



# Preface

by  
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**S**tained glass windows are essentially about colour and communication - colour as communicated by natural transmitted light but changed by passing through the glass. They and the 'message' that they contain in their imagery are designed to impact, inform and delight the eye and mind of the beholder. Colour and impact have always been the hallmark of Rosalind Grimshaw's stained glass work. In 1983 she discovered that she had Parkinson's disease. Until then she had been a distinguished designer, artist and creator of stained glass windows - as well as mother of three. Since then, despite

*"The deeper he (the artist) looks, the more readily he can extend his view from the present to the past, the more deeply he is impressed by the one essential image of creation itself, Genesis, rather than by the image of nature, the finished product.*

*Then he permits himself the thought that the process of creation can today hardly be complete and he sees the act of world creation stretching from the past to the future. Genesis eternal!"*

Paul Klee

numerous difficulties, she has become even more distinguished, her immense activity culminating in her largest and, to many people, her finest window to date, the Creation Window in Chester. Ros has refused to let her illness prevent her from working. She says that the challenge has, paradoxically, brought about an intensely creative period in her life - if not the most creative in her entire career. The large window in the Refectory of the Cathedral in Chester - nearly 20 foot wide and over 15 foot high - shows a profound insight into the theme of the Creation and what it means in the new millennium. For each of the six 'Days' of The Creation as recounted in Genesis, displayed in the main lights, there is a scene below that is relevant to the world of today and tomorrow. The window serves as a reminder that The Creation is an on-going process in which man's responsibility in all his ventures amid the planet's precarious future becomes more pronounced as the years go by.

In this book we trace the evolution of the window from the first sketches submitted in the year 2000 through acceptance of Ros's proposal to the Service of Dedication of the completed window in the Cathedral. The window was designed and made mostly at Ros's home in Bristol with her partner Patrick Costeloe - apart from six weeks



when she was forced to be in hospital. Ros's admiration for the hospital staff knows no bounds; they helped her and her assistant Carrie convert her room on the ward into a design studio for that period. This stage in the window's evolution is an eye-opener to many of us - how to transform a potentially depressing time into a creative experience. Many contributed and all gained. The ward will never be the same again!

Ros kept a diary over the three months when the window was being made, including a series of charming sketches that described the work of the previous day together with comments and thoughts. Much of this is reproduced in this book. At the same time, a photographic record was made of the progress of the project. We see the huge life-size designs made from collage, the process of producing the 'cut lines', selecting and cutting the glass, connecting all the glass pieces with lead into panels and finally water-proofing them. The diary also records the comings and goings of friends and acquaintances as family life continues around the creation of the Creation Window.

Chester cathedral, alas, has no stained glass from the Middle Ages. Until the installation of the Millennium Creation Window in 2001 its

windows were an assortment of 19th- and 20th-century stained glass with a fine display of early 20th-century glass in the cloisters. More recent glass includes Carter Shapland's huge and somewhat brooding heavy west window with its figures and symbols set against a deep blue background, glazed in 1961, as well as Alan Younger's mildly 'explosive' trio of Westminster Windows of 1992 in the nave. However, Rosalind Grimshaw's 21st-century marvel in the Refectory plays with the light like no other window in the cathedral, possibly like no other in the country. It is a tour-de-force that utilises glasses of many different kinds and ages to illuminate The Creation as recounted by chapter one of Genesis. It also points to mankind's ever-increasing role and responsibility in the on-going process of the Creation that we call Evolution. It matches up in every way to what the cathedral asked for, namely "a work of art to be enjoyed" that has "meaning in itself which can be explained." This book is an attempt to explain the window, its making and its remarkable creator.

