

The Stained Glass Museum

29 April - 26 July 2013



Francis Spear

(1902-1979)

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Published by The Stained Glass Museum, The South Triforium, Ely Cathedral, Ely, Cambs, CB7 4DL.

Registered Charity Number: 274776

Printed by Burwell Community Print Centre Ltd, The Causeway, Burwell, Cambridge, CB25 0DU.

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Front cover image: Francis Spear, *Annunciation* (1941).

Back cover image: Cartoon of *Eve*, for the west window of Glasgow Cathedral (1958).

Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	4
Francis Spear - A Brief Biography	6
Alan Brooks	
Stylistic Development in the Work of Francis Spear	7
Alan Brooks	
Spear in Context: Twentieth-Century Stained Glass in Britain	14
Jasmine Allen	
Taught by Francis - A Short Memoir by a Former Student	19
Pippa Blackall	
Catalogue of works shown	20
Bibliography	27

Acknowledgements

The Stained Glass Museum gratefully acknowledges Simon Spear, for gifting three stained glass panels by Francis Spear to the Museum's collection. The Stained Glass Museum is also grateful to Caroline and Tony Benyon, Alan Brooks, and Simon Spear, all of whom generously agreed to loan items for this Exhibition. Both Alan and Simon have also kindly contributed text and images to this guide. Many other individuals have played an important part in the planning and preparation of this display, including Pippa Blackall, who also contributed a short memoir, Will Schenck, Elizabeth Stazicker, and Malcolm Mitchell. The Stained Glass Museum would also like to thank Ely Museum, and the Cathedral Centre for loaning additional tables to display these artworks. Finally, this display would not have been possible without recent grants received from the Headley Trust and DEFRA, who funded our new flexible display.

Introduction

When it was suggested that The Stained Glass Museum host an exhibition of stained glass designs and panels by Francis H. Spear, my predecessor Will Schenck rightly jumped at the chance. This opportunity arose through the goodwill of Pippa Blackall, one of Spear's former students. Pippa introduced both Alan Brooks, who was then writing his book *The Stained Glass of Francis Spear* (published 2012), and Simon Spear, Francis' youngest son and author of guides *The Artwork of Francis Spear*, and *The Passion Prints of Francis Spear* (both published privately in 2012) to the Museum.

In July 2012, The Stained Glass Museum acquired three stained glass panels by Spear, generously donated by Simon Spear. One of these, a Nativity panel from the 1920s, is a rare example of Francis Spear's early work in stained glass. The other two panels relate to one of Spear's most significant commissions for architectural stained glass at Glasgow Cathedral in the 1950s. The panels of 'Adam' and 'Eve' are replicas from the creation window at the west end of Glasgow Cathedral (1958).

This temporary exhibition puts these newly-acquired panels into a wider context of Spear's career as both artist and teacher. It is the first retrospective exhibition on Spear as a stained glass artist, and aims to readdress the significance of one of the most important yet overlooked historical periods of stained glass design, the twentieth century.

The Exhibition encompasses stained glass designs, cartoons, small-scale stained glass panels and lino prints from Spear's sixty-year career.¹ In doing so, it encourages thinking about stained glass design in relation to other artistic media, especially printmaking, which Spear returned to in his retirement to produce the Passion Prints (1970-72). This display also demonstrates the early design processes involved in making a stained glass window, from the initial small-scale colour design sketch, to full-

¹ This Exhibition features a small selection of the many surviving stained glass designs and cartoons in the Spear archive.

scale black and white cartoon, and the final work in coloured, stained and painted glass and lead.

Although Spear might not be considered the most pioneering figure in the history of modern stained glass, his career reveals much about the artistic training, working methods, challenges and expectations of the twentieth-century stained glass artist working in Britain before and after the Second World War.

Spear's designs demonstrate his knowledge of historic glass, especially the medieval and Renaissance traditions, but they also reveal modern innovations in both design and technique. In particular, his ability to illustrate biblical narrative and articulate Christian symbolism through modern visual forms, was one of the most successful features of his ecclesiastical stained glass design, and the church was an important patron of his artwork.

Jasmine Allen
Curator, The Stained Glass Museum



Francis Spear selecting glass in his studio. Photograph courtesy of S. Spear.

Francis Spear - A Brief Biography

Francis Spear (1902-1979) was a prolific stained glass artist of the last century, completing over 300 windows in public buildings in over 130 locations, including six cathedrals. His work is to be seen throughout England, in Wales and Scotland, and in Cape Town, South Africa.

Spear trained at the Central School of Arts and Crafts between 1920 and 1923, then at the Royal College of Art from 1923 until 1926, when he was awarded a scholarship which enabled him to study stained glass in France for a year. Upon his return, he was employed by the Royal College of Art teaching lithography between 1928 and 1948, and at Central School from 1930 until 1953 teaching stained glass. In addition, he assisted the master glass craftsman Martin Travers (1886-1948) for several years from 1922 onwards.

Spear lived and worked in London before the War, renting a studio at Lowndes & Drury between 1935 and 1941. After the War he moved to Reigate in Surrey, and established his own firm, which became a limited company in 1955, Francis Spear set up a studio firstly in Coulsdon, and then adjacent to his home in Reigate in 1962.

Spear's first window was made in 1925 and his last in 1970. The peak period for window production was in the 1950s, when around 160 windows were made. Notable among his achievements are schemes in the cathedrals at Glasgow, Scotland, and Cape Town, South Africa; and the V&A possesses an important exhibition panel of his from 1938.



He married Ellen Chapple in 1941, and they had two sons, John and Simon.

Francis Spear was a significant artist in English stained glass but who also had a parallel career in printmaking and other forms of art.

Francis Spear in 1927. Photograph courtesy of S. Spear

Alan Brooks

Stylistic Development in the Work of Francis Spear

The earliest surviving designs for stained glass by Francis Spear date from 1922 when he was a student at the LCC Central School of Arts and Crafts, and his final designs date from 1972. Over his career in glass of 50 years, he progressed through several phases and embraced several design styles.

During his time as a student at Central School 1920-23, and then at the Royal College of Art 1923-27, the ethos of an all-round artistic education and the technical excellence of Arts & Crafts methods persisted, though with an increasing emphasis on design adapted for commerce and practical application.

Spear's diploma project for the RCA was the west window at Warwick School, designed and installed in 1925 and made initially under the supervision of Robert Anning Bell, then succeeded by Martin Travers. The window shows a mastery of technique and lively, sharp-featured figure design, for which an antecedent can be seen in an early design of 1921 depicting King Midas.



Detail of the west window at Warwick School, 1925, as executed: Edward the Confessor gives his ring to St John disguised as a beggar.



Cat. No. 6. Detail of an early Spear design in the same style, from Central School, 1921: King Midas.



While a student, Spear became pupil-assistant to Martin Travers, in 1922, and under his influence made several commissioned windows in a three-dimensional 'Renaissance' style (as Travers called it), usually to fit in with a classical architectural context.

Detail, apse window at Hinde Street Methodist Church, London, 1929. The chapel was built in 1887 in classical style.

As instructor in stained glass at Central School from 1930, Spear involved his students in carrying out a series of small attractive domestic-style panels in fluted, reeded and rolled white glass with minimal paint and stain and where the design is held mainly by the lead lines.



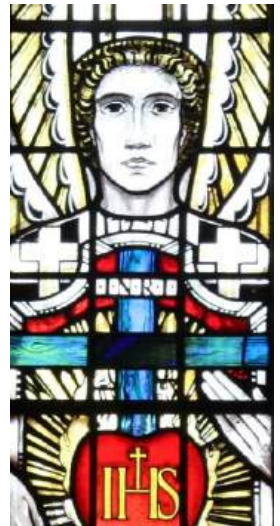
Cat. No. 10. Domestic panel (Summer), Central School, early 1930s. Photograph © C&T Benyon.



An experimental panel of St John the Baptist, acid etched and plated but using no lead, marked a move to a modernist phase in 1938.

Detail from St John the Baptist panel, The V&A, 1938. ©V&A Images.

This progressive mode appears in two pre-War commissions for the Presbyterian church architect Thomas Reive.



Detail, east window, Plymouth, Trinity URC, 1938. window is contemporaneous with the building.



During the War Spear continued to experiment on paper with a simplified design style which he developed for possible use in newly rebuilt churches of contemporary design.

Cat. No. 15. Detail of Wartime design, 1941. The Annunciation.



*Detail of the north chancel
window at South
Warnborough, Hants, 1946.*

After the War there was a great demand for windows to express new hope, made in a legible and conventional design style. Spear met this demand and gained commissions from architects such as Sir Albert Richardson who favoured strong traditional design. But he was also a printmaker and sometimes included vignettes of modern life in a contemporary mode akin to Edward Bawden, Barnett Freedman and other well-known designers whom he knew from the RCA.

Just over half of the windows Spear designed during his career were made in the 1950s. Three examples of sections of Spear windows for churches from this period are illustrated overleaf, showing in the first two cases the final sketch design, the cartoon, and the glass as finally made.

Spear bases the east window at Lynsted, Kent, (opposite) in a 15th Century English figurative style. The chancel here was rebuilt in the 16th century, but parts of the building are older.



A detail from the east window of SS Peter & Paul, Lynsted, Kent, 1950, showing St Augustine. This window was painted by Joan Cleburne of Lowndes & Drury, where the window was made.

St Alfege, Greenwich, is a Hawksmoor church of 1718 and Sir Alfred Richardson, who restored it, wanted a window in the Baroque manner to fit the architecture.



Detail, Christ from the east window at St Alfege, Greenwich, 1953. Sketch and cartoon by Spear; the window was painted by Arthur Pearce, Spear's principal glass painter after 1950. The window was made in Spear's studio, at that time in Coulsdon.

At Rochester, Spear had the freedom to employ a more contemporary figure design in a lively two-dimensional mode.



A detail from the west window of St Margaret's, Rochester, Kent, 1955. The subject is Pentecost.

Finally, the cartoon and panel from the exhibition, of Eve, from Glasgow Cathedral. The window dates from 1958 but the designs were begun several years earlier. Here the figure is on a monumental scale and Spear uses a thirteenth-century design style with large eyes, to be read at a distance.



Eve, a detail from the west window of Glasgow St Mungo's Cathedral, 1958. A replica panel of Eve is now in The Collection of The Stained Glass Museum.

In summary, Spear adapted his design style cleverly in accordance with the architectural context and the needs of client and architect. Modernist experiments of the late 1930s were superseded by the needs of post-war reconstruction where more conventional design was preferred, especially where destroyed windows were being replaced. In that context however subtle variations in style can be seen, with the retention of technical quality and character and individuality in figurative depiction.

Alan Brooks

Spear in Context: Twentieth-Century Stained Glass in Britain

The twentieth century was an important era in the history of British stained glass. In the previous century, the stained glass industry had been revived on a large scale, but arguably it was the twentieth century that presented more opportunities for new styles and expressions in stained glass. This was a dynamic era of change, for both British society and its art. Noticeably, this period witnessed the fulfillment of an Arts & Crafts ideal through artist-craftsmen such as Christopher Whall (1849-1924), and the emergence of modern expressionist and abstract styles following the First and Second World Wars.



*Francis Spear in the 1930s.
Photograph courtesy of S. Spear*

In spite of stylistic developments on the continent, namely Art Nouveau, in Britain, an established Victorian gothic tradition persisted through the 1900s, through individuals like Charles Eamer Kempe (1837-1907), who had initially trained in the London studio of Clayton & Bell, established in 1855. Francis Spear inherited parts of this tradition when in 1922 he became pupil-assistant to Martin Travers (1886-1948), who had studied under Ninian Comper (1864-1960), who had himself been apprenticed to Kempe.

Like many other twentieth-century stained glass artists, Spear benefitted from the Arts and Crafts ethos which revolutionised the teaching of stained glass in art schools by introducing workshop practice as well as design education. At the London LCC Central School of Art and the Royal College of Art, Spear's teachers included Martin Travers, Robert Anning Bell (1863-1933), and Karl Parsons (1884-1934), who was apprenticed to Christopher Whall and is

widely recognised as one of the pioneering stained glass designers of the twentieth century. The influence of both Travers and Parsons can be seen on Spears' designs, at different points in his career.

Spear's artistic education trained him in a number of different artistic media. Yet, at an early point in his career, he chose to specialise in stained glass. This was his chosen medium for his examination in Industrial Design, taken at the LCC Central School of Art in 1923. Some of Spear's early designs for stained glass, produced during his student years, reveal the medievalising influence of the nineteenth century. For example, the popular romantic and chivalric appeal of jousting knights can be seen in a design of 1924 (Cat. No. 4). The following decade however, some panels produced by Spear and his students at Central School (Cat. Nos. 8 - 11), reveal the transformation of such scenes into emphatically modern glass panels. The figure of a knight, shown below, is formed by strong geometric lead matrix containing machine-rolled white glass, in an Art Deco style.



Cat. No. 4. Jousting Knight (1924), 24 x 24cm.



One of Spear's most important contributions to twentieth-century stained glass in Britain was his teaching, through which he passed on his skills and knowledge to the next generation. He held teaching positions at LCC Central School between 1928 and 1953, at Royal College of Art between 1928 and 1940, and at Reigate School of Art in the 1960s. Spear taught stained glass, lithography, heraldry, and printmaking at various points in his career. Amongst his pupils for lithography, was John Piper (1903-1992).

Cat. No. 11. Knight (1930s), 57.7 x 46cm. Photograph © C&T Benyon.



The Three Magi (1965). Detail of Cat. No. 35, The Nativity, north nave, Cape Town Cathedral, South Africa.

When Spear won a Travelling Scholarship in 1926, he journeyed to France to visit many sites renowned for their medieval stained glass, including Beauvais, Amiens, Rouen, Tours, Caudebec en Caux, Les Andelys, Evreux, Chartres and Le Mans. Spear was well-versed in the productions of the Middle Ages and some of Spear's designs draw upon particular medieval iconographic traditions. For instance, designs for four single light windows showing the Nativity, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension for the north nave of Cape Town Cathedral (windows designed in 1965 and executed in 1966), include groups of the three Magi, and sleeping soldiers guarding Christ's tomb which, amongst others, have medieval precedents at Canterbury and York, respectively.

Upon his return to England in 1927, Spear returned to work in Travers' studio, and was entrusted with some of his commissions. His experience in Travers' studio, and at The Glass House, an inspirational centre for Arts and Crafts artists where Spear rented Studio D (Karl Parsons' former studio) from 1935 until 1941, shaped his future directions. At The Glass House Spear became neighbour to the likes of skilled Irish arts and crafts artist Wilhelmina Geddes (1887-1955), who occupied one of the other studios. Other stained glass artists who worked at The Glass House, examples of whose stained glass can be seen in The Stained Glass Museum, include Henry Holiday (1839-1927), Margaret Aldrich Rope (1891-1988), Evie Hone (1894-1955), Moira Forsyth (1905-1991), Hugh Arnold (1872-1915), and Carl Edwards (1914-1985).

The influence of Spear's own experiments in lithography and poster design can be seen on his wartime designs, which reveal the more stylistic direction in which he was heading. *Annunciation* (1941), printed on the frontispiece of this Guide, is a bold composition with strong flat

forms and bright primary colours. The figure of Mary is a simplified almost abstract form which bears resemblance to the shrouded abstract female forms sketched by British sculptor Henry Moore (1898-1986) during the wartime, when London Underground stations were used as shelters during air raids. Compare, for example, the figure in *Woman Seated on the Underground* (Tate Collection, N05707), also from 1941. During the Second World War, when there were far fewer commissions for windows, Spear was free to explore a more modern, abstract style. Several of the unexecuted designs Spear produced in these years demonstrate a change in stylistic direction.

During the War, Spear served as a fire-fighter in Shepherds Bush, London. One design for a memorial window for a church in South Warnborough, Hampshire (1943-46) includes scenes of firefighters in London during the Blitz. Along the bottom of the window, a group of firefighters can be seen putting out fires which swarm two churches, one of which is recognizable as St Paul's Cathedral, London.



Detail of Cat. No. 17, design for a memorial window, St Andrew's church, South Warnborough, Hampshire (1943).

In the 1950s, like many other stained glass artists, Spear was busy with commissions for new windows (many of them memorials) during the post-war rebuilding of towns and cities. While pioneering glazing projects featuring abstract compositions were underway at Coventry Cathedral in the 1950s, Spear continued to work in the figurative tradition. His designs for the west Creation window at Glasgow Cathedral are bold and inventive. The final design for the window, although somewhat hampered by the idiosyncrasies of the Cathedral committee, achieves a harmonious balance between modern figurative design and abstraction. Spear's skill as a designer, and his ability to meet the expectations of clergymen and church committees, and to adapt designs according to their needs, stood him in good stead.

In 1945 Spear contributed a short essay on stained glass to a book edited by wood-engraver John Farleigh, entitled *Fifteen Craftsmen on their art* (London: The Sylvan Press, 1945). Each of the fifteen sections focused on a different craft, from bookbinding to pottery to spinning and weaving, and was written by a specialist in that craft. Spear's essay reveals his knowledge of the medieval development of stained glass, as well as his understanding and appreciation of modern technical developments such as using hydrofluoric acid to 'bite' away layers of coloured glass to decorative effect. He wrote "there are great possibilities in the use of this acid if, with modern inventiveness, the craftsman is willing to experiment with it and also with such processes as embossing, brilliant cutting, sand-blasting, etching and engraving".²

Spear's *St John the Baptist* (1938) window, which is entirely formed of several sheets of acid-etched flash glass plated together, without lead or paint, is an outstanding example of this technique. Spear donated the window to the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1979, where it remains. When exhibited in the Hayward Gallery that same year, as part of the *Thirties: British art and design before the war* exhibition, the window caused Roger Pinkham to proclaim, "Stained glass also had its radical exponents such as Francis Spear and Ervin Bossanyi, the Hungarian born, naturalised British artist".³ This exhibition displays a full-size photographic print of this panel, near to the series of twenty-eight Passion Prints (1970-72) that Francis Spear produced in the early-seventies. Both artworks have been conceived in 'layers'. The figure of St John the Baptist has been created by 'biting' through layers of coloured glass by removing parts with acid, and the passion prints are formed of several layered images, printed on top of one another. Both these artworks reveal some of the more pioneering aspects of Spear's stained glass design, and his mastery of technique.

Jasmine Allen

² Spear, F.H. 'Stained Glass', in John Farleigh (ed.) *Fifteen Craftsmen on their Art* (The Sylvan Press: London, 1945): 89.

³ *Thirties: British art and design before the war, Hayward Gallery 25 October 1979 – 13 January 1980*. Arts Council of Great Britain (London, 1979): 102.

Taught by Francis - A Short Memoir

I first met Francis when, as a horse-mad teenager, I used to go to his house to exercise his son John's pony 'Jenny', John having moved on to other interests. After leaving school, I went to the local Reigate School of Art, where Francis was teaching lithography at the time. By then he must have been in his late 60s. Perhaps my interest in stained glass had been awakened through visits to his studio on those pony-riding days, but I asked if he would teach some of us stained glass. So he did, in an extra evening class. By some means this blossomed into a full-scale applied fine art department with Francis and Gus Lunn. How lucky we youngsters were!

Francis was a kind and generous teacher, who greatly enjoyed our youthful high spirits and the general fun, to which he contributed with marvellous anecdotes about the characters he had employed in his studio, and other people that he had encountered in the world of stained glass in the previous 40 years. He also passed on his love for iconography and symbolism and the rich creative possibilities of church art, as well as sound principles and craftsmanship which descended directly from the Arts and Crafts movement.

Spending time talking and learning with Francis and Nell, who had herself been a capable practitioner in the field, was a great privilege, and Francis guided me in my early church commissions. I used the kiln and tools that John gave me after he died until they were all sadly destroyed in a fire a few years ago. But since, Simon has kindly given me some of Francis' books of reference material and some of his designs; and a lovely little stained glass roundel which hangs in one of the windows in my new studio. It is a constant reminder, especially when I am with my own students, of an inspirational teacher to whom I owe so much.

Pippa Blackall

April 2013

www.stainedglass-art.co.uk

Short Catalogue of Works Shown⁴

1. *Christ Ascending*. Design for a Church Window (1922), 14 x 38cm.
2. *Stag and Deer*. Design for a Domestic Stained Glass Window (1922), 27 x 25cm.
3. *Canterbury Pilgrims*. Design for Stained Glass (1922), 33 x 18.5cm.



Cat. No. 3. Canterbury Pilgrims. Design for Stained Glass (1922), 33 x 18.5cm.

4. *Jousting Knights*. Design for Stained Glass Window (1924), 24 x 24cm.
5. *Christ's Power over Nature*. Design for a stained glass window for St. Luke's Church Centre, Paddington, London (1959), 122 x 28cm.
6. *King Midas*. Framed design for stained glass window (1921), 45 x 61cm.
7. *Nativity*. Stained glass panel (1923), 46 x 73cm. (SGM 2014/4).
8. *Woman Gathering Sheaves of Corn*. Domestic glass panel (1930s), 45 x 30cm. (SGM 1993/1).

⁴ Unless stated otherwise, all items loaned by Alan Brooks and Simon Spear. All dimensions are width x height. Dates refer to the design, rather than any executed windows.

9. *Spring*. Domestic glass panel (1930s), 46 x 58.2cm. (Loaned by Caroline and Tony Benyon).
10. *Summer*. Domestic glass panel (1930s), 46 x 58.2cm. (Loaned by Caroline and Tony Benyon).
11. *Knight*. Domestic glass panel (1930s), 46 x 57.7cm. (Loaned by Caroline and Tony Benyon).
12. *St Edward gives his ring to the beggar*. Design for west window of Warwick School Chapel, Warwick (1925), 51 x 70cm.
13. *Life of Christ*. Design for east window for St Olave's Church, London (1929), 54 x 73cm.



Cat. No. 7. Nativity. Stained glass panel (1923), 46 x 73cm. (SGM 2014/4).

Photograph © The Stained Glass Museum

14. *Canterbury Pilgrims*. Design for stained glass window at St Andrew's Church, Holt, Norfolk (1933), 38 x 59cm.
15. *Annunciation*. Design for stained glass window (1941), 50 x 62cm.
16. *Last Supper*. Design for stained glass window (1942), 46 x 59cm.
17. *Design for war memorial window* for St Andrew's Church, South Warnborough, Hampshire (1943), 50 x 58cm.
18. *Naval Memorial window*. Design for a window on the north side of the chapel, St Martin's Church, Trimley, Suffolk (1945), 41 x 55cm.
19. *Agnus Dei*. Design for the east window of St Gregory's Church, Canterbury (1948), 42 x 74cm.



Detail of Cat. No. 31 showing Pit wheel. The New Bentley mining pits. Design for the left-hand light of the Baptistry window for New Bentley Church, Doncaster (1960).

20. *Christ in Majesty*. Design for east window of St Mark's Church, Reigate (1954), 59 x 96cm.
21. *Christ*. Cartoon for Christ in Majesty, east window of St Mark's Church, Reigate (1954), 48 x 88cm.
22. *Christ in Glory*. Design for east window at St Peter and St Paul's Church, Lynsted, Kent (1950), 53 x 77cm.
23. *St Etheldreda*. Cartoon for St Etheldreda in east window at Lynsted, Kent (1950), 43 x 46cm.
24. *Saint Luke*. Cartoon for east window of St Mungo's Cathedral, Glasgow (1951), 38 x 57cm.
25. *Last Supper*. Design for stained glass window in Highbury Church, London (1954-55), 43 x 87cm.
26. *King David*. Cartoon for south transept wall, St George's Cathedral, Cape Town South Africa (1957), 22 x 33 cm.

Cat. No. 23. St Etheldreda. Cartoon for St Etheldreda in east window at Lynsted, Kent (1950), 43 x 46cm



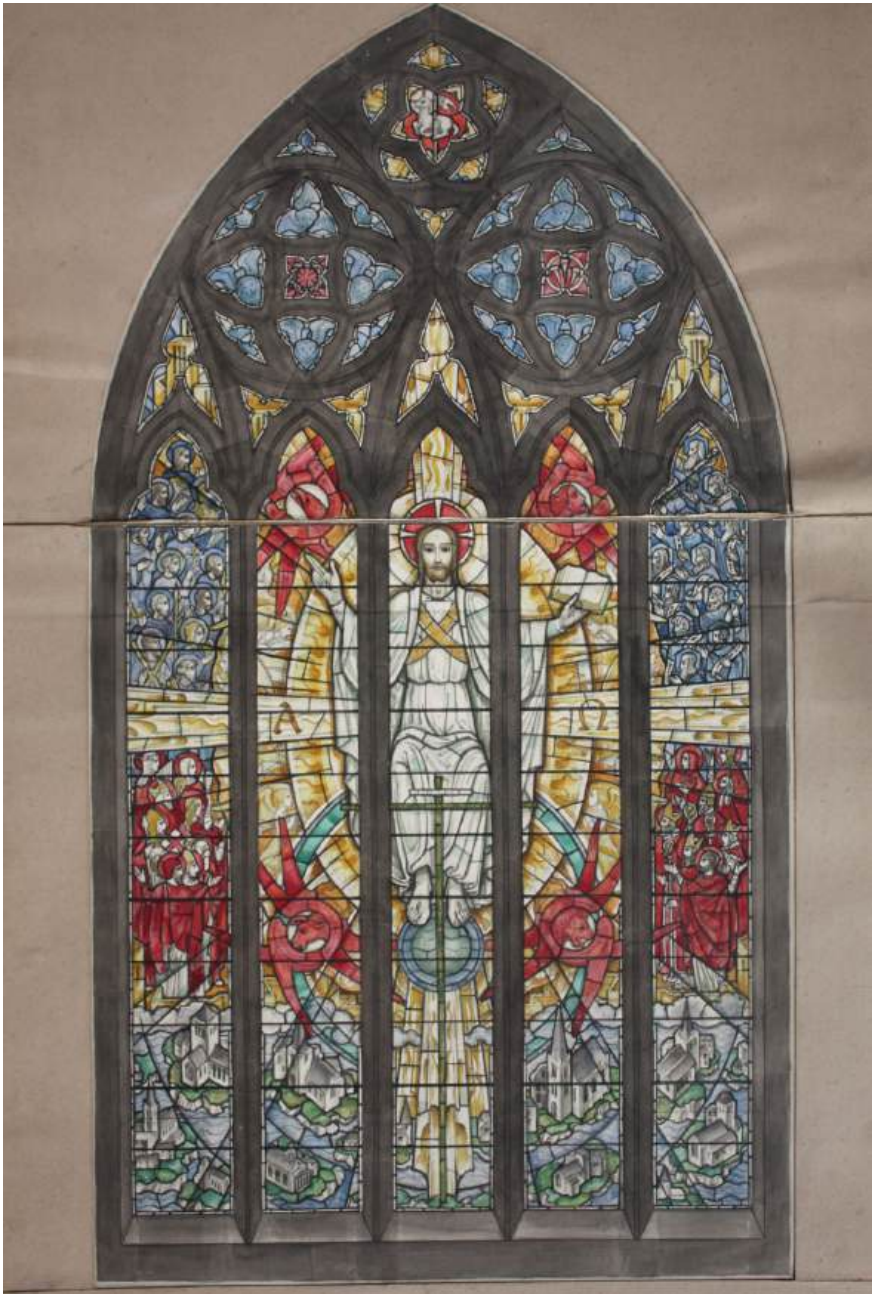
27. *Revelation of St John*. Design for stained glass window for St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh (1957), 41 x 94cm.
28. *St Margaret of Antioch*. Cartoon for St Margaret's Church, Collier Street, Kent (1958), 32 x 40cm.
29. *King David and choirboys*. Design for choristers' window, Handsworth, Sheffield (1970), 35 x 72cm.
30. *Design for children's window*, Stocksbridge Church, Sheffield (1958), 72 x 88cm.
31. *Mining pit wheel*. Design for the left-hand light of the Baptistry window for New Bentley Church, Doncaster (1960), 46 x 76cm.
32. *Blessed are the Children*. Design for a stained glass window, south aisle, St John's Church, Penge (1961), 42 x 68cm.
33. *Christ in Glory*. Design for stained glass window, Penarth (1962), 62 x 92cm.
34. *St Matthew*. Cartoon of evangelist symbol for St Matthew, for a Christ in Glory window, Penarth (1962), 25 x 34cm.
35. *Scenes from Christ's Life*. Design for stained glass windows along the north nave, St George's Cathedral, Cape Town, South Africa (1965), 92 x 62cm.
36. *Adam*. Replica stained glass panel of Adam in the west window of St Mungo's Cathedral, Glasgow (1958), 72 x 76cm (SGM 2012/3/1).
37. *Eve*. Replica stained glass panel of Eve in the west window of St Mungo's Cathedral, Glasgow (1958), 72 x 76cm (SGM 2012/3/2).
38. *Pieta*. Full-scale coloured design for Lady Chapel window in St

George's Cathedral, Cape Town, South Africa (1964), 162cm diameter.

39. *St John the Baptist*. Photographic print of a single light stained glass window made in 1938 (printed 2012), 50 x 245cm.
40. *Passion Prints*. Lino-prints (1970-72, placed in tower construction 2012), 50 x 245 x 35cm. Each lino print is 35 x 35cm.



Cat. No. 40. Scenes from the Passion Print series. Lino-prints (1970-72), 35 x 35cm. Clockwise, left to right: Judas, the scourging of Christ, Christ's betrayal, Pilate washing his hands. Photographs © The Stained Glass Museum.



Cat. No. 20. Christ in Majesty. Design for east window of St Mark's Church, Reigate (1954), 59 x 96cm.

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