

Kubašta's Christmas Related Works

Theo Gielen
Utrecht / The Netherlands

In the last ten or fifteen years several publications have appeared about the Czech illustrator and paper engineer Vojtěch Kubašta (1914-1992). However, it was his biography that received attention and the inventiveness of his (pop-up) books. A properly annotated bibliography of his books, or at least of his pop-up books, is desired, as is an informed study of the techniques and mechanisms he used to make his books three-dimensional and movable.

We don't even know exactly how many pop-up and novelty books Kubašta made in the thirty-five years he was active life in this field. My provisional list of titles published in English counts just over 120 items. I don't know how complete it is. However, not all of the books he designed had British editions.



Lidový Betlém. 1953

The subject of this contribution, a thematic study of Kubašta's pop-up nativity scenes is creches, and related Christmas items and, about those, there is indistinctness and confusion. Wikipedia says: "Every Christmas season, he designed and illustrated a new crèche in which he captured the Czech traditional Christmas setting." Some more informed people estimate there were "15 to 17" crèches made¹, and others say he did "reportedly more than 20."² In neither case was any further attempt made to list all of them.

When one plunges into the subject, a lot of problems emerge since a same design proves to have been published in different formats, reprinted without any such indication, redrawn, simplified, reduced, and even pirated. Above all, dating the items proves sometimes impossible, and observation is not always possible because of their rareness - especially - the Czech/Slovakian publications and ephemera. So, what follows is a provisional exploration of this thematic subject, and I will be pleased to receive corrections and additions.³

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Pop-ups "Discovered" by South Korea

Bruce Foster
Houston, Texas

Members of The Movable Book Society are, safe to say, well aware that for a while now we have been experiencing a retreat by American publishers from the movable book. We can debate whether this is the result of rising costs, challenges by electronic readers and tablets, apathy, or a seismic change in the way books are discovered (or not) and purchased, i.e. Amazon and other Internet sources. But, I am here to tell you that the fascination and love for the movable book remains alive and well. You are not alone. Pop-up books continue to be loved and find new fans, if they can be discovered.

Personally I can attest to this by the wide-eyed looks of amazement and the very audible "oohs" and "ahhs" of the many raptured audiences, young and adult alike, who I have addressed over the past many months. As I introduce audiences to the mind-bending physics and magic and yet, hand-made production of the movable book they ask, how can these things that so puzzle and amaze the modern mind also be grounded in such a distinctly un modern craft?



World Pop-Up Art Exhibition Poster

Ironically, and perhaps because of, the most enraptured of all can be found in South Korea, by many accounts the most technologically advanced nation on the planet, where the name Samsung is literally emblazoned across the skyline of Seoul and an electronic device is in every hand.

In May of this year I was delighted to receive an invitation to attend a new exhibition in Seoul entitled World Pop-Up, an expansive show introducing South Koreans to the magic of the movable book. Until this exhibition, very few movable books had been available there so it has remained an obscure art form to them. But in only seven weeks this exhibition was visited by over 52,000 visitors, an average daily attendance of 1200+ people. And yet it continues. The exhibition has since traveled to another venue in Busan, South Korea, before it will again move on to the Lotte Gallery and again in January to the Suseong ARTPIA in Dae-gu. I would not be surprised if it moves on to other venues after that.

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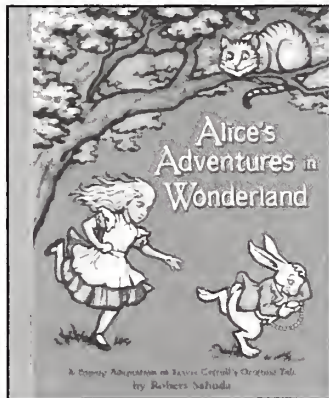
e-mail: info@movablebooksociety.org.

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Pop-ups “Discovered” by South Korea, continued from page 1

Perhaps the exhibition has been so popular is because as the show’s curator writes in the exhibition catalog, “The age where we can read books without opening or turning pages has come. However, the more digital the era is, the more people long for the analog. There is a Korean word ‘sonmat’ literally meaning ‘flavor by hand.’ We feel and remember touches and senses most vividly and longest when the sensations we feel by hand are delivered to our brain.” In a country inundated by electronics, the physicality and sensuality of the movable book is at once revelatory and nostalgic.

Arriving at the Seoul Arts Center Hangaram Design Museum, it was readily apparent to me that South Korea prides itself on its love of the arts. This huge compound contains not only numerous large modern exhibition spaces, but a theater and a centrally located Opera House. In the few days I was there I enjoyed an open air review of opera classics as well as a fascinating exhibition of contemporary Korean sculpture.



Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Entering the World Pop-Up Exhibition, I was cheerfully greeted by a wall size poster featuring Robert Sabuda’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. The exhibition, curated by Vivian So Hyun Choi and organized by Owen Lee, was a large space, actually the largest exhibition of movable books I have ever attended. Dividing it into four parts, Vivian provided her audience with a history of the movable book in “Pop-up Museum,” a wide-ranging and well curated collection of contemporary movable books in “Movable Pop-Up Books,” a chapter on the expansion of the three-dimensional paper book into advertising and fashion in

“Applied Pop-Up Art,” and finally, a look at contemporary artists using the techniques of paper engineering to create one-of-a-kind art works in “Fine Art Pop-Up.”

In the first section of the exhibition, we were presented a comprehensive history of the movable book from the 13th century to today, displaying diagrams of various mechanics of paper engineering with a contemporary example of each in use. Familiar names like Meggendorfer, Nister, and Giraud peppered this area in wall displays and examples.

Continuing forward, the next area was a huge display of late 20th century works presenting examples of movable books, further divided into such groupings as Classic Fairy Tales, Childrens’ Picture Books, Modern Stories, Architectural, and Pattern Design, to name a few. Familiar names like Ron van der Meer, Kees Moerbeek, Andy Baron, and David Hawcock were on display among many, many others. Automated boxes opened and closed spreads from Sabuda’s *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *The Chronicles of Narnia Pop-up*, David Carter’s *Hide and Seek* and *One Red Dot*, Matthew Reinhart’s *Star Wars*, and my own *Harry Potter*. Rounding the corner one came upon what appeared to be a puppet show stage. But instead, featured inside was each individual spread of *Alice in Wonderland* being automatically opened in turn to tell the entire story of his popular masterpiece.

“Applied Pop-Up Art,” and the next section “Fine Art Pop-Up,” were especially interesting as they introduced a number of artist/designer/paper engineers previously unfamiliar to me. Working with corporations and advertisers, Australian Benja Harney, Korean Su Hyun Kim and French Mathilde Nivet loaned their skills to introduce products from Hermès, Chanel, and Bulgari, as well as recording artist Kylie Mynogue through marketing materials or visual displays. Contemporary sculpture in paper was represented by Ingrid Siliakus, many dangling by wire from the ceiling like oversized Christmas ornaments; hand-colored-and-assembled pop-ups by Paul Johnson; one-of-a-kind intricate sculptural pop-ups by Peter Dahmen; abstract paper (although not pop-up per se) sculptural lamps by Jordy Fu; and photography using simulated pop-up elements by Thomas Allen.

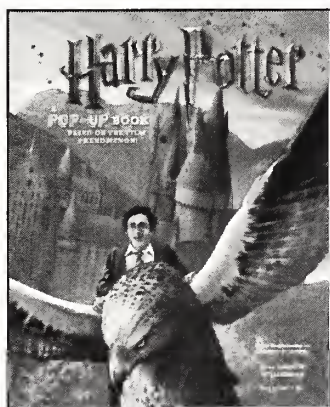


Pop-up Book of Celebrity Meltdowns

As a culmination to the show, “Masterpieces of World Masters,” in a circular room divided into three pie wedges, were large displays and collections of works by Australia’s Benja Harney, France’s Phillip UG, and to my great honor, an area devoted to my own work. Highlighting each area was a full scale replica of a 3D set for a fashion show by Benja, a wall with art literally crawling up to the ceiling from the

colorful, virtually wordless books by Phillipe, and a large, motorized interpretation of the pop-up spread of Tom Cruise and Oprah Winfrey from my *Pop-up Book of Celebrity Meltdowns*.

Prior to my visit I was asked if I would be willing to conduct a few workshops and presentations. Upon my arrival, I discovered that the weekend of my appearance was actually National Children's Day in South Korea, on which parents treat their studious children to a special treat of their choosing. This holiday is a tradition almost as eagerly anticipated as Christmas and birthdays are in the west. So it was another great honor to be asked to personally reach out to these children and their parents on this special occasion. The groups were capped at thirty and ages ranged from three to twelve. Since my most well-known book in Korea is the *Harry Potter Pop-up Book*, I designed a child-friendly (the realistic illustrations by my collaborator, Andrew Williamson, were too scary!) pop-up version of a spread from the book: the Horntail Dragon vs. Harry. Assisted by interns from the museum and an interpreter, the workshops were very successful...with one major exception: my visual presentation. In my many visits to schools here in the U.S., I utilize an old Macbook to present a Mac Keynote program that utilizes numerous videos in different formats. My Macbook has never had an issue working with the schools' PC-based projectors. But as stated earlier, South Korea is a very technologically advanced society. Unfortunately their cutting edge, wireless, next gen network was incompatible with my outdated hardware. So with the invaluable assistance of staff intern June, overnight we wirelessly transmitted as much of the program to their system as possible. However, since their presentation platform is PC and Powerpoint, not very much of my presentation survived the transfer! In literally the last hour before my major, all-ages presentation, June and another intern meticulously worked with me to rebuild a presentation using whatever we were able to salvage. Let's just say there was a lot of new improvisation in this presentation!



Harry Potter

Again, it was obvious how fascinated the children and parents of South Korea were by the exhibition of movable books. This joy and excitement, along with the number of new paper engineers at home and from around the globe represented in the show, should give us hope and encouragement that the art of paper engineering will continue inspiring new fans and building an enduring history into the future. Our challenge in America is to continue finding new ways to make sure this art is actually seen so that it can thrive and inspire here as well.

European Miscellanea

Theo Gielen

Exhibit

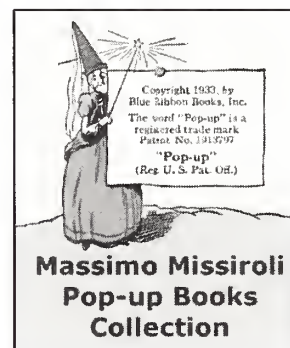
Waouh! 100 Livres Animés Collectors (Wow! 100 Movable Collector's Items) is the name of an exhibit of movable and pop-up books in Paris, celebrating the 10th anniversary of the French movable book website www.livresanimés.com. The webmaster of the site, Thierry Desnoues, and the editors, Gabriella Albanèse, Anne-Sophie Baumann, and Patrick Lecoq have chosen 100 items from their own collections that are, for one reason or another, remarkable. Less known/shown historical and artists' movables and pop-ups will be on display from November 21 through December 21, 2013.

A 150-page, printed color catalog will be available, picturing and annotating in full all one hundred exponents. The Boutique du Livre Animé at 3, rue Pierre l'Ermite will make their gallery, know-how, and showcases available for the event, so it will have a professional look indeed. The opening is November 21 at 18.00 and will coincide with the 6th Salon du Livre Animé of that same day. Champagne will flow! It is open Tuesday to Saturday from 14.00 -19.00 and entrance is free.

Online Presentation

The Italian collector and paper engineer Massimo Missiroli shows lots of books from his collection *Il Libro ha tre Dimensioni* in a video of almost half an hour at: <http://bit.ly/1a3QfFH>. It is a silent ballad of pop-up scenes from dozens of (Italian) movable books, rapidly screened and tumbling over each other, full of zooms and fade-ins and fade-outs.

Unfortunately, it lacks information about the books, unless the front cover happens to be photographed with the title. Now it's mostly a guessing game: who can recognize the most books? But you'll be surprised to see all kinds of (mostly unknown Italian) movable and pop-up books from the last century.



Pop-up Paper Placemats

Great fun for little children are the placemats with pop-up element(s) offered by Deborah Money from Best For Baby Ltd. in the U.K. They customize a place setting for everyone at the table, keep the children busy, let them have fun and learn from them where to put the fork, knife, spoon, and glass. There is an activity area on the back and the girl's pink placemat has a pop-up doll to be clothed by accompanying press-out pieces; the boy's, in blue, has a stand up piece to be transformed into a robot See: <http://bit.ly/1aZIM0>.



Pop-up Placemat

A Dollhouse Game and its Secret under its Bed

Ulrich Tietz
Germany

Some collectors care much about buying intact books as much as possible, that means without dog-ears or other traces of previous users. In contrast, I am happy if I can buy a used book which tells me secrets. I find it interesting if it shows an "Ex-libris" or a dedication. It is equally exciting if it highlights a political or social background of a certain era.

Therefore I became curious, when eBay offered "Puppenkinder daheim – ein heiteres Puppenstübenspiel" (a cheerful dollhouse game). The vendor told me it had been printed on the back pages of old maps. As no other competitor had discovered this offer, I bought it, and received it some days later.

When I unpacked it, a lengthy envelope fell out, 32x12 cm in size. On the front page there is a frame carrying an inscription with the title mentioned above. Underneath it said "erdacht und gezeichnet von Ursula Funcke" (invented and drafted by Ursula Funcke) and "Ferdinand Krick, Leipzig C1" and the publishers' logo. Toys like balls, books, and dolls' accessories were grouped around.

The envelope, open at its small ends, shows comical pictures displaying many children acting in different scenes. Their meaning is not clear at first glance. A blue strip separating the pictures from each



other carries a rhymed text. This is very cryptic, too. The year of its publication can nowhere be found.

The envelope contains a fan-folded dollhouse or three parts which can be put up to a square, lacking one side. If you fold down the room's floor, you see a dollhouse (similar to the folding up of the Schreiber-Stehauf-book 01133 of 1953). The present object shows three walls of different rooms: kitchen, livingroom, and bedroom. The furniture is die cut and folded forward. The equipment, dating from the 1940s and 1950s could be assigned to the upper-middle class. The enclosed game characters (four children with toys and paper doll clothing) are appropriate for the time span mentioned above.

As the scrupulous collector wants to know the year of its release as exactly as possible, he must search for clues. At second glance I discovered that the dollhouse was printed on old ordnance survey maps. But only a small stripe can be seen.

But then I was given a clue looking under the bed of the

dollhouse's bedroom. (Sorry, collectors are used to having a look under the beds of people they don't know. This is not curiosity, but zeal for research!) There it reads: "[LEIPZIG] GER MESSE HERBST 1947 (Leipzig Trade Fair 1947)."

The history of this fair can be traced back to the Middle Ages, because the town was situated at the intersection of two ancient trade routes. The first fairs took place in 1165. In 1895 the fair changed from a trade fair to a sample fair, where commercial treaties were negotiated. The existence of the fair was brought to an end by World War II.

After the war, the town of Leipzig was part of the socialist DDR (German Democratic Republic), the fair recovered slowly and developed gradually to an important center of east-west trade. The fair took place twice a year, in spring and in autumn.

This clearly showed that Krick publishers had printed the prospectus for the fair in spring 1947, which could no longer be used after the end of the event. Because of the lack of paper, which was prevalent in Germany at this time, the back pages of maps were used for print. These pages, on the other hand, were concealed by the printed pages of the prospectus.

The secret of the reverse printed pages is also closely connected with the German post-war history. The eastern part of Germany was occupied by the Russians. They reorganized the political landscape, thus making all present maps invalid and useless. Therefore Krick publishers used the back pages of their maps for creating the dollhouse game. Even the time information matches the note on the Leipzig Fair.

The comic-like pictures on the back of the envelope even date back from another product of Krick publishers. They were part of a match game named "Wichtels Fahrt zur Leipziger Messe" (Wichtel's journey to the Leipzig Fair). This product was originally printed in multi-colors, but for the existing dollhouse game, only prints with blue components were used. That the measures and the image content were matching the paper dollhouse was purely by accident.

Today we live with prosperity and wastefulness. We can hardly imagine the situation that existed in the post-war times. On one hand, there was a lot of poverty which required saving commodities and using things or materials a second time. (In Germany the term recycling did not become common until the 1980s.) On the other hand, there was a strong will among the people of Leipzig, whose city center was largely destroyed, to let it rise again from the ruins. Evidence is the continuation of the Leipzig Fair, and as a small part of a mosaic, the attempt of Krick publishers to contribute to the cultural primary care. This cannot be overestimated.

And to top the recycling idea, after having been used in an unknown child's room, the dollhouse game found an exceptional place in a collection of pop-ups.

Pop-up Advent Calendars, Additions

Ann Montanaro Staples
Salt Lake City, Utah

Several readers have added titles to the list of pop-up advent calendars that was printed in the August, 2013 issue.

Henk Sikkema noted the failure to include Jan Pienkowski's *Christmas Kingdom* (Intervisual Communications, 1991). The paper engineering was done by Roger Smith. He wrote, "Mrs. Blaustein of Intervisual sent me the pack in March 1992, after I saw it in the stand of

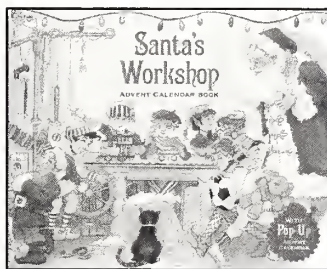


Christmas Around the World

Intervisual at the Frankfurter Buchmesse 1991. Mrs. Blaustein wrote me: 'I am sorry to tell you that this lovely advent calendar is not available in your country. In fact, it is not even being distributed in my country. This project was developed specifically for Penguin Books in London, England.'" The numbered flaps are embossed in the gold foil structure.

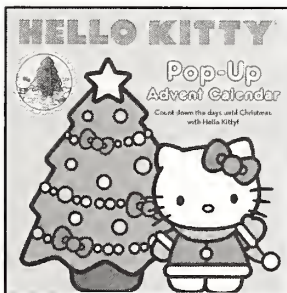
Henk's collection also includes *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte* [The Christmas Story] (München, arsEdition, 2009; ISBN 9783760729053). Illustrated by Renate Seelig, the set contains a stable with numbered flaps in the air around and an illustrated booklet, wherein Barbara Bartos-Höppner retells the Christmas story.

Another addition from Henk is the Nativity Advent Calendar with biblical references. It is a Caltime production, made in England. He does not know the publication date but purchased it at least twenty years ago in a Christian bookshop on the Dutch isle of Texel. On both sides of the pop-up stable (and the do-it-yourself pop-up figures) there are the numbered flaps.



Santa's Workshop

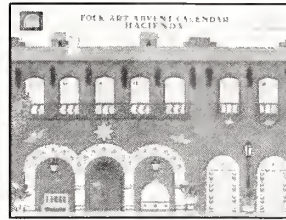
Bruce Foster pointed out that *Christmas Around the World* (By Chuck Fischer, Little Brown, 2007) has an advent calendar in the Fröhliche Weihnachten scene. While not numbered, the windows in the buildings behind the Christmas tree open to reveal holiday objects.



Hello Kitty

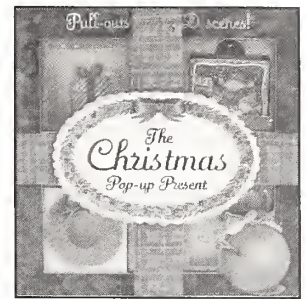
Andy Baron has created Hello Kitty, a 2013 advent calendar. The pop-ups are under the flaps.

Yet another advent presentation is *The Christmas Pop-up Present* (Little Simon, 2005) engineered by Rives.



Hacienda Calendar

Four additional titles have been identified. *Hacienda Calendar: Three-Dimensional Folk Art Advent Calendar* was produced with the Museum of New Mexico. (Pomegranate, 2001). The others are *Santa's Workshop 3D Pop-up Advent Calendar*. (Babalu, 2013. \$17.00). Caspari's Gingerbread House and their Snowmen Advent Calendar Card can be seen on Amazon.com.



The Christmas Pop-up Present

Poppits

Ellen G. K. Rubin
Scarsdale, New York

Events

Oh, to be in Paris when the pop-up books are there. The 6th Annual Animated Book Fair is in Paris, November 21, 2013. See: <http://bit.ly/hTmE7z>.

WAOUH! 100 Livres Animés Collectors. November 21-December 21, 2013. For more information: <http://bit.ly/1b1IQaW>.

Or maybe you'll be in Germany... Pop up! Bücher in Bewegung [Books in Motion]. Hans Hartung's pop-up books at the Alte Dombach paper museum, Dombach, Germany; October 10-March, 2014. <http://bit.ly/18rPUy8>



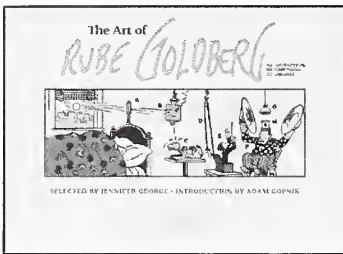
WAOUH! 100 Livres Animés Collectors

This should be a very exciting exhibition: Making Paper Dance: The Art of Pop-up Books. Curated by Linda Ross of Linda Ross Contemporary: Art + Projects; January 19 - April 6, 2014 at the Dennon Museum Center in Traverse City, Michigan. More information can be seen at: <http://bit.ly/HHg982>.

Pop Up Books from the Collection of Francis Gagliardi can be seen from December 2, 2013 until January 9, 2014 at the Wood Memorial Library and Museum in Windsor, Connecticut.

Publications

Andy Baron has been very busy. A Rube Goldberg book with a movable cover will soon be available. *The Art of Rube Goldberg: (A) Inventive (B) Cartoon (C) Genius*.



The Art of Rube Goldberg

The paper engineer is Ingrid Siliakus. The book is in Dutch. <http://bit.ly/19RTahj>.

The Mystery of Yakiv Orenshtain's Little Red Riding Hood is "a preliminary attempt to provide the cultural and historical context for a rare [movable] Russian children's book, the authors uncover the career of a prominent Ukrainian Jewish publisher and suggest questions and keys to further research." <http://1.usa.gov/HtRNyP>

On November 22, the Brussels auction room The Romantic Agony auctioned about 1,000 movable books (plus some "ordinary" children's books). This collection included the famous Apianus scientific treatise containing volvelles, 19th century books by Meggendorfer, Nister, Delcourt, Capendu, some paper toys (18th century paper theaters), and also numerous 20th century books realized by paper engineers such as Kubašta, Sabuda, Carter, Pieńkowski, UG, Pelachaud, etc.). A printed catalog was published and images can be seen at www.romanticagony.com.

Multimedia

Biedermeier cards we rarely see and we all adore - in motion! <http://bit.ly/1i2Rre0>.

Hear Paul Zelinsky's (of *Knick-Knack Paddywhack!* fame) beautiful and moving tribute to Maurice Sendak for Sendak's induction into the New York State Writer's Hall of Fame. Oh, how we'll miss Sendak!

They're alive! They're alive! Just what our pop-ups needed—videos! See several of 19th century and early 20th century books here. I'm told more will be continually added. <http://bit.ly/HHh20h>.

Babdabum, Baby! An inventive video showing thaumatropes and flexagons can be seen at: <http://bit.ly/xlktz5>.

The car manufacturers do it again. A giant pop-up for a Mini car at: <http://bit.ly/HEdwov>.

Rives: Paper Engineering Gone Wild #INKtalks. He shares all the secrets enthusiastically! I'm not sure about his

claims to have invented some of these pop-up forms though. <http://bit.ly/18VAk8D>.

The Magic of Pop-up Books: An Interview with Paper Engineer Bruce Foster is at <http://bit.ly/18rWboF>.

Kubašta's Christmas Related Works, continued from page 1

Paper cribs

Most of the Christmas items designed by Kubašta are three-dimensional paper cribs - pop-up or otherwise expandable. With them he stands in a centuries-long nativity tradition in Central Europe, in which the paper crèche had a special place in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia (especially the regions Bohemia and Moravia).

Since about the year 1800, crèches, crafted from paper, became the nativity representation for the common people, the "poor man's crib." Paper nativities of that period were produced as cut-out figures, based on woodcuts and engravings. The heyday of the paper crèche, however, started in about the year 1860, coinciding with the development of chromolithography. Especially noteworthy and cherished were the crèches published from 1878 by J. F. Schreiber from Esslingen in Germany.⁴

Bohemia and Moravia, in today's Czech Republic, have long been famous for their highly creative paper crèches, introducing a great variety of characters to populate the Christmas scene. Chimney sweep and apothecary, carpenter and cobbler, children and their parents are all part of the scene which frequently includes streets and squares, castles and houses of Bohemian towns. This Czech tradition continues even now, and most of the well-known Czech illustrators have designed their modern versions of the traditional paper crib - amongst them, for example, such well-known artists as Josef Lada, Jiří Trnka and Marie Fisherová-Kvěčhová.⁵

Remarkably, even with forty years of Communism in Czechoslovakia, with atheism as its official state-proclaimed doctrine, this tradition has not disappeared. Kubašta published most of his nativities in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the time when there was some loosening of the tight grip of the regime.

A museum of Czech paper cribs, Papírové Betlémy, can be found in Zábrdí u Husince, in South Bohemia and it has about 800 representative pieces on display. A second one is planned to open shortly in Pečky in Mid Bohemia, north of Prague.⁶

The paper cribs by Vojtech Kubašta

It is in this tradition that we examine the paper crèches of Kubašta. It is no wonder that, as a trained architect, he started his career as a paper engineer with the design of spatial stables, houses, and street scenes for these Christmas items. His first nativity was the 1953 Lidový Betlém (People's Crèche) nativity construction sheet - a Do-it-yourself (DIY) -project done before 1954 when he produced *How Columbus Discovered America*, in his first pop-up book.⁷ It shows, from

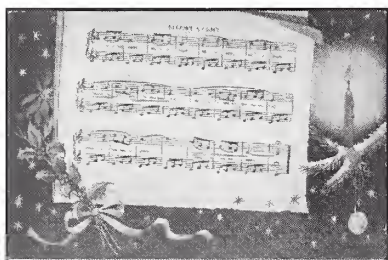
holding a banner with this Latin text/title. It shows the holy family in a poor stable with the ox and the ass, baby Jesus in a straw-filled manger, the angel, the shooting star that blinds, the shepherds with their sheep, and the magi all pictured as described in the *Bible*. There is no snow, and the scene can be imagined to take place anywhere. It is just the presence of one lonely palm tree that suggests the Orient as the place where it all happens.

Explicitly oriental are three other crèches that picture a manger scene in the full glare of the sun and stuffed with camels and elephants, figures in oriental clothes, minarets and colorful domed houses from the Middle East, and lots of palm trees. It is surprising to find such summer representations since, for most of us, Christmas is associated with December, with its cold, darkness, and snow.

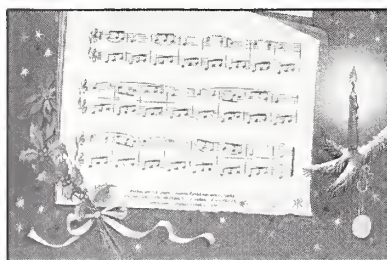
Most of Kubašta's nativity scenes, however, are set in a central European, or more specifically, Czech rural or urban environment. They picture the characteristic colorful country houses with a thick layer of snow on roofs and trees, onion-shaped church towers, the heart-shaped openings in doors and similar decorations on the furniture and the crib of baby Jesus. They additionally show Mary with a head scarf, a pipe smoking Joseph, the fiddler, and people in traditional Czech costumes who bring traditional gifts like fruit, eggs, braided Christmas bread, carp, and potato salad.

And within this group there are some that have a typical Prague background: the *Prague Christmas Nativity* (1969), the *Charles Bridge Nativity*, or the *Loreta Nativity* (1972). They are situated in characteristic places of the city in which the artist lived his whole life: the historic and picturesque Charles Bridge on the Moldau, or the pilgrimage destination of Loreta in the Hradčany district of Prague, with its church of the Lord's Birth, a Holy Hut, and more. Or they picture landmarks of the city like the Prague Castle and the St. Vitus's cathedral, the gothic tower/town-gate that opens to the

Charles Bridge, The Nicholas Church or the Church of Our Lady before Tyn, and the tower with the astronomical clock. I think the inhabitants of Prague will recognize in these cribs many more details from their city.



A Christmas Tale with text in English



A Christmas Tale without text

Formats

Apart from the variety of settings, Kubašta also used a variety of formats for his Christmas creations. Five of them came as books

in the Panascopic Model series with the usual eight pages of text. Mostly, however, they were handled as traditional stationery. So appeared the pop-up scenes of the Panascopic books. They also appeared as a covered double-spreads without any text or title to be sent as (over-sized) Christmas cards – in a matching envelope – and to serve as table decorations. Most likely only these editions, published and distributed by Artia and their foreign publishers, were available abroad.

Some were designed to fold down in a built-in envelope; others came flattened in an envelope and could be pulled out like an accordion to transform into a three-dimensional stand-up scene (mostly accompanied by additional smaller, freestanding pieces). And some came with envelopes as rather simple, traditional Christmas cards of normal size. All of these have text (when at all) in Czech or Slovak, and prove to have been published just for the home market. They are nowadays the most rare.



A Christmas Tale with text in French



A Christmas Tale with text in Czech, English, and German

Some went through several editions, came in two versions, changed size, or details were redrawn. The musical scores of *Silent Night* on the back cover of *A Christmas Tale* (1961), for example, came in various versions: without text,

with the text only in English, or in French, or with text in three languages!

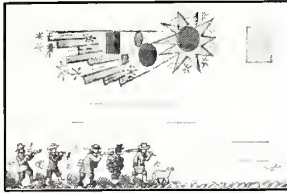
Some have cut-out cellophane windows that provide a special light effect when they are illuminated from behind, such as by a candle. But some lost their open windows in another edition!



Christmas card

To make it easy to use them as Christmas cards, some were designed to close as an envelope themselves (*Charles Bridge Nativity*; *Nativity of Třebechovice*); others came with a fairly neutral large envelope, and for the Panascopic Models, there were envelopes available with an ornamented, cellophane window through which the central scene of the front cover

was visible. Effectively, the whole was a stationery line as well.



Envelopes

In all aspects, Kubašta's Christmas-related items are good examples of industrial publishing! The panascopic modeled ones have been sold in a variety of editions (never marked as such) and versions. Artia must have gained lots of foreign currency with them. Whether Kubašta himself benefitted from their huge sales is unknown.

In any case, the diversity of editions and versions of these Christmas items makes research complicated. The list of the sixteen pop-up Christmas items that follows (and their annotations) should be considered a provisional attempt at documentation. I fear there will pop up still more variations – maybe even more items with a Christmas theme?

Annotated List ¹⁰

Panascopic Models

1. A Christmas Tale. 32.5 x 22.5 cm.

Caption title. Opens sideways and shows an elaborate traditional nativity scene in a stable on a square in a central-European town in winter. When opened to 90 degrees, the light card unfolds into a many-layered tableau, crowded with shepherds, wise men, animals, angels, and peasants, all paying homage to the holy family in the center. From the roofs at the left and the right, choirs of angels sing and an angel holding the banner "Gloria In Excelsis Deo" crowns the roof of the stable. The front cover features a winter scene in front of the gates of a walled town. Two sentinels stand guard at the entrance, and the Gothic gates are wide open, as if to welcome a two-horse sleigh approaching on the left—and the three magi making their way on camelback on the right. Their beacon, the Star of Bethlehem, shines high above the castle parapets. On the back cover there are the scores (and text) of *Silent Night*. It was published several times - in various layouts:

a. 1960: London, Bancroft & Company Ltd., ©1960 Artia Prague. [Nr.] 306 S/3 Printed in Czechoslovakia. (8) p + double spread pop-up scene. Published as a book in the so called "Panascopic Model" series, with eight pages of text telling a story set at Christmas time about a family named Steel. The front cover has cut-out windows and gate that have colored cellophane inserted, to be lit from behind for an extra effect. Some of the copies seen have red cellophane, others

have yellow. On the back, within an illustration of Christmas ornaments, there are the scores and the English text of *Silent Night* (just the first verse). It was reprinted in 1961 and maybe more often since there are copies seen without a copyright date.

b. In the 1960s some editions of just the pop-up scene were printed, without a title or the text pages. It is unknown how many reprints there have been but differences can be seen in the quality of the color printing (especially the in sky which is often much darker blue, the browns turn into purple, details are fading, etc.). Apparently it was meant to be sent as a (rather oversized) postcard in the accompanying manila mailing envelope and to be used as a table-top display or Christmas decoration. Sometimes there is a "Made in Czechoslovakia" on the front cover; mostly the text of *Silent Night* on the back is only in English.

c. 1974: Stated second edition (120,000 copies), published for Art Hall - Enterprise of Czech Catholic Charity, Prague. Date after the "©illustrations 1974" as found on the back. Slightly smaller edition (30 x 20 cm.) of just the covered pop-up scene without a title and without the text pages. Has only the score of *Silent Night* on the back and includes neither text nor the cut-out, cellophane mounted windows.

d. 1974: Identical edition published with the imprint of Lidová Demokracie (People's Democracy) in Vyšehrad (a district of Prague), the publishing house of the newspaper of this same name. Date after the present "©illustrations 1974." Remarkably, this has the text of *Silent Night* in three languages on the back: Czech, English, and German, and additional printed Christmas wishes: "Radostné Vánoce / Merry Christmas / Gesegnete Weihnachten."

e. 1994: An edition of the double-spread pop-up scene with, on the back, *Il est né*, the French version of *Silent Night*.

f. 2009: A pirated edition, printed on the original matrix and published in Poland. The scene is drawn with minor modifications to avoid an infringement of the copyright. The quality of the paper and the printing (too much blue) Shows it to clearly be a fake. But, unreliable vendors sell it nowadays at Christmas markets and elsewhere to less knowledgeable collectors as a real Kubašta.

2. Father Christmas. 32.5 x 22.5 cm.

Caption title. The front cover pictures the smiling face of Father Christmas with a movable tab at the bottom that moves Santa's eyes and mouth. Additionally, a rag doll appears from behind his shoulder and the tab causes the moon to disappear behind the clouds. At the back, amidst Christmas presents and ornaments, a little girl holds a sheet of unrolling paper on which to write Christmas wishes for the recipient. The multi-layered pop-up scene inside shows Father Christmas, having left his sleigh, going into a double-roofed brick cottage to deliver his presents. Some windows have cellophane panes and it is also remarkable to see how intricately and detailed the interior of the house is engineered. Scattered around the

sleigh are all kinds of toys, and at the left, around the corner of the house, there is a group of carolers.

a. 1961: Bancroft & Co. (publishers) Ltd, London. Westminster Books. An Artia production. Printed in Czechoslovakia. (8) p + double spread pop-up scene. Published in the so called Panascopic Model series.

b. About the same time, in the 1960s, some editions appeared of just the double spread pop-up scene, without a title or the text pages. Apparently meant to be sent as a Christmas gift in the accompanying envelope, it has a cut-out window to let Santa peek out. Some have a “Designed and produced by Artia Prague. Printed in Czechoslovakia” on the back; others have the (registration-/order-) number 103 on the front cover and a “Foreign” on the reverse. There are also copies known with “Designed and produced by Artia Prague. Printed in Czechoslovakia” and with the number 207.

c. 1991: Published by VDI in Pilsen, produced by ADUT in Skalica. A Czech reprint of just the pop-up scene but, curiously, with the three covers as usually only found in the book publications of the Panascopic Model series. The movable parts of the front cover have been omitted here.

3. Gloria in Excelsis Deo. (2) p, 32 x 22.5 cm.

The title was chosen from the text on the banner that the large, serene angel holds. She stands on the front cover silhouetted against a starry deep blue sky; otherwise there is no text in the book/card. This is the most traditional nativity scene within Kubašta’s production and most likely also a very early specimen of the panascopic format he designed. It shows a real stable in the countryside, with traditionally clothed Joseph and Mary, baby Jesus in a crib, and the ox and the ass in the back of the stable. On the roof is an angel with the “Gloria in Excelsis Deo” banner and the shooting star. In the foreground, an angel appears to the blinded shepherds, and from right behind the stable, the magi approaches. A single palm tree suggests an oriental setting. On the white package, on the right, are the letters “K+M+B,” meaning Kasper, Melchior, and Balthasar, the three holy kings. There is a cut-out window with cellophane in the stable to be lit from behind.

a. 1956: By deduction I concluded that this item must be the title that Kubašta listed in his *Opus VK* (p 21) as “Zimní Betlém” (Winter Nativity) published at Artia. Though this is not really a winter scene, none of the other cribs produced by Artia is eligible since all have been dated in later years. And I have to spoken people who assure me that they had copies of this crib when they were a child in the 1950s.¹¹

b. In the second half of the 1950s and the 1960s this title must have been reprinted numerous times. Not only is this the least rare title of all cribs, it also pops up in a variety of editions: with cloth spine in dark blue, light blue, beige; with clearly distinguishable lighter, middle dark and very dark colored boards and variations in colors. Copies are found with or without the signature of Kubašta on the pop-up scene. Some copies have a “Made in Czechoslovakia” in bold letters

across the bottom of the back board; some have red, others purple cellophane behind the window. Sometimes there is an “Ars Foreign” at the curly left end and the artist’s name in full on the right end of the banner on the front cover – sometimes there is only the artist’s name on the right end, but mostly both ends are empty.



Gloria in Excelsis Deo with “Ars Foreign”



Gloria in Excelsis Deo with name only



Gloria in Excelsis Deo without text

Some copies have a number 101 on the front and “Foreign” on the back cover and so on. There even is found a deviation in the way the pop-up figures are inserted: Copies have been seen in which the figures are inserted in slits and pasted from the backside with, as a result, that the part of the design that is on the lower side of the inserts cannot be seen; in other ones the figures have glued in cut-out fields.¹²

It is impossible for me to bring any logical order to these different editions – or to figure out which edition was earlier, which later. It makes clear, however, how often this item was reprinted and, therefore, how it has been the bestseller of the series.

4. Prelude to Christmas. 32 x 22.5 cm.

Caption title. A pop-up cardboard Christmas calendar with, on both covers, the picture of a wooden cottage among trees, all under thick snow. The brightly lit interior, with part of the crib is visible through the open door and from all sides pairs of animals: deer, fox, pheasants, squirrels, and rabbits. At the left stands a part of a candle-lit Christmas tree, also under thick snow. When opened, a large tree is revealed, a reindeer with sleigh, a snowman, and a cottage. There are flaps numbered from one to twenty-four, and behind each number is some Christmas related image. Surprising are the small openings above the numbers/images on the tree, behind which are colored cellophanes that enable the tree to be lit from behind. When the last two flaps, with the number twenty-four, are opened, a picture of the manger scene appears.

a. 1958: With the title *Adventní Kalendář* (Advent Calendar). The original Czech edition appeared at Artia, Prague – as *Opus VK* (p. 14) states. I haven’t seen a copy and because of that, I don’t know if the Czech edition has the eight pages of text.

b. 1961: Bancroft & Co. (publishers) Ltd, London. Westminster Books. An Artia production. [Nr.] 309. Printed in Czechoslovakia. (8) p + double-spread pop-up.¹³

c. 1963: © Artia Prague. Printed in Czechoslovakia. Bancroft & Co. (publisher) Ltd., London, Westminster Books. [Nr.] 310. 8 p + double-spread pop-up. Apparently a reprint – with another registration-/order-number! ¹⁴

d. 1960s: At least once the pop-up scene was published without title and without any text, as an ordinary advent calendar without a story.

5. [Shooting star over walled oriental town]. (2) p. 33 x 22.5 cm.

Published without a title or text. The front shows a walled oriental town with towers, domes, minarets, a mosque, and a palm tree under a starry sky with a large pink angel and a shooting star. The back has a candle-lit Christmas tree with packages and below a blank unrolled banner to write your message for the recipient. It opens into one large, sunny double-page, pop-up nativity scene with all the traditional characters grouped around an arched stable with double-topped roof. Remarkable are the very pink angels that catch the reader's attention.

1967: In the colophon on the back cover it is titled in Czech: *Betlém Charita* (Charity Nativity), published for Art Hall, Enterprise of Czech Catholic Charity, Prague, and stated to be a first edition. *Opus VK* (p. 14) lists this with just *Betlém* for its title, and dates it. No further edition has been found.

6. [Star of Bethlehem]. 32.5 x 23 cm.

Another untitled oriental nativity of the Panascopic Model format, published without the usual eight pages of text. On the front cover is one of the wise men on camelback under a large palm tree, and a dazzling star above an oriental town. At the right there is a shepherd with sheep holding his hands over his eyes. The scene is continued on the back where the other two wise men are pictured, one on horseback, the other seated on an elephant. It opens out into a large, colorful, sunny pop-up scene with, in the foreground, a dilapidated shed with holes in the roof and the holy family inside. This is visible through the wide-opened doors. At the back of the scene there is a large, red Bedouin tent, the abode of the wise men where they have parked the horse, camel, and elephant (still with a large golden throne on his back). The scene is populated by the usual characters while an angel and a shooting star are towering high above it.

a. 1969: Under the title *Exotický Betlém*, published by Orbis, Prague. Listed in *Opus VK* (p. 17) and dated.

b. 1969 (?): Only found at the Broward Library was a copy of this book as a "traditional" volume of the Panascopic Model series, apparently with the eight text pages of *A Christmas Tale* (see nr. 1 above) and with the number 306 that matches the numbering of the Panascopic Models. At least their description suggests such: *A Christmas tale!* [illustrated by V. Kubašta]. London : Bancroft & Co. (Prague : Artia). 7, [1] p. : ill. (chiefly col.) ; 33 cm. Though the pictures at their website do not show any text (or booklet) it is a threefold as one usually finds in the Panascopic Model editions. Maybe this came with the first Czech edition in 1969? ¹⁵

c. 1971 (?): Just the pop-up scene, in a cover without title but at the back: "Designed and produced by Artia Prague. Printed in Czechoslovakia" and the number 206. Also seen was a copy with the number 206/2, indicating a second edition of this Artia version. ¹⁶

d. 1999: A piracy offered on Ebay (June, 2011) with the remark to be "published as private print in Prague." With its 33.5 x 23 cm. size (slightly larger than the original), the quality of the paper and the printing betray, at once, its fake character.

e. 2008: Another pirated edition in which the Kubašta signatures have been removed to avoid an infringement of the copyright. The quality of the paper and the printing (too much blue) make it clearly recognizable as a fake even from a distance. Maybe it was from the same Polish source that made the piracy of number one above?

Construction Sheets

7. **Český Betlém** (Czech Nativity). Published 1991 by Panoráma, Prague and printed in Czechoslovakia by Grafiatisk, A.S.

It is unknown to me if this was the first printing or if the design was done (much) earlier. If this 1991 edition is the first, the design is probably one of the last ones Kubašta did.

The sheet (measurements unknown to me) consists of five pieces to cut out, fold, and glue. A diagram of the assembled nativity showing its construction is included. The result is a simple, Bohemian, paper nativity in a winter setting, with two freestanding pieces and the characters all drawn after the figures on Kubašta's earlier cribs. The Czech text on the banner the angel on the roof of the stable holds, reads "Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Good Will Toward Men."

8. **Lidov Betlém** (People's Crèche).

Another one-sheet DIY crèche that sets the nativity in a traditional Czech/Bohemian cottage, where Mary, in apron and kerchief, and a pipe smoking Joseph, rock baby Jesus in his traditionally-painted cradle, typical of the Czech countryside. A boy fiddles, another puts a finishing touch on a snowman, and a little angel writes with his finger in the snow on the roof "Pokoz lidem dobré v le" (Peace on Earth to people of good will). In the snowy street from the right and the left, people in winter clothes approach with traditional Czech food and gifts for the holy family: plaited loaf, eggs, fresh carp, a live goose, extra bedding, and a Christmas tree. The measurements of the sheet are unknown to me.

a. 1953/1967: Daughter Dagmar Kubaštová Vrlkjan dates the first edition in 1953 – and she remembers having had it as a child at home in those days. It is, however, listed in *Opus VK* (p. 17) and dated there 1967.

b. 1991: The Czech website *papirove-betlémý* reports that a reprint of the sheet was published in 1991.

Zig Zag Unfolding, Free Standing Pop-up Nativity (to be sent as Christmas card)

9. Lidové Jesličky (People's Nativity). Unfolds to 26 x 40 x 12 cm.

Effectively a Christmas card of two interlocking pieces of thin cardboard that unfolds like an accordion and stands as a pop-up table-top crèche. When flattened, it could be sent in an envelope. Joseph, with a pipe, and Mary, with apron and kerchief, rock baby Jesus in his Bohemian cradle that has a heart-shaped cut-out at the end. Apparently they got a place in an inn this time. In the snow on the roof of the house is written "Pokoj dobré" (Slovak for "good rooms")! Curiously, both the ox and the ass can be seen inside the house.

The Bohemian setting combines several houses, a garden gate, a little church with both a clock and a bell, trees, animals, and a lot of people (mostly children) approaching with presents for the baby into a crowded scene in which a clothesline with laundry is visible.



Lidové Jesličky

a. 1967: First edition of 35,000 copies published by Orbis, Prague, as the colophon reads. With one freestanding piece, it shows three children caroling and a Christmas tree.



b. 1968: Stated second edition, 30,000 copies published by Orbis, Prague. It has the freestanding piece of the first edition redrawn and split into two separate pieces: one with the Christmas tree and one caroler: the other with the remaining two carolers and a little snow-capped tree.

c. 1991: A reprint of the 1991 was found recorded but it has not yet been seen.

10. Loretánský Betlém (Loreta Nativity). Orbis, Prague. Made in Czechoslovakia. 1972. 43 x 24 x 13 cm. when unfolded.

This is another crèche of interlocking thin board. In the foreground there is a traditional nativity scene with the holy family in the stable, crowned by a banner with "Gloria in Excelsis Deo!"; the Magi, here with large and quite striking

crowns on their heads, and some shepherds. The background - that slides out at the right - shows the skyline of Loreta, the large pilgrimage destination in Hradčany, a district of Prague, consisting of a cloister, the church of the Lord's Birth, a holy hut, and the clock tower with a famous chime. There is an additional freestanding piece picturing sheep and a shepherd (with a baguette in his hands). There is a remarkable contrast between the



Loretánský Betlém

two parts: the nativity is very sunny and has a palm tree, but the Loreta background is dark and there is a lot of snow in the air and on the buildings! *Opus VK* (p. 17) gives the publisher (not on the card) and dates.

11. [Palm trees nativity].

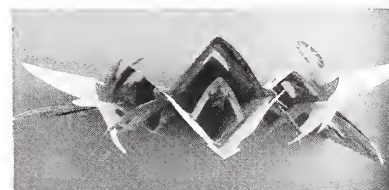
Two ingeniously interlocking shaped leaves of limp board fold out into a wood of arched palm trees with, in the center, a nativity scene in a kind of domed space that is crowned by a curious colorful angel holding a banner with "Gloria in Excelsis Deo." Under the palm trees approach the usual characters: from the left, the shepherds and ordinary people with food and presents, from the right, the three wise men, with the huge elephant - like in all of Kubašta's crèches. The whole looks very oriental, indeed, and came in two different sizes: 15 or 19 cm. high and the larger one unfolding to over 40 cm. There was an additional crossed, freestanding piece of a Christmas tree, angels, and sheep.

a. 1968: The first edition, apparently in both sizes. On the crèche itself there is no bibliographical information. Dated after the Czech



[Palm trees nativity]

website of www.papirove-betlemy.cz where it is said it was printed by Oftis in the Slovak Republic.



[Palm trees nativity] from above

b. 1990: Gamon – Roman Kubašta, Prague, 21x15 cm. Reprinted by grandson Roman as a DIY kit/construction sheet. It has a separate sheet with instructions and was issued under the Czech title of *Vánoční*

Betlém (Christmas Crèche). It also has the crossed freestanding piece of Christmas tree, angels, and sheep.

c. 1990s (?): Pirated edition or “very successful imitation,” undated and lacking every other identification mark. It shows many differences: two angels on top, a different sequence of the magi, the freestanding piece has just sheep, etc., but, nevertheless, at first sight it is a very good Kubašta look-alike.¹⁷

d. 2011: Badly printed (too much red), a pirated edition published as a two-sheet construction sheet to assemble yourself by the Catharijne Convent Museum (for religious art) in Utrecht, the Netherlands in cooperation with Bekking & Blitz, publishers of museum cards. They even claim the shared copyright!

12. Pražský Betlém (Prague Nativity).

Color printed and die-cut interlocking card stock crèche situated in old Prague. In the center there is a traditional nativity scene set in a curved opening in a snow-covered house (with a visible house number of 192?) set in a beautiful architectural composition of two rectangular blocks. On the left are the medieval gothic gate of the Charles Bridge tower and on the right, a lit neo-classical building. The curved background clearly shows the skyline of Prague under a starry sky: Prague Castle, St. Vitus’s Cathedral, Charles Bridge, and Křižovnické Square, all lightly covered with snow. And all characters known from the other cribs approach, once more, to bring presents, to sing, etc. The reverse of the card is in shades of brown, blue and white, with buildings and trees. It includes two separate, free-standing pieces printed on both sides as well: one of four carolers/musicians, the other of the three kneeling (or creeping?) wise men.

Depending on how far it is opened, the measurements are about 25 (high) x 50 (width) x 25 (depth) cm.; 33 x 25 cm. when closed. It was meant to be sent as a Christmas postcard and to be used as an ornament at Christmas time.

a. 1968: Orbis, Prague, and dated in the colophon (in a small area on the back). Printed at Severografia in the town of Velký Šenov in the north west part of the Czech Republic, where most of Kubašta’s books were printed. Listed in *Opus VK* (p. 18) as well.

b. 1969: Orbis, Prague, and dated in the colophon (again in a small area on the back) but not stating that this is, effectively, a second edition. It is missing the folding green doors of the house where the nativity scene is and has the 1968 edition.

c. 1991: Panorama, [Prague], published as a construction sheet of A3 size and noted as “first edition.”

Pop-up Postcards

13. **Betlém z Třebechovic** (Nativity of Třebechovic). 16 x 23 cm. Curiously, this item, as only a crèche, tells its own history, printed on and under the flap on the back - that has to be inserted to close the built-in envelope. The text, in Czech, German, and English, is the story of the nativity of Třebechovic, a small town in the north east part of the Czech Republic, that was the setting for this postcard. The

Třebechovic nativity was created at the end of the 19th century, all from wood, by Josef Probošt. It is seven meters long, three meters deep and two meters high, has a motion mechanism, more than 2,000 carved pieces, and 373 figures. The nativity is famous for its technical and artistic quality, unique in the world, and was on display at the World Exhibition of Montreal in 1967.¹⁸

Kubašta’s representation in this picture postcard is a nativity scene that stands on a terrace supported by arches, all executed in dark brown, before a dark blue starry sky in which an angel floats. Below the scene there is a Christmas wish in three languages “Every Joy this Christmas with Health and Happiness in the Coming Year.” Three windows are covered with red cellophane, that doubles on the reverse as elements of a shooting star.

1971(?): The card was published by SFVU, a gallery in Bratislava (now the capital of the Slovak Republic). Although *Opus VK* (p. 14) lists this title, a date is not given there. The series of numbers on the back of the card, however, suggests 1971 for its year of publication.

14. Karlův Most (Charles Bridge). 21 x 29 cm.

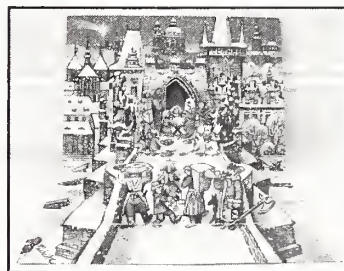
Traditional nativity of Joseph, Mary, and baby Jesus in a manger, set on a wintery Charles Bridge in Prague. It is seen from the bridge on which people walk around the scene. To the left of the holy family there is a choir, at the right some musicians, and three



Karlův Most

(child) magi with paper crowns sit on the floor at the right before the family! Snow is in the sky above the skyline of old Prague with its known churches, squares, and castle; kids are skating and sledding on the frozen river below.

The front of the envelope, into which the whole folds down, has the Czech wish of “Radostné Vánoce a šlástný Nový Rok” (Merry Christmas and a Delightful New Year); the back shows a colorful scene of the three (child) magi with paper crowns walking through the gate of the bridge in the direction of the manger.



Karlův Most

a. 1983: Published by Lidová Demokracie (People’s Democracy) in Vyšehrad (a district of Prague), the publishing house of the newspaper of this same name – and dated.

b. 1988: A reprint, reduced in size from A4 to A5 (about 14,5 x 21 cm.), and dated. Recorded by the Czech website www.papirove-betlemy.sweb.cz but otherwise not found by me.



Karlův Most

c. 2002: Reprinted in a stated second edition as *Betlém /Karlův Most* by Euromedia Group-Book Club, no place, but identified in their colophon as their 2074th publication. The text “Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year” is also in Czech,

Slovak, German, and French on the front of this edition. However, the quality of printing is bad (too much blue) and it is on a too smooth, thin card.

15. [Stained glass pop-up card]. 15.5 x 13 cm.

This card has a Gothic-shaped window, painted to suggest stained glass, and features the magi in a slightly marked oriental setting, carrying, untraditionally, an orb, an anchor, and a flaming heart - the Christian symbols for faith, hope, and love - instead of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It opens out from the middle into a traditional Christmas card with Czech text that reads when translated word by word “Happy Christmas Holidays and a Joyful New Year.” The text is flanked left and right by a simple pop-up flowerpot and a (flat) two-armed candelabra. The original features two elliptical pieces of dual-colored foil between the front and the back, under the magi halos, star rays, candle flames, and large ornament: silver towards the front, gold towards the inside.

This card is undated and is only known to me from a copy in the archives of Dagmar Kubaštová Vrlkjan in Canada. Through her generosity, a sheet to assemble (a slightly reduced copy) can be downloaded for free from the website <http://www.papermodelkiosk.com>

16. [Christmas pop-up card]

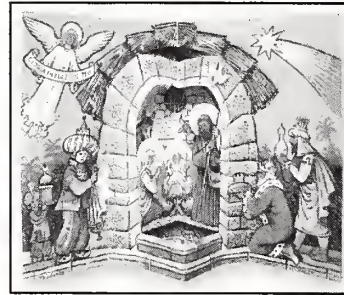
This final Christmas related pop-up item designed by Vojtěch Kubašta, was found at the Czech website www.papirove-betlemy.sweb.cz. It shows a very simple, rather crudely drawn nativity scene with just the magi, a shooting star, and an angel in the air. There it is dated 1991 so it was done at the end of Kubašta’s life.

Conclusion

Examining the complete output of Kubašta’s pop-up Christmas related items, as far I had the opportunity to study them, there are a couple of things that strike me. First, there is the variety of items: table top displays, freestanding Christmas ornaments, crèches, pop-up books with a story (the Panascopic Model series), greeting cards, and more. There are a variety of crèches: some with summer and winter settings, others with town and country settings, with rather neutral backgrounds, oriental backgrounds, and typical Czech backgrounds. And often they came in different editions and/or different sizes.

Apparently Kubašta had more feeling for the traditional Christian nativity than for Santa Claus – though it should have been of more interest for export purposes to publish Santa items for the Anglo Saxon market. Effectively, he did

only two Santa Claus items, one of which is an advent calendar. All in all there were only three, maybe four, items brought out by Bancroft of London, the usual outlet of editions designed to generate foreign currency.



[Christmas pop-up card]

Notable, too, is the variety of spatial designs he shows on this topic – which exemplifies his training as an architect, a training that most likely also ensured his ability to suggest depth in his drawings. In both respects he knows how to surprise again and again.

However, something that emerges by close study and iconographic description of the cribs is their very traditional interpretation of the gospel stories of Luke and Matthew concerning the birth of Jesus. In most (all?) of Kubašta’s cribs we found a very traditionally clothed Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus – provided with halos. The shepherds were always pictured, coming from the left, and most often one of them is blinded by the star of Bethlehem. In a same way the magi are always present, coming from the right, and accompanied by a camel, a white horse, and a huge elephant.

Also the rest of the figures that populate the scenes prove rather stereotypical when one closely compares them: people in a hurry and mostly with the same accompaniments (braided bread, eggs, live goose, a carp, etc.), and drawn in a uniform way that makes them interchangeable. I don’t know if the fact that Kubašta himself seems to have forgotten most of these items at the end of his life (only half of them prove listed in the 1989 pamphlet *Opus VK*) justifies the conclusion that he considered them a not too important part of his work?

What I do know, on the other hand, is that researching this aspect of his work in detail proved to be a hell of a job!

Notes

1. Ellen Rubin in: Findlay, James A, and Ellen G.K. Rubin, *Pop-ups, illustrated books and graphic designs of Czech artist and paper engineer, Vojtech Kubašta*. The Dianne and Michael Bienes Special Collections and Rare Book Library. Fort Lauderdale, FL, 2005.
2. In the annotation of several of Kubašta’s creches at the Czech website of the (future) Crib Museum: <http://bit.ly/HBEmgl>
3. Reactions please to theogielen@online.nl
4. For further information about the history of the paper cribs see, for example: Norbert Langenbach, *Weihnachts-Krippen aus Papier*. Husum, 2006; and Christa Pieske, *Das ABC des Luxuspapiers*. Berlin, 1983 (especially p 202-204). But there are also several websites with information and pictures on the subject available.
5. Tens of them can be seen at: <http://bit.ly/HBEmgl> and go to *Naše Betlémy*.

Christmas Related Works by Vojtěch Kubašta



A Christmas Tale



A Christmas Tale inside



Father Christmas



Gloria in Excelsis Deo



Gloria in Excelsis Deo



Father Christmas inside



Prelude to Christmas



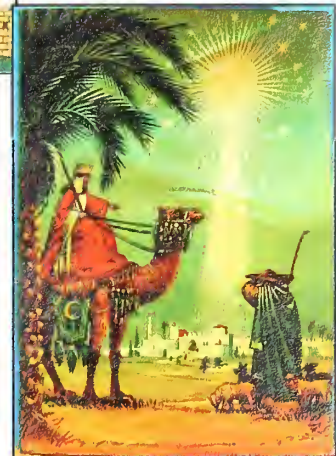
Prelude to Christmas inside



[Shooting Star over walled oriental city]



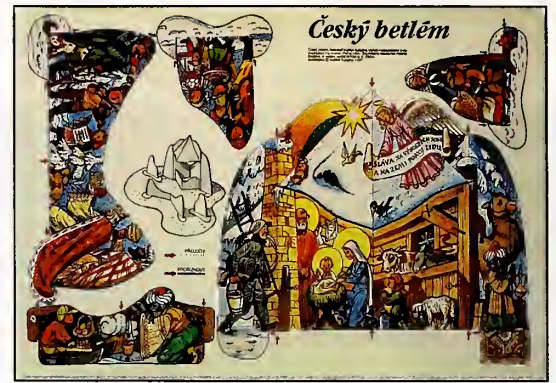
Loretánský Betlém



[Star of Bethlehem]



[Palm trees nativity]



Český Betlém assembly sheet



Český Betlém



Lidové Jesličky



Pražský Betlém



Lidový Betlém



[Stained glass pop-up card]



[Star of Bethlehem]



Karlův Most



[Christmas pop-up card]

6. See their English language website at: <http://bit.ly/1bNJSFY>

7. The sheet is dated 1953 at the crechemania website, apparently based on information of Dagmar Kubastová Vrlkjan. However, according to *Opus VK*, the 1989 pamphlet in which Kubašta attempted to list all his works, this sheet was published in 1967 only (?)

8. From an interview with Mr. Findlay as seen at the website: <http://bit.ly/16WGh5J>

9. Dagmar Kubastová Vrlkjan, *Remembering my Father...* on "Crechemania." <http://bit.ly/16WGh5J> and additional information from her by mail correspondence.

10. A lot of the following editions and variations can be seen at the websites: <http://bit.ly/16WGh5J> and <http://bit.ly/HBEmgl> and <http://bit.ly/1ak8YJS> and <http://bit.ly/HuufT> or pictured in the reference books about Kubašta like the Gubig-Köpcke catalog, the Bienes-catalog, etc.

11. *Opus VK* is the 1989 pamphlet (in Czech) in which Kubašta tried to make a list of all the books he was involved in as an illustrator, paper engineer or in any other way. The pamphlet was reproduced in full in the 2005 Bienes-catalog; see note one above.

12. See detailed pictures of the different ways of assembling <http://bit.ly/1ak8YJS> and scroll down to the part that deals with the Kubašta cribs.

13. The complete copy of the Broward Library is digitized and can be seen at: <http://bit.ly/HBF253>

14. Dated after a copy found recorded in catalog 5 of J. Whirler Used & Rare Children's Books under nr. 2902; had an accompanying Christmas card dated 1963 with which the book was sent.

15. Pictures can be seen at <http://bit.ly/1iDvXEJ> But the text pages have not been digitized – if they are present at all.

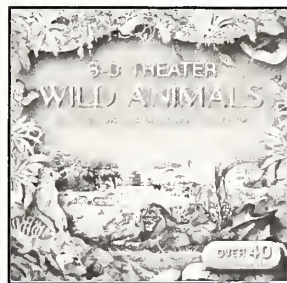
16. Described and pictured at <http://bit.ly/16w05zw>. The date of 1971 for the Artia edition was taken from the Crechemania website <http://bit.ly/16WGh5J>. It is shown there without any source for this date.

17. Pictured at page 5 of the Czech website of crèches: <http://bit.ly/1aSu44q>

18. A very impressive work of folk art, the show piece of the local Nativity Museum, and extensively pictured at the internet.

New Publications

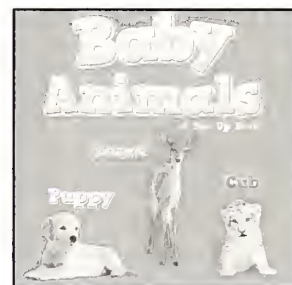
The following titles have been identified from Internet sources, book store hunting, and advertising. All titles include pop-ups unless otherwise noted and are listed for information only - not necessarily as recommendations for purchase.



3D Theater: Wild Animals.
Kingfisher. \$14.99.
9780753468890.

The Art of Rube Goldberg: (A) Inventive (B) Cartoon (C) Genius. [Movable cover]
Abrams ComicArts. \$60.00.
9781419708527.

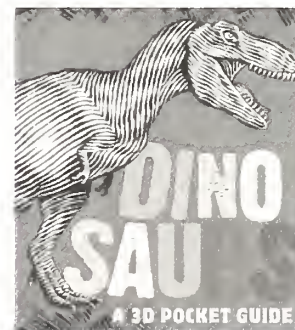
Baby Animals. The Clever Factory. \$5.98.
9781435144620.



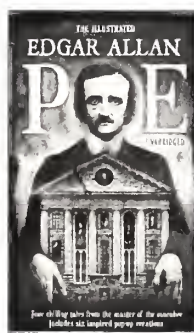
Creative Pop-Up: A History And Project Book: A Fascinating Introduction To Paper Engineering, With 50 Step-By-Step Folds and Techniques. By Trish

Phillips and Ann Montanaro. Southwater. \$17.99.
9781780193021

Dinosaurs: A 3D Pocket Guide.
Candlewick Press. \$8.99.
9780763662356.



Eric Carle Little Pop-Up Song Book. December. Publications International. \$9.98.
9781450868211.



The Illustrated Grimm's Fairy Tales: Eight Sinister Tales from the Brothers Grimm. Literary Pop Up. Canterbury Classics. \$19.95. 9781607108955.

Also: *The Illustrated Edgar Allan Poe.* 9781607108962.

The Illustrated Sherlock Holmes: Two Unabridged Mysteries from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. 9781607108979.

Jervis the Best. January. Three White Kites. \$19.99.
9780989667708.



Journey to the World of the

SAVE THE DATE

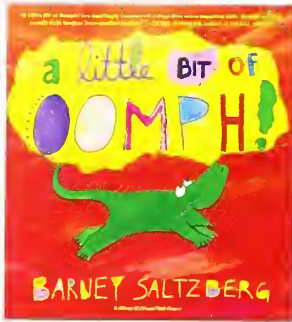
**The Movable Book Society
2014 Conference**

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

September 18 - 20, 2014

Dinosaurs: Peek Inside The Pop-up Windows! Armadillo. \$16.99. 9781861473196.

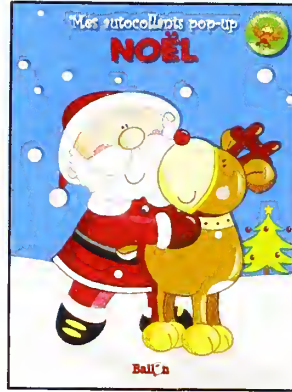
Also: *Robo-Pup To The Rescue.* 9781843228219.
Trapped in the Witch's Lair. (January) 9781861473202.



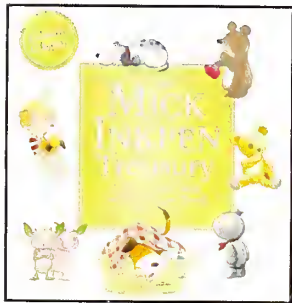
A Little Bit of Oomph! By Barney Saltzberg. Workman. \$13.95. 9780761177449.

Mes Autocollants Pop-up Noël. [French]. October. Le Ballon. £4.90. 9789037488906.

Also: *Mes Autocollants pop-up Saint-Nicolas.* 9789037488814.

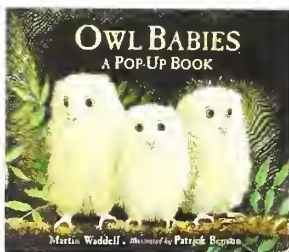


Mr Tumble's Mix and Match. Egmont Books. 9781405268493.



The Mick Inkpen Treasury. Hodder Children's Books. \$24.00. 9781444913064.

Ma Station Spatiale. [French] By Olivier Charbonnel. Tourbillon. £13.99. 9782848019390.

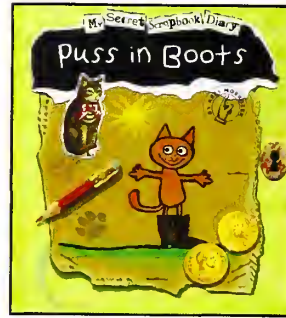
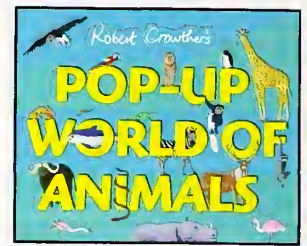


Owl Babies. Walker Books. \$13.00. 9781406352344.

Peppa Pig and the Perfect Day. Candlewick. \$17.77. 9780763668259.



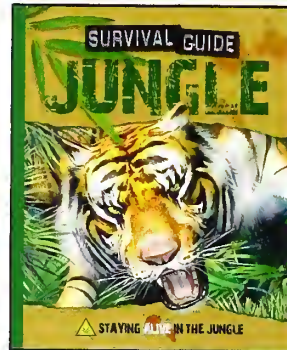
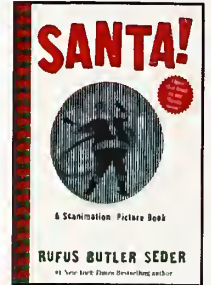
Pop-up World of Animals. By Robert Crowther. Walker. £12.99. 9781406339031.



Puss in Boots. My Secret Scrapbook Diary. By Kees Moerbeek, December. Child's Play. £7.99. 9781846435928.
Also: *The Ugly Duckling.* 9781846435935.

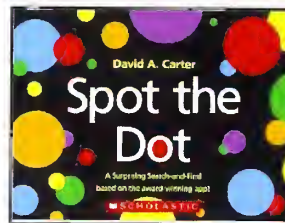
Santa! A Scanimation Picture Book. Workman. \$14.95. 9780761177258.

S. [Removable pieces] By J. J. Abrams. Mulholland Books. \$35.00. 978-0316201643.



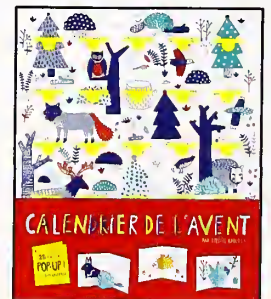
Survival Guide Dinosaur: Staying Alive in the Prehistoric World. January. Arcturus Publishing Limited. \$19.95. 978-1782124337.
Also: *Survival Guide Jungle.* 9781782124320.

Seashore. Sounds of the Wild. Silver Dolphin. \$18.95. 9781607108665.



Spot the Dot. By David Carter. Scholastic. \$12.98. 9780545500098.

Un Hiver En Forêt - Calendrier Pop Up. [French] Editions Mango. £14.31. 9782740430972.



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