

Hallie Monroe

Painting High-End Liturgical Commissions

by Shawn Waggoner

When Hallie Monroe saw duct tape being used on the stenciled windows of Southampton United Methodist Church in Southampton, New York, she was inspired to learn more about painted glass. She knew this practice could not be appropriate procedure for such beautiful historical artwork and vowed to educate herself so that one day when the church called upon her, she would have the knowledge and skills necessary to work on their valuable windows.

Three years later, while attending a glass painting class at the late Dick Millard’s Antrim School in Antrim, New Hampshire, Monroe received the call. Strong winds had collapsed the rotting wood sash, which held three lancets depicting kites and a Star of David in Southampton’s Methodist church. Upon her return from Millard’s class, Monroe bought a kiln and began working on the first of 20 windows she has restored to date, with eight left on the south side that still need attention.

Painting for Liturgical Clients

Since January 2010, Monroe has been a glass painter at Willet Hauser Architectural Glass, Inc., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Willet Studios and the Hauser Art Glass Company merged into what became one of the largest and most respected studios in North America. The company was acquired in January 2014 by Associated Crafts of Gilbert, Arizona. Monroe brings to her liturgical work a history of glass painting technique and the ability to render someone else’s design in an effort to honor each congregation’s desires and demands for its windows.

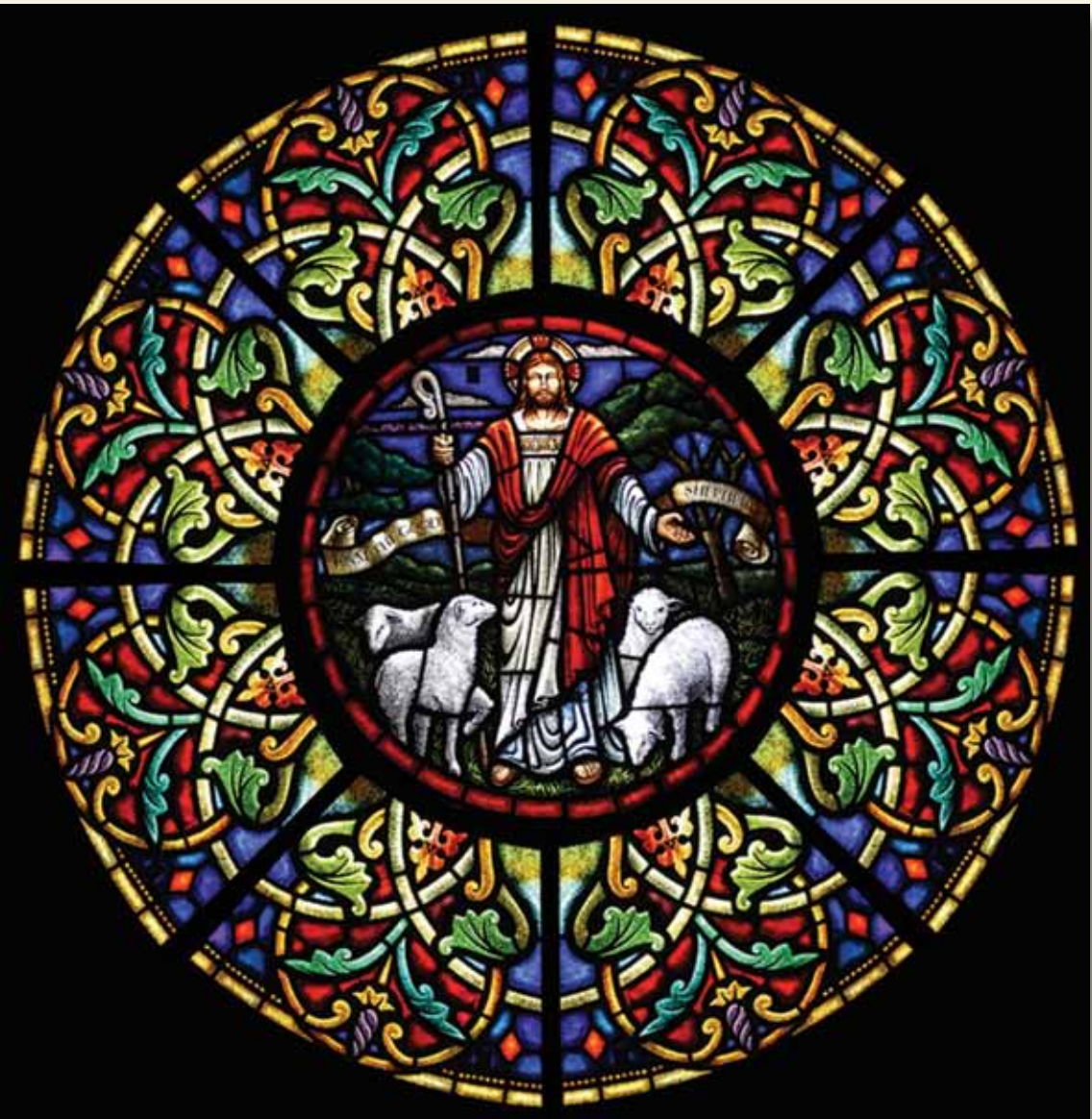
Painting at Willet Hauser has provided a great opportunity for Monroe to work on very large projects. The process begins once the clients have approved the designs. The Glass Eye 2000 program is used to designate the lead line pattern, which is printed out on velum paper in full scale. Monroe draws the portraits, anatomy, architecture, typography, and other aspects of the project, sometimes moving lead lines, but the overall composition follows the original design. Next the design arrives at the glass selecting department, where the perfect colors and textures are chosen from racks of glass. In about two weeks, the cutting department brings all of the numbered glass puzzle pieces on trays to the painting department, where they get laid out on plate glass over the cartoon.



Hallie Monroe, arched window created for a Roman Catholic church in Frisco, Texas. Design by Adam Smith.



Hallie Monroe, St. Francis rose window created for a Roman Catholic church in Frisco, Texas. Design by Adam Smith.



Hallie Monroe, The Good Shepherd rose window created for a Roman Catholic church in Frisco, Texas. Design by Adam Smith.

Monroe acid-etches or sandblasts certain pieces, then begins the trace painting. She usually does the flesh painting first and establishes the darkness of matt layers there. Once the trace has been fired, all of the pieces are “waxed up” to the plate glass, and placed upright on an easel in front of windows and lights in the painting booth. “Because the windows will be installed into architecture, black paper is taped around the colored glass, blocking out light spilling around what is to be painted. Sometimes, to control the light, we even use black tempera paint and paint the lead lines on the backside of the plate glass.”

At this point, the magic happens for Monroe. She applies the matte to all of the pieces. Sometimes she applies a vinegar matte and uses an English stippler to give it texture. Then using a shaped scrub, she pulls the paint off to create highlights. This type of subtractive painting allows the light to come through where the paint has been removed. With some projects, she airbrushes on the mattes to achieve highlights. “Which technique I use depends in large part on the site location. The sun in Texas is a lot stronger than in Philly. So I compensate with how dark I go with the paint.”

Next the carrier glass is laid down flat and the pieces are carefully knocked off the plate glass, then fired. The glass is now ready for any silver stain or enamels.

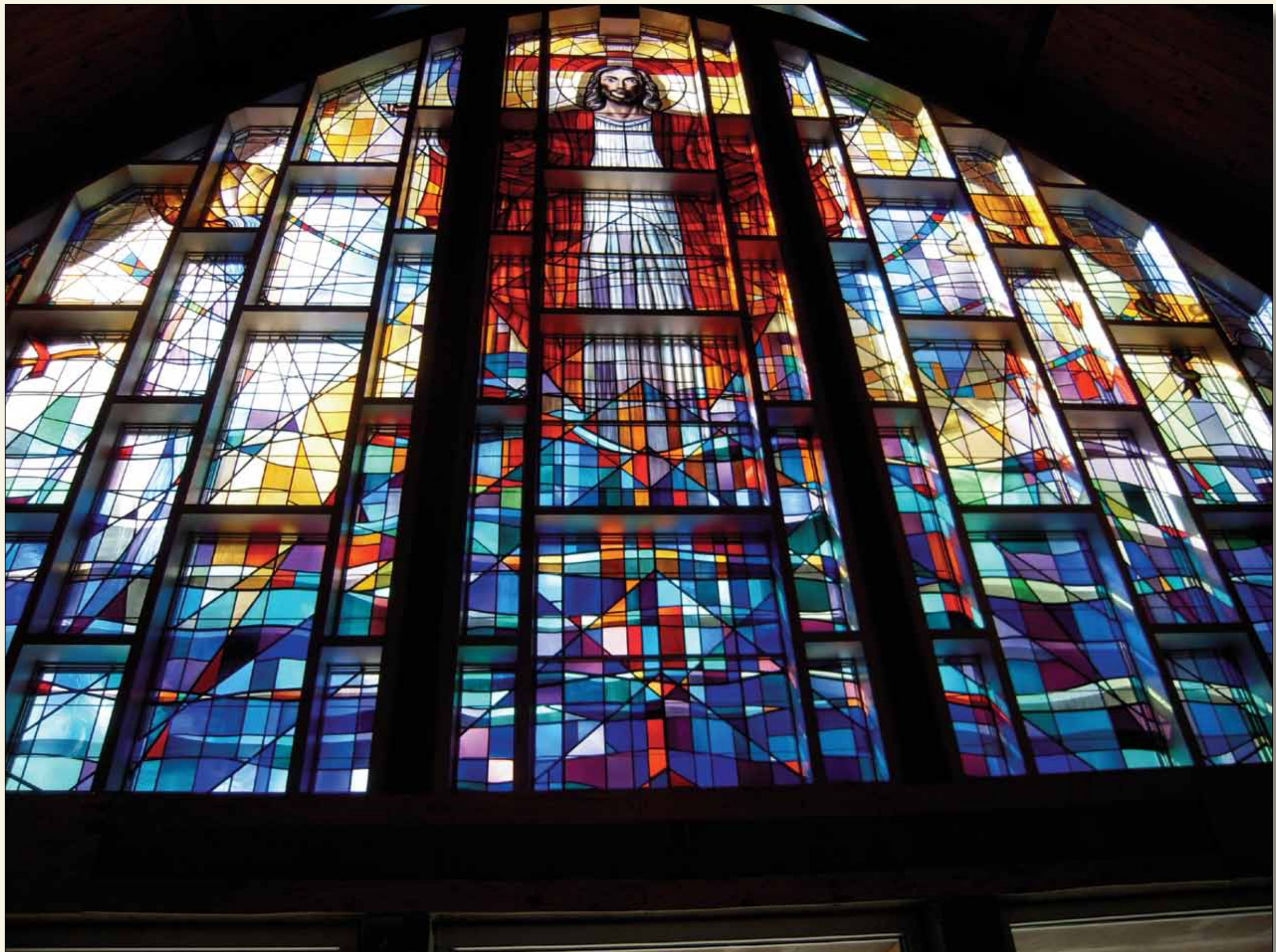
Painting at Willet Hauser

Working at Willet Hauser was the opportunity of a lifetime. However, Monroe lives in Southampton, New York, and could not ask her family to move. She now also has an apartment in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, with a studio and kiln. She paints 40 hours per week for Willet Hauser and drives to Southampton every few weeks.

One of the first projects she painted for Willet Hauser can be found at The Presbyterian Church of Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma, designed by Kenny Crocker. The first window for this project features the history of the church's first six buildings starting with the small brick architecture of 1883 moving through Victorian Greek Revival to Gothic Revival. "I took great care drawing each of these, knowing how important the history was to this congregation. You can't fudge perspective. It has to be correct. There were also a few portraits of the founding fathers that had to be recognizable."

The other massive window in this building was a triptych. The center window measures 35 feet, the two side windows about 30 feet. This chancel window features classic iconography including shafts of wheat, grapes and grail, a lamb with a banner, a dove, and the hand of God topped by the Alpha Omega. The imagery appears on a beautiful Lamberts blue background with a repeating decorative border. "The rest of the windows I painted for this project were miles and miles of repeated textures and repeated patterns for the clerestory and balcony windows. I hope someday to see it if I'm ever in Tulsa."

Hallie Monroe, work performed on one of the largest stained glass windows in the United States through Conrad Pickel Studios for Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida. The Christ head painted by Monroe measures 24" tall.





Hallie Monroe, window illustrating the history of the church's buildings from 1883 through the Gothic Revival period for the Tulsa Presbyterian Church of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Design by K. Crocker.



Hallie Monroe, icon window for the Presbyterian Church of Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Design by K. Crocker.

Recently Monroe has also worked on windows designed by Adam Smith that feature St. Francis of Assisi for a Roman Catholic Church in Frisco, Texas. She will paint 10 nave windows that measure 10 feet by 15 feet and tell the story of St. Francis with more traditional and illustrative detailed painting. She has completed four of these as well as a 15-foot rose window, 10-foot rose window, and windows depicting the Good Shepherd, Our Lady of Sorrows, and Bernadette of Lourdes.

Monroe hones her expert painting skills through high-end liturgical commissions. She draws upon the same skill set to design an additional body of autonomous work that highlights our vanishing natural world. With the discipline of a studio painter, Monroe is able to translate the ideas of other designers as well as express her own. The result of these diverse yet related talents is a body of personal and liturgical work that reflects a deep understanding of design and content brought to life through the hands of a skilled painter.

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See the September/October 2014 issue of Glass Art for more information about Hallie Monroe's autonomous work.

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