

Exhibition of Stained Glass Windows for Jerusalem by Marc Chagall – 06/16/1961

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Host: At the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Marc Chagall is presenting a series of stained glass windows designed for the University of Jerusalem. The series is remarkable in its composition and in Marc Chagall's characteristic colors. While we already knew Chagall well as a painter and illustrator, we were less aware of his creations as a master of glasswork. For Chagall, these stained glass windows are a beginning. He was interviewed by Lise Elina.

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Lise Elina: Master, why are you beginning to work with stained glass?

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Marc Chagall: I made the stained glass windows because destiny, as I've already said, wanted me to do this. To facilitate my expression in what I feel is an unexpected way for me. Tragic too, if you will. Because it's always tragic when you hit on a sensitive spot in your life.

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Lise Elina: Do you think your usual approach, your usual colors, are a match for working with stained glass?

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Marc Chagall: I don't know what my usual colors are, you know. I don't know which colors they are. They're the colors of our life. You're the one who says it. They're Chagall's colors, not Chagall's colors, I don't know.

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Lise Elina: Are you a fan of stained glass? I'm talking about classic stained glass. Do you visit cathedrals?

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Marc Chagall: I'm blown away by some examples of great stained glass, which happen to be found in France, in Roman and Gothic architecture. It's too pretentious to say that I'd like, if you will, to draw inspiration from these great artists. And by the simple ways and by ordinary conduct.

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Lise Elina: It does seem like your stained glass windows are an echo of—and I mean this as a great compliment that could be made to you in the future and for posterity—are an echo of stained glass windows from the Middle Ages. Do you think stained glass can be worked with nowadays like it was in olden times?

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Marc Chagall: Listen, to get married, you have to be in love. And to build things, chapels and synagogues, you have to have a certain religiosity.

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Lise Elina: In your future, do you intend to continue working with stained glass?

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Marc Chagall: If I have enough physical strength and if the people who ask me to are nice. And for nice places, maybe I'll do it.

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Lise Elina: Does it seem like childhood, perhaps your own slightly difficult childhood in your home country, inspires most of your work?

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Marc Chagall: But if I wasn't in France, I'd never have anything of myself. If [I was] still in Vitebsk, I might be a nice craftsman. France gave me not all, but 75% of life and the rest comes from my parents.

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Host: As you know, Chagall was originally from Russia.