

# Caution—Construction Zone

## Why Join the American Glass Guild?



*by Tony Glander*

**M**y daughter is a senior in high school this year, so the college search has begun. During a recent visit to one campus, the president of the college encouraged the students to think of the college experience as a construction site. He told them that on a construction site, people would use all of the tools available to them to get the job done. Of course, he was talking about the students using the faculty, technology, other students, and anything else the college offered to get the best education they could—hopefully in four years. Having been elected president of the American Glass Guild, I immediately applied his advice to the AGG and went from overwhelmed to very excited.

### Working Together to Achieve Success

The AGG has been under construction for just over 11 years. It started with a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of work. Building the membership base, laying the foundation of bylaws, and figuring out how the organization would operate were the main concerns. I have been involved in the AGG since its beginning and know from personal experience that all of the early work has given way to a strong base on which we can continue to build. This year's conference in Chicago, Illinois, taught me that not only does the AGG have great people dedicated to their individual tasks, but they also have great back up.

AGG has attracted hardworking people who selflessly volunteer their time and talents. The executive board is joined by Don Burt, who is already heading up membership, as vice president and Cynthia Courage as secretary. I was impressed when both stepped forward for these positions of responsibility.

Nancy Gong is our new conference chair for 2017 and was already busy planning for next year's conference months before the 2016 Chicago conference. Gong has the support of the board, but more importantly she has access to the last three year's conference chairs—Tom Krepcio, Tony Glander, and J Kenneth Leap. She also has help from Maria Serpentino, who always assists with contracting the hotels, a very stressful step! That alone would be great, but halfway through Chicago's conference this year, Janet Lipstreu, who had just finished a few terms on the board, was already talking about hosting the AGG in Cleveland, Ohio, in 2018.

Patrice Schelkun, our former president, took her two years of presidency very seriously and made a number of changes. Most importantly, she, along with member Nancy Nicholson, revamped the Guild's website. But more importantly, she is willing to stay on and help to maintain what they built.



*Barbara Krueger accepts the Joe Barnes Award presented by Patrice Schelkun and Tony Glander.  
Photo by Noel Grigallunus.*

### Experience, Education, and Exhibitions

A week after the conference, Barbara Krueger called me to say she would be happy to support Senior Advisors in any way she can. This is a big help, in that collectively our senior members are an invaluable tool for helping the organization build itself efficiently under their guidance.

Dan White has fabricated our auctions by dedicating a lot of time and patience. He begins months before, collecting items from members and sponsors, in addition to dealing with many donations brought in at the last minute. White hosts these auctions with great enthusiasm, humor, and organization and is committed to returning for another year.

The AGG also has a firm belief that education is important. Rick Prigg shares that belief and has structured the scholarship committee into a dynamic asset. His committee is responsible for discerning many applications that, in effect, build the ongoing structure of the individual artists.

Another part of the AGG's yearly conference that has emerged and almost taken on a life of its own has been the American Glass Now (AGN) Exhibition. This juried exhibition of stained glass panels started in 2012. Last year's exhibition was so well received at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., that the Cathedral requested this year's exhibition to come to the Cathedral after the conference display in Chicago.



*The Sylvia Nicolas auction panel  
created quite a bidding war.  
Photo by Rick Prigg.*

### **Excitement Breeds Involvement**

All of these spirited people being involved in the process could be enough in itself, but what built my confidence the most was a letter I received a week after the 2016 conference. It came from a first time attendee who said it was a great conference. She truly enjoyed being welcomed into the guild and meeting so many people. But mostly, she was very excited about getting involved in the AGG. Music to my ears!

The AGG has been built on the belief that what we are all doing contributes not only to our own interests, but also to the health and welfare of the stained glass industry as a whole. None of the people mentioned have done their work on their own, and that is what excites me the most. This is a dynamic, excited group of artists who enjoy meeting each year to share their love of great art. That it can still draw new members into

Mary Clerkin Higgins has literally constructed the AGN from its inception. Besides lining up jurors, accepting the applications, and marketing the show, Higgins has designed most of the displays and had a major hand in building most of them. She has also been backed up by other AGG members showing up to help with displays and marketing. The major goal of the AGN is to show the public that stained glass is a contemporary art form that is being refreshed and kept alive by today's great artists. Nancy Nickelson has stepped up to take over this exhibition for 2017.

the fold after 11 years seems to indicate that what we've built in the past and what we are building now means we are using the best tool available—excitement. Why join the AGG? Come find out for yourself. See you in Rochester, New York, in 2017. **GA**

*Visit [americanglassguild.org](http://americanglassguild.org) for more information about American Glass Guild and its upcoming events.*

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