

Plavčík and Vratko – a humorous horror for children

The exhibition Land of Comics presents this art form to children and adult visitors as a kind of graphic expression with the background of a universally-known Slovak folk tale. It is designed as a trip with elements of both humor and horror. Children, making the trip, face various challenges. The interactive components draw from the plot, characters and objects, or things playing a role in the fairy tale Plavčík and Vratko. The exhibition is split into two sections that follow the natural division of the exhibition spaces.

Panels with drawings of the tale bring the visitors to the world of comics, acquaint them with the story and the characters and serve as guides for the visitors. The panels are similar to medieval murals enriched with playful elements such as windows that open, tunnels and rotating elements. The entire exhibition is dominated by a black and white color combination with accents in the basic colors including red, blue, green yellow and orange that mark turning points in the plot and new characters or activities.

The central element, a panel from boards, runs across the centre of the room and also serves as a climbing structure with pictures of three enchanted cities, Bratislava, Banská Bystrica and Košice. The objects, the tree with roots strangled by a snake and the well with no water because a frog is sitting on the spring at the bottom of the well, represent tasks that the children have to accomplish to rescue the punished cities. There is a rotating barrel at the end of the panel, big enough to house two or three smaller children. The walls of the barrel have little round holes to watch what is going on outside. Along the walls of the room there is a belt of comics with tiny three-dimensional elements with information about the next developments of the story.

Dialog balloons of the comics and other elements illustrating the plot (such as the Weeping Valley) are hanging from the ceiling. The road guides the visitors to the magical character of Vratko and here the children receive their golden hairs.

The way back goes across a “studio” furnished with stylish pieces covered with comic strips where children can create their own version of comics for this fairy tale. This space also is a playground for little children. It includes things such as a haptic element, meaning “reading the comics by touching” and textile elements added to the drawings.

The goal of the exhibition is to acquaint children with this specific kind of literature and graphics and to let them rediscover a traditional fairy tale through comics and create the climate of a studio playground in the fantasy world of comics where everything that can be drawn is possible.

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Visual art version of the tale – M. Maťátko

Dramaturgy – I. Abrahamfyová