



LET
THERE
BE
LIGHT

Stained Glass
and Drawings
from the
Collection of
Oakbrook Esser Studios

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The exhibition **Let There be Light** *Stained Glass and Drawings from the Collection of Oakbrook Esser Studios* and related programs have been made possible through funding by the Marquette University Andrew W. Mellon Fund, the Kathleen and Frank Thometz Charitable Foundation, the Eleanor H. Boehm Endowment Fund and the John P. Raynor, S.J. Endowment Fund.

This exhibition came to fruition through the dedication and work of many people. First and foremost, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to Paul Phelps, owner of Oakbrook Esser Studios in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. Paul treated us with great kindness and generously gave his time and knowledge throughout the two year process of putting this exhibition together. The incredibly talented staff of Oakbrook Esser welcomed us to the studio time and again and graciously worked around our many intrusions. Warm thanks in particular go to Dondi Griffin and Johann Minten.

David Fernandez-Barkan, Haggerty intern and art history major at Harvard University, was integral in laying the groundwork for the exhibition. Her thorough research paved the way for the show to come to life.

We also want to thank essayists Dr. Deirdre Dempsey (associate professor, Marquette University, Department of Theology) and James Walker (glass artist, New Zealand) for their contributions to this catalogue.

Cover image

Unknown Artist and Studio
St. Agnus, (detail), c. 1900
Antique glass, flashed glass,
pigment, enamels, silver staining
57 x 22"
checklist #7



Attributed to Tiffany Studios
 New York, New York
 Setting fabricated by Oakbrook Esser Studios
 Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Head of Christ, c. 1900, setting c. 1985
 Opal glass, antique glass, pigment, enamels
 15 x 15"
 checklist #15



Ross Taylor (1916-2001)
 Enterprise Art Glass Works
 Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Life of Mary, c. 1960
 Ink and watercolor on paper
 Diameter 12 1/2"
 checklist #32

A PASSION FOR COLLECTING

by Paul Phelps

Collecting for me has always been a passion. When I acquire any object of art, it is imperative to care for it to the best of my ability. At best, I am a temporary steward. There is a responsibility to preserve the object to ensure its enjoyment by future generations. I tend to gravitate towards items that need saving or are in grave condition. Not only are they closest to extinction – they also pose the greatest challenge. Once the object has been fully restored, I feel a great sense of achievement. History, in many cases, is fragile. When something is resurrected back to its original form, it can have a very profound and lasting effect on the restorer.

This exhibition represents a cross section of new and old windows from the collections of Oakbrook Esser Studios. From humble beginnings, fueled by passion, our dedicated staff, past and present, has designed, fabricated, and restored these beautiful works of art. No one individual represents the core value of the company more than Johann Minten. His hand and artistry can be felt in many of the objects in the exhibition. At 81 years old, he is still contributing to the studio today. He is an inspiration to us all. I owe the entire staff



a debt of gratitude, not only for their work within the company but also for their support that extends far beyond the walls of the studio. I feel blessed to be able to work in a field that has such a glorious past. I love the title “craftsman.” It evokes a time when a person’s life was devoted to a trade that was passed down from parent to child - generation to generation - when people worked with their hands and minds, and were proud of what they created. This is a standard I hold myself to – a goal to achieve. Stained glass has a history that spans over 1,000 years. It is exciting that we still build windows in the same manner, in the same footsteps of the craftsmen of the past.

Stained glass and liturgical installations have a long history and this pairing is still a primary application today. It humbles me to be in this inspirational field and I am grateful that on a daily basis my faith can be expressed in works that give glory to God.

The collaboration that we have had with countless artists – some within our medium, but also extending beyond – is one of my favorite aspects of the studio. Life is enriched by art and the relationship with the artists themselves. Creative energy is a positive force. Sharing this with others is to everyone’s benefit. By commissioning and working with an artist, you not only have the opportunity to experience their work first hand, you are also able to support their craft and give back to the artists’ community. We all need to invest in the arts. Some of the more recent pieces in the exhibition are the designs of Janet McKenzie, Johannes Schrieter, and James Walker. These three artists are accomplished in their own right. I have an admiration for them and their craft. I felt compelled to contact them with the hope that we could one day work together, and the work you will see on display is that dream realized. I am grateful for their friendship and support and for the opportunity to share this experience with you today.

Haggerty staff members Lynne Shumow, John Loscuito and Dan Herro have been a joy to work with. We had more fun than work in planning and staging this exhibit. Their professionalism helped keep me on track (which is no easy task!), and it was a pleasure to be able to collaborate in such a manner with the museum. We chose to represent a cross section of styles and techniques so the viewer can appreciate the broad range of artistry that this medium has to offer.



Johann Minten, Dutch (b. 1928)
For window in St. Clare’s Church
North Lake, Wisconsin
Resurrection, 1988
Watercolor and ink on paper
15 x 17 1/2”
checklist #40

Oakbrook Esser Studios
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Design by Janet McKenzie
American (b. 1948)
Jesus of the People, 2000-2005
Flashed antique glass, enamels
25 x 16”
checklist #21



Jacoby Art Glass Company
 St. Louis, Missouri
Christ on the Cross, (detail), c. late 19th/early 20th century
 Charcoal and watercolor on paper
 70 x 34 1/2"
 checklist #24

By showcasing the different stages of the stained glass process, one can get a glimpse into all of the steps involved in creating a finished window. One of my favorite groupings in the show is the series of full-size drawings created by the Jacoby Art Glass Company of Saint Louis, Missouri. They have strength on their own and are themselves beautiful works of art, however, for the most part, are forgotten. To a studio they represented an important step along the path to the window's completion. These 19th and 20th century drawings were discovered by an artist working in the former Jacoby building years after the company was acquired by Oakbrook Esser. The Haggerty staff has always had a special interest and enthusiasm for these drawings. In the early planning stages, we all realized they would become an important component of the show. Art needs to be shared to touch people and I am grateful for their support.

It would be my wish that everyone comes away from this exhibition with a greater appreciation and understanding of our craft and all of the talented artisans that work in this field. This exhibition is dedicated to their commitment to excellence. I am blessed to be a small part of such an honored trade.



Jacoby Art Glass Company
 St. Louis, Missouri
Mother and Child, (detail)
 c. late 19th/early 20th century
 Charcoal on photosensitive paper and craft paper
 mounted on linen
 46 x 20"
 checklist #29

AND THEN THERE WAS LIGHT!

by Dr. Deirdre Dempsey



Oakbrook Esser Studios
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Reproduction of late 11th/early 12th
century window from Augsburg Cathedral
Augsburg, Germany
Hosea, Early 1990s
Antique glass, flashed glass,
pigment, silver staining
74 x 19"
checklist #1

The title of this exhibition, *Let There be Light*, is lifted from the first chapter of Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament (“God said: ‘Let there be light!’; and there was light”). A reference to light is particularly appropriate for an exhibition featuring stained glass windows: natural daylight is essential for this particular art form. In the 21st century we can, of course, backlight the pieces you see here at the Haggerty Museum: you can enjoy this exhibition rain or shine, night or day.

That was certainly not the case in the medieval period, the epoch that produced our earliest surviving examples of complete stained glass windows! As one scholar has remarked, “Stained glass is the only art form that relies entirely on natural daylight for its effect. Every other art form, from painting and sculpture to tapestry and jewellery, is designed to be appreciated by reflected light. In creating such works of art, no great problem arises for the artist. He controls his colours or his shapes knowing that the purely physical reflection in the spectator’s eye will be exactly as he plans it. With a stained-glass window, however, the artist must control a powerful energy which will be transmitted through his medium of expression. He has to paint with light itself. While the painter or sculptor can arrange for the best possible lighting of his work and knows that in essence it will remain more or less unaltered, this is not so with stained glass.”¹

First we need to deal with some questions of terminology: what is stained glass? And what is a stained glass window? Notice that Lawrence Lee, the author of the preceding quote, uses “stained glass” and “stained-glass window” interchangeably. It would be more exact to say that stained glass is the material from which stained glass windows are made – stained glass has been used, particularly in more recent times, for objects other than windows: we’ve all seen, for example, Tiffany light shades. Why do we use the adjective “stained” to describe the glass that is used in these windows? Sometimes “stained glass” is used as if it were synonymous with “colored glass”; a number of scholars take issue with this lack of precision.² Colored glass has, of course, been around for millennia: excavations at the site of Tel-el-Amarna, the capital of the fourteenth century B.C. Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaten, uncovered a range of colored glasses – black, blue, violet, green, yellow, and red. Stained glass is colored glass – but as our earliest complete examples of the art form of the stained glass window (which come to us from the late eleventh or early twelfth century, so from the medieval period) reveal, if the picture required more detail – facial features, the drape of a garment, for example – that detail was provided by painting on the glass. And from the fourteenth century, artists started using a stain made

with silver nitrate; this lent a yellow color, ranging from pale lemon to deep orange, to white glass. Other stains then followed; by the seventeenth century a style of stained glass had developed in which scenes were painted onto glass panels; the colors were fused to the glass with heat and the pieces were assembled into metal frames. All of these styles of production fall under the rubric “stained glass.”

The origin of the stained glass window, the combination of these colored and painted pieces of glass into a coherent design, fitted into a frame in a wall, is shrouded in mystery. We know that the techniques for making stained glass windows were well developed by the twelfth century; in that century, a German monk who wrote under the pseudonym of Theophilus penned a work entitled *On Divers Arts*, a three part treatise on painting, stained glass, and metalworking. In the second section of this work Theophilus described both the making of colored glass and the manufacture of stained glass windows. *Stained Glass: Music for the Eye* provides a concise overview of Theophilus’s description of the methods: “Early in the twelfth century, the monk Theophilus recorded the ancient glass-making formula: two parts beech and bracken ash (yielding potash, an alkaline base) and one part river sand, washed free of earthly particles. He explained that this mixture, when heated, first assumed a pale green color; as heating was prolonged, it acquired a warm purplish cast which Theophilus described as ‘flesh-color’ (probably due to the presence of manganese in the ash). ... Glass was usually colored by the addition of various metallic oxides and salts to the molten ash-and-sand mixture during the process of fusion. The colors obtained depended on the type of metal used and the temperature to which it was taken. In the beginning, the colors were limited to blue, red, purple, green, and yellow. A beautiful azure blue, very pure, of high intensity, and most plentiful during the twelfth century, was developed through the use of cobalt oxides coming from the mineral ores of Saxony and Bohemia. Red ... was derived by throwing copper filings into the basic glass mixture along with flakes of iron that acted as a reducing agent. ... Copper dioxide was used to obtain greens, with some cobalt often added to give the green a bluish tint. Purple was produced by mixing manganese oxide with small amounts of iron oxide and copper shavings. Yellow was created from sesquioxide of iron or dioxide of manganese. Large fireproof clay pots were used to fuse the metallic oxides with clear glass at red-hot temperatures, and then the glassblower set to work. ... Having been allowed to cool, the colored glass sheets were placed on a large wooden table coated with whitewash. Since the medieval artists hadn’t the benefit of large sheets of paper, this table probably served as the location not only of guidelines for glass cutting, but

also of cartoon lines for glass painting. (The term ‘cartoon’ denotes a full-size black and white drawing taken from a small-scale drawing.) For cutting, a thin line of sheep or cow urine was applied to the glass, and a red-hot dividing iron was placed along the line, causing the glass to crack. Any rough edges were then chewed or smoothed away with grozing irons that resemble today’s pliers. ... The cut pieces were then arranged on the table and glass painters, using as paint a mixture of iron or copper oxides and pulverized glass mixed with urine or wine, traced the details of facial features, drapery folds, and ornamentation onto the glass, following the cartoon lines. The paint mixture, a dark grayish brown in hue, was used to outline and emphasize portions of the images, with compensations for the distance from which they would be seen. ... The glass was then fired in a furnace to fuse glass and paint. After cooling, the glass was usually painted again ... and smoothed while wet with wide badger-hair brushes This thin pigment was allowed to dry and was then carefully scraped away from specific areas where more light was needed to penetrate and reveal pure or subdued colors.”³

Theophilus was writing in the twelfth century; the Golden Age of stained glass windows was between 1150 and 1500 (the years commonly referred to as the middle and late medieval period), in Europe. Given those years and that location, it is not surprising that the Church, the institution that wielded enormous power in medieval Europe, was at the forefront of the commissioning and use of stained glass windows: stained glass windows during this time were created almost exclusively for ecclesiastical buildings. Why were these stained glass windows made? One very simple (and inadequate) answer is: because they could be. Architectural advancements enabled builders at this time to incorporate large windows into their works; what better way to educate the largely illiterate congregation than through narratives conveyed by pictures? But another answer to this question “Why were these windows made?” returns us to our starting point, the importance of light for stained glass windows: light served as an important metaphor in the medieval period (as it does, of course, in both the Old and the New Testaments, and in the writings of some of the patristic fathers). A leading scholar of medieval stained glass windows, Virginia Chieffo Raguin, writes: “To the long tradition of medieval thought, which saw the birth of stained glass, creation is a process of emanations of divine light, from the ‘first radiance,’ Christ, down to the lowliest speck of matter. In order to ascend from the lowest to the highest, one searches for the trace of divine light in all creatures. God is not only light, but also harmony and beauty; the radiant beauty of sparkling stones and stained glass

became for many of this period an intimation of God’s very nature, and important as a contemplative aid. ... Light was transparent as it left the Creator, acquiring color, and thus its ability to be visible, as it penetrated the material world. Colors can therefore be seen as representing the diversity and imperfection of creatures, although they still betray the radiance of their origins.”⁴

In any textbook on stained glass, particularly on medieval stained glass, the name of Abbot Suger looms large. “The pioneer of the Gothic movement,”⁵ Abbot Suger was in charge, from 1122 to 1151, of the very important and powerful Abbey of St. Denis, near Paris. The abbot was profoundly aware of the importance of light as he worked on the renovation of the Abbey Church of St. Denis; some scholars have suggested that he was at least indirectly influenced by the theological meditations on God’s light by patristic writers such as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.⁶ The abbot, who was responsible for an extensive re-modeling of the Abbey Church, a remodeling that included magnificent stained glass windows, wrote that he hoped “to illumine men’s minds so that they may travel through it [the church] to an apprehension of God’s light” by building a church that would be “pervaded by the wonderful and uninterrupted light of most radiant windows.”⁷ Writing specifically about the stained glass windows in his newly renovated church, Abbot Suger rhapsodized: “Thus sometimes when, because of my delight in the beauty of the house of God, the multicolor loveliness of the gems has called me away from external cares, and worthy meditation, transporting me from material to immaterial things, has persuaded me to examine the diversity of holy virtues, then I seem to see myself existing on some level, as it were, beyond our earthly one, neither completely the slime of the earth nor completely in the purity of heaven. By the gift of God I can be transported in an anagogical manner from this inferior level to that superior one.”⁸ Unfortunately, most of the stained glass windows in the Abbey Church of St. Denis did not survive the anti-religion fervor of the French Revolution. Indeed, many of the stained glass windows created in the medieval period have fallen victim to war, natural disaster, iconoclastic tendencies in the Reformation and Post Reformation periods, and misguided attempts at renovation.

Yet another reason why a title (*Let There be Light*) plucked from the Bible is appropriate for an exhibition on stained glass windows: from the very beginning of stained glass windows the Bible was mined for material; stained glass artisans drew heavily from the biblical stories⁹ for their inspiration (although, as James Walker reminds us in his essay, this is no longer necessarily the case). One of the pieces in

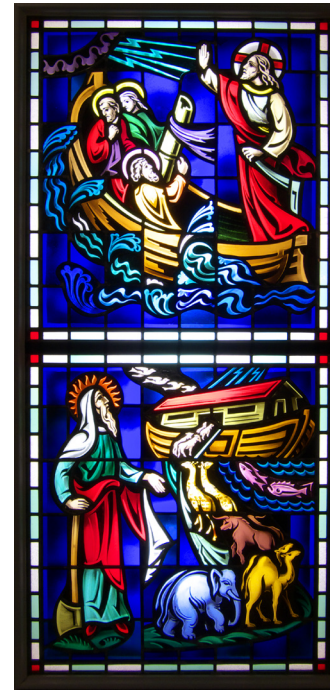


this exhibition is a reproduction of a late eleventh or early twelfth century window from the Augsburg Cathedral, in Augsburg, Germany that portrays the biblical prophet Hosea, one of the twelve minor prophets (checklist #1). The original window is one of five Old Testament figures remaining in the Augsburg Cathedral – Moses, David, Daniel, Hosea, and Jonah; these five windows are all that remain of a longer series, probably comprising twelve prophets and twelve apostles. These are the earliest surviving complete figures in stained glass; scholars point to the sophistication of the Augsburg windows as proof that the techniques involved in the making of stained glass windows were already well developed by the time these windows were made. Excavations at Lorsch and Magdeburg, in Germany, have unearthed remains of early pictorial windows that date from the ninth and tenth centuries, and manuscripts from as early as the fifth century make mention of the use of colored glass in windows.

Each of the Augsburg Old Testament figures holds a scroll with a Latin inscription; in the case of Hosea, his scroll contains a reference to Hosea 5:2 in the Vulgate: *Ego eruditor omnium eorum* (“I am the teacher of all of them”). The line on the Augsburg Hosea is a variation on the Vulgate verse, with the word “Deus,” God, inserted to make clear who the teacher of all is. This reference to God as the teacher of all shows up in a number of the patristic writings – Augustine, for example, comments on it in his work *de Magistro*, “Concerning the Teacher”; it is possible that the quote here on the Hosea window is only an indirect reference to Hosea 5:2. The Augsburg Hosea wears what seems to be a variation on the Judenhut, “Jewish hat,” a cone shaped pointed hat worn by medieval Jews, first voluntarily and then as a distinguishing mark by decree of the Fourth Lateran Council, in medieval Europe; the hat is often used in medieval art to depict Jews of the Biblical period.

Another reproduction in this exhibition is of a fifteenth century window in Ulm Cathedral, in Germany (checklist #2). The stained glass window, designed by Hans Acker, a member of the well-known family of painters in Ulm, depicts the story told in Genesis, chapter 8: Noah, adrift with his family in the ark God had commanded him to make, sends out a raven; the raven does not return. He then sends out a dove, which does return. The stained glass window adds a detail not found in the biblical story: the raven did not return because it had managed to catch a rabbit! Ulm, and its cathedral, became Protestant in the mid-sixteenth century; this window, in a small chapel in the Cathedral, survived, but more than sixty altars and many windows were destroyed.

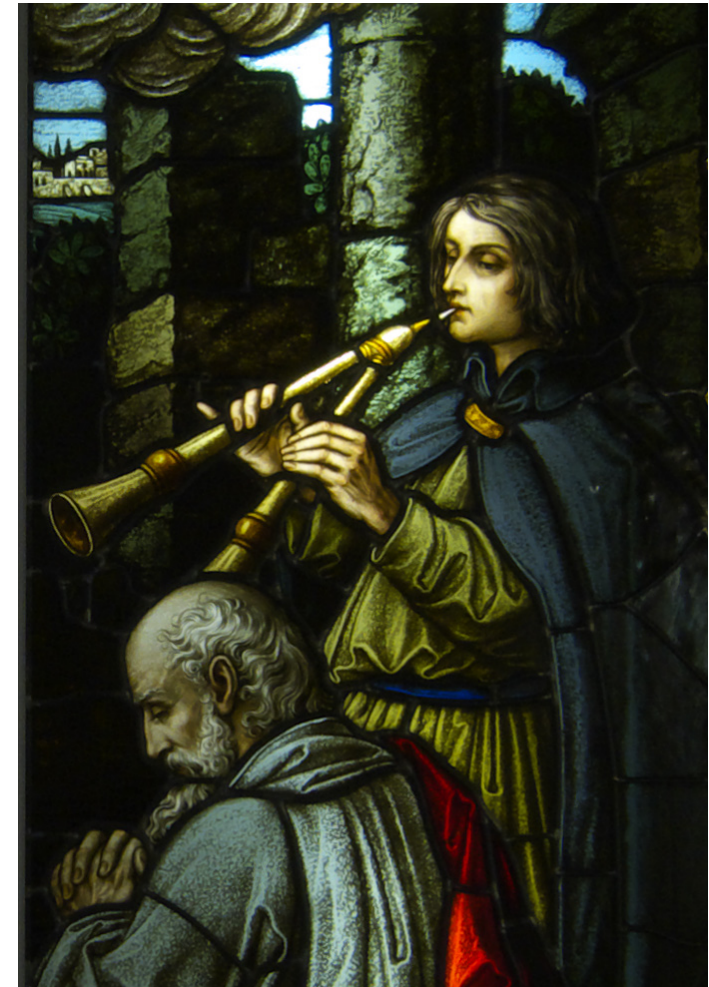
Oakbrook Esser Studios
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Reproduction of a 15th century window
in Ulm Cathedral, Ulm, Germany
Designed by Hans Acker
Noah, c. 1990
Antique glass, flashed glass,
pigment, silver staining
20 x 12”
checklist #2



Oakbrook Esser Studios
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Designed by Leo Cartwright
English (1898-1967)
Reproduction of window for
Christ the King Church, c. 1955, Dallas, Texas
*Jesus Taming the Seas and Noah
Gathering the Animals*, 2000
Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment
55 x 25”
checklist #12

The exhibition contains several stained glass windows produced by the famous German studio Mayer of Munich, including an Epiphany window that dates to around 1878 for St. Mary’s Church, in Boston, Massachusetts (checklist #4). This window is a good example of how the scenes in stained glass windows can reflect the tradition that grows up around a biblical story rather than the biblical story itself. The story of the visit of the wise men to the baby Jesus is told in Matthew 2. Nowhere in the biblical story is there a mention of three wise men; this number is eventually settled upon, in the Christian tradition, since three gifts are mentioned in Matthew 2:12 (gold, frankincense, and myrrh). Although it is not clear in the Mayer window whether we are dealing with wise men or with kings, in the later tradition the magi, the “wise men” of Matthew 2 become kings, under the influence of Old Testament passages such as Psalm 72:10, which speaks of kings coming from afar to pay tribute to the king of Israel, and Isaiah 49:7 and Isaiah 60:10, both of which speak of foreign kings paying homage, in the case of 49:7 to the Suffering Servant, in 60:10 to Jerusalem. The visitors of Matthew 2 also are eventually named – Caspar, Balthasar, and Melchior; according to the traditions that developed about the three, they represent the diversity of the gentile world that comes to Christ, the “revelation to the nations.” They represented the regions known to the ancient world: Africa, Asia, and Europe; Caspar, for example, is depicted as an African.

A twentieth century stained glass window in this exhibition is a wonderful example of typology, an instructional technique heavily used by Abbot Suger. Significant events or characters from the Old Testament, known as types, were counterpointed with scenes which they were thought to prefigure in the New Testament, antitypes. Johann Minten executed a design by Leo Cartwright for a window for Christ the King Church, in Dallas, Texas (checklist # 12). We see Noah, in the bottom scene, watching as the animals enter the ark two by two, with bolts of lightning threatening in the distance; on top of this is the scene of Jesus calming the storm, complete with bolts of lightning, that has arisen as he and his apostles were out fishing. Medieval stained glass artisans no doubt culled material for typological windows (indeed, for all their windows) from illuminated manuscripts. In addition, the fourteenth century development of printing with wooden blocks resulted in devotional books such as the *Biblia Pauperum* (*Paupers’ Bible*); most of the illustrations in the *Biblia Pauperum* were New Testament scenes surrounded by Old Testament types. Another widely used source was the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* (*Mirror of Human Salvation*), which dates from the thirteenth century.



Mayer of Munich, Inc.
Munich, Germany
Epiphany, c. 1878
Created for St. Mary's Church
Boston, Massachusetts
Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment,
enamels, silver staining
68 x 55"
checklist #4

Mayer of Munich, Inc.
Munich, Germany
Nativity, (detail), c. 1878
Created for St. Mary's Church
Boston, Massachusetts
Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment,
enamels, silver staining
97 x 55"
checklist #5



Unknown Artist and Studio
St. Elizabeth, c. 1900
 Antique glass, flashed glass,
 pigment, enamels, silver staining
 53 x 20"
 checklist #6

Saints have also traditionally been a staple of stained glass windows; in this exhibition, we see, among others, St. Martin, St. Agnes, and St. Elizabeth. The reproduction of a privately owned stained glass window of St. Martin bears his name; a somewhat unnecessary touch, since he is one of the most familiar and recognizable of Christian saints, and his story, with a number of regional variations, one of the best known (checklist #3). The basic story: Martin was a soldier in the fourth century; one day, when he encountered a poor beggar, he split his military cloak in half and shared it with the poorly clothed man. That night, Martin dreamed that Jesus was wearing the half-cloak he had given to the beggar. Martin was baptized, served in the army for another couple of years, and then left in order to devote himself to religious life. This stained glass window depicts Martin in the act of splitting his cloak; the geese up in the corners are a reference to the fact that the food traditionally eaten on November 11, St. Martin's Day, in many European countries is goose (according to the tradition, Martin was reluctant to become a bishop, and he hid in a stable filled with geese; the noise made by these fowl betrayed his hiding place).

Two other windows featuring saints simply assume that the attributes carried by the women will betray their identities: St. Agnes (checklist #7) and St. Elizabeth (checklist # 6). According to the tradition, Agnes was a member of Roman nobility, born in the late third century; a Christian who wanted to devote her life to God, she refused to marry the son of a Roman prefect, and he condemned her to death. Agnes chose death over any violation of her consecrated virginity. When she was led out to be killed she was tied to a stake, but the wood would not ignite; the officer in charge beheaded her. She is always depicted with a lamb, since her name resembles the Latin word for lamb, *agnus*. St. Elizabeth of Hungary is identifiable by the bouquet of roses she is carrying. According to the tradition, she was on a mission to carry bread to the hungry when she encountered her husband, a wealthy man who was opposed to her desire to help the poor; the bread miraculously turned to roses. Elizabeth lived during the thirteenth century; after the death of her husband in a Crusade, she devoted herself to acts of charity, joining a Franciscan lay order.

Contemporary stained glass artists are also well represented in this exhibition, and in some cases the more recent windows draw on the same biblical and extra-biblical stories as some of the older windows in the show. As I mentioned above, in the discussion of the 1878 Epiphany window from Mayer of Munich, extra-biblical traditions, stories that are not found in the New Testament, developed around



Oakbrook Esser Studios
 Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
 Reproduction of a privately owned piece by unknown artist
St. Martin, 1999
 Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment, enamels, silver staining
 16 x 14"
 checklist #3

the magi, the wise men, reported in Matthew 2. Janet McKenzie's design for an Epiphany window (checklist #19), executed by Oakbrook Esser Studios between 2003 and 2005, moves along the same path as did the early Christian traditions that found expression in the Mayer of Munich window –but McKenzie not only makes her magi representative of different ethnic groups, she also emphasizes the universality of this “revelation to the nations” by making the visitors to the infant Jesus female! The variety of time periods and styles is a wonderful strength of this exhibition: if we are taken aback when we see that McKenzie's *Jesus of the People* (checklist # 21) is a young African American, this should move us to consider the depiction of Jesus elsewhere in this show: the blonde child in Mayer of Munich's 1878 Nativity window (checklist #5), or the very European Head of Christ attributed to the Tiffany Studios (checklist #15). What does this wide depiction of Jesus say about the historical context of the artist? What does it say about us? What does it say about Jesus?

The stained glass windows in this exhibition, *Let There be Light Stained Glass and Drawings from the Collection of Oakbrook Esser Studios*, individually do what stained glass has done since the medieval period: these pieces educate us, they inspire us, they move us to prayer, they delight and invigorate us. Collectively the pieces allow us to compare and contrast periods and artists, to discern continuity and change, and to consider the influence of historical context as well as the power of tradition.



Oakbrook Esser Studios
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Design by Janet McKenzie
American (b. 1948)
Epiphany, (detail), 2003-2005
Flashed antique glass, enamels
53 x 43"
checklist #19

Footnotes

- ¹ Lawrence Lee, *Stained Glass* (New York: Crown, 1976), p. 18.
- ² Sarah Brown and David O'Connor, *Medieval Craftsmen: Glass-Painters* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1991), p. 4.
- ³ Robert Hill, Jill Hill, and Hans Halberstadt, *Stained Glass: Music for the Eye* (Oakland, CA: Scrimshaw, 1976), pp. 10-12.
- ⁴ Virginia Chieffo Raguin, *Stained Glass: from its origins to the present* (New York: Abrams, 2003), p. 13.
- ⁵ Lawrence Lee, *Stained Glass* (New York: Crown, 1976), p. 68. Gothic architecture – characterized by the pointed arch, the ribbed vault, and the flying buttress – originated in twelfth century France; it lasted into the sixteenth century and the Renaissance. (The adjective “gothic,” as applied to the architecture of the medieval period, originated during the Renaissance, and was used pejoratively, to describe a culture that was considered barbaric; during the medieval period, this architecture was simply called “French Style.”) The earlier style of architecture in Europe, pre-dating Gothic is often referred to as “Romanesque”; one difference between Romanesque and Gothic would be that the former is characterized by rounded, not pointed, arches.
- ⁶ Susanne Linscheid-Burdich, *Suger von Saint-Denis* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 2004) p. 43. Linscheid-Burdich writes, “Die Autoren begreifen die lichte Gestaltung des Chorraums in Saint-Denis als Realisierung neuplatonischer Lichtmystik mit architektonischen Mitteln und versuchen Sugers Schriften den Hinweis zu entnehmen, dass Suger das Denken des mystischen Theologen adaptiert und zur Grundlage seiner Planung gemacht habe.” (“The authors understand the light arrangement of the sanctuary at Saint-Denis to be an architectural realization of neo-platonic light mysticism, and try to find evidence in Suger's writings that the abbot adapted the ideas of the mystical theologian as the basis of his architectural design.”) Linscheid-Burdich, however, believes that while Suger seems to have known the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, he did not draw on these directly in his own remarks. (“In diesem Kapitel soll ein Vergleich der Aussagen über das Licht zwischen Dionysius Areopagita und Suger zeigen, dass Suger den Text von De caelesti hierarchia zwar kannte, offensichtlich jedoch nicht unmittelbar in seinen eigenen Ausführungen nachvollzieht.”)
- ⁷ Quoted in Lawrence Lee, *Stained Glass* (New York: Crown, 1976), p. 67.
- ⁸ From Suger's *De administratione*, XXXIII, quoted by Virginia Chieffo Raguin, *Stained Glass: from its origins to the present* (New York: Abrams, 2003), p. 14.
- ⁹ Madeline Caviness, in “Biblical Studies in Windows: Were They Bibles for the Poor?,” from *The Bible in the Middle Ages: Its Influence on Literature and Art*, ed. Bernard S. Levy, *Medieval And Renaissance Texts and Studies*, vol. 89 (Binghamton: MRTS, 1992), pp. 103-147, makes the important point that some of the stories depicted in stained glass windows of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries seem to draw more from apocryphal or vernacular versions of biblical texts than from the Vulgate itself.

THE LONG PICTURE

by James Walker

Well over half a century ago, my parents, with me in tow, journeyed to assist an elderly aunt move from her rather huge home that was scheduled for demolition. My father, in an effort to entertain an otherwise bored young lad, removed an amethyst colored glass pressing from an already well dilapidated stained glass window in the entry foyer. With such a treasure in my pocket, the trip suddenly became well worthwhile. Sometime over the years that amethyst jewel vanished, but perhaps the memory is stronger in its absence.

Like most kids growing up in the southeastern states in those times, excessive exposure to religion was inevitable. Quite fortunately for me, however, my family probably maintained church connections more for the sense of community than for the magical mystery tour. Out of all the drudgery of attending services (although mercifully oblivious to the symbolism, for the most part), a fascination with the astonishing qualities of stained glass windows became mine from an early age, even though it was to lie dormant for the next twenty or so years.

Being a postwar baby-boomer, some of my most formative years took place in the sixties and with them came the inevitable questioning of the status quo. In part, this questioning explained the re-emergence of the crafts as an effort to find deeper meaning to life than through paths otherwise expected. More than ever, growing up in that era has proven a remarkable privilege - serendipity even.

After receiving a university degree and working various jobs, from picking apples to export sales for a manufacturer of heavy construction machinery, a voyage across the Pacific in a small sailboat landed me in New Zealand where a wonderful life awaited. In the mid 70's, that previously mentioned attraction to the crafts manifested when I became one of three founding partners of Sunbeam Glassworks, an Auckland-based glass studio. While a primary purpose was to set up a fully functional glass blowing facility, the design and fabrication of stained glass windows was also part of the operation; in fact, it was the part that steadily became my primary focus and eventually caused me to sell my share in the studio several years later and set up my own stained glass studio. Inherent in my thinking at the time was the desire to create works larger than what could ever constitute large in the world of glass blowing. I was also interested in the possibility of providing works for more permanent venues than items for sale in dealer galleries. Nevertheless, the knowledge gained through working with glass in its various states endowed me with an ability to work somewhat more laterally when contemplating possibilities to translate designs into glass.

Oakbrook Esser Studios
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Design by James Walker
New Zealand (b. 1948)
Untitled, 2003-2004
Flashed opals, acid etching, pigment
59 x 32 5/8"
checklist #17



Although working on an island in the middle of planet Earth's biggest ocean created difficulties in terms of procuring tools, materials and expertise, it also offered unexpected advantages. Our isolated scene had great success luring renowned artists and designers to our distant shores. Part of the attraction was the possibility to escape a northern hemisphere winter for our summer, as well as simple fascination with New Zealand's garden-of-Eden image. Good fortune was mine in being able to study under numerous big names that were funded via grants to offer workshops in our part of the world. As a result, my general outlook concerning the horizons of the stained glass medium was greatly expanded.

It has never been my intention to replicate the standard idea that stained glass is principally a medium for churches, where stained glass of a so-called traditional nature is the appropriate mode. The mention of stained glass to many inevitably conjures up images of saints and miscellaneous other ecclesiastical data, all coming live and direct via showers of colored light blasting through interiors, like rainbows pursuing pots of gold underfoot. This is the effect the medium worked valiantly to develop and perpetuate for the better part of a millennium and for many, still does. With such a fixed role over so many years, it is not surprising that the evolution of the medium is often stigmatized by its past.

It must be remembered that in their time, those traditional designs were extremely bold and revolutionary and performed a function best articulated by Robert Hughes in his 1981 book, *The Shock of the New*.

Where in fifteenth-century Florence or seventeenth-century Flanders did you get your information about the world and how to interpret it? Not from magazines or newspapers, which did not exist: and not from books either, since most Europeans were totally illiterate. That left two channels of information: the spoken word (which included everything from village-pump gossip to the high rhetoric of tribune and pulpit) and visual images . . . Hence the immense role played by didactic art . . . in determining not merely public taste but mass social and religious conviction as well. Under such conditions, works of art whose message to us has no more reality than a fairy tale . . . could acquire, for their audience in their time, the force of history and the urgency of revolution. They made legends tangible and credible, inserting them unconditionally into the lives of their audience, compelling belief - and so altering behavior.¹

However, to recreate such works today simply because they have been there so long relegates them to become nothing more than fodder for Sunday school picnics. For this reason, it is preferable

(for me) to articulate in a more abstract manner in which the work's primary intention is purely to create the possibility for contemplation and to allow the viewer freedom to find a personal space or interpretation. Fundamental to all this is not only an understanding of what the medium can and cannot accomplish, but also to never abandon the possibility of challenging whatever limits seem to exist. The relationship with the architectural situation deserves special consideration, too—be it harmony or counterpoint. Consistent with these objectives, two German artists, under whom I had the good fortune to study, have had the greatest influence on my work with stained glass over the years.

Ludwig Schaffrath's comments concerning design still ring true. One in particular comes to mind. He once described how he felt the medium of stained glass is best considered when designing a work. First one must establish basic forms and lines, like bones which all fit together to create a coherent skeleton. Then, and only then, does one add meat to the bones in the way of detail and color. A design should be able to stand alone before color is introduced. Color adds density and richness, and is best used to punctuate those basic forms and areas of priority. Too often people try to salvage a bad design by adding color. If it looks bad without color, it will only get worse with color.

Johannes Schreiter once authored a series of windows featuring abstract collages that addressed thoroughly present day issues. He commented that the unfortunate clergyman who championed his designs "still has problems with these windows from his parishioners because the average Christian expects only in the glass windows – still the same type of 'Turkish honey.'" ² While Schreiter's works often relate specific tales or messages through his own visual language, his works are especially successful, as they are able to communicate subliminally at a purely abstract level as well; such is his perfection with use of line, color and dynamic. The following paragraph succinctly and adeptly describes Schreiter's oeuvre.

His fundamental concern addresses the need to be aware of the fragility and transience of all things in this world. His images create an abstract iconography to mirror his desire to offer a sacral space incomparable to anything within our human experience. His entire figurative language works in terms of contrasts and the sense of tension between them. Cracks and splits oppose rhombic and square grids, organic forms contrast with the geometric, spontaneous lines live with constructive ones, and calculable aspects co-exist with those that are incalculable. Calmness can suddenly erupt at any given moment.³



Oakbrook Esser Studios
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Design by Johannes Schreiter
German (b. 1930)
Untitled, 2007-2009
Antique glass, opal antique glass, pigment,
lead glazing, lead overlays
68 x 30"
checklist #18

The stock market crash of 1987 hit New Zealand especially hard where average share prices plunged over 70%. This had a devastating effect on my professional possibilities, as all my major commissions were cancelled. In the meantime, opportunities arose which enabled me to complete a masters degree (Philosophy of Fine Arts from the University of Auckland) and to obtain a position at the Pilchuck Glass School in Seattle, Washington. These opportunities ultimately prefaced the interruption of my work with stained glass, as dialogue at Pilchuck with Stanislav Libenský and Jaroslava Brychtová eventually led to my going off to live and work in Czechoslovakia (as it was called then), for more than a decade. There my medium became solid glass sculpture. While in some ways it seemed professionally suicidal to change medium in midcareer, the opportunity to understudy Libenský and Brychtová would have attracted me even if mud pies had been their medium. More than the medium and material, it was their artistry that drew my interest.

Now back in New Zealand, my work has again returned to the realm of flat glass, although much is created for the wall like a painting, rather than windows through which light passes. The textural qualities of glass after being radically deconstructed by sandblasting or shattering have presently become the glass material's principal offerings of relevance for my work. Meanwhile, my objective to keep within the confines of abstraction remains constant. It forever frustrates me being asked to explain my work. To acknowledge the need to intellectualize or explain a work seems, in some ways, tantamount to conceding its failure. After all, the purpose of visual art is to communicate visually.

Relative to my years gone by, miniscule amounts of time lie ahead. Therefore, more than ever before, it seems quite rational to relate in terms of the passage of time – the long picture, one might say. Spanning centuries, is also the focus of this exhibition. When considering this historical aspect, it is with some irony that my inclusion was made possible only through one of modern technology's offerings, the Internet. Without it, Paul Phelps would not have discovered my work and generously invited me to Oconomowoc where the technicians at Oakbrook Esser Studios successfully fabricated my work now in this exhibition.

Footnotes

¹ Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New* (London, BBC Publications, 1981), p.366.

² Excerpt from a letter written by Johannes Schreiter to James Walker, c. 1985.

³ Unverifiable source from a collection of writings in James Walker's library.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

LET THERE BE LIGHT Stained Glass and Drawings from the Collection of Oakbrook Esser Studios

1. Oakbrook Esser Studios, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Reproduction of late 11th/early 12th century window
from Augsburg Cathedral, Augsburg, Germany
Hosea, Early 1990s
Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment, silver staining
74 x 19"

2. Oakbrook Esser Studios, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Reproduction of a 15th century window in
Ulm Cathedral, Ulm, Germany
Designed by Hans Acker
Noah, c. 1990
Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment, silver staining
20 x 12"

3. Oakbrook Esser Studios, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Reproduction of a privately owned piece by unknown artist
St. Martin, 1999
Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment, enamels, silver staining
16 x 14"

4. Mayer of Munich, Inc., Munich, Germany
Epiphany, c. 1878
Created for St. Mary's Church, Boston, Massachusetts
Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment, enamels, silver staining
68 x 55"

5. Mayer of Munich, Inc., Munich, Germany
Nativity, c. 1878
Created for St. Mary's, Boston, Massachusetts
Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment, enamels, silver staining
97 x 55"

6. Unknown Artist and Studio
St. Elizabeth, c. 1900
Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment, enamels, silver staining
53 x 20"

7. Unknown Artist and Studio
St. Agnes, c. 1900
Antique glass, pigment, enamels, silver staining
57 x 22"

8. Unknown Artist and Studio
Bishop, c. 1900
Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment, enamels, silver staining
54 x 20 1/8"

9. Unknown Artist and Studio
King, c. 1900
Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment, enamels, silver staining
53 x 20"

10. Possibly Gaudin Studios, Paris, France
Marble House Double Lancet Window, 19th century
Medallions c. 1889-1892
Pot glass, flashed glass, enamels, silver staining
125 1/2 x 44"

11. Unknown Artist and Studio, France
Border Section, 14th century
Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment
9 x 31"

12. Oakbrook Esser Studios, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Designed by Leo Cartwright, English (1898-1967)
Reproduction of window for Christ the King Church, c. 1955
Dallas, Texas
Jesus Taming the Seas and Noah Gathering the Animals, 2000
Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment
55 x 25"

13. Oakbrook Esser Studios, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Johann Minten, Dutch (b. 1928)
Reproduction of window created for St. Mesrob
Armenian Church, Racine, Wisconsin
Ascension, c. 1984
Antique glass, flashed glass, pigment, silver staining
52 x 23"

14. Oakbrook Esser Studios, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Johann Minten, Dutch (b. 1928)
Reproduction of window created for St. William's Church
Waukesha, Wisconsin
Jesus Healing the Sick, 1996-1997
Antique glass, flashed glass enamel, silver staining
42 x 24"

15. Attributed to Tiffany Studios, New York, New York
Setting fabricated by Oakbrook Esser Studios
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Head of Christ, c. 1900, setting c. 1985
Opal glass, antique glass, pigment, enamels
15 x 15"

16. Oakbrook Esser Studios, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Design by Frank Lloyd Wright, American (1867-1959)
Reproduction of triptych from the Avery Coonley Playhouse
Riverside, Illinois, 1912, 1988
Zinc, clear window glass, flashed opals
90 x 78 x 3'

17. Oakbrook Esser Studios, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Design by James Walker, New Zealand (b. 1948)
Untitled, 2003-2004
Flashed opals, acid etching, pigment
59 x 32 5/8"

18. Oakbrook Esser Studios, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Design by Johannes Schreiter, German (b. 1930)
Untitled, 2007-2009
Antique glass, opal antique glass, pigment,
lead glazing, lead overlays
68 x 30"

19. Oakbrook Esser Studios, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Design by Janet McKenzie, American (b. 1948)
Epiphany, 2003-2005
Flashed antique glass, enamels
53 x 43"

20. Oakbrook Esser Studios, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Design by Janet McKenzie, American (b. 1948)
Holy Family, 2007-2008
Flashed antique glass, enamels
56 x 44"

21. Oakbrook Esser Studios, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Design by Janet McKenzie, American (b. 1948)
Jesus of the People, 2000-2005
Flashed antique glass, enamels
25 x 16"

22. Jacoby Art Glass Company, St. Louis, Missouri
Nativity, c. late 19th/early 20th century
Charcoal on paper
116 x 55 1/2"

23. Jacoby Art Glass Company, St. Louis, Missouri
Job, c. late 19th/early 20th century
Charcoal on paper
93.5 x 24"

24. Jacoby Art Glass Company, St. Louis, Missouri
Christ on the Cross, c. late 19th/early 20th century
Charcoal and watercolor on paper
70 x 34 1/2"

25. Jacoby Art Glass Company, St. Louis, Missouri
St. Peter, c. late 19th/early 20th century
Charcoal on photosensitive paper and
craft paper mounted on linen
42 x 16"

26. Jacoby Art Glass Company, St. Louis, Missouri
The Entry into Jerusalem, c. late 19th/early 20th century
Charcoal on paper
102 1/2 x 48"

27. Jacoby Art Glass Company, St. Louis, Missouri
Annunciation Angel, c. late 19th/early 20th century
Charcoal on photosensitive paper mounted on linen
79 x 41"

28. Jacoby Art Glass Company, St. Louis, Missouri
St. Mark, c. late 19th/early 20th century
Charcoal and chalk on paper
78 x 30"

29. Jacoby Art Glass Company, St. Louis, Missouri
Mother and Child, c. late 19th/early 20th century
Charcoal on photosensitive paper and craft paper
mounted on linen
46 x 20"

30. Leo Cartwright, English (1898-1967)
For window in Lake Park Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Life of Christ
I. Lazarus (the poor man)
II. Expulsion from the Garden
III. Scribes and Pharisees
IV. Zacchaeus
c. mid 1950s
Ink, watercolor and crayon on paper
38 x 18"

31. Albert Burkart, German (1898-1982)
For window in St. Dominic's Church
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
German Rosary Prayer
I. Nativity
II. Annunciation
III. Resurrection
IV. Ascension
V. Crowning of Thorns
VI. Carrying of Cross/Crucifixion
c. late 1960s
Pen, ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper
26 x 13 1/2"

32. Ross Taylor (1916-2001)
Enterprise Art Glass Works
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Life of Mary, c. 1960
Ink and watercolor on paper
Diameter 12 1/2"

33. Sepp Frank, German (1889-1970)
For window in Our Savior Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Christ, 1951
Pencil, ink, and watercolor on paper
22 x 9 1/2"

34. Leo Cartwright, English (1898-1967)
For window in St. John's Cathedral
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
St. Peter, c. 1940
Ink and watercolor on paper
20 1/2 x 7 1/2"

35. Leo Cartwright, English (1898-1967)
For window in Queen of All Saints Basilica
Chicago, Illinois
Sts. Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory, c. 1960s
Watercolor on blackboard
19 1/2 x 5 1/2"

36. Leo Cartwright, English (1898-1967)
For window in St. Catherine's Church
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Life of the Clergy, c. 1950s
Watercolor on blackboard
19 1/2 x 13"

37. Anton Wendling, German (1891-1965)
For window in Our Lord Christ the King
Cincinnati, Ohio
St. Paul, c. early 1950s
Ink and watercolor on paper
27 1/2 x 3.5"

38. Leo Cartwright, English (1898-1967)
For window in Mt. St. Michael's Chapel
Spokane, Wisconsin
St. Ignatius of Loyola, 20th century
Watercolor on board
24 x 14"

39. Unknown Artist
St. Martin and St. Eustace, 20th century
Watercolor and ink on board
16 x 19"

40. Johann Minten, Dutch (b. 1928)
For window in St. Clare's Church
North Lake, Wisconsin
Resurrection, 1988
Watercolor and ink on paper
15 x 17 1/2"

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