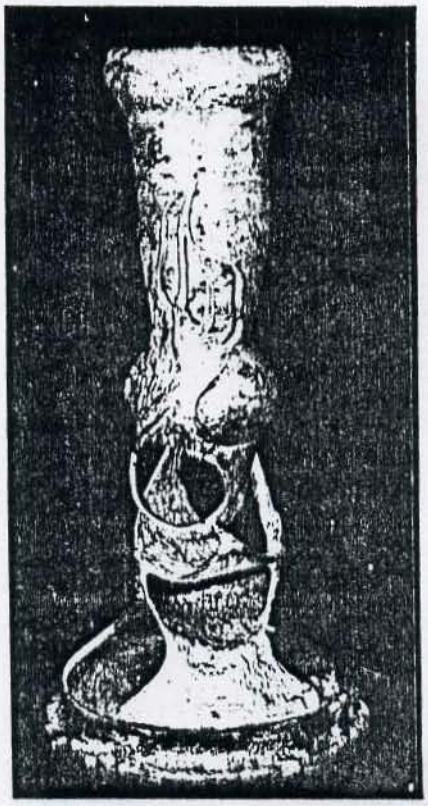
# Updating the Ancient

By Eda Berg

Jerusalem jeweler Uri Ramot describes himself as a "collector's jeweler". It is not an immodest statement emanating from the ultra-ego of an artist, but a matter of truth stemming from the fact that no two Ramot creations are exactly alike. This is because the main component (though not necessarily the most expensive) in Ramot's impressive collection is ancient glass dating back between 700 and 2,000 years.

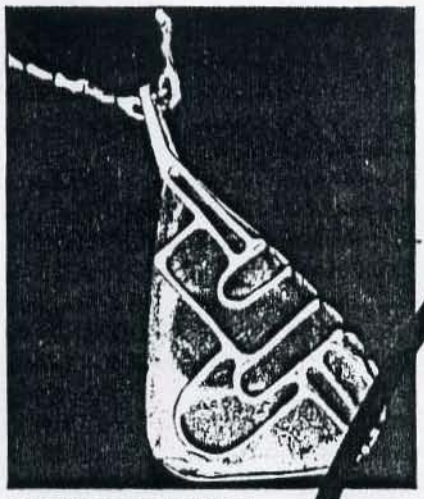
Nature has added its own patina surface to the fragments embedded in the earth for centuries. The magnificent array of colors derive from the combined effects of climatic conditions and the layers of earth covering the glass. Sometimes the result resembles a brilliant miniature mosaic. Sometimes the glass is transluscent in single shades of pale yellow, topaz, jade or opal white; and there are also fragments which are totally transparent.

The color spectrum is breathtakingly beautiful.



*Reconstructive sculpture*

In the case of larger fragments, Ramot has reconstructed them and mounted them on stands of sterling silver, 18 kt gold or bronze. Smaller fragments are set into pendants, rings and brooches. In the latter category, Ramot has an intriguing musical collection in which the sculptured silver has been cast into the shapes of ancient stringed instruments, with the glass set beneath the strings. All of Ramot's pendants can be worn on either side and have been deliberately designed for two-in-one value.



*Ancient glass and silver pendant*

The larger fragments set in free form sculptures include table bottles, vases, jewel boxes, pill boxes, flacons and vials.

Ramot has also produced a series of unique sculptured silver chess sets in which 1½ kilograms of silver has been used in each set.

Pendants purchased from Ramot can be matched with exclusive handmade silver and gold chains.

Ramot has been developing his own individual techniques for the past thirteen years. A graduate of the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, he entered a jewelry design contest sponsored by the Israel Export Institute in 1968, and after winning first prize, was approached by the Israel Museum to engage in jewelry making and reconstruction work. This was the beginning of his permanent love affair with ancient glass. Later, he was commissioned by Maskit, Israel's famous chain of arts and crafts shops, to create gold and silver items. From there, he went to work for the world renowned exclusive jewelry chain of H. Stern.

Five years ago, he set up on his own, and now works out of a delightful studio and showroom in Hutzot Hayotzer, a charming plaza set aside for artists and artisans between the picturesque Yemin Moshe quarter and Jaffa Gate.

Ramot has a modest export relationship with specialty stores in the US, but the overwhelming majority of his clients are private individuals from all over the world seeking items of jewelry, the exact duplicates of which will never be owned by anyone else.

Ramot provides a certificate of guarantee with each item, and should the glass break in the course of time – irrespective of how many years may have elapsed since the purchase – Ramot will incorporate another piece of glass or provide a new item of similar value at no charge. He is rarely called upon to do this, because the glass fragments are fairly solid and do not break easily.

The free form sculptures in Ramot's designs are new, yet in perfect harmony with the ancient glass. ■

# Designers of the Future

By Greer Fay Cashman

The annual Israel Jewelry Fair, this year, for the first time, included an exhibit of works by students of the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design. The Academy, now celebrating its 75th anniversary, has in recent years made a significant imprint on industry, the environment and the quality of life. Arie Ofir, Professor of Fine Arts at the Academy, and Head of its Gold and Silversmithing Department, is himself a Bezalel graduate and a noted artisan in his own right.

*Arie Ofir*