

Jan Lenica, Jan Młodożeniec – Two Ways, Two Styles

Jan Lenica: born 4 January 1928 in Poznań – died 5 October 2001 in Berlin

He received comprehensive artistic education: graduated from the Secondary Musical School and architecture in Warsaw Technical University. He learnt painting from his father Alfred Lenica and gained the knowledge of posters as an assistant to Professor Henryk Tomaszewski in the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Even as a student he started working with such magazines as *Szpilki*, *Świat* and *Odrodzenie*, publishing his satirical drawings – caricatures and accounts of his foreign journeys. At the same time he took to posters and soon became a master in the field. Together with Henryk Tomaszewski, Jan Młodożeniec, Waldemar Świerzy and Roman Cieślewicz they jointly created the Polish school of poster in the 50's and 60's. He also became a critic of poster art, writing pieces on cartoons (films), outlines of art and aesthetics as well as reflections on his own works. Another passion of Lenica's were cartoons (animated films), initially (since 1957) created jointly with Walerian Borowczyk and through years produced on his own. His works, particularly films had a constantly recurring problem: the tragedy of an individual faced with the necessity of subjecting oneself to the trite customs of thoughtless daily rituals. He spoke of helpless nonconformist attitude versus the general public fighting each and every instance of individuality. The form of his works evolved from rough expressionism, to over-realistic collage, to music and painting creations inspired by the charm of Art Nouveau. Since 1963 the artist was living abroad (Paris and Berlin), however, he did not lose touch with his country where he was constantly present through his art. His oeuvre also includes many other plastic projects, such as beautiful theatrical set designs, illustrations of children's books (J. Tuwim's *Locomotive*, B. Leśmian's *Klechdy sezamowe* ["Sesame tales"] and other) and post marks. As a teacher he was employed at universities in Cambridge (the US), in Kassel and Berlin. Lenica's work in time received many international rewards for posters, films and utility graphics as well as many individual exhibitions domestically and abroad.

Jan Młodożeniec: born 8 November 1929 in Waraw – died 12 December 2000 same place

He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw between 1948 – 1955 in the Department of Graphics and Poster led by Prof. Henryk Tomaszewski. He received his graduation diploma in poster in 1955. Since 1953 he created in the area of poster, book graphics, illustrations, press drawings and satire. He worked for the Centre of Film Rental, Polfilm, "Ruch" Publishing Bureau, WAG, KAW,, Warsaw theatres, publishing houses: „Czytelnik,” „Iskry,” PIW, WAF, *Wydawnictwo Literackie* and magazines: *Nowa Kultura*, *Współczesność*, *Ekran*, *Film*, *Miesięcznik Literacki*, *Polska*, *Szpilki*, *Playboy* (polish edition) and *Magazyn Gazety Wyborczej*. Członek AGI since 1974. In the 90's apart from graphics, he focused on painting.

In his works, Młodożeniec used a wide range of colours (he would often use six colours), constructing developed, decorative compositions. An important feature of this artist was an exceptional creative skill and an ability to draw from the world's art while using his own plastic language. His poster were inspired by the avant-garde art from the beginning of the 20th century (Leger, Picasso, Klee, Miro) and pop-art (thick black contour, flat patches of colour) also distinguished by masterly combination of writing and picture. The letter was treated as an independent shape that was equal to other motifs. These agreeable, warm and filled with poetry posters are governed by humour, the grotesque and ironic as well as a lyrical mood and deep reflection.

Anna Zabrzaska-Pilipajć, Dorota Sobczyk
Exhibition Curators