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Highest standards evolving from highest demands

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All those who have written about the preservation and promotion of Tiffany's heritage - and in Croatia this has meant writing primarily about the work of Željka and Boris Rogić - have sought an answer to the fundamental question: where, in the reinterpretation of an already historical phenomenon, does one find the "room for manoeuvre" for a personal vision and acts of creativity? In answering this question, the "divide between supreme craftsmanship and creativity" (D. Glavan) cannot be avoided. It is precisely this "divide" that serves as a starting point in the search for answers to a number of questions concerning the present situation in art. These questions, obviously, have not plagued only those who have inherited Tiffany's legacy; indeed, they are inseparably linked with the whole of art in our days. It is debatable whether such questions should be considered in the context of disintegration of the so-called traditional values, or rather in the context of the increasingly obvious need to put together the "fragments of the broken mirror of aesthetics"

If the Dada movement was the traumatic and fatal blow which forced the "decay" and "decomposition" of the so-called "fake" values in the madness of the First World War, the Allied fight against fascism on the battlefronts of the Second World War raised hopes for a new world built on new principles of humanism. But it soon became obvious that the world remained deeply divided and even more bitterly confrontational in its extremes, which, of course, could not but affect the arts too. There was no essential difference between the pressures exerted by Kharkov-style socialist dogmatism and those exerted by the aggressive and unyielding new avant-garde. Resistance came only from isolated individuals who remained outside the leftist as well as the rightist trends, firmly believing that art could renew itself only in the atmosphere of tolerant pluralism.

During the heyday of extremist hardline policies and practices of

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different persuasions, always "in the name of history", those artists who opposed the new dogmatism looked for their personal (as well as artistic) chance in the process of renewal of fallen values.

Thus, in the citadel of the avant-garde, we find the "Trojan horse" of pop art, hyperrealism, trans-avant-garde, anachronism, and various other "neo-" movements, all of them invoking the recent or more distant past. Nothing was left to chance or improvisation in this search: this was a deliberate return to discipline, technical mastery and perfect craftsmanship - in short, to everything that went counter to the "easy life on the bandwagon".

". Finding themselves on this path of revival, the artistic couple of Željka and Boris Rogić of Rijeka opted for the highly demanding Tiffany technique, accepting not only the rights but also the obligations, as heirs and successors, for the preservation of Tiffany's legacy. They were not discouraged by the possible objection that this was merely "applied" art, and they demonstrated that the implications of this choice were quite deep. Tiffany's discipline covered much more than just lamps, from which it was just a short step to stained-glass windows. I have often been thinking recently about this return to "old" disciplines and technical perfection, which has been brushed aside by legions of mediocre followers of fashionable trends. It is certainly no mere chance that anachronism should have appeared in postmodernism, along with other (neo) figurative movements, to mark a decisive turn towards the hitherto neglected craftsmanship and strict painterly procedures. Of course, much more is at stake today than mere procedural rigour, but if nothing else, it is a sure path back to the art of painting. After decades of experimentation, wandering, frustration, delusion, misdirected effort and inquisitiveness, painting is at last returning to its home port. The Rogićes have found their place on the returning ship.

The Rogićes are not only reviving Tiffany's legacy, but are also doing their best to integrate it into contemporary European art. Tiffany's postulate of "highest standards of design" (F. Vukić) is not yet part of the historical canon of art. Those, including the highly committed and dedicated Rogićes, who have remained faithful to this legacy through - out the time when craftsmanship and discipline were neglected, have not only insisted on rigorous procedural consistency but have also - in line with the highest traditional standards in this genre -successfully



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preserved Tiffany's seed of life for a different kind of art in the future. Efforts such as the Rogičes's have helped to move the future boundaries far beyond the "narrow" domain of applied art, with which Tiffany's work used to be identified.

It is this heightened "interest rate of aesthetics" in Tiffany's legacy that justifies the Rogičes' next step: with the present exhibition, they (formally, one hopes) take their leave of lamps and other illumination objects and move towards stained-glass windows, using Tiffany's double-glass technique to achieve a multiple increase in the number of spectral colours. The shift from lamp shades to stained-glass surfaces is a logical one and certainly not unexpected, stemming as it does directly from Tiffany's postulates.

Let me, in conclusion, take up again the question that I have not yet answered: to what extent is it possible to be individual and creative while strictly obeying the postulates of a hermetic model which, in a way, is part of history? I would agree with F. Vukić, who says that the Rogičes' "supracontextual auctorial effort" comes from the "store of memory". The fact is that the Rogičes did not look for their models in a peripheral segment of modern art, but rather in its historical core and its highest standards, from which there followed highest demands. An adherence to such a model does not in itself mean being a slave to this model. This is well proved by ancient Egyptian art, where the model remained unchanged for centuries, and yet, in its "unchangeability" we can clearly trace each artist's artistic personality. The same is not the same in the work of a genuine artist, while in the work of an untalented artist even the "different" is always the same. Talent will shine through the most hermetic of models, and leave the unmistakable imprint of individuality. This is the imprint that Željka and Boris Rogić have left on their Tiffany-style lamps, which strictly correspond to the historical model and at the same time bear an indelible "supracontextual auctorial touch".



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