

The American Glass Guild Mourning the Loss of a Great Glass Artist and Friend

David Fode



by Kathy Jordan, Past President

Photos Courtesy of the American Glass Guild

The American Glass Guild is deeply saddened to share the news of David Fode's untimely passing. David's family, friends, and glass community joined in a farewell gathering to honor his life and work in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, this past August.

We learned that David's art career began early in life. As he was growing up, David pored over newspaper comic strips daily, with his favorite being *Tumbleweeds* by Tom K. Ryan. Those comic strip-loving days were the thread running through his artistic career into adulthood. He eventually studied at the American Academy of Art in Chicago, Illinois.

Discovering Stained Glass

It was at the Academy that David discovered stained glass through researching his hero Harry Clarke, a prolific artist in illustration who also worked in stained glass. According to David, "The possibilities of stained glass seemed endless, because light can illuminate and bring to life illustrations in that context. However, the drawing must be refined before translation from paper to glass can occur." His goal was to hone his skills in both arenas.

From 1998 to 2004, Fode was co-owner of The Glass Chamber in Waukesha, Wisconsin, with his close friend Bruce Medema. At the time, both artists were working for Conrad Schmitt Studios in Berlin, Wisconsin, restoring Mayer and Zettler windows. Fode and Medema opened their own studio to explore the Munich style in autonomous panels. In 2004 when Medema relocated, Fode founded HaeuserHeil Studios. He designed and fabricated personal works in glass that were infused with the vibrant, lavish style inspired by Harry Clarke.

Fode promoted the Munich style for applications in private and smaller public venues. Portraying modern subjects through ancient techniques made for an interesting and endlessly appealing dichotomy. He was also the senior artist at Gaytee-Palmer Stained Glass in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and an independent designer/painter for Lamb Studio in New Jersey and Hoefer Stained Glass in Kansas.

The Artist in His Own Words

David Fode was an extraordinary man and artist. Here, in his own words, he shares the history of his work, his love of stained glass, and his appreciation for AGG and its members.

"I have been working full time in stained glass since 1999. I have done just about everything relating to the field, including removal, restoration, and installation of historic windows, but I get the most personal satisfaction from designing and painting new windows. Aside from working for, and in conjunction with, several large-scale studios, I also have my own studio, HaeuserHeil Studios, at which I work on smaller, often nonliturgical projects. I focus on the German style of realistic painting and do my best to emulate the work of Franz Meyer, FX Zettler, and the like.

"It is my belief that stained glass is not only surviving but thriving, as seen in the resurgence of interest in traditional glass painting. There are a lot of very talented people out there creating amazing work. The only way to achieve this kind of work is for an artist to do it by hand. The idea that stained glass is going to go away or that it can be replaced with something else is impossible. When I explain to my online clients what I will be doing for them and show them photographs of the work, they are amazed and delighted. Original works of art will always be in demand.



David Fode,
Ornamental Panel.

"I have been a member of the AGG since 2009. I am a past Chair of the Scholarship Committee and the current Vice President. I very much enjoy the spirit of camaraderie and the sharing of ideas and information that comes with being a member. I would love to continue to contribute in any way the AGG sees that I am fit, and I am very thankful for the opportunity. I am pleased to be a part of an organization that provides assistance and education to all those who have an interest in stained glass and that strives to make stained glass more accessible."



David Fode, *The Queen*, created for American Glass Now: 2016. With the charm of an illustration from an antique book, *The Queen* reflects the classic look and feel that defines Fode's aesthetic. Flanked by whimsical creatures including a pelican, a giant fish, and a goat man, in this stained glass fairytale the Queen reigns over all in her kingdom.



David Fode, *Amy Winehouse*, a panel with a border consisting of star lilies that represent being "taken too soon." The opening bars to her song, *Love Is a Losing Game*, is in her halo. The back plates on all of the flesh areas provide added depth.



(Clockwise from top left) *Praying Mantis*, *Star Wars in Glass*, and *Autonomous Panel*, well-loved works by David Fode.

Continuing Support for David's Initiatives

David was the eighth President for the American Glass Guild. The AGG came to rely on his unwavering support, dedication, and exceptional talent. His piece entitled *The Queen* is an outstanding example of his well-loved art. *The Queen* was created for *American Glass Now: 2016*. This juried contemporary stained glass exhibition of 18 artists' work was organized by the AGG at the Logan Center for the Arts at the University of Chicago. *The Queen* was chosen by a jury including Rolf Achilles, the former curator of the Smith Museum in Chicago, Lindsay Parrott, curator of the Neustadt Museum of Tiffany Glass, and Judith Schaechter, artist and American Craft Council Fellow.

As the new incoming President, David was excited and energized for what was to lie ahead for the Guild. In his honor, we will support his initiatives, invite new glass enthusiasts to join the AGG, and encourage our membership to volunteer with the same spirit, camaraderie, and commitment that David so willingly gave.

To learn more about David, please take a moment to read *Remembering David Fode* by Andy Morkes, Founder and Author of *Nature in Chicagoland*. Andy and David were friends for nearly 40 years, and he wanted to share some great memories of David as a fun, creative, and excellent person. "David was very proud of his work with the Guild, and I thought that members and the glass community might like to learn a little more about his life." You can find the article at the following website: natureinchicago.wordpress.com/2022/08/29/remembering-david-fode.

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Visit www.americanglassguild.org for more information about the American Glass Guild and how to become a member.

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