

Note from JC: This page was written before digital cameras.

It was copied from the wonderful website called Preservation Briefs #33 by The National Park Service at <http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/brief33.htm#Photographing%20Stained%20Glass%20Windows>

Photographing Stained Glass Windows

Windows should be photographed with daylight color slide film and black & white film in both transmitted and reflected light. Significant windows should be recorded with a positive color film, such as Kodachrome, with a low ISO, since it is more stable, and images should be printed on Resin-Coated paper. Black & white images should be printed on fiber-based paper to be considered archival. Photographing stained glass from the interior is not difficult if a few basic pieces of equipment are used and if a few simple rules are observed. A strong tripod, shutter cable release, light meter, and camera with through-the-lens metering will make the job easier. The key is to photograph windows in even, moderate daylight with the interior dimmed (lights off and, if necessary, with the other windows covered). Although some stained glass is dazzling in sunlight, the camera lens and film react differently from the human eye, which can quickly equalize the high contrast of light and dark glass. Film cannot discriminate this intense contrast, and the result can be a washed-out exposure or "hot spots."

A light meter should be used to average out variations within the window, with special consideration for the focal point or most important feature of the window, such as a face. Since there is no precise formula for obtaining a balanced exposure, shots should be bracketed three to five shutter speeds up and down to find the best exposure. When photographing on sunny days, shoot away from the sun; shoot eastern windows in the afternoon, western windows in the morning, southern windows at either time, and northern windows at midday. The glass should also be photographed from the inside with reflected light from a flash (positioned away from the camera to provide a raking light and to avoid reflected "hot spots").



Stained glass is an exterior feature as well as an interior one. As part of any preservation project, it should be photographed from the

though photographing with a flash will neutralize the transmitted light and black out the glass, interior photography is valuable because it reveals the location and condition of the comes, braces, tie-wires, and other elements. Shoot the windows as centered and straight on as possible to minimize distortion and to keep the window frames from blocking details. Windows should also be photographed from the outside if there is no protective glazing to interfere with the view. This is particularly important with opalescent glass, which was often meant to be read from the exterior as well. As a final note, to photograph glass consistently well, it is essential to limit the variables (by using the same film, camera, and lenses), and to record the camera settings, to compare with the developed pictures and to adjust accordingly next time.