

Glass from page C1

Saturday, April 8, Ritter will be at the opening of the 28th International Glass Invitational at Habitat Galleries in Pontiac. That show will feature work from his newest series.

"Glass is such a seductive material," said Ritter in an interview from his studio in North Carolina. "Glass is a liquid and flowing. I like that. I think of it as doing a painting."

While Ritter developed an interest in glass while teaching metal-working and advertising design at Center for Creative Studies, it was the three years he spent founding the glass blowing program at the Bloomfield Art Association (now the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center) that allowed him to learn the finer points of creating works from hot glass. At the time, he was living in Birmingham and teaching metal-smithing at the BBAC, where he served as artist-in-residence from 1969-1972.

Reflections

"Back then there were only a handful of us working in glass," said Ritter. "Society of Arts & Crafts was the first school in Michigan to start a program. We were the second. Initially, I wanted to combine glass with jewelry."

Before long Ritter was not only making his own glass and color (something he learned at Society of Arts & Crafts) but developing the style for what has become known. Murrini sprinkled throughout the interior signify

it's a Ritter. Unlike bronzes viewed from the exterior, Ritter sculpture lures viewers into the heart of the piece with imagery.

Ritter began layering crystal to incorporate murrini in sculpture after the vessel form left him cold. A time-consuming process, murrini is formed by stacking colored glass canes into a distinctive pattern inside a ceramic ring which is later sliced like a cookie. The family portrait of his mother, father and sister on a 1976 vessel took dozens of hours to complete.

"What attracted me to the murrini is that I can do these images that I can't do any other way," said Ritter. "The technique for murrini or cane imagery goes back to Egyptian times."

Murrini, popularized by 19th

century Italian glass artists such as Franchini, came naturally to Ritter since he began his career as a graphic illustrator for a Detroit advertising firm. Those six years and several painting and sculpture classes at CCS prepared Ritter to turn hot glass into fine art. Eventually, Ritter would leave Michigan to take a class with Mark Peiser at Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina. After studying with Peiser and Richard Marquis, Ritter became artist-in-residence for the next seven years. He's continued to teach glass at Penland since 1972.

"Since I liked pattern and line, I lent itself to that medium," said Ritter. "Initially I was decorating the exteriors with murrini and felt like I was putting cookies on the side of vessels. While

the pieces take one day, the imagery takes over a month. Sometimes they're very personal images. Others are caricatures."

New works

Among the newest works are the Mandala bowl form. Ritter suspends lyrical strokes of green, yellow, white and red within the blown vessel. A 1983 pocket vessel with simple interior of swirling brown canes is engulfed in translucent topaz glass. A black and white sandblasted vessel lent by Sosin is dramatic. Etching and electroforming copper onto the surfaces of some of the newer pieces adds another dimension to the work, which curator Marks has followed for some time. Marks was responsible for curating a 20-year retro-

spective of the glass artist's work 10 years ago at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. He's not surprised that Center for Creative Studies is bestowing an honorary doctoral degree upon the artist in May.

"Ritter creates entire worlds within glass," said Marks. "His work looks like a painting. I like the painterliness and the color. But what fascinates me is how were these done - how did he do that?"

Don Miller agrees the process is fascinating. A headmaking instructor at U-M Dearborn, Miller took a workshop with Ritter at Penland.

"It's an interesting process to watch," said Miller, "Livonia resident. 'Richard's work is technically intricate.'"

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wrong," said Ehrstine. "Watercolor is very difficult, but I really enjoy it. I like belonging to the club because I feel it will help me grow as an artist. They show a video or have a guest speaker at every meeting."

Ehrstine and Patterson barely knew each other since Patterson just joined the club in December. What will change, said Ehrstine. Caparaderie is one of the other reasons she remains a member

of the club.

Patterson, a West Bloomfield resident, began joining organizations like the Farmington Artists Club back in the 1980s. He'll show landscapes and florals including "Morning Breeze," a spring-like still life in front of a window opening onto a winter scene, in the Livonia Artists Club show.

"I wanted to get into more shows and a lot of Farmington

Livonia Artists Club

What: 39th annual Art Exhibit & Sale
When: 1-5 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, April 8-9
Where: Livonia Civic Center Library Atrium, 32777 Five Mile Road, east of Farmington Road.

lished in Chris Unwin's "Artistic Touch 3."

Learning from each other

"It broadens one's artistic dimensions when you get a group of artists together," said Patterson. "The Livonia Artists Club is very informal. You learn from each other. It pushes you to

club since 1984, Weber will show semi-abstract and realistic works.

"The Livonia Artists Club is the least formal in organization and rules," said Weber, a Livonia resident who serves on the board of the Visual Arts Association of Livonia and the Artists Society of Dearborn. Weber is also member of the Seabrook Club.

Founded in 1960 by Olive Herington, the Livonia Artists Club meets at 7:30 p.m. on the third Monday of the month in Room C of the Livonia Civic Center Library. For more information, call president Marge Masek at (734) 464-0772.

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ART BEAT

Art Beat features various happenings in the suburban art world. Send Wayne Couba arts news leads to Art Beat Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or fax them to (313) 591-7279.

CALL FOR PERFORMERS

The Southeast Michigan region committee of VSA Arts (formerly known as Very Special Arts) is looking for children and adult performers with physical and mental challenges to take part in their festival Friday-Saturday, May 5-6 at Wonderland Mall in Livonia.

Special needs school/community groups and solo acts from the metro Detroit area will display their dance, vocal and instrumental music achievements at the "Celebrate Arts-Ability" visual and performing arts festival. In the last festival, more than 170 adults and children sang, danced and played hand chimes during the two days.

For more information or an application, call Connie Lot at Far Conservatory (248) 646-3347.

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Up to \$500 is available to assist a person with a disability who wants to further their creative talent in the area of the visual, performing or literary arts. The Southeast Michigan region committee of VSA Arts (formerly known as Very Special Arts) is awarding their annual

Jack Olds Scholarship to an artist ages 13 and up, including seniors living in Wayne, Oakland, Washtenaw, Monroe, Macomb, Livingston, Lenawee or Jackson County.

Deadline for application is Sunday, April 16. The scholarship must be used for independent work and not a student project. Last year's winner, Janis Stanton, created a series of 10 watercolors spotlighting Michigan sights.

Deadline for application is Sunday, April 16. For more information and an application, call Cindy Babcock (248) 643-9168.

COMPUTER GRAPHICS SEMINAR

Career opportunities in computer graphics continue to expand and offer exciting challenges in a variety of fields. If you have a dual interest in computer technology and art or design, attend a Real World Computer Graphics Seminar 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, April 8 in the Forum Building at Schoolcraft College, 18600 Haggerty, between Six and Seven Mile, Livonia.

Admission is free. The seminar features media specialists who will discuss web design, page layout, multimedia and computer graphics. Attendees are invited to bring their portfolios for review. Schoolcraft computer graphics students will demonstrate multimedia, animation and web presentations. Student computer and traditional art will be on display in the Braden Library 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, April 8-9. For information call, (734) 462-4580, ext. 8013.

YOUTH PRODUCTION

Tinderbox Productions presents "A Little Princess" 2 p.m. Sunday, April 9 and 10, and 7 p.m. Friday-Saturday, April 14-15 at the Masonic Temple Cathedral Theatre, 600 Temple, Detroit (park in back of facility, use rear entrance).

Tickets are \$7-\$12, and available by calling (313) 635-8962.

IRISH MUSIC

Everything about Chulrun is Irish including their music. The trio, named after the favorite wolfhound of an ancient Irish hero, play traditional music 6 p.m. Sunday, April 9 at Conor O'Neill's Irish Pub & Restaurant, 318 S. Main, Ann Arbor. Call (734) 665-2908 for information.



Ugliest Bathroom Contest

Sponsored By 760 WJR, The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Building Industry Association and Mathison Supply of Livonia, Garden City and Canton.

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