Design - Nativity and Death of Christ

Archive / Collection of Designs and Drawings

Accession Nr.:	KRTF 25
Artist/Maker:	Rippl-Rónai, József (1861 - 1927) / designer
Place of production:	Budapest
Inscription:	balra lent a keretdísz fölött és jobbra lent: Rónai / RR
Materials:	paper
Techniques:	pencil drawing; watercolour
Dimensions:	height: 125 cm width: 100 cm

The proportions and divisions on this sheet are identical with the contemporary embroidered tapestry, known as Idealism and Realism, exhibited at the Milan exhibition and destroyed in the 1906 fire. Only its sketch has survived (Hungarian National Gallery, Inv. No. 1935-2817, 212 x 151 cm). The top scene of the picture is symbolic and static, while the bottom scene is narrative.
The top part of the sketch shows Christ's crucifixion with a kneeling female figure at the bottom of the cross, and a male figure on the left hand side of the cross, wearing a long shirt and a richly plaited tunic (St. John the Evangelist). The scene is enframed by trees of rich foliage on both sides. The tree on the left has separately drawn, spear-shaped leaves, while on the right the foliage creates a homogeneous patch. The same trees in the size of a bush balance the group of figures at the bottom. Sára Iványffy-Balogh recognized Paul Gauguin's 'Yellow Christ (1889) as the closest analogy to this Crucifixion scene. In the bottom third of the sketch, there is an Adoration scene in a long, horizontal, architectonic frame, divided into several sections by columns and pierced arches. The early 20th century objects, such as the sweeper, the pram with wheels, and the bed, make this picture a genre. Mary sits in the centre, holding the child in her arms. A crowned figure with a shepherd's stick in his hand kneels down to adore the Child Jesus. The figures of the other two kings are in the background, hardly noticeable. The location and the figures suggest that the admirers are shepherds, only the simple crown and the gifts from the Eastern wise men - a cup, a casket and a string-of-pearl - refer to higher-ranking guests, as if it were a scene of a Christmas carol. The repeated ornaments of the border are flowers in stylized wreaths of leaves. There is a text at the top: HALÁLA (his death) and on the bottom left ÉS SZÜLETÉSE (and his birth). Rippl-Rónai's tapestry design belongs to a group of works made between 1892 and 1899. Besides other tapestry designs, among the pieces of this period, were the illustration of Les viérges and the objects for the interior of Count Tivadar Andrássy's dining room. All of them show a clear influence of the Nabis artist group, especially the applied arts works of P. Ranson. There is a wool, woven version of the bottom part of this design in the collection of the Budapest Museum of Applied Arts (47 x 111 cm). The realized design was published in a colour reproduction by the periodical Magyar Iparművészet (Hungarian Applied Arts) in 1908, as a work woven in the Weaver's workshop of the Budapest Decorative Drawing School. This tapestry was presented at the exhibition of religious art in Venice in 1923, and is probably identical with the one in the collection of the Hungarian National Gallery (Inv. No. 81.31 T). The measurements of the latter objects are almost identical with the design described above (125 x 105 cm). There is another sketch, also in the collection of the HNG (Inv. No. 1935-2834), dated 1892, with French inscriptions, in a much larger size (221 x 167 cm) and with a less detailed decoration. Comparing the two drawings, there are some differences of the Golgota scenes. On the more sketchy design the composition is less detailed, the colours differ, the strong patch of the foliage is contrasted with the dark tone of the clothes. On the other hand, the design applied on cardboard is more mature, being slightly stiffer and more static. The design in the collection of the Budapest Museum of Applied Arts is almost identical with the realized, woven version - although symmetrically reversed - both in measurements, decoration and colours. It is, therefore, assumed that it was realized according to an earlier design – made specially for the Decorative Drawing School. The size was probably reduced to conform to the facilities of the workshop in the school. Thus the exact date of the design should be put between 1906, the year of foundation of the weaver's workshop in the school, and 1908, the date of the first publication of the tapestry.

Literature

- Szerk.: Nagy Ildikó, Bernáth Mária: *Rippl-Rónai József gyűjteményes kiállítása*. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest, 1998. - Nr. 209-211. (László Emőke)

© 2012-2026, All rights reserved Museum of Applied Arts

- Szerk.: Szilágyi András, Horányi Éva: *Szecesszió. A 20. század hajnala. (Az európai iparművészet korszakai.)*. Iparművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, 1996. - Nr. 9.258. (Lichner Magda)

