

FRANZ MAYER AND COMPANY AND ZETTLER STUDIOS

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The Franz Mayer and Company originally called Mayer'sche Kunstanstalt, was founded in 1848 by Joseph Gabriel Mayer.¹ Current brochures produced by Mayer list the founding date as 1847 and that "Five hundred craftsmen" were employed at the Mayer and Zettler studios.² Originally, Mayer produced altars and shrines followed by the inclusion of stained glass design work in 1865. Shortly after 1868, Mayer established window manufacturing.³ Franz Xaver Zettler graduated from the Munich Art Academy and began working for Mayer as a glass painter around 1863.⁴ After Franz Xaver Zettler married Joseph Mayer's daughter, he founded his own company called F.X Zettler and took over Mayer's stained glass production. The sales remained under the Mayer organization until Zettler formed his own sales force, which resulted in a disagreeable split between the two organizations. In 1873, Mayer developed their own window-manufacturing group, which competed with Zettler until 1939, when they joined forces again.⁵ The combined companies were renamed Franz Mayer'sche Hofkunstanstalt und Glasmalaerej.TM

Mayer and Zettler became known for their "Munich Style" windows, which were installed in "more than 100 Cathedrals worldwide including St. Peter's in Rome."⁶ Both the Zettler and Mayer studios were greatly assisted and supported by King Ludwig of Bavaria, who encouraged the liturgical revival of mural and glass painting during the nineteenth century. Without question both firms had astute businessmen who developed aggressive marketing strategies oriented specifically for the English speaking countries throughout the world. Various catalogs were printed in English for the North American, Australian, and New Zealand clients. Over the years, both organizations received many awards and commendations.

Pope Leo XIII granted the Mayer'sche Hofkunstanstalt the title of 'Pontifical Institute of Christian Art' and Pope Rus IX awarded a gold medal to F. X Zettler. King Louis II of Bavaria awarded the order of St. Michael and the title, 'Royal Stained Glass Institute' to F. X Zettler. In 1910, a book was written by Dr. Josef Ludwig Fischer by the title of 'Vierzig Jahre Glasmalkunst' (Forty years of Stained Glass Painting) of the Royal Bavarian Stained Glass Institute F.X Zettler¹ that is no longer in print.^{ix}

Thousands of windows were exported to North America. Mayer's figurative windows were enormously popular throughout Canada and the United States. Mayer established a New York office during the "mid-1870's and Zettler followed suit at a later time." All sales were routed through the New York office up until World War II. Between Mayer and Zettler, huge numbers of windows were shipped to the United States and Canada during the late nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries. Due to their competitive prices and responsive business practices, Mayer continued selling windows up to and through the Great Depression. During World War II, Mayer lost their properties in Munich as a result of the allied bombings. Both the British and United States governments confiscated Mayer holdings in London and New York City. The only records of orders in existence following the war were those housed in the New York office. Several volumes of order books dated from 1888 to 1933 were returned to Mayer by the United States government in 1988. These volumes have served as the only records available to trace where Mayer windows were installed in the United States and Canada. In 1950, Mayer received an order for two hundred windows for the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Newark, New Jersey. Most of Mayer's postwar work, however, concentrated on conservation and restorations within Germany.

Today, Mayer still produces stained glass windows and is headquartered in Munich, Germany with a sales office in Fairfield, New Jersey. The company is now called Franz Mayer and Company and emphasizes the concept of "art in architecture".¹ Examples of their modern glass is found throughout the world. Mosaics and stained glass ceilings were installed at Pfizer Pharmaceuticals World Headquarters in New York City and a glass tent was designed and installed in Riyadh's Diplomatic Club."

Most of the windows located within in the San Francisco Bay Area were ordered and installed during the late nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries. These windows are considered of the "older style" typical of those produced by Mayer for European clients during the nineteenth century. These windows were popular because of their high quality and beautifully rendered narrative themes. Stylistically, Mayer's windows tend to contain richly colored scenes bordered by architectural frames consisting of pilasters, columns, architrave and elaborate canopies. The frame treatments within the windows vary according to the structure and tastes of each church. Commonly, the lower portions of the windows have richly bordered panels. These architectural frames and panels are derived from directly from medieval stained glass models. Within the frames are narrative scenes based on the life of Christ or Old Testament stories. Frequently, many parishes ordered individual windows portraying Saints, Apostles, and Old Testament figures.

Mayer and Zettler windows contain more than the obvious pictorial themes. The thematic intent of both Mayer and Zettler windows is meant to *remind* the viewer of Biblical teachings. This is an important point, because many people assume that nineteenth and twentieth century stained glass was created in order to *educate* or *teach*. For those who are familiar with Christian symbology, the windows contain a rich array of ecclesiastical vocabulary. Frequently, saints are shown with their personal symbols. St. Peter, for instance, is shown with the keys to heaven. St. Luke is seen with an ox, as a reference to his gospel that begins with a sacrifice. A winged loin is associated with St. Mark. Specific flowers like the white lily is used frequently either to represent purity or as a reference to the Virgin Mary. Roses likewise represent Mary with red roses alluding to her great despair or perhaps a reminder of her heavenly bliss. Cypress trees are meant, as references to death while the palm trees are associated with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Christ's halo is generally a cruciform halo and Mary's halo sometimes contains stars as a reminder of her status as Queen of the Heavens. Mary is uniformly youthful and displays a sweet expression on her face. The apostle, John, is rendered as a young man with flowing hair, while Saint Peter is always the oldest looking apostle. The complex and romantic iconography utilized by Mayer and Zettler was intended to enhance the spiritual experience of the viewer.

Mayer and Zettler narrative window designs are rendered in a Romantic style reminiscent of the religious paintings produced by the early nineteenth century Brotherhood of Luke painters. More commonly referred to as the Nazarenes, these German painters combined the detailed technique of the northern European masters like Albrecht Durer with the more sensual and idealistic styles of the Italian Renaissance Masters. Johann Friedrich Overbeck, as a founding member of the Nazarenes, is regarded as the spiritual and artistic center of the movement. He and the other members of the group preferred to express feelings over reason believing that true spiritual art was attainable only through the emotions. These feelings were based on a mystical interpretation of Roman Catholic religious ideals. They felt that religion and art were joined by God. Despite the influence exerted by Overbeck, most historians credit the Bible illustrations created by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (a member of the Nazarenes) as the basis for a majority of the designs produced by both Mayer and Zettler. The Nazarene's religious dedication to an artistic ideal earned recognition for Germany and established a tradition for religious art that would be emulated by the Pre-Raphaelites in Britain. The glass artists of Mayer and Zettler combined the thematic piety of the Nazarene painters with Raphael's gentle Madonna paintings from the Italian Renaissance. This may well account for the pervasive sweetness attributed to Mayer glass of the nineteenth century. The Mayer and Zettler designs typically exhibit additional characteristics both in the figures, fabrics, and backgrounds. Christ, saints, heavenly hosts, and ordinary people are attired in jeweled tone and richly embroidered fabrics. Backgrounds contain intricately woven tapestries and finely laced cloths. Throughout the narrative scenes are lush plantings and a multitude of flowers each so well rendered that botanical identity is possible. The abundant landscaping is reflective of the Romanticist's belief that nature can be the source for the spiritual experience.

Authentication of which artist created what window is very difficult. One can certainly observe different hands, but again the records were destroyed. Cartoons were frequently reused and rearranged further complicating authorship. Records exist that indicate that an English artist, William Francis Dixon, worked for both Mayer and Zettler."¹" Since hundreds of artists and designers were used, it is rare that any of them actually signed their windows. In fact, not all Mayer or Zettler windows are signed with the company seals. Most structures that contain Mayer or Zettler windows have only one

or two windows with a company logo. Many times windows are completely lacking signatures and one must rely on the iconography and style characteristics as identifying factors. Some American glass studios were known for replacing Mayer panels with their own and readily taking credit for the entire window. Frequently, windows thought to be produced by Mayer and Zettler turn out to have been manufactured by German immigrants in the Chicago area. Naturally, these types of practices add to the confusion of identifying windows. Where possible, parish records can reveal the origins of the stained glass windows.

The Mayer and Zettler windows located within the San Francisco Bay Area are high quality, extraordinarily beautiful testaments to the dedication exhibited by the churches, convents, temples, and mortuaries who planned for and raised the money to install Mayer and Zettler windows. It is remarkable that right that here our own backyards are works of art on the same level as European stained glass. As I continue the saga of writing my thesis during the fall and spring semesters, many new and exciting facts are certain to arise. The generous support and positive assistance provided by all the churches in the San Francisco Bay Area who have either Zettler or Mayer windows is greatly appreciated. Without your help this thesis is not possible.

¹ Barbara Meise Kassis. "A Biographical summary of Franz Mayer and Company and F. X. Zettler." Based on interviews with Mr. Adalbert Mayer and Dr. Gabriel Mayer, 28 December 1981.

^u Franz Mayer and Company. "150 Years-Franz Mayer of Munich Stained Glass, Mosaic-1847-1997." Brochure.

"Kassis.

" Shirley Ann Brown. "The Influence of German Religious Stained Glass in Canada 1880-1941," XXI (January/February 1994): 30.

^v Kassis, 1.

"Kassis.

TM Virginia Raguin. "Historical background of Franz Mayer and the Bavarian tradition of stained glass at St. Mary's Church, Milford." Author's speech notes.

TM Franz Mayer and Company.

* Kassis.

" Shirley Ann Brown, 22.

^H Franz Mayer and Company.

TM Franz Mayer and Company.

** Shirley Ann Brown, 30.