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ENVIRONMENT ACROSS SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS

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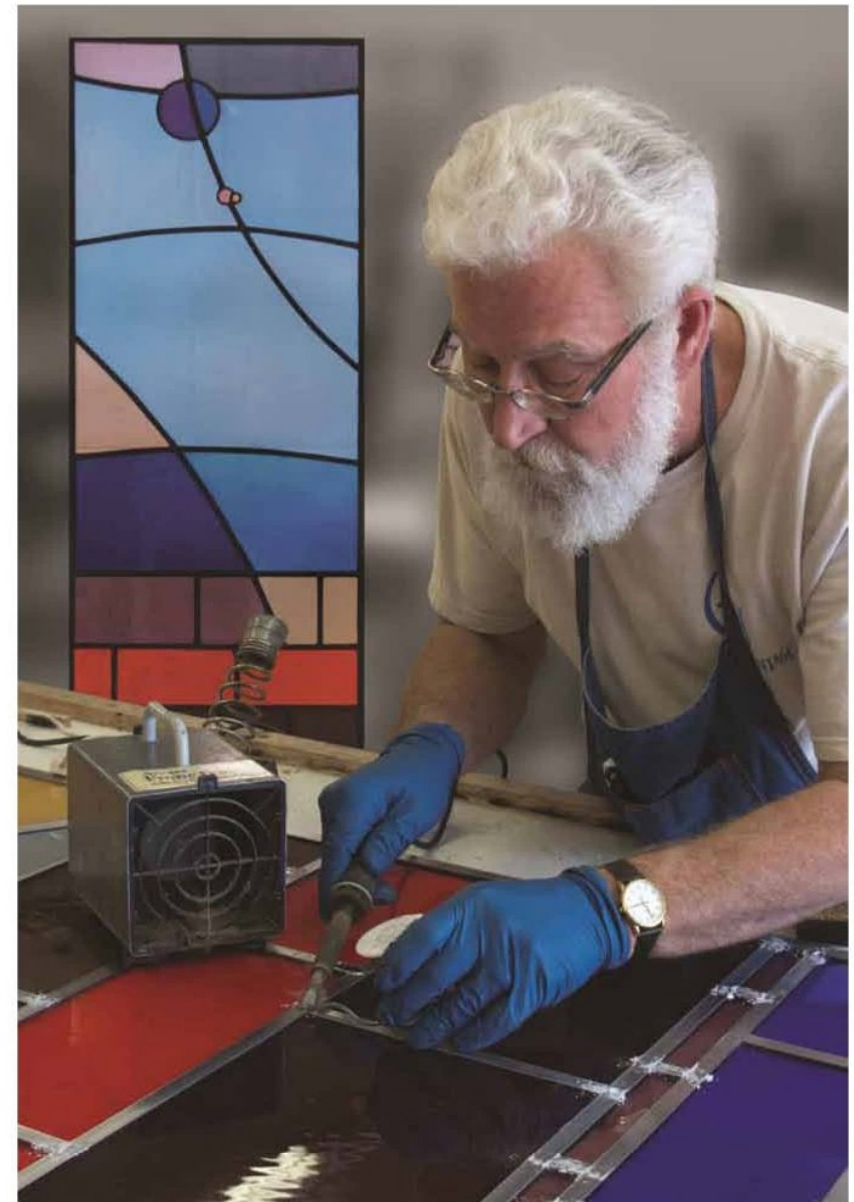
The late Stanislav Libenský believed that glass has a profound effect on human emotions. Stained glass windows have long been used to affect us in a variety of ways: to teach us, allow us to meditate and pray, deliver a message, calm us, inspire us, help us locate inner peace and allow us visual education and joy.

While the use of stained glass windows dates back centuries, today's stained glass has a variety of uses never before achieved. Curtain walls, window panels, room dividers and artistic elements are just a few of the modern day applications. No longer relegated to exclusive use in religious architectural contexts, stained glass has become a common functional element in today's architecture.

In the project discussed in this article, stained glass function is extended to both residential and liturgical architectural contexts. In 2012, Kahl Home built a new, state-of-the-art senior living facility (Kahl Home for the Aged) in northeast Davenport, Iowa, for which we created the stained glass windows. The three-story building with two towers is designed to promote community living for residents. The structure includes a chapel, available 24 hours a day, for reflection and prayer for those of all faiths.

The rooms are grouped in clusters of six to seven with a common living room and kitchen to create a neighborhood feel. The senior living facility features 105 private rooms and 30 semi-private rooms. It also features a large therapy space for rehabilitation services, a pub serving wine and beer to residents and their families, a gift shop and a café. The new location of Kahl Home sits on 40 acres of land, where residents have ample space to enjoy the outdoors and promote independent senior living. There is also a private residence section for housing of the Carmelite Sisters, featuring a private Chapel for their daily prayers and meditations.

The project for creating the stained glass for the Chapels was a year in the making and began with a meeting with both the facilities management and our staff. Glass Heritage, llc, is a fully accredited studio member of the Stained Glass Association of America, specializing in stained glass restoration, architectural art glass work and windows for religious facilities.



Kirk Prebys leading a panel for the Kahl Home project.

After the first meeting we contacted our freelance designer in Indiana, Alison Holen, who would develop these windows using her extensive experience. Alison received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design and a Bachelor of the Arts from Indiana University, Bloomington. She lived in Florence (Firenze), Italy and travelled throughout Tuscany for a summer to study the work of the Italian masters.



Oratory window at the Kahl Home for the Aged, where the Carmelite Sisters meditate and pray daily.



Stained glass windows from inside the Kahl Home.

The Carmelite Order needed windows for a chapel where all are welcome. That simple request can make one feel small. With famous predecessors such as Chagall, Connick, Winfield, Lawrence and Tiffany, we had a lot of work to do to rise to the occasion. This house of worship would need to calm the soul and yet energize the spirit of those who have lived their lives richly and fully.

The main portion of the overall project, the Mount Carmel Chapel, consisted of six large, double wide windows, each divided into four

sections. Approximately 400 square feet of stained glass work was to be designed and fabricated for the chapel. In addition there was the Oratory, a private space where the nuns would pray, meditate and reflect. We were given a rendering of Mount Carmel Chapel with its furnishings. This allowed us to choose and set colors that would not clash with the environment, and yet would still convey the message. The feeling we gained from the spatial design was for a very open, contemporary and yet grounded room. With this information in mind, we

decided that the panels in this entire project would have to maintain the spirit and movement needed to accomplish the desired criteria.

While designing the windows, Alison kept in mind the infinite universe and our being a tiny part of this constantly changing existence. She wanted to evoke a sense of connectivity with the surrounding environment while also maintaining a perspective of one's self within the design. We hoped that the person experiencing these windows would reflect upon their own existence and find a relationship

with the immensity of the universe and feeling the constant presence of the light of spirituality and faith. The shapes in the design were arranged to convey the movement of the heavens, while wrapping the observer in the beauty of color and light.

Critical feedback was solicited from the Kahl Home staff, which led to adjustments in final design. The committee from the Kahl Home met with us regularly and was an integral part of the process. Sister Ann Elizabeth Brown, O. Carm. and a number of the nuns from the Carmelite headquarters in New York



Stained glass windows from inside the Kahl Home.

attended several of the meetings and were a great help in developing the final concepts.

The framing of the Mount Carmel Chapel windows became an important architectural element. After seeing several concepts supplied by the architect, we made a decision that each window would be divided with the shape of the cross. In doing so we established a constant reminder of God's presence, albeit subliminally, through the Christian symbolism of the crucifixion.

We began working with the general contractor on the project to ensure that proper vented framing and protective covering was installed. We specified J. Sussman framing for the Mt. Carmel panels. Sussman framing for stained glass has been used in projects throughout the world and is a standard in our industry. For the Oratory, we needed another style of framing and glass in order to match the balance of the building. Wood-clad windows were selected.

As Alison worked on the design of what would ultimately be known as "God's World", Corey Pierce, our lead artist and designer, and Patricia Rogers, one of Glass Heritage's owners, began glass selection. Our first choice was Lamberts mouth-blown glass from Germany. Selected for its palette, feel and movement, there were over 40 different colors needed and each would have its own set of criteria for the space it was to fill. Cathedral and flashed glass were used throughout the panels. Flashed glass, glass which has one color blown over the other, was used in the universe sky sections. This allowed us to sandblast etch the constellations on both sides of the glass, giving a spectacular movement and color to each star. Cathedral colors were used in the "Rays from God", which are shown as piercing the universe and grounding in our souls.

The Oratory panels were an adaptation of a painting supplied to us by the Carmelite Sisters. The painting was originally designed as the logo for the celebration of the 8th Centenary of the Carmelite Rule; created by Catherine Martin, O. Carm. (Congregation of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Louisiana), it became the inspiration for the final design concept. Alison needed to take that watercolor and turn it into a workable glass design, while maintaining the original intent of the painting. This is not an easy task, as "break" (lead) lines were needed for piecing together the stained glass

without overburdening the feel and flow of the original design.

With the designs approved, colors and glass selected, full-sized renderings completed and cartoons drawn, we began to fabricate the panels. Glass was arriving at the studio at a rapid pace. A number of the colors and textures we had selected were, inevitably, out of stock. Substitutions were selected and the process moved forward.

The process of building a stained glass window dates back centuries and begins with a full size design, or cartoon, that is used as a pattern for cutting the glass. The glass is then cut into pieces and assembled with a lead matrix. It sounds simple, but one has to understand that each piece of glass in the window is chosen for its color, texture and movement, as well as its relationship to the other glass around it, and then is cut to match the space it will occupy. Glass pieces can also require painting and firing, as was the case in the Oratory windows, or etching, as was the case with the constellations in the Mount Carmel Chapel windows. All the design work needed to create an interconnected maze of lead and glass, without overpowering or hindering the flow. Once all the glass and lead is assembled, each lead joint is meticulously soldered. The panels are then weatherproofed with a putty compound to seal each piece of glass in its channel. Reinforcement bars are placed on the finished window in order to maintain the structural integrity of the window as a whole.

Installation was to be the last item for completion in the Chapels. The day was filled with intense last-minute activity with painters still painting, furniture arriving and our hoping that the installation of the glass will go smoothly. The Mount Carmel Chapel was the first to be installed. Because we had ordered the proper frames early in the process, the installation was flawless. The Oratory was next. The operable windows were placed in first and then the main section. The studio's sizing was impeccable.

We were all invited to the Dedication Mass for the anointing of the altar and consecration of the Chapel. The entire staff attended, including Alison and her family. They were showered with accolades from everyone, including the Bishop. A few of the Sisters told them they were brought to tears at the sight of the Oratory windows.



Stained glass windows from inside the Kahl Home.