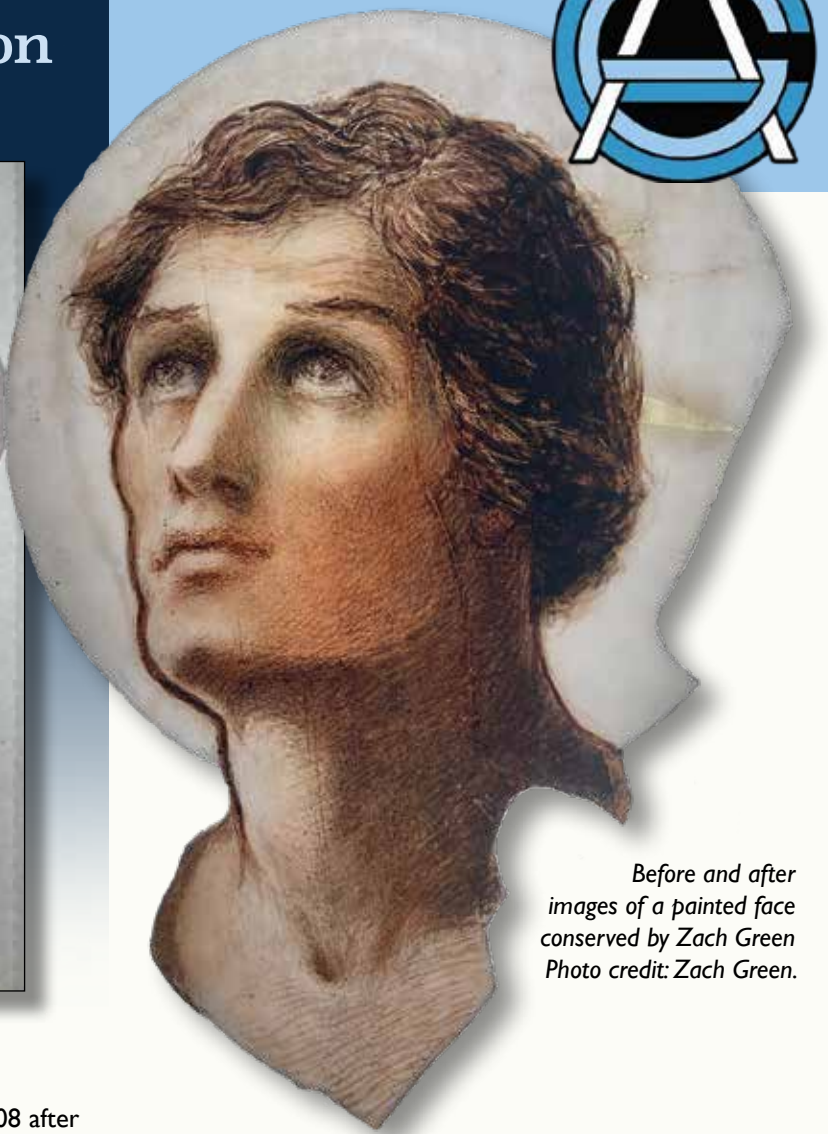
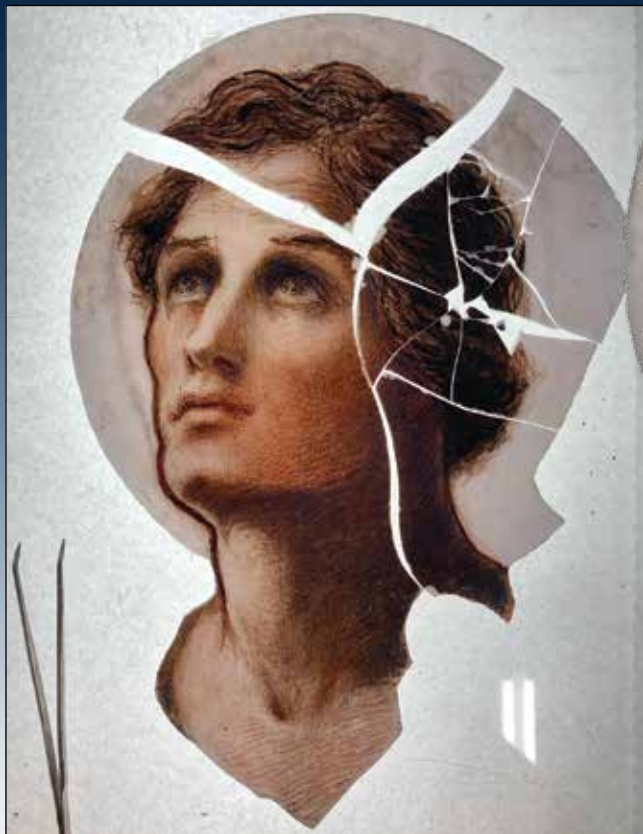


The American Glass Guild: A Legacy of Education



*Before and after
images of a painted face
conserved by Zach Green
Photo credit: Zach Green.*

by Amy Valuck

When I joined the American Glass Guild (AGG) in 2008 after ten years of working in stained glass restoration and conservation, I was grateful for the opportunity to further develop my craft through attending conferences and learning from seasoned experts. In its nearly twenty years as an organization, the AGG has continuously pursued its mission of education, scholarship, and mentorship within the stained glass field. It has provided resources to artists, conservators, historians, students, and all skill levels of glass enthusiasts. I spoke with several glass conservators and craftspeople who have been active participants in the guild through the years to hear their perspectives on how the AGG has contributed to their own learning, and the ways they are helping to carry that knowledge forward.

Founding member Maria Serpentino recalled, "In 2004, Art Femenella, Dick Millard, and I started meeting about founding an organization dedicated to education and scholarship. The following year [Art and I], along with Vic Rothman, Mary Clerkin-Higgins, and Barbara Krueger made it official, and the American Glass Guild was born." Other early contributors included Maria Serpentino's husband, Roberto Rosa, Jim Whitney, and Kathy Jordan. Maria added, "Three of the founders had worked at the Greenland Studio, which at the time was the premier conservation studio in the United States, and on the cutting edge of conservation techniques."

Restoration and conservation lectures and workshops have been a part of every AGG conference, with topics such as CVMA (Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi) conservation guidelines, replication painting, plated windows, support bars and fins, protective glazing, and glass repair. Panel discussions and roundtable talks have delved deeper into the philosophy behind certain conservation approaches, such as the decision whether to relead a window and which repair techniques and materials to employ. In my own recollection of past conferences, I've enjoyed an incredible range of informative subject matter, from Vic Rothman's practical and well-researched techniques, materials, and tools to Mary Clerkin-Higgins discussing her work with some of the rarest historical glass. Especially memorable was Mary explaining the nuances between museum conservation and church conservation. Art Femenella's frequent presentations detailed his confident approach and innovative solutions to unusual restoration challenges. In addition to the founders' contributions, they also invited many colleagues with specialized knowledge to share and participate in guild events. In my personal journey from apprentice to studio owner, I have greatly appreciated the robust support network that I have found with the AGG.

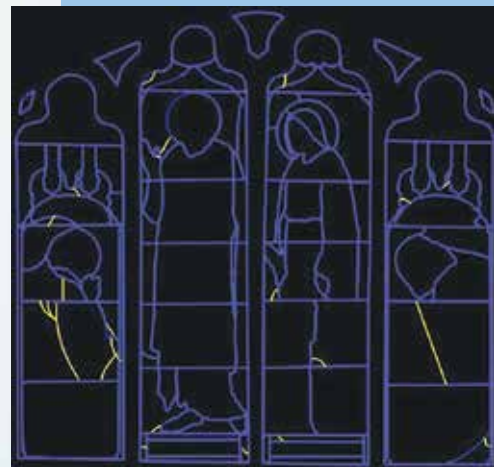
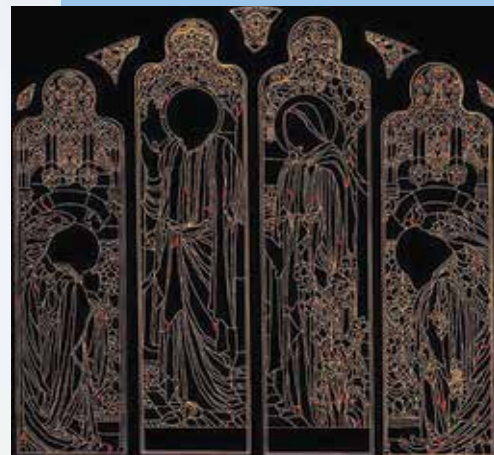
At nearly every AGG conference, studios have given detailed presentations outlining the start-to-finish process of the conservation projects they've undertaken. At the 2024 AGG conference, which was held in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from July 9–14, Roberto Rosa and Zach Green each presented their recent work. Roberto Rosa spoke about the conservation of the Wing Memorial window at Grace Church in Millbrook, New York. He undertook this project in collaboration with Liberty Stained Glass Consulting and Femenella & Associates, who provided consultation and site work, respectively. Roberto explained, "The objective of the project was to remove the interior and exterior plates, repair cracked glass, clean the accumulated soot, and repair the base layer as needed. The most important goal from the beginning of this project was to retain as much original lead as possible in the four panels, from both a conservator's point of view and an historical point of view." Roberto also described how the studio used Procreate software to document cracked glass within the window, rather than using traditional rubbings on paper.

Zach Green's presentation detailed his conservation work on *The Calling of Peter and Andrew* window by Helen and Maitland Armstrong, originally from the Randall Memorial Church at Sailors' Snug Harbor, Staten Island, New York. Zach described the reassembly of the mosaic section of the Agrippa window, explaining his whole process from making test pieces to the finished work. He also spoke at length about the use of Y-shaped leads, which were critical for working with multiple plates and drapery glass. A particularly interesting highlight of the lecture was when Zach gave an overview of the reassembly of the shattered face piece and the challenges of edge gluing. Zach said, "It was the first project of this type that I'd undertaken, and the AGG community was an invaluable resource for technical strategic planning."

Roberto Rosa and Zach Green also teamed up at the 2024 AGG conference to give a hands-on workshop on edge gluing and conservation repairs, where students learned to work with Hxtal epoxy. Among the other workshop offerings was Graham Fox's advanced leadwork class, for students who were "ready to up your lead game." Students learned glazing techniques, including joinery, basket weaving, plating, and some soldering tricks, and discussed lead as a structural element of their work.

Graham, who frequently works in conservation and restoration, also maintains a personal art practice in stained glass. He spoke with me about his personal journey from hobbyist to professional. He said, "I fell in love with the medium and kept trying to learn more about it. I even apprenticed with an amazing artist, Wendy West, who taught me leading and basic fusing. But even then, I was impressed at the scale of some of the amazing efforts I was seeing. These were collaborative efforts."

Graham attended his first AGG conference in 2010 and said that he "made a lot of friends, loved the tour and the amazing talks everyone was giving about their work." Not long after returning to attend the 2011 conference, Graham was hired by Whitney Stained Glass Studio, where he has worked for 12 years. Graham reflected, "We really get into projects that take a team and creativity, and I really attribute a lot of my progression as a craftsman to meeting other hobbyists and professionals in the field and getting inspired by their work. I really think the AGG is a teaching institution because each job is its own challenge, and hearing the variety of work that the members get into and how they did it can be very helpful."



Top to bottom: Zach Green, An after-conservation image of the Maitland Armstrong window conserved by Roberto Rosa and Serpentino Stained Glass Studio.

Roberto Rosa and Brianne VanVorst. Multiple-layered window conserved by Roberto Rosa.

Additional layers of glass are attached to the front and back to create special color effects.