

FISAE Newsletter

58 2021
01.10.2021

Dear friends of ex libris
Here comes a message from Lithuania:

Liebe Exlibrisfreunde
Hier kommt eine Nachricht aus Litauen:

Chers amis d'ex-libris
Voici un message de la Lituanie :

Cari amici di ex-libris
Arriva un messaggio dalla Lituania:

Queridos amigos de ex-libris
Aquí llega un mensaje de Lituania:

Дорогие друзья экслибриса
Пришло сообщение из Литвы:

亲爱的前图书馆的朋友们
这里有一个来自立陶宛的消息。

エクスリブリスの皆様へ
リトアニアからのメッセージです。

Development and Traditions of Ex Libris in Lithuania: the Experience of the Ex Libris Fund of Gerardas Bagdonavičius

One of the objectives of Šiauliai county Povilas Višinskis public library is to popularize Lithuanian ex libris and the Ex Libris Fund of Gerardas Bagdonavičius helps to implement it. Let's review the history of the fund and the experience gained over 20 years.

The library and ex libris have been closely linked since the library was founded in 1950. Then the first library employee, ethnographer and bibliographer Birutė Knizikevičienė got interested in ex libris. She was collecting bookplates on the theme "Woman in Ex Libris". In 1970, in the old library

premises, she exhibited part of her collection – about 100 pieces. Her collection is thought to have been much more abundant, yet its exact size and fate are not known.

The first few ex libris dedicated to Šiauliai county Povilas Višinskis public library were created 50 years ago to commemorate 20th anniversary of the library. Then artists Vytautas Vincentas Timinskas and Valerija Vija Tarabildienė gifted their created ex libris to the library. The most important books of the library were marked with these ex libris. Throughout the years, in total, over 500 ex libris have been created to commemorate various occasions or specific people working in the library. They are stored in library funds and private collections.

Šiauliai county Povilas Višinskis public library became interested in ex libris and started collecting them twenty years ago. In 2001, the Ex Libris Museum was established in the library. One of its first tasks was to collect Lithuanian and foreign ex libris, organize exhibitions and other events. The most important of them were the international scientific conference on the history and development of the Baltic ex libris, and the international ex libris contest “Ex Libris. Šiauliai P. Višinskis Library – 50”. Over 300 works were submitted, which became the basis of the museum’s collection. Over time, the library began to consider a separate space for ex libris and book art. Gerardas Bagdonavičius, the pioneer of modern ex libris, was remembered and the idea of renaming the museum in his honor was raised. In the last century G. Bagdonavičius himself donated ex libris and a part of his personal library to the library, so the idea was only logical.

In 2014 a decision was made – the museum was reorganized into the Ex Libris Fund of Gerardas Bagdonavičius (hereinafter GBEF). After the establishment of the Fund, the Fund Council was elected. Most of its members participate in the activities of the Fund from their good will and for common good. These are art critics, artists, librarians and collectors. The Fund regularly started to organize meetings with ex libris creators, collectors that are being held up to this day. An international forum and conferences was organized. Catalogues or a collection of articles crowned exhibitions and events, so publishing activities were actively carried out of the Fund parallelly. Several publications on the art of ex libris are published each year.

This year, the Fund is celebrating its 20th anniversary. We also commemorate the 120th anniversary of the birth of Gerardas Bagdonavičius and the 5th anniversary of the death of Valerijonas Vytautas Jucys, a famous ex libris creator who turned the genre in the direction of modernization and organized the most important ex libris exhibitions in the country. These anniversaries reminded us that no national ex libris exhibitions have been held for five years now, and this have led us to an initiative. After consulting with the Lithuanian Artists’ Association, which had previously organized national exhibitions, it was decided to return this tradition and invite the creators to the 24th Lithuanian ex libris exhibition dedicated to G. Bagdonavičius and V. V. Jucys.

After announcing the news about exhibition being organized, the activity of ex libris creators was pleasantly surprising as 45 works of ex libris were received. Some of the artists have been creating ex libris for many years, others are just starting. This only shows that the creators missed these exhibitions, and their national scale allows them to meet artists of all ages and creative backgrounds.

The importance of such exhibitions is emphasized by Alfonsas Čepauskas, an artist, who has been leading the Lithuanian Ex libris Club for more than 20 years, has been actively organizing many events, exhibitions and publishing a large number of ex libris related publications, exhibition catalogues and leaflets. Art historian Gražina Montvidaitė had an honor to learn more about the

history of ex libris exhibitions and the beginning of the participation of Lithuanian ex libris creators in contests by A. Čepauskas himself. We invite you to get acquainted with the insights and memories of this artist.

“The purpose of the ex libris has always been to confirm the ownership of the book, but over time, other ways of using the small graphic works have emerged: they have been collected, exhibitions have been organized. The first ex libris exhibitions took place in countries with deep graphic traditions – Germany, France, Italy. Ex libris exhibitions in Lithuania were started in Kaunas in 1928. During the interwar period, ex libris were created by such prominent personalities of the art field as Gerardas Bagdonavičius, Paulius Galaunė, Vytautas Kazimieras Jonynas and others, but there is a lack of knowledge about the exhibitions.

A new stage of ex libris exhibitions began in 1960, when the first national exhibition was held, for which as many as 25 artists created works. Later, national exhibitions were held almost every year, and since 1977 Vilnius ex libris biennials began. In 1982, about 100 events, international and local exhibitions were organized. Lithuanian ex libris club was founded. Numerous exhibitions were organized by sections of this club in other cities (Panevėžys, Klaipėda, Kaunas), in smaller towns – by collectors, city and district libraries, other institutions. It seemed that the ex libris genre fascinated artists even from the most remote corners of Lithuania. Published exhibition catalogues and booklets emphasized the rise of ex libris in Lithuania and not only in it. The first foreign exhibition, in which an artist from Lithuania participated, took place in 1931, in Los Angeles. There, the artist Gerardas Bagdonavičius was awarded a letter of honor for the autoexlibris. This is the first laureate of Lithuanian ex libris art.

Later, in 1958, 16 Lithuanian artists took part in the exhibition in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). Since 1966, Lithuanian ex libris have already appeared in international exhibitions every year.

Catalogues of foreign exhibitions, in which Lithuanian ex libris were reproduced, reached the artists. More and more of them often received letters with invitations to exhibitions and requests to create ex libris. This greatly encouraged the creation of these miniatures, especially since in those days it was probably the only way to escape the and participate in a foreign exhibition.

Lithuania was presented in a separate line from the Soviet Union in the catalogue of the international exhibition “Inter Ex Libris” held in Denmark in the 1970s. When the relevant services noticed this, there was a resentment – where did that country come from? A closer monitoring of letters sent by artists started. Letters with ex libris often disappeared, and artists were warned by special services. This was felt especially strongly until the early 1980s, but despite the constraints, many ex libris entered foreign exhibitions and were rewarded. Klaus Rödel in Denmark, Herber Blokland and Jan Rhebergen in the Netherlands, Grzegorz Matuszak, Tadeusz Gudzowski, Zbigniew Józwik, Andrzej Znamirovski in Poland and others made important contributions to showing the works of Lithuanian ex libris creators by organizing Lithuanian ex libris exhibitions. Such exhibitions were organized by Lidija Šimkutė in Australia, and by Vitolis E. Vengris in America. The latter released an excellent Lithuanian ex libris album “Lithuanian Bookplates” in America, which influenced the preparation and publishing of two valuable historical publications on the past and present of ex libris in Lithuania – “Lithuanian Bookplates 1571–1918” and “Lithuanian Ex Libris” by Vincas Kisarauskas. These publications gather a plethora of data on ex libris, artists, and genre pathways from the Middle Ages to the end of the 1980s.

In recent years, the work of ex libris has somewhat slowed down. Perhaps this is influenced by the wide opportunities to communicate freely with foreign countries, to organize joint or personal exhibitions of various genres. Also, Lithuanians have been receiving less awards recently. Maybe because the older generation of creators have already formed and are creating in their orbit. Another reason may be that some artists give up manual work in preparing the form and take up digital creations, using copying tools. The latter is not equally tolerated everywhere. Meanwhile, young artists from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus have become more active in traditional techniques. Excellently created, artistic, technical intaglio prints often win awards, as the prints from the plates are the most valued creations.

It is worth mentioning that in Lithuania, after a five-year break, the rise of ex libris begins again. International contests and joint exhibitions have been organized in Klaipėda, Pagėgiai, Šiauliai, Šilutė, Vilnius, Trakai, Utena and other cities. It is gratifying that the Book Graphics Center of Povilas Višinskis library and the Ex Libris Fund of Gerardas Bagdonavičius have taken the initiative to revive the national ex libris exhibitions. Perhaps the interrupted Vilnius International Ex Libris Biennale will reborn in the future too.

It is also important for the revival of ex libris art that more young artists join the creation of small graphic works and enrich them with new explorations. Despite the fluid popularity of ex libris, many of our creators remain loyal to this genre, which not only gives meaning to the creator, personality or institution, but also contributes to the nation's history and culture by reflecting the country and people's lives.”

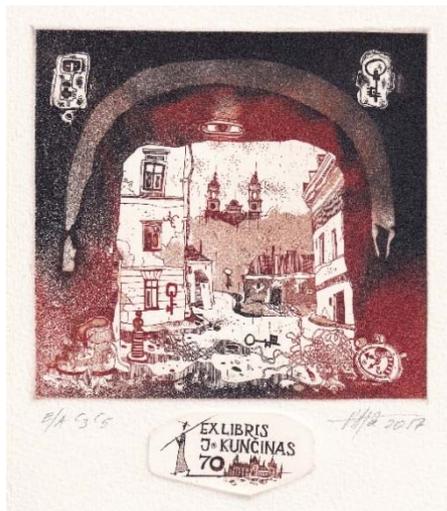
During the 20 years of GBEF's activity, a lot has been done for the benefit of the ex libris genre, its popularization and dissemination, but the most significant works are still in front of our eyes. Currently, GBEF is collecting material for the encyclopedic dictionary of Lithuanian ex libris creators – the largest and most comprehensive publication so far, about personalities who have created and still are creating small graphic works that combine books with art. The implementation of a project of this scale is possible only with a wide network of partners, including a team of researchers, Lithuanian memory institutions, county and regional libraries, and important sponsors, such as the Lithuanian Council for Culture and Šiauliai City Municipality.

FISAE members also responded to our request to help compile a list of catalogues published abroad. We are grateful to Klaus Rödel, Olli Ylönen, Marco Franzetti (representative of the Italian Association), Jan Langhammer (representative of the Czech Association), dr. Kornélia Tóth Vas (from Hungary), Carolina Vinamata (from Mexico), Sergei Ptuchin (from Russia), Mark Ferson (representative of the Australian New Exlibris Association) and many others.

Together, we aim to create a useful, representative and informative publication that pays tribute to creators and collectors working for ex libris.

These ambitious projects show that many more works are waiting for us in the future, which are important for the ex libris genre, the art of book graphics and for Lithuania as a whole. The Ex Libris Fund of Gerardas Bagdonavičius has already matured and is ready for these works.

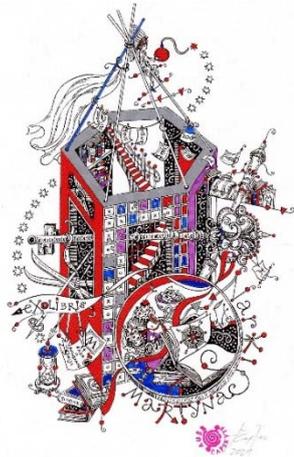
Below we present you works of the 24th Lithuania's Ex Libris Exhibition.



Valentinas Ajauskas



Kazys Bimba



Aušra Čapskytė-Šarauskiėnė



Lolita Putramėntienė



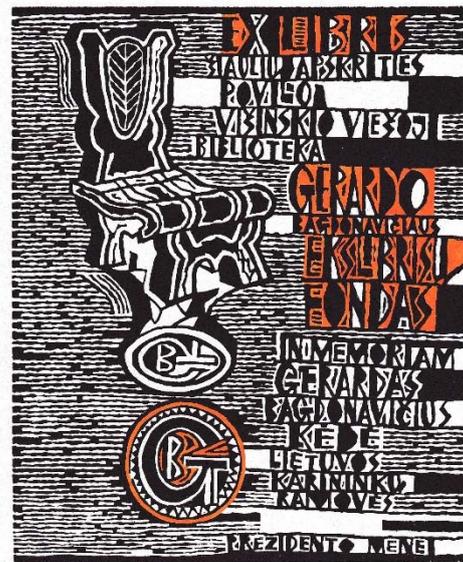
Alfonsas Čepauskas



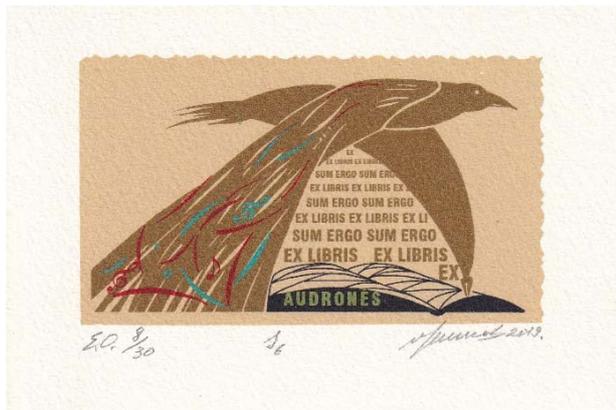
Kristina Daniūnaitė



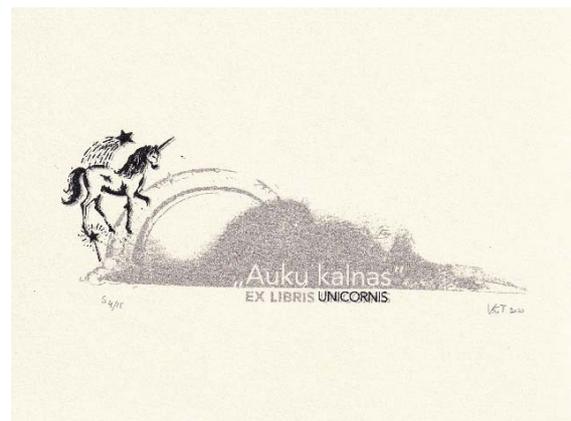
Anastasija Gorodniuk



Rasa Janulevičiūtė



Vaidotas Janulis



Vaiva Kovieraitė-Trumpė



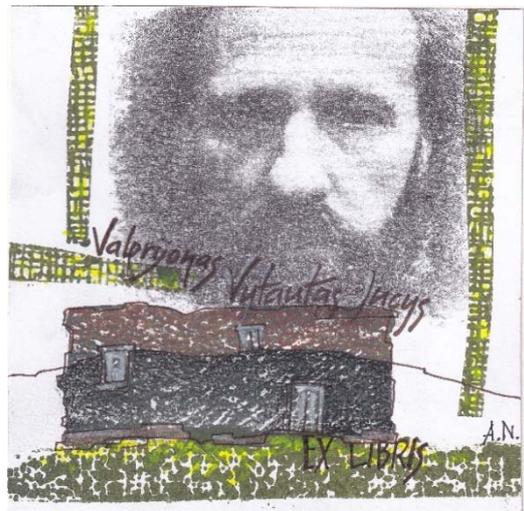
Klemensas Kupriūnas



Rasa Prišmontienė



Virginija Kalinauskaitė



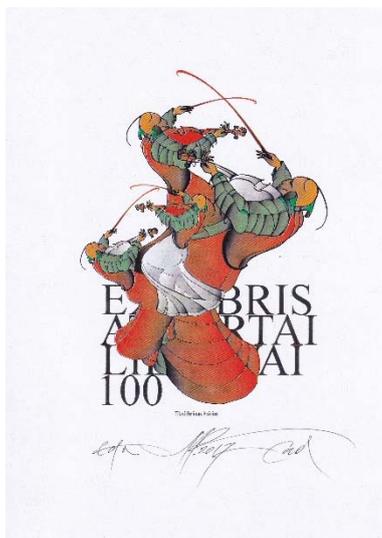
Aleksandr Novak



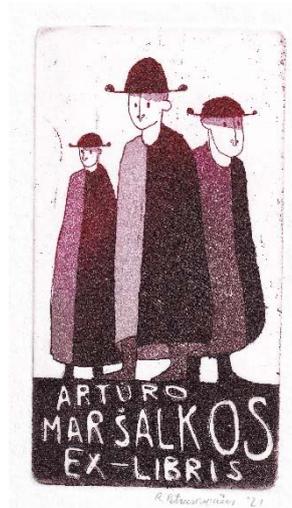
Antanas Olbutas



Aušra Paulauskienė-Gilliusson



Mindaugas Petrulis



Ramūnas Petrusevičius



Rasa Prišmontienė



Ugnė Rudinskaitė



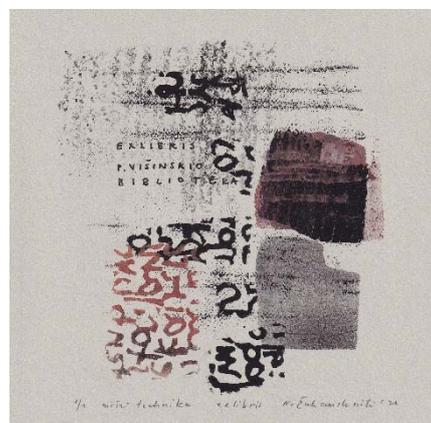
Laima Sakalauskiene



Povilas Šiaučiūnas



Ugnė Žilytė



Neringa Žukauskaitė



Vilius Šliuželis



Mikalojus Povilas Vilutis

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