

# COMMUNITY

## Local artists to be featured on 'How It's Made'

Discovery Channel show airs tonight

By Jeremy Grimaldi  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

“I could tell you but I would have to kill you.”

So goes the famous saying known by millions around the globe. Few are likely aware, though, of its origins, which derive from the glass-making specialists of the Italian island of Murano in the Venetian Lagoon.

It was artisans on that island that re-discovered a long-lost Roman technique of millifiori and filigranae in the 1500s. So sought after was their formula that divulging it or even attempting to leave the island could earn a glassmaker the death penalty.

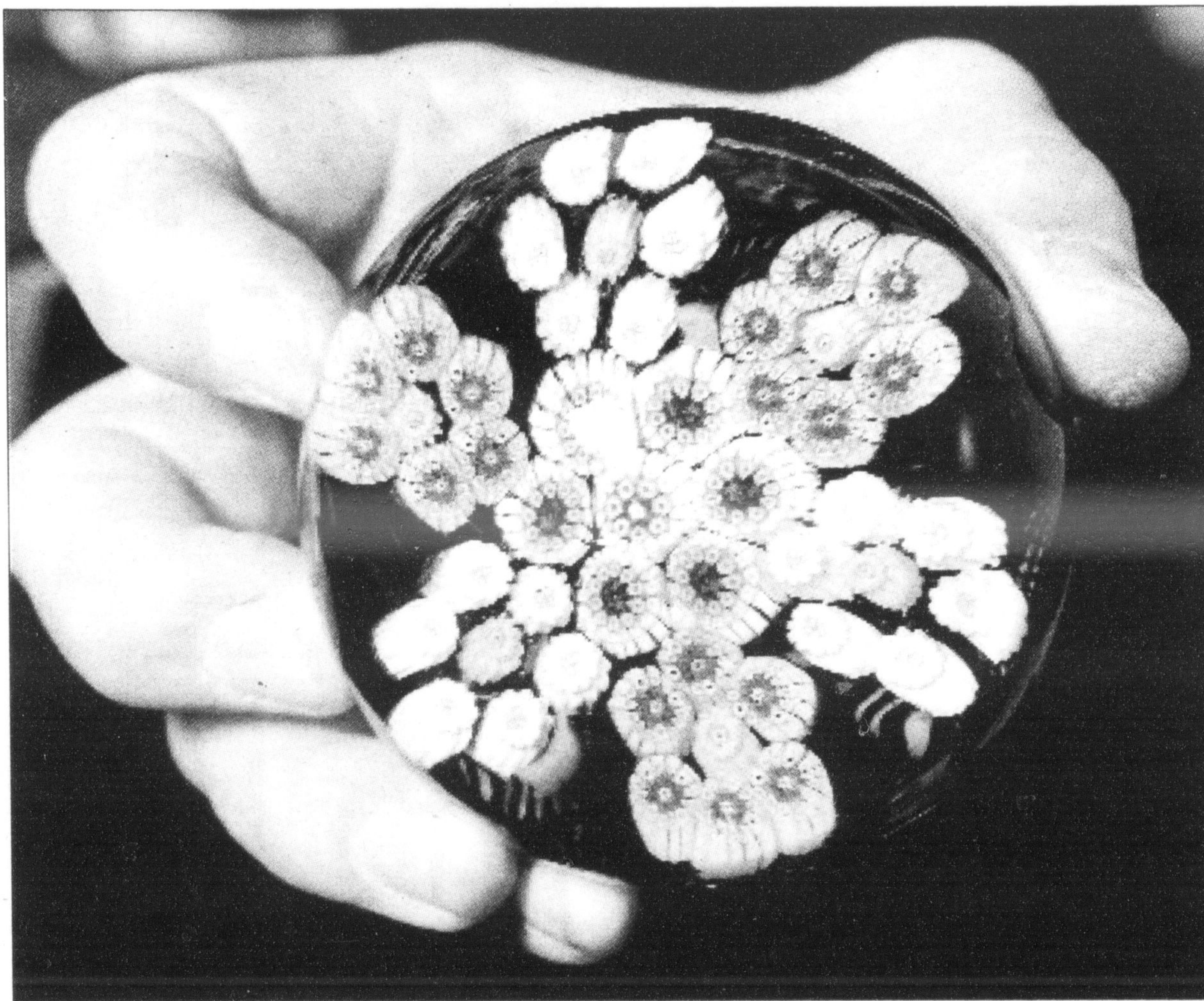
More than a half century later the secret is out, and is now being practised in Milton by artists Virginia Wilson-Toccalino and her husband Tony Toccalino.

### Gaining recognition

The Galactic Glass Studio duo have become so good in their Main Street studio that they have not only become internationally recognized for their methods, but they're now the subject of a two-part series on the Discovery Channel's 'How It's Made.'

The items that will be created on the first program, which airs tonight at 8 p.m., will include the making of the highly-ornate millefiori or 'a thousand flowers.'

A second segment will then be aired February 1 at 8 p.m., when the duo will be shown creating filigrana, a glass renowned for its intricate



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**UNIQUE CREATION:** Virginia Wilson-Toccalino holds a Millifiore (which means a thousand flowers) paper weight.

thread-like patterns.

To produce six items in either style, it takes the couple six days and numerous methods. On the first day, coloured glass is covered with clear crystal and melted at about 2,400 degrees, before it's pulled and stretched between five to 20 feet into a rod-shaped piece.

The second day sees this rod cut into three-foot and then five-inch pieces. On the third day, depending

on whether the glass is millefiori or filigrana, the pieces are joined together and either pulled or spun at 1,000 revolutions per minute to create a multi-profiled piece.

After it is again cut and sorted on the fourth day, it's assembled, heated and turned into a final piece on the fifth day. The sixth day is largely reserved for polishing, finishing and examining the piece.

Tony said it's this detailed and

often confusing process that peaked the interest of the Discovery Channel.

“We are looking forward to the general population better understanding what we do and how we do it,” he said. “It's very interesting to learn about. The better people know the product, the more they can understand the cost and value, and why it's different from a \$30 piece of often recycled glass from China.”

He said he currently compares the couple's methods to those of Faberge Eggs to help people understand how difficult their products are to craft.

“Those eggs are worth millions now. They have value because they are not mass-produced and their value is in their uniqueness and how hard people worked to produce them.”

Tony, who has been working alongside his wife in glass for 10 years, said products in the gallery part of his shop include unique jewelry, paperweights, vases and bells that can range anywhere from \$10 to \$1,000.

### Unique technique

What makes their products so special, he said, is the pair's techniques in filigree, which the traditional Italian makers find “crazy.”

“Very few people around the world do what we do,” he said. “Italians do their filigree in a controlled way, while what we do is freestyle.”

Currently he said they sell more than half of their products around the GTA and Ontario, and the rest at collector shows in the U.S.

Proof of their abilities has been a recent and prestigious commission by the Paperweight Collectors Association to create 25 numbered paperweights for the PCA's 30th anniversary.

Their work will later be exhibited at the Smithsonian Institute, the world's largest museum in Washington D.C.

Anyone wanting to find out more is invited to visit [www.galactic-glass.ca](http://www.galactic-glass.ca).

Jeremy Grimaldi can be reached at [jgrimaldi@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:jgrimaldi@miltoncanadianchampion.com).

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