

Stained Glass Roundels

When we think of stained glass we might think first of the awe-inspiring windows of churches, of iconic stories illustrated in complex arrangements on a grand scale. However, there is also a smaller, domestic tradition within the history of stained glass which we can see in several Medieval Roundels on display at The Stained Glass Museum.



Roundels are small circular windows, usually made of a single piece of clear glass and illustrated with glass paint. They were sometimes commissioned for installation in people's homes.

Showing scenes from everyday life within an illustrated frame, Roundels often display themes specific to the household and family they come from, their locality and the seasonal activities of their community.

Labours of the Months: September, Harvesting Corn, 15th Century English Artist. On loan from the V&A Museum,

We decided to create our own Roundels to show some of what we have seen on local walks over the last few weeks, as spring has unfolded into summer.

→ → → → → → → → → →



What you'll need



1. A clear plastic, circular lid (we used hummus pot lids)
2. Card (we used an empty cereal packet)
3. Double sided tape
4. Pencil
5. Ruler
6. Compass (not essential)
7. Scissors
8. Nail varnish remover and cotton wool ball (to wipe away any product stamps, such as 'Best Before,' dates from your lid)

Constructing your Roundel



Your Roundel will consist of two parts: your clear plastic lid will form a window, and your card will make a frame.

Take a look at your lid. You will see it consists of three circular shapes: a slightly recessed central circle, a raised surround (used for gripping its container), that folds down into an outer edge. With your scissors, cut the outer edge away, leaving just the central circle and raised ring.

Take your card and pencil and draw around the central circle of the lid. You'll then need to draw a slightly bigger circle around the first, we used a compass to do this but you could do it freehand. Cut the inner circle away from the larger, and then cut out the large circle. This gives you one ring. Repeat to make a second the same size as the first. Put your frame pieces to one side for later.

Illustrating your Roundel



We chose summer themes to illustrate our windows: particularly birds, leaves and flowers.

When choosing our materials we considered how they might interact with light as it passes through the window. You might like to think about cutting and collaging materials that will alter how light is transmitted, such as card, tissue paper and cellophane sweet wrappers.

You might like to draw directly onto the plastic with marker pens and notice how light illuminates your lines. You could use watercolour paints and pencils to draw on a disc of tissue paper, and compare how light diffuses through these marks. If you are sticking materials, it's best to use a runny PVA glue as this dries clear.

Roundels were often illustrated simply, with black glass paint applied to the interior side and Silver Stain - which create shades of yellow when the glass is fired – applied to the other. We made sure to use both sides of our window when creating our illustrations.

Illustrating your Frame



We wanted our homemade windows to be framed by an illustrated border that continued the theme of the picture within it. Many medieval roundels also have decorative borders.

Collect your card rings. You can illustrate them using any drawing and colouring materials: paint, pens and pencils. Decorated borders often include leaves or flowers, but you could also draw a geometric pattern or even include some text. How about writing a descriptive poem to accompany your roundel and writing the text around the border?

We finished our frames off with a black felt-tip line around the outer edge, to give the appearance of the leading that surrounds Stained Glass Roundels. This also will help make your illustration stand out.

Putting your Roundel together



The raised plastic ring that surrounds your illustrated window will be sandwiched between your two card rings.

Place one of your card rings decorated side down. Use double-sided sticky tape to stick your window/lids surround to the ring. Attach more pieces of double-sided tape to both the card ring and window/lid surround then stick the second card ring on top, decorated side up.

Your finished roundel!



Your Roundel is now complete and ready to display at a window in your home!

It will stay in place fastened with a little bit of blue tack or tape at the back, or you could punch a hole at the top of the frame and thread a ribbon through to hang it.

