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THE UNIQUE GRAPHICS COLLECTION IN THE RUSSIAN STATE ART LIBRARY

Abstract

Russian State Art Library has a stock of original art works. Pieces made by production designers, theater artists, animated cartoon artists, and illustrators are in it. As for movies and theater there are mostly sketches of costumes, scenography and etc.

Keywords: scetch, RSAL, exhibition, cinema, theater, Moscow Art Theater School, students, cartoon, illustration

The Unique graphics collection in the Russian State Art Library was started in the 1920s, at roughly the same time as the library itself and it included sketches of furniture and ornaments, drawings of folk household items and costumes. The largest part of this fund is the collection of set designs and costume sketches.

Most likely the first items in the collection were sketches made by set designers of the Empyrean Theaters. Mostly these are works by unknown authors. However, among the nameless sketches there's a small collection of works by Georgy Golov, a scene-designer with the Bolshoy Theater and the regular co-author of Konstantin Korovin, a famous Russian impressionist.

The collection was founded by Pavel Pashkov (1872-1952) – a very creative man, who taught at two major art centers: The Textile Academy and the Stroganov Art Academy, which have produced a large number of famous artists.

The collection, somewhat unique for a library fund, was started thanks to Pashkov's good taste and his desire to work with theaters. In the second quarter of the 20th century the collection grew constantly, supplemented with sketches by various artists, mostly those whom Pashkov helped to select materials for their theater projects. During this period works by such well-known artists as Nikolai Akimov, Boris Erdman, Anel Sudakevich etc., in addition to sketches of props, costumes and character types, architectural designs and set designs, were acquired.

Since Pavel Pashkov was among other things an educator, part of the collection is made up of his students' work, including drawings by Valentina Khodasevich, a theater artist.

After Pashkov's death in 1952 the collection stopped growing due to lack of funding and initiative.

Fortunately, when acquiring additional stock for the fund became possible in 2003 the library's interest in the sketch collection has grown once again.

As to the principles of selection we're first and foremost interested in artists that have been or currently are readers at our library. Many of them began coming here as students only to grow into famous artists.

Following this principle we've managed to acquire a number of works by artists who used to work with P. Pashkov or were his students, such as sketches by the library's frequent visitors – Alexander Tyshler and Fedor Fedorovsky.

In the past few years the fund has been accumulating not only theater artists' work but also some amazing sketches by film designers. By now the collection contains over 6 thousand sketches and includes works by theater, film, animation artists as well as book illustrators.

Speaking of sketches for theater plays and movies, it's worth mentioning that we also have a number of photos taken at theater plays and film production stages. We do our best to collect full sets for each play whenever possible – photos and

sketches that supplement each other. This makes it possible to compare and study costumes and staging of a play or film. This is often important for the researchers, students and other artists who come to work at the library as well as for the exhibitions that the collection participates in.

Today our collection includes work by such famous Russian masters as: Sergey Barkhin, Stanislav Benediktov, David Borovsky, Eduard Kochergin, Eleonora Maklakova, Oleg Sheincis who worked in various theaters of Moscow and Saint Petersburg, as well as other towns both in Russia and outside of it.

Besides the famous masters a younger generation of artists who are nevertheless in high demand in the theater community like Olga Polikarpova, Alexey Kondratiev, Viktoria Kharkhalup etc. – are represented in our collection.

Our collection also includes a number of sketches which were graduate works by students of the Set Design Department of the Moscow Art Theater School. Combining works by famous theater artists and those by their pupils in one collection we make it possible to see the development of the traditions of Russian stage design.

In some cases we were the first to acquire works by certain artists. For instance, in 2005 we acquired works by a film production designer – Olga Kruchinina. She was the head production designer on such famous fairy-tale films as *Sadko*, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, *Stone flower* directed by Alexander Ptushko. Several of his movies have become known all over the world.

It's also worth mentioning that we aim to collect the full set of key art created for a play or film. Obviously, it is not always possible since only a couple of sketches are left from some projects. However, if it is possible to acquire the full set we try to get it all. It might not seem reasonable since not all works have equal value but we collect not just the exhibitable sketches.

Our interests range wide and our collection includes materials for films and plays both realized and unrealized. Therefore the sketches and drawings are unique since they are sometimes the only source of information about films and plays that were never made, but are a part of our art history as well.

A little while ago our collection began to accrue animation sketches as well. There are not as many of those so far as we'd like, but we started with such well-known works as *Little hedgehog in the fog* by Yarussova and several works by a famous Russian animation artist – Leonid Shwartzman, the author of *Gena the crocodile*. Many of Leonid Shwartzman's works have received critical acclaim and festival awards. This talented artist created most of his works in our library and has always said that "they know how to work with an artist here".

Besides the works by theater and film artists the original works fund contains original sketches by books illustrators.

Such illustrators as Pavel Bunin, Andrey Kostin and Igor Iliyinsky have worked in our library.

Illustrations are created by very different artists. Each of them has their own unique manner, their own style... This is especially true for illustrations to children's literature, which are always done with a great lot of love and care.

Igor Iliyinsky has always been attracted by adventure books. Readers especially loved his works for *Robinson Crusoe* by D. Defoe, *Treasure Island* by R.L. Stivenson and *Headless Horseman* by Meyne Reid.

Today one can see Iliyinsky's masterful line drawings, Kostin's large graphic sheets, Bunin's elegant graphics and the kind, cheerful images by V. Suteev that look like frames taken out of a cartoon and many others in our collection which is constantly growing.

I'd like to mention that not long ago we managed to find and acquire a set of sketches by Pavel Pashkov, the founder of our collection. It's about a thousand small-sized but wonderfully made caricatures on the everyday life of vacationers in Moscow and at various resorts. He liked to depict unusual angles and scenes. He made a number of sketches of feet, hats, moustaches and bald heads. All in all, he created a rather unusual body of work.

To conclude I'd like to say that the collection of sketches presented to you is an unusual one for a library fund. It's rather an exception, a tribute to the traditions laid down at the founding of the library. Some other Russian libraries have similar funds, for instance the Saint Petersburg State Theater Library.

Today we as collectors are facing an interesting problem. These days many artists prefer to work on their computers. So we need to decide what to collect and how. Do we ask the artist to create a handmade remark for us or do we acquire the work in its electronic form?

The way we see it, information exchange between libraries, archives and museums that collect and store such unusual materials is very important. Fortunately, our relationships with archives and museums have never been competitive but instead "complementary". After all, we do the same job - we collect and preserve a huge layer of theater, film, art history.

The department staff tries to do their best to keep the collection available to a wide audience of professionals and researchers. An electronic database of our collection is being created, so that anyone could find out what our stock holds.

The sketches have been exhibited at a number of exhibitions, both in the library and outside of it. To our gratification, both students and professors of art colleges frequent these exhibitions. Moreover the study of the costume designs collection has been introduced into the curriculum of the Art Departments at VGIK, Moscow Art Theater School and GITIS. So our collection of sketches is not just a "dead

weight” lying around collecting dust but actually helps new generations of artists grow and learn.



The founder of the collection Pavel Pashkov (1872–1952)



Nickolay Akimov. Play Shadow, 1940



David Borovsky. Play Salome, 2003



Andrey Kostin. *Book Dead soul*, 1974



Francheska Yarusova. *Cartoon Hedgehog in the Fog*, 1975



Pavel Pashkov. *Sketches*, 1920s