

PURPOSES OF PAINTING

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Line—Tracing

The term tracing is not entirely correct since it generally means to copy in like-manner, or to imitate. The original underlying drawing or full-sized cartoon is a blow-up or enlarged interpretation of the artist's original sketch. Actually tracing pigment onto the glass surface will not be an exact imitation of the full-sized drawing as done on paper. Instead, the sketch and the cartoon serve as a rough guide to successful painting. It is here that the eloquence of the intended statement will begin to be revealed. The vehicle used for tracing—be it water or turpentine with suspended pigment—is translated differently on the glass surface than is charcoal or graphite on paper. The material upon which the drawing takes place is also very different—the original drawing is on paper and the actual one is on glass. Although the image on the cartoon is usually translucent when placed on the illuminated light box, the traced pieces of glass will appear somewhat different when held up to daylight. The brilliance of light, the inherent qualities of the glass, and the glass color play an influencing role in your empathy towards the painting during the creative process. A creation in stained glass is not the reproduction of what has been done on paper; it is an interpretation of the enlarged drawing (cartoon) on an influencing material (glass) to be seen in a transitory environment of light.

The trace line can delineate shape or form. It is a visual force and element of design painted on the glass surface that is kiln-fired for permanency. A solid trace line can be bold and suggestive of strength; or it can be translucent, fluid, and less supportive. Tracing is also used to widen the visual distance between bordering colors and areas of glass. Covering an area of glass with dark tracing pigment creates a negative space.

The strengthening of a lead line by painting it wider will also reduce the influence of a neighboring glass color. Bold tracing can change the shape of a piece of glass, focusing attention on it. Bolder and wider trace lines and matting will also reduce the amount of light irradiation, which makes the unpainted glass areas appear larger than they actually are. Medieval glass painters understood this and compensated for it in distant windows by painting trace lines wider. The trace line was reinforced with a light matt over it so that brilliant light would not destroy segments of the painted image.

An expressive trace line can denote an object or suggest a mood or gesture having an element of tension and energy within it. A curvilinear line of varied width expresses a feeling of free-flowing movement. A straight line of constant width does not evoke the same response. A line can also be sensitive, defining form and suggestive of mass. The style or character of a trace line such as a decorative calligraphic one may be reminiscent of a particular time period (e.g., medieval).

In stained glass window design, the trace line and the lead line have an energy or tension that is probing and restless. By extending either a traced or leaded line beyond the point of junction with another such line, the energy or tension created within the line extends its directional movement beyond the point of actual line termination. This directional force is the tension within the element of a line. The viewer's mind extends the line further than the eye actually sees, thus creating an artificial visual sensation.

Trace lines can also interact with lead lines and be suggestive of them. A coat of arms done on a single piece of flashed glass (red on white) may utilize such lines that border the red or white color area created by etching.

Shading—Matting

Easel painting on a stained glass surface is the animation of the glass colors and the surface plane. Tensions created between adjacent pieces of glass due to their disproportionate shapes, color, intensities and value relationships can be altered by the experienced painter to gain greater artistic advantage. At the discretion of the artist-painter, the multi-colored pieces of glass upon the easel can be transformed into a more dynamic visual experience by modeling the light with value and tonality. An experienced stained glass painter is able to create an image on the glass surface without neutralizing or destroying the effective character of the glass. Painting should usually be done reservedly and with the intention to enhance the stained glass window. With tonality and line, a desired image can be modeled on the segmented glass surface. The artist's style, technique and individual mannerism will be revealed in the painting.

Varying degrees of glass brilliancy can be achieved through experimentation with value painting and contrasts. Each color hue and tonality present in a glass panel is altered when pigment is applied on the glass surface and matted—as does a glass color change occur when it is placed in context with other stained glass colors. To facilitate such value painting, the tonal range of the applied pigment needs to be established in relation to the various tonal ranges and color intensities of the selected glass colors illuminated before the glass painter. The question of positive (clear glass) areas as juxtaposed to negative (painted glass) areas of each piece of glass must also be addressed. Applied tones of pigment matted on the glass surface should be done while maintaining a good sense for the remaining proportions of unpigmented (clear) glass areas if window enhancement by painting

is to be achieved. Painting in a restrained manner will allow the glass to breathe! Suffocating the stained glass window with a great amount of applied pigment will only reduce the clarity and effectiveness of the glass material. Don't try to say it all in terms of painting!

By contrasting shades or values of applied pigment, the matting can be modulated with light to varying degrees of plasticity. The painting of objects and drapery can be a form of still-life painting. Small panels in stained glass offer a means of practice. Non-objective forms can be painted with interesting value relationships interacting with a design of glass colors. By tonal manipulation on the glass surface, the strong contrast of light and shade creates a chiaroscuro effect. Tracing need not enter into the design of such tonal or value painting since line in reality does not exist. Tracing is usually an adjunct to matting.

As mentioned previously, the disturbing brilliance of direct sunlight can be reduced by very lightly matting the entire area of the stained glass surface. Also, by selectively painting various areas of each piece of glass, the harshness of strong light will diminish as it filters through the screening wall of partially painted glass. The tension between glass colors that do not interact very well can be lessened by shading. The matting can create movement within a stained glass window by planning the positive (clear glass) areas and negative (pigmented glass) areas. The negative areas can be matted with interesting tonality, allowing the positive areas freedom of movement and direction. After a little play, the best plan for the matting can be determined. Movement suggestive of running water, flowing drapery, etc., can be expressed.

The practice of traditional painting techniques on glass presents an opportunity to refine old painting skills or discover new ones. Several proven techniques of tonal painting are possible: Matting (applying the pigment to the glass), stip-

pling (dabbing the end of the brush on the glass surface) when wet and rubbing by hand when dry. A second technique is matting and stippling when dry. A third involves matting and then brushing certain areas while still wet. All of these procedures are used to produce the desired shading and depth. An additional tonality could be accomplished using turpentine and selected oils as a medium. After stippling, the painter also can use brushes, sticks and needles to break the pigment on the glass surface.

Traditional and contemporary stained glass does not follow any one style of design or method of glass painting at any one period of time. It should be noted that what is considered traditional today was often labeled modern 75 years ago. Above all, glass painting is a very individual means of expression used to enhance a stained glass window. As in drawing, the artist's personality is mirrored in his style and the technique used. For this reason, painted autonomous panels exhibit not only the artistic arrangement of color, line and shape, but also the artist's developed skills and ingenuity in tonal painting. While certain "undesirables" must be avoided (e.g., excessive painting), the artist today has much freedom from traditional expectations.

Unfortunately, however, glass painting has not been explored as much as it could be. High business costs are certainly one factor responsible for its restricted use. Hopefully, current interest in glass painting will produce new images on the surface of glass and call attention to its full potential.

Applied color

Neutral black and brown tracing colors are often used for pigmentation of the glass surface. The effect of such tracing upon individual pieces of stained glass is minimal. When black or brown tracing pigment is thinned and lightly applied, the translucency of the traced pigment influences the mood of each glass color in a

different way. Thinned black trace color is cool in color temperature (i.e., leans toward blue); the thinned brown trace color is warm (i.e., leans toward orange). Both colors mixed have a neutral effect on glass colors.

The tracing color and its temperature (warm or cold) is easily seen when a few small mixes of various tracing colors are applied to a clear piece of glass. The samples of tracing should be applied in varied densities of pigment for relationship. Hold the sample tracings up to direct sunlight and notice the differences of trace color and "temperature" radiated. You may want to experiment with this on lighter tints of glass such as amber and blue and see how the color of the glass and its temperature now influence the trace color. A brown trace color applied to various tints of amber glass gives a window a warmer feeling and is in color harmony with it. If an amber-colored window is bathed with direct sunlight, the trace color becomes much more luminous and radiates the color of the tracing pigment. The use of a warm tracing and matting color in a stained glass window should be preceded by deliberation over its effect on the room's intended environment. Again, brown-colored matting applied to flesh pieces of glass gives a warmer feeling after kiln firing, while a black-colored matting radiates a cold feeling. Silver stains and/or enamels may also be considered for color choices.

This essay, taken from "Chapter 13: Painting" is a part of the SGAA Reference & Technical Manual, Second Edition. The entire chapter is available in a reprint edition from the Stained Glass Association of America. For more information and to see all available reprint chapters, visit the SGAA online at www.stainedglass.org.