



Jeff Morehead / Chronicle-Tribune

Irma Maidenberg puts the final touch on one of her homemade pins Friday.

## Area artist pins hopes on modern art

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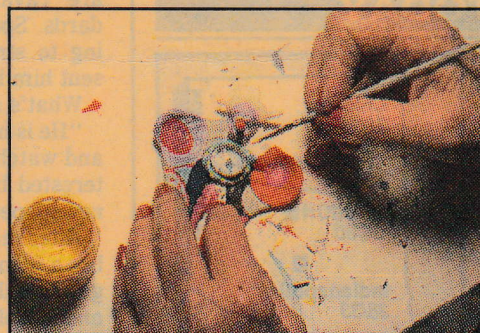
An exterminator visited Irma Maidenberg's home last week and was fascinated by how it was decorated.

"He kept saying, 'Did you make this? Oh, did you make this?'" Maidenberg said, recalling the man's reaction to her home at 1100 Euclid Ave.

Guests walking through the ranch house get a crash course in modern art. Eye-catching works with bold patterns and abstract shapes fill each room.

There are stuffed foam sculptures in the entryway to rid the home of spirits and bears. The walls of each room are covered with colorful paintings and the kitchen shows traces of Maidenberg's own handiwork on the walls, counters and refrigerators.

Maidenberg said she started making foam sculptures after buying one she liked from another artist. Pulling one of her creations



**Maidenberg's creations receive great attention to detail — and fun.**

off the wall, she seems shocked when she noticed it's dated 1983.

She also made some wooden creations early on and after that, her art took many forms, including T-shirts, denim jackets, pins and necklaces.

"Anything I can put paint to, I do," she said.

Maidenberg started making her signature pins a few years ago after buying a mod pin from the Contemporary Art Museum in Chicago.

"I brought it home and said, 'Gee, I could make something like that,'" she said.

Ann Sector owns several pieces made by her long-time friend.

"I have yet to go anyplace — Chicago, California — when people don't say something about them. Somebody is always making a remark," Sector said. "I can go on an airplane, and people will say something. I go into stores, and clerks are looking at them.

"I treasure every one of them I have because she had made them, and she puts so much of herself into each piece," Sector added.

A tray of pins in the kitchen include faces with wild snake-like hair reminiscent of Medusa and decorated with watch parts, compasses or crystals. Others are round or

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square shapes decorated with clusters of little faces.

"People seem to love those little faces, and I'm not even so fond of them," Maidenberg said.

She prefers her more flamboyant pins with faces and wild, bright tresses. She also enjoys making pins inspired by creations that French artist Niki de Saint-Phalle calls "Nanas."

Maidenberg has modified the Nana form of a round woman and shapes them from plastic and then paints them with bright colors.

Maidenberg makes her jewelry from plaster of Paris and plastic. She demonstrated how to make a plastic pin and poured some "Friendly Plastic" granules into a glass bowl and then added boiling water to melt them. After she spooned the plastic glob out of the bowl, she easily formed a round body and added four balls to the center of the figure, which she explained would later become flowers, and a ball at the top for the head.

Once the figure dries, Maidenberg will add paint before moving on.

As she added white crescents to one form she had made earlier, Maidenberg searched for a word to describe the shape with spikes protruding from its top and long nose sticking into the air. She finally came up with gargoyle, but then wondered if that adequately described the being.

"I just have fun," she said about her craft, which she didn't start until later in life after she was married to husband, Milton, and stopped working as a social worker.

Maidenberg said her pieces never seem to take a personality until she paints the eyes on them: "I guess that really shows that the eyes are the window to the soul, even in these little creatures."