

LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY PHOTOGRAPHER

FEBRUARY 13 - JUNE 10, 2001

P H O T O G R A P H Y G U I D E

I) SEA BRIGHT, NEW JERSEY

This group of photographs from Sea Bright, New Jersey, a coastal fishing town not far from New York City, includes some of the strongest images in the exhibition. In Sea Bright, near the fashionable seashore resorts of the time, he captured fishermen at work and graceful sails drying in the shore winds. Sometimes the subject fills the foreground, sometimes the subject is set in a more distant panorama and perspective. Beautifully composed, the images are as carefully calculated in this regard as his paintings.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Untitled, Two Men with Boat,

Sea Bright, NJ
c. 1888 (28.213)

Untitled, Resting Fisherman,

Sea Bright, NJ
c. 1888 (28.069)

Untitled, Launching Boat,

Sea Bright, NJ
c. 1888 (28.186)

Untitled, Pulling Ashore,

Sea Bright, NJ
c. 1888 (28.118)

Untitled, Drying Sails,

Sea Bright, NJ
c. 1888 (28.078)

Untitled, Boats on Beach,

Sea Bright, NJ
c. 1888 (28.052)

Untitled, Gathering at Shore,

Sea Bright, NJ
c. 1888 (28.149)

Untitled, Men With Cart,

Sea Bright, NJ
c. 1888 (28.170)

Untitled, Man at Cart,

Sea Bright, NJ
c. 1888 (28.188)

Untitled, Inspecting Fish,

Sea Bright, NJ
c. 1888 (28.050)

II) THE ORIENT

In contrast to the domestic scenes of Sea Bright are these four photographs of exotic locations – probably North Africa. The photographs in this group well reflect Tiffany's interest in the exotic, particularly North Africa, which contributed mightily to his design work as well as his paintings. Again in style and composition these photographic images are composed and lit according to the principles close to those he followed in his painting.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Untitled, Arab Women and Dhows,
c. 1880s (28.079)

Untitled, Arabs at Waterfront,
c. 1880s (28.082)

Untitled, Desert Oasis,
c. 1880s (28.049)

Untitled, Camels,
c. 1880s (28.075)

III) NATURE

In these two photographs, Tiffany abandons landscape, seascape and genre for strong close-up images of plant life. Made at an unknown location, though possibly in his own garden, these images reflect an approach to photography and to nature shared by other photographers and designers of the time. They are particularly interesting in light of the very similar patterns and composition exploited so powerfully by Tiffany in leaded glass. More generally they also serve to strengthen the link between Tiffany's interest in linear elegance and international Art Nouveau. Botanical imagery and a close-up perspective are typical in his designs. The *Butterfly* (c.1885) and the *Pumpkin and Beets* (c. 1900-05) windows, for example, in the Museum's Gallery III, both show this colorful world of detail in leaded glass.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Untitled, Broad Leaves,
c. 1900 (28.041)

Untitled, Botanical Study,
c. 1900 (28.042)

IV) MOUNTAINS AND WOODS

This group of three photographs was made at mountain or wooded locations – perhaps during one of two trips Tiffany is known to have made to The Grand Canyon and Yellowstone National Park. In their subject and composition they strongly suggest a link between paintings and watercolors Tiffany made in connection with the trips. His watercolor, *Yellowstone Canyon* (1917), in the Museum's Gallery III, is one example.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Untitled, Solitary Pines,
c. 1900 (28.077)

Untitled, Cascade and Pool,
c. 1900 (28.200)

Untitled, Shallow Gorge with Pines,
c. 1900 (28.097)

V) THE PAINTER'S INSPIRATION

What links the three images in this group – a street scene in St. Augustine, Florida, a field with cows, and a country house with a garden, probably in Italy or Spain – is the fact that each became the basis for a painting of his or was a favorite subject of his for painting. Two of the paintings, *Exterior of a House* and *The Arbor*, are in private collections. Tiffany is known for at least three paintings of family members with cows, including *My Family at Somesville*, which is on view in Gallery VI.

Interestingly, each of these images also brings to mind important background sources for Tiffany's work. The cows in the field recall paintings by Rosa Bonheur (1822-1899), a popular French 19th century artist. The garden house is in subject,

light, composition and form a nearly perfect photographic version of oil sketches made by late 18th century and early 19th century artists on their grand tour of Italy.

In these three photographs, Tiffany has photographically noted the reality behind important sources and inspirations in art history for his own painting.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Untitled, Cows in Field,
c. 1900 (28.166)

Untitled, Segui-Kirby Smith House,
St. Augustine, Fl
c. 1883 (28.193)

Untitled, Trellised Garden,
c. 1900 (28.030)

VI) DELAWARE AND LEHIGH CANAL TRIP

These photographs were made during a 100-mile trip up the Delaware and Lehigh canals in Pennsylvania organized by Tiffany in 1886 upon his engagement to Louise Wakeman Knox. The photographic and social excursion, carrying a party of 10 guests, was made on a barge stylishly re-outfitted by Tiffany and drawn by mules. Noteworthy are the perspectives – different, but clearly calculated with great care in each photograph. These photographs, if not perfectly composed, would require little change on their way to oil on canvas.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Untitled, Woman with Children at Lehigh Canal,
c. 1886 (28.214)

Untitled, Boys in Hats,
c. 1886 (28.105)

VII) A MODERN VIEW

This final group of photographs includes a very painterly industrial scene that while modernist in subject is presented in a pictorial style clearly suggestive of painting. Atmospheric effects produce the misty and unfocused image, and the undulating reflections on the water hint of some manipulation of the print during processing.

The photograph of a house in St. Augustine, Florida, however, points in another direction. Its directness and compositional simplicity, though still more picturesque than the sharp-focus images of later modern photographers, suggest the use of photography as photography rather than an imitation or alternate version of painting. Tiffany incidentally had spent time in 1883 photographing the historic architecture of St. Augustine while motoring from New York to his winter home in Miami.

The mountain image takes abstraction a bit further by reducing a natural scene to three wavy horizontal bands in a clear trio of tones, simple and restful in composition.

We would argue these images strike a note of modernity and suggest that they, like others in the exhibition, stand alone as successful art photography by the versatile master of so many mediums.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Untitled, Industrial Plant,
c. 1900 (28.114)

Untitled, Arrivas House,
St. George Street, St. Augustine, Fl
c. 1883 (28.203)

Untitled, Mountain Skyline,
c. 1900 (28.039)

The Charles Hosmer
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of American Art

WINTER PARK, FLORIDA