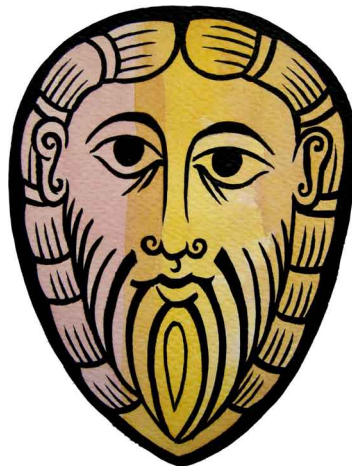


Designs & Observations
by
David Williams & Stephen Byrne

— Nine Stained Glass Heads —

Part 1

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Glass

You must know that architectural stained glass heads are rarely painted onto plain white glass. Mostly they are painted onto tinted glass e.g. amber, pale green or light brown. This is because the glass painter does not want the painted lines to be bleached into near-invisibility by the transmitted daylight. Without the tint – and sometimes even something that is stronger than a tint – the sun will always tend to wash the image out.

Glass paint

Here on the following pages we have happened to use our usual mix of tracing black and bistre brown throughout.

However, another approach would be to use that mix for everything *except* the tracing. Then with the tracing – where the design is on top of the glass and the glass painter is (quite literally) *tracing* it – you can always use a light paint such as umber brown sepia. This way your trace lines will be barely visible later on. They will either be concealed by your strengthening (made of tracing black and bistre brown). Or they will be so light as to all but burn off in the heat of the kiln. And if *that* doesn't finish them off, the transmitted light (see above) most certainly will.

The undercoat

Yes indeed, we are sure you have studied hard and therefore already appreciate the many, varied benefits you accrue from giving your glass a good smooth undercoat *before* you start to trace. For example, such an undercoat guarantees your glass is clean: it reminds you to handle your glass carefully; it provides a lovely surface on which to trace *etcetera*. Yes, all this is wonderfully clear to you, and, being such a good student, you too now shake your head in astonishment and disbelief when you chance upon a venerable book which admonishes you never to paint on top of unfired paint lest you want your paint to fry and bubble in the fire. Stuff and nonsense indeed (though it is printed down in many a good volume). And now it is in connection with the aforementioned tint or colour of your glass that we want to draw your attention to another useful truth concerning the undercoat, your eyes, *and* ... the physical nature of transmitted light.

Namely, the undercoat (just like the tint) helps prevent the appearance of bleaching.

Would you like to test this for yourself? Then we can do no better than quote directly the experiment described by the great C.W. Whall:

“Do a face on white glass in strong outline only: step back, and the face goes to nothing; strengthen the outline till the forms are quite monstrous – the outline of the nose as broad as the bridge of it – still, at a distance, it goes to nothing; the expression varies every step back you take. But now, take a matting brush, with a film so thin that it is hardly more than dirty water; put it on the back of the glass (so as not to wash up your outline); badger it flat, so as just to dim the glass less than “ground glass” is dimmer; – and you will find your outline looks almost the same at each distance. It is the pure light that plays tricks, and it will

play them through a pinhole” (Stained Glass Work, C.W. Whall, 1905)

There! C.W. Whall says it is so: “it is the pure light that plays tricks”, and the glass painter must therefore resort to tricks in kind – or else the painted image will disappear!

Gum Arabic

As any glass painter acquires experience, they will rely less and less on standard recipes and standard techniques, and use more and more of their accumulated wisdom. What does that mean in this case here? It means it is time to accept there is no more just one recipe for how to mix your glass paint than there is a single recipe for bread. Of course, we always have our fail-safe, stand-by, “never-go-wrong” favourites, and there is nothing wrong with that – nothing at all. It is simply that there will be many situations where a slight adjustment will make things better than they would otherwise be.

Just so here.

If you choose to follow the steps described on the following pages, then you should probably choose to use a *harder* glass paint, meaning a mix with more gum Arabic in it than usual.

For consider this: if you were using the *standard* process of softening lines – meaning undercoat, trace, strengthen, soften,

reinstate and shape – you would need less gum Arabic rather than more, because otherwise *you cannot soften your lines*.

However, in this case you see demonstrated here, there *are* no softened lines at all on the front, merely softened *highlights* ... whilst on the back you'll just find softened *tones* (a nice variation on the whole technique of softening).

Our point is, you'll find it is far easier to achieve softened *highlights* when there is slightly *more* gum Arabic than you would normally have for softened lines. And that's why you may well find a harder mix of paint is better here.

(As for the tones on the back, well, even with more gum Arabic than usual, it is easy to blend them because they are quite general and impressionistic, so you can be almost *brutal* with them, which always helps. After all, it's not like you are trying to soften eyes or lips where everything counts towards a particular facial expression.)

It is essential to test everything on your light-box (see picture) *before* you start. Indeed it is. Because it is good to know your fine labour will not be wasted ...

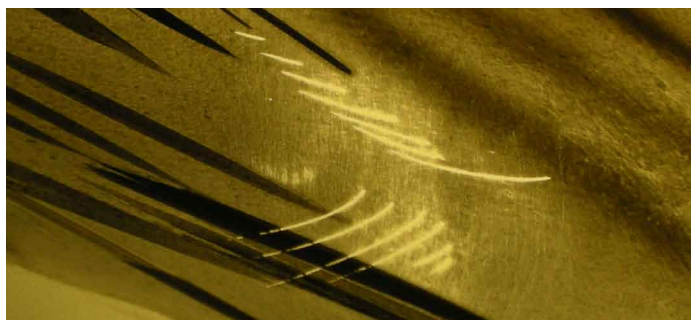
Variations

You, of course, are not *required* to stop and fire the glass at the same point as we do. For instance, you can certainly apply an oil wash to the front of the glass, then apply oil tones and blend them smooth. After firing, you can also apply silver stain – for example, to the star.

You must decide these points for yourself. We merely wanted to take this opportunity to explore some wider issues.

That is our purpose with these *designs & observations* ...

Happy glass painting!







1. You start with glass that is clean on both sides



2. Here you see your undercoat – *observe* how smooth it is



3. Trace the *main* lines, only the main lines



4. With the design on one side, you strengthen them



5a. Blocking in — suddenly the image starts to come to life



5b. There, you will soon see the difference this makes!

6. Now it's time to add the fine "shadow" lines



7a. With a firm, confident hand ...



7b. — make sharp highlights such as these



8a. Now with a clean and gentle hand ...



8b. — soften your highlights *thus*



9. This is important: turn your glass over



10. Apply dark tones on back



11. Clean up these dark tones e.g. the hair and star

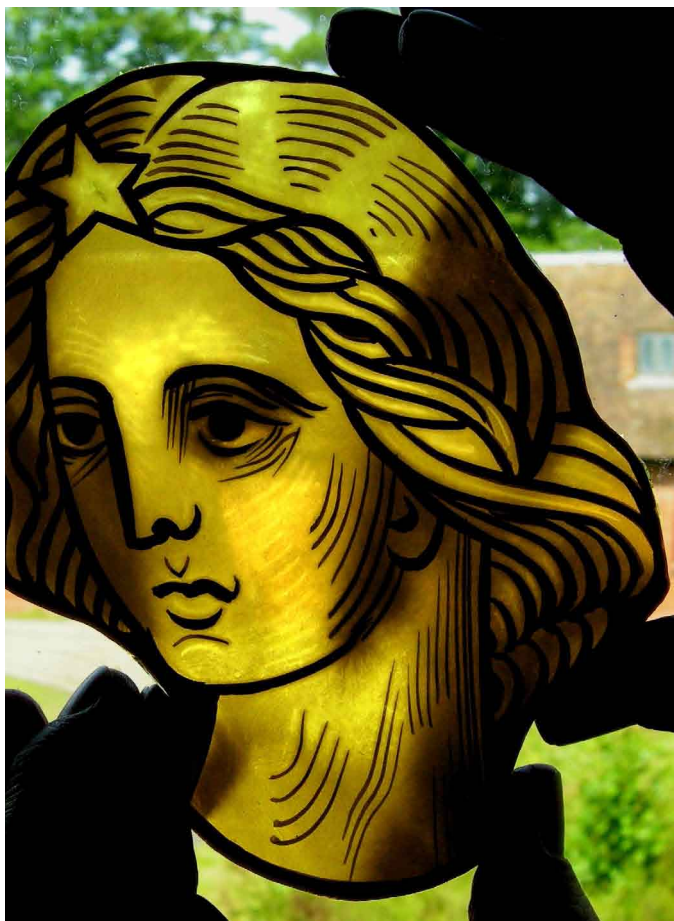


12a. Now apply a wash, then blend and soften ...



12b. Thus!

13. Rub out highlights on back e.g. star, eye, hair, cheek



14. Check against *natural* light and adjust

15. Our lady is now fired



















Glass Painting Techniques & Secrets
from an English Stained Glass Studio

Part 1 - The Foundations

"How You Can Trace, Shade, Flood & Highlight
(Front & Back) in a *Single Firing* & Why You Need
a *Lump of Paint to Do this (Not a Teaspoonful)*"



The Classical Foundations



Glass Painting Techniques & Secrets
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Part 3 — Silver Stain

"How You Can Trace, Blend, Shade & Flood
from a *Reliable Batch* that Keeps for Months
(and Why Water or Vinegar are No Good for This)"



Silver Staining with Oil



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"How You Can Use Oil to Shade Leisurely &
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**THE DIAMOND LIGHTS
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