

Husband, wife collaborate creatively in wax

Who: Chris Reilly and Michelle Haglund
What: Show and sale
When: Opening reception, 5-8 p.m. Saturday; show hangs through July 30
Where: Diehl Gallery
How much: Free
Web: www.diehlgallery.com

By Dina Mishev

Don't feel self-conscious if you can't identify what Chris Reilly and Michelle Haglund's paintings are. Not the paintings' subject matter — the dragonflies, butterflies, flowers and branches are recognizable enough — but the paint itself. You can stop guessing. It's molten beeswax. Mostly.

Reilly and Haglund start by covering their canvases — attached to board for support — with gesso, a type of artist's primer, and watercolor. Then they go to work with the molten wax.

In their first show at Diehl Gallery since it took on that name — they last had a show there in 2003, when it was still Meyer Gallery — Reilly and Haglund are exhibiting paintings they've collaborated on.

The show also includes several paintings that are the individual work of Reilly. In 2003, he and Haglund did their own paintings.

The two artists, who live and work in San Diego, first collaborated for a show in Sun Valley, Idaho, five years ago but then went back to their own work until four or five months ago.

"There's a lot less pressure when you're working together," said Reilly. "When I get stuck in a painting, I can turn it over to Michelle and vice versa."

"There is arguing, disagreement and hurt feelings," he said. "Then we realize it's not about us but about what's best for the painting."

Mariam Diehl, owner of Diehl Gallery, said she hasn't worked with many artists who collaborate on pieces. As she was getting the paintings for this show in last week, she said a quick glance didn't reveal what pieces were collaborations and which were Reilly's individual work. And that's good.

"In the past — not with any of my artists, because I just don't have any that collaborate — I have seen collaborations that were obviously the work of two people — disjointed and confusing," Diehl said. "With Chris and Michelle, the result seems to be more a case where the sum is greater than its two parts. Each has their own fine points and skills they were able to blend together seamlessly."

Although the encaustic process isn't as well known or as often practiced as painting with oils or acrylics or even watercolors, it has been around for millennia. The oldest known portrait in existence, an Egyptian one found in tombs in Al Fayyum dating back 2,000 years, is encaustic.

Egyptians weren't the only encaustic painters. Greeks and Romans painted with pigment-dyed beeswax as well. Encaustic murals were found in Pompeii. In the first centuries A.D., encaustic painting was still common. Some surviving examples from this time include the "Virgin and Child



Explaining the subjects he and Michelle Haglund, his wife and artistic collaborator, choose, encaustic painter Chris Reilly says, "Nature is a kind of universal, eternal language." This piece is "The Butterfly Sutra."

Enthroned" in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, in Egypt.

Having fallen into disuse around the ninth century A.D., encaustic painting has never really regained mainstream momentum. Over the last century, more user-friendly techniques have been developed, however, and encaustic painting is enjoying something of a fringe revival.

From the Greek word "enkaustikos," meaning "burning in," encaustic paintings aren't just ones done with wax, but ones in which the pigments are fused to wax by heat. Ancient Greeks and Romans went through the messy — and dangerous — process of heating both the painting surface and the palette with charcoal burners. They worked with a

See **HUSBAND, WIFE** on 19

Artist demonstrates 'painting in reverse' at Horizon



With "Edge of the Forest III" and other works, Frank Balaam paints the foreground first, then moves back, never overlapping colors.

Who: Frank Balaam
What: Art show and in-house art demonstration
When: 1-9 p.m. Thursday, noon-7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday
Where: Horizon Fine Art Gallery
How much: Free
Web: www.horizonfineartgallery.com and www.frankbalaam.com

By Sarah Lucas

When it comes to Frank Balaam's paintings, it doesn't take an art major to recognize that he has created something unique from a white canvas and some oil paints.

Balaam will demonstrate his "reverse painting" technique Thursday through Sunday at Horizon Fine Art Gallery. He plans to work on a 3-by-3-foot painting of aspen trees he sketched while on a hike through Granite Canyon and up Shadow Mountain.

He will paint from 1 to 9 p.m. Thursday, noon to 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, and he plans to be finished with the canvas by the end of his stint.

"Everything he produces is so full of life

and color," Horizon proprietor Barbara Nowak said. "It's incredible how Balaam has such an unbelievable high regard for the forest, mostly stemming from the destruction of his gallery a number of years ago."

It was in the summer of 2005 that a fire destroyed more than 800 original paintings and drawings in Balaam's gallery, located at the historic Pioneer Hotel in Globe, Ariz.

Before the fire, Balaam solely painted portraits. It wasn't until after the destruction that he and his wife, Nora, began traveling in their RV-turned-studio, painting and drawing scenes across the country. Instead of pulling away from the source that caused such ruin, he has actually developed an exceptional affinity for the forest, which can easily be felt through his works. The scenes he paints are his way of reminding the public that the natural world exists in a delicate balance, and these irreplaceable treasures are constantly being "faced with indifferent and careless sensitivities," Balaam said.

"My paintings are not filled with the

See **PAINTING IN REVERSE** on 19