

Medical bookplate collection in Lithuanian Library of Medicine

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Abstract

This paper is a short history of the medical bookplate collection in the Lithuanian Library of Medicine (LLM). The first LLM's exhibition of bookplate on medical theme was held in 1994. It was an international exhibition-competition dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the Library. 39 authors from 16 countries participated, exhibition catalogue "Lithuanian Medicine" was issued. Ten years later the second exhibition was dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the LLM. In November 2014 the third medical bookplate exhibition was opened and an exhibition catalogue "Lithuanian Medicine. 2014" was issued. LLM now has a nice medical bookplate collection, which contains approximately 600 pieces. Collection includes works from more than 100 Lithuanian and 16 foreign authors. The article aim is to introduce the collection and encourage others to share their experience of collection-forming.

Key words: bookplate in Lithuania; medical bookplate collection; Lithuanian Library of Medicine; bookplate catalogues; ex-libris exhibition.

*May this light never fade away, pouring from your hearts and your hands which hold a book and hand it to others.
By poet Justinas Marcinkevičius, LLM GUEST BOOK, 2000*

A wish to mark ownership of a book is as old as a history of a book itself. The oldest book label is thought to be a faience plate found with a papyrus scroll. The inscription shows the owner of the papyrus scroll. It was Amenhotep III, pharaoh of Egypt, dead about 1377 BC, and his wife Tiye. The plate is kept in the British Museum in London. (1)

Introduction

People interact with a book in various ways. People write books, read, study, collect, give as gifts. People get closer to each other when they lend or give books as gifts to each other. There are book addicts. There are books with long histories, handwritten inscriptions, comments, notes, attached photos or cutouts, dried flowers and leaves, books with signatures, inscribed wishes – all that creates the history of a book. Such books are no longer orphan. Books that have an inscription "Ex libris" ("From books", Latin) belong to someone, a person, a library or an institution. A book and its owner get closer, they complete each other. If you like a book, when it is dear to you, then you say "This is my book". That gets written down, printed on leather cases, marked as if thinking that a book is everlasting. People are proud that it is "their book", they own it, bind it in a simple or fancy way – both

book and its owner rise up and earn more dignity. Old printed and handwritten books become more valuable and important with every century. Some books have metal binding-locks as if emphasizing their material form – a book is locked and taken care of. All what is written or drawn inside is kept under secret. But there are words: "Brothers, sisters, take me and read me, And reading, consider this" (2). A book which is not read is like a person standing behind the closed door. When it is opened, the whole world of thoughts and visions is open.

The medical bookplate collection of the Lithuanian Library of Medicine

The Lithuanian Library of Medicine has a wide medical bookplate collection consisting of more than 600 unique pieces created by both Lithuanian and foreign artists. Main sources of artworks for the collection are exhibitions held by LLM, also the gifts

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from artists-collectors Vytautas Valerijonas Jucys and Klemensas Kupriūnas. Some ex-libris can be found among the books in rich LLM stocks.

The first LLM's exhibition-competition "Lithuanian medicine" took place in 1994 when the Library was celebrating its 50th anniversary. The exhibition-competition was chosen as the most suitable form to memorably note this significant date, to reward Library and its community. The event was organised by art critic Donaldas Strikulis. 39 artists from 16 countries submitted 112 ex-libris, 17 of them dedicated to LLM. An artist Viktorija Daniliauskaitė submitted the first ever ex-libris dedicated to LLM which she created in 1984. The winners were Aušra Čapskytė, Alfonsas Čepauskas (both from Lithuania) and Aina Karlsonė from Latvia. An exhibition catalogue titled "Lithuanian medicine" was issued for the occasion. The publication also presented short information from history of Lithuanian medicine, about Lithuanian Red Cross (exhibition's partner) and LLM itself (both in Lithuanian and English language).

The second bookplate exhibition "Lithuanian Medicine" was dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the Lithuanian Library of Medicine. The main goal of the exhibition in 2004 was to collect as many Lithuanian-medicine-themed artworks as possible. 59 creators responded to the invitation presenting more than 200 bookplates. Such a high level of participation was a pleasing surprise for organizers. The latter and the third exhibitions were curated and their catalogues edited by artist Viktorija Daniliauskaitė.

The third exhibition organized in 2014 for the 70th anniversary of LLM presented artworks of 48 authors. Among already usual professionals' names we had a group of young artists. The idea to look into Vilnius Academy of Arts students' artworks was inspired by Regina Vaišvilienė. The young artist Milda Dainovskytė gradually became a communicator between the Library and the Academy, primarily after organising her personal print exhibition at the Library in 2013. Dainovskytė's amazement about LLM's bookplate collection urged her to organize an exhibition of part our bookplates in one of the galleries of Vilnius Academy of Arts in March of 2014. The event encouraged students (and

their teacher Marija Marcelionytė-Paliukė) of the Academy to take part in the latest exhibition in LLM. They created on various medical themes: ex-libris dedicated to doctors, medical institutions or library. The only restriction for students was using traditional techniques solely. As a result, we have got new forms and very interesting bookplates. Also some students and teachers from Vilnius Technology and Design College (teacher Virginija Kalinauskaitė) participated in this exhibition. The exhibition's catalogue "Lithuanian medicine 2014" (Figure 1) was presented by its co-editors V. Daniliauskaitė, M. Dainovskytė and R. Vaišvilienė during the opening evening. The issue's layout and overall design by Vilmantas Žumbys (student of graphics in Vilnius

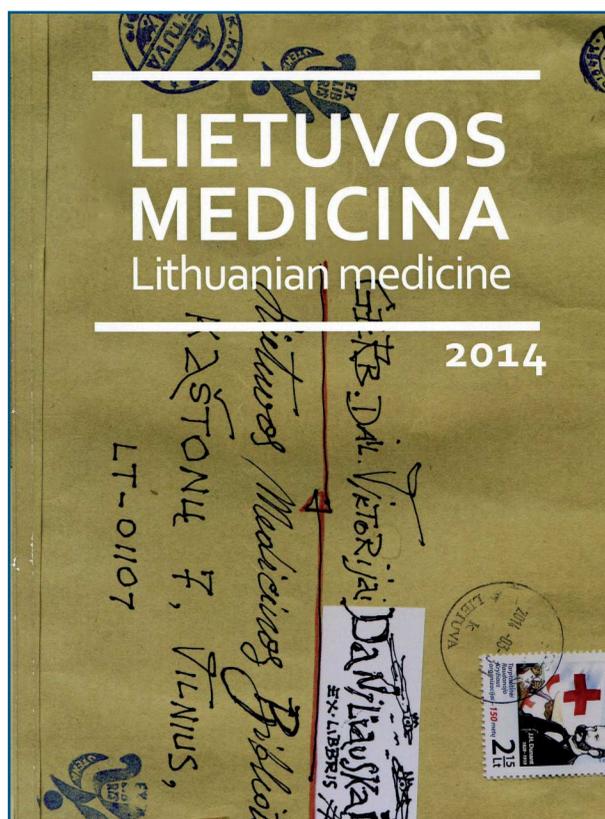


Fig. 1. *Lithuanian medicine, 2014. Catalogue cover*

Academy of Arts) have already received lots of positive feedback.

The LLM exhibitions' collection gives a good opportunity to make comparisons and understand the trends, dominant in the Lithuanian bookplate art, and changes in graphic techniques in particular.

Medical bookplate collection in Lithuanian Library of Medicine

Despite the modern technology many authors still use traditional techniques: linocut, etching, aquatint, dry needle and lithography, etc. Other creators enjoy using computer graphic. M.P. Vilutis obtains an impression of the so-called “Japan” effect: wavy lines are produced by the diminished size. T. Balčiūnaitė uses color pencil, her drawings resemble lithography. There are bookplates executed using Indian ink, special pens or brush (V. Bačėnas, A. Gurskas, K. Gvalda). V. Valius presents elegant-type bookplates in the authentic form of color reproductions. More than 15 cheerful exlibris by T. Balčiūnienė – copies drawn with color flomasters.

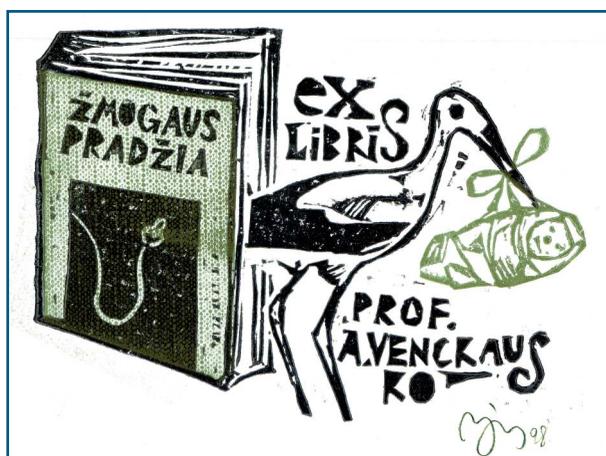


Fig. 2. Valerijonas Vytautas Jucys.
Prof. A. Venckausko, 1998. X3/col 87 x 120

The works of the above enumerated authors illustrate how contemporary technology in the creative process is used.

The collection's authors belong to different generations by age. The old and middle generation is represented by D. Tarabildienė, V. Bačėnas, T. Balčiūnienė, L. J. Paškauskaitė, L. B. Pučkoriūtė, I. Geniušienė, V. Antanavičius, V. Jucys (Figure 2). Bookplates of J. Geniušienė are the earliest by date (1958). L.B. Pučkoriūtė created her works in 1962 and 1966. Linocuts by L.J. Paškauskaitė from 1963 have hand-painted gouache calligraphic initials. Color miniatures by S. Kisarauskienė (Figure 3) look exceptionally modern.

Text and font usage is one of very important components in a bookplate. Some authors put nothing more than initials while other creators try

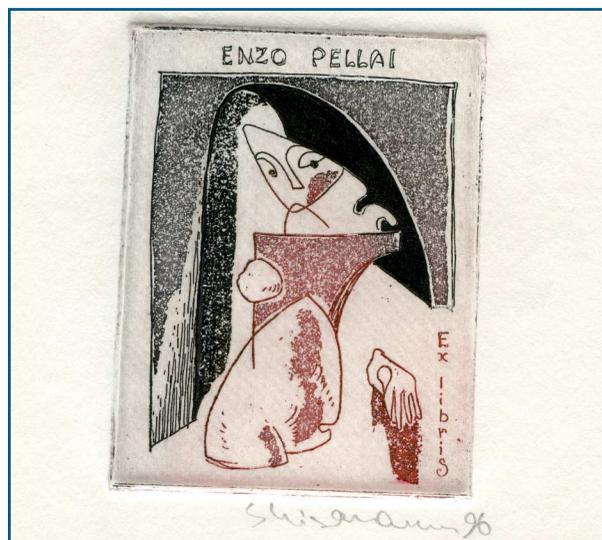


Fig. 3. Saulė Kisarauskienė. Enzo Pellai, 1996. MT, 81 x 60

to insert as much information as possible. K. Gvalda presents bookplates with a lot of type that form tracery. Bookplates by S. Rutkauskas are drawn with color pens and flomasters, and type is essential for the composition. There is some charm in usage of dialecticisms. The collection includes bookplates created during 60 years period. It is a natural reflection of the history of Lithuanian bookplate art, authentic style of authors and general trends in graphic art. On the whole, the collection shows a wide scale of bookplate usage as means of artistic expression: from small poetic miniature to more strict forms of objects-symbols. It is important to note, that interesting and meaningful works were presented by professional artists as well as amateurs.

Bookplates are mainly dedicated to concrete physicians: Prof. M. Krikštovaitis (by D. Tarabildienė), R. Valionytė and V. Melngailytė (by J. Geniušienė), D. Pūras, J. Valentinas, F. Taunytė (by T. Balčiūnienė), Dr. V. Kudirka (by B. Matijošaitytė, V. Petronis), Dr. J. Basanavičius (by D. Žalnierūtė, R. Gaižauskaitė), or to other medical professionals or professions as neurosurgeons, ophthalmologists, cardiologists, medicine sisters with author's explanation: “Oil lamp – international medicine sisters and nurses symbol. It's connected with a nurse Florence Nightingale (called “The lady with a lamp”) and the peculiarities of this profession – nursing patients both day and night” (Figure 4). Some

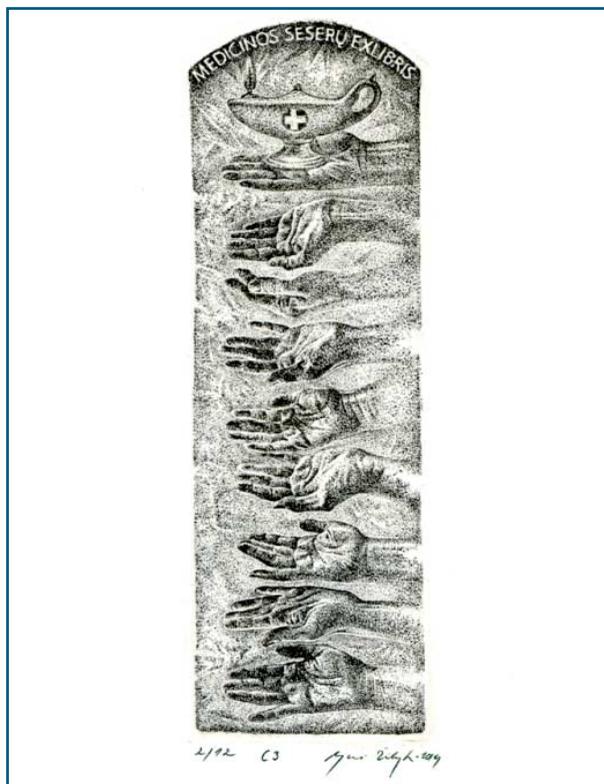


Fig. 4. Ugnė Žilytė. *Medicinos seserims*, 2014. C3, 185 x 63

bookplates are devoted to the distinguished foreign medical workers: Italian collector and pediatrician Enzo Pellai (a passionate collector of Lithuanian ex-libris, curator of Lithuanian art exhibitions in Italy) or Dr. A. V. Stepan from Australia – Lithuanian by nationality. An extraordinary artist Klemensas Kupriūnas has created ex-libris to every employee of the Library. Some bookplates are dedicated for special historical events, medical institutions, societies or libraries. Among exhibits there are metal badges: “Lithuanian Library of Medicine” by V. Daniliauskaitė and “Societas chirurgorum Vilmensis” by A. Každailis.

The first Lithuanian ex-libris goes back to the 16th century (1). An ex-libris created in the end of 19th century and dedicated for priest and writer Juozas Tumas Vaižgantas is considered to be the first bookplate with Lithuanian inscription.

The first Lithuanian bookplate exhibition in Lithuania was held in 1926 and a book “Ex-librisas Lietuvoje, XVI-XX amžius” was printed in the same year by art historian and graphic artist Paulius Galaunė.

Lithuanian ex-libris was thriving during Cold War period in 1960-1990. A small format of bookplates was attractive for various artists. It received less attention from dominant censorship and provided unique opportunity for Lithuanian artists to participate in international exhibitions (by sending bookplates by post), be honoured and awarded there. In 1966 Lithuanian Artists' Association founded an ex-libris section, artist Vytautas Valerijonas Jucys is still its president. At the same time various clubs of bookplate creators or collectors began to be founded country-wide. Ex-libris were being created for various occasions, anniversaries, for personal libraries or persons as a sign of friendship or appreciation. Many ex-libris were created for doctors, medicinal institutions and their libraries as a sincere sign of gratitude from authors.

These days when there is so much anxiety, running around in circles, confusion, ex-libris attached to the book just as in the old days gives the impression of stability, we stop for a moment to appreciate the beauty of a book.

A collection of Lithuanian medical bookplates owned by the Lithuanian Library of Medicine is highly valuable for Lithuanian and World's history of medicine and art. LLM seeks publishing a comprehensive catalogue of the collection one day, hoping it would even more encourage sharing values and knowledge among colleagues and like-minded.

Received on 10 February 2015

Accepted on 18 February 2015

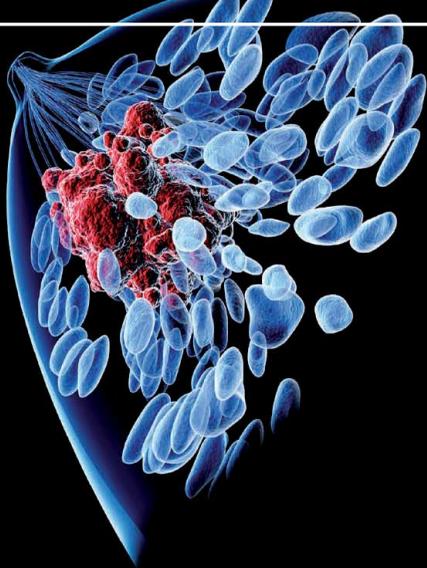
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