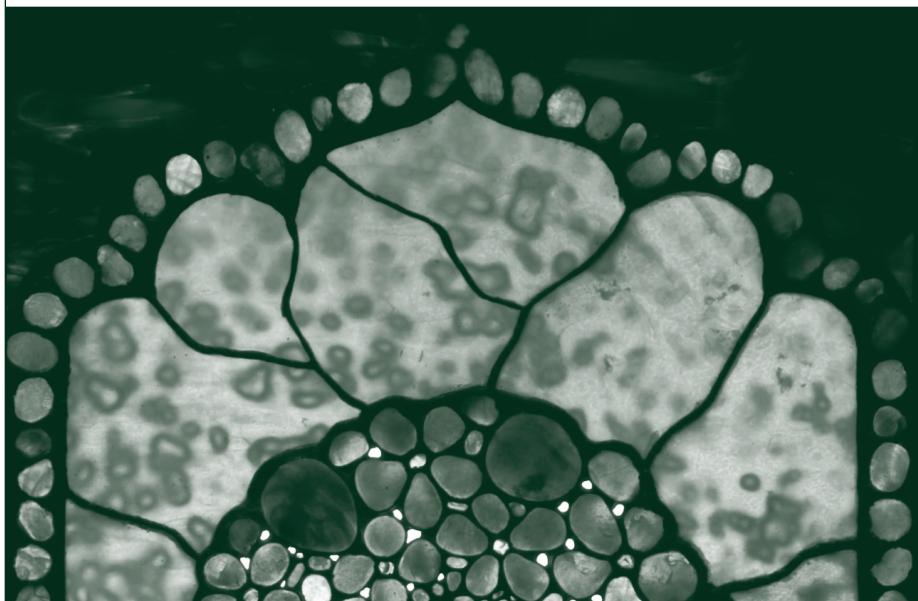


Breaking Tradition: Distinguishing American Stained Glass



From 1880 to 1920, opalescent glass enjoyed tremendous commercial success across America. In this opalescent era, the milky, light-diffusing glass traditionally used for pressed tableware was applied to leaded-glass windows. Artists at the forefront of the opalescent era like Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933) and John La Farge (1835–1910) introduced a painterly and naturalistic aesthetic to the stained glass industry by pioneering new techniques for coloring glass.

These innovations shaped public taste and distinguished American stained glass from its European counterparts. Though enormously popular with the public, the introduction of opalescent glass incited heated debates within the glass art community about the merits of the medium. Artists on both sides of the divide felt that their methods were the true successors of medieval stained glass techniques. *Breaking Tradition* explores this dramatic period in art history, and the ways in which artists adopted and broke from convention to redefine a centuries-old art form.

Gallery II

Across:

1. *Left to right:*

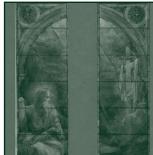
Design drawing, c. 1905
Angels of Peace and Mercy
Watercolor on paper
Tiffany Studios,
New York City, 1902–32
Gift of Lillian Janssen
(90-008)

Design drawing, c. 1918
Ascension
Watercolor
on paper
Maker: Tiffany Studios,
New York City, 1902–32
Designer: Frederick Wilson,
Irish-American, 1858–1932
Signed, lower right: *F.W.*
Marks: *-1336-*
Gift of Lillian Janssen
(90-010)



Design drawing,
c. 1918

Dorris Memorial
Window



Moses on Mount Sinai
Pencil, ink, and watercolor
on paper in original
window mat
Tiffany Studios,
New York City, 1902–32
Marks: *SCALE 1"=1'-0"* /
"MOSES" / *SUGGESTION*
FOR / WINDOW / MR JD
DORRIS / WYNCREST /
[H]UNTINGDON PENN /
APPROVED BY / Louis C.
Tiffany / SKETCH NO 1033
Gift of Lillian Janssen
(90-013)

2. View of Oyster
Bay, *c. 1908*

William C.
Skinner house,

New York City
Leaded glass
Tiffany Studios,
New York City, 1902–32
(69-001)



3. Door panels, *c. 1905*

August Heckscher house,
New York
Autumn vines
Leaded glass
Tiffany Studios,
New York City, 1902–32
(58-011:A–D)

Behind the panels:

Sculpture, 1858

Seated female
fishing
Marble



Scipione Tadolini,
Italian, 1822–92

Marks: *Scipio Tadolini /*
Fecit. Romae / AN / 1858
Gift of Henry Goodpasture
(SC-061-87)

Continues in Gallery III

Medieval Traditions in Stained Glass

In the mid-nineteenth century, stained glass artists colored flat glass using techniques largely unchanged since the sixteenth century. A metallic oxide was added to molten sand and ash to produce a uniform color. Details were applied using enamels and stains. These traditional pot metal stained-glass windows closely resembled their medieval ancestors with saturated colors somewhat muted by enamels and stains, flat compositions, and thick lead lines. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, some American artists began to work in opalescent glass, a material which largely eliminated the need for applied coloration.

4. **Design drawing, c. 1936**
Study probably for
St. Vincent de Paul Roman
Catholic Church,
East Haven, Connecticut
St. Charles Borromeo
Watercolor on wove paper
Probably Louis C. Tiffany
Studios Corporation,
New York City, 1932–c. 1938
Marks: *A*
Gift of Robert Koch
(65-020)

5. *Clockwise, top left:*

Roundel, c. 1535
The Ascension
Colorless glass, vitreous paint
and silver stain
Unknown maker, German
Designer: Albrecht Dürer,

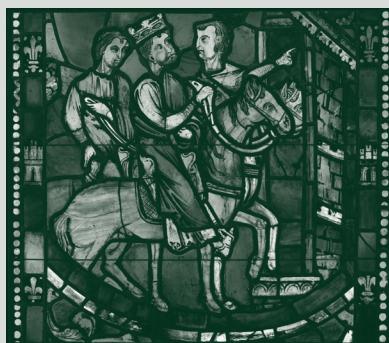
German, 1471–1528
(GL-062-31)

Roundel, c. 1535
Anne and
Joachim at the
Golden Gate
Colorless glass,
vitreous paint and silver stain
Unknown maker, German
Designer: Albrecht Dürer,
German, 1471–1528
(GL-062-32)



Roundel, 1598
Colorless glass, vitreous paint
and silver stain
Unknown maker, German
Marks: *1598 Autmarz*
Kienlin von Allmendingen
(GL-041-85)

Taste and Technique in the Middle Ages



Medieval craftsmen set the standard for the art of stained glass, but there were important variations in technique across the Middle Ages. In the thirteenth century, stained glass artists championed true pot metal glass with vibrant color that permeated the material. Though the glass

was generally not textured, its uneven thickness helped to scatter and diffuse natural light. A thirteenth-century French example in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, pictured above, shows that artists from this period were less reliant on applied coloration, instead filling the composition with pieces of colored glass. By the fifteenth century, tastes and techniques had changed. A selection of sixteenth-century German roundels in the Morse collection, composed of colorless glass heavily decorated with silver stain and vitreous paints or enamels, illustrates the radical turn toward applied color. Later, in the nineteenth century, artists used both techniques for stained glass. Those that preferred surface decoration were part of the Antique School while those that prioritized colored glass over painted glass were part of the Opalescent or American School.



Above: Theodosius Arrives at Ephesus, from a Scene from the Legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, c. 1200–1210. Pot-metal glass, vitreous paint; French; The Cloisters Collection, 1980; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City (1980.263.4).

Bottom: Roundel, 1598. Colorless glass, vitreous paint and silver stain; unknown German (GL-041-85).

6. *Medallion* window, c. 1892
Stair hall, Laurelton Hall,
Long Island, New York,
1902–57
Exhibited: 1901
Pan-American Exposition,
Buffalo, New York
13th-century design for
general exhibition purposes
Leaded glass (*opalescent*)
Maker: Tiffany Glass and
Decorating Company,
New York City, 1892–1902
Designer: Louis Comfort
Tiffany, American,
1848–1933
(U-073)

7. Window, c. 1885
Annunciation
Leaded glass
(*pot-metal*)
Heaton, Butler &
Bayne, London, 1855–1953
(GL-003-74)

8. Window, 1896
Edgar Horne
house (now
Myles Birket
Foster house),
The Hill, Surrey, England,
c. 1861–present
Flora (Roman goddess of
flowers and spring)
Leaded glass (*pot-metal*)
Maker: Morris & Company,
London, 1875–96
Designers: Edward Burne-
Jones, British, 1833–98;
John Henry Dearle, British,
1859–1932
(GL-025-84)



Opalescent Origins

In the late 1870s, American artists John La Farge and Louis Comfort Tiffany pioneered new innovations in stained glass by introducing opalescent glass to windows. Characterized by texture and semi-opaque translucency, opalescent glass both reflects and refracts light to produce a rainbow of color. Unlike pot metal, or antique glass, opalescent glass could be colored with multiple metallic oxides in its molten state, creating painterly effects within the glass itself. The breadth of color and texture effects made possible by the material allowed for naturalistic renderings of landscapes, biblical scenes, and other popular subject matter. Artists working in opalescent glass could represent all parts of a specific scene using different techniques, though the complexity of certain features of figural compositions, such as faces, hands, and feet, were often still rendered with enamels and paints.

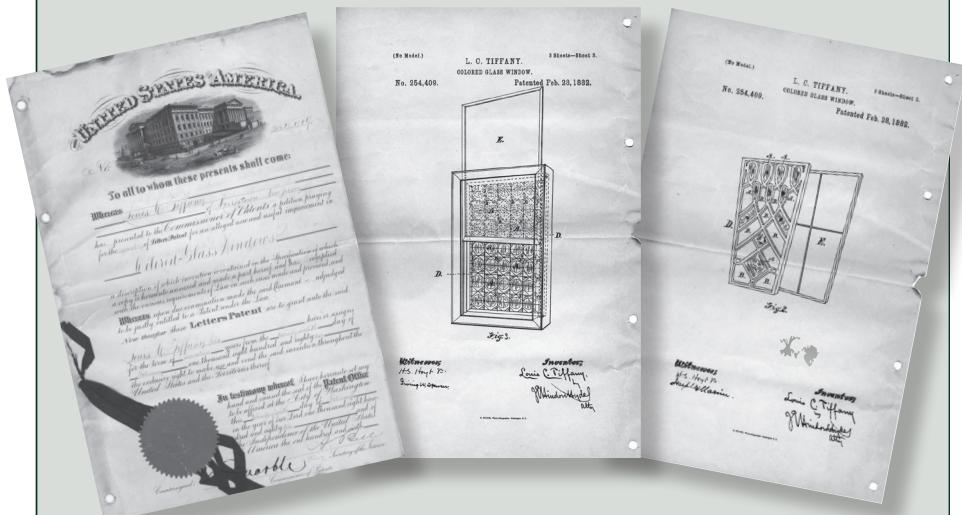
9. United States Patent
No. 254,409,
February 17, 1882
Colored-Glass Windows
To Louis C. Tiffany
Print and ink on paper
(1999-028)

10. Window, c. 1903
Exhibited:
Gustav Stickley's
1903 Arts and
Crafts exhibition,
Syracuse and Rochester,
New York
Parrots
Leaded glass
Maker: J. & R. Lamb Studios,
New York City/New Jersey,
1857–present
Designer: Frederick Stymetz
Lamb, American, 1862–1928
Marks: *LAMB Studios N.Y.*
(GL-034-75)



Patenting Opalescence

Though Louis Comfort Tiffany is commonly credited as the first to work in opalescent glass, it was fellow American artist and designer John La Farge who was originally awarded a patent for opalescent glass on February 24, 1880. La Farge's patent was not for the invention of the material, since it was traditionally used in tableware, but rather the application of this type of glass to windows. While La Farge's patent addressed usage, it did not protect construction. Just a year later, on February 8, 1881, Tiffany was awarded a patent for the specific fabrication of leaded windows using opalescent glass. He also secured two other patents, one in 1881 and one in 1882, for variations on his construction designs. These patents were the result of each artist's experimentation in opalescent glass in the late 1870s, and their shared interest in the material made them strong competitors into the twentieth century.



Above: United States Patent No. 254,409, February 17, 1882 (#9 in gallery). Colored-Glass Windows; To Louis C. Tiffany; print and ink on paper (1999-028).

11. Window, c. 1881

Probably
Michael Jenkins
house, Baltimore
Hollyhocks
Leaded glass
John La Farge, American,
1835–1910
Marks: *La Farge*
(GL-009-74)



12. Window, c. 1894

Aurora (Roman goddess
of dawn)
Leaded glass
Maker: Tiffany Glass
and Decorating Company,
New York City, 1892–1902
Designer: Will Hicok Low,
American, 1853–1932
(66-004)

13. Transom, c. 1905

Probably William
Watts Sherman
house, Newport,
Rhode Island, 1875–present
Parrots
Leaded glass
Tiffany Studios,
New York City, 1902–32
(68-005)



14. *The Arts*

window, c. 1894
Exhibited: Cotton
International
Exposition, Atlanta,
Georgia, 1895;
Tennessee Centennial
Exposition, Nashville, 1897;
and Prima Esposizione
Internazionale d'Arte
Decorativa Moderna, Turin,
Italy, 1902
Leaded glass
Maker: J. & R. Lamb Studios,
New York City/New Jersey,
1857–present
Designer: Frederick Stymetz
Lamb, American, 1862–1928
(GL-033-75)



Tradition Transformed

The innovations in opalescent glass made it incredibly popular with patrons of leaded-glass windows who were dazzled by the seemingly endless possibilities in texture and form. With the introduction of opalescent glass, artists could create many different textures. Faceted jewels, turtleback tiles, and cast flower petals provided a three-dimensionality previously unseen in windows. Opalescent glass also allowed for the illusion of texture. In this section of the gallery, for example, mottled glass offers the suggestion of depth to several of Tiffany's windows.

15. Design drawing, c. 1927

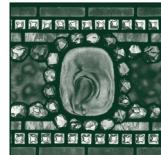
Proposed Murtha
mausoleum window
Watercolor mounted on board
Tiffany Studios,
New York City, 1902–32
Marks: *SKETCH•NO•3466*
SCALE•1" – [ill.] /
SUGGESTION•OF /
ORNAMENTAL•WINDOW /
FOR / MRS•THOMAS•F•
MURTHA / NEW YORK•N•Y• /
ECCLESIASTICAL•DEPT /
TIFFANY•STUDIOS / NEW
YORK CITY N•Y• / ~IN
MAUSOLEUM~ /
WOODLAWN•CEMETERY /
APPROVED BY / Louis C.
Tiffany
(62-022)

16. Window, c. 1897

Joseph Briggs house,
Wood-Ridge, New Jersey,
1911–present
Leaded glass, quartz pebbles
Tiffany Glass and
Decorating Company,
New York City, 1892–1902
(58-016)

17. Window,

c. 1897
Leaded and
cast glass
Tiffany Glass and
Decorating Company,
New York City, 1892–1902
(64-027)



18. Window, c. 1883

Samuel Jones
Tilden house,
New York City,
1845–present

Floral

Leaded and cast glass

Donald MacDonald,
Scottish-American,
1841–1916

(GL-021-65)



19. Window, c. 1912

Joseph Briggs house,
Wood-Ridge,
New Jersey, 1911–present

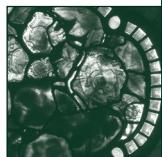
Plum tree

Leaded and cast glass

Tiffany Studios,
New York City, 1902–32
(62-035)

20. Window, c. 1916

Joseph Briggs
house,
Wood-Ridge,
New Jersey, 1911–present
Leaded and cast glass
Tiffany Studios,
New York City, 1902–32
(62-036)



American and Antique

The rise of opalescent glass resulted in a bitter divide between followers of the American School and the Antique School. Artists on both sides felt that the art form had strong ideological underpinnings and required respect for medieval tradition. For artists working in the Antique style, this meant adhering to the letter of medieval craftsmanship by not corrupting glass but rather by respecting it through the use of traditional paints and stains to create color. Those in the American School felt that their innovative techniques honored the spirit of glowing color in medieval stained glass, as they manufactured texture and color effects within the glass itself. Artists from both schools engaged in heated debates on the subject, passionately defending their positions in trade circulars like the *Ornamental Glass Bulletin*, published from 1907 to 1925 in St. Louis, Missouri.

The Opalescent Era

Opalescent glass reached the peak of its popularity at the turn of the twentieth century with thousands of patrons commissioning domestic and ecclesiastical windows. By the 1920s, changing artistic tastes signified a shift away from the high opalescent era. Nonetheless, the persistent use of opalescent glass illustrates how this important period left a lasting impression on the history of American stained glass.

21. Design drawing, c. 1920

Suggestion for Stair landing window, residence of Mr. R. B. Griffin, Jersey City
Watercolor on paper in original window mat
Tiffany Studios, New York City, 1902–32
Marks on mount: *SKETCH NO. 2779 / SCALE 1"=1'-0" / APPROVED BY / Louis C. Tiffany*
(62-025)

22. Window, c. 1916

Daffodils
Leaded glass
Tiffany Studios, New York City, 1902–32
(65-028)

23. Panel, c. 1908

Richard Beatty Mellon house, Pittsburgh, 1908–40
Leaded glass
Tiffany Studios, New York City, 1902–32
(85-013)



24. Window, c. 1905

Landscape with peacock and peonies
Leaded glass
Tiffany Studios, New York City, 1902–32
(75-014)



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