

Lea Grundig's Work as an Artist in Eretz-Israel

A short description of the research project (as by February 2020)

An initial examination of roughly a half of the relevant research materials reveals a portrait of Lea Grundig more enigmatic and more complicated than I first thought. I believe that she lived several often-contradictory lives and took on a variety of lifestyles. She was quite manipulative and towards the end of her life was most likely cooperating with the DDR regime, while simultaneously presenting herself as avant-garde and anti-regime.

After her rather miraculous arrival in Eretz-Israel, she studied Hebrew and made an impressive effort to integrate into the hegemonic cultural circles, and interestingly enough did not attempt to join the *Orient* group in Haifa. She displayed an unusual ability to spot the most influential actors in the cultural scene – newspapers, journals, art galleries, critics, publishing houses, and more – and integrate them into a productive personal network. Very quickly she managed to find work as an illustrator at several of the leading ideological and commercial publishing houses, among them "Dvir", "Am-Oved" and "Massada".

As an Eretz-Israeli illustrator she developed a style different from that found in her earlier work in Germany; her illustrations for children's books were characterized by a colorful, joyful and positive presentation of the world they depicted.

Although she became a member of the communist party and made friends with some of the comrades, she nonetheless also befriended several of the leading Zionist men of letters such as Dov Stock [later Sadan], editor of *Davar's* prestigious literary supplement, as well as influential writers for children like Anda-Amir and Bracha Habas, and did not hesitate to contact them when in search of illustrating work or publicity for her expositions.

Her partner, Nachum Eitan, a scion to a powerful and wealthy family, was instrumental in helping Grundig establish herself as an artist in Eretz-Israel. Apparently, she had a highly adventurous character and wanted to try everything, including life in the Kibbutz; the latter provided her another opportunity to develop as an artist.

Grundig was one of the first illustrators to give voice to refugees and to those children who survived the Holocaust. Simultaneously she continued to work on more political material and produced illustrations for several posters, in which she returned to her previous gloomy and morose pre-war style.

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