

**Neo-Avant-Garde Illustration in Liptovský
Mikuláš**

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***Neoavantgardní ilustrace v Liptovském
Mikuláši***

by

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SYNOPSIS

Neo-Avant-Garde Illustration in Liptovský Mikuláš

V polovici apríla 2021 sa po druhej vlne koronavírusu pre verejnosť znovuotvorili galérie na Slovensku. Jednou z prvých výstav otvorených publiku bol projekt „Bez prebalu“, ktorý prezentoval knižné ilustrácie dnes medzinárodne uznávaných slovenských výtvarníkov tzv. neoavantgardy v Liptovskej galérii Petra Michala Bohúňa v Liptovskom Mikuláši. O menej známych aspektoch tvorby významných autorov v dejinách slovenského výtvarného umenia hovorí jej kurátor Ján Kralovič. Riaditeľ LGPMB Richard Gregor hovorí o tom, ako online verzie výstav nemajú význam a že je potrebné znovuoobnoviť živý kontakt publika s umením. Rozšírená správa je v anglickom jazyku, pretože je určená cudzincom, pre ktorých je RSI jedným z mála zdrojov informácií o dianí v krajine, nielen politickom. Ocenili to najmä v pandemických rokoch.

Neo-Avant-Garde Illustration in Liptovský Mikuláš

In mid-April 2021, galleries in Slovakia reopened to the public after the second wave of the coronavirus epidemic. One of the first exhibitions to open to the public was the project "Uncovered", which presented book illustrations by now internationally acclaimed Slovak artists of the so called neo-avant-garde in the Peter Michal Bohúň Gallery in Liptovský Mikuláš. Its curator, Ján Kralovič, talks about the unknown aspects of the works of significant artists in the history of visual art in Slovakia. Richard Gregor, the director of the LGPMB, reveals that there is no point in presenting exhibitions online while the need to re-establish the live contact between the public and art is highly important. The report is in English because it is aimed at foreigners, for whom the RSI is one of the few sources of information about the latest developments in the country, not only in the sphere of politics. They have appreciated this service mainly during these pandemic years.

Neoavantgardní ilustrace v Liptovském Mikuláši

V polovině dubna 2021 se galerie na Slovensku po druhé vlně koronaviru opět otevřely veřejnosti. Jednou z prvních veřejně přístupných výstav byl projekt "Bez obalu", který v Galerii Petra Michala Bohúňa v Liptovském Mikuláši představil knižní ilustrace dnes již mezinárodně uznávaných slovenských umělců tzv. neoavantgardy. Její kurátor Ján Kralovič hovoří o méně známých aspektech tvorby významných autorů v dějinách slovenského umění. Richard Gregor, ředitel LGPMB, hovoří o tom, že online verze výstav nemají smysl a že je třeba obnovit živý kontakt mezi veřejností a uměním. Rozšířená zpráva je v angličtině, protože je určena cizincům, pro které je RSI jedním z mála zdrojů informací o dění v zemi, a to nejen politických. To ocenili zejména v letech pandemie.

Original script

While UNESCO has designated the 18th of April as the World Heritage Day, the 15th of April is World Art Day. This was decided in order to remind people of the role art plays in sustainable development as well as in inclusive and equitable education. Art helps with sharing knowledge, encouraging curiosity and dialogue. It also helps overcoming crisis such as the current pandemic. This week in Slovakia art lovers are finally able to visit their temples as galleries and museums have reopened. Let us now take you to a brand new show outside of the Slovak capital.

The traditional folk music is inevitably linked to the northern Slovak region of Liptov, the most sought for tourist destination in the country. Nevertheless, we are going to speak about breakthrough tendencies in 20th century art that are far, far from the folk traditions. Dezider Toth, Julius Koller, Rudolf Sikora, Jana Zelibská. These are internationally acclaimed Slovak visual artists of the 1960 – 1980, the period which is called by many experts the neo-avant-garde. The Peter Michal Bohun gallery in Liptovský Mikuláš is now presenting least known aspects of their artwork. Jan Kralovič is the curator of the show.

Ján Kralovič: I have chosen the term neo-avant-garde as this generation of artists who started to be active at the end of 1960's were following avant-garde principles and ideas in their work. They considered art to be able to change the society. The key feature seen in their works is utopia, escape to made-up space and fiction topics that reflected the political situation. They followed progressive trends of that period such as conceptual art, installation, object or action art as well as environmental development.

Martina Šimkovičová: Nevertheless, the current exhibition in Liptovský Mikuláš is focused on something completely different.

J.K.: I focused on them as book designers and illustrators. This aspect of their portfolios is marginalized.

M.Š.: Why is it so?

J.K.: Monographies of these artists reflect their art through their independent works. The point is that the decision to illustrate books was pragmatic as it secured their income. For some of them it provided the room for expressing themselves at the time they were banned to produce regular artworks or when they refused to create art under the censorship of the galleries and museums ruled by the communist party regime.

M.Š.: Is it comparable to their artworks we know them for?

J.K.: The exhibition entitled "Uncovered" is based on my effort to show common features of their independent and commissioned illustration or design works. For example Dezider Toth was very active in illustrating books in 1970's and 1980's using footsteps, prints, index signs and the motive of a mirror that are very common in his conceptual and action art.

M.Š.: May be not that many people know that Julius Koller or Rudolf Sikora or Jana Želibská were active in the sphere of illustration. Is it possible to see this exhibition online because these are also internationally acclaimed artists that might be interesting for foreigners to see this kind of exhibition?

J.K.: It is not possible to see this exhibition online. It's true that not many people who know that these artists are popular abroad know that they were also active in illustrating books. Dezider Toth and Jana Želibská were very active in this sphere. Little is known about book activities of Julius Koller who was almost an obsessive collector of books and magazines. In his legacy, about 30 drafts of book covers

were found while only 2 were made real. I find the segment of book illustration were important in the context of the complex work of these artists.

M.Š.: *(beep)* Regarding the online version of the exhibition... *(beep)* I called Liptovsky Mikulas and here is the director of the Peter Michal Bohun Gallery in Liptov Richard Gregor. Hi, Richard to ...

R.G.: *Hello, hello!*

M.Š.: ... to the Tatras in Slovakia ...

R.G.: *Hi, Liptovsky Mikulas speaking!*

M.Š.: Bratislava speaking too! Great! Connection not lost but found. Richard, I would like to ask you about this online version of this particular show. Why is it not possible to these illustrations on the internet?

R.G.: *The gallery is open right now so I think we should start to work more carefully with the online presentation. So I decided that we will make archival material from every exhibition and it will be always a three dimensional presentation for the purpose of the archive. And if we allow people to see the show online, I think we only will do it after the show will finish. Because now we really need people to come, we really need people to come. We really want to invite people personally to the galleries to re-establish again the habit of visits and communication, I mean not online, but the real communication with art.*

M.Š.: Will foreign visitors be able to see this exhibition online if they are interested?

R.G.: *We always allow foreign visitors to enter the gallery.*

M.Š.: Yeah, of course *(chuckle)* ... the show has just been open. When will it close so our listeners can make their plans for visiting Slovakia and especially Liptov region.

R.G.: *As we suppose, people will start to come in their own tempo. We decided to have these actual shows we have till the end of summer so now the plan is to keep it this way to August 31.*

M.Š.: Under the condition that the pandemic situation will allow to cross the borders.

R.G.: *I think, and it's not only my opinion, that the fact that galleries were closed all the time during the pandemic, I think it was not a good idea because they're not usually crowded even in the regular year so from the pandemic point of view it was never really dangerous. So I think, galleries in Slovakia are the safest places in the world in these terms. And in Liptovsky Mikulas both buildings and especially the main building is so huge that even if now we have the limit of 15 square meters per one person, we have counted that about 70 or even more people can be here at one time.*

M.Š.: What a perfect invitation to visit Slovakia, to visit the Liptov region which is the most touristy destination in the country from the director of the gallery which is located straight in the city. Thank you very much.

R.G.: *Thank you!*