

# **The Wagnerian windows in the Círculo del Liceo of Barcelona: a unique scenography made of glass.**

**Clara Beltrán, Jordi Bonet y Núria Gil**

At the peak of Wagnerian fever in Catalonia, the scenographer Oleguer Junyent, the painter and interior decorator Josep Pey and the stained glass maker Antoni Bordalba, made a set of four windows depicting scenes from Richard Wagner's tetralogy "The ring of the Nibelung" for the men's private club Círculo del Liceo of Barcelona, connected to the Opera Palace Liceo.

These windows depict the main scenes from each of the four episodes of the Tetralogy: *The Rhine Gold*, depicting the Rhine daughters and Alberich, *The Valkyrie* with the dormancy of Brünnhilde while Wotan surrounds her with god Loger fire. From *Siegfried's* play, the scene of the forest murmurs is shown, and the last window represents the dead and funeral march of Siegfried from the play *Twilight of the Gods*. The commission of the stained glass took place due to the reform works of the entrance hall of el Círculo del Liceo, managed by the architect Juli Batllell in 1903. These windows are a unique set in Catalonia not only because of the thematic of the scene, but also the scenographical conception of the panels that shows the true artistic direction of Junyent and the collaboration of his closest friend and workshop mate, Josep Pey who was responsible for the painting of the cartoon following the indications of the first. The construction of the windows was made by the workshop of Antoni Bordalba, author of some of the most spectacular windows of the first years of the 20th century. As a result, the windows are a successful "author piece" that show the perfect symbiosis of these three masters of Catalan Art nouveau decorative arts.

The conservation of these panels is especially difficult since the artist used two layers of glass and even a third one in some panels. The use of opalescent glass and the layering suggests that the makers were aware of the work of Tiffany and Lafarge although this fact has not been proven yet. This arrangement trapped thick layers of dirt between the two pieces of glass causing heavy distortion on the perception of the window.

The 2019 restoration found dirt not only between the layers but also in the interior of the panels. The windows had never been cleaned using wet methods and the inner side was brown from the smoke. Probably right after the installation, the cleaner in charge realized that the layers trapped the liquid used for cleaning, and stopped doing so. The last conservation works led by Dilme-Fabré Architects and Urcotex building conservation company will allow the windows to be seen from the street.

This communication will be an in-depth analysis of this stained glass from a historical point of view, while recovering the role of every artists involved during the process of conception, and also from the technical point of view, with the description of the unusual techniques used on the panels, on the occasion of its recent conservation-restoration.