

From the Editor's Desk:

A Vision for Building the Future

The Stained Glass Association of America's annual Winter Business Meeting is coming up in February. This will be the first time that the Association's entire Executive Board gets to see the SGAA's new headquarters and the future home of the SGAA Stained Glass School.

Re-establishing the SGAA's physical school is a great opportunity for the Association. There are many talented people in the world of architectural art glass, and this project will be a chance for many of them to work together to advance the common good of stained glass. Future generations of artists and craftsmen will be trained at this facility in the techniques ranging from traditional to cutting edge.

The success of such an undertaking depends on the participation of many people with a solid vision for the future of architectural art glass to make the project not just a reality but an institution in the world of stained, decorative, and architectural art glass that will endure long after those who today dedicate time and talent to making it happen have gone on.

This is an undertaking on the scale of the one that took place in 1903 at the Southern Hotel in Columbus, Ohio, when 26 men, representing in person or by proxy, 45 stained glass firms met to found what is today the Stained Glass Association of America. The list of people involved in the founding and building of the Stained Glass Association of America reads like a *Who's Who* of twentieth-century American stained glass: Ludwig Von Gerichten, Joseph E. Flanagan, George Mueller, Karl Steward, Frederick Lamb, H. H. Jacoby, Henry Hunt, Charles Connick, Nicola D'Ascenzo, Henry Lee Willet, Harold Cummings, Harold Rambusch; this list is an impressive one, and it goes on and on.

Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we have the opportunity to once again come together and build



Richard Gross

something that is what the Ancient Craft needs now and will continue to be what it needs in the future. The future viability of the craft of stained, decorative, and architectural art glass depends on the availability of craftsmen and craftswomen who have received the training they need to produce installations of exceptional artistry and craftsmanship. Producing more works of higher and higher quality will grow the market and create opportunity for everyone.

A training facility will allow studios to take their focus off of training new craftsmen and put it on growing their market and retaining qualified employees. Being able to hire from a pool of people who want to work in stained glass will be a boon to studios, while being able to send current employees to the SGAA Stained Glass School to further enhance their craft skills will free up time for managing and growing the studio.

There are many excellent reasons to support a school; however, it is vitally important that the *right* school is built, and this is why people with a vision for the future of stained, decorative, and architectural art glass are so needed in this project. Every commission made will

influence commissions that come after it; by raising the artistic and craft standard in the commissions that will be made, everyone will be able to enjoy the benefits of that raised standard.

I talk to many artists who describe a special commission as a "once in a lifetime opportunity." There is no reason why we cannot envision a world in which those "once in a lifetime opportunities" become once-a-year opportunities or even once every few months. If the commissioning public can be shown the true artistry and achievement possible with art glass, perhaps stained, decorative, and architectural art glass can become much more than it is now or than it ever has been. Perhaps we can experience an entirely new renaissance in stained glass in which people want to include art glass in all new building projects because it adds to the building and enhances the environment.

This should be the goal of the SGAA Stained Glass School and the vision of the future of art glass: to so raise the standard that is expected from stained, decorative, and architectural art glass to such a high level that quality art glass will be included in homes, schools, corporate buildings, retail stores, churches, even industrial facilities and manufacturing plants — in short, all buildings — as a matter of course, because people see instantly that it enhances the environment and enriches the human experience. This goal is not impossible, but it will take work, dedication, and time.

The SGAA is on a path now that could lead it to realize such a goal. Won't you be a part of the SGAA and help it realize this future of art glass? Contact the headquarters and get involved with this important project.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Gross". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.