

MODERN STAINED AND PAINTED GLASS IN RELIGIOUS SETTINGS

Background notes

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Stained glass window by Marguerite Huré, Notre Dame de Raincy, Paris, 1922-23.



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The importance of stained and painted glass in religious settings.

The Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – all associate light with the deity. God commands that there should be light to drive away the darkness (Genesis 1.3), “God is light, and in him there is no darkness”(John 1.5) , Allah is described as the light of the heavens in the Qu’ran (24.353). For builders of holy places, therefore, stained and painted glass windows were the means by which the light of God could enter sacred places and where important symbols and – in Christian churches, narrative images - central to their faith could be depicted.

Much ancient glass has been lost; however, some examples from early Roman and Byzantine churches are known from excavations. Many more examples are been saved from the medieval period when the opportunities offered by the development of Gothic architecture and of new theological approaches, made stained glass and painted glass a much more prominent form within Christian churches in particular. Another wave of church building in the Victorian period as cities grew after the industrial revolution, has bequeathed to us many examples of Neo Gothic and Arts and Crafts stained and painted glass. In the 20th century, it was principally war and the damage it caused, together with the importance accorded to art in sacred places and changes in liturgical practice, which gave opportunities for architects, artists and glass makers in both churches and synagogues. The 21st century has seen new Islamic religious buildings which have taken the art of stained and painted glass in new directions.

The glazing of sacred spaces, its style and importance, is often the result of a collaborative process between commissioning body, architect, artist and craftsperson. But in some 20th century examples, there may be a dominant decision maker who shapes the end result. We will look at some of these instances and also discuss how important – or not – it is for those involved in designing and making to be believers in the faith for which they are producing important works of stained and painted glass.

Many 20th century window designs are abstract rather than figurative. Does this represent a shift in what draws worshippers closer to the divine – and, if so, why?

Some key artists, architects and glass makers of the 20th century

Arts Sacré movement founded 1919 by Maurice Denis (1870-1943) as part of a broad movement in Europe to reconcile the church with modern civilization. The atelier aimed to train artists and crafts people in the practice of Christian art and provide works for churches, especially those devastated by WW1.

Bony, Paul (1911-82) Master glazier based in Paris who worked with Rouault on his windows for Notre Dame de Tout Grace at Assy and with Matisse for his windows at the chapel in Vence. He also made stained glass to his own designs.

Chagall, Marc (1887-1985) Russian born Jewish painter and designer who worked mainly in France. Towards the end of his life he received a number of stained glass commissions, predominantly for Christian churches in France and England. His stained glass work was richly coloured and figurative, mirroring his painting style.

Couturier, Marie-Alain (1891-1954) after serving in WW1, Couturier studied art and trained in stained glass at the studio of the Sacred Arts. Became a Dominican in 1930. From 1936-54, was chief editor of the review *L'Art Sacré*. Best known for his involvement with the chapel at Vence, Notre Dame en Haut, Notre Dame de Toute Grace at Assy and Sacré Coeur at Audincourt.

Gibberd, Frederick (1908-1984) Architect and town planner, who made major contributions to post 1945 reconstruction and civic design. He won the competition to design Liverpool cathedral (1960-67) and the London Mosque at Regent's Park (1969-77).

Huré, Marguerite (1895-1967) a precursor in the design and making of abstract church glass, best known for her windows at Notre Dame de Raincy, Paris, and the church of St Joseph, Le Havre.

Le Corbusier (Charles Edouard Jeanneret), (1887-1965) one of the most influential architects of the 20th century, Le Corbusier worked internationally. He is best known for his industrialised large scale housing schemes, city

planning and private houses. His post WW2 anti-rationalist and sculptural style was shown in its most revolutionary form at Ronchamp where he designed the pilgrimage chapel.

Léger, Ferdinand (1881-1955) painter and designer, whose experiences in WW 1 gave him the ambition to create an art which would be accessible to all. In his later career, Léger worked on large decorative commissions, notably the windows and tapestries for the church at Audincourt.

Marq, Charles (1923-2006) master glass maker, painter and engraver. Married Brigitte Simon in 1949 and together they ran the Simon family workshops in Reims. He became the master glazier of all Chagall's works from 1956-1985.

Matisse, Henri (1869-1954) painter, sculptor, graphic artist and designer. One of his greatest and most original works was created in 1949-51, the Chapel of the Rosary at Vence. Here he designed every detail – murals, vestments and all the stained glass.

Perret, Auguste (1874-1954) architect and builder. An innovator in the use of reinforced concrete structures, Perret designed the church of Notre Dame de Raincy, Paris after WW1, and the rebuilding of Le Havre, including the central church of St Joseph, after WW2.

Piper, John (1903-92) painter, graphic artist, designer and writer on architecture. He began to design stained glass mid-career, his best known works being the large scale windows at Coventry (1957-61) and Liverpool Metropolitan cathedral (1963-7).

Reyntiens, Patrick (b.1925) Considered Britain's foremost 20th century stained glass maker and designer, he is best known for his 35 year long collaboration with John Piper, especially for the windows at Coventry and Liverpool for which he is jointly credited as designer.

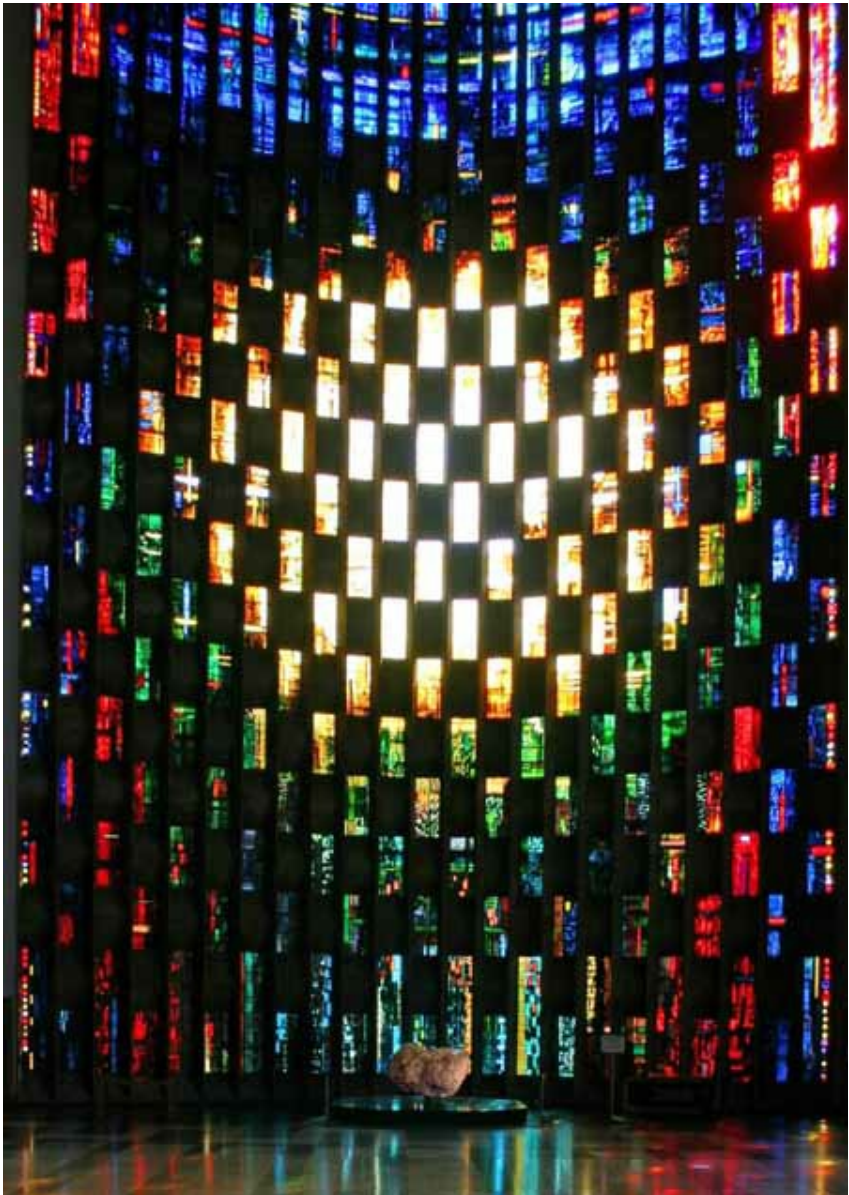
Spence, Basil (1907-76) architect, draughtsman and artist. As a young man, he worked in the office of Lutyens for a brief period. He made his name when he won the competition for the rebuilding of Coventry Cathedral, a modernist work regarded as a symbol of Britain's reconstruction after the 1939–45 war.



Matisse, *Stained glass in the Chapel of the Rosary, Vence, 1948-51*



Le Corbusier, *Stained glass in Notre Dame du Haut, Chapel, Ronchamp 1954*



John Piper and Patrick Reyntiens *Baptistry Window, Coventry Cathedral, 1962*

Suggested reading: general books

Barral I Altet, Xavier *Stained Glass: Masterpieces of the Modern Era*, 2007

Reyntiens, Patrick *The Techniques of Stained Glass*, 1977

Suggested reading: architects and artists

Baal-Teshura, *Chagall*, 1998

Foster, Prof. Paul (ed.) *Chagall Glass at Chichester and Tudeley*, 2002

Gibberd, Frederick *Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, Liverpool*, 1968

Long, Philip and Thomas, Jane (eds.) *Basil Spence: Architect*, 2007

Osborne, June *John Piper and Stained Glass*, 1977

Pulvenis, Marie-Therese *Matisee: the Chapel at Vence*, 2013

Spence, Basil *Phoenix at Coventry*, 1962

Some local examples

Basingstoke, All Saints: West window, designed by the artist Cecil Collins, made by Patrick Reyntiens

Hinton Ampner, All Saints: East window by Patrick Reyntiens

Hound, St. Mary: East window by Patrick Reyntiens

Winchester: Screen at the Wessex Hotel



Stained glass window, Sheik Zayed Mosque, Abu Dhabi, 1996-2007

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