


Bookplate in the context of Ukrainian printmaking at the turn of the XX and XXI centuries: Typological aspect

ABSTRACT


The article is dedicated to the examination of the bookplate of modern Ukraine, which starting from the 1990s entered the state of its revival and flourishing. A version of the bookplate typology, formed on the basis of pictorial motifs as the main classification criteria is proposed, while typologically bookplate is usually divided into groups based on the scope of use or the technique for creating graphic sheets. The reasons for the actualization of bookplate as a type of engraving at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the factors that influenced its popularization outside the country, and the transformation of the functions of bookplate are considered. The role of collecting as one of the most powerful stimuli for the popularization of bookplate in the modern world of graphic arts is emphasized; the leading centers for the development of the bookplate in Ukraine at the beginning of the 21st century and the technique preferred by artists are indicated.

KEY WORDS

Bookplate, ex-libris (EL), woodcut, etching, engraving

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First received: 16.3.2022.

Accepted: 6.11.2022.

Introduction

In the last quarter of the 20th – early 21st centuries, Ukrainian printmaking, which can be described as a rather ancient but little demanded form of fine art, received a new segment, the development of which proceeded very dynamically and along several vectors at once (Romanenkova, Bratus & Kuzmenko, 2021). While book graphic arts in general can be considered quite popular due to the demand for the book itself and its mass character (Hopkinson, 2011), then the bookplate has long been considered only an auxiliary element having a secondary, applied function, primarily positioning itself as an information holder. Bookplate stagnation in Ukraine ended with the beginning of the 1990s, when Ukrainian masters came out of the shadows to the

international arena (Romanenkova, 2015). A very active process of artists entering the international art space began, and accordingly, the emergence of new vectors for the development of the Ukrainian bookplate. From an auxiliary element, information holder, a bookplate turns into an independent work of art of a high professional level of artistic performance, which leaves the “shadow zone” and moves into the “zone of increased attractiveness”, becoming self-sufficient and acting as an inherently valued phenomenon with artistic worth, an object of exhibition and collection (Mikhailchuk, 2014a). Since 1993, there has been a metropolitan bookplate club (UBC) in the country, headed by the art critic and collector P. Nesterenko, the author of one of the two dissertations that exist today on the bookplate of Ukraine and a number of scientific and popular science studies

about it (Nesterenko, 2012; Nesterenko, 2016; Nesterenko, 2021a; Nesterenko, 2021b). The UBC mostly exists as a “hobby club”, being a public organization, and reposes on the enthusiasm of its members. This explains the fact that bookplates in Ukraine are purely commercial, i.e. processes in this area are possible only thanks to the own efforts of artists and critics, and, as the main source, sponsorship of patrons (Romanenkova, 2021).

Artistic centers, main representatives, dominant techniques of modern Ukrainian bookplate

Starting from the 1990s, several epicenters of the main processes of bookplate development in Ukraine begin to emerge. The most fruitful are Kyiv (R. Agirba, K. Antioukhin, A. and S. Burtovyy, V. Vyshnyak, R. Vygovskiy, Yu. Galitsyn, Yu. Kamenetskaya (Kamenetska, 2019a; Kamenetska, 2019b), V. Lopata, A. Melnikova, O. Miklovdada, A. and G. Pugachevsky, N. Stratylat, V. Taran, A. and S. Kharuk (Romanenkova, Paliychuk & Mykhalchuk, 2021)), and Lviv (O. Hnatyv, O. Denysenko, B. Drobotyuk, S. Yvanov, Ye. Kozanevych, R. Romanyshyn, S. Hrapov) schools. Less massive in terms of the number of prominent representatives, yet no less interesting are Odessa (D. Becker), Kharkiv (N. Neimesh), Chernivtsy (O. Kryvoruchko), Sumy (V. Lomaka), Lugansk and the Lugansk region (K. Kalynovych, B. Romanov), Dnipro (S. and V. Khvorost), where one can talk about traditions and demand outside the country, but it is too early to talk about the school.

At many prestigious competitions, Ukrainian bookplates received the highest awards, won prizes, some of them were recognized by leading professional associations of bookplate creators and collectors (Mykhalchuk, 2021). First of all, this refers to the representatives of Kyiv, Lviv, Lugansk. Historically, Lviv craftsmen were famous for their bookplate created using gravure printing techniques. Most often they turn to either pure etching or a combination of several techniques, whose tools are similar, and the visual effect is enriched by this synthesis of mezzotint, soft varnish, aquatint, dry point (Romanenkova et al., 2021). Resist, engraving on steel are less widespread. The palette is predominantly laconic – etching by Lviv people and representatives of other Ukrainian bookplate schools, is monochrome, color etching (and in combination with other techniques) is quite rare (Lviv expert R. Romanyshyn, Kyiv master K. Antioukhin). Sometimes, for example, watercolor or gouache tinting of etching is used, which leads to an enrichment of the palette and a change in the perception of texture (Lugansk graphic artist K. Kalynovych). Today copper and steel are used less frequently. Steel can generally be called an exception – it is very difficult to work with, technolog-

ically few people can operate it, the process is incredibly laborious, and the stroke is quite dry and sharp.

Kyiv masters often become known in the professional environment for their work in xylography techniques. While a few decades ago woodcuts (both end and edged) dominated, for which different types of wood were used, including boxwood, exquisite in texture, then at the beginning of the 21st century wooden boards were almost universally replaced by a synthetic base, i.e. plastic of different thicknesses. The linocut, which is very common among artists since their youthful experiments, does not lose popularity due to the malleability and availability of the material. At the same time, it was the inaccessibility and costliness that caused the artists to almost completely abandon the use of boxwood, which, moreover, is difficult to work with and is one of the most solid foundations in woodcuts.

Ex-librists rarely appeal to flat printing, because the specifics of lithography do not allow them to comfortably work in small forms, so using this technique to create a bookplate is not very rational (Mykhalchuk, 2014b).

Criteria for the classification of the Ukrainian bookplate of the last third of the 20th – early 21st centuries

Based on the functions of a bookplate, we distinguish artistic and utilitarian, applied, i.e. works of art and information holders, which are also subject to classification. It is noteworthy that in this case only artistic bookplate is a matter of discussion. The classification criterion can also be the location of the bookplate in the book. Thus, the super bookplate, placed on the spine or cover of the book, namely in its initially visible zone to the viewer becomes an independent type. But if we keep in mind that in recent decades the bookplate, having transformed from an ordinary information holder into a work of art, is no longer dependent and acquired an independent life as a work of small-form graphic arts OUTSIDE of the book, this criterion ceases to be effective and is applicable only to bookplates created before a certain period.

Artistic bookplates are often divided into subject, monogram and stamp. However, this classification is not entirely correct since the fantasy of modern artists often leads to a synthesis of different types of works, when the coat of arms becomes part of a complex, already thematic composition (Spivak, 2010). The same can be said about the initially classified as monogram bookplates.

The criteria are also the techniques in which bookplates are created (Safonova, 2011). Based on this, it is possible

to single out bookplates created in the techniques of xylography, intaglio and flat printing, bookplate created using computer graphic arts. Sometimes, graphic sheets created using a complex embossing technique, which is mastered by an extremely small number of experts, are singled out as an independent group. Embossed or textured, the so-called blind embossing is a technique, the complexity and ambiguity of the effect of which is dictated by the features of use. It comes to colorless embossing, which is perceived in a very specific way, and more often it is used not as an independent technique, but as an addition to the main ones. It can be combined with embossing, such as foils, if a master has a sufficient level of professionalism for a clear alignment when printing plates. Very often, it performs the stamp of the author of the composition, the author's monogram or logo, if it is present in the graphic sheet.

The color characteristic is also used as a classification criterion, i.e. black and white and color bookplates are distinguished. It is not correct to talk about which of the groups is more in demand and numerous, as it is almost impossible to obtain data of this kind. One can only trace the tendencies of dominance locally, in certain geographical segments and applicable to individual chronological periods. For example, for the Lviv school of modern book sign, a monochrome and black-and-white manner is somewhat more typical, if we take as an argument that the Lviv people are strong in intaglio printing, and etching, as noted above, is more often monochrome. At the same time, Kyiv masters of xylography techniques bring their bookplates to a virtuoso level of performance, turning to polychromy in plastic engraving: they are very popular in Belgium, Italy, Portugal, and other countries (Belgrade Ex-Libris Circle, 1995b), for example, multi-color book plates by Kyiv artists A. and G. Pugachevsky, some of which are made in six, eight, ten and sometimes more plates.

Modern Ukrainian art bookplate: Dominant pictorial motifs

Thematic bookplates can be divided into separate group. It is worth highlighting that group of bookplate that are plotless, *abstract*. Of course, monograms, fonts, ornamental stamp compositions always stand apart, regardless of the color characteristics and performance technique. But abstract ones also deserve special attention. They are convenient since they are universal, they can suit any customer who does not limit the artist in any way. Stylization, allegorical language are inherent in almost all bookplates, but here they are reduced to the Absolute. In such works, the main focus of the viewer's attention is on the composition, technique, stroke, palette features.

The array of *allegorical* bookplates is also quite large. A bookplates always tends towards conventionality and symbolism, so the language of allegory is much more appropriate for it. Masters of different schools turn to allegory (Lugansk artist Kalynovych K.: "The Eternal Temple of Knowledge", etching, dry point, 2020; Pugachevsky G. from Kyiv: "Ex-libris George Mulders. "War and Peace", plastic engraving, 2000). Representatives of the Lviv school of ex-libris are very indicative in their inclination towards a complex allegorical artistic language. Many complex graphic sheets in etching techniques were created by O. Denisenko, S. Ivanov, S. Hrapov. O. Denisenko can be attributed to the cohort of the most sought-after Lviv ex-librists, who works in intaglio printing techniques and uses the complex language of allegory, which creates a kind of artistic code of his works. Bookplates by Denisenko are monochrome, often in black and white, i.e. color is not an instrument of influence on the consciousness of the viewer, therefore, a compensatory mechanism is used to achieve the goal – the language, the code of the pictorial motif, namely, allegory, stylization, complexity from the point of view of technology (Figure 1). A common theme in the artist's bookplate is the image of a knight, which varies in many works, and not only in bookplates.

Portrait bookplate is also quite common. The portrait image, both stylized and naturalistic, can act as a central element of the plot composition of works of other genres, dominating from a compositional point of view (Pugachevsky A.: «"Ex-libris Y. Berdichevsky. "Pushkin in Kyiv"», plastic engraving, 2002; Pugachevsky G.: «"Ex-libris Marietta Hagedorn", "Copernicus"», plastic engraving, 2009), and be the main segment of the graphic sheet (Kalynovych K.: "Ex-libris E/A for Arnold Hausweiler", etching, 1991; Kalynovych K.: «"Ex-libris Johnny Mann. "Portrait of C. Slani"», etching, 2018, Figure 1; Pugachevsky A.: «"Ex-libris Biblioteca Comunale Di Lomazzo. "Sandro Botticelli. 1510-2010"», plastic engraving, 2010; Romanov B.: "Ex-libris S. Demin", linocut, 1998). Stylization is not so distinctive for this type of bookplates.

Ex-librists often turn to architectural motifs, which determine the pictorial dominant of their graphic sheets, when one can speak of a kind of *urban* bookplate. The core of the compositions often become monuments of religious architecture, but emphasis is also placed on secular buildings. Geometrism dominates in such bookplates, when the building is the main dominant, and not the staffing. Buildings can be stylized, depicted in silhouette, spot (Romanov B.: "Ex-libris K. Motrich", linocut, 1993), conditionally schematically, in a generalized way, conveying the general idea (Luchko V.: "Ex-libris V. Hetirer", linocut, 1993; Pugachevsky A.: «"Ex-libris G. Blum. "There are many religions – God is one"», plastic engraving, 1994; Pugachevsky A.: «"Ex-libris H. Stopikowski. "Domes of Moscow"», plastic engraving, 1993; G. Pugachevsky: «"Ex-libris H. Pungs.

“Old Street”», plastic engraving, 1995), but there are also quite naturalistic images, the purpose of which is recognizability of the building (Saratovsky I.: “Ex-libris B. Zhelekhivsky”, linocut, 1993; Pugachevsky G.: «“Ex-libris Cor van Vlijmen. “Amsterdam”», plastic engraving, 1997; Pugachevsky A.: «“Ex-libris Ivo Prokop. “Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra”», plastic engraving, 1996; Pugachevsky A.: «“Ex-libris S. Brodovich. “St. Andrew's Church”», plastic engraving, 2006), Pugachevsky A.: «“Ex-libris (P). Van Os. “Malbork Castle”», plastic engraving, 1993).

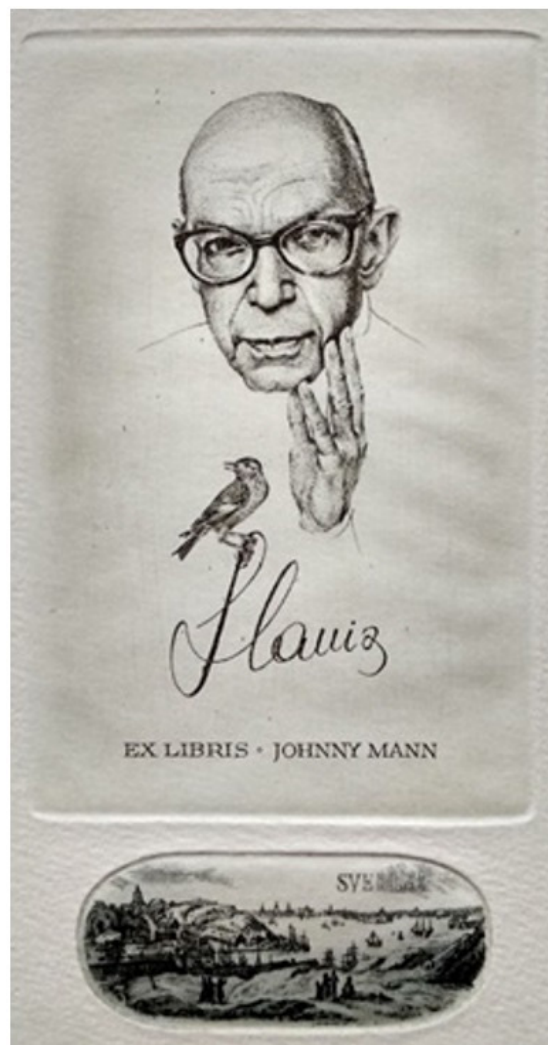


» **Figure 1:** Denisenko O. «“Ex libris Aloys Vertongen. Horn”», etching, 1999.

Literary bookplates are in great demand among bibliophiles. It is popular not only periodically, when competitions are held to coincide with anniversaries, but it constantly attracts the attention of collectors. Graphic sheets with portraits of writers are created (Kalynovych K.: “From the books of Sergei Lishchyna”, etching, 2014), often accompanied by the characters of their works. Among the favorites of artists are A. Pushkin, V. Shakespeare, M. de Cervantes, T. Shevchenko, M. Bulgakov, V. Vysotsky. Quite often, bookplate subjects are drawn from fairy tales (Pugachevsky A.: «“Ex-libris Yan Liu. Hans Christian Andersen. “Thumbelina”», plastic engraving, 2008; Pugachevsky A.: «“Ex-libris Yanying Guo. “Cinderella”», plastic engraving, 2008), folklore.

Such a bookplate is a kind of visualization of the blurring of lines between genres since it adopts all the characteristics of a book illustration (dozens of book sheets of Shevchenkiana by B. Romanov; Kalynovych K.: «“From

the books of N. Tserkovny. N. Gumilyov. “Lost Tram III”», mixed technique, 2014; Agirba R.: “Ex-libris Fu Xian Zhai – 30. Don Quixote Serenade”, etching, aquatint, mezzotint, 2012; Agirba R.: «“Ex-libris P. Becker. “Don Quixote”», plastic engraving, 1997; Agirba R.: «“Ex-libris MT&R. Brondolo. “M. Bulgakov. Dog’s Heart”», plastic engraving, 2009; Pugachevsky A.: «“Ex-libris Luc van den Briele. “Gargantua and Pantagruel”», plastic engraving, 1994; Pugachevsky A.: «“Ex-libris Yaoshen Fang. “Don Quixote”», plastic engraving, 2009, Figure 3; Pugachevsky G.: «“Ex-libris George Sekine. “Don Quixote”», plastic engraving, 1999) (van den Briele, 1994).



» **Figure 2:** Kalynovych K. «“Ex-libris Johnny Mann. “Portrait of C. Slani”», etching, 2018.

Sacred bookplates can also be attributed to the most popular in the Ukrainian bookplate (Soborna Ukrayina, 1994). Religious themes have gained rapid popularity since the 1990s, when compositions depicting architectural shrines, scenes from the Old became popular (Kalynovych K.: «“Ex-libris S. Brodovich. “Judith”», etching, 1993; Pugachevsky A.: «“Ex-libris PE vd Velde-Rath. “Moses”», plastic engraving, 1996) and the

New Testament (Antioukhin K.: “Ex-libris SJM”, etching, aquatint, 1994), individual personalities of sacred texts (Pugachevsky G.: «“Ex-libris Werner Grebe. “St. Ursula”», plastic engraving, 1997; Pugachevsky G.: «“Ex-libris Hermann Wiese. “St. Sebastian”». plastic engraving, 1996). From the Old Testament, there is the exploitation of the images of Adam and Eve, which are also played out in connection with specific plot collisions (Kozanevych Ye.: “Ex-libris Warwarow A.”, etching, aquatint, 1993; Pugachevsky G.: «“Ex-libris Joop Sliep. “Adam and Eve”», plastic engraving, 1995; Pugachevsky G.: «“Ex-libris Hildegard Pungs. “Adam and Eve”», plastic engraving, 1995; Pugachevsky G.: «“Ex-libris L.A. Aarsen. “Adam and Eve”», plastic engraving, 1996; Pugachevsky G.: «“Ex-libris Birgit Gobel. “Adam and Eve”», plastic engraving, 1998; Taran V. “Ex-libris Antonio Gomez”, linocut, 1993) and in a more generalized context as symbols of love, flirting, temptation.



» **Figure 3:** Pugachevsky A. «“Ex-libris Yaoshen Fang. “Don Quixote”», plastic engraving, 2009.

The most common of the New Testament personalities are Jesus Christ and the Mother of God (Romanov B.: “Ex-libris V. Dolinovskaya”, plastic engraving, 1993; Lomaka V. “Ex-libris P. Nesterenko”, plastic engraving, 1993; Taran V.: “Ex-libris B. Gavrylyshyn”, linocut, 1993), angels (Mykhalchuk, 2017). While the Christ and Mother of God cycles involve certain difficulties with often multi-figure composition, and therefore only very experienced highly professional artists can apply to them, then the angel

can also vary in multi-figure compositions, and be a single figure in a graphic sheet (Galitsyn Yu.: “Ex-libris R. Jurelionio”, plastic engraving, 1993). The angel is a head turner for an artist who knows how to stylize well; such bookplates usually have a high degree of musicality, elegance, gracefulness of rhythm. Among the illustrative examples is the bookplate of the work of the Kyiv graphic artist G. Pugachevsky (Pugachevsky G.: «“Ex-libris B. Junod. “Angel”», plastic engraving, 1994, Figure 4), created in nine (!) plates, where unique polychromy is combined with exquisite stylization and musical poetry of the image, which could not go unnoticed by the judges of the competition: the work of the young artist was awarded a Medal at the Sixth International Biennale of Small Forms and Bookplates in Poland in 1995.



» **Figure 4:** Pugachevsky G. «“Ex-libris B. Junod. “Angel”», plastic engraving, 1994.

Mythological ex-libris compositions by Ukrainian graphic artists are also in demand among collectors – extremely beneficial freedom from canons and plot restrictions, the possibility of free interpretation of images and frequent exploitation of the “nude” motif attracts masters to this category of subjects (Belgrade Ex-Libris Circle, 1995a). They also include ancient mythology ((Pugachevsky A.: «“Ex-libris S. Brodoych. “Centaur and Lady”», plastic engraving, 2007; Pugachevsky G.: «“Ex-libris Emil Kunze. “Icarus”», plastic engraving, 1998; Pugachevsky G.: «“Ex-libris N.H. (Norbert Hillerbrandt). “The Birth of Aphrodite”», plastic engraving, 1996), and folklore motifs (Galitsyn Yu.: “Ex-libris Bogachevsky Marty, Khomyak Rostislav”, plastic engraving, 1993) and ancient Slavic

legends (Zastavnaya I.: "Ex-libris Lesya Rilko", line zirconography, 1993), and plots from ancient literature (Agirba R.: "Ex-libris Zheng Shiting. "Medea", etching, aquatint, mezzotint, 2012; Sivak A.: "Ex-libris Mario de Filippis", linocut 1993), where the core is built around the myth, the spectrum is very wide. More often, variations of "The Ravishment of Europe" can be met (Agirba R.: "Ex-libris I.P.P. Giannakos-Xotaris", etching, aquatint, mezzotint, 2012; Pugachevsky A.: "Ex-libris S. Brodovich", plastic engraving, 2007; Pugachevsky A.: "Ex-libris Harmut Opperman", plastic engraving, 2003", Pugachevsky A.: "Ex-libris Ya. Berdichevsky", plastic engraving, 2007), "The Judgment of Paris" (Agirba R.: "Ex-libris Dr. Peter Labuhn", plastic engraving, 2008; Pugachevskiy G.: "Ex-libris P. Labuhn", plastic engraving, 1995), "Leda and the Swan" (Agirba R.: "Ex-libris S. Brodovich", etching, aquatint, mezzotint, 2004; Agirba R.: "Ex-libris R. Agirba", etching, aquatint, mezzotint, 2013; Pugachevsky A.: "Ex-libris Futian Li", plastic engraving, 2009).

In a separate category, a very numerous one, one can single out those bookplates on mythological subjects that have an erotic connotation (Soborna Ukrayina, 1993). Nude figures often occupy the main place in mythological compositions; compositions can also have a pronounced erotic character. However, nude images can be the center of ex-libris compositions on other topics, female personalities are one of the most exploited by artists. Therefore, it is more correct to single them out in a special category and conditionally designate them as *lyrical* since the theme of erotica in a bookplate is popular, yet more local (Antioukhin K.: "Ex-libris Pieter Jonker", etching, aquatint, 1995.; Agirba R.: «"Ex-libris Ludek Kriz. "Young wine"», etching, aquatint, mezzotint, 2017). Amorous, romantic plots are constantly found in the bookplate of all periods. The "nude" motif can be played very elegantly outside the plot, when female images of a conventional, generalized nature, with varying degrees of stylization, become the center of the composition (Miklovdva O.: "Ex-libris Heikki Lahi", cut woodcut, 1993; Gnativ O.: "Ex-libris Mario de Filippis", linocut, 1993). But more often we can see numerous plots glorifying lovers, as the book sign was no exception in the host of art genres that sing an ode to female beauty and the elements of love (G. Pugachevsky: "Ex-libris S. Brodovich", plastic engraving, 2004).

Conclusions

Many bookplates created by modern Ukrainian artists are difficult to classify. They may contain elements that allow them to be classified into several categories at the same time. Therefore, there is no unambiguity in any variant of the typology. There are also many bookplates, the dominant pictorial motif of which was images of a fool, clown, circus scenes, a lot of animalistic graphic sheets, bookplates-cartoons, many works depicting the

signs of the zodiac. Thus, there are a number of pictorial motifs that are not included in the above-mentioned categories since only those that can be called the most extensive due to the demand for the plots and motifs underlying them stood out. There are also motifs that have lost their relevance in the Ukrainian ex-libris, so they can only be considered in the context of an analysis of a bookplates of an earlier period, such as sheets with symbols and plot dominants of the Soviet era. Since the 1990s national motifs replaced them. These motifs were exploited very often, which emphasizes the dependence of this art form on the realities of the time and underlines the fact that the bookplate is a kind of miniature mirror of the era, clearly reflecting its trends and the dynamics of historical and cultural processes.

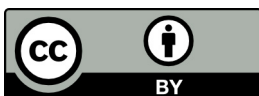
Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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