



## Glass art has master's touch

By Natalie Halpern  
special writer

The current show at the Habitat Gallery showcases the striking and diverse works of glass artists Dale Chihuly and Robin Grebe.

Chihuly, a legend in the contemporary art glass movement with more than 20 years, is having his eighth exhibition at Habitat.

The gallery, while introducing his latest series, the Macchia Phassanta, is usually showing a mini-retrospective of Chihuly's work. He is a master at capturing the sensual, tactile, brilliant color qualities of blown glass.

**FBCHIHULY WORKS** in a series, approaching the same subject in many different ways. The Indian Blanket Cylinder series, beginning around 1974, was inspired by Navajo Indian weavings.

In these, he uses individual glass threads calligraphically to express gesture, motion and direction, contrasting with the neutral and stable cylinder that serves as a base.

The Filibuster Basket Series (1977) was inspired by visions of Indian baskets piled inside each other, dented and misshapen. The series is marked by the use of subtle color and simple, swelling forms.

When he started grouping them together, five or six smaller ones within a larger form, the work developed an interactive aspect, permitting the viewer to assemble and reassemble the individual elements as desired.

**CHIHULY BEGAN** using ribbed molds to give his forms more strength and enable him to work with thinner glass. The work is reminiscent of sea life — wonderful new shapes with a delicate quality, worked with subtle colors.

The Sea Form Series (1980) is on-going, and it, too, consists of several diaphanous elements within a larger one that the viewer may reassemble. With hefty price tags such as these, the viewer is well advised to have a deft touch!

The Macchia (meaning "speckled" in Italian) series, described as "midway between a soap bubble and a sculpture," focuses on vivid color where the outside color is dramatically contrasted to the in-

side. A bright edging complements the inside color. The result is daring, delicate and sensual.

The Persian Series (1987) is marked by color striation and more radical forms — squiggly, with knobs, greater transparency, more intense colors, spiny edges.

The most striking piece in this show is one of the Persian Series, called "Untitled." It is an enormous, floating wall sculpture of brilliant, swirling, elliptical forms. Lighting and installation are included in the \$75,000 price tag. Viewers are very taken with this piece, craning to figure out the lighting sources.

The Venetian Series (1988) shows heavier forms and strong baroque Italian influence, with rope-like squiggles cascading down the sculptures.

**ROBIN GREBE**, in contrast to Chihuly, is an East Coast artist in her 30s, having her first exhibition at Habitat. Her imagery of human form invites speculation, but gives enough clues for interpretation.

Grebe uses a pate de verre (glass paste) technique in which she makes a mold, paints the inside of the mold with the paste, then fires it. The texture of the finished piece results from texture applied to the interior before casting.

She focuses on themes of decline, change and regeneration. We see a recurring Botticelli influence, with hands covering part of the body.

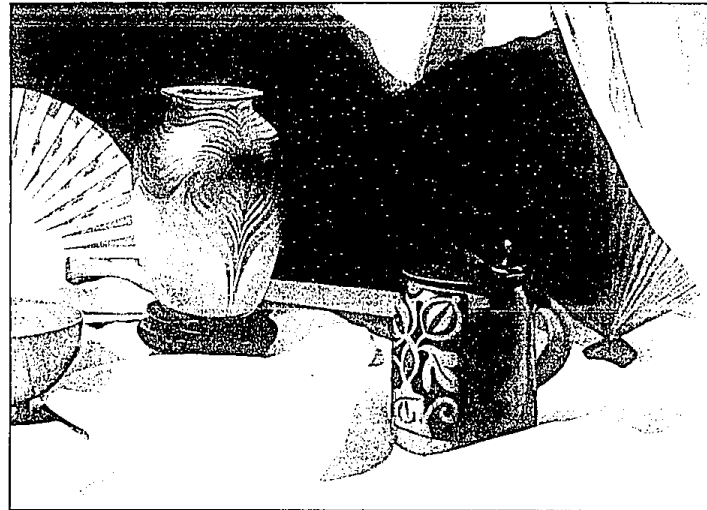
Grebe's work is marked by the use of other materials — wood, paper, metal — in conjunction with glass. Most works consist of several elements, including those of other materials. While her sculpture lacks the sensual appeal of Chihuly's, she uses imagery that arouses tactile curiosity.

**HABITAT GALLERY** owner Ferdinand Hampson realized a long-time fantasy in this exhibition — showcasing a large art glass sculpture floating on water.

A Chihuly work in the Macchia Series, displayed in the bubbling, black marble fountain of the Triarra lobby, appears to be suspended in air. Grab your hat and go see it before the show ends Saturday, 3225 Northwest, Farmington Hills.



Since the mid-1970s, Dale Chihuly has been a leading figure in using glass as an art form. He likes to develop shapes within shapes with an organic reference point.



A humble egg gets as much attention from Karen Wydra as sensual folds of material, fans and the delicate designs on fine art pottery.

## Two artists interpret beauty

### Maryann Harmon fills landscapes with energy

By Anahid Lisa Derbabian  
staff writer

"I used to paint almost completely abstract, and then I blossomed into landscape," said Maryann Harmon, a Virginia-based artist whose works are on exhibit at the Rubiner Gallery in West Bloomfield until March 30.

Harmon lives surrounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains, except for summers when she visits Vermont.

Her painting of a Vermont fantasy forest reveals a clearing. In it sits a solitary, auburn picnic table — thus the name of the painting, "Picnic Table."

Breathtaking trees of all sorts are done in a palette of greens, yellow, reds and whites. So much is happening within those lofty, high-reaching, colorful trees, yet the picnic table, so simple and unadorned, sits neatly at the clearing in the modest, green grass.

**IN TERMS** of expansion and growth in her artistry, "It just sort of evolves, and I find out about it afterwards," Harmon said.

Each painting gives her ideas for future works, she said.

"McMaster Hill" is a treasure of

colorful hills, trees and fields laying like jewels before the eye. Turquoise and beige are the main colors, with touches of blue, yellow and red. Harmon's approach is somewhat abstract, in that shapes aren't exact or precise, but more free-flowing.

**WHEN** a painting isn't coming out as she wants, she said she may leave it for a while or possibly even toss it out.

"Sometimes you have to be harsh on your own work to cull out the bad."

She describes her style as "economy of line and stroke." It is neither simplistic nor heavily detailed.

"Airport Hill," on initial observation, is a serene landscape of Virginia. Further inspection reveals farmhouses vaguely taking shape in a color-filled environment.

Harmon separates each object from the others with cushioning white space in between. Each object is suddenly a separate entity and the landscape no longer feels fluid and serene. It is energy filled.

To view life from Maryann Harmon's eyes is to appreciate the wonder and brilliance of nature.

### Karen Wydra depicts what others overlook

By Anahid Lisa Derbabian  
special writer

Her dress, a black, open crochet weave, reveals more than a "proper girl" would wear. Black fringe exposes and caresses her crossed, muscular thighs.

This painting by Karen Branch Wydra is called "The Crocheted Dress." It is one example of Wydra's diverse group of works, on exhibit until March 30 at the Rubiner Gallery in West Bloomfield.

"I enjoy exploring the effects of how light is absorbed and reflected on surfaces and how objects are thus transformed," Wydra said.

**IN "Lemons and Plums,"** huge, bright, larger-than-life lemons nearly jump off the canvas. The tart, shocking yellow lemons cause one to wince at one moment and impulsively think of a tall, cool glass of lemonade in the next.

Plump purple plums look so ripe and tempting, yet they take a back seat to their yellow companions. A mirror beneath these fruits captures their colors and shapes along with a soft, white cloth backdrop and all its folds.

"I paint large scale to show the wonderful little things that I could

overlook. We rush around and don't have the time to notice everything," Wydra said.

**SHE OFTEN** imagines that she is the object of her painting, and is thus better able to capture its true essence, she said.

"Yellow Egg Cup" shows a lonely, yellow egg cup, chipped in many places. The several chips reveal whiteness underneath, which contrast the golden cup.

One feels tempted to utter, "That's all right. You're still beautiful and worth appreciating, although you've worn with time."

A bright red cloth illuminated by light's presence and a long, tall, purple bottle and wooden folding table complete this painting's engaging scene.

**IN 1987** and 1989, Wydra's oil paintings won first prize in the Birmingham Community House/Carson Business Interiors "Our Town" exhibit, in the still-life category.

The Birmingham resident is busy working on in-state and national exhibitions. She is an instructor at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association and occasionally does courtroom drawings for CBS-TV.

## Preludes West welcomes cellist

Marcy Chanteaux, assistant principal cello, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, will be the guest for the Detroit Symphony Preludes on Friday at Temple Beth El of Bloomfield Township.

Luncheon will be served at 12:30 p.m. and the concert will begin at 1:30 p.m.

Luncheon/program tickets are \$15, program only tickets are \$5. For information and reservations, call 644-7351 or 851-2132.

This is the second of three programs presented by the Volunteer Council of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra Hall (DSOH). The third will be the DSO Woodwind Quintet on Friday, April 20.

**CHANTEAUX** WAS born into a musical family in South Dakota. She began piano studies at 4 and added the cello six years later. She won first prize in a national string competition at 16 and continued her musical education at Cleveland Institute of Music.



Marcy Chanteaux

Mischa Kottler as pianist with the DSO. She joined the cello section four years later. She performs on a 1698 Matteo Goffrilli cello.

Chanteaux recorded George Crumb's unaccompanied sonata, to be released in the coming months.

She was cellist with the National Symphony in Washington, then moved here when she succeeded



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

## Animal art on display

Dennis Anderson expresses his love of animals and the outdoors as few others can — in bronze on paper and canvas. His sculptures and paintings at Golden Pond, 739 N. Woodward, Birmingham, through April 14 are clear, exciting proof of why he is often ranked among the best wildlife artists in the world. His work has been exhibited in natural history museums and wildlife art exhibitions throughout the country and his art has been published in Saturday Evening Post, Reader's Digest and many other publications. He's a native of Seattle, Wash.

Anderson's work is a blend of sculpture and painting. He uses a variety of materials, including bronze, paper, and canvas, to create lifelike depictions of animals in their natural habitats. His work is characterized by its clarity and emotional depth, capturing the essence of the animals he depicts.