

GLASS

STUDIO

Museums mark 50th anniversary of art form

Before Dale Chihuly — the celebrated architect of big, bulbous, vivid and swirly glass sculptures — there was Harvey Littleton.

Before Littleton, glass was for eyeglasses and windshields, goblets and vases — but not heating and blowing into fine art. People worked with glass in industrial settings, not art studios.



Roads Traveled

Mary Bergin

That changed when Littleton, now 89, introduced the nation's first college hot-glass art program at the University of Wisconsin. The art department chairman's work launched the American studio glass movement, and Chihuly

— a University of Washington interior design graduate — was among Littleton's best-known students.

This year art museums throughout the nation (including at least four in Wisconsin) present major exhibitions to celebrate the 50th anniversary of American studio glass.

Devoted to artistic expressions in glass all year, every year since 1959, is the Bergstrom-Mahler: Wisconsin's Glass Museum, 165 N. Park Ave., Neenah. The 1929 Tudor house also is informally known as the Paperweight Museum because it opened to the public with Evangeline Bergstrom's collection of 652 glass



PHOTO COURTESY OF UW-MADISON ARCHIVES



LEIGH YAWKEY WOODSON ART MUSEUM PHOTO

The Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum's new show includes this blown and acid-etched glass sculpture by Ann Warff-Wolff. She studied with Harvey Littleton in the 1980s.

'Cutting Edge'

Racine Art Museum, 441 Main St., Racine, adds "Cutting Edge: Exploring Glass Jewelry — RAM Honors 50 Years of Studio Glass Art" from Oct. 28 to Feb. 17, 2013. The show notes "the intersection of two important elements of artistic production — art jewelry and glass," says the nonprofit Art Alliance for Contemporary Glass; ramart.org, 262-638-8300.

More art glass shows

Near Wisconsin are upcoming art glass shows at:

- Rockford Art Museum, Rockford, Ill., whose "Into the Light: Illinois Glass" is in place June 22 to Oct. 21; rockfordartmuseum.org, 815-972-2878.
- Michigan's Muskegon Museum of Art.

