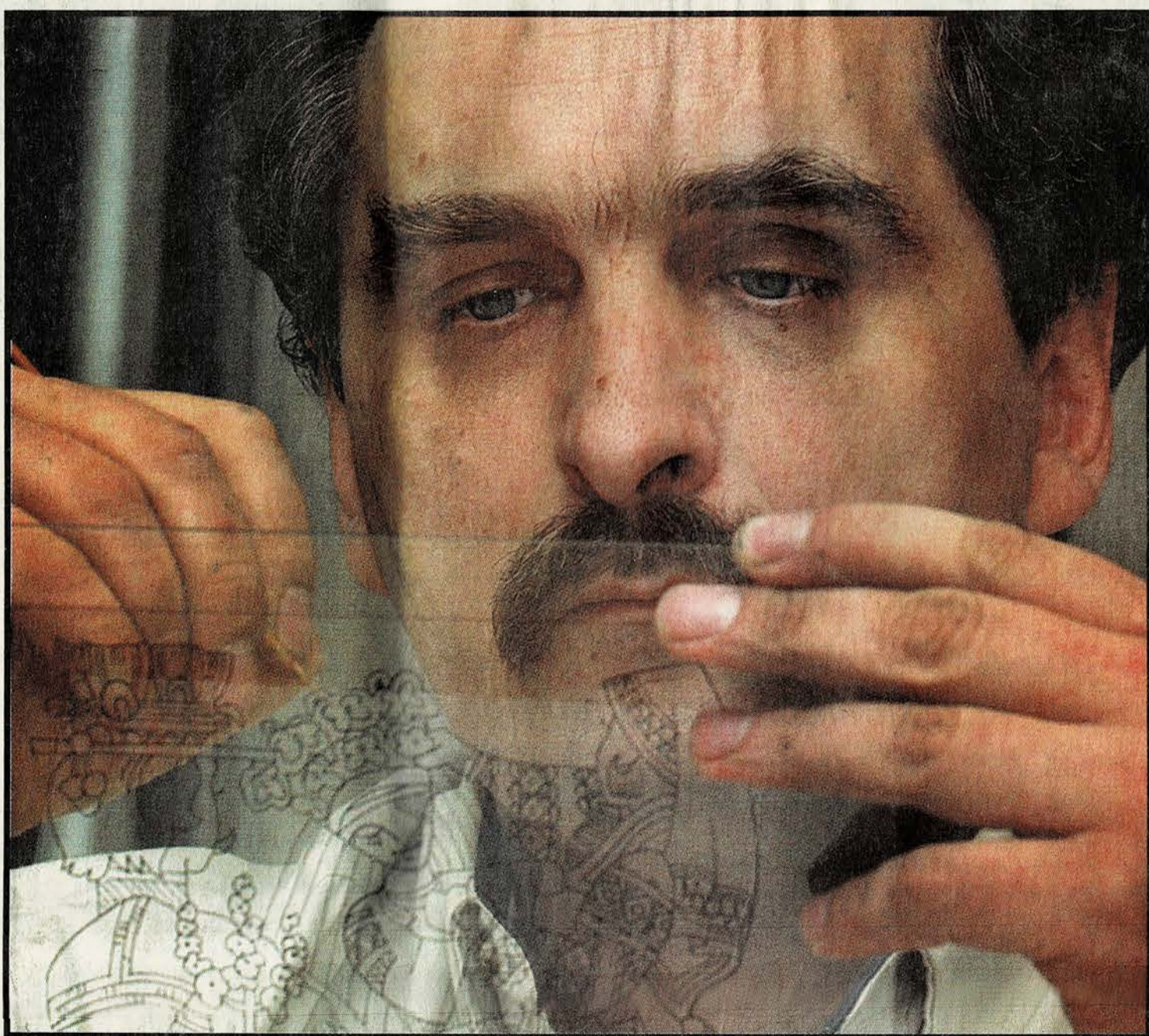


# PEOPLE

THE WILTON BULLETIN



Artist Andriy Khomyk paints on a medium once a favorite of painters in his native Ukraine before the advent of the U.S.S.R. This piece, "Baptism," depicts a traditional religious event by using the reverse painting technique necessary for works on glass. A Wilton resident for the past three years, Mr. Khomyk has some of his works on display at the Fabergé Collection in Stamford. —Scott Mullin photo

## Andriy Khomyk revives a Ukrainian art form

by KEN MASTRO

With the fall of the former Soviet Union and Communism 12 years ago, Ukraine regained its independence and cultural history, and a painter there simultaneously found a hidden artistic past and a new medium from which to work.

Although a well-schooled artist with the ability to produce sketches worthy of American artist Chuck Close and the term "photo realism," Wilton resident Andriy Khomyk spends a lot of his time working in the technique with the vibrant colors that illuminate when oil-based paint is applied to glass.

Mr. Khomyk has lived in this country only for three years, is still learning the language — (though he is much more articulate than he thinks) — and is attempting to make a name for himself in a land half way around the world from his native Ukraine. His works are time-consuming and require the patience and cunning to create backward images. Reverse painting is similar to the task a woodcut artist faces when producing a carving for print. An image must be depicted in reverse of how the viewer will eventually see the finished work.

It is a process that was well known to the Ukraine painters who flourished before the formation of the U.S.S.R.

"When our independence came, everyone became interested in our culture, our roots, our themes," said Mr. Khomyk. "My friends and I started to take pilgrimages to villages to look for ancient icons. Many of them were on glass — the reverse side of glass."

Interested in exploring his cultural roots and intrigued by the discovery of a medium with ancestral significance, Mr. Khomyk turned to glass painting.



"The glass added something — a deepness and brightness to the color," he said of his initial fascination with the old art form.

Much of his work is a reflection of the Ukrainian past and folklore captured precisely but slowly — scene by scene — until a narrative progression is detected when viewed as a collection. This cohesive manner is used by Mr. Khomyk to portray the events before a traditional Ukrainian wedding or to illustrate the relationship between a young boy and his grandfather during the course of a day.

But separate one glass painting from the collective body and the strength of Mr. Khomyk's work is exhibited. Each glass painting has an interaction of characters in a manner that usually portrays a hint of intimacy and sense of humor that allows the painting to stand on its own.

In one playful painting, the viewer sees the back of a boy in a barn as he faces a chicken and points to an empty nest. It is not until one gathers that he is questioning the surprised chicken about the whereabouts of a lost egg that the viewer secretly realizes the humor of the boy holding the egg behind his back.

Mr. Khomyk said that when he finishes painting a scene, he is drawn to create more in the same manner.

"Every single work created calls for another one," he said.

This is illustrated in the collection of wedding paintings that initially began with the creation of a single scene.

"In one series it's the whole story of the starting to the ending of their wedding," he said of the traditions a Ukrainian groom and bride experience on their day.

"After making one image it was not enough for me. I had to make more from the wedding," Mr. Khomyk said.

He does not deal with only Ukrainian themes in his artwork. The time period between the two world

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## Khomyk revives a Ukrainian art form

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wars — the music, clothing and art — intrigue Mr. Khomyk and are reflected in his paintings of bar scenes and jazz clubs. His cubist style of painting in these scenes reflects the prominent style of the time as well.

"I put in certain accessories — hats, clothes and so forth — to portray a time period," he said.

Regardless of the theme, all of his artwork is created by hand. This

makes each painting unique but sometimes risky to the artist. Mr. Khomyk will not work on glass that is larger than 26 square inches.

"It's glass — sometimes it's broken in my hand," he said.

Even in a limited edition of one piece there are no exact duplications of his work.

"Every work is impossible to be the same because every work is by hand," said Mr. Khomyk.

Before he arrived in the United States to live, Mr. Khomyk had been to the East Coast twice before to

exhibit his works in New York City. His works continue to be shown at Ukrainian festivals where they sell well, but he has had trouble breaking into the American art market.

He currently works in the warehouse of the Fabergé Collection in Stamford where some of his works are being displayed. Mr. Khomyk also receives special orders and requests for paintings. Many of his works are displayed on his Web site, [paintingonglass.com](http://paintingonglass.com).

Although he has not found wide-scale success yet in the States, Mr.

Khomyk has learned much from his interaction with the people here.

"There are so many different cultural and different single understandings of the world here — and they're all accepted," he said.

"What I've learned here is to open your mind and be grateful to everyone. These two things are important to me because I could not imagine such things in the former Soviet Republic," said Mr. Khomyk.

"There are many things in America and about Americans that I like very much. Maybe that's why I'm staying."