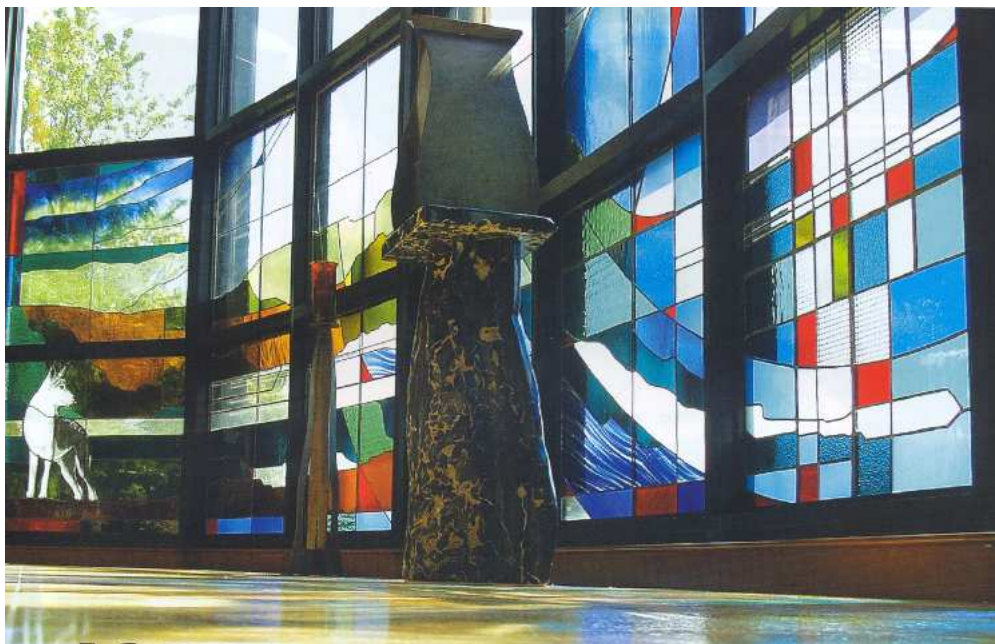


The Dance of Light and Colors

With 96 years of tradition behind it, the Stanisic studio in Sombor is the oldest and best-known stained glass workshop in Serbia.

The craft of making stained glass has been around for more than a thousand years. However, the windows of Gothic cathedrals are considered to be examples of the golden age of stained glass (sometime between 1200 and 1250). The craft entails different-color pieces of glass being joined by lead strips into lace-like structures that make the effects of light stand out in striking ways. "A man can ascend through his senses to explore the divine" - a saying by 12th century French theologians ideally describes the Church's concept of creating a mystical atmosphere within religious edifices. Stained glass was an ideal means to reach out to the believers - much better than opaque wall painting because it was thought to invoke strong emotions and a compliance to act in the name of God.

As cathedrals were being built, stained glass workshops were developed and this unusual technique using lead strips to connect different-colored pieces of glass was perfected further. From the Benedictine abbey of St. Denis, which hosted a stained glass school, this complicated technique proceeded to spread throughout France, and then across Europe. Since the Gothic period, the art of stained glass has gone through ups and downs. While the renaissance of its classical period was launched in the latter part of the 19th century, the craft has continued to this day.



THE STANISIC STUDIO

The Stanisic studio in Sombor is the oldest and best-known stained glass workshop in Serbia. The



The 96-year-long family tradition was passed down from generation to generation, and the fourth generation of master craftsmen from this family is currently carrying on the trade.

The studio was founded in 1908 by Milan Stanisic, the first to manufacture stained glass for churches throughout the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Among them is the Cathedral Church in Belgrade, the stained glass of which was unfortunately destroyed but the original blueprints still exist and are kept in the studio's archive.

After World War II, despite the nationalization of private firms, the workshop

continued to operate. Stained glass fit into the artistic style known as socialist realism. One of the first projects to be executed was the stained glass windows at the Federal Building. This was followed by projects placed in 52 other public buildings in Belgrade.



Stevan Stanistic ran the studio, and cooperation was begun with Applied and Fine Arts Academies' professors. This cooperation continues under his son, Milan, the third successor of the Studio. Milan Stanistic has cooperated with Slobodan Sotirov, Joze Horvat and Milan Konjovic -after whose design the ceiling of the Belgrade pharmacy on Knez Mihailova St. was done while the stained glass windows of the Serbian Arts and Sciences Academy building main entrance hall were conceived by academician Mladen Srbinovic. Together with his son, Stevan, he became a member of the Society for Stained Glass. Their stained glass

in the form of a large seashell for Subotica's Viktorija Villa was declared the world's best for that year at the 1991 Chicago stained glass makers congress. He has had exhibitions in Singapore and Tokyo as well, and his stained glass windows are part of buildings in Sofia, Baghdad, New Delhi...



According to Milan Stanistic, all of the members of every generation worked in stained glass for at least 40 years, and in nearly a century of its existence the Stanistic Studio has turned out nearly 20,000 square meters of stained glass. The art director and current owner of the Stanistic Studio is Stevan Stanistic, who, as he put it, had lacked sufficient knowledge about the process of manufacturing stained glass in the beginning and thus consulted Richard Blank, owner of the largest stained glass factory in the United States. He spent three years there perfecting his craft, and then proceeded to open a studio in Washington, DC. There, together with leading painters, designers and architects, he made numerous stained



glass items in both modern and traditional styles for customers throughout the US.

Since October 2000, he again made Sombor the headquarters of his firm, and has raised the quality of work done there from artisanal to artistic.

The works that he created for Yale University, for which some 160 square meters were made over a period of eight years, stand out from among those manufactured in the US.

John La Fargue and Louis Comfort Tiffany, the inventors of the so-called opalescent stained glass and of a whole series of applied techniques used to create small-form stained glass, were largely responsible for the rise in the popularity of stained glass for decoration.

The intensive dance of light, as it passes through different-colored glass, has in more recent times attracted the attention of fauvist (Matisse) and Cubist painters.

MAKING STAINED GLASS

The stained glass technique has remained virtually unchanged but the glass element has been upgraded considerably. The most appreciated today is hand blown glass, which makes it one of a kind in terms of its structure, as the uneven thickness affords creating nuances in the light passing through.

The manufacturing process begins with drawing a composition that is later transposed in sections onto cardboard and cut according to the shape and intended color. Parts of the transposed composition are thermally processed at 800 degrees, so that the special dye is permanently

blended with the glass. When all the elements are done, lead strips are applied to join them together, and later they are sealed with liquid putty, cleansed and put away for a while. After a time, they are framed.

The restoration process, too, resembles manufacturing: photos taken prior to sustained damage are blown up to the stained glass window's life size and the undamaged pieces of stained glass are placed in position. What follows next is supplying the missing pieces of glass and dying, after which all the elements are joined together into new lead profiles and again sealed with liquid putty to make them waterproof.

source: "Review"