

Tiffany Silver

Book Review by Will Chandler
Silver Magazine, March/April 1997

This important history has for some years been out of print and used copies have gradually become too expensive for most students and collectors of silver. How much more welcome then is this fully revised edition. The author and publisher have worked closely to produce an improved version of the 1978 edition, resulting in graphically superior work.

The new edition most benefits from a larger 8 1/2 x 11 inch page format. The text has been completely reset and there is now room for chapter title headers on the recto pages, and a less cramped combination of text and illustrations. All but two of the illustrations have been rescreened from the original glossy photos. This allowed enlargement of many of the photos and a more graceful balancing of some elements on each page. The result achieves much greater legibility, with a crisper look to most of the illustrations and a fuller tonal range in the blacks and whites. The color plates were also newly separated to improve their veracity. This is especially pleasing in the illustrations of the mixed metal and silver-gift examples.

One design change has, in my opinion, been less successful. The new typeface chosen for the revision sits much more lightly on the page, and is sized just a bit smaller. The body text remains quite readable, but the bolder typeface of the old Dodd, Mead edition is just easier to discern.

The resetting of the text allowed the author to make numerous corrections of small errors or inaccuracies in the text, and to write a new introduction. Mr. Carpenter has included new insights on renewed American consumer interest in silver table wares and silver jewelry over the past twenty years, and the role taken by Tiffany and Co. and its designers in fostering that interest.

The book's index has also been completely rewritten, usefully correcting errors and omissions in the first edition. (The danger of resetting a text is that new typographical errors might be introduced as the author and editors focus on removing the old and vexing ones. I came across a little example on page 112, an "s" dropped from a plural word in the reset text. This is the sort of minor trouble that spellcheck programs don't much help, the publisher's version of a gnat welded to a fresh coat of paint. All involved deserve our sympathies.)

Some book revisions are so useful or so pleasurable that we happily add them to our libraries even though we have a perfectly sound older edition on the shelf. I would add the new Tiffany Silver to this list.

Tiffany Silver 1997 Revised Edition Author: Charles H. Carpenterjr. with Mary Grace Carpenter Publisher: Alan Wofsy Fine Arts, P.O. Box 2210, San Francisco, California 94126 Tel: (415) 292-6500; Fax: (415) 292-6594 260 pages, over 331 b&w photos and illustrations, 8 color plates. 45 photos of marks, pattern number chronology, bibliography, index. Price: Hardcover (ISBN 1-55660-243-X) \$95.00