

The Techniques and Secrets of Beautiful Glass Painting—Tracing

Design, Fabrication and Text by David Williams and Stephen Byrne

This is the third of a four-part series on the techniques of stained glass painting. Part 1 on silhouettes appeared in Fall 2008. Part 2 revealed an amazing way of shading and matting stained glass and appeared in Winter 2008. Here in part 3 we show you some enchanting ways of tracing lovely lines.

We recently had the pleasure of repainting eight lion panels for a doorway in an eighteenth century English stately home. The original glass was broken many years ago. The panels were labor-intensive, that's for sure, but using our glass painting techniques, they were not as time-consuming as you might think. True, the blue enamel and the amber-silver stain each required a separate firing, but we painted all the tracing and shading in a single firing.

You'll remember from Part 2 how it's possible to shade before you trace, then fire your glass just once. Our e-book also shows you how to trace and shade with oil on top of unfired, water-based tracing and shading—one of the techniques that we used to paint these magnificent panels.

Now, before we get to that point, we want to show you various tracing techniques—the same core techniques that we used to paint the lion panels—that will make your glass painting truly come alive. Yet again, we're doing things a different way from everybody else, but the fact is that our approach works wonderfully. You see, other people would begin with tracing. Instead, we begin with silhouettes. (See the Fall 2008 issue of *GPQ*.) Similarly, other people would show you how to shade only after they had shown you how to trace. We do things the other way around. We show you how to shade before you trace. (See the Winter 2008 issue of *GPQ*.)

What are our reasons for being so different? Well,



Glass

Any light-colored glass

Glass Paint

Reusche Tracing Black DE401
mixed with Reusche Bistre Brown DE402
in ratio 3:1 mixed with water and gum Arabic
Light-Colored Paint Undercoating
Medium-colored Paint for Tracing

Tools and Materials

Thin, Wide Brush Blender Brush
Various Tracing Brushes Painting Bridge
Pointed Wooden Stick Scrubber Brush
Light Box Kiln

we know from years of teaching people how to paint stained glass that our approach is the best way to build your confidence and concentration. Also, when you move from silhouetting to shading and then to tracing, you really learn to observe the paint and to make the correct deductions about the consistency and color that you need. This means that when following this different sequence that we suggest, you are now in a strong position to trace with elegance and flair. Let's begin.



1



Cut the glass to size.

Groze the edges, then clean the glass, back and front, several times. Clean the glass thoroughly, because you'll paint on both sides of the glass.

2



Paint a light-colored undercoat onto the glass.

Prime the whole surface of the glass with an undercoat of light-colored paint. To apply the undercoat, take a thin, wide brush, load it with light paint, and paint light, broad stripes over the whole surface of the glass. As needed, while the paint is wet, take your blender and smooth the stripes away. Then let the paint dry. For more information about this, see the previous articles.

3



Lightly copy-trace the main lines.

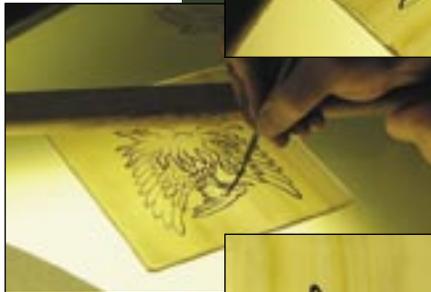
Place the glass on top of the design. Take a fine tracing brush. Prepare some medium-colored paint. Load the brush. Make a careful trace of the main lines as shown. It is essential to leave the detailed lines for later. Remember to move the glass and design so that you can paint each stroke comfortably.

4



Each time you load your brush, test it on the light box first.

If the paint comes out right on the light box, it'll come out right on the glass. When you've finished, let the paint dry.



5

Strengthen the main lines.



Put the design on one side where you can see it. Use the same tracing brush as before. Prepare some glass paint that is a little darker than the paint you used in the previous step. Load the brush. Paint over the main lines to strengthen them, painting over them as exactly as you can. As before, turn the glass around so that you are always painting comfortably. Let the paint dry.

6

Your paint must be dry and a bit sticky.



For the next stage, when you paint the fine details, your paint needs to be sticky and dry rather than watery and runny. This is because you cannot control watery, runny paint. Also, for the tiny details that you're doing next, you will need complete control of your paint. As always, it's best to paint with a lump of glass paint that you dilute a little at a time.

7

Only load your brush with a little paint at a time.



It's also important to load your brush with the right amount of paint to trace only one or two lines. If you overload your brush, it will become difficult to paint precisely.

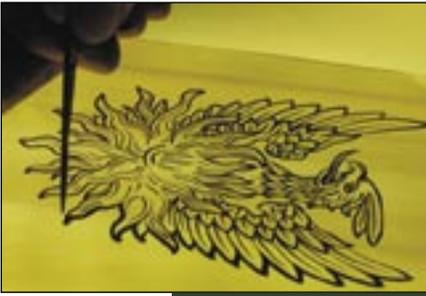


8

Add the details.



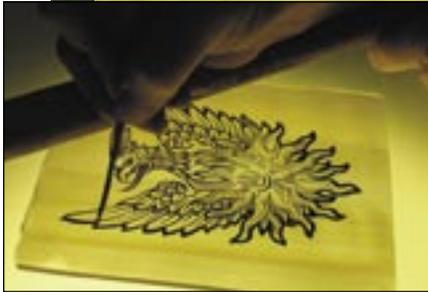
As before, keep your design on one side where you can see it. If you're wondering why we don't suggest you copy these detailed lines by placing the glass on top of the design, here's our answer: It's extremely hard to concentrate properly on the lines that you are painting when you are slavishly copying them from a design. That is, your detailed lines will have more life and beauty when you paint them directly. It doesn't matter that they are in slightly different places to the lines in the design. What matters is their elegance. The paint's darkness is similar to the paint you used to



9

copy-trace the design in s

Thicken the outline.



10

Pick out the highlights.



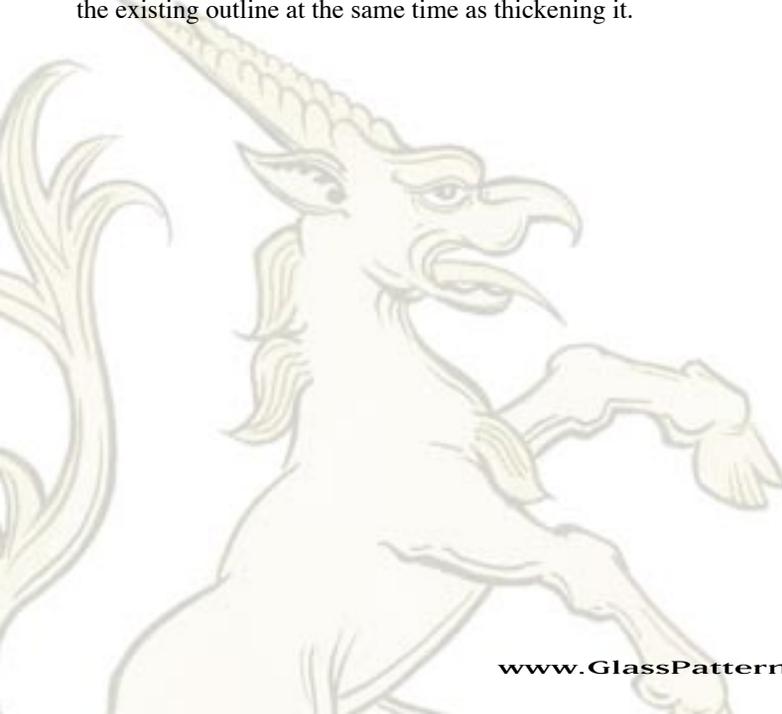
Use a wooden stick to pick out the highlights. Also use a scrubber brush to make a highlighted border around the edges of the glass.

11

Soften the highlights.



Use your fingers, making sure they are clean and dry, and gently rub the highlights so that you blend them with the undercoat that you painted in step 2. Clean your hands thoroughly.



12

Paint an undercoat on the back of the glass.



Turn your glass over. Do this carefully. You don't want to damage the painting on the front of the glass. Use your thin, wide brush, and—exactly as you did in step 2—paint a light-colored tone on the back of the glass. Let the paint dry.



13

Decorate the back of the glass.



Take your scrubber brush and remove the undercoat from around the edges of the glass. Then take your wooden stick and make small dots across the whole surface of the glass. Now use your fingers and gently soften the dots inside the flames at the base of the phoenix. Also soften the dots on the phoenix's neck and the tips of his wings. Finally, use your wooden stick to make a highlight where

14

the eye is.

Fire the paint.



Ramp to a top temperature of 1250°F at 500°F per hour and hold for 3 minutes or as the paint manufacturer recommends. Then descend and anneal the glass as needed.

And that's it. The phoenix is a lovely design, which you can download from the *GPQ* website. Your painted glass will really catch people's attention.

If you have any questions, please visit www.beautifulglasspatterns.com and write to us from there.

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You'll find this and many other great projects in the Spring 2009 issue of Glass Patterns Quarterly.

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Seven Top Tips for Elegant Tracing

1. Study the design for as long as you need to. Make notes about how you plan to paint it. This way you won't distract yourself by thinking things through as you go along.
2. Identify the main lines, which you will copy-trace with the glass on top of the design (and then strengthen as needed). You should distinguish these lines from the detailed lines, which you will add later.
3. Aim to achieve variety. That is, some lines are light, others are dark; some lines are thick, others are thin. This variety of line (along with a corresponding variety of highlighting) will make your painting sparkle with light and shadow.
4. Prepare your glass paint well. That means, prepare enough of it (preferably a good-sized lump), mix it thoroughly and frequently, and do not try to paint with watery paint. Do these things and you are well on the way to being in control of your paint.
5. Beautiful tracing requires a calm, concentrated mind. You need to focus on your work, so don't distract yourself with music or by letting your mind wander to all the other things that you must get done. Just attend to the glass in front of you. Take a rest as often as you need to.
6. Trace on top of an undercoat. It's so much easier than painting on bare glass.
7. Each time you load your brush, take a few seconds to remix the paint. Then always test it on the light box before you use it on your glass.



Stephen Byrne, director of Williams & Byrne, took up stained glass because it was unlike anything he had done before and the challenge appealed to him. Equally appealing was—and still is—the idea that no matter how proficient anyone becomes, it is always possible to improve. Finally, it was glass painting's demand for concentration and calmness that provided the perfect antidote to his seven years of analytical philosophy and his fourteen years in business as a trouble-shooter and problem-solver.

Stephen duly left his career in London for an apprenticeship at the Hardman studios, where he met David Williams. Four years later, they both left Hardman's and established Williams & Byrne. David and Stephen are the authors of the best-selling e-book, Glass Painting Techniques & Secrets from an English Stained Glass Studio. You can download it from www.beautifulglasspainting.com.





