

Matthew Lanyon, *An Altarpiece for West Penwith*, stained glass panel, 2016



Matthew Lanyon, artwork for *An Altarpiece for West Penwith*

The glass used in these unusual panels is blown and made into flat sheets. Two types of glass, antique and flash, are used: in flash the colour forms a thin layer on top of clear glass and can be acid etched to produce colour gradients, whilst antique glass is one colour throughout. When each piece has been cut to create the design, each individual piece is worked on and then assembled into one whole artwork, and fired onto a clear plate glass panel in a unique process developed by Derix Studios near Frankfurt.

We meet at the studios to select individual pieces of glass, plan shapes and agree how certain colours will work with each other in a design. Each piece of glass is unique so the selection is crucial. Two specialist craftsmen and women then cut, arrange and work the raw materials to create Matthew's design at the studios. Each piece is carefully crafted over several weeks and the range of techniques used is enormous, from spray painting to etching and silk screening. Derix studios have been making stained glass panels for 150 years and made the stained glass Patrick Heron window in Tate St Ives.

Matthew's panels are designed mainly for best expression in the external walls of a building as windows and doors but as in the case of the *Altarpiece for West Penwith* in this exhibition, are also effective in ambient light against a window or installed in a partition wall inside a room. The Altarpiece was designed by Matthew in 2016, ordered by him, and then made in 2017 after his death. This exhibition is the first time it has been shown. The design is very similar to the Tapestry also shown in this exhibition and is a triptych or three-part panel which tells the story of a personal journey into an afterlife.

In the central panel is Penwith in the round, in the left panel a female figure reads with her book on her knee and a cat. The right panel holds an angel moving west and a horse's head in the space between left and central panels surrounds the tall figure of death. Beneath the engine house in the centre is St Ives Harbour; the Malakoff and Godrevy Lighthouse and two spools of a typewriter at the base form the eyes of a bull. Around the outside ships carry suns or days in a clockwise motion from sunrise to sunset.

More information about the six glass works that Matthew produced is available on his [website](#)

Judith Lanyon, 2017