

# COLOR

No longer solely for church on Sunday, stained glass is illuminating public spaces and private homes to dramatic effect, from bold splashes of color to delicate painterly designs

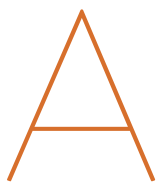
# THE

# WORLD

Words  
RACHEL  
LOOS



A breathtaking centerpiece in the Formosa Boulevard metro station in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Narcissus Quagliata's glass dome is almost 100 feet in diameter and took four years to complete. The artist "wanted to create a world where people could *find* themselves."



At this year's Milan Design Week, heads were turned by beautiful sideboards made with stained glass. Glowing softly in the light, their striking geometric patterns, in a restrained palette of pale blues, sunset oranges, and sage greens, gave a centuries-old craft an elegantly modern spin.

Created by the supremely cool duo of designer-of-the-moment Patricia Urquiola and graphic designer Federico Pepe, the Credenza capsule collection was evidence that stained glass has come out of churches and cathedrals to take center stage in modern design and architecture.

Today, swirling patterns of architectural glass – as the art of using colored glass is now called – welcome visitors at airports, delicately shaded panels of glass give subtle decoration to office buildings, and glass screen-printed with feathery foliage brightens the grey dullness of bus stops. In the home, windows of contemporary stained glass are the new decoration *du jour*, and glass “paintings” worth tens of thousands of dollars are found hanging on walls around the globe.

In creating the collection, Spaniard Urquiola was inspired by the stained-glass window panels in Cologne Cathedral, created by German artist Gerhard Richter a decade ago. “Based on the repetition of a square form, I found them to be magnificent and contemporary,” says Urquiola. For their Credenza pieces, she and Italian Pepe repeated angular shapes within concentric circles, the glass supported by strips of lead. “The challenge was to give a sense of light to an object in the home rather than choosing to work with something on which natural light falls,” she says.

British product designer Lee Broom has also incorporated stained glass into his work. His Chapel Light houses a geometric pattern of hand-crafted stained glass beneath a black metal dome, casting a warm and colorful light.

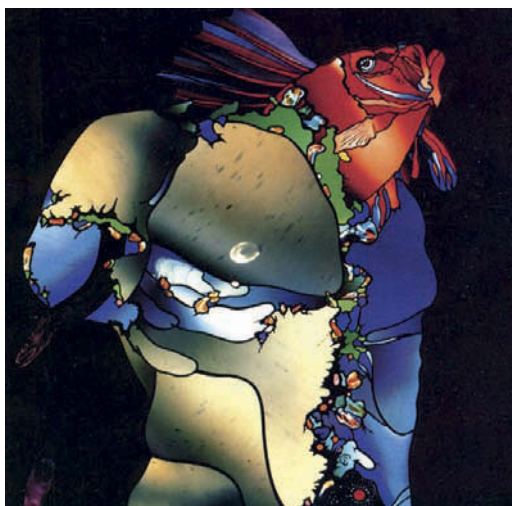
The flow of light through the material is, of course, crucial to the breathtaking effect of colored glass. “The beauty of glass is in truth the beauty of light,” says Narcissus Quagliata, one of the world's foremost glass artists. “Light is a medium that, like music, finds its way directly to the soul. We all are familiar with the magical qualities of the medieval stained glass of Chartres Cathedral, but modern and contemporary glass is equally successful in provoking wonder, capable of surprising but in a completely novel language, which I believe is more in tune with our times.”

#### AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

The term “stained glass” derives from the silver stain that, from about the late 13th and early 14th centuries, was applied to mouth-blown glass, the silver turning a shade of yellow when fired in a kiln. Colored glass was used in Europe from as early as 800 AD, the pieces held in place by lead. Found in churches, cathedrals, and abbeys, the glass illustrated in eye-catching detail a Biblical character or even an entire story. During the Renaissance period, stained glass moved into the domestic sphere and by the late 15th and early 16th centuries was hugely popular among the middle classes, who not only chose religious images, but also heraldry, zodiac signs, and portraits.

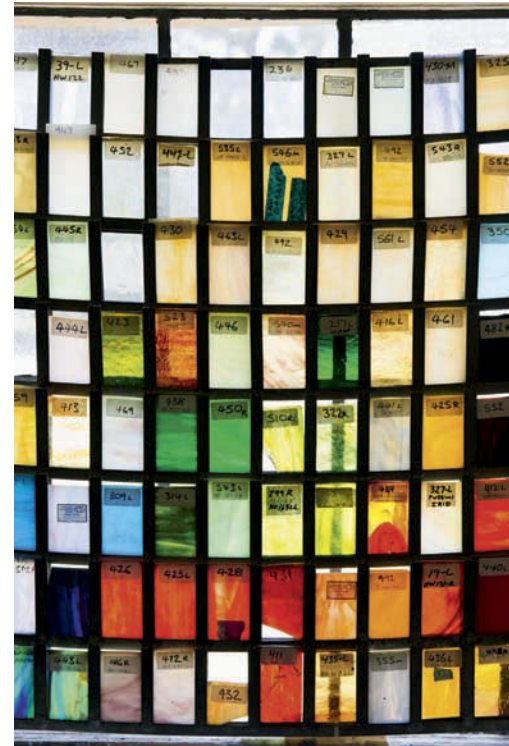
Stained glass remained largely unchanged until the 20th century when it was taken up by the Bauhaus movement in the 1920s; in the United »

Below, from left: Detail from Narcissus Quagliata's *Mediterranean Treasures* series, depicting the way in which Greek statues that sank in ancient shipwrecks are merging with sea life; a stained-glass sideboard from the Credenza collection by Patricia Urquiola and Federico Pepe.



MEDITERRANEAN TREASURES BY NARCISSUS QUAGLIATA, COLLECTION OF THE RENWICK GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN MUSEUM, WASHINGTON, DC; FABRIZIO ANNIBALI

JESSICA SAMPLE



*The Judson Studios:*  
Glass artist Narcissus Quagliata (left) at the architectural glass studio in Los Angeles, and with art department manager Tim Carey (top right).



Above: David Judson heads up architectural glass firm The Judson Studios, which won an international competition to create a vast fused-glass window for a church in Kansas, USA.

JESSICA SAMPLE

States, architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright created graphic designs for secular buildings, including homes. But it was the years after World War II that saw the greatest surge in the use of contemporary leaded glass. Bombing left some 70,000 churches in Germany with blown-out windows in need of restoration, but instead of replicating what had been there, artists explored new designs. “Germany needed to reinvent herself, to build a new world,” says Quagliata, “and so artists and designers reinvented stained glass entirely, including using lead line and glass without any paint for a totally novel look.”

#### SPOTLIGHT ON CHANGE

Other European artists took note, among them Marc Chagall. In the 1960s, he applied his bold use of color and painterly style to 12 magnificent windows that symbolize the 12 tribes of Israel. Before their installation in the Abbell Synagogue, Jerusalem, the windows were displayed in New York’s Museum of Modern Art. “It struck me that his glass was more beautiful than his paintings because the combination of the light and the glass was so profoundly moving,” says Quagliata.

In the United States, artists also began to redefine stained glass. “Unlike in Germany, where artists were [the] designers while the windows were fabricated in long-established studios, in California artists such as Paul Marioni, Kathie Bunnell, and Peter Mollica made their own works, which meant the projects were more personal. The invention and fabrication were as one,” says Quagliata.

While these windows were modern in look, the method of their making was largely unchanged from centuries earlier – carefully cut pieces of

mouth-blown glass held together by a framework of lead. “It is only since the 1990s that there has been an ever-increasing use of new techniques,” says Andrew Moor of architectural glass specialist Andrew Moor Associates. “This move away from leaded glass into new and combined techniques was essential in order to make the large glass panels that are so intrinsic to the language of modern architecture. [A stained glass panel has no structural integrity so must be supported.] Now we make single painted panels as large as six feet by 16 feet.”

These technological advances, from strong, flexible glues that allow two pieces of glass to be bonded together, to lamination and screen-printing, freed artists from the strictures of heavy lead lines, resulting in a new fluidity and creations that are breathtaking in their scale and beauty.

Quagliata’s *Wind, Fire, and Time – The Dome of Light*, in the Formosa Boulevard metro station in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, is the largest illuminated art-glass dome in the world, with a diameter of almost 100 feet. The design resembles a brilliantly hued sky, bathing commuters in ever-changing shades of light. In creating the dome, Quagliata used various techniques, “from traditional stained glass to the more contemporary use of enamels on industrial glass, plus etching, sandblasting, lamination of glass on glass, and fusing.”

Fused glass is arguably the most revolutionary development in architectural glass as it allows layers of colored glass, in a variety of different forms, from powdered to strips and panels, to be heated to high temperatures in a kiln so they »



Clockwise, from top: Lee Broom’s Chapel Light; a render of the fused-glass window designed for the Church of the Resurrection in Kansas; Hong Kong International Airport arrivals hall features a bold artwork by Graham Jones and Andrew Moor Associates.



fuse together. This gives a painterly effect without the use of paint, and, because there is no need for lead, allows for the creation of enormous artworks.

Quagliata, a pioneer in fused glass, is currently leading a project at Los Angeles-based glassmaker The Judson Studios. Together they are creating a window measuring 100 feet by 40 feet that is made entirely of fused glass, and this very modern method is being used to beautify a church, the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, USA. “No-one has ever combined traditional glass painting with fusing on an architectural level to this extent,” says studio head David Judson. “Glass fusing is a fantastic medium. The greatest artists of the 19th and early 20th centuries would have fallen in love with it.”

In Asia, two large-scale artworks designed by artist Graham Jones, and made by Andrew Moor Associates, illuminate Hong Kong International Airport’s arrivals and departures halls. Stunning panels of swirling color, they were manufactured by laminating together two differently textured and colored layers of glass, to create what Moor describes as “hugely active glass paintings.”

#### A LIGHT TOUCH

It’s a more minimalist aesthetic that defines the site-specific work of London-based Kate Maestri, who achieves subtle blends of color by screen-printing ceramic enamels onto glass by hand. Fellow Brit Catrin Jones has used dichroic glass, adapted from the optometry industry, to create designs that change color as you move around them. For her nature-inspired rural bus shelters, she, too, used screen-printed ceramic enamel, the patterns fired onto softly opaque white-acid glass.

Work by the award-winning architectural glass artist Kate Maestri explores the possibilities of structural and three-dimensional contemporary stained glass, as seen in this curved, double-height ceramic enamel and mirrored glass wall in the reception of 10 Portman Square, London.



Luckily, the sheer beauty of architectural glass means it doesn’t have to be big to make an impact, which is why it works so well in the home.

“Modern architectural glass adds a dynamic that plain glass does not,” says Judson. “It can also solve a problem – it screens an unattractive view and gives privacy without the loss of light.”

When commissioning your own window, consider the direction it will face and how much light will pass through it, advises Jones: “In good or strong light a glassmaker could cash in by using more saturated colors. In low light they could employ an opalescent color, which will reflect light back. And in strong light the glass will cast strong colored reflections into the interior.”

How one uses the space in which the design will sit is also key. “Will it be a work that you walk past or one that you will look at all day long?” asks Moor. “If it is the latter, then it has to be a delicate design, one that you won’t tire of.” But glass is not confined to windows – for the London home of a Russian couple, Moor and his team recreated in glass a favorite painting that is on display in their Moscow apartment, hanging it in an open space in a wall between two rooms. “This technique works in any environment but if you can have it lit by daylight it will create the best effect,” says Moor.

Quagliata’s singular art-glass pieces, displayed in museums around the world, unsurprisingly command high prices with private collectors, a three-foot by six-foot single panel fetching as much as \$70,000. Mounted on a wall and backlit, the painterly detail creates an almost living picture that is, quite simply, mesmerizing. ●  
*Former editor of Elle Decoration UK, Rachel Loos has written for The Daily Telegraph and The Times.*

#### On the market

## PROPERTIES WITH GLASS DETAILS

### Chalet Vasconcelos

Cascais, Portugal

Dating from 1898, this four-bedroom home boasts an array of colorful stained-glass windows and door panels, each displaying striking geometric patterns in the sunshine. Sea views, terraces, a winter garden, and further decorative features add to the appeal of this unique property.

€2,000,000

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### Villa Alsberg

Amsterdam,

The Netherlands

With a prime location on the Museumplein, next to the Van Gogh Museum and Rijksmuseum, this restored 1904 Eduard Cuypers villa offers high-end gallery or office space that retains its 19th-century character – from its original wall murals through to 300 refurbished stained-glass panels.

€36,000,000

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