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Heckscher Museum of Art

Style in 'The Age of Tiffany'

BY DEIDRE S. GREIN
Special to Newsday

For a few days last fall, visitors strolling through the park surrounding Huntington's Heckscher Museum may have noticed American sculptor Edward Berge's early 20th century bronze "The Race" beneath a tent propped up on the terrace of the historic limestone building. The depiction of the young lad goading a mighty stallion onward, part of August Heckscher's original bequest, could be spotted there undergoing conservation for an upcoming exhibition. Passersby might even have seen the dynamic sculpture hooked up to a hose, spouting water from the dolphin heads that flank the horse as well as from the equine's mouth.

"The Race" is among works that are part of "The Age of Tiffany: Between Nouveau and Deco," an assemblage of some 45 decorative pieces, often embellished with natural imagery, from the museum's permanent collection. "The fountain sculpture is a transition, a good place to start for people to understand the link between fine and decorative art," says Heckscher curator Lisa Chalif.

Many of the works' creators were originally trained as fine artists before trying their hands at crafting objets d'art. Interest in decoration escalated toward the turn of the 20th century, notes Chalif, as a result of several factors — the international wares exhibited at the 1939 World's Fair, advances in publishing that precipitated widespread circulation of journals and books on the subject, and a new emphasis on "the unity of the arts."

"Louis Comfort Tiffany rode — and largely created — that wave," Chalif says. The son of the founder of the legendary New York jewelry and luxury goods retailer, Tiffany trained as an oil painter and watercolorist, though his love of light and color quickly led him to the art of glassmaking. "He experimented tirelessly with tech-



niques and effects," Chalif says, noting how Tiffany revolutionized the way glass was cut and modulated, its color range and translucency, and patented many of his advances.

Along with a luminous

Tiffany Studios window depicting a lush vine- and vegetation-covered cross on loan from the Queens Museum, the show offers a select sampling from the Heckscher's permanent holdings of Tiffany organic design,



"The Race," above, by sculptor Edward Berge, is in the Heckscher's permanent collection. Agnes Northrop's "Vine-Covered Cross" is on loan from the Queens Museum. Below, a Tiffany Studios glass vase.

The Age of Tiffany

WHEN | WHERE Through July 22, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Friday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Heckscher Museum of Art, 2 Prime Ave., Huntington
INFO Free to \$6; 631-351-3250; heckscher.org



including leaded and opalescent glass lamps, bowls and vases.

The decorative pieces are complemented by some of Tiffany's watercolors, including a rendering of the loggia at his residence, Laurelton Hall, a 65-room mansion once perched on the shores of Oyster Bay, housing many of his works and a foundation for practicing artists.

While a statuette by sculptor Frederick William MacMoanics and gilded bronze floor candelabra with mythological figures by sculptor Paulanship seem less of an artistic stretch for

their makers, a mixed-media table with peacock design by seascape painter Max Kuehne and an Arcadian-themed tapestry by painter Arthur B. Davies are more unexpected.

"It's interesting to see these fine artists experimenting with other mediums," says Chalif, who notes their desire to espouse the ideal of the period, that is the notion "that beautiful utilitarian objects enrich the lives of those who behold them." Visitors to the Heckscher exhibition will see the principle stays true.