

LYRICAL ABSTRACTION

In the phase called lyrical abstraction between 1958 and 1962, Kregar further developed the characteristics of his early abstract painting. In this period, his best and most typical works of art were produced and he reached his artistic peak. He composed amorphous shapes with rhythmically progressive layers of colour. In doing so, he varied one of the prevailing colour shades or arranged colour contrasts which in mutual interaction or dialogue make a composition and with colour gradations create colour tension of the painting. The painting *Desert Shore* still reveals a kind of geometric abstraction with remaining lines and contours; however it is disappearing from the painting and what is left are structured chromatic forms. Kregar's pictures are intense with a lyrical effect. They are melodic in their inner movement but always compositionally balanced with a rhythm of colour blotches imitating the impressions of nature. Therefore, art critics associated him with abstract landscape painting and argued that, with his attitude to nature, he somehow completed the work of the Slovenian impressionists.

Over the course of time, Kregar's range of colours became softer, less contrasting and saturated, and his images softer and translucent. His pictures are often monochromatic with a prevailing basic colour that carries the message and mood. A typical feature of his works from the early 1960s is a strong contrast between light and dark paintings. The following paintings *Eurydice*, *Restless Soil*, *Rainy Day*, *Blue and Red Fleshes*, *Socrates' Death*, and *Istrian Summer* feature these characteristics. The picture *Light Mass* represents the last stage of lyrical abstraction, in which Kregar with the purity and spontaneity of the layers and consequently with rougher texture of the painting surface came closer to more widespread art movement of the time – informel. The painting *Spanish Rhapsody* – which again depicts some moments of reality – already suggests the next stage of Kregar's art – the new figuration that he developed after 1963. His paintings' poetically interpreted titles correspond to their special mood. Kregar himself named the paintings and thus suggested their content. It can be observed that he again used antique heroes and atmospheric impressions of nature. The titles of his paintings appear like verses; therefore, the paintings were often linked with the poetry of Slovenian poets Anton and France Vodnik, who were his cousins, Vladimir Truhlar, and others.