



Smithsonian American Art Museum

## **Louis C. Tiffany and the Business of Art**

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Louis Comfort Tiffany was the most successful American designer of the late nineteenth century and the one American who made a major contribution to international art nouveau. This dissertation will examine Tiffany's design and business practices focusing on the parallel development of his visual aesthetic and his promotional activities. Despite Tiffany's fame and the broad appeal of the objects his companies created, scholars have neither thoroughly explored the design process he employed nor fully determined the role he played in it.

Early scholarship on Tiffany was dominated by Robert Koch and Alistair Duncan who were actively involved in selling works by Tiffany and who consequently had a vested interest in raising their market value. Such writers tended to present every object from the Tiffany Studios as if it were personally designed by Tiffany rather than exploring the complicated process of design and manufacture that actually took place. It has long been known that from the early days of Associated Artists to the last days of Tiffany Studios, Tiffany hired talented designers and craftsmen to produce the art objects that bore his name, yet the role of these women and men has never been closely analyzed. This dissertation seeks to correct this and other gaps in the literature by examining the five major areas of Tiffany's artistic activity: interior design, stained glass windows, world's fair and international exposition displays, lamps, and blown-glass objects.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum's collection and the National Museum of American History's Tiffany objects, ephemera, business, and world's fair materials, as well as the Archives of American Art's manuscript holdings, make the Smithsonian the ideal location to research and write my dissertation.