

MEMBERS' NEWS



Museum of Stained Glass, Curzay-sur-Vonne, France

Paul San Casciani's feature in the autumn *Newsletter* prompted me to enthuse for a few lines about the Musée du Vitrail at Curzay in France. The museum is housed in a church in the village of Curzay, 15 miles from the historic city of Poitiers, itself well worth a visit to take in, amongst other treasures, the outstanding recently restored 12th century Crucifixion window in the Cathedral.

Founded in 1988, the museum offers a technical and historical guide to the production and design of stained glass. Every visit is accompanied and explained by a professional and informative guide – a person, not a book! The museum traces the development of stained glass from early claustra to contemporary work including dalle de verre and fusing and has some particularly fine examples from the 13th century and from the Art Nouveau period. The guided tour also provides a background on the production of antique glass and the techniques of stained glass making, amply illustrated by the artefacts and tools exhibited.

Apart from its permanent exhibition the museum organizes regular long-term exhibitions spotlighting a particular artist or theme. These are accompanied by excellent and informative catalogues. Recent Masters featured include Max Ingrand, Antonio Dias Ribeiro, Jean Mauret and an exhibition dedicated to women glaziers entitled 'Un siècle de vitrail féminin en France'.

The Musée du Vitrail, interior (left); an exhibition panel by Hideo Matsuda (right)



Why only a century? Because until 1899 French law expressly prohibited women from practising as master glaziers!

The museum is currently showing the work of Hideo Matsuda, a Japanese stained glass maker, in an exhibition entitled 'Le vitrail se leve à l'est', which runs till September. Matsuda, who is now based in France, came to stained glass more or less by chance when his application to attend art school in Italy was lost. The work exhibited shows distinct phases of his long career ranging from stark angular designs reminiscent of Jacques Gruber's industrial Art Déco pieces to delicate understated compositions strongly akin to traditional Japanese watercolours. There are also some ingenious and beautifully executed multilayered pieces.

The museum is also active in organizing competitions for publicly funded stained glass commissions to create innovative windows for historic French churches, and runs a training studio called La Maison des Verriers where a variety of courses are proposed for beginners and the more experienced in traditional and contemporary techniques. Tours usually include a visit to this workshop. A selection of publications as well as a wide range of stained glass and art glass items are available for sale in the museum shop. For more information visit the Museum's website at <http://www.museeduvitrail.com>.

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