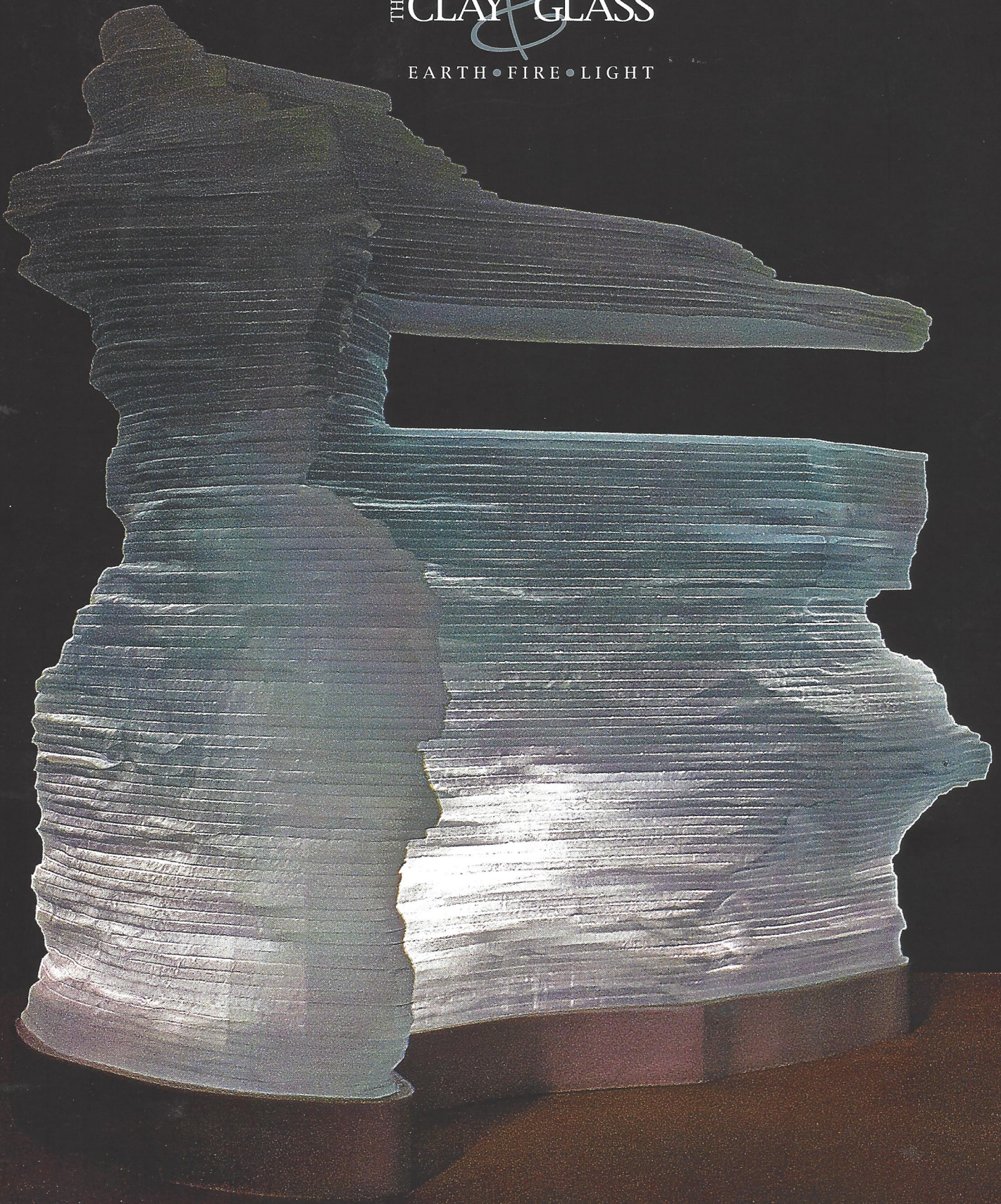


PUBLIC ART IN GLASS



THE CLAY & GLASS
EARTH • FIRE • LIGHT



The Public Art Glass of Robert Jekyll and Sarah Hall¹



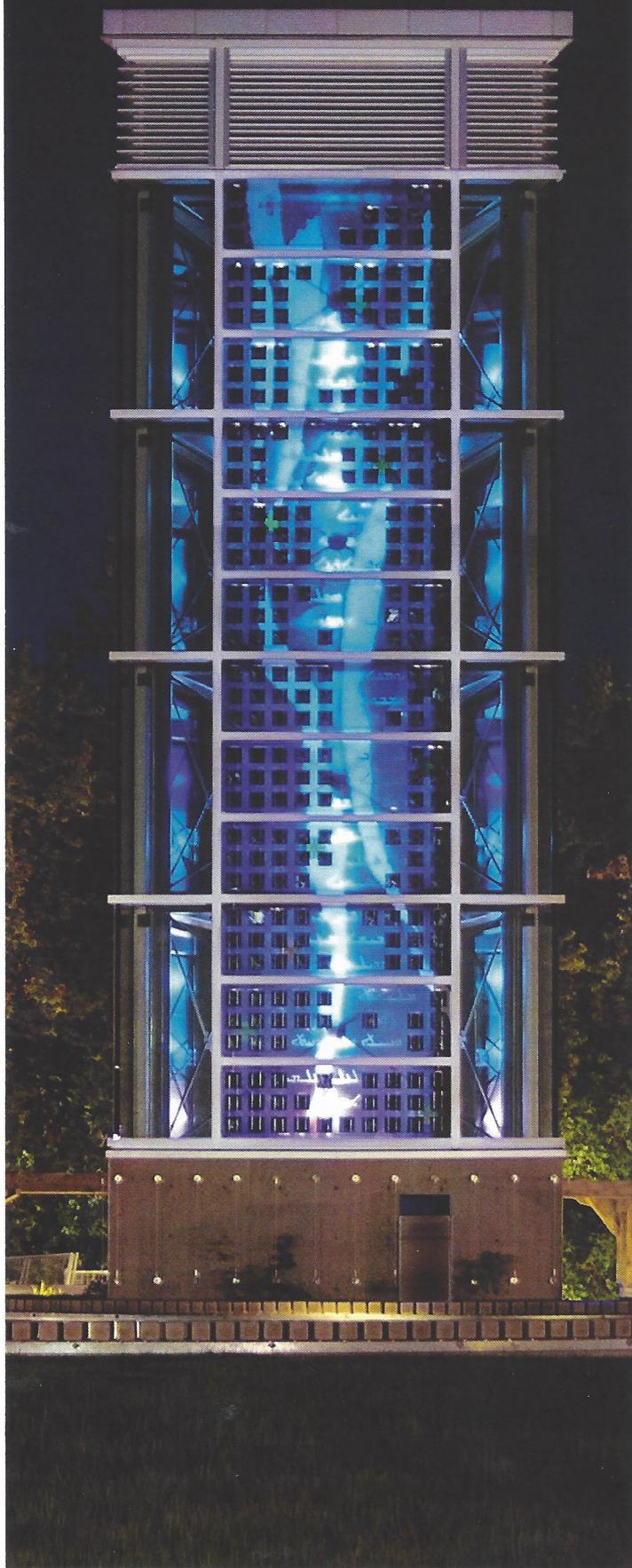
The art glass windows of Robert Jekyll and Sarah Hall draw from the long European stained glass tradition of public art. In its relationship to public architecture, art glass serves a distinct role beyond a gallery setting. Within an architectural enclosure, it creates a sensorial experience as sunlight passes through glass and illuminates space with colour. The translucent and reflective properties of glass produce an immersive, kinetic environment for architecture.

Beginning in the 1970s, Toronto-based colleagues Robert Jekyll and Sarah Hall independently designed and made large art glass windows for public architecture across Canada. Engaged with the international post-World War Two revival of stained glass as an art form, these artists contributed to the revitalization of the tradition in Canada. They created new aesthetics for public art that drew inspiration from the innovations of post-WW II German architectural stained glass². The German windows combined new abstract, non-figurative imagery with traditional stained glass leading and colourful, handblown antique glass.

Left: Robert Jekyll, Memorial Staircase Windows (Detail), Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston, Ontario, 1981.
Photo provided by the Artist.

Opposite: Sarah Hall, Waterglass (Details), Harbourfront Centre Theatre, Toronto, ON, 2011. *Photo by Matthew Lavoie.*





Jekyll and Hall each studied the art and craft of stained glass with leading masters in the UK before returning to Canada to establish studios in Toronto. Study abroad also provided firsthand access to the masterworks of post-WW II stained glass in the UK, France, and Germany. Hall earned her diploma in architectural glass from Swansea College of Art prior to interning from 1977-78 with Lawrence Lee. Jekyll apprenticed from 1972-74 at Burleighfield House with Patrick Reyn-tiens, serving as his studio manager in his second year.

Jekyll produced stained glass windows for over thirty years. In addition to numerous windows for private residences, he created several large public commissions for buildings in Alberta and Ontario. These include stained glass windows for the Royal Military College of Canada (1983) in Kingston, the Arts Commons (1983) in Calgary, the Canadian Music Centre (1986) in Toronto, and Humber-side Collegiate Institute (1992) in Toronto.

Employing traditional techniques with contemporary glass materials, Jekyll made dynamic, abstract window designs. His fascination with the optical properties of glass led him to experiment with unusual textured, industrial, and optical glass along with handblown antique glass. He seamlessly integrated these new and varied types of glass into his windows using traditional leading to join the pieces. Many of Jekyll's abstract designs employed undulating, rhythmic leadlines with saturated colours, imparting a strong sense of movement and dynamism to the

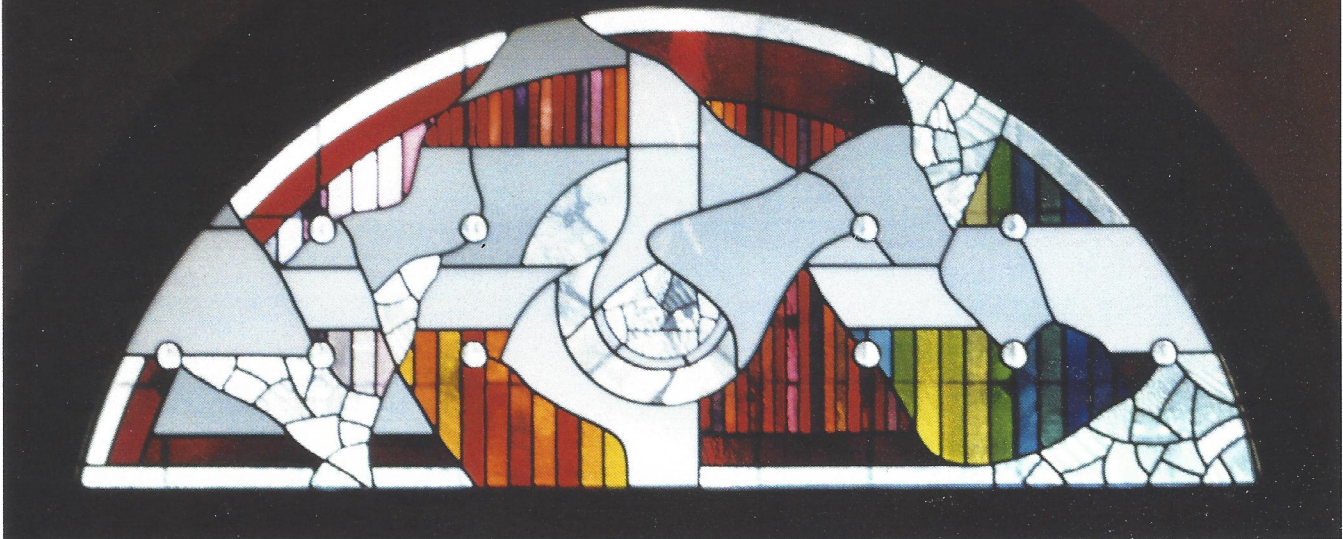
Left: Sarah Hall, Lux Nova, Regent College, Vancouver, BC, 2007.

Photo by Ken McAlister.

Opposite: Sarah Hall, Lux Nova, Regent College, Vancouver, BC, 2007.

Photo by Michael Elkan.





architectural space.

With the conviction that stained glass is properly an architectural art form³, Jekyll often created windows that echoed the formal elements of the architectural site while managing the natural light in the building. This can be seen in his centennial project for the staff lounge at Humber College, where the vertical and curved elements of the nineteenth century window openings were repeated in the glass shapes and leadlines of his design. Composed of transparent and opaque coloured glass juxtaposed with clear glass, a screen-like effect was achieved with partial views outside.

Working as a designer and craftsman, Jekyll fabricated the windows in his own studio. This approach served him well given the limited output of his public projects. In contrast, his colleague Sarah Hall designed windows and collaborated with fabrication partners due to the volume and scale of her public projects. These fabricators included Sattler Studio (1995-2003), Mark Leibowitz, John Wilcox, Bernhard Viehweber, and Mark Thompson.

Hall designed over one hundred public

windows across Canada and the US. Early in her career she employed traditional leading with handblown antique and industrial glass, designing abstract imagery for numerous churches, theatres, universities, schools, embassies, and hospitals. Hall later adopted the post-WW II German approach to fabrication. Glass artists and designers in Europe typically collaborated with fabrication studios that offered a wide range of technologies and in-house artisans. Beginning in 1999, Hall collaborated primarily with Glasmalerie Peters Studios in Paderborn, Germany, a large fabrication studio serving the global market.

Hall's design aesthetic changed with access to larger kilns and a strong support staff of artisans at Glasmalerie Peters Studios. With the new technologies available to her in Europe, Hall developed a more painterly approach. Her process involved

Above: Robert Jekyll, Centennial Project, Humber College, Toronto, Ontario, 1992. *Photo provided by the artist.*

Opposite: Robert Jekyll, Centennial Project, Humber College, Toronto, Ontario, 1992. *Photo provided by the artist.*

building designs by layering colour and film rather than through traditional line drawings. The new large scale window paintings were made using enamels on float glass, a radical departure from the earlier linear designs Hall produced with leading.

Pioneering the use of solar art glass in the twenty-first century, Hall designed several photovoltaic projects for public architecture. These include *Waterglass* (2011) at Harbourfront Centre Enwave Theatre, Toronto, *Leaves of Light* (2011) at the Life Sciences Building, York University, Toronto, *Lux Nova* (2007) at Regent College, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, and *3 Solar Facade Windows* (2013) at Cathedral of the Holy Family, Saskatoon. Although these solar projects represent a mere 5% of her studio practice, they exemplify the creative possibilities of photovoltaics for art glass installations and set a precedent for green technologies that beautify the built environment.

Drawing on the tradition of stained glass windows while experimenting with new materials and technologies, Jekyll and Hall made significant contributions to the Canadian built environment. Their innovative public art projects highlight the complex relationship between craft, architecture, and technology in the creation of art glass windows.

Kathy Kranias

Kathy Kranias is a ceramic artist, educator, and art historian based in Toronto. Her sculptures are held in Canadian embassy collections in Washington D.C., Belgrade, and Beijing. Solo exhibitions include the Art Gallery of Peterborough and the David Kaye Gallery. Kranias served as studio faculty in the Craft and Design Program, Sheridan College from 2004-2012. She has written for numerous publications, including the Journal of Canadian Art History and the Journal of Modern Craft. Kranias holds a BFA cum laude from Concordia University and a MA cum laude from York University.

Endnotes:

¹ This essay draws from my M.A. research at York University. I wish to acknowledge the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding my research on The Evolution of Post World War Two Canadian Architectural Stained Glass through the Joseph-Armand Bombardier Cana-

da Graduate Master's Scholarship (2014).

² Interview with Sarah Hall, August 26, 2014. Interview with Robert Jekyll, August 28, 2014.

³ Russ, Joel and Lou Lynn, 1985, Contemporary Stained Glass: Portfolio of Canadian Work, Toronto, Doubleday Canada, p. 43.

