

IN COMPANY WITH ANGELS

Seven Rediscovered Tiffany Windows

Exhibition Concept

“Angels Representing Seven Churches,” the central element of this exhibit, are a set of free-standing, eight-foot tall, windows created by Louis Comfort Tiffany in 1902 at Tiffany Studios in New York City. Originally commissioned for a church in Cincinnati, the seven windows depict angels which are almost life-size, illustrating passages from the Bible’s Book of Revelation. Although they form a set, each angel, named according to their Biblical reference, has different characteristics--and their own personality--depicted in glass through the artistry of Tiffany Studio.

As an estimated half Tiffany’s church windows have been lost, the tour of this full set of seven rediscovered windows is an unique opportunity to appreciate both Tiffany’s art and his craftsmanship in an intimate museum setting. But more than an artistic *tour de force*, and more than an interpretation of a set of biblical passages, the story of the Seven Angels weaves together history, art and spirituality. The exhibit includes not only the dramatic Tiffany windows, but is supported by interpretive text, illustrations, and music.



History

In 1902 a Swedenborgian church in Ohio commissioned these windows as a gift for a new sister church. These beautiful windows were originally installed in the Church of the New Jerusalem, in Cincinnati, Ohio, which was dedicated in 1903. The choice of subject was based on Swedenborgian understanding of the diversity and unity of humanity as represented by angels, specifically the angels from the Book of Revelation, from which Cincinnati’s Church of the New Jerusalem drew its name.



When the church was torn down for highway construction in 1964, the windows were crated and later purchased for the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos, in southeastern Pennsylvania, by generous donors from across the United States. These treasures were stored in various garages and sheds for decades until their rediscovery in 2001. Funds were raised to renovate the windows, and a professional conservation

team undertook the work. The non-profit organization, *In Company with Angels, Inc.* was created to further the mission of sharing the windows as widely as possible.

Art & Restoration

Stained glass is an art form that has been associated with Christian iconography since the Middle Ages. However fabrication techniques were little changed until the late nineteenth century, when members of the Arts and Crafts movement, such as William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones in England, and John La Farge and Louis Comfort Tiffany in the United States, developed a new aesthetic for the decorative arts incorporating naturalistic themes and the honest use of materials.

Louis Comfort Tiffany was perhaps the best known and most talented of these artists in the medium of glass, although throughout his life he was also a painter, interior decorator, landscape designer, and architect. From 1902 to 1932, Tiffany operated his own glass works, known as Tiffany Studios, where hundreds of craftsmen were employed to create windows, mosaics, lamps, metalwork, ceramics, and enamels, all of which were designed or influenced by the artist himself. His work took stained glass to a whole new level, as he sought innovative approaches to glass making; developing new techniques for glass layering, use of colors, and window fabrication.

The Seven Angel windows, while extraordinary examples of Tiffany stained glass, were in poor condition when they were rediscovered in 2001. Although intact, the windows showed signs of metal fatigue, distortion, and a variety of other issues. Fortunately, conservators were able to restore the original windows using Tiffany's own techniques and materials.



Arthur Femenella, a Tiffany stained glass expert, and conservator overseeing the restoration of these windows, has much to share about the design and creation of this unique set of Tiffany windows. Femenella explains: "These Tiffany windows are selected from a rich and varied palette of opalescent, drapery, rolled, textured, antique and flashed glass. The faces and flesh of the angels are delicately hand painted with vitreous paint. The rest of the windows are exquisitely plated, a technique developed by Tiffany and John La Farge involving the mechanical layering of layers of glass used to achieve great depth."

Spirituality

Tiffany's window series "Angels Representing Seven Churches" illustrates the descriptions in Chapters 2 and 3 of the Book of Revelation. This last book of the Bible, as recorded by the Apostle John, is a symbolic resolution of struggle between good and evil through the judgment and salvation of humanity.



John writes to "the seven churches that are in Asia" --congregations in what is today Turkey in Asia Minor--addressing his letter to the "angel" of each church. The weaknesses of each community, with warnings of the consequences of their actions, are set forth, and promises for reform are highlighted. There are gifts that will be received when these weaknesses are overcome, and these are depicted in the hands of each window Angel.

The Swedenborgian Church, which commissioned the windows, has in its theology that the letters to the seven angels of the churches can be read as the possibility of seven states that human beings can reach in their journey of spiritual development. The seven angels offer their gifts as rewards at the various stages of spiritual salvation that humanity can experience, both individually and as a whole.

Exhibition Materials

This exhibition displays the seven Tiffany windows in custom made, free-standing, light boxes which both support and showcase the windows. Below each window, interpretive texts are viewed on slanted holders. Four additional 30" x 40" wall-mount panels with text and illustrations tell windows' story.

Some small items from the original church, such as the dedication plaque, may be exhibited in a case or vitrine, if desired. Exhibit title graphics, further interpretive photographs, and related materials, are provided digitally.

An 8 minute video entitled "Angels Restored" explaining the restoration process, may be shown on the venue's equipment either within the gallery, or in a nearby area.

Exhibition catalogs are available, and gift shop merchandise is available.

Owners Note: The individuals involved in forming In Company with Angels, see a parallel between the work of uncovering and revealing the beauty of the Tiffany windows hidden beneath years of grime, and the work of uncovering and revealing the beauty of life hidden beneath everyday experiences. This impetus to "reveal the beauty," drove the creation of a non-profit organization, the restoration of the windows, the composition of music, the design of a website and the development of this exhibit. Revealing the beauty is what happens when the windows are backlit and light streams through the stained glass. It has been reported that people who view the windows may feel something newly revealed within themselves.

Exhibition Fact Sheet

Now booking 2015 and 2016

Seven Tiffany stained-glass windows with backlit display boxes, museum risers and labels
Four introductory and interpretive wall panels
Historical images and additional graphics provided digitally

Gallery Specification

900 to 1,200 to square feet with a 12 foot ceiling height is suggested
Electricity/extensions cord needed at the rear base of each window
A completely darkened room is not required, and benches are recommended

Exhibition Rental Fee

\$22,675 (east coast, up to \$25, 675, west coast) all-inclusive fee for a twelve-week loan
This includes all shipping, and ICWA on-site courier/installation manager for installation and de-installation

References

Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester, New York. August 15 - November 1, 2012
Marie Via, Director of Exhibitions, 585-276-9003, [mvia@ MAG.Rochester.edu](mailto:mvia@MAG.Rochester.edu)

Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati, Ohio. June 11- September 11 , 2011
Lynne Ambrosini, PhD, Curator, 513.684.4513, LynneA@taftmuseum.org

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Alabama. January 19 - March 17, 2013
Michael W. Panhorst, Ph.D. Curator of Art, 334.240.4353, mpanhorst@MMFA.org

Urbana University, Urbana, Ohio. November 10 - December 30, 2012
James L. Thornton, VP of Institutional Advancement, 800-787-2262, ext. 1297
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