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The Visual Content in Representative Paintings of Andrei Pozdeev

Vladimir I. Zhukovskiy*
Siberian Federal University,
Svobodny av., 79, Krasnoyarsk, 660041 Russia ¹

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Andrei Pozdeev is one of the greatest Russian artists of the 20th century. The master's creative heritage is amazingly cohesive. Nevertheless, it can be easily divided into several independent groups which are not dependent on factors of chronology or genre, but on attributively crucial characteristics.

Keywords: compositions, illustrations, engravings, watercolours, pictorial paintings.



During many decades of his fruitful life, the great Russian artist of the 20th century, Andrei Gennadyevich Pozdeev (1926-1998) created many remarkable compositions, including hundreds of illustrations, engravings, watercolours and pictorial paintings. The master's creative heritage is amazingly cohesive. Nevertheless, it is quite freely differentiated into several independent spheres, volumes or groups, within the boundaries of which, the compositions community is not dependant on chronology or factors of genre, but on attributively crucial characteristics.

The first of such groups unites the paintings in which the image predominates over expression, and the singular dominates over the integral. Andrei Pozdeev preferred to work in several pictorial genres: portrait, landscape, domestic

scene, still-life, and nude. In each of them, he created compositions which can be included in the relative borders of the given group, as far as they are aimed at a sensuous display of this or that rather specific, essential fragment of reality, and to the presentation of a transient moment in reality. For example, in the painting *Old Krasnoyarsk* (1973) shows the artist's mood is obvious as he shows the remnants of old city streets being busily filled with new constructions, and in the landscape *By the Great Wall of China* (1970), the artist was eager to capture a merry exuberance of a certain autumn moment in the taiga near the Stolby nature reserve (picture 1).

The portrait *Actress Avgusta Klenchina* (1976), which also belongs to the first group of paintings renders the instant of the actress's triumph in a splendidly-performed part. The still-life *China and Faience* (1973) which depicts porcelain still hot from the kiln, and just newly and colorfully painted (picture 2).

* E-mail address: decanka@mail.ru

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a



b

Picture 1. Andrei Pozdeev. Paintings Old Krasnoyarsk, 1973 (a); By the Great Wall of China, 1970 (b)



a



b

Picture 2. Andrei Pozdeev. Paintings Actress Avgusta Klenchina, 1976 (a); China and Faience, 1973 (b)

Many compositions of the first group from the initial period of the artist's oeuvre, have been preserved. Yet this does not mean that Andrei Pozdeev failed to create such paintings in his later years. Vice versa, the master created them throughout his whole life. However, it is a shame that just a few of these remarkable compositions have survived and come down to us. At times, the artist either destroyed them himself, or gave them away to numerous acquaintances.

The other group of Andrei Pozdeev's paintings that generalize achievements having been received as a result of pictorial compositions from

the previous group. These compositions do not go beyond the genre's limits, though they are type-works in their entirety, i.e. such specific pictorial creatures, in which the measure of the common dominates over the measure of the singular, and the expression prevails over the image, while the eternal prevails over the continually changing. For example, while comparing two compositions, painted in different years, both picturing bouquets of blossoming sunflowers, it is easy to notice that the composition *Sunflowers* from the 1970s, belongs to the first group of artist's works, in that it shows the figurative underlining of the outer aspect of these

huge flowers and their living peculiarities, while the painting *Sunflowers*, from 1982, evidently belongs to the second group, because it is entirely oriented to the sensuous essence display of the sunflowers as an extraordinary sensitive earth locator of the sun's blessings of energy (picture 3).

Comparison of Pozdeev's nudes shows, that they can also be differentiated. Thus, the composition *Nude* (1973) belongs to the first group, because it pictorially underlines the plastic peculiarities of girl's body. On the other hand, the

painting *Model* (1988) joins the second group of Pozdeev's works, in that it is concerned with the mysterious and lunar inaccessibility of the female (picture 4).

The paintings of the third group present both greater penetration into the essence of concretely rendered real event and a visual transformation of its essence, widening the limits of its reality. For example, Andrei Pozdeev's reflections about the spiritual purity of the girls who have risked taking off their clothes before the male painter,

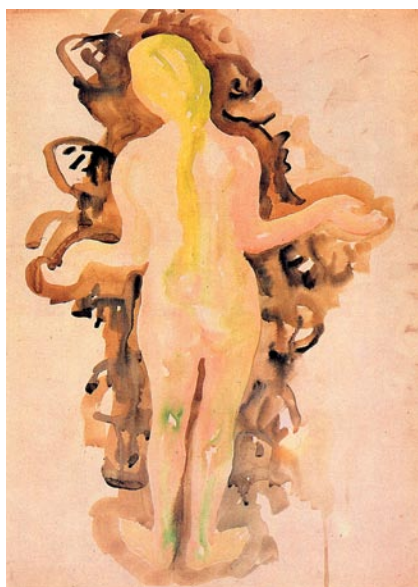


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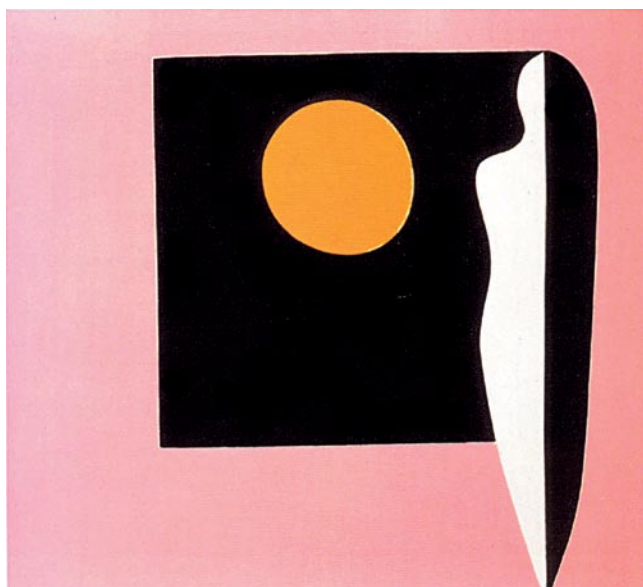


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Picture 3. Andrei Pozdeev. Sunflowers, 1970's (a); Sunflowers, 1982 (b)



a



b

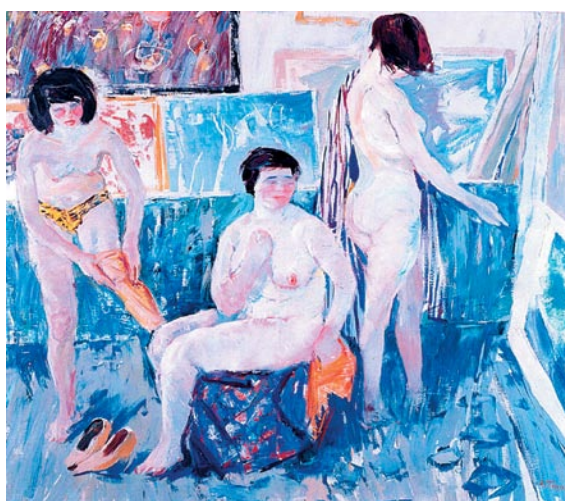
Picture 4. Andrei Pozdeev. Paintings *Nude*, 1973 (a); *Model*, 1988 (b)

led to the transformation of the form and content of the painting *In the artist's studio* (1969) into the sensually shown essence of the composition *Flying* from the 1980's (picture 5).

As early as the war years, the master's reflections about the fate of earthly creatures appeared. The fates of these creatures, whose lives are forcibly cut short for reasons of sport or pride, led to transforming the still-life *Killed*

Birds (1969) into a painting as full of epic pathos as *War* (1981) (picture 6).

Pozdeev's thoughts about cut flowers brought to him in exuberance by his acquaintances from their summer cottages, or which he himself bought for numerous flower still-lives, led him to the creation from not-being to being. In the extremely expressive painting *Flowers and People* (1981), a person who cuts off flowers' heads, acts as an



a



b

Picture 5. Andrei Pozdeev. Paintings *In the Artist's Studio*, 1969 (a); *Flying*, 1980-e (b)



a



b

Picture 6. Andrei Pozdeev. *Killed Birds*, 1969 (a); *War*, 1981 (b)

executioner, depriving himself of his own head (picture 7).

Another group of Pozdeev's paintings breaks through genre limitation. He integrated several genres within each creative work. They are like metamorphoses. The elements of the still-life are parts of a portrait, while elements of landscapes or nudes can be suddenly presented as details of an indoor scene. For example, starting with a naval series, the painting *Ship* (1980), has also summarizes both the content of the landscape painting *Along the Yenisei River* (1963), the essence of the still-life *Basket of Lilacs* (1969), and even the compositional foundation of *The*

Studio (1973) (picture 8), which is of the indoor scene genre.

The effect of typification has been dramatically increased through the integration of different genres into the compositions, included into the given group. The similarities in such compositions is general, and the reality shown is at the level of evoking visual actuality. Such artistic images reach the integral-iconic status.

The fourth group is composed of masterpiece-compositions. Such etalon creative works are based on image-iconic formations that developed into image-symbolic formations. They do not show reality but instead, the abyssal depths of



a



b



c



d

Picture 7. Andrei Pozdeev. Flowers and People, 1981 (a); Gladioli, 1992 (b); Roses, 1991 (c); Bouquet, 1987 (d)



a



b



c



d

Picture 8. Andrei Pozdeev. Ship, 1980 (a); Along the Yenisei River, 1963 (b); Basket of Lilac, 1969 (c); The Studio, 1973 (d)

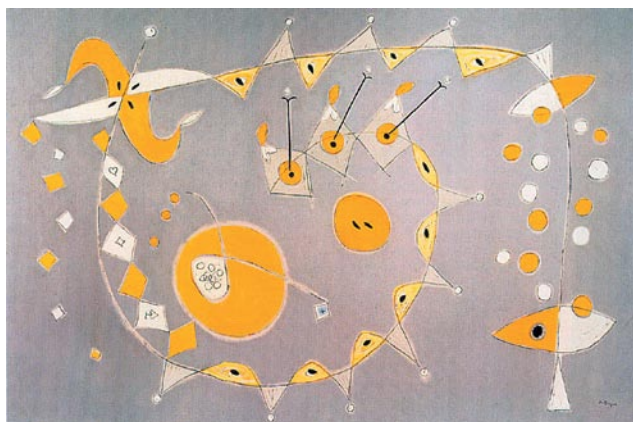
existence. These compositions are not important by themselves. However, they as are necessary as air because they serve as bridges, possessing a rare ability to join a finite person with the infinite. Such magnificent creative works as *The Feast* (1981), *Agony in the Garden* (1982), *Talk about the Truth* (1983), *Adam and Eve* (1985), *World's Creation* (1986), *The Chalice* (1987), *Passion* (1987), *Christmas* (1989), *The Lord's Supper* (1990), *Silence* (1991), and also pictorial paintings of the series *A Man's Life* (1989) (picture 9) indisputably belong to Pozdeev's etalon masterpieces.

THE CHALICE

The painting *The Chalice* (1989) belongs to the artist's etalon masterpieces, which show Andrei

Pozdeev to be a painter who creates not from himself, but through himself, as an intermediary between the divine forces and people. He can be seen as a prophet, sensually showing what heaven-born is (picture 10).

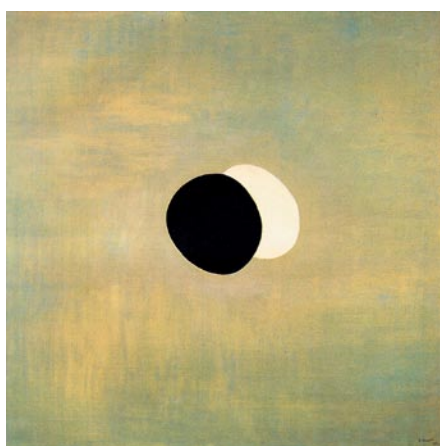
Trying to define the peculiarity of such favourites, Immanuel Kant called those people who possess charisma, "God's speaking-trumpets." During the many months Pozdeev was attempting to finish *The Chalice*, he destroyed seven already completed paintings, each three metres in height and outwardly close to the final composition. Apparently, the destroyed compositions were far in their nuances from that divinely adumbrated prefiguration of *The Chalice*.



a



b



c



d



e



f

Picture 9. Andrei Pozdeev. The Feast , 1981 (a); The Agony in the Garden, 1982 (b); Talk about the Truth, 1983 (c); World's Creation, 1986 (d); Passion, 1987 (e); Silence, 1991 (f)



Picture 10. Andrei Pozdeev. *The Chalice*, 1989

The painting *The Chalice* is the most original mandala because it visualizes the way an ecumenical spiritual wisdom condenses into a gracious elixir, appealing to helping a human soul restore the religious relation of the finite with the infinite, which was destroyed during the Fall of Adam and Eve. The composition demonstrates ecumenical ways which reintegrate the Macrocosm into the condition that existed before the division of the one whole human creature into the male and female hypostases. This division resulted in the

excision of a finite man from the infinite Absolute, of human souls from the ecumenical Spirit.

As a mandala, *The Chalice* is created according to the row emanation principle of flat horizontal layers that simultaneously converge from the periphery towards the centre. That is why the painting is not so freely pictorial but simply graphically linear. The image of *The Chalice* is structured from a row of geometrically equal circles, crosses, squares and triangles, shown both in their separate symbolic meaning, and in symbolic correlation with each other. In such a

case, numeric monad symbolism (1), symbolism of duads (2), triads (3), tetrads (4), pentads (5), hexads (6), heptads (7), octads (8) and enneads (9) play a fundamental role in the painting.

The artistic image of *The Chalice* is open with a format tetrad (picture. 11).

The cosmically boundless infinite monad is opened through the square prism into many geometric forms and elements and goes to their common origin. All this happens before the spectator, who enters into a dialogue with the composition.

The painting's initial tetrad immediately sets the tone for everything that is going on in the sphere of *The Chalice*. From ancient times the square corresponds with such ideas as equality, order, sincerity, rectitude, justice, and wisdom in the mythology, religion, and philosophy of different nations. In this case it is initially invoked to define the order of the event, depicted by the composition, its rectitude, wisdom and justice. More over, the tetrad precisely symbolizes the key that opens the spiritual and material perfection of the macrocosmic.

The first square of the painting, which opens *The Chalice*, inverses into an eight-sided octad.

This octad symbolically represents the Gate through which the Spirit of God emanates to a human soul (picture 12).

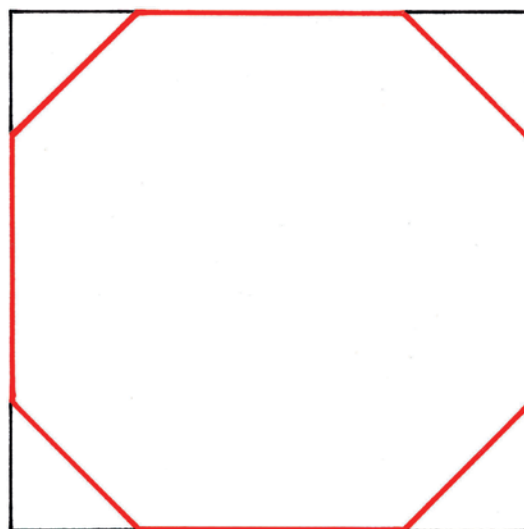
Moreover, *The Chalice* octad adumbrates the formation process of the Universal Mind, the organizing and controlling origin of the Universe. It is not by chance that there are circles at four of the octad's sides, close to the tetrad's angles. In each circle is inscribed a triangle, containing ten black spheres (picture 13).

These four circles, with triangles inscribed in them, are symbolically shown in *The Chalice* artistic image as the initial Elements of Fire, Air, Earth and Water - the Elements that form the Universe. These figures' proximity of these initial Universe Elements to the angles of the painting's initial square is explained by the fact that according to ancient ideas, the tetrad was responsible for the creation of the present existence from four initial elements of multiplicity. In addition, an antique alchemic picture shows that the four initial elements have often been depicted as women who stand on spheres with triangles inscribed in them (picture 14).

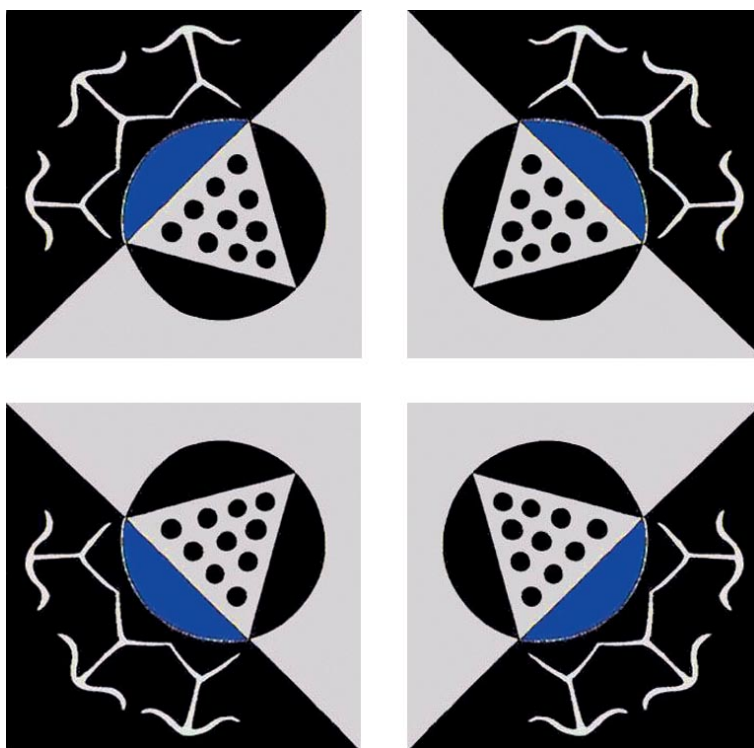
In the alchemic picture, the triangles placed in the spheres of such elements as Earth and Water



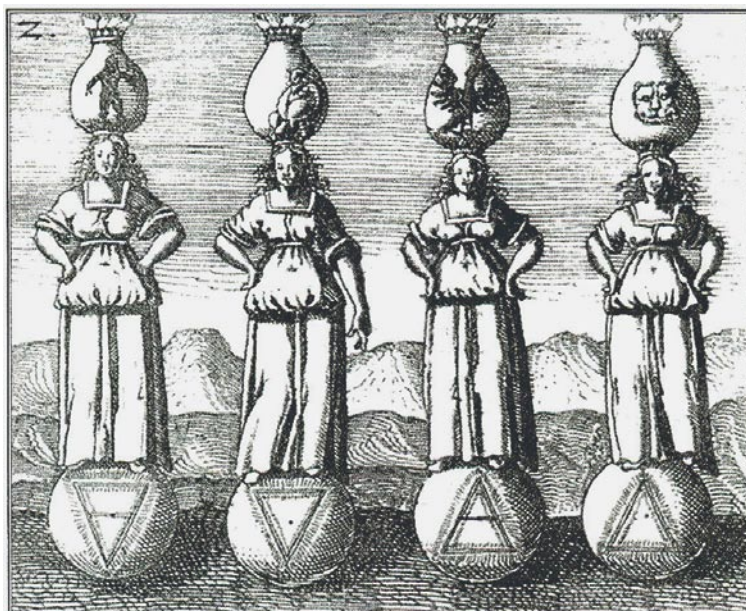
Picture. 11. The artistic image tetrad of The Chalice



Picture 12. Artistic image octad of The Chalice



Picture 13. The elements of Water, Earth, Fire and Air are geometrically presented as circles and triangles inscribed in them in the structure of The Chalice.



Picture 14. Alchemic notion of the Elements of Earth, Water, Air and Fire.

direct their main corners down, while the triangles of Fire and Air elements direct their main corners up. Concerning the painting *The Chalice*, all four triangles inscribed in the spheres of initial elements are directing, as if compass needles, their main corners towards the common geometrical centre of the composition. This symbolically indicates that the Universe as a single knot that organizes all the numerous processes in the Universe.

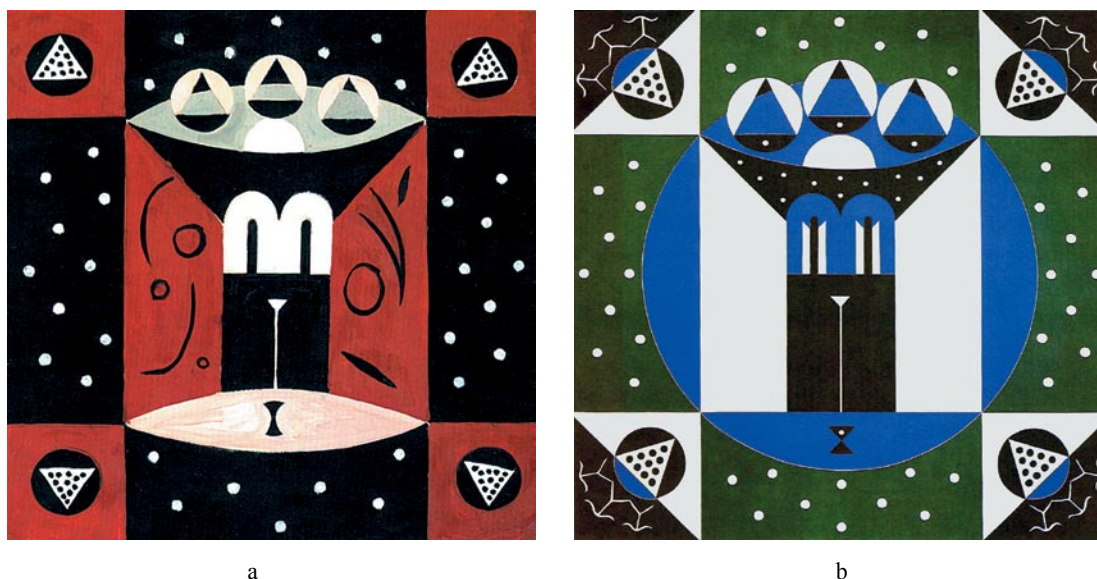
The intact sketch of the painting *The Chalice* shows that Andrei Pozdeev did not easily compose the final version. In the sketch of *The Chalice* in the left corners of the composition there are two triangles, inscribed within circles in accordance with alchemic tradition, and their main corners are directed up or down. The other two triangles, depicted in the spheres on the right, are oriented towards the centre of the painting, as in the final version (picture 15).

Three round figures are placed near each of the four geometrically presented elements in *The Chalice*. These probably, show the twelve Zodiac signs, corresponding to different elements. It is well known, that the Zodiac signs such as Aries,

Leo and Sagittarius represent Fire. Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius represent Air. Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces are symbolically connected with Water, while Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn are connected with Earth.

The black spheres inscribed in each symbolically elemental triangle are apparently a geometrical presentation of the nine planets of the solar system and the Sun – Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto -during one of four seasons of the year and with a certain Zodiac influence. Moreover, Zodiac signs represent a certain planet and have an influence over the behaviour of the cosmic system and people’s lives: Aries is associated with Mars, Taurus is associated with Venus, Gemini with Mercury, Leo with the Sun, Virgo with Mercury, Libra with Venus, Scorpio with Mars, Sagittarius with Jupiter, Capricorn with Saturn, Aquarius with either Uranus or Saturn, and Pisces with either Jupiter or Neptune.

A Greek cross “crux quadrata” appears in the structure of *The Chalice*, after the octad and the figures connected with it, symbolizing four



Picture 15. Composition peculiarities comparison of *The Chalice* sketch by Andrei Pozdeev in the 1980’s (a), with the final version of the composition *The Chalice* (b)

elements, twelve Zodiac signs and ten planets. Its branches are fixed by the points of intersection of the tetrad sides with the octad ribs (picture 16).

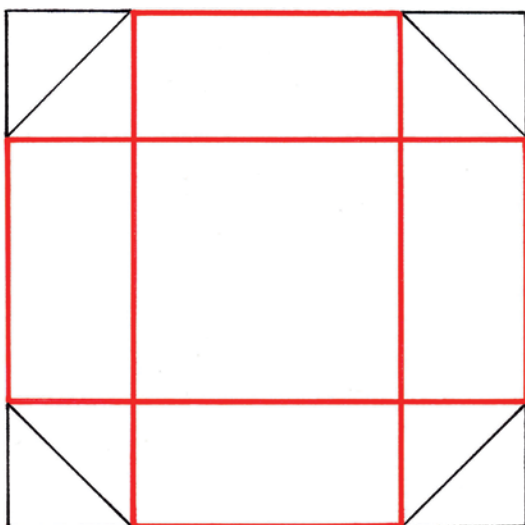
The cross in *The Chalice* composition presents a symbolic manifestation of the Single emanation development into the universe, from the cross's centre to the four cardinal points – North, South, East and West. Moreover, the cross gives a symbolical opportunity to fuse the vertical line (the sign of male spiritual energy) with the horizontal line (the symbol of female spiritual potency) in the painting structure. This is probably why *The Chalice* cross, merging the vertical and horizontal lines, is green in colour. It expresses that only through the torment of death can isolated existence of a male and a female soul integrate into new human life and unify the finite and the infinite.

The cross inevitably outlines both the periphery and the centre of the composition. The triangles symbolic of the four elements point from the corners to the common axial point of the painting and some “planetary belt” in *The Chalice*. The “planetary belt” is structured from a row circular orbits of different diameters and lines, that radiate from the centre and proportionally cut

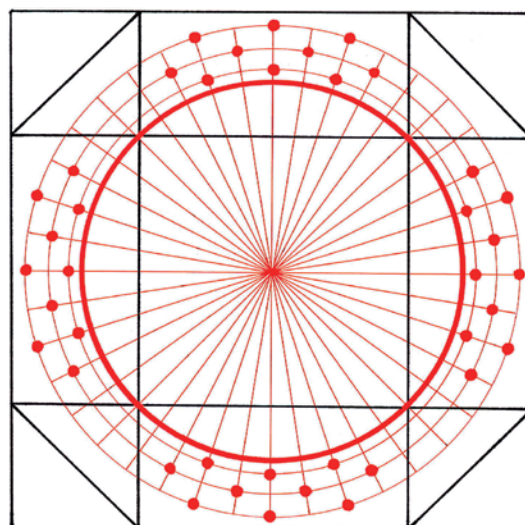
these orbits into forty parts. The intercrossing of the circular orbits and the radial lines makes in total forty small spherical forms. They are placed on the painting cross branches per ten circles up, down, left and right accordingly (picture 17).

Every decade of the circles depicted along the painting perimeter presents itself as a planetary constellation. Together, these forty spheres present a unique planet parade, spread under the aegis of Zodiac signs along the cross branches; and denoting the four seasons – spring, summer, autumn and winter.

On the other hand, each group of ten circles is nothing else but an aspect expression of the geometrically presented form of a perfect creature – the primeval Adam Qadmon, who was created androgynous before the creation of Adam and Eve, i.e. before the partition of the single human creature into a man and a woman and before the fall. In the mystical traditions of Judaism, Cabbala, occultism and Freemasonry, Adam Qadmon is that primeval man about whom it is said in chapter 1, verse 27 of Genesis in the Holy Scriptures, “So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him”. The creation of Adam and Eve is not in the image of God as the Singular,



Picture 16. The cross of *The Chalice*



Picture 17. The “Planetary Belt” of *The Chalice*

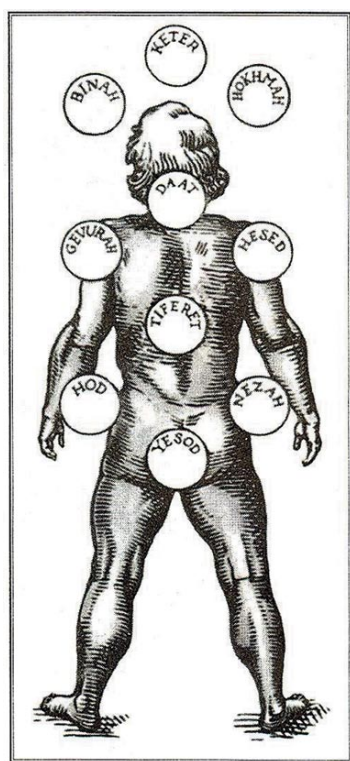
but as something multiple. It is said in chapter 2 verses 7 and 22, of Genesis, “And the Lord God formed man *of* dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul... And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.”

A comparison of the ten circles, presented in the ancient picture, geometrically denoting Adam Qadmon, and the ten circles at each cross branch of *The Chalice*, shows their identical organization (picture 18).

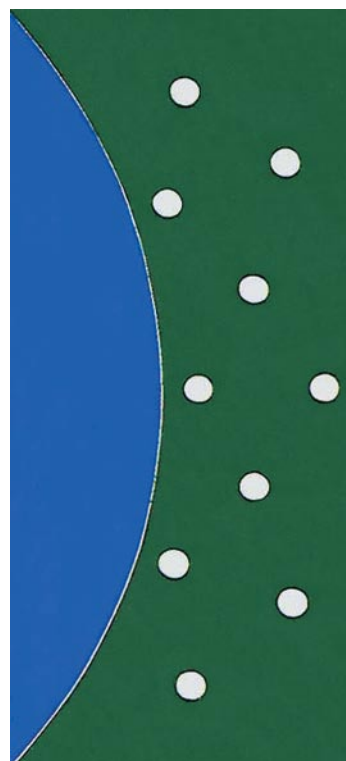
In the painting *The Chalice* the structure of ten circles shows the correspondence between the nine planets of the Solar system and the Sun (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranium, Neptune, Pluto) and the ten divine emanations of the good qualities of the Universe

(Glory, Wisdom, Discernment, Compassion, Severity, Radiance, Infinity, Acknowledgment, Foundation, Kingdom) into the ten parts of Adam Qadmon’s body. Such correspondence first of all confirms the resemblance between the planetary structure of the Universal macrocosmic and the macrocosmic of primeval man. Secondly, it demonstrates the geometrical elements of Adam Qadmon as the initial structure of human perfection, which was lost at the Fall. But, through the communion of the divinely spiritual and the united male and female, human spiritual energy can be regenerated.

Pozdeev spread forty circles along *The Chalice’s* cross branches, which present geometric matrix common to the primeval man. Moreover, Adam Qadmon is here shown as a Messiah, crucified on the cross, i.e. presented as the Single,



a



b

Picture 18. Picture of the circles disposition in the ancient sketch geometrically noting Adam Qadmon (a); picture of ten circles disposition in the subspace of the cross right branch *The Chalice* (b)

separated into a multitude of disconnected parts, spread out along the cardinal points – North, South, East and West (picture 19).

The aim of the sacrifice of primeval man is the reintegration given in the painting *The Chalice*. It is the start of the process of a return to the unity of all which is currently united into independent and self-sufficient elements under the Single emanation.

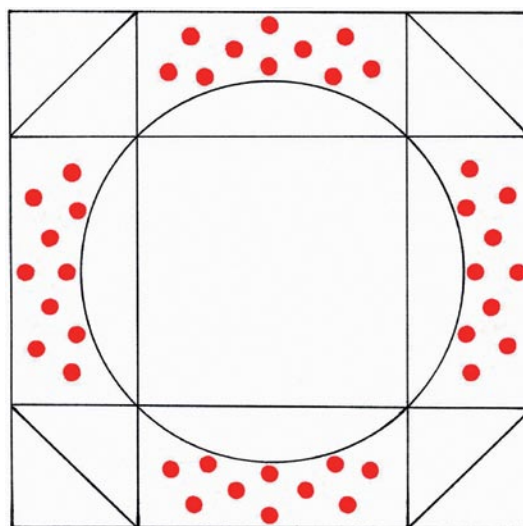
In *The Chalice*, the intersection of the cross branches forms a quadrature of a circle, i.e. it shows a square, inscribed in the circle. If the cross, with the crucified Adam Qadmon geometrical matrix, is shown in *The Chalice*, as the last act of the Single emanation into the multitude, so the quadrature of the circle is the act of the multitude emanation into the Single in the structure of the composition (picture 20).

On the whole, the relationship of the circle and the square is a demonstration of the visual equivalence of Earth and Heaven, Man and the Universe, Space and Time. The Unity of these geometrical figures symbolizes the community of image and expression. The quadrature of the circle in the artistic image of *The Chalice* plays a

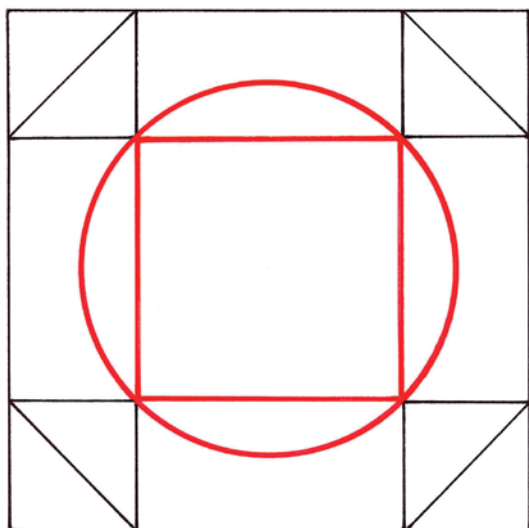
role as the ideal environment within which space the planetary matrix of Adam Qadmon is able to visually become an anthropomorphic matrix.

However, just an evangel space of the circle quadrature is not enough to be a sign of reintegration and the successful cosmic alchemic process of the primeval Adam matrix reversion into an artistically presented matrix. For the sensuous appearance of divine evangel directional essence addressed to a man who strives for a return to the unity of the finite and the infinite, there is a need for a geometrical figural construction. This construction must be able to transform the pre-creation schematized quality of Adam Qadmon into a post-creation of an ideal man, not burdened by the Fall. Such a construction does exist in the painting *The Chalice*. It is the figure that appears in the space of the circle quadrature formed by two triangles, oriented up and down along the vertical line, and merged together at their main corners in one point. (picture 21).

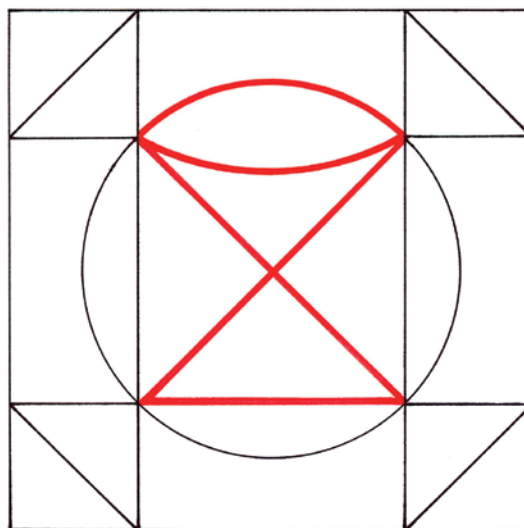
From ancient times, in most cultures, the figure has schematically presented the Macrocosm in its triune fullness. The top triangle, directing its corner down, traditionally models



Picture 19. Sketch of primeval man Adam Qadmon, crucified on the cross and presented as a geometrical matrix by forty circles.



Picture 20. Quadrature of a circle. Highlighting in the structure of *The Chalice*



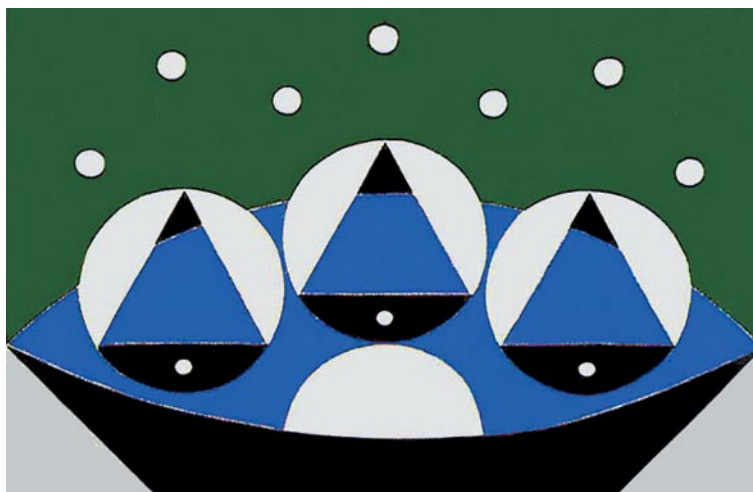
Picture 21. Extraction of the macrocosm triune model in the structure of *The Chalice*

here a Pre-creation World, presented as the Chalice of the Above-Heaven Sacral Waters. The bottom triangle, directing its corner up, models the Chalice of the Under-Heaven Post-Creation World. The intersection point of the Pre-creation World Chalice and the Post-creation one presents the Macrocosm Knot - the point of Transfiguration from the High Place into the Low Place, the Heavenly into the Earthly, the celestial into the human, the absolute into the relative, the infinite into the sensually finite forms. In addition, the sacral Macrocosm Knot coincides with *The Chalice* mandala mystic centre, which symbolizes the highest Universal principal, speculatively presents paradise as an initial paradisaic man condition, like that which adumbrates an initial system actualization of Cosmos values.

On the whole, the pulsation of depictive and expressive, observable and visual, sensually shown and speculatively comprehended elements, is the most characteristic peculiarity of *The Chalice*. This peculiarity contributes considerably to an activation of carnal, emotional, and spiritual bases in the viewer who communicates with the painting. The geometrically interpreted three-part model of

the Macrocosmic is not isolated in *The Chalice*, but is presented in reintegrated correlation with the primeval Adam planetary matrix elements. The composition shows the exodus of three white circles of that part of the Adam Qadmon geometrical matrix, which is placed in the surface of the cross top branch. There is emanation in the form of some partially transparent, radial vessels in the space of the full-brimmed Chalice of the pre-creation Waters (picture 22).

It is interesting that the top of the Pre-creation Waters Chalice is presented in *The Chalice* in the form of a mandorla – an almond-shaped figure, formed of two intersected circles' segments. The mandorla represents the Sky and the Earth, Pre-creation and Post-creation spheres. From ancient times, the mandorla has symbolized the unit of the upper and the lower worlds, the spirit and the material, and their interpenetration. That is why, precisely within the limits of the mandorla, the energetic transformation takes place and is available for spectators' consideration. The Adam Qadmon matrix elements transform into a single snow-white sphere – a balm, which is being prepared by the Holy Spirit for the human soul's



Picture 22. Sketch of the emanation process of geometrically structural elements of primeval man Adam Qadmon into the pre-creation waters chalice of the three-part macrocosmic model

healing. This sphere of white colour is depicted as being plunged into the depths of the Pre-creation Waters Chalice.

The process is a result of reintegrating the primeval Adam matrix into a sensually given patrix is represented in *The Chalice* by an androgynous creature. This creature is eager to cover the three-part model of the Macrocosmic, especially its arch-sacral part – the Centre Knot (picture 23) - by its outspread cuspidate wings.

The given figure is Androgyny, a perfect man who personifies the equilibrium of oppositional principals: male and female, active and passive, animus and anima. Androgyny, as sensual essence of Adam Qadmon, is presented as an embodiment of the reversion of the multitude into the Singular fold, an ideal symbolic expression of the religious connection between the absolute and the relative, the infinite and the finite.

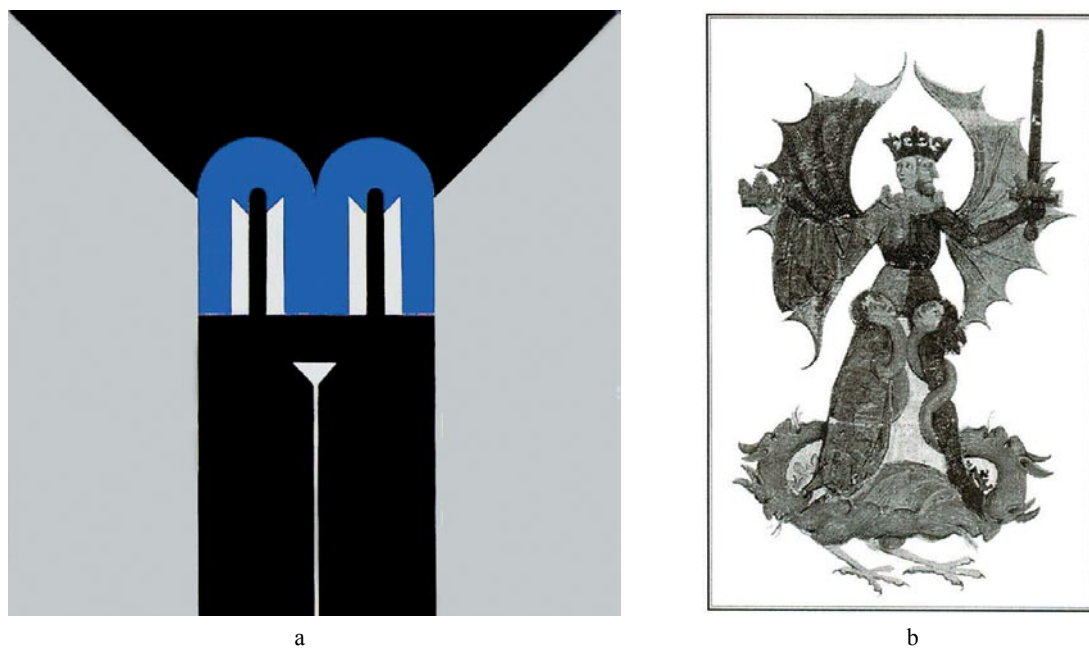
Androgyny, as shown by Pozdeev, is a symbolic integration of magically religious powers, connected with both genders. Androgyny, compared to hermaphroditism, includes in itself not only flesh and sexual features, but also male and female spiritual qualities. From ancient times in different mystical traditions, Androgyny has

been geometrically presented in the form of a chalice or a circle. Some ancient sketches have also survived, which show Androgyny as a winged knight, defeating the diabolic powers and striving to separate male and female spiritual integrity. In comparing medieval sketches, which depict Androgyny as a sort of androgynous creature, with the creature in the central part of *The Chalice*, one finds similar graphic linear positions.

In 1985, long before painting *The Chalice*, Andrei Pozdeev created a composition in which hero possessed many qualities of Androgyny. The master called this painting *The Muse*, and it shows a winged two-part anthropomorphic creature, whose two faces are united by the nimbuses of two circles almost merged with each other (picture 24).

In *The Chalice*, Androgyny has combined in it, through the merging of sky-blue auras, two equal angel-like creatures with black bodies and white wings – a symbolic embodiment of male and female essences.

The Muse's intent is the same as that of Androgyny's; to stimulate man's creative inspiration, which supports the relationship



Picture 23. Sketch of androgyny in *The Chalice* (a); sketch of androgyny in a medieval picture (b)



Picture 24. Andrei Pozdeev. *Muse*, 1985

between the human and the Divine, synthesising the finite human soul with the Holy Spirit.

The Chalice artistic image presents Androgyny, holding before itself a white lotus flower with a thin, long stalk. A fully open lotus is traditionally considered to be a symbol of androgyny (a male bud in a female flower). The lotus symbolizes three stages of spiritual growth: ignorance, the effort to overcome it, and the necessity of understanding connection between the finite and the absolute through male and female essences.

The graphic heritage of Andrei Pozdeev contains a linoleum engraving from 1984, in which the painter possessing several androgynous qualities is shown with a lotus in his hands (picture 25).

The composition testifies that the master made a great spiritual and creative effort several years before *The Chalice* to stimulate in himself Androgyny. Without Pozdeev's experience, Androgyny as the hero of *The Chalice*, would have been deprived of his most interesting qualities.

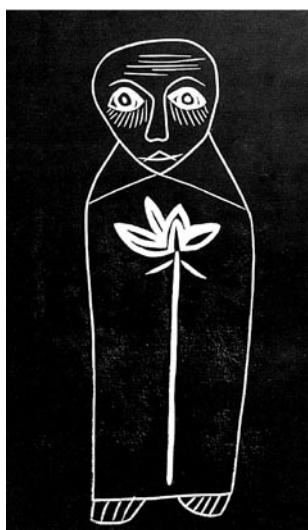
It is quite characteristic of Andrei Pozdeev, that he created numerous "spousal portraits" in

his final working period. These portraits present the painter's spiritual integrity with the soul of his beloved wife (picture 26).

In the bottom part of *The Chalice* there is a black phial with a white point in its middle, its form being similar to that of the three-part Macrocosmic model. It is a crown of the Universal Spirit, a balm for human souls (picture 27).

The chalice is the image of the Holy Grail, a sacral vessel, standing on the mystical Round Table and containing the elixir of life, the potion that makes possible the merging between finite man and infinite God. In the painting, the elixir of life, created by the efforts of the Universe for the humanity, is presented as an oblatinal pearl, which is called to stop the corruption of human flesh. Its goal is to revive in people's souls the striving for the Spirit and to regain the celestial bliss missed by humans after the fall.

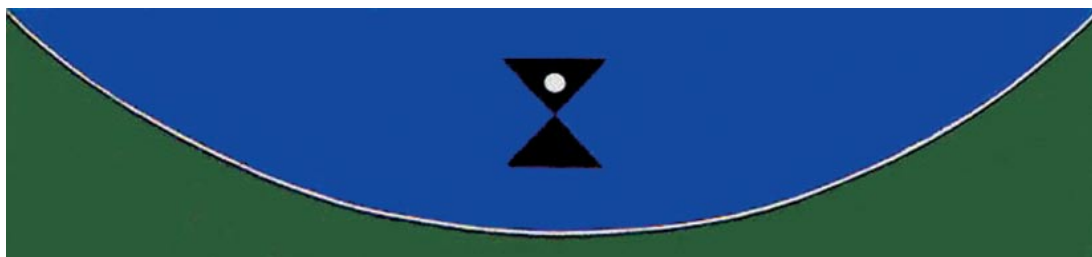
The speculative communication with the Holy Grail provides a reintegration of the spectator into the primeval-androgynous condition of Adam Qadmon, existing in the initial infinity and free from gender's polarity. However, not all spectators are worthy of this reintegration. This



Picture 25. Andrei Pozdeev. Self-Portrait with a Lotus. Engraving, 1984



Picture 26. Andrei Pozdeev. Reading, 1979



Picture 27. Fragment of *The Chalice* with a phial on a round table

person must be like the Round Table knights, who combined in themselves bodily, emotional and spiritual qualities, chastity, loyalty and holiness. In the extracanonical Testament of Thomas, Jesus Christ, addressing his apostles, says,

“When you make one creature out of two, and when you make what is being inside, the same [as] what is outside, and what is outside you make the same, as in inside! And if you make the male and the female to be one, so that, the male is no more male, and the female is no more female, so then you enter the Kingdom of God”¹.

In *The Chalice* there are astrology and Masonry, alchemical and tantric signs, symbols and emblems, but this does not mean that magical content of Cabbala or Theosophy, Christianity or Gentoo is split into separate pieces. The essence of *The Chalice* tenderly leads the viewer to the Macrocosmic. This artistic bridge contributes to the revival of the true integration of Man and the Macrocosmic, but not one that is confessionally isolated or religious in its essence. This integration is that which existed at the beginning of the Creation, when Man was not male or female. In the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, it is said, “There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” (3: 28)

THE LORD’S SUPPER

The Lord’s Supper, which Andrei Pozdeev painted in 1990, is structured from several

expressive layers, which gradually reveal their essence in a step-by-step process (picture 28).

Pozdeev’s method of depiction appears to be the only correct method. The painting’s content is presented neither too abstractly, nor too realistically. Such an artistic interpretation of the religious event avoids exterior demonstrativeness and adheres to that mixing of form and content, which allows the spectator to pass on quite easily from the observed to the less obvious. The viewer can ascend freely from indexical and iconic sign-oriented notions to symbols. He is able to speculatively contemplate several levels of the essence. The colourful and substantial elements of the painting have different meanings. Such polysemanticity should be considered a regular phenomenon, as far as symbolic mutation represents an attributive feature of the artistic language of the master. Signs, meanings and symbols are born not outside the process of viewer’s communication with the artist’s creation, but they are fundamental to their interrelation.

Initially the painting discloses the essence of *The Lord’s Supper*. It vividly presents one of the main events in the last days of Jesus Christ in his earthly guise. Therefore, the composition shows the most important moment of the secret meeting of the Teacher with his twelve closest followers. The Messiah institutes the sacramental mystery, or oblation, as a gracious means of uniting the faithful with Christ – the oblation of His Body and

¹ Ref.: Robert M. Grant, “The Secret sayings of Jesus”. – New York, 1960. – P. 143.



Picture 28. Andrei Pozdeev. The Lord's Supper, 1990

Blood as the true Holy Lamb, taking upon himself the sins of the world.

The sacral act is presented in a square chamber, cut off from the rest of the world by the hoop of the sacral circular line. The Son of the God is depicted sitting in the centre, his head wreathed by a sky-blue aureole. Near the Saviour, observing the mirror symmetry are six future apostles – three on the each side of Messiah. On the other side of the table are six more followers of Christ, in whose company the figure of Judas Iscariot is underlined. While the heads of the Teacher and

His eleven apostles are white, the arch-traitor is depicted with a black-coloured head.

Here we should note that in *The Lord's Supper*, one of the dominating themes is the symbolic motive of a grain or a seed.

The grain form is appropriate for the head of Jesus Christ because the Son of God is the grain of bread, sent by the Highest Power to humanity to fulfill the mission of the promised Saviour and world Re-newer. It is not by chance that in the New Testament Jesus Christ is called the Apostle. "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our

profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him that appointed him” (Eph. 3:1, 2). In addressing his followers, the Teacher affirmed, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give you is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (In. 6:51).

The bread, broken by Christ, has the form of a grain; it is carefully laid out on the charger standing in the centre of the table. The bread grains are a symbol of the transformation of such seeds into the true Flesh of God. This transformation is performed during the sacramental mystery, at the moment when Christ presents Himself as a sort of a Sower, calling the faithful to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. “The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof” (Mat. 13:31, 32).

Also the charger has the form of the grain, where the oblation is place. The black colour of the dish symbolizes the earth as a grateful soil, which contributes to the luxuriant growth of the new belief.

The heads of all Christ followers present at the secret supper have the grain form. It is a sign of their future apostolic role, symbolizing their forthcoming mission as ambassadors and messengers of God’s word. “And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach” (Mrk. 3:14). Thus, the white colour of the head-grains of eleven followers symbolizes the gratefulness of the environment, where the seeds of God’s Flesh have fallen. “The Sower went out of the house. And when he sowed, some seeds fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear!” (Mat. 13:8,

9). The fact that the seeds of God’s Flesh have fallen into the grateful ground is also represented by the green colour of life, present in the image of all eleven figures of Christ followers. The black colour of Judas Iscariot’s head symbolizes the rotten seed. It also symbolizes the ingratitude of the soil, where one of the seeds of the Saviour has fallen. “The Sower went forth to sow, some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had no root, they withered away” (Mat. 13:3-6).

The pictorial painting makes vivid not only the essence of the sacramental act itself, but also those deep perturbations which are the result of the seed’s productive consumption by the composition’s heroes, the seeds given by the Saviour. It especially concerns the figures of five Christ followers, placed on both sides of Judas Iscariot. Each of them is presented in the process of the transformation that is taking place under the influence of the seeds of God’s Flesh. It is demonstrating the tormenting struggle of the good colours (green and white) against black, bleeding through by stains of different configurations.

Finally, the table at which they have gathered together for the last meeting with the Teacher, has a grain form, which represents the beginning of the Catholic integrity of the Christian Church.

Presenting the story’s essence, Pozdeev’s *The Lord’s Supper*, provides an opportunity to comprehend the meaning of the white crosses, placed in the corners of the painting. On the one hand, these are the signs of four canonical Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, whose texts narrate the Last Supper’s events. On the other hand, the crosses, oriented to all the cardinal points, symbolize those apostolic paths, which the loyal followers of Christ have followed to christen people. The crosses are a

stable religious symbol of the unity between the finite and the infinite.

Pozdeev's painting presents the sacramental mystery in the form of a scene of the Last Judgment at the moment of the second Advent of Jesus Christ, who has come for the judgment of the sinners. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mat. 9:13). In this case the event is shown as a court consisting of God's Son and the righteous saints. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son... And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (Jhn. 5:22, 27).

The charger with grains spread on it, standing before the Messiah, testifies that the process of the court proceedings has already begun. The Lord is holding court as a Sower separates the good grains from the rotten ones; he is selecting the righteous from the sinners, "as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Mat. 25:32).

Judas Iscariot is presented as a convicted sinner, who has betrayed the Teacher for thirty pieces of silver (picture 29).

Judas Iscariot, his head darkened from his sin and his arms spread sideward, is made of white and

black forms, and is shown as a scale, which the Lord's judgment uses for weighing righteous and sinful human acts. The edge of the table, crossing the sinner's neck, takes on the symbolic role of a huge noose, while the table itself is shown as a gigantic half-section timber, on which the head of the convicted is placed. With the help of such signs the court commission's heavy sentence is visualized, the sinner is condemned. "Judas, having sinned, went and hanged himself" (Mat. 27:5).

As a composition depicting the Last Judgment, Pozdeev placed four crosses in the corners of the painting, adumbrating the call of the sinners from all over the world to the Lord's Judgment. "And they shall gather together his elect from four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Mat. 24:31). These crosses are also a symbol of the beginning of the Lord's Judgment, which is supposed to be spread from the centre into all directions. They are a sign, that the Last Judgment is the burden of not only the sinner Judas, but of every man existing in sin: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10).



Picture 29. Andrei Pozdeev. The Lord's Supper. Fragment

The Last Supper shows the polarity and consonance of heaven and earth. On the one hand, the table is singular. On the other hand, it has sides, which are contrary, i.e. placed opposite each other. The opposition of the sides defines the opposition of the personages in the group presented at the sides of the table. Six Christ followers, three on the left and three on the right of the Saviour surround Christ, while He himself represents Heaven, ruled by the divine mind, pure symmetry, rationality of form and colour structures and universal peace. Six other righteous apostles placed on the other side of the table, stand for the representatives of Earth, ruled by emotional irrationality and unstable senses.

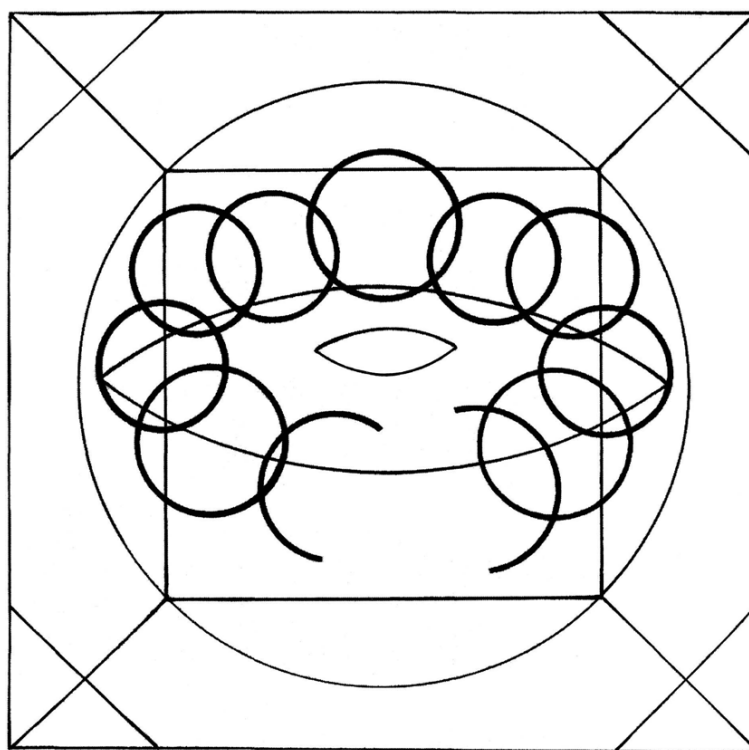
The righteous of the Heaven and Earth are divided by the table, yet united by a chain, which is not immediately observable. Circular links are structured with the help of all the depicted figures;

including the image of Jesus Christ surrounded with a nimbus (picture 30).

There is a chain in *The Last Supper*, which is accessible not to the viewer's eyes, but to his mental vision. It reminds us of another masterpiece, *The Last Supper*, by the Leonardo da Vinci (picture 31). Recent research on this great creation, of which Andrei Pozdeev was certainly aware, have shown that there is a virtual five-link chain in the structure of the mural composition¹ (picture 32).

But, if we compare the compositional chain presented in the painting of Andrei Pozdeev with the chain in Leonardo da Vinci's composition, we observe not so much their resemblance to each other, but their difference.

In da Vinci's composition *The Last Supper*, the chain is a sign of the religious connection between the apostles and God. It is a symbol of

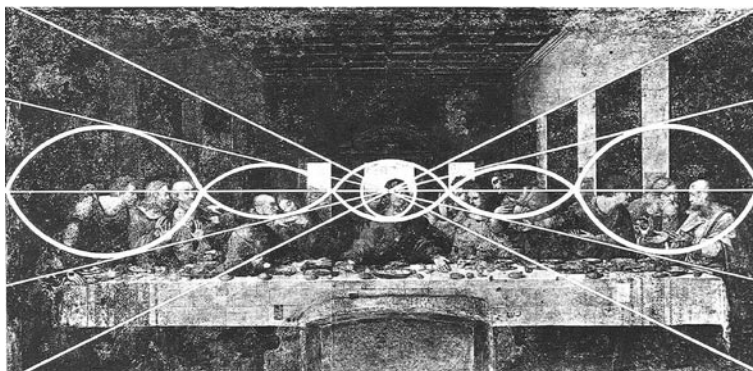


Picture 30. Andrei Pozdeev. The Lord's Supper. Visualization of the "chain" painting compositional formula

¹ Ref. in detail: V. I. Zhukovskiy *The Harmony Formula*, Krasnoyarsk, 1999. P. 78-93.



Picture 31. Leonardo da Vinci. The Lord's Supper, 1494-1498



Picture 32. Leonardo da Vinci. The Lord's Supper. Visualization of the "chain" compositional formula

the endurance of Christian beliefs and a portent of the admittance and mastery of Christ's followers during the commandment of the oblation sacrament. Here, the chain is presented as strong and singular: its integrity does not need any additional conjunctive links.

The chain in Pozdeev's *The Last Supper* is different. Nine out of the eleven rings in this chain are linked, while two of them are broken. Thus the chain emphasizes the fact that the righteous of Heaven and Earth are not capable of uniting. To make the chain integral a twelfth link is needed.

In the composition of Leonardo da Vinci, Jesus Christ's figure is placed in the geometrical

and notional centre of the mural composition, and it completes the chain. In the composition of Andrei Pozdeev, the chain's integrity depends wholly upon the figure of the sinner Judas, in that his very presence pretends to be the role of its conjunctive link.

It is interesting to note that while the hero-sinner's significance for the integral meaning of Andrei Pozdeev's creation increases, most pictorial elements of his composition undergo a symbolic metamorphosis, making the essence of *The Last Supper* stray from the traditional Christian interpretation of the event. Indeed, according to the texts of the canonical Evangelists,

Judas Iscariot, after betraying Christ, disappeared-which meant that a new righteous man was needed in replacement. “And they gave forth their lots, and the lot fell upon Matthew, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:26). But, in Pozdeev’s painting the event differs. The compositional structure of the painting unequivocally underlines the significance of the sinner Judas, who, having recognized his sin and repented it, managed to rise above it. It is not by chance that it is said in the Holy Scriptures, “Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying: I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood” (Mat. 27:3, 4).

If we complete the broken links of the compositional chain, the point of the links cross each other in the middle of the figure Judas. Moreover, in spite of the fact that Judas’ black

cup of sin outweighs his white cup of good deeds on the scale, it is only through these geometrical elements that the vivid chain can obtain its integrity.

Andrei Posdeev’s *The Last Supper* is truly religious, if we understand religion as the connection of man with the fullness of existence. The painting makes visible a sacral meeting of people with the Almighty. The essence of this creation is the following: only a man who has gone beyond his sin and atoned for it by his sufferings is worthy of becoming a connecting link between infinite God and finite people. It is not by chance that the figure of the sinner Judas is presented in the form of the crucifix; it recognizes the hero’s sacrifice and the forgiveness of his sins. Responding to the content of the composition, the famous prayer before the oblation is as follows: “Today, at the Lord’s Supper, Son of God, receive me, the oblationer.”

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