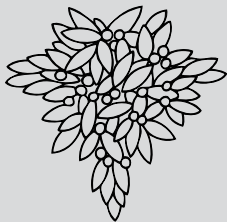


The mystery of the Triangle

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It is not surprising, therefore, that the Rogićes, as the continuators but also questioning explorers of Tiffany's opus, have absorbed both his virtuoso technique and his predilection for symbolic representation characteristic equally of the turn of the century, which Tiffany lived to see, and the turn of the millennium, in which the Rogićes took their most courageous and original step in their artistic career



Whenever I wrote about the creative work of Željka and Boris Rogić, which I have done on more than one occasion already, I never failed to point out the fact that their contribution to the preservation of the Tiffany style of artistic design of glass objects contained elements of an unmistakably original approach. It gives me a great deal of pleasure at this point to note that such advance signs - especially visible in the changed colour scheme and combinations of original models - have finally resulted in an invention that fully confirms the prophecy of a gradual departure from the great historical model.

Željka and Boris Rogić never rushed along the path of artistic maturity: rather, just as they painstakingly and systematically mastered the highly demanding technology of glass making in accordance with Tiffany's postulates, they slowly built their own, original archives of forms. In addition to producing virtuoso variations of the great master's compositions, with a distinct interest in the understanding of symbolic representations in historical as well as contemporary settings, the Rogićes also accept commissions which encourage them to seek original compositional and design solutions to match the spiritual, public or commercial purpose of the space which they thus decorate with their glass friezes. In doing this, for sacral buildings, for instance, not infrequently do they run against equally precise and constraining instructions by the clients as they did with their early variations of Tiffany's lamps and similar utilitarian objects. Among the public buildings decorated by the Rogićes, mention ought to be made of the Kostrena town hall with monumental (12 square metres) windows, in which strongly coloured vertical patterns alternate with narrower vertical patterns in translucent white and several shades of grey. Similar compositional effects are achieved in the stained-glass window with the motif of the green cross, which fits perfectly into the interior of the Pharmacists' Club in Rijeka.

In the execution of these highly effective and imaginative geometric patterns, the artists continue to use top-quality glass manufactured in Tiffany's tradition, but with this piece they take a radical step away from Tiffany's inventions and adopt the neoconstructivist idiom in the tradition of Exat 51, which is still very much alive among the artists belonging to the Rijeka Circle. The series of eighteen mosaic pictures presented at this exhibition, made in the technique of stained glass, marks a radical departure from the artists' earlier practice of reliance on, and exploration of, the historical legacy and in the direction of a total freedom of artistic creation.

Carefully selected fragments of prefabricated glass plates manufactured in highly reputable workshops and used in the realization of this project behave like paint tubes on the artists' personal palette. What matters is not the point of departure but the ultimate result - the combination of tones obtained with the mixing of colours, that is, a careful selection, gradation and shaping of small triangles made of glass. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Rogićes, as the continuators but also questioning explorers of Tif-

fany's opus, have absorbed both his virtuoso technique and his predilection for symbolic representation characteristic equally of the turn of the century, which Tiffany lived to see, and the turn of the millennium, in which the Rogićes took their most courageous and original step in their artistic career.

Speaking informally, one could say that the "mystery of Tiffany" has been replaced by a Rogić-style mystery of the triangle. A possible reading of the present series of representations may be sought - in keeping with the authors' own statements - in the Christian concept of the Holy Trinity. This explains the use of the equilateral triangle as the basic visual element and module for the construction of the totality of the picture. The Christological interpretation is most transparent in the seventeenth picture, where thirty-three equilateral triangles are placed within stylized waves to evoke the thirty-three years of Christ's life on this earth.

Quite apart from this predominantly religious symbolism, the present cycle can also be interpreted on the worldly level, for instance, in the light of historical and contemporary concepts of art. On my first encounter with this exceptional artistic undertaking, I was reminded of the mediæval rules for the recognition of the status of a master in a particular form of creative endeavour - be it in art or in craftsmanship. Once an apprentice had learned the trade under the watchful eye of an experienced master craftsman, he was sent into the wider world for several years as an itinerant journeyman to develop his skills and gain new experience. It was only after such travels that he was allowed to take a master craftsman's examination and present his original work for the recognition of this status. With the present cycle, the Rogićes have definitively, though perhaps unconsciously, asserted their independence of Tiffany's creations and demonstrated their ability to offer an original reinterpretation of their knowledge and skill within a radically changed formative syntax.

Also, a comparison of the present cycle with the Kostrena town hall windows and the stained-glass window in the Pharmacists' Club reveals not only morphological consistency but also an increasing complexity, moving from simpler to more complex creations. Moreover, the underlying geometrical pattern of this cycle, particularly the motif of the meander as the optical focus of the central pictures, can be seen as a reflex of the already mentioned strong presence of geometrical abstraction and constructivist picture-building principles in modern and recent Croatian painting. It is within this tradition that Željka and Boris Rogić situate this imaginative series of triangles and concave-convex pictures, to win for themselves an original and recognizable position that rests on three components: supreme historical legacy of international renown, the local and national genius loci, and personal inspiration.

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