

LITURGICAL ART

"...art remains a kind of bridge to religious experience." Pope John Paul II

TODAY

FALL 2008



Caring for Your Church's Stained Glass – Five Steps Every Parish Should Take

By Donald Samick

Stained glass window restoration in the United States began in the 1960s and '70s as America's churches started to age. Windows in churches that were built during

the surge of construction at the end of the 19th century and the early 20th century are now in need of attention.

Of all the components of a church building—roof, walls, windows, floor and foundations—stained glass windows typically are the last item to receive attention. This is due in part to their beauty. They are pieces of artwork in the church, so they generally are not considered a structural component. And because failures in a stained glass window often are not obvious to a lay person, they may go unnoticed until the damage has reached the point that expensive restoration is required.

However, there are steps that a parish member can and should take to examine the church's stained glass windows to determine if any are in need of restoration.

Does the window push outward when pressed?

The window should be set firmly in its frame and sash.

Are the thick reinforcing bars still attached securely to the window?

They should not be broken away.

Do glass panes rattle within their lead frameworks?

Loose glass may need only a fresh supply of putty pushed up by hand under the leads, around the glass pieces, and into any gaps.

Are the panels bulging?

If the bulging area is firmly set in sound leads, there is no immediate danger. If bulging occurs around the reinforcing bars, however, a structural weakness is indicated.

Is glass cracked, broken, or shattered?

Cracked pieces that are still secure can be left alone. Loose pieces may be carefully glued with clear epoxy or silicone cement. Missing, mismatched or leaking glass should be replaced.

If a window is displaying any of these conditions, it would be wise to have a conditions report prepared by a reputable studio that specializes in stained glass restoration. Not all stained glass studios specialize in this area, so checking restoration references is advisable. Qualified studios can be invited to submit for evaluation, at no cost to the parish, the specifications of what work they think needs to be done. Deferred maintenance can result in failed frames and lead comes, resulting in their costly replacement. Make annual inspections, and consider establishing a stained glass maintenance budget, with a certain amount of money allocated each year.

Finally, all stained glass windows should be photographed and the photos stored in a safe or safe deposit box. Insurance evaluations of the windows also should be accurate and current, and a professional stained glass appraiser—certified by a nationally recognized appraisal organization—should prepare a replacement evaluation of the church's windows. This document will be recognized by insurance companies, the IRS and the judicial system.

Parishioners are the custodians of the building that was built for their use by an earlier generation. Be mindful of that generation's contribution, and the contributions you must make today.

Donald Samick is President of J & R Lamb Studios, Inc., Wyckoff, N.J., and a member of the Appraisers Association of America, Stained Glass Association of America and a director of the American Glass Guild. For more information call 877-700-lamb or visit www.lambstudios.com.



Craftsman removing the old lead comes and details of reassembling the cleaned pieces with new lead comes.

Publisher's Note

Through the years artists have been inspired by the Holy Spirit to create art expressing sacred realities. I hope the prayerful work of contemporary artists creating new images of divine truth invite your faith community to enter into a deeper communion with God.



Linda McCray, MFA

Blessings,

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Edited by Barbara Fifer

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Collaborating with architects, consultants and designers to create site specific artwork that compliments each individual worship space.

Creating artistic designs with a variety of materials. Using the qualities of each medium such as wrought iron, bronze, glass and wood.

Left: Leaded glass-metal, St. Peter and Paul, Hortonville, WI



Altar screen, forged and fabricated steel, 26'-3" x 8', Christ The King Chapel, Cathedral, Superior, WI

ORIGINAL PAINTINGS FOR SACRED SPACE



ABSTRACT
SPIRITUAL
ORIGINAL
PAINTINGS

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From Clay to Bronze...

By Lynn Kircher, Sculptor

Many carefully taken steps intervene between my original clay sculpture and the bronze work of art that results from it.

A mold is made of the clay original. The first part of a mold consists of a creamy rubber layer, brushed onto the original in several layers, and allowed to cure between layers. The second part can be either fiberglass or plaster, and is called the mother mold. It is placed over the rubber mold to give it structure and protection.

Hot wax is poured or brushed to a predetermined thickness inside the rubber mold after the clay original is removed, having left behind its negative impression. When this wax cools as a "shell" it is removed, reinforced where needed, and carefully "gated." Gating refers to the network of wax rods and cup that ultimately will provide a pathway for the molten bronze. This entire assembly is dipped into a ceramic slurry and coated with decreasing sizes of sand in alternating layers. Each stratum is carefully layered. The final drying of this now-heavily-encrusted wax occurs in an oven. The molten wax



Left: Clay original of Mary of Advent "maquette," or model. Center: Rubber mold of maquette. Transparent tape pieces mark a seam. This will allow the foundry to separate the mold into halves.

pours out of the shell and is the reason for the naming of this casting process as "lost wax." The cavity left behind is ready to be filled with molten bronze. The bronze cools and the ceramic slurry shell is broken off.

The sculpture is assembled, welded, sandblasted and patinas are applied.

Lynn Kircher is a figurative sculptor whose work is found in over 20 churches in 14 states. His work was accepted in the Vatican Collection in 2002 and can be viewed at www.kirchersculpture.com. 719 672-3036

Igniting Spiritual Imagination

By Linda McCray, Painter of Abstract Spiritual Original Paintings

We are God's work of art. Let the Holy Spirit work through you and bring the art within you back to God. Making art ignites my spiritual imagination and I hope that it does the same for you.

I have been inspired by carvers of wooden crosses who pray and fast for weeks before carving. It makes so much sense to me to prepare myself for making art for God's sake. Since I don't have weeks to pray and fast, I modify this concept to fit into my life. Before I pick up a brush, I read and pray. I find reading about sacred art, world religions, Catholicism and most especially Scripture enriches my spirituality. The very act of slowing down and making art is meditative to me. My reflections are much deeper when I do what I call "sketchbook journaling." Many write in journals to clarify their reflections. I draw in a sketchbook.

I have led groups on spiritual art journeys. I am taken by how the Holy Spirit works through our hearts and hands while making art. It is not about creating great art, it is about connecting spiritually. How about reaching others through this fresh form of prayer that taps into our creativity and spirituality? Bringing art and faith together through workshops and retreat sessions for our youth, liturgical art committees and individual believers can be enlightening.

Linda McCray, MFA, ACLS, creates abstract spiritual original paintings for sacred space, leads art and faith retreats and teaches art at The University of Montana-Helena College of Technology. For more information call 800 923-5537 or visit MontanaDesignsUnlimited.com.



Linda McCray was inspired by Matthew 7:16, "By their fruits you will know them," while creating "By Their Fruits."





ORIGINAL PAINTINGS FOR SACRED SPACE

“Art is integral, not incidental to the liturgical life of the Church. The human hand and heart of the artist leads the worshipping community more deeply into the mystery of the incarnation and attests to the truth that ‘here God dwells among the people.’ Linda’s art fires the imagination and creates the environment for a deeper encounter with the real presence of Christ.”

Fr. Ed Hislop

Permanent Original Paintings
Paintings on Wood Panel
Paintings on Unstretched Canvas
Stations of the Cross
Murals



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High Altars and the Latin Mass – An Old Catholic Tradition is Back

Learn from the Italian "Ars Sacra 1875 Ferdinand Stuflessner" the history of High Altars and its renaissance with the Latin Mass.

At Ars Sacra 1875 Ferdinand Stuflessner we have a history of five generations. In our long history we have built over 900 High Altars in different styles and materials.

High Altars were used for Mass celebrations until the second Vatican Council, which closed in 1965 under Pope Paul VI. After this Council, the present ordinary form of the Roman Rite of the Mass was introduced.

Through Pope Benedict XVI the Catholic Church has the possibility to celebrate Latin Mass again. It surely will not take the place of our regular Masses but it is a possibility to celebrate Mass in a very traditional and historic way.

These are the main reasons why we are having many requests and orders for new High Altars, rebuildings of High Altars exact to the old originals, and restorations for existing High Altars.

Building High Altars has always been our main branch. Together with wood carvings, bronze castings of statuary and doors, altars and the presbytery area still are our specialization.

In the last 133 years we have had the chance to build High Altars in wood and marble, bronze statuary and bronze doors for cathedrals, churches and chapels throughout the world, always modeled to our customer's wishes and carved in the



Stuflessner High Altar in Zagreb (Croatia)

finest materials of their choice. Since everything is custom made, any detail and customer's wish can be executed in order to guarantee a unique piece of art.

Our founder and great-great-grandfather, Ferdinand Stuflessner I, opened our workshops in 1875 and worked throughout the world, shipping his masterpieces from England to USA and from Australia to South Africa. Our craftsmanship and firm philosophy have not changed since then, and we still use the same noble materials, as wood, bronze and marble with the same carving techniques of over 130 years ago.

If you are looking for unique art works in a beautiful, majestic and solemn material, our High Altars, statues of saints, church interiors and doors will satisfy all your wishes.

Ars Sacra 1875 Ferdinand Stuflessner, fifth generation Italian studio providing church interiors, sculptures, and restorations. For more information call Filip Stuflessner at 011 39 0471 796163; fax 011 39 0471 796690; mail to Ars Sacra 1875 Ferdinand Stuflessner, Petlin 13, 39046 Ortisei (Bz), Italy; email info@stuflessner.com; or view the website www.stuflessner.com.



From left to right: Stuflessner High Altars: Romanic style, Ortisei parish, Italy; Gothic style, during our working process, Illinois, USA; Gothic style, Cathedral of Lodz, Poland

Be Not Afraid of Abstract Spiritual Art

By Linda McCray, Painter of Abstract Spiritual Original Paintings

Art has a unique capacity to take one or other [sic] facet of the message and translate it into colors, shapes and sounds which nourish the intuition of those who look or listen.¹

Pope John Paul II

There is a need in every age to communicate and express the sacred in a relevant, contemporary visual language. Contemporary music can be deeply moving in our worship. Why aren't today's visual arts contributing a stronger voice in the chorus of praise?

Expressing the Sacred in New Ways

God is mystery. The experience of mystery through total liturgy requires an environment which invites worship beyond the rational, through all of our senses. Artists convey inner meaning through abstract elements. For example, feeling, mood, and certainly the meaning of the Gospel can be conveyed through the relationship of colors, rough textures, and bold brush strokes. Wassily Kandinsky, a Russian painter who wrote the book entitled *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, concluded that the effects of art are not dependant on subject matter alone.


Historical masterpieces were painted by artists who created in a way that was modern to them. For example, Renaissance painters clothed sacred personages in contemporary clothing, which did not compromise the power of their work. To create truly authentic original art, artists must make art of their own time. Freed from the past need to illustrate the Word for an illiterate audience, artists today can strengthen and clarify the message through new ways. Abstract spiritual art is a form of contemporary art that immediately reaches the heart and draws believers more fully into communion with God.

Reaching Our Spiritual Hearts Through Abstract Visual Language

Abstraction has been with us through the ages. The flying buttresses of medieval cathedrals call our eyes and hearts to God. Through abstract elements, we are reminded of God, and a human response is initiated. The idea of God is conveyed through the abstract elements of form, mass, space and light.

We have all seen art in museums and galleries that has somehow turned us away. While it may be difficult to understand exactly why at times, it is actually the message that we are turning from, not the way it is said. Today we are accustomed to reading art in a different way than in the past. Art that communicates in our language has greater potential to move us towards the transcendental.

Abstract art has the ability to evoke contemplation and personal acts of devotion while providing an aura to deepen our liturgy. It provides the faithful an immediate impact that reaches the heart. Abstraction distills the message to its pure essence and draws us closer to the universal divine mystery.



After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him.

Matthew 3:16

Linda McCray was reflecting on Matthew 3:16 while painting "Rebirth." It is an original acrylic painting on floating panel in the triptych format, which is symbolic of the Trinity. It is hanging above the baptismal font at Blessed Trinity Catholic Community, Fr. Ed Hislop, Pastor.

"Rising," an Easter installation at the University Congregational Church in Missoula, Montana. Dr. H. Rafael Chacón, Professor of Art History and Criticism, curated the exhibition.

Embracing Our Art

As the National Conference of Catholic Bishops said, "Contemporary art is our own, the work of artists of our time and place, and belongs in our celebrations as surely as we do. If liturgy were to incorporate only the acceptable art of the past, conversion, commitment and tradition would have ceased to live."²

There is a time and place for all religious and spiritual art. Certainly the art in a gothic cathedral should be different than that in a contemporary church. Antique religious art belongs in traditional cathedrals. Contemporary art in traditional cathedrals can be a stunning contrast. A contemporary church calls for contemporary art. If this article was written in Old English it would not be as easy for you to read and understand. The same is true for art. To read the mystical language of icons you must know their symbolism. In different ways, icons and abstract art both serve as windows to heaven. Abstract art goes beyond iconic illustration to express spiritual truth.

There are a number of ways to translate transcendent reality into art. To capture feelings of grace, light, and God, I use a number of techniques including the old masters' use of glazes to capture luminosity, as well as contemporary mixed media techniques of incorporating found objects rich with symbolism, such as sand from Jerusalem. I bring spiritual art up to date by using abstract visual language to enlighten today's believers. I create fresh ways to communicate knowledge of the truth.

New Images of Faith

"People live and die with images and by images. In the efforts to communicate faith, believers must constantly try to find new images that can convey something of that faith. When St. Patrick stumbled upon the shamrock as the image of Trinity, he was being faithful to the human need to express concretely an abstract notion."³ John F. O'Grady

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Footnotes

1. Pope John Paul II, *Letter of His Holiness to Artists* (Vatican City: The Vatican, April, 1999).
2. Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Environment & Art in Catholic Worship* (Washington D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000), p. 9.
3. John F. O'Grady, "The Present State of Christology," *Contemporary Catholic Theology: a Reader*, ed. by Michael A. Hayes & Liam Gearon (New York: Continuum, 2000), p. 199.



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