

Climbing that long ladder that leads to the Olympics

They'll come from as far away as Mississippi and as close as down the street to test their skills against competitors from seven states next week at the Plymouth Cultural Center's ice arena.

The week-long event is billed as the Great Lakes Eastern Figure Skating Championships and boasts a field of 320 young skaters who will vie for the chance to end up at the World Championships in Hartford, Conn., next March... and maybe, just maybe, some will make it to Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, in 1984 for the Winter Olympics.

Cultural Center staffers expect a crowd of more than 2,000 for the six-day event, which starts bright and early at 7 a.m. Monday.

Skaters will compete in men's and women's singles, pairs team and dance team in five different skill levels.

Tickets for the events are priced at \$4 per person for the Friday and Saturday evening shows. An all-events pass (four days) is \$20 and a special weekend pass is \$11.

Sponsoring Plymouth Figure Skating Club members expects a sellout for the Friday and Saturday finals and advise buying tickets in advance.

For ticket information, stop by the Plymouth Cultural Center, 525 Farmer, Plymouth, or call 455-6620.



Jim Bowser of Westland pairs up with Nancy Berghoff of West Bloomfield to compete in the Senior Dance competition next week.



Elizabeth Bondar of Rochester has earned her silver, now she's after the gold in the Juvenile Ladies.



Marnie MacArthur of Troy is no stranger to regional competition and hopes to finish high in the Junior Ladies division.



Sandie Dubas of Farmington Hills won the gold in 1978 as an intermediate. She's like to repeat this year in the Junior division.



Heidi Meissner of Farmington Hills has a couple of gold medals to her credit this year and would like to add one more in Junior Ladies.

Premier glassmaker keeps up rapid pace

By MARK S. TALABA

At first glance they might be wet and wind-swept leaves circling each other and shuddering in the breeze. Then, suddenly, they recall the rounded and glistening skin of water-worn stones. Another look and they seem to nestle together like sea shells or chanterelles, delicately toned and colored.

These forms, paradoxically combining impressions of mass and stability with trembling fragility — of absolute technical mastery with a spontaneous, even accidental character — are the work of Dale Chihuly, one of the world's premiere studio-glass artists.

An exhibition of his works in glass is on display at Habitat Galleries, 28235 Southfield, Lathrup Village through Nov. 23.

Chihuly himself is something of a paradox, having chosen the dual role of artist/educator, forever putting to rest the old saw "those who can, do — those who can't teach."

Born in 1941, he completed his undergraduate work at the University of Washington and went on to earn his master's degree from the University of Washington in 1967 and a master of fine arts from Rhode Island School of Design in 1968. He then worked in Europe on a Fulbright Fellowship and has since received National Endowment and Tiffany Foundation grants.

HE HAS WORKED as a designer for Steuben Glass and Vennini Fabbbrica in Venice, Italy. His work is in dozens of public collections around the world including the Corning Museum of Glass, the Metropolitan Museum of New York, the Smithsonian, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Glasmuseum Frauenau in Germany and the collection of the Australian Arts Council.

In the past year, he has mounted solo exhibitions at the Renswick Gallery, Museo de Arte Sao Paulo, the Lohmeyer Gallery in Vienna and the Haaretz Museum, Tel Aviv.

Since 1970 he has served as chairman of the glass department of the Rhode Island School of Design, which has launched the careers of several major figures in contemporary glass, Ben Tre, Shaffer, Wedberg and Glancy among others.

To while away the summers, he founded the Pilchuck Glass Center in 1971 where — to the amazement of the school's benefactor — Chihuly, some friends and 17 students built furnaces, tools and shelter and began blowing glass a mere two weeks after they arrived at this hillside center north of Seattle. Today, with Chihuly as faculty coordinator, Pilchuck is the only school in the United States solely devoted to glasswork.

EVEN FOR A MAN of Chihuly's great drive and imagination, achievement on this scale can only be possible through an integration of the artistic and educational functions. His belief is that students stand to gain most by working with established artists.

The faculty and teaching assistants at Pilchuck, for instance, are all working artists and are expected to produce new work during their stay.

"Whenever there was not someone making their work in the studio, we found that the quality of the studentwork plummeted," he said.

Chihuly introduces his students to every aspect of his career, working with them in teams of five to produce the forms — guiding and directing them, then completing each piece in a manner similar to the old world glassblowing shop concept. He is not content to prod students into making things. He also sees to it that they think and talk about what they are doing, so that the questing spirit of the artist is kindled.

Sue Krasnic, who with Margie Jervis, won a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship while at Rhode Island, confirms this.

"Dale (Chihuly) teaches what he is, how he handles his life. He shows you that you can learn whatever is needed to make your ideas."

To Chihuly, discipline, restraint, hard work, organization, and attention to detail are essential to the realization of esthetic ideals. Even the photographing of his work gets his utmost attention.

"I've found out that I actually learn more about my work from taking photographs than from any other single thing, with the exception of actually making it," he said. "I don't collect my work, so it's very important to me to arrange it and light it the way I actually see the glass. Now, in my mind, the work is not complete until it is photographed."

THE WORK CURRENTLY on display at Habitat Galleries is an extension of work first inspired in 1977 by a collection of Indian baskets in the museum in his hometown, Tacoma, Wash.

Sensing the tension in these crumbling containers, sagging under their own weight, he set about to capture this experience in glass. Since then, he has become less concerned about any resemblance in his work to the baskets and concentrates instead of creating relationships of form and color within groupings of pieces.

Chihuly's friends and associates quietly marvel at the breakneck pace he has set for himself and wonder if he will ever tire of it. In fact, he has wearied — not of the pace, but of a lifestyle that seems split between two coasts.

"FOR A WHILE, I seriously considered buying a home in Chicago because it was in the middle," he said with a smile.

Instead, he recently stepped down from his chairmanship at Rhode Island, retaining the title of permanent artist-in-residence. Though he will maintain his spacious studio in Providence, he is currently leaning toward his Pilchuck (Washington) residence as home base. There he can exercise his commitments to art and education in surroundings familiar to him since childhood, while his career and his importance in the art world continue to flourish. Mark S. Talaba is a local glass artist and writer. He is presently completing two commissions for church windows in this area.

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