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March/April 2017



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Volume 32 Number 2



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March/April 2017

Volume 32, Number 2



Above: New Ghost by Judith Schaechter.  
Photo by Dom Episcopo.

On the cover: Prismatic Tapestry by Richard M. Parrish.  
Photo by Jesse Moore.

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## Glass Art

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## Letter from the Editor

### Make 2017 Your Year to Flourish

Springtime inspires growth and rebirth in all walks of life, and with its arrival *Glass Art* welcomes you to its 2017 schedule of comprehensive Glass Expert Webinars™ to fulfill your personal goal to learn something new this year. You'll find the complete list of exciting online workshops for growing your glass skills without ever leaving home at [www.glassartmagazine.com](http://www.glassartmagazine.com).

*Glass Art* also continues to celebrate hot, warm, and cold glass through its popular podcast *Talking Out Your Glass*. These interviews with renowned artists have garnered more than 10,000 downloads via iTunes and Stitcher. Listen while you work and share episodes with friends and colleagues to inspire and inform.

Blossoming knowledge can also be yours at myriad industry trade shows. For the first time the International Society of Glass Beadmakers (ISGB) and Glass Craft & Bead Expo are coming together in Las Vegas, Nevada. Although still independent, the partnership will offer a unique experience for glass artists. ISGB will hold The Gathering March 29–April 2, with preconference workshops beginning on Tuesday, March 28. The Glass Craft & Bead Expo workshops begin March 29–April 2 with the annual trade show running March 31–April 2. ISGB will add its one-day Glass, Beads & Jewelry Bazaar to the show floor on April 1, and *Glass Art* and its sister publications, *Glass Patterns Quarterly* and *The Flow*, will once again sponsor the Gallery of Excellence and live demonstrations. All events will take place at the South Point Hotel & Casino.

The Society of American Mosaic Artists (SAMA) will host its American Mosaic summit in Detroit, Michigan, May 2–6, followed by the American Glass Guild's (AGG) *Harmony: Old and New, On Light and the Gift*, held in Rochester, New York, May 19–21. Conference Chair Nancy Gong has pulled together an extensive, world-class slate of presenters, panelists, demonstrators, and workshop instructors on architectural and stained glass.

The Glass Art Society (GAS) selected the Chrysler Museum of Art and its Perry Glass Studio as host for the 46th annual conference, *Reflections from the Edge: Glass, Art, and Performance*. From June 1–3, 2017, attendees will experience technical glass demonstrations on various glass processes and topics plus lectures on science and art, as well as a local Gallery Hop, Goblet Grab, International Student Exhibition, and Live and Silent Auction.

The summer shows end with the Stained Glass Association of America (SGAA) holding its 108th Annual Summer Conference in Raleigh, North Carolina. Preconference classes run July 29–30, followed by the conference July 31–August 2.

Helping you cultivate your art in print and online,



Shawn Waggoner  
Editor



Purple Heart by Jeffrey Stenbom.  
Photo by Casey Rose.

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Our office hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST, Monday through Thursday. We apologize for any inconvenience you may have been caused by this change.

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# Judith Schaechter's Life Ecstatic

## *Championing Stained Glass into the World of Fine Art*

by Shawn Waggoner

Photography by Dom Episcopo

Judith Schaechter's work gives voice to those who experience pain, grief, despair, and hopelessness, resonating with viewers and leaving a profound and lasting impression. In addition to using stained glass to express content typically associated with fine art, Schaechter revolutionized her craft through an inventive approach to materials.

"I found the beauty of glass to be the perfect counterpoint to ugly and difficult subjects. In terms of my figures, although they are supposed to be ordinary people doing ordinary things, I see them as having much in common with the old medieval windows of saints and martyrs. They seem to be caught in a transitional moment when despair becomes hope or darkness becomes inspiration. They seem poised between the threshold of everyday reality and epiphany, caught between tragedy and comedy."

In 1983, Schaechter moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where she is now an adjunct professor at The University of the Arts. She also teaches a course for masters students at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Arts. Her most recent body of work was on view in October 2016 at Claire Oliver Gallery in New York City in an exhibition titled *The Life Ecstatic*.

*Judith Schaechter, The Life Ecstatic, stained glass, cut, sandblasted, engraved, painted, stained and fired, cold paint and assembled with copper foil, 31" x 29", 2016.*



*Judith Schaechter, A Play About Snakes, stained glass, cut, sandblasted, engraved, painted, stained and fired, cold paint and assembled with copper foil, 27" x 52", 2013.*







*Judith Schaechter, Feral Child, stained glass, cut, sandblasted, engraved, painted, stained and fired, cold paint and assembled with copper foil, 25" x 42", 2012.*



*Judith Schaechter, Anchoress, stained glass, cut, sandblasted, engraved, painted, stained and fired, cold paint and assembled with copper foil, 35" x 25", 2015.*

Schaechter's exhibition history includes the 2002 Whitney Biennial and the collateral exhibition *Glasstress* of the Venice Biennale in 2012. Her work can be found in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum in New York; the Victoria and Albert Museum in London; the Hermitage in Russia; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; The Corning Museum of Glass; and The Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Through unforgettable characters in unbelievably intricate and beautifully rendered settings, Schaechter continues to take the art world by storm. "It seems my work is centered on the idea of transforming the wretched into the beautiful in theme as well as design. For me, this means taking what is typically negative—say unspeakable grief, unbearable sentimentality, or nerve-wracking ambivalence—and representing it in such a way that it is inviting and safe to contemplate and captivating to look at. I am at one with those who believe art is a way of feeling one's feelings in a deeper, more poignant way."





## An Equation for Success

Schaechter was raised in Newton, Massachusetts, an upper middle-class liberal suburb of Boston. Her father was chairman of the microbiology department at Tufts University. Her mother, who held degrees in both music composition and social work, eventually became the executive director of a school for autistic children. Both of Schaechter's parents encouraged her to become an artist.

Now 55, Schaechter credits her 1970s upbringing with an early and intense desire to make art. "I had endless amounts of my own free time with both parents at work. I walked around the unheated house in my puffy coat, reading Nancy Drew books and making art, which I did constantly because I was bored and unsupervised. I didn't have a choice but to think independently. I feel sorry for my students, who are being raised now in fear of creativity and being left alone to their own devices."

Earning her BFA at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in 1983, Schaechter credits glass professor Richard Harned with demonstrating that *any* idea can be rendered in stained glass and fellow student Loraine for introducing her to the possibilities of sandblasting. RISD groomed young Schaechter for success in the gallery scene. The artist's personal confidence that her art would be both well received and groundbreaking put her on the map.

Like many artists, Schaechter struggled to make a living initially. Most of her stained glass was dependent upon sandblasting. Because she was without the means and know-how to set up a blasting studio, Schaechter returned to painting and left glasswork behind, but not for long.

*Judith Schaechter, Odalisque, stained glass, cut, sandblasted, engraved, painted, stained and fired, cold paint and assembled with copper foil, 24" x 33", 2015.*

The artist returned to stained glass and had her first exhibition in 1983 at Nexus, a co-op gallery in Philadelphia. In 1986, she moved into a small three-room house and turned the middle bedroom into a stained glass studio. She began applying for and receiving grants, including two NEA grants, one in 1986 and one in 1988. In 1989, Schaechter was awarded the prestigious \$20,000 Tiffany Foundation Grant, which is rarely given to stained glass artists. Following three more shows at Nexus, Rick Snyderman of Snyderman Gallery saw her work and began representing her in 1990.

Two respected art authorities began championing her work — Susanne Frantz, former curator of 20th Century Glass at the Corning Museum of Glass and Michael Monroe, then curator at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Museum. "A gallery and chutzpah will only get you so far. It helps to also have interested people."

In 1996, Schaechter left her trinity for a bigger house with a studio in South Philly where she still works today. In 2000, Claire Oliver Gallery in New York City began exclusively representing her work in solo exhibitions held every two years or so, the most recent in October 2016.



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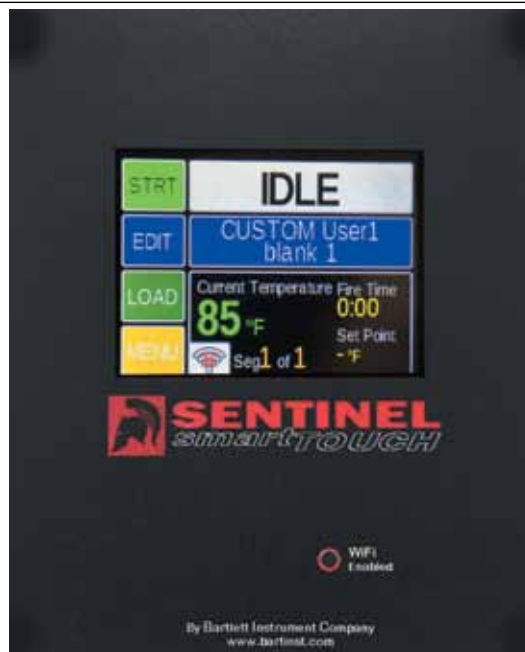
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## Schaechter's Latest at Claire Oliver

Inspired by a vintage book cover, *The Life Ecstatic* is both the title of Schaechter's recent exhibition at Claire Oliver gallery and a specific window in the show. Serving as her Google Maps pin, the piece "tells me where my soul is in the cosmos."

The figure in *The Life Ecstatic* represents the best example of engraving the artist has ever done. Created for an earlier window called *Three Tiered Cosmos*, the figure was abandoned in favor of a full-color character. In an attempt to hold to her rule of never using the same figure twice, Schaechter placed the character on her side, giving the subject new life.

Schaechter's main characters include both humans and animals, such as the bear in her piece *Realism*. She initially drew the painting, which features a moonlit landscape and a bear uncharacteristically approaching a campfire. Inspirations for this work include fellow RISD graduate, painter/printmaker Walton Ford and the painting *The Flight into Egypt* from 1609 by German artist Adam Elsheimer. The painting within a painting, the figure, the interior, the landscape, and still life are all subjects that realistic painters paint. The piece leaves the viewer with this question: Does the painting reflect what she's dreaming?

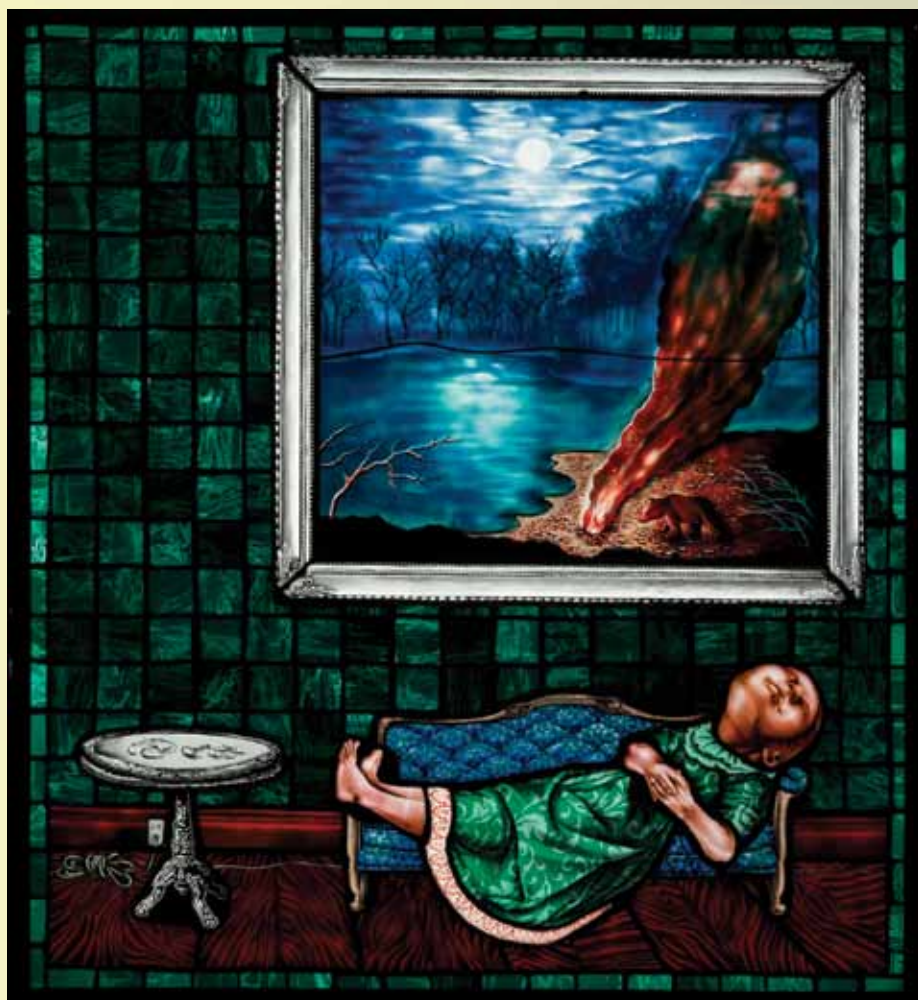
In terms of color, green represented uncharted territory for Schaechter, who sandblasted and engraved the entire *Realism* window intensely. "I keep going in spite of the fact that failure is a potential. The feeling that a piece or process is going to be a failure is an indication of exactly nothing. And if you quit too soon, you find out nothing at all."

The lead role in *Realism* is represented by a figure made several years ago from a dreamy blue Lamberts glass that Schaechter meticulously hand filed. "I collaborated with S.A. Bendheim to get this glass that engraves really nicely. All my needs for super smooth were satisfied by this glass."

Schaechter finishes her work for an exhibition long before the show goes up, because the pieces have to be photographed and installed in light boxes. The artist did nothing artistic for the month following her Claire Oliver show, then began to draw only birds and flowers—no humans. Perhaps this is where her next body of work is headed.



Judith Schaechter, *Three Tiered Cosmos*, stained glass, cut, sandblasted, engraved, painted, stained and fired, cold paint and assembled with copper foil, 30" x 40", 2015.



Judith Schaechter, *Realism*, stained glass, cut, sandblasted, engraved, painted, stained and fired, cold paint and assembled with copper foil, 31" x 29", 2016.



*Judith Schaechter, Dream of the Fisherman's Wife, stained glass, cut, sandblasted, engraved, painted, stained and fired, cold paint and assembled with copper foil, 32" x 48", 2004.*



## A Few of My Favorite Things

Laborious, detailed processes provide Schaechter's work with its signature look. Many artists sandblast or abrade the surface of glass, but Schaechter uses these processes on every piece of glass all over her windows. In her unique technical orchestration, everything is manipulated multiple times via engraving, hand filing, and sandblasting. While using a flexible shaft engraver, Schaechter had an epiphany that she did not have to plug in the tool. The diamond bits would scratch the glass without being powered. Thus she began using Starlight Diamond Files from His Glassworks to achieve ultrasmooth tones of transition through hand filing.

Schaechter has always worked from her doodles, which combine with other inspiration in a magical stew of startling and original ideas. "Every piece I've made reminds me of carrot juice. How many carrots does it take to make one cup of juice? For me to make one piece takes at least 1,000 micro ideas that form together. I don't know how it happens and have no more insight into it now than I did at the beginning. I let creativity arise organically without a lot of control on my part. I don't want the work to be autobiographical. I'm trying to tell the story of humankind, though I do identify with my characters."

Early on some critics were vocal about Schaechter's disturbing or heavy-handed content. Over the years, her work has become less "aggressively freaky," and social media has allowed the artist to target a specific demographic interested in her aesthetic. Many who love Schaechter's work love it specifically for its darkness and its truth.

Romantic sensibility combined with inspiration from the song "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" and the movie *The Poseidon Adventure* led Schaechter to render shipwrecks and other water follies gone wrong. Although ambiguous in message, we know what these pieces represent.

Her 2004 masterwork, *Dream of the Fisherman's Wife*, was influenced by the cyclorama at Gettysburg, a giant tubular painting that one views from inside. Beginning with her doodle of the face and inspired by Japanese *shunga* prints featuring women in combination with octopi, Schaechter designed one of her most challenging works to date.



*Judith Schaechter, The Battle of Carnival and Lent, stained glass, cut, sandblasted, engraved, painted, stained and fired, cold paint and assembled with copper foil, 56" x 56", 2011.*



The expression, the colors, and the composition unite in a tour de force of imagery, and Schaechter was challenged by its creation. She carved the ocean out of a rare and expensive turquoise flashed glass but found it unsatisfactory, threw it out, and began again. She eventually achieved the look of the water by cold painting on plate glass. *Dream of the Fisherman's Wife* was purchased by Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh.

Schaechter's 2012 work *Feral Child* transports the viewer into the cold and snowy world of a girl raised by wolves and befriended by birds. She is more comfortable in abandonment than in civilized society. The 50-inch by 31-inch piece was exhibited in *10-TWENTY-10* in celebration of the Claire Oliver Gallery's 20-year anniversary.

In her trademark method, Schaechter delighted the viewer's eyes and mind with a band of highly colorful, superdetailed birds. This section required two weeks of nonstop work, including sandblasting and engraving with a flexible shaft engraver on three layers of glass—red on clear, blue on clear, and pink on clear. Silver stain and black paint help to define the details.

Schaechter created her three-dimensional forest by cold painting a layer of trees on the bottom side of a second piece of glass. Using a lighter hand, the artist created atmospheric perspective. The color is the result of transparent oil paint wiped onto sandblasted areas.

There is a layer of highly detailed trees on the top surface. Another layer of trees was cold painted on the bottom side of the second piece of glass. The bottom layer of trees is painted lighter for atmospheric perspective. The blackbirds were painted on with vitreous paint fired on in a kiln, and the border texture was created through the use of a stencil Schaechter designed in Photoshop.



Judith Schaechter, Bust, 5" x 6" x 10"  
(5" x 6" x 15" with base), 2014.



## Architectural Work

On April 1, Eastern State Penitentiary (ESP) in Philadelphia unveiled Schaechter's ambitious work, *The Battle of Carnival and Lent*. As part of ESP's 2012 artist installation program, these 17 stained glass windows were inspired by the prison's dark history.

Schaechter's figure windows were balanced with more traditional, cathedralesque windows, based loosely on the designs of 13th century Europe, particularly those seen in Chartres. The combination helped viewers draw an association between the prison's purpose of providing an environment conducive to self-reflection and penance and the harsh realities of solitary confinement.

"When you go into a cathedral, you notice that all the windows were done by different artists at different times. There are often a lot of different styles in one church. I was interested in working with that aesthetic, because it would fit in with my mission to rehabilitate the idea of the decorative arts. I wanted to install windows that were ornamental, because modernism has given ornamentalism a very bad name. I wanted to show that it has significance and is not just pretty."

Claire Oliver, owner of Claire Oliver gallery, describes Schaechter as the Bruegel of our time. "Her work at Eastern State Penitentiary has been referred to as the Sistine Chapel of stained glass. The people I overhear make commentary such as this are very familiar with the art world at large. She's crossing many lines and is blurring multitudes of borders with her content as well as her concept. I don't consider her a glass artist but an artist who happens to work in glass."

## The Ties that Bind

On the board of the American Glass Guild, Schaechter now has a front row seat from which to monitor the life and times of stained glass. To revitalize and make the craft relevant for current times, she recommends innovating with processes and materials. "This recommendation is often accepted, but with the caveat that artists make stained glass the traditional way first. It's not a mandate to learn a set of rules. If your goal is to keep the art form alive, that will have to be sacrificed."

In regard to her own work, Schaechter has finally come to terms with and can acknowledge her success. "People admire my career. They don't live my life, so they don't know what that costs. But I was cocky and entitled early on, really convinced I was going to be a great artist. Now I am utterly grateful for all the support from collectors, viewers, and the art world."

GA

Judith Schaechter was a recent guest on Glass Art magazine's new podcast, Talking Out Your Glass. Subscribe on iTunes or Stitcher today!

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# Nancy Gong

## Developing a Contemporary Artistic Voice

by Colleen Bryan

Nancy Gong has worked in glass for 37 years and might be forgiven for resting in her expertise. However, the New York artist is eagerly searching out commissions that stretch her boundaries in the design, size, and scope of projects, the environments where they are installed, and the techniques employed to make them.

As a first generation American, the future artist was born awash in her family's Chinese culture and art. Though her style has evolved in a manner that is not overtly Asian, the natural themes, deliberate use of line, and highly saturated colors from that region of the world influence her creations.

Gong's portfolio reveals her ability to discover design elements within the glass itself. "If I see a nice piece of glass, I am generally not inclined to design around it. I prefer using this old material and giving it a new voice within a contemporary design." She understands that this orientation flies in the face of how most glass artists are taught. "Our common way is to teach craft or technique without a sense of design. People develop skill in a particular technique and become the teachers of it. They may use that technique with only subtle variations in palette, texture, or form throughout a body of work." Gong is convinced that glass artists will only garner respect as fine artists if they succeed in subordinating the emphasis on technique and mediums to focus more on art.

The artist attributes her own awareness of the importance of design to a workshop with Narcissus Quagliata in the late 1970s that proved a primary influence on her work. "I was designing pictorial windows in art nouveau and Victorian styles without much personal meaning. I left that workshop thinking that I want to be an artist creating work that is representative of my time. A solid fabricator and craftsman, yes, but more than that. After that workshop, I began developing my own artistic voice."

Gong loves using different tools and artistic processes to express her design aesthetic. Today she employs a wide variety of glass techniques for her architectural art glass designs including etching, painting, lamination, fusing, and mosaic work for windows, walls, and structures. Gong's style across all these mediums emerges as strongly organic, contemporary, free-flowing, and enlivened by movement. She gets excited when a project gives her the opportunity to combine several processes together, to work materials and processes at larger scale for interior or exterior environments. "I just need to find the projects that will allow me to apply all that I have to offer. I'm not afraid to try new things. I drive my suppliers and associates crazy, but I am proud of my work. It's the challenge that keeps the work exciting."

*Nancy Gong, Lily from the Character Series, inspired by details in Gong's two-dimensional designs and cultural adornment, 28" x 12" x 12", 2002. Animated sculptures combining glass and steel in a fresh, new way.*

*Photo by Tim Wilkes.*





### Variety and Spice in Commissioned Work

While Gong has built relationships with galleries around creating collectible pieces, she resolutely asserts, “I am definitely a commission artist.” She enjoys the commission process—learning about new areas of study, telling different stories, and using assorted techniques and processes as vehicles for each project. Chiefly, though, she loves interacting with clients and searching around her toolbox for just the right approach and design to meet each client’s needs.

“Clients generally give some input but leave a fair degree of room for me to explore and express the vision.” Gong uses this discretionary space to research subject matter, to investigate new mediums and technologies, and to continuously expand her voice in glass and the knowledge of her field.

The artist lives in a relatively conservative region of the country, so she feels fortunate to be able to make a living from artwork designed in a contemporary style. “In my commissions, what’s really important is being able to express myself through the work and to create art that is meaningful for the people who will experience it. Bringing those two components together makes all the effort worthwhile. That makes me very happy.”

*Nancy Gong, Genesee River: Watershed, two lights 7' x 4', 2016. The glass art shares the big picture story about the storm water management and the Genesee River Water Shed through an educational, decorative, connective design about storm water management and the Genesee River Water Shed.*

*Photo by Christopher Maggio.*

Gong’s biggest challenge as a commission artist is not so much finding work as finding the kind of projects she wants to do. “I keep that challenge front and center when I decide how to present my art. I never put anything out there that I don’t want to continue to do. I don’t advertise, because I’m not doing vernacular pieces. But if you want to do more independent work, potential clients need to see your work in the world and to understand what you are capable of.

“I can’t make the same thing all the time. I would be bored to death. To quote glass caster Danny Lane, ‘It would be like eating the same meal every day.’ I constantly want to taste something else, something new in my work. I want my artwork to evolve, to stay fresh.”





### Setting Sights on Larger-Scale Work

One of Gong's ambitions is to work on larger scale projects than those she has yet attempted. Her works to date have been substantial medium-size commissions, though the scale of her work is growing. "I love working big. The presence of large-scale installations can transform the mood and emotion in a space in a powerful way. Working with glass for large installations provides a greater opportunity to interact with light and shadows in the environment."

Even as she says this, Gong recognizes that working at a larger scale has implications and presents new challenges in terms of materials and design, studio space, and changes to her solitary work habits. The challenges start with design. "Most of my art has been freestyle representational work. Telling a story may be appropriate for certain large projects, but I question how well that design approach lends itself to other large-scale applications. While I don't appreciate the practice of stamping out repetitious patterns to cover a broader canvas, I am moving toward a conceptual design approach in my new work."

In terms of material, Gong notes that handmade, mouth-blown glass is irregular, which can make it difficult to use with a process such as water jet cutting. "Many of my designs are made with large-size pieces that don't cut well via water jet, because blown sheet glass is not flat. But Wendell Castle, an internationally known woodworking artist, once suggested that if artwork is too easy, the target is too close. I find that this is true for me. When the going gets tough, I remind myself that if what I do is so easy, then everybody would be doing it. There's always a solution to be found."

*Nancy Gong, Fermata Rapture, hand cut, mouth-blown sheet glass etched and painted, with fused glass, laminated, two lights 56" x 25" and 2 lights 70" x 25", 2013. Designed for two musicians with an affinity for music, art, culture, and color.*

*Photo by Christopher Maggio.*

### Implications of Scale on Studio Space

From the outset of her artistic career, Gong has worked in a variety of home studios. "Otherwise, I'd never see my husband! I work alone in my studio except when I need specific help on a project."

The artist characterizes her studio as a well-designed, dreamy, flexible work space with high ceilings and a great view that feels good to work in. It is a compact 1,000 square feet, of which 540 are devoted to fabrication. She has worked from this studio since 1994. With all of the new processes and their related equipment and materials, however, it is filling up quickly.

Gong is determined that she'll adapt to make her studio space work. "To this point, the architect-designed studio functions well as a result of its flexibility, but as the size of projects continues to grow I anticipate the need to collaborate with others for space and access to larger kilns. I just finished a project for the Rochester Museum and Science Center, for example, that took up all of my available benches. I got through the process by building transportable, stackable boards. Some of the larger pieces would not fit in my kiln, so I had to rent kiln time elsewhere."



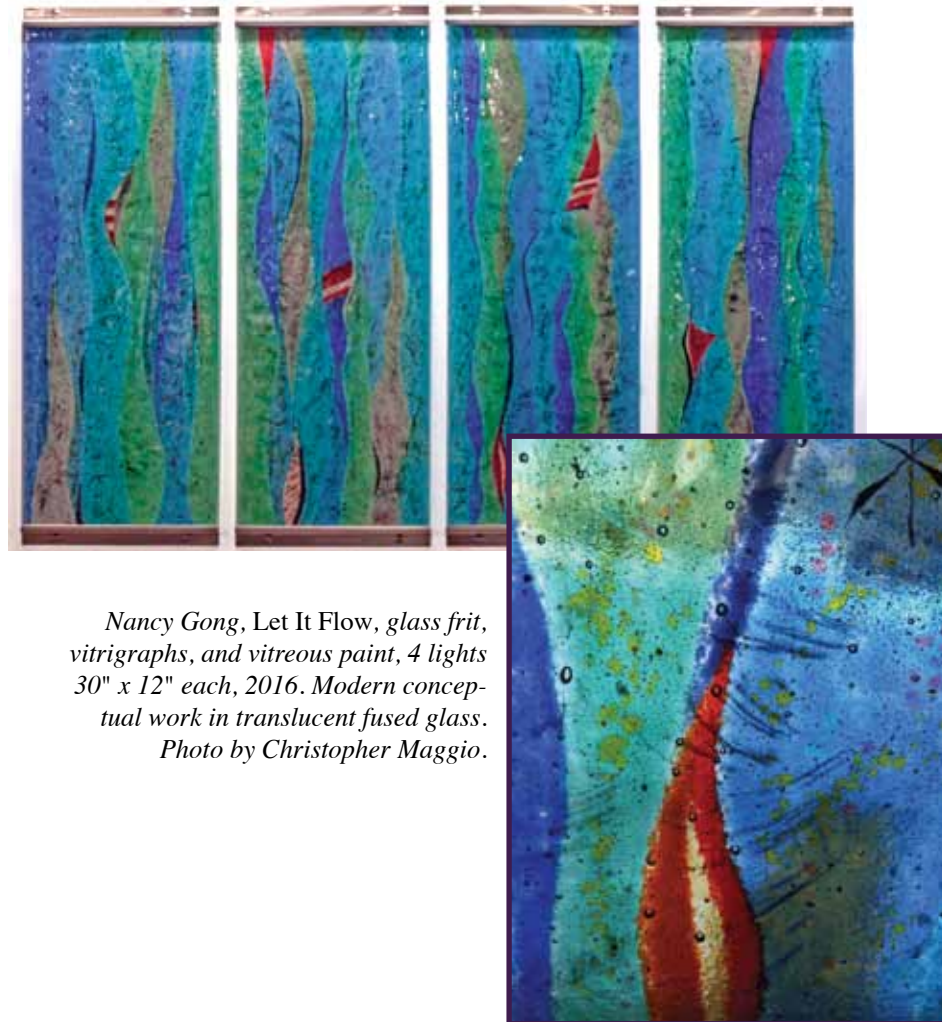
## Implications of Scale for Collaboration

"I have generally worked alone, but as projects get bigger, I see myself needing to collaborate more with other industries and fabrication studios. Having established professional relationships worldwide makes large-scale projects more doable."

One of Gong's largest installations to date is a 10-foot by 54-foot curvilinear etched glass wall titled *In Art, Science and Life, What is the Question?* The art glass wall was completed for Administration Services and the Innovation Center of Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in 2009. The installation consists of 13 panels, each weighing more than 400 pounds. Etched images relate to each of the Institute's nine colleges with a binary code quote running the length of the wall. "A lot of research went into that design. We had to proof the code very carefully. I developed a great interest and appreciation for physics as the primary design emphasis."

The wall functions both to physically divide a lobby from the innovation space and to meaningfully connect the spaces. Although the building has been repurposed since the wall's installation, Gong is delighted to go back and observe that the art casts a peaceful atmosphere that still welcomes students to a positive space to be curious, to meet, or to hang out. The wall is still relevant.

This project is another example of how Gong addresses the realities of the collaboration required to work on large-scale pieces. "I couldn't deliver that project alone. I had to lay out a plan for the logistics of each step, explicitly articulating where and when I needed to work in the studio, the glass company, the blast room, or on-site at RIT. All of the design work was done in the studio, then scaled to full size. Preparation of the glass, design transfer, and stencil preparation was done on-site at the glass company, where they provided guys to flip each 400-pound panel as needed. We then transported the prepared glass with artwork to a blast room where it was etched. The glass was then transported to RIT, where I created the hand-chipped texture on-site and installed the wall. Each panel of glass was handled 12 times."



*Nancy Gong, Let It Flow, glass frit, vitrigraphs, and vitreous paint, 4 lights 30" x 12" each, 2016. Modern conceptual work in translucent fused glass.*  
*Photo by Christopher Maggio.*

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*Nancy Gong, In Art Science and Life, What Is the Question?, art glass wall connecting two areas within the Administrative Services Building and Innovation Center at RIT, 10' x 54', 2016. The etched and glue chipped "Bose Einstein Condensate Theory Wave" section was hand-chipped on-site. Photo by Don Cochran.*

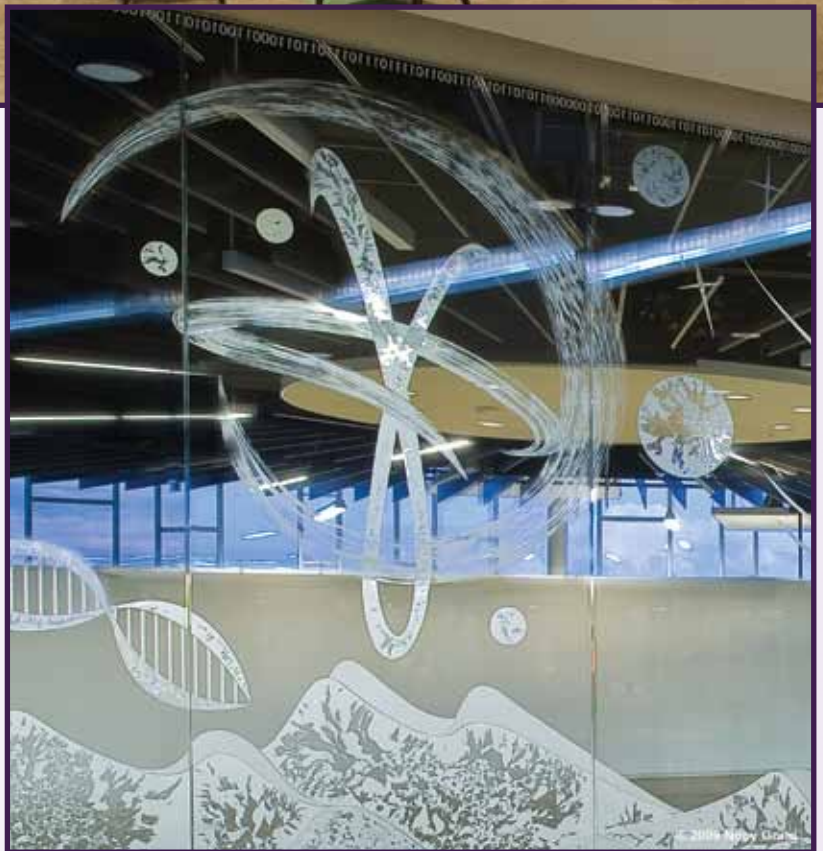
One of the finishing processes for the RIT project needed to be done in consistent environmental conditions with the glass located on the same plane. Straight from the blast room with resist remaining on the glass, all 13 panels had to achieve a consistent random texture. Hot molten glue was applied to the vertical surface, cooled in a building without heat, then chipped off amidst all kinds of construction still underway throughout the space. This sort of collaboration gives me access to people who have the range of skills, expertise, facilities, and manpower I need to make these larger works happen.

Gong pursues public art competitions and has completed a number of local and regional public art projects in addition to the RIT project. From an artistic perspective, she is not convinced that such competitions are the way to go. They are largely driven by budget and politics, which can have the effect of compromising artistry. Practically speaking, it is especially tough to break into distant markets. She continues to submit proposals, though, and to delight when surprising matches come of them.

The artist is preparing for a future with bigger projects—shifting her marketing research to potential sources for work, nurturing relationships in the U.S. and abroad with collaborators such as fabricators, and building connections to resources to help her in anticipation of the next stage of her art. "With so many possibilities, it's an exciting place to be!"

GA

Look for **Subscriber Benefits** coming via links in upcoming e-mails from Glass Art. This **Bonus Content** describes in more detail how Nancy Gong has worked to expand her technical toolbox and her artistic vocabulary to express her vision in contemporary art glass.



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## EPISODE 20

Award winning artist/designer Peter McGrain has been working with stained glass for over 30 years. During that time he has handled every type of stained glass project imaginable, ranging in scope from intimate experimental panels to large-scale architectural installations. The book *Uncommon Stained Glass* charts McGrain's journey from crafter to award-winning artist.

Since the development of McGrain's Vitri-Fusaille process, a hybrid of glass fusing and traditional glass painting, demand for his workshops has been on the rise along with increased gallery interest. His piece *Man with Fish* appeared in *New Glass Review 26*, the Corning Museum's annual survey of avant-garde glass. In 2012, McGrain proved to himself and the world that Vitri-Fusaille could also be used in the creation of architectural work as seen in his commission for the Jewish Home in Rochester, New York, his home town.

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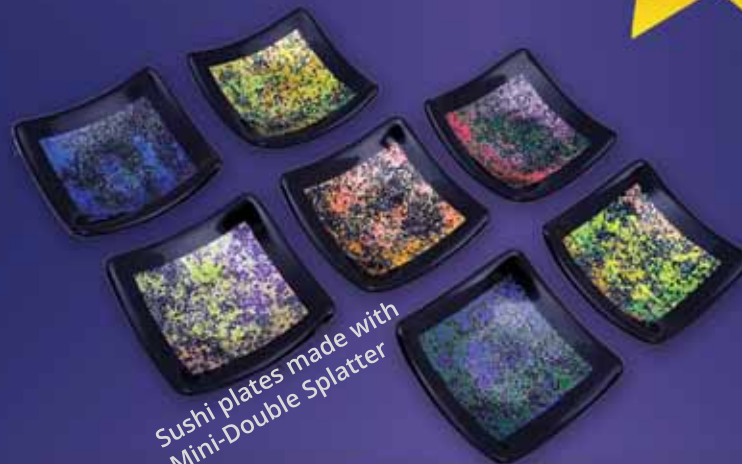
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## AGG Goes to Rochester



*Personifikation Böhmen a Mucha panel presented by speaker Christina Snopko. Photo by the artist.*

by Tony Glander

This year's American Glass Guild (AGG) conference, from May 19–21, 2017, brings together leaders, practitioners, and just great people in Rochester, New York, one of the most artistic cities anywhere. It will take place at the Radisson Hotel Rochester Riverside located on the Genesee River. The program committee has scoured not only America, but has also gone abroad to fill this conference with incredible speakers and instructors who will elevate the artists' game by leaving them fully inspired. The auction, tour, and exhibition are all making some slight changes to make this an unforgettable conference.

### Preconference Workshops

Two days prior to the conference on May 17 and 18, the AGG will be offering a wide assortment of impressive workshops. To help artists on the marketing side, Bill Dexter will be presenting a class on *Photoshop for Marketing*. Combine that with a social media workshop from Amanda Chestnut and *PR Tactics to Boost Your Business* by Lisa Hahn and Joseph Cavalieri, and you get better looking photographs that will be seen by more and more people!

If you enjoy hands on workshops, Tim Carey will be leading a class in stained glass painting and fusing. Judith Schaechter will also be there divulging how she creates the tonal changes in her flash glass. A full list of workshops can be found on the AGG website.

### Conference Presentations, Opening Reception, and Exhibition

Friday through Sunday, May 19–21, attendees will be presented with a variety of talks. Friday morning's talk about design will be from world-renowned metal sculptor, Albert Paley, a Rochester local. Additional presentations will cover everything from business and glass conservation to the independent work of artist Robert Kehlman.



*St. Paul by Kloss®. Photo by Sam Halstead.*

On Saturday morning, Swiss artist Christina Snopko will present a talk on Alphonse Mucha's work in St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague, Czech Republic. During the keynote presentation Saturday night, California artists David Judson and Tim Carey of Judson Studios will discuss their Church of the Resurrection window project that, when completed, will be the world's largest stained glass feature that utilizes fused glass to achieve colors.

A half day of talks on Sunday proves to be just as enticing as the previous days' presentations. A selection of speakers will present a panel discussion about the many facets of completing any job. Later, Toni Sikes will cover grants and submissions for public art. The complete list of speakers and their biographies can be found on the AGG website.



The annual American Glass Now Exhibition will be on display at the hotel for membership before it travels to Washington, D.C., for a public event. An opening reception will be held Friday evening off-site, with complimentary shuttle service to and from the event.

### The Perfect Experience at the Perfect Venue

Rochester couldn't be a better location for glass art. From the moment you arrive at the airport, you are greeted with a large contemporary installation of Peter McGrain's work in the exterior wall of the concourse. The town itself has many sites of stained glass work from historic to contemporary. Many of them are on the annual tour on Sunday, May 21, 2017.

Nancy Gong, this year's conference chair, has an incredible piece on the grounds of the Rochester Museum and Science Center, *Genesee River Watershed*, that incorporates the architecture and the ground surrounding it, as well as rainwater poured on it from the roof of the structure above. The water goes into the drain below and is filtered by the ground. It is then used to water a nearby garden, thus depicting the story of storm water management in beautiful antique glass.

Historically, both the Christ Episcopal Church and St. Paul's Episcopal Church have windows from Henry Sharp and Louis Comfort Tiffany. The Third Presbyterian Church offers Tiffany glass but also includes Louis Chapin, Charles Allen, David Maitland Armstrong, Willett, and Redding, Baird & Company, and even windows from three generations of artists from Pike Studios. The four and a half hour tour will be packed with a diverse body of work and guided by artist Valeria O'Hara of Pike Studio.

Along with great talks, an incredible selection of workshops, and amazing glasswork on the tour, the most important feature to any AGG conference is always the networking of the members. The annual banquet, a few lunches, and even breakfast activities are all being planned to help foster discussion and camaraderie, because in the end, the AGG's best resource is its members! **GA**

Visit [www.americanglassguild.org](http://www.americanglassguild.org) and click on the "Conference" tab for complete information about the 2017 event and easy registration.



*Genesee River Watershed* by Nancy Gong. Photo by Tony Glander.

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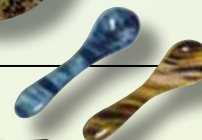
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### Traditional Glass Painting Made Easy

## Working with Transparent Enamels

by Peter McGrain

Anybody involved with creating full-color illustrations on glass can utilize a variety of paint types. So far in this series of articles, we have examined the formal, multistage process of depicting our painted imagery on clear glass using traditional glass stainer colors, which are applied and fired in multiple layers. The first step after tracing was to establish our artificial color-fields on the front using uniform mats of brighter hues such as red, blue, and green. Follow-up shading mats, which modulate the value of the color-fields, plus the application of silver stain to insert yellow and amber color onto the back of our pieces, completed the picture.

For centuries this was the standard approach used by stained glass artisans, who would also integrate elements of painted cathedral glass to achieve bright transparent color in their compositions. In this case, some limitations may arise. As we've discussed, color-fields that are achieved with the traditional glass stainer type of paints tend to appear rather translucent when viewed in transmitted light. This can result in a predominantly subtle, traditional look to the work, which may or may not be appropriate. One area of concern is when these translucent elements are integrated into stained glass formats where contrasting transparent colored glass is used in adjacent areas.

Noticeable differences in both the aesthetic and illuminative characteristics between the two types of color-fields used—translucent versus transparent—can sometimes result in finished work that may appear awkward and not as visually cohesive as it could. Silver stains do, indeed, allow for bright transparent color, but with them you are limited to yellow or amber as available hues. Luckily, there is a third type of glass paint available to us that can be used to achieve a full spectrum of bright, transparent color-fields and effectively mimic the jewellike quality of pure cathedral glass—transparent enamels!

### An Innovative Source of Color

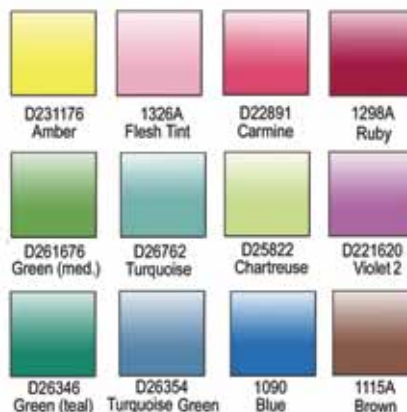
Compared to the other types of glass paint, transparent enamels are a fairly recent innovation. Like the rest of the paints we use, they come in powdered form and are prepared for use by mixing with a liquid, usually water. The most popular transparent enamels are made by two manufacturers, Reusche & Co. and FuseMaster. Both varieties function the same, fire in the same temperature range, and are available in lots of beautiful colors. They are generally sold in one-ounce jars.

The cost of transparent enamels can vary depending on the color, the most expensive being the ones that have gold in them, such as carmine and violet. Other colors, such as blue and green are very affordable. When properly fired, they are permanent and unaffected by UV radiation, and they will not scratch off or fade. There is, however, a danger that if they are exposed to caustic solutions such as patina and some fluxes, they may deteriorate and be ruined. For this reason you should never, ever expose *any* painted surfaces to these chemicals.



*Peter Heyes, Painted Finch, 8" x 4", Bolton, U.K. This delicate little piece, painted on a single piece of clear antique glass, utilizes shades of blue, green, and brown transparent enamels to complete the color imagery of the bird and branches.*

It's important to remember that transparent enamels contain lead, which is the element that gives them their clarity, so **be safe!** As with all glass paints, you must keep a very clean work space and wear a dust mask or respirator when handling them. Dust collectors and latex gloves also help prevent direct contact with these materials.



*This chart shows the most popular Transparent Enamel colors produced by Reusche & Co. These bright, glassy hues mimic the jewellike transparency of fine cathedral stained glass types.*





*Full-color painting on clear glass. As a final step following tracing, matting, and silver staining, the application of transparent enamel color-fields to the back of the project complete the full-color image. Notice how Carmine 22891 was applied and fired over Yellow #3 silver stain to achieve orange shading on the face.*

## Important Considerations for Working with Transparent Enamels

Transparent enamels are generally applied as matts to create uniform color-fields within a previously traced and matted design. These paints have a very shiny reflective quality that would be too distracting if fired over the satiny painted surface you have achieved on the front of the piece. Normally they are applied to the back of the workpiece, similar to the way silver stain is applied. It is wise to apply them to the back, since any inconsistencies in their appearance will be camouflaged by the shading on the front.

Traditional glass stainer colors mature at around 1200 degrees Fahrenheit and melt directly down *into* the glass surface, thus preserving the exact appearance of any traced, stippled, or scrubbed details. In comparison, transparent enamels are formulated to mature at a lower temperature of about 1050 degrees Fahrenheit. This is not hot enough for them to melt into the base glass. Instead, they melt into themselves as a hard, shiny layer of color on the glass surface. Because of this, it is ineffective to try to create tonal gradations or textures by stippling or scrubbing them. The tool marks will simply blur and disappear when fired. Instead, any desired shading or texture must be accomplished in the earlier stages of your project when you are manipulating the shadows and highlights in the shading matts on the front of the workpiece.

Because of their lower firing temperature, you cannot begin firing the transparent enamels on the back of the piece until *all* of the higher firing tracing and shading matt applications are completed and fired on the front. This can seem weird at first, since you will find yourself shading areas that do not yet have color in them. With practice, however, you will begin to anticipate how the eventual introduction of the color-fields will affect the piece and be affected themselves by the tonal matts.

If you plan to use silver stain for your yellow and amber color-fields, you must always apply them to the back *before* the enamels, even though they both fire at the same temperature. Stains require a pure glass surface with which to react, and if you try firing them over a surface that has already been coated with transparent enamels, you are in for a serious disaster. Also avoid firing stains and transparent enamels in the kiln at the same time. The delicate chemical reactions taking place with each of them can easily corrupt both in the kiln atmosphere, leaving you with strange colors you had not planned on . . . or worse!



*Peter McGrain, Gwailo Bar, full-color illustrational painting on clear glass using transparent enamels and silver stain as color-fields, 16" x 16". The central composition is painted entirely on a single square of scrap window glass.*



## Correct Techniques for Application and Firing

Transparent enamels are tricky to work with, and care must be taken to apply and fire them correctly. The most critical issue is that *they should never be applied too thickly*, which may cause them to boil during firing and lead to a blotchy and distressed appearance. I have seen countless projects ruined after an artist did a wonderful job of tracing and matting the front of the piece, only to butcher it at the last minute by trying to fire a matt of transparent enamel color that is too thick in a single firing. The end result is very amateurish-looking blotches of inconsistent color all over the back of the picture.

To avoid the blotchy appearance, you must separately apply and fire between two or three thin layers of the enamel over one another to achieve full color concentration. This bypasses the boiling and blotching scenario. Sure, it's a pain to have to fire the piece so many extra times, but in doing so, any small imperfections in the first matt will be cancelled out by the self-leveling effect of applying the next, and so on. The ultimate reward for your patience will be color that is uniform, rich, and blemish free. This is what separates the pros from the amateurs.

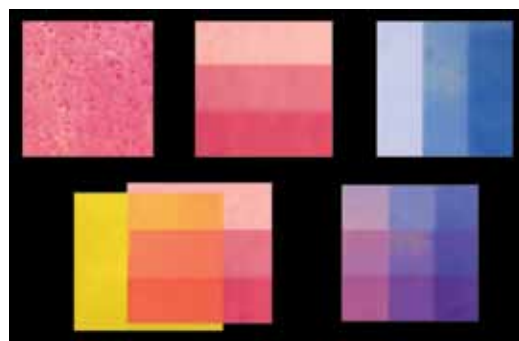
## Preparation

Begin by placing a small amount of the transparent enamel color you want to use on your glass mixing palette. These paints will require a wetting agent in the mix. Gum arabic will work, but it has a tendency to cause these paints to boil and blister when fired. If you use gum, use as little as is required to keep the wet paint from beading up on the glass when applied. Hardness is not an issue here, because we are not going to be stippling or scrubbing these matts.

A better choice for the wetting agent is a product known as Water Based Painting Medium by Reusche or FuseMaster's Water Friendly Medium. For a half teaspoon amount of paint you only need to add 4 or 5 drops of medium. Use an eyedropper to drop the medium directly onto the pile of dry paint.



*Using transparent enamels for complex color on isolated elements for stained glass. The image on the left shows a detail of several traditionally painted glass elements that will ultimately be leaded together into a stained glass window. In some, all of the color is in the base glass. For the face area, however, where many different colors must be used, a piece of clear glass has been traced and matted in preparation for the eventual integration of painted color-fields. On the right you can see how silver stain and several transparent enamel color-fields have all been separately fired onto the back of the clear facial piece to achieve a high level of color complexity. When leaded together with the other painted pieces of colored glass, a sophisticated level of descriptive detail is achieved.*



Next you will add the vehicle to the mix. Water is the best choice. Use the dropper to create a small pool of water next to the pile of dry paint. Using circular strokes with your palette knife, begin mixing the dry paint into the water. Correct wetness is extremely important with the transparent enamels. If they are too wet, they will go on too thin. If they're too thick, they will go on too heavy and will not blend well. I normally mix them to be just a bit wetter than my tracing paint mix. Continue mixing as thoroughly as possible until no grainy specks of paint can be seen.

On a light box, prepare the back of the workpiece by first taking a paper towel and picking up a little of the wet paint to use for scrubbing and cleaning the surface of the glass. Cleaning the glass is essential, since transparent enamel will bead up very easily on dirty or oily glass.

Remember, do not make the mistake of applying too-thick enamels. Use a soft, quilled applicator brush to pick up and spread the first application of wet enamel into your intended color-field area. Large tracing brushes work well for that.

## Blend to Finish

Work quickly when applying the enamel so it does not begin to dry up before you get a chance to blend it. Try to keep the perimeter edges of the color-field behind the tracing lines and dark shaded areas of the design. This will hide them from view and help maintain a mystery surrounding how the colors have been achieved.

Next, use your blender to blend the wet paint as uniformly as you possibly can. These paints turn transparent when fired, so any little streaks you leave in the paint will be visible. You must learn to work quickly and effectively. Some painters have smaller badger quill blenders, which make blending small isolated areas a lot easier. Otherwise, learn to use just the corner of the blender for control in small areas.

If the enamels begin to dry before or during blending, you will discover that they end up getting scraped right off the glass. If so, you can easily remoisten the entire area of the color-field with a wet applicator brush and try again till you get it right. Don't attempt to touch up a blotch in the unfired dry matt by brushing more enamel into it, since that will destroy the uniform color-field. Just do the entire thing over again. With practice you will make fewer mistakes during this challenging process.

After successfully blending the enamels, use a paper towel or cotton swabs to wipe up any enamel that has strayed out of your intended color-field areas. On complex shapes you may have to wait until the enamel has dried before trimming the color-fields back to where they belong with a scratch stick or stiff-quilled stippling brush. On the light box, confirm that the matt is not too thick by making sure you can still see a faint view of the tracing and shading through it. If not, the paint is probably too thick.

GA



*Studio reference samples. It is a good idea to make accurate color swatch samples of the transparent enamels you intend to use. These samples are approximately 2" x 2".*

*(Upper left) When applied too thickly, transparent enamels will boil in the kiln resulting in an unattractive blotchiness that can ruin the delicacy and mystery of the painted project.*

*(Upper center) It is better to apply transparent enamels in three thin, separately fired layers to achieve smooth, blotch-free, color distribution. This sample shows how Carmine 22891, a nice shade of cranberry pink, will appear when it is built up in three carefully blended mats.*

*(Upper right) This sample shows the three color degrees of 1090 Blue. Samples like this make it easy to foresee how the color will appear when applied to your project.*

*(Lower left) Transparent enamels can be applied and fired over colored glass or silver stained areas to achieve a third color. Here the Carmine 22891 sample is placed over a sample of Yellow #3 silver stain to show how to achieve beautifully transparent shades of orange color.*

*(Lower right) Transparent enamels can also be fired over each other to achieve new colors. Here the Carmine 22891 sample is placed over the 1090 Blue sample to show how various shades of purple and violet can be achieved by separately firing the two different colors over each other.*



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*Peter McGrain is an artist, lecturer, and workshop leader who has been working with glass for over 35 years. He has made it his professional mission to introduce as many people as possible to the joys of glass painting. More information about his full line of instructional glass painting videos and supplies as well as numerous photographs of both his and his students' work can be found at [www.petermcgrain.com](http://www.petermcgrain.com) and [www.facebook.com/PeterMcGrainGlassPainting](https://www.facebook.com/PeterMcGrainGlassPainting). You can e-mail the artist at [mcgrain@gorge.net](mailto:mcgrain@gorge.net).*

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# The 2017 SGAA Stained Glass School Comes to Raleigh



The Stained Glass School of the Stained Glass Association of America will be presenting a wonderful variety of professional classes on July 29 and 30, 2017, before the SGAA 2017 Raleigh Conference in North Carolina. Two very different, two-day glass painting classes will be hosted by Stained Glass Associates in Durham, North Carolina. All materials and transportation from the Sheraton Hotel in Raleigh will be provided.

### Learning Munich and English Painting Styles

Steven Cowan is joining SGAA from England to teach repainting work. Students will learn the techniques needed to replicate styles based on the Munich and English studios. Although this class will be based on replicating old pieces, the techniques discovered will help in the creation of new painted glasswork.

Cowan received a master's degree in mechanical engineering. Having always had a love and a flair for stained glass through his father, however, he took on a position assisting his father in the painting department at John Hardman & Co. after just one year in the field of engineering. During eight years at John Hardman & Co., Cowan was able to learn all aspects of stained glass and master the now rare, traditional skills used in creating new windows and preserving and restoring existing windows.

### Working with Enamels

Jim M. Berberich, known for his work with enamels, will be sharing ways that the use of enamels can add so much color and detail to your stained glass projects. Enamels have been in use as far back as the 17th century, enhancing this applied art form. "We will focus on simple methods that have been proven effective when applying this unique paint. The techniques used in class will allow the artist to achieve a rich deep color and also a smooth application."

Berberich has worked in the stained glass field as an independent glass artist for more than 25 years. "I took up painting on glass to add a third dimension to my work. The painting has allowed me to be involved in joint works and supply paintings to multiple stained glass studios." The artist uses the matt and stipple techniques that have been applied in stained glass painting for centuries for trace lines, multiple shadings, and the use of enamels.

### Additional Classes

On location at the Sheraton Hotel in downtown Raleigh, students will have a wide selection of classes including mentoring sessions. Back by popular demand is 25-year stained glass veteran Ralph Mills with *Restoration 101*. If you have been doing stained glass for any length of time, you've undoubtedly come across clients requesting repair/restoration services. Join Mills and learn the ABC's of restoration. Topics include documentation, rubbings, disassembly, cleaning, conservation, glazing, cementing, finishing, safety concerns, and many more restoration secrets. No need to shy away from lucrative restoration projections any longer.



*Jane Kempe repaint  
by Steven Cowan.*



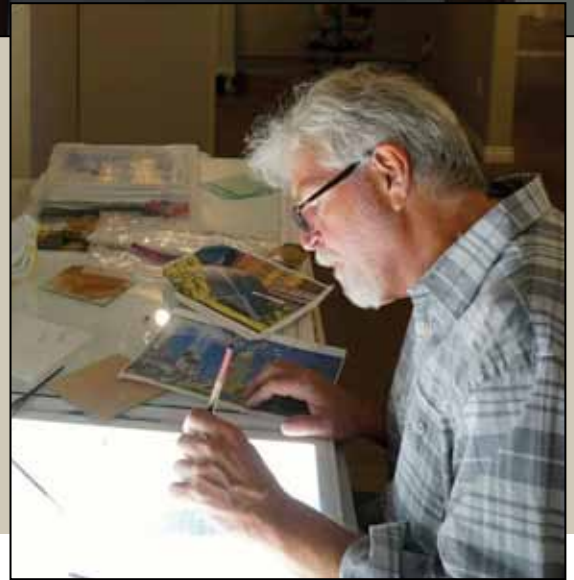




*Emmanuel Stained Glass, installation by Dennis Harmon, one of three mentors.*



*Enamels portrait by Jim Berberich.*



*Jim Berberich. Photo courtesy of the artist.*

If you are starting to venture into warm glass, join Megan McElf and her vitrigraph kiln, a simple, small kiln that allows you to make your own stringers and murrine for use in other glass work. "At McElf GlassWorks, we use the same vitrigraph equipment and processes developed at Bullseye in the early 1990s by Narcissus Quagliata and Rudi Gritsch. We have built up an array of techniques specific to firing and incorporating those elements into stained glass art." During the class, students will learn how the kiln is set up and have an opportunity to pull their own stringers and murrine.

If you're looking for something different in panel construction, join Bohle America for a Lamination Workshop. This introductory level session presents a new method of combining the functionality of modern architectural glazing substrates, such as insulated glass and safety glass, with the tradition of stained glass artistry. Lamination techniques offer a practical solution for stained glass designs that can be efficiently combined with acid etching, painting, and abrasive etching processes to provide an economical architectural design solution.

The Stained Glass School has also arranged Peer Mentoring Sessions with Dennis Harmon, Jim Piercey, and Andy Young. The owners of three SGAA-accredited professional studios will be available for half-hour sessions to discuss your portfolio of work, critique your designs, and offer suggestions and expert opinions on problem projects for both custom and restoration installations. You will be able to ask questions, share your concerns or just chat about what it is to be involved in the stained glass art world.

## Raleigh 2017 Exhibition Call for Entries

Kokomo Opalescent Glass, Inc. will be sponsoring the SGAA Raleigh 2017 Exhibition, *Conversations Founded in Glass*. Each entrant will be sent five pieces of Kokomo glass including two bulls-eye cutoffs, one spun rondel, one pressed jewel, and one sample size dalle de verre. The challenge from Kokomo is to create a *conversation founded in glass* that incorporates all five pieces into the panel.

This challenge has been designed to inspire your creativity within set limitations. The pieces can be altered in any way you like, including cutting, breaking, faceting, beveling, or slumping them, and the surfaces can be treated with paint, acid etching, or sandblasting. Use your imagination! Just make sure you incorporate all of the pieces. Add any other glass or components to the panel to complete the project, though we encourage you to use Kokomo Glass products to honor their sponsorship.

Everyone is welcome to enter, and you do not need to be an SGAA member. The entry fee is only \$65. First Place is \$1,000, Second Place is \$500, and Third Place is \$250. Product prizes will be announced as they are donated. Winners' names will be published in *Stained Glass*, the quarterly magazine of the Stained Glass Association of America, and on the SGAA website. Judging will be by popular vote of those registered for and attending the conference. Entries will be accepted until July 1, 2017.

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Visit [www.stainedglass.org](http://www.stainedglass.org) or call (800) 438-9581 for additional detailed information, registration, and entry forms for the upcoming conference.

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# J. Kenneth Leap Taking Stained Glass to Younger Learners

by Colleen Bryan

J. Kenneth Leap has long been interested in education related to stained glass. His cumulative seven years as education chair for the American Glass Guild (AGG) have convinced him that early hands-on education is critical to the future of stained glass. When very young learners have opportunities to experience stained glass directly, Leap believes the industry benefits from a fuller and enduring appreciation of the medium. One of his goals with the AGG is to develop lesson plans about glass for elementary and high school students and to make them available to educators on the AGG website.

“Several of my students at Catholic school 20 years ago still remember that class. Only a tiny percent ever become stained glass artists or designers, but many more carry that early exposure to adult roles as architects or on to town councils, school boards, and corporate boards. They become investors and appreciators of stained glass.”

### Lots of Poor Imitations

Leap's Internet research about stained glass lessons in schools revealed only a few approaches. In elementary and middle schools, most used construction paper or tissue paper in a stained glass manner. “It is counterproductive and frustrating to see how much teachers rely on faux materials rather than teaching glass itself. That dilutes the whole medium.” Examples of students making projects directly out of glass seem restricted to high school students. Leap assessed most of the craftsmanship as “pretty atrocious, not something you would want to be a permanent installation.”

The barriers to younger children making stained glass include the required level of fine motor development and organization, tight competition for classroom time, and general concerns about safety, liability, and cost. Leap developed a project that addresses these barriers and engages middle school children in making a permanent stained glass window. His 6th grade daughter was a perfect test subject, helping him gauge how far he could push the materials with this age group and what skill levels he could expect. One of the biggest advantages he found at this age is that kids are ready to try anything.

### Locating the Middle School Project

Opportunity for working with middle school students came via the New Jersey State Council of the Arts. Its Arts in Education program places artists in residence in the state's schools. The arts council uses a 20-day residency model, during which artists must make something that makes an impact on the larger community.



*Students selected colors for the panel by placing glass samples on the pattern.*

Central Middle School in Stirling, New Jersey, wanted an artist to work with its 6th grade classes on a stained glass project. The school teaches the Middle Ages in its history curriculum, culminating in a medieval festival each spring. The school proposed three core groups of 12 to 15 students who would interact consistently with the artist at every visit. The residency would take place in 45-minute sessions two days each week for a total of 20 contact days. The principal wanted the project to result in a permanent artwork installed in the school in which every child would participate, but the school prohibited them from cutting the glass themselves.

At first, Leap was uncertain how to teach stained glass to students who are not allowed to work with it. He first proposed that students would help to design a stained glass window. On touring the school, he selected a space for a transom over the front entryway, then drafted a mockup to give the principal a sense of what the final design could look like. To the artist's consternation, the principal liked the mockup so much that he insisted he wanted that *exact* window, not something the students might design along those general lines. So now the kids were neither allowed to cut or design. What exactly was left for the students to do? Leap set about trying to address these challenges.

Leap settled on a model that adapted his design and served as a conductor of and co-conspirator with the children. “The wild card of the kids' contribution was not controlled, but it took place within a structure of the design that had appealed to the principal.” The artist did not simply demonstrate the steps a stained glass artist takes in a studio, but rather built a series of lessons that moved back and forth between the familiar paper drawings, collages, pens, and ink, and the unfamiliar glass, snips, and paint until the children saw the finished window come to life under their collective hands.





*The fused and painted elements add richness to the completed transom window at the school's main entrance.*

## Tackling Obstacles

The first step was to fully plan the project and determine where and how Leap could find opportunities to engage the students, link to learning goals, and give them an experience of making actual glass art. He developed incremental, sequential assignments that built up to the final product. Next, Leap enlarged his design to scale and assembled a selection of Spectrum 96 glass compatible for fusing. The students selected glass for each segment of the design to approximate the colors in his mockup. The kids did the color selection, and he cut the glass for the transom window, moving through each color successively.

The students chose a general theme for the window, settling on flora and fauna of the region. While Leap cut glass, he asked students to make individual drawings within that theme. He also set out a task to cut paper collages using the same general color palette he was using in the window. "I purchased construction paper with a broad range of colors. Each child made two paper collages, one in warm colors and one in cool colors, exploring the various elements of color theory." Their work was posted on the classroom wall.

In cutting the glass, Leap generated scrap, separated by color. "By then, the school had become more comfortable with me and how I worked with the students. They were permitted to use glass snips with safety goggles to modify the scraps I created. Each student chose one element from the paper drawings, then chose pieces of scrap to replicate that element in glass. The trimming gave them a small experience in cutting glass."

Having discovered an unused ceramics kiln, Leap recommended that the school install a controller so the kiln could run a fusing cycle. "I took the shapes that the kids generated in glass, put them onto the top of glass pieces cut for my design, and fired them in the kiln at the school." The results generated a lot of excitement for the class. "Everyone was searching for personal pieces and reaching out to touch them."



*Students made nature-themed paper collages to explore imagery to add to the design.*

Leap also gave students an experience in glass painting. He chose Reusche's Series 5 line of ground glass pigment for its lead free and cadmium free properties. The oxide renders it opaque, and its flux lowers the melting point of the pigment. Thus, the pigment fuses before the glass itself begins to melt. "I gave all of the students small pieces of scratch board and asked them to make a design on it. Then I put a brush stroke of black paint on one of the window pieces and asked them to transfer their design into the glass paint." Each child contributed a little fused piece and a little painted piece to the transom.

Finally, Leap demonstrated leading so that students could see the process for bringing the separate pieces of glass into a single window. He completed about one-fifth of the design in the classroom. Students did not handle the lead used to wrap the glass pieces, thereby sidestepping concerns about exposure. Under a separate contract, another studio finished leading the rest of the window.



## Enhanced Value

The budget from the State Arts Council covered the costs for Leap's residency, the contract for finishing the window leading, modifying the kiln, a teacher to stay in the classroom with Leap whenever children were present, installation, and part of the cost of materials. Spectrum Glass generously contributed some of the glass to the project, which stands as part of the company's legacy.

Leap enriched the project by incorporating a field trip for the entire 6th grade class to a church close to the school that has beautiful stained glass windows. "We all marched to the church, and I gave them some history and education about stained glass. I talked about the chemistry of different colors. We talked about symbols, looked for them in the windows, and tried to figure out what they meant. The focus on stained glass as a pictorial means to convey a story advanced the school's requirements for communication and literacy."

The school unveiled the new window at a formal dedication with representatives from the town and the state. The band played and all who contributed to the window received certificates. Leap made the students fused medallions to wear around their necks.

## Lessons from the Experience

Leap is thoughtful in summarizing the lessons this experience might have for other artists interested in working with middle school children. "As an artist, I couldn't have done this project before being a dad and having experience with kids. You have to be comfortable with kids, observant, and enjoy working with kids to take on a co-conspirator conductor role with them."

Such projects require the artist to develop a level of mutual trust across the school community. The administration, the art teacher, and other teachers must buy in. A school is constantly balancing complicated and competing standards and goals. Leap also found it critical that the school provided a permanent space for doing the project instead of using a rolling cart or a closet. "We worked from a former wood shop, since we needed to spread out and leave the work between sessions."

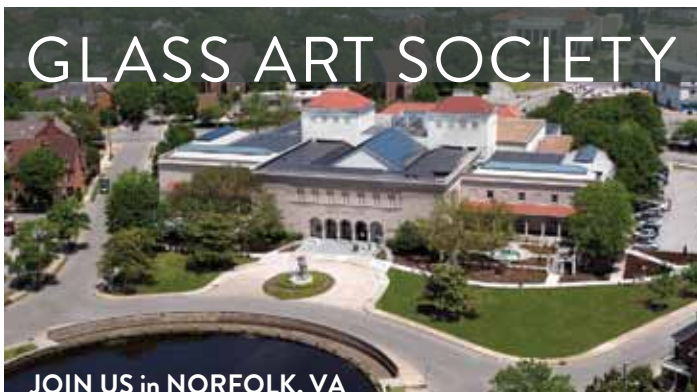
As part of the residency, Arts Horizons incorporated a professional development workshop for teachers in the school to promote buy-in and expand opportunities for multidisciplinary teaching. Essential aspects of the residency required adjusting schedules to make it possible for the children to participate. "This coordination let us infuse the project with material from other subject areas including history, geometry, science, literacy, and English as well as art. I was able to check off a lot of boxes!" That is especially important, since schools are under pressure to teach appropriate grade level curriculum goals and standards.

Central provided amazing support from its Parent-Teacher Association. Three women, for example, rotated as volunteers so that Leap had a teacher and a parent assisting every day. Given the geographic distance between the school and his home, which was two hours each way, the residency would have been very challenging without one of the parents hosting the artist and bringing him food. "It takes a village to make these amazing things happen."



*Children made elements from their paper collages using glass scraps. Leap incorporated these into the final design by fusing them to the panel pieces.*

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Christi Klein

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## Evaluating the Project

The final transom window was artistically pleasing since Leap had preselected the colors, and the fused and painted elements provided attractive texture to the window. The principal was delighted to have a striking piece of artwork to showcase the school's program. Teachers were also happy for students to have an engaging exploration of making something creative, even while advancing the district's learning goals.

The children and their parents were proud of their accomplishment. In addition, the art teacher took a subsequent class from Leap to earn professional development credits and can now incorporate glass fusing into her curriculum. Given a trained teacher and a kiln, students at the school can now continue to work with glass.

Leap has had several projects over the past 20 years that engaged high school students and hospital communities on projects involving mosaic and glass painting. These days, he teaches stained glass at Bryn Athyn College in the town of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, and challenges the membership of the AGG to offer demonstrations to school assemblies or propose similar projects that show their craft. "This is another way for us to give back to the community in a manner that demystifies glassworking and can help our industry. Planting a seed for future generations is part of the work we all need to be doing."

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Leap's initial concept for the window design.

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# Dana Boussard's Wind and Wheat Uniting Holy Spirit Catholic Parish

by Shawn Waggoner

In June 2016, the final pieces of Dana Boussard's *And You Are the Branches* were installed in Holy Spirit Catholic Parish in Great Falls, Montana. A decade of her work with project fabricator Dennis Lippert resulted in 40 panels of stained glass comprised of more than 16,000 pieces. Boussard's modern interpretation of wind and wheat imagery unifies the space it adorns with the parishioners of Holy Spirit.

The windows were produced in three phases as funding was secured via parishioner donation. Phase 1, completed between 2008 and 2011, culminated in four separate stained glass components, including a large rose window 8 feet in diameter, that is installed high above the entryway in the church's vestibule. Double, four-section area windows flank the altar. And the pièce de résistance, a prow-shaped, four-story-high window, allows Boussard's designs to rise up between them as it reaches for the heavens.

Initially, the church wanted only the rose window and the windows behind the altar. Upon seeing their worship space alive with the light and color that only stained glass can provide, Holy Spirit Catholic Parish began a capitol campaign for Phase 2 of the project. From 2012 to 2014, Boussard designed and Lippert fabricated two corner windows on the back wall behind the altar and chevrons at the tops of the side windows. The lower portions of those panels were produced in Phase 3 of the project from 2014 to 2016.

Boussard and Lippert were fortunate to maintain consistent personnel throughout all three phases of *And You Are the Branches*. As a designer, Boussard remained dedicated to continuing the same flow of design in all phases of the project in spite of the fact that a decade passed between start and finish.

### Boussard's Wind and Wheat Design

Some of the best works of art meld together the artist's history and aesthetic with like-minded goals for the project. When project and creator are inseparable, one cannot imagine the artwork being created successfully by any other artist. This is the case with Boussard and her windows for Holy Spirit Catholic Parish.

"The building was not only contemporary, but wide open. It was a large, empty, very simple canvas on which I was elaborating and embellishing. I wanted to bring in the spiritual, but also romance in a sense, by avoiding sharp, angular, geometric lines. That treatment or approach fits the kind of work with which I am associated. The space was given a warm and inviting feeling through the glory and color of the stained glass. I added movement to the space through my windows by using wind and wheat imagery to soften the clean, hard, static qualities of the architectural environment."

Best known for her work in textiles, Boussard's first foray into stained glass came in 1986 when she produced 14 memorial windows typifying the Creation for St. Joseph Catholic Church in



Dana Boussard, one of two side wall windows, each 10'5" x 18'.  
Photo courtesy of Roberta Grobel Intrater.

Choteau, Montana. The windows were created in memory of her father, Charles Boussard, a revered Choteau dentist, and were later dedicated to the memory of her mother Dorathy.

Ten years ago, when three Great Falls parishes in Montana were combined into a single, new church called Holy Spirit Catholic Parish, Father Dick Schlosser requested Boussard for the church's windows. Not only did he remember and admire her work at St. Joseph's, but he also wanted a regional artist to design his parish's new windows.

The church requested that Boussard's windows reflect both wind and wheat. These two elements were not only familiar to the artist but had been indelibly ingrained on her psyche. Born and raised in Choteau on the east side of the Continental Divide where the Rocky Mountain Front meets the Great Plains, the West of Boussard's imagination lives and breathes in her artwork.

Dark purple vines begin in the earth then wind their way up through the design, which starts at the bottom with grasses and stalks of windblown wheat. Leaves, branches, flowers, flames of light, and red doves eventually lead the eye to angels' wings that surround and support the Blessed Virgin Mary, her head framed by stars in the night sky.

"I wanted the eye to see the bottom windows first, then look upward toward the sky. That inspired my use of grasses, wheat, and twisting vines in the lower panels, with the chosen verse from John 15:5 becoming an underlying and unifying element for the parishioners: *"I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."*

The vines typify wind and movement as the eye moves upward to the top of the windows. Surrounded by images of doves and wheat, the deep purple vines branch into the form of a chalice, with the host, bathed in radiant light, rising above.



*Dana Boussard, Rose Window, installed on the opposite wall from the altar windows, 8' x 8'. Photo courtesy of the artist.*

*The three center windows behind the altar, side windows 22' x 6' and center window 42' x 8'. Photo courtesy of Roberta Grobel Intrater.*



## Painted with Glass

Working closely with the SLATERPAULL firm of Denver, Colorado, Boussard was able to design windows that have become an integral part of the architectural concept. Her primary concern was not imagery but rather style. She opted to move away from painted or figurative work and adorn Holy Spirit with windows that would reflect the contemporary design of the church.

In search of the right type, color, and texture of glass for this project, glass selection was a major undertaking, requiring that Boussard travel to Denver; Seattle, Washington; and Atlanta, Georgia. Her main goal was to have a big enough selection to use the glass in a painterly way. She worked mostly with Armstrong, Uroboros, Bullseye, Youghiogeny, and Spectrum glasses to bring her aesthetic to life.

"Essentially I painted these windows with glass," says Boussard. "There are thousands of cuts, and multitudes of small pieces achieve color and nuance. On the small bird shapes, for example, there are probably 10 or 15 cuts. On the larger red birds, there are six different types of red glass, and the feathers on the wings are each individually fabricated."

Because Great Falls benefits from many sunny days, Boussard's original windows behind the altar incorporated opaque glasses and semi-opaque glass to help block the sun from worshipping parishioners. When the corner windows were being designed, the church expressed a desire for more transparent glass and a feeling of "bringing the outside in." The upper portions of the corner windows behind the altar start out opaque but move into an increased use of clear glass. These transitions allowed the artist to maintain a consistent style throughout the entire project while meeting the clients' requests. The corner window combination of opaque and clear glass was continued in the final side windows so that the total effect in the church is both rhythmic and cohesive.

## A Team Effort

Boussard stresses the importance of her team in the process of fabricating and installing Phase 1 of the windows. The glass was all copper foiled with hidden rebar reinforcement, a must in all of her windows. Master glass cutter Roy Carpenter, fabricators from Lippert Studio, and Lippert himself, with whom Boussard had worked on previous projects, were key members of her team.

A Missoula, Montana, architect who's worked in stained glass for 40 years, Lippert previously built a 21-foot stained glass dome for George Lucas' Skywalker Ranch. His projects with Boussard include her windows for St. Joseph Parrish and public pieces for Big Bend College in Moses Lake, Washington; Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana; and The Anchorage Health Science Center in Anchorage, Alaska. Pushing the limits of stained glass is always likely when combining Boussard's ideas with Lippert's technical prowess. The two of them completed Phase 2 and 3 of the Holy Spirit project alone.

Boussard's husband Stan Reifel contributed his construction skills to the project by building expert shipping cases and light tables. In the early 1970s, Boussard moved to New York where she met Reifel, an exhibition designer and gallery director as well as furniture and house designer. Their romance began when he exhibited her paintings at his Fairtree Gallery. They lived in San Francisco, California, for a short time, then moved back to Montana and married. Together they have a daughter Ariana, also an artist.

Boussard and Reifel say the Holy Spirit project was the most challenging glass installation they've worked on to date, as well as the largest. Boussard spent considerable time consulting with the architects on issues regarding light and dimension. Working from the inception of the architectural specs, the complicated angles



were constantly being modified as construction for the glass space commenced. That process created delays, since shifting angles and changing window sizes slowed what she could do.

## Installation

TC Glass Company, located in Great Falls, spent days installing the windows. Professional movers brought the windows to Great Falls in crates built by Reifel, and not one piece of glass broke. The massive circular rose window, designed to reflect a marriage of the other three, took a full day to install and was carried to its permanent location on a scissor lift inside the church. The pieces on either side of the altar were also installed from the inside using scaffolding.

The four-story centerpiece had to be installed from the outside with a man lift. Though she had seen the piece in working drawings enlarged to scale, she didn't see this window in its entirety until installation day. The installers had to remove 10 thermopane glass panels, each approximately 8 feet by 4 feet, while sometimes encountering near gale-force winds.

"It was a little nerve-wracking, because the wind was blowing like crazy," says Boussard. "There were days when we had to stop, take a break, and wait for the winds to die down. When you're manipulating such large windows, there's always a fear of breakage and the possibility of the panels bending. The wind exacerbated that immensely."

## Artistic Growth Through Public Art

As Boussard works on smaller drawing and painting projects, she awaits with anticipation her next large stained glass commission. The artist has lived for years near Arlee, Montana, on the Flathead Reservation in their hand-built wooden house on a meadow surrounded by woods. Her studio is located in a refurbished 1916 barn with two separate floors and plenty of room to work. Large skylights provide the perfect light for all of her media, and there is plenty of wall and floor space.

"I couldn't have made the Holy Spirit windows without this much room. It is this space that allows my mind to be able to envision and complete large public artworks. I live on 60 acres outside of Missoula, where I see mountains, wheat fields, and cows running by. There's a peace that comes from being surrounded by the natural world, and that's reflected in all of my work."

Her other public art commissions consist of mostly textiles and can be seen at the Anchorage International Airport, Anchorage, Alaska; the Federal Reserve Bank, Minneapolis, Minnesota; AARP Headquarters, Washington, D.C.; and Montana State Library, Helena, Montana. In 1999, Boussard was awarded a distinguished Fine Arts Alumni Award from the University of Montana and was chosen to represent her state with a textile piece in an exhibition at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, in Washington. She is also a past recipient of both a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and a Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) Fellowship.



*Dana Boussard with Rev. Richard Schlosser  
at the halfway point in the commission.  
Photo courtesy of the artist.*

*Using lifts to install windows on the outside of  
the church. Photo courtesy of the artist.*



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*Dana Boussard, Starry Top, the top two panels of the center window behind the altar, 8' x 8'.  
Photo courtesy of Ariana Boussard-Reifel.*

"I have been very fortunate throughout my career in public art that I've been allowed and encouraged to explore artistically and develop designs based on my strengths and interests. Overall, I've had very few constraints. With the Holy Spirit windows, they were open to my creativity, and I was very grateful for that. The wind and the wheat have now become the home of the congregation, and that symbolism will unite them as parishioners for years to come."

GA



*Dana Boussard, Detail of the Red Bird in the center window behind the altar.  
Photo courtesy of the artist.*

**Dana Boussard**  
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## What's New



**Glass Craft & Bead Expo** will be presenting Margot Clark, Peggy Pettigrew Stewart, and Dennis Brady in an **open-forum discussion** on Sunday, April 2, 2017, from 8:30 to 9:50 a.m. during the upcoming Expo to learn more about how to work with float glass, also known as window glass, to create glass art. Bring your questions and join our exchange on how to add color to float glass with paints, enamels, mic, and even inks and dyes. Coffee and donuts will be provided by Unique Glass Colors and Victorian Art Glass. The forum is free but seating is limited, so you must sign up for Class SU-03 at the expo website.

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*Continued on page 45*

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# RICHARD PARRISH



by Colleen Bryan

Richard Parrish grew up in the American Intermountain West, with big skies, endless prairie, and a big butte with little else on the horizon. Fields of grain laid down an endless, undulating pattern. Despite years away developing an urban avatar, this landscape calls him back, infuses the artist's kiln work, and is the source of his artistic inspiration.

These days, about a third of Parrish's practice focuses on teaching and traveling around the world. The rest takes place in his Fusio Studio. There, he makes three kinds of work—commissions, a series of decorative functional and wall pieces entitled *Tapestry*, and a less decorative series he has dubbed *Mapping*.

## Boyhood Roots

Both Parrish's distinctive *Mapping* and his *Tapestry* series are grounded in his boyhood on a farm in Eastern Idaho. "As people grow up, we often walk away from our past. I left the farm at age 14, rejected the life I had there, and moved on to become the city guy. It wasn't until graduate school that I learned I could draw inspiration from my grounding in the Intermountain West, with its big landscapes and the farm where I grew up. I learned to draw on that reservoir for my glasswork."

While he acknowledges that his childhood on the farm was a very hard one, Parrish notes that his considerable angst is not what propels his art. "There were some bright spots, and doing the *Mapping* work helped me remember and appreciate those."

Parrish's grandparents owned the farm until his grandfather died and left his grandmother a young widow with seven children. "My grandmother was a strong woman, a real feminist, even doing things like traveling to Cuba after being widowed. She took up amateur landscape painting and loved it. She started me painting

when I was 8 years old, and that was the formal beginning of my artwork. She helped me understand that art is essential to getting through tough times in life."

"In some ways," Parrish reflects, "what I do now with powdered glass is not so far from playing in the dirt, moving glass around, contouring, and making imaginary or very specific places. Doing the work has made me appreciate where I came from and let me see what was there in a new way."

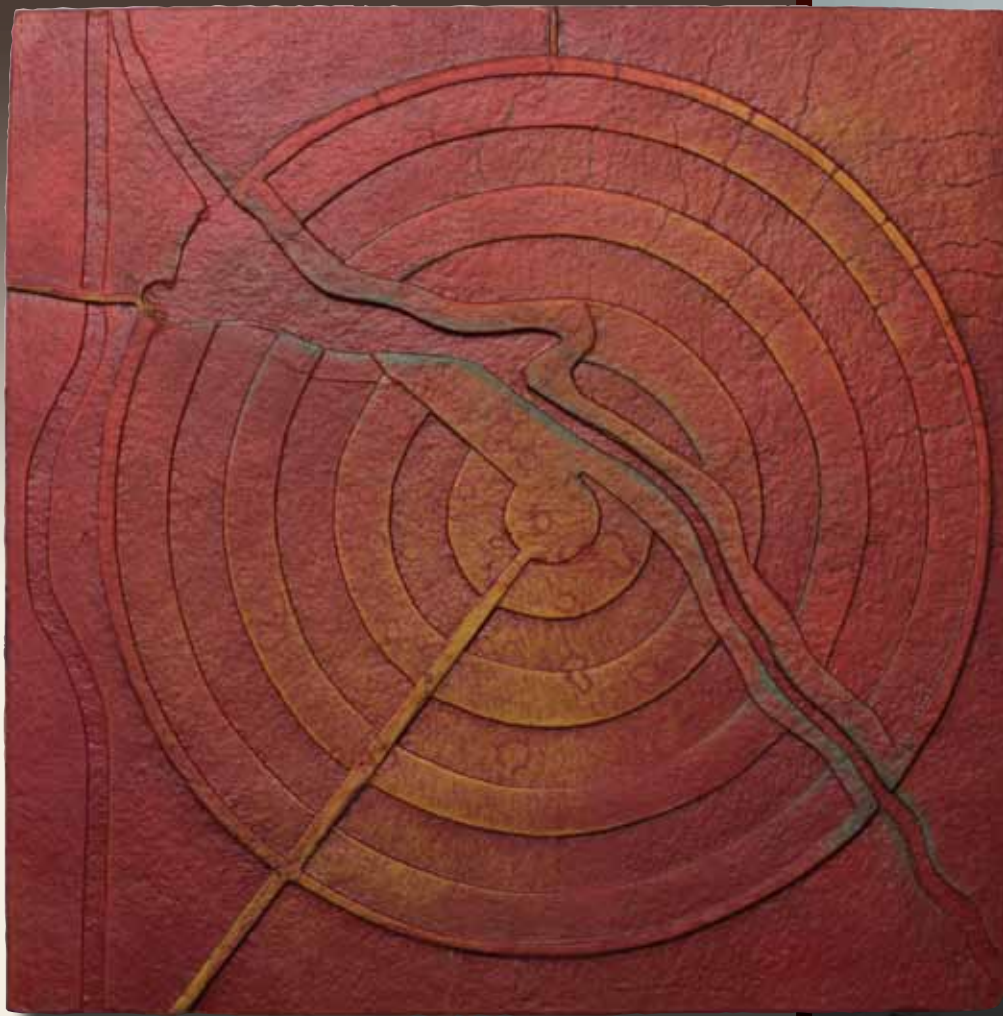
## Architecture Saturated in Art

Parrish earned both a bachelor's and master's degree in architecture. He feels lucky to have completed his master's work at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. The school is ranked among the best fine arts schools in the country and offers both intimacy and an invigorating exposure to art across disciplines. Cranbrook offers specialties in ceramics, fiber arts, photography and graphic design, metals and jewelry, painting and drawing, sculpture, printmaking, two- and three-dimensional design, and architecture. Each program is small, comprised of only about 15 people, so the academy consists of 125 students pursuing their self-directed work on a beautiful campus.

"The students are fairly saturated in art of all kinds. I gained more from that exposure to other artists than from the entire architectural curriculum. It required a shift from the practical world of architecture. It helped me start thinking in a very different and a more artistic way about design. It was an amazing place."

Parrish sought a graduate degree so that he could pursue teaching at a university, and he subsequently taught classes in architecture and design at The University of Michigan and at Montana State University. Within a year of settling in Bozeman, Montana, in the

# WESTERN LANDSCAPE IN FUSED GLASS



*(Left to right) Richard M. Parrish, Red River, wall mounted kiln formed glass panel, 9-3/4" x 23-3/4" x 1", 2011; Madison Field 9, wall mounted kiln formed glass panel, 12" x 12" x 3/4", 2015; the artist holding the Red River panel. Photos by Rab Cummings, Jessie Moore, and Cummings, respectively.*

early 1990s, he secured a grant to buy a kiln and fusible glass so he could do glasswork on the side. "Since there were not a lot of resources in my area, I started teaching myself, experimenting, adjusting, and adapting."

Parrish continued to teach at the university for eight years before determining that he was not made for academia and returning to the practice of architecture. In 2001, Parrish began making glass full time and distributing his work through wholesale shows and art fairs. In the process, he developed two distinctive lines of glasswork that established his reputation as a glass artist and continue to be the substance of his teaching.

## Mapping

Parrish's distinctive *Mapping* series is his most personal work and evolved from a 2004 breakthrough. "I was offered a sole exhibition at a gallery in Portland, Oregon, and I made original work for that show. I produced large hanging wall panels with bas relief surfaces suggesting landscapes, topographical, and aerial views. Their surfaces were not shiny but had an earthier feel. People related to them as paintings rather than glass."

The inspiration for the series was set in place and time. "When I was a child on the farm, a big butte was visible on the northern horizon. I remember wondering what would happen if you could cut that butte off, lift it up, and look under it. That sparked my initial idea for the glass."





*Richard M. Parrish, Tapestry 42, wall mounted kiln formed glass panel, 25-3/4" x 61" x 1/2", 2011. Photo by Rab Cummings.*

Early pieces were abstract designs with a geologic quality. The artist layered pieces of sheet glass in different colors and fired them on ceramic fiber paper, which imparts its contours onto the glass. After the layers are fused, he grinds off areas to expose the colors of glass below the surface. "There is a direct parallel between the idea of cutting through the earth and cutting through the glass." Later, Parrish worked more by sifting powdered glass. "Powder gave me more subtlety in the colors, more ability to manipulate patterns, use water, and apply other techniques. And that led me more toward the gritty, earthy quality I was looking for."

The series continues to evolve and change over time. In 2014, Parrish met Chris Boyer, an aerial photographer in Bozeman whose photographs he had admired. The two recognized parallels between Parrish's glasswork and Boyer's photographs. Since then, the men have flown together over the region in a small plane that allows the flier to see much more detail.

Parrish's subsequent fused glass pieces make more direct reference to center pivot irrigation systems, rivers, and creeks in the area. "This body of work relates more directly to specific places near where I live or have lived, and I have worked with fusing long enough now that I know more techniques and have developed greater mastery at getting the glass to do what I want."

Over the past decade, Parrish worked on the series but did not show it a lot. Then he was invited to launch an exhibition at the Rockwell Museum in Corning, New York. "The founders of the museum had a collection of traditional western art including Russell, Remington, and Bierstadt bronzes and oil paintings. The museum has moved intentionally to be more inclusive in its definition of Western art and to acknowledge that region's contribution to American art. The museum's new curator, Kirsty Buchanan, saw Parrish's *Mapping* as a series of Western landscapes.

"This was the first show that the new curator had fully curated, and she selected my work. I completed 22 new pieces for the show

and incorporated three older pieces. The exhibition, which ran from February through June 2016, was a huge event in my career as a glass artist. I walked into the opening and found myself thinking, 'I can't believe I actually made all of this!'

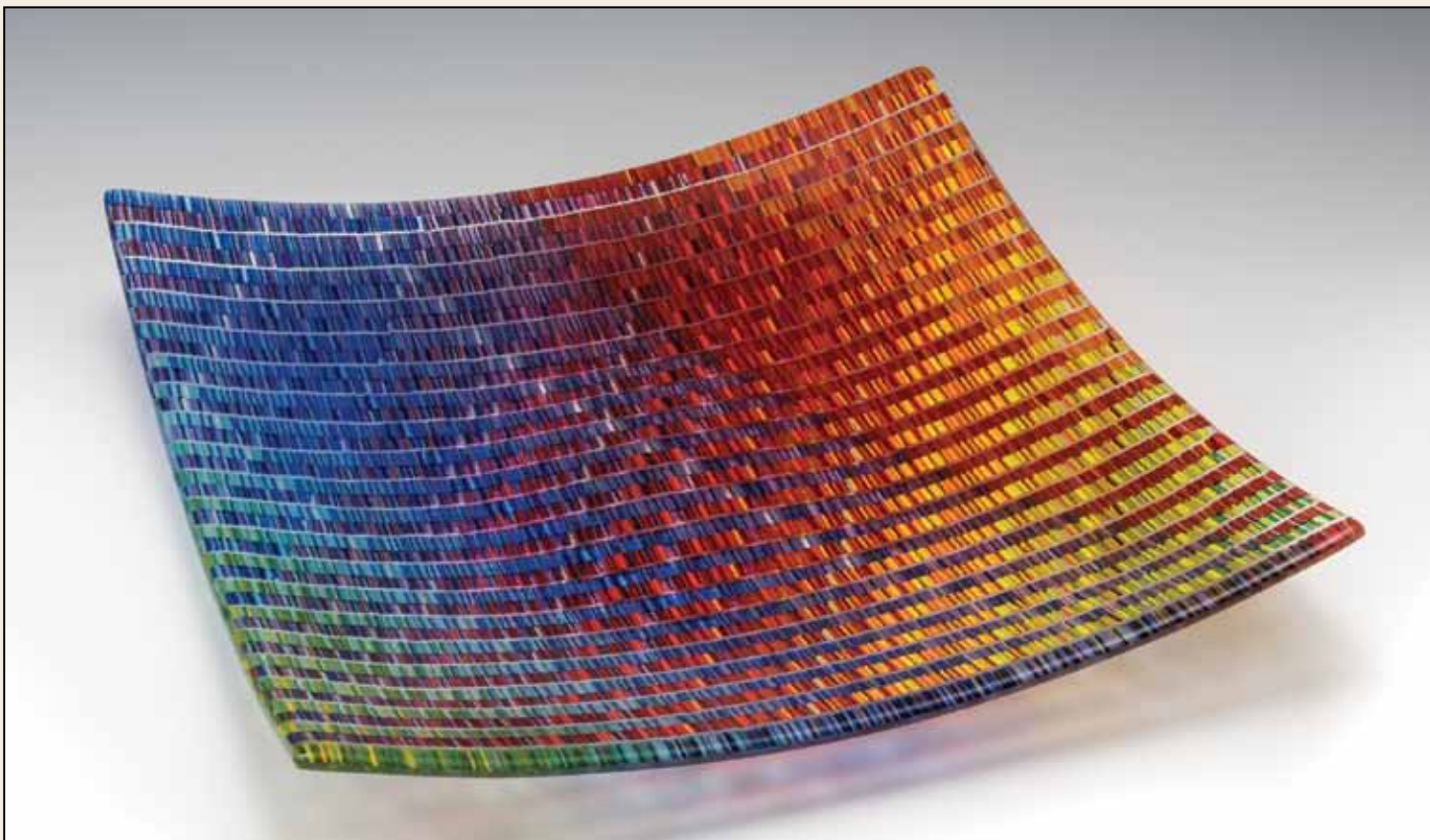
"*Mapping* is the most personal work that I do. It deals with memories of where I grew up and allows me to express my feelings about the place. The show hung at Corning during the 2016 Glass Art Conference where the opening party drew 1,400 glass artists. Seeing people's reactions and responses to the work touched me deeply."

## **Tapestry**

Ten or 15 years ago, Parrish found himself considering the rows of grain that remain after harvest that create repetitive patterns of vertical lines. He experimented with ways to express those patterns in the glass. As his work developed, he moved away from that original idea toward a more fabric-like design. The *Tapestry* series is much more decorative than his *Mapping* work. "*Tapestry* is all about design, pattern making, and color. People often can't believe that I do both bodies of work, but the unifying principles of design, color theory, and order are inherent in everything I do."

Parrish distributes the *Tapestry* work through galleries, in the past at outdoor art fairs in Idaho at Sun Valley and Jackson Hole, and through museum fine craft shows including the Bellevue Art Museum in Washington and the Philadelphia Museum of Art in Pennsylvania. He has also distributed his work at high-end indoor shows such as the American Craft Council show in Baltimore, Maryland, and the Smithsonian Craft Show in Washington, D.C.

The *Tapestry* series ranges from small plates to large bowls to wall panels. Parrish wryly observes that anything that hangs from a wall inherently draws higher prices than functional objects that sit on a table, even when the process for making them is the same. He suspects that this commercial advantage highly skews the debate about what comprises "real" art.



*Richard M. Parrish, Prismatic Tapestry Plate, kiln formed glass, 15-3/4" x 15-3/4" x 1-1/2", 2016. Photo by Jessie Moore.*

"I have distinguished the *Mapping* and *Tapestry* works. I view *Tapestry* as decorative and *Mapping* as fine art, which acknowledges the distinction made by the art world. Modernism in art and architecture has stripped away decoration as superfluous. Decorative work is often seen as craft and as lesser than fine art pieces." But Parrish is somewhat impatient with the distinction. "I've always loved doing the *Tapestry* work. Comprised of millions of tiny lines, the product looks complex. It is colorful and fun, and people love it," a response that is not lost on the maker.

The artist was delighted to be invited to join a group exhibition that opened in the Glasmusset in Ebeltoft, Denmark, in April 2016. "The show was called *Ornament* and included glasswork with a primarily decorative component. Fifteen artists from around the world were invited to be part of the show, and I was honored to exhibit alongside the other artists. Several were people I'd met in my travels, and artists from as far away as Australia and New Zealand came to the opening. I loved the confirmation that there is a real place for and a tradition of decoration. Work doesn't have to be fine art to have value."

The debate on art versus craft rages, but Parrish has little appetite for it. "To me, both are valuable. We live in a pretty diverse world, and it isn't important to make an assertion that one is better. Elaborate, decorative, functional work has had a place in every culture, so it stands to reason that it must address some basic human need. I have grown tired of the debate. Perhaps it helps that I don't often think of myself as an artist—more as a maker, an artisan. What I do is to make things with my hands and materials."

## Commissions

Parrish's most recent commission was a set of windows for a synagogue in Los Angeles, California, designed by Berliner Architects. Temple Beth Sholom approached Steve Klein, a mentor-turned-friend whom Parrish credits as his biggest influence in glassmaking, to do the commission. Klein accepted on the condition that Parrish could bring his architectural background and experience with large-scale glass to the project. The two had become good friends, teaching together and running residency programs across the world, but this was their first joint commission project.

The project consisted of eight windows set into a wall between the worship area and the entry gallery. Natural light floods the glass, which can be viewed from both sides. The space that the wall and windows address is very contemporary. The artists chose to render images of synagogues and temples that had importance to the history of the Temple Beth Sholom congregation. The rabbi and a committee designated the important buildings they wanted to depict, and Klein and Parrish photoshopped and silk screened, using glass powders on a glass base to create the images. "Neither of us had ever even taken a class in the process, but we just skipped coasters and moved directly to making windows."

The committee selected the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the ancient temple at Alexandria Egypt, temples in Berlin, Germany, and in Russia, and the congregation's earlier temples in the United States. "The buildings represented many different periods and architectural styles. Because silk screening abstracts the images somewhat, that choice of process helped minimize the differences so that the end result reads as a whole wall."





*Richard M. Parrish and Steven Klein, Windows for Temple Beth Shalom, Santa Ana, California, 2015. Photos by Richard Parrish.*

The window design was highly symbolic as well as representational and aesthetically resonant. “Our palette was drawn from colors that represent the 12 tribes of Israel, and we layered the colors one on another to get them just right. On one side, the windows are heavily textured to relate to the Jerusalem stones that the wall is made of.”

While storytelling is foundational to both gallery and commission work, Parrish observes that conceptual and research work and interactions with clients are quite distinct between the two. “On a commission, your client has a vision too, and the artist has to be willing to share the vision rather than jealously guarding his own self-expression. I learned that skill in architecture, and it was a critical advantage that I was able to bring to the temple project. I very much enjoy collaborating with clients.” When Parrish visited the temple in December 2015 to celebrate completing the construction, he was overwhelmed and humbled by how important the windows are in the building and to the congregation.

Parrish has found that this willingness and ability to share artistic vision can sometimes make the difference in getting a commission at all. Several years ago, he was invited to bid on creating windows for The Children’s Hospital in Aurora, Colorado. An art consultant was acting for the client, who wanted a glass artist from the Intermountain West. Two artists showed up in Denver, Colorado, to do a presentation and interview. The competing artist went first and presented a design to the committee that said, “This is what I’m going to do for you.” Then Parrish showed them a portfolio of completed work, described his process, and made it clear that he did not yet know what he would do, because he wanted to talk with the chaplain and a small committee before he even prepared a design. He was selected unanimously for the project.

When he joined the conversation, Parrish found he had stepped into some discontent. “The architects, who were from a good and respected firm out of Portland, had designed a chapel that the chaplain was unhappy with. He was grumpy about it. I tried to listen to him about what he wanted the chapel to be. I came up with some ideas to use the windows to bring all of the design elements together to create a nondenominational, spiritual, meditative space. After getting past his initial skepticism, he became pretty excited. I made the windows, and the chaplain loves the chapel now. The challenge really appealed to me.”

GA

*Look for **Subscriber Benefits** coming to **Subscribers Only** via links in upcoming e-mails from Glass Art. This **Bonus Content** describes Richard Parrish’s teaching practice as well as the artist residency program he sponsors with Steven Klein.*



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## What's New

Continued from page 39

complete with firing schedules and notes. The private Facebook feature is something Tanya wanted to include in order to give artists a place to interact with her as well as other artists who have taken the same online class. Many questions are raised and answered, and the continued access to learning has proven to be invaluable after the initial workshop. You will also earn Education Coins when you shop at the website that can be used to watch paid videos at a discount or for free.

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**McMow Art Glass and Wardell Publications** present **Glass Quest 2017**, a weekend of education, inspiration, and engagement for glass enthusiasts in West Palm Beach, Florida, May 26–28, 2017. Attendees will



have the opportunity to meet and partner with other glass artists and push the boundaries of glass as a contemporary art form. Maureen James, art glass educator and publisher of *Glass Patterns Quarterly*, *Glass Art*, and *The Flow* magazines, will be the keynote speaker. As a member of the board of the International Art Glass Suppliers Association and 2012 recipient of the organization's Lifetime Achievement Award, she has been influential in bringing glass education to the masses. The event will also include lectures and demonstrations from professional glass artists from across the country, an extraordinary kiln forming experience hosted by Jen-Ken Kilns, and opportunities to review and purchase the latest, greatest tools, supplies, and equipment from select manufacturers.

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Continued on page 51



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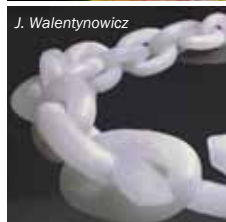
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# Higgins Glass Studio

## Preserving a Legacy

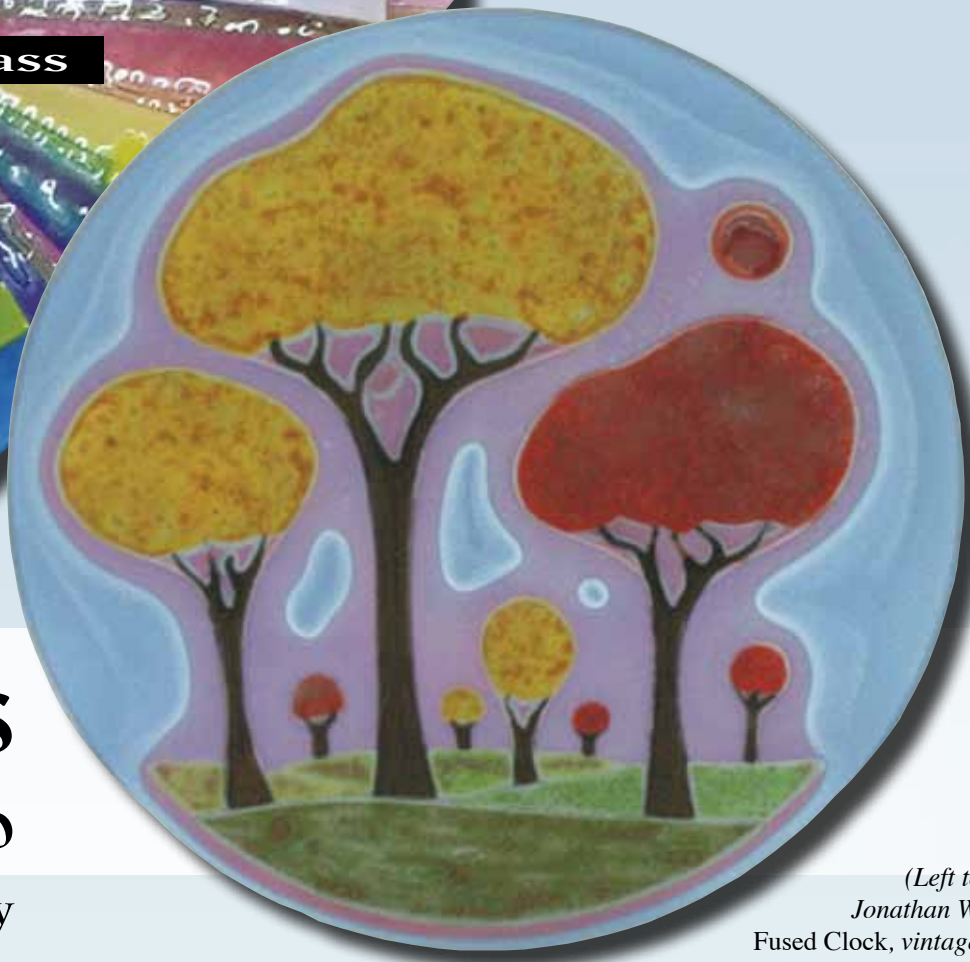
by Colleen Bryan

Higgins Glass Studio was essentially a love story back in 1948 when artists Michael and Frances Higgins resurrected the ancient, all-but-lost art of fusing and began touting their “modern miracles with everyday glass.” The refined graduate student and art teacher from the University of Georgia and the boisterous Englishman and art instructor at the Chicago Institute of Design married that same year.

Functional fused glass provided an avenue for the Higginses to support themselves with their art and their hands. Their chosen successors, Louise and Jonathan Wimmer, a mother-and-son team who learned their craft from the Higginses, see their mission as continuing a legacy. Jonathan Wimmer shared how he and Louise balance the preservation of a legacy with the imperative to compete in an ever changing world of studio glass. Consistency, a change in style, innovation, and technology, as well as appropriate business approaches for marketing and distribution are all part of what it takes to keep the Higgins traditions alive.

### Rooted in Higginsware

The Higginses started making glass together using kilns they stored behind the couch in their Chicago, Illinois, apartment. There they made smaller functional glass items to punctuate household design schemes and won distribution contracts from national retail department stores. From the beginning, they eschewed individual attribution, opting to sell everything that either Fran or Michael produced as Higginsware. The trademark represents a classically midcentury modern style with signature geometric, floral, and organic designs.



(Left to right)  
Jonathan Wimmer,  
Fused Clock, vintage 1950s  
“Roman Strip” glass, 11" square,  
2016. Louise Wimmer, Fused Fall Tree  
Plate, 7-1/2" diameter, 2016.

In 1957, the couple entered their most prolific period in a partnership with Dearborn Glass Company in Chicago making complete table settings for homes and restaurants. Even the popular game show *The Price Is Right* featured a complete table of Higgins glass as a prize for winners. Wimmers shared, “That was neat, but there is little call for such sets anymore, since changes in the way society entertains make buyers of such large sets elusive.”

The Higginses moved away from mass production when they left Dearborn Glass Company in 1966. After a brief stint at Hagger Pottery and shuffling between a few addresses, the couple acquired a studio in Riverside, Illinois, where they focused on individual art pieces. In the 1970s they purchased the building where the studio currently operates.

Louise Wimmer met Fran Higgins at an art show and offered to help in the studio. Eventually, Higgins accepted her offer and began a lifelong mentoring relationship. Jonathan grew up in the studio, and beginning when he was in the 8th grade, he worked under Michael Higgins’ tutelage. Career and relationship overlapped, becoming more familial than professional, Wimmer says. When Frances died in 2004, she left the studio to Louise, her longtime apprentice and colleague.

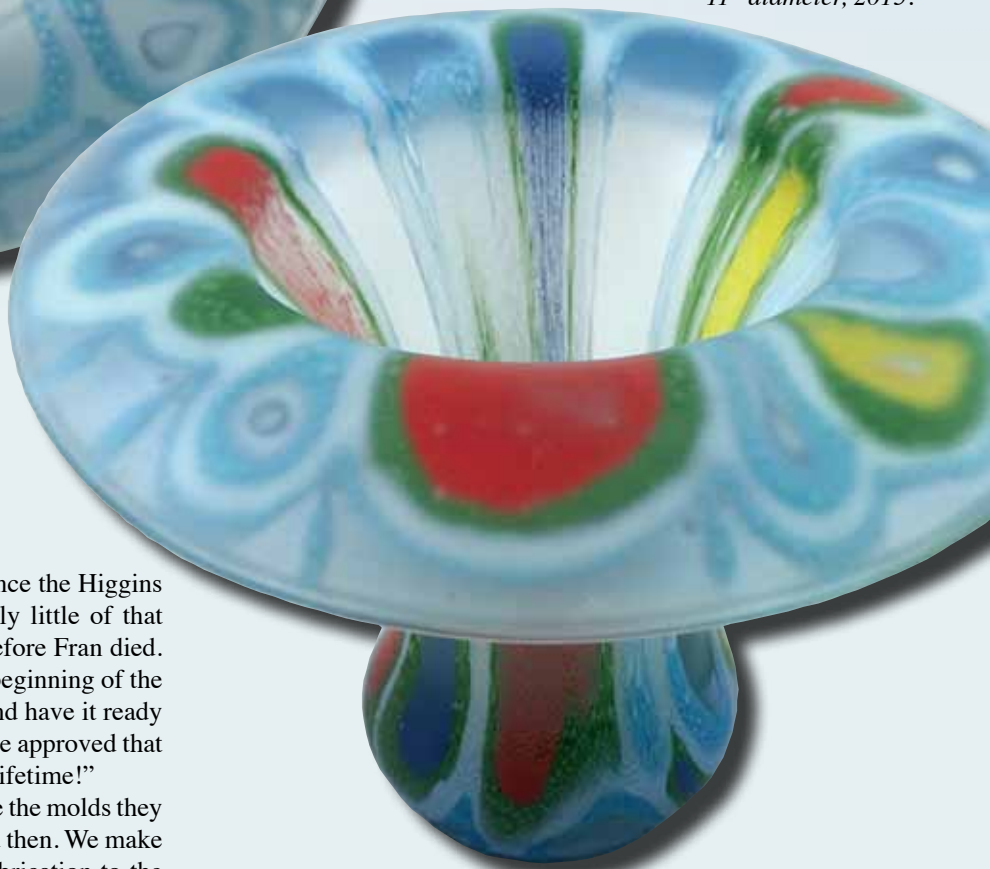
Higgins Glass Studio still operates in its beloved Riverside, a village that is home to approximately 9,000 residents. Located just west of Chicago, it is one of the country’s earliest planned communities and was designed by Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmstead in the mid-19th century. Today the suburb is an architectural museum with an older, affluent population.



*Louise Wimmer, Fused Medium Drop Out  
(top and side view),  
4-1/2" tall x 5-1/2" wide, 2016.*



*Jonathan Wimmer, Fused Confetti Plate,  
11" diameter, 2015.*



## Technology, Equipment, and Processes

Fusing technology has advanced profoundly since the Higgins era. Higgins Glass Studio incorporates remarkably little of that technology. "We did install a computerized kiln before Fran died. It has been great for us. We work on pieces at the beginning of the day and can pool our work together at day's end and have it ready by the next morning. But Michael would never have approved that purchase or even accepted credit cards during his lifetime!"

Everything else in the studio is original. "We use the molds they made in the 1950s and stacks of glass they amassed then. We make our own glass, mix color, and send it away for fabrication to the same company that has performed that function since 1950. The result is more like a window glass than stained glass. Two of the original kilns the Higginses purchased are still in use in the studio today. In the realm of the physical materials, tools, and equipment, not much changes."

Early on, for lack of a source of specific tools or products, the Higginses made their own. Frances was adept at inventing tools, such as a stylus and minibaster that she adapted to produce fine lines. When something worked, the artists found little need to replace it. "We still have all of those tools, and I'm using them today."

The founders developed their own processes—a specific way of laying down enamel, making dropouts, fused vases, or what they dubbed *framies*. The Wimmers closely mirror processes used by the Higginses, which Wimmer attributes to the way that he and his mother came up in the studio. "We learned by doing—by watching Fran and Michael work and emulating them. That is the way we know how to work in glass."



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River Green and Mint (detail) by Amber Cowan



### Legacy and Innovation

The Wimmers are intentional in their mission to maintain the Higgins style. Today as Wimmer makes mobiles, for example, he hears his old mentor's voice in his head. "With mobiles, pieces in two colors suspend from an arm piece called the bow tie. Now as I lay out mobiles, I make sure every one of the dark pieces is on top, as Michael would have wanted."

When Wimmer makes a plate in Michael's style, he incorporates Michael's aesthetic about the distances between pieces in the design as well as between the design and the edge. "It feels great when I open the kiln and sense that Michael helped me out with that one."

From the 1940s onward, the two Higginses were inventively trying to move their work forward. Their portfolio had a distinctive and organic feel, but it evolved over time. This frames an essential tension in the challenge that the Wimmers have in carrying forward a legacy business while allowing it to continue to grow and evolve. How do they avoid mere reproduction of fine artwork? The resolutions they have used so far involve reconfiguration, extension, and scale.

Wimmer notes that the Higginses left behind a treasure trove of creative property that helps his family stay true to the Higgins style. "Fran drew prolifically. We have hundreds of her drawings in drawers, most of which she never got around to translating into glass. Most are base drawings depicting how to divide a plate or a bowl. Within each base, patterns evolve over time. Wimmer's sister, Celeste Loeffler, brings these patterns to life with bird, cat, and tree designs, which have always been important themes in this historic area. Many clients think we are reproducing designs that the Higginses made during their lifetimes, but that is not the case. Rather, we are making original, one-of-a-kind designs elaborating on their patterns, designs, and palettes."

The studio has made jewelry rings under both Higgins and Wimmer. Last year Wimmer created a wrap-around ring as an entirely new variation of an item the studio has long produced. The studio also introduced wall sconces, a completely new product line that incorporated the Higgins color palette, glass, and designs. "We are taking our glass and making something that still looks identifiably Higgins, but that is new and different and aimed at a modern market. It's a lot of fun."

Like Michael, Wimmer keeps a box of scrap glass at his desk from which to choose interesting pieces to incorporate in designs. He pushes the practice forward in tabletop mobiles, sculptural pieces, and large architectural mobiles, some nine feet long with a wingspan of eight feet, hanging 20 feet in the air. "With the mobiles, evolution is most obvious in changes to their scale and setting. As we step out into architectural pieces and larger buildings, I know that direction is something Michael would have loved."

The studio's biggest successes in the post-Higgins era have been two large mobiles for the Riverside and Oak Park libraries. "In Riverside, we made a five-foot piece combining a standard mobile and rondelays. The one in Oak Park Library is quite special, an eight-foot-wide standard mobile with hundreds of pieces. That mobile was one of our crowning works."

To some degree, Wimmer admits, "We're in a bubble, captured here. We're so specific and original in how we make things. If Fran and Michael fired a kiln and it worked, they repeated the process. That is what we do today. Because our glass is so specific to us, our processes and our products would not be the same if we bought glass from Ed Hoy and fused it. Often, what I hear from other artists feels overcomplicated and confusing, whereas the ways we proceed seem simple to us."

### Shifting Markets

Higgins Glass Studio has been in continuous operation for 68 years. People are drawn to the studio by their general interest in glass and appreciation for the studio's specific place in history. "The fame and history of the studio keep it relevant. Generations of families have come through here. I receive e-mails weekly asking about someone's grandmother's piece. Most collectors are introduced to Higgins Glass Studio by antique dealers who collect the mass-produced, Dearborn-era pieces. Then they find today's studio."

*Jonathan Wimmers, Fused Multicolored Mobile, 28" x 23", 2016.  
Wimmers ensures that every one of the dark pieces in the mobiles  
is on the top, as Michael Higgins would have wanted.*



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Recently, a woman from the Quad Cities area of Northwest Illinois and Southeastern Iowa brought in a three-footed oblong chip bowl in a butterfly design for us to authenticate and estimate its value. The piece was made at the studio during the 1950s at a time when the Higginses also made plates, bowls, and ashtrays. “Whenever such pieces come up for auction at the Wright Auction in Chicago or Sotheby’s, the studio receives a lot of buzz.”

Rondelays and mobiles created at the Higgins Glass Studio have been featured in architectural magazines, and people relate them to the studio. The rondelays are now the signature pieces produced there, although Wimmer notes that market favorites change over time. “Rondelays weren’t generally popular in the 1950s and ’60s, but became so in the mid to early ’90s and persist to the present day.” Part of the studio’s marketing task is to remind people that they can still purchase new custom glass rather than being limited to auction houses.

The studio does little advertising, relying instead on social media and local newspapers to publicize annual big events. Wimmer posts daily to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Several active Facebook groups concentrate on midcentury modern glass. “Most people who are into modernism know about and are into Higgins Glass. We see a lot of our customers coming from that direction. They’ll call us to make new custom pieces.”

## Annual Rhythms

Work at Higgins Glass Studio proceeds in a regular seasonal rhythm with three high points. Spring starts the wedding season with custom requests for wedding plates and specialty items. Fall brings higher demand for one-of-a-kind sculptures and tree plates. The annual Christmas Open House takes place the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

The open house has always been a big deal in the life of the studio. “In 2016 we held our 68th annual open house. That is the only time of year we sell our seconds. In preparation for high demand, we build up a supply of one-of-a-kind bowls, plates, and trays.”

Preparation for Christmas begins in July. The studio team makes 25 or 30 different ornaments each year, producing 25 to 30 each of most ornaments and 50 of the year’s new edition, which in 2016 was a sled. They also make thousands of stars of all shapes and sizes. “Each ornament must be cut, fired, sanded, and washed before it is ready for display.”

Wimmer says the challenge of maintaining a legacy is one that many artists will recognize. “Every day you look at a blank canvas and figure out what to do. But I’m staring at the blank trying to come up with a design that honors Fran and Michael by keeping it in their style. We experiment a lot with random pieces of glass and colors and themes. Fran and Michael had a vision and we try to tap into it, but everything starts off from a single piece of glass.”

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*(Left to right) Louise Wimmer, Large Fused Drop Out with Veils, 2015, and the interior of the Higgins Glass Studio showroom*

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## What's New

Continued from page 45

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**Salem Community College** will host the **17th Annual International Flameworking Conference** March 24–26, 2017, in



Carneys Point, New Jersey.

Joining artist Amber Cowan are Beccy Feather, Zach

Puchowitz, Ryan Tanner, Jacob Moskowitz, and

Ryan Tanner. The Friday night presentation by Beth Hylen and Eric Goldschmidt of The Corning Museum of Glass on the history of flameworking is free and open to the public. Cowan, who uses recycled, upcycled, and second-life glass for her sculptural work, will give a two-hour presentation on Saturday, followed by Moskowitz and Puchowitz.

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sale of the Uroboros Glass name, equipment, technology, and formulas has been completed, and all current colors and product lines, including System 96® and FX90 fusible products plus traditional art glass and contracted custom-produced glass products, are expected to be available again in the months ahead. The new owner, Oceanside Glasstile (OGT), headquartered in Carlsbad, California, has 25 years of experience in developing and dependably supplying aesthetically superior, responsibly made colored glass products. Eric Lovell, founder and president of Uroboros, and several long-term Uroboros employees will be closely involved with the start-up of production in Mexico and will continue to be involved with the Uroboros brand. Remaining inventory and new production should be available from Uroboros/OGT starting mid-May 2017, with remaining inventory and new production for frit, stringer, noodles, rods, and other accessory items available in early June. Current Uroboros distributors are encouraged to contact OGT for initial product inquiries and orders.

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# Are You Aware of Current Trends?

by Mark Veit

Ofentimes glass artists develop tunnel vision when creating art. This is a very common occurrence and is in no way a bad thing when it comes to creating art. It can, however, hamper your sales if you are not taking current fashion and decorating trends into account.

Learning and growing a technique and pleasing your own eye as an artist is often the focus. There is nothing negative about this coming from the view of an artist and no doubt helps you grow your artistic ability. What pleases one person's eye, however, may not please another's, and when it comes to making sales, the only eye that counts is the buyer's. I have challenged you in the past to step out of your artist shoes and into the shoes of your buyer, and I will do it again here. By looking at each end of the process individually, hopefully we will be able to tie them together in a stronger, more profitable way.

## Researching Fashion Trends

A good place to start is right in front of you—your computer. Spend some time searching for current trends. Some good search terms for 2017 would include *fashion trends*, *home decorating trends*, *jewelry fashion trends*, *popular clothing and colors*, and other similar keywords that include the current year. Whether you focus on large glass art or glass jewelry, getting a feel for current trends in fashion and decorating will give you an idea as to which colors and styles are popular. Once you have an awareness of current trends, you can decide which technique of yours will be the best match for creating those styles.

Knowing current fashion trends will allow you to design pieces for people that will fit appropriately. If low necklines are in for women in 2017, for example, you might design a pendant knowing that it will probably be worn with skin as a backdrop. If higher necklines are the trend, you might design a pendant knowing it will have different colors of clothing as a backdrop.

In the case of high necklines, the next logical question is to determine what clothing colors are popular so you can design your piece with that in mind. I can tell you that black is the most common color, so if you are ever questioning how your piece will be worn, lean toward black. More times than not you will be right.

If you have kids or nieces or nephews who are more into current fashion than you are, pick their brains. Show them some of the pieces you have made in the past. Rather than asking them whether or not they like it, ask them how they would change it to fit their own style. After many attempts at this, I learned that asking, "Do you like this piece?" nets a stock response of "yes" with no value. If I steer them into an open-ended question, I tend to get more usable advice. A few years back, for instance, I learned that kids were wearing more rings than normal, and I have seen this trend continue all the way up the age ladder.



*Glass Jewelry  
by Tanya Veit*

## Knowing Your Best Shows

We receive many questions and experiences in our Facebook group about the best way to set up a display for an art show. Each area of the country is different, so each location needs to be approached with a different sales plan. While I can tell you to keep it well lit, organized, and inviting, there is no magic formula I can give you as far as making sales. What I can tell you is that not every show is for every artist.

Our studio has learned from trial and error over many years and many disappointing shows and kept notes on what worked and what didn't. We dropped the shows that didn't work and focused more on the type of shows that did. No matter the type of show that works best for you, always keep notes of sales and overall feel of the show. When the time comes to register next year, you will know exactly how you did the year before.

## Staying True to Your Own Designs

While it may sound like I am telling you to create or adjust your entire product line to meet current trends, I'm not. It is important to maintain the designs for which you are known and that are affordable to make. These pieces go a long way toward helping you maintain a profitable margin as well as offering a wide price range among your inventory to reach more customers. For our studio, that means always making sure we have a good inventory of simple black-and-white *Tree of Life* pendant, bracelet, and earring sets at each show. These have always been popular sellers no matter where the show is being held.

By staying up to date with current trends in your industry, you will be ahead of the curve and ahead of your competition. By having up-to-date glass art at your booth or on your webpage, you will see an increase in customer views that will turn into more sales. Best of luck, everyone. Here is to a great year in glass!

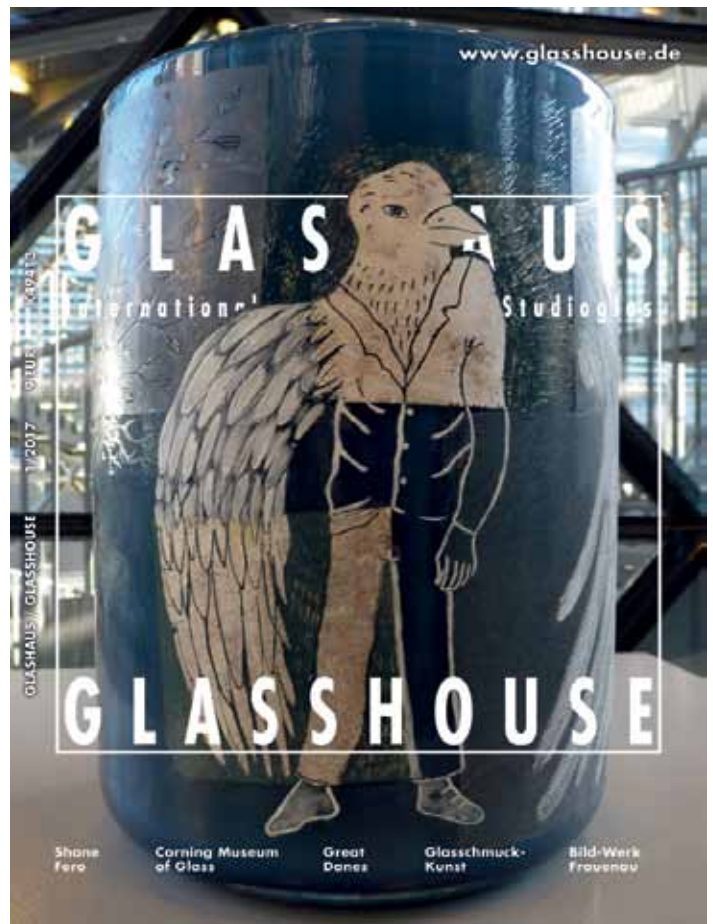
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Mark Veit currently owns and operates [www.aaeglass.com](http://www.aaeglass.com) along with partners Tanya and John Veit. They create enamel waterslide decals for glass artists and sell them on their website along with unique silver settings for glass. They also wholesale their fused glass jewelry to galleries and boutiques.



Constantly attending workshops, seminars, and classes with master artisans helps Veit and his partners evolve their work and makes it possible for them to offer glass and jewelry artists a unique medium to maximize their sales. Visit [www.aaeglass.com](http://www.aaeglass.com) or e-mail [info@aaeglass.com](mailto:info@aaeglass.com) for more information.

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# Jeffrey Stenbom

## A Veteran's Journey Home through Glass Art

by Colleen Bryan

Glass art gives Minnesota artist Jeffrey Stenbom a way to emotionally process wartime trauma. It lends a voice to his witness of what occurs in war, an activity that our larger society wages and finances but which relatively few people see up close and personally.

Stenbom discovered that glass art gives him the ability to profoundly touch as well as express the experience of others, especially other warriors and their families. The sculptor works in mixed media, primarily in glass, producing installations of artwork that address his own experience and that of others who carry the burden and feel the reverberations of America's longest war.

### Answering the Call to War

Just out of high school, Stenbom took art classes in sculpture and ceramics at community college before transferring to the University of Minnesota and switching his major to art. "I did neon for two years and loved making beautiful things, but I had a nagging feeling that something was missing in my artwork. I took a semester break from school to give myself time to figure things out." Then 9/11 happened.

Like many Americans in the aftermath of that tragedy, Stenbom felt the imperative to *do* something. Unexpectedly free of school entanglements and in search of purpose, he joined the U.S. Army. "The job I chose in the Army was cavalry scout. A scout's job is forward reconnaissance—finding the bad guys." After basic training, Stenbom was stationed in Germany, deployed to Kosovo, and sent to Iraq for the second year of the war.

Stenbom served for three and a half years during the height of the conflict. "Iraq was horrible and difficult. I internalized all that I had seen and been a part of. There were crises on the home front as well. My first son was born. My sister and only sibling passed away suddenly."

Pressured by both deployment and home life, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) bloomed. Stenbom returned stateside with a diagnosis and was discharged from the Army in January 2004.

*Jeffrey Stenbom, To Those Who Have,  
kiln cast glass, acrylic, and vinyl coated  
steel cable, 140" x 16" x 16", 2015.  
Photo by Will Crocker.*



*Jeffrey Stenbom, Freedom's Threads, worn United States military uniforms, parachute cord, and steel, 70" x 144" x 2", 2015. Photo by Will Crocker.*

## Home and Floundering

Convinced that he no longer wanted to be in the military, Stenbom still did not have a plan for his life. "In the Army in Iraq, all I cared about was getting home alive. With that, I thought, I will be happy no matter what I do." Once home, though, this conviction waned.

Stenbom was trying to make a new life for himself and struggling with anger issues when he returned to Normandale Community College in Bloomington, Minnesota. Staunchly supported by his parents and professors, he signed up for the last class required for an associate of arts degree. On a whim, he also found a fused glass class.

## Discovery and Exploration

The artist appreciates the parallel between glass as an art material and people. "Both are very strong and very fragile, so easily broken but also able to renew and transform."

In the fluid spontaneity of fusing, Stenbom connected with the drive, passion, and focus that had been lacking from his earlier glass and art studies. This shift was facilitated by his instructor, Martha Wittstruck. "I stayed at the community college to earn a second associate's degree in fine art with a focus on three-dimensional art and continued as a teacher's assistant for Martha. She framed art in a different way than I had known before. If not for her, I don't know that I would be doing glass or making art today."

This experience helped Stenbom see the role that art was playing in his personal recovery and to understand the power of art to heal and change people's lives. The teaching assistantship also sparked a recognition that he loved teaching.

In fusing classes, the artist started working thicker glass with glass casting. He got an opportunity to blow glass at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. While he loved the process of blowing glass, Stenbom found it limited in producing the perfect representations he wanted. "Some things work better with one process or the other. I grew to understand the need to master a wide variety of glass techniques so you can make the artwork you want."

## Focused Education and Culminating Thesis

Recognizing that he wanted to build a future incorporating both art and teaching, Stenbom pursued a four-year degree from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls close to his home. He got his BFA in glass and sculpture and a complementary BS in art education. Knowing that he wanted his MFA so he could teach at all levels, he applied to graduate school at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, was accepted for the fall of 2013, and graduated with an MFA in May 2015.

Stenbom's thesis show at Tulane included four large installation pieces that came together as an exhibit entitled *Thank You*. The show includes large, clear, cast glass dog tags suspended from an acrylic chain with a blown glass clasp. Kiln cast glass combat boots are reflected in a cube of one-way mirrors atop a ground of discarded brass rifle shells. There is also an interactive glass ground with imprints of army boots over which visitors can fit their own steps and a flag woven of U.S. military uniforms.

The concept behind the exhibit developed from a research fellowship on symbolism and iconology. "I proposed to visit native tribes of the Northwest to study their use of symbols in their artwork. My goal was to be more effective in how I communicate symbolically with my own art. I then considered symbols that are iconic within the culture of the military and decided to use those things to draw the viewer in to consider the piece overall."

As an artist in residence at The Studio at The Corning Museum of Glass during March 2016, Stenbom added new pieces to his existing body of work. He has been a resident artist at Pilchuck and the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. He served Richard Parrish and Giles Bettison as a teaching assistant, and credits their generous insights about what is required of a professional artist for opening doors within the glass art community. Stenbom instructed at the Bergstrom-Mahler Glass Museum and at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. He is also slated to instruct at the Pittsburgh Glass Center, The Studio at The Corning Museum of Glass, and at Arrowmont in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, in 2017.



## Beyond the Personal to Impact Others

Stenbom's artwork focuses on the sacrifices and burdens of people who have served in the military. "Just under 3 percent of the American population is either on active duty or has served in the past. This small group protects our freedoms on a daily basis. They volunteer to serve their country and continue to carry the burdens of that service into civilian life." With his artwork, Stenbom brings attention to the sacrifices and hardships borne by this small cohort and acknowledges their contribution.

Glass art has connected Stenbom to others across the community of warriors, veterans, and their families. "While dismantling a show in Wisconsin, I was approached to be part of a panel on combat PTSD. At the time I experienced my crisis in Iraq, soldiers didn't acknowledge PTSD if they wanted a military career. Since I've been out a lot has changed, and the services are trying to recognize and treat PTSD better."

After that show, the artist sat late into the night reading comment cards. "They said the art helped family and friends understand their loved ones. There were notes of thanks for talking about mental illness, breaking down taboos, and making sure the subject is alive in the public discourse. Veterans thanked me for being their voice, for making meaningful art and not just beautiful things."

In that way, Stenbom's art continues his role as a scout—going out ahead, naming the dangers, letting the troops know there is a way through. His ability to communicate how art has helped him negotiate the treacherous territory of returning from war to become the person he is today sparks hope for returning soldiers still foundering in the morass.



*Jeffrey Stenbom at work in his studio.*

*Photo by Gary Hodges,  
courtesy of The Corning Museum of Glass.*



*Jeffrey Stenbom, Everlasting Impact, kiln cast glass,  
brass, one-way glass, 24" x 24" x 24", 2015.  
Photo by Will Crocker.*

Stenbom has a newfound understanding that art can save people. With that comes new purpose. "I want to make art that helps me and helps others. I never intended to be an advocate, but the discovery that art can impact so many others inspires me to make more. Art can educate and change societal opinions on specific issues."

## Changing over Time

Looking over his full body of work, Stenbom is pleased to note an evolution in content as well as craftsmanship. "Before entering the Army, I made beautiful things and concentrated on workmanship. Now my work is full of meaning, symbolism, and context. It is very rewarding to have made that leap."

Both his abstract and representational works examine voids. "Everything I've done over these few years relates to voids. Certainly, art has formed and filled my life to move me to where I am now. And the work—the dog tags, the combat boots, and empty footprints—all are voids where a soldier once occupied space and breathed and is now gone. Even the properties of glass itself and the process of casting are metaphors for the void."

Before reapproaching artwork, Stenbom could not discuss his experiences in the Army. "I'm not a person of words, and those experiences can't be spoken of or written about easily. But now I can talk about them. My glass art expresses and communicates them. And working things through with my hands opens me up to talk about them more freely. Art has given me a voice and allowed me to be a voice for others."

## Where from Here

Stenbom is taking a deep breath for the first time in nearly four years. Recounting academic pursuits, residencies, travel, and installation activities that have kept him running, he takes this first downtime to consider which next steps will best further his establishment as a professional artist. His first priority is finding space for a permanent working studio in Minnesota.

A related priority for Stenbom is securing representation for his art, which could generate more income and opportunity, making it easier to justify building the studio. "Other artists see my work and ask who is representing me. When I tell them I don't have representation yet, their jaws drop." But many also caution Stenbom to be choosy in selecting a representative. He agrees with those who observe that his work might not find traditional markets such as Sculpture Objects & Functional Art Fair (SOFA) but is likely to be highly marketable in places such as Veterans hospitals or museums. "This is important, unusual work that needs to be seen by the masses and needs to travel."

Meanwhile, the emerging artist is not stopped by a lack of work space or representation. He works through schools and residencies until he can establish his own studio and uses juried shows to create awareness of his work and generate sales. "A lot of people are starting to know my work. After only one and a half years beyond graduate school and my thesis show, I feel very fortunate to be where I am now."

Stenbom recalls a conversation with Giles Bettison: "Jeff, you have the ability to be an artist as a career. The stuff you are doing has an impact and makes a difference. Many people would love to be doing that." Until he heard that, Stenbom says he had thought of art only as a means for his own personal reclamation. Now he makes art full time.

"When struggling to survive in Iraq, I promised myself that if I got out alive I would spend the rest of my life doing something I enjoyed. That is what I've done. I live life to the fullest, both for myself and in honor of the sacrifice of friends I lost. Making artwork helps me cope with PTSD and helps me connect with and enjoy my life."

GA



*Jeffrey Stenbom, Cause and Effect, kiln cast glass, steel, aluminum, and wood, 14" x 18" x 9", 2016. Photo by Casey Dierks.*

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# The 2016 Glass Art Society Lifetime Achievement and Membership Awards



by Erika Enomoto

The Glass Art Society (GAS) is pleased to announce the selection of its 2016 award recipients. These awards honor and acknowledge individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the development of the glass arts worldwide. The Lifetime Achievement Award for Exceptional Achievement and Contributions to the Studio Glass Field is awarded to Joyce J. Scott and the recipient of the Honorary Lifetime Membership Award for Outstanding Service to the Glass Art Society is Wayne Stratman.

## Lifetime Achievement Award

Joyce J. Scott is a mixed media sculptor who constructs sophisticated bead sculptures incorporating glass, clay, fabric swatches, and found objects that address social topics including racism, violence, and gender inequality. A lifelong Maryland native, she is an active leader in Baltimore, promoting creative spaces for the local community.

Scott holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Maryland Institute College of Art, and a Master of Fine Arts from the Instituto Allende in Mexico. She has received honors from the National Endowment of the Arts, 2016 Baker Artist Awards, and most recently a 2016 MacArthur Fellowship. Her work has been exhibited at institutions around the world including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York; the Museum of Applied Arts, Helsinki, Finland; and the Meguro Museum of Art, Tokyo, Japan.



*Portrait of Joyce J. Scott by John Dean.*

## Lifetime Membership Award

Wayne Stratman received his PhD by published papers from the University of Sunderland in 2008 in glass and the neon arts in recognition of his many years of work making sculptures, conducting research, writing, and advocating for neon and other advanced forms of lit glass sculpture. His background degree in engineering and his work as a researcher, teacher, and artist allowed him to produce over 100 articles and the industry standard textbook, *Neon Techniques*. He also developed a large number of innovative lighting patents and products featuring techniques beyond conventional neon to make lighted sculpture and commercial products that have been sold internationally. His company Stratman Design, based in Boston, Massachusetts, has been a world leader for decades in building museum displays, making custom sculpture, and developing innovative lighting products for commerce and industry.

A former Glass Art Society board member, Stratman initiated and endowed the Wayne Stratman Critical Dialogue Lecture Fund, which sponsors a lecture with new and stimulating information on art glass during each annual GAS Conference. He has also co-funded the inaugural Technology Advancing Glass (TAG) grant and started and helped maintain neon exhibitions at GAS conferences since 1997. Stratman continues to be a supportive member of the Glass Art Society.



*Portrait of Wayne Stratman, courtesy of the artist.*

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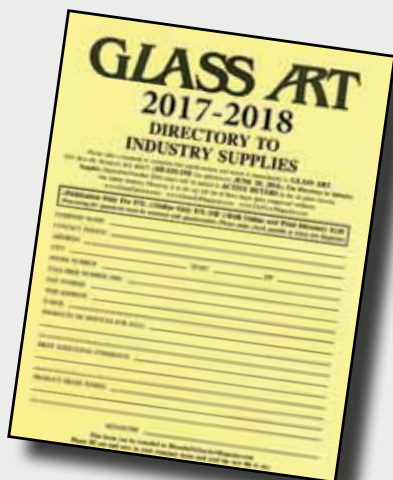
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# GLASS ART

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## CGS Celebrates Its 20th Anniversary in 2017

by Pam Reekie

It's a special year for the Contemporary Glass Society (CGS) during 2017 as the organization celebrates its 20th anniversary. In May 1997, a small group of enthusiastic artists, including Peter Layton and Colin Reid, gathered together to establish a new organization to represent glassmakers in the United Kingdom. CGS has grown from around 100 makers in 1997 to what is now heading toward a membership of a thousand. Today CGS not only represents U.K. artists but also has many members across Europe and the rest of the world.

### Unforgettable Events

Over the past 20 years there have been many memorable events, including *Burning Fat*, commissioned for the 2007 conference, "Looking into Glass." In 2017, CGS will be celebrating its success with three exhibitions and an international conference in Bristol. There will be several online exhibitions, including an open invitation to Latin American artists.

Events will be planned to occur throughout the year with CGS Regional Hubs, with the aim to make it a year when everyone can get involved. There is also the International Festival of Glass and Glass Biennale in August 2017, which will seek to highlight many of Britain's talented artists.



David Reekie,  
*Daggers Drawn IV*, from  
the Mike Barnes collection.



Fiona Fawcett, *Erosion*

### Welcoming a New Interim Chair to the Board of Trustees

CGS welcomes Susan Purser as the new chair to the Board of Trustees as Julia Stephenson stands down. Stephenson recently shared details about her time as chair. "Quite unbelievably, it is two years since I took over from Victoria Scholes as chair of CGS. I have really enjoyed the experience, but with regret, I have made the decision to step down.

"I wholeheartedly believe that the CGS board members are doing a fantastic job and will continue to do so. In 2016 our organization has been promoted by leading international galleries and publications, and there are plans underway to continue to create and deliver fantastic opportunities for all members."

Susan Purser Hope, who has been a board member for several years, is pleased to take up the role of interim chair until the AGM next year when the position will be reviewed. Hope spent most of her career as a commercial interior designer but returned to Wolverhampton University to study glass nine years ago. Most of her work has been architectural or collaborative projects promoting well-being through glass.

As Hope explains: "Having had to relocate my studio earlier in the year to a smaller unit, I am exploring new routes for my work. However, this means that I have time to become the interim chair in what will be a very busy and exciting period as we organize a variety of events to celebrate our 20th anniversary year. My aim is to ensure that all of the members find something relevant, enjoyable, and useful to them during the celebrations!"

### Additional New Board Members

Hope will be joined by two more new members—Mike Barnes, a collector, and Fiona Fawcett, a fellow glassmaker. Fawcett graduated from the University of Sunderland in 2015 with a Bachelor of Arts with Honors degree in Glass and Ceramics. She went on to work in an architectural glass company for a year before settling back to her native Suffolk to establish her glass studio. She specializes in kiln formed glass that is inspired by the natural landscape and maritime environment.

Fawcett explains: "I was introduced to glass relatively recently and have developed a passion for contemporary glass, admiring the technical skills and craftsmanship, and fascinated by its versatility. I am delighted to be involved with the CGS Committee and am looking forward to an exciting 20th anniversary year."

Barnes has been a collector for over 20 years. He started collecting worldwide modern studio glass, but in recent years he has focused on British makers living both in the U.K. and abroad. He has built up a collection of over 100 pieces and is now only limited by space at home. Barnes is passionate about promoting and supporting the British glass scene and is delighted to be on the CGS Board.

GA

Visit [www.cgs.org.uk](http://www.cgs.org.uk) for more information on the Contemporary Glass Society's events and becoming a member.



*Burning Fat, Instalation by Richard Wheeler at Eden Project.*

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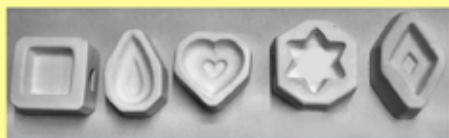


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