

usually strains toward in his canvases. And she has achieved it simply, directly, without the cornball effects that evoke the desolate B-movie futurism of a Mad Max. (Through June 1.)

IRVING PETLIN (Gallery 400, 400 S. Peoria St.): Two years ago, this former Chicago artist responded to Primo Levi's book, "The Periodic Table," with 21 pastels devoted to elements, such as iron or gold, found in nature.

Each pastel, often on colored paper, treats a single element plus various associations Levi brought to it not only as a chemist but as a Holocaust survivor. Given that members of Petlin's own family perished in Nazi death camps, his contributions are equally vivid, if also sometimes elusive and tending toward the abstract.

The great influence on all Petlin's pastels is Odilon Redon, whose presence one feels most clearly in "Carbon," through its delicate, disembodied sleeping head. The best of the works on show convey this mystical aura through landscapes blazing with otherworldly color.

Viewers familiar with Levi's book will most likely find several points of contrast and contact that deepen the series as a whole.

To one who has not read it, nearly all the pastels are beautiful but more than a few look a little thin as independent works of art. (Through May 18.)

TREVOR BELL (Lydon, 203 W. Superior St.): Bell is a veteran British artist whose monumental shaped canvases betray a lot of the sun-drenched atmosphere of Florida where he now lives and works.

Several of his pieces seem to take the form of a deep pot or vessel, at times balanced precariously on a fragment of an arc. Such balance is more an issue than the apparent representational form, though it could be argued that the artist's glowing color holds the eye most strongly of all.

This doubtless is true of the single canvases, which makes them look easier and more decorative than Bell probably intends. However, in his interlocking pieces, a feeling for unusual structure strongly asserts itself, firming up each piece and checking the chromatic sprawl.

"Rocker with Two Heavy Weights" is the best example of a murallike piece that achieves maximum tension from the artist's shaping. The other, smaller works do not succeed nearly as well. (Through May 26.)