
ENCYCLOPAEDIA BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL OF THE ART OF THE
CONTEMPORARY EX-LIBRIS XXVI

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VICTOR MELNYK

Victor Melnyk was born in 1957 in the Zhytomyr region, Ukraine.

He studied at the faculty of history and theory of arts at Kyiv Institute of Fine Arts. Now, he works as a head of the fine arts department in Ivano-Frankivsk Art Museum.

Special subjects of interest are the history of Ukrainian icon painting, Baroque plastic art, the critique of modern art. He is the author of the monograph «The Church of the Holy Spirit in Rohatyn», publications in special art editions on ancient and modern art.

More than once he was an organizer and a curator of ex-libris and small-scale graphic arts exhibitions in Ivano-Frankivsk: «Sacred graphic arts of Precarpathians artists»; personal exhibitions of Yuriy Protsan (Ukraine, 1997) and Juliusz Batura (Poland, 1997). He was a curator and compiler of the catalogue of International exhibitions of small-scale graphic arts «Sobor - 96» dedicated to the 400th anniversary of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church.

Now he compiles the museum ex-libris collection of the Ukrainian and foreign authors.

PETRO NESTERENKO

Petro Nesterenko was born on 13 July, 1949. An art critic, ex-libris collector (with a collection of 24,000), and a President of the Ukrainian Ex-Libris Club, he lives in Kyiv. One third of his 150 publications have been about ex-libris, and he has been published in *The Ukrainian Review*, *Bookplate International* (England), *New Days* (Canada) and *Ex-libris* (Spain). Currently he is writing a book about Ukrainian ex-libris history. Petro Nesterenko has organised ten ex-libris exhibitions, including two international ones in Ukraine and three of Ukrainian bookplates in Germany, Denmark and Great Britain. He was awarded diplomas at ex-libris exhibitions in Munchen (Ukraine 95) and Kyiv (World petpress 1995).

JULIA ROMANENKOVA

Born in 1975 in Kiev, Ukraine.

Graduated from the State School of Fine Arts, department of painting (1993), works in free graphic arts, too. Then graduated from Ukrainian Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture, department of theory and history of art (1998). As art critic writes articles about ex-libris by Ukrainian and foreign graphic artists for editions of Ukraine, Greece, Spain, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, Denmark, and Belgium (from 1994).

HORST SCHULT

Born in 1924 in Osnabrück, Lower Saxony, he has lived since 1963 in Bonn, the former capital and now the Federal-City of Germany. As a certificated engineer for Radio-Frequencies he worked until 1987 as a frequency-manager for Satellites and Radio-Relay-links at the German Ministry of PTT and is now retired.

From his youth he drew and painted, collected book and graphic arts, in which he preferred all the artists occupied by the theme «Women».

By reason of lack of space he turned over from the collection of large-sized graphics to the collection of bookplates, also on the theme «Women», whereat the limit lies now at the work of the artists, F. von Bayros and Mark F. Severin.

He is a member of the German, Belgian, Dutch and Danish Bookplate societies.



ROLANDAS RIMKUNAS

Julia Romanenkova

Ten castles of the copper kingdom

Let's try to imagine; a young Baltic artist, specializing in techniques of intaglio printing from 1991, decided to attempt to create his first bookplate. I think, dear lovers of ex-libris, you will be agree with me — it is the beginning of a new stage of creative life for each artist, isn't it? Each person understands nowadays that the bookplate is a rather limited sphere of activity, that its life depends on the desire of a customer, that it is a genre of applied graphic arts, etc. So, there are too many difficulties, many

reasons that can force an artist to turn from such an idea — of creating bookplates. But the hero of our new conversation will not give up his intention and his first ex-libris nevertheless will appear. Let's introduce the graphic artist from Lithuania Rolandas Rimkunas. He is of 36 years and chief assistant at Kaunas Art Institute. He teaches drawing, graphic design and printmaking. It is interesting that this artist graduated from the same institute in Kaunas (1983-1990), glass design department, then he



graduated from Vilnius Academy of Art — twice, i. e. two departments (1990-1995 and 1996-1998). Last year was the last year of his studying there. So, you see that this young man has a very high level of professional education, although it is a rather rare event now. An artist may have experience in professional creative work but without education. But, it is a pity, maybe on the contrary, too, that there are too many artists with diplomas, after different academies and institutes, but without mastery. Regrettably, too many artists, who have diplomas and titles, have not

experience and good practical skills now. It is a trouble, general to numerous countries: ruthlessly ambitious persons without talent have not nationality, always and everywhere. But the Lithuanian artist Rolandas Rimkunas is a rare exception. He has both professional education and skill. His preferred techniques are copper engraving and etching; in some cases he combines these techniques in one sheet (we will see such an example). So, he is an expert in the fields of intaglio printing. Rimkunas took part in many international exhibitions, competitions since 1994 in Yugoslavia,

Chronological checklist of ex-libris by Rolandas Rimkunas

1994

1 «Lago Maggiore» C2 85 x 130

1995

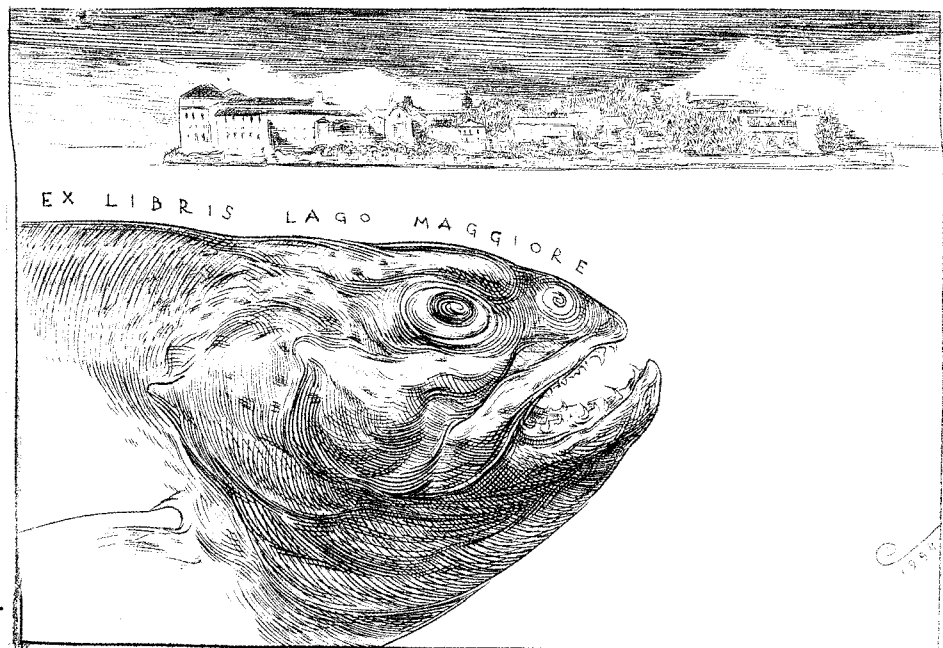
- 2 Raimundo Minkeviciaus C2 110 x 140
 3 Edmundo Saladziaus C2 108 x 127
 4 E. R. (Egles Rimkunienes) C2C3 88 x 95
 5 Egles C2 110 x 135
 6 Egles C2 110 x 137
 7 Rimvydo Kepezinsko C2 127 x 137
 8 Vytauto Rimkuno C2 125 x 135

1997

9 «Prienu Savivaldybes Viesoji Biblioteka» C2C3 100 x 150

1998

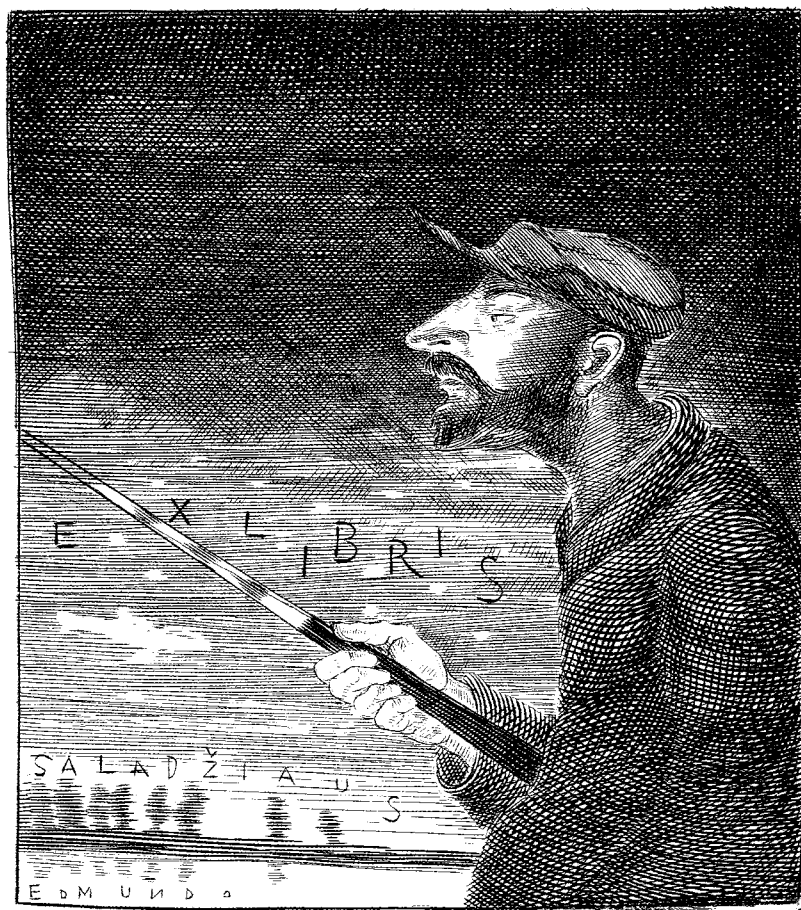
10 R. R. C3 125 x 170

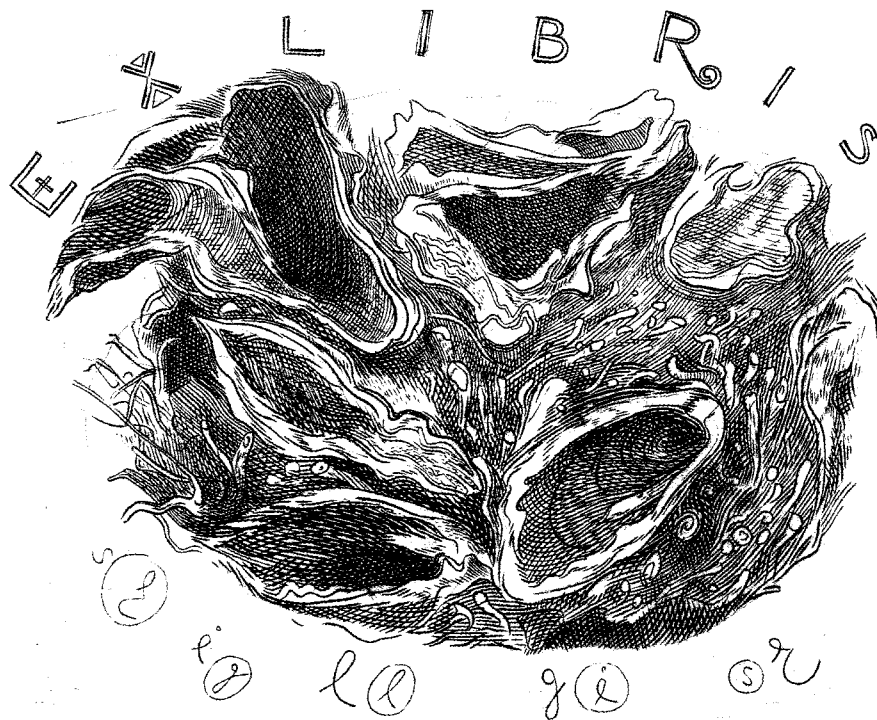


Japan, Poland, Italy, Canada and Lithuania. It is very interesting that this artist has one more sphere of creative activity, sc. «violin of Ingres». As far as Frenchmen have not the term «hobby», they have another term, that is much better — «the violin of Ingres», i. e. hobby, something that means that person creates it not only because it is his profession, but likes, adores its own creation, too. This word-combination is a synonym of the notion «hobby», but more graceful and suitable for graphic art. That's why I would like to say that the «violin of Ingres» is heraldry for Rimkunas. He created one recreated six coats of arms for Lithuanian towns. By the way, there is rather much work in the field of heraldry in this country now

because Lithuania must have its own national symbology as an independent country. I think there is no necessity to explain that such work needs accuracy and punctiliousness. The artist bears the responsibility because he creates symbols for all the country for many decades or — in the best case — even centuries.

At last we approach our most interesting theme: ex-libris by Rolandas Kimkunas. He has created ten bookplates — not very many yet, but we must remember that his first attempt in this field was done only in 1994. This time we have good opportunity to study, to analyze each sheet. It will be peculiar to travel to the copper kingdom — all bookplates by this Lithuanian graphic





artist were created in copper engraving (in two cases it was combined with etching). It is interesting that there are many Baltic popular tales where we read about three kingdoms — Golden, Silver and Diamond. We will guess that our artist created a fourth — Copper kingdom. It consists of a ten castles — a ten graphic sheets. It is necessary to do ten steps to get to the last castle. And we'll do these ten steps — step by step.

Welcome to the first copper castle — «ex-libris Lago Maggiore», 1994. This work has two different plans, the element of two genres. We see an urban landscape as background, small buildings, part of which sinks in the vegetation. The artist created two plans, having contrasting size — small buildings as background and a large (although partial) figure of a fish as first plan. It is a grandiose head of fish with open mouth. The text is along

the line of its contour, symbols are not too visible, these words do not disturb. It was a short description only. But I am sure that each true lover of the bookplate must be not an admirer only but at least just a little professional. That's why I will say: it's interesting that the main principle of composition of this sheet is contrast. There is contrast between the white area of the first plan and dark figure of the fish, contrast between the almost black spot of the right part of the sky and the whiteness of paper in the bottom of the right corner of the sheet. It is a contrast of sizes — small size of details of background and large figure of first plan. There is one more contrast. We can discern each even smaller detail of the fish-head but the background consists of schematic, generalized images only.

The second ex-libris by Rolandas Rimkunas was dedicated to Raimundo



Minkevicius and was created in 1995. It is an absolutely different sheet having other composition, other character of subject, other system of construction, and so other artistic language. We see a hand, surrounded by letters. It is a hand only, but with symbolic, profound sense. The artist disposed fingers in the order that is usual, it seems to me, for a musician's hand, for the fingers of a person who plays the violin. These fingers are not horny, but rather graceful. There are no other details in the sheet a slightly dirty tone of white empty paper only. Nothing disturbs sounds, which will be born by means of these fingers.

By the way, it seems that the general mass of the palm is just a little large as compared with spots of fingers, i. e. proportions of such fingers are too elegant for this palm. But thanks to this fact we can hear here, in the castle of this ex-libris, different melodies but not only with identical level of force. It may be, for example, both *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor from Brandenburg Concerto N° 2* by Bach and *Bagatelle N° 59, in A minor «Fur Elise»* by Beethoven. So, the imagination range is very rich.

Now let's go to the third spectator's place of rest — the bookplate of

Edmundo Saladziaus, 1995. This is a one-figure composition, where we see a fisherman with his fishing rod. The coast is at the bottom of the sheet, trees are symbolic, cut by means of a couple of horizontal schematic short lines. A partial-profile male figure is situated in the right corner of the graphic sheet; all the left part of the area is occupied by the sky. If the last composition (with the hand) had rhythm as the main notion, so, this work has another principle — an unusual compositional building, where an asymmetry is the most important component.

Our next copper castle is a little other, built in 1995 too for Egles Rimkuniene (by the way, this time our artist combines copper engraving with etching). It most probably is a small hunter's house but not a grandiose castle like before. This bookplate is not so

serious, it is sc. an isle of creative smile, where the artist does not think about global problems and does not think what other artists will say about him if he draws a usual cat, without serious subject tip off and allegory with secret sense. It is a cat only, a little facetious spark in the eyes of the artist congealed in copper and saved by author for somebody close.

The ex-libris, cut in 1995 for Egles Rimkuniene too, has rather a controversial character. Controversial because this image may be explained differently; there are many ways to read it. This composition is abstract, somebody can see strange flowers, somebody a nutshell, one more spectator will want to see seashells here, the deep or the flame. But in general the subject of this graphic sheet is not main, some thing else has much more important



value. I mean the illusion of non-stop motion, spontaneous motion, that does not have one axis, one direction, motion, which cannot be ruled. It is natural power, that has neither beginning nor end, but has organic nature only, that seethes inside itself.

Now we will return to the theme of contrasting. One more bookplate of Egles, 1995. By the way, Rimkunas devoted most of his ex-libris to his friends and relatives. All composition is surrounded by peculiar scrollwork with the text. This time the centre of composition is the face of a young girl with a disobedient curl. She mildly smiles but her eyes are serious, the smile

is shallow, it touches her lips only. And nothing more the girl's mood is calm, without impish revelry, that we could wait, looking at her lips. As for the contrast — we see the factory pipes and smoke behind the girl's head. Such a background resists her pure youth and freshness. As far as the spot of smoke is too large and surrounds this young face by a narrow ring, we cannot be sure that the white side of the world will win this time — darkness is too strong here. Although the author has given us at least unsure hope — a small part of light, which has escaped from the mantle of smoke.

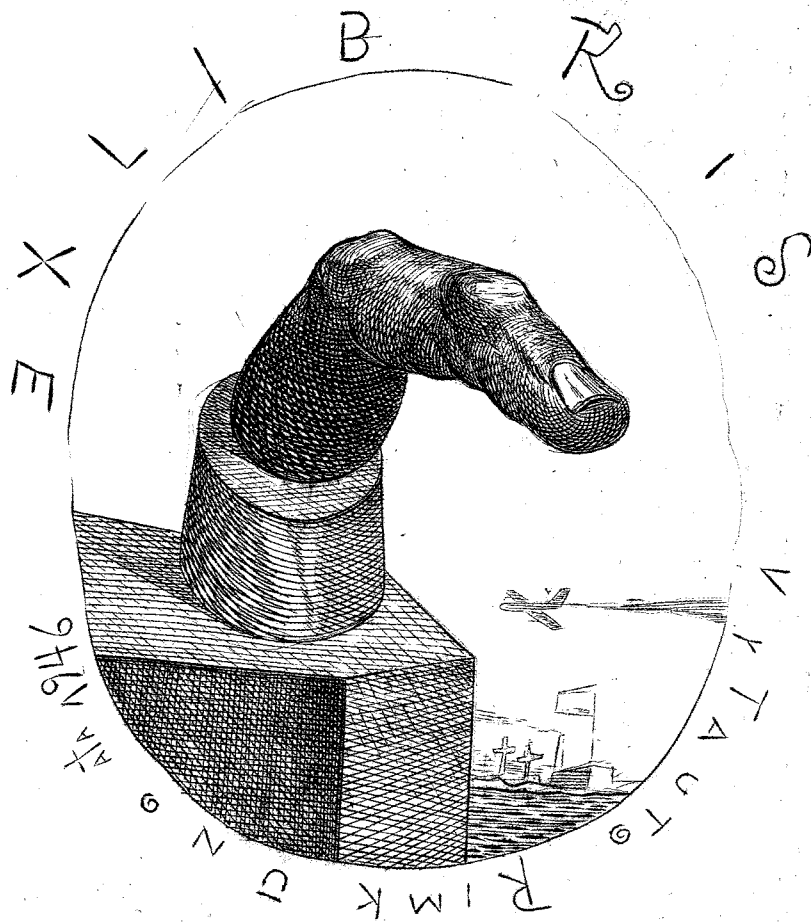


Rolandas Rimkunas has created graphic sheets with some figures, too. For example, the ex-libris of Rimvydo Kepezinsko, 1995. It is the sheet with a rather literary subject — two personages (man and woman) that are heroes of the original scene. An artist uses interesting methods of unusual perspective, combines images, lying in different planes, that gives inconsistent impressions.

Next is the ex-libris, cut for Vytauto Rimkuno in 1995. This work is less typical than the preceding bookplate. Its composition is put into the

oval, surrounded by thin lines of text. The compositional kernel of this sheet is one bent finger on the prop. The graphic artist has given us an opportunity to make out small crosses, a flag and the airplane far from the first plan, short horizontal lines, symbolizing the sea. All this combination of symbols may be explained as one general symbol, allegory.

1997 was the date of the creation by R. Rimkunas of a very interesting graphic sheet in copper engraving and etching, that is an example of the work





which belongs to two genres simultaneously. It is both ex-libris and heraldry work. I mean the bookplate, cut for the Library of the Lithuanian town of Prenai. It is a coat of arms where the rider fights against the dragon. The text is almost imperceptible in this sheet, it exists but does not disturb. The background of this composition is rather strange, unusual — it is a whimsical combination of fine lines with skulls. These lines form abstract drawing, although the main image is fully realistic. The background of the coat of arms is the darkest spot of the whole sheet, it is a centre of composition — semantic, optical, compositional centre.

Finally, the last work that will be an object of our interest, my own ex-libris by Rolandas Rimkunas, etching, 1998. This work is very characteristic thanks to the language of allegory, its specific nature. It is a multifigured composition— we see four figures. They are rather strange. There are three figures of

cats — two tom-cats and a cat with a crown on its head; near this personage is a figure with the head of the deer. A tom-cat with the picturesque helmet on his head presents the tray with the chopped off feline head to the lady-cat. All details of this composition have just a little naive character — but purposely naive, it's a wise naivety, that may exist in children's drawings only, which are drawing near the high truth thanks to their frankness. It is possible to read this subject many times differently. But it reminds me one other subject, that, maybe, does not concern the author though. Do you remember, the Bible, old story, old like the world, the Salome, who got the head of John as present from Herod for her dance?

So, all these bookplates by Lithuanian graphic artist Rolandas Rimkunas *, created in copper engraving and etching, are black-and-white, having some general characteristic features. Almost all sheets have very



deep, thick lines, which form dark, «viscous», heavy spots, deep tone. Sometimes only we could find graceful ornate lines, contrasting with these main spots. We have had an opportunity to see ten bookplates by this Baltic artist only, it is a pity. Although let's remember a gold rule that the main thing is not the amount but the quality. But for all that we will hope we will return to this name and see some new works. For all that... for all that... for all that...

* Rolandas Rimkunas was born in Lithuania in 1963. Graduated from Kaunas Institute of Art (1983-1990), than Vilnius Academy of Art (B. A. Printmaking dep., 1990-1995), Vilnius Academy of Art (M. A. Printmaking dept., 1996-1998).

Works in etching, copper engraving. Has heraldry works (1995-1998). He is a chief assistant at Kaunas Art Institute, teaches drawing, graphic design and printmaking.

Exhibitions

1994

- Ex-Libris Lago Maggiore 94, 2nd International Competition (Italy).
- 3d Biennial of Graphic Art (Yugoslavia).

1995

- International Biennial of Small Format Print Leskovac (Yugoslavia).
- The 18th Independent Exhibition of Prints (Japan).
- Graphic Art. Exhibition of Kaunas Graphic Artists (Lithuania).
- 17th Biennial of Small Format Prints (Belgium).
- Vith International Biennial of Small Size Prints and ex-libris (Poland).
- The World of ex-libris (Yugoslavia).

1996

- XVIth International Biennial of Contemporary ex-libris (Poland).
- Postcards Made Significant (Lithuania).

1997

- The 19th International Independent Exhibition of Prints (Japan).
- 2d International Graphic Triennial Bitola 97 (Macedonia).

1998

- «9+9» Lithuanian Artists (Germany).
- «Metal-History» Printmaking Show (Lithuania).
- 1st International Biennial of Thematic Ex-libris (Italy).

1999

- International Triennial of Prints Trois Rivières (Canada).