

The Lion in the North

- a 20th century lineage

A personally immersive account of the development and influence of a progression in the use of glass painting in Scotland as an expressive form with particular reference to this as a unique and identifiable east coast phenomenon

by

Douglas Hogg

1 St Andrew's and St Georges West Church Edinburgh

Alfred Webster / Douglas Strachan

Standing in the circular well of **St Andrew's and St George's West Church Edinburgh**, looking back and up to the gallery, two fulsomely large circle-top windows bear down on us. Looking relatively similar in terms of their compositional presence and scaling they may at first sight seem to share much in common with each other. In fact they perfectly reflect the quite different cultures which, by way of their histories, exist at either end of the central belt, a mere 39 miles. The windows carry within them the essential characteristics of being at either side of a cultural divide : of an east coast / west coast differential. Perhaps these differences may start early with contrasting geographies. Up and down the entire east coast the North Sea plunges bursts and tugs persistently at the coastline resulting in tall cliffs and stony beaches. On the west coast it seems as if the ocean is invited far in to the land, each gentle tide creeping across low shorelines and moving up long sea-lochs. The best hills are arguably in the west. In socio-historical terms the 5th and 7th centuries AD saw Christianity first come to western shores. They named this Dalriada, a Gaelic kingdom encompassing both the eastern seaboard of Northern Ireland and the western seaboard of Scotland. The river Clyde eventually became a centre of heavy industry and ship-building while Edinburgh and the east coast with long established trading links with Europe became associated more with culture and learning. The two Scottish colleges involved in training for the ministry, Trinity College in Glasgow and New College in Edinburgh, even now strike deeply varying emphases in the structure and focus of their work. While in a recent tribute to Rolling Stones' pianist Ian Stewart, Mick Jagger recounted that he had always laid great emphasis on the fact that he was from the *east coast* of Scotland. So what's going on?

Up in the gallery, standing directly in front of each window, the left-hand is by Alfred (Alf) Webster of Glasgow, the right by Douglas Strachan of Edinburgh. Both artists are obviously consummate masters of their art, each capture the aesthetic influences of their time and reflect perfectly the nature of each of the two great cities. Webster's work reflects the strong Scotia / Hibernian roots of the largely catholic industrial west while Strachan takes on board the mobile influences of a contemporary European art. His mannered, toughly wrought graphic style reflects an acquaintance with the vorticist movement current in Europe at that time. Strachan's choice of colour range (narrower than Webster's) in combination with a "clean" technique balances the considerations of a strong southern light beautifully. In this work we can detect the almost psychological pulse which permeates his larger compositions. With

Webster, a broader palette of colour and a brooding sense of an emanating glow is accompanied by a fine, if rather dusty, on-glass stipple modelling that I associate with the nature of west coast glass painting. Sadly, Alf Webster died in the Great War just a year or two after this window was installed in 1914 and it is at this point that I believe Scotland lost one of its limbs in the flourishing of Scottish stained glass and its subsequent development.

Strachan's much utilised technique of "plating" glass on glass in order to achieve the correct hue of colour and tone can be seen on this window when viewed externally.

2 Westruther Church Scottish Borders

Alf Webster / Douglas Strachan

It is at **Westruther Parish Church** in the Scottish Borders where we again see examples of the two artists previously mentioned with both of them being from an earlier period in each artist's career. The more artistically significant is the **Alf Webster** window dating from c.1910. Here, the whole image is imbued with an Irish / Celtic ambient glow of an almost mythological light and atmosphere. My attention is drawn to a possible connection between Scottish west coast artworks and Irish artworks developing simultaneously during the period.

In this window Webster's composition appears as being compositionally 'stacked' with the figure above re-enforcing a vertical intent. Some may say that the inevitable verticality of a window space may deem this as normal in any case, but nevertheless this particular configuration can appear as a descending motion towards us and as such a bit unusual. It is certainly quite striking and might reasonably contain echoes of a ground-breaking artwork which had just appeared in Glasgow around that time. At any rate Webster would be aware of a new painting: "The Druids: Bringing in the Mistletoe" (1890) by George Henry and E A Hornel, two of the influential group of painters called the Glasgow Boys. They both worked on this painting together which can be seen at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow.

The painting shows a group of figures in vertical procession descending towards the viewer and gathered fame, being considered as quite a novel form of composition, noted also for its distinctive mood and atmosphere. The painting has decorative elements added to it as a surface embellishment with gold leaf being used in parts. An early awakening perhaps of a developing European focus on surface qualities of design and texture.

Bearing such possible confluency in mind, I can detect in the window instances which might have been the forerunner of a decorative style engaged by the Irish artist Harry Clarke. The Kelvingrove Gallery has recently added a Harry Clarke window to its collection which I feel looks a bit sad and lonesome, lacking in good company perhaps, its graphic mannerism and colourful flamboyance under-exploited. The possible tripartite connection has not been formally advanced and remains merely a personal notion.

The figured central window, a very early Douglas Strachan, dates from his early Aberdeen origins when he worked for the commercial glazing firm of James Garvie and Sons. Here we see heavy commercial leaded glass work with figures, the brown suppressive modelling of which would carry on in the work of his brother Alex. Douglas had travelled south taking up work as a black and white graphic artist and a cartoonist on a Manchester newspaper where we can probably trace his great tonal strength and compositional power. He was invited to set up a new course in Design and Craft subjects at the Edinburgh College of Art (ECA). Leaving his brother in charge of the stained glass course Douglas left, committing his attention to completing a set of four windows for the Peace Palace at the Hague (1911) and thereafter on to a celebrated career as Scotland's most notable stained glass artist of the 20th century.

The other window in the church dates around the late 1960's or early 1970's. The artist remains unknown but this is a window which comes from the stable of ECA.

A detailed account of the life and work of Douglas Strachan can be found online in a PhD thesis by Juliette Macdonald for St Andrew's University (2003). Professor Macdonald is currently Head of the School of Design / Personal Chair of Craft History and Theory at ECA.

The fate of this building is currently in the hands of the Trustees of the Church of Scotland as the congregation voted to close it down when their minister recently retired. It might be hoped that the Webster window can be saved. But given recent experience where an exquisite canopy set of the Creation by Strachan in a church nearby was lost to the bulldozer, I can't hold out that much hope. This, in spite of having approached the two nominal stained glass repositories north and south of the border as well as national heritage bodies advising them of this impending loss.

3 Sprouston Parish Church

Douglas Strachan

The Sweet Pea Kirk in the Scottish Borders is the glamorous and fragrant name given to **Sprouston Parish Church**. Founded in 1149 it was connected to the nearby Kelso Abbey four miles upstream on the River Tweed. The four Border Abbeys of Kelso, Jedburgh, Dryburgh and Melrose represent the closest cluster of abbeys in Europe due to their control over the vast exporting of wool being sent across to Europe. This fragrant appellation came about in 1912 when the minister, encouraged by his gardener, was awarded first prize in a national sweet pea competition run by the Daily Mail and held in the Crystal Palace, London, his wife receiving second prize. On the financial proceeds of winning of this together they managed not only to furnish the manse but build a chancel on to the church as well. The chancel was embellished with a modest **Douglas Strachan** window depicting the figure of St Michael. The figure of Satan himself rewards attention : with its eloquently depicted writhing form, Strachan is capably enjoying this. The two greens he has chosen for this depiction are most definitely those from an east coast palette and relevant comparison can be made with the other window in the church.

This later, larger window is by the Glasgow firm Abbey Studios, attached to City Glass, a commercial company. Here the compositional and chromatic association of quite different greens within a broader colour structure are quite different than that of, by easy comparison, the more reserved Strachan. It is the warmer and wider chromatic palette of colours chosen and the 'sootiness' of the on-glass modelling stipple which can compromise the glassy aspirations of a playful sharp daylight. These two windows make good examples in their comparison, settling with my own premise of east and west coast identity and outcomes. Like many civic memorial sculptures in towns and cities where the foundry's mark is of importance to avid collectors, so the maker's mark and/or distinctive bearing is of interest and can be assessed as part of a window's creation and character.

In a similar west-coast example the Glasgow-based St Enoch Glass Company have a standardised, readily identifiable approach in their window-work. A nearby example of their work is in the west gable at St Michael's church in Gordon where a typically lusty west-coast colour palette combined with a heavy stippling in the modelling style gives the whole a strangely burnished metallic feel - like a colourfully brash El Greco painting.

4 Kelso St Andrew's Church

Vivienne Haig

Upstream of Sprouston on the river Tweed is **Kelso St Andrew's Church** tucked away on the old road which led to the first Kelso Bridge. This was washed away in a flood and replaced by the current John Rennie bridge, a precursor to his London Bridge from where the two bridge lamps adorning the south end have come from.

Vivienne Haig is an ex-student of ECA. She has installed here a memorial window in the memory of a friend. It includes various views including one of Eton College Chapel and takes the pathway of a pilgrim as its theme. Reference to a quote of Henri Matisse has been of influence : "...like a song that mounts to the vaulted roof" is reflected by more earthly presences in a landscape peppered with references to a life. Her fine, subtle, wetly tentative brush markings are much reflective of a still developing east coast (Edinburgh) style continuing a post-1950's spirit of revival.

There are two Strachan windows here, one "The Four Horses of the Apocalypse" does look like Douglas' work (being formally attributed as such), certainly in gestural strength and colour composition. There is one more Strachan work here, St George slaying the (c1946). dragon dating later than that at Sprouston which lacks the tight strength and conviction in the lower, dragon, area in comparison to the tight articulation at the foot of the Sprouston window.

I have been told by his family that Douglas, the better artist, often designed or line-painted windows for Alex, and with a bit of "getting the eye in" we can make our own personal comparisons and judgements on this. Alec's drawing and modelling, his on-glass technique, is of an overall brown mottled appearance as in his signed single light window at Cramond Kirk in Edinburgh. It is in the War Memorial Chapel at Edinburgh Castle where Douglas' work shimmers and rings in the Shrine. Alec's own hand can be evidenced in the civic and domestic narrative scenes in the transverse hall. The Scottish architect Sir Robert Lorimer in his neo-baronial style used artists, sculptors and craftspeople in most of his projects. Apropos of style I find that Douglas Strachan's window set at Winchelsea has an extremely curious even unsettling appearance.

A Henry Holiday window fills the south gable wall.

5 Caddonfoot Church Selkirkshire

Herbert Hendrie

At one point **Herbert Hendrie** was the most prolific British stained glass artist of the time. The church at **Caddonfoot** in Selkirkshire contains a five-piece window which was a personal favourite of his. Hendrie's compositions have a bejeweled iconic stillness and repose to them in contrast with Strachan's strongly gestural compositions. A product of Christopher Whall and the Royal College of Art (ARCA) he took charge of the Stained Glass course at ECA before becoming head of the Design School there. At Caddonfoot we can see the chiselled features of his figures with their drapery echoing the forms of post-Reformation Flemish Painting, the model for many glass painters of the early 20th century. To the rather graphically exaggerated details of form he added a mobile definition by way of line, stipple and dry brush with fine wet line-work to finish. At Caddonfoot the right-hand lancet is the only known memorial in stained glass to Sir Walter Scott. It includes a local landscape reference to the estate of Bemersyde from where the famous Scott's View looks across to the Eildon Hills and beyond.

Hendrie's studio at ECA produced a number of student glass-painters who worked there on his windows. These included John Blyth and John Cook who, after Hendrie's death in 1946, continued on their own working in their similarly mannered styles. Their work carries the almost identical style of Hendrie but their meticulous modelling looks drier and the outcome more arid than their master. As Hendrie's assistants, Blyth would paint a bee in the border, the mark of Cook being a fly as identification. Hendrie's largest work, revered by many, is at Liverpool Anglican Cathedral. I find this huge window a disappointment : it comes across, uncharacteristically, as dull, inappropriately scaled and ill-defined for its setting.

Another student, Walter Pritchard, went on to teach stained glass, mosaics and murals at the Glasgow School of Art (GSA). The Hendrie style of glass painting taught by Walter Pritchard brought about another west coast differential which can be seen in the work of Sadie McLellan, his wife. Her remarkable set of windows for the Robin Chapel Chapel at Craigmillar in Edinburgh, nine of which reference incidents in John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress", shows a personally advanced form and freer composition. Cear McCartney also studied under Pritchard at GSA. In the sharp, finely detailed work at either side of the entrance to Peebles Parish Church vestiges of the Hendrie can still be seen in lyrical landscape terms. Interestingly a contemporary of mine John K Clark also studied at GSA under George Garson (ex ECA),

and has taken a very tight technical approach to his work. In his recent set of small windows at the Barony Hall, opposite Glasgow Cathedral, his exactly precise technique can be seen.

6 The Eric Liddle Centre

William Wilson

William (Willie) Wilson began as an apprentice glass-painter at Ballantines of Edinburgh where his uncle worked as a glass-painter, taking evening classes in etching at ECA. He started up his own stained glass studio in the Dean Village in Phyllis Bone's ex-sculpture studio (her sculpture guards the entrance to the Scottish War Memorial), taking on William Blair who had apprenticed in lead glazing at Cunningham's of Edinburgh as his studio manager, bench worker and installer. Figuratively speaking, Wilson took on the basic form and composition of Hendrie but advanced this in his more fluid approach with respect to design, colour, paint and light. Like many of his predecessors he took an interest in current European art movements: two small panels in the collection of the Scottish Gallery of Modern Art reflect this. With a fluency of colour and open brushwork (he could paint a full window in a weekend when pressed) he moves away from the stiffer iconography of the Hendrie style. His superb mannered etchings of towns, villages and landscapes are shot through with a strong vision in dark and light and have a playful gestural perspective. His window in the Eric Liddle Centre in Edinburgh is a beautiful example of his best work. Once a church, a full internal structure now occupies the original void and so this work can now only be viewed in sections.

Elsewhere here there are many other examples of good work, including that of Chilton and Kemp, "Arsenic and Old Lace" whose studio bench worker was John Blyth's father. Margaret Chilton had studied at GSA leaving in 1916. Making studio space for other artists by accommodating their projects could occur when help was necessary. The Chilton & Kemp studio accommodated, amongst others, John Duncan the painter and muralist who has a window here, a good Hendrie also being present. Wilson was prominent in Scottish Art circles. He was chairman of the boards of governors at the four Scottish Art Colleges, President of the Royal Scottish Academy, chairman of the Scottish Arts Council and a president of the Scottish Arts Club in Edinburgh. He went blind in 1962, after which John Blyth took over as the designer and painter. Observant onlookers will perhaps notice the stylistic change in installed works, drawings and cartoons but galleries experts and auction houses can't seem to make the distinction readily.

At one point the Wilson studio took on Strachan's main bench worker James Scullion ("Auld Scullion") but only for a very short while. Never slow to rush to the door to tell all visitors that he had worked with the great Douglas Strachan, his studio coat caught one day on a stacked set of finished panels awaiting collection causing them to crash to the floor and sustaining much damage.

7 St Mary's Church Haddington.

Sax Shaw

The most undeniably critical influence and experience of the many artists and architects who passed through Edinburgh College of Art for almost forty years was **Sax Shaw**. An example of his work can be seen at **St Mary's Church, Haddington**, but it is as a unique tutor that I refer to him here. Teaching at ECA (and GSA in early years) aspirant artists received great benefit from the deep wisdom of his teaching. He taught his pupils as individuals, to possess a clarity of purpose and be of an independent mind. Both a flamboyant and thoughtful person he had his own inimitable style and approach but it was how he questioned and enlivened the hearts of independent beings that he will be remembered of artists and architects. Here we were now being presented with the simple premise that nothing had ever yet eclipsed the qualities of medieval stained glass, that the soul of work in glass still lay there. With Sax developing the visual sensory experience came first before academic purpose - the honest simple use of colour and the spare fluidity of a graphic was what would give glass its life back again. Both the Pre-Raphaelite and Arts and Crafts movements had proposed this too but were, it could arguably be advanced, rather unsuccessful in this, making it an academic and intellectually purposed process as opposed to a purer more elemental and sensory response. Both these movements had been very much in control of their media processes, dominating to trap and rein in the playful nature of light and glass. With Sax, any teaching was geared to a self-exploration, further and deeper - he chose not to interfere while this process was taking root. Unregulated, unaccountable? Not for a minute.... we were given the independence and trust to find things out for ourselves. Sax's quiet strength was as a facilitator of self-enquiry which delivered a strong personal focus and a path of progressive development.

His window at Haddington shows the clear almost unfettered use of colour combined with a watery painterly slip technique characteristic of his style which honours the material of glass while celebrating the daylight within.

As an artist he was also remarkable but never made any reference to his own projects in the teaching studio. A tapestry designer/maker and a stained glass artist, he also designed the copper font, metal screen and slab glass wall of a baptismal area in a small modernist chapel at Parkgrove in Edinburgh. He painted murals as well: one of these, a notable fresco in an Edinburgh electricity showroom has sadly been destroyed. A tapestry designer too he was appointed director of the Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh, the interior of which he had started to alter to accommodate the huge tapestry for Coventry Cathedral for which he had been asked to create a sample piece translated from the coloured drawing by the painter Graham Sutherland. Having in his early days spent some time studying at the famous Gobelins tapestry studio in France, his own woven sample of four warps-to-the-inch had a tufted textured surface true to the character of wool but equally relevant was an essential structural consideration of weaving it on its side for the strength required to support the great weight of wool involved. This was not accepted by the artist who stubbornly wanted the final piece look exactly like his original watercolour drawing. And so the work went to the Gobelins Manufactory where it was woven in the upright position at sixteen warps-to-the-inch with the result that the great weight of the weft is causing it to slide down the warps causing gaps to appear. With the tapestry pulling itself apart due to the weight and now has great structural defects which must constantly be attended to. The architect of Coventry Cathedral, Basil Spence (ex ECA), later Sir Basil, has written a very good account of the project : "Phoenix at Coventry" where he has much of interest and relevance to say when it comes to the structuring of a competent commissioning process and dealing fairly with the ideas and works of architects and artists. With Coventry Cathedral came a vast array of new stylistic approaches and the incorporation of fresh imagery within an almost incredible modernist setting. This has proved to be a very fertile moment in British fine and applied art in an architectural context.

Willie Wilson was also asked to prepare designs for the Coventry windows which he did but the 2'x2' glass sample he submitted was never returned!

8 The Maryhill Burgh Halls Glasgow

Alec Galloway

At the **Maryhill Burgh Halls** in Glasgow the work of **Alex Galloway**, ex-ECA, is placed in the refurbished Halls opposite some of the originally commissioned panels of the late 1800s. The new set of ten themed window panels depict the Heavy Trades, Social Heritage, Education, Workers, Space-Age, Youth Culture, Sport and Leisure, Regeneration and Diversity. Both the themes and resultant works came from “close community involvement....directly from the people, the imagery itself...” Alec’s work here is very hands-on and demonstrative, using photo-screen, hot melt and other on-glass techniques. These are the very techniques being exploited in much contemporary work around the country today, released from the constraints of a religious setting and expectation. Alec Galloway represents the last tutor on the Stained and Architectural Glass Course which ran unbroken for 100 years, a full century.

The panels opposite originate from the Halls’ initial opening at the end of the 19th century and are the work of Stephen Adam a Glasgow-based firm. They reflect graphically precise and accurate, if soulless, pieces of work, the best of which are reminiscent of the French painter Poussin in fine detail and stillness of atmosphere. Trained as a glass painter at the Edinburgh firm of Ballantine in the late 1800’s, his style was influential on the west coast.

A severe drop in church commissioning must now leave the door open, not closed, to new work and fresh horizons for the bright minded flexible artists of today. To a very large extent this opportunity has not been taken up and explored. Context it seems, rather than the further opportunities that this that this beautiful material has yet to afford us, is sadly entrenched to its severe detriment within a certain type of past, now long played out. Because of clinging to this past, new design is mainly weak: playing to a traditionally expectant gallery is not exactly the approach of serious innovators who constantly struggle to break the mould. John Lawrie (student, hot glass teacher and muralist at ECA) produced a large glass and concrete wall for the chapel at Loretto School near Edinburgh. Other currently active ex-ECA glass artists include Leifur Breidfjörd (St Giles’, Edinburgh), Derek Hunt (his YouTube channel excellent), Kirsty Brooks (interviewed on same), Kate Henderson (Patrick Geddes window at the Edinburgh City Council offices), Emma Butler-Cole-Aiken (Glasgow Cathedral), Vivienne Haig (St Patrick’s in Soho Square, London, 2021 - possibly the largest set of windows recently installed in the UK) are just some. Many had elected to study drawing and painting as

a supporting vehicle as I myself had done. In the '80's and '90's the older established stained glass department joined with the hot glass course where new techniques extended the possibilities even further giving a boost and flexibility to the use of glass in architecture. Patrick Reyntiens had come up to Edinburgh having been awarded a post-graduate year in the school of Drawing and Painting, leaving in 1952. His strong, passionately tentative and joyously liquid glass-painting style seems to come out of an Edinburgh stable. He collaborated with John Piper the English painter on many projects including the baptistry wall at Coventry Cathedral and the glass crown at the Liverpool RC Cathedral. Tom Denny is a 1970's product of the Drawing and Painting School at ECA while the original Stained Glass course at Swansea Art College was founded by an ex-ECA student in 1916. Patrick Reyntiens OBE went on to become the head of Fine Art at the Central School of Art and in 2016 he was awarded an honorary Doctorate for service to the arts by the University of Edinburgh.

Nowadays many artists find that they can / have to subsidise their incomes through an involvement in school and community group work, as Alec has done in Glasgow. These are valuable points at which to tie in references to existing work of a similar nature and pointing to the continued relevance of all the arts. Visiting specialists from across all the arts areas are a valuable asset to learning and the continuing credibility of, and potentially a deeper interest in, the art-form involved : budgets are set aside for this and are continually scrutinised for their efficacy and value for money. The practice of architects commissioning on behalf of their clients by introducing integrated artwork at the outset of a new building has largely fallen out of favour but remains a relevant aspiration. In its place however many public and private organisations commission new works of art and it is in the realm of public art that the many innovative advances in glass art can be experienced.

9 Ancrum Church

Tom Fairs / William Johnstone

At the west end of the village of **Ancrum** near Jedburgh there exists a most interesting circumstance pivotal to an unknown small window having been placed in the church there in the 1960's. **Tom Fairs**, a painter and Royal Academy exhibitor had also studied stained glass at RCA. But at this point we must roll back to the second decade of the 20C when a local lad **William Johnstone** was brought up on a small farm outside Selkirk. Against his parents' fervent wishes that he remain to eventually take over the farm, he decided to study art. In

1919 he set off to study at ECA but the break with his father was particularly strained. The farm was soon sold and their relationship never fully recovered. In 1925 he moved to Paris joining with other (now) well-known names in taking drawing classes and discussing art and the contemporary movements such as the Symbolists and the Surrealists. He married a sculptor who was studying under Bourdelle, leaving for the States where he briefly taught life painting in California, returning to the UK during the financial crash. From 1938-46 he was the principal of Camberwell School of Art & Crafts where he developed an innovative curriculum engaging practicing artists as teachers and encouraging them to teach subjects outwith their trained areas. In 1947 he became the principal of the Central School of Arts & Crafts where he continued to encourage the interdisciplinary teaching of artists until he retired in 1960. His approach as a principal was very much hands-on - he would often be wandering around the place, entering the studios, peering with great interest over the shoulders of students, often sitting on the stairs talking art with individuals or small groups. How refreshingly modest and generously unstuffy! Throughout both of these teaching appointments just about every recognisable name in British painting, sculpture or design had passed as students through the doors or had taught at either Camberwell or Central Schools of Art - painters, sculptors, graphic artists, potters, textile artists and....yes, stained glass artists including the painter Tom Fairs. He had studied in the stained glass department at RCA with Lawrence Lee and was recruited onto the teaching staff at Central. Fairs had also been involved in producing some of the windows for the new Coventry Cathedral. Alan Davie the Scottish painter (ECA late 1930's) had taught at Central from 1953-1956. He collaborated with George Garson on a mosaic wall mural in the centre of Grangemouth and has also produced tapestries with the Dovecot Studios.

William Johnstone visited the United States on several occasions, once spending some time with Frank Lloyd Wright and his students. Today FLW remains an important figure in the teaching of architecture: architect working as an individual, as an artist. One American student, Robert Sowers, came to Britain on a Fulbright Scholarship to study painting at Central with Johnstone who suggested instead that he study and investigate the possibilities of using stained glass. On his return to the States Sowers took on many glass commissions including a vast work for Kennedy (then Idlewild) Airport, the first instance of contemporary glass artwork being applied on such a scale and in that specific context. Nowadays the work of glass artists, some of them British, can be seen at international airports around the world although unfortunately not here in the UK. Sowers was a serious and committed modernist writing two important books on the subject of stained glass: "The Lost Art" (1954) and "Stained Glass: An

Architectural Art” (1965). On his retirement he came back to the Scottish Borders where he died at Crailing, near Ancrum, in 1981 aged 84. I attended his retrospective exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London in 1980.

For years I had been curiously aware of this window at Ancrum but only as it appeared on the outside. It was only relatively recently that I discovered that it had been gifted by William Johnstone in 1958 and dedicated to the memory of his parents. This appears to be an unrecorded window and it was only by digging deep into local press archives that I found mention to this with a description of the occasion. The theme is the Venerable Bede, the cleric and scribe from Monkwearmouth near Sunderland - not that far away. The blue flashed glass used throughout would most likely have come from here where glass-making had been going on continuously since the middle ages, only ceasing with the name of Hartley, Wood & Co some 40 years ago. I was lucky enough in earlier times to have selected glass from this unique source for myself and with my students at ECA. For the memorial Johnstone himself would have designed and been involved in creation this artwork in his very much hands-on manner with the attentive and practical guidance of his colleague and friend Tom Fairs, who was also present at the dedication.

William Johnstone pioneered in developing a structure for the future direction of art education in the UK along with the painter and Slade teacher William Coldstream. Here I make mention that the Scottish painter and Royal Academician Craigie Aitchison who studied under Coldstream at Slade designed a stained glass window for St Mary the Boltons' church in Chelsea, London, which was completed just after his death in 2009.

In 1954 William Johnstone was awarded the OBE for services to art education.

10 Glasgow University Chapel

Keith New / Afterword

The essential link which gladdened me as I moved on from being a student at ECA and taking steps into an unknown future in the early 1970's was in hearing that **Keith New** had recently made a window for **Glasgow University Chapel**. A new book had also just been published "The Technique of Stained Glass" by Patrick Reyntiens. Apart from "doing what it says on the

tin” the book contained colour images of contemporary works created by students from the stained glass department of the RCA. Some of these were painters adapting and extending their vision to, for them, the new material of glass - young contemporary artists under the tutelage of Lawrence Lee. Their work, fluid and passionately emotive excited me linking perfectly with my already focused vision and developing philosophy. Knowing that Keith New had new work in Glasgow was encouraging although for my part, my hope of a national revival was not to be, at that point at any rate and I found myself very much out on a limb. Letting the light sing with less interruption through the colours, giving it an added voice in the way that Keith New, Tom Fairs, Geoffrey Clarke and Sax Shaw had done makes this period a real step-change in the use of glass, colour and light. My confirmation of liberty. Keith New subsequently went on to produce many new pieces of work in his bright colourful and inventive style, later becoming head of Fine Art at Kingston College of Art. I met him only once at a Fellows’ (BSMGP) Society meeting in London where I doubtless managed to embarrass him with a degree of hero worship and the unknown part he had played in my own story. A book on his work has recently been published.

Afterword

Simultaneously, and in the midst of all of this, interest in the church was waning and there was much less of a call for new commissioned work within this context. The term Stained Glass grew the perception of being dull and old-fashioned and the stage was therefore not favourably inclined towards innovation. Unfortunately the promise of extended possibilities using glass was about to slow right down. Even in the representative societies which promoted stained glass as an art form, technical compliance was seen as being of more importance than a creative, experimental vision. In many European countries the contemporary and the traditional are valued equally side by side, both acknowledged and accepted as civilising principles. In the UK however a cultural conservatism moved in and took root. To borrow a universal truth from another genre: “The dead hand of tradition can stifle inspiration, ruling out quirkiness and individuality and preventing great gardens from developing.” This is Christopher Lloyd, the eminent garden designer. The “dead hand” of commercially trained technicians, glass-painters and lead-workers was allowed to prosper and rule. Professional artists and especially students were increasingly being told that “you can’t do that...” or “you have to do it this way...” and : “you don’t learn anything at an art college”. This was discouraging and dispiriting for those who knew that they had fresh ideas to bring to the table. And life’s difficult enough in any case. The commissioning of good glass artworks became a rarity, the “icing on the cake”:

a special feature. It then comes as no surprise that the large commercial glass studios of Germany in particular began to accommodate British artists. The highly trained and accomplished staff supported them unreservedly in achieving their goals with professionalism and respect.

Stained glass conservation is a technical service industry. Conservators are not artists as their work has nothing culturally new to propose. The one person that can straddle both areas with consummate skill whilst still retaining a personally acquired visual language is Derek Hunt. With democratisation and populism rife in the arts world of the moment (control of, dilution of, ideas) on the one side, and the analytics of a burgeoning high-end academe on the other, the student of art should quietly slip out from between these and get back to the actual world with the stark realisation that you are only as strong as your last piece of work. They need this; it's what artists do. Art can be taught in a shed.

The ability to identify by style and accent the music, art and literary works emanating from the very marrow of national experience within the UK can still identify in Wales, Ireland and Scotland, and indeed in areas north of the Humber, ringing with a particular resonant and nuanced cadence. But as to the possibility of continuing to identify, for example, an east / west cultural value and tendency in Scotland, this is, I fear, becoming less clear...

And it was only very recently, as part of a corporate work for Swansea University Library, that I finally faced up to putting into words the sense of what I myself have been searching for, chasing, throughout the years, how I myself approach the expectation of giving voice to the entrancingly fugitive qualities of glass, life and light :-

the liquid awakening / of a fractured ground

Douglas Hogg

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