

# SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE

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# SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE

HUNTING THE WHITE RHINO  
AND THE TRIP  
DOWN THE NILE

BY THEODORE  
ROOSEVELT



EMILY SHAW REESE  
DRAWN BY RUSSELL

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS NEW YORK

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# · THE FIELD OF ART ·

## CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURE IN COLOR



Grotesque. College of the  
City of New York.

IN the gradual process of its development, or reconsideration, contemporary architecture in this country seems to be coming to the point of accepting freely the embellishment of colored sculpture. The adoption of the typical steel girder and frame, within the period of less than a quarter of a century, has—it has been suggested—through its insistence upon greater safeguards and higher standards in structural work, led to the adoption of more absolutely fire-proof and frost-proof material, as terracotta, and thence, naturally, to the introduction of color with this material, first in the strictly constructive members, then in the ornamental, tiles, medallions, reliefs, and finally in decorative and even monumental sculpture. But, while science is permitted to go on (somewhat haltingly at times) to the exploitation of entirely new fields, one after another, the fire-new presentations in art frequently prove to be either of doubtful value or the revivals of past glories—even when it is question only of the material processes, the technique. “Luca’s works in glazed faience,” writes a contemporary expert, “have technical qualities which have never

been surpassed. In the first place, he used a clay that was well selected, washed and freed from all impurities; secondly, he employed glazes which were pure and beautiful in color, and predominant among these were a magnificent pale blue and a creamy white; thirdly, his works had the glaze evenly distributed over the whole surface and so preserved the beauty of his modelling; fourthly, he was extremely careful in the jointing of different pieces and he always fitted them together and eliminated all ragged edges and coarse joints.”\* In the more impalpable qualities of the art, also, the contemporary sculptor, working with polychromatic faience and terra-cotta, will probably be content to rival the two great Della Robbias.

In the simpler color schemes adopted, the arrangement of white figures on a blue ground is frequently maintained to-day, as in the pediment of Dr. Parkhurst’s church, Madison Square, in this city. In the panels of the

Boston Opera House, representing Music, Drama, and Dancing, this blue takes on a greenish tinge. In the large medallions and reliefs on the façade of the new Vanderbilt hotel, in this city, now in process of construction, the color is more delicate, the figures being white and the background a delicate cream color. But for all this work, sculptural and purely architectural, the number of colors, it is claimed, can be indefinitely increased.

The use of this material in building has become so extensive that, it is asserted, fifty per cent. of the visible construction of the

\* Francis G. Plant, Art Director, Hartford Faience Company.



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Panels by F. G. R. Roth.

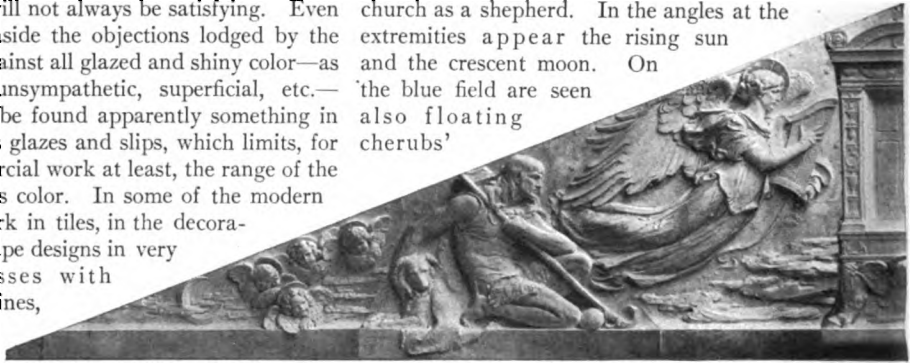
sky line of the "sky-scrappers" on Manhattan Island is of terra-cotta, and only about fifteen per cent. of marble, granite, and other stones. The rest is mostly brick.

If, however, we take for a moment the point of view of a painter, it may be admitted that this color will not always be satisfying. Even in setting aside the objections lodged by the tonalists against all glazed and shiny color—as repellent, unsympathetic, superficial, etc.—there is to be found apparently something in the clay, its glazes and slips, which limits, for the commercial work at least, the range of the charm of its color. In some of the modern interior work in tiles, in the decorative landscape designs in very broad masses with raised outlines, something more like the qualities the

painter strives for are obtained—the mellowness, richness, depth, smothered pomp—so to speak, the color living and working in the mass, ready to break out, threatening, to be hoped for. *Color*, in short. And even better results will probably be obtained.

Dr. Parkhurst's low-domed, Romanesque church facing Madison Square was designed as a colorful edifice, and the sculpture in the pediment was planned by the late Stanford White. The size of the figures, in very high relief, excited some apprehension when it came to their execution, and many devices were employed to insure success—among others, that of mounting a vastly enlarged photograph of the completed model, the size of the original, in the tympanum (forty-four feet on the base line) and inspecting it critically from the park below. From Mr. White's memoranda, H. Siddons Mowbray, painter, executed a careful design, indicating the color, and Adolph A. Weinman, sculptor, carried this out in a relief model of the dimensions required. From this model the Atlantic Terra-cotta Company produced the finished work, in the required colors, and the assembled pieces were carefully set in the brick work of the pediment, the touches of gold, in leaf, being afterward laid on by hand, though the metal, also, could have been applied and fired with the three colors employed. In the centre of the tympanum appears an upright tabernacle or shrine, bearing the cross and ball in gold on an orange panel and with the ornament also picked out in gold; underneath are clouds and a winged head: this rep-

resents truth; on either side are graceful floating female figures in adoration, one with a lyre and the other with a scroll, "Gloria in Excelsis Deo." Of the two kneeling male figures, that in armor on the right indicates the conquering or militant church, and that on the left the church as a shepherd. In the angles at the extremities appear the rising sun and the crescent moon. On the blue field are seen also floating cherubs'



Pediment in Dr.

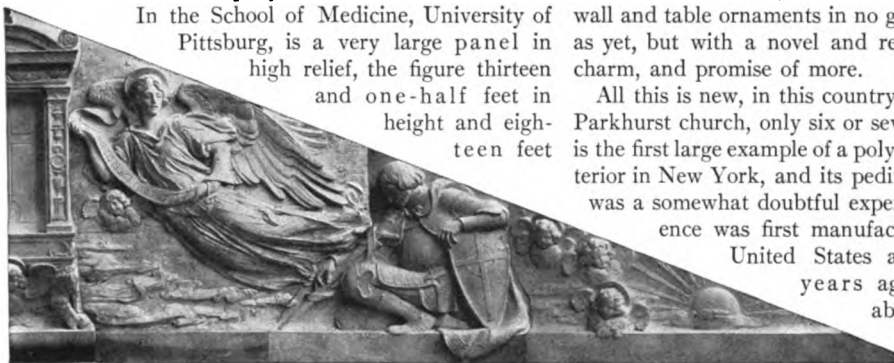
heads and wisps of cloud, and it is spotted with stars. The figures, etc., are of a glazed white, not too cold; the lyre and the lettering on the scroll, the halos of the two angels and of the cherub heads, the knight's sword hilt and the stars, are also gilded. The background is of a luminous blue, somewhat more luminous than is wanted, allowance having been made for the inevitable lowering of tone by dust and exposure to the weather.

The decorative panels over the main entrance of the Boston Opera House, Bela L. Pratt, sculptor, executed by the Atlantic Terra-cotta Company, are smaller in scale, also in high relief, and divided into square panels like gigantic tiles. These panels present in each a central figure or group, about half life size, and larger groups at the two ends.

For the decorations of the first two floors of the façade of the Vanderbilt hotel the scheme is more strictly architectural. In the great semicircular lunette over the central entrance very tall decorative terminal figures, nymphs and satyrs, six feet in height, eight in number, radiate from the centre like the sticks of a fan, separating very shallow arched niches and united by festoons and other light devices; over the light cornice of the second floor, on the three great bays of the building, are spaced large medallions, four feet in extreme diameter, bearing dancing figures in relief, and the cornice itself carries a handsome Paladion motif. In the interior of this building, when completed, it is intended to make still more ex-

tensive use of this decorative sculpture tricked out with color. All of it will be modelled from the designs of the architects, Warren and Wetmore, and under their supervision by Donelly and Ricci, and executed by the Hartford Faience Company.

In the School of Medicine, University of Pittsburg, is a very large panel in high relief, the figure thirteen and one-half feet in height and eighteen feet



Parkhurst's church.

at base, of Esculapius, with his staff and serpent, gray in color, modelled by the sculptor Charles Keck for the Atlantic Terra-cotta Company. For the more or less Byzantine architecture of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the elaborate color scheme of the relief work of which—in red, green, yellow, cream tones, and sienna—has provoked much comment, this same company has provided nearly a hundred cherubic figures, creamy white against yellow, and other figures in high relief, a colder white against blue. Examples could be multiplied. Among them is a large panel in several colors representing knights tilting, seven feet in length, in Rookwood faience, by the sculptor W. P. McDonald, over a doorway in Westwood School, Cincinnati, Ohio. A very extensive field is opened by the possibility of exact reproduction of any classic work—as a panel of Donatello's children, by this company, in old ivory with touches of sienna.

In the field of smaller work, wall fountains, flower-boxes, vases, tobacco-boxes, panels in relief, etc., etc., the opportunities are innumerable, and the interior work offers certain advantages in permitting the use of soft, porous, and heavily applied mat glazes, not having to fear the assaults of wind and weather which will affect unglazed terra-cotta.

For fountains, the polychromatic exterior glaze decoration is peculiarly well adapted and has been used in a number of important cases.

A very ingenious and interesting diversion of this art has been presented in the little

animal figures in faience by the sculptor F. G. R. Roth, both in the round and in panels of various degrees of relief. In these, to a wide range of modelling, realistic and purely decorative, he adds an equally wide range of color, truthful and fantastic, and contrives to produce wall and table ornaments in no great numbers as yet, but with a novel and real decorative charm, and promise of more.

All this is new, in this country at least; the Parkhurst church, only six or seven years old, is the first large example of a polychromatic exterior in New York, and its pediment in color was a somewhat doubtful experiment. Faience was first manufactured in the

United States about twenty years ago; and tiles about thirty-

five, but the origin of the latter among

the Egyptians is traced back by some historians to about 5000 B. C., and their general use to about 1400 B. C. The Alhambra, the beautiful tiles of which have never been excelled, was commenced in 1272 A. D.; Luca della Robbia first employed faience about 1440 A. D., and to him is usually attributed the discovery of the method of producing opaque glazes which could be applied directly upon the body clay without the intervening coating of white clay, or "slip." This latter method, however, is still in use by the terra-cotta manufacturers whose wares, generally, are content with one firing, while those of the faience specialists, like the vases of the potter, enjoy two, before and after glazing. Consequently the latter are usually distinguished by a greater delicacy and beauty of finish, color, and surface texture which permits of their use in association with marble, bronze, and the finer stones. In "the production of glazes having the softness to the eye and touch of the non-reflecting mat surfaces of the faience of to-day, with their richer and more sympathetic qualities of color," the modern makers contend that they rival "the somewhat glassier textures which, even with such masters as the Della Robbias, represented their most advanced technical knowledge." \* The possibilities of the non-reflecting mat surface for sculpture are of vital importance for the full development of the art.

In the tiles, which permit of a great variety of broad and decorative effects in landscape and figure design, the modelling is either in

\* Sturgis Lawrence, Rookwood Pottery Company.



Panel by W. P. McDonald in the Westwood School, Cincinnati.

low relief or limited to raising the outlines, partly for the purpose of confining the color within its proper boundaries.

The clays, of different colors, in which occur sand, flint, and feldspar, are found in various localities. For the terra-cottas, broken pieces of the baked terra-cotta, called "grit," are added. From the model furnished by the sculptor, or from that made by trained workmen in inferior pieces, a cast is made, into the mould of this cast the prepared moist clay, the "body," is forced into every part, and when dry taken out and fired in muffle kilns.

The largest part of the drying takes place after the piece is turned out of the mould, either on the floor or in tunnels where artificial or waste heat is in circulation. In the circular kilns the flames do not touch the clay, but circulate in various directions through the hollow walls and down through the central hollow shaft according to three separate systems of firing, known by their respective names. For the larger pieces of terra-cotta, as those of the Parkhurst church, it is necessary to regulate this firing very carefully, that the moisture contained in them shall be completely expelled before the extreme heat is applied. The steam vent holes, left in the upper part of the kiln, are not closed for two days, then all peep holes and vents are stopped up and the highest temperature developed, frequently 2,250° Fahrenheit.

For the one firing of the terra-cottas, both

glazed and unglazed, it is usual to give six days to the firing and six to the cooling; for the faience, about fifty hours to the "bisque" and fifty more when it has been covered with the vitreous glaze. This glaze and the preliminary "slip" are applied by spraying on the principle of the air-brush. The shrinkage in the firing is very nearly fifteen-sixteenths of an inch to the foot in the plain pieces, and one inch to the foot for the glazes, which require a higher temperature, and this shrinkage is allowed for in the original modelling. The kilns are circular, built of fire brick, banded with iron, and frequently repaired; when they are filled, ready for firing, the doors are bricked up with a double wall through which horizontal flues are left for the circulation of the flames. The completed pieces, issued from the kiln, are trimmed by hand and the joints planed smooth to fit neatly, though the architect—unlike the sculptor—frequently insists upon the demonstration of this cement-filled joint.

The colored glazes and slips are made of mineral chemicals and clays, often imported from Germany and England, and frequently very expensive. A nice adjustment is required to make equal the coefficients of expansion and contraction of the glazes and the terra-cotta bodies to which they are applied. Otherwise "crazing" ensues, *i. e.*, the appearance of fine cracks in the glaze.

WILLIAM WALTON.



"The Drama," by Bela L. Pratt, Boston Opera House.