

# Making GAS More Accessible



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Photo Courtesy of the Glass Art Society

Over the past year, the Glass Art Society has been making intentional changes to improve our organization while also adapting to the impact of a global pandemic. Using these challenges as opportunities for growth, the GAS team has been tirelessly innovating our existing programs to offer new ways for the greater glass community to appreciate, learn about, and connect around the medium of glass. Through strategic initiatives like expanded virtual programming, reduced membership fees for students, and nonmember access to the annual conference, we are making GAS more accessible to people worldwide.



## Expanded Virtual Programming

A sense of community is a huge part of what members and supporters find through GAS. In the face of a worldwide pandemic and social distancing, virtual programming has provided a way for us to increase our offerings and community engagement. Inspired by our 2020 Virtual Conference happy hours, our Cohort Calls were launched in June to bring together educators, executives, and small business owners for intimate conversations about vital issues within their sectors. Similarly, our Community Conversations series was born out of a desire to have open discussions about the glass field's most pressing topics like COVID-19 and racial equity. As a way to provide additional support for students, we began hosting monthly GAS Student Meet-Ups in May. These gatherings feature studio tours and guest speakers while providing a platform for students from different programs and countries to connect. These new programs are just the beginning, and we are looking forward to adding to this list later in the year.

## Pay-What-You-Can Student Membership

One of the ways we are working to create more access and equity in glass is by addressing its entry points. For us, this means empowering students in both degree and nondegree programs despite many experiencing financial hardship, especially students of color. This fall, we launched a pay-what-you-can student membership to remove as many barriers as possible for students regardless of their socioeconomic status or background. Now, any glass student will be able to access the full range of benefits that our organization offers, from portfolio reviews and exhibitions to networking opportunities and leadership openings. It's resources like these that will allow the new generation of glass leaders to thrive.

*The first gathering of the GAS Community Conversations series in July focused on reopening studios after COVID-19.*

## Nonmember Access to GAS Conference

When we decided to present our first virtual conference for free and open to the public, we were overwhelmed by the community's response. With thousands of website visitors each day, it was clear that interest in the Glass Art Society's Annual Conference went far beyond our membership. To continue expanding our network of glass lovers around the world, we have decided to offer nonmember access to future GAS conferences. The more diverse and unique voices we can bring into our community, the more we will all benefit. Membership does have its privileges, though, and GAS members will receive discounts on programs and conference passes. For those joining GAS within two months of the conference, we will be offering credits on their membership. These are just a few ways that GAS continues to transform itself to meet the needs of our growing and changing global glass community.

*Visit [www.glassart.org](http://www.glassart.org) to learn more about upcoming GAS programs, membership updates, and more. Also be sure to join the 2021 GAS Virtual Conference in May 2021.*

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