

IT'S A LIVING: DORIS CULTRARO, DC STUDIOS, LLC

The Delicate Business of Stained Glass



The preservation, restoration or addition of new stained glass in the home has become the hottest décor element over the past few years, as homeowners and homebuyers look for value, charm, and unique details in their homes. Stained Glass is a desirable feature to incorporate into the distinctive homes that we see in the Hudson Valley. Whether you are planning to add a new stained glass element to your home, or preserving an existing one, DC Studios is available to assist with more than 30 years of stained glass experience. Doris Cultraro, a stained glass artist since 1974, has been in demand, evaluating residential stained glass windows for her clients, and assisting them by determining their current condition and/or recommending some level of repair or restoration when required.

“Repairing an older stained glass window requires meticulous skill and can vary de-

pending on the level of damage and repair required,” says Ms. Cultraro.

Some projects can be completed within a short period of time. Others may take longer due to more enhanced issues for example: matching a painted piece, locating a particular color and type of glass, etc. Proper repair or restoration work can seldom be performed in place. Most often the stained glass window is brought to my DC Studios in Rhinebeck, where the repairs can be executed under the appropriate conditions.

“We can thank our stained glass predecessors for much of the repair work out there today because they were so prolific in the past 100 years,” Ms. Cultraro says. “Fabulous examples of stained glass art were produced to enhance the beautiful Tudor, Mediterranean and other classic styles we see in the distinctive homes today.” Many of these windows have

reached an age where some careful repair work is necessary to maintain them for another 50 – 100 years. A bit of attention now will preserve these windows and add great value to your home.”

Stained glass provides a dynamic alternative to window treatments due to their ever-changing color effects on a room. Activated by sunlight or subdued by dimming light at the end of the day, the vibrant colors will appear jewel-like, dancing on the walls or spread across a room. Throughout the year, outside weather conditions and the different types of seasonal daylight will bring stained glass windows to life. Towards dusk, they will become subdued. As daylight diminishes, the more delicate colors come forward sending those deeper color tones into the background. Artificial light within a room also affects the glass - creating a beautiful warm glow to all who admire your house and windows from the outside. The ever-changing nature of light and color is something that cannot be achieved with fabric.

The distinctive homes in the Hudson Valley boast many superior examples of stained glass in doorways, transoms, sidelights, and stairway landings that are well worth maintaining. Homeowners can commission their own new installation in any style they want by having their windows made to fit a particular area or new addition. The options are limitless.

In addition to windows, Ms. Cultraro also expertly designs and fabricates modern day tiffany style lampshades in traditional or contemporary designs. Perhaps you have a great lamp with broken or missing pieces. The repair of your antique lampshade is not out of reach. Many of the glass companies around at the turn of the 19th century are still in business making glass from their secret recipes. Glass made around 1910 can still be matched perfectly today. Their secret formulas are as closely guarded as the company secret

for Coca-Cola® syrup. Ms. Cultraro's secret recipe is her attention to detail. She carefully performs the repair by meticulously removing the damaged section and matching the color and template of the original piece. The restored item has to match the craftsmanship of the original fabricator so that the lampshade looks consistent. "It's more a labor of love to preserve these beautiful hand-made lampshades," says Ms. Cultraro, "rather than see them end up in someone's attic or at a tag sale." However, she admits to finding some great items at auctions, estate sales and even some tag sales. She either repairs the lampshades (and window panels) or uses the glass for other restoration projects that come her way. Can't afford that original Tiffany or Handel lampshade? Ms. Cultraro will custom design one just for you!

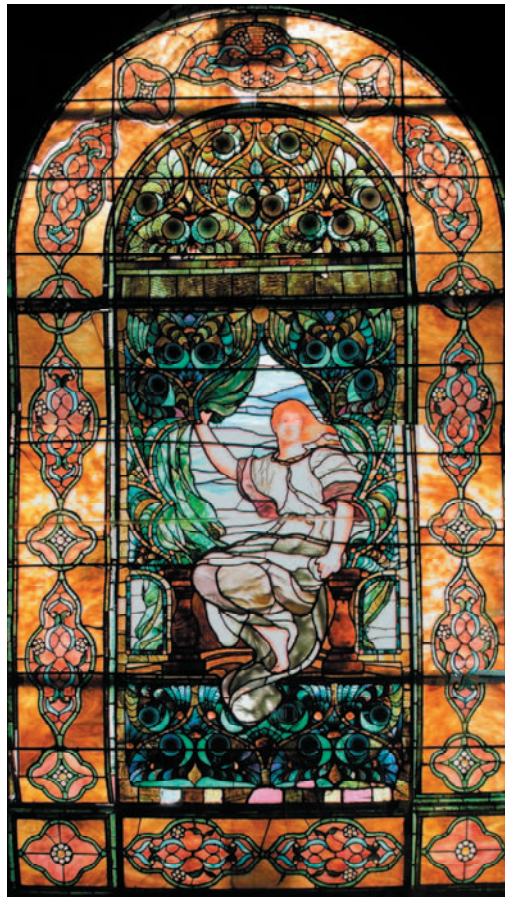
Buying? Selling? Decorating? Stained Glass is an asset that can and will add value to your house and the comfort of the space around you. Enjoy the glow of warm colors around your home. There are still some things that cannot be mass-produced and must be hand made piece by piece. Stained glass provides that satisfaction and a comfort that helps make a house your home.

Architectural and design services are also available through DC Studios, LLC. Ms. Cultraro's husband Conrad, is an architect. The two collaborate on some projects for a full-service solution to your project be it a renovation, remodeling or new addition to your home.

DC Studio's current restoration project is a 10' high x 6' wide window. The image above right is the result of merging two separate photos to show the full scale of the project. The window was buckling and sagging with daylight showing thru the glass. The lead had deteriorated in many locations. Glass was glued back in, or taped over. All the support wires had separated from the steel support bars, so the window was sagging. There

where numerous "bad" repairs from prior years, and broken or missing glass pieces throughout the panel.

To restore this window to "as new" condition, broken and unmatching glass from previous repairs will be replaced. New lead will replace the old lead and a new frame will be made to contain this window, complete with insulated glass on the outside to protect it.



The window was from a private residence in Cold Spring NY in the 1960's. The current owners purchased it from a salvage yard. It was originally commissioned to be the centerpiece in a mansion of a wealthy businessman in Tarrytown, NY. The mansion was demolished in the 1950's to make way for the building of the Tappan Zee Bridge. There was very little history as to its origins. The window found its way to a local salvage yard, until the current owners spotted it in the

1960's and hauled it up to Cold Spring in a pickup truck.

The original designer or studio that fabricated this magnificent window is unknown, but Ms. Cultraro hopes to find some clues during the restoration process or from the Tarrytown Historical Society once the window is reinstalled. The quality and detail of this window is superlative and is consistent with the great studios of the late 1890 – 1920's.

This detail shot shows the beautiful use of glass and vibrant color softened by a muted tone border. Of particular interest is the white glass. It is called "drapery glass" because it actually looks like the folds of fabric draping over the body. It is consistent with the type of glass used in the great windows of Louis Comfort Tiffany and LaFarge. Of particular note in this panel is several levels of glass plating. That is a second layer of glass is attached to the first (see the pink in the sleeves) to give the glass image more depth. The layers can be either on the front or back of the glass, depending on the glass artist and the effect desired. The border glass between the image and the floral pattern on the right is heavily rippled – another details that gives this special glass it's depth and quality. The painted portions show some wear and tear. Some of the black detail paint, which outlined some of the facial features, has become destabilized and flaked away.

For further inquiries, Doris Cultraro can be contacted at her studio: Tel: 845.876.3200 or email her at: info@dcstudiosllc.com. www.dcstudiosllc.com. Prospective clients may send along a photo of a piece they would like restored or a design they would like to match, then call for or a free estimate or consultation.