

Tiffany Lamps and the Healing Power of Light

By Jennifer Vignone for <http://www.NY-ARTNews.com>

A Chance Encounter

On his way to meet a friend, John, a retired Sanitation worker of 25 years, stopped by the Queens Museum to see the Tiffany glass exhibition from The Neustadt Collection of Tiffany Glass. His eyes misted over as he spoke of his love of Tiffany glass. He was excited about the new display. It was “stupendous”. His best memory of his job was finding a set of Tiffany candlesticks that had been thrown out. The lamps, he explained, brought him a sense of peace. Their glow was inspiring. He felt renewed by this spontaneous visit. This effect is not unusual; the impact of Tiffany is truly unique. The colors, themes, workmanship, the way they transform light, and the gateway to an aesthetic period in history all contribute to their splendor.

The Lady in Green

Dressed in kelly green, she sat in her wheelchair as her son accompanied her through the Tiffany collection. They spent two hours in the gallery, reading every panel and watching every video. She owns six Tiffany lamps — two are the large Wisteria and she also has two Tiffany pendants. She spoke of the joy they brought to her every day and how they enhanced her home and provided a sense of comfort to her and family throughout the years.

A Doctor, His Wife, and the Lamp that Started it All

Dr. Egon Neustadt and his wife, Hildegard, started their collection of Tiffany lamps in 1935, purchasing a daffodil design table lamp for \$12.50 in a Greenwich Village second-hand shop. Their love for the work resulted in the largest and most important collection of Tiffany lamps in the world. Dr. Neustadt incorporated the Collection in 1969 as a non-profit organization. It is dedicated to preserving, studying, and sharing these treasures.



Louis Comfort Tiffany's Daffodil Lamp, the first lamp purchased by Dr. and Mrs. Egon Neustadt, Queens Museum, Flushing, New York. Photo: Jennifer Vignone

Since 1995, The Neustadt has enjoyed a partnership with the Queens Museum. This allows them to share selections from their vast archive of lamps, windows, desk sets, and Tiffany flat glass and glass 'jewels' with the public. For more than 25 years, The Neustadt has shared their collection through an active traveling exhibition program across the United States, extending it into new territories. To date, their exhibitions have been enjoyed by more than a million visitors. It is an ongoing tribute to the art and vision of Louis Comfort Tiffany, as well as an aesthetic and educational experience for visitors to the Queens Museum. Over the years of her work as director and curator, Lindsay Parrott saw the substantiating, nurturing, and restorative quality of Tiffany's works. Nature, the central theme of the Tiffany aesthetic, brings additional value to this healing experience. Ms. Parrott explains, "Lamps are a familiar and reassuring form that remind people of home — a place of safety and comfort. Tiffany's richly colored lamps are particularly special and in an unexpected setting like a hospital, they truly brighten someone's day. The floral designs selected for this new exhibition initiative bring the outdoors into a sterile medical environment and soothe spirits that may be nervous and agitated."

A Hospital's Innovative Approach to Healing

The Montefiore Health System is a network of eleven hospitals providing primary and specialty care. Its primary teaching hospital, Montefiore Medical Center, is dedicated to investigating and exploring new methods of healing. Its ultimate goal is to serve the community — patients, families, caregivers, students, faculty, and staff. When The Neustadt was to launch an inaugural traveling exhibition called "Louis Tiffany's Shade Garden", they approached Jodi Moise, the in-House Director for Montefiore Einstein Medical Center. As Director, Ms. Moise manages Montefiore's Fine Art Program and collection that comprises seven rotating exhibition galleries across its campuses, acquisitions, commissions, as well as the Innovation Technology Program which promotes an immersive environment employing virtual and augmented reality as part of the recovery experience. Its mission is to enhance and support the healing environment for patients, families, and Montefiore associates.

The connection resulted in ten of the renowned nature-inspired lamps — fashioned with peonies, apple blossoms, dogwoods and daffodils — populating the hospital's bustling lobby of Montefiore's Hutchinson Campus in the Bronx, building on Montefiore's Fine Arts initiative. Ms. Moise describes how artwork reduces stress, makes people less anxious — bringing a feeling of healing tranquility. When people first encounter the lamps in the waiting room, they stop and look, admiring the craftsmanship — reading the informational plaques, and feeling the warm radiance of the colorful Tiffany glass. The space is transformed from a clinical, forbidding environment to an affirming, supportive space, adding a therapeutic benefit to the recovery process.

The result is a powerful experience of light and nature in an environment where so many emotional decisions sometimes have to be made every minute. "Art humanizes the patient experience." says Moise.



"Louis Comfort Tiffany's Shade Garden," a traveling exhibition for healthcare facilities, organized by The Neustadt Collection of Tiffany Glass, Queens, New York. Photo: Jesse Winter



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Care was taken to ensure access to the lamps with special pedestals that allowed wheelchair-bound patients and guests to get close to the lamps to appreciate their workmanship and beauty. The lamps have the effect of bringing the outside world inside through their nature theme, comforting homelike quality, artistic beauty and the effect they have in changing the light. Everyone benefits, Moise, points out — not just the patients, but also the staff, who find satisfaction in the calming break from their long hours and hectic schedules. It improves morale. They feel that an effort was made to bring something beautiful, affirming, and valuable to them, to make their space special. And, as Ms. Moise explains, people like glass. It has multiple personalities that are brought out by the type of light that brings it to life, how the light changes from season to season, and the experience each individual has with it. Tiffany elicits a different kind of connection. The lamps are a touchstone to art, history, innovation, and home. Ms. Parrott from concurs.

A Second Installation within the Montefiore Network

The Neustadt has just opened the second exhibit at Montefiore, an installation of four lamps at the Burke Rehabilitation Hospital's White Plains campus. Burke President and CEO Jeffrey Menkes states on their press release, "At Burke, we are building a fine art program aimed at fostering an affirming, restorative, and supportive environment for our patients and their loved ones. Exhibiting the Tiffany lamps, with their soft glow and radiant colors, only enhances this mission. I'm proud to partner with The Neustadt in recognizing the therapeutic benefits of arts in healthcare. We are honored to have these beautiful lamps on display in our lobby."

There are up to ten Tiffany lamps available for installation in hospitals and other healthcare facilities. If interested in bringing this unique extension of art and light into your venue, contact Lindsay Parrott, Executive Director and Curator of the Neustadt.

Important Links:

The Neustadt Collection of Tiffany Glass

The Neustadt Collection of Tiffany Glass: <https://www.theneustadt.org/>

Louis Comfort Tiffany's Shade Garden:

<https://montefiorefineartprogram.squarespace.com/specialexhibitions>

The Queens Museum and The Neustadt Collection: <https://queensmuseum.org/2018/09/tiffanys-iridescence-glass-in-rainbow-hues>

Email: Lindsay Parrott email: lparrott@theneustadt.org

Montefiore

The Fine Art Program and Collection at Montefiore Medical Center:

<https://montefiorefineartprogram.squarespace.com/>

Montefiore Health System

<https://www.montefiore.org/>

Louis Comfort Tiffany's Shade Garden

<https://montefiorefineartprogram.squarespace.com/specialexhibitions>

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