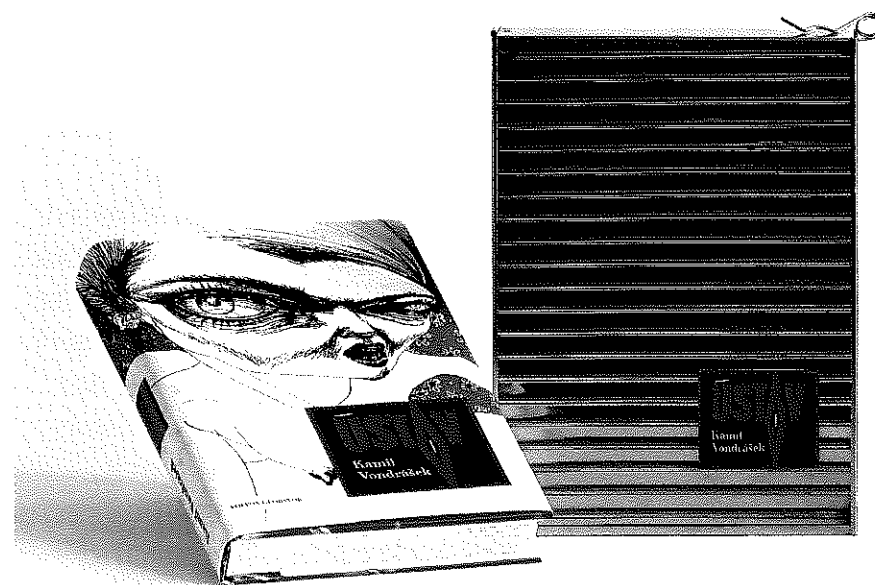


When did the fish-eye perspective, so typical for your paintings, originate?

Actually it came into being when I was doing my mandatory military service. While a lot of others started smoking at that time, I stopped for a change. There were compulsory smoking breaks then and we gathered near round stainless ashtrays. I used to sit on the ground and therefore could see the perspective unwinding in the play of roundness and deformation of legs, arms, bodies, and faces. Later on I found out this could work well in pictures and paintings as mostly the dynamics of a painting, if there is a motion in it, is solved by composition into a diagonal. I began to realise I would move it to the front. And I clearly recall Alfredo Siqueiroz had been doing something pretty much similar, only he expanded and amplified some parts and disregarded the motion. The nearer we are to the eye, the more dynamic the perspective becomes. So I started to bring some things closer to the front and later on I arrived at the persuasion that I even didn't have to comply with the rules of the fish eye. I simply draw some things near and work in the "fish-eye" way, but other things are used differently. Actually I can bring forward just anything independently on the real fish-eye principles and play with it. The fish-eye perspective is too technical and regular after all and therefore boring in a way, while I can draw a figure according to this perspective, for example, but the background can be done as a normal

Asylum (Czech edition) — K. Vondrášek, B. Jirků, graphic design B. Golda, 2007



view. So I can use something known even in Gothic — sequencing figures according to hierarchy. I abundantly used it already when illustrating fairy tales, when the major figures were, say, three times as big as in reality, while for example cows were just as big as dogs because they carried no importance. The fish-eye perspective kick-started my interest in gradual, yet for a story or expression, important freedom in images.

Where does the gravity centre of your work rest?

I have to say I'm really glad when I'm working on order. I long for vitrages and monumental paintings, but sadly haven't got an order like that as yet. I guess all of my colleagues from the Academy of Arts were working on the St. Vitus Cathedral after the war, but nothing has broken since. Which I feel is a bit of a pity, but the situation is simply as such. If we are talking about illustrations, it's always interesting work. It's necessary to find a key to a given story and then make a compact series, which opens the door to painting when other features and techniques come into consideration. I have such a system that I do, say, a hundred drawings yearly. Out of these, some fifty graphics or illustrations arise, further some twenty paintings, and in the end — one statue. I simply try and play and what I think has shifted most becomes that statue. Last year there was none, and I'm sorely missing it, but this year I have already got a certain plan.

You have just finished illustrations of Kamil Vondrášek's Asylum...

I enjoyed illustrating the book very much. Actually I donated the illustrations to the project as the book would become too expensive otherwise. So I became a donor. On the other hand, the result is a joint project of Kamil and myself and is therefore a huge promotion for both of us. His aim was to publish the book exactly as we wanted, without any financial, material or other limitation, bar our own finitude. My ambition is to continue and have the book translated at least into three languages and let it wander throughout Europe. I hope it works out, as the book is truly outstanding.

What kind of asylum is the book about?

The story is set in an imaginary country, although there is a mention of Brno in it, so one can assume the settings are somewhere in the Czech Republic. The asylum is an institution where children are sent, after being taken from their parents at the age of five. They never see their parents again or at least for quite some time, and maybe their own children are returned to parents at the time when the asylum adjudicates the upbringing is over and the children are sufficiently educated. The whole novel is a grotesque about incredible despotism which holds a crooked mirror up to society, not only totalitarian, but such which works somehow by itself without any significant moral attitudes and ideological purpose or activities. It's a kind of grip of despotism and power, deformed interpersonal relations, while there are almost vulgar erotic scenes — depicted with great noblesse, though. What is interesting — the narrator looks objective, but still chooses information in such a way that always strengthens the grotesque timelessness and hyperbole. Thanks to it I could once again, after a prolonged period of time, use the typical perspective we were talking about at the very beginning. The thing is I don't use it all the time. In this case I don't deform individual things by the fish eye, only amplify and minimise them in a certain way. It's based on basic principles and I tend to gain more dynamics. Therefore it's possible to make full use of the given space. If we comply with the basics of perspective, all figures have to be smaller when looking onwards. I often look at the scene from above and as everything is getting smaller when looking onwards, a lot more things can fit into a relatively small space. Originally, I created thirteen colour four-page spreads and had been



Illustrations from Asylum

