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# TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

## ***The Crowning of Ivanhoe*, 1904** Designed by Edward P. Sperry

For many years, whenever I entered Bartlett Gymnasium (now a dining commons) at the University of Chicago, I would turn to look at the splendid stained glass window over the entrance. At first I was simply attracted by the bright colors and intricate details, but gradually I learned more about the window's subject, a pivotal scene from Sir Walter Scott's 1819 novel *Ivanhoe*. This chivalric tale was set in twelfth-century England and the window presents The Crowning of Ivanhoe at the jousting tournament of Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Seeing it evoked memories of grammar school reading, to say nothing of the Hollywood epic starring Elizabeth Taylor as the beautiful Rebecca. The subject seemed appropriate to a sports facility built in the early-twentieth century when university campuses were filling up with gothic buildings and athletic events invested with complex rituals. The window was designed by Edward P. Sperry, who had worked in the studio of Louis Comfort Tiffany. Its six tall sections have been reproduced in several books dealing with Tiffany glass.

Alas, reproduction is the only way to see this great window at the moment. It was taken out for safety reasons during Bartlett's renovation, and the reinstallation, as well as the restoration of the glass, will be very expensive and await a donor. There are certainly other causes more worthy of support. But the window's current status reminds us that works of art, like all of us, age and deteriorate, and require careful attention if we are to take a closer look. The Bartlett lobby does retain other artistic tributes to the power of athletics, notably Frederic Clay Bartlett's elaborately painted mural depicting a medieval tournament. Bartlett was a benefactor as well as an artist. While his father Adolphus donated the gymnasium, he gave the Art Institute its most popular possession, *La Grande Jatte* by Seurat. I hope one day *The Crowning of Ivanhoe* is back where it can be seen, invoking Scott's great novel and the memories associated with this storied building.

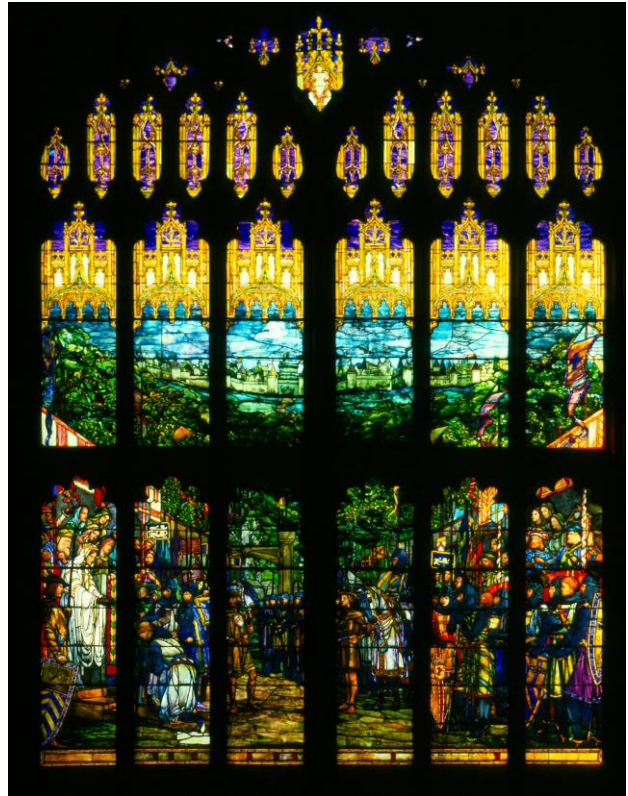


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The Chicago-based Terra Foundation for American Art is proud to sponsor *American Art American City*, a Chicago-wide initiative designed to promote awareness and appreciation of historical American art. Between October 2007 and December 2008, approximately 30 partner organizations around the city are offering a wide array of American art activities, including exhibitions and tours of important and rarely seen collections, television programming, lectures, and more.

**TAKE A CLOSER LOOK**, a campaign in conjunction with *American Art American City*, is designed to highlight the wealth of American art treasures in Chicago. A group of prominent Chicagoans have shared their personal responses to a favorite work of historical American art, whether on display in a Chicago museum, park, school, or downtown plaza.