

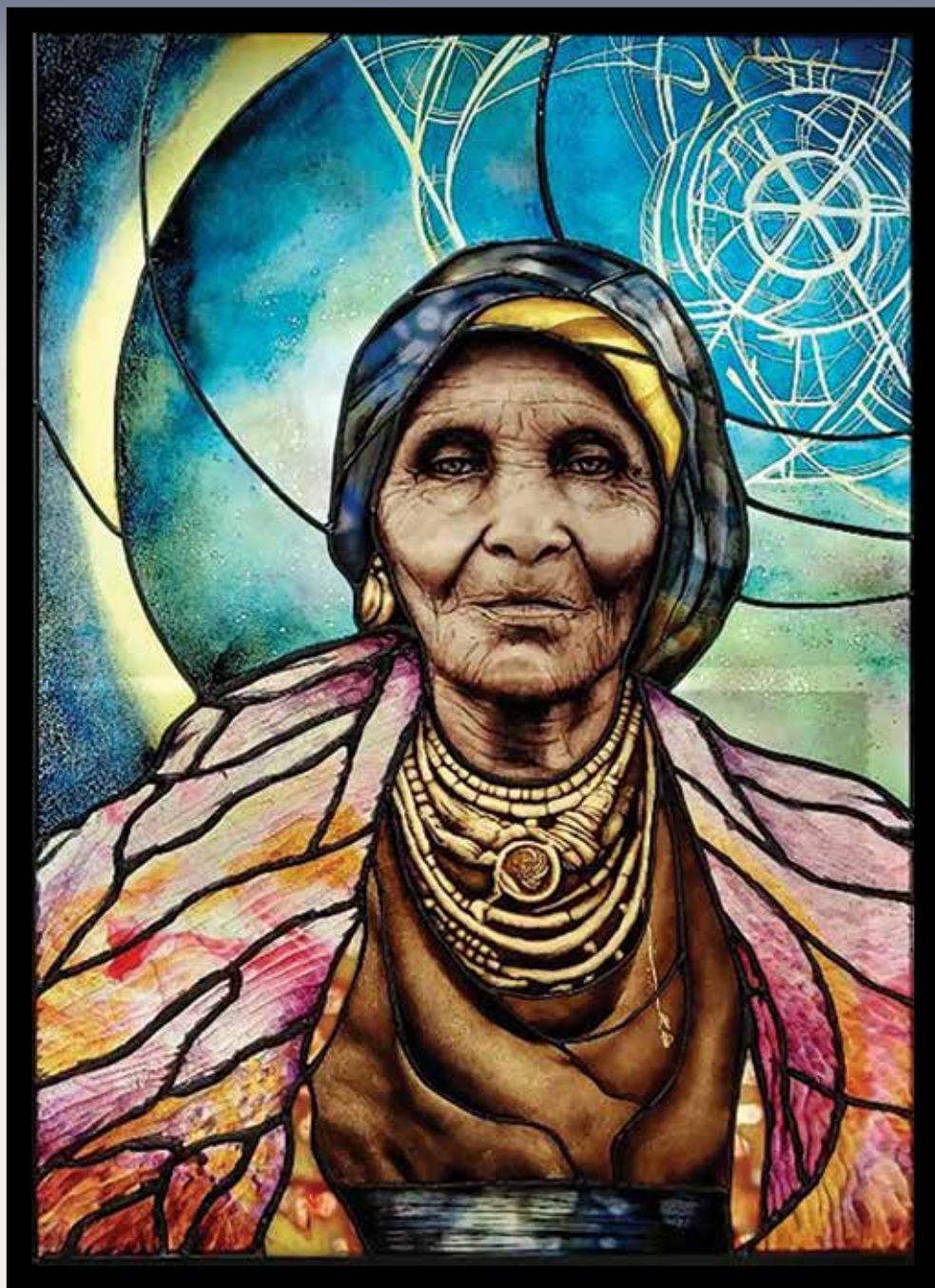


# The American Glass Guild presents American Glass Now: 2024

*A juried exhibition of member artwork, held  
in conjunction with the annual AGG conference*

by Amy Valuck

The American Glass Guild invites you to “raise your glass” during our summer conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan, “Beer City, USA” from July 9–14, 2024. This year’s program is full of exciting activities to interest all glass enthusiasts, from novices to experts. The festivities begin with two days of preconference workshops on glass painting, conservation and fabrication techniques, fusing, and design, followed by a day of touring local architectural stained glass. The main event kicks off with a welcome reception at the Grand Rapids Art Museum on the evening of July 11, where conference attendees will have a chance to browse the *American Glass Now* exhibition and meet the exhibiting artists. At the conference, attendees will participate in an engaging schedule of slide presentations and live demonstrations, silent and live auctions, and plenty of networking and socializing with like-minded colleagues.



Rita Shimelfarb, *Wisdom*



Jesse Olwen, Portrait I

The *American Glass Now* exhibition will include segments on the history of stained and decorative glass, examples of tools, materials, and processes, and a juried selection of artwork by AGG members. The exhibition will be open to the public from June 7–September 8, 2024, at the Grand Rapids Art Museum. In addition to the welcome reception, conference attendees will receive free admission to the museum for the duration of the conference.

### Just a few of the artworks to be shown in the exhibition:

Bruce Buchanan's "Specimen Console" puts salvaged historical glass pieces into a modern, graphic context. "Having worked in restoration studios making and repairing narrative church windows for years, I find myself wanting to make nonrepresentational pieces that explore color, form, and systems of organization. I've got boxes of painted glass debris from past restoration projects, so I use those as a leaping-off point. The scraps are all interesting in their own right, with varied colors, painting techniques, and history. They become the subject matter for new layouts—something to build around." Buchanan continued, "I've found that turning the jaggy, angular glass into river-rock shapes softens the pieces and further removes them from their old contexts. After arranging the shapes in a grid, I intuitively cut backgrounds, borders, and infill glass to complete the composition. Each decision informs the next, and without a prescribed layout, the panel can change and grow until it is resolved. In this case, the curved bottom edge and furniture legs seemed appropriate, so they made the cut."



Bruce Buchanan, Specimen Console

Jesse Olwen of Hemlock Stained Glass studio earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 2010 and received several notable awards from colleges and universities in the fields of painting and sculpture, including an international exchange to study architecture in Singapore. He began to learn traditional glass painting in 2019. His piece *Portrait I* is part of a series inspired by futuristic sci-fi art from the 1970s. "Integrating glass painting has proven to be a source of creative liberation, and I feel energized knowing that nearly anything can be translated into glass."



Cynthia Rudzis,  
The Court of the Lotus

Rita Shimelfarb's piece *Wisdom* is part of her Sacred Feminine Archetypes series of glass paintings. Shimelfarb finds her analytical background in math and computer science indispensable to solving various glass construction challenges and in developing new processes for image and medium manipulation. Her subjects revolve around themes of life transitions and human archetypes, as well as the sublimation of what it feels like to be an outsider in search of a place and community to belong to. The art glass' raw brilliance and color are primary inspirations in her work. Shimelfarb elaborated, "I felt like the Universe 'commissioned' me to bring this series into existence, and noncompliance with that request was not an option. The embodiment of the Archetypal states is how the collective unconscious plays in our lives by having us take on an impersonal role and turning it into a personal, one-of-a-kind experience. The Wisdom archetype represents integration of deep insight, imagination, spiritual vision, authenticity, and power. Wisdom is clarity, and I wanted that quality reflected through glass' transparency and brilliant color."

*Harleigh Who?* by Maria Orr is a piece that was inspired by the many moods of a toddler. When Orr signed up for Tim Carey's Vitreonics course online, she knew the image she wanted to use. The portrait subject is her granddaughter, Harleigh, a spirited little girl who carries much expression in her face. Orr has typically done traditional stained-glass painting, but in the past few years she has dabbled with fused glass. This course allowed her to step outside the box and create a colorful way to portray her granddaughter. "It was terrifying and energizing at the same time working on this project . . . each time wondering if it would turn out okay when it came out of the kiln for each firing. I really enjoyed taking the risks in the end and trying something new!"



*The Court of the Lotus* by Cynthia Rudzis is an allegory of the health symbiotic relationship of native inhabitants that once existed on the Mattawoman Creek, an endangered watershed near the artist's home. Rudzis works from her farm studio in Southern Maryland's Potomac tidewater region. Her personal work focuses on the abundant flora and fauna of the region, as well as its past and present inhabitants. She designed the panel to center on a custodial figure holding two native *Nelumbo lutea* (American lotus). The face and hand of the central character are painted and plated. An illustrated, long-nosed gar skims the lower portion of the panel, and the small painted upper insert depicts the Northern parula among wild rice. The panel is created using the copper foil technique.





The *American Glass Now* exhibit has always served as an excellent showcase of the potential for creative expression within stained and decorative glass techniques. With the inclusion of newer educational elements for 2024, the AGG can create an opportunity for the public to engage and learn about the processes and history behind the artwork. Our mission to provide glass art education will be able to extend beyond our membership, with the goals of sparking new interest and attention to the medium and inspiring museum visitors to try it for themselves. We look forward to an exciting conference and exhibition, and welcome anyone with an interest in glass art to join us this July in Grand Rapids!

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Visit [www.americanglassguild.org](http://www.americanglassguild.org) to find out more about AGG, its current and upcoming events, and how to become a member.

Maria Orr, Harleigh Who?

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