



THE CHARLES HOSMER
MORSE MUSEUM
of American Art

January 30, 2014
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Turn on Your Cell Phones Please: Morse Museum Employs Mobile Technology to Introduce Its First Audio Tour

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WINTER PARK, FL —On February 11, the Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art debuts its first audio tour as an educational enhancement for its permanent exhibition on Louis Comfort Tiffany's Long Island estate, Laurelton Hall.

The audio tour, accessible by cell phone, continues the museum's efforts to help bring Laurelton Hall to life through both the surviving objects and the telling of its story. The audio tour includes 27 stops at objects and wall panels and lasts about 45 minutes. Produced with Earprint Productions of San Francisco, which specializes in mobile tours and applications for museums, the tour was in development for 18 months. It features a professional narrator along with commentary

from Museum Director Laurence J. Ruggiero and Curator and Collection Manager Jennifer Perry Thalheimer plus audio clips from the late Hugh F. McKean, the Museum's first director and an artist who studied at Laurelton Hall.



View of the dining room gallery in the Laurelton Hall exhibition.

Audio guides have been a staple offering at major museums for years, but as mobile technology has been improved and embraced, the platform for these audio tours is shifting from devices provided by museums to personal devices. Cell phones—the most quickly adopted consumer technology in the history of the world according to Pew Research Center—are now in use by 91 percent of adults. According to a 2012 survey by the American Alliance of Museums, 8 percent of museums still offer the traditional museum-

provided devices but 36 percent now exclusively offer applications and tours accessible through a visitor's own personal device.

Morse Museum visitors, who come from around the world to see the museum's Tiffany collection, routinely request audio tours. In selecting mobile technology as its choice for audio tours, the Morse can provide visitors with a tour that is both free and supremely convenient. For the museum, using mobile technology eliminates concerns about equipment maintenance, storage, and obsolescence. The Morse Museum's tour is being provided through OnCell, a mobile tour provider with clients in Central Florida and throughout the country.

In preparation for the debut of its first cell phone audio tour, the Morse installed a repeater system in the galleries that boosts reception for most major service providers. The museum plans to eventually develop a mobile application for the tour, to provide access to it via its website, and to produce it in other languages.



View of the living room gallery, showing the turtleback glass hanging lamps and Four Seasons panels.

Tour Highlights

In 27 stops throughout the Laurelton Hall galleries, the audio tour will illuminate visitors on Tiffany's quest of beauty, his glass techniques, and the importance of Laurelton Hall—arguably Tiffany's greatest work of art—in understanding his legacy. On the tour stops in the dining room installation, for example, visitors will learn more about a suite of six leaded-glass wisteria transoms and a 13.5-foot-high, mosaic-decorated marble mantelpiece that is one of Tiffany's most forward-looking designs. In the living room

installation, the tour will stop at four leaded-glass panels depicting the four seasons to provide the history and context for their setting at Laurelton Hall. These important panels are from a single window shown at Tiffany's award-winning exhibit at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris.

Visitors can also hear more about the Daffodil Terrace, an 18-by-32-foot outdoor room at Laurelton Hall that is now installed at the Morse in a glass-enclosed gallery. Supported by eight 11-foot marble columns that are topped with bouquets of glass daffodils, the terrace's coffered ceiling is composed of hundreds of stenciled wood elements and molded tiles in three bays imported in part from North Africa. As the



View of the Daffodil Terrace from Laurelton Hall.

tour will note, Tiffany added the terrace in 1915 after spending years perfecting his design for the daffodil blossoms.

Louis Comfort Tiffany's Laurelton Hall

The museum's exhibition *Louis Comfort Tiffany's Laurelton Hall* opened in February 2011 in a 12,000-square-foot addition that provided for the first time long-term public access to the largest single repository of surviving materials from Laurelton Hall anywhere. The installation features the restored Daffodil Terrace and 200 art and architectural objects from primary rooms at the estate. Highlights include objects from the artist's collection, iconic Tiffany lamps, and leaded-glass windows designed for international exhibitions.

Laurelton Hall, built between 1902 and 1905, was an 84-room, eight-level mansion set on almost 600 acres overlooking Cold Spring Harbor and Long Island Sound. For his country estate, Tiffany integrated into one rapturous whole all the passions and preoccupations of his life—color, light, nature and the art of Eastern and Islamic cultures.

The Laurelton Hall galleries deepened the Morse's interpretations of Tiffany's life and legacy. The artist directed every facet of the estate's construction, from the room interiors and architectural details to an extensive scheme of gardens and fountains. The mansion was destroyed by a fire in 1957. After the fire—as the audio tour will describe—Hugh F. McKean and his wife, Jeannette, who together assembled the Morse Museum's collection, salvaged architectural elements, windows and other objects from the ruins of the estate. Over the next four decades, they continued to search out and collect objects from the estate that earlier had been auctioned, sold or given away.

About the Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art

The museum, home to the world's most comprehensive collection of works by Tiffany, was founded in 1942 by Jeannette Genius McKean, who was committed to the family tradition of philanthropy begun by her grandfather, Chicago industrialist Charles Hosmer Morse. She and her husband, Hugh F. McKean, built the Morse's collection over a 50-year period and have provided continued support to the museum as a gift to the community. The Morse is owned and operated by the Charles Hosmer Morse Foundation and receives additional support from the Elizabeth Morse Genius Foundation. It receives no public funds.

The Morse, located at 445 N. Park Avenue, is open 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. November through April, the museum's public hours on Friday are extended to 8 p.m. with free admission after 4 p.m. Regular admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, \$1 for students,

and free for children younger than age 12, and free for all visitors from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Fridays, November through April. For more information, call (407) 645-5311 or visit www.morsemuseum.org.

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