

ACRYLART

FAQ's

What is 'Acrylart'?

'Acrylart' is art that hangs in a window instead of on a wall. When people see it, they assume it is stained glass, but I have made my "stained acrylic" with museum-grade clear sheet acrylic, lead, glass embellishments and glass paints.

I've never seen this before – Is it new?

It's relatively new – the adhesive lead has been around for about 50 years now & different techniques for adding texture & colour to plain glass have been evolving. I've been creating in this medium since 1991-92, and spend most of my time at shows educating rather than selling! It still appears to be new to most Canadians, but the British are much more familiar with it, as it is much more prevalent over there.

Is Acrylart just decorative or can it serve any useful purpose?

Mostly, it's just pretty to look at. But I've discovered two important side benefits: Privacy & Security: I often design windows for privacy – they can be designed such that you cannot see anything but light through them – I have many Happy Customers who can wander about naked in their homes now, where before they would have been in full view of their neighbours! (And they no longer need curtains or blinds!) A permanently installed window can also add security in that the acrylic would be VERY difficult to break through, if it is securely fixed around all edges.

Why do you use acrylic rather than glass?

Lightweight (shockingly so!). Unbreakable (or darn close to!) Easy to install. UV protected & UV filtering. Shippable. No waste in materials. But most of all: **UNLIMITED DESIGN POTENTIAL! It's SO much fun to design for!**

Your designs are so unique – what inspires you?

Thankyou! You name it: Mostly it's Nature that inspires me, but it is amazing what can spark an artist's imagination – everything from a shampoo commercial on TV, to all the wonders of heaven & earth, and all the dreams & fantasies in-between! Good luck with your own – remember, we are all amateurs at some point!

What is 'Decra-Led'?

It's an extruded (99.9% pure) lead strip with an adhesive backing. You reel it off the roll like scotch tape, finger tack it into place, and then squish it with a 'boning' tool to mold & seal it into its' permanent place. The lead is malleable, the adhesive is guaranteed for 'ten years or the life of the window' (even outdoors!), so once it's molded into place it should not move.

Isn't lead poisonous?

Yes, if you eat it. LEAD IS POISONOUS only if ingested: Keep out of reach of children and wash hands thoroughly with soap & water before and after handling. Because I work with it daily, I practice all cautions, and my blood lead levels remain at the low end of the 'normal' spectrum.

What kind of paints do you use?

Commercial grade, solvent-based, UV protected glass paints. Because of their toxicity while drying, they are not available to the general public. One needs to be properly protected (sealed ventilation system & mask) before even opening a bottle!

Does Acrylart fade?

UV Stability: Both paints and acrylic are UV stabilized. However, in 1997, I did have a paint/pigment failure (in a paint which I no longer use) after 4 years in a south facing window and as a result, since then, I have switched to a Museum-grade (UF5) UV-filtering (98% UV-A & B) Acrylic and continue to guarantee my work 100%: If properly installed (with painted, textured side facing indoors) on the indoor side of an existing window, the acrylic will never yellow or craze and the paints are guaranteed non-fading.

Where do I install it?

Usually on the indoor side of an existing window or door – my work is designed to enhance the natural light coming into your indoor space. The joy of having it in a window is that it looks different every hour of the day, as the light conditions change.

On a wall – like any other piece of art!

On a Mirror.

How is it installed?

In a Window: Screw in two (or three or four, if any dimension is over 24") cup hooks into the top frame of the window & attach Acrylart with a few links of chain. It should hang 2-4" away from the indoor surface of the window (leaving enough room for air circulation will avoid condensation problems in winter.)

Suction cups (good ones!) will hold small pieces, and transparent fishing line can also be used, but cups & line are subject to UV deterioration & need to be regularly tested & replaced.

On a Wall: install something like a decorative curtain rod from which to hang the Acrylart by a few links of chain so that it hangs away from the wall, so that you still get a sense of depth when you see through it. Mounting Acrylart flat on a wall will result in a great loss of texture caused by the way light refracts & reflects through it – and of course, the colour of the wall you mount it on will have a great effect on its appearance!

On a mirror: Acrylart looks great hung directly on a mirror – just hook the chain over the top edge of the mirror & enjoy! Before adding the additional weight to your mirror, however, make sure the mirror is solidly & properly installed first!

Permanent or fixed installations, ie. On a door or operating window (every door is different, even so-called 'standard' ones!): Leave the acrylic panel 'room to move', as its' expansion coefficient is considerably more than glass, and temperature changes will warp it if the fit is too tight. 1/8" on all sides is usually sufficient (any dimension over 4' may need more space). If surface mounting, mirror clips can be used (again – leave the acrylic room to move!). Silicone sealant is NOT recommended. NEVER nail or screw through the acrylic – it WILL crack! If an air-tight seal is desired, use a top-quality 'peel & stick' ribbed rubber draft seal tape (do not stick it to the acrylic; stick it to whatever trim etc. you are layering against the acrylic), again leaving the acrylic 'room to move'! Pre-paint all trim before installing it around an acrylic window because paint, masking tape adhesive (or attempted removal of either) will damage the surface of the acrylic. Most modern steel doors have a vinyl trim which can be easily removed on the indoor side, a panel inserted directly on the thermal pane glass, and the trim re-installed with draft seal tape. CAUTION: Tampering with a door or window will probably void the manufacturer's warranty!

Detailed installation instructions are included with the Owners Manual which comes with any larger piece (any dimension over 2').

SAFE HANDLING: Although an acrylic panel will break only under extreme conditions, its' surface can be easily scratched or damaged so: **TRANSPORT** (topload only) & **STORE ACRYLART** in its' original white coroplast card (standing upright on its' folded edge), until ready to install, and: **HANDLE BY EDGES ONLY!**

ALWAYS INSTALL WITH PAINTED SIDE FACING INDOORS
OTHERWISE COLOUR FASTNESS GUARANTEE WILL BE VOID

Are there instances where you do NOT recommend acrylic over glass?

Yes!:

Acrylic scratches more easily than glass, requiring proper handling during transport and installation. Once installed, a soft damp cloth is all that is needed for cleaning. I do not recommend acrylic for installations like kitchen cabinet doors, because that type of use requires regular cleaning & the acrylic will eventually begin to show wear in the form of fine scratches.

Acrylic is also a combustible material, which is why you should NEVER see it associated with any heat source (ie. lampshades or fireplace screens). When backlighting an acrylic panel, only cool light sources (ie. fluorescent, rope, led) should be used.

Humid areas, such as bath/shower rooms that steam up – see '[Keep Dry](#)' below. A good quality exhaust fan is usually sufficient for removing humidity.

Acrylic will also not wear weather & temperature extremes very well, so is not recommended for outdoor applications. Outdoor conditions will void all warranties.

The expansion coefficient of acrylic is much more extreme than glass (it shrinks in the cold & expands when hot). This is why the best installation method is to free-hang it indoors & why it cannot be easily sealed with glass (see [How to Install](#) above).

Some of my designs (a good example would be 'Another World' (see photo gallery) are not recommended for Hot windows (ie., South or SW facing) because the sun will cause different expansion factors between the differently coloured areas (rich dark colours absorb more heat) and the piece will warp while in the sunlight. For a cute story, see 'Mother Earth'! (coming soon)

Do you accept commissions?

Yes. At least ½ of what I do is commissioned work. I enjoy commissions because they are usually new & challenging!

How much do you charge?

The price of most commissioned artwork usually ends up falling between \$100 to \$130 / sq. ft. However, prices have ranged from \$50 to \$175 / sq. ft., depending, obviously, in how much work goes into each square foot! Most (95%?) of my work is one-sided, meaning the paint & lead are applied to the side that you look at from indoors. If you want it to look the same on both sides, I will flip it over and lead the back side as well. The only time this is necessary is when the work is being closely examined on both sides, such as in a front door, or a room divider screen.

Two-sided work will add 30% to the price/sq. ft.

Care & Cleaning:

CLEAN ONLY WHEN NECESSARY: Wipe or dust gently with a hot, damp (not wet) SOFT cloth. NEVER USE ANY CHEMICALS! Greasy fingerprints can be removed by using a drop of liquid dish detergent in the hot water you rinse your soft cloth in. If cloth is wet enough to leave any water residue, follow with a dry soft cloth to remove water marks before they dry. KEEP DRY: Humid or wet conditions will oxidize new lead too quickly, resulting in a powdery, dull gray or white residue rather than a slow (3 - 10 years) darkening to a dark gray shiny patina. Humid or wet conditions can result in an undesirable residue (lead carbonate) which can be accidentally smeared onto the acrylic surface during cleaning.

Do you teach classes on how to make Acrylart?

No. The paints I use are solvent based & therefore quite toxic until they have dried (about 7 days). I have a sealed & separately ventilated painting room with a huge, noisy exhaust fan, & I wear a mask while painting. I will not (cannot) teach under these conditions, so I refer prospective students to [Romie](#), who teaches with water-based paints, to learn the basics. 98% of my techniques are self-taught (ie. 'discovered') anyway! During my [Studio Tour](#), I set up a series of pieces in different stages of production, so visitors can see what goes into my work. Visitors to my [Studio](#) or any of the shows that I do (see show list) often get an impromptu explanation/demonstration as well!

Do you sell the supplies?

Nope... I only sell my art & the occasional permission to use my designs.

So where can I get them?

Acrylic, cut: [Canus Plastics](#), 300 Lisgar St., Ottawa, (613)232-2657
Acrylic, sheet (4x8'): GEPolymer Shapes, 1250 Old Innes, Ottawa, (613)745-7043
Lead: [North Western Lead Company Ltd.](#), Newton Moor Industrial Estate, Mill Street, Hyde, Cheshire, England, UK., SK14 4LJ Telephone: +44 (0) 161 368 4491 Facsimile: +44 (0) 161 366 5103 Email: decaled@decaled.co.uk
Paints: Most craft store glass paints are only recommended for playing with, not for permanent works, but they're a safe way to learn. The best quality readily available glass paint that I can recommend is by 'Pebeo' and is available at fine art stores such as [Wallacks](#).