

The journal OIL SHALE has in several issues reproduced pieces of art depicting oil shale theme - to be exact, woodcuts by the Estonian painter Hando Mugasto done to special order of Prof. P. Kogerman, the head of the Oil Shale Laboratory in 1936.

We intend to follow this example, and in this issue Mr. Arthur Ruusmaa, the head of the Oil Shale Museum at Kohtla-Järve, begins to introduce the works of Estonian painters dealing with oil shale. His first paper gives a review of this subject in book-plates.

The Oil Shale Museum at Kohtla-Järve - in the centre of Estonian oil shale industry - was founded in 1966, and since then it has become a remarkable cultural centre of this industrial town.

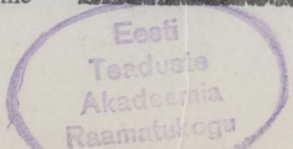


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OIL SHALE THEME IN ART

A nice art collection of works representing the oil shale theme has accumulated in the Oil Shale Museum at Kohtla-Järve. For a long time only works reflecting the oil shale industry were collected, for the last years works depicting the local nature, history, and sights of our countryside have been added. Over 200 pieces by different authors in differing techniques are obtained during the last 25 years.

This paper deals with a relatively new and small-dimensional genre - book-plates (BP), or ex-librises represented in our museum. One can rarely see mining as a subject for BPs. The initial impulse for that was given by an exhibition "Collective book-plates" organized in Kohtla-Järve by Tartu BP Club in 1978. After that the Production Association "Eesti Põlevkivi" has ordered book-plates for its enterprises, and some





miners have got them personally, too.

In the collection of the Oil Shale Museum there are 41 BPs now made for oil shale enterprises, Kohtla-Järve BP Club and their members.

The most frequent motifs in those BPs are huge shale and ash piles (R. Kaljo, E. Okas, P. Luhthein, P. Somelar, S. Väljal et al.), stylized representation of trilobite (V. Tõnisson), miner's lamp, helmet and pickaxe (H. Hiibus, E. Lepp, R. Mutso, S. Väljal), and trolleys (J. Kangro, V. Tõnisson).

In BPs made for open-pits, an excavator and open-pit milieu are the most popular motifs (S. Väljal, E. Kruus-Helng). Rather original seem the BPs by L. Soom made for the Viivikonna and Oktoobri open-pits: in the first one, forest is being planted on mined out area and in the second one the arable land is reclaimed and returned to agricultural use. The ideas of environment protection characterize the miniatures by M. Olvet made for Tammiku and Sompaa mines as well.

Quite often several miner's attributes (lamps, helmets, pickaxes, trolleys), ash piles and books are depicted together in the same BP.

The modern BPs are more stylized and robust, concentrating on visual elements; the older ones (the BPs by Hugo Lepik made for "State Oil Shale Industry") catch one's eye with their realism and sense of detail. They are photographic and lifelike, very impressive with their filigree work and accentuation. In one BP a miner is sitting leaning on his pickaxe and thoughtfully reading a book, another one represents in detail both underground and surface mining stages and its effect on surrounding environment. The most impressive and depressing piece to my mind is a woodcut by A. Kivi made for Sillamäe BP Club in 1985 where against the background of an A-bomb mushroom the BPs dedicated to the 5th anniversary of the club are being blasted away.

Thus, I should say that even a book-plate is a historical and documental reverberation of the age reflecting the problems and ideas of a certain epoch.

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