

Title: Samokhvalov – A Periodization of His Illustrations

Author: Timothy Ormond

Traditionally, studies of Aleksandr Nikolaevich Samokhvalov focus on his monumental canvases and how they conform to the dictates of Socialist Realism. This paper draws attention to his work as an illustrator of children's books and of literature. It is in his capacity as an illustrator, collaborating with publishers, that he departed significantly from the norm and allowed himself freer expression. This paper defines three distinct periods in Samokhvalov's long illustration career: 1) the 1920s, where he authored and illustrated many children's books for Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 2) the 1930s, where he made illustrations for works of classic Russian and world literature with the "Academia" publishing house, and lastly, 3) the post-war years, when he worked under the auspices of the Khudozhestvennaia Literatura publishing house. Though this periodization clearly demonstrates Samokhvalov's gradual retreat away from the avant-garde and into realism, it nevertheless proposes that Samokhvalov was not as much of a conformist as generally perceived and supports Vera Chaikovskaia's thesis that he had two artistic faces. The dictates of the galleries forced him to wear a public face; the possibilities afforded by working with publishing houses allowed him to show a more intimate one.