

Connick Windows

Thoughts, news and comments concerning the art and craft of Connick stained glass, published periodically by....

The Charles J. Connick Stained Glass Foundation, Ltd.

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Toward an Appreciation of Stained Glass

Orin Skinner continues his commentary, begun with the article "How a Stained Glass Window is Made" in the Feb '94 issue of Connick Windows.

Good stained glass is not fundamentally a question of style or period, but is related to inherent qualities of the material itself and its use in architecture. A window is an opening in the wall of a building designed to admit light. It is filled with a transparent material so that it may shut out the weather while continuing to admit light. It may be decorated in any manner not interfering with this simple premise which does not conceal the material and which is in harmony with the surrounding architecture. The glass may be colored and the light controlled, but the problem is always to be stated in terms of active light, direct transmitted light.

No other craft deals in light as brilliant or elemental; and so if colored glass is used, color is of the first consideration. Colors should be pure and their active translucence should not be lost. No matter how heavily a window is painted, it should not appear muddy or turgid. It should be alive and singing in the light. Even in its deeper, most somber passages there should be a quiet glow. Pure color in light has the power of lifting the observer out of himself. A window should be inspiring, not simply exciting in color. Color takes this way of suggesting virtues and ideals, much as do pure sounds in music. Ancient races sensed the glory of color and from that early realization grew medieval color symbolism, a spontaneous expression of profound spiritual significance.

As in color, so in form, stained glass finds expression in symbolism. It is the underlying ideal, not the surface appearance, the inner reality rather than the exterior manifestation of nature that the true craftsman seeks to represent in design and pattern. He strives to convey the essential image in symbolic form.

A window need not be elaborate in order to be good; and indeed, good design and color are just as essential in a simple and inexpensive window as in a more elaborate composition.

Every window should be designed for its individual setting and definite surroundings. It is impossible to devise a set of rules by which one may scale the merit of a work of art. It has been well said that a receipt for beauty in terms of law destroys the creative faculty. We can only hint at general principles and leave the creative master craftsman free rein to expand his dreams.

Connick News

For Your '94 Calendar

The Orin E. Skinner Annual Lecture is scheduled for Wednesday, November 9th at 6:30 PM, Rabb Lecture Hall, Boston Public Library, Copley Square, Boston. The lecturer will be Jonathan L. Fairbanks, Katharine Lane Weems Curator of American Decorative Art and Sculpture at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Foundation Annual Meeting

The Charles J. Connick Stained Glass Foundation Board of Directors held its 9th annual meeting on April 4, 1994.

Tour of Connick Archives

A small group of interested people enjoyed an educational tour of the Connick Archives in the Fine Arts Department at Boston Public Library with Janice Chadbourne, Curator of Fine Arts, and with Katherine Dibble, Supervisor of Research Library Services. The group was impressed with the responsible attention and dedicated service the Library gives to the Connick Collection. Although much progress has been made, a great deal of cataloguing needs to be done before cross-section information can be accessible. The Foundation is exploring with the Library the ways to provide better access to the Collection.

One definition of Window is "a means of obtaining information". Our newsletter will keep you informed of the Foundation's activities, the Connick Collection in the Fine Arts Department of Boston Public Library, and Connick news around the country.

"The New England Fantasy"

(continued from Feb. '94 Connick Windows)

As mentioned in the February '94 Connick Windows, we are thankful for the efforts of stained glass collector Charles Hayes and conservator Monica Radecki for restoring the watercolor cartoon of a very unique window which is now available for exhibition.

However, "New England Fantasy", Connick's glass mosaic set in plastic, designed and executed for the Exhibition of Contemporary American Industrial Art at the Metropolitan Museum (NYC), is in particular need of restoration. Because of inadequate climate control storage at the studio, the plastic has warped away from the zinc bars connecting the pieces. (Zinc was used in place of the lead of traditional stained glass window.)

Jonathan Fairbanks, Katharine Lane Weems Curator of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, has made the following comments,

analyses and recommendations for this unique panel:

"This is Connick's only major piece done in plastic. This plastic documents an era of the material. The back pieces of plastic should be removed - and discarded. The plastic that holds the glass pieces need to be flattened in a kiln. Each piece of glass should be removed, cleaned, and reset in its own space in the original plastic with a drop of powdered lucite and binder to hold it. Then the plastic (without backing) be reset in the original zinc. The panel needs to be displayed in a light box with fluorescent lights; so the plastic will not soften."

"New England Fantasy" is part of The Connick Foundation Collection, and is an important piece for future exhibitions. We now have the design and newly restored cartoon available to us. Once the allegorical window is restored this unique collection will be complete and available for exhibition.



"Angel of Prayer", window over the south entrance, Grace Methodist Church, St. Louis by Charles J. Connick. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Boston Public Library of the City of Boston.

Opportunities to See Connick Stained Glass Windows

St. Louis, Missouri is the site of the 85th Annual Summer Conference of the Stained Glass Association of America (July 6 - 9), and is also the site of a variety of Connick stained glass windows. Connick windows in the St. Louis area can be seen in the following churches:

Christ Church Cathedral,
1210 Locust Street (phone 231-3454)
Two groups of 2 windows in the Baptistry, 1928.

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish,
7148 Forsyth Avenue
(phone 726-6200)

Rose window in the north front, 1918.

Grace United Methodist Church,
6199 Waterman Avenue
(phone 863-1992)

Angels of Praise and Prayer windows over north and south entrances, 1944.

Second Presbyterian Church,
4501 Westminster Place
(phone 367-0366)

Rose window over entrance, 1932.

St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church,
7230 Dale Avenue (phone 644-2144)

Rose window over entrance, 1929,
North transept window, 1930.

St. Michael & St. George Episcopal Church,
6345 Wydown Blvd (phone 721-1502)
Aisle and clerestory windows, 1947-1963.

Note: For registration or more information about the seminars and events of the SGAA Summer Conference call 1-800-888-7422.