

### **Unconsciousness by Launt (Lancelot) Thompson (1833-1894)**

Launt Thompson was born in Ireland and moved to Albany, New York with his widowed mother in 1847 as a result of the potato famine. He had always possessed a talent for art and was hired as a studio boy by Erastus Dow Palmer who saw potential in his work. Launt moved to New York City in 1858. His first work to catch the attention of the public was his marble portrait of James Capon Adams, also known as "Grizzly Adams", the legendary woodsman.

Thompson was doing so well financially, that he took the "Grand Tour" of Europe in 1868. While in Florence, he visited the famous Irish-American sculptor, Hiram Powers, who did the Proserpine bust located in the Napoleon Room. Back in New York, he married Marie Potter and they moved to Florence in 1871. Here they lived next to Hiram Powers.

It was during this time that Launt Thompson finished his only nude sculpture entitled "Unconsciousness" or the "The Chief's Bride". This piece was a labor of love for him since he was not commissioned for the work. Launt was taken by the story of a young American girl, who was kidnapped by Indians. When the girl became an adult, the chief gave her a choice of returning to her family or becoming his bride. She chose to remain with the tribe and the sculpture depicts her touching a turtle which was the symbol or totem of the tribe.

Launt moved back to New York in 1881 and the loneliness of leaving his family behind in Florence and the high demand for his work caused him to overwork and to drink to excess. In 1890, he was arrested, then transferred to a private sanatorium then moved to the State Homeopathic Asylum for the Insane in Middletown, New York., where he died in 1894.

The statue was purchased by Charles Starbuck and present to The Flower Memorial Library in 1906. Unfortunately, during the train ride from New York City to Watertown, her neck was broken.