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## Rare jewelry to be exhibited in El Paso

By David Burge

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EL PASO — El Pasoans will have an opportunity to see a traveling exhibit featuring 5,000 years of jewelry.

The exhibit of more than 150 pieces from the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore is scheduled to open at the El Paso Museum of Art on March 27



Courtesy of the Walters Art Museum

**This post-Byzantine pendant, left, from the 16th century and Greek gold bracelet from the first century B.C. are examples from a traveling show called "Bedazzled."**

with a VIP and sponsors' reception. The exhibit, called "Bedazzled," will open to the public the following day and be on display through July 25.

The art museum is the only place the exhibit will be shown west of the Mississippi River, said

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## Jewelry

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Michael Tomor, the art museum's director and the deputy director of the three city-run museums.

"It's what we call in our business a blockbuster," Tomor said. "It's definitely a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see this exhibit without having to travel. This is the most significant museum collection of jewelry in the country."

The exhibit has been previously shown at its home museum, at the Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Fla., and the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in Nashville, Tenn.

The city's Museums and Cultural Affairs Department is asking the City Council today to authorize it to spend \$137,000 to bring in the exhibit \$100,000 to lease the show for four months and another \$37,000 to have it shipped and installed.

General city tax dollars will not be used. Instead, the exhibit is being financed with donations, museum memberships, sponsorships and an entrance fee for the jewelry show, Tomor said.

"It's really the private community and donations that make things like this happen," Tomor said.

Susan Eisen Fine Jewelry & Watches is the main sponsor and wants to bring the exhibit to El Paso to celebrate 30 years of being in business, Tomor said.

A \$20,000 grant from the county government will be used to market the exhibit.

About 12 new exhibits each year — four of them traveling shows from other museums — are featured at the art museum to keep it fresh, Tomor said.

The jewelry exhibit will be timed to be here for the U.S. Bowling Congress' 2010 Women's Championship, which will be held at the convention center.

Bill Blaziek, general manager for the El Paso Convention & Visitors Bureau, said the tournament will bring about 42,000 bowlers and another 18,000 visitors to El Paso across 3½ months.

The "Bedazzled" exhibit will give bowlers and their guests something else to do while in El Paso and could attract other visitors from New Mexico, Arizona and elsewhere in Texas, Blaziek said.

This could give a boost to hotels, restaurants, nightclubs and retailers, he said.

The oldest piece of jewelry in the exhibit dates from 3,000 B.C. and is from Mesopotamia. The exhibit will also include pieces from Greece, Egypt and Macedonia and will include 20th-century work from Tiffany & Co. and Lalique.

The cost will be \$10 per person and \$5 for museum members. The museum only charges for special exhibits; the rest of the museum will remain free.

Museum hours will also be extended during the exhibit, but specifics have not been made final.

The art museum drew 71,162 people for the budget year that ended Aug. 31.

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