

The Glenmorangie Window

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The Project

The project began as an invited competition where several artists working with glass, were asked to present ideas for the new window to be located in the stillhouse in Tain. The theme of the window was to be the signet used by Glenmorangie. This in turn is derived from the Hilton of Cadboll pictish stone.

It seemed appropriate that this window instead of being a traditional window, . The stone is a relief sculpture, so it seemed appropriate that the window should be too. I explored other artistic and technical possibilities but the relief was the best solution.

Instead of simply using the signet image, I decided to make a presentation keeping the signet as the central image but taking the border that surrounds it on all three sides bringing the top border of the stone down to become the top border of the window.

A visit to the Distillery was arranged and a visit to the new stone, a complete interpretation of the original stone by the sculptor Barry Grove, who I met on location there. The original stone, at least most of it, is in the Museum of Scotland.

The stone is wonderful and Barrie's version is astonishing

Since Barry made his stone, the base section of the original stone had been uncovered and I was able to see the original carving and figures in this area. I redesigned the side borders to work with this section. Barrie, very kindly" let me use his solution to the top section as he said he was fairly certain it is right.





The first concept was to make the panel in normal float glass which when slumped gives a wonderful silvery quality.

The concept was accepted , however with the proviso that I can make something happen with (what else) whisky colours.

So began a period of experimentation.

There are not many ways to colour glass. Either you begin with coloured glass and work with it, etch away the colour with acid or enamels can be painted on. In my opinion, neither of these methods were appropriate for this project. A third method would be to fuse glass together. This is what I chose to do.



This was the revised design I made showing how the colour in the centre would dominate the image and the borders would have a supportive role visually.

Here is also the inspiration for the project and the some of the first tests and samples that I made to ensure that the technique works.

There are few glasses which are compatible with each other and although you can fuse them, they would break apart and crack when cooling. I therefore decided to use the American Bullseye glass which is all compatible within the range.

I experimented to see what would happen and presented these samples to Glenmorangie. It was only after these samples were made that the project was awarded.





Although I had worked the whole of the drawings as a computer graphic and it worked perfectly for all that I needed to do on the small scale, when I enlarged the image to full size, I realized that I had to make a full sized drawing and that is what can be seen here.

From that drawing, I made tracings, and from these tracings, I began to make the forms.

It is quite a time consuming process.





Some of the stages of creating the forms.

These forms were the most important part of making this work, basically, these are the art work. I created a set of relief sculptures in a material that would withstand the firing temperatures needed to melt glass, over 800 C

This is a carbon fibre board that I cut and formed.



All the time that I was working on the main forms, I was creating samples to test and refine the technique, encountering and solving problems along the way.

Here can be seen a sample made from the large drawing seen in the background.

The glass I used to make the structure had to be tested. The sheets of glass have to have a certain thickness to allow much of the material to melt and flow in to the deeper areas.

This base glass had first to be melted together r.

I used 2 layers of clear 6mm glass fused giving me a sheet of 12mm.

For this sample panel, I used clear glass. I added some small amount of coloured frit into the form to see how this worked.

This base sheet of glass was then placed on the form here shown and fused.



The most important phase of making this work was in preparing the forms on which I would cast the glass. The window is made in 9 sections with the largest being 1.35mts, almost square.

I made all the forms at the same time but continually working with samples to refine the technique and to sort out technical problems such as the firing temperature curve needed. The windows must be heated in a certain way, and more importantly, cooled in a certain way.

These are just some shots taken in the studio as I was working.

The samples and the inspiration can be seen in the background.



Some views of me working in the studio.

I made the window min the Derix Studio in Taunusstein where I have made all of my work for a long time.

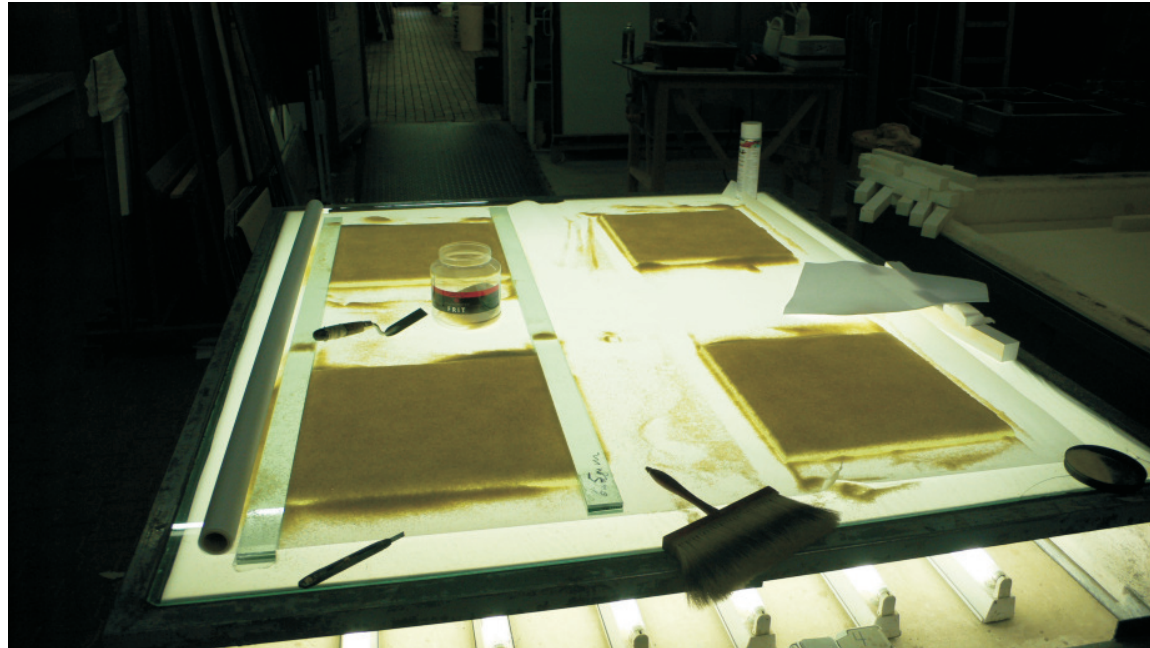
here can be seen how I worked on all of the forms until they reached the same level of finish before moving on to the next stage.

The drawings and some photographs taken from the original stone are in the background.

Although the stone from Barrie was the inspiration for the project, I went to the Museum of Scotland and took photographs from the original stone and worked from that as much as possible, just as Barrie did.

The photographs that are on the wall behind me are taken from the original stone. It was good to be able to see the recently excavated base section of the original stone and I used the spacings and same sense of drawing found in this section.





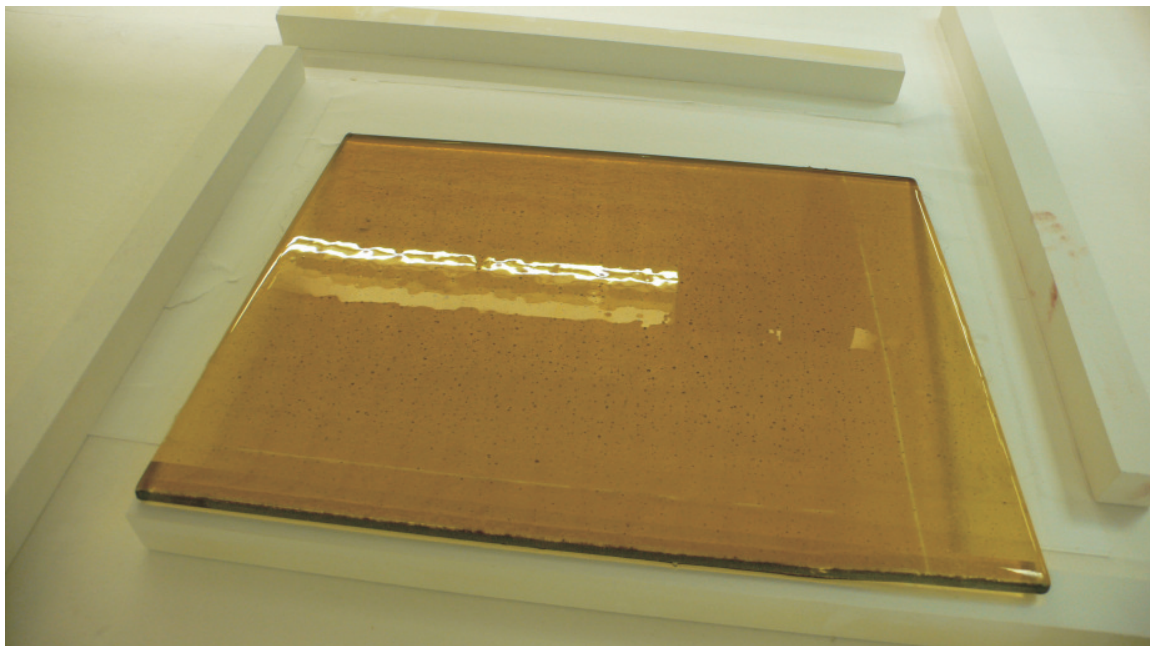
The base glass is being prepared with an amber colour on top.

At this stage, each section is a 12mm fused transparent glass.

This is a layer of frit, crushed glass, that has been spread evenly on the surface.

This is then melted together forming what will be the base glass part of the window.

This was all done in advance of the final firing. At this stage I was still working on the forms.

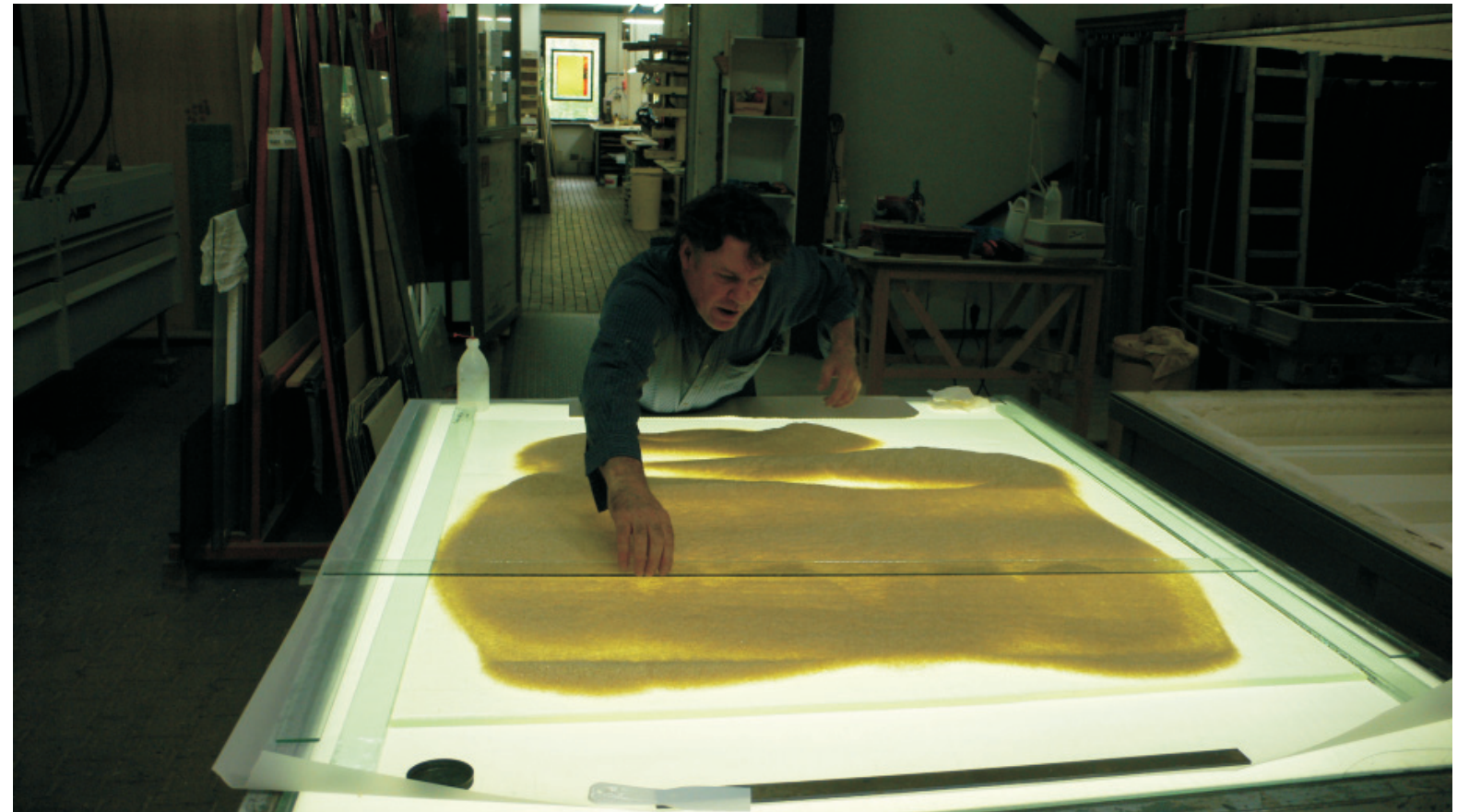




To make the final window more interesting, I also painted a structure onto the relief. That is what can be seen here.

The forms are now completed and must be left to dry out completely and then fired. Once they have been fired, they become much more vulnerable to damage, they are quite sensitive anyway.

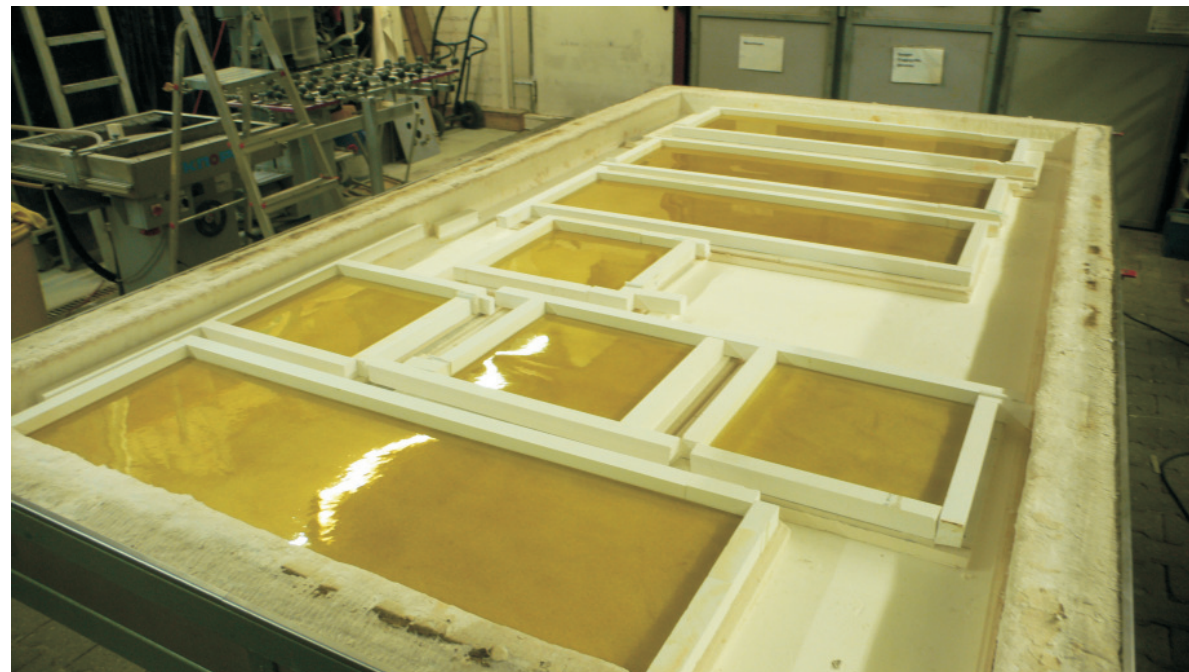
Once I put them in the kiln and fired them, I left them in the kiln and finished preparing them there.



Here, the finished forms are being filled with Frit while still in the kiln.

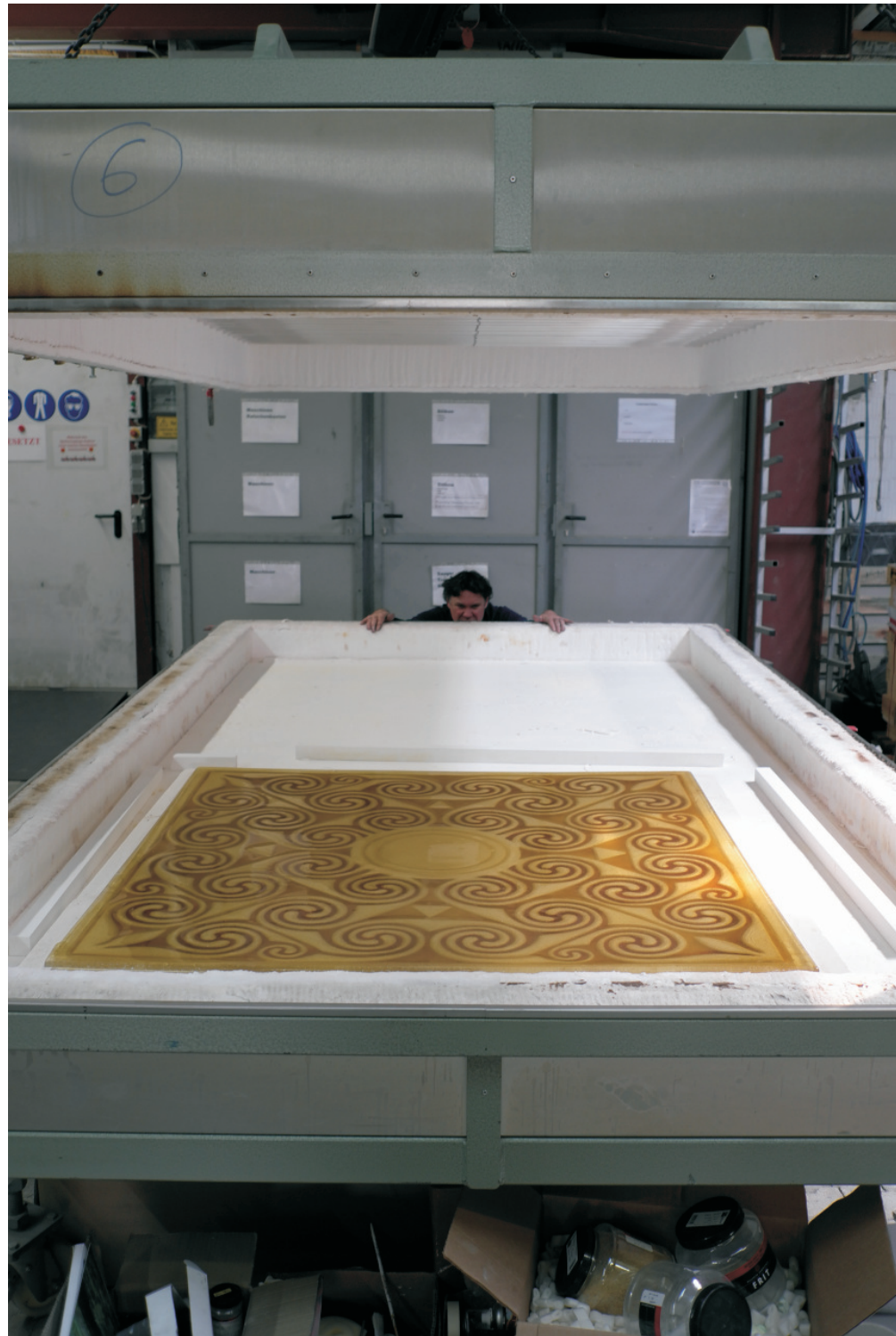
The large centre sheet of glass is being prepared with the coloured layer of frit and then was fired.

The firing and cooling process took around 18 hours and the kilns must be left closed until the almost at the ambient temperature.



Before and after fusing and removal from the kiln





The main section after firing and then after removal of what is left from the form.

As can be seen here, the form is completely destroyed in the firing process, making each section unique. If something goes wrong at this stage, then it would be back to the beginning and start over.

Nervous days and hours as the panels were fused.

The final stage, is just to wash the glass.



The work installed.

There was a long drive from Germany to Tain and then a long way up the scaffolding before the panel plopped into place.
The center panel weighs around 170 Kg.

I had also arranged for the frame to be manufactured and made the panels to fit that frame.

This is a unique and very special project.

It was a great pleasure to work on this project and I thank all of those involved at Glenmorangie for making it possible to allow me to develop this new approach to working with glass and to create this astonishing work.

As much as anything can be, this is a permanent work, it will not fade or change and should be part of this building for as long as whisky is made there.

More works of mine can be seen in my website

www.glasspainter.com



location of the window in the stillhouse

Part of the idea for having this window made, was that this room is sometimes called the Cathedral, so a special window in this location is quite appropriate.

