

## Boston's Ayer Mansion Seeks Its Missing Tiffany Vase

by Jeanne Schinto

Photos courtesy Ayer Mansion

A preservation organization that is renovating a historic house in Boston's Back Bay is asking collectors, dealers, curators, and others to be on the lookout for a vase by Louis Comfort Tiffany that has gone missing. It was one of three that Tiffany designed for Frederick Ayer and Ellen Banning Ayer at 395 Commonwealth Avenue. Completed in 1902, it is Tiffany's only surviving intact residential commission.

Currently, there are two Tiffany Favrite vases in the house's front hall. An inventory for the house, prepared in 1903, clearly lists three. And while that third one has been missing for decades, Jeanne M. Pelletier, preservation advisor for the Campaign for the Ayer Mansion, has reason to believe that it will soon be changing hands again, at auction. That's why she is getting the word out about it.

"We have heard through the grapevine that the vase is now the base of a lamp, and that it is in the estate of a Tiffany collector from the Midwest who died last year. We have also heard that part of his collection, including the vase, will be going up for auction. However, we have been unable, through our contacts, to find out where the auction might be."

Pelletier added, "It's our understanding that the vase now has a Tiffany shade on it as well, and we have no interest in that portion of the 'redesign'—only the vase."

The mansion has been under restoration for 20 years. The vase has been missing all that time or longer. "There is some lore that a previous owner took it with him when he sold the house in 1964," Pelletier said. "At any rate, it is no longer here. We would, of course, like it to be returned to its original home."

The inventory says: "3 Tiffany Favrite glass jars. 16" high, 8" diameter of centre; (over electric bulbs in niches above wainscoting). Shaded bronze, green, and gold coloring; open bottoms. Perfect condition."

The bottoms are open, and the light from the electric bulbs shines up through the tops. They are, in fact, exquisite vase-lighting fixtures. Two are in the niches that Tiffany designed for them. A ceramic statue is holding the place of the third one.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Pelletier at <AyerMansion@gmail.com> or (617) 859-7193.



One of the vases in its niche at Ayer Mansion, electric-lighted from below.



The same vase, without the lighting effect.

## 2018 Wunsch Award for Excellence in the American Arts

For the first time the annual Eric M. Wunsch Award for Excellence in the American Arts was given to contemporary luminaries: Outsider art collector Audrey B. Heckler and art furniture maker Wendell Castle. The award ceremony was held on January 17 at Christie's in New York City.

"This is a real pivot," said Peter Wunsch, son of the late Eric M. Wunsch, before the event.

"Outsider art, for many years the passion of a relatively small group of collectors and scholars, has long since come in from the cold," Wunsch told a large crowd. "Tonight we acknowledge and celebrate Audrey Heckler's passionate support for collecting and commitment to the American Folk Art Museum. We also celebrate American design this evening, and possibly the outstanding furniture creator and crafter of the past half-century, who though certainly not an Outsider artist is recognized for his own unique voice. Wendell Castle's studio practice and his mastery of construction directly parallels the lauded traditions of American craft across the centuries."

Heckler, introduced by Valérie Rousseau, curator of art of the self-taught and Art Brut at the American Folk Art Museum, said, "In 1993, I saw a sign announcing the Outsider Art Fair, and I decided to see what it was about. I went and saw all these dealers and all these colorful works of art. It led me to buy a painting that day."



Alison Castle accepts the award on behalf of her father, Wendell Castle.

She went back the next day and bought more. "That was my first exposure to Outsider art.... Over the years, I've had a very simple approach to collecting. I always liked art, and I acquired what I liked. My paintings are my friends, and it's a joy to live with them...., and they don't talk back," she told the crowd.

Castle's award was introduced by Jennifer Olshin of the gallery Friedman Benda. Castle did not attend the sale, and he died three days later, on January 20. "We celebrate a man that Clement Conger might have called a 'treasure of state.' Wendell is an extraordinary artist, craftsman, and maker of ideas," Olshin said. "With about 2000 works made by hand in his studio, his legacy is unprecedented in our field." Castle, born in Kansas, studied art and industrial design before he realized that "sculpture could take on a greater challenge if it presupposed function. So he became a furniture maker," said Olshin, who added that duck decoy construction was an inspiration for Castle.

Castle's award was accepted by his daughter, Alison, who told the crowd, "He would have loved to have been here if he could, and I'm honored to accept the award for him."

Previous winners of the Wunsch Award have been Patricia Kane, Linda Kaufman and the late George M. Kaufman, Richard Jenrette, the Chipstone Foundation, Arnold Lehman, Morrison Heckscher, Peter Kenny, Brock Jobe, and Leroy Graves.



Audrey B. Heckler accepts her Wunsch award from Peter Wunsch, son of the late Eric M. Wunsch.

## The Philadelphia Antiques and Art Show

by Lita Solis-Cohen

The 56th Philadelphia Antiques and Art Show has new support. The Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) and Penn Medicine have become joint beneficiaries of the show, and the PMA will gradually assume full responsibility for the show's organization and management in the following years and apparently become its sole beneficiary.

The show's 61 dealers will fill its purpose-built tent pitched on a field at 11th Street and Kitty Hawk Avenue at the Philadelphia Navy Yard for three days: Friday, April 20, through Sunday, April 22. The preview party will be on Thursday, April 19. (Note: this is a new location at the Navy Yard, two blocks nearer the water, with more convenient parking and lots of signage.)

The show features furniture, silver, pewter, folk art, ceramics, paintings, prints, jewelry, textiles, and crafts from pre-Colonial days to the present, all of which is exhibited by leading dealers in their fields. The show is designed to appeal to traditional antiquarians and sophisticated art collectors who come every year from all parts of the country and to a new and broader young audience.

The show was founded in 1962 to support the work of Penn Medicine. This year's show will also benefit the Philadelphia Museum of Art, marking the 12-A Maine Antique Digest, March 2018

beginning of a new era. The loan exhibition *Philadelphia Collects*, assembled by PMA curators, will include art made in Philadelphia in past centuries to the present, including some recent acquisitions.

"It is exciting to be partnering with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, whose purpose is to share the splendors of the past and make us aware of the art of today," said Diana Bittel, who with Karen and Ralph DiSaia manages the show.

"The Philadelphia Antiques Show has long been regarded as one of the best of its kind in the country, and we are expanding the offerings in 2018 to accommodate new and broadening audiences," said Anne Hamilton, who with Nancy Taylor is cochair of the show.

Tours, panel discussions, and lectures will add to the show experience. Martha Stewart is the lecturer on Friday at 11:30 a.m.; she will be talking about her new book, *Martha's Flowers*. Tickets are \$50 and include show admission.

At 2 p.m. on Friday, Alexandra Kirtley, the PMA Montgomery-Garvan Curator of American Decorative Arts, and Elisabeth Agro, the PMA Nancy M. McNeil Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Crafts and Decorative Arts, will discuss collecting Philadelphia's decorative arts past and present.

On Saturday Emelie Gevalt, a Ph.D.

candidate at the University of Delaware, in cooperation with the Decorative Arts Trust, will give a talk at 2 p.m., "Buying and Selling Philadelphia: The Story of the Legendary 1929 Reifsnnyder Sale," which will explore the market forces, personalities, and mystique behind the sale that occurred just before the stock market crash in 1929.

On Sunday at 2 p.m. Stacey C. Peebles, the Pennsylvania Hospital's curator and lead archivist, will talk about the hospital's historic collections in its historic building, which is still operating as a modern hospital. Pennsylvania Hospital, part of Penn Medicine, is a beneficiary of the show.

The show is open Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission tickets are \$15 online from the website ([www.philadelphiaantiquesandartshow.com](http://www.philadelphiaantiquesandartshow.com)) until March 16, and general admission is \$20 at the door; the price of admission includes a catalog and admission to the 2 p.m. lectures. Discounted tickets are available for youths 13-18, students, and seniors; children 12 and under receive free admission; and groups of ten or more may also arrange for a discount rate by calling (215) 573-2247. Well-informed guides will offer tours of the show an hour before opening time (10 a.m. daily); the fee is \$25 a ticket. The Bull Dog Café, sponsored by

Pook & Pook, Inc. and catered by 12th Street Catering, got accolades last year, and it will be back.

Tickets for the preview party on Thursday, April 19, are \$600 for 5 p.m. arrival, \$300 for 6 p.m. arrival, and \$150 for "young collectors" (people younger than 40).

On Friday, April 20, the Antiques Dealers' Association of America (ADA) will present its Award of Merit to Peter Kenny, co-president of Classical American Homes Preservation Trust. Tickets are \$95 and can be purchased by sending a check made out to ADA to PO Box 218, Northwood, NH 03261. Kenny is well known for having been a curator for 30 years at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where he oversaw the design and renovation of the American Wing's Classical galleries and the installation of the New York Dutch Room. Kenny was responsible for two major exhibitions at the Met accompanied by prize-winning books: *Honoré Lannuier: Cabinetmaker from Paris* and *Duncan Phyfe: Master Cabinetmaker in New York*.

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