

“Where Do I Start?” – Pattern Development

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Ever since I started teaching this art form hardly a student doesn't eventually ask such questions as;

- If I buy a pattern book and want to make one of the designs, then what?
- I'm artistic and want to draw up my own design, is that OK?
- When I blow up a pattern the line widths change, what do I do?
- I saw a picture of a piece on the internet that I want to make, where do I start?
- What about “Rapid Resizer”, GlassEye and others?
- Can I use my computer paint program to draw my designs?

Pattern Books These are great for ideas and inspiration but they are rarely exactly what you want. Either the design is just not “quite right” or the size & aspect ratios are wrong for your individual application. I recommend only using designs in pattern books as a start point for your design, unless you just plan to make a “sun catcher” panel that hangs in an existing window area.

Drawing My Own Design This is a great exercise and you can most definitely personalize your piece this way. The down sides are that no matter how hard you try to draw exactly, no two pieces of glass will ever be exactly the same, even though you want them to be, i.e. “mirror image” pieces. Secondly, since you will have only your one original you will have to produce copies of it to produce your pattern cartoons. An additional concern is simply finding paper large enough to draw your design on in one fell swoop.

Enlarging Patterns Many times people spend hours at a copier progressively enlarging a pattern copy that they have to meet their particular dimensional needs. When they do this, they find that the element lines get thicker proportionately. This is not a problem in itself if you remember to cut your individual cartoons allowing for an ideal piece to piece spacing, (around 1/16” gap if foiling, slightly more if you use came).

Internet Pictures Unless you are extremely adept in computer graphics I would suggest that you send the image to a stained glass professional and allow them to produce your pattern, etc. Most studios and stained glass supply stores will do this either for free, (for good customers), or for a nominal fee, at least that's what I do.

Stained Glass Computer Programs I have found most of the current programs being offered are fair at best. Both “Rapid Resizer” and “Glass Eye” tout their auto-trace capabilities, and both are lacking. If you can live with patterns that meet the “close counts” criteria then you'll be just fine but if you want to produce patterns and layouts that are exact, forget these. One redeeming

quality of “Glass Eye 2000” is the ability to offer colored concepts via manufacturers’ stock photos. This is basically useful only if you are a professional and want to submit a color concept with your bid. Basically, stained glass computer programs are approximate in their design capabilities and extremely expensive if you want something that is even fairly good.

Computer Paint Programs For anything short of basic concepts these “bit map” based programs are worthless as it relates to the stained glass art. I personally use AutoCad here for my design work, but even Corel Draw or another “vector” based program is far superior to “paint programs”.

My closing advice to any novice or home stained glass craftsman is to refine your design as much as you can and then get with a professional to finish producing your layout pattern and cartoon sheets.

As an aside, you may have noticed me referring to “cartoons”. This is the accepted name of those individual pattern pieces you cut out of paper to actually produce your individual pieces of glass. Regardless of what others may teach you regarding how this is time consumptive & not necessary, ignore them! **Do Not** however do as some suggest and attempt to merely lay them on your bulk glass and cut around the edges. This is a failure. Firmly hold your cartoon against your piece of glass and then neatly trace around the paper with a black felt marker. Then when you cut your piece, remember that everything inside this black line represents the exact size of the piece of glass you want. “Cut the black off”!