

# The Frederick News-Post Online - Frederick County Maryland Daily Newspaper



*Staff photo by Sam Yu*

**Three Washington-based glass artists are exhibiting their work in a show called “Constructing Content” at the Delaplaine Visual Arts Education Center. The artists, from left, Erin Antognoli, Erwin Timmers and Sean Hennessey, were at their opening reception on Saturday.**

‘Constructing Content’ with glass

Originally published December 6, 2012

Erwin Timmers and Sean Hennessey were testing lights and arranging pieces at the Delaplaine Visual Arts Education Center last week when Hennessey said something you don't hear often.

"I paint with cement."

He and Timmers, along with Erin Antognoli, are exhibiting glass sculpture in the show "Constructing Content," up through December, but they don't limit themselves to glass, as glass artists traditionally did, they said, beginning in the '60s when the medium gained popularity.

They are what they call Glass Secessionist Artists, a relatively new movement, they said. They all use basically the same technique: they build ceramic molds and fire the glass in a kiln. The results vary, representing individual aesthetics, but complement one another

nicely with the translucence and sheen of glass.

Glass Secessionism is a new direction in glass. "There's a lot of artists who are going in that direction," Timmers said.

## **GLASS SCHOOL**

The three glass artists were brought together under the Washington Glass School in Mount Rainier. Timmers co-founded the school, Hennessey is a resident artist, and Antognoli takes classes there.

Artists in all mediums come to work and study there, Timmers said. Antognoli was primarily a photographer before coming to glass and has since learned welding, to create the pieces she's showing at the Delaplaine Center. Hennessey combines concrete mold making and mixes pigments to get the effect he's after.

"We want to use whatever tools and methods are needed to create the work that we want," Timmers said. "We're sort of a renaissance school in that way."

"We focus on glass that has more of a message ... rather than making perfect glass pieces," Hennessey added.

The school is located in a vibrant arts area (it has relocated a few times since its founding), so artists are further influenced by -- and trade secrets with -- artists surrounding them in the neighborhood, including ceramic artists.

## **ERWIN TIMMERS**

A former metal sculptor, Timmers uses mostly recycled materials in his glass pieces, which sometimes include metal -- like the light that's part streetlight, part office chair and part exhaust tubing that had been thrown out by a muffler shop.

"So much glass just does not get recycled," he said, in part because things like windows usually aren't recyclable and end up in landfills.

"There's so much of this glass out there," he said, showing off his series "What We Leave Behind," which uses greenish window glass that has an iridescent gold/silver gleam to it (it came from an office building near Dulles International Airport). The collection contains five pieces shaped like boxes, each of which represent items left behind from a

specific era -- the '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s and 2000s. The 2000s has a Starbucks cup and an already-outdated Blackberry; cassettes, address books, a film camera and a can with a pull-tab litter the '80s box. Meanwhile, batteries get smaller and smaller throughout the decades, and cash is replaced by credit cards.

The boxes are on the floor, rather than hung, so viewers peer into them from above, as if looking at an archaeological dig. Each box is a bit higher than the era that came before it.

## **SEAN HENNESSEY**

Perhaps the most memorable of Hennessey's images is the lightbulb, a recurring motif throughout his series, which literally lights up when plugged in. Several of the lightbulbs are being held on strings, like balloons (he also uses several hands in his pieces -- which are his hands, pressed into the large sheets of ceramic molds, before being fired).

He paints several layers of color onto the glass to ensure the colors are not diluted too much by the LED light behind them.

The Delaplaine Center show marks the first time he's showing the series.

"I was doing little glass elements in mixed-media pieces," Hennessey said, before his work at the Washington Glass School.

He also incorporates video into some of his work, although he won't feature that at this show.

## **ERIN ANTOGNOLI**

Antognoli's pieces resemble family trees in mood and design. Photographs, handwritten letters and glass replicas of trinkets are in circular frames which connect to one another like wheel spokes.

Within the frosted glass circles are handwritten letters (most were solicited for this body of work; some were taken from old handwritten census reports and personal letters) and small objects, such as bottles and keys.

"Handwriting has always fascinated me," she writes in an artist statement. "A person's penmanship reflects a great deal of personality that an email cannot ... . In this age of

digitization, doing anything by hand has become a lost art."

Antognoli was working primarily in black-and-white Holga photography when she discovered glass, looking for a way to expand upon her style while still using photos.

Washington Glass School's Holiday Open House will be held from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 15, at 3700 Otis St., Mount Rainier. For details, call 202-744-8222.