Small sculptures in metal and wood represent a new level of achievement

**Artist Emerson Bell ringing in the new at New Images**

*By ANNE PRICE*

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The Downtown Art Affair last Sunday drew several hundred visitors to downtown galleries, including New Images, Images, The Photographer's Place, Stephen Wilson Stained Glass and a new exhibit space on the sixth floor of One American Place — Renaissance.

Emerson Bell makes the New Images exhibit stand out in the crowd. His small sculptures in metal and wood represent a new level of achievement for this artist, who brings emotional power and significance to his work.

The pieces are displayed in the front area of the gallery and are a genuine magnet for viewers. While the entire space is filled with a variety of credible art, Bell's work alone makes a visit almost imperative.

A new **Heavens and Earth** series presents small, symbolic images in framed metal relief on tall pedestals, with the pedestals as much a part of the work as the images themselves. In one work, an open hand holds a small globe, perhaps representing the earth in the hand of God? In any case, the impact of the piece is powerful and sacred in its inspiration.

A slender, stylized human figure stands like an icon in the center of the exhibition, a work in the style of Bell's recent figurative sculptures. This one, however, has a special aura, partly because of the beautiful surface of the copper from which it is created. Bell has used the oxidation along with polished areas to produce an unusually beautiful effect, and the figure's form is exquisite.

He has returned to the use of wood, in this case mahogany, for several pieces, including a harp form and groups of slender figures. A **Trinity series** features a trio of figures, mounted on a pedestal with a medallion in the base, which refers to the symbolism in the **Heavens** series. A group of small studies in copper, two torsos and a mother and child form, are appealing, and he also shows a pair of models, a bust and a figure, ready to be cast.

Bell's intense dedication to his art gives it lasting strength and symbolic force.

Several prints of Fonville Winans' celebrated photographs are a welcome segment of the show, and the photographer's journey to France for exhibitions there was hailed at the opening reception.

The exhibition also features strong watercolor florals by Pam Soileau, who reveals a good sense of design and composition and uses color to the best advantage. Her "Daisy Fence" combines the strong forms of a wood fence with glowing flowers to balance the composition.

Ellen Moore is showing black-and-white prints that reveal new ways of looking at the world. Her insight is a welcome new voice for this gallery.

Al DeForest's paintings, also a part of the special exhibit, are super-realistic views of the romantic Old South.

Mary Jane Cox, whose work is at Renaissance, is also represented here, with traditional scenes such as "Louisiana Country," a sensitive portrayal of an old country store, and in contrast, an ebullient, colorful composition of carousel horses.

The exhibition continues Oct. 20, and a selection of work by contemporary Louisiana artists is always a changing show in the rear room of the gallery. Works of Don Zeringue, Betty LaBauve and Geeta Dave are among the works on display.

The gallery is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday.