

IN THE ARTS

SHEDDING LIGHT ON COLORS

Harriet Hyams of Palisades "paints with light."

Using a palette of colored glass, the stained-glass artist creates her abstract expressionist pieces according to the type of light shining through. It is an art with modern-day challenges never envisioned by medieval artists who built the world's great cathedrals.

But then, they didn't have to worry about parking lots or brick walls built behind their windows. "What they saw through their church windows was only sky, clouds, and kinds of light," says Hyams. "They didn't have to worry that in two years there'd be a new building going up next door."

For nearly 20 years, Hyams has designed windows, skylights and glass murals for private residences, churches, synagogues, hotels, and corporate offices.

In 1984, she designed a 9-by-11-foot floor-to-ceiling stained glass window for the office of the chairman of the board of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. in Orlando, Fla.

The company chose stained glass rather than drapes or blinds to obscure the 20-foot-high letters, HBJ, outside the building from the chairman's view. The challenge, she says, was to design a work of art that the chairman could see through, but that would also block out the letters. She met that challenge by using three types of glass that permitted light to come through, but obscured the view outside.

Her major commissions include the Hallmark Building in Houston, Maple Knoll Chapel in Springdale, Ohio; New Dorp High School on Staten Island and windows at the Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Apostolic Church



Hyams: At home with glass.

in Ridgefield, N.J. She's also designed windows in Hartsdale and Scarsdale.

For New Dorp, Hyams fashioned four 6-by-8-foot windows representing the four seasons. "The subject matter was left entirely to me," she says. "I went back to my own feelings from high school days. They had mostly to do with the passing of time. Beginnings and endings, holidays, vacations, time standing still, boredom, daydreaming, time accelerating and slipping away."

Born in Jersey City, N.J., Hyams graduated from Rutgers University in 1950 and in 1972 earned a master's degree in art and education from Columbia University, where she taught for two years.

She worked in stone, then wood, then metal sculpture, studying at the Art Students League and at the Museum of Modern Art School. She learned stained glass not through study but simply "by hanging around a stained glass studio in New York City." In 1976, one of her works was selected by the Corning Museum for *Compendium 1976*, a show of the "most promising glassworks in the country."

Hyams and her husband live in a wood-and-glass house on a shelf of palisade rock not far from the Hudson River. From that lofty perch, she muses poetically, "I've learned about glass, about people, about living. It's just the process of changing, always changing. . . as the light."

— Nancy Cacioppo

WHERE TO SEE IT

Hyams' work can be seen in numerous books about stained glass, including:

- *The Language of Stained Glass* by Robert Sowers
- *Working in Stained Glass* by Jean Jacques Duval
- *Stained Glass Step By Step* by Erik Erikson
- *Leaded Glass* by Alistar Duncan
- *Stained Glass Design* by Jennie French.
- On the cover of the 1985-86 winter issue of the international magazine, *Stained Glass*.