

The Rumors of My Death Have Been Greatly Exaggerated

by Tony Glander

I really like sleep, travel, and working late into the night in my studio. When all three come together, I find it exceptionally enjoyable. I always book an early morning flight when I can, because that means I can work late in the studio, get to the airport early, and once on the plane be asleep before the wheels are up!

My intentions were no different on a recent flight. I was just settling in when the gentleman next to me introduced himself with a smile and an outreached hand. I returned in kind and continued my dozing preparations. But then he asked that fatal question, “What do you do?” Okay, I can still be obscure and get some sleep.

“I do art glass.” Plain and simple, right? Not for him.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, I do stained and fused glass,” seeing my dreams fade—literally. But he was being nice enough, until the next statement.

“Wow, I thought stained glass was a dead art.”

Now it’s not like I haven’t heard this before or even partially believed it sometimes, but not today! So I engaged him, pleasantly.

The Scott Ouderkirk Adventure

The reason I was on the plane is that I was returning from a stained glass retreat, the first one I had ever heard of. Organized by AGG member Scott Ouderkirk, it was three days of sharing and inspiration in upstate New York’s Thousand Islands. Once the artists paid for their travel, there were no other costs. The idea that everyone has something to share was the first intent of the retreat. The second was to be inspired by the beauty of the Thousand Islands.

Ouderkirk took applications earlier in the year and selected five of us to attend. It was a great adventure, and I was still a little high on inspiration and camaraderie from such a great experience centered around stained glass. I explained all of this, from the goats to the sandblaster and even the castle. I also shared how I felt that this type of event would catch on and soon be offered and well attended. Thankfully, I had the pictures on my phone to show him. By that time, however, I was holding a soft drink in my hand, and I could see that wasn’t enough to convince him, so I continued.

A Call to New Inspiration

The American Glass Guild (AGG) does an exhibition each year, *Art Glass Now*, that features juried panels created by artists from all across the country. It started out as an exhibition for our conferences, but it has grown to an installation that is typically in place a month or two in the city of the conference. It then travels to the National Cathedral in



*Detail of a panel under restoration by Andrew Goldkuhle at the Washington National Cathedral.
Photo by Tony Glander.*

Washington, D.C., for a three-month show. The public gets to see great designs done in traditional as well as contemporary techniques.

Polar Vortex, Amy Valuk’s panel in the recent exhibition, was an excellent example of a great design coming to life by introducing fused glass into a stained glass panel. The exhibition has been a great avenue to show off this type of modern stained glass to the public.



Samples of painted glass inspired by the local area produced during the weekend Thousand Island Stained Glass Retreat. Photo by Tony Glander.

Speaking of the Cathedral, while I was attending the 2015 AGG conference in Washington, I met Andrew Goldkuhle. He invited me to see the stained glass panels he had just restored and was reinstalling. They are typically three stories above the main altar, so it was very impressive to see the detail and craftsmanship up close.

Unexpected Benefits of Stained Glass

Now the gentleman had a magazine in his hand, but if I don't get to sleep, he shouldn't get to read. I explained that stained glass is not only healthy, but even evolving in many ways. The largest stained glass window is underway in Los Angeles, California, for the Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City, Missouri. Designed by Tim Carey and under fabrication by Judson Studios, this will be an incredible piece when it is completed. Like the Valuk panel, it will also incorporate fused glass within the stained glass process.

The seat belt sign came on, and the pilot announced the final approach. My friend looked a little relieved that I had put away my phone. He may have been getting tired of the inspirational pictures of other artist's stained glass work that I was showing him.

I didn't really even get a chance to explain how being involved in the AGG has been paramount in keeping me positive and allows me to keep up with all that is going on in stained glass. I didn't think he was interested anymore, but I also don't think he has the same attitude toward stained glass.



Artist attendees to the 2016 Thousand Island Stained Glass Retreat, (left to right) Celeste Parrendo, Joan Paschall, Scott Ouderkirk, Doris Cultraro, and Tony Glander.

I didn't get any rest that flight, but it turned out I didn't need it. The conversation had refueled me enough to go back to the studio and get to work. I realized it wasn't what others think of stained glass that was so important as much as it was what *I* think. **GA**

Visit www.americanglassguild.org to find out more about the AGG and discover how to become a member.

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The American Glass Guild is a nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging and promoting the creation, conservation, and history of stained, leaded, and decorative glass. Our Mission is to encourage spirited debate, initiate fact-based research, and work to build an environment within our field that both cultivates novices and facilitates experienced artists and craftspeople to attain a higher level of expertise. We look to create partnerships with existing nonprofit organizations that cherish these same ideals and encourage such organizations to contact us.

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