

OBSCURED BRILLIANCE: FREDERICTON'S MODERN STAINED GLASS HERITAGE

> JOHN LEROUX

JOHN LEROUX is an architect and art historian based in Fredericton. He has won many awards for architectural and public art projects throughout Canada, and he has taught at the University of New Brunswick, St. Thomas University, and the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design. A contributing columnist for the *Canadian Architect* magazine, he is also the author of six books on New Brunswick architecture, including: *Building New Brunswick: an Architectural History* (Goose Lane, 2008), *St. Andrews Architecture: 1604-1966* (Gaspereau Press, 2010), and *Glorious Light: the Stained Glass of Fredericton* (Gaspereau Press, 2011). The latter is the first time in Canada that a fully illustrated history of a city's stained glass has been published.

Luminous, bold and ever changing, stained-glass windows are an architectural paradox within the Modern Movement. Although dynamically exploited by influential modern masters ranging from Frank Lloyd Wright to Le Corbusier and Wallace Harrison, stained-glass windows often seem a throwback architectural element, a relic of centuries past. The longstanding connection of stained glass with medieval cathedrals and Victorian domestic parlours seems a long way from the heroic modernist experiments that pushed the boundaries of structure, materials, technical systems, and spartan industrial design. Carefully composed fragments of coloured glass set in lead can seem incompatible with the massive planes of clear plate glass and soaring curtain walls that typify the modernist visual language.

Despite their association with the pre-modern, heroic and innovative modernist stained-glass windows did at times transcend the derided realm of “applied ornament.” The sweep of natural light as it enriches interior space aligns stained glass with a key architectural pursuit of modernism, as stated so forcefully by Le Corbusier: “Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light.”¹ At their best, modern stained glass approaches are exceptionally dynamic creations that radically transform with the changing light, angle of the sun, time of day, and weather conditions. When carefully designed, stained-glass windows rendered the extremely important element of modern architecture—the building skin—exuberant and alive.



FIG. 1. STAIR LANDING WINDOW AT 96 SECRETARY LANE, 1897. | JOHN LEROUX

Where traditional stained glass often concerned itself as much with narrative and illustrative roles as it did with its luminous and decorative qualities, modern stained glass regularly freed itself from the limits of descriptive elements and scenes. American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) was a pioneer in making this conceptualizing leap. And while he openly appreciated the great rose windows of the mediaeval European cathedrals,² he felt that for his own contemporary assessment, “nothing is more annoying to me than any tendency toward realism of form in window-glass, to get mixed up with the view outside. A window pattern should stay severely ‘put.’”³

Paradoxically, the new generation of modern architects and glaziers still remained typically grounded in materials and techniques that had existed for a thousand years; although therein laid the challenge... Wright inferred that the proper use of architectural glass was not only a responsibility, it was loaded with unlimited possibility, calling “glass and light—two forms of the same thing!”⁴

Echoing Le Corbusier’s devotion to light, Wright also felt that “light is the beautifier of the building,”⁵ and he laid out his clarion call:

Let [the architect] work, now, with light diffused, light refracted, light reflected—use light for its own sake—shadows aside. The prism has always delighted and fascinated man. The machine gives him his opportunity in glass. The machine can do any kind of glass—thick, thin, colored, textured to order—and cheap. A new experience is awaiting him.⁶

By the end of the Modern Era, stained glass artists and designers were striving to make their works part of the architecture itself and less about the simple decoration

of windows; as eminent British glass artist John Piper called it, “more and more in the simultaneous creation of a light-filled architectural unit.”⁷

Although it is seldom celebrated, the city of Fredericton contains some of the finest stained glass in eastern Canada. These are exceptional artworks, although many sit virtually unknown, their designers and craftsmen largely unidentified. This oversight is most palpable with regards to the city’s twentieth-century modern glass; not surprising in a city so closely tied with Loyalist roots and nineteenth-century architectural tradition.

Akin to the commitment to new materials and measured ornament in Canada’s postwar architecture, the diversity of themes contained in Fredericton’s modern stained glass is remarkable, ranging from religious and historical subjects to a bestiary of animal figures, stylized portraits, and abstract fields of colour and pattern. This glass embodies the paradox of being a visual legacy connected to past centuries, as well as at times a direct aesthetic refutation of traditional craft practices, all the while needing to physically express the soul and character of this particular place. Perhaps more so than the typical decorative or narrative forms of the city’s pre-modern stained glass, Fredericton’s modernist examples seek to create transcendent visual and spatial experiences by the transmission of light through colour.

Fredericton’s identity has always been centred on its political position as the provincial capital, as well as its major role as a centre of higher education, religion, and culture. The city has consistently punched above its weight in literature and the fine arts, and its beautiful site along the Saint John River has made for surroundings of visual richness. This aesthetic spirit, as

presented in its stained-glass windows, resides in churches, in private homes, in educational and government buildings, in places of commerce, and even deep in the woods. Far from a city shackled by its Victorian past, the illuminated wealth of its enduring postwar glass presents the multifaceted ideological and spiritual/secular character of Fredericton—a city striving for a new progressive face at a time of rapid change.

ARTS AND CRAFTS GLASS

Buoyed by its ascendancy in Great Britain, the Gothic Revival made its way to British North America in the mid-nineteenth century, with Fredericton being a focal point. By the 1850s and 1860s, many new churches housing symphonies of stained glass and decorative Gothic delights filled the streets of New Brunswick. These included magnificent British-made windows at Fredericton’s St. Anne’s Anglican Parish Church (1846-1847) and Christ Church Cathedral (1845-1853), both monuments of North American Gothic Revival. It was not long before the fervent religious use of coloured glass spread to the domestic and institutional spheres. The eclectic and ornamental splendour of the late Victorian era revelled in the exuberant (and at times excessive) use of stained glass in dining rooms, parlours, stairway landings, and entry vestibules in the houses of the wealthy as well as those of the middle classes. Glazed panels abounded, flaunting social virtues, historical scenes, lavish patterns, and extravagant colouration.

While much of Fredericton’s late-nineteenth-century stained glass was textbook Victorian graphic indulgence, instances of clever restraint were beginning to be seen. A large Queen Anne Revival house at 96 Secretary Lane, behind the Provincial Legislature, has a



FIG. 2. STAIR LANDING WINDOW AT 31 LANSDOWNE STREET, 1915. | JOHN LEROUX.



FIG. 3. FRONT DOOR WINDOW AT 57 ROOKWOOD AVENUE, c. 1925. | JOHN LEROUX.

unique stairway landing window that is unusually clean and innovative for its 1897 date, with an ordered palette of red, blue, green, and yellow glass, clear bevelled circles and an off-centre crescent moon (fig. 1). As a pictorial exercise, it has more in common with a 1950s Paul Rand logo than with the typical designs of the day, and hints at compositional themes that will emerge in the glass of the first half of the twentieth century.

EMERGING MODERN APPROACHES

As the twentieth century was entering full swing, housing was becoming more standardized throughout Canada. Improved communications led to a decline of local vernacular approaches, thanks partly to large-circulation printed media that disseminated new architectural fashions, decorative designs, and construction methods. One of the most familiar

instances of this was the popularity of the Craftsman bungalow house between 1905 and 1925. By the early twentieth century, the democratic ideals of the British Arts and Crafts movement had spread throughout North America, while the California Arts and Crafts homes designed by the Greene brothers and the horizontal Prairie houses of Frank Lloyd Wright inspired construction across the continent. This architectural approach found widespread acceptance in the new Craftsman style, which takes its name from a widely circulated American magazine published from 1901 to 1916 appropriately titled *The Craftsman*. One of the houses' most visible features was their prominent use of stained glass, usually showing a distinct geometric simplification compared to earlier Victorian patterns, hinting at the coming Art Deco style.

Fredericton's downtown neighbourhoods feature a number of one-and-a-half-storey

bungalows that blend fine craftsmanship and materials, along with comparatively open and unfussy layouts compared to their neighbours from previous decades. The bungalows have low-pitched sheltering roofs with wide eaves and exposed wood rafters/braces, deep porches with square columns, interior stained wood paneling and simple rectangular trim, and leaded/stained-glass windows. The latter were calculated and controlled, with areas of clear or opaque frosted white glass in a generally rectilinear pattern, and compositional contrast attained by curved or coloured highlights. Hand-painted or etched glass was virtually abandoned.

Within the suite of recurring Craftsman bungalows along Lansdowne Street at Fredericton's East end, the 1915 example at 31 Lansdowne has a stairway landing window (fig. 2) with an affinity to the renowned stained-glass designs



FIG. 4. ONE OF A PAIR OF STAR OF DAVID WINDOWS AT THE REAR OF THE SGOOLAI ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE, 1934. | JOHN LEROUX.

of Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928). Mackintosh's geometric and floral-based windows from the turn of the twentieth century were revolutionary, changing the path of modern stained glass through their serenity and flowing organic outlines. The Lansdowne window harkens to the glazed Ladies' Luncheon Room divider at Mackintosh's Ingram Street Tea Room in Glasgow (1900), whose vertical lead lines and gently coloured panes are punctuated by gentle curves and smaller seed-like green organic forms.

Working in a singular development of the Arts and Crafts approach, Frank Lloyd Wright transformed the very complexion of modern architecture, and was perhaps the twentieth century's greatest innovator of architectural stained glass. For him, stained glass was conceptually tied to the architectural setting as part of a complete environment,

and he frequently referred to his stained glass as "light screens." His designs were often geometric abstractions of natural elements such as hollyhocks, butterflies, and his famous "tree of life." His bold yet reverential style is characterized by basic geometric ornament expressed in repeating shapes of rectangles, chevrons, and simplified organic forms, often set in horizontal bands of repeating casement windows. The c. 1925 Craftsman bungalow at 57 Rookwood Avenue in Fredericton shows a strong Wright influence. Its darkly stained front door proudly features a simple yet sophisticated two-by-two-foot bevelled glass window with a forty-five-degree arrangement and symmetrical chevron pattern (fig. 3), a reserved New Brunswick version of Wright, if you will, as they are kindred spirits to the forty-five-degree geometry and overall restraint of his repeating "tulip" windows at his 1912 Geneva Hotel in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, as well as the



FIG. 5. SALVATION ARMY CHAPEL GLASS BLOCK WINDOWS, NEIL STEWART, ARCHITECT, 1964. | JOHN LEROUX.

mainly clear, leaded patterned French doors of his celebrated Hollyhock House of 1921 in Los Angeles.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the flamboyant Art Deco style provided a Jazz Age flourish of colour and geometrical simplicity to architecture and to stained glass. Although Art Deco made few inroads into New Brunswick due to the poor economy of the day and the generally conservative approach to design in the province, where it did appear, it was often subtle and served only as partial embellishment. The rear façade of Fredericton's 1934 red brick synagogue on Westmorland Street features a pair of high circular openings with Stars of David, set irregularly with white, pink, and violet stained glass (fig. 4). Their slight flattening and daring colour choice is a subtle, but distinct, instance of 1930s decorative sensibility influenced by Art Deco. A further instance of local stained glass, barely visible to the public,



FIG. 6. CLASSROOM ANNEX STAIRWELL GLASS BLOCK WINDOWS, FORMER FREDERICTON HIGH SCHOOL, WILLIAM LAKE, ARCHITECT, 1961. | JOHN LEROUX.

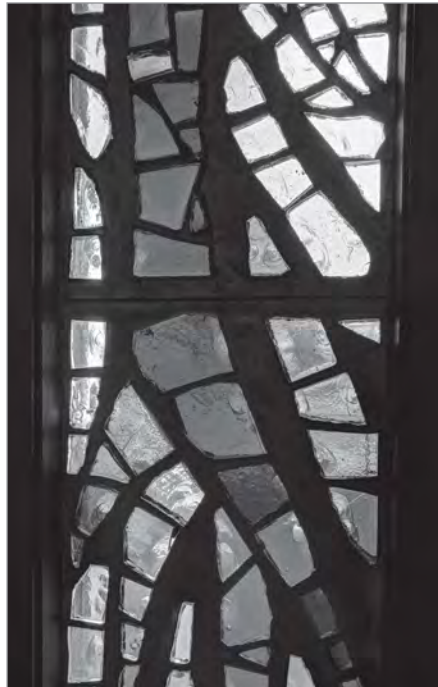


FIG. 7. *DALLES DE VERRE* DETAIL, ST. DUNSTAN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, CHARLES VERSTEEG STUDIOS, 1965. | JOHN LEROUX.

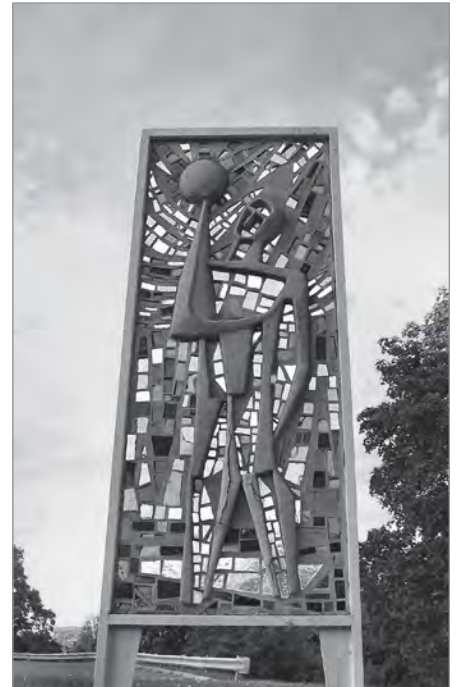


FIG. 8. *MAN OF SCIENCE* SCULPTURE, UNB, CLAUDE ROUSSEL, 1963. | JOHN LEROUX.

the familiar Jewish symbols and their delightful colours give notice that not all religious stained glass in Fredericton is Christian-based.

As postwar architecture adopted new materials and minimal ornament, a newly favoured wall typology was the period's embrace of large structural glass block surfaces. Fredericton's former Salvation Army Headquarters (1964) features three vertical strip windows of green, blue, and clear glass block at the chapel walls (fig. 5). They present a beautiful diffused light that echoes a Bauhaus sensibility as well as the slenderness of early church lancet windows. Analogous to this approach are the clear ribbed and yellow glass block walls at the 1961 former Fredericton High School classroom annex between George and Brunswick Streets (fig. 6). They bathe the busy stairwell with light and spot colour, yet are resilient and tough, requiring virtually no maintenance or upkeep.

HIGH MODERN EXPRESSION OF INTEGRAL STAINED GLASS

One of the most distinct material connections between stained glass and modern architecture was the emergence of *dalles de verre* in early-twentieth-century Europe, and later in North America. *Dalles de verre* is French for "slabs of glass," a technique introduced in France during the late 1920s that utilizes thick glass slabs, hammer-cut and purposefully chipped to enhance light refraction, all set in an epoxy matrix or resin grout (fig. 7). The use of chunkier glass (up to one inch thick) produces deeper colour effects than the thinner traditional lead came stained glass, especially when illuminated by strong natural light. *Dalles de verre* windows are usually modern in feel and structurally solid, with a fiery intensity of colour.

To that effect, the University of New Brunswick's Fredericton campus is home to an exterior *dalles de verre* sculpture called *Man of Science* (fig. 8). Formally abstract and figurative at the same time within its flat steel mounting frame, *Man of Science* depicts a cement Henry Moore-ish figure raising up a solid sphere in one hand, with deep red and orange flashed glass radiating from it. The human form is lined with white, yellow, and brown *dalles*, a counterpoint to the multicoloured and variegated *dalles de verre* background. Originally situated between the University's late 1950s science building and the 1829 administration building,⁸ this eight-foot-tall sculpture was created in 1963 by New Brunswick artist Claude Roussel (1930--), who completed a number of freestanding *dalles de verre* sculptures during that period. As one of New Brunswick's most successful artists and a pioneer of modern Acadian art,⁹ Roussel fused sculpture and visual art



FIG. 9. ST. DUNSTAN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, LENZ AND TAYLOR ARCHITECTS, 1965. | COURTESY OF THE COLLECTION OF THE PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF NEW BRUNSWICK, P342-7445.



FIG. 10. INTERIOR VIEW OF ST. DUNSTAN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, LOOKING WEST TOWARD THE ENORMOUS CRUCIFIXION WINDOW. | JOHN LEROUX.

with modern architecture. In 1964, he won the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada's Allied Arts Medal for recognition of outstanding creative achievement in the arts connected to architecture.¹⁰ Roussel's work emerged into public view in the 1950s and 1960s, when the modernist aesthetic dominated visual art, as well as public and private buildings.

A more architectural and religious ally to Roussel's sculpture, St. Dunstan's Catholic Church anchors Fredericton's downtown intersection of Brunswick and Regent Streets. The large building with its rich stone and brick cladding, steeply gabled roof and three-sided copper-clad bell tower is a striking example of modern ecclesiastical architecture and soaring forms (figs. 9-10). Opened in 1965, St. Dunstan's was designed by Lenz and Taylor of Hamilton, Ontario. The firm also designed Hamilton's St. Eugene's Catholic Church (1962) on a comparable

corner site, a preceding architectural twin that is completely identical right down to the design, colour choice, and dimension of the stained-glass windows. It is one of Canada's rare pairs of matching high modernist buildings in different cities.¹¹

Intensely integrated with the architectural expression, St. Dunstan's features a remarkable program of modern stained glass, including richly figured *dalles de verre* as well as conventional assemblies of pure coloured glass. One of the world's finest modern churches is First Presbyterian in Stamford, Connecticut (1958), designed by American architect Wallace K. Harrison (1895-1981). Its worship space is an entire volume of triangular slabs of concrete and *dalles de verre* from floor to ceiling, arching completely around those seated within (fig. 11). Its effect is profound and spectacular, and this widely published design had a resounding effect on encouraging use

of this technique in the 1960s, such as at St. Dunstan's.

St. Dunstan's main entry is surrounded by a colourful abstracted design in *dalles de verre* representing the Christian Mystic Vine (fig. 12) conceived and crafted by *dalles de verre* specialists Charles Versteeg Studios of Toronto.¹² The particular glass system was carefully chosen as it offers the somewhat dark entry vestibule a glowing, colourful sense of playfulness and sparkle, not far removed from the ubiquitous stand of kaleidoscopic votive candles that flicker and flame near the entries of Catholic churches. The seeming randomness of the fractured pieces and the irregular thickness of the grout only accentuate the organic metaphor of the Mystic Vine.

Above, a lofty window towering over the St. Dunstan's choir loft shows a heroic image of Christ on the cross below a fiery



FIG. 11. INTERIOR VIEW OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT, WALLACE K. HARRISON, ARCHITECT, 1958. | JOHN LEROUX.



FIG. 12. MAIN ENTRY DOOR *DALLES DE VERRE* "MYSTIC VINE" WINDOW SURROUND, ST. DUNSTAN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, CHARLES VERSTEEG STUDIOS, 1965. | JOHN LEROUX.

red sun, with a pair of peacocks at his feet (fig. 13). This powerful window is one of the tallest in New Brunswick, dominating the church's western wall with its brilliant colour, vertical mass and reach, and unapologetic symbolism. A lustrous figurehead of the front façade, it is a masterwork of Versteeg, who designed, built, and installed (with his son, Eric) these enormous walls of glass—as well as their identical twins at St. Eugene's several years before.

The side walls of St. Dunstan's display a multicoloured field of textured stained glass rectangles ranging from smaller squares of deep red to larger forms in orange, blue, white, and yellow (fig. 14). This Mondrian-like effect became fashionable in churches through the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s as it was an easy and inexpensive way to cover large areas with stained glass. It aligned with the abstract, non-figurative art that was all

the rage, and it still offered the sense of diffused, coloured light washing over the interior space. While many instances saw this approach done to the point of banality, this suite of glazing (designed by Lenz and Taylor) is the best example in the province, and the silhouette effect on the carved Stations of the Cross is nothing short of startling. Up close, the skilfully carved wooden stations' detail and texture are easily appreciated as sculptures of worth, but when seen from a distance their transformation into mysterious and tortured black shadowy forms is deeply enhanced by their incongruous rainbow-toned background of light.

The huge north-facing vestry window at St. Dunstan's is minimalism done to perfection. Sharing the same geometrical spirit as Frank Lloyd Wright's early leaded windows that usually embraced minimal colour and small shapes in fields of clear glass, the vestry's regimented window

evokes calm and control, using punctuating rectangles of two alternating shades of blue coloured glass astride a field of clear sheets of rectangular glass (fig. 15). The effect is sublime and unpretentious at the same time—an important outcome as it looks out over a relatively unsightly parking lot.

As one of the finest high modernist structures in the city, St. Dunstan's is a perfect instance of the integration of architectural space, glass design, shimmering effects, and carefully controlled natural light, all leading to a palpable atmosphere of Christian spirituality. It is avowedly an allied arts project with sensibilities that permeated much of the institutional and religious architecture of Canada during the 1960s, where collaboration between the architectural and visual art/craft disciplines (*i.e.*, architect and artist) was key to humanizing such a monumental space. In St. Dunstan's case, stained glass was the



FIG. 13. *DALLES DE VERRE* CRUCIFIXION WINDOW, ST. DUNSTAN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, CHARLES VERSTEEG STUDIOS, 1965. | JOHN LEROUX.



FIG. 14. SIDE WALL WINDOWS ALONG NAVE, ST. DUNSTAN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, LENZ AND TAYLOR ARCHITECTS, 1965. | JOHN LEROUX.



FIG. 15. VESTRY WINDOW, ST. DUNSTAN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, LENZ AND TAYLOR ARCHITECTS, 1965. | JOHN LEROUX.

essential element to the towering building, attesting to Le Corbusier's "magnificent play of masses brought together in light" dictum.¹³

Grace Memorial Baptist Church (1965) at the edge of downtown Fredericton is a noteworthy, yet overlooked, example of a mid-century modern church, featuring a laminated Douglas-fir beam structure, steeply gabled roof, and minimalist stained wood surfaces. Incorporated several decades after the church opened, a dramatic contemporary chevron window

commands the sharp roofline at the northeastern end, more than making up for the poorly executed biblical-scened stained glass along its aisles.¹⁴ Rising like a colossal arrow shooting skyward, the window band effectively makes the roof feel like it is floating. Designed by master stained-glass craftsman Paul Blaney of Saint John in the late 1990s and installed between 1998 and 2004,¹⁵ the chevron window has a strong heraldic quality with its minimal palette of red and white trimming on a deep rich blue background (fig. 16). Blaney recalls the



FIG. 16. CHEVRON WINDOW (ABOVE SALVAGED AND RELOCATED 19TH-CENTURY ROSE WINDOW), GRACE MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH, P&B STAINED GLASS STUDIO, 1998-2004. | JOHN LEROUX.

red and white bands being metaphors for baptism, while the rising white dove and yellow cross are typical Christian symbols¹⁶; although the specific colours also relate to the exact palette of the nineteenth-century rose window below, rescued from the Congregation's previous nineteenth-century church that was closer to downtown.

Like the St. Dunstan's windows, the coloured glazing at Grace Memorial is front and centre as the most prominent architectural element of the building, speaking to the public through means that are both sacredly appropriate and artistically progressive. While Blaney's glazing is not of the high modernist era per se, having been installed thirty years after the inauguration of the church, its surroundings certainly are. The architecture was without question the leading influence on the spirit, scale, and formal design intention of his window, which tie it



FIG. 17. CLASS OF 1936 MEMORIAL WINDOW TRIPTYCH, EDWIN JACOB CHAPEL, SIR HOWARD DOUGLAS HALL, UNB, MOLLY LAMB BOBAK & SHADES OF LIGHT, 1989. | JOHN LEROUX.



FIG. 18. NASHWAAKSIS UNITED CHURCH CHANCEL WINDOW, P&B STAINED GLASS STUDIO, 1972. | JOHN LEROUX.

deeply to the dazzling stained-glass windows at St. Dunstan's.

LATE MODERN AND POST-MODERN STAINED GLASS

Following the heroic collaborative architectural/stained glass experiments of the 1950s and 1960s, recent stained glass has been more traditional in its relationship

to the architecture and often more figurative and narrative in expression. It has experienced somewhat of a return to a subordinate spatial status of glass as arts and crafts, or as a post-construction integrated painting or artwork, with less of a far-reaching effect on the space itself. More often the work is set/framed within pre-set architecturally determined openings. This being the case, Fredericton's

stained glass of the past thirty years still boasts an abundance of exquisite modern glass by noted artists that pushed the typical limits of composition, colour, and craft.

A distinguished intervention fusing contemporary visual arts and Classical Georgian architecture on the University of New Brunswick (UNB) campus occurred in the form of the stained-glass triptych installed in the existing chapel windows of the 1829 Sir Howard Douglas Hall. Designed in the late 1980s by esteemed Canadian painter Molly Lamb Bobak in her distinctive and graphically energetic crowd-depicting custom, the windows were donated by the class of 1936 in honour of their fiftieth reunion. The three panels depict a graduation procession in front of the Sir Howard Douglas Hall building, with Cecil C. Jones, president of the University during the 1930s, in the lead (fig. 17). A secular expression in a quietly sacred space, the windows combine modern subject matter with the vibrant colour and light typical of traditional religious stained glass to express the pomp and history of UNB graduations in a timeless fashion.

While contemporary churches are often diligent guardians of established social values, they have frequently been at the forefront of contemporary design in Fredericton through their commissioning of innovative textiles and stained glass. A number of bold windows that express religious themes in exciting and colourful ways can be found in newer churches throughout the city within a wide range of denominations. Outstanding instances can be found at Nashwaaksis United Church, the Catholic Church in New Maryland, and St. Thomas University, as well as a striking 1969 balcony window added to the 1883 Brunswick Street Baptist Church.



FIG. 19. ST. FRANCIS WINDOW, ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI CATHOLIC CHURCH, LINCOLN, P&B STAINED GLASS STUDIO, 1986-1987. | JOHN LEROUX.

A colourful and self-assured arrangement of clerestory windows delineates the entire worship space of Nashwaaksis United Church (1957). This stained glass assembly, created over twenty years—between 1972 and 1992—by Paul Blaney, is a symphony of colours and a masterwork of linear composition as it presents the stories of the Gospels and biblical excerpts. The related, much larger, mosaic-like windows on either side of the rear choir pews are remarkable for their gusto, colourful bravado, and sheer seventy-square-foot size (fig. 18). This 1972 pairing perfectly characterizes the thrust to Modernity and shifting rituals that were being embraced by churches in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.¹⁷

St. Francis Catholic Church in Lincoln (1984) is an unremarkable building housing one of Blaney's more exceptional and welcoming stained-glass windows: a wide scene of Saint Francis of Assisi surrounded by a cluster of animals, his

arms outstretched to them all (fig. 19). The tales of Saint Francis caring for animals are well established, but the choice of expressing this symbolic imagery here through local fauna (birds, bear, squirrel, beaver, rabbit, mouse, deer, and heron) is playful and enthralling, tying the character of the European saint to this very place.

A pair of thin windows bookend the altar of Sts. John and Paul Catholic Church in New Maryland (1981) in a beautiful and energetic design that brightens the stained wood interior (figs. 20A-20B). Designed by émigré Irish artist Nora Gaston and built in 1982 by P & B Stained Glass Studio of Saint John, the windows are sinuous and innovative through their expression of fluid line and subject matter. The left window includes a multihued haloed eagle at its centre (a symbol of Saint John), surmounted by tongues of fire and a white bird representing the Holy Spirit. The right window presents



FIG. 20. SAINT JOHN WINDOW (20A) AND SAINT PAUL WINDOW (20B), SAINTS JOHN AND PAUL CATHOLIC CHURCH, NEW MARYLAND, NORA GASTON WITH P&B STAINED GLASS STUDIO, 1982. | JOHN LEROUX.



FIG. 21. "MARY WINDOW," ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY CHAPEL, MARJORIE AITKEN AND SHADES OF LIGHT, 2005. | JOHN LEROUX.

a large sword and book as its main elements (symbols of Saint Paul), along with a collection of people as branches of Christ's Vine, again, all capped by the flying Holy Spirit. Each window also includes motifs of fiddleheads, maple leaves, and patterns from a Mi'kmaq ceremonial jacket, adding locally specific symbols to the universal Christian figures.

The chapel at St. Thomas University (1964) features a large south-facing arched stained-glass panel known as the Mary Window, designed by Marjorie Aitken and crafted in 2005 by local glass artisans Shades of Light. Depicting a noticeably pregnant Virgin Mary holding a "ball of the world" representing red, brown, black, yellow, and white peoples, the window features a range of symbols, including a fruit tree, shell, fish, moon, swing, boat, veil, child's pail, trinity circles, and a depiction of Rome (fig. 21). A somewhat

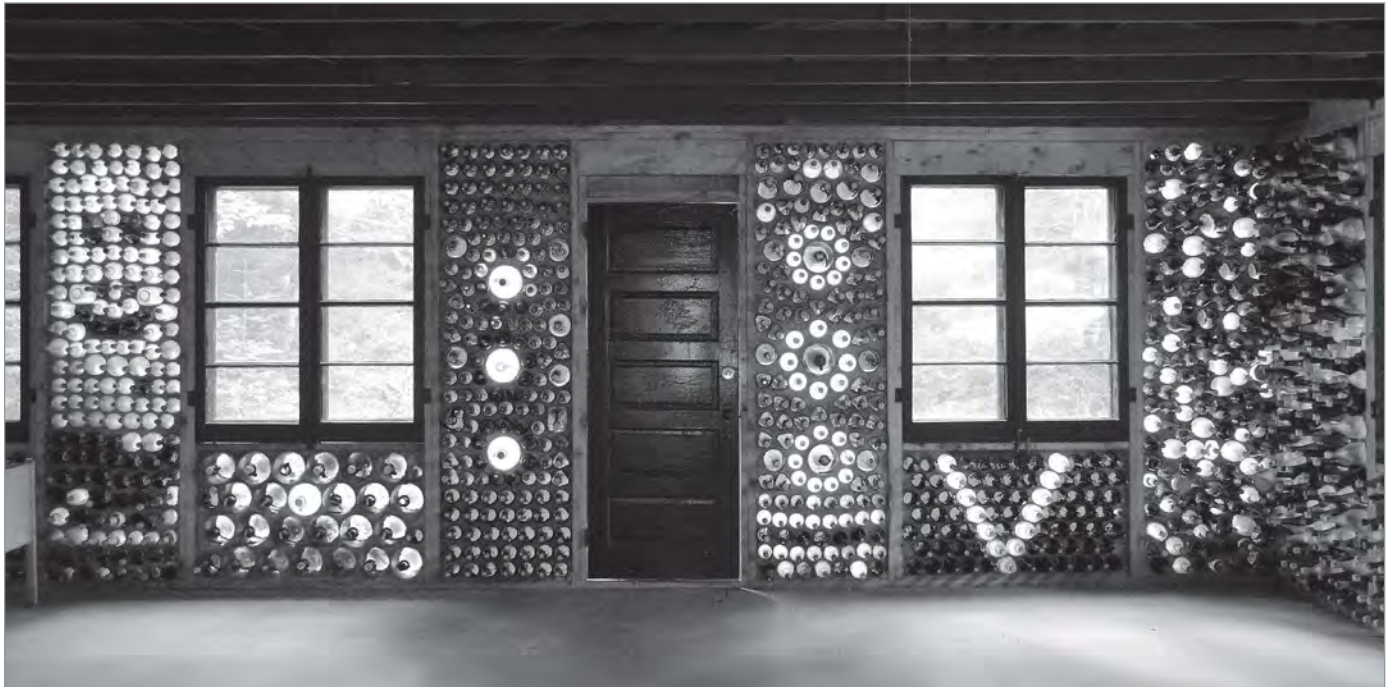


FIG. 22. PATAKI BOTTLE HOUSE INTERIOR, LONGS CREEK, JAMES PATAKI AND OTHERS, 1981-1985. | JOHN LEROUX.

radical and unusual intention is the transparent quality of Mary's dress, with multiple blue shades offering a silhouette of her pregnant female form beneath—the translucency of stained glass has a literal role here, showing both Mary's eternal virginity (through the traditional lapis blue) and her human reality. Composed of simple geometric forms, the window focuses on a meditative and reflective exploration of feminine characteristics, combining the worlds of myth and contemporary Christian contemplation of Mary.

HOMEMADE "WEEKEND" STAINED GLASS

There is little doubt that traditional stained glass is the product of a challenging craft, requiring years of training, compositional and technical talent, and loads of patience. The reward provided by this discipline is the wonder of beams

of coloured daylight, transforming architectural space. A hidden gem of hand-made architecture on the outskirts of Fredericton shows that the richness and simple joy of sunlight passing through coloured glass can also be achieved by more ordinary means than the tables, paper sketches, glass cutters, and lead comes of traditional glaziers.

James and Inge Pataki, owners of the well-respected commercial art *Gallery 78* in Fredericton, engaged a number of their friends, including artists Bruno and Molly Bobak, to help build a summer camp alongside an inlet of the Saint John River at Longs Creek in the early 1980s. Resourcefully, they took advantage of several years of by-products of the typical art show opening reception (used liquor bottles), thus giving the Patakis and their collaborators free raw materials to handshape a unique "stained glass" bottle cabin.¹⁸ Using a technique borrowed from

stacked cordwood house construction popularized by a style of hippie "hand-made houses" of the 1970s, the camp's walls were assembled from stacked bottles in a mortar bed.¹⁹ Although the work was carried out by members of the artistic community, the resulting cabin completed in 1985 shares qualities with the best folk or naïve art. The walls are informal yet sophisticated, and while they started at the floor plate corners (as per typical cordwood construction) via an *ad hoc* pattern, Pataki soon realized that with virtually no extra effort or time, interesting patterns could be achieved by varying the white, green, yellow, and brown bottles. Every section of wall is different from the others, with patterned designs of alternating green and clear glass courses in chevrons or straight lines, rounded target-like motifs using large brown and white jugs surrounded by rings of coloured bottles, squares of "little brown jugs" with green and white

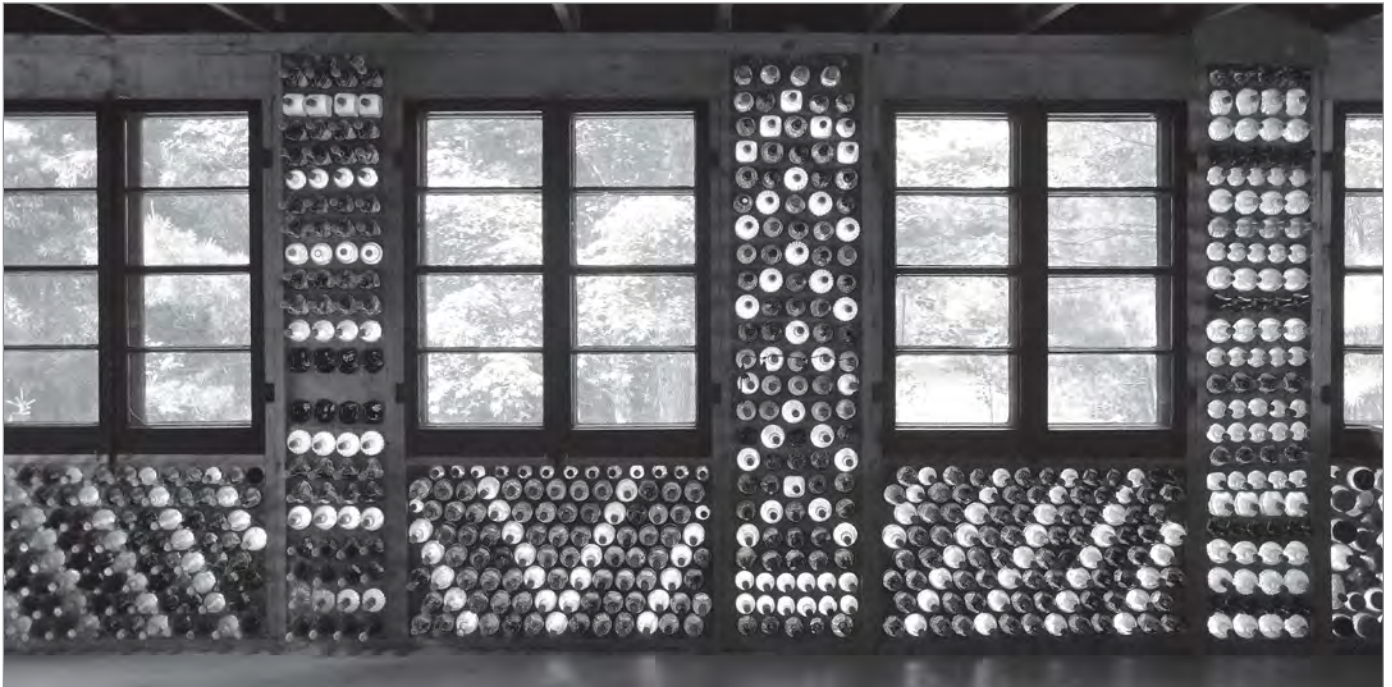


FIG. 23. PATAKI BOTTLE HOUSE INTERIOR, LONGS CREEK, JAMES PATAKI AND OTHERS, 1981-1985. | JOHN LEROUX.

bottle highlights, and even a smiling guardian jug face with blue bottle eyes overseeing the open space (figs. 22-24).

A perfect (though more grassroots) instance of John Piper's aforementioned "creation of a light-filled unit," the camp's walls supersede the expected and mundane role of a retreat's protective partitions. Like a postwar abstract colour-field painting, the Pataki's idea was not that the carefully designed matrix of coloured bottles read as a "window," but rather as an expressive presence of colour and light able to permeate the interior. On a sunny day the interior effect is magical—an immersive encounter that almost makes people feel like they are still standing outside surrounded by the trees and water. One's very experience of the structure changes entirely according to the intensity of light, which is startling and unexpected considering that on the outside, the camp is as grey and opaque as a cinderblock

(fig. 25). James and Inge's daughter, Germaine Pataki-Thériault, fondly recalls life at the camp as being communal with nature and fully aligned with sunrise and sunset (that is, early rising, early to bed), as there was no electricity or artificial light... they simply were not needed.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Pataki camp is reminiscent of *dalles de verre*, both through the thickness of its mortar matrix and the overwhelming effect of turning "solid" walls into shimmering glass. Although the building itself is spatially routine, the light effect through the bottles becomes even more remarkable than through typical stained glass, due to varying thicknesses, varying bottle sizes and shapes, and the combination of direct transmission with multiple reflections/refractions. Through resourceful scavenging and gallons of sweat, the Pataki's have built one of New Brunswick's most exceptional buildings.

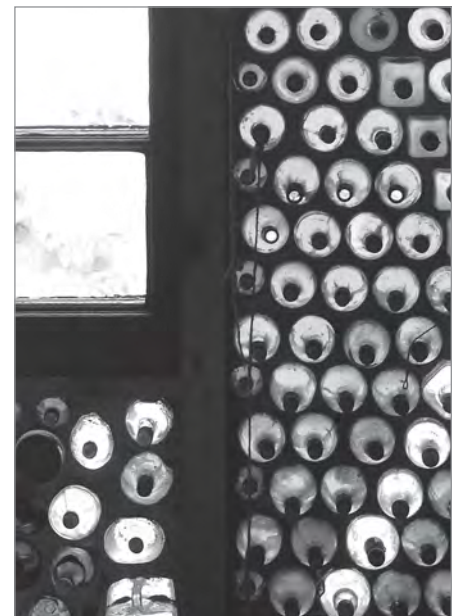


FIG. 24. PATAKI BOTTLE HOUSE INTERIOR. | JOHN LEROUX.

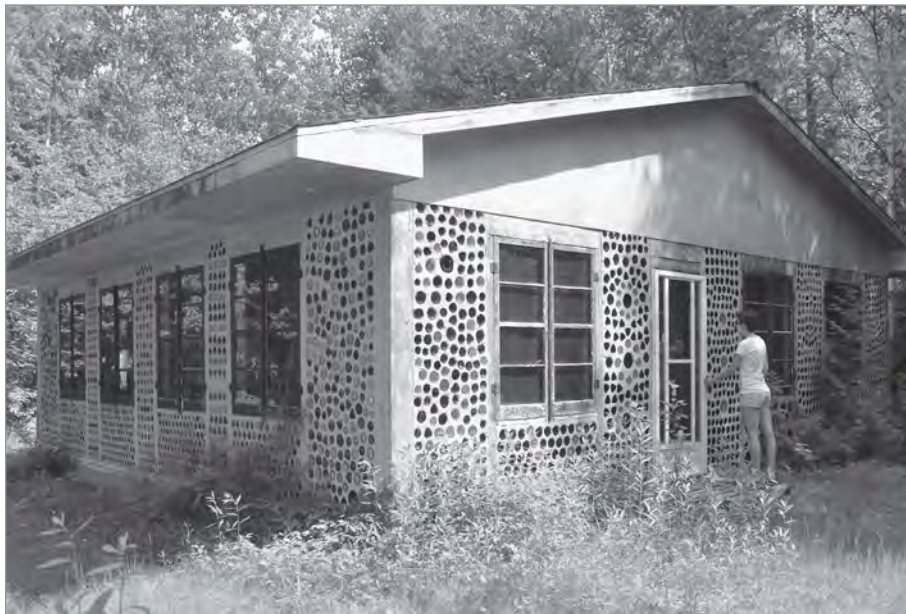


FIG. 25. PATAKI BOTTLE HOUSE EXTERIOR. | JOHN LEROUX.

What would the Victorian church builders, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, or the modernists of the 1960s think of the bottle cabin? Would they see God (as light) pouring through the gin and champagne bottles? Would they see recycling resourcefulness and material poetry? Or would they just be perplexed by a house made of discarded glass and cement? More modestly, can we consider the cultural meaning of Wallace Harrison's First Presbyterian or the local St. Dunstan's Church in the same breath as a camp made of discarded bottles? What these diverse approaches share is the sensory power of their visual effects: fostering the simple and honest phenomenon of light shining through coloured glass that stops us in our tracks and fills our minds with wonder. The study of the modern stained glass of Fredericton reminds us that great architecture and design are an inspired mixture of material and motivation, giving revelation to form, no matter how elevated, or down-to-earth.

NOTES

1. Le Corbusier, 1923, *Vers une architecture* [Towards a New Architecture], London, The Architectural Press, p. 31.
2. Wright, Frank Lloyd, 1928, "In the Cause of Architecture. VI. The Nature of Materials – Glass," *The Architectural Record*, July, p. 201.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Id.* : 202.
5. Wright, Frank Lloyd, 1936, "Organic Architecture," *The Architectural Record*, August.
6. Wright, 1928 : 198.
7. Piper, John, 1968, *Stained Glass, Art or Anti-Art*, London, Studio Vista, p. 60.
8. "Man of Science" was removed and placed in storage in 1976 to make way for the construction of the University's new Science Library that would occupy the site. In the 1990s, the sculpture was given new life once again as it was moved to a new position only fifty metres away, aside the Alumni Memorial building, in an attempt to become the cornerstone of an unrealized campus outdoor sculpture garden.
9. An avowed multidisciplinary (painter, sculptor, printmaker, public art master), Roussel is universally considered as the father of modern and contemporary Acadian visual art. During

the 1950s and early 1960s, he was essentially the only sculptor in New Brunswick, and he was the first Acadian to pursue a full-time career in modern visual art. He was also the founder and first director of the Université de Moncton's Département des arts visuels, starting in the mid-1960s.

10. LeBlanc, Yvon, 1964, "Claude Roussel: Allied Arts Medalist," *Journal RAIC-L'IRAC* [Royal Architectural Institute of Canada], vol. 41, no. 5, p. 41.
11. It should be noted that this critical link is essentially unknown to both parishes, as all conversations the author has had with either church, their members, or their administration, has not had a single individual knowing of their shared history, let alone the existence of a "twin" in the other province. The Hamilton connection was brought to the author's attention by a priest in the Saint John Catholic Diocese office.
12. For a biography of Versteeg and illustrations of some of his work in Ontario, see [www.sarahhallstudio.com/assets/files/book/luminous_portals.pdf], accessed 2010.
13. Le Corbusier, *op. cit.*
14. The side aisle windows were not done by Blaney.
15. Straddling the worlds of traditional artistry and modern forms are the many church windows throughout New Brunswick by stained-glass master Paul Blaney of Saint John (1933--). A native of London who spent his early years in Devonshire, he was trained in stained glass and lettering at the Bideford School of Art in the early 1950s, and moved to Canada in 1963. Having worked in the art form for over fifty years, Blaney's style is distinct and his craft impeccable. His designs are fully grounded in the figurative tradition of stained glass, yet matched with a deft sense of colour and composition. Blaney's windows can be found in countless churches throughout New Brunswick.
16. Author's interview with Paul Blaney, 2010.
17. In 1958, German architect and theorist Rudolph Schwartz, praised by Mies van der Rohe as "one of the greatest thinkers of our time," published his monumental treatise, *The Church Incarnate* (Chicago, H. Regnery Co.), in English for the first time. At the core of Schwartz's theory was a series of seven floor plans for churches that are in fact not so much plans as models for organizing the church in worship. These range from the sacred inwardness, through the broken ring,

the chalice of light, the sacred journey, the dark chalice, the dome of light, and lastly the cathedral of all times. These building plans were dramatic departure from the pseudo-colonial norm popular in America, and such books, combined with the widely published open-plan modern churches such as Eliel Saarinen's First Christian Church (1942) and Eero Saarinen's North Christian Church (1964), both in Columbus, Indiana, forever altered the American church landscape with their sense of openness and non-traditional materials. Within the proposed changes to the Catholic liturgy during and after the Second Vatican Council in the mid-1960s, there was a movement to build new churches and renovate old ones in the "spirit of Vatican II." These changes were advocated as a means of bringing the actions of the Catholic mass closer to the congregation to encourage "full and active participation." The hierarchy of separation between the congregation and the priest was greatly eliminated, and this created a move for much more open churches with modern ornamentation.

18. Perhaps only half-jokingly, Bruno Bobak told the author that he had probably consumed half of the alcohol in those same bottles, not all of which would have come from gallery events. A brass plaque beside the Pataki camp entrance claims: "This building was made possible by endangering the lives of the builders . . . and champagne bottles from the opening of the new wing of the Beaverbrook Gallery, Oct. 29, 1983 . . ."
19. The Pataki camp actually has a single corner made of cordwood, as James Pataki originally intended to build a cordwood camp, starting in 1981. Based on a method popularized during that time by New Brunswicker Jack Henstridge, who published several illustrated books on the process, Pataki started down this path, but soon realized that it would require an inordinate amount of work and time, both of which he didn't have much of as a full-time professional musician with the Brunswick String Quartet. During a fishing trip with Bruno Bobak, Bobak suggested that he employ used coloured bottles instead as they were easy to collect, they were free, they were relatively inert compared to cordwood, and they were ready to be piled compared to cordwood, which needed to be debarked. Pataki immediately started collecting bottles for the better part of the next four years from the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, friends and colleagues, and even drive-in movie theatres. The evidence is in the walls (interview with Inge Pataki, 2013).