

Poster with Björn Hedlund's book cover; PR-materials of the Stockholm Riksteatern (2011) and the Gothenburg Folkteatern (2010)

Artists and draughtsman Björn Hedlund (1922-1987), first illustrator of the Katitzi books, close friend of the author Katarina Taikon, worked closely together with her, creating thus a linguistic *and* graphical process that made the first Katitzi book(s) born. The family show of Emma Broström premiered in Gothenburg in the winter of 2010. The events in the story take place in a present in which rootlessness, overcrowding and the search for a real home are frequent themes as well as Katitzi's will to go to school. In Riksteater (2011), director Kajsa Isaksson made Katitzi into a super-heroine; her version broadens the themes and thus the possible audience of the piece, as she says: „Our show is about finding home, no matter where you are. Who you are. It's about prejudice and ignorance but also about community, struggle, family, bureaucracy, rights and dreams.” Together with her tour, seminars and talk on democracy and equal rights were organized. The piece has reached thousands of primary school children. Further theatre adoptions are in progress.

Original drawings by Björn Hedlund Katitzi 1, 14 illustrations, 1969.

Ink on white paper

95x143, private property

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In the Katitzi books, text and image meld in a way that the drawings transcend the purely illustrative and become a vital part of the narrative. Björn Hedlund's drawings add a new layer to the stories, adding dimensions to the main character, Katitzi, and sharpening her features and personality. His depiction of Katitzi identifies her innate strength and the inviolable power that is visible in her face, which contrasts with the texts' often grim and cruel stories. The drawings contain a realism that goes beyond the simplifying conventions or patterns of children's books. Bold approaches, with decorative elements in the milieus and backgrounds recur in the illustrations, which bear traces of the late 1960s and early 70s psychedelic poster art. Interestingly enough, the accentuated contrasts between light and dark allow a lively grey scale - shadings and nuances that give the images a certain softness while at the same time emphasizing contrast. (Jan Ekman: Image of Katitzi: On Björn Hedlund and his Illustrations)

Original book cover by Björn Hedlund: Katitzi fleeing

33x45cm, private property

Original book cover by Björn Hedlund: Rosa och Paul

37x45cm, private property

Original book cover by Björn Hedlund: Katitzi in Stockholm

33x45cm, private property

Original book cover by Björn Hedlund: Katitzi the Child Bride

37x49,5 cm, private property

Original book cover by Björn Hedlund: Katitzi Z1234

37x49,5 cm, private property

The concept of "illustration" may suggest that images are less important than text. This is not quite true in the case of Katarina Taikon and Björn Hedlund, whose long and close

friendship was reflected in the intimacy of their collaboration on the books. Katarina Taikon prepared the books by talking about her life and upbringing while Björn Hedlund described the stories through sketches and drawings. The creation of the autobiographical but fictional character, Katitzi, can thus be described as a parallel linguistic and graphic process, even if the actual stories preceded the drawings. In some sense, and without diminishing Katarina Taikon's undisputed importance, it is a shared project in many ways. This is also apparent in their joint publishers, Tai-Lang, with whom Katarina Taikon's husband, Björn Langhammer, was also involved. (Conversation with Mona Andersson, Björn Hedlund's sister, 10.07.2012, published in Jan Ekman: Image of Katitzi: On Björn Hedlund and his Illustrations)

Various volumes of Katitzi, among them German, Slovakian, Hungarian and Romanes translations, an LP with Katerina Taikon's signature, the E-Katitzi book and the DVD of the tv series

The translation of the Katitzi books began already in the 1970s, first into the neighboring Nordic languages (Danish in 1972, Norwegian in 1975, Finnish in 1977) and into German in 1974. The French translation came in 1984 and in 1999, after the fall of the Berlin wall, when the discussion on the Romani people's situation was again actual; a Czech translation was also published. In 2001 the books were translated into Slovak, Hungarian and Romanian. A translation to Romanes was made in 2010 by Hans Caldaras, who also recorded the story on CD. When the TV series first appeared, an audio version on LP (with Katarina Taikon as narrator) accompanied the TV-show. In 2006 the tv series was published in DVD.

Original drawing by Björn Hedlund: Katitzi the Child Bride

Ink on white paperboard
36x58 cm
private property

Without Björn Hedlund's illustrations in the thirteen Katitzi books (1969-1982), the image of Katarina Taikon's autobiographical alter ego would have been less distinctive. The black and white illustrations depict details and milieus in the various parts of Sweden where Katitzi finds herself. Together with the text, the illustrations portray the injustices and prejudice that so manifestly dictated the Romani conditions of life in the recent past – and which continue to impact their situation today. The Katitzi books may be described as a kind of literary social reportage, which over time developed from children's books to young people's literature with the last books in the series addressing increasingly complex questions. Already in the second book, *Katitzi and Swing*, the reader encounters a common reality for the Romani people: being deprived of rights that are self-evident for other citizens. (Jan Ekman: Image of Katitzi: On Björn Hedlund and his Illustrations)

Kamratposten nr 1, 1976.

Katitzi series in Kamratposten nr 3, 1975.

Comic books published by Williams publishers, 1975-76.

The collection represents the typical youngster's literature in Sweden in the 1970s. Kamratposten, also known as KP, 'Folk School Children Journal', is a Swedish newspaper founded in 1892. The target audience is children and youngster between 8 and 14 years. The magazine writes about current and universal things in an easily understandable and often neutral manner. Kamradposten published Katitzi in two different periods, 1969-1970 and 1973-1976, as a serial and as a cartoon. The impact of the Katitzi story is also proven by the comic Katitzi published once a month in 1975 and 1976 by Williams publishers in Bromma.

Letter to Katarina Taikon
Child drawing 25 x 32,5 cm
A copy of Katarina Taikon Gypsies, 1971
Copy article Expressen August 30, 1969 "How was DETDA"
Copy interior of dwelling tents

The letter and the children drawing are demonstrating the young readers' intimate relation with Katarina Taikon.

A part of Katarina Taikon's Gypsies published by Natur och Kultur in 1970. Katarina Taikon was a writer as well as a political activist, who regularly published books and articles about the Roma's living conditions in the country and demonstrated for Roma's rights together with her sister, Rosa Taikon.

Expressen, independent liberal daily, introduced the 37-year-old Katarina Taikon and published parts of the first Katitzi book which was just about to come out. The article highlights that Katitzi is a true story based on the author's own childhood and underlines that the issue of Roma not being accepted in the society is still acute in Sweden.

In the 1930s, Katarina and her family lived in a tent seen on the picture above.

Previously, most Gypsy families lived in a similar tent, only a few families could afford to stay in wagons.

Katitzi DVD 2006

1979-1980 The Swedish Public Service Company SVT broadcasts the TV-series Katitzi in six episodes. Directed by Ulf Andréé, Katitzi becomes a physically expressive girl who is not as verbal as the protagonist found in the books. Music plays an important role in the series and is written by Katarina Taikon's close friend and relative, Hans Caldaras, who also designed the Romani costumes. He also served as one of two Romani fact checkers. In 2006 the TV series was published on DVD: the stories of Katitzi live on more than forty years after they were first published.

Clips from SVT / TV Western (1979-1980) / Katitzi Folkteatern clips (2011)

Emma Broström's family show premiered in Gothenburg in the winter of 2010. The events in the story take place in a present which rootlessness, overcrowding and the search for a real home are frequent themes. Sören Bruner transformed the stage into a circular ramp upon which boxes served as flexible furniture. A common theme in the show is Katitzi's will to go to school and in this interpretation, the nine-year old girl becomes a particularly sensitive and curious child. The grandmother figure Mami has a prominent place. The warm meeting between the grandmother and Katitzi becomes an essential scene and the rousing Romani-inspired music helps accentuate the plot.

Rosa Taikon's video message on the 7th Berlin Biennale, in the frame of The Romani Elders project

Video by Yvonne Ihmels, Gyula Galyas

Rosa Taikon, Katarina Taikon's sister, talks about the actual situation of Roma in Sweden and recalls her personal memories about how she and Katarina became the most active fighters of Roma rights at the time. Rosa Taikon is an internationally well-known silversmith and activist. The Romani Elders project wishes to make sure that the achievements of The Romani Elders, the wisest of the Roma intelligentsia are not neglected or forgotten and their wisdom is utilized and re-invested in our societies. The project is curated by Tímea Junghaus, Anna Lujza Szász and Angéla Kóczé.

www.theromanielders.org

E Katitzi CD

In the mid 2000s, Hans Caldaras, relative and close friend, was asked by Rosa Taikon and Katarina Taikon's child to translate the first Katitzi book into the Romany language. It is the first book of its kind in the world, and was published by Podium in 2008 together with five spoken CDs recorded and narrated by Hans Caldaras himself. It was the first Roma LP in the language Romanes in Sweden, with which Caldaras attracted attention. Today he is a well-known popular music artist and activist of Sweden. Between 2007 - 2011 he worked as a director of the Roma Cultural Centre in Stockholm. Between 2003 - 2005 he was a member in the Roma-Council at the Swedish Parliament.