

# PATEK PHILIPPE

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE

VOLUME III NUMBER 3





1962



1980



1967

The Latvian magazine *Jaunā Gaita* has been produced in Canada since 1955 for Latvians everywhere. Its associate editor, Juris Zagarins, has now decided to share his archive of covers with the rest of us. He reveals their inspiration to leading designer Anita Matusevics



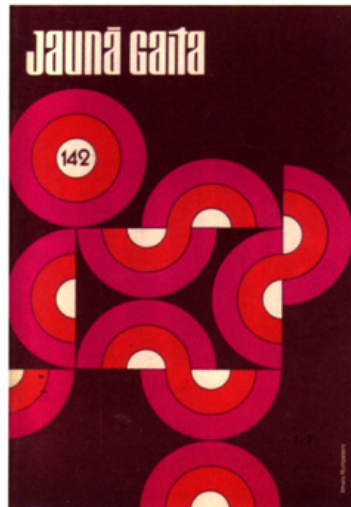
1967



1976



1981



1983



1963



1994



1964



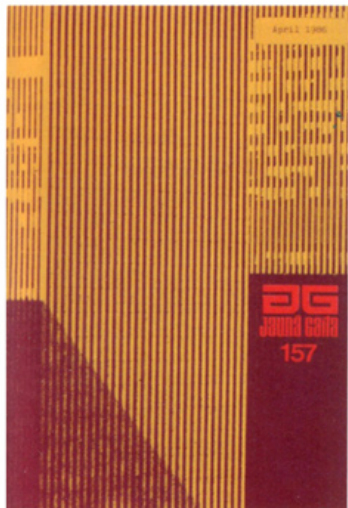
1971



1962



1983



1986



1981



1961



1969



1973



1963



1966



1990



1963



1991

**Anita Matusevics** *Jaunā Gaita* means “the new course.” The masthead says it is “a Latvian quarterly devoted to literature, the arts, and the discussion of ideas.” But before you start perusing the poetry, prose, memoirs, history, literary criticism, and other great content, you’ll notice the cover. I remember loving these covers as a student in the 1970s and early 1980s. They were inspiring, vintage, modern, experimental, powerful...and they still are. Who was responsible for designing them?

**Juris Zagarins** Many different artists were involved but Ilmars Rumpeters, who joined the magazine in 1965, is responsible for a great many of the eye-catching covers.

**AM** How did he come up with these images?

**JZ** I’ll let Ilmars answer that. He says, “I made sure that *Jaunā Gaita*, being the magazine of young writers, poets, and artists, had very contemporary covers. It was really fun to do all that creative work and have total freedom. The editor-in-chief in those days, Laimonis Zandbergs, trusted me completely. One could let the creative mind fly. And that’s also what the other Latvian artists who submitted covers did. Those were happy days for all of us. Latvian national symbols were used sometimes, but in the main it was pure graphic design. We used to be limited to two or three colors for offset printing, so we had to make the best of it. Doing creative design work every day (my day job was in a packaging company in New York), it was no wonder that interesting cover ideas crossed my mind. The purpose of a good-looking cover is to help sell the magazine, just like packaging graphics sell the products. And for me, there was plenty of inspiration in a city like New York – museums, art galleries, art exhibitions.”

**AM** Reading a brief biography of Ilmars Rumpeters, I began to realize that the difference between a good and a bad designer is how much they know about everything else – biology, history, society. The interesting stuff is *what* you choose to communicate and how and why. Ilmars’s life is the product of history and world forces: from the Daugava River to world war, displacement, immigration, factory labor, unemployment, conscription, to his perseverance in returning to art and graphics whenever he seemed to have an opportunity (usually when history and politics moved their attention to other places). No wonder the covers are so great.

Do you think you get these kinds of images/covers by just letting them emerge, by letting go and being comfortable in not really knowing what you are doing, letting them just emerge from experience and history, or were they conceived and controlled and extremely specific to the content of the magazine?

**JZ** They did not always relate to the content – they were more ornamental, to get people’s attention. But such things do not simply emerge. *Jaunā Gaita* is the product of talented individuals putting in a lot of valuable work on a voluntary basis (subscribers pay only for mailing and printing). I am not sure that an interesting life is

all it takes to be creative but I do remember that it used to impress me that people of my parents’ generation, faced with the hard scrabble for a decent living, still spent much, and sometimes most, of their energy on volunteer work for their community.

**AM** Tell me a little about the history of the magazine.

**JZ** In the late 1940s, most of the people who would one day found the magazine were attending Latvian schools in refugee camps in the American and British occupation zones in Germany. Around the turn of the decade they gathered in the Midwest of the United States in the Great Lakes region – Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin – and also in Ontario, Canada, where they continued their education at university level while at the same time struggling to make a living. They were intellectually inclined and highly competitive individuals who did not want to disappear by assimilation in the great melting pot around them. Hence the magazine.

**AM** What was the editorial objective?

**JZ** The first issue (September 1955) was dedicated to “all readers and writers, to all who hope in the future to see a new generation of Latvian writers carry on our literary traditions.”

**AM** As a student I was more active in the Latvian community and followed the content of *Jaunā Gaita*. At that time, before the internet, it offered a link to a lot of creative Latvian thought. It was a community that fostered my own early experiments in art and graphics, which have now grown to maturity within my own practice and during my years as an associate with Bruce Mau [a visionary Canadian designer who believes design can change the world]. Does *Jaunā Gaita* still have the same goals?

**JZ** The current editor [since 1998], Rolfs Ekmanis, says, “More than ever there is a need for stimulation of intellectual life, for preserving our spiritual wakefulness, for Latvianness, which is fundamentally anchored in language, historical roots, and culture. A nation is what it is solely by virtue of its culture.”

**AM** Do you think there is a link between the history of Latvian culture and these unique covers? On the *Jaunā Gaita* website Alvis Hermanis talks about Riga, the capital of Latvia, being like the eyes of a very old person, full of irony and melancholy but also philosophical. Could that describe the magazine too?

**JZ** There is a link between the history of Latvian culture and the magazine and its iconic covers. Maybe they are not the eyes of culture but they are icons or symbols of the power of art in culture.

**AM** The covers are still meaningful today and still universal.

**JZ** I agree that there is nothing petty or diminutive about Latvian culture. It is as universal as any other culture. In 1970, our late esteemed contributing editor and writer, Gunars Andrejs Irbe, wrote, “Aren’t we all lucky to be in exile, we who are never to grow old. We – the forever young.” Of course this was tongue in cheek, but there’s an element of truth there: it takes art to achieve the immortality of universal and undying relevance. ♦

# JAUNĀ GAITA 84

Inspiring, vintage, modern, experimental, powerful