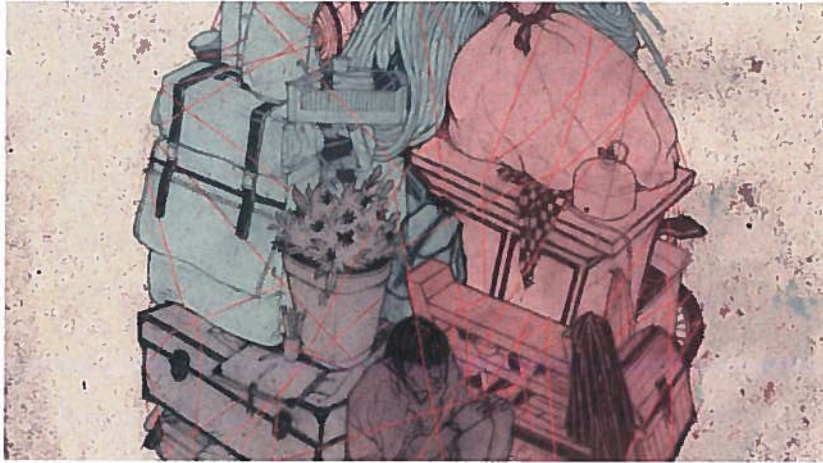


Art Collections at Chapman University



A Conversation with Štěpánka Jislová

Comic Book Artist and Wilkinson College Scholar-in-Residence

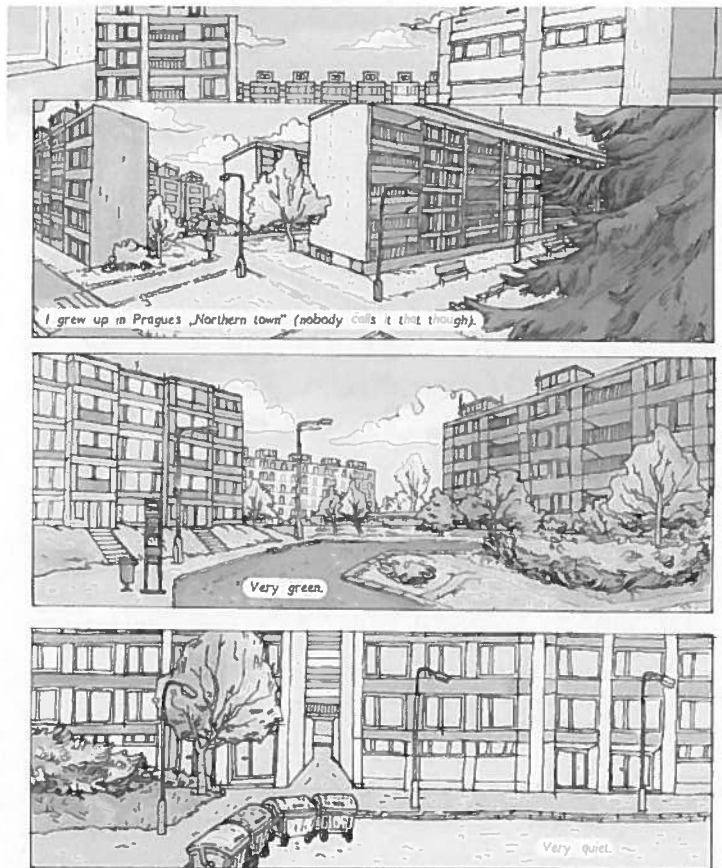
December 7, 2016

The Wilkinson College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, in collaboration with a [“Getting to Know Europe”](#) grant from the European Union, launched a [Scholar-in-Residence program](#) that gives European-based visual artists and culture professionals an opportunity to bring their work into the Chapman community and engage with new perspectives and ideas.

This semester’s Scholar-in-Resident was [Štěpánka Jislová](#), a Prague-based comic book artist with thought-provoking illustrations and narratives, as well as a personal mission to empower female artists within the comic community.

The Chapman Art Collections had the opportunity to ask Štěpánka a few questions about her work, her time at Chapman, and her plans for the future.



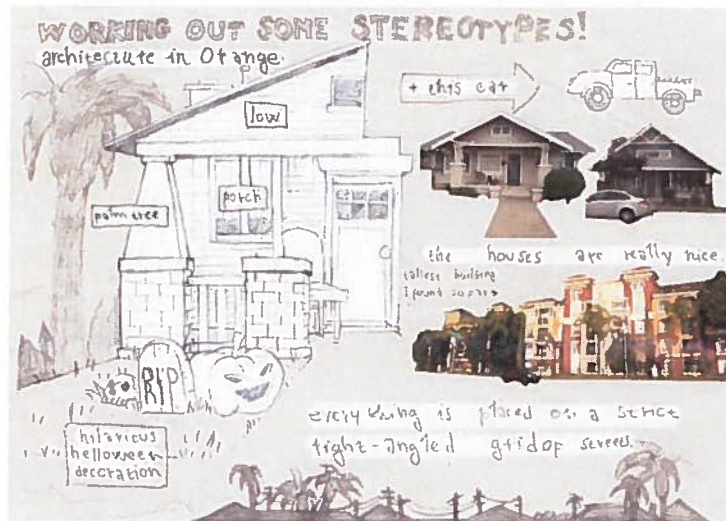


Cement and Rebar, Štěpánka Jislová

What are a few of the main themes or concepts of the project you were working on while at Chapman?

I originally applied with a comics story about a road trip and the transition between staying and leaving, but before I got to Chapman it went through some changes and somehow I ended up doing two projects instead of just one. I became primarily interested in the idea of home and how our surroundings and the places where we grow up affect it. That became the main theme of my eight-page-long comics. I was born in Prague, in a neighborhood known for its socialistic architecture but also located in a Protected Landscape Area, and I wondered how that might have contributed to my identity.

The second project came together very naturally. I didn't want to forget any part of my stay in Chapman, so I started drawing a very simple comics diary. It turned out to be quite a nice connection with my Czech friends as I regularly updated new pages online and it fits the theme of the grant (making connections between Europe and States) perfectly.



An example of Štěpánka's comic diary, Štěpánka Jislová

Tell us more about **Laydeez Do Comics**. How and why did you open up a Czech branch of this organization?

Laydeez Do Comics is an international organization that focuses on promoting female comics artists to the general public. Originally founded in 2009 in the UK, the movement quickly spread to other cities like Leeds, San Francisco and many more.

We, the Czech branch residing in Prague, decided to join in September last year, and its core consists of Tereza Drahoňovská and me. Throughout the year, we regularly update our websites with articles, interviews and reviews, but our biggest accomplishment so far is definitely a week long comics symposium, "GENDER: REDEFINED." By the end of the week, we had seven unique stories from the best young female Czech and Slovak comics artists. Apart from the creative process, we were happy to see that the symposium worked as a networking event as well and we managed to put together two exhibitions of the symposium works so far.





Beautiful Darkness, Štěpánka Jislová

How does Laydeez Do Comic empower women in creative industries?

Our main goal is to balance the gender inequality that has always been here, not just in the comics field. Nowadays there's more and more female comics artists, but it still doesn't feel like they are getting the same recognition as their male counterparts, especially when it comes to the older generation. When the comics community gets confronted with said fact, many voices argue that there just wasn't (and isn't) enough female artists. We want to prove them wrong by giving female artists a space for promotion!

The interesting thing is that in my generation, there's a majority of female artists and when I look at the American indie scene, I am seeing mostly women as well. We are still lacking positions at festival panels and at the big mainstream publishing houses, but it's getting harder and harder not to see us.



Knightie, Štěpánka Jislová

Do you have a goal/dream project for what you would want to do for your career?

My ideal plan is to balance freelance illustration and my own personal comics projects so that I make enough money with illustrations and I still have time and energy to work on my graphic novels. There are so many themes I'd like to explore – myths, legends, the limits of humanity and the importance of home. If I dare to dream big, my absolute dream goal would be to one day collaborate with artists such as Neil Gaiman or Mike Mignola.

Although Štěpánka has returned to Prague, her art and continuing work with [Laydeez Do Comics](#) can be viewed via her [Facebook page](#). The Chapman Art Collections Department thanks Štěpánka for her time spent at Chapman and her unique artistic perspective that she was able to share with our community.

Interview and text by Madeline Anderson and Jessica Johnson