

# Arts & Entertainment

## Stained glass artist's latest project to adorn chapel



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Local stained glass artist Suna Reay surveys one of three windows she has completed for inset into a pair of chapel doors. At left is her design for the front wall of the chapel, her largest commission to date. The stained glass for the wall is expected to take another five months to complete.

By STEPHANIE THIESSEN

The Champion

It takes a steady hand and an eye for detail to fashion a timeless work of art from tiny pieces of glass as distinct — and sometimes, it seems, about the same size — as snowflakes.

Just ask local stained glass artist Suna Reay.

No two masterpieces are the same, meaning each finished project is a segment of Ms Reay's imagination never to be captured again.

Considering her latest project measures more than 12 feet at its highest point and involves nine windows consisting of 23 panels, it's no surprise her current commission is the artist's largest — and most enticing — challenge to date.

"I'm very excited," she said of the chapel wall project, which will encompass more than 120 square feet of glass.

Early last year, Ms Reay — whose business is called Designs by Suna — was contacted by an architect from Sievenpiper Associates Inc., who had seen one of her stained glass works. He commissioned her to design and create two projects for the chapel at New Chester Village, a retirement home located off the Danforth in Toronto.

"They wanted something organic," the self-taught artist explained.

The first piece, which is already finished, is a half-circle transom measuring six feet by three feet to be installed atop a pair of interior oak doors leading to the chapel.

Set into the doors will be two smaller windows, also already completed and just about ready for installation. The auburn

colours of the tree leaves contrast against the blues, greens and purples of the glass sky, and give the idea the viewer is looking up into a tree.

The second part of the project, which Ms Reay is getting ready to cut, is the aforementioned stained glass scene, which will be installed at the front wall of the chapel.

The windows, Ms Reay said, depict an early morning Ontario landscape in the spring, designed to inspire and provide a peaceful atmosphere for reflection.

Nine vertical windows will be placed side by side, each providing a slice of the scene. Rolling hills and peaceful pools of water will be illuminated by artificial lights placed behind the windows. The centre window portrays a sun from which streams of light flash.

### Piece non-denominational

Since the chapel is non-denominational, Ms Reay said she chose to create a piece without religious connotation, so each person could find his own meaning within. Even the flowers she chose — irises and rhododendrons — are less symbolic than other varieties, like roses or lilies.

"I hope that they have hope in reflection and that they get some peace," she said of the seniors.

Like a fish in water, Ms Reay seems completely in her element as she stands in her Martin Street home studio and points out various stages of the process.

First, there are the rows upon rows of colourful art glass in varying degrees of opaqueness and a multitude of colours, some with patterns, some more plain. It's from these sheets of glass that the small pieces are painstakingly cut.

Hanging on the wall is what looks like a

giant paint-by-numbers, which Ms Reay said is called a cartoon. It's a to-scale pattern of the chapel wall windows, each small section numbered and colour coded.

When asked how many individual pieces the wall project will encompass, Ms Reay wrinkled her nose.

"I don't usually count. It's a waste of time and a little depressing," she said, laughing.

She does, however, know the three windows for the oak chapel doors are created from 400 glass pieces.

She expects it'll take her about five months to do the wall — that's on top of the months it's already taken her to design it.

Does she mind the fact it'll take so long? "Ask me at the end," she said wryly.

Watching the installation is always a nerve wracking task, Ms Reay said, adding she's not looking forward to the day the huge panels go up in the chapel.

"I don't eat the day before," she chuckled.

Fortunately, nothing has broken yet. Knock on wood.

Ms Reay's smaller commissions include windows and doors, plus decorative works for hanging in houses ranging from modern to historic.

Just recently, Ms Reay said she finished a pair of Victorian doors for a home in town being restored to its 1840s splendor.

But it's always particularly exciting doing a public space like the chapel, she said, adding she'd like to do one in town.

"I'd love to do a restaurant," she said.

To see more of Ms Reay's stained glass art, visit [www.designsbysuna.com](http://www.designsbysuna.com).

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## Women of Note concert to bring in 2006

For those of you who wish Christmas music didn't have to end on December 25, the Women of Note ensemble will be offering an upcoming holiday concert.

The group will perform The Infant King, a concert for Epiphany, January 6 from noon to 1 p.m. at Knox Presbyterian Church, 170 Main St. E. Tickets cost \$10 at the door, with kids 12 and under free.

The music will focus on the visit of the

magi, prophecies fulfilled and foretold and the beauty of the winter landscape.

Guest performers will be Rosanne Warren on flute and tenor Bill Smelser — of the local group Men II Boys — who will perform a solo in The Kings, which tells the story of the wisemen's journey to Bethlehem.

In this concert, the ensemble will do a number of unaccompanied songs.

"Singing a cappella is always a challenge

for an ensemble, but hearing the beautiful blend of the women's voices without the piano is worth the effort," said founder Laura Jeffrey.

To help celebrate its 10th season, the eight-member Women of Note will be donating the proceeds from this concert to the Milton Music Festival for scholarships.

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