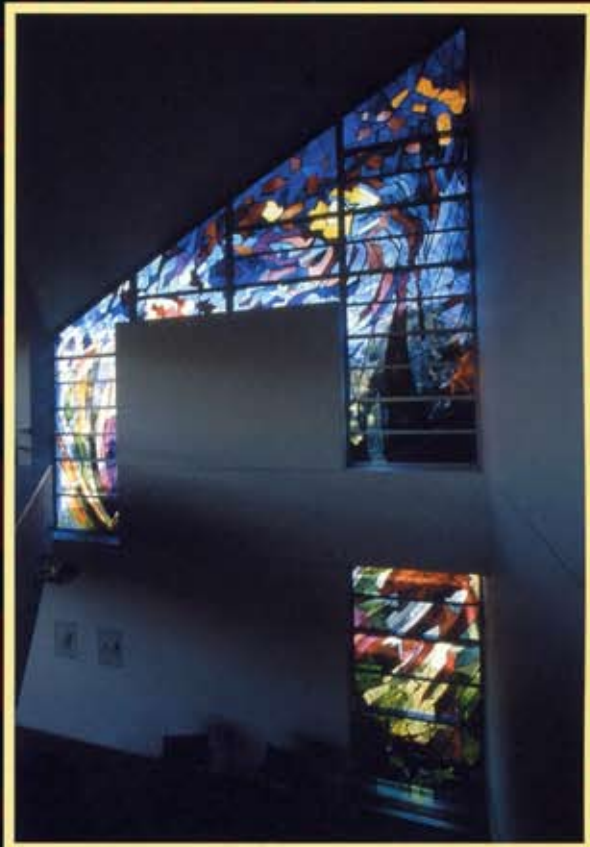
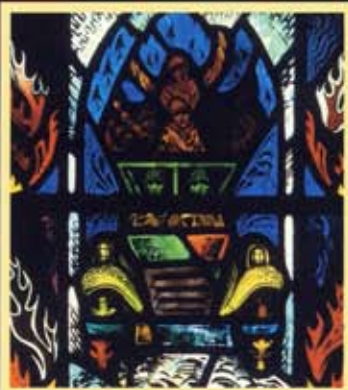


Spring 2003

# STAINED GLASS



A magazine appertaining  
to fine glazing and  
calculated to stimulate an  
appreciation of architectural  
possibilities in the  
*Ancient Craft*

QUARTERLY OF THE STAINED GLASS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

In this issue:

- Memory Grove
- Insuring Stained Glass Windows
- Dune Church
- Aluminum Frame Finishing
- Marian Woods

Presenting contemporary and historical architectural stained glass since 1906



Choir Windows

# Stained Glass

for

## Our Lady of the Rosary Dominican Chapel Sparkill, NY

by Harriet Hyams

photographs by Charles Shimel

A chapel designed by the Czech-born architect Martin Holub is unlike anything I've seen in these parts, ever! To think that a group of Dominican Sisters would dream of planning a building so untraditional as Our Lady of The

Rosary in Sparkill, NY, makes the head spin. But then, the Dominican Sisters in Vence, France, were every bit as daring when they selected Matisse to design a chapel for them.

Sparkill? A small town, just north of New York City, not too far

from the Hudson River. The Sisters? A group of women dedicated to God, caring for the impoverished, teaching across the globe and voicing their concerns for social justice; there are artists among them, too.

As I came to know the Sisters after my initial meetings, it



*Resurrection Windows*



*Eucharist Window*



*Chapel Exterior View*

became clear to me that these talented women were extremely worldly in their outlook. When I was told the stained glass designs for their chapel were to be abstract, I didn't think they had grasped the full impact of abstract design. I was dead wrong. I lean toward abstract and expressionism in designing glass, but this time my first concept was too traditional, and they sent me back to the drawing board, where I let my instincts and emotions just take over. I studied and read, talked and listened, and, to my delight, my next and final presentation for the *Eucharist* and *Resurrection* Windows was greeted enthusiastically. There must have been an undisclosed signal that only the Sisters understood, because I was given the go-ahead without ever hearing a discussion. The



Lower *Eucharist* window and Harriet Hyams on the day of installation.

and old can pray together. There is a second-floor walkway that wraps around the interior perimeter with clear glass from under the hand railing to the floor that permits congregants to view activities and ceremonies below without obstruction.

been told The Holy Spirit reveals in unexpected ways.

So with the walkway cutting through the space as a large architectural element (that also conceals the heating and cooling system), viewing the *Eucharist* window is an interesting endeavor. However, when the interior lights shine in the evening, the entire window wall can be seen from the exterior; I'm told that the Sisters take delight from this view as seen from their living quarters opposite the window.

Working out the iconography for the windows was a challenge, as I translated my research and dialogues with the Sisters into abstract design, working within the context of Catholic spiritual meaning. The Eucharist has layers of mystery, and the Sisters trusted me to conjure the Eucharist into a design to which they could relate. I understand that some of the Sisters see images that I don't (not unusual), but basically my theme was wind and fire.

selection committee was large, and I understand that there had to be a consensus of opinion: a nod, a look, went unnoticed by myself. Then, some months later, an additional commission for two choir windows was discussed and decided in my favor.

The Chapel is connected to a retirement home for the elderly Sisters, many of whom had been unable to attend Mass and other services for a number of years because of their disabilities. The new chapel permits easy access and participation where young

The upper walkway is a marvel for the disabled, but causes the stained glass in the *Eucharist* window to be cut in half when viewing the window from the first level; one must approach closely and look up. When on the second level, the viewer (to see the entirety) must approach closely and peer up and then down. Standing on the far side of the walkway, a viewer gets to see some stained glass, depending on the angle. This separation was a surprise to me but, I think, does not diminish the overall effect of my design. Rationalizing the situation, I've

The two *Resurrection* windows form a right angle, and have a strong south light, devastating to the eyes in winter. Obviously, to avoid excessive brightness, I used relatively somber hues. The images have a wide and somewhat upward thrust, carrying the design continuously around the corner. These two windows are at the end of the Fourteen Stations of The Cross (sculptural plaques) on the adjacent wall. I was assigned the "Fifteenth" Station to be fabricated in stained glass, and named them "Resurrection Windows" with the

enthusiastic agreement of the Sisters.

The two Choir windows are adjacent to and neatly frame the organ and piano at the first-floor level. The very wide overhang on the exterior of the Choir windows presented an obstacle in glass selection: the committee requested very light-colored windows. The parked cars and pedestrians on the street needed to appear distorted, but the greenery was lovely and should be seen. Opak and semi-opalescent glass was used with some antiques that permit viewing the exterior from within. When folks pass by, they are unable to peer in, but they do see glass that reflects into an organized design. I selected the element of water as the theme for these windows, which is harmonious with the musical setting. (Inspiration: Handel's "Water Music," Ravel's "Le Mer," etc.)

Now, all the spiritual elements are present and represented in the stained glass windows of the chapel — Fire, Wind and Water. The Chapel was dedicated on September 10, 2001, by Cardinal Egan of New York.

While vacationing in France, we were visiting the Matisse Chapel in Vence on September 11. The day was sunshine-spectacular as we watched the reflections move across the chapel floor. Needless to say, another spectacle was occurring in New York on that same sunshiny day.

*End Comments: These windows were fabricated with great care and skill*

*at The Wilmark Studios in Pearl River, NY. The overall dimensions are 335 sq. ft. Wilby Malarcher was the liturgical consultant, and I express my gratitude for his advice.*

*The glass came from S.A Bendheim & Co. Most of it was imported from Germany for this job and some imported from France at an earlier time.*

*The photos were taken by Charles Shimel.*

Harriet Hyams has been designing stained glass for more than 30 years. The 32 foot high west windows in the sanctuary of The Jewish Chapel at West Point; the prize-winning Dominican chapel, Our Lady of the Rosary, Sparkill, New York; and a stained glass wall for the world headquarters of Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc, Orlando, Florida, exhibit her unique style. Besides liturgical projects, she has done work for government buildings, corporations, public buildings, schools, residence and autonomous panels.

Working as a sculptor in wood, stone and steel in her early career, Hyams' love for form



Detail from Eucharist window.

and space adds other dimensions to her work incorporating light and color. Her 14 solo exhibitions have all included sculpture. Since 1987, she has produced and exhibited life drawings in ink, charcoal and gouache. Her works are included in public and private collections throughout the country.

Hyams has traveled extensively to see and learn about old and new stained glass throughout the world. This has brought scholarly knowledge and unique perception to her work. More of her work can be seen online at [www.harriethyams.com](http://www.harriethyams.com).

