

GALLERY VIII

STORIES FROM THE ARCHIVES

Louis Comfort Tiffany and His Studios

OBJECT GUIDE

Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933) founded his business—today best known as Tiffany Studios—in the late 1870s as an elite interior design firm. Over time, his studios evolved to manufacture all manner of items related to decoration, each marketed and sold under a name that had become synonymous with quality, taste, and style.



Above: *Tiffany Studios building at 347–355 Madison Avenue, New York City, c. 1917.*
Photo by Wurtz Bros.

Customers could buy luxury products from Tiffany ranging from a single lamp to customized proposals for large-scale design projects. Tiffany's stunning success is a testament to his creative genius, his commitment to art and beauty, and to the talent and skill of the employees he led in his complex enterprise. There were many steps from an idea for a work of art to its production and sale. This exhibition, drawn from the Museum's archives, presents artifacts, preliminary studies, photographs, and printed material that provide insight into the inner workings of Tiffany Studios and its visionary leader.

BEHIND THE SCENES AT TIFFANY STUDIOS

Beyond the main sales rooms of the flagship Tiffany Studios store in New York City, teams of talented artisans and craftspeople labored in workrooms and offsite manufacturing buildings integral to the production of quality products worthy of the Tiffany name. Sample panels, photographs, and a paper trail tell the stories of their contributions.

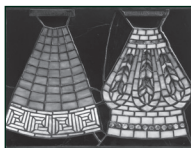
Unless otherwise noted, the objects in this gallery were made by Louis Comfort Tiffany or under the name of one of Tiffany's companies in New York City.

1) Left to right:

Lampshade sample panels,
c. 1905–10
Leaded glass

Partial sections for lamp designs, for example, provided suggestions for glass type and color to the workers responsible for selecting, cutting, and assembling the leaded-glass lampshades.

Greek Key and Gentian designs
Marks: 16" GREEK
BR. / 1444 / 18
GENTIAN 1486
(2001-041)



The completed Gentian lamp, including its base, can be seen in one of the Tiffany Studios study photographs to the right of these lampshade sample panels. An example of the Gentian lamp is on display in the Morse Museum's lamp exhibit in Gallery X.

October Nightshade design
Marks: OCT. NIGHTSHADE.
(64-020)

2) Clockwise from upper left:

Tiffany Studios study photographs,
c. 1905–20

Phases of production were recorded in photographs and archived for in-house reference. Here, they help illustrate the progression from lampshade construction to sale of a leaded-glass lamp.

Lamp
Gentian Blossom
shade No. 1486,
Indian Hookah
standard No. 371
Marks, image: 7455 /
L. 371 / S. 1486 /
TIFFANY STUDIOS
N.Y.

Marks, mount: *Lamp*
371 75.00 / *Height overall* 22" /
Shade 1486 17" 100.00
(1998-028:004)

This image of the matched shade and standard (lamp base) was used to provide model suggestions to clients.

Pattern
Peony leaded-glass lampshade
(1998-028:010)

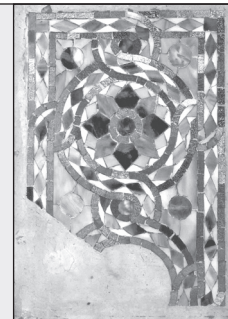
Patterns were constructed using a flattened perspective as an aid for glass selection and cutting.



MOSAIC DEPARTMENT

The bustling mosaic workshop was filled with tables stacked with designs, photographs, and models.

Its walls were covered in sample panels from past commissions—like the panels exhibited here—made as detail proposals for the larger works completed. Artisans toiled on commissions while the paper records of the orders were shuffled from the salesroom through production to the accounting offices. Supervisors monitored the workflow and material costs that in the end assured accurate pricing. Promotional materials reinforced the company's reputation while promoting high sales in the most profitable products.



3) On wall, left to right:

Mosaic sample panels, c. 1905
Glass, cement
(76-010, 76-012)

Mosaic workshop, c. 1918
Ecclesiastical Department
Photographic reproduction
(2009-007:001)

Mosaic sample panel, c. 1905
Glass, cement
(2005-042)

4) On top of replicated workman's table, left to right by letter:

A. Documents

Clockwise from back left:

Design contract, c. 1910
(1999-054)

Design approval stamp, c. 1910
Rubber, wood, leather
Stamp reads: *List No. / Part No. / Article / Date Drawn and By / Date Traced and By / Drawing No. / Approved / Tiffany Studios / Corona, New York*
(79-535)

Estimate form, c. 1922
(69-030:018)

Metal Department purchase order pad, c. 1925
(69-030:017)

Shipping label, c. 1920
(1999-053:1)

Bill of sale, February 1, 1929
Gift of Suzanne T. Darrow
(2015-048:01B)

Lamp standard parts
(1999-076:1)

Tiffany Studios maintained a bronze foundry that produced the components necessary to make a variety of styles of standards (lamp bases), wall sconces, and other fixtures.

Venetian pattern desk set
(65-030:0208:02)

This image of a lamp, part of a larger desk set, appeared in promotional brochures and sales pamphlets.

B. Workman's materials associated with Henry Salzer

Clockwise from back left:

Constitution, 1925

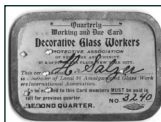
Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers of America (69-030:03)

Glass-working tools, c. 1915

Cedar, metal (69-030:01A-R)

Quarterly Working and Due Cards, 1905, 1912

Decorative Glass Workers' Mutual Aid/Protective Association (1999-041:1, 2)



Square, c. 1925

Wood (69-030:04)

Work ledger, c. 1920

Mosaic Department (1999-045)

Salzer tracked the daily hours every worker contributed to each project in this pocket-sized ledger.



Henry Salzer (1879–1943) was a foreman in the Mosaic Department at Tiffany Studios during the first quarter of the twentieth century. An active member of the unions organized for the specific needs

of decorative glass workers, he worked on notable commissions including the vaulted mosaic ceiling at Marshall Field & Co. (now Macy's) in Chicago and the grand mosaic fountain at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. He is pictured here working at his desk, c. 1925.

Constitution and By Laws, c. 1922

Decorative Glass Workers' Mutual Aid Association (1999-040:1)

C. and D. Price lists and promotional materials

C. Clockwise from back left:

Tiffany Desk Sets, c. 1925

Gift of Elizabeth Fullagar Shipley (2007-027:10)

Trade cards, c. 1910, c. 1925

(1999-047:1,2)

Announcement, 1932

Louis C. Tiffany Studios Corporation (1999-030)

Letter, January 27, 1930

Regarding *Graduate* pattern deskset (82-003:3A&B)

Price list, October 1, 1924

Gift of Elizabeth Fullagar Shipley (2007-027:01)

Tiffany Chapel

From *Glass Mosaic, 1896* (1998-056:1)

D. Clockwise from top:

Glass and mosaic workshops

From *Character and Individuality in Decorations and Furnishings, 1913* (71-004:1)

Tiffany monuments

From *Ecclesiastical Department, c. 1907* (77-045)

Graduate pattern desk set

From *Tiffany Desk Sets, c. 1910*
Gift of Elizabeth Fullagar Shipley (2007-027:11)

A few suggestions of Desk Set articles..., c. 1925

(69-030:09)

Ecclesiastical Department trade card, c. 1925

(1999-077)

5) *On lower shelf of replicated workman's table, left to right:*

Crate, c. 1895

Wood, metal

Inscribed: *FROM / TIFFANY GLASS & DECORATING COMPANY / 333 TO 341 FOURTH AVE. / NEW YORK / [conjoined TGDco] / Glass*

Gift of Micki and Jay R. Doros (2009-025)

Wheeled crates were often filled with sand in order to allow for sheets of glass to be transported and kept accessible during glass selection for projects like mosaics and leaded-glass lamps and windows.

Stencil, c. 1915–20

Copper

Perforated: *THIS BOX CONTAINS / LEADED GLASS WINDOWS / FROM / TIFFANY STUDIOS / 21 WEST 22ND STREET. / NEW YORK* (64-014)



Company crates were labeled for shipment with a reusable stencil.

TIFFANY'S COMPANIES



Although Louis Comfort Tiffany's company is best known by the name of Tiffany

Studios, his vast creative enterprise operated under various names through the years. These include Louis C. Tiffany & Company (1878–85); Tiffany Glass Company (1885–92); Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company (1892–1900, pictured above); Allied Arts (1900–1902); and Tiffany Studios (1902–32). Additional production support in the neighboring borough of Queens was provided by Stourbridge Glass Company (1893–1902); Tiffany Furnaces, Inc. (1902–19); and Louis C. Tiffany Furnaces, Inc. (1920–28).

The location of Tiffany's flagship store with showrooms and workshops moved uptown as did Manhattan's wealthy clientele. First Tiffany maintained a building in the fashionable art area near Madison Square at 333–341 Fourth Avenue (1880–1905). They then migrated up Madison Avenue: 347–355 Madison Avenue (1905–17); 361 Madison Avenue (1917–22); and 391 Madison Avenue (1922–32). Off-site workrooms, mainly at 46 West Twenty-Third Street, provided more work space in Manhattan. In 1902, an additional building was constructed for Tiffany Studios at Corona in Queens. It was across the street from Tiffany's furnaces.

Tiffany Studios filed for bankruptcy in 1932, forcing the closure of the Manhattan flagship store. The company immediately reorganized as the Louis C. Tiffany Studios Corporation, which continued at the Twenty-Third Street studio until 1938, well after Tiffany's death five years earlier.

LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY PAINTER AND DESIGNER



Above: Louis C. Tiffany painting, holding a mahlstick, with Sarah Hanley at Laurelton Hall, c. 1925. Photo by Max Berman.

Tiffany, who began his artistic career as a painter, used wood panels in the early stages of design to perfect details he felt important to the finished paintings. Some panels focus on establishing the overall scene, while others concentrate on a specific feature of the final work. Tiffany used oil-on-board studies for planning both paintings and windows. These studies appear to have been very personal to him as they were displayed on shelves in his studios and lined the halls of his personal suite at his Long Island country home, Laurelton Hall. When the house and contents were sold in the 1940s, these cherished studies escaped the auction block and were offered first to his family.

- 6) **Mahlstick, c. 1920**
Wood
Gift of Mrs. Benjamin Hosking (67-034)

Tiffany, like many painters, used this tool to assure a steady hand while keeping a distance from the wet canvas.



- 7) *Top to bottom:*

A Market Place, c. 1870
Oil on panel
Gift of Comfort Tiffany Gilder (55-021)

My Family at Somesville, c. 1888
Oil on panel
Gift of Comfort Tiffany Gilder (55-023)

Children at the Beach, c. 1888
Oil on panel
Gift of Comfort Tiffany Gilder (55-022)



- 8) *Left to right:*

Entombment, c. 1890
Oil on panel
Gift of Dorothy Schmiderer Baker, in loving memory of her mother, Mary ("Mabbie") Tiffany Burlingham Schmiderer (2019-004)

Photograph, 2019

This image is an x-ray exposure of the lower level of paint beneath the study of the Entombment. Tiffany had painted these women as a study for his 1876 painting As Good As New!. He reused the board when working out details for his Entombment window about fifteen years later.

- 9) **In the Fields at Irvington from The Art Work of Louis C. Tiffany**
Papier-mache, bronze, parchment
New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1914
Gift of Mrs. Robert Stuart (Comfort Tiffany Stuart) (95-002)

Tiffany's authorized biography written by Charles de Kay (1848–1935) was illustrated with color images of some of his most cherished paintings and other art objects. With elaborate binding and side clasps, the book was personally designed by Tiffany for family members, and only ten editions were produced. This volume was presented to his daughter Julia. A second one given to his son Charles can be seen in the Museum's Louis Comfort Tiffany's Life and Art gallery.



- 10) *Top to bottom:*

Studio, c. 1880
Bella Apartment, New York City, 1878–85
Albumen print
Photographer: George Collins Cox, American, 1851–1903 (2015-001:094)

Even after Tiffany became known as a successful decorator, he remained active painting, exhibiting his work internationally. Studies line the chair rail in this picture from the studio in his first apartment.

Academician certificate, May 8, 1881
Printed paper, ink
National Academy of Design, New York City, founded 1825
Gift of Louis T. Lusk (68-060:22)

Tiffany was accepted into the exclusive Academy at a young age, propelling him into a distinguished group of American artists.

TIFFANY'S GRAND FOUNTAIN

PAN-AMERICAN EXPOSITION

BUFFALO, NEW YORK, 1901



The 1901 world's fair in Buffalo was a celebration of light, beauty and technology. There, Tiffany's massive onyx, pearl, and glass mosaic fountain (pictured left) became the exposition's heralded centerpiece. Inspired by tiered geothermal silica formations and illuminated, it was a multisensory spectacle. Tiffany Studios proudly publicized its participation in the exposition. The award certificate they won for this fountain is in the Museum's *Louis Comfort Tiffany's Life and Art* gallery.

11) Schematic drawing, c. 1901

Mosaic fountain
Paper, graphite
(69-030:021)

This drawing was used by workmen in the complex assembly of the fountain in a central display at the exposition. The guide was likely also used during disassembly as well as its subsequent installation in an infamous Chicago hotel bar.

12) Left to right:

Official Views of Pan-American Exposition

Buffalo, New York: C. D. Arnold,
1901
(325)

Official Catalogue and Guide

Buffalo, New York: Charles Ahrhart,
1901
(2084)

The Pan-American Exposition Illustrated

Buffalo, New York: C. D. Arnold,
1901
(239)

Workman's passes, June and November 1901
(1999-044, 1999-043:1,2)

Henry Salzer kept his worker's passes—necessary for admission during the installation and removal of the mosaic fountain—as mementos of his participation.

Tiffany Favrite Glass, c. 1905
(1998-049)



THE CHARLES HOSMER
MORSE MUSEUM
of American Art

445 NORTH PARK AVENUE,
WINTER PARK, FLORIDA 32789
407-645-5311 MORSEMUSEUM.ORG