Glass retrospective offers clear look

By Linda Ann Chomin
special writer

A leading showcase for contemporary studio glass art, Habatat Galleries is exhibiting a retrospective of works spanning more than three decades by legendary Czechoslovakian glass artists Stanislav Libensky and Jaroslava Brychtova through Oct. 26.

"The Libenskys pre-date the American glass movement," said Ferdinand Hampson, gallery founder. "It was my honor to have the first solo exhibition of the Libenskys in 1984."

Hampson quite possibly is exhibiting the last as well. Glass made the Libensky way requires hard physical labor. Stanislav and Jaroslava are 70 and 67 years of age, respectively.

The Libenskys began a lifetime of collaborative glassmaking in 1955. In the late 1940s, Jaroslava worked with hot glass, casting, molding and experimenting with various techniques. Her father, glass master Jaroslav Brychta, was known for his lamp work and innovative techniques in casting glass sculpture.

Stanislav, a painter, instructed students for 20 years, eventually becoming headmaster of the secondary school of glassmaking in Zelzny Brod.

THE LIBENSKYS' sculpture communicates a love for glass and the light with which it plays.

"Light makes the glass. Without light is not living, is not alive," Jaroslava said in an interview at the gallery. "When you see it (glass), it needs light. We always work with light and how it works in and out."

The Libenskys initially began making glass in color. The pieces cast in ruby, turquoise and amber featured hollow interiors.

In 1958-59, they used internal modeling techniques to create "Hlava I (The Kiss)," an elongated head similar to work by Modigliani and Cubist painters. When viewed from either side, one face is seen. When viewed head on, two faces are seen meeting for the kiss.

"'Hlava I' pre-dates the American glass movement by three years," Hampson said. "It's rather astonishing the work they were doing back then. It wasn't until 1979 that Americans started to do more than work on a gob on the end of a blow pipe."

Although they began creating in color, the Libenskys worked many years in crystal. They created geometric forms, using a cube-shaped crystal bar to separate hemispheres.

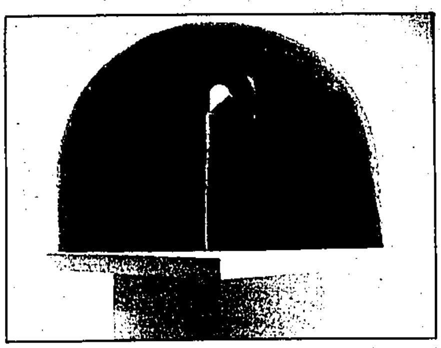
"I was sculptor, he is painter. We made crystal. It was very interesting," Jaroslava said. "After many years of crystal, you want something warm, warm in color. We used to work much with color. We like color. 1984, we came once more to color. Through sculpture, we find color."

"DESERTED THRONE" makes a stark political statement. Its sharp black lines are harsh, the glass, cold.

"The 'Deserted Throne' is when the government in Czechoslovakia was going through turmoil," Hampson said.

In the sculpture "Flowering Throne" created in 1991, there is great warmth in the reddish-brown glass crowned with abstract flowers.

In "Bird II," the sweeping line of a bird's wings adds grace and nobility to the ice-blue cast sculpture.



Architectural in nature, "Arcus I" is a 1991 cast glass sculpture by Libensky and Brychtova.

Miniaturists set big show

A three-day exhibit of the work of area miniaturists will be displayed Friday-Sunday, Oct. 25-27, at Miniature Makers' Workshop, 4515 N. Woodward, Royal Oak.

Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and Saturday and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday.

The exhibit is sponsored by the Wee Bees, a group of Detroit area miniaturists. Admission is $2. For information, call 549-0633.

Miniature Makers' Workshop is hosting the exhibit to mark National Dollhouse and Miniature Month through October.

MORE THAN 50 miniature makers are expected to display their handcrafted, one-of-a-kind items at the exhibit, said Wee Bees president Iris Longo of Roseville.

Wee Bee members planning to participate include Evelyn Perrone of West Bloomfield, Mary Elerman and Joyce Bochemuehl of Bloomfield Hills, Jean Clark, Yvonne Pessel and Betsie Robinson of Birmingham and Betty Gleeson of Farmington Hills.

Wee Bee members have collaborated to make a domed miniature garden scene, suitable as a table centerpiece. Now on display at Miniature Makers' Workshop, it will be raffled off Sunday.

The purpose is to finance Wee Bees projects, such as donations of educational miniature materials to libraries, and maintenance of the Wee Bees dollhouse, shown by libraries.

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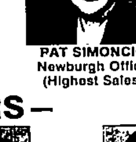

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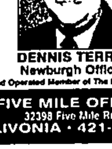

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