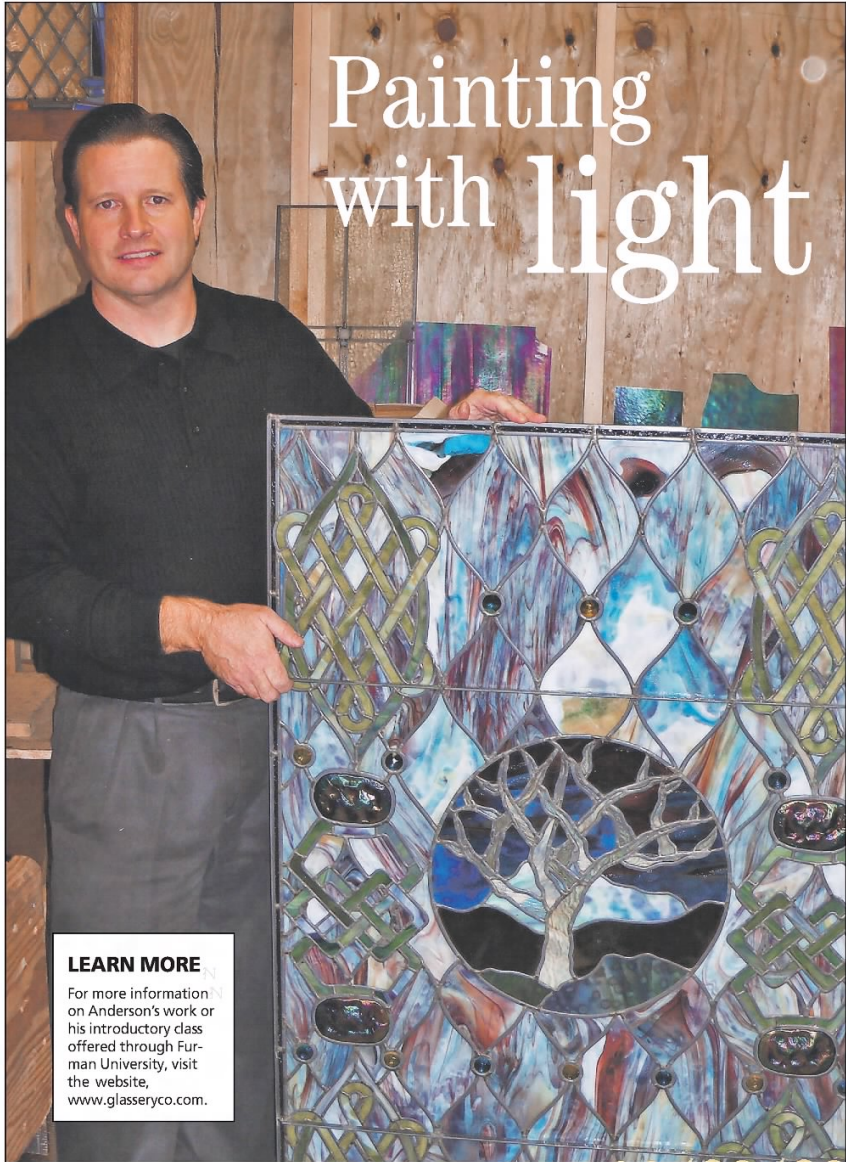


ARTIST



Painting with light

Stained-glass artist Aaron Anderson refines his medium

By Caroline Sellars
Special to The Greenville News

For glass worker Aaron Anderson, the craft of stained glass is one that requires years of practice and an abundance of patience. "I think like anything else, it's something you never master," he says, "but with each window I try to get better. It's enjoyable when that happens, bringing a picture to life with glass."

Anderson, who moved to Greenville from Minnesota two years ago, appreciates the community's emphasis on the arts. "It's been great," he says. "I see real opportunity for growth here."

With 25 years of experience behind him, Anderson is considered a seasoned professional in American opalescent glass. "I started when I was about 16. I worked at a shop, a studio," says Anderson. "I've been with it ever since. At first it was just a job, but I really started liking it and thought of what I would do if I did my own windows."

Unlike its translucent European cousin, American opalescent glass has the color created within the glass itself.

"Americans invented it in the late 1800s," Anderson says. "Before that you would paint the color on. With this style you refrain from painting it other than hands or faces if you're doing images. A lot of work and chemistry went into opalescence. If you've seen a Tiffany lamp, that's what it is."

Anderson says his clients usually have an idea of what they want. "They give us color ideas, and when people look at my stuff they see the direction I go in. From there we do a pencil drawing, and when they sign off on that sketch

we do a watercolor to help visualize what the glass will look like.

"I like glass that has a lot of movement in it," Anderson says. "I keep them involved every step of the way. I always tell them when it's all complete and done that if for some reason they don't like it, I'll buy back the window from them. I would never put anything up that someone wouldn't like. It hasn't happened yet, but it's comforting for them to know."

Stained glass is considered an obscure art, something Anderson is trying to change. "Stained glass is one of those unknown things," he says, "so I'm doing my part to make it popular. I love church work, but I like doing businesses and private residences because it's so personal."

Anderson says the way light affects the glass is a big part of designing. "It's difficult to go from a painting to a window because of how light plays on glass. It changes with the sun and the light coming in. I think a good window is one that is enjoyable to look at all day long, night or day."

In addition to stained glass, Anderson is also proficient in mosaics. "A mosaic involves reflected light on a wall; there's no light coming through it. It's different from stained glass because the glass is flat, and we use a silver backing like tin foil. Light reflects off of that and people really notice the color."

Anderson says he tries to emphasize color in his mosaic work. "It can make up for a design that's simple. We're just finishing a mosaic for a private home; it's a rooster above a cooktop in a kitchen. I think it's going to be really nice. It's a focal point and conversation piece."

LEARN MORE

For more information on Anderson's work or his introductory class offered through Furman University, visit the website, www.glasseryco.com.

Aaron Anderson designs with opalescent glass, which, unlike European stained glass, has the color created within the glass. CAROLINE SELLARS/CONTRIBUTOR