

Marguerite Gaudin: A Master Stained Glass Designer

Marguerite Gaudin was internationally famous as a stained glass designer for the Willet Studios.

Ms. Gaudin graduated in 1930 from the Philadelphia College of Arts, which in 1960 awarded her their distinguished Alumnae Award. She began her career doing freelance commission for the Curtis Publishing Company including a monthly cartoon for Jack and Jill Magazine called "Finney the Office Gold Fish".

In 1931 she joined the Willet Stained Glass Studios, then located on Wood Street. In a decade she became the principal designer for the studio. Working closely with Henry Lee Willet, she developed his concepts into magnificent scale drawings in both opaque and transparent color. During her sixty years designing for Willet Studios she created windows for hundreds of churches and secular buildings, located in all fifty states and five foreign countries.

Among her notable design achievements were the last six windows executed in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York City; the entire fenestration in the [National Presbyterian Church and Chapel, Washington, DC](#); six nave windows in Grace Episcopal Cathedral, San Francisco; façade windows for the St. Anselm's Meguro Church, Tokyo, Japan; and one of the largest dale de verre (faceted glass) installation in the world, the [30,000 square feet of glass for the Museum of Science](#), a permanent building constructed for the 1962-63 New York Worlds Fair.

She had a very wry sense of humor often introducing unusual but related themes into serious religious windows. One is a vignette of Schroeder the Peanuts Character, playing Beethoven on his toy piano, placed into a large music window featuring such musical luminaries as Palestrina, Luther, Bach, and Ralph Vaughn Williams.

Her last work for the studio was a window depicting the Arts of Man for Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church. It included portraits of Louis Comfort Tiffany, Henry Lee Willet and herself, representing the Art of Stained Glass.

While she was equally at home with both traditional and modern design, perhaps her most unique creation was the development of Mr. Willet's dream of a stained glass window that would be beautiful both day and night. Working with Mr. Willet, she combined colored glass with an overlay of lead sculpture flown with gold leaf creating the Willet Sculptured Gold

window. She not only designed the original sample panel but also the lumiere transparency for the "Glory Window" in the Westwood community Methodist church, Los Angeles, completed in 1951, the first example of this type of window in the country.

She was a director and vice president of the Willet Studios and the first Artist-designer member of the Stained Glass Association of America.

One of her greatest skills was the detailed art of calligraphy. She designed and made hundreds of illuminated commemorative scrolls for such notables as Presidents Hoover, Eisenhower, Nixon, Carter and Bush; Generals Omar Bradley and Douglas MacArthur, Statesmen John Foster Dulles and Ralph Bunche; as well as generations of Honorary Members and Fellows of the Stained Glass Association of American.

She had many exhibitions of her watercolors including solo shows at the Woodmere Art Gallery, The Philadelphia College of Art and the Philadelphia Art Alliance.

Marguerite died September 29, 1991 at her home in Philadelphia, PA.

Because the design style originated by Ms. Gaudin was so popular (and realizing that some of her windows would need repair in the future), Willet Studios has trained another designer and numerous glass painters in that style.