



URBAN TEXTS + STREET ANIMALS = THE COMICS OF VILNIUS

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The idea of creating an urban comic compiled of texts and pieces of street art in Vilnius was developed this August during the summer school „City. Language. Identity“ organized in the European Humanities University (EHU – Belarusian University in exile, located in Vilnius since 2005). Our international working group „Urban texts“ consisted of eight sociologists, art historians and designers: Alla Marchenko from Ukraine, Kristóf Nagy from Hungary, Ieva Vaičiaitė from Lithuania, Vera Kavaleuskaya, Vera Zalutskaya, Darya Vasiura, Kate Varfolomeeva from Belarus and me, Veronika Urbonaitė-Barkauskienė from Vilnius.

We were inspired by the genius loci, street poetry ... and those fantastic animals we met on the walls of Vilnius. We spent several days walking in different districts of the city taking pictures of street art and trying to understand what characters, colours, moods and topics dominate the urban landscape of Vilnius. After these field trips we shared our insights and had long discussions. We discussed many questions, such as why are there so many graffiti in the center and oldtown of Vilnius, or why does the street art in working class district Naujininkai differ so much from the brand new suburb with private houses where graffiti is simply absent. The most important question was, what narrative can we extract from illegal pictures and inscriptions on the streets of Vilnius. After long hours of talking, arguing, drawing, cutting and gluing we developed the characters, the story (or to be precise – a fairy tale) and the whole crazy comic – about the multiethnic spirit of Vilnius and adventures of the street animals, such as the Space Cat, its best friend kiwi Vytautas, huge worm Ivan and others who fight Lion the Cleaner of Walls and celebrate the diversity of Vilnius.

After this interdisciplinary experience in urban anthropology + visual ethnography + collective story writing + designing the comics (which was, to tell the truth, as intriguing as exhausting) I still think that every city with a rich history and walls full of texts and characters deserves its own urban comic. And I wonder which city is going to be our next?

SEE FULL COMICS IN U12 IN WWW.URBAN.EE



