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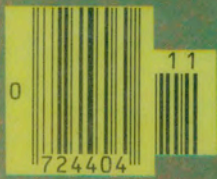
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TIME

A Special Report



Stained Glass, Back and Blooming

Old skills and new techniques

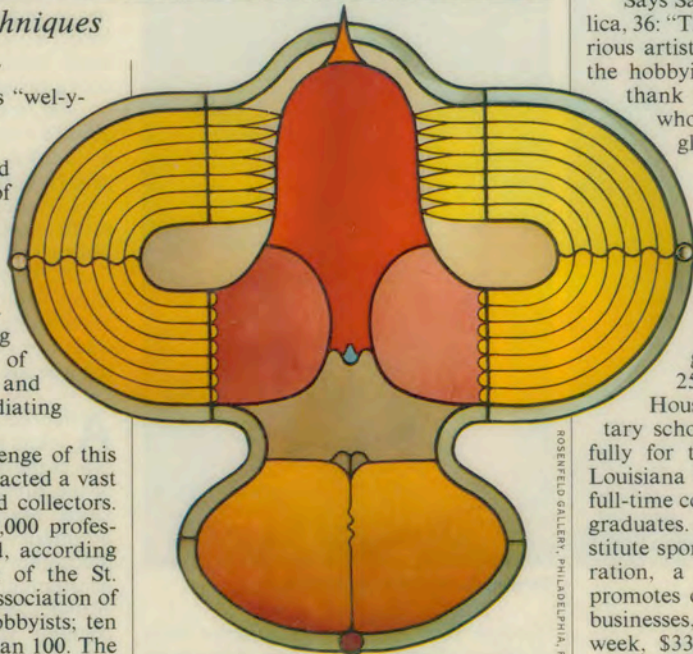
"To beholde hit was gret joye."
—Chaucer, describing his "wel-y-glased" chamber.

The shimmering lights and the shifting imagery of stained-glass have entranced the eye and expanded the imagination since the evolution of the art some 16 centuries ago. Today, as pervasively as sunshine pouring through the great windows of Chartres, the resurgent art and craft of stained glass is irradiating the American scene.

In this decade, the challenge of this once and future form has attracted a vast legion of artists, students and collectors. In the U.S. there are now 5,000 professionals working in glass and, according to Patrick White, president of the St. Louis-based Stained Glass Association of America, at least 100,000 hobbyists; ten years ago there were fewer than 100. The output of artists and amateurs is becoming highly visible in offices and stores, schools, courthouses, chapels, restaurants, apartment buildings and homes. The pieces may be room dividers, skylights or side lights, bathtub screens, doors, windows or—most significantly—hanging or freestanding "autonomous" works that can be displayed like paintings or sculptures or suspended in front of windows. As Lithuanian-born Artist Albinas Elskus notes: "You can actually suspend an image in mid-air. You cannot find any other material that does that."



Richard Posner's *The Big Enchilada* 1975



Philadelphia Ray King's *Bird Piece* 1976

A distinctive, irradiating form.

At the first major exhibition of its kind ever mounted in New York City, the Museum of Contemporary Crafts is showing 33 pieces of "New Stained Glass," devoted to small, "personal" works by leading artists that range from Miróesque abstraction to ribald political satire. One offbeat work by Californian Richard Posner, 29, is called *The Big Enchilada* 1975; it depicts in allegorical terms the White House infighting over Watergate. A similar show at the Pacific Design Center in Los Angeles drew 2,000 people on weekends, while another recent exhibition in the Washington suburb of Reston was jammed during its six-week run.

Glass mania infects people of all ages, occupations and educational backgrounds. However, most of the professionals are young. One of the most innovative artists in the field, Bay Area-based Paul Marioni, 36, had previously worked as a garage body-and-fender man (though he has degrees in English and philosophy). Ecuador-born Frank Del Campo, 44, who works on Manhattan's Upper West Side, went from soldier to singer to antique dealer before becoming a full-time artist. Philadelphia's Ray King, 27, until recently had to make ends meet by restoring old stained-glass windows; now he is one of the few artists in the medium who can earn a living making his own experimental pieces. Benida Solow, 30, whose lustrous *Innerscape*, a freestanding screen, was included in the Los Angeles

show, has been represented at five other California exhibitions in the past two years.

Says San Francisco Artist Peter Mollica, 36: "The reason it's happening for serious artists is because it's happened on the hobbyist level. I think you have to thank the amateur. A lot of people who are serious now about stained glass started out as amateurs."

More than a thousand courses in stained glass are now available in public schools, museums, Y.M.C.A.s, art centers, colleges and private studios throughout the U.S. After Artist Don Davidson started teaching stained-glass works as a pilot project for 25 fifth- and sixth-graders at Houston's Luther Burbank elementary school, parents clamored successfully for their own afterschool classes. Louisiana State University is offering a full-time course in the medium for undergraduates. At North Adams, Mass., an institute sponsored by the Hoosuck Corporation, a nonprofit organization that promotes design-oriented manufacturing businesses, has just completed a two-week, \$330 class in rudimentary technique; it was sold out. Another course in April will teach painting on glass; in June under Albinas Elskus, there will be a course in design. At the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, four-year students can take a major in stained glass. Later this year a special class will be taught there by West Germany's Ludwig Schaffrath, 54, a master of design who is regarded as the greatest single influence on Americans working in the medium.

Artist Otto B. Rigan notes in his book *New Glass* (Ballantine, \$7.95): "The pioneering, limit-shattering art of the new

show, has been represented at five other California exhibitions in the past two years.



Benida Solow's *Innerscape*, 1977