

Christopher Wallis: Law in light and glass

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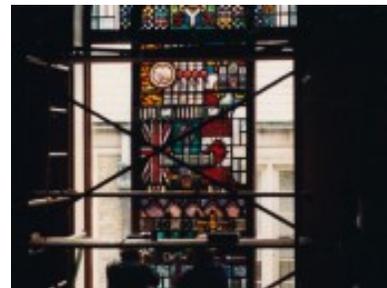
The window representing Canada's law societies was installed on May 26, 1988.

One of the celebrated stained glass windows framing Osgoode Hall Restaurant will have been installed 25 years ago on May 26.

Guests are invited to tour the space, also known as Convocation Hall, during this weekend's 14th annual Doors Open Toronto.

The windows, created by internationally renowned artist Christopher Wallis, are always popular among visitors.

Commissioned under the leadership of the late Lay Benchet Reginae M. Tait, the 10 windows were installed between 1986-9. Mrs. Tait proposed exchanging the clear-paned windows with stained-glass panels depicting the history of law in Canada.



Sponsored by individual lawyers, law firms and legal associations, each window depicts a development of Canadian common law using heraldic design, imagery and colour. Their shape and proportion reflect the neoclassical architecture of Osgoode Hall.

In a speech at the 1997 dedication of the window representing the Inns of Court, Wallis explained: “The uniqueness of the Convocation Hall stained glass windows lies in the fact that the heraldic details of their design-composition are woven into a total statement — an historical statement that spans a four-millennium passage of time in the history of law.”

Born in London, England in 1930, Wallis was educated at the Hammersmith School of Arts and Crafts. He served a four-year apprenticeship in stained glass at London’s Ecclesiastical Art Studios of Martin Travers and Lawrence Lee.

Wallis came to Canada in 1956. Since 1959, he has designed and created over 800 stained glass windows in Canada.

Wallis is among Canada’s most distinguished stained glass artists. His work is found across Canada, including in Ottawa’s Rideau Hall, Victoria’s Christ Church Cathedral and St. Paul’s Anglican Church in London, Ontario.

His work has been photographed by Yousuf Karsh, unveiled by Queen Elizabeth II, exhibited at Expo ’67 and at the Museum of Civilization.

He is a fellow of the Royal Heraldry Society of Canada and a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Art.

At the beginning of May, Wallis celebrated 50 years of work with a retrospective at his studio in Grand Bend, Ontario.

The windows in Osgoode Hall are as popular with Doors Open attendees as they are with Law Society employees, members of the judiciary and law students.

(Photo gallery follows below. Click to enlarge images.)



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