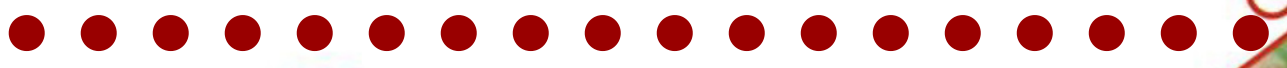


4 Elements in Arts: Stories about FIRE





4 ELEMENTS in arts

Improve foreign language learning and intercultural competences of adults through e-learning

The project

The Erasmus+ KA220 project “4 Elements in Arts” helps educators of adults with specific learning needs and talents. These adults have specific talents but they also have to cope with specific difficulties and challenges. The project explores how the four elements — common images in European culture— influence thinking processes, creativity and arts. The exploration comprises analysing stories depicted in visual works of art such as paintings and sculptures, as well as cinema. The project aims at improving the skills of educators in the field of arts, cultural heritage and English language teaching. It engages adult learners in lifelong learning and education aiming at improving their linguistic, digital and artistic skills as well as their European awareness.



Introduction

The "**4 Elements in Arts**" project focuses on the exploration of concepts related to the fine arts and non-formal education. The project aims to facilitate English and intercultural learning through the visual arts, specifically through paintings/images depicting the four elements: **Water, Fire, Air and Earth**. The following carefully selected artworks serve as **teaching tools for adult learners**, including those with specific learning needs.

In addition, the project aims to contribute to the creation of a **European identity by exploring the cultural significance of the visual arts**, particularly painting, in the European consciousness. It recognises the role of art in shaping national and transnational identities and aims to promote cooperation and understanding between Europeans through cultural exchange.

The importance of the four elements is rooted in both the universal and poetic imagination, emphasising their symbolic meaning and cultural significance throughout history (Gaston Bachelard, 1972). For this reason, the 4 Elements in Arts project emphasises **the importance of exploring these elements through art and literature** in order to understand their deeper meaning and influence on the human imagination.

To summarise, the project, and this document in particular, aims to **promote creative and inclusive non-formal educational approaches through the exploration of art, culture and identity**, focusing on the four elements as depicted in European paintings.



What you will find ...

In this document you will find a collection of artworks on the fourth element - **fire** - from various European countries. Take a look at the artworks selected by the partners and read the stories based on the artworks.



Partners

The project was coordinated by CVO EduKempen (Belgium). The partnership also included DomSpain Consulting (Spain), Zini Foundation (Latvia), Les Apprimeurs (France), Istituto dei Sordi di Torino (Italy), Slovenian Third Age University (Slovenia) and MyArtist (Greece).

The partnership of the "4 Elements in Arts" project wrote these stories between 2022 and 2024.



Content

Belgium

Mad Meg 9

Prometheus Bound 12

France

Job taunted by his wife 16

The fireworks 19

Greece

Prometheus and Atlas 23

The Porch of the Caryatids 26

Italy

Poster advertising the Pietro
Berzia factory 30

Fahrenheit 451 33

Latvia

“The National Union will save Latvia from the red dragon”. Pre-election poster for the 15th list. 36

Old Refugee 38

Slovenia

Litostroj 42

Chronicler 45

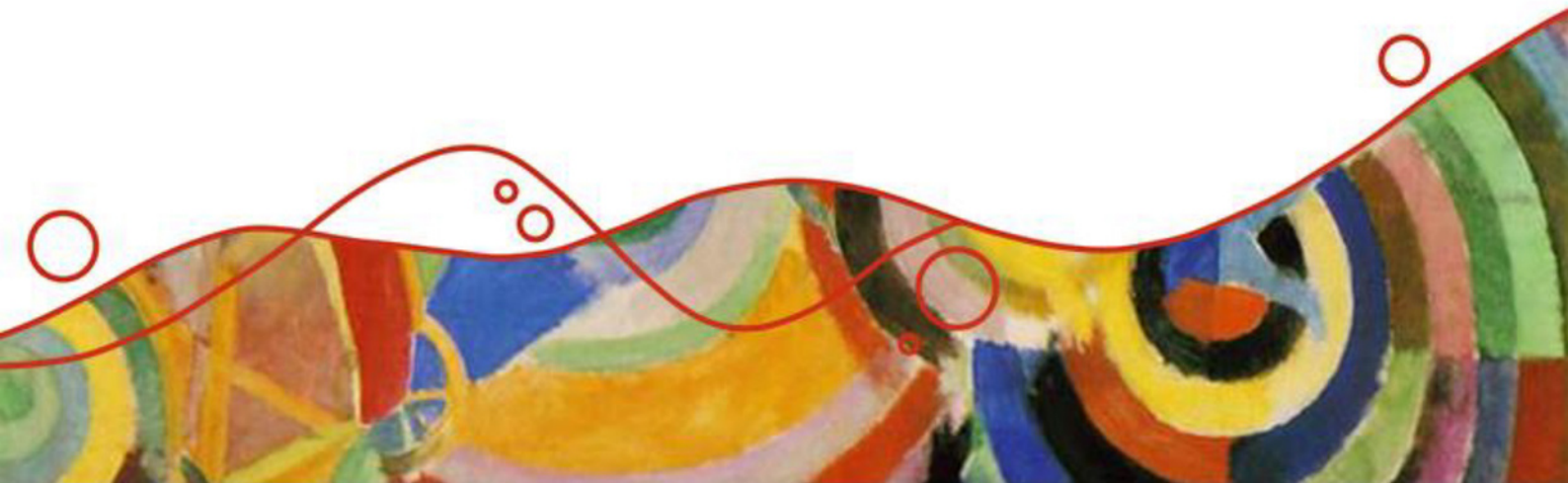
Spain

Miguel de Cervantes 49

Fire on board 52



Belgium



Mad Meg (“Dulle Griet”)

Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1563)



This is an oil painting on oak wood. Mad Meg is a figure of Flemish folklore. The painting depicts an angry and wrathful woman who leads an army of women to pillage Hell. Bruegel used the cheap smalt for the robe of the central figure of Mad Meg instead of other more expensive techniques.

Story

Breugel is a painter who connects us with the folk beliefs of the poor of the Middle Ages. In this painting we find "Dulle Griet" which means "The Mad Meg", a typical figure of Flemish folklore that refers to an evil-tempered woman.

At first glance, Bruegel is making fun of noisy, aggressive women. It could refer to the Flemish proverb: "She could plunder from Hell and return unharmed." But the closer you look, the more possible meanings you can find.

The painter could be denouncing the sin of greed: although she already has enough possessions, Griet and her companions want to enter the mouth of Hell itself in search for more.

Bruegel could be playing on the double meaning of "dulle." The first meaning was "mad" and the second "foolish" or "stupid."

A feminist approach focuses on the fact that Meg is a human being, not a demon at all. Meg walks toward the Hellmouth through a landscape of monsters that represent the sins to be punished with masculine figures. However, she is the one dressed in male clothing and carrying a sword. She collects plates and pans while other women are plundering a house and empowering themselves in front of the men.



Links for more information:

<https://museummayervandenbergh.be/en/page/magd-meg>



Prometheus Bound (“Prometheus Geboeid”)

Peter Paul Rubens (ca 1611–12)



The tenebrism technique on this oil on canvas directs the viewer’s attention to the focal point of the piece, Prometheus’ body and the eagle’s head. The viewer can see all his muscles tensed and veins pulsed as a result of the predator’s attack. ◦

Story



Most people think of Rubens when you say Antwerp so we can follow his steps in town.

We can start our tour at his house in Wapper street 9-11. He designed the house and atelier himself together with the baroque garden. If we walk towards the Cathedral of Our Lady, we will find his statue in the middle of the Groenplaats. If we have some extra time, we can walk or take the tram to the Museum of Fine Arts to admire some of his paintings.

Back in the centre, we can visit the cathedral where we can find four of his original paintings. If we walk towards Hendrik Conscienceplein, one of the cosiest squares of Antwerp, we will find the magnificent St. Charles Borromeo Church. Rubens made the decorations on the facade and top of the tower for this Jesuit Baroque construction.

This church survived two fires. The first one on 18 July 1718 where 39 ceiling paintings by Rubens disappeared. The second one on 30 August 2009 did not destroy any of the artworks.

Further, you can visit the Rockox House, Keizerstraat 10, where you can find some of his paintings. Rockox was the mayor of Antwerp and friend of Rubens. Finally, we can finish our tour at his chapel at Saint James' church where Rubens is buried. He himself painted the altarpiece Madonna Surrounded by Saints in the chapel.



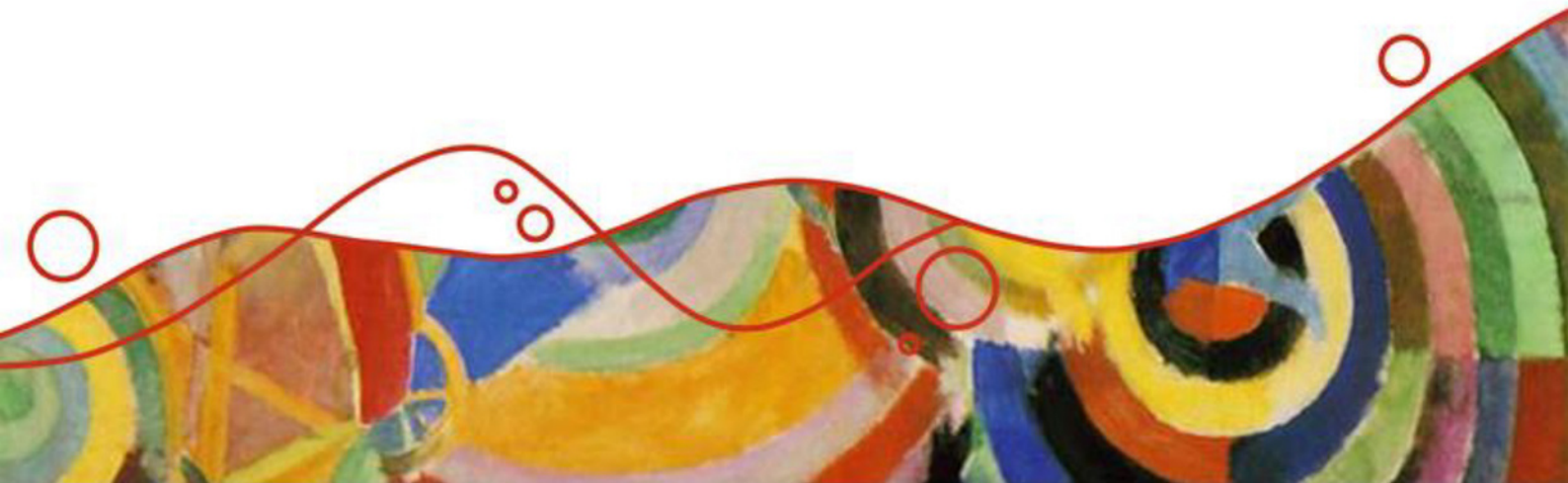
Links for more information:

<https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/104468>





France



Job taunted by his wife ("Job raillé par sa femme")

Georges de La Tour (around 1620-1650)



A well-dressed woman, with a candle in her hand, illuminates a seated, leprous man. He can be recognized by his cut fingers. Both exchange looks, he seems to be in quarantine, in the darkness.

Story



The painting illustrates a passage from the Book of Job in the Bible (Job 2:8-10).

Job, a rich farmer who observes all the commandments given by God, is the subject of a wager between God and Satan. Satan robs Job of his children and his wealth, and makes him sick. Although his wife tells him to curse God, Job remains faithful to the Lord and regains what he has lost.

The story of Job is a reflection on suffering and on the distance that separates humanity from God. The contrasting chiaroscuro saturates the colours, and the light draws attention to the three main elements of the story: the extravagant clothing, the exchange of glances, and the flame of the candle, symbol of the divine presence. In the Bible, fire can represent judgement or purification, but also the presence of God.

In this painting, the light of the candle fire comes as if to purify Job from his misery (the light reveals Job's misery, especially his leprous hand) and to restore his wealth, because at the end of his trial he receives more blessings from the Lord than he had received at the beginning.



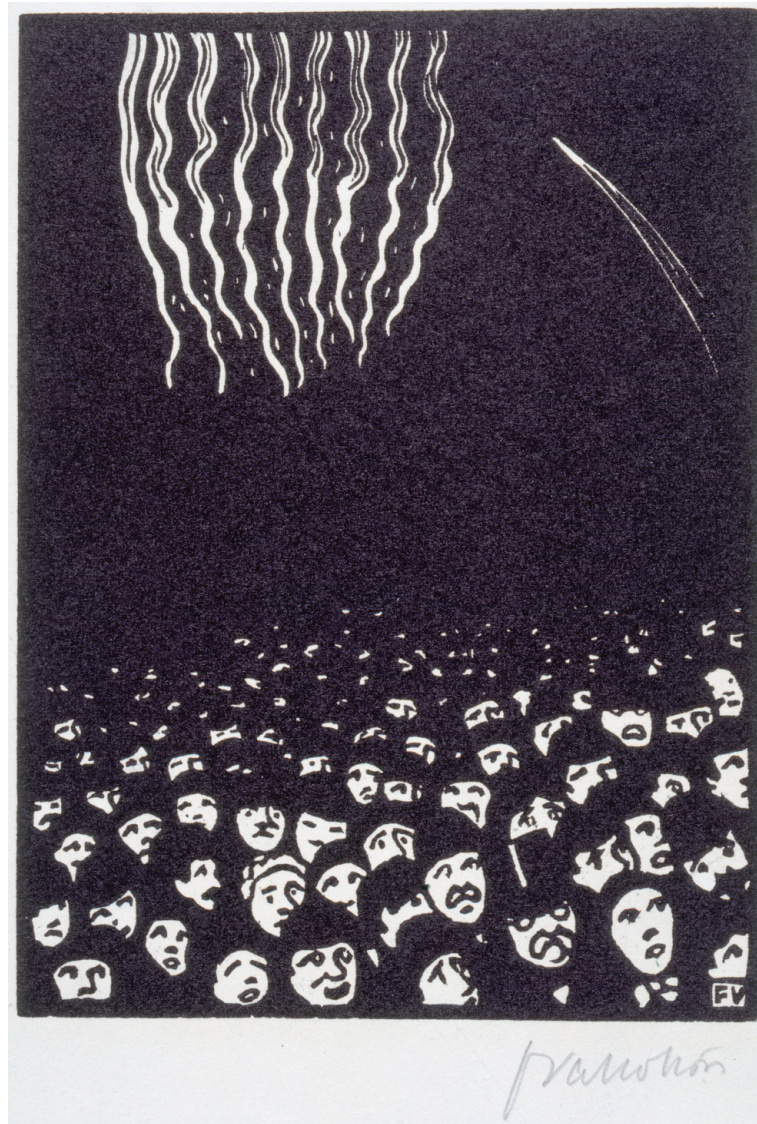
Links for more information:

<https://mudaac.vosges.fr/collections/les-collections>



The fireworks (“Le feu d'artifice”)

Félix Edouard Vallotton (1901)



An engraving in black and white showing a crowd of people watching fireworks in amazement.

Story



This woodcut refers to the World's Fair of 1900. A world's fair is an exhibition which showcases nations' technological, industrial, and artistic achievements. The host country welcomes other nations to its territory and gives them the opportunity to exhibit their latest innovations. It represents a unifying and educational experience. It offers foreigners the opportunity to see the similarities between nations, as well as the differences and peculiarities.

The 1900 World's Fair was the fifth world's fair held in Paris. It was open to the public from April 15 to November 12, 1900, and brought together more than 83,000 exhibitors (including 40,000 foreigners).



The theme of this year was "The Balance of a Century", as it celebrated the entry into a new century. This exhibition was characterised by optimism, celebration and fireworks.

It is an event that is part of the history of France, because France had been holding a series of international exhibitions since 1855. These were larger than any exhibitions held before.



Links for more information:

<https://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr/fr/petit-palais/oeuvres/planche-6-le-feu-d-artifice-vallotton-goerg-208#infos-principales>





Greece



Prometheus and Atlas (“Προμηθέας και Άτλας”)

Arkesilas Painter (565-550 BC)



It is a black-figure pottery, a kylix, in which Prometheus and Atlas are depicted. Each is represented at the crucial moment of his own torment. Prometheus, on the right, is tied tightly to a Doric column; the eagle tortures his chest with its beak, from which drops of blood are dripping, forming a pool on the ground.

Story



Prometheus and Atlas are depicted on the vase serving their punishment. The myth explains that Prometheus stole fire from the gods to give it to humankind, and his action, which occurred in opposition to Zeus's will is placed at the very beginning of humankind. It represents the origin of the human condition. Prometheus in Western culture is being seen and depicted as a figure on the side of humanity, who brought fire and thus progress, defying the will of Zeus.



Links for more information:

<https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/museo-gregoriano-etrusco/sala-xviii-collezione-vasi/kylix-laconica-con-prometeo-e-atlante.html>




The Porch of the Caryatids (“Καρυάτιδες”)

Pericles (421 and 406 BC)




They are sculpted female figures serving as architectural supports, taking the place of a column or a pillar and supporting an entablature on their head. The Greek term karyatides literally means "maidens of Karyai", an ancient town in the Peloponnese.

Story



According to the Roman architect Vitruvius, who mentions it as early as the beginning of the first book of his *De Architectura*, the name *karyatis* means "woman of Karyes": the women of that Peloponnesian city would in fact have been enslaved and retained their matronly robes. following the defeat and destruction of their homeland. This is how they were punished for having supported the Persians. Later, Greek architects would depict them as supporting the weight of the building to pass on the memory of the event. This represents a piece of Greek history.





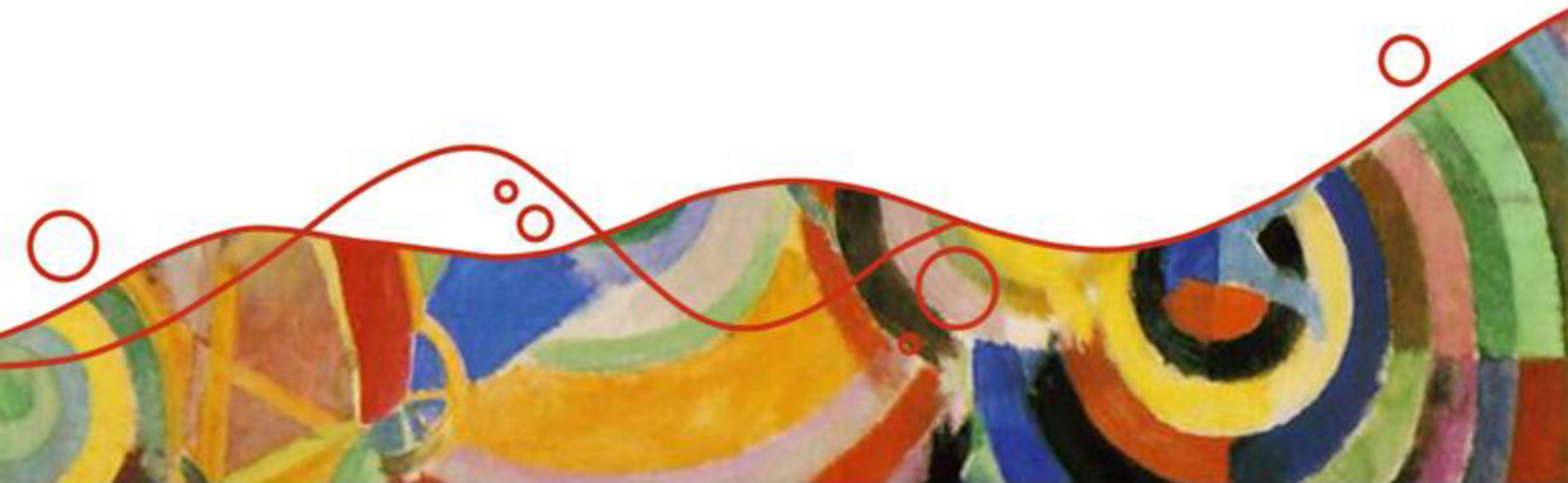
Links for more information:

https://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/imperialfora/augustus/erechtheion.html





Italy



Poster advertising the Pietro Berzia factory ("Poster pubblicitario della fabbrica Pietro Berzia")

Litografia B. Marchisio e Figli (1902)



In 1850 the Pietro Berzia company was founded in Turin, a manufacturer, among other things, of fire pumps, tools and equipment for firefighters, and portable fire extinguishers. This is one of their advertising posters, dated 1902.

Story



The technological and industrial evolution that took place with the spread of steam engines led to enormous social and economic upheavals.

Fire brigades throughout Europe benefited from the steam engine, with the development of new and increasingly powerful fire defence machines.

In 1887, the International Exhibition of Machines and Tools for Firefighters was held in Turin. It was one of the first and most important events of its kind in Europe. For a few days, the latest advances in firefighting technology were exhibited at a site close to Valentino's Park. Alongside the new steam pumps, visitors to the exhibition could find prototypes of even newer and more complex equipment.

The Pietro Berzia company was a manufacturer of firefighting equipment and was based in Turin. The company asked typographers Marchisio & sons to create a poster to advertise their activities.



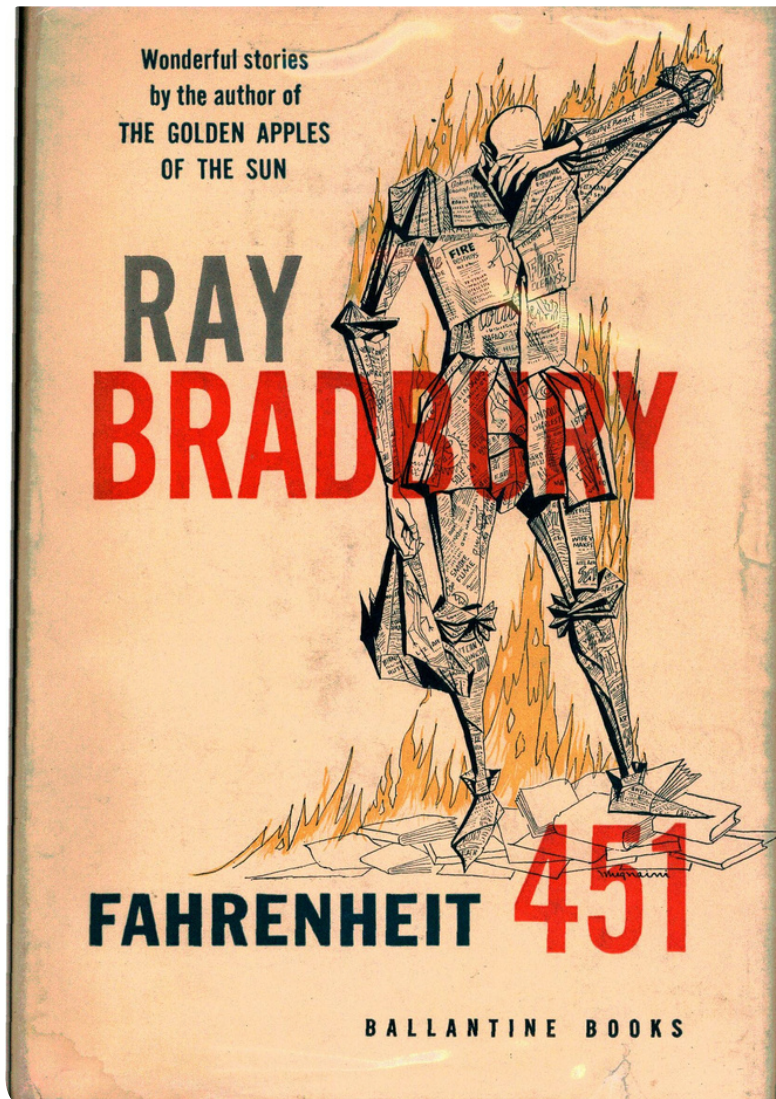
Links for more information:

<https://www.impronteneltempo.org/pompieri.html>



“Fahrenheit 451”

Ray Bradbury (1953)



“It was a pleasure to burn everything. It was a particular pleasure to see things devoured, blackened, *transformed*.”

Story



“Fahrenheit 451” is a science fiction novel written by Ray Bradbury in 1953. The book was an expansion of the short story “The Fireman”, originally published in February 1951 in the magazine “Galaxy Science Fiction”.

Set in an unspecified future after 2022, the novel describes a dystopian society in which reading or owning books is considered a crime. To enforce this, a special body of firefighters has been set up to burn any type of volume.

In 1966 the book was made into a film of the same name directed by François Truffaut.

Fahrenheit 451 is the temperature at which paper burns.

Links for more information:

<https://www.laweekly.com/ray-bradbury-fahrenheit-451-misinterpreted/>



Latvia



“The National Union will save Latvia from the red dragon”. Pre-election poster for the 15th list.

(“Nacionālā Apvienība Latviju glābs no sarkanā pūķa”. Priekšvēlēšanu plakāts 15. sarakstam.)

Rihards Zariņš (1930)



Political poster for the Latvian Social Democratic party in the national election during the 1930s.

Story



In the political poster “The National Union will save Latvia from the red dragon” Rihards Zariņš merges and strengthens the image of the Latvian folk-tale hero Lāčplēšis with a form of St. George, whose origin is rooted in the apocryphal story of the dragon (Satan) and the Virgin (church). The Virgin is saved from being devoured thanks to St. George, who has been sent by God. Thus, the National Union represented itself as a belligerent organization whose mission was connected with the will of God, during the election for parliament. The National Union was in direct opposition to the communist party.

Links for more information:

<https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/handle/7/31351>

Old Refugee (“Vecais bēglis”)

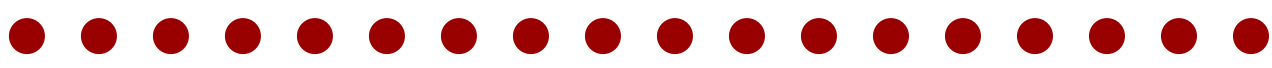
Jāzeps Grosvalds (1917)



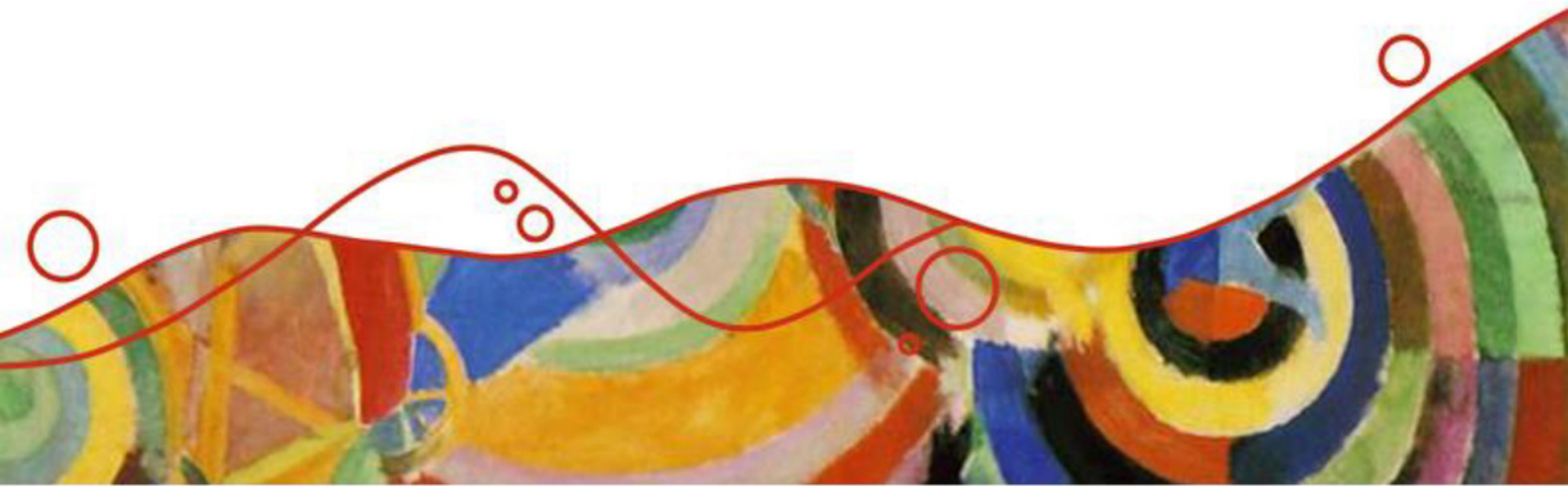
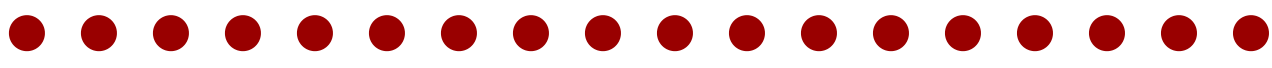


Links for more information:

<https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/kultura/maksla/21.01.2024-dzive-ka-misija-jazepa-grosvalda-mantojums.a539431/>



Slovenia



“Litostroj”

Slavko Pengov (1949)



The image is showing workers of the newly built Litostroj metal factory in Ljubljana. Gender equality, promoted by the new post-war communist government, is being symbolised by a woman who is leading the workers and holding a flag.

Story



The image represents workers of the newly built Litostroј metal factory. The spirit of unification was welcomed in the post-war socialist times, characterised by general enthusiasm and readiness to construct new society which the painting is depicting. Gender equality is also well represented by the female figure holding a flag. This work of art is part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.





Links for more information:

<https://www.muzej-nz.si/si/zbirke-new/digitalne-zbirke/1750/1088-Slavko-Pengov-Litostroj>




Chronicler (“Kronist”)

France Mihelič (1955)

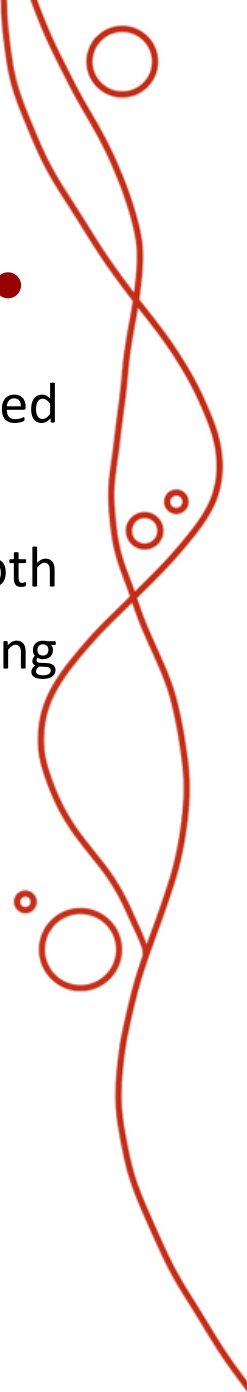


“Chronicler” is a painting representing a person who writes accounts of the war atrocities.

Story



During the Second World War France Mihelič started preparing drafts of his fantastic-apocalyptic image "Chronicler". Later he developed the drafts into both a linocut and a painting. The two works are featuring a chronicler carefully writing accounts of war atrocities. Chronicler includes numerous artist's metaphors (village burnt down, dog screaming, petrol lamp, window, burnt tree). The painting is stored in the depo of the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.





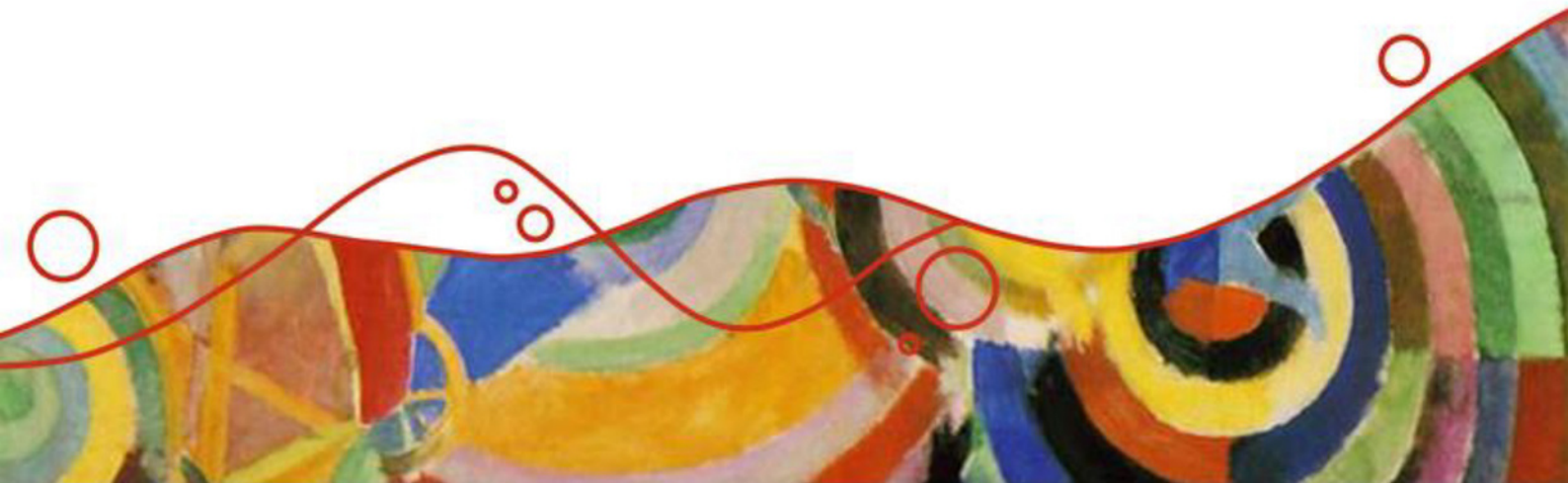
Links for more information:

Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia:
<https://www.muzej-nz.si/si/zbirke-new/digitalne-zbirke/1750/1094-France-Mihelic-Kronist>





Spain




“Miguel de Cervantes”

Augusto Ferrer-Dalmau Nieto (2016)



The painting portrays the famous Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (the one-armed man of Lepanto) in the battle of Lepanto (1571), a famous battle between the Christian army and the Turks.

Story



Today, Europe could be Islamic. For centuries, the Ottoman Turks posed a serious threat to Christianity. Between the 7th and 13th centuries, the Byzantine Empire fought and won numerous battles. A decisive factor was a weapon called "liquid fire", a liquid that was shot in the form of a fiery jet during naval battles.

The Turkish invasion of Europe continued into the 16th century, at which time it forced several Christian republics to ally against them. The result was the army of the "Holy League" that fought in the Battle of Lepanto (1571), considered the greatest naval battle of modern times because it demonstrated the superiority of European artillery over Ottoman forces and stopped their expansion into Europe.

Interestingly, "liquid fire" was not used at Lepanto because it disappeared after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. In any case, the powerful depiction of burning ships in the painting "Miguel de Cervantes" by Augusto Ferrer-Dalmau Nieto reminds us of this powerful weapon.



Links for more information:

https://augustoferrerdalmau.com/inicio/249-miguel-de-cervantes-8436575121406.html?search_query=CERVANTES&results=5



Fire on board (“Fuego a bordo”)

Antonio Muñoz Degrain (1920)



Antonio Muñoz Degrain’s painting "Fire on board" is a powerful depiction of the forces of the natural elements. In this case, humans are prey to the destructive powers of fire and the deadly desolation of the sea.

Story



Humans have used the ocean as a means of transport for millennia. On the one hand, navigation has enabled the exchange of goods and the movement of people, connecting cultures and traditions. On the other hand, the ocean's immensity and undiscovered depths have also instilled fear in humans.

The truth of the matter is that the ocean is a giant graveyard. According to the Spanish archaeologist Carlos León Amores, 700 ships have sunk near the American continent since the 15th century, but the actual total could be 2,000. The conquering ambition of the Spanish crown coexisted with the famous "law of Neptune". The crown assumed that the loss of some valuable cargo when ships sank (or when treasure hunters looted it) was the price of the greater enterprise.

During this imperial era, the crewmembers of these ships were well aware of the dangers at sea and knew before setting sail that surviving the journey was not always a probable outcome. Muñoz Degrain's "Fire on Board" is a powerful depiction of the horrible fate of many of these brave men. Here, the crew are victims of the destructive powers of fire and the deadly desolation of the sea.



Links for more information:

<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/fuego-a-bordo-antonio-mu%C3%B1oz-degra%C3%ADn/swECXk7sBLFmVA?hl=es>





Co-funded by
the European Union



4 ELEMENTS in arts



The Slovenian
Third Age University



ZINI FOUNDATION
FOR INNOVATION AND EDUCATION



DOM SPAIN



ISTITUTO
DEI SORDI
DI TORINO



MYARTIST

LES APPRIMEURS

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.