

Artists at work

Richard Wackerlin - stained glass magician

by Sue Charlebois

Some of us think of glass as something you drink out of, or something a window is made of that you look through or open up to let in sunshine.

Glass does let sunshine in, it is also a means for creating illusions, and still going deeper, it is a means to express one's own individuality.

Richard Wackerlin of Perkinsfield sees glass as a source of light with which he can create his own designs and show his individuality.

Originally from Illinois, Richard moved to Canada in 1969 when over a period of three years he gradually learned the techniques of working with stained glass from a friend.

One of the things that attracted Richard to the fragile pieces was, "With glass you're working with light," "I like the fact that glass is a funny kind of medium to work in," says Richard.

Original designs

Richard, who is his own company registered under "Soldered Sand Productions," makes many different pieces out of stained glass, pieces that are all his own original designs. "Creating original designs is a real challenge," says Richard.

"Sometimes people want to express something but the glass doesn't want you to." "If you try to go beyond the limits of the glass you end up with a pile of very expensive chips."

Richard who sees stained glass as an interface between graphics design and a craft says that craftsmanship is a very important part of it.

He himself took no

courses and has been doing stained glass for four years with the last year being taken very seriously, and has been selling his work for the past six months.

Presently working at the Mental Health Centre in Penetanguishene, Richard says when he is working full time on his craft he spends up to about eight hours a day designing things such as wall hangings, boxes, jewellery boxes, and jewellery ranging from small butterflies to large bugs.

But is the fun really taken out of a craft once it is being sold for money?

Challenging

"Sure it's a business but it's a way of life - of doing things that I really like and things that present a challenge to you." "It sure doesn't take the fun out of it."

Richard not only sells his precious pieces of work but also does many private shows in Toronto, local shows, and still more in other places of southern Ontario.

To date he has seven shows scheduled from now to the beginning of September.

"I'm at the point of wanting to earn my living doing it and maybe earn my fame later," says Richard.

"As jobs become more futile maybe I should take the big plunge and rely on myself rather than relying on the job market."

Having a BA and an MSc in psychology, Richard says this helps him with his work in glass because he knows about the way people see, which is a good asset.

"You have to take other people into consideration as well as

yourself."

To start his work, Richard says he has to be in a particular mood to design.

"I have to feel fairly calm within myself." "I suppose it's a kind of discipline."

Sometimes the craftsman sits with a sketch pad and goes through many designs that he may use for the original piece.

Once this is completed the delicate piece of glass is ready to turn into a beautiful original design.

Stained glass which is either rolled out by machine or hand blown gives the artist the choice of not only different colors to work with but also different textures.

Textures

Richard experiments with many different textures and colours

during his designing.

After the design has been decided on, Richard then cuts out the glass with a glass cutter and specialized pliers.

Copper foil is then put around each piece of glass to frame it and then the pieces are soldered together for complete assembly.

Richard says that this solder can be colored to give a different effect by using what is known as patina which causes a chemical reaction on the solder.

One important fact about working with glass is that all leftovers are saved for future use. You never know when that little chip of green might come in handy.

Many of Richard's finished pieces deal with illusion. He does it on purpose to make things appear a little bit dif-

ferent than what they really are.

Magician

"At this point my direction with glass is to do things that people really enjoy," says the craftsman.

"I like playing magician."

One of these pieces, a jewellery box, which Richard played magician with, recently won second place at a craft show in Haliburton.

This, along with many other of the finished pieces certainly lend themselves to being different with that certain air of individuality.

The finished products which take anywhere from one hour to almost two days to complete are a great asset to "Soldered Sand Productions," assets that are likely to grow.



Finished products

Richard, whose designs are both original and creative, displays some of his work made from the precious stained glass. The jewellery box shown here in the middle is one that just brought Richard a second place finish at a show held in Haliburton.

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Midland Fire Department's chief, Terry Lethbridge, reports a relatively quiet weekend.

Sunday night the department was called out to do a wash down on

Heritage Drive, Midland after a automobile accident.

The only other report was another wash down from an accident on Bay and Fifth Street, Midland on Tuesday.



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