

Gallery XV

Tiffany's Chapel



In 1893, the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company (1892–1902) created an elaborate display for the World's Columbian Exposition, a world's fair held in Chicago from May to October. A strong showing at the fair was critical for Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933), an artist on the verge of widespread commercial success, but preparation for the fair was difficult. Delays in the fairground's construction paired with a lack of organization by the exhibition's planners left many exhibitors like Tiffany unsure if they would have space at

the fair. As the Exposition drew closer, Charles Lewis Tiffany (1812–1902), Louis's father and founder of Tiffany & Co. (1837–present), offered his son part of his own exhibition space in a prime location. With only weeks to spare, Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company created a magnificent display which showcased their domestic and ecclesiastical designs.



Detail, Chapel exhibit by Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company, 1893. Chromolithograph on wove paper; Joseph Lauber, German-American, 1855–1948; gift of Robert Koch (68-007).

Tiffany's most remarkable exhibition component, and the one that received the most press, was the chapel, a Byzantine-inspired interior replete with ecclesiastical furnishings and decorations. A tour de force of design and a virtuoso performance in the arts of mosaic and glass, the chapel was a sensation and brought the already successful firm to even greater heights of popularity both in America and abroad. Though the chapel was meant to be a temporary structure, it had a long life after the fair's end—traveling from Chicago to New York City to Long Island and finally to Winter Park. These galleries bring together surviving elements of Tiffany's 1893 display and tell the story of the chapel's journey to the Morse Museum.

All objects and architectural elements in the chapel were designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany or one of his artists and made under the name of one of his companies in New York City.

Narthex Gallery

The two large ecclesiastical windows on view in the narthex gallery were a part of the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company exhibit at the 1893 Chicago world's fair. Later, when the chapel was reconstructed at Tiffany's Long Island estate, Laurelton Hall, these windows were replaced.

The Entombment

The Entombment window depicts a moment between Christ's deposition from the cross and the actual burial of his body. Its dark character and eerie light suggest Northern European Renaissance sources. The Museum owns three of Tiffany's preliminary studies for this window. To the right of the chapel's entry, two oil sketches demonstrate Tiffany's earliest efforts to map the composition of the final window. In the center, a more detailed leaded-glass study offers an exercise in coloration and glass selection. On the right, a second leaded-glass study presents a detail of the head of Joseph of Arimathea. It is believed that Joseph's face was based on Tiffany's father, Charles, and



Detail, Study for *The Entombment*, c. 1892. Leaded glass, enamel (76-007).

this carefully executed study suggests the importance of the figure, as well as the complexity of its construction. The plating (layering of glass) technique creates an almost holographic appearance.

1. *Left to Right:*

Preliminary study, c. 1892

for *The Entombment*

Oil on wood panel

Gift of Comfort Tiffany Gilder
(55-020)

Preliminary study, c. 1892

for *The Entombment*

Oil on wood panel

Gift of Dorothy Schmiderer
Baker, in loving memory of
her mother ("Mabbie")

Tiffany Burlingham

Schmiderer

(2019-004)

2. *Study, c. 1892*

for *The Entombment*

Leaded glass, enamel

(76-007)



3. *Head of Joseph of*

Arimathea, c. 1892

for *The Entombment*

Leaded glass, enamel

(85-005)

4. *The Entombment, c. 1892*

Leaded glass

(58-012)

Madonna and Child

In contrast to *The Entombment*, *Madonna and Child* is based on a Southern European Renaissance painting, *Madonna and Child Attended by Seven Angels* by Italian artist Sandro Botticelli (1444/5–1510). This painting was destroyed in Berlin by 1945. Tiffany's reproduction of Botticelli's iconic work emphasizes the aesthetic possibilities of opalescent glass. The angels' robes are composed of jewel-toned drapery glass, an innovative technique that mimicked the natural folds of fabric.

In Chicago, the *Madonna and Child* window was exhibited inside Tiffany's chapel interior



Madonna and Child Attended by Seven Angels by Sandro Botticelli. Tiffany Studios Study Photograph Collection (65-030:0716).

along with *The Entombment*. Showing these windows together demonstrated Tiffany's virtuosity—specifically his ability to produce complex religious imagery in radically different styles and appeal to a diverse clientele. This was an important statement to make at the World's Columbian Exposition given the international scope and high-profile nature of the event.

5. *Madonna and Child*, c. 1890
Leaded glass
(74-018)

Fathers of the Church

To the right of the *Madonna and Child* window is the mosaic titled *Fathers of the Church*, which was displayed at the Chicago world's fair in a room adjacent to the chapel. Standing over eight feet tall, this monumental mosaic was designed by Joseph Lauber (1855–1948) and crafted by the Women's Glass-Cutting Department at Tiffany's firm. The composition features three important figures in early Christian theology: John Chrysostom (left), St. Augustine (center), and St. Ambrose (right). When the Chicago fair ended, Tiffany displayed the mosaic in his Manhattan showroom as an example of his firm's skill and innovation in the art of mosaic. Later, Tiffany moved the mosaic to Laurelton Hall, his Long Island estate and the repository for his most prized works of art. The mosaic is on long-term loan from the Neustadt Collection of Tiffany Glass in Queens, New York.



6. *Fathers of the Church*,
c. 1892

Glass, plaster, steel

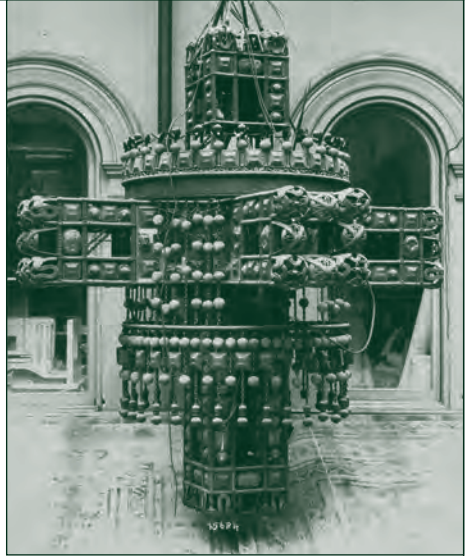
The Neustadt Collection of
Tiffany Glass, Queens,
New York (N.86.M01)

On long-term loan to the
Morse Museum of American
Art, Winter Park, Florida
(L2024.1)

After the Fair

When the Chicago world's fair ended, Tiffany relocated many of his exhibition pieces to his studios in New York City where visitors could experience a re-creation of the renowned display. In 1894, Mrs. Celia Whipple Wallace (1833–1916) purchased the chapel from Tiffany's New York City showroom, intending to donate it to Manhattan's Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine as a memorial.

In 1898, the chapel was moved to Saint John's crypt while the upper stories of the cathedral were still under construction. To accommodate the constraints of the crypt, the chapel was installed in a substantially different form than at the



Chapel electrolier at Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company's Manhattan showroom, 1893. Matte collodion print; Tiffany Studios Study Photograph Collection (1998-028:015).

Chicago world's fair. It was used for services for about ten years before the cathedral's main sanctuary opened upstairs, whereupon the chapel was closed indefinitely and left to fall into disrepair.

In 1916, concerned about its fate, Tiffany reacquired the chapel, restored it, and installed it in a small building at Laurelton Hall. There, the chapel was fitted with a wooden door (on view in the narthex gallery).

7. Chapel door, c. 1916

Wood, wrought iron, metal
(58-022)



At Laurelton Hall, Tiffany made several changes to the interior of the chapel. He added a leaded-glass window, Adoration, above the door. He also altered the Field of Lilies window by removing an angel initially present in the 1893 world's fair display. Finally, Tiffany created wooden pews as seating for chapel visitors.

8. *Adoration, c. 1900–1916*

Leaded glass, copper
Gift of Adelphi College,
Garden City, New York
(74-020)

Baptistry:

9. *Field of Lilies, c. 1892/1916*

Leaded glass
(U-071)



Detail, Tiffany Chapel interior installed at Laurelton Hall, Long Island, New York, c. 1925. Gelatin silver print; David Aronow, American, 1886–1967; Tiffany Studios Study Photograph Collection (2012-028).

Circular windows:

10. *Christ Blessing the Evangelists, c. 1892*

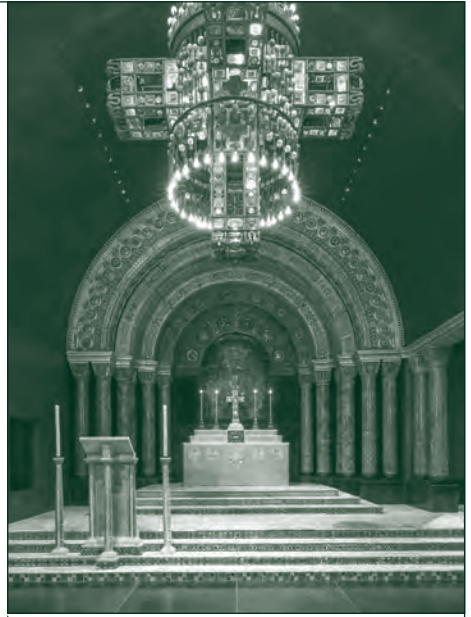
Leaded glass
Gift of Adelphi College,
Garden City, New York
(74-019)

11. *The Story of the Cross, c. 1892*

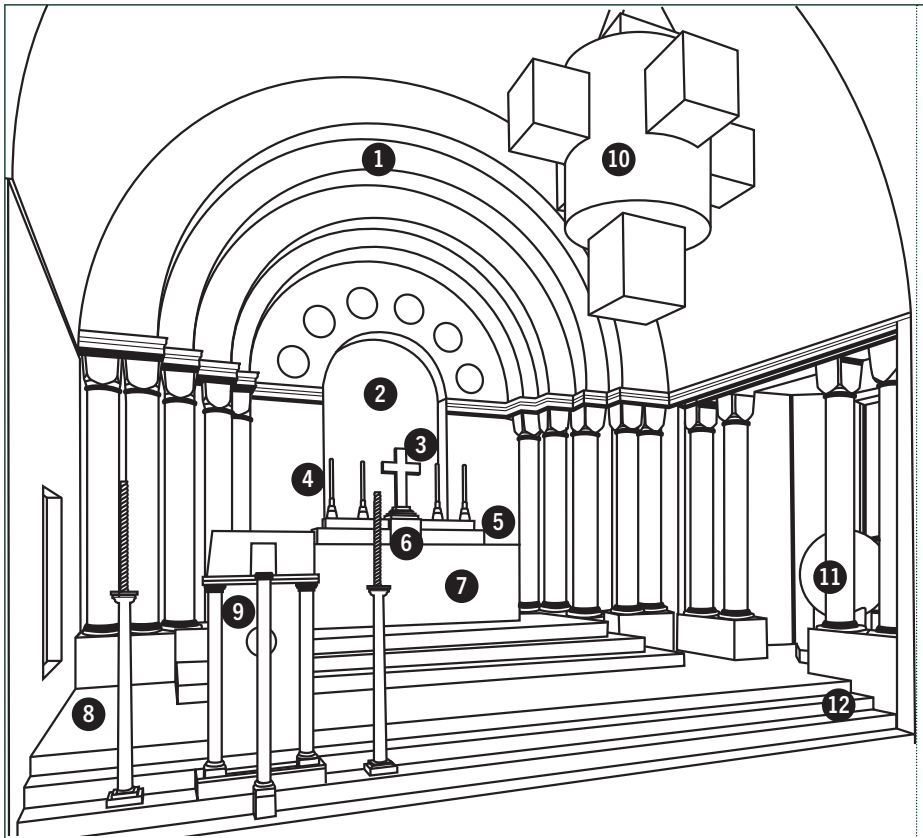
Leaded glass
Gift of Adelphi College,
Garden City, New York
(62-037:1–3)

The Chapel at the Morse

After Tiffany's death in 1933, control of Laurelton Hall was transferred to the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation. Parts of the estate were sold or donated, including components of the chapel. In 1959, twenty-six years after Tiffany's death, Morse Museum founders Jeannette (1909–1989) and Hugh McKean (1908–1995) acquired the architectural components of the chapel. Hugh McKean, who was a fellow at Laurelton Hall during Tiffany's lifetime, recognized the importance of reunifying the chapel. In the years following, the McKean family reassembled virtually all the furnishings and windows that were dispersed when the estate was sold. In 1997, the Museum began an extensive conservation project to restore and reconstruct the chapel at the Morse. Two years later, the chapel opened to the public for the first time since the Chicago world's fair. Apart from two of the four pews, all of the



elements in the Museum's chapel exhibit are original to Tiffany and most date from 1893. These include the decorative moldings, altar floor, carved plaster arches, marble and glass-mosaic encrusted columns, and a ten-foot-by-eight-foot electrified chandelier. The nonhistorical parts of the chapel—walls, nave floor, and ceilings—are based on available knowledge of Tiffany's installations at Chicago and Laurelton Hall.



*“The chapel was his favorite among all his works,
not least because it was a trial run,
a proving ground for nearly everything he made later.”*

— Hugh F. McKean

1 Archivolt

Latin Translation:
Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and who is, and who is to come

2 Reredos

3 Altar Cross

4 Canonical Candlesticks

5 Retables

Latin Translation:
Left: *I am the bread of life descended from Heaven*

Right: *Who eats this bread will live eternally*

6 Tabernacle

7 Altar

8 Predella

9 Lectern

10 Electrolier

11 Baptismal Font

12 Steps

Latin Translation:
Top: *I will go to the altar of God, to God who gives joy to my youth*

Middle: *Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth*

Bottom: *Holy, holy, holy, holy, holy*

Note to visitors:

An automated lighting system in the chapel cycles through four two- to three-minute settings, each a new visual interpretation of the space. The lowest light setting shows the chapel at its most mystical, suggesting the experience of the million or more visitors who saw it at the 1893 Chicago world's fair.

More from the Fair

The Morse has several other pieces from Tiffany's 1893 exhibition on display. The watercolor and leaded-glass window with the subject "Taming the Flamingo" are on view in the Laurelton Hall Living Room gallery. In the Museum's lobby, a library window depicts a scholar.



Library window, c. 1892. Leaded glass; designer: Frederick Stuart Church, American, 1842–1924; Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company, New York City, 1892–1902 (66-034).



Detail, *Taming the Flamingo* (also known as *Feeding the Flamingoes*), 1888. Watercolor on paper; Louis Comfort Tiffany, American, 1848–1933 (85-011).



Detail, window, c. 1892. Leaded glass; Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company, New York City, 1892–1902 (U-072).



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