

Gracjan Achrem- Achremowicz: Vilnius Print-Maker, Graphic Designer, Bibliophile and Publisher

Katarzyna Kulpińska

Faculty of Fine Arts, NCU, Toruń

catalina@umk.pl

——— When considering the personality and work of Gracjan Achrem-Achremowicz, a citizen of Vilnius, one must keep in mind the richness of his interests and talents: he was a painter, a printmaker, a bibliophile, a collector of antique prints, a publisher, an educator, a poet and a translator, and he knew several languages, including Hebrew and English. His passions and activities, though versatile, were most strongly associated with artistic (workshop) print-making, the graphic design of books, and with the printed word. In my paper, I aim to define the achievements of this artist as those of one of the few students of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Vilnius who was committed to graphics at a time when teaching this discipline was not a priority (before 1930), and at the same time as an artist who had the opportunity of studying abroad.

Keywords: Faculty of Fine Arts at Stephen Báthory University, *Alma Mater Vilnensis*, Vilnius Society of Visual Artists, Association of Polish Librarians, print-making, design, and fine book in the interwar period, Polish Art Printing House “Grafika”.

Gracjan Achrem-Achremowicz (1899–1942) graduated before “the age of Jerzy Hoppen,” the creator of the Vilnius School of Graphics. While he was a student, print-making was practiced by only a few students: Roman Jakimowicz and Zbigniew Kaliszczak¹, the painter Michał Rouba, sporadically, as well as Zofia Dembowska-Römer, who was not affiliated to the university. The Department of Applied Arts had been established within the Faculty of Fine Arts from the beginning, together with the Ornamentation and Graphics Studios, and students learned the practice of graphic art from artists who predominantly practiced painting. Stanisław Matusiak², one of the Lviv Formists, fulfilled this role during the period 1923–1930. Achremowicz’s earliest attempts at woodcut and linocut were most probably undertaken with his assistance.

Before characterising the artist’s work, a few words about his biography. Gracjan, one of four sons of a lawyer, Antoni³, and Helena, née Ciszewicz, was born on 31 December 1899 in Mińsk Litewski. He graduated from high school there and was a boy scout. In 1920, as a volunteer in the Polish Army rifle regiment, he was taken prisoner by the Russians⁴. Achremowicz’s father worked as a defence counsel at the city court, and then at the court of appeal in Vilnius from 1921. The family probably moved to

1 Kaliszczak studied print-making at the Academy of Graphic Arts in Leipzig and graduated in 1932 with honours.

2 Matusiak was an assistant at the Department of Applied Arts at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Vilnius from 1923, later a lecturer in the pedagogy of drawing, eventually becoming artistic director in the field of graphics and ornamentation. He was the artistic director of two Vilnius magazines, *Źródła mocy* [Sources of Power] and *Alma Mater Vilnensis*, as well as the mentor (“member-master”) of the students’ Guild of Saint Luke (1927–1930). He illustrated books, creating, among others, full-page woodcut illustrations and vignettes for the book by Władysław Zahorski, *Podania i legendy wileńskie* [Tales and legends from Wilno], Wilno, 1925. He practiced artistic printmaking on the periphery of his artistic work. He designed covers for books, magazines and posters (among others for *Książę Niezłomny* [The Constant Prince] for the “Reduta” Theater). In 1929 he painted polychrome decorations on the walls of the Church of St. Ignatius in Vilnius. He left Vilnius in March 1930.

3 One may want at this point to clarify the origins of the two-part surname of the artist, whose family originated from Iwieniec (now in Belarus, in Volozhynsk region, Minsk district). Those inhabitants of this city who had taken part in the January Uprising of 1863 or helped the insurgents, the Achremowicz family among them, were persecuted by the Tsarist authorities. They were deprived of their noble titles, and the surname of Achremowicz was changed to Achrem. In 1912 the authorities restored the family’s right to use the full surname. Gracjan’s great-grandfather Antoni, “in order to preserve his integrity in the documents of his cases, <...> decided to use the two-part name Achrem-Achremowicz.” (After: Jan Achremowicz, “Rodzinna historia [Family history]”, in: *Niedziela* – edycja lubelska [Sunday – Lublin edition], 2010, No. 7.)

4 One of his four brothers, 18-year-old Romuald, disappeared without trace during the war of 1920.

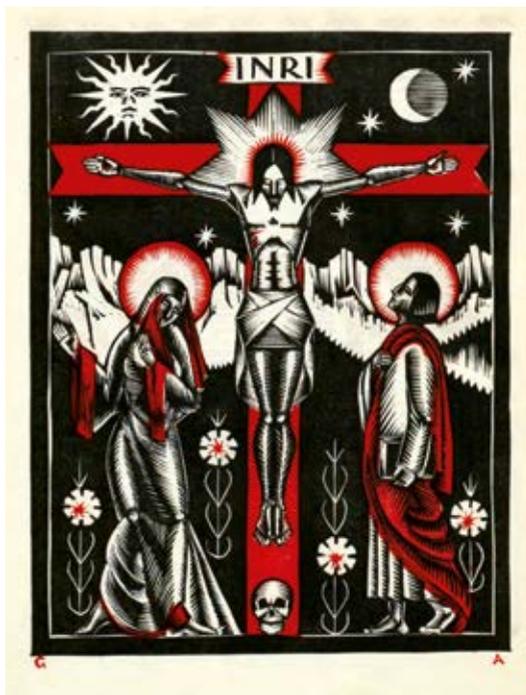
Vilnius at this time, and young Gracjan's life became intertwined with that of the city. He became a student at Stephen Báthory University during the academic year 1923/1924, initially in the Medical Faculty, in which he served as a junior assistant-illustrator at the Chair of Anatomy. During his first semester, just like one of his brothers, Leon, the artist belonged to the academic corporation *Konwent Polonia* (a *Studentenverbindung* or fraternity organisation), for which he wrote the *Pieśń fuksowska*⁵ [Novices' song] and designed invitations to occasional meetings⁶.

Next, in 1924–1928, he studied painting in the Faculty of Fine Arts under Ferdynand Ruszczyc and Ludomir Sleńdziński, and lettering under the direction of Bonaventura Lenart. In 1929 he obtained the diploma of a state drawing teacher, and in 1932 the diploma of an artist-painter. He took an active part in the cultural life of Vilnius. In 1928 he was the artistic director of the magazine *Alma Mater Vilmensis*. He belonged to the Vilnius Society of Visual Artists and was a member and the secretary of the Association of Polish Bibliophiles. Achremowicz also belonged to the Vilnius Circle of the Association of Polish Librarians, the Vilnius Photo Club, and the Vagabonds' Club. He taught drawing in high schools, including the Eliza Orzeszkowa High School, and graphic arts at the vocational school of the Vilnius Society of Visual Artists. In the years 1930–1935, he was librarian of the Faculty of Fine Arts and managed the printing works of this department. In 1934 he opened the artistic printing-house "Grafika". From 1 September 1936 to 15 December 1939 he worked in the print department of the university library, where he began compiling an inventory of its print collections. He published articles on printing, print-making and fine books. It is difficult to say which of his passions predominated – art, science or teaching. It should be added that he shared his passion for literature with his wife Wanda⁷, who was also a graduate of the Stephen Báthory University, a student of Stanisław Pigoń and a teacher of Polish, who, after raising three sons, developed a professional career teaching in secondary schools. She wrote poetry and critical studies and published a magazine for the young.

5 A "fuks", or novice, was a candidate for membership of a corporation but not yet a full member.

6 The cover of an invitation for black coffee for novices to Konwent Polonia is decorated with the image of a fox in the costume of a novice, complete with sword and glass – a woodcut by Gracjan Achremowicz.

7 See: Jerzy Starnawski, "Wanda Achremowiczowa (1901–1974)", in: *Rocznik Towarzystwa Literackiego im. A. Mickiewicza* [Yearbook of the A. Mickiewicz Literary Society], 1974, vol. 9, pp. 204–206.



1.
*The Crucifixion from Via Crucis Domini
 Nostri Jesu Christi in XIV Tabulis*
 portfolio, linocut, 1929, in: *Alma Mater
 Vilmensis*, 1928, No. 7, p. 50

*Nukryžiavimas iš serijos Via Crucis
 Domini Nostri Jesu Christi in XIV
 Tabulis, 1929*

The output of Gracjan Achremowicz is rich and varied in both artistic⁸ and applied graphics. He created woodcuts, engravings, etchings, drypoints, and occasionally lithographs; he designed posters and bookplates, produced graphic designs for books, and wrote articles on typography. The first technique with which he became familiar was most probably relief printing, as his earliest-surviving graphic works from 1924–1925 are linocuts and woodcuts (e.g. *Autoportret* [Self-portrait], *Rycerz-nieszczęście* [Knight of Misfortune]), and a series of expressive, broadly-executed linocuts *Jeźdźcy Apokalipsy* [Horsemen of the Apocalypse]). Achremowicz's works produced in artistic print-making techniques appeared in both university and occasional student publications, mainly those of *Braterska Pomoc* [Brotherly Help], as well as in publications provided with a developed graphic design and decorated with the artist's woodcuts. He also created woodcuts depicting the monuments of Vilnius, such as *Zautek* [The close], *Na Ostrobramskiej* [On Ostrobramska Street], *O zmroku* [At dusk], as well

⁸ This has been the subject of research by Maria Grońska and Jan Kotłowski.

as prints in which the architecture of Vilnius provided the background for particular events: *Święty Łukasz malujący Matkę Boską* [Saint Luke painting the Blessed Virgin], *Złożenie do grobu* [The Entombment]. At the end of the 1920s, Achremowicz increasingly concerned himself with religious subjects. One of his sons, Lucjan, explained this as follows: “In 1926, while still a student of the Fine Arts Department, he married Wanda Nowodworska, whom he called his Beatrice. His love for her led him to break with his former disordered life and turn to God. He became an enthusiast of the liturgy, the Holy Bible and ancient prayers, which he transcribed beautifully into a small prayer book. He began to use religious motifs in his work: *Droga Krzyżowa* [The Way of the Cross], *Św. Tomasz* [St. Thomas], *Św. Łukasz* [St. Luke], *Judasz* [Judas], *Ukrzyżowanie* [The Crucifixion]”.⁹ An interesting example is a portfolio of linocuts printed in black and red (together with a second version printed solely in black), entitled *Droga Krzyżowa – Via Crucis Domini Nostri Jesu Christi in XIV Tabulis, Vilnae* [The Way of the Cross – Via Crucis Domini Nostri Jesu Christi in XIV Tabulis, Vilnae], dating from 1929. One of the linocuts was published in the journal *Alma Mater Vilnensis*, of which Achremowicz was artistic director in 1928. A modern, highly simplified, geometrised and rhythmic form strongly affects the viewer by means of sharp contrasts of black, white and red. The composition of individual plates is compact and economical, and the static surfaces contrast with mobile zigzags and parallel lines. The alleys of Vilnius are visible in the background, and the decorative nature of the composition is emphasised by means of wildflowers (stylised thistles, poppies, dandelions and cornflowers). It seems that the artist made his first attempts at printing linocuts in red in 1927, the year that *Stephen Báthory*, a linocut in red and black, was created.

The artist gained new and significant experience in the field of graphic arts as the recipient of a National Culture Fund¹⁰ scholarship for study abroad.

⁹ Lucjan Achremowicz, “Wspomnienie” [Reminiscences], from the series *Pożegnania* [Farewell], in: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, [Wrocław], 2000, No. 74, from 28.03, p. 10.

¹⁰ The National Culture Fund, established on the initiative of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, was a state foundation operating in the Second Republic of Poland in the years 1928–1939. It supported Polish academic and artistic activity by means of allowances and scholarships for individuals, grants for publishers and subsidies for institutions, scientific and artistic groups. The fund was headed by a committee presided over by the prime minister, while academics and artists sat on the board and committees. Between 1928 and 1939, the director was Stanisław Michalski, an educational activist

He was awarded a foreign scholarship (for *the Via Crucis* portfolio) in 1930 together with 16 other artists representing various artistic circles in Poland¹¹. The first report¹² published in 1931, however, did not include the amount of the scholarship or any further details. The second report¹³ (which lists the academic and artistic objectives and the amounts allocated to them) shows that in the financial year 1932/1933 other institutions and artists in Vilnius also received a National Culture Fund scholarship¹⁴.

Achremowicz lived in London in 1930–1931, while studying at Chelsea Polytechnic School of Art and the Grosvenor School of Modern Art. Images of London were executed in techniques not previously attempted by Achremowicz – in etching and drypoint (*Uliczka w Londynie I, II* [Alley in London I, II], *Fulham Road, Chelsea, London; Greycoat Row, Westminster*, 1930), etchings with aquatint (*W British Museum – czytelnia* [In the British Museum – the Reading Room], May 1930) but also woodcuts

and science organizer. The fund published budget reports and a study entitled *Fundusz Kultury Narodowej (1928–1937) – zarys działalności* [The National Culture Fund – outline of activity], Warsaw, 1937. In the opening remarks to the First Report, we read: “In the field of fine arts, the main support was provided to the work of painters, sculptors, graphic artists and artists working in the area of applied arts <...>. In all fields of art, the Fund Committee has endeavoured <...> to provide indirect assistance to artists by creating appropriate working conditions <...>. Direct assistance has consisted of the provision of allowances and scholarships for specific individual works <...>. The Fund’s objective is to promote scientific and artistic output” (p. 114–115), whereas in the publication *Fundusz Kultury Narodowej – zarys działalności* [The National Culture Fund – outline of activity] we read: “The essential criteria for the National Culture Fund’s material assistance to individuals are the moral and academic or artistic qualifications of the candidates, their degree of preparation for the tasks they undertake, the hopes that may be associated with the anticipated development of their scientific or artistic talents, and the expected benefit that may result for Poland from their work in the future.” (p. 9).

¹¹ Among others: Tadeusz Breyer, Józef Jarema, Rafał Malczewski, Zbigniew Pronaszko, Zofia Stryjeńska, Czesław Wdowiszewski. In the same year Tymon Niesiołowski, Bolesław Cybis, Józef Czapski, Tadeusz Kulisiewicz, Antoni Michalak, Janusz Podoski, Waclaw Taranczewski, Jan Zamoyski received a national scholarship.

¹² *Pierwsze sprawozdanie Funduszu Kultury Narodowej* [First National Culture Fund Report] 1.III.1928 – 1.IV.1931, Warszawa, 1931.

¹³ *Drugie sprawozdanie Funduszu Kultury Narodowej* [Second National Culture Fund Report] 1931/31–1932/33, Warszawa, 1934.

¹⁴ The Vilnius Society of Visual Artists received 750 zlotys for the installation of an exhibition at the Warsaw Institute of Art Propaganda and the Faculty of Fine Arts 500 zlotys for the purchase of works by students awarded at the Faculty’s annual reporting exhibition in 1932. In the same year, Jan Bułhak received 500 zlotys for his works in the field of artistic photography, and Tymon Niesiołowski 600 zlotys for paintings and plein-air studies. In addition, Vilnius institutions awarded benefits to: the Eastern European Science and Research Institute, Society of Friends of Science, Vilnius Philharmonic Society, editorial committees of “Theological Studies” (*Studia teologiczne*) and “Vilnius and Vilnius Land” (*Wilno i Ziemia Wileńska*).



2.
Alley in London I, etching, drypoint, 1930,
 Nicolaus Copernicus University Library
Alėja Londone, I, 1930



3.
Alley in London II, etching, drypoint, 1930,
 Nicolaus Copernicus University Library
Alėja Londone, II, 1930



4.
Self-Portrait with a Pipe, woodcut, 1933,
 The National Library of Poland
Autoportretas su pypke, 1933

(*Tufton Street from Dean's Yard*, 1930). He also produced an interesting monotype in colour entitled *Vincent Square – Londyn we mgle* [Vincent Square – London in the fog], which perfectly depicted atmospheric phenomena, and a five-colour woodcut, *Macierzyństwo* [Motherhood] (1930). The year 1930 was very eventful for the artist; he dated the prints produced this year together with the month of their creation (they included *Matka karmiąca* [Nursing Mother], *Judasz* [Judas], *Święty Sebastian* [St. Sebastian] and *Tristan i Izolda* [Tristan and Isolde]). In London, Achremowicz became acquainted with intaglio and monotype techniques; he undertook new iconographic motifs, and aimed at effects similar to those obtained in the colourful linocuts of the artists and tutors associated with the Grosvenor School of Modern Art. The five-colour woodcut by Achremowicz entitled *Autoportret z fajką* [Self-portrait with a pipe] (1933), so unlike his youthful self-image, is clearly seen to be more mature and original when juxtaposed with the Vilnius graphics of this period. Although perceived as japonising works, both this self-portrait and the previously mentioned woodcut *Macierzyństwo* were, in my opinion, created under the distinct influence of the bright and light-coloured linocuts produced by Cyril Power, Claude Flight and their students. More religious compositions were created in 1933: *Święty Jerzy* [Saint George], a linocut in a simplified form, subjected to slight geometricisation, yet decorative, and the woodcut *Święty Łukasz malujący Matkę Boską* [Saint Luke painting the Blessed Virgin], in which the artist, following representations of this subject in modern art, also depicted the architecture of Vilnius. He opened out the space of the room, which was delineated by arcades, to a Vilnius cobbled street, thus letting two realities interpenetrate. Achremowicz also created portraits: slightly archaising depictions of King Stephen Báthory, Hetman Karol Chodkiewicz and Jan Śniadecki, as well as images of Marshal Piłsudski in woodcut and engraving made in 1935, the year of the Marshal's death. Several images of members of the artist's family have also survived. Proof of Achremowicz's passion for experimentation in workshop graphics is, however, a print made utilising engraved oilcloth¹⁵ – apparently an attempt to test the potential of a technique invented and practiced by the Warsaw print-maker Feliks

¹⁵ *Pokutnik I* [Penitent 1], the collection of the Ossoliński National Institute. The composition *Pokutnik II* [Penitent 2], in turn, was made in linocut.

Jabłczyński. Lucjan Achremowicz recalled his father's diverse passions, including his wish to explore the secrets of the so-called *graphic laboratory*:

He collected materials on the history of printing, woodcutting, illustration, paper-making, bookbinding and graphic techniques, including recipes for various printing inks, chemicals, methods of preparing stones and plates, and so on.¹⁶

Achremowicz was a seasoned bibliophile; this is demonstrated by his article on the book as a work of art published in *Alma Mater Vilnensis*, among others, in which he expertly discussed the typography of fine books and the history of the decorated and illustrated book (including the activities of William Morris, whose works he probably had the opportunity of seeing while in London). Achremowicz wrote:

we don't know how to look at a book, we can't realise the artistic values that make up its entirety. The concept of a fine book is generally associated with the richness of its illustrations and the colourfulness of its cover. <...>On the other hand, every little detail in a truly fine book must be thought out and tuned to a harmonious whole. <...>Only then will not just the illustration speak to the reader, but the typographic arrangement itself, and every word and letter of the text.¹⁷

Achremowicz regarded the book as a harmonious whole, whose visual elements, together with its content, should complement one another. He emphasised the significance of the design of the lettering, the white space on the page (the space between letters, words and lines), as well as the proportions of the margins, for the reception of the whole text. He postulated a close fusion of illustrations and text and, at the printing stage, the collaboration of printer with graphic designer. He emphasised that the choice of technique employed for illustrations has an impact on the aesthetics of the book, and that an artistic effect can also be achieved by omitting illustrations altogether. He urged typographers to be sensitive to the need to adapt the font and column layout to the content of the printed work. Finally, he drew attention to the quality of the printing ink and that of the

¹⁶ Lucjan Achremowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹⁷ Gracjan Achrem-Achremowicz, "Książka jako dzieło sztuki" [The book as a work of art], in: *Alma Mater Vilnensis*, 1928, vol. 7, p. 44.



5.
Motherhood, colour
 woodcut, 1930, Nicolaus
 Copernicus University
 Library

Motimysté, 1930

paper, as well as its weight appropriate to the format of the book. “Beautiful layout, clean embossing, and good, durable paper are inseparable parts of the whole and determine its beauty. Only careful harmonisation of individual elements and a thorough contemplation of all the details can result in a truly great work, and good taste should be a touchstone in all difficulties”¹⁸. He tried to follow these principles when managing his publishing house.

Achremowicz’s activity following 1934 was associated primarily with typography, the book and its ornamentation. In 1934, he opened the Polish Art Printing House, “Grafika”, in Vilnius, located at 22 Tatarska Street and later at 13 Trocka Street. The artist was co-owner and manager until

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 48.



6.
*Saint Luke Painting the Blessed
 Virgin*, woodcut, 1933, in: *Alma
 Mater Vilnensis*, 1933, No. 11

*Šv. Lukas tapo Šventosios
 Mergelės portretą*, 1933

1935, and it was subsequently run by Stanisław Turski, until September 1939¹⁹. “Grafika” printed the Vilnius magazines *Comoedia* and *Rysunek w Szkole* [Drawing at School], as well as catalogues of annual exhibitions of the Faculty of Fine Arts. Achremowicz also designed the binding of missals and liturgical books, which were appreciated by connoisseurs, and were re-issued by Władysław Strzedziński, a Vilnius bookbinder, and commissioned by the Saint Wojciech Bookshop in Poznań. He designed layouts and book covers, including a collection of poems entitled *18 ohydnych paszkwilów na Wilno i Wilnian* [18 hideous lampoons on Vilnius and its inhabitants] (Wilno, 1934, printed at the “Grafika” printing house), and the cover for a poetic collection for the Polish Society of Stephen Báthory University, *Spod arkad* [Underneath the arcades] (Wilno, 1929). He also produced illustrations (e.g. for the book by Teodor Bujnicki, *Patykiem po niebie* [On the Sky with a Stick], Wilno, 1929, and a novel for young people by Helena

¹⁹ See: *Encyklopedia Ziemi Wileńskiej. Książka i prasa na ziemi wileńskiej: drukarnie, wydawnictwa, księgarnie, biblioteki, czasopisma XVI w. – 1945 r.* [Encyclopedia of the Vilnius Land. The book and press in Vilnius land: printing houses, publishing houses, bookstores, libraries, magazines of the 16th century – 1945], edited by Mieczysław Jackiewicz, Bydgoszcz: Towarzystwo Miłośników Wilna i Ziemi Wileńskiej, 2008, p. 104; Janusz Dunin-Horkawicz, “Z dziejów książki polskiej w dwudziestowiecznym Wilnie” [From the history of Polish book in 20th century Vilnius], in: *Wileńskie Rozmaitości 2* [Vilnius miscellany 2], 1996, No. 2, p. 6.

Obieziarska, *Danek i Grzmot* [Danek and Thunder], Wilno, 1936). Several minor projects, including logos and seals for various organisations and associations, and numerous invitations to student and bibliophile events, were also among his creations. He also prepared projects for the university: for the University Library, the Library of the Theological Seminary, and the Military Library of the 1st Infantry Regiment of Józef Piłsudski's Legions. In 1935 he printed the illustrated youth magazine *Słówka* [Words], edited by his wife and published by Stanisław Mackiewicz. The "Grafika" printing house also published *Trzy zimy* [Three winters] by Czesław Miłosz, as well as a beautiful commemorative volume dedicated to Ferdynand Ruszczyk. Achremowicz advertised his printing house by means of a decorative knotted monogram, which he also used to sign his prints. Used in the advertisement, this monogram has the features of a modern logo, and Achremowicz was probably the author of the advertising text directly addressing the potential client: "This symbol will ensure that you receive an accurate and aesthetic print performance: professional artistic management; new typefaces; careful and clear print; punctual execution of orders; minimal prices"²⁰.

Achremowicz was the author of over 50 bookplates²¹, for institutions (e.g. the Tomasz Zan Library in Vilnius), acquaintances, friends and immediate family members; these were designed between 1926 and 1940. They are not as sophisticated nor as developed as bookplates by such masters as, for example, Tadeusz Cieślowski the Younger, Jerzy Hoppen or Edward Kuczyński, but certain of them have an interesting form. Two bookplates for Achremowicz's own book collection have survived, together with the design for one of them. Since a bookplate ought to make reference to the personality of the owner or their interests, and these bookplates depict the artist as a sage poring over a book and as a magician against the background of a five-pointed star and the zodiac, one may assume that Achremowicz wanted to emphasise his passion for science, the passion of a researcher who explores knowledge, perhaps also secret knowledge. In the bookplates the artist designed for others he made use of various concepts and motifs, depending on who they were for – the emblem designed for his wife (his fiancée at the time) is lyrical; the bookplates made for his sons are probably related to their

²⁰ An advertisement in the periodical *Włóczęga* [Vagabond], 1935, No. 1, p. 18.

²¹ A small, several-page catalogue of bookplates was prepared by Lucjan Achremowicz, *Exlibrisy Gracjana Achremowicza* [Gracjan Achremowicz's bookplates], Wrocław, 1989.



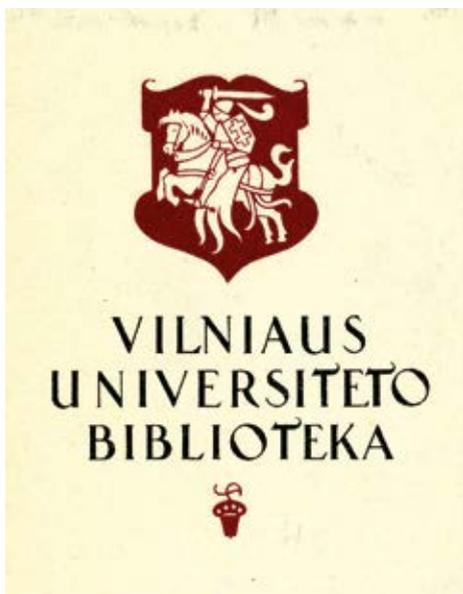
7.
3rd auction of books – manuscripts – engravings
organised by the Association of Polish Bibliophiles in
Wilno, poster, 1928

*Trečiasis knygų, manuskriptų ir graviūrų
aukcionas, surengtas Lenkijos bibliofilų asociacijos
Vilniuje, plakatas, 1928*



8.
*The Library of Theological Seminars of
Stephen Báthory University, bookplate,
zincography, 1939, The National Library of
Poland*

*Stepono Batoro universiteto Teologinių
seminarų biblioteka, 1939*



9.
*Vilnius University Library, bookplate,
zincography, ca. 1940, The National Library of
Poland*

Vilniaus universiteto biblioteka, apie 1940

interests when young (a locomotive, a ship, and a Red Indian). The bookplate utilising lettering, rarely employed in inter-war Poland, created for the director of Vilnius University Library, Stefan Rygiel, a librarian and bibliophile, is outstanding. The bookplate for the writer Antoni Gołubiew is distinctive, operating by means of a rhythm of flat, black and white, and extremely simplified and geometrised forms, whereas that for Stanisław Lisowski has a strongly graphic quality, employing the Vilnius motif of three crosses. Achremowicz also designed the poster *3. aukcja książki – rękopisy – ryciny urządzona przez Tow. Bibliofilów Polskich w Wilnie* [3rd auction of books – manuscripts – engravings organised by the Association of Polish Bibliophiles in Wilno] (1928), in which the surface is subdivided into small geometrical fields.

The artist's talent and energy was divided due to the multitude of his interests²², and resulted in works that are interesting and that were appreciated in the field of design and lettering, but that were not outstanding. Achremowicz may have involved himself in too many activities, as is indicated by the fact that he signed up to the Vilnius Photo Club, but he did not have time to participate or take photographs as a full member, probably due to his numerous other obligations. His works were not presented at any of the exhibitions of the Photo Club. A colleague composed a humorous verse on this subject: *ACHREMOWICZ: nowy członek, / Prac do teki nie mógł składać, / Bo wciąż z Turskim szukał czcionek, / Wydawnictwo by zakładać* [ACHREMOWICZ: a new member, / Was unable to put together his portfolio / Since he continued helping Turski in his search for fonts / In order to set up their publishing house.]²³. As a graphic designer, Achremowicz mainly participated in local exhibitions; in April 1933 he took part in a collective exhibition of the Vilnius Society of Fine Artists in Warsaw; in May and June 1939 he participated in the exhibition of the Vilnius Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Vilnius²⁴. He exhibited two woodcuts on this occasion: *Macierzyństwo* [Motherhood] and *Kościół świętego Michała* [St. Michael's Church], binding designs for missals, bookplates executed in woodcut and zincography, and the calligraphy for a prayer.

22 He also wrote poems; one of these, "Lew Sapieha" was published in *Alma Mater Vilnensis*, 1933, No. 1, pp. 15–16.

23 A nursery rhyme by Józef Farbotka, quoted after Jerzy Piwowarski, *Wileńskie środowisko fotograficzne w okresie międzywojennym* [The Vilnius photographic milieu during the inter-war period], Częstochowa, 2016, p. 45.

24 See: Exhibition catalogue. 2nd group exhibition of Vilnius artists. Painting and graphics. Vilnius Society for the Promotion of the Culture of the Fine Arts, Wilno, 1939, May–June.



10.
Bookplate for Achremowicz's own book collection, linocut, 1926, The National Library of Poland

Achremowicziaus asmeninės knygu kolekcijos ekslibrisas, 1926



11.
Stefan Rygiel's bookplate, woodcut, ca. 1928–1929, The National Library of Poland

Ekslibrisas Stefanui Rygieliui, apie 1928–1929

In 1940 Achremowicz was arrested for his underground activities. He was released from prison in Moscow and exiled to Roślawie, in Smolensk Province. According to information provided by Krystyna Czarnocka in *Słownik Artystów Polskich* [Dictionary of Polish Artists]²⁵, he worked as technical and artistic manager of the toy cooperative there. Arrested again, he died in prison in Ufa (USSR) from a “heart attack,” as it was subsequently reported, on 26 March 1942. Achremowicz was known locally above all, as a Vilnius artist, but the print-making experience and skills acquired under the tutorship of Bonawentura Lenart could be transferred by the artist to the fields of printing and fine books, and these, as is well known, recognise no borders – they reach the farthest corners of the world.

Submitted — 11/12/2019

²⁵ Gracjan Achrem-Achremowicz; entry edited by K. Czarnocka, in: *Słownik Artystów Polskich i obcych w Polsce działających zmarłych przed 1966* [Dictionary of Polish artists and of foreign artists active in Poland, who died before 1966], vol. I, Wrocław–Warsaw–Kraków–Gdańsk, 1971, p. 3.

Bibliography

- Achrem-Achremowicz Gracjan, "Książka jako dzieło sztuki" [The book as a work of art], in: *Alma Mater Vilnensis*, 7, 1928, pp. 41–49.
- Achrem-Achremowicz Gracjan, "Techniki graficzne. 1. Drzeworyt" [Graphic techniques. 1. Woodcut], in: *Nisza, Słowo* supplement 55, 1934.
- Achremowicz Lucjan, *Exlibrisy Gracjana Achremowicza* [Gracjan Achremowicz's bookplates], Wrocław, 1989.
- Achremowicz Lucjan, "Wspomnienie" [Reminiscences], z cyklu *Pożegnania* [from the series *Farewells*], in: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, [Wrocław], 1974, 2000, p. 10.
- Dunin-Horkawicz Janusz, "Z dziejów książki polskiej w dwudziestowiecznym Wilnie" [From the history of Polish book in 20th century Vilnius], in: *Wileńskie Rozmaitości 2* [Vilnius miscellany 2], 1996, p. 6.
- Encyklopedia Ziemi Wileńskiej. Książka i prasa na ziemi wileńskiej: drukarnie, wydawnictwa, księgarnie, biblioteki, czasopisma XVI w. – 1945 r.* [Encyclopedia of the Vilnius Land. The book and press in Vilnius land: printing houses, publishing houses, bookshops, libraries, magazines from the 16th century to 1945], edited by Mieczysław Jackiewicz, Bydgoszcz: Towarzystwo Miłośników Wilna i Ziemi Wileńskiej, 2008.
- Piwowarski Jerzy, *Wileńskie środowisko fotograficzne w okresie międzywojennym* [The Vilnius photographic milieu during the interwar period], Częstochowa, 2016.
- Słownik Artystów Polskich i obcych w Polsce działających zmarłych przed 1966* [Dictionary of Polish artists and of foreign artists active in Poland, who died before 1966], Wrocław–Warsaw–Kraków–Gdańsk, 1971, p. 3.
- Starnawski Jerzy, "Wanda Achremowiczowa (1901–1974)", in: *Rocznik Towarzystwa Literackiego im. A. Mickiewicza* [Yearbook of the A. Mickiewicz Literary Society], 1974, vol. 9, pp. 204–206.

Santrauka

Gracjanas Achremas-Achremowiczius: Vilniaus grafikas, dizaineris, bibliofilas ir leidėjas

Katarzyna Kulpińska

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Stepono Batoro universiteto Dailių menų fakultetas, *Alma Mater Vilnensis*, Vilniaus dailininkų draugija, Lenkijos bibliotekininkų asociacija, spauda, dizainas, knygos menas tarpukariu, Lenkijos meno leidybos namai, „Grafika“.

Straipsnyje aptariama įvairiapusiško menininko Gracjano Achremo-Achremowicziaus (1889–1942) kūryba ir jo veikla tarpukario Vilniuje prasidėjusiame leidybiniame judėjime. Su Vilniumi jis buvo susijęs visą gyvenimą, o 1924–1928 m. studijavo Vilniaus dailės fakultete. Jo kūryba estampo bei grafinio dizaino srityse yra išties turtinga ir įvairi. Achremas-Achremowiczius sukūrė plakatų ir ekslibrisų bei publikavo straipsnių apie tipografiją. Jo kūryboje dominuoja medžio raižiniai, graviūros, ofortai, sausa adata ir keletas litografijos kūrinių. Reljefinė spauda, ko gero, buvo pirmoji šiam autoriui pripažinimą atnešusi technika, o iš ankstyviausių – 1924–1925 m. laikotarpio – išlikusių jo grafikos darbų išskirtini linoraižiniai ir medžio raižiniai (*Autoportretas, Nesėkmingasis riteris* ir ekspresyvių ir laisvai atliktų linoraižinių serija *Apokalipsės raiteliai*). Autorius sukūrė Vilniaus paminklus vaizduojančių medžio raižinių – tarp jų *Akligatvis, Prie Aušros vartų, Prietemoje* – ir įvairius įvykius vaizduojančių graviūrų su Vilniaus architektūra fone, pavyzdžiui, *Šv. Lukas tapo Šventosios Mergelės portretą* bei *Guldymas į kapą*. 3 deš. pabaigoje Achremowiczius pradėjo naudoti religinius motyvus (*Kryžiaus kelias, Šv. Tomas, Šv. Lukas, Judas, Nukryžiuavimas*). Įdomus tokios kūrybos pavyzdys yra juodai raudonų linoraižinių serija (kartu su antrąja bespalve versija), pavadinta *Kryžiaus kelias – Via Crucis Domini Nostri Jesu Christi in XIV Tabulis, Vilnae* ir datuojama 1929 metais. Gavęs Nacionalinio kultūros fondo stipendiją

savo studijoms užsienyje, menininkas įgavo naujos ir svarbios patirties grafikos meno srityje. Stipendija jam buvo paskirta už *Via Crucis* darbų seriją. 1929–1930 m. Achremowiczius studijavo Londono Chelsea meno politechnikume ir Grosvenoro moderniojo meno mokykloje. Londono peizažai buvo atlikti iki tol jo nenaudota technika – ofortu ir sausa adata (*Londono gatvelė, I, II, Fulhamo gatvė, Chelsea rajonas, Londonas, Greycoat gatvė, Westminsterio rajonas*, 1930), akvatinta (*Britanijos muziejaus skaitykloje*, 1930 m. gegužė), taip pat medžio raižyba (*Tuftono gatvė nuo Deano kiemo pusės*, 1930). Būdamas patyręs bibliofilas, Achremowiczius sukūrė knygų meno darbų ir publikavo straipsnių apie knygos grožį; *Alma Mater Vilnensis* žurnale publikuotame straipsnyje jis postulavo glaudaus teksto bei iliustracijų sąryšio ir bendradarbiavimo tarp spaustuvininko bei grafinio dizainerio spausdinimo stadijoje svarbą. Jis buvo ir žurnalo *Alma Mater Vilnensis* meninis vadovas (1928). 1934 m. Vilniuje menininkas įkūrė Lenkijos meno spaustuotę „Grafika“. Achremowiczius buvo jos bendrasavininkis ir vadovas iki 1935 m., kai tas pareigas perėmė Stanisławas Turskis, leidykloje išdirbęs iki 1939 m. rugsėjo. Leidykloje „Grafika“ buvo spausdinami Vilniaus žurnalai *Comoedia* ir *Rysunek w Szkole* [Mokyklinis piešimas], taip pat Dailės fakulteto rengiamų kasmetinių parodų katalogai. Achremowiczius dar kūrė maketus, knygų viršelius ir žinovų itin vertintus mišiolų ir liturginių knygų apkaustus, kuriuos „Šv. Wojcecho“ [Św. Wojciech] knygyno Poznanėje užsakymu gamino Vilniaus knygryšys Władysławas Strzedziński. Laisvu nuo poezijos rašymo metu Achremowiczius kūrė ekslibrisus, logotipus ir atspaudus įvairioms organizacijoms ir asociacijoms. 1926–1940 m. menininkas sukūrė per penkiasdešimt ekslibrisų institucijoms (pvz., Tomaszo Zano bibliotekai Vilniuje), pažįstamiems, draugams ir artimiesiems. Jis dirbo centrinės Stepono Batoro universiteto bibliotekos grafikos skyriuje, kur ėmėsi kolekcijų inventorizavimo. Achremowiczius buvo Dailininkų draugijos ir Lenkijos bibliofilų asociacijos narys, taip pat priklausė Lenkijos bibliotekininkų asociacijos Vilniuje ratui, Vilniaus fotografijos klubui bei „Bastūnų“ klubui. Menininkas dėstė piešimą aukštosiose mokyklose (tarp jų Elizos Orzeszkowos aukštojoje mokykloje) bei grafikos meną profesinėje Vilniaus dailininkų draugijos mokykloje. 1930–1935 m. jis buvo Dailės fakulteto bibliotekininkas ir buvo atsakingas už šio skyriaus spaudinius. Kaip grafikas ir dizaineris

dalyvavo daugiausia vietinėse parodose; 1933 m. balandį dalyvavo grupinėje Vilniaus dailininkų draugijos parodoje Varšuvoje, o 1939 m. gegužę ir birželį – Vilniaus dailės propagavimo draugijos parodoje. Savo talento ir energijos dėka menininkas sukūrė daug įdomių darbų, vertintų dizaino ir tipografijos ekspertų, tačiau dėl plataus interesų rato jo kūryba nebuvo išskirtinė. Lokaliai Achremowiczius buvo žinomas visų pirma kaip Vilniaus menininkas, tačiau iš Bonawenturos Lenarto perimtą spaustuvininko patirtį ir įgūdžius menininkas sugebėjo panaudoti leidybos ir knygų meno srityse, kurios, žinia, nepripažįsta sienų ir randa pasekėjų net ir tolimiausiuose pasaulio kraštuose. Už savo pagrindinę veiklą 1940 m. Achremowiczius buvo suimtas, o 1942 m. kovo 26 d. mirė Ufos (SSRS) kalėjime – kaip buvo pranešta, nuo širdies smūgio.