

AGG Rochester 2017

by Tony Glander, President, American Glass Guild

The American Glass Guild (AGG) met in Rochester, New York, in mid-May 2017 for the organization's annual conference, *Harmony: Old and New, On Light and the Gift, Nurturing the Creative Mind*. Conference Chair, Nancy Gong, along with program committee members Kenneth Leap and Judith Schaechter, selected an incredible array of national and international glass art speakers to address a range of topics covering the "old" and "new" of the glass industry.

This well-coordinated event covered hands-on opportunities, a grand variety of lectures, and a tour of area stained glass and art glass, plus numerous networking opportunities. The air about this conference was positive, upbeat, and excited as artists, historians, curators, critics, and other experts discussed the outlook for today's art glass that pushes the limits of creativity and technology while honoring the tradition of stained glass.

Outstanding Workshops

Workshops were in full swing starting Wednesday, May 18. Sasha Zhitneva taught an in-depth, hands-on class on glass lamination. This technique involves working with adhesives to combine the functionality of modern architectural glazing substrates with the tradition of stained glass artistry.



Tim Carey



Troy Moody

Tim Carey amazed students with a new style of combining traditional glass painting with building layers of color using cut glass, stringer, and frit to create imagery with multiple color and tone. Kathy Jordan said, "Tim brings creativity and vision to our industry with a generosity to share his experiences and knowledge."

Judith Schaechter's workshop showed students how she creates the illusion of volume, form, light, and shadow in her panels using layered flash glass. Meanwhile, Jeff Zimmerman took his students across the street to a cemetery to draw inspiration for his style of painting on different pieces of glass, then layering them to create depth and play with the transparency of the glass. Examples from all of these outstanding workshops were on display during the conference so that attendees could gain a better understanding of the techniques.

Insights Into Glass Art

The full conference was kicked off on Friday morning with an announcement from the office of Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren. It was exciting to hear that she had declared May as the official Stained Glass and Architectural Art Glass Month in Rochester.

Keynote speaker and local artist, Albert Paley, impressed attendees with his talk that addressed his evolution over 40 years as a metal sculpture artist. He intrigued listeners with stories of how he experimented with metals to explore the possibilities and limits of the material. He then left the crowd speechless when he showed participants how he is experimenting and incorporating glass into his metal sculptures. Paley reminded us, "To be a successful artist, you are responsible for your art and self. Do what you have to do."

Gordon Huether followed with a talk on his large-scale glass art in architecture and provided insight into the intricate path of working in public art. He spoke on ways to humanize spaces by bringing art into architecture. Huether reminded us that, “Life beats down and crushes the soul, but art reminds that you have one.”

Dr. Christina Snopko from Switzerland gave two interesting talks that brought light upon Alphonse Mucha’s stained glass work and his windows in St. Vitus, Prague, Czech Republic. John Wilcox from Canada also entertained everyone with a talk about recent adventures in a complex restoration work.

Saturday sessions continued with intriguing talks on the old and new, from Jeff Zimmer’s contemporary painted work, which he creates in Edinburgh, Scotland, to the incredible feature length documentary, *Lighting the Way*. The film, produced by Sam Halstead, showcased the influential German stained glass pioneers.

Antoni Vila Delclòs from Spain gave two talks focusing on Antonio Gaudí’s work and the history of the Sagrada Família Cathedral in Barcelona. Robert Jayson from Bendheim and Hans Reiner Meindl from Lamberts presented images of incredible works utilizing the beauty of blown glass. David Fode walked people through the delicate steps to recreate 19th century glass painting, a process lost with the death of the artist, with a very enjoyable and memorable talk.

The banquet on Saturday night was capped by two fascinating talks about the same commission from two different points of view. The *Resurrection Window* in Kansas has been noted as the largest stained glass window in the United States. Studio owner David Judson discussed the efforts required—from logistics to facilities—to accomplish this historic commission, and Tim Carey, who created the design, worked along with Narcissus Quagliata to fabricate the window using a new technique for incorporating traditional painting with glass fusing. Tim’s talk took listeners on an incredible journey of exploration and inspiration as he showed how the design and process evolved to create an awe-inspiring window.

Business Insights and Networking Opportunities

Sunday’s talks kept the pace of the conference with business insight from Toni Sikes, who inspired attendees to broaden their commission opportunities, and Ellen Miret, who in her talk “Why Geometry?” shared images of her incredible design work. Valerie O’Hara, local studio owner and the third generation to operate Pike Studios, discussed the history of the studio and its commissions, then hosted a visual tour of numerous stained glass treasures from Tiffany to McGrain found in and around Rochester.

Networking opportunities ran throughout the conference. The Friday evening American Glass Now (AGN) reception was hosted at a private residence. A combination of beautiful architecture, delightful weather, and a plethora of food and drink made it a splendid evening for mingling among presenters and attendees.

The AGN Exhibition itself was a place to meet old and new friends and discuss the contemporary work shown. The exhibition has since traveled to the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., and is scheduled to be on exhibit through September 8, 2017.

More networking events on Saturday morning and afternoon offered opportunities to take part in various roundtable discussions. A presenter or an AGG member hosted each table for discussions on topics ranging from lead work to contracts. An interactive panel discussion between attendees and Tim Carey, David Judson, and Gordon Huether provided more time to explore ideas and insights.

The Value Found in Community

Clearly, one of the most lively and interactive events continues to be the auction, which raises funds for the Jim Whitney Scholarships. Each year books, tools, and a large variety of other items are donated to raise funds for education. The lively bidding over the donated stained glass panels always brings out the competitiveness, the banter, and the laughter.

The strength of the AGG will always lie in its membership. An AGG conference is unique in the sense that its foundation lies in bringing people together to learn, inspire, and simply talk with one another. This year’s conference was remarkable due to the breadth of national and international speakers who presented varied and meaningful subjects. The most critical part of the conference, however, occurs when a connection takes place between speakers and attendees, old membership and new membership, friend to friend. It is that connection that sends people home inspired and looking forward to next year . . . in Cleveland, Ohio!

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Visit www.americanglassguild.org to find out more about becoming a member of the AGG.



Kathy Barnard

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