

# Reaching out from Bath with mood setting light and colour

**THEMIS MIKELLIDES** of **Bath Aqua Glass** explains his art and how his team of stained glass artists in the city in Somerset works on a wide range of commissions on a national and also international basis.

Situated in the heart of the world heritage city of Bath, Bath Aqua Glass finds its home neighbouring the historic Bath Abbey and opposite the Roman Baths. Visited by over 3.5 million visitors each year, Bath boasts many attractions, but one of its most interesting is also one of its most creative.

Bath Aqua Glass is a local company making handmade glass in the centre of the city. It specialises in blown, fused and stained glass, creating unique works of art. Founded in 1996 by Annette Dolan, the company now employs 30 staff and has both a national and international profile.

In our flagship shop, windows and walls cascade with baubles; shelves display eye-catching vases and bowls, and the stained glass makers work on site creating new pieces.

As a stained glass artist, I head the stained glass studio, working with my team on commissions for customers all over the world. A director of the company, I originally trained in Swansea studying medieval and architectural stained glass, followed by an MA in glass for which I pursued ideas and artworks that create a three-dimensional quality.

Like many using all kinds of fields, I was originally inspired by my father, Byron, a



*Memorial window celebrating the life of "Rose". Private commission, Devon. Detail of sandblasting, through mouth blown, red flashed streaky glass.*

retired Oxford professor and pioneer in the field of architectural psychology, a subject that encompasses how light and colour affect us all on a psychological level.

Allowing daylight and colour to enter a building is an essential quality in sustainable building design. It has been well documented that environments which incorporate the aesthetics of light and colour greatly enhance the psychological happiness and well-being of their occupants.

Both traditionally made and contemporary glazing can partially engage or fully block an undesirable view, an ideal solution for creating light and private spaces.

As a building material, glass is interactive with sunlight and influences the interior quality of buildings more than any other construction material. Architectural stained glass can also be used as an ideal solution for reducing solar glare.

I found a natural marriage of both light and colour in the art and medium of stained glass, marvelling at how light reacting dynamically within the glass changes its entire appearance and feel. Research shows that strong, vivid colours stimulate our



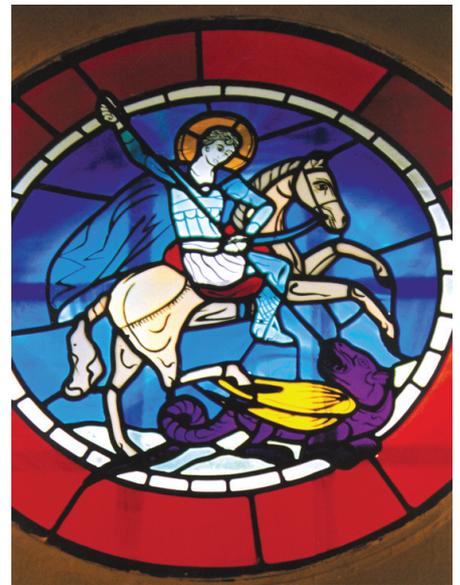
*Double glazed roundel panel. A private commission in Gloucestershire. Client's brief... inspired by the turbulence of water.*



*A chapel window for Monkton Combe School outside Bath – the vivid red colours symbolise the blood of Christ and of the brave men and women lost in the First World War.*



A newly commissioned heraldic shield for a private client, Berkshire.



Traditionally made 13th century stained glass window for St George's Catholic Church in Warminster.

minds and appear closer to us, whereas cooler, paler colours will calm us and appear further away.

I employ this understanding of the psychology of colour within my work, creating pieces of art that seek to radiate an innate beauty.

I and my team work on a wide range of projects including the restoration of church windows and the design and execution of commissions for churches, commercial and domestic buildings.

One of our most recent projects was the recreation of a missing section of a window designed by Joseph Bell around 1850. When the window was first made, ancient painting methods were utilised using badger hair brushes and stippling techniques.

So our studio team did the same, painstakingly recreating the detailed designs and firing each piece in a kiln at 660 degrees Celsius. This fuses the ceramic paint to the glass, meaning that the images can last for up to 1,000 years.

One of the most meaningful ecclesiastical windows created by the team was of a chapel window for Monkton Combe School outside Bath. The window was funded by an elderly former pupil who wanted to leave a commemoration to his old school, and he was delighted to see his dream realised before he died.

The window depicts the three crosses on the hills of Golgotha, using vivid red colours to symbolise both the blood of Christ and of the brave men and women lost in the First World War. The window forms a bond between past, present and future, a story that we leave for future generations.

Looking ahead through 2018, I and my team will be creating a window for a local church commemorating its 300th anniversary. The design will incorporate the water themes of the Bath spa, and will be made using contributions from every part of the company.

Hand spun roundels, (circles of glass created in the Walcot Street blowing studio) will use copper and iron in a mineral



These hand spun roundel panels, located at the entrance to the Bath Aqua Glass shop in Bath, have become a local landmark.



Three-dimensional glass art. Traditional enamel glass paint, screen painted over two panels and double glazed. Contemporary domestic commission, Wiltshire.



Details from a contemporary window, private commission, Washington, USA. Created by slumping mouth blown glass and leading. A process that creates remarkable visual light catching and distortion through the thick sections of glass.



Making a window in Corsica – mainly cooler, paler colours to generate a certain feeling in the beholder.

combination used by the Romans to create aqua colour. These roundels will represent water bubbles.

A flowing watery element will be created by combining fine glass frit (small glass particles) and enamel glass paint. A clear reamy mouth blown glass, (glass with striations – ridges – running through it) will complete the design by inviting the viewer to imagine they are seeing through water, with detail slightly distorted.

These elements will be leaded together using traditional techniques. These schools of glass making combined will make this window very special, and hopefully something of a talking point for years to come.

Taking account of ever increasing environmental concern and a greater desire to be more energy efficient, all our windows can be glazed incorporating energy saving laminated low E glass. The double and triple glazed units are made to the highest standards with materials that promote longevity. A stained glass window can now be a very secure installation.

As well as having commissions in the UK, we have pieces installed as far away as Alaska, Florida, Washington, Nigeria and Corsica.