

Stained glass artist links glass and psychology

By CORINNE ABATT

Does it take a degree in psychology to make stained glass windows? Hardly. But, stained glass artist Mark Talaba of Birmingham thinks it helps.

Talaba, who works almost exclusively on commission, said, "My interest in psychology led me to this because of my interest in the way people perceive things."

Talaba's treatment of stained glass differs from tradition in that he makes

many pieces to be used as wall hangings, serving the same function as a painting or graphic. He also does non-traditional windows, skylight and other commissions for architects, builders and homeowners—the more the commission calls for problem solving and innovation, the better he likes it.

From Talaba's viewpoint, he carries a heavy responsibility because the light from whatever piece he does will have a direct bearing on the lives of the people who live with it.

"It is a challenge to use materials that people have preconceptions about in a new and exciting way. I got into it because I was taken by the power stained glass has to fill a whole room with color. The responsibility comes

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—Mark Talaba

because anything that has that much power could wind up as something that's violent and nauseating."

Talaba said he knows of one stained glass window in Oakland County that has a totally negative effect on the viewer. "The colors vibrate so strangely that while looking at it the diaphragm begins to go up and down."

This illustrates a point that he wishes to emphasize—that colors

vibrate just as sound vibrates. And it is through the acknowledgement of this truth that he feels he became an artist, rather than a psychologist.

It was his sister, Linda Talaba, an artist who shows regularly in the metropolitan area, who kept telling him that he was meant to be an artist. He denied it for a time, but then while still a student at Michigan State, began to work in glass.

He worked in Detroit with Andrew Maglia, learning faceting and helped Maglia on his commissions for stained glass windows. When Maglia died, Talaba finished all of the windows of the Evergreen Lutheran Church.

Now, with a studio on the lower level of 279 S. Woodward, Talaba works in a wide variety of styles and methods,

from faceted to leaded glass, from art deco to traditional and modern abstract—and all areas between.

"The first thing I consider," he said, "is function, then architecture and decor, and finally what do the people want. This imposes a discipline on me that keeps my ego from running away with me."

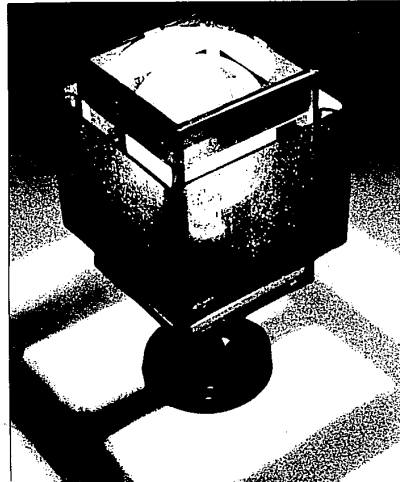
While the challenges are exciting, it is when things go right from start to finish that Talaba remembers with particular joy.

"When I make impossible cuts, when the glass literally flies into place—it's like ecstasy to work like that."

That's what keeps Talaba in this profession which started as a sideline and became all-consuming.



Mark Talaba considers himself an artist who works with light as his medium.



When he makes lighting fixtures, Talaba is as much concerned about the pattern created by the light through the glass as the shape itself.



Panel to be hung in a window has American blown Blenko glass, European blown glass and slabs of carnelian agate.

Bridge builders span top honors

Three Southfield-Lathrup High School students used bridges made of toothpicks to span all three top honors last Thursday at a University of Detroit bridge-building contest.

The three students placed first, second and third in the contest, beating out more than 85 other area high school contestants.

First-place winner is senior Donald Kirk, 18, who received \$18 for his win-

ning entry. John Hurite, 16 and a sophomore, took second place and the \$15 prize. Senior Mike Sweeney, 17, won third place and \$10.

The contest was sponsored by the student chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers as part of the university's 46th Annual Engineering Week. Object of the contest was to construct a bridge from toothpicks

that would hold the most weight in relation to the weight of the bridge.

The bridge built by Kirk held 2,092 times its own weight, while Hurite's carried 1,091 times its own weight. Sweeney's bridge withstood 1,059 times its weight.

School officials say it is the second time in three years that Southfield-Lathrup students have taken all prizes in the contest.

Strength of the bridges is determined by placing each over a 10-inch span and suspending a weight from the center. The weight is gradually increased until the bridge collapses. Then, the weight of the bridge is computed in relation to the weight it carried before breaking.

College students will compete in a similar contest Thursday.



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