

SGAA Celebrates Creativity and Collaboration in Stained Glass

Highlights of the 113th Annual Conference: Sand to Sash



by the Staff of The Stained Glass Association of America

The 113th Annual Stained Glass Association of America (SGAA) Conference, *Sand to Sash*, took attendees on an in-depth journey through the glassmaking process from creation to installation. Held in Kansas City, Missouri, in early October, 2024, it brought together artists, architects, historians, and industry professionals for four days of interactive workshops, discussions, and social gatherings.

Diverse Learning Venues

Brought to you by Tyler Kimball of Monarch Glass Studio, Andrea Denning of Denning Stained Glass, and Kathy Barnard of Kathy Barnard Studio, the conference activities were held in several different venues. The first two nights of networking, hosted by Monarch Glass Studio, took place in the city's Historic Jazz district and featured studio tours, glassblowing demonstrations, and delicious dinners. Workshops at Monarch covered topics like blown glass rondels and stained glass sessions, providing participants with hands-on experiences. Kathy Barnard's studio, renowned for her beautiful design techniques, hosted a lecture showcasing her artistic process using her custom walk-in sandblaster.

Exhibitions Showcasing Creativity

Belger Glass Annex, Kansas City's first public glassblowing studio, and Crane Yard hosted workshops and exhibitions during the conference. One highlight was the *Mosaic Arts International 2024* exhibition, organized by the Society of American Mosaic Artists (SAMA). Featuring works by over forty artists, this exhibition showcased the fusion of traditional and contemporary mosaic art techniques. Notable pieces included Laurie Frazer's *We Are Woven*, which won Best in Show.

In addition to the juried exhibition, the conference hosted the *One Hundred Moments: Season Five* exhibition. This nonjuried collection invited artists from the SGAA and SAMA to create small works using various glass techniques. The exhibition celebrated a wide range of interpretations. Artists captured moments of life through stained glass, mosaic, and fused glass. The collection reflected the diversity and creativity of the global glass community.

Hands-On Workshops and Skill Development

Throughout the conference, participants engaged in workshops tailored to various skill levels. Notable instructors included Monarch Glass Studio staff, Joseph Cavalieri, Meggy Wilm, Malcom Potek, and Maria Sheets. They covered a wide range of techniques, such as imagery, glass painting, blown glass rondels, kiln work, and stained glass creation. Each instructor offered unique insights into their craft, ensuring that the participants gained practical experience and creative inspiration.

Empowering Art and Education

Molly Conway, a high school art teacher from Omaha, Nebraska, shared how attending the conference and receiving an SGAA Foundation scholarship greatly enhanced her teaching and artistic practice. The scholarship enabled her to participate in Maria Sheets' glass painting workshop, which she described as invaluable. Conway expressed, "Maria was such a wealth of experience and continues to be a fantastic mentor. The skills learned and connections made with other businesses and artists have enriched my practices in art and education in more ways than I can attempt to summarize."

Industry Innovations and Networking

The Sponsor Resource Center and Demonstration Hall were alive with excitement as manufacturers and suppliers showcased new tools and techniques. Everyone enjoyed the technical presentations and demonstrations highlighting the latest advancements in the stained glass industry. The conference also featured a Membership Forum, which offered participants the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions about the future of the field.

Sacred Art

A highlight of the conference was a guided tour of the Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, home to the 100-foot-wide fused and kiln-formed window by Judson Studios. The tour provided an exclusive, behind-the-scenes look at the installation, its intricate mechanics, and the ongoing efforts of the community to integrate and live with this spectacular sacred artwork.

Seminars for Professional Growth

The conference's General Session featured a series of engaging presentations, including a keynote by renowned historian Peter Cormack. Peter took attendees on a journey through Charles J. Connick's life, illustrating how he transformed stained glass aesthetics in America, from his humble beginnings to becoming a key figure in the Modern Gothic design movement.

Other notable presentations included Neal Vogel's *Illustrious Obscuritas: History and Restoration of Prism Glass Transoms*. Christian Baierl discussed the opportunities and possibilities of mouth-blown Lamberts glass. There was a behind-the-scenes look at Kathy Barnard's *Into the Tennessee Woods* project. Michael George presented a session on insurance basics. This was led by SGAA Executive Director Megan McElfresh, who also presented the *American Stained Glass Story*. These presentations enriched the understanding of stained glass in both historical and contemporary contexts.

In addition to the general sessions, a series of seminars provided educational content on essential industry topics. Joseph Cavalieri covered marketing, art residencies, framing, and lighting. Ted Ellison discussed stained glass design and pricing. Jill Huentelman shared strategies for growing a stained glass business. Bryant Stanton led a field session focused on evaluating sacred spaces. These sessions enhanced attendees' knowledge and provided the tools to implement what they learned in their own stained glass practices.

Inspiring Storytelling

SGAA Conferences have been fortunate to feature many distinguished speakers who energize the community for the journey ahead. This conference closed with a capstone presentation from Therman Statom, a renowned artist known for his life-sized glass sculptures. His talk emphasized how glass can serve as a medium for storytelling and social impact.

Fundraising for the Future

The Fundraising Auction included both silent and live components. All proceeds went directly toward scholarships that support research and conservation, emerging and established artists, and initiatives aimed at enhancing accessibility within the field.

The 113th Annual SGAA Conference in Kansas City was a celebration of creativity and collaboration. The connections made have strengthened the glass community. They have also sparked new ideas. As the SGAA looks ahead to the coming year, they are excited to build on this momentum while continuing to inspire and educate the glass community.

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To find out more about the SGAA or become a member, go to <https://stainedglass.org>.

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Materials and prizes provided by Wissmach for this intercollegiate event at The Ohio State University were a hit! The schedule included presentations on Friday, followed by competitive activities like skilled glasswork, zine creation, and t-shirt making on Saturday, with teams from 18 schools participating.



Flash Point Glass Symposium and Olympics



Michigan Glass Project

The Michigan Glass Project fosters collaboration and community through meaningful art. This year, artist Carrie Ann Strope created a large Community Mosaic Mural using glass donated by Wissmach, bringing together local residents and global participants.

"When we work together, we create something far bigger than ourselves—a symbol of unity and strength that will stand for years to come." - Carrie Ann Strope