions with The Oakland Museum.

De Patta once proclaimed that, “[c]ontemporary jewelry must characterize our times.” Such sentiments continue to inspire generations of artists and scholars who reflect on MAG’s history as they forge a new path in the field of metalwork. (fig. 72) De
Patta and other founding members have cemented MAG’s legacy, as the organization celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2011.
ENDNOTES


6 In addition to being a sculptor, Alexander Calder is considered by scholars as an early pioneer of American modernist jewelry. Scholars consider his early kinetic sculptures as a precursor to his jewelry development. Ibid., 30-32.


8 Margaret De Patta Handwritten Notes, “Jewelry Design - 20th Century,” Margaret De Patta Archives, Bielawski Trust, Point Richmond, CA.


10 Merry Renk, interview by Arline Fisch, San Francisco, California, January 18-19, 2001, Archives of America Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.


13 Irena Brynner, interview by Arline M. Fisch.
The New Bauhaus in Chicago was established by László Moholy-Nagy in 1937. It later became known as the School of Design in Chicago in 1938, Institute of Design in 1944, and the Illinois Institute of Technology in 1949.

Merry Renk, interview by Arline Fisch.

In a moderated conversation with Jennifer Shaifer during MAG’s 60th Anniversary symposium, Forging Communities, Merry Renk advises that she only had only a single class with László Moholy-Nagy before he died. Greenbaum, *Messengers of Modernism: American Studio Jewelry 1940-1960*, 132.

Ibid., 133.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid., 73. The Bauhaus was well-known for its approach to design. During a six-month probationary period, students were required to take preliminary coursework, that lead into studies of geometry, color, composition, materials, tools, fabrics, and nature. Training would later follow a traditional guild system, with the teacher as master and student as apprentice. Students would take workshops in clay, stone, wood, glass, textiles, and metal.


Ibid.

29 Bound and Turner, “Going To War and Going To College: Did World War II and the G.I. Bill Increase Educational Attainment for Returning Veterans?,” 790.


31 Ibid.


34 Government documents list Irena’s last name with the official spelling of “Bryner.” In fact, she even had an article with the headline “A Bryner With One ‘N’ to Her Name.” However, several scholars and Brynner herself also spelled her name “Brynner.” For the purpose of this thesis, Brynner will be used. From Carolyn Anspacher, “A Bryner With One ‘N’ to Her Name,” San Francisco Chronicle, October 7, 1951, sec. S; Irena Brynner Papers, 1920-2002, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.


36 Sam Kramer had connections with California. He took his first jewelry course with ceramist Glen Lukens at the University of Southern California. Greenbaum, Messengers of Modernism: American Studio Jewelry 1940-1960, 17, 74-76.

37 MAG member Irena Brynner moved to New York City in 1957.


41 Greenbaum, “Body Sculpture: California Jewelry,” 140.

43 Greenbaum, “Body Sculpture: California Jewelry,” 140.


45 Greenbaum, “Body Sculpture: California Jewelry,” 123.


49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.


53 Ibid., 234-235.

54 Ibid., 236.

55 Mark Dean Johnson, “California’s Collective Art Culture” in At Work: The Art of California Labor. Edited by Mark Dean Johnson (San Francisco: California Historical Society Press, Publisher, in conjunction with Heyday Books, San Francisco State University, and the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, 2003), 50.


Johnson, “California’s Collective Art Culture,” 49.

California Labor School Catalogues, California Labor School Collection, 1942-1957, San Francisco State University, Labor and Archives Research Center, San Francisco, CA.

“School and Art,” The Labor Herald, August 23, 1946.

California Labor School Catalogues, California Labor School Collection, 1942-1957, San Francisco State University, Labor and Archives Research Center, San Francisco, CA.

Johnson, “California’s Collective Art Culture,” 49.

Ibid., 50.

Ibid.

House Committee on American Activities, Bills To Curb or Outlaw the Communist Party in the United States: Hearings on H.R. 1884 and H.R. 2122, 80th Cong., 1st sess., 1947.

According to Merry Renk, Bielawski refused to sign the Loyalty Oath that the United States instituted during this time. Other CLS artists blacklisted included Philip Norton, Freda Koblick, Edith Heath, Adelyne Cross, Milton Halberstadt, Giacomo Patri. House Committee, Bills To Curb or Outlaw the Communist Party in the United States, 54.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., 21.

Ibid., 24

Ibid., 25


“General Aims of Metal Arts Guild – Talk at April meeting 1951,” Metal Arts Guild Archives, San Francisco, California.

“Constitution,” ca. 1951, Metal Arts Guild Archives, San Francisco, CA.

“Jeweler’s Organization, Minutes of the Meeting Held on May 30, 1951,” Metal Arts Guild Archives, San Francisco, CA.


Ibid.  MAG’s Jury of Acceptance was composed of the membership chairman, two full-members of the Guild, and two qualified craftspersons (member or non-member).


Publications available to members included: *Design Is Your Business, Developing and Selling New Products, Cost Accounting for Small Manufacturers*, and *A Handbook of Small Business Finance*.

“Jeweler’s Organization, Minutes of the Meeting Held on May 30, 1951,” Metal Arts Guild Archives, San Francisco, CA.
95 Ibid.

96 “General Aims of Metal Arts Guild – Talk at April meeting 1951,” Metal Arts Guild Archives, San Francisco, CA.

97 Guildletter, August 1955, Metal Arts Guild Archives, San Francisco, CA.

98 The A.F.L. established the International Jewelry Workers Union (IJWU). “Minutes of the meeting held on May 30, 1951,” Metal Arts Guild Archives, San Francisco, CA.

99 The author could not find evidence confirming if MAG’s efforts were successful in eliminating artist entry fees. “Special Bulletin to All MAG Members,” June 24, 1955, Metal Arts Guild Archives, San Francisco, CA.

100 Margaret De Patta’s Drafted Letter to Senator George Miller and Special Bulletin to All MAG Members, June 24, 1955, Metal Arts Guild Archives, San Francisco, CA.

101 Merry Renk, interview by Arline Fisch.

102 Merry Renk, in discussion with the author, September 8, 2009. Margaret Carver was responsible for organizing the first Handy and Harmon Conference in 1947.

103 “College of Marin Silversmithing Workshop, 1952,” Margaret De Patta Archives, Bielawski Archives, Point Richmond, CA.

104 Irena Brynner, interview by Arline M. Fisch.

105 Merry Renk, interview by Arline Fisch.


107 Fifth Annual San Francisco Art Festival Exhibition Catalog, San Francisco Subjects Vertical Files, San Francisco Arts Commission Art Festivals, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco, CA; Peter Macchiarni, “Report: First Annual Metal Arts Guild Exhibit and 1951 Art Festival Exhibit,” Metal Arts Guild Archives, San Francisco, CA.


109 Ibid.

110 Guildletter, August 1958, Metal Arts Guild Archives, San Francisco, CA.

111 Guildletter, October 1958, Metal Arts Guild Archives, San Francisco, CA.


Ibid., 130.


Ibid., 126.

Ibid., 110


Margaret was married four times to Floyd Charlous Bollman (1922-1924), William Schuster (1925-1927), Sam DePatta (1929-1941), and Eugene Bielawski (1946–1964).


Margaret De Patta Handwritten Notes, Margaret De Patta Archives, Bielawski Trust, Point Richmond, California; Interview Notes, May 7, 1962, Yoshiko Uchida papers, BANC MSS 86/97c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.


Margaret De Patta Handwritten Notes, Margaret De Patta Archives, Point Richmond, CA.

Bielawski, “Margaret De Patta – An Analysis of Her Work in Jewelry,” 27.


Ibid.

Margaret De Patta Archives, Point Richmond, CA.

Margaret De Patta Handwritten Notes, Margaret De Patta Archives, Point Richmond, CA.

Ibid.

Yoshiko Uchida, Interview Notes, May 7, 1962, Yoshiko Uchida papers, BANC MSS 86/97c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.


Francis Sperisen cut gemstones for several MAG members, including Merry Renk, Irena Brynner, Peter Macchiarini, and Florence Resnikoff.

Richard Sperisen, interview by author and Julie Muñiz, Redwood City, California, July 6, 2009, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA.


Richard Sperisen, interview by author and Julie Muñiz.


Bielawski, “Comments and Notes,” 43.

Margaret De Patta Archives, Point Richmond, CA; Bielawski, “Comments and Notes,” 31.

De Patta won the 1962 San Francisco Art Commission Art Festival Purchase Award for this piece. San Francisco Art Festival papers, 1946-1986, San Francisco Art Commission Civic Art Collection Public Records.

Margaret De Patta papers on the California Labor School, Margaret De Patta Archives, Point Richmond, CA.

De Patta designed a ceramics line for Heath Ceramics and flatware for an international competition. Additionally, De Patta interest in Modernism extended to home design and architecture; she renovated her San Francisco home in the style of the Bauhaus as well as modernized her Napa Valley home.
In 1957, Margaret and Eugene close Designs Contemporary, their limited edition production line, so Margaret could focus on custom orders and experimental work. Margaret De Patta Archives, Point Richmond, CA.

Yoshiko Uchida, Interview Notes, May 7, 1962, Yoshiko Uchida papers, BANC MSS 86/97c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Yoshiko Uchida, “Margaret De Patta,” 19.

Margaret De Patta Handwritten Notes, Margaret De Patta Archives, Point Richmond, CA.

Peter Macchiarini, “Autobiographical Sketch,” Peter Macchiarini Archives, San Francisco, CA; Peter Macchiarini, interview by Mary Fuller McChesney.


Peter Macchiarini, “Autobiographical Sketch,” Peter Macchiarini Archives, San Francisco, CA; Peter Macchiarini, interview by Mary Fuller McChesney, October 18, 1964, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Daniel Macchiarini, interview by author.


Peter Macchiarini, “Autobiographical Sketch,” Peter Macchiarini Archives, San Francisco, CA; Peter Macchiarini, interview by Mary Fuller McChesney.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.
Ibid.


Ibid.


Ibid.


172 Peter Macchiarni, “Autobiographical Sketch,” Peter Macchiarini Archives, San Francisco, CA.


174 “Miscellaneous Notes on Mass-Production of the Arts,” ca. 1956, Peter Macchiarini Archives, San Francisco, CA.


176 “Miscellaneous Notes on Mass-Production of the Arts,” ca. 1956, Peter Macchiarini Archives, San Francisco, CA.

177 “Statement,” Margaret De Patta Archives, Point Richmond, California.


Ibid.

180 Irena Brynner, interview by Arline M. Fisch.


184 Irena Brynner, interview by Arline M. Fisch.
Although Irena lived in Russia during the rise of Constructivism, she was just a child and there is no evidence of her awareness of the movement. Irena Brynner, interview by Arline M. Fisch.


Irena Brynner, a spiritual person, made a series of liturgical art sculpture and works.


Brynner, Jewelry As An Art Form, 14.
After a short period of inactivity in 1960, the Guild questioned its need to exist due to the number of craft organizations that were now established in the San Francisco area. Membership consensus was that MAG served an important purpose and was necessary in the field of metal arts. Members felt the Guild had “several useful functions. 1) Providing a way of showing member’s work in several annual shows and the traveling show. 2) In education of the membership through the friendly exchange of ideas and techniques. 3) In education of the public in good design through the several annual shows. It was felt these functions go hand in hand, and that one cannot do without the other.”
Primary and Contemporary Resources

Archives and Collections


California Labor School Collection, 1942-1957, San Francisco State University, Labor Archives and Research Center, San Francisco, CA.

California Labor School, San Francisco Subjects Vertical Files, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco, CA.

Golden Gate International Exposition, San Francisco Subjects Vertical Files, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco, CA.


Margaret De Patta papers, 1944-2000, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Margaret De Patta Bielawski Archives, Bielawski Trust, Point Richmond, CA.

Merry Renk papers, 1952-2000, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Metal Arts Guild Archives, Metal Arts Guild, San Francisco, CA.

Oakland Museum of California Library, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA.

Peter Macchiarini Archives, Daniel Macchiarini Creative Design, San Francisco, CA.


San Francisco Art Commission Art Festivals, San Francisco Subjects Vertical Files, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco, CA.

Yoshiko Uchida papers, 1903-1994, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA.
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Anspacher, Carolyn. “A Bryn[en]er With One ‘N’ To Her Name,” *San Francisco Chronicle,* October 7, 1951, sec. S.


De Patta, Margaret. “De Patta,” *Arts and Architecture* 64, no. 7 (July 1947): 30-31, 57.


De Patta, Margaret. “Contemporary Jewelry by Margaret De Patta,” *Arts and Architecture* 66, no. 9 (September 1949): 34.


“Farmhouse Turned Into Modern Home,” *Napa Register*, January 26, 1957, sec. A.


Kramer, Sam. “Gems In New Contexts,” *Craft Horizons* 12, no. 5 (September/October 1952): 30-34.


“Paulites Turn to Art: Miss Brynner Opens New Department,” *The Spires* 10, no. 1 (October 1949).


White, Nan. “Well-Designed Jewelry Must Be Comfortable, Says Artisan.”

Wilgus, Stevens Spear. “‘Two Heads Are Better Than One’ Couple Declares; Bielawski Faculty Husband-Wife Team In Art,” *Summer Signal*, July 8, 1947, Summer Session edition.
“Work of Margaret De Patta, Genius of Modern Jewelry Design, to Be Shown Here,”  
*Press Democrat*, November 6, 1949, Art section.

**Online Media Files**


**Oral History Interviews**


Macchiarini, Peter, interview by Mary McChesney, for the Archives of American Art New Deal and the Arts Project, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, District of Columbia, October 18, 1964.


Renk, Merry, interview by author, San Francisco, California, September 8, 2009.

Renk, Merry, interview by Julie Muñiz, San Francisco, California, n.d.


Sperisen, Richard, interview by Julie Muñiz and author, Redwood City, California, July 6, 2009

Secondary Resources

Books and Catalogs


Journal, Magazine, and Newspaper Articles


**Online Resources**


**Theses**


**APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEA</td>
<td>Artists Equity Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLS</td>
<td>California Labor School</td>
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<td>CWA</td>
<td>Civil Works Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAD</td>
<td>Index of American Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>IJWA</td>
<td>International Jewelry Workers Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAP</td>
<td>Federal Art Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>Federal Theatre Project</td>
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<td>FSA</td>
<td>Farm Security Administration</td>
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<td>FWP</td>
<td>Federal Writers Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAG</td>
<td>Metal Arts Guild</td>
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<tr>
<td>PWAP</td>
<td>Public Work of Art Projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPAS</td>
<td>Section of Painting and Sculpture</td>
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<td>TRAP</td>
<td>Treasury Relief Art Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>WPA</td>
<td>Works Progress Administration</td>
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</table>
Appendix B: Selected List of Metal Arts Guild Members between 1951-1964

F. Adele Ackerman
Vera Allison*
Margery C. Anneberg
Mary Augsburg
Norman Barish
Marian Bassett
Franz Bergmann*
Eugene Bielawski*
Janet Blundell
Margot S. Brestman
Irena Brynner*
Carl Buchenroth
Richard Bugbee
Milton Cavagnaro
Stella Chen
Dr. Robert Coleman
Wynn Colombo
Earle Curtis
Hal Davies*
Loren Lee Davies*
Lyda C. Dear
Margaret De Patta
Bielawski*
Margaret “Peggy” Dhaemers
Robert Dhaemers
Florence Dixon
Harry Dixon*
Philip Eden
Robert Eden
Ione Elioff
Edward Fourtane
Loyola Fourtane
Caroline Foote
Imogene “Tex” Bailey Geiling
Neal George*
Richard “Dick” Gompf
Hans Grag
Dorothy Greene
Orren Grossman
Connie Grothkopp
Peter Hale
Helen Heick
Wayne Henrie
Donald W. Herberholz
Jack Hoag
Richard Hom
Diana Ides
C. Carl Jennings
Elizabeth Jennings
Hilma C. Johnson
Katie Kamesar
Marguerite Kelly*
Leslie Klepper
Barbara Langford
Kay Lane
Jean Lasnier
Dr. S. Lazar
Richard Lee
Jean Leslie
Edward F. Geisinger
Iva L. Geisinger
Neil George
Afton Lewis Giacomini
Connie Grothkopp*
Fallie Lind*
Thomas Little
David Loveless*
Albert Lukavich
Peter Macchiarini*
Virginia Macchiarini*
Roxanne Marden*
Fern Marx
Gretchen McAllister
Nancy McRae
Byron Menendez*
Phyllis Menendez*
John M. Miller
Dorothy Moore
Josephine Mount*
John Nagle
Natalie Nechaeff
Win Ng
John H. Nordback
Jack Nutting
Ann B. Olmstead
Barbara Pearl
Robert “Bob” Pearl
Joseph F. Peterson
Joy Peterson
Margaret Randolph
Robert W. Randoph
Hans Rawinsky
Merry Renk*
Florence Resnikoff
Victor Reis
Anne Riegel
Phyllis Robbins
Edward Robertson
Caroline Gleick Rosene*
Jerrie Rubenstein
A’leen Runkle*
Lucy Sanger
Muriel Savin
Marguerite Segal*
Mayer Segal*
Pauline Shinazy
Patrick Sieler
Howard A. Slatoff
Rose Smith
Fred P. Snowden
Francis Sperisen
Betty Stewart
Martin Streich
Valerie J. Taylor
Elmer Trone
Betty Turn
Joel Waldman
Roy Walker*
Fred L. Wallace
Emanuel Weber
Martin K. Weber
Claudia Williams
Margaret Willis
Byron Wilson
Sally Wilson
Robert “Bob” Winston*
Seth Wood

*Founding members