

The Tiffany Windows at St. George's

Part 1 - Introduction



St. George's has three Tiffany windows though one is a double window with two distinct scenes, one below the gallery level and the other at gallery level. All were installed in the Church during the years 1912-1917. Tiffany's significance in art was that he was the creator of an American glass.

Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933) was the son of Charles Lewis Tiffany, founder of Tiffany and Company (jewelry and silverware) in New York City. Louis maintained close ties with the family firm and he became Artistic Director of Tiffany & Co. after his father's death in 1902. His first artistic training was as a painter, studying under George Inness and Samuel Colman in New York City and Léon Bailly in Paris. However, he had shortcomings as a painter and moved to the applied arts and started a decorating firm in the 1880's.

In 1865, Tiffany traveled to Europe and in London he visited the Victoria and Albert Museum, whose extensive collection of Roman and Syrian glass made a deep impression on him. He admired the coloration of medieval glass and was convinced that the quality of contemporary glass could be improved upon. Tiffany wanted the glass itself to transmit texture and rich colors.

In the 1870's, he began experimentation on glass, renting space in the commercial glass houses in the New York area. He won his first commission in 1876 for the Church of the Sacred Heart in New York.

He lived at the right time to introduce his windows into churches. The number of churches under construction in one year alone 1875 (4,000) provided possible commissions. The highpoint of Tiffany window production was between 1890 and 1920 when the ecclesiological movement from England desired to revive medieval art and architecture in the Church. He also became disenchanted with interior design since he failed to win recognition in this field.

What makes Tiffany windows Tiffanies? Much of the success of Tiffany lay in his use of glass and special techniques and his ability to attract designers. All designs were personally reviewed by him. In addition, he helped to introduce landscape and floral panels into Churches.

Tiffany experimented with novel types of materials, achieving a more varied palette with richer hues and greater density. Tiffany and his rival John LaFarge working independently explored the pictorial, coloristic, and textural qualities of stained glass in new and daring ways that completely changed the look of the medium. By 1881, each artist had patented an **opalescent** glass, which has a milky, opaque, and sometimes rainbow-hued appearance when light shines through it. Tiffany called his brand **Favrile Glass** and was a key part of his stained glass windows since the color was embedded or ingrained in the glass. It was a uniquely American phenomenon that proved to be among the most important advances in decorative windows .

In 1885, he created his own company, Tiffany Glass Company to assemble the windows, using glass purchased from various manufacturers. He gathered a competent set of designers, many of whom worked for him for a lifetime. By the end of the 1880's it was the largest stained glass studio in the nation. Eight years later, he started his own glasshouse in Corona, Queens, New York. Tiffany hired Arthur Nash, an experienced English glassblower, to run the Corona factory. Originally called the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company, it became Tiffany Furnaces in 1902. (Tiffany Studios was the related company producing stained glass windows). It was Nash who developed the formulas for creating the glass. In addition to fabricating the glass for Tiffany's stained glass windows, this company produced blown glass vessels.

Tiffany received the recognition he sought after the 1893 Columbian Exposition. His exhibit, mostly a lavishly gilded and ornate Byzantine chapel drew hoards of visitors and brought accolades from critics.

10 Tiffany's techniques present in St. George's windows

1. Opalescent Glass – fusing of colors



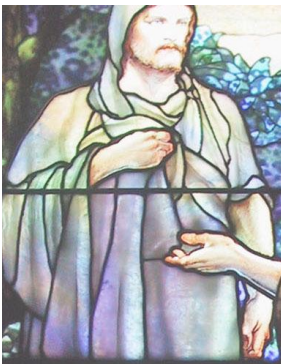
Opalescent glass is a generalized term for clear and semi-opaque pressed glass, cloudy, marbled, and sometimes accented with subtle coloring all combining to form a milky opalescence in the glass.

This opalescence is also created in the glassmaking by alternating heating and cooling of the glass and with the addition of chemical additives to create the desired effect.

John LaFarge, a Tiffany rival, created this technique, but Tiffany furthered and popularized its use.

From “Angel of Victory”

2. Drapery Glass – folds



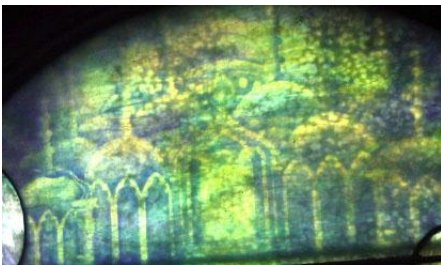
Glass while molten thrown onto an iron table and rolled into a disk. The glassmaker armed with tongs manipulated the mass and by taking hold of it from both ends like dough and pulling and twisting till it fell into folds.

The resulting texture gave volume to the robes of figures or the petals of a flower and increased the modulation of light. We see it here in the folds of the clothing.

From “Road to Emmaus”

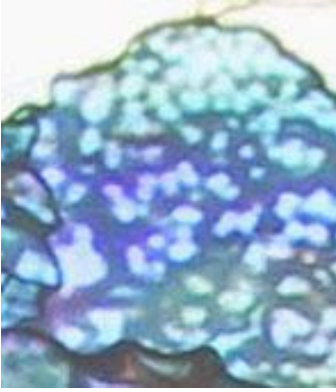
3. Plated - layering of glass by soldering one or more pieces of glass over another

There are several advantages. It allows you to modify glass colors and textures and superimpose images. It helps to create a 3 dimension effect for depth.



From “Angels with Trumpet and Incense”

4. Mottled or Spotted Glass -



It resulted from a crystallization created by the addition of fluorine in the firing process of glass, and the rolling process carried out on the molten glass, which produced variations in the density and size of the spots.

From “Road to Emmaus”

5. Fractured or confetti glass



Fractured glass is embedded glass with tiny paper-thin flakes in different colors. It was made by breaking vessels blown thin, spreading the shards on a marver and embedding them into the molten glass. These multicolored, irregularly shaped fragments produced visually complex effects, which were perfect for representing foliage. Typically this glass was used for landscapes.

From “Angel of the Resurrection”

6. Marbleized Glass



From “Road to Emmaus”

This technique was commonly used in inscriptions as shown above.

7. Ripple Glass



Ripple glass refers to a sheet of textured glass with marked surface waves. Tiffany made use of such textured glass to represent, for example, water or leaf veins.

The texture is created during the glass sheet-forming process. A sheet is formed from molten glass with a roller that spins on it, while traveling forward. Normally the roller spins at the same speed as its own forward motion, and the resulting sheet has a smooth surface. In the manufacture of rippled glass, the roller spins faster than its own forward motion. The rippled effect is retained as the glass cools.

From “Angel of the Resurrection”

8. Enamel Paint over the glass – It was common to use enamel paint on the faces and arms for a realistic view. Enamels are soft powdered colored glass that is mixed with a medium and painted onto the glass with a brush. When the medium is dry, the glass is placed in a kiln for firing.

This was one of 4 ways to color glass

- A. Pot Metal** - It was heated in a large crucible and metallic oxides were added for color.
- B. Flashing**- made by dipping a ball of semi-molten white colorless glass into molten colored glass which, when blown and flattened, results in a less intense color because it will be white on one side and colored on the other.
- C. Staining - coloring** the surface of glass by the application of silver sulfide or silver chloride, which is then fired at a relatively low temperature.



From “Road to Emmaus”

9. Copper foil method – use of copper foil tapes instead of lead came to hold glass panes together and enabled three dimensional objects, such as stained glass lights. Steps A. the edges of all the glass pieces are wrapped in the foil. The foil is then burnished or put onto all three sides. Instead of putty, flux is applied very sparingly to all of the visible copper. B. The pieces are then soldered together. Solder is put across every visible spot of foil. C A patina is then put on to finish the piece by darkening the solder. This also allows for the black edging look to occur, which would normally take quite a bit of time with lead.



From “Angels with Trumpet and Incense”

10. Jewels

These are pieces of hot glass that is press-molded into a jewel like shape. Note the middle of the flowers



From “Angel of the Resurrection”