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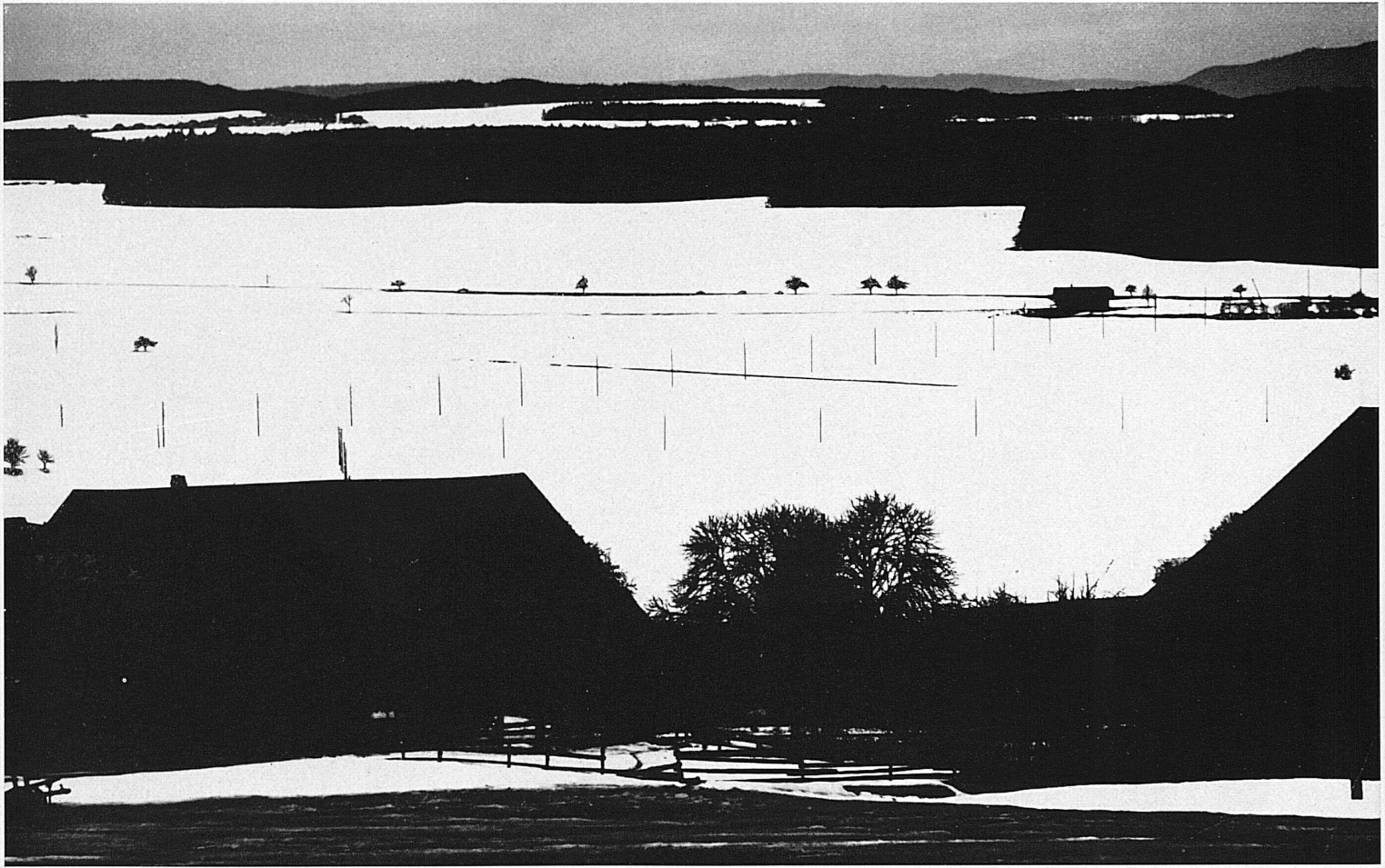
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*Winter über den Äckern von Alchenstorf im Berner Mittelland
Alchenstorf, dans le Mittelland bernois: l'hiver sur les champs
Inverno sopra i campi di Alchenstorf, nell'altipiano bernese
Snow-covered fields near Alchenstorf in the Canton of Berne
Photo Max Mathys*

In den Jahren 1525 bis 1530 entstanden für das Chor der ehemaligen Klosterkirche Königsfelden bei Brugg im Aargau elf Bildfenster, die zu den bedeutendsten der Schweiz zählen. Es sind Stiftungen der Familie des in Königsfelden ermordeten Königs Albrecht I., des älteren Sohnes König Rudolfs von Habsburg. Das ergreifende Teilstück mit Johannes, dem betenden Lieblingsjünger, entstammt der Beweinung Christi im Passionsfenster.

Eleven stained glass windows, produced in the period 1525–1530 for the choir of the former Königsfelden conventual church near Brugg, are considered to be among the most important such windows in Switzerland. They were donated by the family of King Albrecht I who was the eldest son of King Rudolf of Habsburg and was assassinated in Königsfelden. Photo shows the disciple John in prayer, part of the window devoted to the Passion.

Photo Kantonale Denkmalpflege Aarau

Les onze vitraux de l'ancienne abbatale de Königsfelden (près de Brugg, Argovie) figurent parmi les plus beaux de Suisse. Créés entre 1525 et 1530, ils sont un don des descendants du roi Albert I^{er}, fils aîné de Rodolphe de Habsbourg, assassiné sur le lieu même où se dresse l'église votive. Ce fragment, qui représente le disciple préféré en prière, est une partie du vitrail de la passion et de la scène qui groupent ceux qui pleurent le Christ.

L'ex chiesa conventuale di Königsfelden, presso Brugg (cantone d'Argovia), vanta undici vetrate policrome ideate e composte negli anni 1525–1530, un autentico capolavoro annoverato tra i maggiori tesori d'arte del nostro paese. Il convento e la chiesa, ai quali gli Absburgo furono larghi di doni e di privilegi, sorsero nel luogo medesimo in cui venne assassinato Alberto I, figlio maggiore del re Rodolfo d'Absburgo. Il particolare qui riprodotto fa parte della scena raffigurante il compianto per la morte di Cristo, nella finestra dedicata alla Passione. L'orante è Giovanni, il discepolo più giovane e prediletto di Gesù.



In its prime, glass painting was an ecclesiastical art. Thus we find in inexhaustible variety an endless succession of similar themes: The Life of the Saviour, the Life of the Virgin, the History of the Apostles, Legends of the Saints, and Scenes from the Old Testament foretelling the gospel story.

The depictions assume two dominant forms: the statuesque figures of Christ and the Mother of God, enthroned in majesty, and the standing figures of the Apostles and Saints, static and hieratic, encircling the light-filled spaces of the cathedrals, recognizable from afar; and the smaller scenes where the artist has given joyous rein to his imagination and created a throng of people with much accessory detail.

The framing decoration in stained glass is decided by one or the other form of representation. It allows the stonework to be carried over into the window and ensures the preservation of scale either by means of Gothic canopies and tabernacles with their crockets and hood mouldings or by setting the stage and scene in quatrefoils, quarries and medallions. The adjacent panels created by the subdivision of the surface contain an abundance of geometrical, floral and figure-like motifs and ornamentation. Variety in the form of framing gives rise to marked contrast between one window and the next, and sets off the characteristics of each to advantage.

Flexible strips of lead or "comes" secure the differently-coloured pieces of glass and at the same time clearly mark off the various panes making up the whole. These bands it is which bring out the lines in the stained glass, but at the same time they form part of the general patterning. If the lead strips simply follow the outlines and nowhere indulge in patterning for its own sake they form vessels brimming with lucent colours whose glories are beyond words. There is no merging of hues: the colour radiates intensely from within the sharply-defined limits of its pane, and when the sun is shining, flashes and coruscates like the fire in gems. One becomes conscious of the inherent organization of the window only after some contemplation. To it the colours are subject—the red and blue of the background, the sonorous chords of red, yellow and green, of red, green and violet, and the dazzling brilliance of white glass.

In only a few cases is the name of the master known or traceable. His personality may be perceived in his choice of colours, in the preference he gives to the basic tones of red and blue and the combination in which he uses them, and in the light or dark effect which his window has as a whole. As regards colour there is less naturalistic accuracy than in painting on wood or canvas. The haloes of the saints are red or green, the grey stone

of the building is cheerfully transmuted into blue or yellow; reality and unreality intermingle without embarrassment.

The lead which holds the glass and separates the colours is assisted by the brush, which draws in "schwarzlot", or black line, adds an overlay of transparent colour, shades and etches, and with a few telling lines can indicate facial features—hair, eyes, nose and mouth—hands and feet, folds and hems in the kerchiefs and garments, houses and plants, and the sun and the moon. Drawing has its own purpose to fulfil by underpinning the colour and helping the onlooker to understand the picture. It will be noticed that this function is purer in the earlier examples, for there drawing is used but sparingly. For stained glass achieves its greatest triumphs where the artist succeeds in painting *with* glass and not *on* glass. The use of "yellow stain"—a mixture of silver chloride and fine-grained clay which gives white glass a golden-yellow colour—was the first deviation from this principle and brought about a relaxation of the rule that each colour must have its own pane of glass.

The technique of production remains the same in its details whether the work in hand is a small chapel window or a series of panels depicting a succession of related episodes. Stained glass requires generous donors, a spacious workshop, and finally costly conveyance from the glass works to the site of installation, which is frequently some distance away. The pieces of glass are chosen from many different varieties, and such factors as irregularity in thickness, colour and so forth are taken into account in obtaining a desired effect. With a cartoon of the picture as a pattern, the pieces are cut out with scrupulous care, composed into a whole, supplied with drawn details, shaded, then fired and fitted into the lead comes. Masters and assistants set their hands to this task unmindful of their status.

Good fortune and genius seem to have conspired to create the masterpiece of the Königsfelden choir, which is without a peer in our country and far beyond its frontiers. Windows of such rich artistry depicting the legends of saints, figures of apostles, and the life of our Saviour, with all their intricacies and gradations, and their superb ordonnance according to subject, colour and form, could only take shape because one single family had bestowed the necessary funds for their creation—the children and grandchildren of King Albrecht I of Habsburg, who was slain on this spot by a murderer's hand and in whose memory the double abbey of Franciscans and the Sisters of St. Clare was raised in compliance with the wishes of his widow.

ANCIENS VITRAUX DE SUISSE

A sa grande époque, la peinture sur verre était un art religieux. En une transformation incessante, on y retrouve le constant retour des mêmes sujets: vie des saints, vie de la Vierge, histoire des apôtres, légendes pieuses, ainsi que les scènes de l'Ancien Testament qui annoncent le Salut.

Deux genres de figuration dominent: les images monumentales du Christ et de la Vierge, trônant en majesté, les figures en pied des apôtres et des saints, statiques, hiératiques, majestueusement alignées, reconnaissables de loin dans les verrières des cathédrales françaises — et les scènes de plus petites dimensions, riches en images narratives, en personnages et en accessoires.

Les maîtres verriers ne sont que rarement connus. Leur personnalité se manifeste avant tout dans le choix des couleurs, dans les préférences accordées aux tons fondamentaux du rouge ou du bleu avec leurs alternances, dans les harmonies en clair ou en sombre qui forment l'ensemble de la baie colorée. Les tonalités s'éloignent davantage de la nature que dans la peinture. Les nimbes des saints sont rouges ou verts, la pierre grise des architectures se transforme sans scrupules en bleu ou en jaune; la réalité et le rêve se pénètrent sans gêne.

Au plomb qui réunit les verres et sépare les couleurs vient s'ajouter le pinceau qui dessine en noir, glace, trace les ombres et les efface et connaît

les secrets pour figurer les visages, les cheveux, les yeux, les nez, les bouches, les mains et les pieds, les plis et les bordures de coiffes et des vêtements, les maisons et les plantes, le soleil et la lune. Le dessin complète la couleur, aide à l'intelligence de l'image et la sert. On remarque qu'il la sert avec plus de pureté dans les vitraux les plus anciens, de conception plus simple. Il ne faut pas perdre de vue que le vitrail célèbre ses plus grands triomphes alors que l'artiste peint son œuvre avec le verre et non sur le verre.

Une première atteinte à cette loi a été portée par l'apparition du jaune d'argent, mélange de chlorure d'argent et d'argile finement granulé, qui donne au verre incolore une teinte dorée, dérogation à la règle qui veut que pour chaque couleur il faut un fragment de verre.

Le procédé est toujours le même, de la petite fenêtre d'une chapelle aux grands ensembles formant un cycle. Le vitrail ne se conçoit pas sans de généreux donateurs, de vastes ateliers de verrerie et des transports que l'éloignement de la verrerie rend souvent coûteux. Les verres sont choisis entre diverses qualités, en tenant compte des irrégularités de fabrication, de la couleur et d'autres facteurs déterminants pour l'effet d'ensemble. Par des procédés compliqués, les fragments sont coupés d'après le modèle, assemblés, dessinés, peints, vernis, puis passés au four et réunis par des plombs. Maîtres et aides collaborent également à l'œuvre. M. St.