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DAY SPAS TO RENEW MIND AND BODY

connections and we got tons of inspiration looking at the rest of the stuff."

This past September, while Berghold honeymooned in Mexico and Nashan toured Greece, the partners' work won Best Artist-Fashion and Jewelry. The gold and silver inlays, engraving, bluing and scrollwork give the simple vintage watches a Western touch. Nashan credits the conference itself for the watch company's use of these techniques and for its popular 1915 WD watch.

Suzanne M.M. Warner, whose finger is callused from needle pricks, won Best Artist-Fashion and Jewelry last year and in 2000. Warner is a perfectionist who tore out and re-stitched a hatband the night before her first Western Design Conference show in 2000. She's a morning person who stargazes at 4 or 5 a.m. There are no streetlights in Joliet, Mont., where she lives. This summer, home from Hawaii where years ago she had learned shell-weaving, she spent a lot of time outside, "just making friends with where I live again." The gala night sky-Perseus, Mars and the meteor shower-inspired "Starry Night" ensemble she sewed for this year's conference. The ensemble didn't win, but it sold for \$3,500.

About 12 years ago, the art community viewed beadwork as a craft. She feels gratified that her work is now a respected art. Warner wears her own pieces daily, but another woman in her life wears her finest jewelry. "My mother has the best collection of all my work," she says.

When clothing designer Pate Stetson saw Warner's jewelry in a shop with Stetson's own clothing, she encouraged Warner to apply to the conference. "The more designers we have that are the cream of what they do," Stetson says, "the better for the conference."

Stetson's "Women of the Wild West" designs won her the Best Collection award the past two years, though not this year. The photographer, sculptor, painter and now designer of Western clothing pairs Italian calfskin leather with Dupioni silk, and rich earthy browns against vibrant coral or bold plaids. "I love beautiful materials," she says. "I love pieces that flow."

She loves quality, too-maybe to a fault. If naïve customers wander into the Big Timber showroom asking for leather bustiers, she says, she probably won't sell to them at all. Every town has a head shop, she says. Stetson's low tolerance for kitsch may have drawn her to her current work, which began about a dozen years ago.

"I realized that 'Western' had gotten synonymous with 'garish' and 'bad taste,'" she says. She decided to create some tasteful reproductions of old Wild West show's outfits.

She uses her art to promote both her personal and political ideals. Her quest for quality means her hems won't unravel, and it guides her business principles, too. The seamstresses who stitch the hems all work out of their own homes and around the hectic schedules that ranch life dictates. She seems proud of both the business and its stunning results. Her pieces aren't out of place in New York.

GLENN GILMORE'S fireplace screens are firmly in place in Montana. And in Massachusetts, Wyoming, Illinois, North Carolina, Florida and other states. In 2001, a screen decorated in pinecones won Gilmore the Best Artist-Metal award.

"I was really floored," he says, "because when you make a piece, you are always critiquing it." Unlike the watchmakers, Gilmore doesn't design around a Western theme for the conference.

"My feeling for Western design is a little more landscape- and nature-oriented," he says. He hasn't won since, but his role at this year's conference grew when a scheduled speaker failed to materialize. The topic was "Getting Published," and Gilmore knew something about it. Plus, he says, he has a hard time leaving open microphones unattended. He took the stand, called upon several people he knew in the audience, and facilitated the workshop. His audience reviews were good. More than one person told him that they took more notes in his session than in any other.

It isn't any wonder that a couple of these winning artists-Gilmore included-celebrate their wins by going home and sleeping. From loading and unloading their pieces to attending-and hosting-workshops to nightly dinners with old friends, the four-day events fatigue as much as inspire the artists. Their typical pace of life changes. Usually, says Warner, artists work alone, many of them in rural, isolated areas. Not that they mind the solitude, but they make the most out of their time together.



Montana Watch Company in Livingston makes replica watches that won first place in its division at the Western Design Conference



Suzanne M.M. Warner's work won Best Artist-Fashion and Jewelry last year and in 2000 at the Western Design Conference.