

The AGG Goes Virtual for 2021



The restoration of the Tiffany Christ window from Calvary United Methodist Church will be one of several projects explored by Art Femenella and Amy Valuck.

by Troy Moody

With 2020 behind us, here's to looking forward to all that is possible in 2021. One event on the glass horizon is a new virtual experience with the American Glass Guild (AGG). This year's gathering will be the 15th Congress of Glass Artists, Conservators, Historians, Entrepreneurs, Enthusiasts, and Students that is the American Glass Guild. The gathering will bring all of the key elements of a standard AGG conference directly into the homes and studios of our community in an interactive, online experience.

Outstanding Presenters

As is customary for the diverse platform of the American Glass Guild, we will be hosting a plethora of presenters offering engaging and knowledgeable discourses on an array of topics. Ellen Mandelbaum and Marie Foucault-Phipps will discuss the world travels of a thirty-plus-year-old organization of notable women glass artists, and Art Femenella and Amy Valuck will offer an in-depth exploration of contrasting conservation techniques.

Ken Leap will bring his abundant enthusiasm to regale us with his adventures from stained glass into muralism. Architect and historian George Bryant will reflect on his nearly three-decade-long scholarly study of Henry Holiday, perhaps the most important stained glass artist of the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Bethanie Zucker will share her personal journey from making small copper foil pieces in a Brooklyn apartment to becoming a stained glass conservator through the Master of Arts in Stained Glass Conservation and Heritage Management program at the University of York. Her education was partially funded through the generosity of scholarships from the AGG. We are also very excited to have Helen Whittaker of the United Kingdom's Barley Studios to discuss her involvement in translating the unique vision of two renowned artists for Westminster Abbey.

The Impact of Public Art and Architecture

The keynote speaker will be Artist Michael Janis of the Washington Glass Studio. Michael had a successful 20-year career as an architect in Australia and the United States before focusing his attention on glass. Among his many awards and acknowledgements are two features in Corning Museum's *New Glass Review* and the prestigious Mayor's Art Award for Excellence in the Arts. Now as co-director of Public Art and Architecture of the Washington Glass Studio, Michael devotes much of his creative energies to navigating various complex processes, from finding public art opportunities and developing a meaningful proposal to ultimately facilitating their creation and installation. Michael's practical knowledge of the various factors involved in participating in public art will make him a speaker not to be missed, while his views on the importance and power of public art in communicating and unifying communities aligns wonderfully with the inclusive attitude of the AGG.

As Janis recently shared, "A public art installation can be very impactful when they are intentional, inclusive, inspiring, and promote dialogue. The role and power of public art is truly vital to the narrative of our time. It unites us and offers an opportunity for many individuals, not just artists, to connect with the neighborhoods where the artwork is placed. The large-scale installations created by artists of the Washington Glass Studio both enrich and celebrate diverse communities."

Participating from the Comforts of Home

Although this year's format is certainly different, if you've attended any of the past AGG annual conferences you'll find many of the planned activities familiar. The driving concept for our virtual happening can be summed up in a single slogan, "From Our Studio to Yours," that is indicative of the tone and character of the AGG from its inception. All paid attendees will have early access to prerecorded lectures to view from the comfort of their own homes, studios, offices, or vans down by the river.



*Keynote Speaker, Michael Janis, will offer an enlightening talk on the power and importance of Public Art.
Photo by Washington Glass Studio.*

After having plenty of time to absorb all of the educational videos at the attendee's leisure, the conference presenters will be available for live streamed question and answer sessions on Saturday, June 5. The Q&A sessions will be casual opportunities for attendees to meet with and ask questions of knowledgeable experts in the field. Saturday will also feature Peter Swanson offering an introduction to his enlightening documentary about the extraordinary life and work of Rowen LeCompte, after which all conference attendees are invited to a screening of the film.

In addition to the many events already listed, the conference will also feature a downsized, online version of our popular auction, short introductory videos of AGG members, a slideshow of member artwork, sponsor pages, and even more to be determined. Please check the AGG website and social media for registration details and updates.

Why Join the American Glass Guild?

The focus of the AGG has always been on education. The connection with new friends and old colleagues, raising awareness of this most noble craft, and the expansion of knowledge have long been and continue to be the motivations of the Guild. If you are not already a member of the AGG, I want to leave you with these words from AGG board member, glass artist, and all-around good guy, Don Burt. This was his response as to why you might want to join this organization.

- **You believe the art of stained glass is worth supporting.** There are aspects of the art form that should be taught and perpetuated to support and encourage the future of the art. There are also skills, procedures, and creative processes that may not survive if we do not actively improve upon the education offered to those who love stained glass as we do.

- **You want to grow as a stained glass artist, a scholar of stained glass, a supplier to the trade, and a conservator and restorer of historic stained glass.** You love stained glass, want to share the experience with others who love it as much as you do, and want to access the resources of experience and knowledge of other AGG members. They happen to be some of the best at what they do and believe unequivocally in sharing what they know via email, the Guild Bulletin Board, classes made available by the Guild, and in person at the annual conference.

- **In the American Glass Guild you are treated as a peer and encouraged to contribute and participate to whatever extent you wish.** This happens without your being categorized according to the size of your studio, the credentials following your name, or the breadth and fame of your work.

- **You believe that even though the American Glass Guild is already a great resource, it can become better with your help.**

On behalf of everyone at the AGG, we sincerely wish you all well and hope that you can join us virtually for the 2021 Annual Conference of the American Glass Guild. Visit www.americanglassguild.org for more information on upcoming events and how to become an AGG member.

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Noted glass artist and past AGG President, Ken Leap, will discuss his adventures in muralism. Photo by the artist.