

WORCESTER ART MUSEUM

Radiance Rediscovered: Stained Glass by Tiffany and La Farge Upcoming Exhibition at Worcester Art Museum Brings Stained Glass Windows By Tiffany and La Farge On View After More Than 40 Years

Worcester, MA—June 7, 2018—This summer, the Worcester Art Museum (WAM) will present an exhibition of stained glass works created by Louis C. Tiffany and John La Farge that have not been on view for more than 40 years. Originally commissioned for Boston's Mount Vernon Congregational Church in the late 1890's, the large stained glass works were donated to WAM in 1975 when the church vacated its building. On view June 30, 2018 to summer 2019, [*Radiance Rediscovered: Stained Glass by Tiffany and La Farge*](#) will open with the windows by Tiffany installed in the Contemporary Gallery. The panels by La Farge, which require additional restoration, will go on view in the same space as the Tiffany windows in late September 2018. This exhibition is the first of three pre-contemporary American art projects supported by major funding from the Henry Luce Foundation.

The Tiffany windows, titled *Angel of Resurrection* (1899; 90 x 37 inches), show an angelic figure among a field of lilies. The La Farge panels, titled *The Pool at Bethesda* (1898; 133 3/8 x 31 7/8 inches), depict a scene from the New Testament, in which an angel of God stirs the healing waters of the pool at Bethesda. The windows are remnants of the American Gilded Age, an era that saw rapid economic growth and development—and a boom in church construction that also brought along a resurgence of interest in stained glass for its beauty and power in conveying narrative. Both sets of panels are undergoing extensive conservation work, to clean the glass and ensure the stability of their mountings, so that new audiences can experience the intricacies and vibrancy of their designs.

As part of the exhibition, the Museum will also feature other works that highlight the artists' creative visions and techniques, as well as their aesthetic influences, from paintings and works on paper to Favrite glass. Among these works is La Farge's experimental *Peacock Window* (1892–1908)—another work in WAM's collections—which simulates the vibrant coloration of the magnificent, exotic bird, and is the last example of La Farge working with the challenging process of *cloisonné* glass.

"The Museum's American art collection is one of its strengths, and this is particularly so because many of these works connect directly to the history of New England," said Matthias Waschek, C. Jean and Myles McDonough Director of the Worcester Art Museum. "In this case, it is a great pleasure to be able to present such fine examples of stained glass by its two American master artists, Tiffany and La Farge, and to explore new ways of sharing them with the public. We are tremendously grateful to the Luce Foundation for their support for this important project, and to guest curator Amanda Lett."

The windows came to the Museum from what had been Mount Vernon Congregational Church in Boston. A thriving congregation in the city's Back Bay neighborhood, the Church bought its building in 1891 and quickly sought out to create new stained glass windows that would create a beautiful atmosphere for worshippers, and also speak to the spiritual and material strength of the community. Both Tiffany Glass and Decoration Company and John La Farge's studio—the two leading stained glass artists of the age—were commissioned to create windows for the building.

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As attendance at the Church began to dwindle in the 1970s, the congregation merged with another nearby church, leaving behind its building. Recognizing their importance, the congregation donated the Tiffany and La Farge windows to the Worcester Art Museum in 1975—saving them from subsequent ruin caused by a fire that destroyed all but the façade of the Mount Vernon Congregational Church building in 1978.

At the time they were acquired, the panels were covered in decades of dirt and grime; there also appeared to be damage from the harsh Boston winters, as well as from prior attempts at repair in the 1960s. When the Museum began conservation work in 2017, conservators saw that the Tiffany windows were in excellent structural shape, requiring primarily cleaning and targeted restoration work to ensure their ongoing stability. However, it became clear that the La Farge windows required more significant restoration, including fixing pieces of glass that had begun to slip out of the structural grid. That work—which is ongoing—is expected to be completed in September 2018, at which point the La Farge panels will join the Tiffany pieces in the gallery.

Radiance Rediscovered: Stained Glass by Tiffany and La Farge is curated by T. Amanda Lett, a Ph.D. candidate in History of Art & Architecture at Boston University.

This exhibition is made possible by the Henry Luce Foundation, which awarded the Museum a three-year grant totaling \$825,000 to support a series of projects focused on its extensive—and exceptional—collection of pre-contemporary American art and related curatorial apprenticeships. One of the largest awards given by the Foundation’s American Art Program in 2016, these funds are supporting a new series of installations and rotating exhibitions that highlight important but less frequently seen works from WAM’s holdings of American art, including these stained-glass windows which have never before been presented to WAM audiences. Additional funding for *Radiance Rediscovered* is provided by the Sherman Fairchild Foundation; corporate support is provided by Rand-Whitney Container.

“The Luce Foundation is pleased to support the important work of collections research, conservation, and exhibition development at the Worcester Art Museum,” said Dr. Teresa A. Carbone, program director for the Henry Luce Foundation’s American Art Program. “This new exhibition of stained glass panels by Tiffany and La Farge brings back into public view an important part of New England’s artistic heritage.”

About the Worcester Art Museum

Founded in 1896, the Worcester Art Museum’s encyclopedic 38,000 piece collection covers 51 centuries of art. Highlights include the Medieval Chapter House, Renaissance Court, and Worcester Hunt Mosaic, as well as the recently integrated John Woodman Higgins Armory Collection of arms and armor. The Museum is internationally known for its collection of European and American art. It was the first in America to acquire paintings by Monet and Gauguin and one of the first to exhibit photography as fine art. As the one of the first U.S. museum to focus on collaborating with local schools, it has been at the forefront of engaging audiences and giving them a meaningful and personal experience for over a century.

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The Worcester Art Museum, located at 55 Salisbury Street in Worcester, MA, is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and every third Thursday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Admission is \$16 for adults, \$6 for children 4-17, \$14 for seniors 65+, and \$14 for college students with ID. Members and children under four are free. Parking is free. For more information, visit worcesterart.org.

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