

## notes

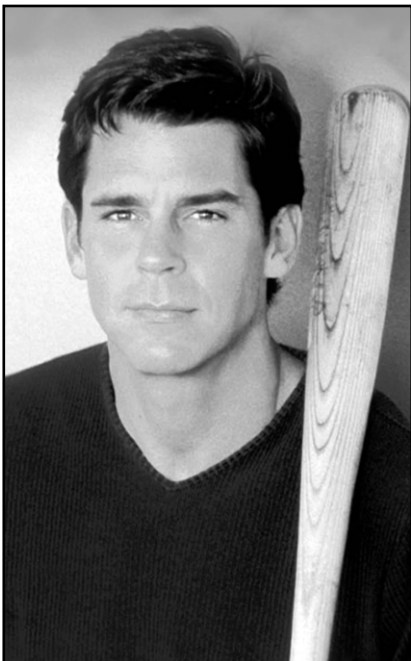
FRIDAY  
AUGUST 6

**REHOBOTH BEACH OPEN:** This tennis tournament, sponsored by the Rehoboth Beach Tennis Club Inc. in association with the Gay and Lesbian Tennis Alliance, runs through Aug. 8, and is expected to draw up to 100 tennis players from around the world. Scheduled participants include gay activist and athlete Billy Bean, a retired Major League Baseball player who is openly gay. In addition to being a spokesperson for the Human Rights Campaign and an ambassador for the Gay Games, Bean is author of "Going the Other Way: Lessons from a Life In and Out of Major League Baseball," which is being made into a movie for Showtime. The former San Diego Padres player broke into tennis in 2003 by winning the Miami Art Deco Open VIII. For more information on the tournament, access [www.rehobothbeachtennis.org](http://www.rehobothbeachtennis.org).

**HIV COMMUNITY COALITION:** As part of its Bridging the Gap program, the HCC will provide free HIV testing and counseling with same-day results from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the intersection of MLK and Malcolm X Aves., SE. Bridging the Gap brings together 12 local organizations, including Planned Parenthood, the Whitman-Walker Clinic, whose mobile testing van will be present, Andromeda and DC Healthy Start to provide comprehensive HIV/AIDS-related health services to communities that might lack them. Bridging the Gap's efforts are focused on D.C. Wards 5, 6, 7 and 8. For more information, call 202-543-6777.

SATURDAY  
AUGUST 7

**GLBT VEG "OUT":** This group, part of the Vegetarian Society of DC, is holding a potluck gathering at the home of one of their members in Gaithersburg at 7 p.m. Created a year ago by VSDC board member and local musician Steven Gellman, GLBT Veg "Out" organizes vegetarian, vegan and gay-friendly events in the DC area. The group meets on the first Saturday of each month for potlucks, restaurants, movies and other social activities. This month's potluck will feature Sue's homemade sorbet. RSVP to Steven at [hiddenpoet@aol.com](mailto:hiddenpoet@aol.com) or 301-428-0313 by Thursday, Aug. 5.



Gay former Major League Baseball player **Billy Bean** will play in the Rehoboth Beach Open tennis tournament next weekend.

## out in d.c.

## Chile's artistic ambassador

## Joan Belmar wins chance to display work at the Athens Olympics

By **JOE HOWLEY**

Gay artist Joan Belmar plans to travel from Washington, D.C., to Athens next month for a role in the Olympic Games. His athletic prowess did not earn him the opportunity to visit Athens, but his skills as an artist did.

Belmar, whose unique abstract artwork has been displayed at several galleries in Washington and Europe, is one of 600 artists participating in ARTiade: Olympics of Visual Art, an 8-year-old effort to strengthen ties between artists and athletes represented at the Olympic Games.

ARTiade organizers said the exhibition "offers the ideal medium for documenting the 'feel' of any country — current events, emotions and traditions. In short, it is a forum for world culture."

The piece Belmar created and will display in Athens contains collages depicting various regions of Chile, where he was born.

Belmar's work is visceral. Colorful, creative, and highly abstract, it nevertheless conveys clear impressions and emotions. The piece ARTiade judges chose for him to display in Athens is actually 12 pieces, a vertical prism of color and sensation that corresponds with the 12 provinces of Belmar's native Chile.

Belmar's piece is a sensory tour of his home country, from the northern tropical region of Tarapaca — "Chile's frontier," Belmar laughs — which contains a florid red and purple that suggests forests and beaches, to the southern Magallanes and Chilean Antarctic in stark, but lively grays and browns that conjure glaciers and oceans.

Belmar, whose first name is pronounced "Joe-on," left Chile in 1995, when he was 24. Openly gay and devoted to art, he says he felt uncomfortable in Chile from as far back as he could remember.

"Often, I felt that I was different, and one [way] was art," he says. "When I told my mother, 'I want to be an artist,' she said, 'No way!'"

Belmar says he also was not happy with "political stuff" in Chile and knew it would not be easy to be gay there.

"I realized that my only chance was to leave," he says.

Though he worked as a graphic designer in Chile, he began creating his personal, non-commercial work in Spain, where he took part in several solo and group



**Joan Belmar** moved to the United States in 1999, after teaching art in Spain at a private Catholic school. A 12-piece collage he created depicting Chile, where he was born, is scheduled to be displayed in Athens during the Olympic Games. (Photo by Leigh H. Mosley)

exhibitions. While living in Europe, he also made a pilgrimage in honor of Van Gogh, one of his favorite artists.

Belmar lived in Spain for four years, studying and teaching art in a private Catholic school in Ibiza. He moved to the United States in 1999 and said he was granted permanent residency in 2003.

Though Belmar says he's not entirely happy with "some political facts" here either, stickers endorsing John Kerry and condemning the Federal Marriage Amendment adorn his windows.

Nevertheless, he says he does not feel entirely at home in the United States, though his work is gaining attention.

## Revival of traditions

The ARTiade competition, which included 5,000 artists from around the world, might be his greatest success yet. Begun in 1996 at the Olympic Games in Atlanta, the international art show seeks to revive the traditions of the ancient Hellenic Olympiad, which was a festival not only of athletics but of art and religion as well.

In Ancient Greece, athletes and artists held equal status, both devotees of different gods. Indeed, the opening ceremony for the ARTiade will be held the night before the Olympic Games open near the stadium where many of the events will take place.

Belmar is thrilled. "Artists are part of the culture, too," he says. "Art can bring people together, the same as sports."

Lydia Bendersky, cultural attaché of the Chilean Embassy in D.C., also is excited.

"I love his work," she says. "I think that the way he captured the different regions ... it's like a gut feeling."

Though ARTiade is not paying Belmar's way, Bendersky says she is working with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Chile to help send him and his 12 collages to Greece.

Bendersky says she sees and feels her country clearly in the piece.

"It transmits an emotional connection with the regions," she says. "It's not a rational connection. I think he does that brilliantly."

This is exactly what Belmar is going for. He calls what he does "impression," comparing it to art that clearly shows a person or thing.

"In impression, you show inside," he says. "You can see whatever you want. If you look at the painting, you can find lots of things. You find for yourself what you want."

He later adds, "I love when people discover stuff. I like the fact that people can discover and see stuff through the art without me giving information."

In Belmar's 12-piece collage, the province of the Maule is comprised of crumpled paper painted varying, vibrant hues that evoke lush foliage, even before the viewer reads Belmar's description of the area. He describes Maule as "a privileged climate" with "abundant vegetation."

Although much might have changed in Chile since Belmar left, he still worries about young people there being forced into professions that do not interest them.

"I don't want to see a doctor who is unhappy with his job, because lots of people will be unhappy too," he says. "That's the case in the world, people doing things that [they] don't care about."

He may get a chance to share these concerns with the many influential types who will be attending the Olympic Games and the ARTiade events.

"Supposedly, I am the artistic ambassador [of Chile]," he says with a chuckle. "The event is very political. I will try to talk to as many people as I can. I will do my best, but I am not very political. I will be diplomatic."

Chile and the United States are both sending athletes to Athens to take part in the Olympics, and Belmar says he knows which country he will be rooting for.

"Both."

## i MORE INFO

**ARTiade: Olympics of Visual Art**  
Aug. 12-Sept. 29  
Athens, Greece  
[www.artiade.com](http://www.artiade.com)  
<http://jbelmar.tripod.com>