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## 'Painting with glass': Louis Comfort Tiffany exhibit opens in Jacksonville



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The Cummer Museum has a display of Lewis Comfort Tiffany's glass work on exhibit through the end of the year. [John Faier/Driehaus Museum]

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A new exhibit on loan from a Chicago Museum highlights the intricate glass work of Louis Comfort Tiffany at Jacksonville's Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to an editor's error, this story was originally published with an incorrect spelling of Louis Comfort Tiffany's name.*

Born in 1848, Louis Comfort Tiffany had the good fortune to come of age just as his family was becoming wealthy.

His father, Charles Lewis Tiffany, founded what would become Tiffany and Co. in 1837.

By the time Louis Comfort Tiffany was born, his father's store, located in lower Manhattan, was becoming one of the country's leading jewelers.

For the younger Tiffany, the family's wealth created the opportunity to pursue his passion for art.

By the time he was 30, Tiffany had attended the National Academy of Design, studied in Paris and exhibited paintings at the Exposition Universelle in Paris.

Then he began his real work, work that would mark him as one of America's finest artists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He established Louis C. Tiffany & Co., the first of a series of companies that would allow him to do brilliant, innovative work with glass and metal.

"He was one of the great artists of the American Gilded Age," said Adam Levine, director and CEO of the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens, which is currently showing "Louis Comfort Tiffany: Treasures of the Driehaus Collection."

The exhibit includes more than 60 glass windows, lamps, vases and assorted other objects that demonstrate Tiffany's belief that "everything should be beautiful," said Holly Keris, the Cummer's chief curator.

Tiffany, who ran a variety of glass and metal manufacturing businesses and employed small armies of artists and craftsmen to realize his vision, created or guided the creation of hundreds of works art.

Tiffany was also active in interior design. In 1881 he was hired to work on Mark Twain's house in Hartford, Conn. Then Chester A. Arthur, who became president after James Garfield was assassinated, declined to move into the White House until Tiffany had given it a redesign.

"What set him apart was the glass itself," Keris said. "It's not flat, it's not uniform. It has life, it has breath, it has energy ... He was painting with glass, not on it."

Considered the leading American practitioner of the Art Nouveau movement, a movement designed to counter the historic classicism of 19th century art, Tiffany was not interested in using art to make philosophical arguments, Keris said.

Rather he was interested in capturing the natural beauty of the objects on which he worked. To accomplish that, Tiffany became incredibly inventive in identifying and refining new techniques, Keris said.

The Cummer exhibit is borrowed from the Richard A. Driehaus Museum in Chicago. Driehaus, a successful hedge fund manager, purchased the Nickerson Mansion, a Chicago landmark completed in 1883, and turned it into a museum. While the museum features work by a variety of Gilded Age artists, Tiffany is the most prominent.

While Tiffany never joined his father's company, he was named design director in 1902, after his father's death.

Meanwhile his own companies began experiencing difficulties as art nouveau went out of fashion.

By the time he died in 1933, all of the companies Louis Comfort Tiffany had opened had gone out of business. Only the company his father had founded survived.

Through Jan. 5 at the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens

Museum is open 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday

Admission is \$10 for adults, \$6 for seniors, military and students

Admission is free 4-9 p.m. Tuesday and Friday



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