

ARTIST PROFILE

State Of the Art Gallery Exhibit:

Helle Scharling-Todd Manipulates Molecules

By **ANDRIA WATSON** / CASA

INSPIRED BY THE UNSEEN FORCES IN ALL LIVING THINGS,

Helle Scharling-Todd's State of the Art Gallery sculpture, *Color Molecules*, on display through November 15th, takes a closer look at chemical bonds.

"Molecules are the small entities that we don't see, but we know they are the motors underneath the skin, Scharling-Todd shared. "The focus on the microcosm inspired me. Also, my husband is a biologist, so that influenced the piece as well."

Color Molecules, Scharling-Todd's tallest work so far measures 14' x 6' x 2' and is located on the corner of State and Ortega Streets. Scharling-Todd, who has created approximately 50 public art sculptures, stresses the importance artwork in the public arena.

"Public art is such a major factor in the Urban Society because nearly everything around us is functional. But art has an extra dimension, with more than just aesthetic qualities," explained Scharling-

Todd. "I've recently been travelling in Turkey, and I've seen public art from 11,000 BC!"

Scharling-Todd first became interested in art while travelling with her parents in Germany as a young girl. She was especially fascinated with glass works.

Her mother and father supported her interest in the arts, and fostered a unique home-life for her to express herself, whether it was acting in a faux theatre her mother had put together for the kids in the neighborhood, or covering the walls in her home with large, colorful designs. She began painting lessons at the age of thirteen.

"We had a very dynamic and engaging atmosphere in our house," Scharling-Todd recalled. "My mother helped start Youth For Understanding [a non-profit international educational exchange program for young people]. My father became a lawyer, but could have been a professor in literature. I had a beautiful childhood."

After receiving her Baccalaureate in 1965 in Art History, she went to work in a Kibbutz, a collective community in Israel. She then studied drawing at Højebjerg Drawing School, in Copenhagen, the capital and largest city of Denmark.

When she was 21, Scharling-Todd went to Italy for two years to study mosaics. "I was attracted to mosaics because of the colors and the resistance to weather," she explained. After Italy, the artist went to



Photos by Kimberly Kavish

Molecules by **Helle Scharling-Todd**, on display at corner of State and Ortega Streets through November.

Germany to learn glass art at a school for art and architecture in Krefeld, where she finished a four-year-program in two years.

"After I completed the program in Germany I went to Mexico to study the Mexican mural masters," shared Scharling-Todd. "I had the great opportunity to meet Alfaro Siqueiros" [a painter known for large murals in fresco that established the "Mexican Mural Renaissance"]. "It was an eye-opening experience to what public art can do."

In 1979, after meeting her American husband in Denmark, the two bought a house in Ventura, and have lived there ever since.

Scharling-Todd's work has been displayed at schools, churches, factories, libraries, public pools, malls, town squares, parking lot walls, museums, senior centers, recreation centers, insurance companies, and city halls.

"I decided to apply for the Santa Barbara SOAG opportunity, as I had made a sculpture that I thought was fun and had something new," explained Scharling-Todd. "I was happy to be accepted."

The artist's specialties include stained glass, sandblasted glass, cast glass, painted glass, glass sculptures, mosaics, tile murals, tile floors, and she is a color consultant. She has also taught at Ventura College and held workshops.

"My favorite part of the creative process," shared Scharling-Todd, "is the initial idea or image that comes to me, whether it be day or night, and the ability to carry it out. It's so exciting I almost forget time when it happens!"

For information, visit www.glassandmosaics.com or www.sbartscommission.org



Helle Scharling-Todd