Illustrator Vladyslav YERKO
2020 H.C. Andersen Award Nominee from Ukraine
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Vladyslav Yerko was born in Kyiv in 1962. From the early childhood he was interested in illustrations and reading. The images of books were the first step in understanding the story and the narration was the second stage for him. Yerko, during his childhood, changed images in books, he added some “lost” details and very soon adults did not notice the changes. His mother encouraged and supported his early interest in illustration and bought him albums with works of famous artists. She recommended him to pay attention to Rubens and El Greco. Under some family circumstances he studied at boarding school and had no artistic education.

Vladyslav Yerko studied at the Faculty of Book Graphics at the Ivan Fedorov Polygraphic University in Kyiv from 1984 to 1990.

He has been a member of the National Union of Ukrainian Artists since 1989. Books with illustrations of Vladyslav Yerko were published in 20 countries.

Vladyslav Yerko is not a public person and he completely devotes himself to painting.

Vladyslav Yerko:

“I don’t fill any book with codes, symbols, signs, mandalas and some other hermeneutics on purpose. But if you work a lot with one illustration (and I don’t work fast), it is done by itself that the sword becomes a Rosenkreuz symbols etc. They say not to overburden a child with excessive unexplained information. I know it by myself that there is nothing excessive in childhood. It is better when the book is “for growing”, than if a 3-year-old child has nothing to discover. I think that children are more adult than grown-ups, but in another way. I always focus on myself as if I am a child. I was not so smart child, but I am sure I felt life more complicated, exciting and not banal than I do it for now. Now I terribly miss it.”
Vladyslav Yerko:
“I almost never think about my old works and I am still studying art and I like this prolonged education.”
“During my whole life I have been using warm colours for my paintings. I’ve had a wonderful yellow childhood – the sky had to be blue and trees green, but I looked at everything through “yellow glasses.” Yellow was considered to be a colour of filled life, colour of spring, autumn, summer and even winter if you were in warmth. People from the publishing house “Sofia” say that blue and violet are colours of the higher chakras and yellow, red and orange are materially-minded, ordinary, trivial... However, this triviality and simplicity appeal me.” Vladyslav Yerko
Vladyslav Yerko comments on critics: “Firstly, people differ. Secondly, I used to be a genius when I was three years old! For now I’m just a stupid person. In my childhood my favourite painter was Picasso – I knew him, felt him...”
STATEMENT

Vladyslav Yerko began his professional life in 1989 and illustrated the works of H. C. Andersen, W. Shakespeare, E.T.A. Hoffman, J. Swift, Lewis Carroll, Paulo Coelho, Richard Bach etc. He gained popularity in 1990th with the works for books by Carlos Castaneda for publishing house “Sofia”. In the beginning of 2000 he created illustrations for books by Paolo Coelho and Richard Bach. Vladyslav Yerko has been cooperating with Ukrainian publishing house “A-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA” (specialized in literature for children) since 2000. Thanks to this cooperation artistic world of V. Yerko got the freedom that helped him to blossom and develop. He created real masterpieces for well-known books for children (“The Snow Queen” by H.C. Andersen, “Child Roland and Other Knight’s Tales”. The British Knights’ Tales) and for those that are already symbolic in art world of Ukraine. Among the newest are illustrations for the world classics (“The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark” and “Romeo and Juliet” by W. Shakespeare, “Gulliver’s Travels” by J. Swift, «The Tinderbox» by H.C. Andersen, “Alice in the Wonderland” and “Alice Through the Looking Glass” by Lewis Carroll, “Klein Zaches, genannt Zinnober” by E.T.E. Hoffmann, “The Picture of Dorian Gray” by Oscar Wilde, “The Little Prince” by Antoine de Saint-Exupery) and Ukrainian classics (“100 kazok: naikraschi ukrainski narodni kazky” (tr. “100 fairytales: the best Ukrainian folk fairytales”) (one of illustrators, more
than 100 reprintings), “Taras Bulba” and other stories by N. Gogol (cooperation with Kost Lavro) and “Rytual” by M. ans S. Diachenko. V. Yerko is an author of book covers for the series of books about Harry Potter by Joanne Rowling published in Ukraine.

Nowadays V. Yerko is creating colour illustrations for children books (watercolor, gouache and tempera on paper) and black-white graphics for youth (pen, ink and pen, paper and computer graphics). At first it seems that these techniques differ, but in interaction they add accents to the artistic world of the illustrator, show his unique manner to “discuss” the text with the reader. It looks like mysterious game of clues, hidden signs and wonderful discoveries. The child and the adult existing in the artist engage to get involved in their own, open only for them dialogue and the reader can take part in this discussion considering the age and the outlook.

His colourful, exquisite, emotional illustrations attract both neophyts and admirers. The artist does not depict the plot of the text, but fills it with emotions, visual details, thousands of shades and lines. V. Yerko’s illustrations are graphically detailed, canvas is filled with details and it resembles medieval miniature or old tapestry. He creates a moving pattern of images, lines and colours that make an integrated canvas for a reader. The artist invites the reader to dive into the world of the writer, so that one can see all those thousands of stones, wonderful fish, shades, mountains and uncounted things that can amaze and help to understand the ocean of the book. His illustrations add emotions and impressions to the text, they “catch” and prompt to read, to feel empathy and to think over the text. V. Yerko’s complicated and beautiful images create an “atmosphere of childhood”, when every little thing of the story, every object is important and needs to be discovered. It is a “slow” illustration. It has nothing accidental. The artist shows the world as it is when every object lives not on its own, but weaved into the vivid life. The main character of his illustrations is always tied with the surroundings. And a child can concentrate on the emotions of the hero or can take a trip to the world that is shown to him. His illustrations add emotions and unforgettable impressions.

V. Yerko, as one of the most successful Ukrainian interpreters of the world classics, has courage to tell new, unknown, own
story filled with Ukrainian outlook markers. That is why his illustrations wipe the dualism, they don’t show the only one side of the heroes and events (good or evil) as the Ukrainian mentality of cordocentrism requires. Ukrainian world of V. Yerko at the same time is absolutely universal. His language of illustration is accepted in different countries (Great Britain, Norway, Brazil, Hungary, Poland, Russia, South Korea etc.).

His illustrations are made for children who reflect, who adopt cultural symbols and at the same time are sensitive, natural, empathic and dreamy. Every illustration is exquisite; the smallest details are taken into consideration to show the eternal soul of the book.

The value of his illustrations lies in the trust to the child and ability to feel the text emotionally. His illustrations teach the art of reading, aesthetically and ethically perceive the world.

As a leading Ukrainian illustrator, acclaimed master of graphic arts Ukrainian Section IBBY highly recommends Vladyslav Yerko for Hans Christian Andersen Award.
APPRECIATIVE ESSAY

Perhaps, there are not so many people in Ukraine and in the world, who don’t know name of Vladyslav Yerko. “The Snow Queen” with his illustrations is published from Great Britain to South Korea and received a lot of appreciative comments and awards. Ukrainian book covers of Harry Potter are recognized in the whole world. One can examine his illustrations for hours and every time find new details, symbols, secrets and strokes. Most of his books got awards, but he is indifferent.

V. Yerko’s artistic life was not easy. Lots of publishers refused to print his illustrations for “The Show Queen”, they showed him as an example Disney images and asked him to be simple and grounded. Who could have even imagined that just in a few years “The Snow Queen” with his illustrations will be included to Christmas wish-lists in Great Britain!

“The art can protect from everything. During difficult times of my life only tart saved me. That is when I realized its power”. Vladyslav Yerko

Ukrainian artist avoids publicity; he is sceptical to his own works as he does not like self-admiration and at the same time does not like to hear critics.

“I deeply enjoy the process. And what happens later does not bother me”

Albin Brunovsky, Slovak artist, graphic and illustrator influenced Vladyslav Yerko. For several years V. Yerko was inspired by his style till he created his own and understood that he had found his right way.

Codes and symbols entwine themselves during the process of a long work and depict reflections of an artist.

“If someone prominent praises you, it does not make you better. If you are a normal person and consciously understand what you have done – normal or bad then any praise does not influence you. If you are silly, then you try to find every praise and show it to everyone, but not the works.” Vladyslav Yerko
“My experience shows that every illustration can be made in thousand ways and no one knows which one will be the best.” Vladyslav Yerko

Every illustration by Vladyslav Yerko looks like separate world, mysterious, mesmerizing, enriched with light and beauty. He does not make sketches, layouts or concepts, but starts with the picture that he imagined in his dream.

He illustrates not the actions, but pauses, characters and reflections.

The artist likes the feeling of “what if I create something cool” during creative process. When he finishes he thinks that the work is not bad, but after publishing he is already disappointed. Then everything is vanished and he starts a new process.

“The artist should not explain anything at all. If one explains then he is a writer, art critic or therapist.” Vladyslav Yerko
AWARDS AND OTHER DISTINCTIONS

Vladyslav Yerko is the winner of numerous awards at prestigious art and book fairs: Vladyslav Yerko received the 2nd Award in the Moscow International Poster Competition in 1987. He is a laureate of Lesia Ukrayinka Award.

He received the title “Man of Books” when he was named the best artist for 2002 by “The Book Review” (Moskow, Russia).

The Snow Queen with illustrations by Vladyslav Yerko:
Grand Prix award at the Ukrainian Book of the Year awards in 2000;
Included in the list “White Ravens” in 2002;
Included in the Top – 3 best Christmas sellers in Great Britain and it won “The Book of the Year – 2006” in the USA (Anderson House Foundation);
Best in the nomination “The most beautiful edition” (2000 Book of the Year National Contest);
Best in the nomination “Children’s Holiday” (2000 Book of the Year National Contest);
1st award of the Book Art of Ukraine National Contest.
“Child Roland and Other Knight’s Tales”. The British Knights’ Tales with illustrations by Vladyslav Yerko:

The White Ravens list 2006;
“Best children’s book-2006” (USA), Anderson House Foundation;
The Best Children’s Book of the Year (2003 Book of the Year National Contest).
The Honour List 2018 IBBY for illustrations for “The Little Prince” by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.
Vladyslav Yerko created his own illustrations for book covers for Ukrainian publishing of Harry Potter series.

“I like it. Keep on going!” said Joanne Rowling as she saw Ukrainian cover for the first edition.

“This is perhaps the most extraordinary children’s book that I have seen in my life,” said internationally celebrated writer Paulo Coelho, upon seeing Yerko’s “The Snow Queen”. His own books are illustrated with equal success by Ukrainian artist.
TEN IMPORTANT TITLES


TRANSLATED EDITIONS

- 눈의 여왕. — Korea Piaget Co., Ltd., 2004. (Korean. South Korea)
• Andersen H. C. Snødrønnningen. — Kirkenes : Barentsforlag, 2006. (Norwegian)
• Andersen H. C. Βασίλισσα του Χιονιού. — Athens : Papadopoulos Publishing, 2006. (Greek)
• 눈의 여왕. — Korea Piaget Co., Ltd., 2011. (South Korea)
• Andersen H. C. A Rainha Da Neve. — Tessitura Editora, 2013. (Portuguese. Brazil)
• 冰雪女王.— Beijing Shi : Children’s Fun Publishing, 2016. (Chinese)
LIST OF FIVE BOOKS SUBMITTED TO THE JURY

“Snihova Koroleva”
Hans Khrystyian Andersen and the English version of the book with illustrations by V. Yerko “The Snow Queen” by Hans Christian Andersen

“Kazky Tumannoho Albionu”
(“Child Roland and Other Knight’s Tales”)

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“Kresalo”
Hans Khrystyan Andersen and the English version of the book with illustrations by V. Yerko “The Tinderbox” by Hans Christian Andersen;

“Malenkyi Prynts”
Antuan de Sent-Ekziuperi (“The Little Prince” by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry)

“Romeo i Dzhulietta”
Viliam Shekspir (“Romeo and Juliet” by William Shakespeare)
• 100 tales: best Ukrainian folk tales with illustrations from leading Ukrainian artists. V. 1 / ed. by I. Malkovych; ill. V. Yerko and oth. – 7th ed. – Kyiv: A-ba-ba-ha-la-ma-ha, 2008. – 161 p. : ill. – (For children from 2 to 102).
• 100 tales: best Ukrainian folk tales with illustrations from leading Ukrainian artists. V. 5 / ed. by I. Malkovych; ill. V. Palchun, V. Yerko and oth. – 10th ed. – Kyiv: A-ba-ba-ha-la-ma-ha, 2016. – 161 p. : ill. – (For children from 2 to 102).
• 100 tales: best Ukrainian folk tales with illustrations from leading Ukrainian artists. V. 6 / ed. by I. Malkovych; ill. V. Yerko and oth. – 11th ed. – Kyiv: A-ba-ba-ha-la-ma-ha, 2017. – 161 p. : ill. – (For children from 2 to 102).
• 100 tales: best Ukrainian folk tales with illustrations from leading Ukrainian artists. V. 7 / ed. by I. Malkovych; ill. V. Yerko and oth. – 12th ed. – Kyiv: A-ba-ba-ha-la-ma-ha, 2018. – 161 p. : ill. – (For children from 2 to 102).
• 100 tales: best Ukrainian folk tales with illustrations from leading Ukrainian artists. V. 8 / ed. by I. Malkovych; ill. V. Yerko and oth. – 13th ed. – Kyiv: A-ba-ba-ha-la-ma-ha, 2019. – 161 p. : ill. – (For children from 2 to 102).
• Andersen H. C. The Tinderbox: tale / H. C. Andersen; ill. V. Yerko; trans. from

- Gogol M. V. Taras Bulba / M. V. Gogol ; trans from Rus. ed. by M. Sadovskyi and M. Rylskyi ; ill. V. Yerko. – Kyiv : A-ba-ba-ha-la-ma-ha, 2005. – 320 p. : ill. – (Books that have overcome time).
• Carroll L. Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland; Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There / L. Carroll ; trans. from Engl. by V. Kornienko ; ill. V. Yerko. – Fifth ed. – Kyiv : A-ba-ba-ha-la-ma-ha, 2007. – 264 p. : ill. – (Books that have overcome time).
with the book: Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland / L. Carroll.


- Carroll L. Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There / L. Carroll; trans. from Eng. by V. Korniienko; ed. by I. Malkovych; [ill. V. Yerko]. – 14th ed. – Kyiv: A-ba-ba-ha-la-ma-ha, 2015. – 120, [3], 141 p. : ill. – (Books that have overcome time).


• Coelho P. Eleven Minutes / P. Coelho; trans. from Port. by V. Shovkun; ill. V. Yerko. – Kyiv: Sofia, 2007. – 300 p.
• Coelho P. Eleven Minutes / P. Coelho; cover, ill. V. Yerko. – Kyiv: Sofia, 2006. – 304 p.
• Coelho P. Veronika Decides to Die / P. Coelho; ill. V. Yerko. – Kyiv: Sofia, 2002. – 269 p. : ill.
• Coelho P. Veronika Decides to Die / P. Coelho; trans. from Port. by O. Domashevskyi; ill. V. Yerko. – Kyiv: Sofia, 2002. – 269 p. : ill.
• Coelho P. The Devil and Miss Prym / P. Coelho; ill. V. Yerko. – Kyiv: Sofia, 2006. – 256 p.
• Coelho P. By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept / P. Coelho; trans. from Port. by A. Bohdanovskyi; ill. V. Yerko. – Kyiv: Sofia, 2003. – 224 p. : ill.
• Coelho P. By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept / P. Coelho; trans. from Port. by A. Bohdanovskyi; ill. V. Yerko. – Kyiv: Sofia, 2007. – 217 p.
• Coelho P. The Fifth Mountain / P. Coelho; trans. from Port. by A. V. Emin; ill. V. Yerko. – Kyiv: Sofia, 2003. – 268 p. ill.
• Perutz L. By Night under the Stone Bridge. Saint Peter’s Snow / L. Perutz; compl. F. A. Yeremeiev; trans.


