

Thoughts On Glasnost, by K. D. Kragen (1993)

(Egg Tempera - 36x30 - 1992) Assume an objective theory of art. There exists extra-mental, aesthetic reality out there in the real world, as a fact of the matter. The aesthetic perceptual capacity of the artist affords the artist access to aesthetic reality. And given such aesthetic vision and creative intuition on the part of the artist, the artist concretizes some aspect of reality or truth into the work of art; thus the aesthetic object or aesthetic event exists autonomously, objectively, and inherently possessing a variety of aesthetic properties.



Now, "Glasnost," by Claudia McKinstry, expresses the vision of the mystic, the intuitions of the aesthetic perceiver, and exhibits the techné of the accomplished artist. Though dealing with a subject that is, in fact, foreign to the artist—a topic indigenous to the Russian experience—the creator of "Glasnost" nonetheless shows herself amazingly conversant in the images and feelings of that second language.

Utilizing the medium of Russian Iconography, egg tempera, "Glasnost" is itself a kind of modern Icon, recording, concretizing, sanctifying a single moment in time. It captures and focuses our attention on that moment. The clock in the center of the picture is art deco, a style contemporaneous with the early years of the Soviet empire. The clock is dead center in a work that celebrates the demise of The System and the beginning of Openness.

Materially, the style is reminiscent of the American painter, Edward Hopper (1882-1967). "Glasnost" seems to combine a tenuous realism with just a whisper of surrealism. Thus, the moment hovers tenaciously between the hope of Glasnost and the fear of losing an auspicious beginning.

The window in the painting opens both ways, outward and inward, so it is with Openness. The afternoon light comes in, the yellow glow of smog over the city shows decay. And the ethereal aspect of the great Orthodox Cathedral on the left is indistinguishable from its reflection in the window on the right, as if the central vision of Glasnost (in the moment) is more concrete, more substantial, than the perennial institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Now, assume a subjective theory of art. Now, "Glasnost" can mean whatever you want it to mean.

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