

Marko Ivan Rupnik, S.J.

Slovenian mosaic artist, theologian and priest
(b. 1954)

Marko Ivan Rupnik (Salloga d'Idria, November 28, 1954) is a Slovenian artist, theologian and presbyter, belonging to the Jesuits.

Together with the Spiritual Art Atelier of the Aletti Center, of which he is director, he has created famous works all over the world, such as the mosaics in the "Redemptoris Mater" Chapel in the Vatican, those of the basilicas of Fátima and San Giovanni Round, those on the façade of the Sanctuary of Lourdes, the Sanctuary of the Madonna dei Fiori in Bra, the Cathedral of Santa Maria Reale Almudena in Madrid, the Orthodox Church of the Transfiguration in Cluj, the Sanctuary of St. John Paul II in Krakow, the Shrine of St. John Paul II in Washington and the Shrine of Madonna Ta 'Pinu in Gozo.



Biography

In 1973 he joined the Society of Jesus. After studying philosophy in Ljubljana, in 1977 he enrolled at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome which he concluded in 1981. He then studied theology at the Gregorian University in Rome. Here he specializes in missiology, with a license on "Vassilij Kandinsky as an approach to a reading of the theological significance of modern art in the light of Russian theology". In 1985 he became a priest. For some years, from 1987 to 1991, he lived in Gorizia at the "Stella Matutina" Jesuit Center, where he worked mainly among young people. In 1991 he obtained his doctorate from the Gregorian Faculty of Missiology with a thesis led by Tomáš Špidlík on "The missionary theological meaning of art in Vjačeslav Ivanovič Ivanov's essays".

Since September 1991 he has lived and worked in Rome at the Aletti Center of which he is director. He teaches at the Pontifical Gregorian University and at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute of Sant'Anselmo.

Since 1995 he has been Director of the Spiritual Art Atelier of the Centro Aletti. From 1999 to 2013 he was consultant of the Pontifical Council for Culture and since 2012 he has been consultant of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization. On January 14, 2017, Pope Francis appointed him consultant to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

In 2013 he received an honorary doctorate from the Francisco de Vitoria University of Madrid and in 2014 from the Faculty of Theology of Lugano.

In February 2000 he received the "France Prešeren" award, the highest recognition for the culture of the Republic of Slovenia. In 2002 he was awarded the honor "Sign of

honor of the freedom of the Slovenian Republic", conferred on him by the President of the Republic. In 2003 he received the "Beato Angelico" international prize for Europe.

In addition to his activity as an artist and theologian, he has always dedicated himself to the more specifically pastoral activity, through conferences and the guidance of courses and spiritual exercises. He is the author of numerous books on theology and spirituality, many of which are published by the Lipa publishing house.

The beginnings

Father Rupnik is a color artist. At the beginning of his career he is close to the avant-garde of the twentieth century, in particular to Kandisky's abstract painting.

"Following them, I understood painting as an expression of an inner, mysterious world that escapes rigorous methodologies, science, but which is essential for man, which is as true as the existence of man himself is true, even if suffocated. under a formalist and rationalist cloak that also reifies the person "

The paintings of this period are built on the rule of contrasts between colors, in the search for harmony between them. "God is the light, and all that is in God is in the light. Communion is the light of men. Communion is captured in the colors. Communion in God is harmony in colors. But harmony is possible in diversity. The harmony that God wants is the cohesion of absolute, pure, strong colors. In the light, contrasts sparkle a spectrum of communion. Love is that force that creates a symphony from contrasts "

"One day a little gypsy woman proudly told me she had black eyes. She wore a small red flower in the tuft of dark hair. Since then I have said to myself: it is not true that black is not a color "

However, Rupnik is not interested in color itself, as an expression of the artist's state of mind, but feels the urgency to get to the point of putting the meaning of life as a theme, which for him means recognizing the centrality of Christ.

Even in this non-figurative phase, characterized by the softness of colors, interspersed with fabrics, animal skins, objects, carpets, the artist progressively begins the search for the "Face of Christ", an eternal and personal face that lies beneath cultures and traditions, those of the American Indians, the ancient Slavs, the beginnings of Christian art.

Sacred art

Descent into Hell and Resurrection in the chapel of the St. Stanislaus College in Ljubljana, the work of Father Marko Ivan Rupnik and the artists of the Centro Aletti

The frequentation and deepening of the spiritual and cultural tradition of the Christian East (the Fathers, but also recent Russian theologians such as Vladimir Sergeevič Solov'ëv, Nikolaj Berdjaev, Sergej Bulgakov, Pavel Florenskij) allow Rupnik to draw on the heritage of the " Undivided Church "of the first millennium and to show what it

considers the insufficiency of a part of Western theology sometimes imprisoned in the schemes of instrumental rationality without symbolic capacity.

"I was doing exhibitions, the critics noticed me, and I understood the risk that fame can pose. But St. Ignatius of Loyola directed me to inner freedom and the spirituality of the Fathers to the monastic heart I began to take leave of painting, art, exhibitions. I even covered some paintings with black, to be really free of it. "

Here there is a further passage in Marko Rupnik's artistic and spiritual path: from the artist who "feels" to the artist who "serves". "There is a thick ascetic trait between an art proposed as a refined craft and an art that responds to the need for« beauty that saves the world »(Dostoevskij)".

"In 1996 the Church asked me to engage in a liturgical artistic work. Then I understood clearly that I can no longer escape, that art is not simply the expression of the artist, but a service, humble like all services. Art is like love: the more personal it is, the more universal it is. "

This intuition leads Rupnik to search for coherent artistic forms aimed primarily at sacred spaces. "Gradually I saw more and more clearly that my art finds its *raison d'être* in participating in the totality of the liturgy, bearing witness to human pain and God's redemption."

It is therefore not a question of choosing between figurativism or abstractionism, but of keeping liturgical language in mind: it moves on the "personal" and the "community". The liturgy by its nature is a space that combines the subjective of the believer with the objective of the "ecclesia": even art in this space can overcome the antinomy between subjective and objective to arrive at a symbolic essentiality, recognizable in every historical moment by the Christian people.

In Fr Marko "the perception of the organic unity between the liturgical event that is celebrated and the building or space that hosts it matures. The art in the liturgical building is not decorative, but constitutive of the event that is celebrated there and of the community that recognizes itself in that building, the image of the Church, of humanity and of the transfigured universe. We need a liturgical art that not only arouses admiration, but also devotion, reverence, piety, a religious sense. "

The mosaics and choral art of the Centro Aletti

In 1999, with the Atelier of the spiritual art of the Aletti Center, Fr. Marko Rupnik concludes the mosaic renovation of the Redemptoris Mater Chapel entrusted to him by Pope John Paul II. From now on, Rupnik's art will be engaged in a dialogic relationship between the iconography of the Eastern tradition and the artistic sensitivity of Western modernity, united in particular in the mosaic technique.

The choice of the mosaic was born from two reasons:

"The hammer is not like the spatula or the brush. Stone is a more demanding, harder art, stone has its own will. If you take it for his way it will go along with you, otherwise

you hurt yourself ". The choice to work with stone leads to purifying the internal horizon and communication with others

"The mosaic cannot be done alone, it is always a choral work". In ancient times the mosaics were made by artists who worked under the guidance of a master all together in the yard. Therefore making mosaics is an "ecclesial experience". "From the work of communion the material movement slowly reveals itself, acquires a face". "Here in Capiago there were twelve artists working with me. If three had been missing, a different mosaic would have come about. Because no mosaic is done at the table in an abstract or rigidly fixed way. We must take into account the people who actually work there . "

The references of this mosaic art are to be found on the one hand in the tradition, on the other in the modernity of the more material currents such as those of poor art.

"It took me years of research to arrive at a simple essentiality that goes back to the early Romanesque, the early Byzantine and Gothic periods. Those eras are of a formidable artistic-spiritual maturity. It is not a question of imitating, but of drawing inspiration and recreating that period. spiritual intentionality. "

"In this time that is slipping more and more towards the virtual and the imaginary, I think it is important to love reality, for creation" as fidelity to the material loved by a God who became incarnate. "

The mosaics by Rupnik and Centro Aletti are composed of irregular tiles (from a few millimeters to tens of centimeters) of different materials: granite, marble, travertine, enamel, silver, mother-of-pearl, gold leaves. They create a movement within which artists suggest the link between liturgy and history, between time and eternal salvation.

In them, red and blue "explode" as signs of the "divine humanity" of Christ, Mary, his disciples and those who let themselves be moved by the Spirit: they are "the unshakable foundation of the harmony of colors, the two colors in which the Christians of the first millennium recognized the divine and the human "

In the church of Saints Agostino and Monica in Casciago, in the province of Varese, there is another mosaic by Marko Ivan Rupnik, also depicting the Descent of Christ into hell.

Translated from:

https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marko_Ivan_Rupnik

[Photo catalog of Fr. Rupnik's works](#)