

## *Graphic artist and painter Jiri (George) Kayser*

was born on Nov. 16, 1918 in Pisek, nineteen days after the declaration of independence of the Czechoslovak republic. The first of the weird sisters endowed him with artistic talents, the second one with longing for freedom which has become the bases of his pilgrimage through the world in harmony with the endowment of the third weird sister, whose prophecy interwove his fate with the fate of his native land.

He really filled his life with art. He started to study at the Czech High Technical Learning in Prague after the high school graduation, but decided for a carrier of a professorship in painting. He realized soon during the nazi occupation how painful was the loss of previous freedom, when also the degrading closure of Czech universities took place. He was able to study privately with the academic painter and artistic conservator Mr. Ladislav Bradac and Mr. Josef Novak, professor of the School of the Applied Art. He formalized his studies with professors Cyril Bouda, Martin Salcman, Oldrich Blazicek, Karel Lidicky and Karel Pokorny. Hope of new life and artistic creativity in Czechoslovakia after the war, was dampened by both obvious and hidden struggle for real freedom. Vision of a possibility of life and artistic creativity without fear was very promising at the beginning, but was thwarted by the communists, who seized the power with the help of foreign armies. Hesitatingly, supported by his loyal and faithful wife Dagmar, he decided to leave his country and emigrated to find a new home in Canada. Luckily, one year after his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, he saw the return of freedom and restoration of democracy in his old country.

Jin Kayser lived through his youth in the city, where every step was reminding of long past and late cultural traditions. He grew up in a cultured environment of the family, which favored his artistic inclinations. They were not unambiguous. His feeling for music was refined at frequent music sessions at home, but painting gained the upper hand, which was shown when he tried with remarkable success to copy reproductions of old masters. He gained also basic qualification for creative expression in the technique of drawing, painting and graphic, which he later extended to means of monumental expression intended for use in architecture. But above all, he deepened his creative vision and feeling, which enabled him to insert inner feeling and imagination into the perception captured by senses. The coexistence of his painter's world with the world of music remained a dominating feature of the artist expression till these days. It has become his lasting fancy and a significant source of inspiration at the same time. It was not surprising that he drew and painted musicians, who were his closest friends. He did it in a form of either a portrait (the first one was of the cellist K. P. Sadlo in 1941) or choosing musical motives in his works of art (chamber or orchestral bodies, conductors and soloists at work, etc). As he mentioned once, "his aim is not the likeness of players, but their concentration on the expression, creation of tones", well known to himself. The artist's imagination is really urged by the effort to catch the chosen theme firstly by rhythm and melody of lines, forms and colors. The access to this kind of interpretation of reality enabled him obviously the enlightenment of the still living heritage of expressive creations. He tries successfully by this visual form to evoke psychical and audiovisual enjoyments in the spectators mind. He points out himself modestly: "I am painting with a brush in my hand what I am living. By utilization of all creative components of human being as it was made clear by understanding of each "ism" of this century". Among the themes, which did not stop luring him, were by far not only his portraits, but to the same extend still lives and landscapes. An important part of the last mentioned ones become city sceneries, which draw his painting diction closer by fading of the lines of force and matter into non figurative sloped compositions. In parallel graphic sheets they are enlivened by detail figural actions, pointing at hidden dramas of human fates.

We got used to meet with paintings and graphics from J. Kaiser's studio at exhibitions in some Czechoslovakian cities around the year 1949 and finally also at independent expositions, taking place in Prague, Teplice, Usti nad Labem and Litomerice. He was also able to introduce his works abroad, where his exhibition in Vienna in 1964 got an exceptional response. (Albertina bought there one of his graphics for its collections). Attention draws also his realizations of mosaics, wall encaustics and vitrages in the open space.

The artist's forced emigration led him first to Vienna, where he resisted a luring offer of a professorship, which he accepted later at the Academy des Beaux Arts in Canadian Quebec, where the Kayser's resided. He conducted also parallel courses of painting in Champlain in the United States.

The life in a democratic environment and a background feeling of responsibility for representation of creative culture of home were as if multiplying his creative powers. He has combined demands of the teaching job with concentration to the independent painting and graphic art, accessible to him in the Canadian exile. His creative activity got appreciated, apart from invitations for participation in exhibitions and interest of collectors, by an offer of the international flight organization IA T A to create a series of paintings for their offices, halls and conference

halls. He closed an agreement of cooperation in that sense with that organization in 1977, which he honestly honored till 1989. (On the base of response to his paintings he gained among others orders for realization of monumental work in Vienna and San Francisco).

Long time has gone by since it was possible to see him at concerts and exhibitions in Prague. Even when he disappeared from sight, the inconspicuous and kind artist has not disappeared from the mind. We met him in the early nineties at the congress of Czechoslovak Association of Science and Art in Toronto. His creations reminded itself at an exhibition taking place on that occasion, and amused the present ones by its life and artistic vitality. As a follow up, Ms. Marcela Pankova pointed at Kayser when she was preparing panoramic overview about Czech artists in exile (her premature death did not allow her to finish it). Rightfully she placed his works in the exhibition "Seda cihla - exil" (Grey brick - exile), arranged by Gallery Klatovy - Klenova in 1994. After this first return to the home scene, further chapter appears to be the presentation of selection of painter's work in the exhibition halls of Prachenske Museum in artist's native Pisek. It is being author's comforting satisfaction. The public is getting experience of work of a seemingly lost son, as it will be refreshment of memories to some, introduction of the artist to some others.

Above all, it will be a confirmation of renewal of not only human, but also artistic consistency with culture of our century.

Written in Czech by Dr Jiri Setlik