

Slovak Book Art and Illustration 1945—1985

In the postwar development, particularly after February 1948, Slovak book art and illustration were given weighty social impulses. Conditions were created for setting up a book art and illustration as a specialized branch of fine arts, for producing belletristic books as a synthesis of literary, creative and polygraphic elements. Artists of the founding generation of the interwar period preserved continuity with the preceding development. Works relating to classical writings of Slovak literature predominated. National tales and legends, in particular, found enthusiastic interpreters among the illustrators (M. Benka, L. Fulla, J. Vodrážka, K. Ondrejčka, E. Makovický, J. Hála). In the fifties, there was a prevalence of literary writings of epic character and this was reflected also in the illustrating paraphrase of the topic, where illustrative drawings of a matter-of-fact, descriptive character predominate (Š. Bednár, A. Kováčik, A. Kajlich, F. Klimáček, V. Chmel, E. Semian, L. Kellenberger, J. Vrtiak, J. Šturdík, L. Ilečko). Original writings, the topic of the Slovak National Uprising, but also translation literature were in the forefront of interest. The edition of basic works of classical literature was linked with the activity of the illustrator and teacher — V. Hložník, as also with the pioneering efforts of D. Šulc. These efforts were carried on from the sixties onwards by further graphic illustrators (L. Krátky, in the domain of belles lettres, I. Kovačević in the graphic layout of books on fine arts, K. Pecho and J. Švec in the adjustment of books for children and the young). Illustrators applying classical woodcut and other graphical techniques, as a rule in relation to works of national literary tradition (A. Pepich, E. Zmeták, R. Dúbravec), or to works of social motivation (J. Szabó, O. Dubay, J. Baláž), followed the artistic expression on the basis of graphic display. Striking conceptual stimuli have been brought into creative co-operation in book designing by graduates of the Bratislava High School of Creative Arts, particularly by specialists of

Hložník's school (A. Brunovský, J. Lebiš, V. Bombová, F. Hübel, V. Gergeľová, J. Pavlíčková, T. Schnitzer, L. Končeková-Veselá). In parallel with this, illustrative work went on that was based on decorative stylization and a poetic transposition of ideational sources of a literary model (A. Klimo, V. Kraicová, M. Cipár, M. Želibská). During the sixties and seventies, several generation strata took part in the art of book design and illustration which became reflected in a polyphony of creative planes and in a possibility of closer specializations. Strongly represented is the illustrative trend on the basis of a painting or colouristic approach (Š. Cpin, L. Nesselman, F. Hložník, T. Gáll, B. Votavová, B. Kolčáková, J. Trojan, O. Zimka). Nor is there any lack of experimenting in an application of combined techniques (M. Čunderlík, J. Čihánková, J. Fillo, V. Popovič, I. Tarasová). Related to the development of original belles lettres, science-fiction and adventure literature, was the new wave of interest in black-and-white, graphic and drawing illustrative expressions (V. Machaj, J. Cesnak, I. Schurmann, G. Štrba, O. Lupták, N. Rappensbergerová-Jankovičová). The period between the second half of the seventies and mid-eighties has meant not only a stabilization of crystallized conceptions, but has also brought in stimuli of speculative endeavours. The various editing domains are acquiring, besides a thematic profiling, also a characteristic visual form as a result of a systematic co-operation of book illustrators not only in the field of a traditionally advanced creative culture (belles lettres, books for children and the young, creative-artistic publications, bibliophilies and special-occasion prints), but also in that of political, health and natural-history literatures. At the present time, our book art and illustration dispose of a strong creative potential in the various, differentiated expressions. Among these, young creative artists assert themselves in a telling manner and gradually take over the initiative in book designing.