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separations. This year I wanted to explore how cultural differences affected the artists' work," said Ferdinand Hampton, president of Habitat Galleries in Michigan and Florida.

"I'm most excited about Japan. It's the first time many of the Japanese artists have exhibits in the U.S."

As part of the international, a major installation featuring legendary glass artist Dale Chihuly commemorates the May 7 opening of his show at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Other highlights in this year's show include a retrospective dating back to the late 1960s of glass by some of the early artists like Erwin Blach, and a recap of the first international exposition in Latin America, "Cristalmanica: Contemporary Art in Glass," with 30 of the 134 original works displayed at the Marco and Rufino Tamayo Museums in Mexico.

"I'm excited about the new artists this year. We're introducing two Japanese artists, a husband and wife team. They have a couple of magnificent pieces," said Kathy Scheib of Bloomfield Hills, assistant gallery director.

Japanese artists

Shinichi and Kimiaki Higuchi of Saltamas, Japan, work in pâte de verre or glass paste where the glass is ground into powder, melt-

ed and then poured into a mold. Inspired by flowers and vegetables she grows in her garden, Kimiaki's vessels emulate their living beauty and fragility, capturing it eternally in glass.

"The garden of my atelier is full of plants of all seasons where insects and birds often visit," Kimiaki said. "I pick the flowers and vegetables in their prime and with my hands, they turn to glass alive."

Although all Kimiaki's pieces share this beauty, not to be missed is the sensual figural sculpture, "The Beautiful With Thorns."

Shinichi imbues opaque glass boxes with nature themes. Bees and other insects as well as moths color this work, filled with energy and vitality.

Global view

Also new to the show this year, glass artist Nancy Mee of Seattle uses classical figures like Daphne, Aphrodite and Venus de Milo in her steel, photo sandblasted glass and wood sculpture, achieving a delicate balance in works of art that span the ages. Laura Donefer of Canada incorporates bones, raffia, sandstone, fiber, dried sea plants and crab claw into her pots. The stone used in the vibrant "Cree Stone Witch Pot" comes from Manitoba's Cree Village.

While Donefer's pots revel in native beauty, Sibylle Peretti's mixed media work expresses brutality and violence, at once prodding and disturbing the viewer. The German artist incorporates found materials, predominantly glass and jagged metal, into the assaulting imagery.

"Glass has proven to be an extraordinary material to present a variety of new ideas and concepts. I see it as a conduit for the artists," Hampton said. "Every year there's tremendous pieces that come in. The enthusiasm becomes the theme. This year, Kreg Kallengerger will introduce a new series, a long boat form, and Jon Kuhn will introduce several new forms."

Herb Babcock offers two new sculptures, "Pillared Series No. 20," and "The Vortex," which explore the concept of the black hole. Babcock, working in cast glass, steel and stone, deals with the precarious balance of life.

"It's all about precarious balance, the recession in the U.S., the Soviet bloc falling, my wife and I becoming parents for the first time," said Babcock, chairman of the glass and crafts departments at Center for Creative Studies in Detroit.

"They've become more precarious."

Magnificent medium

For the last 21 years, Babcock

has documented the international for use by his glass students at CCS. It shows the progression of the contemporary studio glass movement.

"Habitat's international tracks the evolution of many artists from the inception in the 1960s to the mastering of techniques in the 1970s, to what are you going to say with the material and back to the issues as an artist in the 1980s," Babcock said.

"The glass movement's still growing. In the 1970s, artists went to Europe to learn new techniques. In the 1980s, Europeans were coming to the States. If any new techniques were learned, they were shared. It's interesting that the movement has so many people getting together."

Since Harvey Littleton first used glass as a canvas in a series of workshops he'd at the Toledo Museum of Art in 1962, glass has progressed from craft to fine art.

Glass, the great seductress, temptress in disguise, begs you to touch her as she lures you deep inside with flashing prisms of light, which run the spectrum of the rainbow. Is it any wonder that more than 30 years ago contemporary artists fell in love with this cool beauty?

Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday (April only). Closed Easter Sunday (April 11). Call 651-9990.

Artist from page 1D

gesture. It's as simple as that."

Megdall's early interest was in ceramics. A teacher in high school encouraged him to go to Pewabic Pottery and the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association. When he went to the BBA in Birmingham for classes, a glass studio was being built there.

"When they got it going I directly went right into it. You get hooked on it."

That was 14 years ago. Megdall took glass classes at the BBA and taught there for three years. He has been making glass full time for 1 1/2 years.

Hot subject

Megdall can make a small bowl in about 15 minutes and a large bowl in about 1 1/4 hours, but the time seems more like eight hours to him because of the intense heat. The artist works with temperatures as high as 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit and so wears padding on one arm to protect it.

His instruments include a long rod or pipe called a punty. Megdall first prewarms one end of the pipe in the furnace so a blob of syrupy glass from the furnace will adhere to it. Holding the opposite end of the pipe, he then dips the blob into pans of colored glass bits that resemble large sprinkles used in bakery decoration.

"I'm working with glass like an artist with work with a palette. The only difference is I can't touch it."

Keeping the punty spinning, Megdall shapes the glass with wood blocks. At one point he blows a quick blast of air into the other end. This air is cold, and so expands and pushes the hot glass out.

"I just let nature do its thing." Using an instrument that resembles a large tweezer, Megdall slightly pinches the glass near the pipe to give it a neck. He dips the glass into and out of a thick molten bath.

"Now the piece becomes very unstable. It becomes harder and harder to manage. This is where experience comes in. You've got to know when to heat it and when to cool it."

Shaping up

Megdall smoothly and steadily



JERRY ZOLNYSKY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Glass work: Glass blower Stan Megdall displays one of his fluted bowls.

continues the process in which a glass bud blossoms into a bowl. He raises the pipe and blows into one end as if it were a herald's trumpet. He reheats the glowing mass. He holds a cloth-like material against the glass.

Megdall keeps the punty almost constantly spinning. Timing is crucial. If the pipe stops moving for too long, the glass will drop off. If the glass gets too cold, the finished piece will crack.

"I could make it a uniform vessel but that's no fun."

The bowl is taking on a shape and definition, much like a ceramic work forms on a potter's wheel.

"Now the fun part. It comes alive at this point."

Megdall points the punty down and pulls it sharply a few times as he turns it. The glass on the end slowly starts to fold like a weary butterfly's wings, but the jerking keeps the bowl open and gives it a ruffled edge.

Nearing the finish, Megdall taps the pipe and breaks off the bowl. This will go into an annealing oven for a gradual cooling process so it won't explode or shatter.

Megdall gives each work individuality. His original creations include three-legged floral vases, fluted bowls, and vases that rest in a stand made of welded pieces of wrought iron. Some vessels look as though they are wrapped in seafans.

"Every piece is very individual... Even making 100 (pieces in a series) I'll change each one."

Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Saturday, noon to 4 p.m. Sunday and by appointment. Call 349-4131.

Design class set

Interiors By Design of Rochester will conduct a three-week class on updating the home with the latest colors, styles and design ideas Wednesday, April 21 and 28 and May 5.

The class will take place at the Rochester Community House, 816 Ludlow. The fee is \$40. To register, call 651-0622.

Megdall smoothly and steadily

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