

By Rick Streitfeld



Stained Glass Artistry

What does a stained glass artist actually do? Most people when they think of stained glass, think of colorful window designs often seen in churches and temples. They may have also seen stained glass in homes or restaurants. The thing that is not always “clear,” is that stained glass artists design and build the beautiful beveled windows that are very common among homes in Southern California and they usually have no color at all!

Bevels are made from glass which is thick enough to “miter” the edge, generally about half an inch, and it’s usually clear glass. This gives a prismatic effect when the light hits it, which is beautiful in any setting. Even when light isn’t shining directly on them, the view looking through them can be quite dazzling! Sometimes these bevels are made with a textured glass for privacy or just for an artistic variation. The texture remains on top of the bevel while the mitered edges are still clear. That’s the nature of a bevel.

Stained glass implies that the glass is “stained” or “colored,” yet “stained glass” artists often work with glass that is NOT stained and NOT colored. Probably about 70% of my artwork is not “stained” glass at all, but “clear textured” glass, or “beveled” glass, or a mix of both. Everything else in the process is the same. It’s joined together, generally with a lead alloy, but on occasion zinc or other metals are used. This is why it’s often referred to as “leaded glass.” The building process is identical regardless of whether the actual glass is stained, beveled or clear.

Window categories

There are three basic categories: Color windows, clear windows and beveled windows.

Within those areas, there are the “hybrids,” which represent a mix of color and clear glass, or mostly clear with a touch of color, fully beveled windows or partially beveled, and mixes of color glass with clear bevels. In addition, there are the various styles, including traditional, abstract, geometric, full color scenes, seascapes, etc.

When looking into purchasing stained glass, most people generally know what they like as far as whether they want any

color, bevels, clear textures, etc., as well as what styles they like. Armed with this information as a starting point helps the artist guide the client to help them achieve a beautiful art window that is personal to them. This is where doing some research on the Internet and viewing various web sites can help people focus on what would make them happy. As a stained glass artist, it’s always helpful for the process when a new client already has a direction in mind, although after they see photos of what can be done, they generally get very excited about a particular style in short order.

After this is all decided, designs are created for them to review and discuss. Then it’s on to the fun part - selecting the glass and materials. The artist generally will show a client various types of glass – the origin of which can be from anywhere in the world. The variety of textures and colors available are mind boggling! And then there are the bevels, which come in many “flavors” as well. This is one area where an art glass window can be upgraded significantly, as there are standard bevels and then

there are custom bevels. Custom bevels often times are thicker and arrive in non-standard shapes. The beveling process is quite labor intensive, and custom shapes are hand made mostly here in the USA. The artist you’re working with should be able to explain the difference in quality and origination. Generally, as with most things, “you get what you pay for,” but even lower budget windows without any upgrades can be quite exquisite with the right design!

When you’re ready to embark on an art window project, get that computer humming and start surfing in beautiful Huntington Beach. Surfing the Internet, that is!

Glass artist Rick Streitfeld has owned and operated Art Windows in Huntington Beach since 1996. His creations can be found not only in Southern California, but in more than 25 states

across the nation. Rick is available to answer any questions about stained and beveled glass. Studio Phone 714.842.8979, or visit www.ArtWindows.com to view more than 1100 photos of past commissions.

