

Prairie Stained Glass and School of Craft's roots run deep. Planted firmly in the heart of Winnipeg's West End neighbourhood, the family owned and operated studio has served the local arts and crafts community for three decades. The business has thrived on change and breaking new ground while holding firm to its customer-centered values.

"We see ourselves as a one-stop shop," says Matthew McMillan, who manages the store along with his mother, Lucinda Doran. Since 1978, when Matthew's father Brian McMillan established Prairie Stained Glass, the store has evolved to include an extensive selection of glass art classes, custom commissions, repair and restoration work.

To accommodate its diverse offerings, Prairie Stained Glass recently conducted a series of exterior and interior renovations at its current space located at the corner of Sargent Avenue and Sherbrook Street. The expanded 9,000 square foot space offers an extensive inventory of materials for glass art hobbyists. The store is one of the largest retail suppliers of stained glass, fused glass and Art Clay Silver products in Canada. This includes 400 types of glass, as well as working tools such as glass cutters, soldering irons, kilns and more. Prairie Stained Glass is the exclusive Manitoba distributor of Dakota pottery clay and carries a full line of Spectrum glazes.

Prairie Stained Glass also publishes its own line of best selling stained glass pattern books; many titles are industry standards. With such a wide selection of glass, tools and books, glass artists and hobbyists can usually find what they are looking for. Of course, advice and expertise is available in abundance from the store's friendly, knowledgeable staff.

Prairie Stained Glass was the first stained glass store in Winnipeg to offer classes. Matthew acknowledges that over the past 30 years, stained glass and other glass art techniques have become "less of a vocation and more of a hobby. Because glass art is more user-friendly now, the results are more consistent," he adds. This move into the mainstream has led more people to take up glass art.

To accommodate this interest, Prairie Stained Glass offers a variety of glass classes throughout the year in its spacious, well-lit and well-equipped classroom areas. Classes are taught by staff as well as renowned local and international artists. "We look at our industry and bring in top people for a different perspective," Matthew says.

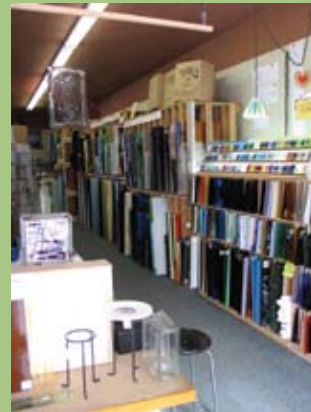
The store keeps its workshops fresh by including some of the latest art glass techniques in its course offerings. Glass fusing - a process of creating a glass design by fusing glass pieces together in a kiln - is one of the hottest trends, as is Art Clay Silver jewellery. More traditional craft workshops are available, including wood-carving, bead making, garden art, mosaics, copper embossing, decorative soldering, glass casting and stained glass.

No experience or artistic background is necessary for most classes, which are taught in a fun, friendly and relaxed atmosphere. "It's an all encompassing, therapeutic hobby," Matthew

Art of the Prairie

Local glass studio celebrates 30 creative years

By Leigh Patterson



notes. In the end, students end up with beautiful, one-of-a-kind pieces.

The store's sun-drenched, south facing windows showcase a wide range of high quality art glass pieces for sale, ranging from more traditional, representational pieces to contemporary designs. Prairie Stained Glass offers a full custom design service, creating dramatic decorative installations for residential, commercial and religious settings. The store's in-house glass artisans also work with interior designers and architects on specific projects.

To celebrate its anniversary, the store is offering ongoing specials and events throughout the year, including a glass art show May 26 to June 7, 2008 featuring works by their students. It's just another way to thank the community and the customers that have supported Prairie Stained Glass' creative ventures since its earliest days.

