

## A Philadelphia Man Paid \$6,000 for Cracked Church Windows He Saw on Facebook. Turns Out They're Tiffany—and Worth a Half-Million

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A Pennsylvania antiques collector who has a penchant for quaint historical objects like vintage signs and age-old commercial products got more than he bargained for when he snapped up some odds and ends from an old church in West Philadelphia.

When Paul Brown, who is 56, decided to salvage two rose windows—cracked and covered in years of dust and grime—for just \$6,000, he couldn't have imagined that they would turn out to be Tiffany.

Now, the rose windows by the renowned New York decorative arts firm, which once crowned St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, have been restored to their former glory. They are expected to fetch between \$150,000 and \$250,000 each when they hit the auction block on May 18. Whether the precious objects inspire a bidding war or not, the final hammer price is certain to be many times higher than what Brown originally paid for them, even accounting for the additional costs of hiring workers to extract the windows and the \$50,000 conservation fee.

Brown arrived just in time to save the glass from being demolished during the 1901 building's ongoing conversion into the new Emmanuel Christian Center, a process that has been controversial among local preservationists. "Do you want to get these windows out before we sledgehammer them out?" Brown was asked after he inquired about the windows on Facebook Marketplace, he told the [New York Times](#).

With the instinct that he may have something valuable on his hands, Brown took the windows straight to Freeman's auction house to be appraised. As it turned out, they had been commissioned from Tiffany Studios around 1905. The workshop, founded by Louis Comfort Tiffany in 1878, made stained glass for many churches across the country thanks to the support of wealthy donors. (In this case the local merchant John Wanamaker helped support the purchase.)

Both radial windows contain a spectacular kaleidoscope of color with cooler hues of yellow and green at the center and warmer purple and navy tones at the border. The central quatrefoil on one contains a golden crown, representing Christ, while the other boasts a white dove mid-flight for the Holy Spirit. Both windows are being offered with their glass set into a custom wood frame.

"The intricacy of these works is stunning, and it's meaningful to bring to market pieces that have such a deep, meaningful history in Philadelphia," said the head of Freeman's design department Tim Andreadis.

The rose windows will be included in Freeman's upcoming design auction in Philadelphia, which begins at 11 a.m. on May 18.

