

# Art Review: Boyertown glassblower Will Dexter's magnificent work sparkles

The sculptor's work is currently showing at Freedman Gallery at Albright through April 14.

Written by Ron Schira - Reading Eagle correspondent

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I have come to the conclusion that blowing hot, partially liquid glass at temperatures too dangerous to touch is a challenging and arduous endeavor that must be loved in order to be used as a medium for art. Yet that is exactly what glass aficionado Will Dexter has done — and is still doing — for more than three decades, and an exhibition of his work titled “Fragile Beauty: Contemporary Glassworks” is now viewing through April 14 at the Freedman Gallery of Albright College Center for the Arts.

A beautifully installed selection of at least 50 pieces in the main room, the display is somewhat of a retrospective for the artist, who, with his wife, Karla Trinkley-Dexter, is co-owner of the Taylor-Backes Gallery in Boyertown.

The artist originally studied marine biology at the University of Miami; after three years of studying that, Dexter studied glassblowing for an additional two years at the University of Wisconsin. He received his Bachelor of Fine Art degree from the Tyler School of Art (now part of Temple University), and afterwards attended the Rhode Island School of Design for his Master of Fine Art in glass. In 1990, he received a Masterworks Fellowship by the Creative Glass Center of America in Millville, N.J.

His work has been exhibited worldwide and is in the permanent collections

of numerous museums including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the American Craft Museum and The Chase Manhattan Bank Collection. He has lectured and taught at the internationally renowned Pilchuck Glass School in Seattle, among others.

Aside from his impressive history, the works in this show fill both the walls and floor with splendid examples of Dexter's work. Slightly right to center is an electrically-lighted hanging installation of crystal clear bells, titled "Raindrops," while "Splash," against the rear wall, is composed of 15 tinted plates mimicking drops in water.

Possibly relating to his prior background in marine biology, a few of the works resemble a variety of aquatic life as well as sea shells of varying sizes. Some of them are large and can be seen throughout the show.

A few of the pieces are blown into molds to resemble abstracted heads with minor additions placed at their peaks like a hat or headdress. "Red," for instance, is a two-foot tall bust with an eye or spiral glyph pressed into its side with a bunch of grapes sitting on top. Another bust, "Neytiri," is flamboyant, with rich earth tones and primary colors; a tortoise serves as a topper.

Mixing the glass with other materials such as wire or metallic bases, Dexter creates an ersatz environment where his nature-inspired pieces can exist. A trio of herons, for example, places the three birds in a wire grassland of sorts, their bodies positioned on an armature. Each are given names and a pedestal to inhabit. Many of these take a team to complete.

Bearing many similarities to his fellow artist Dale Chihuly, Dexter is a contemporary master of the medium living in our midst. For those of you enthralled by the art of glass-blowing and the effort of making beauty from a glob of molten hot material, check this show out. You won't be disappointed.

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## If you go

**What:** "Fragile Beauty: Contemporary Glassworks" by Will Dexter, through April 14.

**Where:** The Freedman Gallery of Albright College Center for the Arts is at 13th and Bern streets.

**Hours:** 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. For additional information, please call 610-921-7715 or visit [www.albright.edu/freedman](http://www.albright.edu/freedman).

**By the way:** A benefit for the Freedman titled "Sound Masses and Wine Glasses" will take place at the gallery on March 30 from 7 to 10 p.m. Call the gallery regarding tickets and additional details.

## In galleries

Reading Eagle correspondent Ron Schira's must-see picks in regional galleries this week:

- "Fragile Beauty: Contemporary Glassworks" by Will Dexter, Freedman Gallery of Albright College, 13th and Bern streets, through April 14.
- "Farm to Table," Studio B, 39A E. Philadelphia Ave., Boyertown, through Tuesday.
- "Legacy, a Faculty & Alumni Showcase," Project Room at Freedman Gallery of Albright College, 13th and Bern streets, through April 14.
- "Fabric of America" by Michele Byrne, Alvernia University's Miller Gallery, Francis Hall, 400 St. Bernardine St., extended through Friday.
- Berks Art Alliance Members Show, Yocum Institute for Arts Education, 3000 Penn Ave., Spring Township, through Friday.
- Photography by Vince Burke and sculpture by Richard Frederick, Say

Cheese! Restaurant, 600 Penn Ave., West Reading, through March 31.

- "Dutch Golden Age: Prints by Rembrandt and Contemporaries," Reading Public Museum, 500 Museum Road, through May 5.
- "Passport to Asia: Works from the Collection," Reading Public Museum, 500 Museum Road, through July 31.
- Paintings by Irene Dobson and jewelry works by Marilyn Pounder at Art Plus Gallery, 604 Penn Ave., West Reading through March 31.
- Works by Berks County Intermediate Unit, GoggleWorks Center for the Arts Cohen Gallery, 201 Washington St., through today.