

## **Adapt or Die**

As glass artisans, our problem is that low price (but respectable quality) imports have created the perception that stained glass (lamps or panels) are inexpensive. There is no such thing as real value - only perceived value. If the public perception is that stained glass is of low value (and the Chinese or Mexican stuff IS cheap) then that public won't be willing to pay the prices we expect. Glass artisans here that keep claiming the imports are inferior quality are self-delusional. If they think they'll be able to support themselves selling stained glass lamps or panels, they're living a fantasy. Let's be realistic folks. The market for domestically built stained glass is finished. It's not dying - it's dead. Yes, there will continue to be some demand for locally made stained glass - about as much as there continues to be a demand for blacksmiths.

However....I see this as more of a good thing than a bad thing. For far too many years, we've been so free of serious competition many of our businesses have become complacent - due and deserving to be driven to extinction. The problem isn't that people living in the countries we import from are willing to work too cheap, it's that people in our countries expect too much for too little effort - fed too much and work too little.

Adapt or die! Many will face extinction, but the survivors will be stronger, more versatile, and more profitable. My advice? Diversify into other disciplines. It's no longer sufficient to have stained glass skills. To survive in the future marketplace you need to learn kilnforming, torchworking, casting, sandblasting, painting, etc. etc.