

The Art of Glass, Inc.

Kathy Jordan, a longtime Partners' Professional Alliance member, opened her studio, the Art of Glass, Inc., in 1987. Specializing in stained glass conservation, restoration, and historic paint replication, Kathy explains, "We have worked on large cathedrals and small country churches. Our craftsmanship, quality and dedication [are] given to every project we work on. More importantly, we have a well-documented reputation for projects that were a success and completed on schedule." Recently, thanks to Kathy's skills and expertise, the firm gained something of a new specialty – that of miracle worker.

On the afternoon of October 23, 2004, a devastating fire swept through Saint Bernard's Episcopal Church, an 1890s Gothic Revival building in Bernardville, NJ. When the smoke finally cleared it was plain that the building was in ruins; shards of stained glass, which exploded from the intensity of the fire's heat, lay scattered across the church lawn

Parish members quickly proceeded with restoration plans, including the re-creation and repair of a six-foot oculus window – the focal point of the church – created for the congregation in 1898 by Clayton and Bell, a prestigious English stained glass firm. Kathy recalls, "The devastation was not isolated within the walls of the sanctuary. I could see it on their faces. Tears flowed freely when they spoke of the great oculus window and what it meant to them.

Left to right, below: The shards of glass and lead matrix pour out of the cardboard box they arrived in. Like a giant jigsaw puzzle, the myriad pieces are fitted together to reassemble as much of the original window as possible. Kathy at work on her light table, painting in details of the window; a drawing of the oculus can be seen on the left in the background.



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They needed reassurance that I could recreate their window. Their passion was my motivation." In order to restore the window, Kathy needed to pull together, like a giant jigsaw puzzle, a multitude of pieces in order to reconstruct the whole picture.

The first step was to obtain photographs of the window, but the church didn't have any in its property records. Kathy tells the story, "A plea went out to the congregation for photographs of the oculus window. I received dozens of wedding photos of brides and grooms with this tiny postage-sized window off in the distance." From the photos, Kathy could see what was in the window, but she still lacked the color palette, which would reveal itself from an unusual source.

After the fire, crews arrived to clean up and recover whatever they could. Salvaging hundreds of glass shards seemed impractical so they were gathered in a box for disposal. Lead architect Annabelle Radcliffe-Trenner, who thought Kathy might be able to use the "trash," stopped the crew from throwing away the pieces of lead matrix and glass, and delivered them instead in the cardboard box to the Art of Glass. Kathy said that when she opened the box, her initial reaction was "What have I promised?" However,

PROFESSIONAL ALLIANCE SPOTLIGHT (cont.)

she came to see the remnants as “a box full of clues.” The original glass provided a reference for the painting technique and pigment color of the window, and by combing through the shards, cleaning them and fitting them together, Kathy was able to painstakingly reconstruct sections of it. Although she was able to fabricate much of the window from original glass, she also needed to fill in the missing components by matching new glass to the old, and painting in the details.

Over the course of several months, Kathy and her staff succeeded in re-creating the Clayton and Bell window, and while the church was still being rebuilt, it was installed back above the altar – a spot it had held for over 100 years. With tears in his eyes, the priest told Kathy that the return of the oculus window was a monumental day for the church.

After four years of restoration and rebuilding, Saint Bernard’s Episcopal Church was reopened and dedicated on Easter Sunday 2008. Kathy says, “When I saw the oculus window in its glory for the first time, it was very emotional for me. You could see the pride on the faces of the masons, carpenters, roofers, builders and all the people involved in restoring the church and its windows.”



The stunning Clayton and Bell six-foot-wide oculus window from St. Bernard’s Episcopal Church, after a months-long restoration by the Art of Glass, Inc., which required Kathy Jordan to sift through glass and metal shards to piece together what was left of the original window, and then painstakingly recreate what had been lost by a devastating fire.

One valuable lesson learned from the St. Bernard’s experience is the importance of record keeping in being able to recreate or restore stained glass windows. Kathy Jordan says, “I cannot impress strongly enough that congregations should document their stained glass windows. Photography should include interior and exterior shots, in reflected as well as transmitted light.” Be sure to keep the photographs in a fireproof vault or off site, to avoid losing this key record in case of a devastating fire. She adds, “Remember that if a church is faced with vandalism or fire, try to salvage as much of the window as possible.” The oculus window of St. Bernard’s is proof of just what can be accomplished with glass shards in the hands of a skilled expert!

Stained Glass

Conservation & Restoration

Partial List of Clients:

Trinity Episcopal Church, Swarthmore, PA	St. George’s Episcopal Church, Rumors, NJ
First Presbyterian Church, Germantown, PA	Seton Hall University, Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, S. Orange, NJ
Christ Episcopal Church of Georgetown, Washington, DC	University Chapel, Princeton University, NJ

“Victory of Life” Tiffany Studios, Circa 1911, First Presbyterian, Germantown, PA

CONSERVATION

“It was my personal pleasure to see first hand Kathy’s demonstration of her considerable skill in a technique that demands a total commitment for improvement. She is emerging as one of America’s treasures in this most difficult of art forms.”

Andrew Young, President
Stained Glass Association of America

“I find Ms. Jordan to be hard-working, honest and sincere in her dedication to producing the finest stained glass windows possible. I think she is one of the top stained glass painting talents in the country.”

Arthur J. Femenella, Stained Glass Conservator & Consultant

BEFORE AFTER

“As both a stained glass conservator and historian, I cannot emphasize how important it is for our American stained-glass heritage to have someone with Kathy Jordan’s attitude and talents in the field.”

Jean M. Farnsworth, Stained Glass Conservator & Historian
Asst. Director, Census of Stained Glass Windows of America

REPLICATION PAINTING

REMOVAL & INSTALLATION

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“We are committed to preserving the great art glass treasures of the past. Our goal is to maintain the original aesthetic while enhancing the structural integrity of the original art work.”