

American Glass Now! Mesa 2025

by Zachary Green

The American Glass Guild (AGG) conference held in May 2025 has transformed the Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum into a vibrant showcase of contemporary glass art, uniting artists and enthusiasts from around the world. This year's centerpiece, the American Glass Now (AGN) juried exhibition, currently on view, features nearly thirty contemporary glass artists whose works span stained, fused, kilnformed, etched, and painted glass. Jurors selected pieces for their originality, technical complexity, and creative use of the medium, ensuring a dynamic and diverse display.

Among the standout works is *Dagr's Lighthouse* by Cynthia Rudzis, who also contributed her talents to painting the head of an ambitious collaborative project that resembles a snake. Joy Keltner's assemblage, *Trust No Car*, draws inspiration from a menacing intersection and a battered crosswalk signal, blending narrative and urban observation. Michi Muzyka of Jersey City, New Jersey, presented *The Burden of the Feminine Heirloom*, a layered, painted glass piece set in a gilded lightbox, exploring themes of inheritance and identity. These works, along with those of other renowned and emerging artists, have filled the AGN gallery with innovation and storytelling.

Collaborative Group Projects

Adjacent to the AGN exhibition, Korina Oswald's monumental *Snake* project, in collaboration with the American Glass Guild, has made its debut. Korina, from Maple Valley, Washington, but originally from Gilbert, Arizona, has a history of ambitious stained glass collaborations. Her first project, *Quilts*, stitched together 160 unique glass pieces. Her second, sponsored by Oceanside Glass, incorporated all 100 types of glass that the manufacturer produced. This spirit of inclusion and experimentation set the stage for her latest endeavor.

After being invited by Amy Valuck to propose a group project for the AGN exhibit, Korina envisioned a snake-themed stained glass installation to honor the "Year of the Snake" and Arizona's distinctive landscape. The project's scale is unprecedented, with 517 participants from twelve countries who have contributed small, trapezoid-shaped works. Each one is unique, yet designed to fit seamlessly into the larger serpent form. The final piece, approaching 9 feet by 18 feet, was engineered for modular assembly, with the head and tail created by Brandi Utigard from Refraction Lab in Seattle, and Cynthia Rudzis painting the head.



Michi Muzyka, *The Burden of the Feminine Heirloom*,
12" x 12" x 12", painted stained glass, 2025.
Photo courtesy of the artist.

A Landmark Exhibition

The *Snake* project was conceived as a bridge between professionals and amateurs, welcoming anyone with an interest in stained glass to participate. Each contributor's section, though unrelated in imagery, shared a common shape and size that, when united, embodies the philosophy that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." The project required extensive coordination and patience, with Korina orchestrating the assembly and ensuring that every voice was included.

Both the AGN exhibition and the *Snake* project are on view at the Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum with the *Snake* remaining through spring 2026. Afterward, the modular panels from the *Snake* will be auctioned to benefit the AGG scholarship fund, further supporting the next generation of glass artists. An exhibition catalogue documents the artists and their works, cementing this event as a landmark in the world of contemporary stained glass. GA



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