

Rosalind Grimshaw (1945–2020)

Tough, imaginative, determined and immensely talented: we were very lucky to know Rosalind Grimshaw. She really was an exemplar, absolutely true to her vision, a vision that she managed to 'realize' so well in the weird, demanding medium of stained glass. Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in her thirties, she managed to keep going both physically and mentally, her charm enthusing her many friends especially her partner and collaborator Peter Costeloe, with whom she was able to continue on her unique creative path until her very last days.

I first encountered Rosalind's work during that period of time (1973–81) when I was Hon Secretary of the Society. Our amazing Chairman at that time was Michael Snow, son of the great structural engineer, Sir Frederick Snow, and a man with influence in the architectural circles to which all us stained glass artists hoped to be associated. Snow's first act as Chair was to arrange an exhibition of our members' work at the RIBA headquarters in Portland Place in 1973. I can clearly remember a small panel sent in by Rosalind. It showed two small children on a sofa, a very unusual subject for that era. It was absolutely captivating, lovely colour and very intensely and carefully painted. There was a fairytale quality to the work, a mysteriousness that greatly appealed to me.

Had I known more about her background at that time, the presence of these qualities might have been less of a surprise. Born Rosalind Neuberger

to emigrant Jewish parents, she and her brother grew up in Highgate where she attended Camden School for Girls before moving on to the University of Brighton. Later she met and married John Grimshaw in South Africa, returning to England and moving into a spacious commune-style house in Clifton near Bristol. Here the couple had four children and Rosalind herself began her long love affair with stained glass, joining 'Joseph Bell & Son', the long-established Bristol firm of stained glass window makers, first as an apprentice and then as creative designer and maker.

Her husband's enthusiasm for cycling led him away from the family to create 'Sustrans', the renowned network of cycling tracks, while Rosalind remained in Bristol. She was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in her early 30s but, undeterred, she continued to create new work in glass, winning important commissions with the help of her colleagues, among them her partner Peter Costeloe.



Window at Urchfont St Michael, Wilts.

At this stage in her life, I saw a little more of her, since she would arrive at the hall of the Arts Workers' Guild in Queen Square to attend lectures arranged by the BSMGP. Impervious to the behaviour of her limbs in this confined space, Rosalind would firmly get her questions across, continuing to be a gloriously enthusiastic member of our fraternity. Her helpers were always friendly, revealing by their conduct the continuing charm and competence of Rosalind during this terribly difficult time of her life.

She has achieved so much. Today, her best-known work is the magnificent 'Creation Window' for the Refectory of Chester Cathedral, which shows the 'Hand of God' moving through the Six Days of Creation (photo top right). It's an incredible piece of work, a commission

Chester Cathedral, Creation window (detail).



she gained through national competition and a quite extraordinary achievement. On being asked about its effect on those dining in the refectory, she is reported as saying that 'Rainbows will sparkle in the soup and arrows of light will fill the teacups'. While many of her commissions were for private homes, she created several works for visitable spaces, especially hospitals, whose staff well understood the importance of her perseverance and prowess. These include Derriford Hospital in Plymouth, Southmead Hospital in Bristol, St Chad's Hospital, Seighford in Staffordshire and St Mary's Hospital, Balcombe in West Sussex.

So visit these spaces, look at the windows, marvel and enjoy!

Caroline Swash FMGP



Private commission 1998 for a client in St Denis, Paris, depicting images from Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (detail). © Rosalind Grimshaw (photo David Gilliland).

Tribute event to Roz Grimshaw Mon 22 March, 18:00–20:00 GMT

This event will pay tribute to the late stained glass artist Rosalind Grimshaw (1945–2020) by her partner Patrick Costeloe and her close friend, painter Angela Baum, among others. She is best-known for the stunning Creation Window she designed for Chester Cathedral. However, she also produced a number of powerful works on Jewish and Holocaust themes – among them 'A Dream of Kristallnacht, or they thought they were Germans' of 1989, owned by the Imperial War Museum, London.

Register on Eventbrite here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/tribute-to-rosalind-grimshaw-stained-glass-artist-tickets-142699661529>.