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Artist, Glass-Painters, Craftsmen, and a Dispute about their Place in Designing and Executing Stained Glass at the Beginning of the 20th Century

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Artiste, peintres verriers, artisans, et la discussion sur leur place dans la conception et l'exécution du vitrail au début du XX^e siècle – Résumé

En 1912, dans les pages de la Zeitschrift für alte und neue Glasmalerei und verwandte Gebiete, un débat eut lieu sur la possibilité d'améliorer la qualité de la fabrication du vitrail allemand. Cela servit de base pour soulever différentes questions sur les relations entre les différents agents impliqués dans la réalisation

des vitraux.

- 1) Un débat sur les relations entre l'art et l'artisanat ;
- 2) Un conflit entre la production collective ancienne et les artistes ;
- 3) Une discussion sur la place du vitrail dans la hiérarchie des arts.

Künstler, Glasmaler, Handwerker und die Diskussion um ihren Platz in der Gestaltung und Ausführung von Glasmalereien zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts – Zusammenfassung

1912 wurde auf den Seiten der Zeitschrift für alte und neue Glasmalerei und verwandte Gebiete eine Diskussion über die Möglichkeit einer Qualitätsverbesserung der deutschen Glasmalerei geführt. Auf dieser Grundlage werden unterschiedliche Fragen zum Verhältnis der verschiedenen Akteure bei der Realisierung

der Glasfenster aufgeworfen.

- 1) Eine Debatte über das Verhältnis von Kunst und Handwerk;
- 2) Ein Konflikt zwischen alter kollektiver Produktion und Künstlern;
- 3) Eine Diskussion über den Platz der Glasmalerei in der Hierarchie der Künste.

In 1912, a discussion about the possibility of improving the quality of German stained-glass making, which was considered poor, took place in the pages of the *Zeitschrift für alte und neue Glasmalerei und verwandte Gebiete*. Delegates of the Association of German Applied Arts Societies (Verband deutscher Kunstgewerbevereine) passed a proposal that unprofessional businessmen (that is, individuals not trained in stained-glass making), whose main concern was the cheapest possible production, be prohibited from running stained-glass workshops. They also suggested that workshops should dispense with commissioning designs from independent artists who charged inflated fees for their work, as their designs, for economic reasons, were unprofessionally executed anyway. A cure for the poor state of stained-glass making would be to integrate the designing of cartoons and executing them in glass in a single hand.

A contrary view was held by Gottfried Heinersdorff. He believed that only the separation of the design process from the execution of the cartoons in glass could improve the quality of stained-glass-making. He pointed out that stained-glass workshops, operating usually under the owner's name – often an accomplished painter himself – employed artists to make designs for stained glass, whose names did not appear on the works produced by the workshop. This lowered the artistic quality of designs, because their makers did not feel personal responsibility for the outcome of their work. Heinersdorff thought that only if renowned artists from the outside were entrusted with designing stained glass, would the quality of designs improve. These artists would set much more store in the quality of their ideas, and simultaneously the craftsmanship of their execution in glass would be higher, because the artists would make sure that their designs were not spoiled by a poor rendering in glass.

Rudolf Linnemann, in turn, warned against engaging external artists in designing stained glass. He was of an opinion that a majority of them were not knowledgeable about the technical aspects of stained-glass production, which might result in their designs being impossible to be properly executed. Furthermore, he asserted that – unlike in the 15th and 16th centuries – contemporary artists had no insight into decorative qualities of art, which prevented them from making proper designs for stained-glass windows.

In these three attitudes the main problems related to the authorship of stained glass, as debated at the beginning of the 20th century converge.

1) A debate about the relationship between art and craft. Should the designer be a craftsman or an artist? Should every work of stained glass be a work of art, or was there room for crafts (e.g. ornamental,

simple, geometrically patterned glazing, heraldic panels, and restaurant signs) as well?

2) A conflict between the old, guild-system-based, collective production, and the artists who aspired to be the sole ('inspired') creators of the work or art.

3) A discussion about the place of stained glass in the hierarchy of arts. Does it belong to 'pure art' (i.e. painting) or 'applied art'? And consequently: what should its makers be called? Do they only provide a general idea which is then elaborated by draughtsmen in the stained-glass workshop into a cartoon? Or are they artists, fully aware of the technical and material constraints of the stained-glass medium; or finally, are they craftsmen, less interested in the artistic side of the design and more attentive to the highest level of the work's craftsmanship?

