

THE MCKEANIAN SPIRIT

From its founder and most especially its first director, Hugh McKean, the Morse Museum inherits an enduring respect for human values. The Museum thus tries to balance its dedication to scholarship, objectivity, and even conventionality with an acknowledgment of the unique interests and personality of the individual.

This section of the Museum's 75th anniversary exhibition celebrates the Museum's own individualistic nature as it is manifested in several objects from the collection and Hugh McKean's delightful, conversational labels.

Included are works of art by American artist Arthur Bowen Davies (1862–1928). An avant-garde artist, Davies was a member of The Eight along with Robert Henri (1865–1929), who rebelled against conservative academic traditions, and a major organizer of the famous 1913 New York Armory Show, which introduced advanced European painting to the United States. Louis Comfort Tiffany famously hated the Armory Show. Despite Tiffany's opinion, Hugh McKean took a path more akin to Davies, filling his own paintings with ethereal figures and settings evoking an imaginary world.

Davies' paintings illustrate nicely how the Museum's collection not only represents a path taken by American art but the first Museum director's sensibilities and taste. Other objects include a Tiffany vase McKean calls "odd" and two works he suggests that others may not deem museum worthy.

Nowhere are the Museum's human values more plainly spoken than in Hugh McKean's witty, informative, and unorthodox labels, which in his day became the stuff of local legend.