

STAINED GLASS

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This year has been transformative for the Association. At our Winter Board Meetings this past January, we set realistic, but still fairly lofty goals for our board and for the office staff, which until mid-May was still just Megan McElfresh and a one-afternoon-a-week bookkeeper.

Together, we have basically taken everything apart that makes up the SGAA and we are in the process of putting it all back together. We have focused on four pillars we identified as being our biggest strengths: Stained Glass Quarterly, Annual Conference, Sourcebook, Membership.

Even though the Quarterly looks better than ever—especially with Bryant Stanton at the helm—we have continued to push ourselves to look for ways to improve it. We tried some new marketing efforts in the last year and are happy to say that subscriptions are up 28 percent!

Working with American Glass Guild (AGG) on the Annual Conference has been an exciting process. The most obvious sign to me that the joint conference was a success was seeing and hearing from so many suppliers and manufacturers at the conference, with out these people and their ability to provide us with what we need in our studios we could not do what we do. We look forward to our two organizations continuing to work together in the future for the betterment of the industry as a whole.

We dug deep on the sourcebook and created something completely from scratch. In October, we started building a brand-new website that now also hosts our new Sourcebook. We have recently launched Phase 1 and will to continue to develop this amazing tool. As it evolves, our vision is a complete Resource Center for both our membership and the public we serve. Already, in the first months of the new site being live, traffic to the site has almost doubled, and average weekly store and subscription orders are up.

Membership is the heart of this organization, and is intrinsically tied to the other pillars. The Stained Glass Quarterly is our voice and the Conference is our place to come together and have meaningful discussions that raise the standard for all of us. The Sourcebook and website are our outreach, driving awareness and sharing knowledge with the public. Because of our renewed focus, we have welcomed almost 100 new Affiliate members in the last 12 months.

Perhaps the biggest indication of the State of our Association, however, is that we have been able to hire help for Megan in the office. Already in her first two months, Amy Moritz has made a huge difference in what can get done in the office and we are excited to see what is in store for us in the next year with two highly caffeinated phenomena in the SGAA Office.

Thank you to every member, new and returning, that has been a part of this transformation. It is truly an exciting time to be a part of this community.

David Judson, Judson Studios
SGAA President ■

From the Editorial Board

Like a tornadic-spring storm in Texas, the 110th annual summer conference blew into South Texas with a whole lot of excitement and plenty of activities for all. But just like that, it was over, and everyone left for their respective home base. We left San Antonio just as we found it, no harm was done. If you ever want to experience a real whirlwind, simply offer to host an SGAA-AGG co-conference. It will teach you just how vital the SGAA staff is in making those of us who host “appear to have it all together.” Once after many months of preparation, the conference doors finally open, they go the extra mile in making the conference hosts “look really good.”

In the Winter 2019, we featured an article “The Handmaids of Architecture.” In the article, our readers were introduced to the art of Cecil L. Casebier of ORCO, Inc. of San Antonio. Cecil’s son Lang Casebier reached out to the SGQ: “my father, Cecil Casebier, considered the St. Michaels windows his best church designs—because he was given an entirely free hand to design the windows. His favorite designs, however, were his first, St. Luke’s Episcopal in San Antonio, when it was all new, and he knew little about stained glass construction. The glass is Blenko Glass from West Virginia.” (sic) During our post-conference tour, we were fortunate enough to visit St. Luke’s Episcopal Church along with the Temple Beth-El in which Casebier designed a beautiful curved backlighted wall of faceted glass for the altar.

In this current issue, we have a recap-article Bigger in Texas—a post-wrap-up of the conference and its cavalcade of fabulous speakers. We have written an excerpt from Helen Whittaker’s talk, Seven Points of Light. Whittaker walks through her process of working on a commission. And Megan McElfresh summarizes the Manufacturer’s Forum from the conference. I’m sure we’ll be unpacking more material from the conference for months to come; it was truly an experience in information overload!

Megan Muller writes of a significant discovery concerning the stained glass windows in the Canterbury Cathedral. We all remember Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales from College English class, don’t we? We also have a short story on Barbara Derix, a ‘German in Paris,’ and her campy-journey across North America. From the now-for-something-completely-different department, we introduce our readers to Karl Unnasch. His original art brings a blue-collar perspective to public art in the article “A Midwestern Ruralist.”

We found the work of Gertjan van Beijnum of The Netherlands, interesting enough, that we worked together with the Dutch glass magazine GLAS 2-2019, the magazine of the International Stained Glass Association, and asked if we could republish their article in the SGQ.

Once again, we have managed to bring together an eclectic blend of interesting articles for this issue of the SGQ. The Stained Glass Quarterly is one of the many benefits of being a member of the Stained Glass Association of America. This publication belongs to all of us. It is for this reason we enjoy hearing from you, our readers. Do you like the articles we are publishing? Would you enjoy reading articles on other specific topics? If so, we need to know. As always, we welcome your feedback.

Bryant J. Stanton
Chair of The Editorial Committee ■

From the Stained Glass School

This year at the SGAA Conference, I was honored to present the Stained Glass School "Excellence in Education Award" to a dear friend and noted artist and educator, Ellen Mandelbaum. Ellen is an artist who came to stained glass bringing her unique, gestural expression and boundless enthusiasm with her, and who has now spent decades inspiring us all.

Education is not limited to the classroom, although Ellen certainly excels there as well. Education is about sharing and community. Education is about the accumulation of our shared experiences and explorations. Over 25 years ago, a group of women was searching for that community and support which we must all have to thrive. That group became The International Women's Glass Workshop and to this day they continue to support and inspire each other. Just recently, Ellen worked to collect and donate the archives of The International Women's Glass Workshop to the The Juliette K. and Leonard S. Rakow Research Library of The Corning Museum of Glass. This is such a notable achievement. It ensures that the gatherings and special exhibitions of these incredible women will be available for the inspiration of future generations! Well done, Ellen!

As usual, classes were a great experience. We had the traditional array of painting and restoration classes, but we were also very excited to bring Angel Gilding back to the conference and to look at new technologies in restoration using drones. We gave our members a little fun as well with some glass blowing - people could try their hands at making their own rondel. Participants were energized by the material and the additional camaraderie gained in these classes, led by knowledgeable and experienced instructors.

We granted just over \$6,000 in scholarship monies in this year's cycle and are hoping to increase available monies

in the years to come. With that in mind, we worked hard to gather donations for our main fundraising event: the silent auction! And after many years, we reincorporated a live auction into our Awards Banquet. As it was a joint conference, we split the money raised at the auctions between the Stained Glass School and the American Glass Guild equally. Everyone's efforts were rewarded with a remarkable return of almost \$22,000 raised in combined funds during the auctions. Thank you to everyone who donated, bid, and volunteered!

The annual conference is always a valuable time to dig into these connections, share our expertise, lift each other up and reflect on the state of our organizations. This year, it feels like we're finally getting to a pivot point with the Stained Glass School. In its half-century of history, the Stained Glass School has had many identities, all valuable in their respective time and space and all under the umbrella of the Stained Glass Association of America. As the SGAA has undergone a transformation over the last two years, rebuilding its foundation and creating a new strategic plan, it is now time for the SGS to discover its new compass.

In the coming year, we want to take time to listen, dream and imagine the possibilities for the SGS. We want to move forward with purpose and intention, creating a strong base for the SGS that will serve our members and the community for the next 50 years.

We are listening to you. Please feel free to reach out to the office. We will also be looking for feedback in the coming months through surveys and through social media as we look forward to the possibilities that lay before us.

SM Ann Therese Kelly
School Director ■



Bigger in Texas

Highlights from the Stained Glass Association of America's 110th Annual Summer Conference

By Bryant J. Stanton

Historical perspectives. Personal artistic stories. Demonstrations of techniques and products. Meeting new friends and building new memories with old ones. The first joint conference for the Stained Glass Association of American and the American Glass Guild had a little bit of everything in San Antonio.

Nearly 200 people from across the country, along with attendees from Japan, Peru, Great Britain, France, Germany and Canada enjoyed five days of learning and networking, with a little Texas culture (including heat and humidity) thrown in for good measure.

Friday, May 31, many board members and volunteers from both organizations began arriving to get the ball rolling.

Laurie Wells of Old World Stone, Ltd. gave a presentation on the challenges of restoring historic masonry
Photo: Mark F. Heffron

Registration bags were overflowing with goodies this year and the auction tables quickly began to groan with donations. Classes ran on Saturday and Sunday before the two-day main conference which was jam-packed with speakers, demonstrations, and vendors discussing history, personal journeys, and the current trends and products available to stained glass artists of all ilk.

How the West Was Won

The conference kicked off with a presentation from Rolf Achilles, who described several major 19th century stained glass installations of the American West. The key point in this discussion—railroads.

“The American West, how do you access it?” Achilles began. “In the 1830s, 40s and 50s, the access was very difficult. You can access the West from the East in two ways commercially—railways, which began in the 1850s out of Chicago mostly... The other way to get west was by ship. The Panama Canal didn't open until 1914, so how did you get to San Francisco from New York? Well you went around South America. That took you awhile. It could have been scenic but for windows and glass, it was a trick and a half.”

The primary mode of transportation was the railway. First Chicago, which opened up the west, then St. Louis, which allowed for travel south and southwest.



Conference sponsor Abatron, Inc., demonstrated wood adhesives; Photo: Judson Studios / Kyle J. Mickelson

“The result of all this is most of the early stained glass windows are in cities along the railroads,” Achilles said. “They’re not more than about 20 miles on either side of where the railroads went. That’s still true today because the interstate for the most part follows the old railroad routes.”

One more note about 19th century windows which Achilles said is still true today:

“One of the problems with 19th century windows is that they’re not signed. Not even one window is signed,” Achilles said. “And that’s a problem with stained glass in general. You guys don’t sign enough windows. And the church never knows about your windows. They just know they have beautiful windows. These are the most beautiful windows in the world. Who made them? I don’t know... Stained Glass artists are the most famous anonymous artists working in the art world today.”

Too Much is Not Enough

Susan Stinsmuehlen-Amend discussed her journey as an artist—from being influenced by the punk rock scene in Austin, Texas in the 1970s to her work commenting on 9/11 and the Gulf War—while taking the audience through examples of her work.

“No matter how many permutations my work has taken, since 1973 it has always been about painting in the particular and ambiguous space of glass,” Stinsmuehlen-Amend said.

Her work in glass and mixed media, architectural glass, hot glass and public art is in private collections and public institutions but she said she fell into glass work when she was the partner and co-creator of Renaissance Glass (1973-1987) in Austin, Texas.

“Self-taught in glass, I wanted more information about the innovations happening in the glass movement and someone came up with the idea of inviting artists I read about in Glass Magazine to come to Austin to teach or lecture,” she said. “I called artists... and they all came. Beside all the information about life and art, I learned how to organize workshops, put on exhibitions and write press releases. Those things are tedious but so necessary. Through this process, I became connected to the national world of glass art.”

“The whole time we were doing commissions, I was working on the X Series,” Stinsmuehlen-Amend said. “Educated in fine art and painting and drawing, I worked nights and weekends to figure out how to make this craft of flat glass a form of personal expression. I adopted the X as my symbol of rebellion. I was influenced by the local punk scene,



The Drones and Documentation class went on site to try out the new technology at St. Joseph Church; Photo: Mark F. Heffron

fashion design, pattern and decoration, and neo-expressionism in painting as well as the ongoing innovations in the world of craft. It led to work that was unrestrained, kinetic, frenetic, glittery, and jarring. But keep in mind, most of this X series keeps the traditional methods of making stained glass. I keep hanging on to those. My mantra at this time was too much is not enough.”

Technical Insight for Everyone

Representatives from Sussman Architectural Products, LLC, and Old World Stone, Ltd., led sessions about their work in the field. Jacob and Robin Sussman, the fourth generation of Sussman’s, described their family business, dating back to Isadore Sussman who in 1906 founded the company after emigrating from Poland to Manhattan. They outlined the process of working with their company, which designs window frames, from the project estimate through installation.

Laurie Wells of Old World Stone, Ltd., presented on the challenges of working on historic building preservation including matching the raw stone material, much of which is no longer available today. Her work at the company based in Burlington, Ontario includes serving as a bridge between the building owners and the stone fabricating cutters and carvers. Their flexibility and ingenuity is absolutely crucial

to the restoration work in our field and it was an excellent opportunity to dive deep into their process.

Tuesday featured afternoon demonstrations by several artists and companies. Tony Glander demonstrated basic fused glass properties then walked participants through wafer production and layering techniques.

Ken Leap, who spoke about Bryn Athyn College’s BFA program in the Building Arts and offered a demonstration on enamels while Vic Rothman, who was part of the restoration panel, also offered a live demo of tips and tricks he has developed over the decades in his studio practice.

Sponsors who offered demonstrations included Angel Gilding (on gilding and mirroring), Amerway (on solders), and Abatron, Inc. (on restoration wood adhesives).

Vendors and Sponsors

Fifteen vendors were on hand to share their products with artists and studios in a much expanded Vendor Showcase this year. Both Sunday evening and Monday afternoon receptions specifically gave conference participants time to get to know each and every company who made the time to join us.

A Stained Glass Love Story

Michael Lauer expected to find like-minded people when he first began attending stained glass conferences and art shows in 1978.

He didn't necessarily expect to find his future spouse. But fall in love he did after meeting Beatriz at a trade show in Chicago in 2000.

"I had a studio in Lima (Peru) so I started coming to the U.S. for stained glass conferences and stained glass shows," Beatriz said. "I started buying glass from the U.S., grinders and tools and all that, because they were produced here. That's why I came here and that's why we met."

The couple operates a studio, Michael's Stained Glass Studio, in St. Cloud, Minnesota, while Beatriz still has her shop in Lima. She returns about twice a year, but is in daily communication with her staff via email.

In 2019 the pair returned to the Stained Glass Association of America's annual conference bringing along three people from the Vitrales Peru SAC studio—Oswaldo De Espinoza, who manages the store and works on installations, his wife, Raquel, and Diego Velasco Picasso, a designer who has worked for Beatriz since he was 17 years old. Now, at age 40, Diego is going to school to become an architect, utilizing his stained glass design skills in new ways.

"For them and for us, being here with all people doing the same thing, that's very important and very interesting and very exciting," Beatriz said. "You get to see the glass manufactures represented and all kinds of stuff."

Among them were representatives from seven glass manufacturers: Pilkington North America, Inc., Oceanside Glass & Tile, Bullseye Glass Co., Glashütte Lamberts with Bendheim Architectural Glass, Monarch Glass Studio, Verrerie de Saint-Just, and Kokomo Opalescent Glass Co. It's rare that we have the opportunity to be with so many of our glass manufacturers at once; to take advantage of that, we held a forum where each manufacturing company had a chance to spend a few minutes speaking about their unique experience within the industry.

New Vendors this year included Oceanside Glass & Tile, Abatron, Inc., Handy Hanger, Monarch Glass Studio, Old World Stone, Ltd., and Delphi. In addition, Youghiogheny Glass sent a table of samples and material for participants to see. Several attendees remarked about how it was an enormous benefit to be able to directly connect with suppliers across every facet of the industry personally.

Bid High, Bid Often

The silent and live auctions to benefit scholarships for both the American Glass Guild and the SGAA's Stained Glass School were a rousing success. Nearly 14 tables were filled with books, jewels, tools, original artwork, and more. Amy Valuck went above and beyond as this year's joint auction chair to keep everything organized and efficient. Over \$11,000 was raised in the silent auction alone this year.

The AGG has always incorporated a live auction into their conferences but it had been many years since the SGAA had done so. This year's live auction featured 16 panels donated by artists and capped off the annual Awards Reception and Banquet. Lucky winners were able to snap up a panel by Graham Fox, Amy Valuck, David Fode, Peter Mollica, Kenneth Leap, Kathy Barnard and others to expand their own collections.

The bidding on Cynthia Courage's stained glass panel, which was a celebration of the joint event while gracing the 2019 Conference Program cover and much of the year's conference marketing material, was one of many hotly contested battles. David Fode was the ultimate winner

and then drove several to tears (most especially Megan McElfresh herself!) when he then donated the purchased panel to the Stained Glass Association offices.

Overall, both auctions raised nearly \$22,000 to be distributed between the SGAA and AGG scholarship funds. More importantly, the teamwork and dedication of the auction volunteer crew and the camaraderie gained during the live auction has set a new bar for future conferences.

Honors and Awards

Capping off the conference was the annual awards banquet, honoring people for their contributions to stained glass and to the two host organizations.

Robert Jayson, owner and president of S.A. Bendheim Ltd., was presented with the SGAA Lifetime Achievement Award. The oldest of three brothers raised in the generational glass company, Jayson has continued to build the company and bring innovation to tradition in glass manufacturing.

“I was truly born and raised in the glass business,” Jayson said in his remarks. “My maternal grandparents, Sem and Margaret Bendheim founded S.A. Bendheim in New York City in 1927. Their life was filled with friendships made through stained glass and they loved to entertain. Their home was always filled with the artists and studio owners they befriended. Today I live in this home, and their tradition continues.

“From an early age I knew that I wanted to be in this business. So later, it was no surprise when I became disenchanted with college and decided to take a ‘sabbatical’ before returning to complete. I failed in my attempts to get a job on the Alaska pipeline and my chances of being a tuna fisherman in the Caribbean were slim to none.



From top: The silent auction raised \$11,000 for the SGS and AGG scholarship funds; Ken Leap and Kathy Jordan drummed up support during the live auction; Robert Jayson, owner and president of S.A. Bendheim, was presented the Lifetime Achievement Award from SGAA president David Judson. Photos: Judson Studios / Kyle J. Mickelson



SGAA Board & Staff (from left to right, back to front): Tom Holdman, Ralph Mills, David Judson, Bryant Stanton, Jim Piercey, Ed Gilbertson, SM Ann Therese Kelly, Kathy Barnard, Megan McElfresh, Courtney Nelson, Ariana Makau, and Amy Moritz. Not pictured: Ron Weaver, Kristine Nordmeyer, Eric Suevel, Andrea Reid; Photo: Judson Studios / Kyle J. Mickelson

“It was at this time that my dad suggested I try to get a job at the Lamberts glass factory in Germany. The job would be hard, which appealed to me, and I would be the only American to have worked in the Glashütte Lamberts, one of the world leaders in mouthblown sheet glass. I’d come back a better person and bring additional knowledge to the business when I joined. I thought this was a great idea and it ended up becoming the single most valuable experience in my life. I spent almost six months there, working as a walzenträger, or cylinder carrier, running the hot cylinders from the blowers to the annealing lehr. I experienced the bond born of men working as a team through skill, strength, and sweat, to create these fragile cylinders of glass art. I came back a better person.

“In 1976 I joined the business full time (that’s 43 years ago!) and in the early 80s I had ‘my one good idea’ according to my brothers. At the time I realized Lamberts had a glass that closely resembled true old window glass and recognized the need for such a glass in the traditional building market. I worked with Lamberts, refining it to become the perfect historic reproduction glass. Following the success of Restoration Glass®, my brothers and I soon realized architects

and designers were the perfect audience for all the specialty glasses we carried. Restoration Glass® became the inspiration and bridge to our transformation into one of the nation’s leaders in the specialty architectural glass industry.”

Roberts brothers, Donald and Steven Jayson flew out to San Antonio to join us at the Awards Banquet and support their brothers “one good idea.”

David Judson then presented Megan McElfresh with the Distinguished Service Award for her dedication as the SGAA’s executive administrator. “Megan told me she’d kill me if I ever gave this to her, so I told her I’d only do it once!” he said. McElfresh didn’t have much to say to that: “This is the dream job I didn’t even know was my dream job. This doesn’t get anyone off the hook, though: if you’re on a tour, don’t you be late for your bus tomorrow!”

To conclude the Stained Glass Association of America Awards, Tony Glander, president of the American Glass Guild, was presented with the President’s Award from Judson for his instrumental help in creating a joint conference with both organizations.

The Winding Road to Stained Glass

Bridget Taylor was looking for her next career. She had spent 25 years working in the movie industry doing visual effects.

"I was traveling all over the world, always uprooting my life," Bridget said. "It was glamorous. It was wonderful. I made lots of money but I burned out. I knew it wasn't the career I wanted to retire with so I embarked upon a seven year career search, if you will, to reinvent myself."

She started with shoemaking, but while she loved it as a hobby, didn't see it as a career path. In the meantime, she had returned to her hometown of Buffalo, NY. She was house-sitting, so her cost of living was low, enabling her to rent studio space. She'd give shoemaking one last try.

"And in that process, I signed up for stained glass course," she said. "It was just to meet people, to have something to do, and I fell in love with it. I shoved all my shoemaking stuff aside. I bought a grinder and I started."

That was three years ago. She took any stained glass course she could in between film projects until taking the plunge in October of 2018, filing her business certificate and opening Abeille Glassworks in Buffalo. As she developed what she'd like her business to look like, she found her way to San Antonio and the annual SGAA Summer Conference.

"Ultimately what I want to do is residential custom work and restoration work and that's why I'm here," Bridget said. "In my time in Buffalo, I couldn't find anyone to teach me to do repair and restoration, even though I asked anyone I could. That class was offered here. I took Restoration 101 and that was fantastic. That's the main reason that brought me to the conference was I found the restoration class."

Already in Texas for the restoration class, she registered for Drones and Docs, a class about using drone technology to help in major restoration projects. On paper, it seemed a bit

of a stretch for someone new to stained glass to jump into this class. But turns out, it wasn't that much of a stretch.

"I'm just starting out with my own business and probably am a long way from documenting cathedral windows and taking that kind of project on," Bridget said. "However, the actual technology that they discussed, that's exactly what I've been doing... I literally walked in here thinking 'this will be interesting, it won't help me in my career' and now I'm thinking, 'well, maybe not tomorrow, but maybe.'"



Bridget Taylor took the Drones and Documentation course at the summer conference; Photo: Bridget Taylor



Judith Schaechter was presented the Joint Presidents' Award; Photo: Judson Studios / Kyle J. Mickelson

Also honored at the Awards Banquet, SM Ann Therese Kelly surprised Ellen Mandelbaum with this year's Stained Glass School Excellence in Education Award: "Ellen Mandelbaum is an artist who came to stained glass bringing her unique, gestural expression and boundless enthusiasm with her, and who has now spent decades inspiring us all. Just recently, Ellen worked to collect and donate the archives of The International Women's Glass Workshop to the The Juliette K. and Leonard S. Rakow Research Library of The Corning Museum of Glass. This is such a notable achievement—it ensures that the gatherings and special exhibitions of these incredible women will be available for the inspiration of future generations! Well done, Ellen!"

The American Glass Guild presented its honors to Kathy Jordan and Vic Rothman. Kathy received the AGG Joseph Barnes Award for her hardworking, generous spirit, coupled with enthusiasm that continues to impact the American glass industry. Vic received the AGG Nicholas Parrendo Lifetime Achievement Award for his dedication to the art glass community.

Finally, both David Judson and Tony Glander took this opportunity to present Judith Schaechter with the first ever Joint President Award in recognition of her outstanding vision, dedication, and commitment to glass art. They presented Schaechter with a beautiful illuminated manuscript crafted by Celeste Parrendo. Then, just as Schaechter made to take her seat, Tony produced a taxidermy armadillo as a "trophy" for her personal collection. "This never happens, but I am speechless!" Judith exclaimed. Her delight in receiving an armadillo was shared by all.

The general consensus at the conclusion of the entire multi-faceted joint event was simultaneous enthusiasm and exhaustion. "My sole disappointment in the conference is that the next joint conference isn't scheduled yet!" was a sentiment echoed by many on the post-conference survey. With so many keen on it, we're sure it won't be long until it is a definite reality! ■

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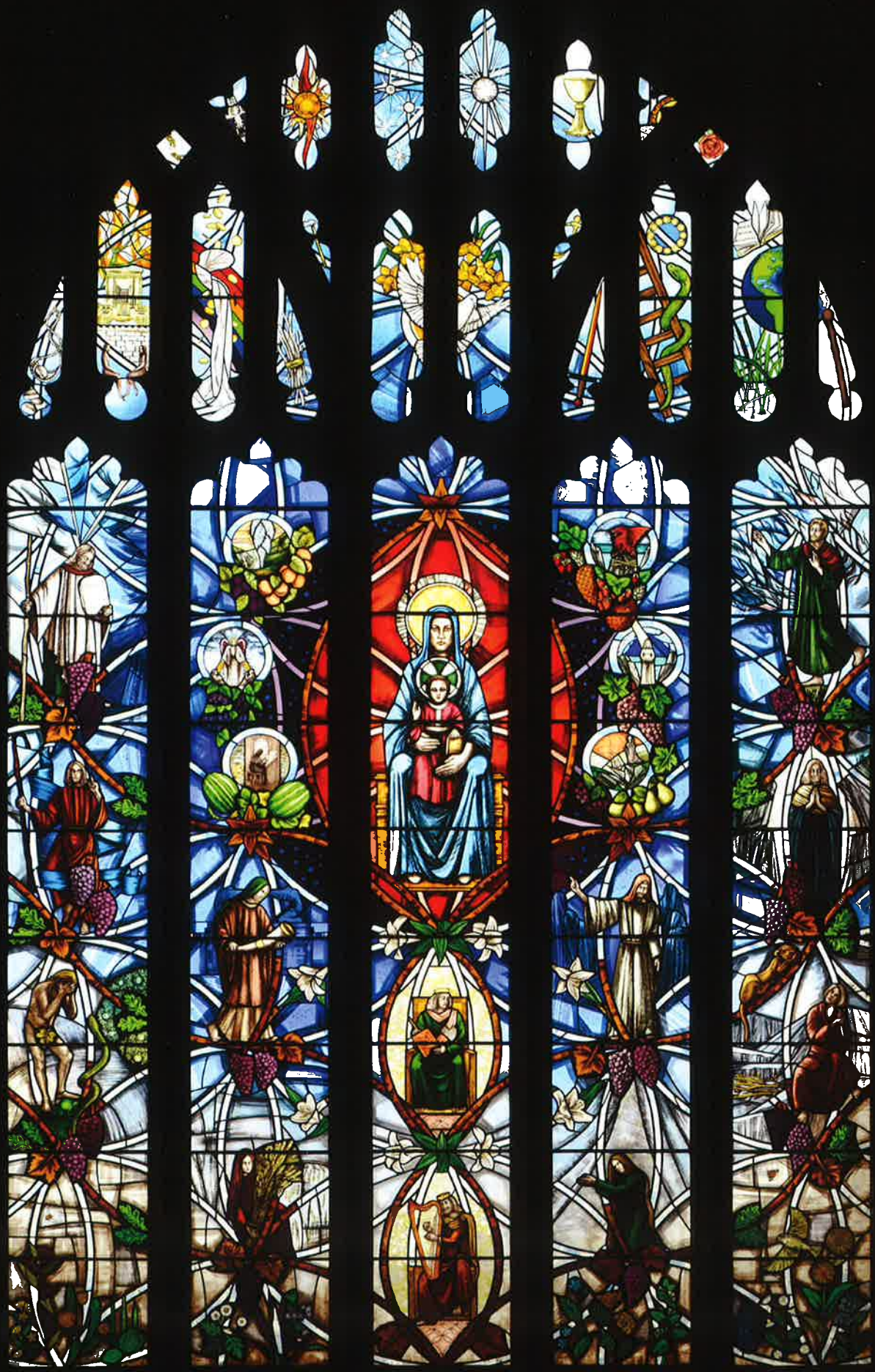


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Seven Points of Light

Helen Whittaker walks through her process of working on a commission

About a third of the way through her presentation, Helen Whittaker came to a slide that caused her to smile. “I know it’s name dropping, but I really do have much to thank His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales for,” she said, as the audience chuckled at her apology while the photo of her with Prince Charles took over the screen.

Her subtle British humor peppered her keynote address in San Antonio, Texas at the SGAA and AGG annual conference.

The creative director at Barley Studio in the United Kingdom, Whittaker is an acclaimed stained glass artist. While her artistic beginnings came from a love of painting, she found her calling in doing commission stained glass windows which led to prestigious collaborations with renowned artists Hughie O’Donoghue and David Hockney for two different works in Westminster Abbey.

ARTISTIC BEGINNINGS

“It all started when I was born, which I think is the same for many of you out there,” she said. “I come from five generations of crafts people—cabinet makers and blacksmiths, resulting in me, a female stained glass artist. You don’t just do this on your own. There are many people I could thank for getting me where I am and who have massively influenced me.”

Whittaker traced her roots back as an artist to the pictures of paintings which adorned her walls. From classic works of sacred art to the pop art of Roy Lichtenstein, she surrounded herself with seemingly random works of art. But all of them drew her for specific reasons. She was drawn to work with black lines and block colors, to the use of geometry, and to the play of light and dark. She also was drawn to the narrative and storytelling possibilities a painting could bring to the observer.

Among her inspirations are Giotto, Caravaggio and Vermeer along with Mark Rothko, William Blake, and the sculpture of Rodin.

“Against the background of my love of painting I also enjoyed the process of craft,” Whittaker said. “So I started learning my vocation in glass at the University of Sunderland which is in the northeast of England. I did glass blowing. I learned stained glass. I did fused glass. Ceramics. And life drawing as well. I used to really enjoy drawing the figure. But quite soon after, I realized glass was for me, stained glass was for me.”

Abergavenny Jesse Window at St. Mary’s Priory Church demonstrates the relationship of the window to other works of art. Photo: Barley Studio

This is where the Prince of Wales enters her story. In 1996 she won a scholarship to train at the Prince of Wales Institute of Architecture for their two-year master's program.

"He is the patron of the cause and the founder of this school and he has truly been a passionate advocate for our arts and crafts," Whittaker said of Prince Charles. "So no matter what you hear about him in the press, he really has given a lot of support to us craftspeople."

While working on her master's degree she studied under Professor Keith Critchlow, an international expert in sacred geometry and sacred architecture, which opened up new possibilities and strengthened her artistic sensibilities that continue in her work today.

"I must thank him for his understanding of geometry and proportion and how it can be discovered in many beautiful objects," Whittaker said. "He basically said that geometry is everywhere from a beautiful flower to a painting. There's an order to things you'll find in these great works of art but equally to the flowers you see along the (San Antonio) Riverwalk."

While her education provided a solid base, it was practical work as a student which gave her the necessary experience. She worked for Keith Barley in his studio as a student and then was offered a job a few years later.

"Degrees are great but it didn't quite prepare me to work in a studio," Whittaker said. "I realized I didn't know anything when I started working at his studio in the summers."

She joined the Barley Studio team full time in 1998 and has gone on to create more than 100 commissions in buildings across the UK.

THE ART OF COMMISSION

For Whittaker, commission work is deeply satisfying both as an artists and as a problem-solver.

"I actually like my work to be commissioned because it makes me think in different ways," Whittaker said. "I actually prefer working to commission. What I try to do is to think of new ways of telling a story. I think that's what kept me. I'm trying to think of a new way of telling the narrative. It's so easy to go on Google and see these stock images of Christ doing this or someone doing that. I just try and re-engage that story."

"I don't just always do figurative or abstract or representational," Whittaker said of her work. "I do what I feel responds to the building and that to me keeps it interesting because every commission is drawing something out for me."

There are seven points Whittaker considers when designing a new stained glass window for commission.

History of the Building

She begins with the history of the building, allowing the story of the space to help in her design.

This can be seen in her work on The Processional Way in Ely Cathedral, Cambridgeshire. The space was a link for the between the cathedral and the lady chapel.

"The idea I was thinking was that I didn't want you to actually focus on these windows," Whittaker said "I didn't want them to be the focal point because the whole idea of the processional way is you're moving through. So with my training in geometry, I did these circles that take you through."

The history of the space also impacted her design for the RAF Club in London. The window is located in the former Anteroom to the Ladies' Bar and Lounge, the only space where women were allowed to wait for the husbands until the 1960s. She started thinking about the efforts of women during World War I and World War II.

“I didn’t want to do women doing stuff. I wanted to think of what they did, the symbols of what they did to think a bit further on,” Whittaker said. “You don’t see these women but they’re holding it all together.”

And so the work features items of women in the war efforts, including a steering wheel, spitfire, operations clock, typewriter, and Red Cross.

The Architectural Space Surrounding the Window

At St. Peter and St. Mary’s Church in Stowmarket, Suffolk, she encountered a dual challenge. The four large windows she was working with were different sizes and the tracery shapes were all different. In addition, the client had enough money to pay for stained glass in essentially a third of each window.

“My idea was then to think about the seasons, because he was a farmer, and the elements,” Whittaker said. “I suggested to him we could have that area of glass that you paid for just moving within in the lights – spring and water, summer and fire, autumn and earth, and winter and air. You don’t notice the windows are all different heights with different tracteries because there’s movement throughout.”

St. Brandon’s Church in Brancepeth, Durham provided another challenge. Fire nearly destroyed this medieval church and the architects had pulled together a modern interior. For a long time, the church had no stained glass in this window.

“So the committee were mixed in what they wanted,” Whittaker said. “Some wanted a stained glass window, they wanted to go back to how it was and some people just liked to see the trees. So it was a bit of a challenge. I started thinking what can I do that can pull these two together and also have a modern message. So I thought about St. Brandon and for those who don’t know, St. Brandon was apparently the person who found the garden of paradise.”

Working with the light coming through the window was one of the challenges of designing for the Royal Air Force Club in London
Photo: Barley Studio





She happened to be at the Chelsea Flower Show and saw *Birds of Paradise* and thought that was it, the key element with her design.

After some haggling with English Heritage, she was able to design a window that appealed to both the stained glass enthusiasts on the committee and those who enjoyed the natural view.

The Purpose of the Window

At St. Thomas of Canterbury Church in Greatford, Lincolnshire, the clients wanted a window firmly connected with their patron saint, but they didn't want a human figure.

"Which gets you thinking because that's all you see," Whittaker said. "The central motif is a sweeping geometric amice which would have been worn around his shoulders and neck. In the low part of the window we have three choughs, which are birds, and are actually on his coat of arms. So what I started thinking was to show his martyrdom, I'd use that amice to show the divide between the earth and the heaven."

When working on a memorial commission for an 18-year-old who died doing work in Tanzania, she incorporated what she learned about the young man and included animals of East Africa under a theme of the book of Genesis.

The Light Coming Through the Window

The bigger problem with light is when there is none. That's what Whittaker faced when working on a window for the Royal Air Force Club in London, which was in a stairwell with outside light blocked from nearby buildings and the outside emergency staircase.

"My goodness, what am I going to do? There's hardly any light," she said. "There might have been some light from the top but it's pretty dark. And also the window is on

a staircase so you can only see half of it at the top. You can see the rest at the bottom."

The design of the window goes up in diagonals, beginning with a 1940s pilot at the base, up to a 1980s pilot with searchlights.

"Your eyes are immediately moving up the window instead of focusing on one image," Whittaker said. And she used a new-to-her technique.

"The whole base of the window is gilded. I had never done gilding before but I thought this is what we need for this window," she said. "We need to use the reflective light as much as we need to use the transmitted light."

The Relationship of the Window to Other Works of Art

In 2016, she won a national competition to work on the Jesse Window at St. Mary's Priory Church in Abergavenny. The commission was essentially to unite a medieval six-foot oak sculpture of Jesse with a stained glass window depicting the family tree of Jesus.

"They wanted a lot of characters in this but I didn't want them to be just dangling in a hole," Whittaker said. "There has to be some kind of geometry, some kind of structure that pulled them all together." So she used a six-fold geometric shape that underpinned all the characters in the window.

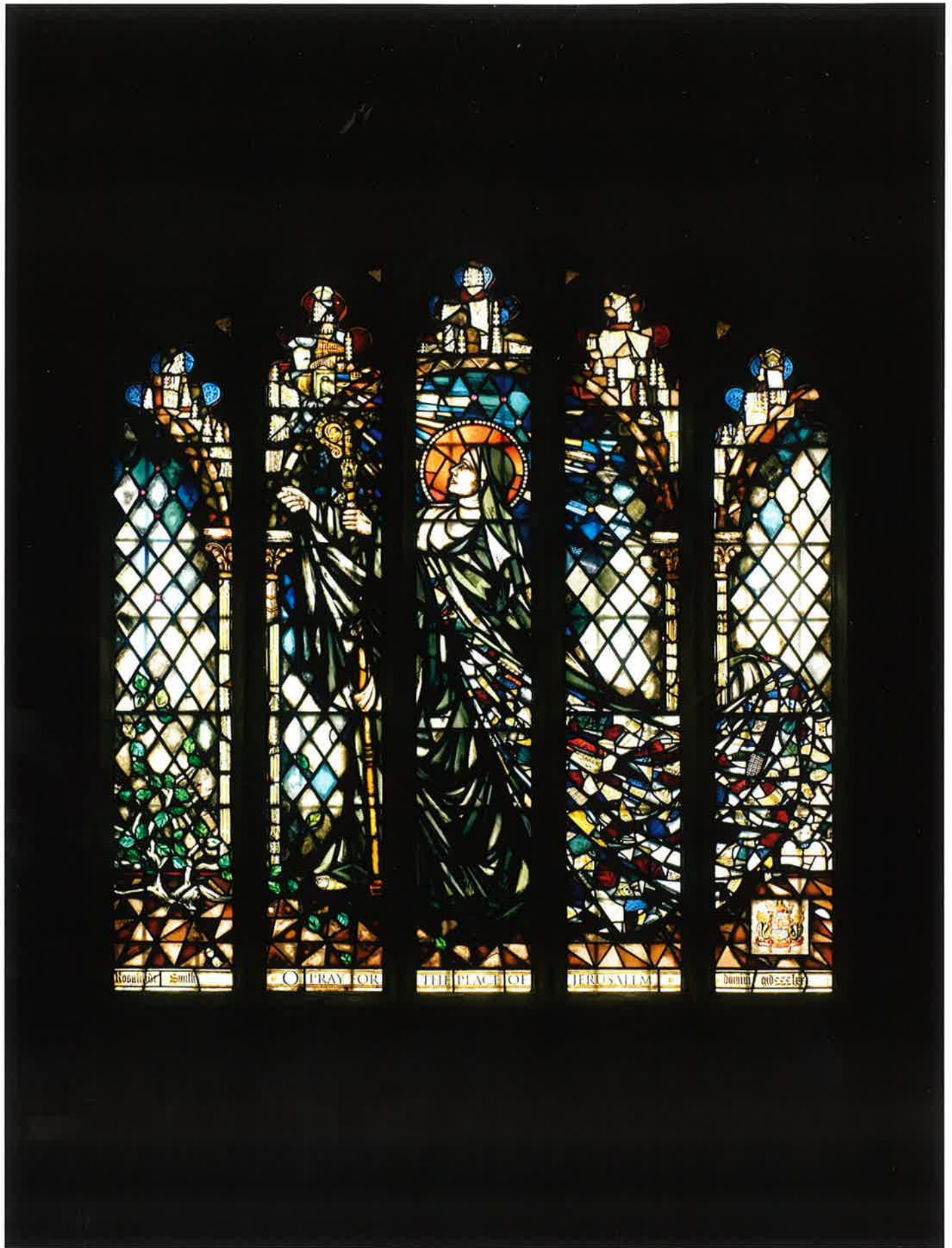
Additionally, the window had to protect the statue.

"One of the concerns was UV light coming down onto this figure," Whittaker said. "So we were fortunate enough to be working with Lamberts who have designed this fantastic UV glass so the base of the window has as lightly yellowed tint but this is to protect it from the UV rays to not damage the oak figure."

The Relationship of the Window to the People Who Use It

Another memorial window had Whittaker researching the subject's life. Commissioned to do a memorial to architect Dale Owens and his son, Jason, she found that Owens worked with Walter Gropius, father of the Bauhaus movement.

At St. Peter and St. Mary's Church in Stowmarket, Suffolk, Helen worked with different sized windows, budget constraints, and the architectural space surrounding the windows.
Photo: Barley Studio



That led her to using the circle, square and triangle. She found the biblical text, “For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God,” to pull it all together while using one of Owens’ buildings as the heavenly Jerusalem.

Structural limitations of the window

In 1993, St. Ethelburga’s Church in London was destroyed by an IRA bomb. In 2002, it was being rebuilt and reimagined as a center for reconciliation and peace.

“I say this had structural limitations, because we had to work within this medieval filament which is quite dark and heavy and you have the fragments (of the original glass) as well which were quite dark and heavy. So my window is a quite a dark and intense affair,” Whittaker said.

THE ART OF COLLABORATION

While Whittaker is still actively working on commissions, the last six years have brought a new opportunity for her to collaborate with artists on projects at Westminster Abbey.

In 2013 she worked with Hughie O’Donoghue on the Marion Windows while in 2018 she completed The Queen’s Window with David Hockney. Neither artist had ever worked in glass before.

“There’s a mindset that only stained glass people can design stained glass windows,” Whittaker said. “I believe as long as you’ve got the right people party to the creation, anything can go. They were very respectful. David Hockney really did look at what we were doing. He looked at various techniques. It was certainly a collaboration.”

With O’Donoghue, she was working to translate his full-scale painting into glass.

“I found it very hard to get the textures he was getting, so I asked to see his brushes,” Whittaker said. “Because I wasn’t quite getting these brush strokes. I started to use his own

brushes to crate the paint marks. By thinking what he’s doing I was able to accurately translate his artwork into glass.”

Hockney was a different process, as he began his work using the technology of an iPad.

“He didn’t just do it on his iPad and press go,” Whittaker said. “There were a lot of processes from there on. He created it on his iPad because he felt he got the transparency. Hockney wanted to keep it simple, wanted to use simple color and lead, and he was very inspired by Matisse.

“My intention was always to translate his design into glass. I wasn’t wanting to make it my own. The purpose was to keep it as real to his intentions as possible.”

Whether it’s commission or collaboration, Whittaker looks to each work as an opportunity to engage the audience, to tell a story, and to let the building tell its story as well. Her confidence in her work was built in increments, and often goes back to the charming story she told of studying under Keith Critchlow.

“As a student I was quite daunted about all these different kinds of arts and academia,” she said. “He used to come by, write the Nike sign, and say ‘Just do it!’” ■

Using the fragments of broken glass after an IRA bomb hit St. Ethelburga’s Church in 2002, Helen worked with the structural limitations of the window
Photo: Barley Studio

Art Glass Manufacturers Forum

at the 2019 Conference

Moderated by Megan McElfresh, SGAA HQ

Glass manufacturing is a rich art unto itself and their work is at the core, the soul, of our industry. It's rare that we have the opportunity to be with so many of them at once; to take advantage of that, we held a forum where each Manufacturing Studio had a chance to spend a few minutes speaking about their unique experience within the industry.

Pilkington North America, Inc.

Kyle Sword, Business Development Manager,
Architectural Glass North America

Oceanside Glass & Tile

Vince Moiso, President (and in-house cow-bell star)

Glashütte Lamberts with Bendheim

Robert Jayson, President, Bendheim
Rainer Schmitt, Managing Partner and Owner,
Glashütte Lamberts

Bullseye Glass Co.

Jim Jones, Director of Sales

Monarch Glass Studio

Tyler Kimball, The Gaffer

Verrerie de Saint-Just

Simon Ballagh, General Manager
Barbara Derix, International Sales Manager

Kokomo Opalescent Glass Co.

Jeff Shaw, Chief Executive Officer



Photo: Judson Studios / Kyle J Mickelson

After a brief introduction, each member answered the same question: "From the perspective of the glass manufacturer, what is the future of glass?"

Kyle Sword, Pilkington North America, Inc.

Kyle Sword kicked off our forum and connected with us immediately: "I've been making glass and ceramics for about 30 years and it's primarily been in the manufacturing of float glass, so mostly heavy industrial manufacturing. I have a degree in ceramic engineering and I am a total glass nerd. I'm told that you are my people."

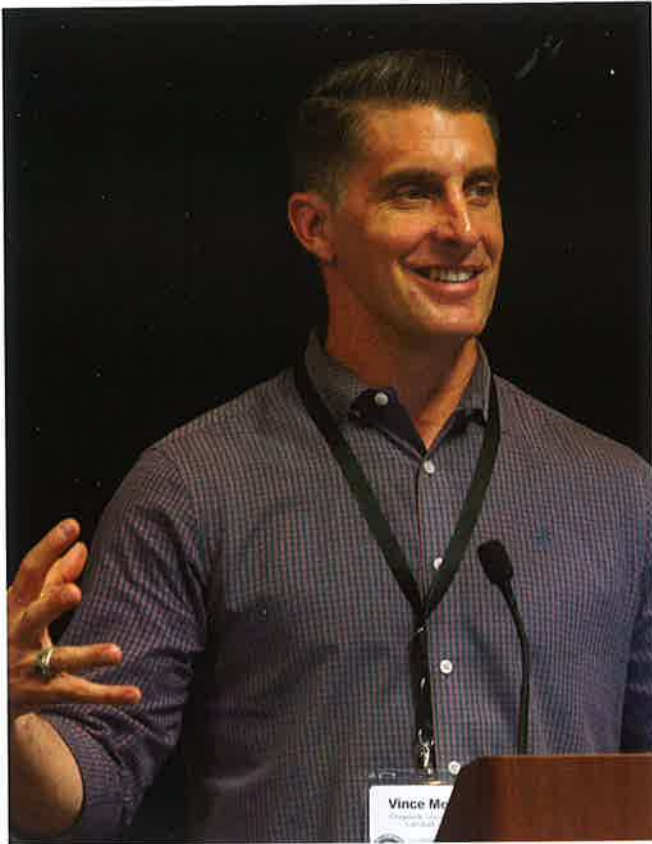
Pilkington has an incredibly long history (200-plus years) of glass making all over the world. Sword had two short video clips with him of very early plate glass manufacturing offering a glimpse at the difficulties that existed in just trying to make a sheet of clear glass of architectural proportion at the turn of the 20th century.

A lot of the "firsts" in glass manufacturing belong to Pilkington Company—one of the first to develop a vertical sheet glass production line, one of the first to do coatings, one of the first to develop a lot of self-cleaning coatings. Their manufacturing history may have a mostly commercial

glass focus, but you can look back and forth between commercial glass and art glass and see how their industrial innovations have had an impact, be it merely inspirational or a direct influence on the material itself.

To revive some of back and forth influence between commercial factory and artist, Pilkington has started a commission art program out of their Toledo facility. Momentum | Intersection is an opportunity for national artists and designers to develop projects inspired by the properties of Pilkington Glass North America's (Nippon Sheet Glass Co., Ltd.) wide range of float glasses. Sword hopes to continue this conversation and commission process in future years.

As he transitioned from talking about the history of Pilkington into the future of glass, Sword pointed out: "The big thing I've noticed that's the takeaway in all of the glass industry is the complexity has gotten really, really difficult. Glass has just gotten really complicated for everybody. Not just commercial. Not just residential. Not just stained glass. For everybody. Glass has gotten complicated."



Vince Moiso, President, Oceanside Glass & Tile
Photo: Judson Studios / Kyle J. Mickelson

"With the different uses in construction, glass is only going to grow and we want to be a part of that. We want to bring colored glass to that."

Despite that, Sword had a positive view of the future and of restoration projects specifically. "People are moving back downtown. If you look at energy in a building people are saying it's better to reuse a building than to tear down and build new. People want to live in old, historic buildings and there's a lot more code that says you've got to take care of these old, historic buildings. So I'm seeing a huge trend move toward how can we retain these old, historic buildings that have great crafts, great old-growth wood, all these reasons we want to see older buildings maintained. I think that's going to continue to grow."

Vince Moiso, Oceanside Glass & Tile

"We started in 1992 but really the focus of the business was originally glass tile," Moiso said. "Those original three partners were really glass art enthusiasts who decided to make tile out of glass. I think it's important to know that Oceanside glass was founded out of art glass."

Moiso took the podium second and jumped right in. "We are approaching, I believe, three years to the day almost that Spectrum announced its closure. And it was as big a deal for us as for anybody because at the time we were buying their sheet glass and using a cut tile and a water jet tile and a mosaic tile from that sheet glass and it represented about 25 percent of our total revenue at the time. The whole idea around acquiring Spectrum equipment was really selfish motives. We wanted to be able to keep that portion of our business. What started as a selfish motive grew to something way beyond what we had ever imagined which was taking on all that equipment, taking on the Uroboros operation as well, moving them to our plant and supplying a whole new industry for us. It's been a lot of fun and a lot of headache and a lot of heartache. It wasn't easy."

"All these guys will tell you," Moiso said of his fellow manufacturing representatives, "it's not easy to make glass."

Moiso worked to clarify many of the questions Oceanside staff are asked each time they travel to meet people within the industry. "We acquired the equipment and the formulas. We did not buy a business. We did not buy Spectrum."

We did not buy Uroboros. Both of those companies, to be totally clear, were shutting down. I want you guys to know that contrary to anything that happened with the environmental issues and all that, both of those companies, Eric 43 years in business, an amazing business, really great product, he was ready to move on. For Spectrum, the Barkers had valuable property and too much inventory and way too much production to meet the market demand so they were ready to move on and we were in a position to do it."

Moiso readily admitted the challenges and difficulties, both seen and unforeseen, that had made for a bit of a "hell" that last three years, but that he was glad they were on the ride. "As far as trends, industry trends, where we're going, I think I'm too new to the industry at this point, especially specifically the art glass industry. What I can say is what I've seen in the last three years and obviously with my experience with glass tile is glass is just a medium that's not going anywhere. If anything, glass is a medium that's growing... With the different uses in construction, glass is only going to grow and we want to be a part of that. We want to bring colored glass to that. With us being able to bridge our experience in the tile industry and the construction industry, we want to bring those things together."

Rainer Schmitt, Glashütte Lamberts

After a brief introduction by Robert Jayson, Rainer Schmitt came up to the podium to present for Glashütte Lamberts, "My English is not so good and I apologize but I think glass speaks more than words and I'm more a glazier and glass painter than a speaker."

Here in the United States, many were just starting to get to know Schmitt as the new owner of Derix Studios. The added layer of ownership of Lamberts was a curiosity or a concern to many, and Schmitt was eager to give participants the knowledge that he was just another glazier whose passion has run away with him. His story is something many can identify with: "I come from really basic beginnings. My whole life is created around the glass and it's also my passion. It's really important for me."

With Lamberts based in Germany, many glass artists in the United States were not even aware that Hans Reiner Meindl, the previous owner of Lamberts, was looking to retire. As the new owner of Derix—where they only use Lamberts glass—Schmitt was more aware than most what an impact it could be if a new owner for Lamberts wasn't found. "If Lamberts closes it will be a hurricane in the glass world," he said.

Schmitt admitted that his whole family is glass crazy (another point many can relate to) and that they are all involved in glass with him and very supportive of this journey. "I'm really lucky to have a partner, Cornelia. We learned together years ago, glazier and glass painter. And my son at 22 years old, Simon, will go this year to master glazier and my daughter, 18 years old, Katarina, learning at Derix in third year glass painting, and I'm really happy about this."

It became clear as he shared his passion with the conference that what might have begun as an emergency, this great concern that Derix Studio needed Lamberts which led him to purchase the manufacturing facility, was actually a wonderful fit, both personally and for the organizations he now leads. Schmitt has an unbelievable ability to see the best in difficult situations and to use that in his leadership of the two iconic glass companies.

This is most clear when Schmitt talks about the future of glass. "I think more and more artists are working off the computer and we have to make the right glass for it. I think in the future it will be more flash glass. I think in the future you see more layers.

"In the past we made the most of glass for churches but it changed, it goes to airports and public art and hotels and lobbies and medical centers all over the world. We need color. You can feel colors and smell and taste colors. When you drink a red wine in blue light and when you drink a red wine in red light, it tastes different. You can taste colors."

In closing, he confirmed what his infectious enthusiasm had already said: "In the future, I see the question in your eyes,

what's going on with Lamberts? Yes I'm Rainer Schmitt and I'm the owner of Derix Studios and Lambert Studios but when I speak to Hans Reiner Meindl and he thought to maybe close Lamberts it was a shock for me. Lamberts is very necessary and important for Derix Glass Studio, because we are making only mouth blown glass. But not just for Derix. I think all studios around the world need Lamberts! That's my passion to say and I will do it!"

Simon Ballagh, Verrerie de Saint-Just

Simon Ballagh jumped right into what he sees as the future of stained glass: "I guess I see the future quite positive. I am very confident. Mouth-blown glass is a material that withstands time, it has soul... The future of glass is what we want to make it. There will always be changing and we should embrace it and make the change in our best interest. I would say we need to break down the walls in our head of ways we can use mouth-blown glass."

Ballagh talked about the importance of educating customers, or connecting with architects, and of building markets. Through education, artists can add real value to the work and create the market for their work. Through specific examples, Ballagh showed how there seems to be more acceptance in combining traditional materials with industrial materials. All that is needed is to work together—the manufacturers, the craftsmen, the artists, the architects—to sell more glass to the world. "It is up to us to have a vision and make it come to life."

Jeff Shaw, Kokomo Opalescent Glass Co.

Jeff Shaw has an open, honest approach to his story with Kokomo. "I'm the new owner of Kokomo Opalescent Glass beginning Sept. 21, 2017. I purchased the company. I keep getting asked the question a lot, 'Well what was your background in glass?' And my answer is, 'Well, I have none.' I still barely have a background in glass. I've been learning rapidly but have a long ways to go yet."

His brief rendition of the history of Kokomo from its founding in 1888 to present was humorous and refreshing.

Although his background isn't obviously glass-centric, he's no stranger to engineering and ingenuity. He hopes to recapture more of the historic variety of Kokomo and do it more efficiently and more quickly.

"In the year and a half I've been with the company I think the biggest complaint I've heard from customers is, 'Why does it take so long?' So we're experimenting. We're doing some different things in how we schedule. In the past there were minimum order quantities that had to be hit and I think you're going to find us more flexible going forward in regards to how we schedule and plan our production. We'll be turning things around more quickly, running smaller batches, and doing some things to bring back the technical knowledge that we had in past decades that kind of went away over time.

"Today it's no longer simply a manufacturer of sheet glass. A lot of things are going on. A lot of improvements I think you'll see coming in the future. Adding a little bit of capacity to help get things turned around more quickly for you."

Jim Jones, Bullseye Glass Co.

"The last three years have felt like 50." Jim Jones opened with blunt honesty among a crowd of friends who could certainly agree with his sentiment.

Bullseye is more than just a glass factory, but it's a passion for making glass that drives everything they do. In the late 1970s, when Bullseye pioneered glass fusing, no one knew what glass fusing was, so they needed an education machine to keep doing what they loved.

Bullseye operates five resource centers, a fabrication studio, and hosts artists in residence. That collaboration with artists helps develop new techniques and new products, which then get passed on through the resource centers.

Bullseye settled a \$1.2 billion class action lawsuit in May 2019. "I would say the silver lining of the whole thing is No. 1 seeing how supportive the glass community was to Bullseye through this whole thing and our employees

were amazingly professional. We had protestors. Death threats. And the employees were just amazing as far as powering through and fixing all those problems.” His comments were met with a stamping round of applause. Today, Bullseye is again 100 percent operational and seems stronger than ever, especially from an education and advocacy standpoint.

While Jones admits that Bullseye is in regrouping mode, he’s visibly still very excited about the future. “Obviously we think kiln-forming is the future. It’s really interesting. In the last couple of years in our resource centers we’ve seen many younger customers in their 20s and 30s. The average age of our customer is probably 45 to 60 and we’re seeing a lot younger customers and those customers are actually interested in stained glass. Flat glass. Leaded glass. That’s pretty interesting. They’re doing really small projects at this point, but we think that the real future is in kiln form glass and I think in architectural kiln form glass. “What we’re doing in the fabrication studio is we’re trying to show people how we can do large scale fabrication in kiln form glass. Our fabrication team collaborates with artists, architects and other studios to really try and expand the boundaries of what can be done.”

Tyler Kimball, Monarch Glass Studio

Tyler Kimball is a glassblower who loves making rondels for architectural glass. His Monarch Glass Studio name is derived from his time working for Jim Flannigan of Freemont Antique where he was dubbed the rondel king. While it’s a big juxtaposition compared to some of the other manufacturers on the forum, it’s a crucial part of the glass manufacturing resource pool.

Kimball and his crew’s attention to detail has allowed them to master the rondel science, from color to size, consistency to complexity. They also can do some very specialized hand blown sheet glass. Kimball admits about sheet glass: “We don’t do a lot of it. It’s got to be highly specialized. There are people who have been doing it for a long time and are very good at it,” he continued, recognizing the crowd up on the platform with him, “but if you can’t get what you’re



Jim Jones, Director of Sales, Bullseye Glass Co.
Photo: Judson Studios / Kyle J. Mickelson

“Our fabrication team collaborates with artists, architects and other studios to really try and expand the boundaries of what can be done.”



"We're excited to talk about doing something specialized. We're always trying new things."

looking for from them, we're excited to talk about doing something specialized. We're always trying new things."

Kimball finished his presentation by sharing what drew him to the specialization of rondels in the first place. "My favorite thing about glass is the finished look of stained glass. I love the process of blowing glass so I feel lucky to be able to do that every day. I also feel lucky that it's going into your hands to make beautiful, beautiful windows. I really feel fortunate to be doing what I'm doing. And I hope you guys continue to make beautiful work so that we can continue to do that for you."

While there was time for only 20 minutes with each presenter, it was an introduction to several new faces within manufacturing and a chance to start forging new relationships. While some have expressed shock and unease at the recent leadership changes among the glass manufacturers, it's nice to see a new generation embracing these companies. If art glass manufacturing had no future, why would these gentlemen have taken on the risk?

The final takeaway: WE are the future of stained glass. Manufacturers produce to demand. As distributors order product, that's what will get produced. This is an important conversation to keep going. These are important relationships to cultivate. We must nurture our industry ourselves. These conferences can and should be an important part of that platform and we hope to make that happen in the coming years through more and more partnerships with the Stained Glass Association of America. ■

On the Road

Barbara Derix's great American adventure

By Amy Moritz

She ducked back into her camper with her French press in hand. It was time for more coffee and Barbara Derix put the kettle on to boil, moving about the small space with the ease and grace of someone born to be on the road.

She tried to park the camper each night in a position to see a bit of greenery outside her window, something that can be found even in the cement jungles of American cities. It gave Barbara a bit of a nature in her mobile office on this great stained glass road trip she concocted.

While her business cards give her title as international sales manager for the French glass manufacturer Saint-Just, she calls herself a glass connoisseur, ambassador, and translator.

“I know the glass world pretty well,” Derix said, speaking with a heavy German accent. She had worked in glass for 21 years in Germany before taking a sales position with Saint-Just. “That’s why I say I’m a connoisseur, ambassador, and translator, my absolute forte is (listening to) an artist

who has never worked in glass before. He can tell me what kind of effect he wants to achieve and I know which technique he needs to use to get that effect. Most of the time, there are budget constraints, and you have to find out which technique, which materials can be used to stay in the budget. That’s my forte.”

Derix took her forte on the road in the spring and early summer of 2019 while partly fulfilling a lifelong dream. See, she always wanted to drive across the United States, from the East Coast to the West. But a similar opportunity presented itself when she started looking at the possibilities for her American business trip in May and June.

First, there was the Conference of Catholic Facility Managers in Minneapolis. Two weeks later was at the joint conference of the Stained Glass Association of American and the American Glass Guild in San Antonio, Texas. A week after that was the annual Americans for the Arts conference back in Minneapolis.

“I thought cool, that’s quite a round trip,” Derix said. “And then I was researching all the glass studios on the way, and then I make the math. How much would it cost me to rent a car and search a hotel every evening? How much would it be to rent a camper van and not needing to search for a hotel every evening, not get your luggage out and your bag out every evening? And the camper van was cheaper.

“I called my boyfriend and I said what do you think? Should I suggest it to my director? Should I do this? It would add a grain of adventure to my business trip. And he said do it Barbara. You’ve been talking about this for years. Just do it. Best decision I ever made.”

From Minneapolis, she went on to Wisconsin and Chicago before making her way south to San Antonio, visiting studios and artists along the way.

The camper van gave her flexibility. She could park anywhere, although she tried to avoid Wal-Mart parking lots simply because “they’re too boring.” And anyways, the camper allowed her that bit of adventure as well. Take for instance,

her trip to visit glass artist and architect Michael Hecker at Oxford Art Glass Studios in Milwaukee.

“I work now in France and I saw a sign near his studio which said ‘Boulangerie. Patisserie.’ Of course, I had to stop,” Derix said. “I got a croissant and a pain au chocolate which was marvelous. And a hot chocolate because it was fricking cold.

“Then I saw his studio door open so I just went in and I said, ‘Hi Michael, I know I’m early. We have an appointment on Monday, but you would help me out a lot if we could talk today.’”

Michael was busy finishing a project for a client, but invited her back on Sunday for a chat.

So Barbara went back to the Boulangerie-Patisserie and parked her camper van on the street in front of it for the night.

“So I just slept right in front, right at the street curb, because she gave me their wifi password and that also worked in my camper van,” Derix said. “The next morning, I brought him pain au chocolate because he was meeting me on a Sunday.”

The friendliness of people—from both within the stained glass community and outside of it—impressed and surprised Barbara on her adventure down the middle of the United States.

“First of all, people, ordinary people, are so friendly,” Derix said. “And then there’s always that big hype in the United States that you cannot go there, you cannot stay there, it’s too dangerous. I stayed in the weirdest places. I just have such faith in humans that really nothing happened to me.”

“I heard from several people there’s not enough work in the U.S. for stained glass, but I saw the opposite,” Derix said. “Everybody’s so busy. Amazing. That’s lovely, I’m glad to hear that. Because if everybody’s really busy, that means there is a market and we can all share that market.

“Then, I was also surprised, on the one hand I got to know Americans as very, very positive people. So if something doesn’t work, they don’t whine about it, they just try to find



Barbara Derix, the international sales manager for glass manufacturer Saint-Just, rented a camper to travel the central United States for a month, attending conferences and visiting artists and studios along the way. Photo: Mark F. Heffron

a solution, which is very nice. But then at the same time, I was surprised about how negative people saw the future of stained glass. That was one of their main questions for the manufacturers—what is the future of stained glass? I didn’t really understand that question because there’s no reason to be afraid. Everything changes all the time. We just have to go with the change.”

That infectious positivity is what made Derix a welcomed visitor to studios throughout the American heartland. Spending her entire career in the glass industry, she has seen up swings and downturns, witnessing artists and studios using their creativity and courage to face those challenges, move forward, and advance not only their own work but the entire community as well.

Writer Amy Moritz works in the Stained Glass Association of America offices in Buffalo, NY. A former print journalist, she has a touch of wanderlust herself. ■