

Practice in Context Dissertation Proposal

Key words: Painting, Traditional & Light

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Painting, Traditional & Light

An independent Research Document proposal

The context of this is to explore the three words that will be supported by three images that work together with the theme of, glass work in synthesis. All of this research will be an attempt to link together the three key words that are, painting, traditional and light which together form a question that will be used for my independent research, for my area of study. The artists that this will be related towards are Harry Clarkes, Louis Comfort Tiffany and a stained-glass window piece from The J. Paul Getty Museum. Research into these artist and how their work is linked with one or more of the key words and how it has been developed further. The end question that has been formed from this research will then be used to develop a load of sub questions that can be taken forward and answered in the future.

Painting

What is painting? "Painting is the practice of applying paint or other media to a surface, usually with a brush" (Tate, ART TERM) when taking this into glass painting it is very much similar with small differences.

"I arose before dawn and mixed several pounds of paint for the painters who arrived at 6. Expected praise, I received abuse; Master Inchbold struck me so I bled on account of how I added too much water and made 'vile useless slops' he cursed." (Journal of Nathaniel Somers. 12 April 1847. The glass painters Method Williams & Byrne)

Stained glass painting is a long process that relies on the paint that is created, It can effect the entire piece and if done incorrectly can take a while longer to fix. Researching into the book The Glass Painters Method has proven that this is important and demonstrates the techniques and methods required for painting. The glass painting method by Williams & Byrne was extremely informative to looking into on the subject on painting, from the mixture recipes and brushes to silver stain and enamels as well as important history.

Painting is a beautiful artform, for stained glass painting you don't need many brushes. "Just the right few brushes" (WILLIAMS & BRYNE .2018. XI) Creating such pieces requires a steady hand when using long haired brushes to paint lines, a hake brush, a badger blender, a tracing brush, a painting bridge, a wooden stick and finally a kiln to fire the work. The strengths of having the correct brushes on hand is a fact, each item used must be used to develop any skills and to provide a hand with what design will be painted. "Most glass paint is dark e.g black or brown, or else you wouldn't see it well with the light behind it (WILLIAMS & BRYNE. 2018 . 12)" which is a very important fact to remember as the work being created is always an important factor, for the creator and the receiver of the piece.

This is shown when painting a “portrait family members, perhaps made on roundels, is not only a valuable personal record but an heirloom” (Paul San Casciani. 1996. p52) every painting has an importance which is more so than just a beautiful image painted upon glass but, it tells many stories in many different ways.



Figure 1 Harry Clarkes , Sturminster Newton South aisle Window.

For example, The use of deep rich colours, delicate yet beautiful elongated figures with sharp features and life like eyes. The painting was done in such a way, to capture the person within the paint and bring them to life with the use of brush strokes, colours and light, The Painting techniques are traditional and yet the style is completely in a world of its own. It is dark yet it has a captivating present within the place it is held as if the woman could walk out of the very painting.

The elegant forms that are captured within the work have been done using a number of items, using a brush with long bristles allows you to capture the pigment and draw a long and continuous line. Over all “glass painting is the most misunderstood and neglected of all the major techniques of stained glass” (Paul San Casciani,1996. P37) Glass painting is a necessary technique when making any

stained glass window in order to control the light to its maximum potential. This is shown within the window shown here as the light is used to highlight the features in the women's face and hands, along the folds of her dress and the city behind her etc. "It's said that 'a fine wine aged to perfection' and so it is with the art of Harry Clarks. Since his death in 1931, appreciation for his talent has only increased" (Lucy Costigan & Michael Cullen pg X111) this is understandable with his work. Clarks work is similar to story telling windows in the way that it is more than what you are seeing, there are hidden messages, a story behind, Clarks windows in particular were also created the windows "to be a lesson in ecclesiastical and local history" and Clark has filled the "windows with many hidden details" which have been painted within his windows for others to find. Painting onto glass has many meanings, theories behind what you can see be it a memorial piece, religious painting and everything in between, painting allows you to express your designs in an illustrated way using the medium of glass, using traditional techniques and light. Clark created his windows by "retaining areas of unpainted antique glass and contrasting them with heavy black diapering to create dynamic vibrancy of light and colour" (Lucy Costigan & Michael Cullen pg 2) This technique creates a beautiful visual of the glass shimmer and dance before any one who is viewing his work. Clarks work has been known to be "very wonderful in colour" and portrays very ethereal pained people. The use of light was very important in this work, this is clearly seen from the number of dark tones used in all of his Clarks work, highlighted when light shines through the paint which has been deliberately placed to best portray the work and each feature.

Traditional

What is the meaning of traditional? Traditional means "following or belonging to the customs or ways of behaving that have continued in a group of people or society for a long time without changing" (Cambridge Dictionary), the very meaning of tradition is strong in glass. Techniques were passed down from master painters to apprentices, knowledge of brushes to use, mixing the pigments, how to use staining etc everything is very traditional.

What is Traditional stained glass? "Stained glass is a fabric composed of many small pieces of coloured glass, painted with monochrome enamel, paint and fastened together with narrow strips of lead and held in place with crossbars." (Robert & Gertrude Metcalf, 1972 p19) Stained glass is a very traditional art laced with history that is known and some which is lost. Stained glass windows can be at times hard to guess which century it is from, one way to have more of an understanding is the "particular way the flesh is drawn and painted will often provide a very useful clue, not only to the period, but even to the century and to the decade of the window's execution." (Robert & Gertrude Metcalf, 1972 p21) Glass is very much made up of information from the past and techniques and theory that has been rediscovered or made within the last few centuries, it is traditional and full of history.



Figure 2 Louis Comfort Tiffany, Christ & the Apostles, 1890

Tiffany is someone who made a big impact upon the stained-glass community. There is a lot of traditional design work which can be seen from the image depicting Christ and the Apostles, religious pieces are traditional and are one of the most depicted stained-glass pieces. The style of work Tiffany does is Art Nouveau and there has been a very significant contribution to the art of glasswork. Tiffany took the world by storm, creating a glass called Favrite glass which ended up creating a new fashion and then Tiffany went onto creating stained glass work such as the Seasons which made an incredible impact on the world of stained glass. Glass has always been something eye catching, from the smallest bead of glass to the stunning windows created over the years, “color is to the eye what music is to the ear” (Tiffany Glass and Fridolin Kretschmann pg 5) glass has always been something that draws something with in everyone. Traditional stained glass is usually about religious pieces depicted from the bible, when gazing at theses pieces within a holy space can cause feelings of spiritual awareness, caused by the glow from a combination of the glass, paint, silver stain, enamel and overall piece. Owning Traditional stained glass was a statement, stained glass can last forever, with small amounts of restoration work required if care is taken. Only in the late 1400s, did glass panels become wider-spread, they started setting stained glass into their clear glass windows, smaller panels that would be amusing or instructive, even to celebrate their family histories” (Khan Academy, Stained glass: history and techniques) in the current age having stained glass windows has been taken for granted because traditionally this was not the case.

Light

“Through the sense of sight, light is a primary tool for perceiving the world and communicating within it. Light from the Sun warms the Earth, drives global weather patterns, and initiates the life-sustaining process of photosynthesis. On the grandest scale, light’s interactions with matter, have helped shape the structure of the universe. Indeed, light provides a window on the universe, from cosmological to atomic scales.” (Britannica, matter & Energy) Light is one of the most important elements, and within the use of glass it is very impactful and extremally important to consider both within the design of glass, from the painting, and the final product placement of the piece. Light has a large effect on everything, even different times of the day when the sun moves and changes colours into the evening, the morning light will affect how you view a stained-glass window. Light shines though glass and captures the very essence of the glass. Light captures the paint and in the case of silver-stained glass “when illuminated from behind gives you a realistic sensation of flames” (Khanacademy) the very glow that is created will illuminate the very room, this effect is seen a lot in traditional stained glass religious pieces where the halo brings life, a more Spiritual feeling to the overall presents within the room and within yourself brings forth a new power.



Figure 3 Heraldic Panel with the Arms of the Eberler Family, Swiss, possibly from Basel, c. 1490, pot-metal and clear glass, black and brown vitreous paint, and silver stain. 17-5/16 x 12-3/16 x 3/8 inches (The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003.47)

The image shows just how well the light shines through glass and adds life to the overall piece, The image shows a story “the best stained glass of the period fully reflected and even rivalled the latest development in painting , incorporating atmospheric landscape depiction, expressive and dramatic full length figures, while exploiting to the full the vibrant properties of light”(Art of light , p3) This is something that is seen though out all glass work, the colours, the painting, the light all goes together hand in hand. This is a very traditional piece and it includes the Coat of arms, there is a lot of gold leaf and silver stain which has been used to high light which adds depth to the overall window.

The beams of light shine through the glass, illuminating the room to create a calming atmosphere. Throughout history the art of stained-glass painting has not really changed in the sense of how to create stained glass windows but the style that is painted, or what it is used for has developed, stained glass painters have kept a lot of knowledge very close to themselves not elaborating on techniques, so there is still a lot of painters and stained-glass makers to discover and explore. Over the last century knowledge of some techniques has been lost

When thinking of questions “What is next?” this question may propose as a starting point to develop on as this would combine all of the key words.

Throughout exploring the three keywords as well as the images that coincide with them has led to a number of other points to consider.

Each word light, traditional, painting all join together in multiple ways which leads me to the question of “Where will stained glass windows be in the future?” this opens up too many different discussions, the question proposed for the independent research document. There are many other questions that branch off from this proposal such as “will stained glass always be here?”, “Can stained glass be transformed into something with multiple uses? “Do we still have to use lead in the windows or can something else be used?” “how is silver stain created?” “Can you make your own paint?” “What will take the world by storm next?” and “How to bring stained glass windows into the future?” and “Why has so much information been lost and where to find it?”.

This will be something that will be considered to further develop and explore within the independent research document, under my working questions that will be used for next year.

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Figure list

- Figure 1 Harry Clarkes , Sturminster Newton South aisle Window.
- Figure 2 Louis Comfort Tiffany, Christ & the Apostles, 1890
- Figure 3 Heraldic Panel with the Arms of the Eberler Family, Swiss, possibly from Basel, c. 1490, pot-metal and clear glass, black and brown vitreous paint, and silver stain. 17-5/16 x 12-3/16 x 3/8 inches (The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003.47)