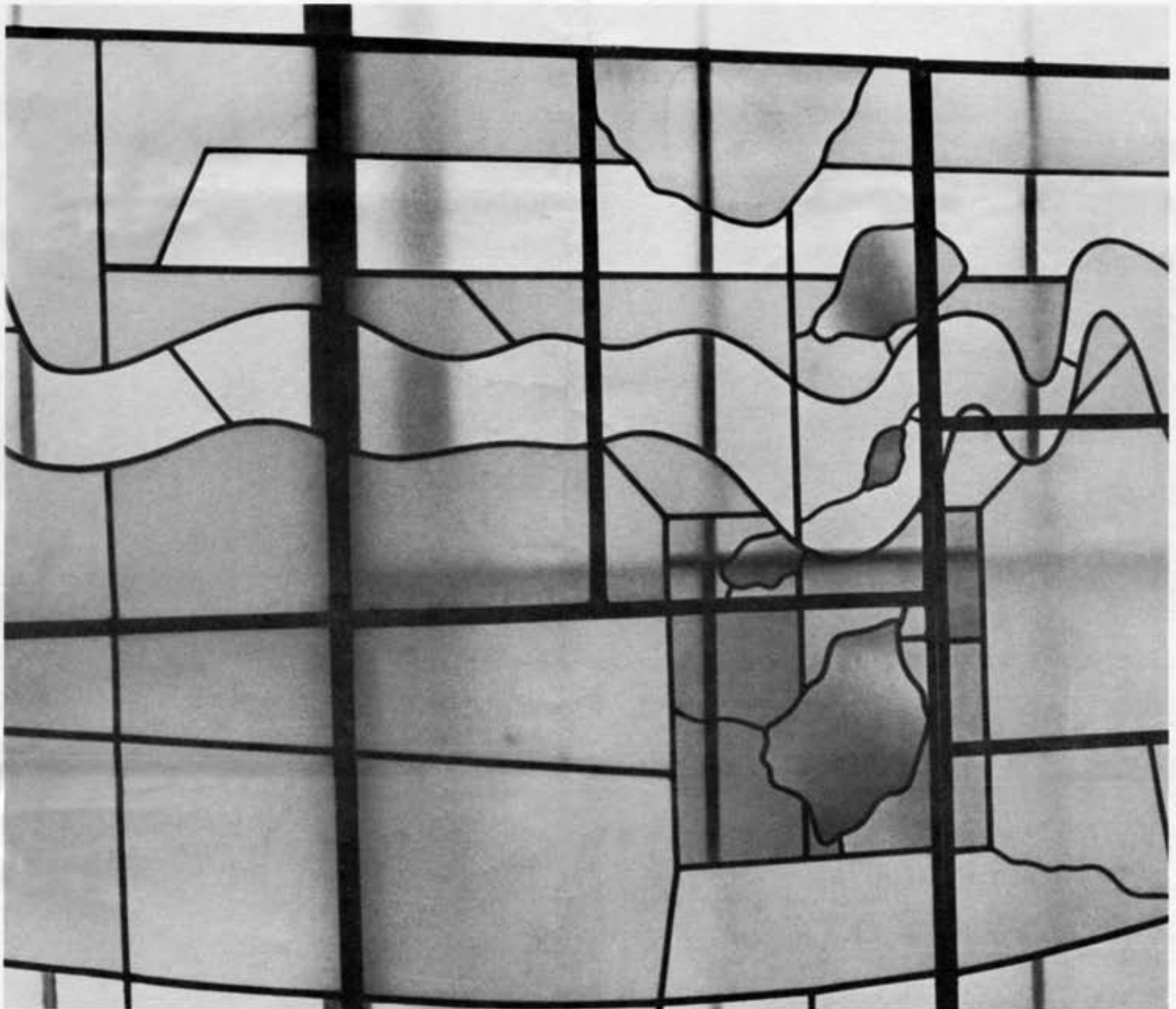


# THE LEADLINE

Volume 3, Number 4      Toronto, Ontario      Autumn, 1978



*Patrick Reyntiens to-day stands in the lonely vanguard of contemporary British stained glass. Although he is most widely celebrated for the work he has done in collaboration with John Piper, in which he has acted both as Piper's interpreter-in-glass, and on occasions as his co-designer, Reyntiens' most important achievement lies in the relatively small but impressive body of his own work. Ranging from complete curtain-walls of glass such as at St. Mary's Priory, Leyland to highly individual autonomous exhibition pieces, Reyntiens has produced a new and exciting vocabulary of images that should be numbered among the most important 20th century stained glass. Stuart Reid, who studied and worked under Patrick Reyntiens for two years, provides us in this edition of THE LEADLINE with the first of two parts of his assessment of Reyntiens' work. Patrick Reyntiens is widely known in Canada and in the US for the unique school for stained glass artists he directed at Burleighfield in Buckinghamshire, and for the book "Technique of Stained Glass" which has been acclaimed as the standard text on the subject. The exhibition panel illustrated here (1969 — in the collection of the artist) is free-standing and was originally exhibited in the gardens at Burleighfield.*

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# THE LEADLINE

THE LEADLINE is published by:

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In March, after extensive research into the whereabouts of almost every stained glass artist or craftsman listed with central or provincial art and craft organisations, or in the Yellow Pages, invitations to participate in the Master Stained Glass Workshop were sent out to over 300 Canadians from coast to coast. Only 16 of these responded! For a time it looked as if we would have to cancel the event as a result of this unexpected poverty of support. In fact, we decided to go ahead with our plans. Lawrence Lee came over from England, and the rest is history and cherished memories of two weeks of association with a great artist and a thoroughly delightful man. We can now put things in their proper perspective, as Lawrence Lee has done in his comments published in this edition, and assess some of the issues raised by the Harbourfront Experiment.

Why were only 16 people sufficiently interested in such an event that was indeed unique in the history of Canadian stained glass? Was the project too ambitious? Was it too expensive? Has the isolation of stained glass from the rest of the art world in Canada caused us to withdraw into a self-satisfied preoccupation with our craft? Are we too secure in the knowledge that our skill alone ensures us a ready market for our product? Are we afraid of artistic and aesthetic enlightenment? Are we afraid of each other? Is there indeed any hope for a community of stained glass artists in Canada such as AISG seeks to facilitate?

We need answers to these questions. For until the answers are forthcoming, the questions themselves will speak eloquently about the state of stained glass as an art form in Canada. In three years of publication, THE LEADLINE has received only *ONE* Letter-to-the Editor! How about a few answers to these questions?

## EDITORIAL

## THE NEW YORK EXPERIMENTAL GLASS WORKSHOP

One of the unexpected benefits of the Master Stained Glass Workshop was the connection established between members of Artists in Stained Glass and Steve Cosimano of the New York Experimental Glass Workshop (NYEGW). Steve's attendance at Harbourfront was sponsored by GLASS and Glass STUDIO magazines.

Founded in 1977, the NYEGW is in many respects similar to AISG. The NYEGW was established to promote the use of glass as an artistic medium through information exchange, meetings, slide shows, lectures and exhibitions. In addition, one of NYEGW's primary objectives is to provide facilities in Manhattan for glass blowing, glass working, teaching and experimentation in glass.

With barely a year under its belt, this energetic organisation has undertaken some very ambitious projects in 1978. The year began

with a January exhibition at the Hadler Galleries in NYC which included work by directors of the glass programs at five major US colleges . . . Represented were Dale Chihuly, Jon Clarke, Dan Dailey, Marvin Lipofsky, and David Willard . . . as well as a number of other glass artists. In April, NYEGW conducted a live glass-blowing demonstration at the International Craft Show at the NY Coliseum. In May, they again demonstrated live glass-blowing . . . this time on TV as part of the Works in Progress program of WNET Channel 13.

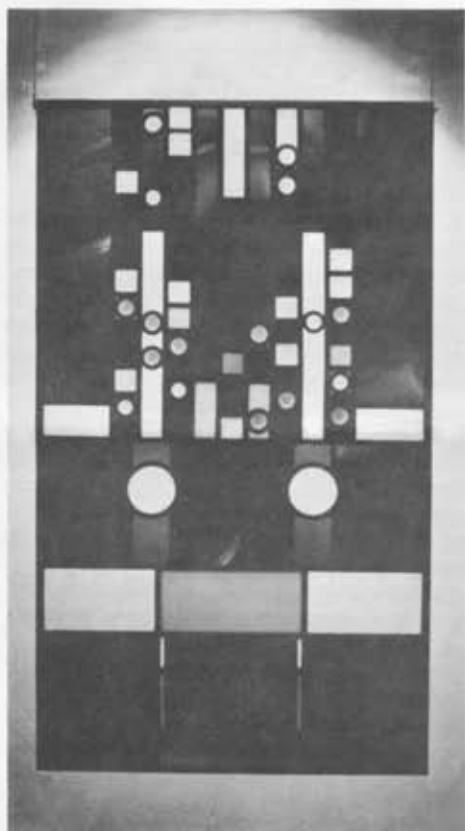
In July, NYEGW offered the first classes in glass blowing ever to be taught on the island of Manhattan. Eight students were enrolled with Richard Yelle and Joe Upham instructing. The glass facilities are located at one end of a large pottery studio operated by Clayworks.

The second glass exhibition of the year (reviewed in this issue) was held in September at the gallery of the Parsons School of Design. It closed on Friday, 29 September with a flourish marked by a public lecture by Ludwig Schaffrath, and attended by over 200 enthusiasts, and a reception the following day at the studio/residence of NYEGW Executive Associate Erik Erikson in honour of Herr Schaffrath. Another stained glass lecture is planned for October to be given by Paul Marioni and Kathy Bunell from California.

Your editor and James Gillespie were in NYC for the festivities marking the Schaffrath visit, and found the members of the NYEGW to be very interested in AISG and our activities in Canada. Links have now been established with the hope that in the future we may see some joint enterprises being undertaken between the two groups.

## THE SECOND NYEGW GLASS INVITATIONAL OF 1978

a review by Robert Jekyll



*Stained glass panel by Robert Sowers at the NYEGW Exhibition*

From 5-29 September the New York Experimental Glass Workshop held its second major show of the year in the gallery of the Parsons School of Design, 2 West 13th Street, NYC. Amongst the 50 or so invited to exhibit were the prominent American stained glass artists: Ed Carpenter; Albinus Elskus; Robert Pinart; Richard Posner; Narcissus Quagliata; Robert Sowers; Dick Weiss; and David Wilson. The theme of the exhibition was "Glass in the Environment" featuring designs, models, full-size working cartoons, and photographs of installed architectural work as well as structures made from flat glass and free-blown glass. Excluded from the show were glass vessels and objects-of-use.

According to the "flyer" available at the door, the exhibit was intended to demonstrate a conscious awareness of the relation of the-artist's glass work to the environment. This notice then goes on to question whether a number of the artists exhibiting respected this consideration as much as they might have.

From the outset the Parsons School gallery is a difficult space for glass. Far from being a slick Madison Avenue art emporium, the Parsons gallery seems to be more of a huge windowless lobby than a place to exhibit art. There is a busy traffic pattern to and from offices above and beyond. One of these offices, into which the exhibition overflowed, was serving double-duty as a course registration centre. The distraction of human activity was compounded by the break-up of the space by several huge square sectioned pil-

lars that made it difficult, if not impossible to achieve any degree of visual unity. The lighting set up high in the two-story high gallery was totally inappropriate for an exhibition of glass as it bathed everything in a bleak washed-out glare. Initial impressions are important, and the space itself in which an exhibition takes place adds to or detracts from this first impact. Glass is probably the most difficult medium to exhibit effectively, and there are very few galleries that are ideally suited to this purpose. Groups like NYEGW and AISG, operating on a tiny budget, must inevitably avail themselves of whatever space they can conveniently come by. Nevertheless, among the options available, however restricted, there must be some that in some way are sympathetic to the medium of glass. The Parsons gallery was not such a place.

As regards the exhibition itself, it was refreshing to see a fair representation of east-coast work amidst the now standard California fare. Autonomous stained glass panels cleverly illuminated and suspended from simple open box frames set out from the walls were in the majority. Glass sculptural and "environmental" pieces came next, followed by a number of full-size cartoons. A scale model of stained glass for a building foyer, some photographs, and a series of design proposals completed this very eclectic display.

On entering the gallery my attention was immediately rivetted upon a stained glass panel by Robert Sowers . . . evidently brought forward from his 1975 exhibition at



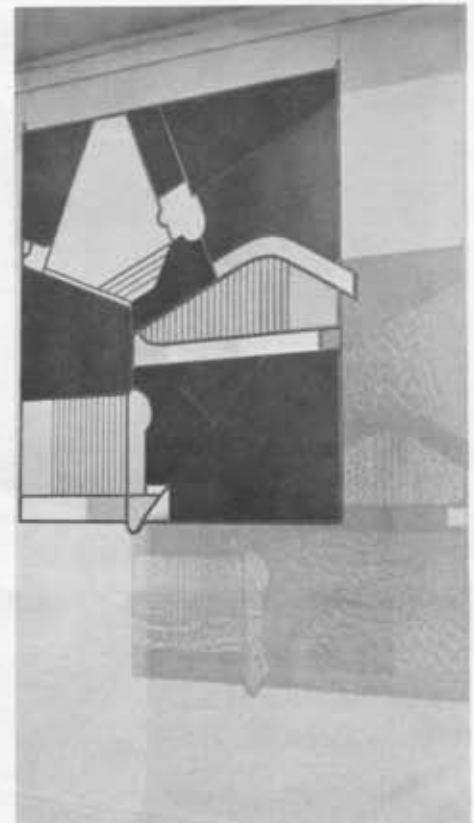
the Museum of Contemporary Crafts. The rigid network of symmetrical graphics together with a dramatic use of strong colour against white suggests a re-evaluation of the post-Cubist era of 20th Century Dutch-German stained glass. Facing Sowers' piece was a confusing series of design proposals by the James Carpenter Design Association . . . something to do with Solterra Projects identified by obscure and pretentious labels such as . . . "autonomous aquiculture" and "phototropic-voltaic" . . . seemingly derived from the bureaucratic lexicon of the Pentagon. Many minutes of examination here went unrewarded.

The sheer magnitude of David Wilson's cartoon for a Baton Rouge, Louisiana, church commission next demanded my attention. These days one is perhaps too inclined to look for influences in everybody's work . . . especially if it suggests a hint of the presence of a certain German artist. But once this recognition is set aside, the strong simplicity of the soaring graphic lines could not fail but impress. Philadelphia artist, Ray King, who seems to specialise in producing stained glass in unusual shapes, was represented by a "U" shaped piece containing a symbol looking for all the world like a coiled-up worm set in a box on a large magenta field. I'm sure all this glass could have been put to a better use.


A full-size cartoon by Robert Pinart for his window in Washington's National Cathedral

was colourful, but failed to convey a strong sense of image. One hopes that the real thing has achieved the dynamism of upward movement that seems implied in the cartoon but somewhat diminished by an almost helter-skelter use of fragmented colour. A sophisticated and intellectually cool piece by New York artist Harriet Hyams entitled "Glas Architectur I", in my opinion, stole the show. Apart from a somewhat unsettling use of mirror, the work was entirely composed of grey opals and opaks. In spite of the strong graphic element and the almost ritualistic use of lead-line, the strong shapes had a distinctive quality to them that dispelled the all too often felt nagging worry of "influence". The flood lights intended to back-light the panel were switched off . . . either intentionally, or inadvertently. No matter, I tried both modes and decided I preferred them off. I found the image reflected on the wall from the general gallery lighting quite fascinating, and an important contribution to the overall image. However, I have never been at peace with the idea of using mirror in a stained glass composition. The accidental image it produces is usually entirely foreign to the design . . . and I felt Ms. Hyams placed an otherwise elegant work in jeopardy through its use.

A well designed three section glass screen that made effective use of German opals and opaks by Missy Nord Haggerty showed a disciplined sense of design that achieved a nice balance between function and form. A



GLAS ARCHITECTUR I by Harriet Hyams



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PORTRAIT OF SCHAFFRATH a full-size cartoon by Narcissus Quagliata at the NYEGW Exhibition

humorous, if irreverent, cartoon entitled "Portrait of Schaffrath" by Narcissus Quagliata embodied a "traditional" Quagliata silhouette dressed up in a detail of a Schaffrath window, set against an equally familiar background from the master's drawing board.

Of particular interest was the inclusion in the show of two neon pieces. This, more eloquently than anything else, stated the experimental nature of the exhibition . . . and of NYEGW itself. I was especially interested in the small but elegant piece produced by Steve Cosimano . . . a simple curve of blue neon threaded through a series of slits in a simple paper surface. Unfortunately, a timer for this work had been stolen on the first day, and I had to plug in the cord to make it work. Reluctantly I obeyed an unspoken command and unplugged it again after enjoying this unlikely, but entirely effective association between paper and glass.

The weakest elements in the show were the glass "sculptural" pieces. While a few had promise of further development in terms of environmental art, most simply lacked sufficient presence to even draw attention to themselves. There is perhaps a largely uncharted region between architectural glass set in wall openings and blown glass as functional or decorative objects, that represents the most challenging area for exploration and experimentation amongst glassworkers. In spite of their apparent weakness this consideration alone justified the presence of many of these works in the show regardless of the success (or failure) of any one individual piece.

In conclusion, I refer to the remarks of organiser Erik Erikson in the exhibition flyer: "It was not the objective of the NYEGW so much to succeed in the stated intent of the exhibit as to experiment with the idea. We know of no other glass exhibit that has attempted to direct such a diversity of expression to the theme of environment". And I concur with his conclusion that "NYEGW has succeeded in mounting a provocative exhibit".

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