

John Halas writes:

To evaluate the design work of Jan LeWitt and George Him, one must consider three aspects of their careers: their joint achievements during their partnership from 1933 to 1954, Him's own work until his death in 1982, and Him's character as a man, a personality, and a philosopher.

Upon his departure from the partnership, LeWitt kept himself in the background and concentrated on abstract visual art. He had an urge to make up for lost time from his neglected love of painting freely, without the restraint imposed by a brief from a commercial client. Him adopted exactly the opposite policy; he recognised the challenge of a given problem, enjoyed analyzing it as a surgeon does over the operating table, and solving it logically, step by step. Their partnership had come into being through their eccentric plan to walk around the world together, earning their keep by sketching. Instead, they established themselves in London where they collaborated on book covers and children's illustrations. How two characters with such opposing personalities stayed together for seventeen years is still puzzling. One can only assume that through contradiction, argument, and continual friction they found their mutual strength and achieved better and richer solutions than they would have done individually. They made a joint impact with their wartime posters in Britain, especially the one persuading the public to walk; this consisted of the shoe-shaped "Shanks' Pony", head and tail emerging from each end of the shoe, and beshod lettering. Also a classic was their "Vegetabull" character (a bull made up entirely of vegetables), intended to encourage the public to substitute vegetable dishes for meat.

One of the most imaginative advertising campaigns ever to appear in Britain was originated by Him and the humourist Stephen Potter for the soft drinks company Schweppes in the early 1960s. It was based on "Schweppshire," an imaginary county somewhere in England. Potter, the inventor of "gamesmanship" and "lifemanship," and Him created an English scene out of such nonsense and eccentricity. Later, they followed this with "Europe in PerSchwepptive," making fun of the Englishman's prejudice against Europe. As with Him's other works, wit and inventiveness dominated both the story and the images for these series. Besides the playful pleasures of content and form, everything the most demanding client needed to convey was there. Him's work, to the end, showed him to be mentally alert, fertile in ideas, and original in concept.

Him was a true amalgam of Eastern and Western Europe. His studies of art and philosophy in German universities, his choice of British soil as a location in which to function mixed to create a uniquely interesting and fascinating personality. Having had the privilege of working with him for some twelve years on animated films, I benefited from his logic and penetrating analytical approach to story-development in arriving at a final conclusion. His brain was continually brimming over with ideas, but he was always able to control them with self-discipline and consideration for the point of view of others. His craftsmanship and sense of colour were superb and his speed of execution, unusually fast, contributing substantially to the fact that everything he created came to life.

Apart from his work in Europe, Him did a great deal in Israel, including the designs for the exhibition at Masada. He also taught at the Academy of Art and Design in Tel Aviv.