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AMERICAN
art
COLLECTOR





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DAVID PATCHEN

Intricate patterns

David Patchen is a scuba diver. He took a sabbatical after his career as a Silicon Valley corporate marketer ended with the dot-com bust and gave his time to blowing glass and to diving. “There’s a parallel in my work with the underwater colors and amazing patterns of the soft corals and anemones,” he says, “even the fish and shrimp. I don’t interpret it literally but the aesthetic beauty of the coral reef is in some ways percolating in my head.”

After his sabbatical, he worked part time as a consultant and part time as a glassblower. He slowly decreased his consultant hours and increased his glassblowing hours and, four years ago, began to work with glass full time. Scuba diving now takes a back seat

to his family and his work.

Patchen’s Patterns, an exhibition of his latest work, will be shown November 12 through December 5 at Duncan McClellan Gallery in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Patchen’s patterns are remarkably complex visually as well as in the work that precedes his actual work in the studio. In fact, he only blows glass twice a week. The rest of the time is spent assembling the elements that will go into a final piece. Preceding even that is the designing and making of glass cane and murrine. The combinations of rods of color and encasements of clear glass make Patchen’s work stand out. Cut into slices and applied to a piece in successive layers, the murrine celebrate the many



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1 David Patchen at work.

2 *Foglio*, blown glass and murrine, 23 x 14 x 4"

3 *Sphere*, blown glass and murrine, 15 x 14 x 14"

4 *Obelisk*, blown glass and murrine, 15 x 14 x 3"



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qualities of glass as well as his command of the technology and his virtuosity.

One piece that immediately brings to mind the qualities of water is *Obelisk*. Slices of murrine float in a sea of aquamarine blue not as patterns applied to a surface but as if they were actually floating, surface tension building up edges as they appear to float around. Patchen's experience has taught him the qualities of the varying viscosities of varying colors at varying temperatures. He masterfully manages them, balancing the aesthetic with the technical and creating effects not often seen in studio glass.

Patchen aims "to get the most detail in the glass as possible." The individual strands of white glass appear as the tentacles of sea urchins in their ocean of blue in *Obelisk*. The technical virtuosity lies in his making them appear to float. *Sphere* is a tour de force of technology and aesthetics executed in what he calls his "three-dimensional canvases."

His work can be admired for its skill and its beauty as well as for its ability to transport the viewer into other realms. ●