

Glass from page C1

confident." Several trends are striking in this year's Invitational, according to Hampson.

"There's an interest in traditional forms like vessels, there's an exploration in mixed-materials and in increasing scale," he said.

Among the 65 artists from 17 countries in the Invitational are three local artists: Herb Babcock, chair of the glass department at the Center for Creative Studies, Cristen Veilky, currently working a master's of fine art at Cranbrook Academy of

Art, and Albert Young, who also teaches at CCS.

**Opening up**

While glass has been around since the Phoenician traders in 2500 B.C. it has been stigmatized in the 20th century as a "pretty craft," said Hampson.

Apparently, critics wondered: Could a material most commonly used for utility purposes also have aesthetic value?

The recent history of glass artistry isn't too different from that of the one-time estrangement of photography from the fine arts.

It wasn't until Ansel Adams and others proved that "art" was as much about vision as technical proficiency that photography became widely recognized as a fine art.

Today, photography is arguably the most popular art form. Could glass be far behind?

In the early 1980s, said Hampson, the future of glass became crystal clear. (Who could resist that pun?)

Finally, albeit reluctantly, critics and art historians began to recognize what collectors had

known for 30 years: glass sculpture not only complements natural light, but is an ideal medium in the age of optical illusions.

"Twenty-six years ago, there were only a few invitational glass exhibits. And no one had put together an annual show until Hampson.

Today, there are signs that Hampson's ambassadorship has indeed opened the world to glass artistry.

In the last few years alone, there have been major glass exhibits at museums in Cleveland, Boston, Indianapolis and Milwaukee.

Other positive signs abound. Hampson is encouraged that high-profile artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns have explored glass in their work.

Meanwhile, Hampson has continued to document the year-to-year developments in glass artistry while spreading the word, setting up exhibits in western Europe, Japan and Taiwan.

"I figure we have five more years of opening the world to glass," said Hampson.

After that, he said, he expects programs in glass studies and regular venues for glass artists to be included at public museums, and in the fine art galleries around the world.

"I feel like I've fought the good fight," he said.

For the opening on Saturday, Hampson expected about 2,000 visitors. During the Invitational exhibit, which runs through May 3, he figures nearly five times that many will stop lightly through Habatat Galleries.

Who knows? Maybe they'll have to call out the guards.

Landscape from page C1

scene north along Woodward doesn't interest him.

"Everything is sanitized in suburbia," he said. "I'm looking for diversity, not homogeneity."

Ten years ago, Magsig, joined a friend on a photo shoot of historic buildings in Detroit.

At the time, Magsig was painting abstraction. "I was looking for something more personal," he said.

He found an emotional kinship with the vacant downtown Hudson's building, the Michigan Train Station, the River Rouge Plant, the post-9/11 War built homes in Bru'a Park, and the General Electric plant on Jefferson Avenue.

Then, he studied the shadowy buildings in the area of Grand Circus Park, Gratiot, Fort and Michigan Avenue, many of which were built at the turn of the century.

The epiphanies at that initial photo shoot provided the material for the 10-plus years of painting. And with recent trips to

New York City, Magsig has expanded his architectural references to include buildings and street scenes in the Big Apple.

Working from a photographic reference and an intricate grid system, Magsig "roughs in" the composition by drawing with a paint brush. Alternatively, he examines a color slide of the subject through an eyepiece, then lays in the color, working from dark to light.

Although many of his paintings depict the fine details of a building, it only takes Magsig a few days to complete finish a canvas. But efficiency shouldn't be mistaken for proficiency, he said.

"It's not how fast you paint but how often."

And Magsig seldom misses a chance to paint.

**Rootedness**

Growing up on a farm in northern Ohio, Magsig recalled that rising early and working until sundown under the great

rural skies cultivated a "sense of things."

Including dedication to work. "Growing up on a farm, you didn't stop working until all the work was done. Whenever that was," he said.

While some of his friends have often talked about "becoming an artist" after they retire, Magsig is determined to recommit himself to his art each day.

He keeps a visual journal, and doesn't expect to wait for inspiration. Magsig's ambition requires a day-to-day commitment.

"Being an artist is about the journey," he said. "It's not something that you try to find time for."

Somewhat reluctant to describe his work, Magsig readily recites a quote from one of his favorite contemporary painters, Chuck Close: "Inspiration is for amateurs. I just work every day."

That kind of work ethic can have a stabilizing effect.

Glass transforms viewers into lovers

Lou Ann Shelton compares the excitement glass art generates in viewers to the feeling "you get when you're in love."

On Saturday, April 11, Shelton will speak about the dazzling material in conjunction with an exhibition at River's Edge Gallery II in Canton.

In celebration of Michigan Glass Month - April, River's Edge Gallery II in Wyandotte, and the Canton gallery, are hosting educational and historical exhibits of glass works by nine Michigan artists. They will also feature vintage pieces from the collections of Jerome and Carolyn Ash of Detroit, and Clifford and Lou Ann Shelton of Allen Park.

Shelton curated both shows, and will lecture on the history of glass, contemporary artists, and collecting. Shelton began to assemble her glass collection during an internship at Habatat Galleries.

Shelton was studying for a bachelor's degree in art history at the University of Michigan-Dearborn at the time. She learned about techniques and history of glass from Habatat Galleries president Ferdinand Hampson during her internship at the all-glass gallery in Pontiac, formerly in Farmington Hills. Hampson is a wealth of knowledge about the medium, and has written several books on the contemporary studio glass movement.

During the lecture, Shelton will show examples of different hot and cold glass making processes including fusing and slumping. Her own collection spotlights a fabric store by Emily Beck and the lamp-worked paperweights of Paul Stankard.

"It's almost like a love affair," said Shelton. "Sometimes there's a depth, you can go into and almost live there."

The hard-to-resist medium of glass mesmerizes viewers and artists alike with its rainbow of reflections. The sparkle and glitter emanating from the surface hasn't been matched by paint or clay since artists discovered its alluring elements in a weeklong workshop held behind the Toledo Museum of Art more than 30 years ago.

Harvey Littleton, who led the sessions, built a furnace which enabled individual artists to create work. Until that time, glass was produced by teams of craftsmen in factories such as Steuben (later purchased by Corning) and Tiffany.

Creativity unleashed

The discovery that artists could work alone unleashed a torrent of creativity.

**Class Glass**

What: An exhibition of blown and stained glass by nine Michigan artists. Reception featuring a talk on the collectability and techniques of glass by art historian Lou Ann Shelton, 6-7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 11.

When: Exhibit continues through Friday, May 1, with a special display of historical glass Saturday-Thursday, April 11-16. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday and Tuesday; until 7 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday; until 8 p.m. Friday, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday.

Where: River's Edge Gallery II, 44934 Ford Road, (between Shelton and Canton Center Road, behind Murray's Auto Supply), Canton, (734) 254-8880.

"Class Glass" fills the galleries with vessels, bowls, beads, and stained glass by John Fitzpatrick, Gregory Johnston, Bruce Boatman, Theresa Pierzchala, Tim Kurant, Dr. Robert Schweyen, Karmig Dabianian, and Karen and Tim Carney.

**Featured artist**

John Fitzpatrick shows vessels and sculpted bowls created in his Touch of Light Studio & Gallery of Handblown Glass in Ferndale. Fitzpatrick studied glass making at Center for Creative Studies, Orrefors Glasskoln and Koeta Boda Glassworks in Sweden. His experience with the medium includes working as a glass blower and designer in Denmark in the early 1980s.

"I love glass," said Fitzpatrick. "It's a very immediate kind of material because it's 2,000 degrees F. when it's blown. Unlike painting, you can't go back to blown glass and rework it."

Conversations from page C1

another several hours to fill in the details.

"I don't know where it comes from," she said of the inspiration and energy for her art.

But she knows where it leads. Often, she tells her students at the beginning of class, "Close

your eyes, we're going on a trip." A paintbrush, she teaches, is like a passport.

Tomkow's current work, a path winding through a row of sunlit trees, is more mystical than her previous landscapes.

She holds up the work-in-

progress, and wonders aloud about what the painting represents.

"I want to show people that there's always a path that leads away from a place that's cold and lonely."

"There's always hope," And room for salvation.

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