NOVEMBER 18, 1996

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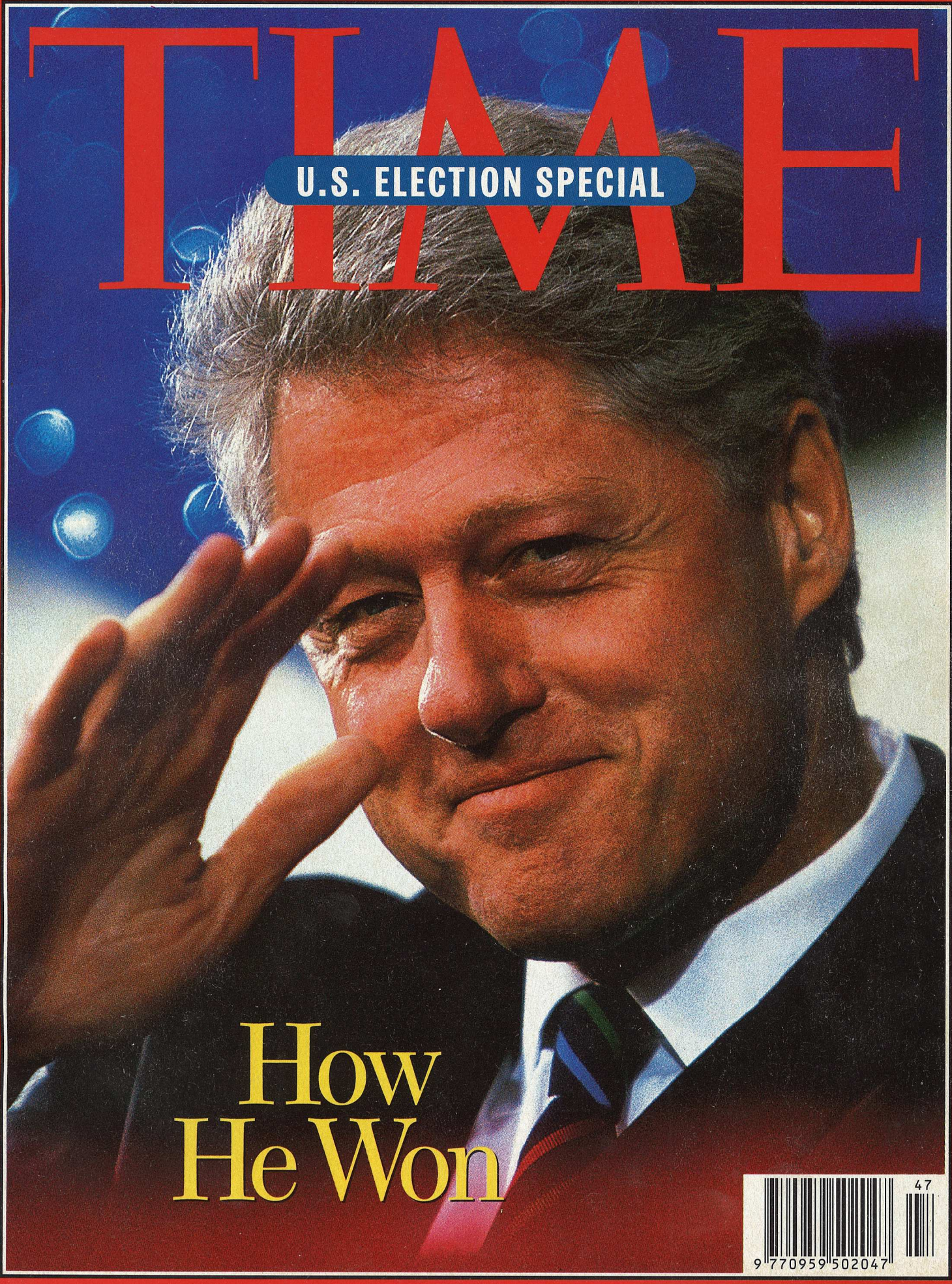

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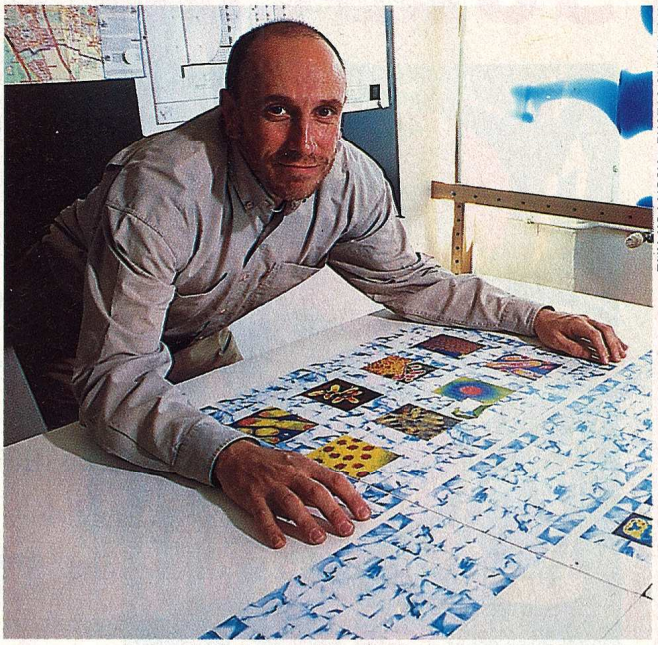
COVER: *Photograph by Diane Walker for* TIME
Bill Clinton after his re-election to the U.S. presidency

GREG GIBSON—AP

Joyful Noise: Clintons enjoy victory fireworks (*see* COVER)



WOLFGANG STECHE—VISUM FOR TIME

Art of Glass: Brian Clarke aims to dazzle (*see* ARCHITECTURE)

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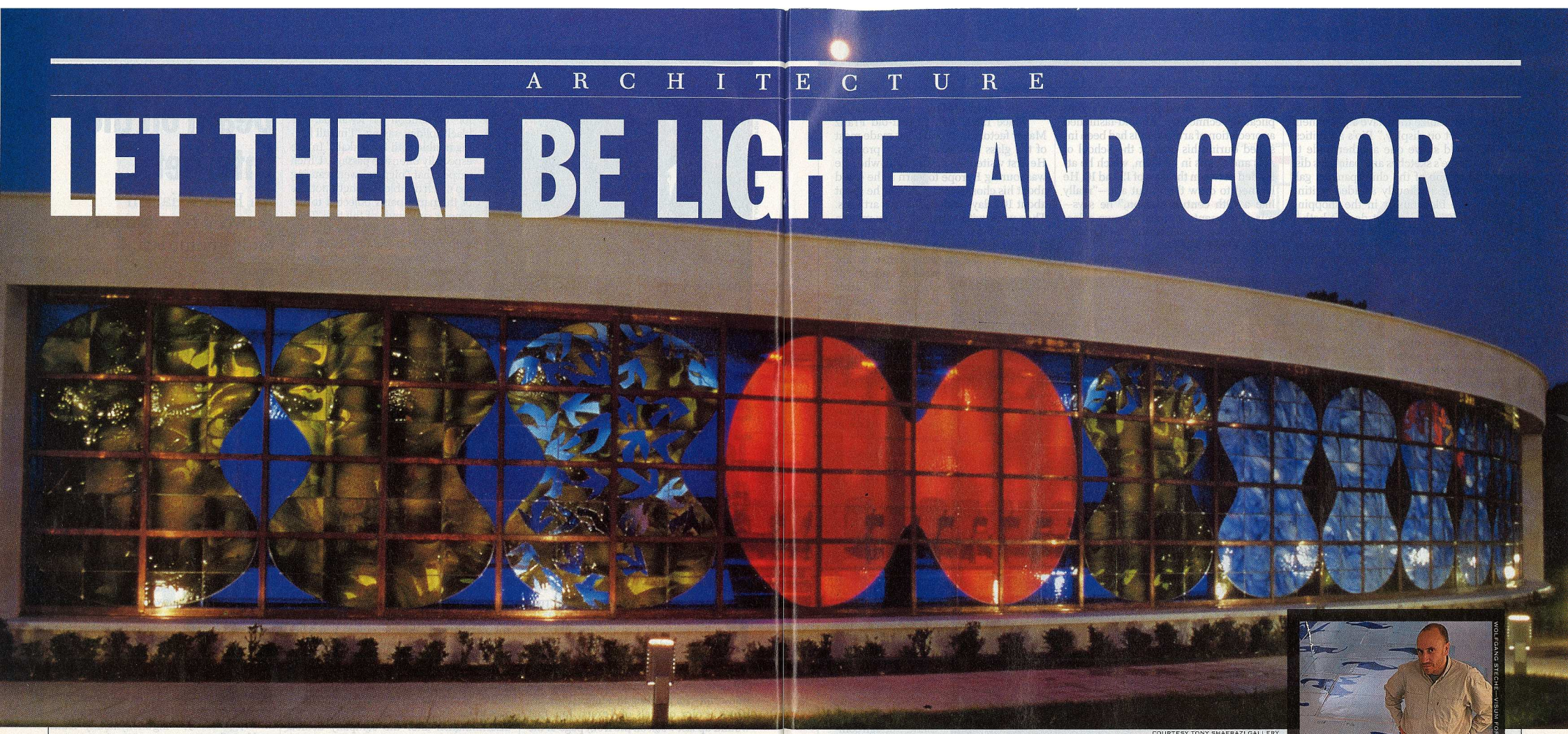
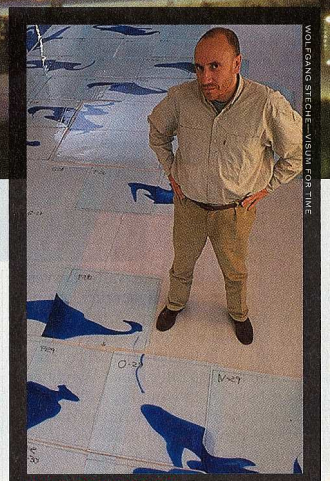
LET THERE BE LIGHT—AND COLOR



COURTESY TONY SHAFRAZI GALLERY



WOLFGANG STECHE—VISUM FOR TIME

HANDLED WITH CARE For the entrance to a new sunlit resort in Apulia, in southern Italy, Clarke, inset, designed shimmering vaselike forms

British artist Brian Clarke's architectural stained glass brightens the world

By EMILY MITCHELL

BRIAN CLARKE CAN PINPOINT THE moment when his future as an artist took a decisive turn. He was 15 and an art student, gifted but undirected, in his British hometown of Oldham in Lancashire. One of his teachers returned from a Roman holiday with photographic slides of Renaissance works, capturing in his shots people and sections of buildings as well as the masterpieces. The Lancashire lad who had never traveled as far as London was stunned by the monumental scale of paintings such as Raphael's *The School of Athens*. "I had no idea it was a huge wall and that people could walk in front of it," he recalls. "It had an extraordinary effect. I felt kind of sick with excitement. I think if I hadn't seen those slides I maybe would have gone off in a totally different direction."

Awakened to the ways that art can be an integral part of a building and transform its atmosphere, the teenager started studying old structures with stained glass and mosaics, and observed how contemporary architecture virtually ignored the two ancient forms. That has changed now—and largely because of Clarke, who at 43 is the world's foremost stained-glass artist, working closely with renowned international architects. Britain's Sir Norman Foster, who has collaborated with Clarke on five projects (including London's third airport, Stanstead in Essex, 1991), calls the stained-glass specialist an "exceptional, bold talent with an ability to stand by his convictions in an extraordinary range of different locations."

Clarke's glowing windows and ceilings are incorporated into buildings of dizzying diversity all over the world. Atop the 1988 Lake Sagami Country Club in Yamanishi, Japan, is an elegant tower of vibrant glass panels that glow at night like a beacon in the darkness. He adapted repetitive Islamic patterns into his skylight and clerestory for the 1982 mosque at King Khaled International Airport in Riyadh. Mondrianesque grids in the blue-and-white windows for the New Synagogue (1988) in Darmstadt, Germany, convey tranquillity and reverence that contrast with three fire-colored windows he installed along one wall to memorialize the Holocaust. More than anything, notes New York City gallery owner Tony Shafrazi, "Clarke is involved with the magic of stained glass, its luminosity."

Historically, stained glass was almost entirely reserved for ecclesiastical spaces. "It is my mission to bring it kicking and screaming out of that milieu," says Clarke. By all accounts, he has accomplished that mission—with unmistakable style. Two recent projects show his genius in the separate worlds of the sacred and the mundane. With a solemn liturgy, Cistercian nuns in Romont, Switzerland, dedicated the jewel-like windows he designed for their tiny 14th century abbey. The dignified ceremony in August contrasted with the exuberant display in Brazil last May of Clarke's $6 million sweeping array of skylights—more than 1,000 sq m of glass and 50 sq m of mosaics at NorteShopping, a giant mall that was rebuilt in a working-class section of Rio de Janeiro.

The Brazilian opening festivities brought out nearly 100,000 Cariocas, who spent much of their time craning their necks, admiring Clarke's brilliant greens and blues—inspired by the Amazon and evoking the gaiety of Carnivale. "It was incredible," says Waldir Martin, president of NorteShopping's merchants' asso-

ciation. "People would stop and stare. Now they realize they have a permanent work of art on display." Rio's art critics, who would shove one another aside to view Clarke's sketches and paintings displayed in one of the chic Ipanema galleries, have studiously avoided writing about the blockbuster in the shopping center, an omission that doesn't bother Clarke. "Art should be in the streets, in public places," he says. "If the project excites me and people use the building, then I'll do art in a sewage plant."

No project is too big—or too little—for Clarke. The 747-sq-m canopy over the Edwardian-style Victoria Street in Leeds is Britain's largest stained-glass work, and his spectacular sets for Paul McCartney's 1989-90 and 1993 world tours traveled to stadiums that seat more than 100,000 spectators. Clarke designed some of his smallest works with photographer Linda McCartney, etching her delicate pictures of a swan and a fallen leaf onto glass panes for Rye Memorial Hospital, near the McCartneys' home in Sussex. "The idea of man decorating buildings has been done since before he discovered agriculture," Clarke insists. "It's a human need, not a luxury. [Early] man was painting pictures on the walls of caves."

For much of this century, stained glass was out of favor. Artists—among them Léger and Matisse—experimented with the medium, and a handful of architects, including Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier, put windows with colored glass into their buildings. But for the most part, the centuries-old union of art and architecture has broken apart. Western buildings have been largely a march of gleaming white-and-metal structures, all streamlined function and undecorated purpose. Reductionism has ruled.

To challenge the less-is-more thinking, Clarke mastered glassmaking's complicated technology. An old-fashioned appreciation of artisan skills had been instilled during his days at the School of Arts and Crafts in Oldham, which he attended between the ages of 12 and 16. He learned to draw there, but also—"really like a 19th century person," he says—mixed pigments to make his own colors and studied bookbinding, calligraphy and heraldry.

After attending Burnley College of Arts and Technology and earning a diploma in art and design at North Devon College of Art and Design, he traveled on a Winston Churchill Fellowship to Europe and the U.S., studying architecture and art. Back in Lancashire, he got his first stained-glass commissions from local churches; he would create the panes in his studio, then deliver them by bus. By the late '70s, he had fashioned a modest number of windows in Britain and had several gallery exhibits of his paintings. Although Clarke continues to draw and paint, it is glass, luminous with color and radiantly alive with light, that absorbs most of his time and energy.

Since 1982, the 149-year-old Franz Mayer factory in Munich has made most of the glass for Clarke's larger projects. He first visited the firm in 1970, when he was touring Europe to learn all he could about his chosen craft; last year he spent about 100 days with the Mayer artisans. They work with experts to blow molten glass into huge bubbles, which are then sliced so they can be spread apart into flat panes. The German craftsmen are equally adept at etching with acids to make smooth transitions from one color to another. "No other artist in the world orders such quantities and size in glass and mosaics as Brian," according to company owner Gabriel Mayer, the great-grandson of the founder.

At the moment Clarke is supervising an extravagant project that unites his passion for glass with a sense of art's purpose in a public space. His 540-sq-m ceiling for the giant Pfizer pharmaceutical company, installed in a renovated lobby that stretches a full block in the firm's midtown Manhattan building, will be finished next year. Clarke's design combines mosaics with large glass panels, and will be artificially lighted. Blue and white undulate in a basic color field that he describes as looking like ink poured into milk and swirled. Into this surface are inset a series of etched-glass panels representing enlargements of human cell structures, based on photographs taken under microscopes. "It's a collision," Clarke says. "Computer-enhanced microphotographs are translated through a medium that is a thousand years old." To him, forcefully combining the ancient and the modern is what timeless art is all about.

—With reporting by Ian McClusky/Brasília, Kate Noble/London and Bruce van Voorst/Bonn

JOHN MAIER JR.—THE IMAGE WORKS FOR TIME

GLASS OF FASHION The Clarke-created extravaganza at the Rio de Janeiro shopping center, above, illuminates a working-class district

WINDOWS OF FAITH In Switzerland's Romont abbey, left, Clarke's grid and glowing abstraction pay homage to the ancient ecclesiastical tradition