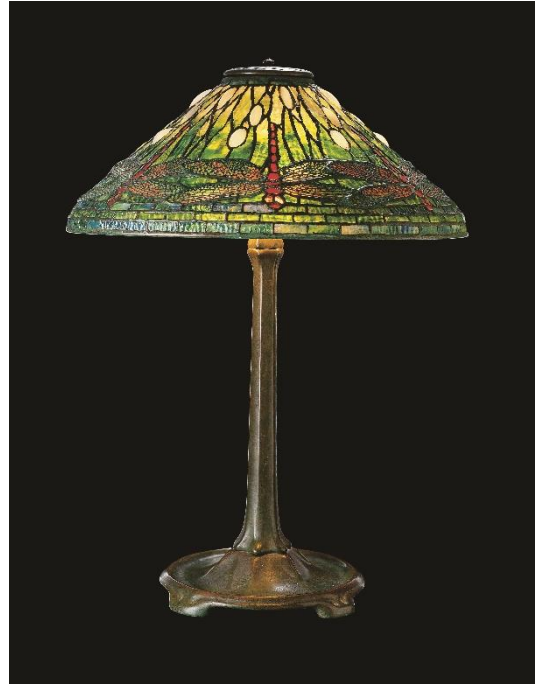


OBJECT of the **month**

May 2020



TRANSCRIPT

Hello. I'm Susan, a Museum Guide at the Dayton Art Institute. I'll be discussing a delightful piece of decorative art in our collection: *Dragonfly Lamp*, by Tiffany Studios, New York; designer: Clara Driscoll from Ohio—made in 1910.

There is a hidden story, lost through time, behind this artwork. But first, let's take a closer look at the lamp.

Louis Comfort Tiffany, owner of Tiffany Studios and the son of famed jeweler, Charles Lewis Tiffany, once said, "Color is to the eye, as music is to the ear." As you can see, this lamp 'sings' with color!

What color stands out to you the most? The red of the dragonfly and the green of the background are complementary colors, so they create a striking contrast. Now, look closely at the individual pieces of glass and their colors. What do you notice about them? There are several pieces of opalescent glass, which is glass with many colors. Opalescent glass was perfected by Louis Comfort Tiffany for his Tiffany Studio creations. In order to realize his vision, he opened his own glass factory and worked with chemists to achieve these looks.

Now, observe the texture of the glass. Are all pieces smooth? Notice how the glass near the bottom rim of the shade appears to have a rippled texture. Does it remind you of anything? Perhaps it suggests the green rippling water beneath a hovering dragonfly.

Towards the top of the shade, we find smooth, white oval shapes. What could those be? How do they contribute to the lamp's overall design? Would the lamp be as interesting without these shapes? Tiffany often tried to replicate natural textures and patterns of nature in his glass.

How would you describe the lamp's bronze base? This design may be reminiscent of a reed or stem in the water. The Dragonfly lamp shade was created in many different colors and could be combined with

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different bases, depending on whether it was to be used with fuel or with electricity. The bronze cap at the very top of the shade featured openings which allowed the heat to escape.

Now, you may wonder: why would one chose to put a dragonfly on a lamp? The artistic movement known as Art Nouveau often took inspiration from nature and was popular at the turn of the century. Mr. Tiffany, a world traveler, had seen a Japanese woodblock print with dragonflies and chose to incorporate them into his art. Dragonflies were a popular motif, standing for courage, victory, and strength.

Let's uncover a bit of the hidden story behind this artwork: while researchers were planning a book about Tiffany, hundreds of letters were discovered, written by Clara to her mother and sisters while she was working at Tiffany's. In the letters, she spoke about the lamps she was designing, including the Dragonfly lamp! Clara Driscoll was the one responsible for designing many of the lamps for the Tiffany Studios.

If you would like to learn more about the lamp and how it was constructed, please visit "What is a Masterpiece?" found on our website. Thank you.

END TRANSCRIPT

Click [here](#) for full multimedia presentation.

RESOURCES

www.nyhistory.org
www.metmuseum.org
www.tiffanystudios.org
www.themsv.org
www.daytonartinstitute.org

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