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OIL SHALE THEME IN ART: GRAPHIC ARTS AT THE OIL SHALE MUSEUM ART COLLECTION

The new branch of industry born at the beginning of this century in North-Eastern region of Estonia - oil shale mining and processing - determined the economic conditions of this district, and gave job and bread to many local people and new-comers. These surroundings aroused a wider interest among artists as well. The developing industry needed publicity - emblems, signboards etc., and painters got commissions for works of art on oil shale industry. The art collection of our museum originates from such ordered pieces containing at present almost 300 works of different techniques.

The first works are made by Arkadi Laigo - "View of the oil producing plants", "Work in surface mine", "Work in underground mine", "On the way to a mine" in which both surface and underground mining are shown. Johannes Nahk has made posters — Ernö Koch and Hugo Lepik have concentrated on the complexity of the oil shale industry. The portrait of retort operators made by



Arkadi Laigo

Raamatukogu
Akadeemia
Tead. sta



Evald Okas

H. Lepik in 1943 has been appreciated by art critics. Both artists have made nice little engravings representing the buildings of oil plants. These reprints have been used as souvenirs, especially as new-year's cards and letters of thanks. H. Lepik has made nice book-plates for "State Oil Shale Industry" as well.

Later on the oil shale theme has been depicted by Evald Okas - his large engravings give for the first time an authentic picture about miner's hard labour.

Esko Lepp has made several graphic works reflecting the foundation of new manufactures and restoration of the old in 1949. The works are distinguished by their photographic exactness being therefore of historical importance, replacing missing photographic material about events and objects not preserved till our days.

Aino Bach has given us a nice portrait of a legendary and beloved mine director - Mihkel Ütt (Uit). Eduard Einmann has painted many front-rank workers of Kukruse and Kiviõli pits during his missions in 1947 and 1949. This was the heyday of socialist realism and hard-working men and women are depicted in his very lifelike portraits. Some of them are at their work, some are rigorously sitting within fixed frames in a way very typical to photography of that time, too.

These are some of the pieces of art made till 1960's, completed mostly during the missions and as ordered works. However, the artists have had a free hand in their creative work, and the resulting works dearly reflect the artists' own conception of the subject. Such a personal attitude is missing in works of the present day, as we shall see in the following papers.