

It is little more than a decade since Kathy established her studio, yet it has grown in caliber at an inordinate rate.



Kathy Jordan in her personal painting studio at The Art of Glass.



Dick Millard
[click photo for author biography]

A Challenging Choice

by Dick Millard

The art of decision-making

Editor's Intro: Dick Millard continues his series on the best and the brightest in the world of art glass. His mission is to seek out the people who will make up the new establishment in our art and our craft, these two aspects having their own rising stars.

In this installment, Dick introduces us to Kathy Jordan, studio owner, glass painter, fabricator, restoration expert and realist.

It is rare, indeed all too rare, that one finds a studio principal who is as talented an artist/designer as those better-known designers, whose work is fabricated in her studio. Or should I say, 'better known so far'? That is certainly the case with Kathy Jordan and her studio, The Art of Glass, in Media, Pennsylvania. In addition to being a studio that fabricates for a select coterie of independent artist/designer/painters, Kathy's studio has done extensive repair, re-leading, and restoration projects, primarily in the northeast United States; many in collaboration with restoration mogul, Arthur Femenella.

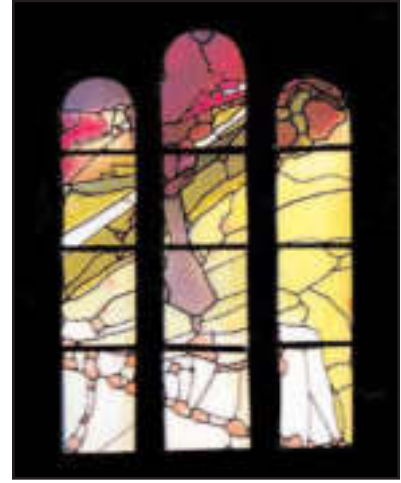
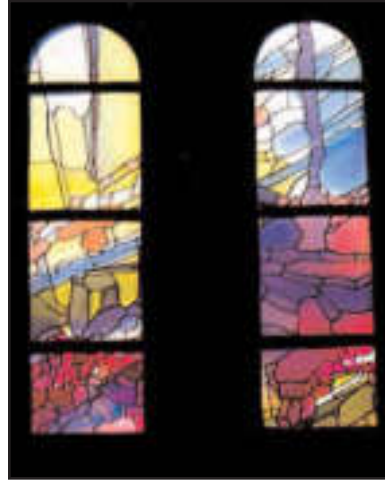
In the little more than a decade since Kathy established her studio, it has grown in caliber at an inordinate rate. That, I believe, can be attributed to a few primary factors. One, she takes great pride in her work, and expends every effort to expand her knowledge by exposure to, and questioning of, those whose experience precedes 1970 and the subsequent hobby-emphasis 'training' since that time. It has required great effort for her to seek out and find those of long established qualification from whom she could learn the traditional and long proven procedures which has provided her a solid foundation upon which to build her career.

6° OF INSPIRATION

the Dick Millard Column

Challenging Choice Millard

Preliminary sketches for a project presentation.



Kathy Jordan exercises patience and diligence, and, consequently, her wonderful painting reflects her healthy attitude.



Kathy's sense of whimsy takes over in this playful painting on glass that is a departure from her normally classical style.

Because of Kathy Jordan's guidance, leadership, and very realistic and attainable vision, she has been able to achieve the level of one of America's major studios.

Two, Kathy is very artistic, with a great sense of color and line, and she draws beautifully. This has helped her considerably with her stained glass painting that noticeably progresses each year that she returns to my summer workshops. She exercises an excellent work ethic in class and is willing to practice and practice to improve her work as she refines her skills. Kathy is very aware that the skill-level

required in her chosen field extends far beyond the, 'I'll take the class for a week and learn it' echelon. Unfortunately, that is an attitude that is not as rare as one might suspect. Kathy Jordan exercises patience and diligence, and, consequently, her wonderful painting reflects her healthy attitude.

Because of Kathy Jordan's guidance, leadership, and very realistic and attainable vision, she has been able to achieve the level of one of America's major studios. I hasten to define what, in my estimation, constitutes a major studio. In the past, such a term often referred to the size of a studio, as well as its caliber of work. To an extent, this is still a somewhat accepted impression. It is, and always has been, a misconception to equate size of staff and volume of production with the term "major" as an automatic association with quality. That can often be a most erroneous presumption.

Challenging Choice Millard

The competence of work performed by Kathy Jordan and her “Art of Glass” staff exemplifies, and substantiates a long held contention of mine, which is shared by many others throughout the profession, that the finest work in stained glass is being created by small studios with staffs of approximately 2 to 10 craftsmen and artisans. That certainly does not mean that all small studios create great work and all large studios are doing lousy work. What I do say, and the evidence is quite stunning, small studios are creating a most disproportionate ratio of exceptional work, and large studios today are more prone to produce a more pedestrian caliber of work.

Why this is the case, I am not sure. However, there are a few suggestions that come to my mind. A large studio that may employ a staff from twenty to thirty-five has an enormous weekly payroll obligation that can run in the range of twenty to thirty thousand dollars with little difficulty. It becomes a runaway train constantly needing fuel. The fuel it needs is a constant flow of commissions provided by a well-compensated sales force driven to deliver projects to maintain work for the staff. The pressure is great, as is the temptation, to “get the job” at all costs, which may include a bit of verbal embroidery and exaggeration of the need for attention to “restoration” needs of dire necessity. More often than not, this is a gross exaggeration. Sadly, this condition can reach levels that severely challenge known ethics, yet, the giant appetite must be fed.



A standard drawing that one would expect to find hanging in any art studio in the world, yet this figurative exercise, by Kathy, is wonderfully produced on glass, not paper.

Challenging Choice Millard

Kathy is both an exceptional businessperson and an outstanding stained glass designer/painter and colorist. Regrettably, it is quite difficult, if not impossible, to do both, without forfeiture of one or, dilution of both.

Less is more

This is a condition in which a small studio is not likely to find itself mired. They do not have to produce, or should I say, 'create' such a volume of work. The studio principal is more likely able to exercise proper quality control and not have to relegate it to another. Generally, I have found the smaller studio to have a different philosophy. Certainly, this describes the studio under the leadership of someone with the artistic talents and aesthetic sensitivities, of Kathy Jordan. She certainly wants to make a good profit, in fact, a healthy profit. However, that is not the sole motive of primary dominance. There is a more than healthy concern for the satisfaction derived from doing an exceptional job and creating work of memorable dimensions, well above the prosaic 'yard goods' produced by large production line factory-studios. The emphasis I have seen evident in the 2 to 10 person studios is one that equates success with quality of aesthetic, in design, color, and painting, as well as high caliber skills of fabrication. Rather than a commonly held view throughout our society which bases 'success' all too frequently, and solely on money, and the evidence thereof. Too many studios merely pretend to factor quality into the equation that defines 'success'. I have found this quality less likely to prevail in the smaller studios, i.e. Art of Glass, under Kathy Jordan's guidance and founded on her constant pursuit to improve excellence. Further, the smaller studio concept enables Kathy to implement the quality control she desires, as opposed to having to assign such responsibility to an employee. There is greater control of the studio by the principal. There is a difference! Especially with "New Work" versus "Re-leading" [...often mistakenly and deceitfully referred to as "Restoration"].

Wearing many cloaks

Kathy Jordan is in a position, which as the title of this piece states is one of “a challenging choice”. She is both an exceptional businessperson and an outstanding stained glass designer/painter and colorist. Regrettably, it is quite difficult, if not impossible, to do both, without forfeiture of one or, dilution of both. Kathy finds herself in this quandary. At least for the present, her emphasis is, and has to be, on the business side. She has to content herself with periodic excursions into creatively indulging herself with drawing, designing and painting at selective seminars that she attends throughout the year. Optimistically, in the not too distant future, she will be able to find a resolution to this quandary in which she finds herself. Then she will be able to make, what I believe can be, a significant contribution as a designer/painter to the stained glass community.

Much of the work performed by The Art of Glass has fallen into the category of Repair and Restoration, from the all too common re-leading, to those works truly in need and deserving of restoration. To those rare projects, which can be truly referred to as ‘restoration’, Kathy Jordan brings the sensitivity of an artist’s eye. An ingredient all but overlooked in its absolute necessity on those truly rare and accurately defined Restoration Projects. Unfortunately, too many studios foist “liturgical restoration” upon unsuspecting and much abused, clergy, having neither a clue about restoration. Nor are they directed by a principal of artistic sensibilities and sensitivity to make the “judgment calls” necessary in True and Worthy Restoration Projects. These differ greatly from the Remove, Rip and Re-lead Projects called restoration, which likely make up more than 99% of the projects so assigned. Sadly, many will deny this condition, yet it does exist to the extant stated. Fortunately, there are studios run by ethical and qualified individuals, such as Kathy, who are doing excellent restoration work around our country. As I stated previously, such caliber of work is the overwhelming domain of the smaller studios. However, one should not assume all small studios do the best work. They don’t! Many haven’t a clue!

To those rare projects, which can be truly referred to as ‘restoration’, Kathy Jordan

brings the sensitivity of an artist’s eye. An ingredient all but overlooked in its absolute necessity on those truly rare and accurately defined Restoration Projects.

Challenging Choice Millard



Here we can see how Kathy's personal and contemporary style comes through in this painting on glass.

Though it seems I may have gone off on a tangent regarding "restoration"; I don't feel I have. Kathy Jordan exemplifies the antithesis of an all too prevalent post 1970's attitude of some, all too content with not gaining sufficient knowledge to recognize an extensive ignorance.

Within the recent past, Art of Glass has expanded its service to the stained glass community. It now serves as a fabricating studio for independent artists in stained glass who have brought their projects to Kathy and her studio to execute and install for them. Many, in fact most, stained glass designers/painters have little desire to fabricate their own work. Those, over the years who have, are excellent glaziers, doing jewelry-like work. Kathy and her staff are quite able to fulfill the needs of the aesthetically discerning designer, as she shares and understands such sensitivities. As Art of Glass continues in this recent addition of providing fine custom fabrication for the discerning independent artist/designer, I am sure the studio's excellent reputation will assuredly expand their contribution to stained glass.

Boldly, Kathy does not hesitate to expose herself to topnotch training in the body of stained glass disciplines that are selectively available. As previously mentioned

there are few who share her healthy curiosity and recognize that the pursuit of knowledge and refinement of skills is a lifetime pursuit. Too often, once one establishes ones studio, their pursuit of necessary educational programs ceases, with an all but audible "screeching halt". Just look around your area. How many studio principals are attending educational programs on a consistent basis, seeking to improve their understanding and expertise in stained glass artistic and technical practices? Kathy is part of an even smaller group, which exhibits exquisite artistic talents. She certainly provides one of the major rays of sunshine, which so warmly shines on the future of stained glass artistry.



BIO To try and list the accomplishments of Dick Millard would overload your hard drive. Suffice it to say he is a living legend in the art of painting on glass. Dick lives and works in Antrim, New Hampshire, consults and works on major commissions all over the country and runs workshops in the summer for select groups of students.