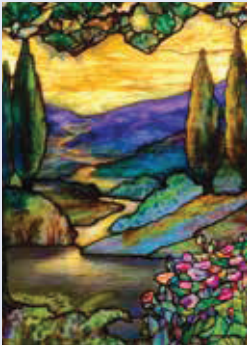


Louis Comfort Tiffany
River of Life, 1905
Favrile glass, copper foil, lead
Loan courtesy of the Denkmann Family

River of Life



Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933) This master of Art Nouveau traveled extensively from a young age and developed a strong curiosity about how beautiful things were made. With a penchant for ancient Roman and Persian glasswork, as well as the jewel tones of the Orient, Tiffany wished to capture in his art the connection between color and sound. He added depth through the melting and shaping process—effectively painting with glass. Tiffany began experimenting in a Brooklyn glasshouse in 1875 and opened a glassmaking firm in 1885. Today his works are recognized worldwide for their technique and beauty.

A product of its time

Tiffany created this memorial window in the early 20th century, when the United States was in the middle of the Progressive Era. It was a time of political, moral, social and economic reform, and the new subject matter of this memorial—*River of Life*—is a reflection of that change. Memorial windows are forms of remembrance and during this period it was common to include biblical figures in these largely Christian artworks. Tiffany replaced the traditional biblical figures with landscape vignettes, reflecting ideas introduced by other 19th century American artists, such as the Hudson River School painters.

Take a closer look

To achieve more naturalistic colors, Tiffany blended several colors together while the glass was in the molten state, thereby achieving subtle effects of shading for greater realism, such as opalescent glass with streaks of color (marbleized glass) and flecks of color (confetti-type glass). By layering two or more pieces of glass, Tiffany created richer colors and the illusion of three dimensions. He made subtle textures by rolling the glass with corrugated rollers during the molten state and used lead rods to emphasize specific parts of the composition. At the same time, he layered glass over lead rods in other sections in order to make them recede.

Did you know?

The window was damaged when art thieves removed it from the Denkmann Mausoleum in Chippiannock Cemetery (Rock Island, IL) on April, 5 1976. After 20 years of searching, the groundskeeper responsible for the cemetery located the piece in Florida and the FBI returned it to the Quad Cities. The piece has been on display at the Davenport Museum of Art (now the Figge Art Museum) since then. During its “missing” period, the glass was damaged. Although Tiffany art conservators repaired and stabilized the window, a long crack in the glass is still visible.

On your own

“Tiffany Window had ‘panestaking’ journey to Figge”: http://qctimes.com/news/local/tiffany-window-had-panestaking-journey-to-figge/article_9adb3534-b1b2-5a57-beb1-b84ad9400331.html

Morse Museum of American Art: <http://www.morsemuseum.org/louis-comfort-tiffany>

New York Historical Society: <http://www.nyhistory.org/explore/louis-comfort-tiffany>