

PASSAGE 2

Marc Chagall was a Russian-French artist well known for his paintings and works of stained glass.

Windows That Capture the Sun

by Anna Levine

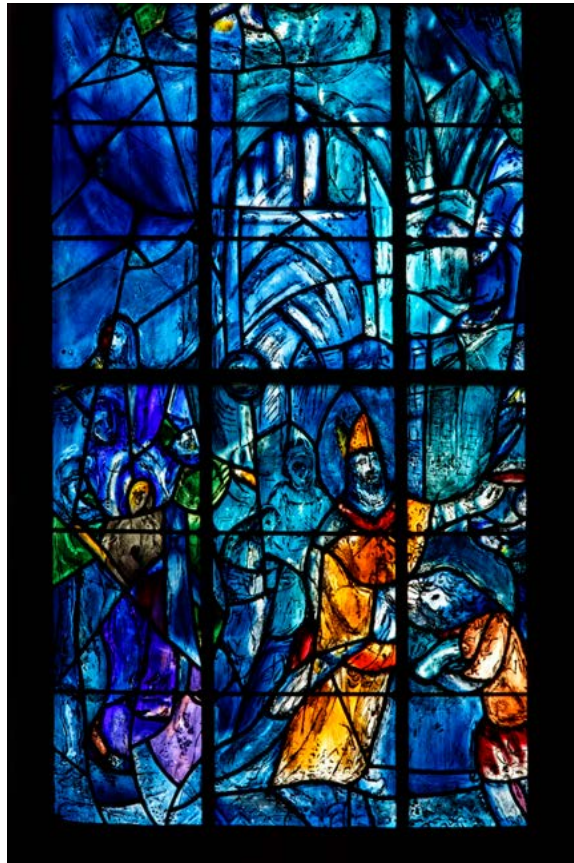
- 1) At the age of 70, the famous painter Marc Chagall discovered that by designing stained-glass windows, he could breathe bright color and light into his artwork.
- 2) “I *had* to make stained-glass windows. I had to get myself into daylight,” he said.
- 3) By the late 1950s, Chagall had already spent more than 50 years exploring the bold use of color. His paintings had made him famous and inspired countless artists. From then until his death in 1985, he created windows for churches, chapels, synagogues, and other buildings around the world.
- 4) Today, people still marvel at how his stained-glass creations flicker and change with the sun.
- 5) Born in 1887 in a Russian-Jewish town, Chagall started painting at the age of 19. He was frustrated by the neutral colors of traditional Russian art. He loved to paint with strong blues, reds, and yellows. In 1911, he moved to Paris, France. There, actors, writers, musicians, and artists from around the world were creating new art forms.

Bold Fantasies and Colors

- 6) Chagall learned new ways of painting but stayed true to his childhood memories. While others chose modern subjects, he painted scenes of fantasy and fairy tales based on an older, peasant-like way of life. Acrobats and green horses floating above rooftops, yellow skies, and red trees were all creations of his imagination. “My familiar sources remained the same,” he said. “I did not become a Parisian, but now the light came from the outside.”
- 7) Chagall lived through turmoil and tragedy. When World War I began in 1914, he happened to be in his hometown. He and his new wife, Bella, were not able to leave for Paris for nine years. Then, in 1941, because they were Jewish, the Chagalls had to leave France to escape persecution by the Nazis during World War II.

Drawn to Stained Glass

- 8) By the 1950s, Chagall’s life was calmer. The war had ended. He had returned to France. He continued to make his dreamlike paintings and was now world-famous.
- 9) One day, during a stroll through the French countryside, he discovered a beautiful chapel. He imagined replacing its walls with stained-glass windows. Some time later, in a 700-year-old cathedral, he saw a stained-glass window that contained a green donkey. It looked as if Chagall might have created it himself. Here was a sure sign, he thought, that he should create his own stained-glass windows.



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Stained-glass windows by Marc Chagall in a cathedral in the city Reims in France

10) He began collaborating with master glassworker Charles Marq. Many stained-glass windows are made of flat colors, but Chagall used various techniques to create the effects he wanted. He painted images on glass, then had them fired to high temperatures, making the lines and colors part of the glass. "Stained glass is not so easy," he once said. "You have to approach it as if you were trying to catch a mouse. Not in a cage. . . but with your hand. There are no foolproof methods, you either catch it or you don't."

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