

Tiffany but Today and Here

Trying for the second time to sum up the most significant elements of the biography and artistic creation of Željka and Boris Rogić, graduates of the Zurich school continuing the tradition of Louis Comfort Tiffany's technique of glass forming and increasingly frequent exhibitors in the most prestigious Croatian museums and galleries, I am again faced with the key determinant of their exceptional glass forming art - namely, the relationship between their work and encounters with the Rogićes faultless replicas as well as variations of Tiffany's lamps and with their own original creations like the "Croatian Lamp", I did not find it easy to clearly differentiate between supreme craftsmanship and creativity, since in the overall impression the painstaking respect for tradition prevailed over intimations of originality. This first impression, strengthened also by their precise decision to dedicate their first exhibition in Zagreb to L. C. Tiffany, has gradually shifted in favour of their own invention as I came to know more and more of their original works. In spite of the incompleteness of that first insight, I am pleased to be able to repeat some of the remarks that I made in the "literary" biography of the artistic couple which was included in the catalogue of their first exhibition, "Hommage a L. C. Tiffany", held at Zagreb's Museum and Gallery Centre in 1993. At the time, I explained their case as yet another piece of evidence of the cosmopolitan character of 19th and 20th century art production in the city of Rijeka. With an even firmer conviction, I can now reiterate my opinion about "their decision to go deliberately beyond the boundaries of self-imposed limitations".

At that time I did not quite clearly grasp the key that would enable me to understand the link between Tiffany's artistic fate and the Rogićes' opus, apart from the easily recognizable technological and stylistic identifications. This time, I hope, I am closer to the recognition of the ties between the founder and the continuators of this fine glass cutting tradition, thanks, among other things, to my reading of Norman Potter and Douglas Jackson's study of Tiffany's opus (Norman Potter and Douglas Jackson, *Tiffany*, Octopus Books Limited, 1988). In a typically concise Anglo-Saxon style, Potter and Jackson highlight the main characteristics of Tiffany's artistic personality, noting that "Louis Comfort Tiffany was a very gifted, creative and extremely energetic man, who had no fear of radical changes in his career". It is precisely in this openness to radical shifts in life that I see the deep link between Tiffany's personal and artistic life and that of Željka and Boris Rogić. The Rogićes, for example, renounced the middle-class security that their law studies would have given them in favour of the artistic adventure of glass-cutting. Like Tiffany, they too are supreme masters of glass-forming, whose products, ranging from office lamps for high public officials to stained-glass windows for churches, depend greatly on the needs and tastes of those who commission their work.

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It was precisely Tiffany's willingness to place his designs in private residences as well as in most notable public buildings (Yale University, West Point, the White House, etc.), in profane as well as sacral environments, that secured for him a key position in American art at the turn of the century. It is this same approach that allows his glass cutting but also spiritual successors, the Rogićes, to continue the tradition of his art in keeping with today's needs and sensibilities.

Today and here, they know that they cannot rest content simply repeating the master's solutions, but rather that they must - with great skill and sense for fine nuance - reconcile the original spirit of Tiffany's creative tradition and challenges of modernity.