

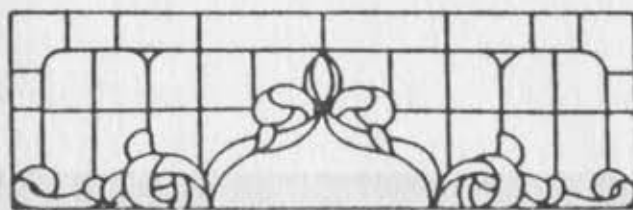
Evolution of an Art Concepts in Stained Glass Design



guest curators

Leland A. Cook and Barbara M. Meise

**October 31st, 1986
through
January 4th, 1987**



The Barron Arts Center
582 Rahway Avenue
Woodbridge, New Jersey

Gallery Hours:

Monday - Friday 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Friday Evenings 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Sundays 2 - 4 p.m.

Closed Holidays



Woodbridge Township
Cultural Arts Commission

"I drew near to the forecourt of holy Wisdom and I saw the sanctuary filled with a variety of all kinds of differing colors, displaying the utility and nature of each pigment. I entered it unseen and immediately filled the storeroom of my heart fully with all these things. I examined them one by one with careful experiment, testing them all by eye and by hand, and I have committed them to you in clarity and without envy for your study. Since this method of painting (on glass) cannot be obvious, I worked hard like a careful investigator using every means to learn by what skilled arts the variety of pigments could decorate the work without repelling the daylight and the rays of the sun. By devoting my efforts to this task I have come to understand the nature of glass, and I see that this effect can be achieved by the use of glass alone and in its variety. I have made it my concern to hunt out this technique for your study as I learned it by looking and listening."

written by the German monk Theophilus "On Divers Arts" in ca A.D. 1122.



"Art is the Lethe of Life" - Frederic Crowninshield - ca 1888

HISTORY

At the time of Theophilus, stained glass began to flourish, its translucent splendor revealing to the faithful sublime aspects of their religion. It became, with the advent of the Gothic Age one of the greatest of church arts, a blending of the inner emotional aspects of the northern people of Europe with the artistic restraint aspects of the people of the Byzantine East.

The twelfth century was a time of mysticism and superstition, when alchemists labored to turn base metals into gold and ambition and inventiveness reached a peak of perfection in the shape of cathedrals. Light, and its power, became a metaphysical instrument for reaching heaven. As the play of light changed the color of glass, its mystery heightened. The art of creating stained glass windows was one of the extraordinary achievements of the middle ages; despite the scarcity of glass and the limited range of available colors, countless windows were produced by teams of craftsmen traveling throughout Europe, spreading their art.

Much of the uniform strength of stained glass design and the universality of its compositional content had to do with the control of the church on matters of iconography. When the Reformation shattered that control, vast amounts of glass were destroyed, because of iconolatry. For the next several centuries the popularity of glass declined; as it did so, its creation moved out of cathedral-owned workshops whose anonymous craftsmen produced it enmasse, and into the studios of masters whose names became known. Much of the production of glass was affected by the rise of the middle class. Through the influence of wealthy merchants, churches were built, artist-craftsmen served on city councils, and society on the whole became emancipated from feudal tradition. As the dominance of the church and nobility waned, the beauty of stained glass diminished.

During the 18th century, the Age of Reason, rationalist thinkers insisted that people be freed from myth and superstition, overlooking the possibility that clinging to and preserving myth and superstition might be part of people's nature. They also erred in evaluating the past, particularly the middle ages, when life was filled with disasters, famine and pestilence, that were believed to be of supernatural origin and a form of divine punishment. Unable to investigate nature on a scientific basis, medievals trusted to the aid of saints and angels to save them from demons and 18th century thinkers considered them naive.

The medieval concept of reasoning had much to do with the development of medieval art, especially stained glass windows, made for interpreting religion. Religion was a source of hope, its optimism helping to shape the believer's faith in his capacity for

progress. Eventually this was to influence the philosophy of the "Age of Reason," when man believed that all the answers for human perfectibility were at hand. It was a time of restlessness, discovery and invention. The powers of the monarchs waned, yet they remained patrons of the arts, and the arts expressed to an exacting degree a philosophy of decline of the aristocracy.

Soon, the 19th century, the "Age of Romanticism," approached. It was the beginning of the "modern" world, when people began to search in art for unusual sensations and emotions. Medieval and classical art became the source for the discovery of a new "naturalness," rather than of formal order in design. Artists, preoccupied with the notion of intense personal experience, looked for naturalness within conventions, a trend still evident in art today. During the "Age of Romanticism" many new churches were built and existing ones restored. Stained glass windows once more became abundant. A new industrial development also helped to produce a new analysis, criticism, and propagation of the arts. Victorian writers concerned themselves with the question of the relationship of painting and sculpture to the applied arts. Each country took it as a national mission to encourage good design and improve the education of designers and artist-craftsmen. Research into techniques of earlier periods led to a development of prime importance; the rediscovery of the principles of design implicit in these earlier periods and an appreciation by modern artist-craftsmen of the materials they used. This development mirrored the intellectual world and the artisan workshop - the mind-to-hand relationship.

The mid-nineteenth century produced such great stained glass artists, as William Morris, Burne-Jones, Joshua Reynolds, John La Farge, Louis Comfort Tiffany and Frederic Crowninshield, who contributed greatly to the arts and crafts movement in Europe and America. Around 1880 a new period in glass, the "Opalescent Age," evolved. In contrast to medieval glass, which is clear, opaque or opalescent glass is milky and textured, transmits less light and has an iridescent look. La Farge and Tiffany popularized its use in windows and lamps; they experimented with different effects of blending color, making a distinctly American contribution to glass. The panel by Frederic Crowninshield "Art is the Lethe of Life," ca 1888, is - with its subdued color combination, stylized design and superb leading technique - an example of opal glass; it is representative of an art form in glass that affected the public preferences and tastes for decades to come.

A movement that predated, but then went on to parallel the Opalescent Age, was the German School in art glass. In sheer volume, it all but eclipsed other styles. German craftsmen and master painters set up shop in the United States and imported vast amounts

of glass to produce expertly painted antique glass windows with heroic figures under ornate canopies. Known as "Munich Style," this was widely popularized throughout the country. The "Apostle" window in this exhibition was executed by the Chicago Studio, ca 1900 in such style.

The popularity of opalescent and Munich Style glass lasted until the 1930's, when the Depression took its toll and most studios fell by the wayside. After World War II a new challenge in design was met in functionalism, which established itself with simpler, cleaner lines in Bauhaus tradition, and allowed the use of abstractionism. In 1940 the so-called "New Glass" period evolved, despite some resistance by traditionalists. Its development in the United States was slow at first, with many artists having little success in attracting commissions. There was a tendency towards the notion of 'simply less stained glass of any kind.' The medium was looked upon as anachronistic, belonging to another time. With the 1960's and 1970's - and the social protests and political crisis of those years - American aesthetic values were restructured and that restructuring is still at work today.

The artists of this exhibition are from the metropolitan area. Their work represents the 'modern idea' in glass today, from abstract to realistic, from unpainted to painted glass, from two-dimensional to three-dimensional projection. Whatever their individual styles, all work is an art form that is constantly growing. These artists respect the laws and limits of their craft, laws and limits they had to learn before moving freely within its boundaries.

The exhibition presents a sampling not only of aesthetics and style, but also of glass techniques and processes over the past one hundred years, to be enjoyed by all who come to learn "by looking and listening," as Theophilus stated a long time ago.

Barbara M. Meise

GUEST CURATORS

BARBARA M. MEISE

I am professionally involved in art since childhood, drawing and painting, and entering competitions in my native Bavaria. The beauty of nature, my family's philosophic outlook and eccentric lifestyle were conducive factors for my development in art. I also loved dreaming and plotting escapes to far-away places.

My first move was to England, where I studied art and literature, followed by a visit to New York, a city of world art and excitement. It was 'love at first sight' - and I remained. More than a decade ago I became apprenticed in stained glass at Lamb Studios in Tenafly, learning techniques and design of this ancient art. These were productive times, watching master craftsmen at work and gaining knowledge by 'trial and error.' I was eventually asked to teach at The Cloisters, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, which gradually led to further expansion in medieval art. While studying precious illuminated manuscripts in their collection I became a devout medievalist believing, without doubt, in the wisdom of the ancients.

It is my mission to revive and make known once more the techniques of stained glass painting, gold illumination, icon painting, and buon fresco; to inspire artists to use ancient techniques in modern art. There are strong signs for a renewed interest in these techniques by students, and the news media is eager to support it. I teach ancient techniques at the School of Sacred Arts, Pratt Manhattan, and have appeared on television proliferating these ideas. Every night at bedtime I read Cennini and Theophilus, whose wisdom I treasure.

LELAND A. COOK

My long quest for "Storied Stained Glass" in America began on February 22, 1957 when I was commissioned by Tiffany & Co. to photograph William Bolton's "Gift of Magi" window for reproduction on a Christmas card to be sold at the Fifth Avenue store. This window, ca 1843, is recognized as the first religious, figure stained glass window actually made in America and is located in Christ Church, Pelham Manor, New York. There are other examples of stained glass produced in the 1600's, but they were armorial glass designs made for individual families in New Amsterdam. My quest has been given added dimension over the years and now encompasses photographs of stained glass in England, Toronto, Hawaii, Hong Kong and Japan as well as many important churches and public buildings around America.

For me, colored glass is exciting, like jewels, not like glass at all ... perhaps because of this my career in the photography of precious stones has become inherent in my photography of stained glass. I have found that the photography of stained glass is made more difficult because of the unique relationship between stained glass and any given light source. We can photograph the color of painted surfaces because of the existence of reflected light, while refracted light brings out the color of stained glass. Thus because of this relationship we are at the mercy of the subtle changes brought on by the time of day, the season of the year or the weather in which we are attempting our photography of a particular stained glass "masterpiece".

My vocation for a period of 27 years beginning with my employment by Tiffany & Co. in July of 1956 was as their advertising photographer ... (I retired from Tiffanys in May of 1983). In turn, my avocation during that period and since my retirement has been the photography of "Interesting Americana" especially stained glass.

My slides of stained glass have found favor with lectures to various groups such as the D.A.R., The English Speaking Union, The Women's Pay Club at Sardi's, two Art Groups in Tokyo and Osaka, Japan, plus many Historical Societies and Ladies Clubs around America. My photographs of windows in the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, New York City, were used on a record jacket, a jigsaw puzzle and in 1982 a calendar. My many photographs of stained glass and other articles of religious art in St. Patrick's Cathedral during the restoration of the Cathedral in 1972-73 culminated in my book in 1979 "St. Patrick's Cathedral: A Centennial History" with the foreword by Terence Cardinal Cooke and the introduction by Brendan Gill. In 1978 Eastman Kodak's Christmas show in their galleries at 44th Street & 6th Avenue, New York City featured mural transparencies of 6 of my large format photos of religious stained glass windows.

As photographic consultant to the Stained Glass Association of America for many years, I have fulfilled assignments for their magazine in such places as Toronto, Canada, New York City, California, Hawaii, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and most recently in Collegeville, Minnesota.

On four occasions I have been honored with the George Washington Honor Medal by Freedoms Foundation, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, for my photographs depicting the "American Way of Life".

Over the years, on nine occasions, Tiffany & Company commissioned me to photograph windows that were used on Christmas cards that were on sale at the Fifth Avenue store and I have been honored by the use of my transparencies of windows from St. Patrick's Cathedral on the personal Christmas cards of Terence Cardinal Cooke and Cardinal O'Connor.

I graduated from Brooks Institute of Photography, Santa Barbara, California in 1949. In October of 1984 I was invited back to Brooks to address a graduating class and was honored by Mr. Ernest Brooks with a Masters Degree of Science of Photography for my career in photography.

MARNI BAKST

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| Blue Vertigo | 4' x 4' |
| Checkered Past | 5' x 5½' |
| Rhomboid Rhumba | 6' x 6½' |

MICHAEL E. DAVIS

| | |
|-----------------|------------|
| Stars & Stripes | 11½" x 18" |
| Tron | 15½" x 23" |

ALBINAS ELSKUS

| | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Blue Grass | 31" x 11" |
| Head of Christ | 19" x 27" |
| The Last Rose | 18" Diameter |

CAROL FROHLICH

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Art Deco Circle | 19" Diameter |
| Art Deco Triptych (3 pieces) | 71" x 23" each |
| Peace Dove | 22½" x 24½" |

SAARA GALLIN

| | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Hope | 38" x 21" |
| The Littlest Angel | 21" x 37" |
| Tortoiseshell Geometry | 35" Diameter |

THOMAS GARCIA

| | |
|------------|-----------|
| Winter '76 | 20" x 30" |
|------------|-----------|

MARY CLERKIN HIGGINS

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Four Scored | 11 ¹⁵ / ₁₆ " x 11 ¹⁵ / ₁₆ " |
| Our Lady of the Eaves | 13 ⁵ / ₈ " x 16 ¹¹ / ₁₆ " |
| Red/Black | 24 ¹³ / ₁₆ " x 30 ⁵ / ₁₆ " |

HARRIET HYAMS

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| Glas Architektur IV | 42" x 40½" |
| Glas Architektur V | 31" x 48" |
| Seascape | 23" x 43¼" |

ELLEN MANDELBAUM

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| Freudian Tree | 13" x 19" |
| Golden Martinique | 41" x 48" |
| Martinique | 18" x 21" |
| Picture Window/Mountain View | 38" x 27" |

BARBARA M. MEISE

| | |
|--------------|-----------|
| I Live Here | 30" x 40" |
| Remembrances | 31" x 38" |
| Wanting | 40" x 30" |

SISTER GERARDINE MUELLER

| | |
|-------|-------------|
| Earth | 3' Diameter |
|-------|-------------|

FROM THE COLLECTION OF BARBARA M. MEISE

"Art is the Lethe of Life"
Frederic Crowninshield - ca 1888
- Victorian style

"John the Apostle"
by Chicago Studio, artist unknown
- ca 1900
- Munich style

Glass Fragments from the
Michael C. Rockefeller Chapel windows
at Pocantico Hills by Marc Chagall

FROM THE COLLECTION OF SUNNY COOK

"Butterfly Rondel"
by Robert McCausland

FROM THE COLLECTION OF GORDON HENDERSON

Triptych cartoon, Tiffany studios

Fragments of Opalescent Glass,
Louis Comfort Tiffany

Fragments of Drapery Glass,
Louis Comfort Tiffany

Panels from Henderson Brothers,
New York City, ca 1880's

FROM THE COLLECTION OF LELAND A. COOK

Dickens Christmas Carol Past, Present & Future
color transparencies from Kodak Exhibition

"Flight into Egypt" by William J. Bolton
Church of the Holy Apostle, New York City
color transparency from Kodak Exhibition

"Nativity of Christ" St. Patrick's Cathedral
color enlargement from Kodak Exhibition

color transparencies from Hawaii, Hong Kong & Tokyo

color transparencies of America's first religious
figure windows by William Jay & John Bolton
ca 1843-50

St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York City
color transparencies of windows
by Connick Studios, Boston, M. Ely, Nantes,
France and M. Lorin, Chartres, France.

Dana House, Springfield, Illinois
color transparencies of windows by Frank Lloyd Wright,
Linden Glass Company, Chicago.

CHRISTMAS WINDOW

William Bolton

Church of the Holy Apostle, New York

TIFFANY & CO.