

An abstract artwork featuring various glass pieces with swirling, concentric, and spiral patterns in vibrant colors like red, yellow, blue, and green. The word "GLASS" is overlaid in a white, outlined font.

# GLASS

Five Years

# ART IN ARCHITECTURE: HARRIET HYAMS

*photography by BO PARKER*



Maple Knoll Chapel,  
Springdale, Ohio.  
Gruzen and Partners, architects



During a trip to West Germany in 1976 I became more familiar with Buschulte, Katzgrau, Lunenburg, Wendling, Meistermann, Gies, Schreiter, and Schaffrath, and I investigated and studied the ways in which they worked with stained glass. Their ability to assimilate beautiful contemporary designs with the old windows of gothic architecture was breathtaking. What a challenge a job like that could be, I thought. Little did I realize how soon it would be that I would accept a similar challenge.

That spring the architectural firm of Gruzen and Partners suggested that I design the stained glass windows for a new chapel in Maple Knoll Village, in Springdale, Ohio.

Maple Knoll Village is a self-contained community for the aging built under the auspices of Southwestern Ohio Seniors' Services, Inc. In addition to the centrally-located chapel, there are homes, apartments, a hospital, recreation and other facilities.

I was recommended to design the twenty-two windows (eleven on the north side and eleven on the south side) of the chapel. The two circular windows that would face west on either side of the altar were old windows of traditional, representative character from the chapel of the Widow's and Old Men's Home in Cincinnati that dated from around 1900. Because of their central placement, they would be the focal point of the chapel. I was to carry out a design that would complement these old windows, that would enhance the building and also meet the psychological, philosophical and budgetary requirements of the twenty or so members of the board. The design had to be acceptable to the architects as well and, most importantly, to the residents, who are of all religious persuasions. In addition, my own strong leanings away from the traditional literary style of window design was a problem, given the imposed limitations of the old windows.

The architects indicated their confidence in my ability to cope with this mountain of possibilities. On the other hand, the board was apprehensive about the proper selection of an artist for this assignment. My work, as they saw from my slides, was strongly influenced by an abstract aesthetic. There would be no financial consideration for my preliminary designs; I had first to convince them of the authenticity of my design plan. They had to understand my intentions, design and purpose.

My designs were to be conceived of as secondary to the old windows. In the progress report I mailed to the board in August of 1976 with my theories for the eleven south windows, I stated:

*The entire chapel has a beautiful harmony. The lower half, with its red carpeting and brickwork, appears to represent strong earth elements, the area for the participants. The structure is delineated horizontally by the break from the brickwork to the gray concrete of the upper chapel walls. The culmination of the walls is in the stained glass. I am suggesting that the lighter walls and vertical movement of the chapel give a feeling of moving heavenward. The lightest place is under the cross, where the wall is washed with saturated white light from the skylight. After having studied the architecture and having seen the two older windows that are to be used, I've made some preliminary decisions.*

*The eyes of the congregation focus on the two round windows as they pray looking at the altar. The colors and rhythm are primary. The colors of the windows will blend with the round windows and gradually change as the eye moves to the windows most easterly, away from the round windows. There will be a continually lighter feeling as the windows progress to the east, to the rear of the chapel.*

*The whole feeling of the windows will be light to suggest the heavens and*

Following pages: close-up of seven of the windows installed in Maple Knoll Chapel, Springdale, Ohio. Insets: lower left—the chapel as it now appears; upper right—several of the windows that were removed from the old chapel and replaced. Photo: Yehuda Yaniv.







*will be in keeping with the light feeling of the upper part of the architecture. The colors will be stronger as they move to the rear. Because of this use of color, we cannot have a weak design. The patterns must be bold in order to make their own statement in this building, which has a strongly patterned ceiling. The design must be simple and bold, and must harmonize with the other existing colors. To further give meaning to the old windows, I have concentrated on the circle shape by using partial circle shapes and the wing shapes. Both shapes are used in the old windows.*

When I presented my designs for the first eleven south windows to the board, the outcome was most unexpected. The designs I had worked on so assiduously to complement the old windows had impressed the board so much that they decided not to use the two old windows at all. They commissioned me to design two new circular windows and, thus, all twenty-four chapel windows. My eleven new windows then became the basis for the overall design. This was a delightful although unexpected turn of events.

My basic feeling and determination for the aesthetic appearance of the chapel had not changed, so my designs for the two new circular windows flowed from a confidence in the legitimacy of my first analysis. The use of circles, wing shapes and colors of the old windows were still paramount in my thinking, so my use of them in the new rose windows was very natural. These geometric forms have their known universality. What I did was to freeze them into a new light. The basic shapes and colors have never changed their meanings.

The explanations of my designs are simple: the spirit of the heavens, and the light of the sun and the moon are the theme of the twenty-four stained glass windows. The round window on the left side of the altar represents the moon, Mary, and the Old Testament, and signifies the female symbol of divine creation and protection. The right window relates to the sun and the New Testament, the divine light of Christ, and signifies the mystery of light. The many circles and partial circles in the design of all the windows symbolize immortality: no beginning and no end. The wing shapes suggest soaring to the heavens, the angels and the phoenix of immortality.

The light of the sun and the moon become colors for use in the chapel. White suggests the plenitude of God and peace. Gold indicates joy and glory. Red symbolizes love, and blue signifies the spiritual life and faith. Green suggests hope and creation. Gray means resurrection.

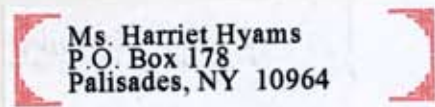
As I was designing the square windows on the south and north walls, I tried to keep in mind not only the iconography and the design, but also the problem of sunlight with my intention of keeping a light feeling. Using white and gray glass not only provided a transition from the rose windows, but added a continuity to the gray concrete upper walls and ceiling. The white and gray complemented the wide palette of colors and helped to reinforce the unity of the entire building. One of my chief concerns was using the white and gray without permitting the light to become blinding. I experimented with different tonalities and found that by using only grays on the south side and gray and white on the north side, I was able to achieve the desired effect without the unbalanced appearance of a light side and a dark side. The grays on the south appear whiter in brilliant sunlight. I used all antique glass and the grays and whites are flashed opals.

What more can be said about this project, completed last May? I've learned about glass, about people, about living. There were new friends, and friends lost. It's been said before and I can't say it any differently. It's just the process of changing, always changing. . . as the light. . .

**Project:** Maple Knoll Village Chapel  
Springdale, Ohio

**Architects:** Ben Puccio, project architect  
Peter Sampon, partner in charge  
Peter Krasnow, design captain  
Gruzen & Partners, Architects & Planners, A.I.A.  
New York, New York

**Stained glass design:** Harriet Hyams  
Teaneck, New Jersey



**Assistance in execution of windows:** Greenland Studio  
New York, New York

**Dimensions:** Six feet in diameter

**Materials:** Hand-blown antique glass, flashed opal glass

**Description and date of completion:** The Sun Window (1977) appears on the right side of the chapel altar.

**Photograph:** Bo Parker









## GLASS VISION NUMBER TWO



Yehuda Yaniv

Harriet Hyams was born in Jersey City in 1929. After receiving her B.A. in English from Rutgers University in 1950, she studied stone, wood and metal sculpture at both the Art Students League of New York and the Museum of Modern Art School in New York for the next fifteen years. She began exhibiting her sculpture in 1958 and her first one-person show of sculpture was in 1964.

She began working in glass in 1967 and received her M.A. in Art and Education from Columbia University in 1972. She then taught a stained glass workshop at Columbia from 1972 to 1974.

In 1972 she was the recipient of the Arthur Desley Dow Purchase Award for one of her stained glass panels at Columbia University.

Other commissions include work for a New Jersey synagogue, many residential works and a stained glass wall made in 1972 for the Hallmark Building in Houston, Texas. Yehuda Yaniv made a filmstrip of her and of the Hallmark Building commission during 1972-1973 for Imperial Films.

Her work has appeared in many books dealing with stained glass, including *Working with Stained Glass: Fundamental Techniques & Applications* by Jean-Jaques Duval, *Stained Glass: Step by Step* by Erik Erikson, and *Leaded Glass: A Handbook of Techniques* by Alastair Duncan. *Glass Works II* by Jenny French, to be published in 1978, also includes Ms. Hyams' work. She is the author of "A Sculptor Turns to Stained Glass," which appeared in the Winter 1975 issue of *Stained Glass*.



## ART IN ARCHITECTURE: Comments From

### THE CLIENT:

*Mrs. Ralph R. Burchenal*  
*Member, The Board of Trustees*  
*The Southwestern Ohio*  
*Seniors' Services, Inc.*

The design flows through the windows and the viewer is free to see what she or he pleases. If your sight isn't as good as it was, you see all the colors of life. Whenever I'm in the building, I find I'm drawn to the chapel. It says all we hoped it would and more—and indeed it is the jewel we hoped it would be.

### THE STUDIO:

*Tom Venturella*  
*Greenland Studio*

The marvelous thing about any large-scale work of art is that it inevitably involves more than the artist to bring his or her statement into a physical reality. In the studio situation, achieving this reality can become a great adventure with the interplay of artist and craftsperson.

February 1977 was the beginning of an adventure for me when Harriet Hyams brought her full-scale cartoons and color renderings for the Maple Knoll Chapel to our studio in New York. I had the personal thrill of "mid-wifing" the entire cutting of the job, which consisted of twenty-two smaller windows and two six-foot diameter roses. Harriet's work was a challenge, and working with her on a daily one-to-one basis afforded me the enviable opportunity to be an intimate part of a creative process, seeing it grow day by day and discovering new things all along the way.

Harriet is a complete designer and takes every aspect of the work into consideration. Aside from hand-selecting every piece of glass, she also designed the leads for each window. Colors were not the only statement—the leads also played an integral part in the design. Because I have found the linear statement to be an issue often side-stepped by many of today's glass artists, I appreciated Harriet's careful planning.

The glazing was even more challenging than the cutting because it could never be taken for granted. The cartoon was always placed in full view of the glazing table where it was read like a road map with many cautions and detours. For a 3/16-inch lead to appear to grow into a 3/4-inch lead and then to a 1/4-inch lead on the same curve took a bit of dexterity—it wasn't an uncommon occurrence in these windows. But the finished works were worth every last bit of time that went into them. For myself, the experience was most exciting.