

Discussion Day: 'Stained glass unbound' Glaziers Hall, 16 October

This Centenary Discussion Day was very special. Glaziers Hall hosted the occasion with wonderful competence. The Master (Michael Dalton) was present, the staff were welcoming and helpful while the interior of the building gleamed with fresh paint and polish. We were given the renovated Library for coffee and the refurbished Court Room for talks and discussion. Rachel Mulligan had organised the event and the speakers this year were Rachel Phillips, Derek Hunt, Gill Hobson and Andrew Moor and the day was chaired by Steve Clare. The subject 'Stained glass unbound' had been chosen to enable a gloriously expansive 2021 Discussion Day. Members and friends of the Society were not disappointed!



Rachel Phillips in studio

Rachel Phillips took us on a magical journey through the development of commissions created over a 20-year period from her studio in West Wales and she revealed how much she had learnt on the way. 'Glass work is always changing' she told us and 'Glass can do all sorts of things, so its Progress not Perfection' and she revealed how much she 'loved the graphic quality of lead' and commanded us to 'Be brave, enjoy the scale of large commissions.' Cheerful and inventive, Rachel shared the ups and downs of some of her grand designs.

These included a fascinating group commission with several of her fellow Swansea (UWTSD) alumni intended to bring colour and visual interest to the 'glass beacon'- a special feature within the newly converted School of Art space where in earlier days so many young artists had received their stained-glass education with Tim Lewis, John Edwards and later Rodney Bender and Lisa Burkl. Another commission, rich in local reference, was a series of fragment windows in Conwy Castle's Royal Chapel, a collaborative project with artist Linda Norris. Here, Rachel had reformatted the glass, bringing charm, order and historical authority to the scattered remnants of an earlier age.

History of place had always fascinated Rachel and frequently lit the fire of her imagination! For a Celebration window made in 2018, she was inspired by a colourful piece of Jacobean embroidery, while for a recently completed window in Oxford on the subject of 'Bell ringing', she combined coloured glass with a series of banners plotting the pattern of the various peals and changes. A few years later, in another collaboration with Linda, she was commissioned by CADW to restore the glass in Beaumaris Castle Chapel. On this project, she deepened her knowledge and practice of the skills of sandblasting, vinyl plotter and waterjet cutting to give their chosen glass the range and intricacy desired.

She teaches too!



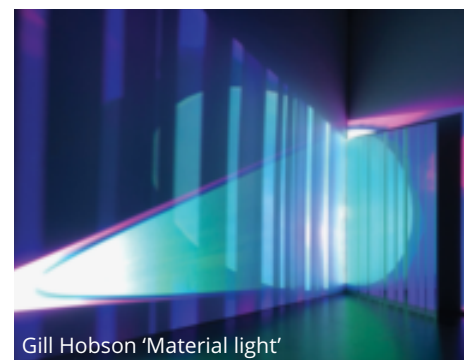
Screen by Derek Hunt

Our second speaker, Derek Hunt, arranged his presentation in an engagingly thoughtful way, speaking directly to us with the pictorial version accompanying him on this personal journey. 'Traditional stained glass doesn't work for contemporary architecture' were his first words. His search for the stained glass that would work for him started at art school in the 1980s and has continued ever since and he described stained glass as 'A wonderful life-affirming medium' and directed our attention not only to the windows in Gaudi's 'Sagrada Familia' in Barcelona but also to the earliest traditional English glass described by the Venerable Bede in the 7th century. So much that he saw still applied today. 'We are all a work in progress' he observed, pointing out that stained glass was simply a membrane 'whose purpose is to let light into a building'.

In his own approach to colour, Derek thought that the work of artist Robert Rauschenberg had influenced his own treatment of an early commission for a church in Ilford. Here a screen for the congregation had been achieved by printing layered colours onto a single piece of glass for this west facing window. This process had turned out to be an effective and inexpensive solution to the project. Indeed, Derek admitted that he deliberately looked for ways of working speedily in the creation of his windows and told us that he actively enjoyed collaboration, usually with David

Proto at his screen-printing studio in Devizes. He often went to Germany (Derix Studios in Taunusstein) to build his windows, telling us that 'Innovation is something they enjoy, plus you can stay at the studio in special visitor's accommodation'. He added that the experience reminded him of being at art school where everything seemed to be possible. With Derix, he found that he could work with an amazing range and variety of materials, do three-dimensional work and have access to 3D computer-controlled printing as well as being able to use really good glues for glass bonding. Derek ended his talk with a stirring call to action for us all:

- 1) Push the boundaries.
- 2) Experiment and Innovate.
- 3) Get involved; use social media.
- 4) Enjoy your creativity.



Gill Hobson 'Material light'

Our third speaker was Gill Hobson, introduced to the BSMGP by Andrew Moor as an artist deeply interested in glass, colour and light. Rooted in the experience of stained glass, her practice acknowledged historical applications, linking science and technology to the development of glass in architecture. Citing early breakthroughs in glass-making in the production of panels of pure coloured light, her presentation brought new dimensions to the appreciation of glass and light as mutually activating elements that affect the experience of the viewer and she referenced medieval practice in which pilgrims were advised to heal and renew by standing in coloured light from the stained glass windows, while her work in arts and health contexts has highlighted the way similar elements of change have persisted today.

Gill's work is essentially concerned with the effect that coloured light has on perception and feeling and she described this as activating 'new and varied experiences' for the viewer. She spoke of her interest in how the 'experiencing' of stained glass colour could cause 'pause' and 'in the moment' appreciation, deriving from the qualities of light play, while installations, which often employ reflective surfaces and shadows, help place the viewer within the work. Sometimes, transparency and reflection were obtained by using

projected images to bring visual rhythms, echoing and transforming the experience of natural light itself.

She continues to explore the relationship between 'time and light' as well as the intersection of 'memory and imagination'. These shifts and changes in perceptual experience have successfully allowed her artworks to activate the psychology of the viewer. She told us that ideas of 'home' and 'place' have always been central to her work and she also showed us some amazing, commissioned work displayed at events, galleries and festivals around the UK.

This lecture, with all its new ideas, was followed by Andrew Moor's talk on the international world of architectural glass of which he is such an important member. Through work and friendship with Brian Clarke (whose first lecture, incidentally, was given to the BSMGP in the 1980s), Andrew has built an amazing and useful business, linking artists with architects and fabricating studios. Indeed, he has been responsible for initiating and coordinating some of the

Andrew Moor: 'Departure' window



most interesting new schemes of our time. He talked freely to us as practitioners, telling us that 'we must exhibit' and that we must 'sell our work'. He was firm in his instructions about attitudes to architects and buildings. 'Don't be afraid of repetition' he declared 'Repetition is power' he added and for good measure told us to 'Master repetition' not competing with but transforming the space with coloured glass. He cited the beautifully

atmospheric presence of Kate Maestri 's carefully calibrated (mostly blue) surfaces and he reminded us of the use that architects can make of us glass artists. He talked at some length about 'public art', pointing out that architects rather enjoyed controlling artists' commissions since these conferred 'excitement' to their new building' while all the clients loved public art and stained glass 'because it added prestige to their brand'. His message to us practitioners was cheerful indeed: 'Keep making, keep exhibiting and respond to suggestions with positive ideas'!

The day ended with questions to the speakers and general conversation among those attending, some of whom hadn't met for over a year. It was a pleasure too, to have Michael Dalton, the current Master of The Worshipful Company of Glaziers, with us. Indeed, over the years, the Livery Company's own annual Stevens competition has been the starting point for the careers of so many young artists working in glass today. **Caroline Swash**

Jottings of the Hon. Librarian

Harry Clarke



Harry Clarke has been the subject of a number of books since his early death in 1931. After the publication of the magnificent biography *The Life and Work of Harry Clarke*, by the much-missed Nicola Gordon Bowe, in 1989 and 2012 (reviewed in JSG XXXVI), we have had *Strange Genius: The Stained Glass of Harry Clarke*, 2010, by Lucy Costigan and Michael Cullen, *Harry Clarke and his Legacy: The Stained Glass in St Joseph's Church Terenure*, 2017, by Patricia Curtin-Kelly (see JSG XLI) and *Harry Clarke and Artistic Visions of the New Irish State*, 2019, by Griffith, Helmers and Kennedy (see JSG XLIII).

Costigan and Cullen returned to the subject in 2019, by exploring *Dark Beauty: Hidden Detail in Harry Clarke's Stained Glass*, and this has now been published in paperback (Merrion Press, 2021, €27.95, also available as an eBook).

The 300 illustrations in the book, drawn from a collection of 60,000, show the absolute genius of Harry Clarke for cramming wonderful detail into his windows. The title reflects the duality of Clarke's work, which often has a hint of something of the night amid ravishing and sumptuous portrayal of shimmering elegance. Following an introduction to Clarke as a 'master of colour and light', the following chapters focus on specific areas where the minute details are shown in dazzling close-up in excellent colour photographs. A CD 'A revel in blue' is also available from the website harryclarke.net.

Illustrations, clockwise from top left: Cover, St Elizabeth from Madonna and Child with St Elizabeth of Hungary and St Elizabeth, Sturminster Newton, Dorset; one of the Damned from The Last Judgement, St Patrick's Church, Newport, Co. Mayo; Angel Musician from the Immaculate Conception window,



Ashdown Park Hotel, Sussex (which we lucky few saw on the BSMGP visit in 2019); original panel 6 from The Geneva Window, Dublin City Gallery (the revised, less skimpily attired version of the lady is in the Wolfsonian window, the whole of which can be downloaded from their website). (Images here ©Merrion Press.)

