



## Unique Chapel Window Design Spurs Creative Production Technique

When renowned artist Reverend Dr. Peter Wm. Gray presented a modern abstract design to Eishhorn Stain Glass in Louisville, Kentucky, he also presented an execution problem: *how could the artist's idea be translated into glass without interrupting the flowing design that had allusions to water, wind, light and biological fluids?*

"When I first saw Peter's design, I wondered how we would pull it off," said Peter Eishhorn of

Eishhorn Stain Glass. "It was just a watercolor – very free and fluid. I didn't know how we were going to execute that. We started thinking about the traditional leaded glass but decided it wouldn't work with the concept. It would have introduced too many definite lead lines into his freeform design."

Dr. Gray created this freeform design for two bay windows in the newly renovated chapel of the

Greater Baltimore Medical Center in Baltimore, Maryland. The glass covers nearly 220 square feet and is illuminated by sunlight. The bay windows define the sanctuary's interior and fall under the category of a "glass canvas."

The project was unlike any Eishhorn had ever seen. He knew the design cried out for a special process. To create the sensation of organic movement, 76 panels of



These chapel windows were designed by Reverend Dr. Peter Wm. Gray and fabricated by Eishhorn Stain Glass in Louisville, Kentucky, for the Greater Baltimore Medical Center, Baltimore, Maryland.

hand-blown glass were painted and then equally subtracted by broad, bold strokes of acid.

“By experimentation, through reading and looking at other people’s work, we came up with the idea that we could reproduce this free-flowing design by laminating the panels onto another piece of glass to capture and intensify that open feel of glass and color,” said Eishhorn.

Craftsmen at Eishhorn laminated the panels on to a 3/8 inch-thick piece of glass using a specially formulated GE silicone. The panels were then shipped to Baltimore and installed.

This unusual method worked perfectly with the unique design. The sanctuary wall pulsates night and day, constantly recreating itself from the vagaries of light.

“As far as I know, there is no other installation in the country like it,” said Eishhorn. “There may be smaller ones, but I am not aware of them. It is far removed from the traditional technique that I associate with art glass. I see tremendous potential to do large-scale, free-formed painting with this medium where the glass totally becomes a canvas for the artist.”

The artist, Dr. Gray, says the execution really brought his vision to life.

“For me,” says Dr. Gray, “the challenge was to discover a motif which would contain the vital exchanges of religion and science. When one really looks at the glass, one senses a cosmic display of life forces shaping us in sprays replicating the chemical evidences found on laboratory slides or the gentle, underlying dance of water or a

scene of a mysterious, divine meeting caught at night.”

He says he kept the concerns and needs of patients uppermost in his mind as he created the design.

“Each person who comes into this chapel is invited to enter into a time and space totally different from the pragmatic profile of the medical center’s reality,” said Dr. Gray. “To pray or to sit in silence here is to approach the

wholly other, to intercede, to commune or submit.”

Eishhorn says he oversees the installation of nearly all of the stained glass projects his company constructs, but admits this one was special.

“I was at the chapel dedication,” said Eishhorn. “I had tremendous pride in that it all worked and that we were a part of this project. When you start something like this – when so many things come together, it becomes more than just a job. You involve yourself emotionally to a great degree. Being able to see the whole installation instead of seeing it piecemeal here in the shop was a great surprise. Everything that you dreamed about actually worked. You can imagine what that feels like to collaborate with other people and make the dream come true.”

In addition to innovative bay window installation, the chapel

redesign called for a more traditional 153-square-foot stained glass panel that runs directly from the hospital's main lobby into a busy corridor where patients, staff and visitors pass, meet and constantly move.

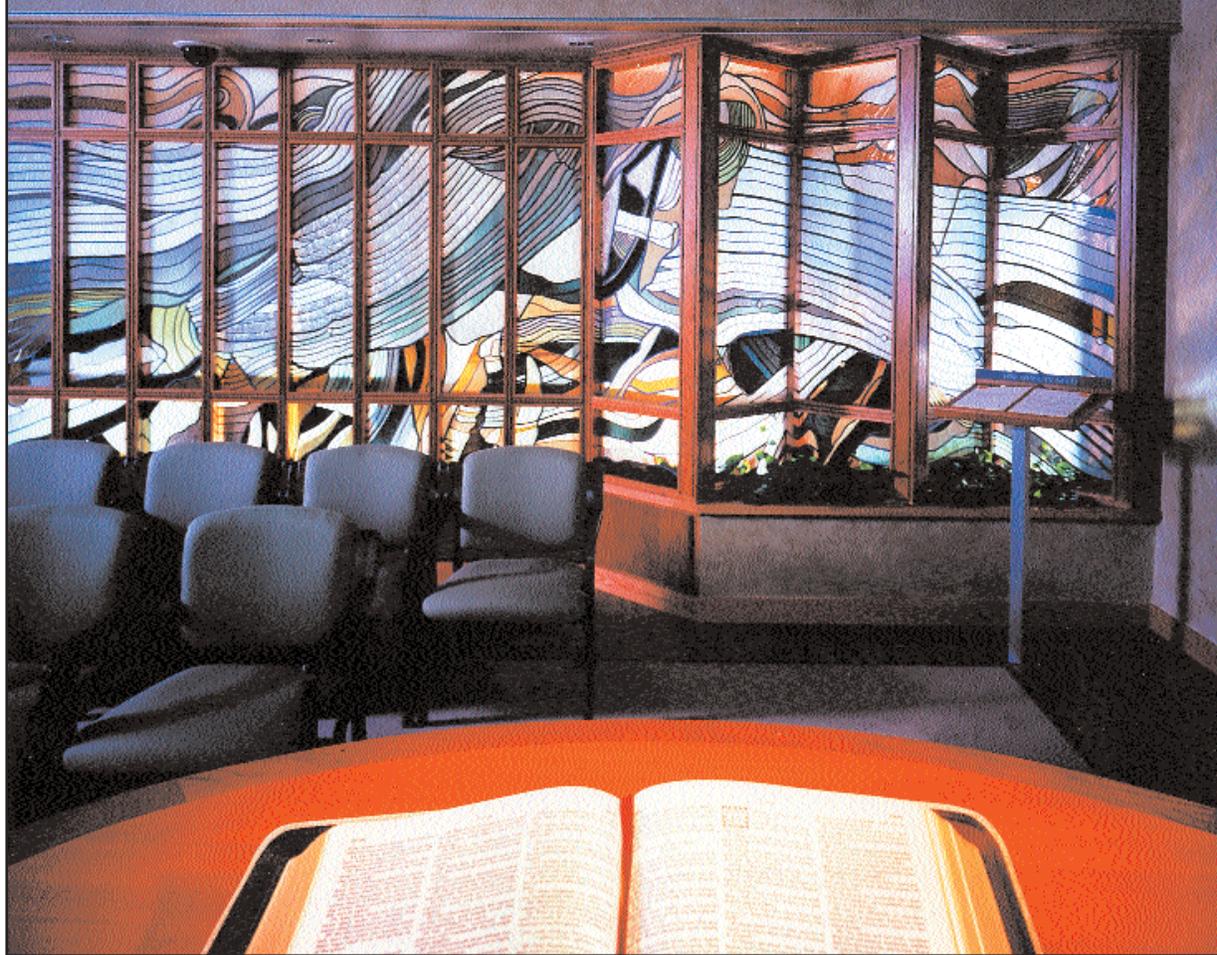
The 152 panels of 4,000 pieces of hand-cut, hand-blown antique glass from Germany and France act as a large white wave of opal or a flowing river of furrowed channels where

Dr. Gray conceals and reveals medical and scientific props and instruments. Within each curve, a repository of geometric shapes stand out in pools of muted colors, bordered by prisms or silverstained lenses.

Eishhorn says the antique glass makes a tremendous difference in the look of the window.

"Hand-blown is never a uniform thickness," said Eishhorn. "For example, you have a medium blue glass – even a fraction of a size increase will intensify the color, so, in one sheet of glass, you will never have just one color. The color moves sometimes over three to four shades from light to dark. It seems to have more movement. There also are textures involved in the glass. The glass striations and bubbles make the glass more interesting."

J. Joseph Hart, MDiv., Director of Spiritual Support Services at Greater Baltimore Medical Center



who headed up the renovation project, says the project was completed exceeding all expectations.

"The hallway is illuminated with the most inspiring display of color," said Hart. "People going by in wheelchairs and on gurneys are literally bathed in God's light as a reminder that there is hope as they deal with their various physiological challenges."

Hart, Gray and Eishhorn believe the success of the project lies in the working relationship of all the people and companies involved, including a church-interiors firm called Gibbons of Baltimore.

Gibbons fashioned furnishings and faith symbols that would complement the stained glass. They also worked hard to use materials such as fruitwoods to add symbolic significance to the chapel renovation.

"We had many meetings with Joe and the medical center's CEO about two years before things started," said Francis X. Gibbons, Sr., owner of Gibbons of Baltimore. "We were very involved in working with the artist, Joe and the studio."

Hart says the collaborative effort added up to a magnificent, sacred space.

"It was spectacular and truly inspiring to see the melding of creativity and talent come together with such meaning and grace," said Hart.