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My Books: Creating Bilingual Worlds for Children

Maria Gerasimchuk-Djordjevic

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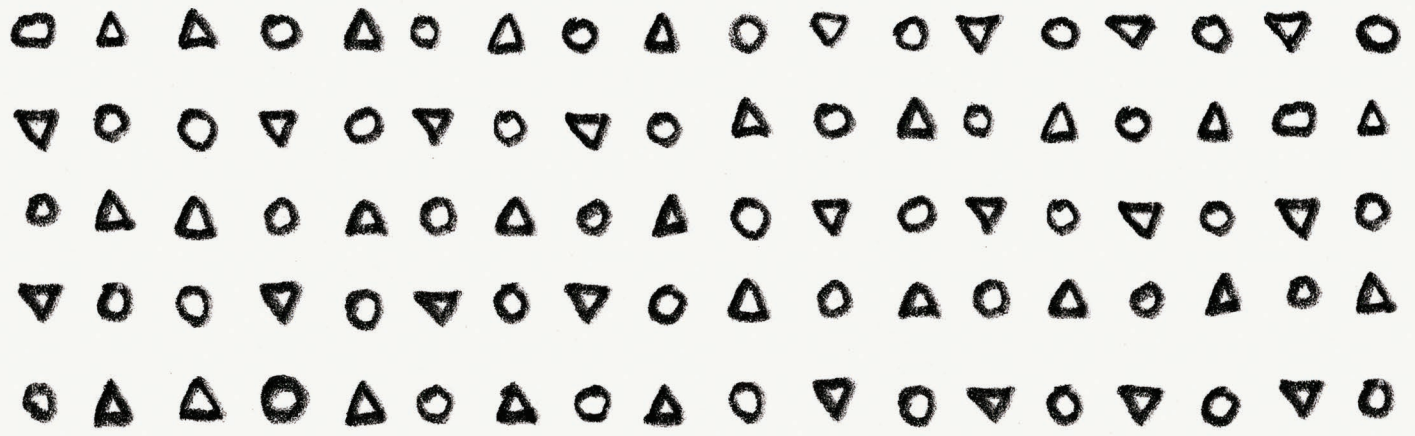
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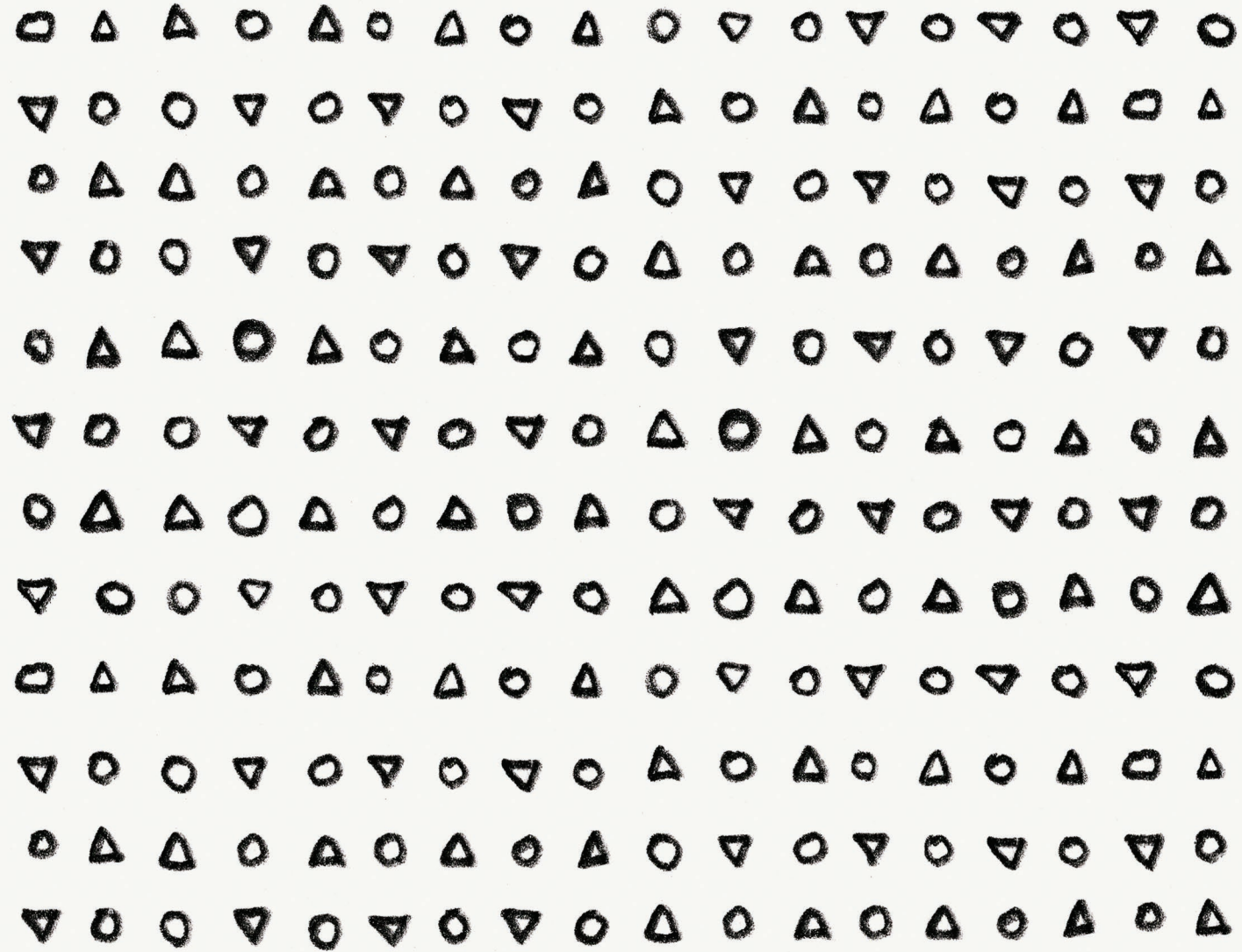
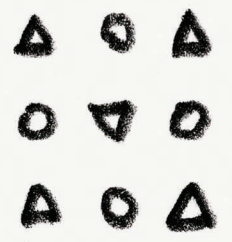
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My Books:

Creating Bilingual Worlds for Children



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Creating Bilingual Worlds for Children



“... a fluffy cat that lived in the forest.”

My Books:

Creating Bilingual Worlds for Children

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Student Exhibition Center, Springfield, Missouri

April 19–30, 2017

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My Books: Creating Bilingual Worlds for Children

An MFA Thesis Submitted to the Graduate College of Missouri State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For the Master of Fine Arts, Visual Studies.

May 19TH, 2017

ABSTRACT: In my fourth semester of graduate school, I wrote and illustrated my first full, bilingual, 32-page children's picture book—*What do you Like?/Що Тобі Подобається?* I have since continued to explore and pursue the social aspects and influences of nationalistic conflict among the population of war-torn Ukraine. These books express my hope and confidence in a new generation, especially in the immigrant community. The cultural exposure from my youth, yielding autobiographic experiences, as well as observations of a new culture, are prominent in my work. The bilingual aspect of my books is central to my work in general—Ukrainian points to the audience I portray, and English, an international language, reflects the audience I aim to reach.

KEYWORDS: Bilingual, children, Ukraine, books, literature.

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In the interest of academic freedom and the principle of free speech, approval of this thesis indicates the format is acceptable and meets the academic criteria for the discipline as determined by the faculty that constitute the thesis committee. The content and views expressed in this thesis are those of the student-scholar and are not endorsed by Missouri State University, its Graduate College, or its employees.



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∞ **DEDICATION**

TO VLADAN for feeding me throughout this journey.

TO CARLA for proofreading whatever I throw at her.

TO ERIC: *Если Зайца долго бить, она научится писать.*

INTRODUCTION

As I am approaching graduation I can't help but think about my professional future. Naturally, this self-reflection would be difficult without the review of the past. The books that I wrote and the images I created are part of my creative cloth. The techniques I experimented with, as well as the exploration with hand-generated textures led me down the path of Photoshop-based exploration. Digital illustration allowed me quite a bit of flexibility—if a mistake was made, it was easily adjusted. However, the indefinite nature of the mark—things could be added and removed, changed and removed again, “finalized” and removed yet again—could become quite a distraction while creating an image. At the same time, the complaisance and the opportunities of digital illustration are undeniable—the forgiving nature of being able to return to a saved file (hopefully with non-flattened layers) is something that I could not have had with a linocut block—if the cut is made it is final. Silkscreen is somewhere inbetween the two and allows me to create an image, dissect it into multiple layers, and carefully put it back together through the utilization of yet another medium—paint.

That being said, no matter what process or medium I end up selecting my initial idea is generated in the form of a sketch. It is in that process that I am making my first choices in regard to how my characters will be portrayed, and how they will interact with their surrounding. My final choices are governed by resistance to over-explanation in illustration, as well as by the idea that children utilize their own imaginations when it comes to perceiving stories. In a way, I can't help but wonder if other young illustrators from Ukraine are drawing the same conclusions (wordplay intended).

The recent cultural and political changes that swept through Ukraine, my country of origin, have influenced my life, thoughts and my work. Folklore imagery, prominent in traditional Eastern-European crafts such as embroidery, ceramics, and woodcarvings, provides inspiration for a visual language that merges with a more contemporary, Western aesthetic. This connection impelled me to pursue visual storytelling and writing my own bilingual books for children.

In the Spring of 2015, during the second semester of my first graduate year, the themes in my work began to come into focus and my interests shifted toward utilizing multiple languages. I turned to children's book illustration and began to write the text for my first bilingual book—*The Orange Girl/Помаранчева Дівчинка*. As certain parts of the story are still being worked out, I am also exploring certain stylistic aspects of the visual narrative.

One of the first characters for the book emerged through visual exploration in my printmaking class—a reduction linocut character study of the main heroine—the Orange Girl. This stylistic investigation began with a quick sketch and led me to create the *Лай!Гав/Woof!Bark!* print. Due to the nature of my character being an orange (fruit), one of two colours I picked was orange. Black was chosen for contrast quality as well as the elimination of the overprint transparency problem. Stepping aside from my narrative, I added a personal trait to the character of the orange, which alludes to my discomfort and occasional fear of dogs. The exaggeration of the wolf-like features in the illustration, along with the chaotic typography, are meant



1. *Lai!/Bark!*
2015. Reduction
linocut. 18" x 16".

to create an impression of a loud animal. The leash, as a symbol of conquest, and the “*Tuuue! Tuuue!*” (“*Quite! Quite!*”) exclaimed by the Orange Girl are meant as a representation of control.

While there is beauty in the quality of the imprint from a linocut block, the time it would take to create all of the spreads of the book in that method was something that I had to consider. Since my goal was to finish at least three spreads and create a cover for the book by the end of the semester, I decided to utilize my digital skills while reusing parts of my existing prints. As a result, I created over 40 *Photoshop* brushes—all based on hand-generated textures from my printmaking artwork.

The next stages of my process involved considerable research. While working with the cultural influences tied to Ukraine, I looked at children’s books published within the last 25 years—since Ukraine became an independent country after the fall of the Soviet Union. A revival of folk art and nationalistic tendencies was, and still is, a popular theme—it is found in many children’s books, while traditional stories are now included in the curriculum for elementary grades.

This revival is a good sign, though it highlights gaps in a visual style and cultural education that had been, for political reasons, absent (for decades). This political and ideological shift has energized Ukrainian society with more vitality, and inspired a return to certain cultural traditions (most of which were classified as *folk art* during the Soviet Era). This recent wave of style and “everything Ukrainian” currently saturates the tendencies of artistic expression. Children’s literature is no exception to this rule. Unfortunately, there was no distinction in government-approved “folk art”, and this approach (although initially well intended) lasted for almost 80 years, resulting in the visual tastes of multiple generations morphing into a generalized aesthetic of what folk art means. In the example on the opposite page, titled *Історія Одного Поросятка/A Story of One Piglet*, the main character is a tiny pig, who falls asleep and dreams up an adventure. This style of visual narrative is segmented, with multiple scenes happening at the same time, which is a story vehicle of the *lubok*¹ style of art. The use of bright, primary colours is also a

¹ Russian-style woodcut, similar to the English and American *broadside*, and French *imagerie populaire d'Epinal*.

dominant feature of this style. The main character is wearing traditional red *sharovary* (loose-fitting pants) and an embroidered shirt. His ensemble is completed by little leather boots.



2. Oleg Petrenko-Zanevsky, *История Одного Поросенка (A Story of One Piglett)*, (А-ВА-ВА-GA-LA-МА-GA, 2005).

Another part of my style research included looking into various illustrators that work with similar iconography. One such illustrator is Vladyslav Erko, whose work I have been familiar with since prior to coming to the United States. He is a good example of an artist, educated in the Soviet Union (making him a generation older), whose career peaked after the collapse of the USSR. His use of symbols and the ability to weave them into textural patterns throughout his illustrations (particularly in *The Snow Queen* and *The Knights of the Round Table*) are some of the more recog-



3. (LEFT): Vladyslav Erko, *Снежная Королева (The Snow Queen)*, (А-ВА-ВА-GA-LA-МА-GA, 2000).



4. (RIGHT) Vladyslav Erko, *Казки Туманного Альбіону (The Knights of the Round Table)*, (А-ВА-ВА-GA-LA-МА-GA, 2003).

nizable attributes he uses in his work. Using traditional iconographic symbols, he also created a set of face/court cards for *Taras Bulba*², a restaurant in Moscow that specializes in Ukrainian cuisine.

Vladislav Erko is not the only illustrator who utilizes this style. As soon as folk style is mentioned, published illustrators such as Katerina Shtanko, Kost Lavro, Iveta Kluckovska, Viktoriya Palchun, and Innokenty Korshunov come to mind. In their work, these illustrators, schooled in Soviet and post-Soviet realistic illustration, typically portrays their protagonists as detailed as possible in traditional clothing and in a culturally conventional setting. This approach leaves little to the imagination of children.

This trend is slowly changing. In an interview, Anna Hromova, who wrote the bilingual book *Монетка/A Coin*³, was asked what changes she would like to see in contemporary literature. Her response was, “To see prejudices towards using bilingual literature in the curriculum of kindergarten disappear; for parents to have a more open attitude to the forms and themes that were not part of their own childhood. Due to historical reasons, we have lost a lot of time. Meanwhile, the children are growing up now, they do not wait, and their requests are quite modern.”⁴ This is a statement that resonates with me, because I am aware that new stories and illustrations do not follow the pattern of the tales that my parents grew up with. A change in thematic and visual culture would bring new international cultural interests to the world of children and their parents, and in return Ukrainian authors and illustrators would be able to share their stories on the global scene.

In the last four years, Ukrainian children’s literature is experiencing somewhat of a Renaissance. New books are being written by new authors and illustrators are gaining popularity among domestic and international audiences. For the last two years, books by Ukrainian authors and illustrators have been in the selected win-

² *Taras Bulba* is a short story written by Ukrainian-born Nikolai Gogol, about an old Zaporozhian Cossack, Taras Bulba, and his two sons. It is considered to be a Russian/Ukrainian classic, and is part of the literature curriculum in schools.

³ Written by Ania Khromova, illustrated by Anna Sarvira, translated by Oksana Lushchevska, Published by *Bratske Publishing* (2015), this book was crowd-sourced through Kickstarter, and has an e-pub version.

⁴ Ania Khromova, interview by Valentyna Vzdulska, kazkarka.com, September 02, 2015.



5. (TOP): Anna Savrira, *Нові Друзі (New Friends)*. 2017.
Pencil, digital illustration.

6. (LEFT): Romana Romanyshyn, Andriy Lesiv. *Війна Що Змінила Рондо (The War That Changed Rondo)*, (Stariy Lev Publishing House, 2014).

ners of the prestigious *Bologna Children's Book Fair Awards: The War That Changed Rondo/Війна Що Змінила Рондо*⁵ received the *New Horizons Award* in 2015. Illustrator Anna Savrira was among the top 75 finalists selected for the illustration exhibition during the judging process in 2017 (*see above*).

These awards boosted Ukrainian literary arts to the international scene, representing a young generation of illustrators under 35 years old. While this might be common in European and American illustration, it is a new development in the post-Soviet art structure of Ukraine. As consumers become more cognizant of this “unusual” style of domestic illustration, young artists are increasingly aware of the myriad influences from all over the world, representing various schools of thought. Departing from the dominant tastes set by decades of the visual simplistic overnarration of *Social Realism*, contemporary illustrators of Ukrainian children's literature are exploring a somewhat avant-garde approach to visual storytelling (in response to recent political changes), which could be compared to the Russian avant-garde movement of the 1920s (*see APPENDIX: HISTORICAL CONTEXT on p. 50 for more*).

⁵ This book received the *New Horizons Award* at the *Bologna Ragazzi Award 2015*, as part of the *Bologna Children's Book Fair*.

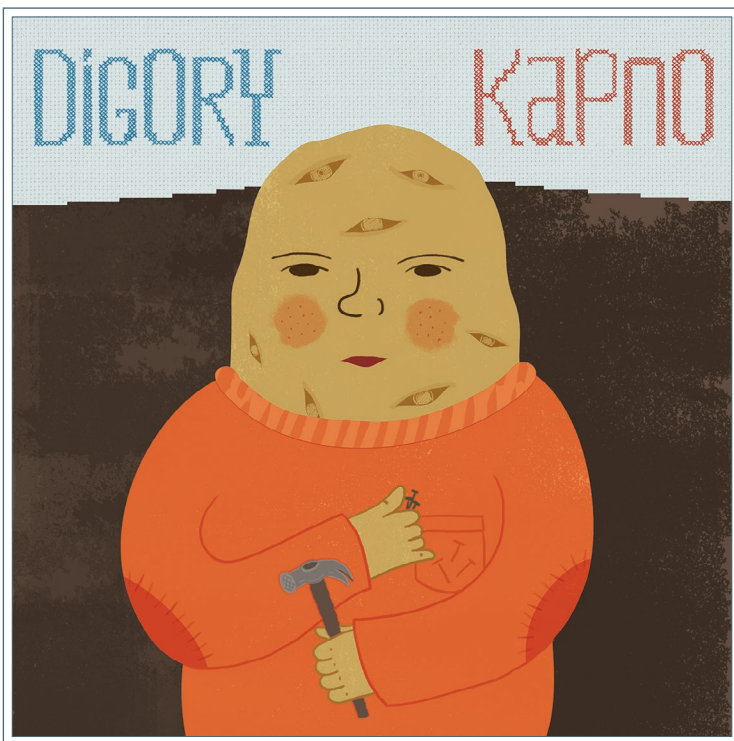
8 VEGETABLES: TALES FROM THE PAST

My contribution to ending gender-specific occupations can be seen in my work by female characters being presented in the same roles as male characters. One of my projects is a collection of 8 illustrations, 4 male and 4 female, which I plan to complete with stories and turn into a bilingual book. Each character is a root vegetable prevalent in European fare. I specifically looked to root vegetables as characters to accentuate their underground habitat, where they are away from sunlight and unable to see beyond their own heads. It is symbolic of the socio-political situation fomenting in Ukraine. The characters include: *Квітослава/Darnigold* carrot (female), *Карно/Digory* potato (male), *Юстина/Eglentine* onion (female), *Захворай/Filbert* garlic (male), *Пріска/Dorka* turnip (female), *Хведь/Beaton* radish (male), *Параска/Etheldred* rutabaga (female), *Прокін/Marvin* beet (male).

The development of my characters included the etymology of certain Ukrainian words (particularly when it comes to names for these characters). I also researched old Slavic names while trying to eliminate the ones of Biblical origin, as well as names historically-tied to cultures that presided over what is now the territory of Ukraine. After creating a list of Ukrainian names, I then began to look for old English and American names. Here the task proved a bit more difficult since many of those names have Biblical origins. The list I arrived at was narrowed down by what the character represents, as well as the condition that the names in Ukrainian and English must relate to one another. While pinpointing the names to the characters, I also realized that they all have one thing in common. They are all plants with similar places on the hierarchy of biological classification. This, in turn, manifested itself in the creation of a family tree of sorts. The characters are all remotely related and some of them haven't spoken to others for years. After establishing the foundational structure of the story, I was ready to create my own narrative.



7. *Квітослава/ Darnigold*, (carrot, female). 2015.
Digital illustration,
10" x 10".



8. *Карно/Digory* (potato, male). 2015.
Digital illustration,
10" x 10".



9. *Захвораў/Filbert*
(garlic, male). 2015.
Digital illustration,
10" x 10".



10. *Юстина/
Eglentine* (onion,
female). 2015.
Digital illustration,
10" x 10".



11. *Προκιν/Marvin*
(beet, male). 2015.
Digital illustration,
10" x 10".



12. *Πριγκα/Dorka*
(turnip, female). 2015.
Digital illustration,
10" x 10".



13. *Xведь/Beaton*
(radish, male). 2015.
Digital illustration,
10" x 10".



14. *Παρασκα/Etheldred*
rutabaga (female). 2015.
Digital illustration,
10" x 10".

THE ORANGE GIRL/ПОМАРАНЧЕВА ДІВЧИНКА

The story of *Помаранчева Дівчинка/The Orange Girl* was written in the spring of 2015, one year after the political winds began to shift the cultural landscape of Ukraine. It is based around a young female character who was born in a new place/country—different from her grandparents and parents. As she begins to reflect on her family’s past, there is a growing interest in her relatives’ backgrounds and what they did when they were her age.

Around kindergarten and early elementary, children tend to be curious about the idea of the past and begin to realize that other people around them have memories that do not involve them. When working on the first round of sketches for this book, I initially included the main character in every spread—she was meant to be a “guide” of some sort, a “thread” through the plot of the book, that would be relatable from the first page to the last. But when I returned to this text almost two years



15. *Grandpa/Дідусь*, spread from *The Orange Girl/Помаранчева Дівчинка*. 2015. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".

later, I revisited my visual approach and realized it would be more interesting for the viewer to establish their own relationship to the characters in the story. Eliminating the main character from some of the illustrations was a deliberate attempt on my part to avoid over-explaining, leaving some of the details to the imagination of the reader.

The story is semi-autobiographical—though I was born in the same country as my parents and grandparents, certain attributes of the main characters are loosely based on my relatives. My younger sister and brother, who were born in the United States, were introduced to the country of their parents through personal stories and short trips overseas.

While writing about the relatives of *The Orange Girl* throughout the book, I focused on activities from their past lives—they are either portrayed as children or as adults engaged in their past profession. *The Orange Girl* is the only character depicted in the present, as she walks toward her school.

My grandmother does have a sweet tooth, so it was natural for me to depict her as a child who fantasizes about eating desserts. When she was the age of *The Orange Girl* (seven or eight years old), she and her family had to flee their home as the advancement of the German forces approached. Because the premise of the story is based around relocation, I chose not to specify the main reason for this displacement; it could have been a conflict, or hope for economic prosperity, for example. Regardless, it is the hope for a better life which is imbued in the main character.

The grandfather in the story was loosely based on my paternal grandfather, who lived in a rural village as a child and was responsible for taking care of the family cow—a valuable possession during and after WWII. He became an engineer just like the grandfather character in the book and oversaw construction.

The Father (*Tato*) and Mother (*Mama*) in the book have less in common with my parents, though they are portrayed as working class people. In the book, Mother (*Mama*) used to be a daycare teacher, while Father (*Tato*) worked as an accountant (my parents are both chemists).

The careful structure of this narrative is intentional—it is a commentary on the hope and confidence instilled in a new generation, particularly in the immigrant/relocation community. The story concludes with *The Orange Girl* going toward a school building, ready to share the stories of her relatives with new classmates.



16. COVER for *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



17. Front ENDPAPER and BASTARD TITLE from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



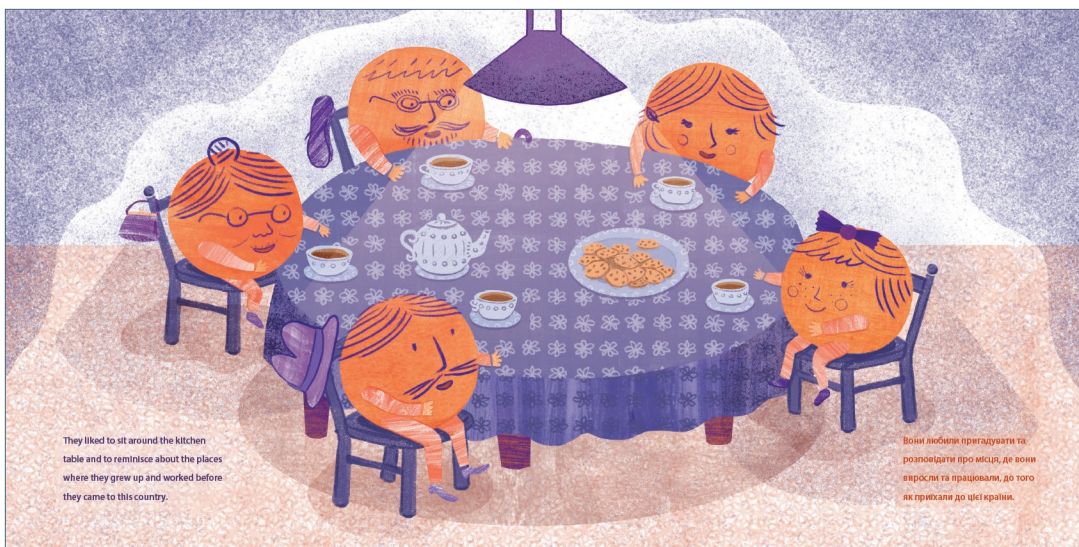
18. FRONTISPIECE and TITLE PAGE from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl* 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



19. COPYRIGHT and DEDICATION pages from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



20. *The Orange Family*, from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



21. *Family Stories*, from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



22. *Imagining*, from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl* bilingual book. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



23. *Different Animals*, from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



24. *Cacti*, from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



25. *Painter*, from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



26. Fluffy Cat, from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



27. Experiments, from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



28. Pastries and Cakes from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



29. Grandpa as Engineer, from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



When he was little, and lived in the village,
he pastured a cow names Marushka.

Коли він був маленьким, та жив в селі, він пас корову Марушку.

30. *Marushka*, from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



The next morning the Orange Girl will go to school
and share these family stories with her friends.

Наступного ранку, коли Помаранчева Дівчинка піде до
школи, вона розповість своїм друзям історії своєї родини.

31. *School Day*, from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



32. *What About You Family?* from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".



33. COLOPHON and back ENDPAPER from *Помаранчева Дівчинка / The Orange Girl*. 2017. Digital Illustration, 16" x 8".

WHAT DO YOU LIKE?/ЩО ТОБІ ПОДОБАЄТЬСЯ?

The story of *What do you Like?/Що Тобі Подобається* revolves around a little chick who moved to a new place with his mother. Initially this story came out of the news about internal re-settlement of many Ukrainian families (due to the conflict in the East of the country). Since the initial concept for this book came to me a year-and-a-half-ago, the world politics, particularly in the Middle East, have changed to the point where this book is becoming more globally relevant than ever. A common thread of life within a new place and the inability to go back is something that the next generation of migrating children will have to face (while they assimilate their habitat in return).

As the divisiveness and unrest in Ukraine (and many other areas of the world) influences how people from other countries are perceived, I am motivated to impress upon children the universality of humanity's needs and desires. In my book *What do you Like?/Що Тобі Подобається?*, the female protagonist (a chick) asks a stranger (another chick) a series of questions about what does he like. It is revealed at the end that what he wants/needs is a hug.

As the two main characters interact with their surroundings, the female character is continuing to ask questions in order to find common interests with her new friend. Since fruit is universally liked by children, instead of making the book about toys, clothing, or games, I decided to play with the idea of evoking a memory that would be common through multiple cultures. As the sweet memories build up from spread to spread, candy is brought in as the sweetest food. The only thing that can top that is a comforting hug of acceptance.

In order to make this book more relatable in both cultures, I tried to stay away from exotic fruit and berries that would not be common in both cultures (red and white currants, quince, or honedew cantelopes among others). That being said, the bilingual aspect of this book is central to my work in general—Ukrainian points to the audience I am drawing my inspiration from, and English, an international language, reflects the audience I want to reach.



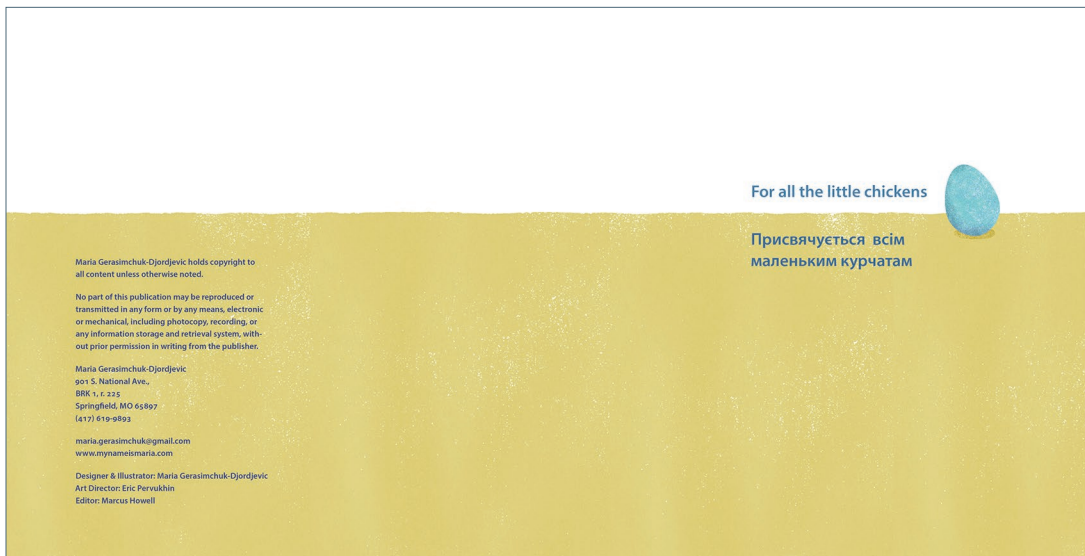
34. COVER from *Що Тобі Подобається?/What Do You Like?* 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



35. Front ENDPAPER and BASTARD TITLE from *Що Тобі Подобається?/What Do You Like?* 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



36. FRONTISPICE and TITLE PAGE from *Що Тобі Подобається? / What Do You Like?* 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" X 10".



37. COPYRIGHT and DEDICATION page from *Що Тобі Подобається? / What Do You Like?* 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" X 10".



38. *The Meeting, Що Тобі Подобається?/What Do You Like?* 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



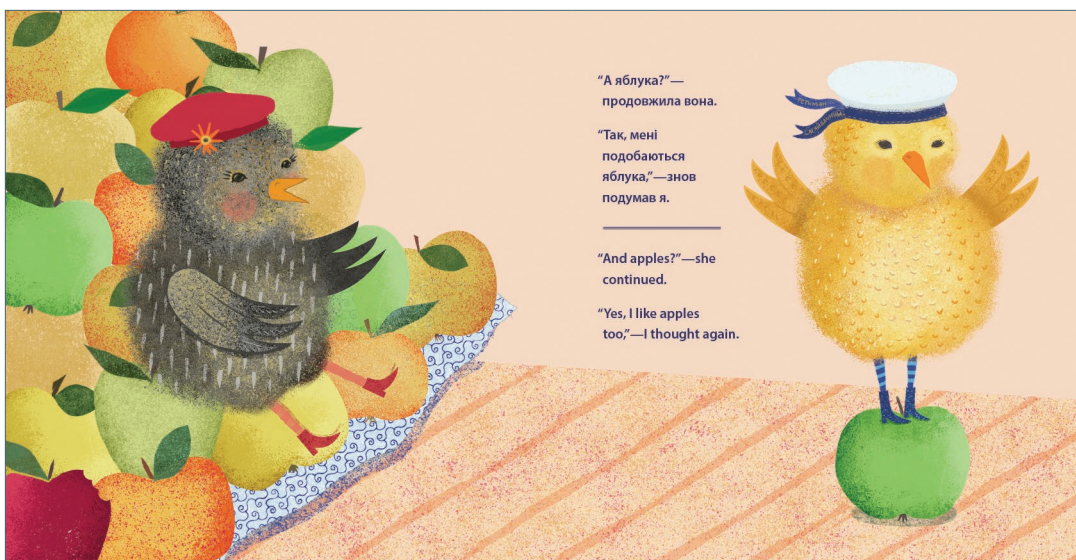
39. *The Introduction, Що Тобі Подобається?/What Do You Like?* 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



40. *The question, Що Тобі Подобається?/What Do You Like?* 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



41. *Bananas, Що Тобі Подобається?/What Do You Like?* 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



42. Apples, Що Тобі Подобається?/What Do You Like? 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



43. Pears, Що Тобі Подобається?/What Do You Like? 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



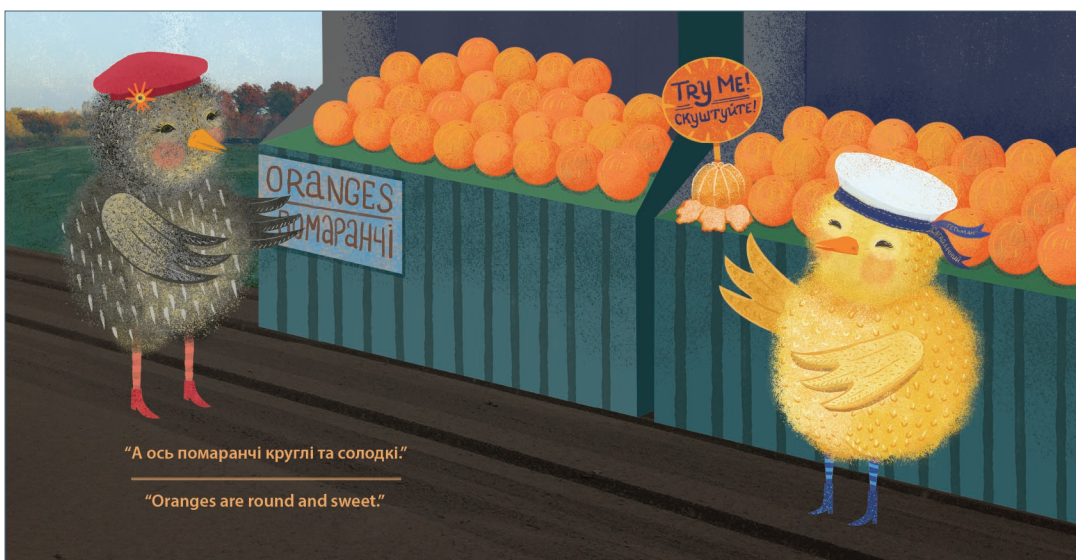
44. *The question, Що Тобі Подобається?/What Do You Like?* 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



45. *Plums, Що Тобі Подобається?/What Do You Like?* 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



46. Lemons, Що Тобі Подобається?/What Do You Like? 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



47. Oranges, Що Тобі Подобається?/What Do You Like? 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



48. Candy, Що Тобі Подобається?/ What Do You Like? 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



49. You Can Talk!, Що Тобі Подобається?/ What Do You Like? 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



50. A Hug, Що Тобі Подобається?/What Do You Like? 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".



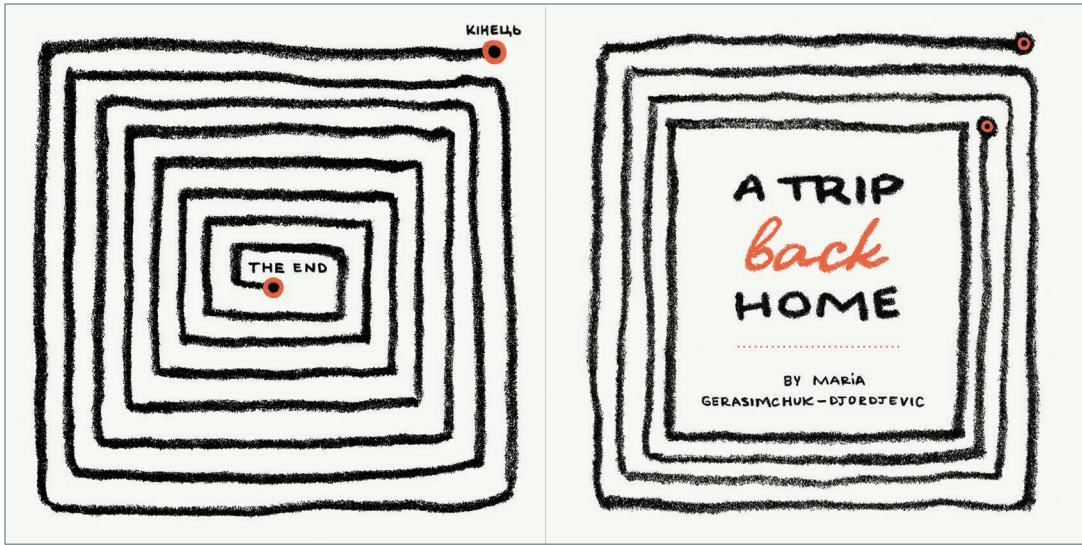
51. COLOPHON and BACK ENDPAPER Що Тобі Подобається?/What Do You Like? 2016. Digital Illustration, 20" x 10".

A TRIP BACK HOME

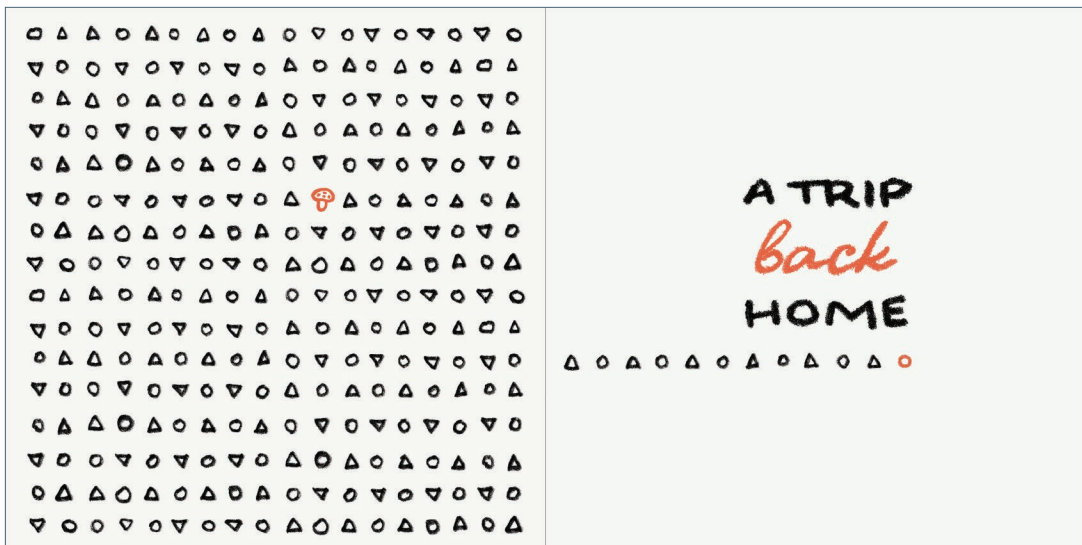
In the Fall of 2016, I wrote and illustrated some short stories that are based around my summer trip to Ukraine. It was my first trip back since the unrest that has influenced my life, thoughts, and my work. Although I grew up and am quite familiar with Kiev/Kyiv, during this trip I was approaching everything with the “eyes of a tourist”. I took pictures of all things interesting to me. As a result, over 3,000 images have been collected. Going through them and selecting what would work, and what would not was an excellent way to determine what this book was going to be about.

As an adult, I am more aware of negative developments in popular culture, political movements, and the economical welfare of my family and friends. As an artist, I can't help but synthesize these observations. The sketches I made during the trip served as guides toward new, complete drawings that were finished during my Independent Study class with one of the professors. Since I was interested in the gritty quality of the line produced by a litho crayon, it was the first tool I tried. Unfortunately, the level of detail I was hoping to be able to achieve was not there, and upon suggestion I switched to drawing with graphite, but on a small scale—my drawings were no taller than 2". The drawings were scanned at higher resolution, in order to retain the textural properties within the image once it was enlarged at least 4 times. After the small drawings were scanned and adjusted in *Photoshop*, they were placed into *InDesign* for page layout.

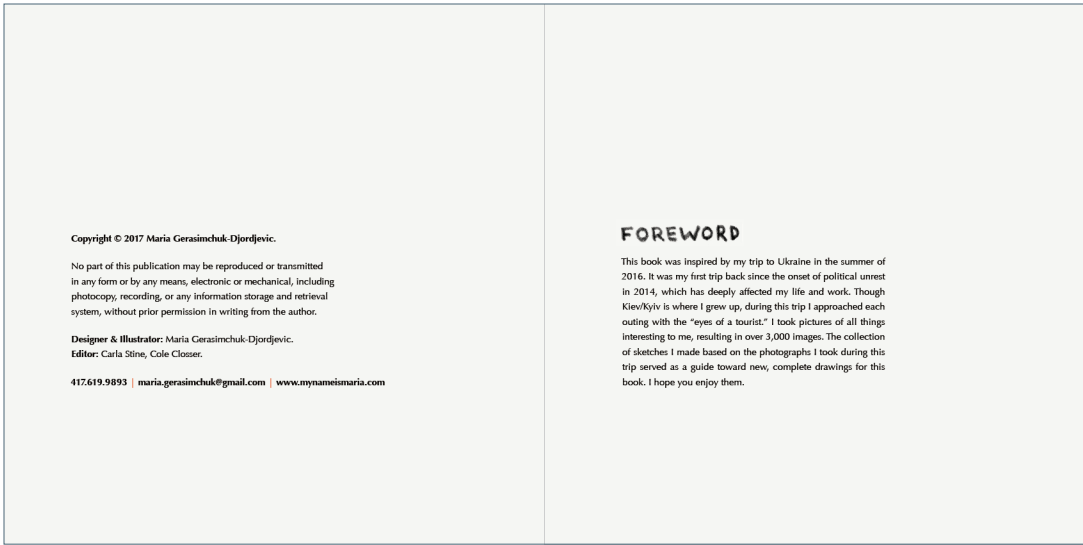
The stories and memories from this trip overlapped the cultural exposure from my youth, yielding somewhat autobiographic experiences. Although my illustrations were initially meant to be part of a colouring book, I currently think that they are a window to my experience as an immigrant returning into my own culture that is in the state of an ongoing change.



52. COVER for *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".



53. Front ENDPAPER and HALF TITLE from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".



54. COPYRIGHT and FOREWORD from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".



55. *Tickets and Passport*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

My grandmother still has the **MONEY TREE** I grew from a single leaf of my friend's plant.

Ania is now a notable fashion designer and lives in Holland.



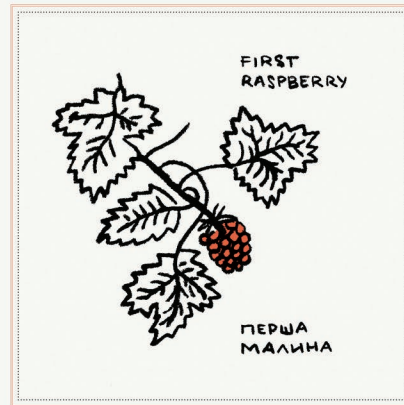
56. *Money Tree*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

The **VEGETABLES** my family grew when I was a child are still the same ones my aunt grows today.



57. *Garden Vegetables*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

The
FIRST RIPE RASPBERRY
is always a little bit sour.



58. *Raspberry*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

Since WWII there
have always been
MORE WOMEN
than men.



59. *Women*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

GRANDMAS
are usually the
ones who take
care of children.



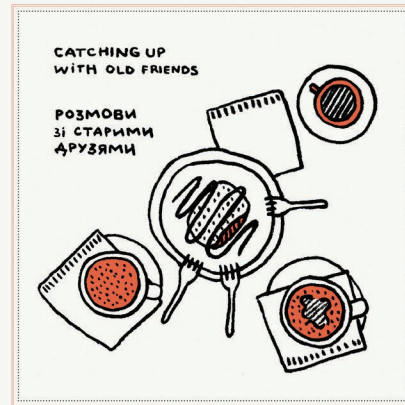
60. *Grandmas*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

LINDEN TREES
begin blooming in
late June. Their sweet
aroma saturates the air.



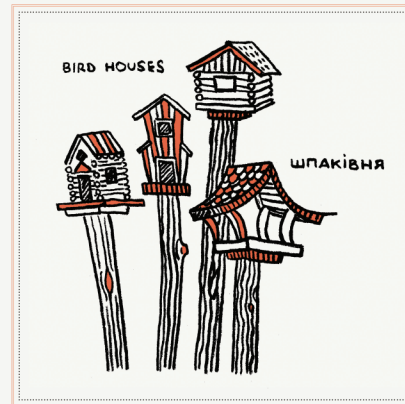
61. *Linden Trees*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

Catching up with old friends over a cup of coffee and a slice of **APPLE STRUDEL** is the best part of the first weekend at home.



62. *First Raspberry*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

Since **WINTERS ARE COLD**, people build little bird houses to take care of their feathery friends.



63. *Bird Houses*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

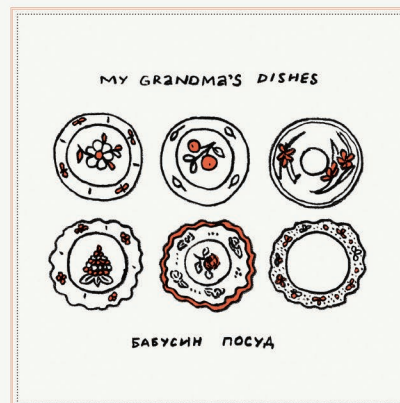
EVERYONE

air dries their laundry:
any season, any time.



64. *Laundry*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

My grandmother's
DISHES were always
simple—no gold or
ornate decoration.



65. *Dishes*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

Every time I visit
Vinnitsa, my cousin
and I go to a cafe with
CUSTOM DESSERTS,
made fresh daily.



66. *Custom Desserts*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

I ate all of them
in **ONE SITTING.**



67. *Spartacus*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

Traditional
CLAY SOUVENIRS
are still considered
a good wedding gift.



68. *Clay Souvenirs*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

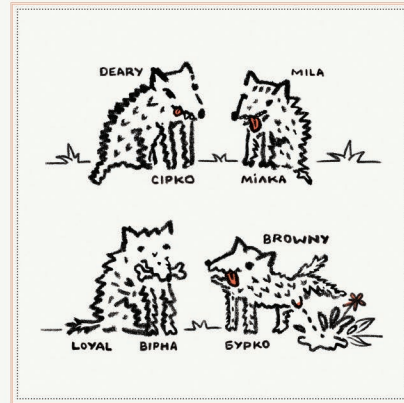
Dogs are not allowed
inside stores, so often
you will see a line of
FURRY BUDDIES
waiting for their owners.



69. *Furry Buddies*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

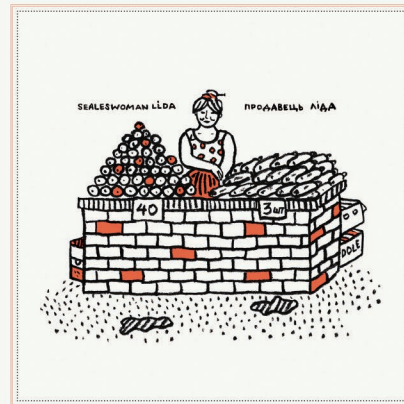
STRAY DOGS
are everywhere.

They live around
open air bazaars
and feed on food
scraps, sometimes
even **BONES**.



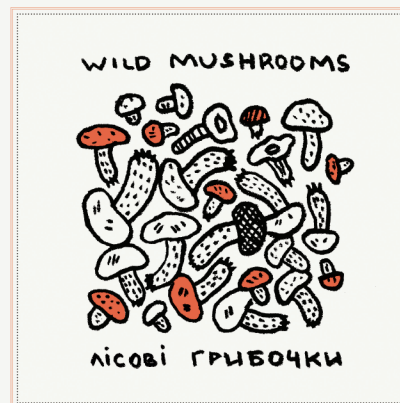
70. *Stray Dogs*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

SUMMER
VEGETABLES
are always fresh.
It's better to buy
them at the open
air market.



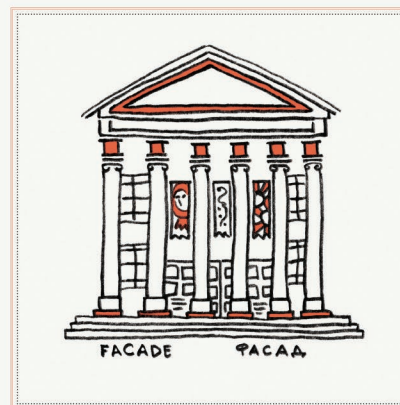
71. *Vegetables*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

When people say **MUSHROOMS** they mean a variety of wild mushrooms that are hand-picked in the forest, and not purchased at the supermarket.



72. *Mushrooms*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

Over 800,000 items from various archeological periods are kept at the *National Museum of the HISTORY OF UKRAINE.*



73. *Museum Facade*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

There are treasures
in every corner.

TWO VESSELS from
different periods coexist
in the same display case.



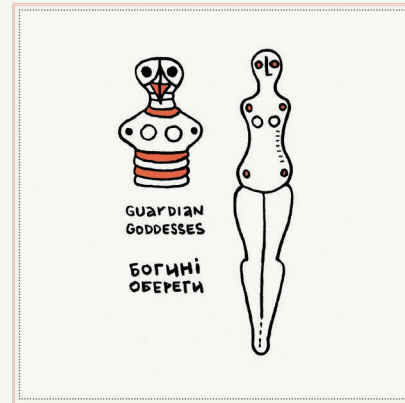
74. *Two Vessels*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

Some **CLAY VASES**
were decorated with
scrafitto, while others
were painted with
natural inks.



75. *Clay Vases*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

Figurines of
**GUARDIAN
GODDESSES**
were found in
various regions
of Ukraine.



76. *Guardian Goddesses*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

TRYPILLIAN POTTERY
is a unique attribute
of Neolithic–Eneolithic
archaeological culture.



77. *Trypillian Potter*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

Another museum in Kiev is a permanent home for *Infanta Margarita*—a **PAINTING** by Diego Velázquez.



78. *Infanta*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

A medieval plate with flowers and **ARTEMIS** in the center.

She is a Greek mythological deity of chastity, virginity, the hunt, and the moon.



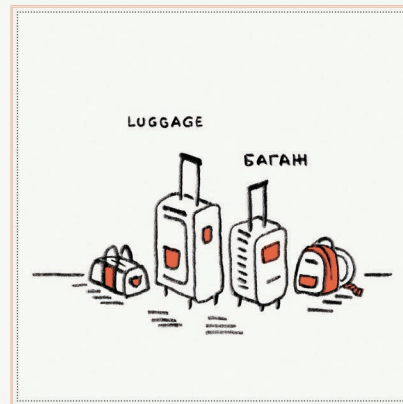
79. *Artemis*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

A Byzantium icon of **TWO SAINTS** is one of my favourite pieces at the *Museum of Eastern and Western Art*.



80. *Two Saints*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

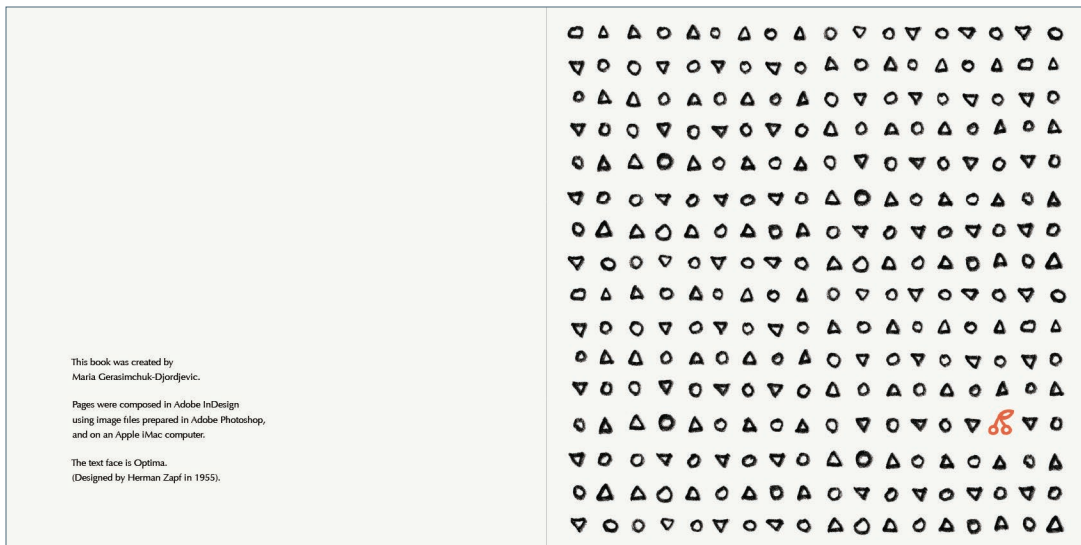
SUITCASES are packed to the limit the day before departure. They carry souvenirs and memories in their zipped bellies.



81. *Suitcases*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".



82. *Cup of Tea*, from *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".



83. *COLOPHON and BACK END PAPER* for *A Trip back Home*. 2017. Pencil, digital illustration, 16" x 8".

APPENDIX: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The roots of the Russian (Soviet) *avant-garde* grew out of the geometric *Suprematism* of Kazimir Malevich as early as 1915. During that period, several political and cultural figures inside the Russian Empire grew increasingly disillusioned with the Tsarist régime and its politics. European countries were at war with each other, and revolutionary sentiment had spread to the Russian Empire's territory as well. Beginning with the first stage of the Russian Revolution in February of 1917 (the so-called *Bourgeois* revolution), arts organizations adopted a form of *proletkult* (acronym for proletarian culture-educational organization).⁶ Largely powered by Marxist ideology, the main goal of *proletkults* was to deliver art that would meet the needs, and be clearly understood, by the working class (proletariat). Taking on the role of advancing the message and “benefits” of communism, *proletkults* were guided by the desire to produce idealistic art: art that could be reproduced in large quantities using industrial printing presses and dispersed to the masses. Therefore, claims to originality and ownership became less important. This led to the re-appropriation of *lubok* (a simplified version of pictorial folk narrative, popular in the 17TH–18TH centuries), and brought back the art criticism of the bourgeois “old-style” of pictorial creation.

Due to pressure from the new political apparatus and the change of direction in art in 1918, the *Imperial Academy of Arts* ceased to exist.⁷ *VkhuTeMas* (*Higher Art and Technical Studios*) was formed in its place. Taking advantage of the opportunity presented before them, many artists, who were teaching at the newly established *VkhuTeMas*, began to shape the new, “truly proletarian” *avant-garde* art. Powered by the Utopian visions of a new, Communist viewer (who would miraculously catch up on art ideas and education), artists such as Tatlin, Malevich, Kandisnksy, Rodchenko, Matveev, etc., continued their *avant-garde* explorations. This generation of artists had received their education in the Russian Empire, as well as various parts of Europe, and as the result, still had friends and acquaintances among the contemporary, and often influential, artists working in different countries.

⁶ Matthew Culerne Bown, *Art Under Stalin*. (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1991), 20.

⁷ *Ibid*, 22.

With the Bolshevik victory in the Russian Civil War (1921) and, as a result, more political stability within the country, Lenin continued to tackle social issues of *narod* (“the people”). Notorious for meeting with “the masses”—from kindergarten school-children to mine workers in the remote regions of Russia—Lenin began to pay close attention to the art being produced by *VkhuTeMas*. After a visit to their school in 1921, he came to the conclusion that this style of art was not true “proletarian art,” and it had moved too far from “realistic” painting. Lenin’s personal tastes in art were rather conservative, and he “viewed the function of art as laying within the broader framework of education, for which tackling the illiteracy of 80 percent of the population and the scarcity of basic technical skills were the real priorities.” Because of that, in one of his letters Lenin wrote: “To instruct the People’s Commissariat for Education: Not to pursue policies in the interests of groups and trends and, in particular, to take urgent measures toward the reorganization of higher art education and to ensure priority for the artistic development of realist trends in painting and sculpture.” As a result, Russian avant-garde began to fall under criticism from the *Commissariat for Education*, and one by one its artists began to emigrate or shift the artistic direction of their work, while hoping for the best. Vladimir Lenin died in 1924, and Joseph Stalin, who was already the general secretary of Central Committee, began his calculated rise to power, and liquidation of opponents.

The school of Soviet illustration began in the early 1920s, going into the early 1930s, when one socio-political regime was transitioning into another, and children’s literature needed to be changed to carry a different message. When writing an analysis of that period, Evgeny Steiner wrote: “children’s books are aimed at a readership whose artistic tastes and philosophical views are only beginning to take shape.”⁸ Some of the books were more experimental than others as is with the example of El Lissitzky’s book published in Berlin in 1923 (*next page*). Using the notion of fresh ideas and knowing about typographic solutions of DaDa and Italian Futurists, Lissitzky picked up on the idea of utilizing grotesk typefaces in various geometric directions.

⁸ Evgeny Steiner, *Stories For Little Comrades: Revolutionary Artists and the making of Early Soviet Children’s Books*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 14.



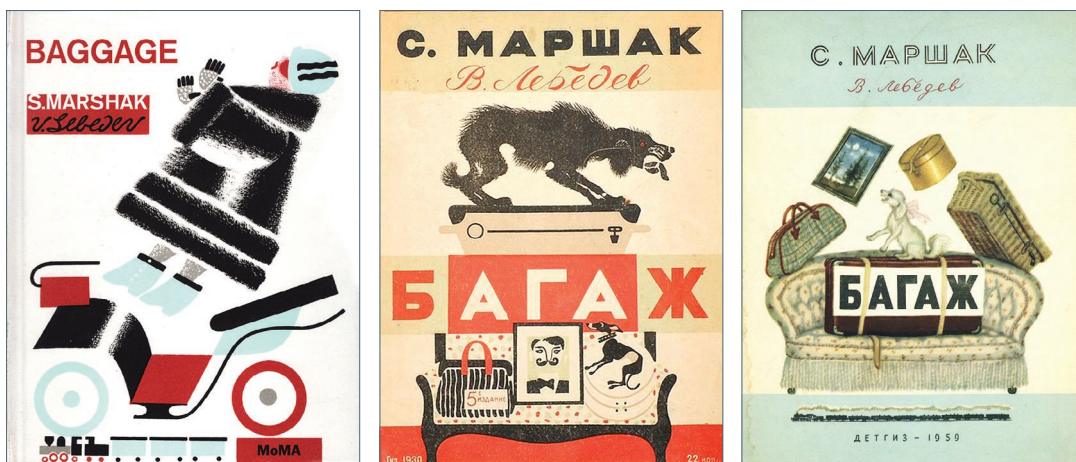
84. El Lissitzky, spreads from *Mayakovsky Dlya Golosa (Mayakovsky For the Voice)*, SKYTHEN VERLAG/СКИФЫ (1922).

“Of course, obsession with grotesk and other cut typefaces of the early 20TH, was not accidental. Compared to the perception of the text set in old classical typefaces, reading the text set in new designs was different in its principle. ... On a quasi-semantic, better put—phonetically-poetic level, pieces of words and sounds were going through a re-revolutionizing re-construction, by adding prefixes and suffixes to other words.”⁹ Naturally, Lissitzky was not the only designer and illustrator working at that time.

Vladimir Lebedev worked on a lot of books with Samuil Marshak, who was one of the more prominent names in Soviet literature for decades to come. Marshak was the head of the children’s literature department at *GIZ*¹⁰ since 1924, and encouraged a lot of writers to contribute to the children’s literature of the *new* era. Lebedev was the art director of the same department from 1924–1933 and, in retrospect, is considered to be one of the more influential illustrators of Russian *avant-garde* to be ridiculed and chased out after the introduction of *Social Realism*. Provided below are images of the cover for *Baggage/Багаж* throughout the Soviet years.

⁹ Evgeny Steiner, *Avangard i postroyenie novogo cheloveka: Iskusstvo sovetskoi detskoj knigi 1920 godov*. (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2002), 56.

¹⁰ *GIZ* is an acronym for *Gosizdat* (translates into *Government Publishing*). Starting with May of 1919 publishing houses of the Russian Empire were reformed into one centralized publishing house, with multiple branches, each specializing in particular professional genre/direction. In 1930, *GIZ* was renamed into *OGIZ*.



1st, 1926 ed. repr. in English, MoMA. 5th edition, ГИЗ, Moscow, 1930. 9th edition, ДЕТГИЗ, Moscow, 1959
85, 86, 87. Vladimir Lebedev, covers for *Багаж* (*Baggage*), (1926, 1930, 1959).

Aside from political oppression, during the 1920s, much of the newly formed republic of the Soviet Union began to experience cultural “re-adjustment” as well—while there were many languages and dialects in use by various (now internal) cultures, Russian was still considered to be the primary language of the land. This historical tension predates the Soviet Union, but with forced implementation of the *Soviet citizen* culture there was a pushback from certain ethnicities within the country.

Ukrainian publishing of the late teens and early twenties was focused on more nationalistic ideals, since the political powers (think УРА¹¹) were trying to seize the moment and create an independent state. Provided is an example of a book that puts a new spin on the war for independence—it utilizes an old myth about wild forest mushrooms being the warriors of the forest, and depicts them as an uprising army. The title *The War of Mushrooms with Beetles/Війна Грибів з Жуками* sets up an expectation of a battle, but in fact it never depicts the presumably evil Beetles. Instead the book is focused on riling up the troops against an invisible enemy. Needless to say, the mushrooms are dressed in Ukrainian traditional male clothes.

¹¹ УРА is an acronym for *Ukrainska Povstancha Armia* (translates into *Ukrainian Resistance Army*)



88. Cover and pages from *Війна Грибів з Жуками* (*The War of Mushrooms with Beetles*), ЧАС, 1919).

As I have mentioned, with time, as the Russian Civil war was mostly over in 1921, Soviet leaders realized the problems of education and lack of vocational training. They also realized that there was only so far that they could push the notion of the identity of a “new Soviet citizen.” As the result, some cultural aesthetics were adopted and put through the filter of “correct” visual representation. In order to try to unite certain historically-divided parts of Ukraine, re-appropriation of traditional symbols became the default visual language. As a result, one of the main items of re-appropriation items became Ukrainian “*traditional*” costume—it was used as a tool in Propaganda during Soviet times on everything from leaflets and posters to 9-story mosaics on apartment buildings (usually framing major city roads and boulevards, and still standing today). This happened in other places as well—15 Republics of Soviet the Union had their own “*traditional*” costumes, that often appeared on USSR stamps, as well as on singers and dancers that traveled the country with folk shows, showcasing the “diversity” of the Soviet citizens. This oversimplified assumption of each one of the 15 counties having only one set of traditional clothes is a vast misrepresentation that ignored all various regions and traditions within each one of these Republics (not mentioning the climate changes in various geographic locations with various adjustments to native clothing). This use (and abuse) of imagery applied to everything from the architectural details of

traditional wooden houses to details in embroidery. Nonetheless, this kind of iconography was a powerful tool—“Art programs instituted during the early years of Communism were based on the theory that art should be given to the masses as a “legacy” and as a powerful tool to be used in the creation of a new social order.”¹² The preservation of something that had been selectively synthesized has influenced the work of many illustrators as well. Due to multiple generations of artists educated in a specific manner, the products of their creation often looked like a bizarre combination of folk imagery and socialist symbolism, as with an example of *Чудо Дерево/The Wonder Tree*, written by Korney Chukovsky, illustrated by E. Vedernikova (*I’m providing the 1978 edition of a pocket book for reference*):



89. E. Vedernikova, *Чудо Дерево (Wonder Tree)*, Veselka, 1978.

In this happy village, main characters, who are depicted wearing folk clothes, are surprised to find a wonder-tree that grows shoes and socks for everyone. This non-sense rhyme ends with a call to all the children to pick the “fruits” of the wonder tree and cover their “naked heels.”

The collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) offered authors and illustrators the freedom to celebrate and nurture Ukrainian culture because the censorship apparatus for content that had controlled children’s literature disappeared. Folk tales featuring national heroes became increasingly available, and history books were re-written.

¹² Original: John E. Bowlt, *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934* (New York: Viking Press, 1976), 176–82. As cited: Alison Hilton. *Russian Folk Art*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 258.

During the early '90s, schools' curriculum was significantly revised to accommodate a different ideology—one of nationalism and Ukrainian pride. This cultural pushback and eruption was necessary and very much expected. Without the overseeing eye of political and ideological restrictions, new books began to appear in bookstores, book markets, and libraries.

The problem for the next 15–20 years (roughly through the early 2010's) was the continuing presence of the old school of illustrators—remnants of the Soviet school. Those who were clever made connections with publishing houses like *A-BA-BA-GA-LA-MA-GA* and *Stary Lev Publishing*, and continued their relationships from the times of the USSR publishing house *Veselka*. One of the first blockbuster books was the 1992 publication of the first post-Soviet *Українська Абетка (Ukrainian Alphabet)* written by Ivan Malkovych and illustrated by Volodymyr Harchenko. Since then, Ukrainian children's literature has seen many other influential books: *Стефа і її Чакалка (Stefa and Her Chakalka [Monster])*, *Суперагент 000 (Superagent 000)*, *Аля з Недоладії (Alya from Nedoladiya)*, *Мед для Мами (Honey for Mama)*, *Чи є в Бабуїна Бабуся? (Does Baboon have a Grandma?)*, *Улюблені Вірши-1 (Favourite Poems-1)*, and of course *Війна Що Змінила Рондо (The War that Changed Rondo)* mentioned in the beginning of my thesis.

With every passing year from the downfall of the Soviet Union, the new addition of writers, like Oksana Lushevskya, and particularly illustrators: Polina Doroshenko, Oksana Bula, and the Romana Romanyshyn and Andriy Lesiv duo are representing Ukrainian publishing in a new light. While establishing and implementing new visual styles, these young professionals are accepted by a new generation of readers who are eager to discover and learn more about the world.



1. *Lubok*—Russian-style woodcut, similar to the English and American *broadside*, and French *imagerie populaire d'Épinal*.
2. *Taras Bulba* is a short story written by Ukrainian-born Nikolai Gogol, about an old Zaporozhian Cossack, Taras Bulba, and his two sons. It is considered to be a Russian/Ukrainian classic, and is part of the literature curriculum in schools.
3. *Монетка/A Coin* is a bilingual book written by Ania Khromova, illustrated by Anna Sarvira, translated by Oksana Lushchevska, Published by *Bratske Publishing* (2015), this book was crowd-sourced through Kickstarter, and has an e-pub version. Reference ISBN: 978-966-97380-1-1.
4. Ania Khromova, interview by Valentyna Vzdulska, *Анна Хромова: "Потрібні книжки які "спустяться" до щоденних дитячих проблем,"* September 02, 2015. <http://kazkarka.com/authors-illustrators/anna-hromova-potribni-knizhki-yaki-spustyatsya-shhodennih-dityachih-problem.html>.
5. *The War That Changed Rondo/Війна Що Змінила Рондо*—this book received the *New Horizons Award* at the *Bologna Ragazzi Award 2015*, as part of the *Bologna Children's Book Fair*.
6. Matthew Culerne Bown, *Art Under Stalin*. (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1991), 20.
7. Matthew Culerne Bown, *Art Under Stalin*. (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1991), 22.
8. Evgeny Steiner, *Stories For Little Comrades: Revolutionary Artists and the making of Early Soviet Children's Books*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 14.

NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

9. Evgeny Steiner, *Avangard i postroenie novogo cheloveka: Iskusstvo sovetskoj detskoj knigi 1920 godov*. (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2002), 56.
10. **GIZ**—an acronym for *gosizdat* (translates into *Government Publishing*). Starting with May of 1919 publishing houses of the Russian Empire were reformed into one centralized publishing house, with multiple branches, each specializing in particular professional genre/direction. In 1930, GIZ was renamed into OGIZ.
11. **UPA**—is an acronym for *Ukrainska Povstancha Armia* (translates into *Ukrainian Resistance Army*).
12. Original: John E. Bowlt, *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934* (New York: Viking Press, 1976), 176–82. As cited: Alison Hilton. *Russian Folk Art*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 258.



