THE LENCINGRAD ARTISTIC GLASS PLANT

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The Leningrad Artistic Glass Plant has been a participant in many international exhibitions and trade fairs. It is the holder of the Diploma of Merit of the Brussels World Exhibition and the Gold Medal of the Leipzig Trade Fair. The Leningrad crystal is exported to Belgium, Denmark, Canada, Finland, and other countries, including Italy, the birthplace of Venetian glass.

What is the reason for the fame of the production from this Plant which is still very young (this year it celebrates its 25th birthday) and which is continuing to grow and to be reconstructed? It bears on its shoulders the 200-year-old tradition of making ringing, sparkling crystal. The Plant cannot be separated from the history of Russian artistic glass since modern glass-making in our country cannot be understood without considering the experience of the Leningrad Plant.

The Plant is not a simple enterprise producing a product to meet general demand. It is a part of our country's culture and one of the artistic glass-making schools. Such cultural figures as the world-famous sculptor Vera Mukhina and Alekssei Tol'st'i the writer are associated with the history of the Plant. It is not by chance that the former Dekinskaya Street, where the building of the St. Petersburg Civic Glass Plant once stood and where later the mirror factory stood on which the present Plant was based, now bears the name of N. N. Kachalov. Professor Nikolai Nikolaevich Kachalov, corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and an outstanding figure in science and technology, was one of the founders of the Plant.

Whereas today the production of the Leningrad Plant embodies the aesthetic principles of only one of the many artistic schools of Soviet glass-making, only two decades ago no other such schools were in existence. We can state that the establishment of this branch of the industry began with the founding of the Leningrad Artistic Glass Plant. Although tens of our plants produce high-grade glassware and some of these have a 200-year history, the artistic glass industry has taken shape in its present form as a result of the direct influence and experience of the Leningrad Plant. The first artistic and scientific-research laboratories attracting specialist artists were set up here. All the processes involved in working and finishing glass have gradually begun to be carried out on a scientific basis. The Leningrad Plant has also been the alma mater of many craftsmen and artists now working in other enterprises.

The radical reconstruction of the Plant was begun in 1960 and is still being continued. The production area of the new buildings will be almost double the previous area. The reconstruction is being carried out without any interruption of production.

The artistic laboratory, under the direction of E. V. Yanovskaya for the last 20 years, has been faced with an arduous but worthy task. The artistic style of the Plant was not, at first, sophisticated. From simple domestic articles the artists began gradually to change over to a more disciplined and grand style. Leningrad crystal conforms, as it were, to the architectural style of the city. The artistic sense is subtly combined with a high standard of execution. Color is used very delicately. The articles are fascinating in the nobility of their form, the purity and sparkle of the material, and the tranquil balance of all the sections and details of the articles. The delicacy and discipline are produced by certain elongated proportions and the vertical articulation of the goods. Within a general framework, the artist can express himself in different ways. Thus, for example, the work of A. M. Ostroumov is more disciplined and elegant, while the work of L. O. Yurgen is distinguished by its emotional quality.

The artistic laboratory is carrying out much work on gift articles. Large imposing vases and services commemorating various anniversaries and important events have been made. Many new articles


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have been made for the 100th Anniversary of Lenin's Birth, the 50th Anniversary of the October Revolution, and the 50th Anniversary of the Founding of the USSR.

The artists have designed a fair number of Leningrad souvenirs, little vases, goblets, and other souvenirs for Vladimir, Suzdal', Gorki, and the Black Sea resorts. Particular success in this field has been achieved by the artist A. A. Astvatsatur'yan, who has several times been the victor in various competitions. In 1969 the Plant was awarded the first prize of the Ministry of the Structural Materials Industry of the Russian Federation for mass production of souvenir and gift items in special packaging.

The artistic laboratory has carried out much work on the use of glass in architecture, for example, in the glazed columns of the Avtovo Station of the Leningrad Metro (architects E. A. Levinson and A. A. Grushke), and has played an important role in the creation of curved glass sculpture ("Torsos," "Head of Scientist" by V. I. Mukhina) and souvenir and gift articles ("Badger," "Bear" by A. E. Sylova).

One achievement of the artistic laboratory has been the change in the range of goods. Virtually all the old ranges produced by the Plant were replaced by new ones in 1970. New articles began to be produced in mass editions and this had a favorable effect on the creative output of the artists.

The work of the scientific-research laboratory has also received a new impetus. It was necessary to find methods of mass- and serially-producing articles which even yesterday were unavailable to the public and were only seen at exhibitions. This has created a sound basis for cooperation between the artists and the scientists. The artists, on their part, began to master new production techniques which had been developed by the engineers of the research laboratory.

The artistic laboratory tested new glass compositions, finishing methods, and various decorative media, which had been developed in the scientific-research laboratory. The artists of the Leningrad Plant were the first in the country to use sand-blasting methods, ultrasonics, and iridescent films for decorative purposes. These developments have been widely acclaimed and now have a widespread application in this branch of the industry.

The scientific-research laboratory has developed one of the most beautiful of contemporary glasses which is rich in artistic features. This is the so-called zinc sulfide glass (originators A. A. Kir' enin and E. A. Ivanova). Many Plants in the Russian Federation, in the Ukraine, and in Belorussia, have now mastered the melting of this glass. The Dya't'kov and the Pervyi Mai Plants have achieved particular success here.

The chemical polishing methods developed by the Leningrad Artistic Glass Plant and the necessary special technical equipment are now widely used. The Plant was the first to begin studies on the use of a diamond tool for finishing hollow-ware. This method has been taken up by other enterprises.

The Plant has studied methods of melting and the compositions of colored glasses. From these studies a handbook has been produced, "A Dictionary of Normal Glass Compositions and Their Melting Schedules" (author A. A. Dauval'ter) which is used in several other enterprises. New modern designs have been created at the Plant, including a hand-operated pump for blowing, a brush invented by Rodnin, a glass-blowing tool invented by Rodnin and Eremin, and a method for metallizing molds, discovered by Rokhlin et al., all now widely used in the high-quality glass industry.

It should be noted that, thanks to the activities of the scientific-research laboratory, the Plant became its own scientific center.

The designs and ideas of the artists and the development of production techniques become reality at the talented hands of the Plant's master craftsmen. The work of the diamond-tool workers A. D. Vasil'ev, N. A. Savin, and M. A. Kudryavtsev, and of the glass-blower V. A. Efimov, stands out for its technical and artistic perfection. All these men have been awarded the title of "Master-artist" and some have been awarded orders and medals of the All-Union Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy of the USSR.

Other leading craftsmen are at work, clearly interpreting and expressing the artistic ideas of the artists: the diamond-cutter, V. F. Solov'ev; the grinders, M. N. Kondrat'eva and A. A. Smirnova; and the engraver, T. V. Shalotina. Some of the master craftsmen are also inventors. They include F. S. Rodin, a joiner; I. M. Trishin, a fitter; and I. E. Kolosov, a presser. Their labor has been rewarded with high honors.