



Interview

Time for Tradition

Stained glass windows may be associated with churches and boast a rich history, but they remain as popular as ever even today, and make a delightful feature for the home.

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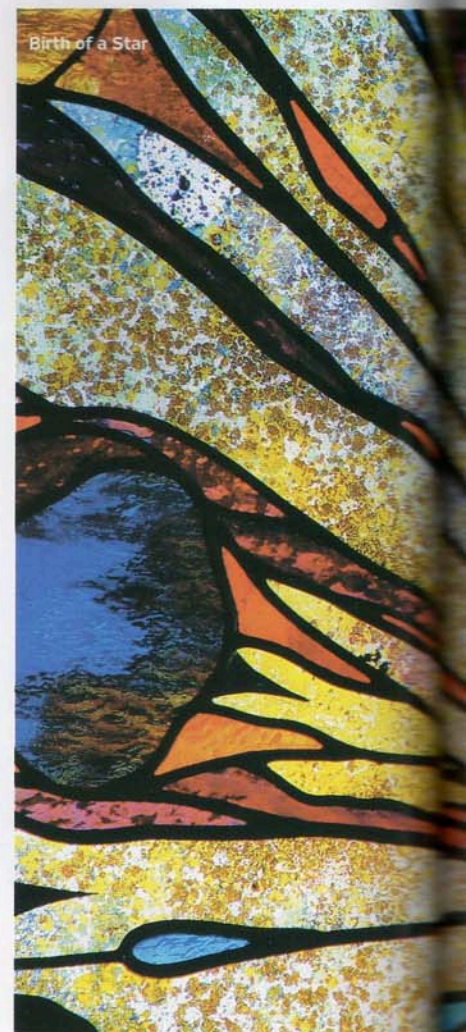
When you meet Kim Fitzpatrick, owner and master craftsman of Australian-based Tradition Stained Glass, you can't help but be impressed. The passion he has for his work is contagious, and as he shows me some of his intricate designs, it's pretty obvious that they are masterpieces in their own right. The work that has gone into even the smallest details is incredible and, as I look at some of his creations, it's clear why stained glass is undergoing something of a revival.

"In Australia our business is getting stronger and stronger," says Fitzpatrick. "We have

quite a presence and are busier than ever. Windows have become fashionable and we are constantly brainstorming new ideas. Our products are always moving with the times."

Fitzpatrick happened upon the stained glass industry by chance, even though his family has been in the business for two generations. He explains, "The company was founded by my great-grandfather in Holland in 1908. My grandfather took over in 1936 and then emigrated to Perth in 1952. I was living in Vancouver when I received a letter offering me an apprenticeship and a one-way ticket to Perth, so at the age of 17, I moved to Perth to follow my destiny. I apprenticed with my

Above from left: Tradition Stained Glass is an Australian company with over 100 years of experience in their chosen craft. Here we see some of their many available designs: Deep Water Dreaming, the Palace port hole window and Galactic Spin



grandfather, loved it, and worked alongside him for eight years." And indeed, the methods that Fitzpatrick uses today are based on what he was taught by his grandfather.

"We start by purchasing the best glass that we can find from around the world," says Fitzpatrick. "Once we have the glass, our creative team works on the design and hashes out a motif for a client presentation. After the meeting, we fine-tune everything and make a full-size, working drawing and hand cut every piece. We individually wrap the lead around each piece of glass, then solder every single joint. The window then goes to the putty shop where it is sealed and strengthened for security. Hours are spent polishing and cleaning the glass to ensure there is no residue. Finally it goes to the drying area for a week and is then ready for installation." Projects that Fitzpatrick has worked on

include a private residence in Singapore, the Hotel Lisboa in Macau, a chain of Irish hotels in Australia and the Western Australian Parliament, as well as a commercial one in Dubai. "For the Western Australian Parliament, the work was all Victorian to match the original windows that were built in 1890," says Fitzpatrick. "That project is dearest to my heart - when my children went on a school trip there, they saw my work and were so proud. Those windows will be there well into the future."

In Australia, a huge part of Fitzpatrick's work is making Victorian stained glass windows which, according to him, is due to the British influence. However, they also undertake several other architectural designs. "We accommodate a variety of design eras, including Art Nouveau and Art Deco. We also design a lot of contemporary architecture and



glass for modern buildings. In a nutshell we can design to any style of architecture." But whether you have a modern, cutting-edge home or a more traditional one, it seems that there are innumerable spaces where a stained glass window can be installed. "You can take an existing home to another level," says Fitzpatrick. "There is so much potential. Key places for a stained glass window include a grand front entrance or in domes, skylights and stairwells. They can also be incorporated into bathrooms, particularly ones in spas where people want to relax – the windows help create a mood and a relaxing point."

People certainly do fall in love with stained glass windows, and they do not have to leave them behind when changing residences.

"When customers move house, they can take the window with them," says Fitzpatrick. "We

can create the window within a frame so that it is easier to move it."

Some people invest in the windows as heirlooms and others choose a window for a corporate logo, which is what Dubai furniture manufacturer and retailer Mobilia, Fitzpatrick's partner in the UAE, did. For Mobilia's Al Barsha premises a striking, stained glass window with the Mobilia logo can easily be seen illuminated in the evening and has proved to be a huge attraction for passers-by as well as visitors to the premises.

Fitzpatrick aims to do a lot more work in Dubai. "I've been looking at Islamic art and new concepts, and my dream would be to design a stained glass window for a mosque," he says. With Fitzpatrick's amazing ability, this is something which is certain to happen in the not too distant future. ■