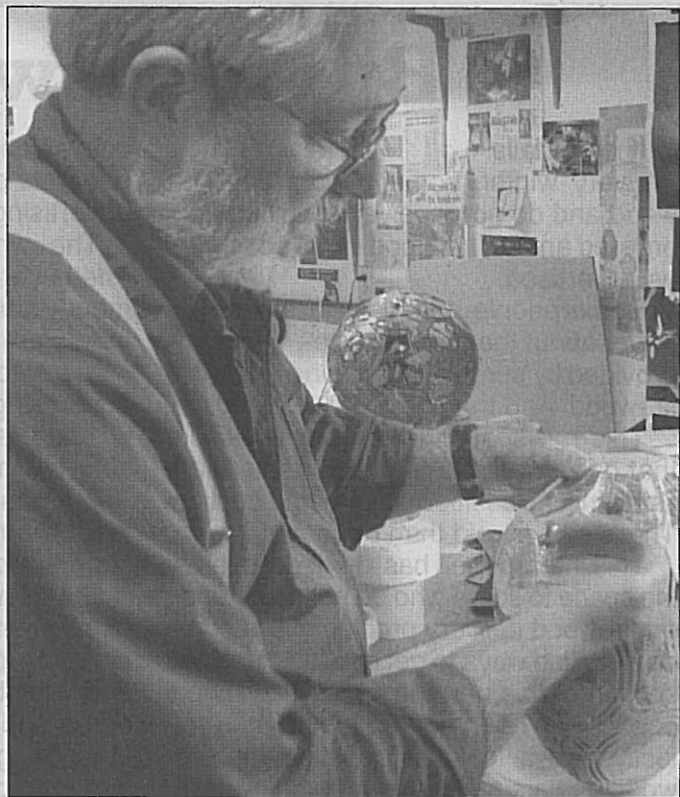


# Getting to Know . . .



## David Schwarz glass artist

**Brandy Slagle**  
*Staff reporter*

Peer inside David Schwarz glass forms, and the viewer falls through tangled branches into a kaleidoscope of swirling colors. Fluid lines invite the eye to wind across the jewel-toned surface of the orb, which is occasionally broken with thick bubbles.

The original designs are marked by Schwarz's painstaking attention to detail. The Ridgefield-based artist's works have appeared in museums across the nation.

Born in Vancouver, Schwarz graduated from Fort Vancouver High School before being part of one of nation's last Army drafts in 1972. Stationed in Germany, he returned home to take courses in engineering at Clark College. While enrolled at the school, he found courses in visual arts, such as ceramics, to compliment his heavy schedule of math courses.

"I remember struggling through calculus," he said. "I began to wonder if I would make a very good engineer."

Schwarz continued his education at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, then went on to receive a master's degree in science and glass from Illinois State University in Normal, IL, in the early 1980s.

"At the time, glassblowing, and glass in art, was still a young movement," he said. "There was a lot of unbroken ground."

It was around that time that Schwarz attended the Pilchuck Glass School. The program was internationally-known and attracted professors who were masters in the field from around the globe. Courses were only held during the summer, and after completing the program, Schwarz continued on at Pilchuck as a staff member. He taught there from 1979 until 1986.

"I've been fortunate in the glass art field to develop a unique style," he said.

In 1986, he decided to leave the academic world to pursue work on his own. He built a home studio in Ridgefield where he continues to work. He has had work exhibited in several collections, including the Corning Museum of Glass, in Corning, NY, the Smithsonian Museum of American Art in Washington, DC, as well as the White House.

Schwarz's style was developed from working with a few simple cuts in the surface of the glass. His clear glass pieces are given colored glass overlays before they are cut and etched. The various style of cuts create facets which form optical illusions.

"I try to refine the process and outdo myself each time," he said. "I see this very much as an evolution process. I want to continue to push myself."

Unlike the popular, free-flowing style of glass artists such as Dale Chihuly, Schwarz work is intricate.

"You see a lot of people replicate Chihuly's work because it's based around high production, it's pretty and it's easy to sell," said Schwarz.

Schwarz's produces an average of two pieces per month due to the intensive labor involved in each form. Each glass piece takes nearly three weeks to finish. He starts by shoveling silica sand into a high powered furnace that burns at 2400 degrees. Once the glass is blown and hardens, Schwarz starts performing the "cold" work, which includes long hours of grinding, polishing, sandblasting and painting. His work is shown in galleries throughout the nation. One piece can start at \$1,800.

"Perhaps that's why nobody has copied me," he said with laugh. "My work is too labor intensive."