

Garden Museum, Lambeth, London SE1

Address

Garden Museum, 5 Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB

Overview

Lawrence Lee (1909 – 2011) was one of the most distinguished stained glass artists of the 20th century. This window is one of a selection made in conjunction with Lawrence Lee's son, Stephen Lee, to highlight some of his father's best work for the Visit Stained Glass website.

The window was installed in the Garden Museum, which was founded by Rosemary and John Nicholson in 1977, in order to rescue the abandoned church of St Mary's at Lambeth, which was due for demolition. Unfortunately, the window is now largely obscured by structures created by the museum. As a result the window has not been included as a main entry. However, it was a favourite of Lawrence Lee and a good example of his 'secular' glass, so details have been included in this PDF.

Highlight

Tradescant window

Artist, maker and date

Lawrence Lee, 1981

Window description

The following description of the window is by Lawrence Lee

The motif of an abstracted tree forms the main linking device over the whole window; it also performs a practical function by accepting the difficulty of a central mullion in making it form a stem which embraces the tracery above in a kind of flowering wreath to surround the monogram of the Tradescants. The central circle is the world as seen from outer space – a symbol of a world-wide interest in plants promoted by the Tradescants.. The square area below is a symbol of order and may also be thought of as an enclosed garden.

The four roundels are respectively: Adam and Eve (bottom left); the Tradescants father and son (bottom right); an Oriental garden (top left); and the garden at St. Mary's (top right). Below the latter two are the Arms of the Tradescants and the Arms of the Worshipful Company of Glaziers. The suggestion of flowers within the tree branches (in the sketch) are exploited in the actual window with examples of plants connected with the Tradescants; the flowers in the monogram are, in fact, Tradescantiae.

Though these elements are the main subject matter of the window, the spectator should first see it as an evocation of nature through colour and design, and not be too concerned with literal explanations.

The quotation at the base of the window is from John Smith's General History of Virginia:

Adam and Eve did first begin this innocent work to plant the Earth to remain to posteritie. But not without labour, trouble, and industrie.

Other comments

In addition to Lawrence Lee's Tradescant window the museum has there are a number of windows by Francis Stephens (1953-58), although, unfortunately, they too are not always fully visible. An image of one of the windows is on Francis Stephen's Artist page.



Lawrence Lee, detail of Tradescant window (1981), Garden Museum, Lambeth, London SE1.

Photo: Peter Hildebrand



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