

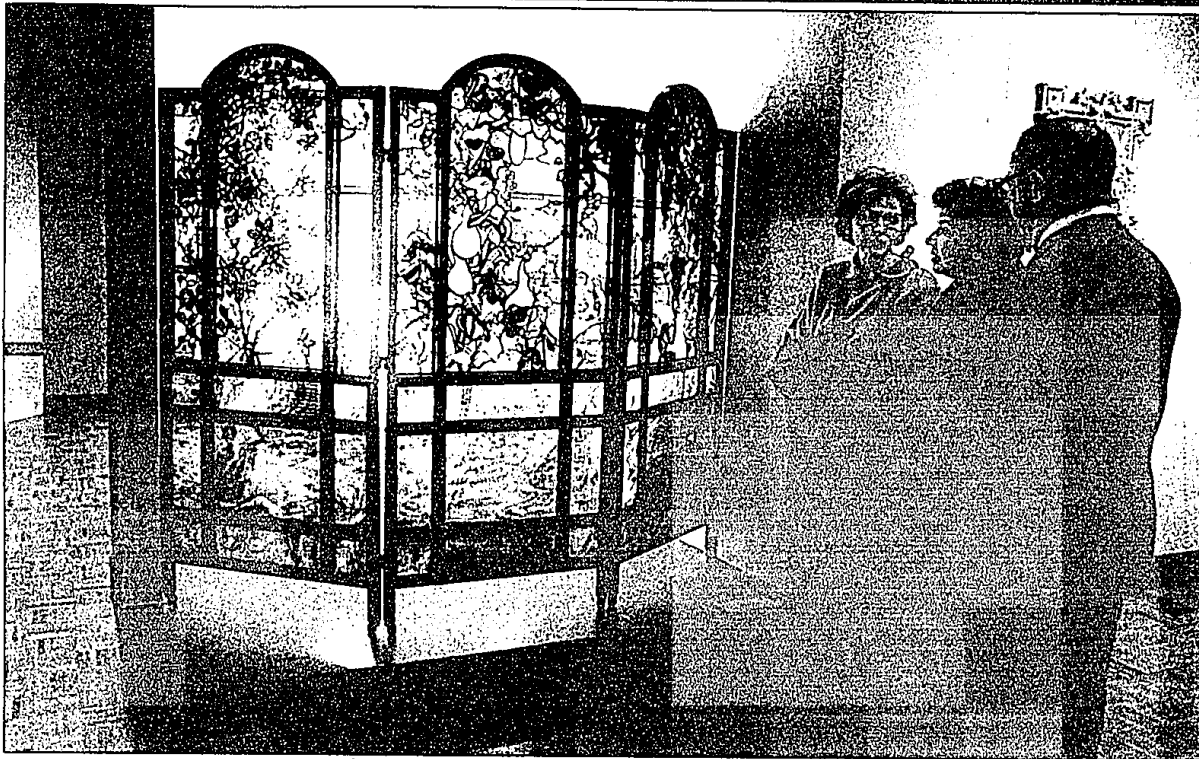
# Creative Living

Marie McGee editor/591-2300



Thursday, December 17, 1987 O&E

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Admiring the Tiffany panels, circa 1900 are Rova Stocker and Dr. and Mrs. Irving Levitt, all of Bloomfield Hills.

## A celebration of craft and art



Exhibit No. 181 is "Four Tiles."

By Marion McLaughlin  
special writer

**B**EHIND EVERY artist worth his or her measure, there is a craftsman or craftswoman, and in good artisanship, there is always art.

The symbiosis and fusion of the two come admirably together in the current "The Art that is Life," the Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920, series at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

This short but extraordinary period in American art history was launched by a group of artists and social reformers who rebelled against the increasing industrialization of urban society, which they believed was responsible for degrading craftsman-like potters, carpenters and metalsmiths into mere ciphers.

The Arts and Crafts Movement was opposed to mass-produced products and ornate "revival" imitations. Its goals were to promote a simpler, better way of life by making working conditions more agreeable, and by truly reviving handicraftsmanship-art that would not only be useful, but beautiful and affordable.

Apart from examples of solid craftsmanship, imagination and flair abound in the more than 200 works on display, including furniture, architectural blueprints and designs, textiles, ceramics, silverware, jewelry and wallpaper. This miscellany of objects — both large and small — has been cleverly and artistically presented by the DIA's American art curator Nancy Rihard Shaw, and museum designers Louis Gaudi and Robert Loeu.

SMALLER ITEMS LIKE silverware and jewelry are arranged in

glass showcases, and a series of partial room settings display furniture and furnishings. Each gallery has an informative description of the history behind the work, and/or movements within the movement.

The Arts and Crafts Movement actually began in England in the mid-19th century where two of its most prominent spokesmen were the first professor of art history at Oxford University, John Ruskin, and artist-social reformer William Morris. Ruskin rejected the use of all machinery and believed that only by returning to handwork would individuality and quality be restored. Morris, who was closely associated with the pre-Raphaelite group of artists, devoted his life to reforming society through craftsmanship.

While influenced by the British group's involvement in moral issues and the revival of medieval and Gothic forms, the American Arts and Crafts Movement found its own identity and voice in, for example, Gustav Stickley's sturdy but esthetically pleasing furniture, dress that combined beauty with comfort and simplicity, and homes designed to blend with American landscapes — such as the by California architects Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene.

Other influences were native American art and craft, Henry Saylor's American-style bungalows — the central fireplace, and the Prairie School houses designed by Louis H. Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, George Washington Maher and others. Women played a significant role, both politically and as artists.

**SOME OF THE SHOW'S** highlights are a standing desk by Mary Lou McLaughlin (1876), the contemporary look of straight-backed chairs and a hanging lamp in leaded stained glass by Frank Lloyd Wright; a stunning linen press circa 1904 from the Byrdcliffe Colony, New York, with leaf-pattern panels designed by Zula Steele; a comfortable Morris chair circa 1910 from the Craftsmanship Workshops, Syracuse; a Gothic carved, church-like crib, 1922, from Bryn Athyn, Pa.; and a fascinating "medieval" ornamental door lock in iron with inlays of gold, silver, bronze, brass and copper, depicting the theme of Grimm's fairy tale, "Snow White and

the Seven Dwarfs, and designed by Frank L. Koralewsky, Roxbury, Mass., circa 1904.

Although Art Nouveau architecture is rare in America (apart from several buildings in Chicago), this highly interesting, ornamental movement from 1890 to the turn of the century, coincided with the Arts and Crafts Movement, and its exaggerated nature forms and sinuous female curves are present in many of the exhibition's vases, glassware, book illustrations, posters and silverware.

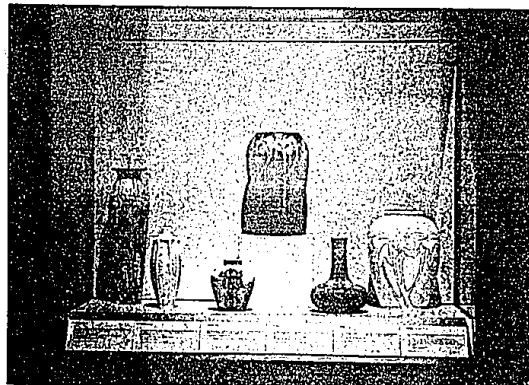
One example is a gloriously romantic three-panel screen in stained glass circa 1900 from Tiffany Studios, New York, comprised of a fruit and flower pattern with bunches of grapes in relief, and smoky, opalescent lower panels.

Others are iridescent vase from the Weller Pottery Co., Ohio, decorated with a flowing tulip pattern by Jacques Sicard (1902-1907), and a silver ewer and stand which dates between 1900-1904, with swimming mermaids in a sinuous sea-wave pattern, from the Gorham Manufacturing Co., Providence.

An oriental influence is seen in a beautiful silver pitcher, circa 1878 from Tiffany, which has a dragonfly, carp and flower motif, and in a vase from the Rockwood Pottery Co., Cincinnati, 1881, decorated with applied dragon and relief-modeled fish and waves, and covered in green and black glossy glazes.

"The Art that is Life" was organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and will proceed to the Los Angeles County Museum and the Cooper Hewitt Museum in New York after it weeks in Detroit. It is appropriate that the exhibition should be featured at the DIA as Detroit was part of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

The exhibit at the Detroit Institute of Arts continues through Feb. 28, and will be accompanied by a series of informative talks, lectures and workshops (for both adults and children). For further information, call 833-7900. Public tours of the exhibition are given daily at 1 p.m. Free with the exhibition admission of \$3 for adults, \$2 for students, and \$1 for children 6-12. No admission for children are 6.



Pottery is an important part in the 200 works that are part of the DIA "Art that is Life" exhibit.

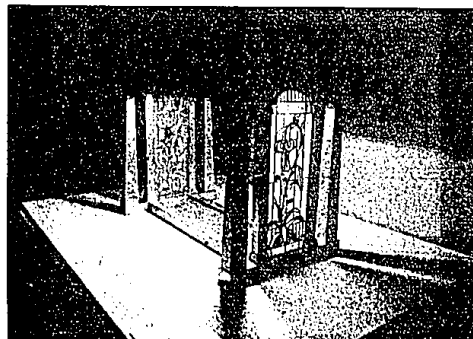


Exhibit No. 219 is a table lamp designed by G. W. Maher.

Staff photos by Laura Castle