

Stained glass windows of Paris

FROM THE RENAISSANCE TO THE 20TH CENTURY

1450 was the start of a golden age for Paris' stained glass windows. Pieces of exceptional quality were created, many of which have been conserved. Apart from the ensembles at the churches of Saint-Gervais and Saint Germain-l'Auxerrois, described here, this boom period also saw the creation of important sets of windows at Saint-Séverin, Saint-Merry and Saint-Etienne-du-Mont.

Designed by painters at the court of Francis I or inspired by the artistic trends of the day (Northern school, Italian masters), these stained glass windows are an example of the refinement of the Renaissance style, and liberate the compositions from the divisions of the window.

In the 17th century, the rigour of the Classical age and the growing need for light in the liturgy led to stained glass windows letting in more and more light, and they were soon reduced to simple glasswork. Masterpieces with no future, the windows by Souignac for the upper choir at Saint-Eustache were a final attempt to link the narrative stained glass window to the architecture surrounding it.

After the Revolution, the taste for stained glass windows and their techniques, which had lain dormant for over a century, were rediscovered by the Parisian workshops, such as the Manufacture de Sèvres (Sèvres Factory). Throughout the 19th century, a climate of research, sometimes led by painters such as Maréchal or Lafaye, led to many workshops reviving and updating the old stained glass window style.

In the 1920's, the revival of sacred art and the breakdown of barriers between the techniques attracted artists to religious decoration and the use of glass. The churches of Paris thus offer a number of creations that reflect the innovations and aesthetic debates of the 20th century.

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(9th) 18bis, rue de Châteaudun

Notre-Dame-de-Lorette Church

Bay 1 The Assumption - 1827-1829 (installed in 1836)



Pierre Delorme - painter, author of the cartoon

Manufacture de Sèvres - stained glass window production

This window was the first creation by the Manufacture de Sèvres, whose workshops played an eminent role in the rediscovery of the stained glass technique at the turn of the 19th century.

Apart from the political will to relaunch the royal factories, two men also played a decisive role in this revival: the Count of Chabrol, Prefect of the Seine and a connoisseur of English stained glass production, and Alexandre Brongniart, Director of the Factory, scientist and glass painting enthusiast. Sèvres broke away from traditional stained glass techniques: large panes of plain glass, cut at right angles, were covered with vitrified paint in many different colours, emulating the effects of oil painting. These "luminous" paintings, designed by famous painters (in this case Pierre Delorme, the author of the ceiling in the Chapel of the Virgin, in the same church), stood in contrast to a more archaeological conception of the stained glass window from the middle of the 19th century onwards.



(9th) 63, rue de Caumartin

Saint Louis d'Antin Church **Bay 4 Charity** - 1882



Edouard Didron (1836-1902)

The nephew of Adolphe Didron (1806-1867), a Christian theorist and founder of the *Annales archéologiques* (Archaeological Annals), Edouard Didron worked as a glass painter and writer like his uncle before him. In 1882, the Saint Louis d'Antin factory commissioned him to make stained glass windows for the church's fifteen half-moon bays, including five narrative bays in the lower part (the three theological Virtues and two episodes of the history of the True Cross). The choice of figures, clever organisation of their gestures and their attributes testify to Didron's interest in questions of religious iconography. As he was also keen to bring more light into the naturally dark church, he used very pale shades - a range of grey shades with just a hint of gold - that reinforce the monumental effect and didactic clarity of the scenes.



(7th) 23bis, rue Las Cases

Sainte-Clotilde Church **Bay 114 Ezechias (Ezekiel)** 1853



Louis Lamothe - painter, author of the cartoon

Prosper Lafaye - master glassworker

A classic example of Neo-Gothic art, the Basilica of Sainte-Clotilde-Sainte-Valère was the first Parisian church built in the ogival style in the 19th century. From 1851 onwards, the most famous glassworkers of the time, such as Thévenot, Maréchal and Lusson, were called upon to make the stained glass windows. The glass painter Prosper Lafaye delivered his first great creation by executing the high bays of the transept, in collaboration with the Lyon artists Lamothe and Chancel, students of Ingres and Flandrin, who designed the central figures of the Apostles and the Prophets. In each light, they are depicted within a grisaille architecture, against floral patterned backgrounds with saturated colours. While the duality of the design, with its supple figures and precious ornamentation, sometimes in clashing shades, caused a controversy from the outset, the omnipresence of the decorative frames creates the monumental unity here.



(1st) 2, place du Louvre

Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois Church

Bay 120 The Incredulity of Saint Thomas - 1533



Jean Chastellain - master glassworker

The commissioning of this work is documented in the contract signed in 1533 by Jean Chastellain, a master glassworker in Paris, and Antoine Bohier, an advisor and financier to the King. Stylistic and technical similitudes observed during recent restorations have made it possible to attribute the cartoon to the Anvers painter Noël Bellemare, whose name appears in the contract for the southern rose (bay 118), executed the previous year by the same master glassworker. Similar to The Wisdom of Solomon at Saint-Gervais, it has the same arrangement of elegant figures and a set of complex perspectives, for an even more monumental effect. As well as the influence of Flemish Mannerism, we see the influence of the Italian masters, such as Raphael, in the care taken over the individual details of the apostles. Here the art of Bellemare blends in with the extraordinary technical mastery of Chastellain, to create a masterpiece of Renaissance stained glass window-making.



Bay 122 The Second Incredulity of Saint Thomas - mid-16th century

This scene unfolds in three stages: the apostles, surrounding an open, empty tomb, look to the heavens, where the Virgin is ascending in a glorious cloud surrounded by angels. She is looking to the right, where, in the background, Saint Thomas stands alone at the Mount of Olives and is handed Mary's belt by an angel. As was often the case from the 15th century onwards, the theme of the Assumption is connected with the "second incredulity of Saint Thomas", an Italian legend in which the Virgin is said to have left her belt with the Apostle as material evidence of her Ascension. The composition, freely inspired by a wood carving by Albert Dürer, is organised in a vertical direction, emphasised by the rhetoric of the figures' gestures. While the technical execution (large pieces divided boldly, rich floral patterns) is reminiscent of the art of Chastellain, the style has little in common with the neighbouring bay. Nonetheless the dazzling colours and elegance of the angels make up for the archaic composition.



Bay 22 Ezechias - 1847

Charles-Laurent Maréchal and Louis-Napoléon Gugnion - glass painters

Painter and master glassworker Charles-Laurent Maréchal enjoyed widespread fame throughout the 19th century. In 1833, he opened a stained glass window factory in Metz, in association with his step-brother Gugnion, and then with Charles Champigneulle after 1854. This workshop in the Lorraine produced a considerable body of civil and religious work. In Paris, Maréchal secured important commissions for church windows, such as those at Sainte-Clotilde, Saint-Augustin and Saint-Vincent-de-Paul. At Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, he produced the stained glass windows for the ten lower bays on the nave side, in 1847. On the south side, leading biblical figures (patriarchs, kings of Judah and Israel), with a hieratic and stern appearance, face characters from the New Testament surrounded by angels on the north side. Although they have not aged well, these stained glass windows are an example of Maréchal's very particular style. He made use of a very sophisticated technique (layers of enamel and grisaille on top of glass in very dense shades); in an attempt to use light to reproduce the smooth look of oil painting.



(1st) Rue du Jour

Saint Eustache Church



Bay 302 and 304 Saint Paul – Saint Jacques le Majeur - 1631

Antoine Soullignac - glass painter

Built in 1624, the upper choir of Saint-Eustache was decorated with stained glass windows in 1631. Each of the lights in the eleven windows (six double bays and five single bays) contains an elegant,

carefully posed figure, in front of a monumental elevation which has been given a grisaille treatment. The Church Fathers and the apostles surround Christ and Saint Eustache, depicted in the axis bay. The dilation of the scale in favour of the architecture and the striking trompe l'oeil effect of the perspectives make these an exceptional set of windows. They were made by Antoine Soulignac, a master glassworker about whom little is known. The search for clarity, favoured here by the large amount of plain and light-coloured glass, was one of the changes in stained glass window-making that took place in the 17th century. Six years later it would result in the creation of colourless glazing in the high windows of the transept and the nave, which are adorned with decorative borders only.



Bay 4 (Pork Butchers' window) Saint André - 1643

Adeline Hébert-Stévens - glass painter

The daughter of Jean Hébert-Stevens and Pauline Peugniez, both painters and master glassworkers, Adeline Hébert-Stevens joined the family workshop with her husband Paul Bony during the thirties. Founded in 1924, this workshop was a meeting place for many artists who were all passionate about religious art, including Maurice Denis and Georges Devallières. The Occupation did not interrupt this activity, as shown by the large amount of stained glass windows created during the 1940's. At Saint-Eustache in 1943, the French pork butchers' society, the last corporation of the culinary trades connected with Les Halles Church, commissioned a stained glass window dedicated to Saint André, the titular saint of the site, and Saint Anthony, patron saint of pork butchers. In a fairly classic, educational spirit, the artist has placed stylised images with captions on a geometric glass background with golden tones.



(4th) 2, rue François Miron

Saint-Gervais-Saint-Protais Church



Bay 9 Lives of Sainte Isabelle and Saint Louis - between 1510 and 1517

Anonymous

The network of this window contains fragments of two separate stained glass windows. The four tapering main panels illustrate episodes from the lives of Saint Louis and his sister, Sainte Isabelle, who died in 1270. From left to right, they show the second burial of the saint, dressed in the royal costume; the miraculous curing of a child lying on Sainte Isabelle's shirt; the miracle accomplished by Saint Louis in front of his sister's tomb; and finally the taking of Damietta by the crusaders. These very dense compositions are full of picturesque details that reinforce the iconographic meaning of the scenes.

These panels are surrounded by a depiction of the Court of Heaven (God the Father accompanied by angels), in a more elegant and refined style. The glazing for the lower part of the tympanum and the lights was produced in 1976 by Anne Le Chevallier, in an abstract style.



Bay 16 The Wisdom of Solomon - 1531

Noël Bellemare - painter and author of the cartoon

Jean Chastellain - master glassworker

The story starts in the two apertures on the left of the tympanum, with the scenes of the Sacrifice and the Song of Solomon, continues in the lights with the scene of the Judgement, and finishes with the visit of the Queen of Sheba in the two right-hand apertures. The main scene takes the form of a frieze spanning the whole width of the bay, and is one of the first examples of a unified stained glass window in Paris. Several groups of characters are cleverly arranged in the open space of an opulent Renaissance palace. The momentum of the figures, animated by flowing gestures, the refinement of the costumes and the various material effects all make for an elegant stained glass window of exceptional technical virtuosity.

The cartoon was recently attributed to the painter Noël Bellemare, born in Anvers, thus confirming the

connection with early 16th-century Flemish Mannerism.



Bay 124 Abraham and Melchizedek - 1610

Nicolas Chamus - glass painter

In 1610, the churchwardens commissioned Nicolas Chamus, a Parisian glass painter, to produce a stained glass window illustrating the Last Supper and the meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek in two corresponding stories, one on top of the other.

Today only the second episode remains in the median register: Melchizedek offers Abraham bread and wine, foreshadowing the figure of Christ at his last meal. Today it is inserted between two composite battle scenes from other windows: in the lower register, Saint Jacques at the battle of Clavijo, most probably dating from the 19th century; and in the top part, two scenes from the life of Saint Louis, dating from the 1600's. While a certain heaviness in the brushstrokes and composition sets them apart from the masterpieces of the previous century, the stained glass windows at Saint-Gervais represent a final attempt by the Parisian glassworkers to keep the storytelling tradition of narrative stained glass windows alive.



(3rd) 195, rue du Temple

Sainte Elisabeth Church Bay 8 Saint Jean l'Évangéliste - 1828



Abel de Pujol - painter, author of the cartoon

Warren-White and Edouard Jones - master glassworkers

In 1825, the Count of Chabrol, Prefect of the Seine, commissioned six stained glass windows for the Chapel of the Virgin, built by Godde at the back of the choir of the church. Three of them (The Theological Virtues, which have since been removed) were commissioned from the William Collins workshop in London, following models by the painter Reynolds; the three others (Saint Jean Baptiste, Saint Jean l'Évangéliste and Saint Joseph), designed by Abel de Pujol, were made in 1828 by the English glassmakers Warren-White and Jones. Under the Second Empire, the demolition of the chapel led to the stained glass windows being taken down, and only three of them were restored to the right-hand side aisle of the church in the mid-20th century. Essential examples of the stained glass window revival at the turn of the 19th century, these English windows are of exceptional picture quality and were often emulated in the Parisian workshops, at both the Manufacture de Sèvres and the Choisy-le-Roi glassworks.

Due to the provisions of the Concordat signed in 1801 between France and the Holy See, which ratified the Revolutionary seizures of the clergy's possessions and transferred the property of the parish churches and their offices to the communes, the City of Paris currently owns around one hundred religious buildings, including a large number of Catholic churches.

The Concordat regime, which remained in force until the 1905 law separating Church and State, proved to be advantageous for religious buildings belonging to the commune. Making the works of art confiscated during the Revolution available to the clergy, combined with an active policy of commissioning decors and constructing new buildings, made the churches of Paris an artistic series of buildings of exceptional wealth covering the major periods of French art, from the Classical era to the modern period.

The Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of Paris is currently responsible for conserving this considerable heritage. It is in charge of its inventory, maintenance and promotion as well as the restoration work necessary to conserve the buildings which house it.