

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

LONDON

Marian Windows – Henry VII Chapel (two windows each 3m x 7.5m) 2013

A generous donation from Lord Harris of Peckham enabled Westminster Abbey to commission two new windows for the Henry VII Chapel. The windows were designed by the artist Hughie O'Donoghue RA, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Queen's Coronation. Although the new windows flank the East Window by Alan Younger (installed in 2000), Hughie chose to design for the building as a whole rather than be constrained by the existing stained glass. His predominantly blue and white colour scheme, incorporating Marian symbols of lilies and stars, is complemented by golden tones reflecting the light, warm-hued stonework and Tudor gilding of the Chapel.

Hughie created the designs as full-size painted cartoons, and Hughie and I then worked out the cutlines, deciding where the lead-lines would go, using partial outlines to create definition while breaking up other areas. The freedom of the imagery was achieved through a great deal of acid etching of blue 'flushed' glass, particularly creating the white stars on the blue ground.

In order to translate Hughie's oil paintings onto glass, we experimented together with different brushes, as well as different media for applying the paint and enamels, to capture his style, consistency and brushstrokes. I applied coloured paints and enamels with scumble brushes, intensifying the colours with multiple layers, to create the same effects that Hughie achieves with layers of oil glazes in his painting. Blue, white, red and yellow opaque paints for the 'trace-lines' and blue, red and yellow transparent enamels for the shading, mixed with Dammar varnish and distilled turpentine, were used in place of the traditional dark brown paint with water or vinegar, along with yellow silver stain on the reverse side of the glass.

The collaborative process of creating the Marian windows was very positive, and it was very interesting for me as a stained glass artist to work with a fine artist who was not restricted by the limitations of the craft. Hughie created the designs in his own style, and we worked together to translate them into the final artwork, developing new painting techniques in order to capture faithfully the spirit and style of the designs in glass.

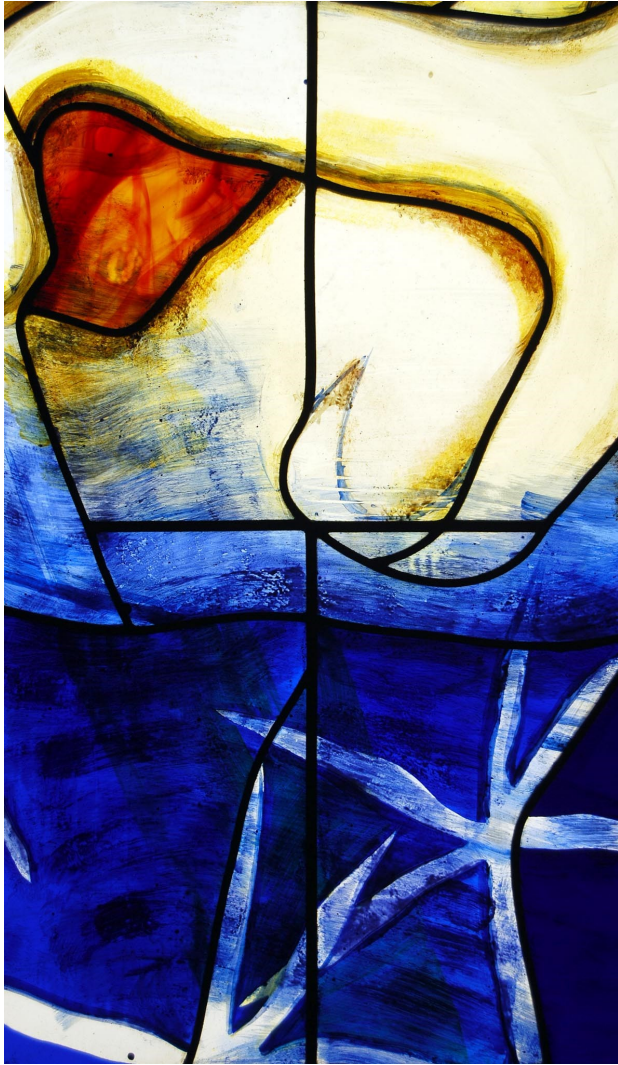
The Westminster Abbey windows were completed and installed by the Barley Studio team for the service celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Queen's Coronation in June 2013.



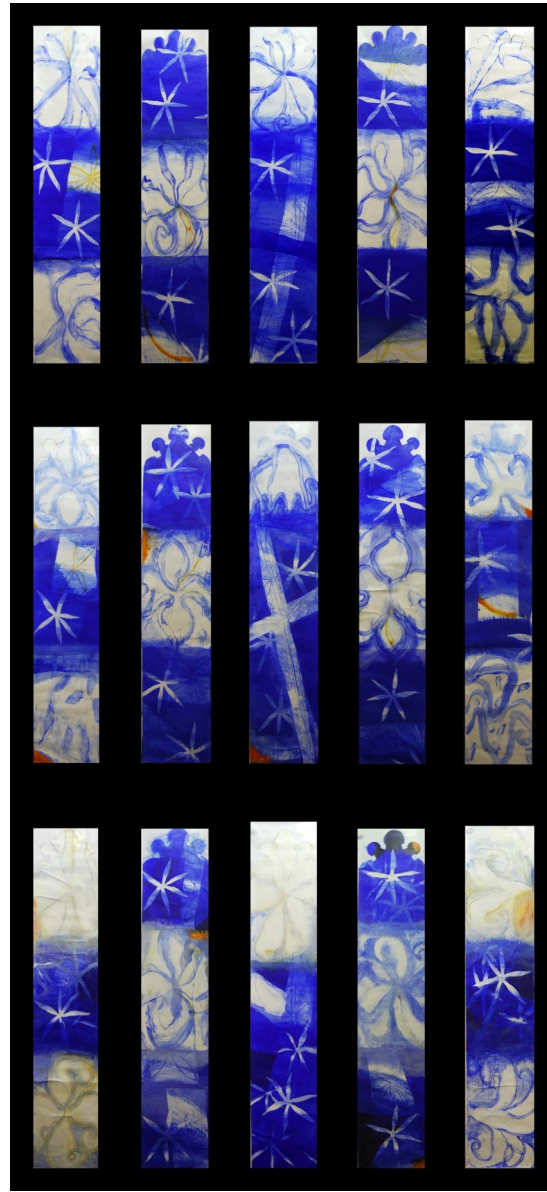
Photograph: Rob Scott

WESTMINSTER ABBEY LONDON

Marian Windows – Henry VII Chapel
(two windows each 3m x 7.5m) 2013



Detail: Lily



Hughie's full size paintings



Detail: Helen translating Hughie's artwork onto glass
Photograph: Rob Scott