



WILLIAMS & BYRNE

# Glass Painting Techniques & Secrets from an English Stained Glass Studio by David Williams & Stephen Byrne

## Restoration case study



this front door of a Georgian house that we recently finished restoring. In total, 12 pieces of intricately etched, painted, enamelled and silver-stained glass were either broken or missing. The owners found us, and asked us to restore these pieces.

The *broken* pieces were sad but fine:



The depressing thing was that the *missing* glass had been re-painted in the most ghastly way. Just look at this and sigh:



### Restoration case study

At the Williams & Byrne studio, it is *design* which is our first interest: everything we make must emerge from beautiful *ideas*. So of course we have a natural preference in favour of designing and making windows of our own, rather than restoring or conserving ancient windows.

Nonetheless, restoration and conservation have always been core features of our studio work. We are “Williams & Byrne – Designers, Painters and *Restorers* of Glass”.

One important reason why we do this is that it keeps us “on our toes” – alert and attentive. It stops us from settling back into a tried, tested and excessively comfortable way of painting. This is because, as restorers, we are constantly being asked to *copy other people’s styles*.

It follows that we have to *understand* these different styles. To forge different styles and to create immaculate facsimiles, we must first come to an understanding of what processes were used.

This is hugely challenging and rewarding. We are always required to learn and discover

new things.

Our new work also requires this: with us, everything is driven by the design, and so, once the design is there, we must then devise techniques which allow it to be created on glass.

But only up to a point.

This is because the design, of course, is of our own making: therefore it’s a “question” that we ourselves chose to ask.

Restoration, on the other hand, takes us out into the realm of “questions” that we never thought to ask. We are constantly being faced with questions that would otherwise never have occurred to us.

This is the particular joy of restoration.

Then there is the satisfaction of a job well done: this is in fact a job that other people won’t even notice! What a happy irony: we have done our best work when people cannot tell that we’ve done anything.

Sometimes we come across “howlers” (that is, they make us howl in despair and disbelief): previous attempts at restoration that have only made things worse.

Such was the case with the glass in

We decided to prepare this guide for you because it shows you one way in which *oil-based painting* was used in earlier times. See Chapter 6 of our book, *Glass Painting Techniques & Secrets from an English Stained Glass Studio*, for a recipe and demonstration of oil-based painting.

Although we ourselves had been using oil for many years before undertaking this particular project, it still showed us new ways of using oil – ways which hadn’t occurred to us *until* we were faced with working out how someone else had managed to paint so beautifully. We figured out the answer and made excellent copies for our clients. *Our* copies look new for now – we didn’t replicate the dirt that the originals now own – and this is the main feature which makes them distinguishable from the originals. In a few years time, they’ll be as dirty as the originals, and no one will know we’ve been there.

That’s just as it should be.

We always send you our best wishes.



1. This is the first piece we copied. Our proposal to the clients was that we would first copy this piece to their entire satisfaction and then restore all the other broken or missing panels in one go.

Since there was a lot of detailed work involved in repainting each panel, this approach gave them the security of knowing that we could do what they wanted us to do.

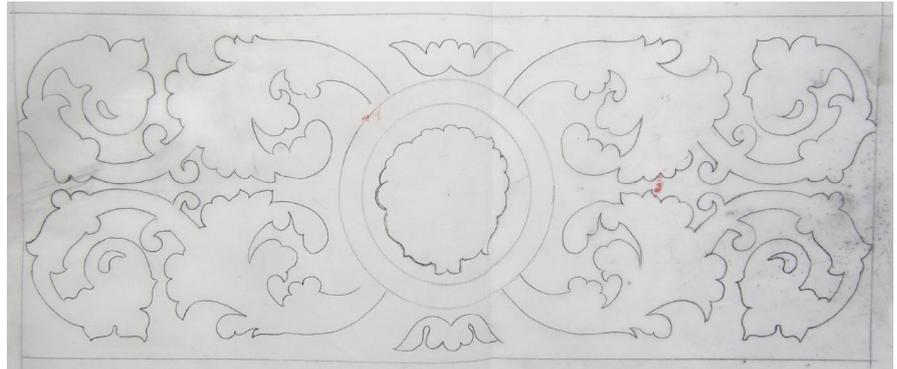
The piece measures about 12 inches by 5 inches.

It's a lovely piece of work.

2. The piece uses acid-etching, painting with water- and oil-based paints, enamelling and silver-staining – all achieved with admirable grace.

3. The unpainted area all around the scrolls and leaves is obscured by acid-etching. The effect is to create a contrast with the shimmering gold within.

Therefore the first thing that we did was carefully trace the outline of the shape that needed to be masked in order to protect it from the acid.



4. With the glass on top of the outline, we used shellac to mask the area that we wanted to protect from the acid.

5. We let the shellac dry.



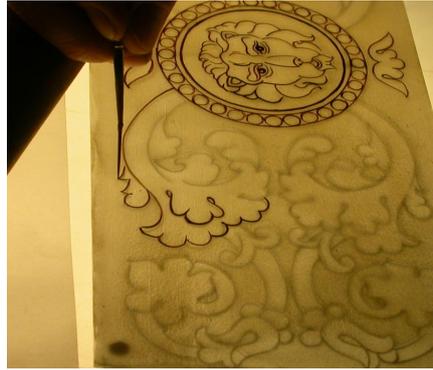
6. There was no need for hydrofluoric acid here: etching paste was fine. To make sure the etching was even, we squeezed the paste through silk. We left it to "bite" for several minutes. Then we neutralised the etching paste and cleaned the glass to remove the etching cream and shellac.



7. Here you can see the frosted area where the etching paste has obscured the glass.



8. In order to be able to copy-trace the lines exactly, we first traced them with a pencil onto tracing paper.



9. With our etched glass on top of the traced design, we could then copy-trace the main lines with water-based glass paint.



10. Here you see the glass on top of the design on top of the light box.

11. We prepared some oil-based paste (see Chapter 6) using red glass paint. We diluted a thin wash. We began to paint over the piece.



12. This needed a light stipple to give it the texture that we wanted.



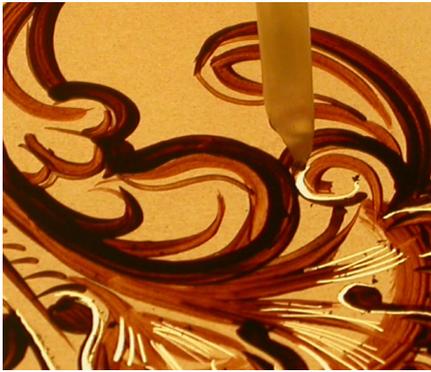
13. Then we filled in the leaves with the same light wash of oil-based paint.



14. We prepared a mix of medium-dark oil-based glass paint and painted half-tones on top of the wash of oil-based paint.



15. Now the glass looked like this. All the time, of course, we worked with the broken original on the light box next to us so that we could always see where to paint the half-tones.



16. We used sticks and quills to make highlights.



17. The glass was then ready for its first firing.



18. Then we painted blue enamel around the lion's head and fired the glass a second time. The final stage involved using silver stain on the back and firing a third and final time. The clients were delighted, and we then made copies of all the other sections that were either missing or which had been badly restored by another studio.



Another studio's restoration



Original



Williams & Byrne's restoration