

New York Historical Society

A New Light on Tiffany: Clara Driscoll and the Tiffany Girls

An Acoustiguide Tour

Acoustiguide Corporation

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Outside of exhibition

Cellphone Instructions – Message on Dial Up

1. Introduction

411. Acoustiguide Instructions – AG 2000

Introductory area

2. Clara Driscoll's Letters

Gallery 1: Clara's New York World

3. Photo Of Bicycling On Riverside Drive

4. Photo Of Jewelers' Club Mckinley/Hobart Flag On

Broadway

5. Photo Of Gertrude Kasebier In Studio

6. Photo Of Loie Fuller In Butterfly Dress

Introductory area (again)

7. Dragonfly Lamp With Mosaic Base

Gallery 2: Clara Driscoll; Designing for Art & Commerce

8. Butterfly Lamp

9. Graphic Of “Winter” Window

10. Deep Sea Base/Fish Shade

11. Wisteria Lamp

12. Geranium Shade

13. Inkwells

14. Wild Carrot Candlestick

15. Photo Of Clara And Joseph Briggs

16. Group Of Enamels/Pottery

Gallery 3: The Tiffany Girls; Lampmaking at Tiffany Studios

17. Poppy Lamp

18. Wisteria Lamp (Different From Above)

19. Geometric Shades

20. Glass Sheets/Shards

As Recorded Script

CELL PHONE INSTRUCTIONS-- Initial Message on Dial Up

NARRATOR:

To access the audio tour of “A New Light on Tiffany: Clara Driscoll and the Tiffany Girls” on your cell phone, look for the audio tour symbol and a number beside selected works.

Then enter the number on your keypad, and press pound.

Please listen to the introduction before you enter the exhibition. To hear it, just press 1, then the pound key. You can also leave a comment at any time by pressing 500, then pound.

Have a wonderful time.

[81 words]

1. INTRODUCTION

NARRATOR:

Welcome to the New York Historical Society and “A New Light on Tiffany: Clara Driscoll and the Tiffany Girls.”

Please listen to this introduction before entering the exhibition. This show provides a fascinating new perspective on the artist Louis C. Tiffany and the work of his celebrated Tiffany Studios. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Tiffany was arguably the country’s foremost producer of artistic glass and other objects, from splendid lamps to sumptuous leaded glass windows. Because these bore the name Louis C. Tiffany, many believed that Tiffany himself designed them. Today, however, we know more, thanks to

the discovery of a trove of century-old letters. As you enter the exhibition, to your left, you'll find a few of these letters on display. They tell a fascinating story.

Joining you on this tour will be the exhibition's three curators -- Margi Hofer of the New York Historical Society, and the scholars who discovered Clara Driscoll's letters--Martin Eidelberg, professor emeritus of art history at Rutgers University, and independent curator Nina Gray.

For detailed instructions on using the Acoustiguide wand, press **4-1-1** and the 'play' button at any time.

[190 words]

411. ACOUSTIGUIDE INSTRUCTIONS – AG 2000

NARRATOR:

You can take this Acoustiguide tour in any order, and at your own pace. Look for an audio tour symbol and a number beside selected works. Just enter the number on your keypad, then press the large green “Play” button. [pause .5] To cancel a selection, press the round red “C” button, enter a new number, then press “Play” again. You can also pause your tour at any time, or adjust the volume. You control your own tour.

[78 words]

2. CLARA DRISCOLL’S LETTERS

NARRATOR:

The letters displayed here were written to her family by Clara Driscoll, a pioneering artist who worked for Tiffany for nearly 20 years. When they were found in 2005, scholars at last learned how many of the Tiffany lamps and other objects were actually designed and produced. More importantly, they discovered the surprising role that women--in particular Clara Driscoll--had in creating some of Tiffany's most famous works.

Just beyond the case of letters, is a side gallery devoted to Clara Driscoll's New York world. The large map on the right as you enter pinpoints neighborhoods where she lived and worked. Arriving from Ohio in 1888, Clara lived for most of her working career in boarding houses on Irving Place near 16th street. Farther uptown, at the Tiffany Studios, she made her designs and oversaw the women who cut the

glass for Tiffany windows, shades, and mosaics. Heavier work, including making and soldering the glass and assembling the lamps, was done by men at another Tiffany facility in Queens. The pottery and enamel departments were out there too.

Now, turn around and walk over to the bicycle mural – it's our next stop on this tour.

[194 words]

3. PHOTO OF BICYCLING ON RIVERSIDE DRIVE

NARRATOR:

Women on bicycles: an unremarkable sight. But in the late 19th century, the very idea scandalized many. Nevertheless, in

the 1880s and 1890s a new woman was emerging--educated, career-minded, and adventurous. Like Clara Driscoll.

Margi Hofer of the New York Historical Society:

MARGI HOFER:

“She is a new type. She is finding a way to live outside of the traditional family home. And she is working in a profession that is not teaching or nursing.”

NARRATOR:

Like many of her compatriots, Clara took up bicycling, which Susan B. Anthony said had done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world.

MARGI HOFER:

“In 1898, she recorded in her letters...her first attempts at learning to ride, including her unfortunate collision with a lamppost.”

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“As I was crossing the street an old lady, instead of going across--she had plenty of time--waited for me to pass between her and the lamp post, a distance of about two yards. I knew that such nicety was impossible to me and that it was either the old lady or the lamp post. So although the former would have been softer and more comfortable for me, I heroically chose the lamp post.”

NARRATOR:

Soon, however, Clara was taking trips all the way up to Grant's Tomb, like the bicyclists in this photo.

[216 words]

4. PHOTO OF JEWELERS' CLUB**MCKINLEY/HOBART FLAG ON BROADWAY****NARRATOR:**

Clara Driscoll found work at Tiffany Studios in 1888. Within four years she had risen to become a designer and department manager for the company, in the heart of the noise and crowds of New York City.

Clara never wrote home about women's emancipation, yet we know she held strong political views.

Margi Hofer:

MARGI HOFER:

“She has a hatred of the corrupt politics of Tammany Hall in New York City. And she...was a big supporter of William McKinley in 1896 because...he promoted jobs for workers.”

NARRATOR:

That year, to show their support for McKinley, the Tiffany workers strung a huge banner across New York’s Fourth Avenue --much like the one in this photo. Clara described the event as full of excitement.

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“We all got ready and went down in front of the building. One of the workmen stood on a tall box and made a speech which the roar of the wagons going up and down the street entirely drowned out except for an occasional word or two.... When he finished, the flag slid slowly across the street on a heavy rope.... It was the American flag with this in large letters across the bottom: ‘Raised by the artisans of the Decorative Arts/ McKinley and Hobart/ An honest dollar and a chance to earn’.... The men sent up three mighty cheers.”

[221 words]

5. PHOTO OF LOIE FULLER IN BUTTERFLY DRESS

NARRATOR:

One May, Clara Driscoll had special news:

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“The chief excitement this week was a visit from Miss
Loie Fuller, the beautiful dancer of worldwide fame.”

NARRATOR:

Loie Fuller, whom you see here and in the video, was the
sensation of the dance world in turn-of-the-century America
and Europe.

Margi Hofer:

MARGI HOFER:

“She was a pioneering dancer known for her natural
movement, her flowing silk costumes and her use of colored

stage lighting in her performances. And in 1903 she came to visit Clara.”

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“She is trying experiments with effects of light through colored glass and spent most of the morning trying to show me what she wanted. I am making three little screens for her, through which the light is to be thrown upon her and greatly magnified. When dancing she looks like a beautiful fairy spinning and floating in the air.”

NARRATOR:

In person, however, the dancer was rather different...

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“My amazement was simply unbounded to see that she was a little fat, dumpy, short necked middle aged woman, with most insignificant and plain little features.”

[181 words]

6. PHOTO OF GERTRUDE KASEBIER IN STUDIO

NARRATOR:

In 1903, Clara Driscoll had her portrait taken by Gertrude Kasebier, shown here on the right. She was one of the most important photographers of the day.

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“She is a middle aged woman with ...a most intelligent face. Her eyes are deep set and narrow and she squints a great deal, to get effects.”

NARRATOR:

Kasebier, like Clara Driscoll herself, was a transplanted Midwesterner -- and an innovative artist.

MARGI HOFER:

“Kasebier was a leading member of the Photo Secession, which was a group started by Alfred Steiglitz to foster recognition of photography as an art form. But ... she...earned a good living...taking portraits...of...New Yorkers, many from the artistic community.

“Clara's account of sitting for her portrait with Gertrude Kasebier is actually the most detailed and insightful description we get of Kasebier’s portrait business.”

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“She had everything on rollers and moves the model stand with you on it, or the camera or the screens, constantly to get different effects.”

NARRATOR:

Unfortunately, Kasebier’s portraits of Clara Driscoll have not been found.

[166 words]

7. DRAGONFLY LAMP WITH MOSAIC BASE**NARRATOR:**

The base of this beautiful dragonfly lamp, one of Tiffany Studio’s most famous designs, is marked with the company’s

name. But the idea for it came from Clara Driscoll. She wrote to her family:

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“This Dragon fly lamp is an idea that I had last Summer....It is for an electric light and is going to be dragon flies with gauze wings-- eyes made of glass beads cut in two, the split hole in the bead making the light in the eye--and the bodies made of metal. I want to submit the idea to Mr. Tiffany.”

NARRATOR:

Rutgers art history professor Martin Eidelberg.

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“It's the first lamp that we can identify with Clara Driscoll. It's not the most elaborate of her designs, but it is a quite beautiful one, and in it you can see the harmony of glass between the mosaic down below and the colors of the shade up above.”

NARRATOR:

Even though Clara Driscoll came up with the design, it's still very much in the style of Louis C. Tiffany.

Like Tiffany, Clara Driscoll loved nature. She drew much of her inspiration from growing up in rural Ohio.

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“It's very hard to tell where...Clara begins and Tiffany ends....I'm sure that she was very much aware of the kinds of

motifs that Tiffany liked, and the kind of color that Tiffany liked.... And he came around every week to look at the designs. So I think that this is something in which the artist can anticipate what her employer would like.”

[251 words]

8. BUTTERFLY LAMP

NARRATOR:

A swirling cloud of little yellow butterflies decorates the shade of this beautiful lamp. Until recently, experts believed that the concept for this lamp originated in the mind of Louis C. Tiffany.

Martin Eidelberg.

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“I think the general tendency was...that Tiffany himself designed everything, or at least gave the initial impetus for the designs, and then left it to his assistants to work out the details.”

NARRATOR:

Then, in late 2005, two Tiffany scholars, Martin Eidelberg and Nina Gray, learned of the existence of Clara Driscoll’s letters. They found a trove of them in the Kent State University library and at the Queens Historical Society.

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“The letters told us how Tiffany Studios worked. We...have basically a week by week account, written from the inside, of

how the designs were prepared, who the people in control were...what the ethics and aesthetics of the business were.”

NARRATOR:

The butterfly lamp, he learned, was not thought up by Tiffany but by Clara Driscoll. In a letter, she describes designing the lamp, which was inspired by memories of yellow butterflies and primroses on an Ohio farm:

ACTOR (CLARA DRISCOLL):

“Like that field of them on Mr. Root’s land. This in mosaic will be the lamp, and a cloud of little yellow butterflies which you know look exactly like the primrose blossom, in a network of gold wire made in beautiful lines like lines of smoke--is to be the shade.”

NARRATOR:

When Clara described her idea to Tiffany, he was immediately enthusiastic.

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“Tiffany himself had made a very large window with butterflies for his own home.... And of course, the butterfly had become very important in the 1880s and '90s, partly because it appeared in Japanese art.... So we can see that Tiffany would have very much recognized a certain aspect of his own art in this lamp.”

[298 words]

**9. PHOTO OF TIFFANY AND GRAPHIC OF
“WINTER” WINDOW**

NARRATOR:

This is an image of the Winter window, one section of a large window representing the four seasons, which Tiffany exhibited in the 1900 Paris World's Fair.

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“This panel...depicts pine tree boughs under caps of snow, And this is one of four panels...each representing a season by showing some aspect of nature.”

NARRATOR:

Many describe Tiffany as an Art Nouveau artist, but Martin Eidelberg has a different point of view.

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“I would rather think of him as somebody who...was much

more interested in nature in all its resplendent glory, and also a slightly old fashioned... interest in historical styles. Gothic, Romanesque, Byzantine, Japanese, which he melded together in a very particular way.”

NARRATOR:

The Winter window showcased the Tiffany Studio’s artistic and technical prowess. They even managed to bring out the individual pine needles, without painting them in, by choosing glass imbedded with threads of dark green glass.

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“They're [a] kind of tour-de-force in color and richness and...variety of glass. And that was one of the things that Tiffany wanted to show everybody at the World's Fair,

was...the great depth of color and texture that was available in his glass.”

NARRATOR:

Tiffany designed the whole window, including the Winter panel, by himself, but he asked Clara Driscoll to speak to him before selecting and cutting the glass. He was sick that day, so Clara had to take a streetcar uptown to Tiffany’s home.

On the text panel to the right, you’ll see an image of that 72nd Street mansion.

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“In a big white bed lay Mr. Tiffany scarcely raising the coverlet, so slight was he. He looked pale and sick and fragile to a degree that made me heartsick. . . His voice

sounded weak and weary in spite of his energy of spirit.

Then he told me his ideas about the snow window.”

[303 words]

10. DEEP SEA BASE/FISH SHADE

NARRATOR:

The Deep Sea lamp, which you see here as a base and shade, was one of Clara Driscoll’s many designs. In a letter home, she wrote:

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“Today I thought how nice it would be to make a lamp with a mosaic base instead of a metal or glass vase.... I am anxious now to use some ends of shells that have

been polished and made to look like beautiful pearls. ...

And I would design a shade that should be made of

ambers and greens like the tanks at the Fisheries

Building at the World's Fair. It would look like a globe

of fish with light showing through.”

NARRATOR:

Clara accompanied the letter with a sketch of the lamp that made it possible for the curators to recognize the model.

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“I remembered seeing a lamp base just like this 30 years ago, and what was so distinctive about it was that it had these large clam shells and mother of pearl.... And...we were wondering what the shade would have been on it, and lo and behold, we were able to trace it, and indeed, it's the very

shade and the very base that she was drawing, although the proportions have changed somewhat between the initial sketch and the realized lamp.”

[209 words]

11. WISTERIA LAMP

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“The Wisteria Lamp is...one of those iconic images, and everybody is in agreement that this really represents Tiffany's vision, even if Tiffany didn't design it. Which is to say, to transform an object into what seems to be a living plant.

“Tiffany loved wisteria, in fact his house in Laurelton...Hall was...itself draped in wisteria vines.

“The...bronze base [is] like the roots and shaft of the wisteria vine, rising up and then descending down in a cascade of bronze branches, into the blossoms, which...can vary in color from one model to the other very often, as they do in nature. “

NARRATOR:

Many Tiffany lamps were sold as either fuel or electric models, but the Wisteria lamp was produced exclusively for electricity.

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“A very...elegant thin shaft, which would only be possible if you had electric bulbs above, because there's no need now to support a large fuel container.”

NARRATOR:

The open top allowed heat from the bulb to rise.

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“This is a very artistic solution for it....What you have is a great latticework of...bronze, which allows the air to come up straight through these holes.”

NARRATOR:

For years, it was rumored that the Wisteria lamps had been designed by a Mrs. Freshel of Boston. But Clara’s letters tell us that this was her design -- and that it was selling very well.

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“Today we got an order for...five more Wisteria lamps.

That makes 20 Wisteria lamps in all, and as they are my design and sell for \$250.00 apiece I feel quite pleased.”

[250 words]

12. GERANIUM SHADE

NARRATOR:

This Geranium shade and the shade with the arrowhead leaves nearby were both Driscoll’s designs. For years, the design and manufacture of small lamps with 14-inch shades had been a prerogative of the men at Tiffany Studios. Then in 1903, they threatened to go on strike, trying to force the women’s department out of work.

Nina Gray is an independent curator and historian--and one of the discoverers of Clara’s letters.

NINA GRAY:

“The men's union actually tried to eliminate women entirely from Tiffany Studios. Tiffany [was] very supportive, as [were] the other managers at Tiffany Studios, of the abilities of the women.... In the end what they do is they compromise on the number of women in the department, so that...it is capped off at 27 women.”

NARRATOR:

In the aftermath, Clara was given the right to design the 14-inch shades. She wrote proudly to her mother that she was designing three of these, using a full-scale plaster model:

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“I divide [this plaster form] into three parts so that I can

use it for three different shades, making a third of each design. Then with pencil, I sketch the design on one of the thirds, and then with watercolor make it look just as the glass will, tracing in the lead lines with dark paint.

On this mould--I have a geranium shade, an arrowhead shade and a daffodil shade.”

NARRATOR:

These were among the more moderately priced Tiffany lamps.

[218 words]

13. INKWELLS

NARRATOR:

Not all the objects designed by Clara Driscoll were extravagant. She called these inkwells “cheap novelties.”

But they too were relatively expensive and were aimed at the luxury market.

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“Last week I took down the first one of my cheap novelties for this year all ready to go to the factory. A small inkwell to be of cast metal with a little place for a rich medallion of inlaid glass, which we are to do by hand, and the other a pen tray to go with it. The cost counting in the metal work will enable them to sell...for ten dollars apiece.”

NARRATOR:

The bronze would be cast by the men at the Queens factory, and then the inkwells would be decorated in mosaic in the

Manhattan studio, by the women known as the “Tiffany Girls.”

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“Mosaic... kept them employed, especially when there weren't large...commissions coming along. So there would never be idle time, because they worked by the hour, and if there wasn't a job then they would be sent home.”

NARRATOR:

The glass used for the mosaic was also made in the Queens factory, to Tiffany’s specifications.

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“It's got his wonderful range of colors...deep, deep saturated colors. And when the girls cut it, they didn't try to just match

it, in fact there are very interesting juxtapositions, where suddenly red notes and blue notes are introduced into the harmony. It's really almost Whistlerian in its brilliance, its shock, and pleasure.”

[239 words]

14. WILD CARROT CANDLESTICK

NARRATOR:

This reed-like candlestick, in the form of a wild carrot plant, looks too delicate to hold an actual candle. But in fact, it works well.

Tiffany designers were fascinated with nature. In crafting this candlestick, they probably referred to one of many books of

botanical studies which were published at the turn of the century....

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“All this week I have been working hard on the wild carrot idea and it is not nearly finished.... I want to accomplish great things with that microscopic wild carrot tomorrow.”

NARRATOR:

As you can see, the wild carrot candlesticks came in a number of models.

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“Some of the candlesticks just have the modeling in the base at the bottom, and then a relatively plain geometric bronze

cup holder at the top, or one with glass set in it, and these are the standard ones. But we also know that they made another type, called natural, in which the cup holder...seems to be cast from an actual plant itself.”

NARRATOR:

The design of the “natural” candlestick is incredibly delicate: You could easily crush the bronze tendrils with your hand.

[181 words]

15. PHOTO OF CLARA AND JOSEPH BRIGGS

NARRATOR:

This remarkable photo shows Clara Driscoll at work in the Tiffany Studios on East 25th Street.

She sent this picture home to her family with a letter.

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“I thought it would be nice for you to have a picture of me at work in my apron and sleeves with my head workman in attendance. It is exactly the way we look every day.”

NARRATOR:

Curator Nina Gray:

NINA GRAY:

“The setting of the photo is Clara's studio... She is sitting by a window...and standing beside her is Joseph Briggs.”

NARRATOR:

For many years, experts believed that Briggs was her supervisor, but now we know that he was Clara's chief workman.

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“The thing that I am working on in the picture is the butterfly candleshade. It is to be made of iridescent glass butterflies flying around the candle flame.”

NINA GRAY:

“She's actually carving it in plaster.... She also talks about another object in front of her that she's carving in plaster, that's a milkweed powder box....”

NARRATOR:

Just to the right, on top of a box, is one of the inkwells in this exhibition.

NINA GRAY:

And beside it a paperweight that has a swirling bronze base and then a piece of iridescent glass...inlaid into it.”

NARRATOR:

At the far right, on the second shelf, is a plaster form Clara used in designing her shades. The variety of objects shows how multi-faceted her work was.

NINA GRAY:

“She didn't work on just one thing at a time...she had many ideas that were constantly coming into her mind.”

NARRATOR:

Above Brigg's head is an electric bulb. Clara wrote of her dislike for those "nasty electric lights," which were necessary on dark or rainy days. She preferred working by daylight, as the subtleties of the glass were easier to see.

[285 words]

16. GROUP OF ENAMELS/POTTERY**NARRATOR:**

These remarkable objects are made from hammered copper, which was then decorated with enamel and fired in a small kiln.

The largest is a plaque depicting seaweed and shells, as if they're at the bottom of a tidal pool.

MARTIN EIDELBERG:

“Just like the lamps and everything else, what they have is a beautiful blend of really rich, deep colors. Colors that are not merely naturalistic...they're greater than nature, they're richer, more beautiful, like Impressionist painting, where color is much better than in nature itself.”

NARRATOR:

Tiffany and his staff began experimenting with enamels in the private studio of his 72nd Street mansion, then transferred the work to his factory site in Corona, Queens.

With a touch of jealousy, Clara Driscoll describes a visit to the enamel workroom, where the chief designer was another woman, her friend Alice Gouvy.

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“I went over to the little old factory which is virtually Mr. Tiffany’s private enterprise.... Most of the things were Alice’s design.... Three...girls were putting the enamel paints on to copper vases and boxes to be fired.... No one ever comes and asks them when they will finish a thing or how much it will cost....They ...are quite untouched by the hurry and worry of the commercial world. Mr. Tiffany whose only idea is Art comes to see them two or three times a week.”

NARRATOR:

From enamels, Tiffany turned to pottery, making vases with plant motifs—tulips, arrowhead plants, water lilies and frogs—motifs you’ll find elsewhere in this exhibit. The pottery was also entrusted to the women.

[255 words]

17. POPPY LAMP**NARRATOR:**

Like all of Tiffany’s more elaborate lamps, this Poppy shade was constructed by the “Tiffany Girls” under Clara’s supervision.

NINA GRAY:

“The Tiffany Girls came from a variety of

backgrounds....Some of them had gone to art school and studied design....Many of them were completely untrained, which was something that actually Tiffany found appealing, so that they...could be molded to have...an appreciation of the Tiffany materials.”

NARRATOR:

The Tiffany Girls worked in pairs to craft each shade, one woman selecting the glass, and her assistant then cutting it.

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“The patterns are all laid out on a flat piece of glass that has had the design traced on it in black paint and this piece of glass...put in one of the windows against the

light--and the right glass selected and cut for each pattern.”

NARRATOR:

The cut pieces of colored glass were then sent to the factory, where they were assembled on a wooden mold with inscribed guide lines.

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“There each piece of glass is taken off and put on its corresponding space on the mold, where they are all fastened together with metal and the whole thing drawn off a complete shade. It is then put in an electric bath and plated with copper... Then...it comes back here to be sold.”

NARRATOR:

The Poppy shade here establishes a sense of depth and botanical realism by using metal filigree sections made by acid-etching the metal.

NINA GRAY:

“These filigrees are placed...sometimes behind and sometimes in front of either the ... the poppy blossom, the center of the blossom, or the leaf.... Depending on where they're in front or in back, they give a slightly different...feeling for the flowers.”

[270 words]

18. WISTERIA LAMPS

NINA GRAY:

“The Wisteria Lamp was one of the most popular of the...Tiffany lamps. It was made as a unit, so that the shade and the base came together.”

NARRATOR:

There are two examples here. You may have noticed a third earlier in the exhibition. It’s interesting to compare them.

NINA GRAY:

“Even within the... blue and white palette with green leaves, there are a lot of variations, depending on...which of the girls was cutting the glass perhaps, or what the sheets of glass that were in the studio... Were they bluer or paler, or some of

them have a slight pink tinge to them, the backgrounds differ in being different kinds of glass.”

NARRATOR:

In fact, demand for the Wisteria lamps was so great that some were made by men out in the Queens factory. Clara, however, doubted whether they had the skills.

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“It is beyond their capacity in quality so I want to have a sort of supervision over it which...will require great tact and diplomacy not to get the Union by the ears.”

NARRATOR:

This was two years after the men's strike over the role of women at Tiffany Studios, and tension between the sexes apparently still existed. Still, Clara didn't want to see her beloved design ruined.

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“I am to make a color scheme for them and send over glass and then go and criticize. I do hope it will be all right.”

[229 words]

19. GEOMETRIC SHADES

NINA GRAY:

“At Tiffany Studios...women were generally responsible for cutting and selecting the glass for nature-based themes, which would include flowers, vines, insects such as dragonflies and butterflies...and fish.”

NARRATOR:

Men ... were given the task of designing and manufacturing lamps with geometric compositions....

NINA GRAY:

“It was felt at the time that men were better suited toward...dealing with the precise lines and...mathematical designs.

“This geometric shade is called the [Vine] Shade.... It has different varieties of geometric motifs, but they're all basically straight lines in a regular pattern that goes around the shade. There aren't terrific nuances necessary to give depth or dimension.... The shade concentrates on...the pattern and the coloration.”

NARRATOR:

Clara Driscoll didn't have much respect for these relatively inexpensive, mass-produced shades. Nonetheless, she herself sometimes designed geometric shades for the men to execute. In 1902, she wrote:

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“I saw just how they did all the cheap shades (that they make a hundred of these instead of three like mine) and I am going to make some new designs forthwith.”

[174 words]

20. GLASS SHEETS/SHARDS

NARRATOR:

The special quality of a Tiffany lamp comes largely from the glass. In front of the lamps along this wall, you can see the raw material the Tiffany Girls used to make the lampshades.

NINA GRAY:

“In this section we are concentrating on lamp shades that have a basic yellow coloration.... In selecting glass for a

particular lamp shade...the women had sheets of glass, and each sheet of glass was actually made by hand.”

NARRATOR:

Now, walk over to the wall at your right to look at a group of dramatic hanging shades. (Pause) In them, you’ll find a variety of textures and colors of glass, much of it manufactured at Tiffany’s own factory in Queens.

NINA GRAY:

“Tiffany...concentrated on making glass that had...particular effects in it, such as...depth or mottling.”

CLARA DRISCOLL (LOIS CHILES):

“Mr. Tiffany called me into his studio this morning and showed me some of the most wonderful glass I ever saw

that he has just succeeded in making.... I am dreadfully scared about it, and can't bear to cut into it for fear of making an irrevocable mistake. If I were a genius, I could do something perfectly wonderful that would take Mr. Tiffany's breath away and bring honor to me."

NARRATOR:

Clara trained her Tiffany Girls to select the right glass for even the smallest lampshade detail.

NINA GRAY:

"In selecting glass for a leaf, you might want something that had some...striations in it, whereas for a blossom you would want something that was perhaps lighter or darker in the center.... When you're talking about a piece of glass that might be under...a half an inch square, it really makes a

difference...to the overall success of...the shade, that... each piece is... used to best advantage in rendering depth or...the natural...texture.”

NARRATOR:

You'll discover a few final exceptional pieces as you leave the exhibition.

The extraordinary quality of the glass, and the finesse with which it was selected and cut, distinguishes the work of Tiffany Studios. Today, many of these masterworks are highly prized by museums and collectors. Their exceptional quality is due in large part to Clara Driscoll and her talented staff, the Tiffany Girls.

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