

The AGG James C. Whitney Memorial Scholarship Helping Stained Glass Artists Grow

by Tony Glander, President AGG

A few years back, the county I live in put out a call to artists for what was titled an “artist improvement grant.” I had to laugh at the title, because my initial thought was, “If there were ever an artist who needed improving, it would have to be me!” The county agreed, so I was awarded money to take a class and be able to collaborate with another artist, two things I couldn’t have afforded otherwise at the time.

That opportunity really helped to move my abilities forward and did something else as well. Not only do I continue to use what I learned, but I also even teach part of it to others now. I still collaborate with the other artist, creating more incredible things each time. Education is sneaky like that. It will usually give you the information you were seeking, but it will also take you places you didn’t anticipate.

Passing on the Knowledge of Glass Art

The American Glass Guild (AGG) wanted to help others continue their education in stained glass, so they created the James C. Whitney Memorial Scholarship. The scholarship fund has awarded over 100 scholarships since 2007. Scholarship Chair Rick Prigg, said: “Ours is an esoteric trade, and while once the industry itself trained thousands of proud artisans, most of the apprenticeship programs of the 20th century are long gone. It is up to organizations like The American Glass Guild to make sure the knowledge of our art is properly passed on to the next generation.”

Scholarships have been used for a variety of educational opportunities. “These scholarships have provided hands-on training by highly accomplished artists in the study of glass painting, glazing, acid etching, museum grade glass adhesives, and a host of other stained glass centric skills,” shared Prigg. “We also award scholarships to attend the AGG annual conference, a fantastic way to meet and learn from the existing stained glass community!”

AGG member Hallie Monroe commented: “Over the years, I have been fortunate to have been awarded four AGG James Whitney Scholarships. I have greatly appreciated the educational opportunities they have helped me afford, from glass painting classes with masters like Dick Millard, Nicholas Perrendo, and Ken Leap to the Transatlantic Symposium in Stained Glass in Germany.” Monroe has reciprocated with donations of painted stained glass panels to the fundraising auction.



David Fode panel in AGG’s annual auction. Photo by Tony Glander.

Thankful Recipients

Magdalena Marciniak came from Australia on an AGG scholarship to Bryn Athyn to take Steve Hartley’s class on the repair and conservation of historic stained glass. They spent a week practicing conservation techniques, including restoration painting, edge bonding, and cleaning techniques.

Mark Bleakley used a scholarship to take a painting class with Kathy Jordan. “Stained glass has a community and a common base of experience, and in its many facets it also provides a great opportunity for constant growth and development in excellence. I’m grateful for the scholarship to attend this class and have come to believe it’s an important part of working in the field to take opportunities like this to learn from excellent teachers such as Jordan and to share with and in the knowledge and experience of others.”

Seth Mathurin also used a scholarship to attend a painting class lead by Jordan. “The residents of the program came with varying degrees of experience, but all were challenged and found accomplishment in the works that they created. I came with an academic knowledge of glass painting and left with the core skills that will allow me to further develop my art. This class was an important point in my art career, and I am so happy to have been able to spend the week learning from Jordan. Her expertise, passion, and kindness were truly inspirational.”



Seth Mathurin developing a drawing during a painting class. Photo by Kathy Jordan.



Kris Tiffany's panel in AGG's 2017 auction. Photo by Tony Glander.

Educating the Next Generation of Stained Glass Artists

Jordan is the current auction chair for the AGG and has fulfilled the roll many times over the years, helping raise thousands of dollars. "Supporting education was at the core of our scholarship's namesake, James Whitney. Since its inception, members have found meaningful ways to contribute by volunteering, donating, or sponsoring the collective efforts of our guild. Witnessing the fruition of our scholarships brings the story full circle and motivates me to stay connected in such a worthy endeavor."

Whitney was an incredible person, husband, father, friend, and a very accomplished stained glass artist. Sadly, he passed away from cancer in 2005, but in recognition of his zest for education and his pursuit of excellence in education, the scholarship fund was created to help others achieve their educational goals. He was a strong supporter of both the AGG and the SGAA.

I think Whitney would be happy to know that it takes a lot of hard work and generosity to raise funds for the scholarships, but people also get a lot of enjoyment from helping in this effort. The annual auction gives people and businesses a chance to show their support by their donations as well as by supporting the bidding. The sneaky thing is the fun and camaraderie that take place at these auctions. People guard their bids at the silent auction while the timer counts down, and they never know when someone will outbid them on that incredible stained glass panel during the live auction.

Bringing Members Together

As Prigg shared, "The AGG is committed to educating the next generation. We encourage those seeking to further their education in stained glass to go to the organization's website and apply today!" The deadline for applications is usually early February with a notification in March. Recipients receive full or partial scholarships for various educational opportunities, such as the AGG conference and workshops, or other ongoing educational efforts.

The creation of this scholarship has many potential benefits. The most obvious is that people can apply to receive money to help them learn a new technique or to make it possible for them to attend the AGG annual conference. Either will help their careers as stained glass artists. It has also created a resource for teachers to recommend to students to acquire aid, and it helps fill up classes as well. Most importantly, it has helped bring members of the AGG together in the spirit of helping others.

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