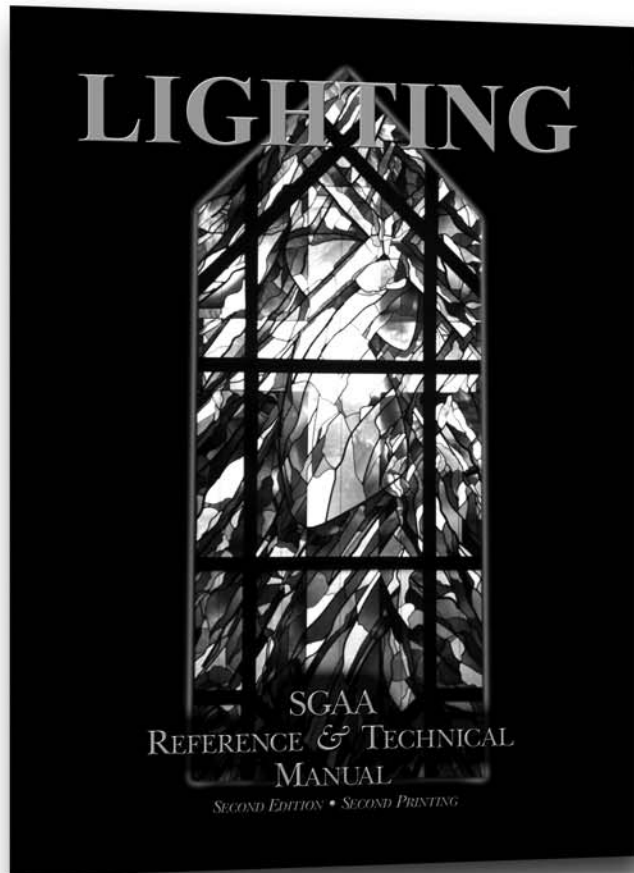


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A. Color and Light in Interior Spaces

Saara Gallin

Light is the symbol of the divine. With the exception of the flickering flame of a candle, nowhere is this more evident than in the relationship between light and stained glass. The interaction of the color in stained glass with light is unwritten music. Consequently, discussions of color in stained glass must simultaneously consider its relationship with light. One without the other is like a musical score never being heard—without sound, without appreciation. Thorn Prikker once made the comment that stained glass is painting with light. I think of my work as sculpting with light.

Can stained glass have magic without the existence of natural light? I think so. The beauty of glass

lies in its relationship with light. My present concern is with glass in interior spaces, the lighting for which is seldom natural. Yet the non-existence of natural light by no means precludes the aesthetic wonder of glass magic. In interiors, what should be considered is the nature and direction of the light as well as the type of glass to be used. For example, opalescent glass survives the harshness of incandescent and fluorescent light more easily than does pot metal glass. However, my focus is on mouth-blown glass.

What happens if one persists in attempting to use pot metal glass in an interior situation? For one thing, all of the subtlety of the glass can be destroyed by the harsh light. The magic is gone. If one continues to persist, what possibilities exist? Clear glass and tints always seem to work with low levels of ambient light, which seems to us the average situation in interior spaces; however, the darker, more powerful, sensual colors are not turned on by soft light, and the subtle textures and optics of hand-blown glass are usually destroyed by strong transmitted light.

A ploy that works especially well with clear glass and light tints in a situation where minimal light is available is to use a mirror behind the work of pot metal glass. A space of two and one half to five inches between the mirror and the glass is desirable. Careful choice of pale tints, with an emphasis on the texture rather than color, will work to offset the tendency toward “glitziness” inherent in this situation. The light in the room will go through the pale tints, bounce against the mirror, and return to activate the glass. I have used this successfully in a number of situations where I was preparing to tell the client that perhaps he did not really want glass but should look to other materials.

I believe that one of the major reasons underlying the poor acceptance by galleries of non-commissioned stained glass is that galleries, by their very nature, are interior spaces. Only on rare occa-

sions is there much window space. When the work is shown, it is most often exhibited with a very poor understanding of what can be done with the existing light situation. The best resolution to this persistent problem is to ensure that the gallery lights, which are usually in the ceiling, are directed toward a white wall. The glass is then hung with a good space between it and the wall. The lights are between the glass and the wall. To repeat the order a different way:

1. The viewer
2. The glass
3. The space and light and, finally,
4. The wall.

The balance of light must always be such that there is more light on the side of the glass away from the viewer. Ugly hot spots of light are avoided in this way, and the pot metal glass is not drowned in a sea of bad light.

What do you do when existing ceiling lights are in the wrong place? A recent innovative and successful use of light was developed in attempting to mount a temporary exhibition of modern non-commissioned stained glass in connection with an exhibit, "The Great Windows of New Rochelle."

Lighting was rented for the occasion from a firm that provides theatre lighting. The lights were placed on the floor and were directed up at the white walls. The walls were easily washed with light, with no hot spots. The intensity of light was adjusted with reference to the needs of a specific work from a central control panel placed out of sight.

The ability to use pot metal glass in interior installations without destroying the very essence which makes it so wonderful to work with is a current reality. Low-voltage halogen light is being used more and more by galleries and interior-design people. They are increasingly aware of this light's ability to make all art work glow. This is particularly true of stained glass. The light is extraordinary. Once you have worked with it, it is hard to settle for anything else. Remember the basic rule: the preponderance of light must be on the side of the glass away from the viewer, with halogen light as with all others.

The contribution of low-voltage halogen light to the interior use of stained glass is that all the colors and tex-

tures are true and never obliterated. The possibilities for the use of pot metal glass—in conjunction with this modern gift of light—in homes, offices, and restaurants are endless. Of course, as wonderful as it is, low-voltage halogen light can never compete with natural light, light that changes the work from morning to evening and from season to season. Nevertheless, the faerie-like, magic-creating, aesthetic-inducing qualities of glass can be used within interior spaces and can be used effectively.

B. Artificial Lighting of Stained Glass Panels

Douglas Phillips with Mona Phillips

When we think of lighting for stained glass, we need to remind ourselves that stained glass is ordinarily seen by looking through the glass at a lighted background. This can be sky, foliage, or buildings. Such background images, dimly seen through the stained glass and distorted by its texture, create the familiar "glassy" look. For best viewing conditions, the brightest light should be on the side of the glass opposite the viewer; however, we do not want the light source to be seen through the glass. For example, we notice how sunlight, when it shines directly through stained glass, can create uncomfortable and distracting glare. Uncontrolled light can be disastrous.

Our aim in lighting stained glass should be to provide a lighted background using a hidden source of light. How we accomplish this depends on how the stained glass will be displayed.

If the glass is in a window opening, we may need to provide lighting that enables viewing at night, from either the outside or the inside. In many instances, glass may be set not in a window opening but rather against a lighted wall or in a box that functions both as frame and light source—a "light box." We use various lighting techniques in our installations, and there are underlying principles for each approach to the lighting of stained glass; however, it should be remembered that lighting itself is also an art, and these principles serve only as guides....

***Excerpted from the Opening Pages of the
SGAA Reference & Technical Manual
Chapter 21: Lighting***

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