

WHERE CAN I LEARN *Professional Stained Glass Techniques?*

by Rick Hoover

Serious individuals who want to participate in stained glass on a professional level often ask the question, “Outside of a lengthy studio apprenticeship, where can I learn professional stained glass methods in America?” Unfortunately, currently, the answer is, “Nowhere.” That situation needs to change, and the Stained Glass School is the logical catalyst for that change.

I recently had the pleasure to speak with stained glass artist and educator, Ken Leap. Ken currently heads up the educational efforts for the Art Glass Guild, so we share some mutual concerns in the educational realm. He asked me what my vision for the Stained Glass School is. I presented my thoughts and would like to share a more concise version of those with readers of this magazine — indeed — with all members of the stained glass community.

The SGS educational efforts I envision can be divided into three separate categories — artistic excellence, technical proficiency, and continuing education.

Artistic Excellence

The SGS, through its network of existing stained glass artists and acknowledged leaders in the field, can and should, provide learning opportunities for art students across America. We cannot hope to get a stained glass curriculum into every recognized art college in the United States; however, the SGS can provide a stained glass curriculum and instructional opportunities at a central location at its property on the outskirts of Kansas City.

Much like a “semester abroad,” a semester-long, highly concentrated, residential program might be accredited, through a national association of colleges of art. A rigorous, artistically oriented stained glass program will recruit talented, young artists from across this country to embrace fresh approaches to new markets — markets outside the usual ecclesiastical setting. Fledgling studios with

newfound ideas will inevitably develop, breathing new life into this medium. The infusion of informed artistic talent, armed with uncommon design ideas, may define an artistic direction of American stained glass for decades to come. That is a deliciously enticing prospect.

Technical Proficiency

Stained glass education of the type required to produce *bona fide* artisans is an arduous and extensive process, generally involving lengthy apprenticeship programs. At no point in the history of stained glass education has a simple, abbreviated time frame been discovered to produce competent, professional craftspeople.

There is no easy way — no magic bullet — to learning the ponderous, sometimes mystic, complexities of the stained glass art and craft. No weekend seminars, no intensive semester immersion programs can replace a dedicated academic and “practicum” experience — mentored by masters — over the course of several years.

The most expeditious course may be to amalgamate the stained glass curriculum with an existing vocational training facility. In addition to classroom training, young learners, during the course of their studies, will participate in project-based learning and internships, and will, eventually, be offered certification through their participation in SGS studio activities and testing. At the conclusion of their studies, students will be proficient in engineering, construction methods, installation techniques, and restoration procedures involved in the trade. This program, which may also involve adults and veterans who are retraining in new fields, is anticipated to take two to four years to complete, depending on the level of certification desired.

Continuing Education

For those individuals currently involved in the art and craft of stained

glass, there is a constant need to upgrade and learn new skills. Short, intense “master classes” and symposia are envisioned to fulfill this need. Classes ranging in length from three days to three weeks in duration and focusing on one specific area of knowledge are proposed. These classes will be taught by recognized masters in a specific aspect of the art and craft, and will be offered at the Stained Glass School facilities. Certificates of completion will be granted to those who successfully complete the classes.

It is anticipated that these classes, due to their relative ease of production, will be the first to be offered by the Stained Glass School.

In Conclusion

Establishing programs of the scope and magnitude outlined above is a monumental undertaking — one that cannot be accomplished by any single individual. There is a great deal that must be done, including decisions regarding direction, funding, curriculum, outside participation, faculty, and a myriad of other concerns, all of which must be addressed before the first class comes to fruition.

There are many tasks to be accomplished before any of these programs can actually be put in place — tasks for which volunteers are desperately needed. Whether you are a fourth-generation owner of a major American stained glass studio, an independent artist, or a newly minted small studio, the Stained Glass School needs your input, expertise, and energy. Please consider helping preserve and enlarge the community of stained glass artists and artisans for generations to come. You will feel better for it, and the craft will benefit immensely from your participation. Volunteer to help today by calling toll-free 1-800-438-9581.