

International conference

Conference organizers:

The Faculty of Arts and the Cluster of Research of Disintegration of Communism and Post-Communist Transformations at Vytautas Magnus University together with Vilnius Academy of Arts

Conference board:

Linara Dovydaitytė (chair, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas)
Kristiāna Ābele (Latvian Academy of Arts, Riga)
Ginta Gerharde-Upeniece (Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga)
Giedrė Jankevičiūtė (Lithuanian Culture Research Institute, Vilnius)
Katrīn Kivimaa (Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn)
Andres Kurg (Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn)
Agnė Narušytė (Vilnius Academy of Arts)

Conference venue:

VMU art gallery 101
Laisvės av. 53, Kaunas

Conference dates:

14-15 October 2011

Publication compiled by:

Linara Dovydaitytė

© Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, 2011

Cover image:

16 mm film still from Algimantas Kunčius' *Vilnius artists at the painter Viktoras Vizgirda 80th anniversary exhibition*.
M. K. Čiurlionis State Museum of Art, Kaunas. 1984.

Supported by:

The Research Council of Lithuania

**(At)blokuota atmintis:
dailės istorijos rašymas Baltijos šalyse**



**(Un)blocked Memory:
Writing Art History in Baltic Countries**



October 14-15, 2011
Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas

2nd conference of Baltic art historians

(UN)BLOCKED MEMORY:

WRITING ART HISTORY IN BALTIC COUNTRIES

According to French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, the narrative of history is essentially selective; it 'remembers' certain events of the past and 'forgets' others. Yet 'forgotten' or 'blocked' memories do not disappear; they settle in the collective unconscious and influence the society's life from there. The international conference *(Un)blocked Memory: Writing Art History in Baltic Countries* will focus on research into the arts in three Baltic countries: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and will offer to look at them through the lens of the problem of memory. During the last several decades, art history has been seriously affected by the ideas of critical historiography; it has been influenced by such new disciplines as culture studies, memory studies, postcolonial studies, etc. encouraging a critical rethinking of art history as an objective narrative about the past. Such self-reflectivity of art history in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – countries that have experienced Soviet occupation – refers not only to the ideas of Western theories, but also to the live historical experience. The rewriting of history, the blocking and liberation of collective memory constantly accompanied the change of political regimes in the twentieth century. In the post-Soviet era, these processes also affect art historical discourse as well as curatorial and museum practices.

The participants of the conference will discuss the history of art as a (re)construction of the past influenced by political, economic and ideological factors and by collective memory and imaginary. The conference will consider the construction of the national canons of art history and its change, new challenges in making national narratives, various practices of remembering and blocking memories in art historical texts and museum practices. The aim of the conference is to bring Baltic art historians together and to provide an opportunity to discuss current processes and problems of writing art history in the regional context.

The conference is a continuation of the series of conferences of Baltic art historians, which were initiated by the Estonian Academy of Art together with the Estonian Association of Art Historians in 2009.

11.00-11.20 Welcome speeches

Opening session

(Re)writing History: Ideologies and Interpretations

Moderator: Ginta Gerharde-Upeniece

11.20-11.40 **Giedrė Mickūnaitė** (Vilnius Academy of Arts), Past Things, Present Texts: Medieval Art and Its Histories (A Lithuanian Example)

11.40-12.00 **Aija Brasliņa** (Latvian National Museum of Art), Niklāvs Strunke in the Shifting Paradigms of Latvian Art and Art History

12.00-12.20 **Anu Allas** (Freie Universität Berlin), An Unexpected Loss: Writing Art History between Parentheses

12.20-12.50 Discussion

13.00-15.00 Lunch break

Afternoon session

Rethinking the Discipline: Theories, Concepts, Methods

Moderator: Agnė Narušytė

15.00-15.20 **Linara Dovydaitytė** (Vytautas Magnus University), Art History and Post-Colonialism: A Lithuanian Case

15.20-15.40 **Maija Rudovska** (Latvian Academy of Arts), Expired Monuments: the Case Studies of Latvian Soviet Time Architecture

15.40-16.00 Discussion

16.00-16.30 Coffee break

16.30-16.50 **Simona Matuzevičiūtė** (Vilnius Academy of Arts), Micro-History without Macro-Context: Burials and Memorial Culture of the 19th c. Manors in Lithuania

16.50-17.10 **Maria-Kristiina Soomre** (Estonian Academy of Arts; Kumu Art Museum), Art, Politics and Exhibitions. (Re)writing the History of (Re)presentations

17.10-17.30 **Renata Šukaitytė** (Lithuanian Institute for Culture Research; Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre), The Drift along a Traumatic Past in The Cinematic Worlds of Šarūnas Bartas

17.30-18.00 Discussion

Morning session I

(De)constructing the Canon: Heroes, Myths, Alternative Stories

Moderator: Linara Dovydaitytė

10.00-10.20 **Dace Lambergā** (Latvian National Museum of Art), The History of Latvian Classical Modernism

10.20-10.40 **Tomas Pabedinskas** (Vytautas Magnus University), Lithuanian School of Photography: The Birth of the Myth and Forgotten Alternatives

10.40-11.00 Discussion

11.00-11.30 Coffee break

Morning session II

Possessing the Past: Art History and Competing Discourses

Moderator: Giedrė Jankevičiūtė

11.30-11.50 **Krista Kodres** (Estonian Academy of Arts), Who's Art History? Competing Art Historical Narratives in Estonia in 1930's and Their Afterlife

11.50-12.10 **Kristiāna Ābele** (Latvian Academy of Arts), The Picture of the Period 1890–1915 in Latvian Art Historical Writing: Ethnocentric Distortions and Ways to Correct Them

12.10-12.30 **Iveta Derkusova** (Latvian National Museum of Art), Interpretations of the Creative Work by Gustav Klucis (1895-1938) in Latvian Context and Beyond

12.30-13.00 Discussion

13.00-15.00 Lunch break

Afternoon session I

(Re)constructions: Art as Mnemonic Practices

Moderator: Krista Kodres

15.00-15.20 **Agnė Narušytė** (Vilnius Academy of Arts), Photographic

Reconstructions of Memory 1988-2011

- 15.20-15.40 **Lina Preišegalavičienė** (Vytautas Magnus University), The Interaction of Memory and Interior in the Interwar Kaunas Living Space
- 15.40-16.00 Discussion
- 16.00-16.30 Coffee break

Afternoon session II

Facing Challenges: Global Culture and New National Narratives

Moderator: Kristiāna Ābele

- 16.30-16.50 **Ginta Gerharde-Upeniece** (Latvian National Museum of Art), The Continuity Aspect of Latvian Cultural Policy (1918-1940) in the Early 21st Century
- 16.50-17.10 **Silvija Grosa** (Latvian Academy of Arts), Rethinking National Romanticism in the Architecture of Riga at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries
- 17.10-17.30 **Skaidra Trilupaitytė** (Lithuanian Institute for Culture Research), On the Global Industry of *Lithuanian Fluxus*: the Story of Political Appropriation
- 17.30-18.00 Discussion

**The Picture of the Period 1890–1915
in Latvian Art Historical Writing:
Ethnocentric Distortions and Ways to Correct Them**

The period 1890–1915 is considered to be the most extensively described segment in the timeline of Latvian art history. Still every venture from the published interpretations down to the sources can leave one surprised at the large proportion of art historical evidence that has never been used as material for investigations. This inadequacy is largely due to the ethnocentric tradition that has prevailed and unwittingly keeps prevailing in Latvian vision of our country's art on both popular and academic levels.

With the rise of the new national professional art in the late 19th century, writers would shift from a territorial view to a focus on phenomena that they identify as ethnic Latvian, disregarding non-Latvian (basically German) aspects. Typically, the reader can get no idea that Latvia's artistic culture in the period in discussion was more multicultural than ever before and after, with the new developments gaining strength from both interaction and rivalry with their counterparts. Originating in the local art criticism of the late 1890s, the ethnocentric story of Latvian art developed into a strong tradition that was sustained, for partly changing reasons, in the interwar Republic of Latvia as well as even during the Nazi occupation and under the Soviet regime with a strong aftermath today.

In order to diagnose gaps and distortions of memory caused by this national narrative, it is useful to wind it back to its starting point where the urge to discern every Latvian element from the whole production of Baltic artists (unambiguous "fellow nationals" from ambiguous "our compatriots") made its first steps and the rising Latvian nation used every chance to manifest its cultural superiority. When the period 1890–1915 had turned into distant past, art historians either discarded nationally inappropriate elements or naturalised them. This approach consigned to oblivion numerous personalities, events and achievements that were not qualified as Latvian. Even in comprehensive surveys their role was reduced to footnote area.

Although the last two decades have gradually brought about a positive change of mind among Latvian art historians regarding the multicultural past, the progress towards a possibly all-inclusive, multi-layered picture of turn-of-the-20th-century period and delayed integration of "our compatriots" into the cultural memory of Latvian society requires more than re-interpreting the previously collected and published material. This purpose cannot be accomplished without meticulous "fieldwork" that shows its first results in certain spots of the art historical "excavation area" but still has much of it to be done in the future.

An Unexpected Loss: Writing Art History between Parentheses

In recent Estonian art history, the period from the end of the 1970s to the beginning of the 1990s has continued to hold an uncertain position, barely integrable into prevailing narratives. Critics during the period often described the contemporary art as 'unexpected' because of its unusual intensity, barely intelligible symbolism, visionary and 'radically traditional' qualities. During the following two decades, a process of revision has mostly responded to the difficulties with this unexpectedness by interpreting it as a transitional phenomenon and symptomatic of an era that is inexplicable according to the logic of developments in previous and later art. However, the vagueness of that interpretation has also reinforced a sense of loss concerning this particular phase in local art history (*Lost Eighties. Problems, Themes and Meanings in Estonian Art of the 1980s*, Tallinn: CCA 2010), partly because of its incongruity with art historical narratives, but also because it appears to lack any direct connection with the social processes of the 1980s.

The aim of this paper is to compare two discourses in Estonian art (history) writing (although many of the same writers have contributed to each): art criticism during the 1980s, and more recent writing (from the 1990s and 2000s) concerning the same period. The two discourses will be analysed to show how they both have been formed, albeit in a different way, by attempting to overcome the apparent disparity between the art and the context (art historical and/or socio-political) in which it was produced. Various techniques are employed in these writings for coping with the disparity (sometimes simply ignoring it); including, for example, sympathetic alignment with visionary art (especially in the highly emotive art criticism written during the 1980s) or, on the contrary, repression of such strangeness by rationalist structured analysis of the period (in later writings). By examining the shift from one discourse to the other, and the intersections of the two, we are able to analyse the first phase of a process in which contemporaneity becomes history. Examination also shows the process to have been accompanied by divergence in thinking, a brief period of chaotic reorientation, and a struggle between the aim of integrating certain phenomena into art history and the wish to exclude them – in relation to changes in social and cultural environment and the personal position of each writer.

Niklāvs Strunke in the Shifting Paradigms of Latvian Art and Art History

Niklāvs Strunke (1894–1966) is one of the most original and versatile artists of the legendary interwar generation of Latvian modernists. In his creative work the search for artistic expression of an epoch converges with that of an individual in an unusual, often singular synthesis. During the tense period of national artistic development that coincided with the foundation of an independent Latvian state, Strunke, alongside Jāzeps Grosvalds and Jēkabs Kazaks, became a renowned and influential figure. His painting “Man Entering the Room” (1927, Latvian National Museum of Art) was recently included in the Latvian cultural canon as one of the icons of local Classical Modernism.

After the First World War Strunke joined the elite francocentric Riga Group of Artists in Latvia, and in the 1920s he became part of the international European avant-garde scene in Berlin and Rome, establishing contacts with Italian Futurists while at the same time drawing inspiration from Late Cubism, Constructivism, Art Déco etc. His creative work in the 1920s and 1930s was also marked by variously interpreted ideas of national art and a partiality for the rebirth of classical tradition in the spirit of *rappel à l'ordre*.

In Latvian art history, as well as in the broader European context the individual stylistic transformations, creative activity and heritage of Niklāvs Strunke have not yet been thoroughly described and analysed and the sources of influence and analogy in his art remain insufficiently determined. Contradictory assessments of the artist form a spectrum ranging from a reputation of a radical avant-garde figure and cosmopolitan innovator to a defence of an “interpreter of Latvian spirit” and creator of standards for the “national style”. After the Second World War Strunke lived in exile in Sweden, and only in 1989 a retrospective exhibition of his works was organised in Riga – the largest and most important so far.

The diverse interpretations of Niklāvs Strunke’s biography, personality and work throughout the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st century reflect the metamorphoses in Latvian art history in a significant manner, pointing out the particularities of different methodologies, the commitment and biased distortion of opinion determined by the ruling political ideology, as well as the depoliticisation of art history and the problematic aspects of current research and modern discourses.

Interpretations of the Creative Work by Gustav Klucis (1895-1938) in Latvian Context and Beyond

The complex political history of the 20th century has made several distorted gaps in art history of the Baltic countries and in collective memory of our nations. We have been used to think in categories like “before” and “after”, meaning fifty-years lasting Soviet occupation, and like “here” and “there”, meaning art development in local art centers and in the rest of Europe. During recent decades art historians had been rethinking art processes of the 20th century in Baltic and in Eastern Europe in general, with an aim to create a new, integrated European art history of the period. A considerable progress in this field has been achieved, though we are still on a way to commonly accepted interpretation.

One of questions still unanswered is: how should we interpret the art (and should we?), created by Baltic-born artists, who worked in Soviet Russia in 1920s and 1930s – during the period when our national modernist art traditions were shaped in homelands?

From one hand, in Latvia a statement “the best recognized Latvian artist in the world” is almost an axiom, speaking about Gustav Klucis. And also a fact, that the most important collection of his works is possessed by the Latvian National Museum of Art, makes Klucis’s ties with Latvia evident. More over, his course of life is common for thousands of Latvians who stayed in Russia after Bolshevik coup of 1917 and fell victims of the Stalin purges in late 1930s. Through the lens of collective memory of Latvians, no more arguments are needed to place him strongly in the Latvian context.

But the above arguments are emotional, not professional. We shall remember another, not less strong aspect, what shapes Klucis’s worldwide recognition – he is one of the most important exponents of the Russian Avant-garde art.

It is obvious why in late 1950s official ideology in then soviet Latvia required to include creative work by artists like Klucis in context of the local art history. The aim was to extend so-called Latvia’s soviet art history, searching back for its origins as far as since 1917. But how is situation of today? The process of re-construction of our collective memory, saturating it with the cultural heritage, created by our most talented compatriots during the 20th century all over the world, rises up new risks of inadequate interpretations, and these risks should be recognized and explored.

Linara Dovydaitytė

Vytautas Magnus University

Art History and Post-Colonialism: A Lithuanian Case

In recent years, the dominant approaches to Soviet art have become objects of criticism in Lithuanian academic texts. Two main problematic aspects are usually pointed out: 1) the fact that the Soviet era is generally analysed in the context of two differing modes of behaviour – conformism and resistance; 2) the fact that the discussion of Lithuanian artists' relationship with the Soviet regime is based on value judgment. In the field of art history these approaches are mostly criticised for being too politicized. As a way from political evaluation of Soviet art a more "neutral" analysis is proposed by critically minded art historians. However there is a doubt that writing the history of art, just as the artistic practice, can be a politically and ideologically neutral activity in principle. This paper is dedicated to discuss a "third" possible approach to Soviet art, i.e. application of politically engaged analysis, such as post-colonial theory.

The application of postcolonial theory to post-Soviet art historical writing is quite problematic. On the one hand there is a fundamental question whether the occupation by the socialist USSR is equivalent to the capitalist colonization and can be analysed from the same theoretical perspective. On the other hand one encounters methodological difficulties as post-colonialism focuses mostly on literature, often leaving aside visual arts. With focus on existing (mis)uses of post-colonial theory in art historical analyses, I examine different concepts of post-colonial theory and various (dis)advantages of their application to writing the history of Soviet art.

Ginta Gerharde-Upeniece

Latvian National Museum of Art

The Continuity Aspect of Latvian Cultural Policy (1918-1940) in the Early 21st Century

Since the restoration of independence in 1991, the history of Latvia is considered to be a continuation of the period of the first period independence (1918-1940) with its achievements and failures in politics, economics and culture. The aim of this presentation is to assess the idea of continuity in two interconnected aspects - the activities of cultural (art) institutions and the representation of art abroad.

The search for "bridges of continuity" between today's Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education of the first Republic of Latvia is not a current issue. Although

some analogies emerge from the attempt to unite the management of culture, education and science by one institution, each of them reflects the situation of its time and looks for solutions of pressing issues. If state funding is considered crucial, continuity can be seen in the work of the Culture Foundation then and the State Culture Capital Foundation now but it should nevertheless be remembered that each Foundation reflects the cultural politics of its time. Other examples of continuity are found in the Latvian Academy of Art and museums where professional skills are passed from one generation to another, including the contradictory Soviet period.

Latvia's diplomatic service is the only institution that has worked uninterruptedly since the founding of the state in 1918. Persistence of this service is a real testimony of the continuity of Latvia and its international recognition.

After the restoration of independence in the 1990s Latvian art had to regain its status on the international level, with Ministries of Culture, Foreign Affairs, diplomatic service, exhibition organizing committees and professionals joining forces. Not everything is acceptable literally, and not everything found in the past and recovered today is a manifestation of continuity. According to French sociologist Bruno Péquignot the society regraded their memories. It can be seen in a great variety of ways.

Considering the long period of interruption (1940-1991) brought by two occupations, cultural continuity will be secured if, confrontation aside, intellectual, creative resources are invested in this process. The nostalgia typical of the transitional period of the 1990s is no longer apt for describing continuity; now it is important to create an up-to-date version of institutional genesis. Today, in the search for the identity of a unified Europe, the ties of Latvian culture with the past are a crucial element and from this aspect the art historical context already acquires a different scale and analogies.

Silvija Grosa

Latvian Academy of Arts

Rethinking National Romanticism in the Architecture of Riga at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries

During the 1920s and 1930s, the architectural heritage of the turn of the century was much criticized in Europe, and Latvia was no exception. Publications about the work of particular architects simply tried to ignore the period or to interpret it as a sop to the public taste of the day and age. Nevertheless, the field of professional art history was developing during this period, and initial, albeit laconic evaluations of the architecture of the turn of the century were produced. It is important that essentially unilateral viewpoint would become a cornerstone for the assessment of National Romanticism in Latvian architecture, thus creating a foundation for a continuously tendentious and simplified interpretation of the style.

Systematic and purposeful study of the architecture and the plastic art of the late 19th and early 20th century truly began in Latvia only in the 1970s.

In the 1990s, the historical city centre of Riga, including buildings from the turn of the 20th century, was listed as a World Heritages Site by UNESCO. This achievement internationally acknowledged the high artistic quality of Riga's architectural heritage. Nonetheless, the already mentioned simplified interpretation of architectural developments in turn of the 20th century Riga has taken deep root and, in spite of later efforts to consider stylistic issues comprehensively, has given ground to a sort of hypertrophisation of Riga Art Nouveau heritage as part of mass culture.

It is not possible to claim that so-called National Romanticism really helped Latvian identity to emerge more specifically than was the case with other forms of architecture during the period that is in question here. Latvian architects at the time were discussing the classical heritage as a possible paradigm for national art. The forms and language of National Romanticism, not least in the area of décor, were based on various elements and traditions from the Latvian ethnos. This is most clearly seen in the stylisation of ethnographic ornaments and motifs. If the question is whether this type of décor should be identified as "Latvian National Romanticism," then there is the matter of differentiating the style as a broader concept.

Krista Kodres

Estonian Academy of Arts

Who's Art History? Competing Art Historical Narratives in Estonia in 1930's and Their Afterlife

In 1930s art historians working in Germany and Estonia both had pretensions to write academic art history of Estonia /the Baltic countries Estonia and Latvia. The (Baltic) German narrative had a much longer tradition. The Baltic Germans were the first to begin examining the artistic heritage of Estonia and Latvia in the late 18th century. Between 1800 and 1939, approximately 2000 studies of varying length were published on 'Baltic art and architecture'. Thus, the Baltic Germans were remarkably enthusiastic in researching art in the region that they, forming the elite of the society, governed for 700 years. Estonians' and Latvians' interest in history and art history grew from the late 19th century onwards. They had to face difficulties in formulating the essence of the artistic heritage of their countries, because the ethnic Estonians and Latvians 'own art' was defined as ethnographic heritage, produced in villages and on farms. In 1918, in gaining independence and establishing national states, the process of 'incorporating' the local 'foreign' artistic heritage, the process of 'making it our own', started. In regard to what was said above, the emerging competition of Baltic German and Estonian (Latvian) art historical narratives in the 1930s is not surprising. The paper will pay special attention to the relation of competing concepts of both narratives to the emerging new political situation in Europe.

The History of Latvian Classical Modernism

Latvian Classical Modernism of the period between the First World War and the 1920s can be considered one of the most vivid pages of our art history and is closely connected with the Riga Group of Artists.

The purpose of the research compiled in my book *Klasiskais modernisms. Latvijas glezniecība 20. gadsimta sākumā* (2004, *Classical Modernism. Early 20th Century Latvian Painting*) was to establish the possible manifestations of Classical Modernism – Cubism, Fauvism, Expressionism, Constructivism and New Objectivity – in Latvian painting. In the Latvian press the trends of Western European Modernism were covered in a few articles by Uga Skulme and Romans Suta, and also by *Laikmets*, a magazine published in Berlin in 1923; however, there was a lack of a serious academic basis which would help elucidate the essence of the innovative movements.

The bibliography of Latvian Classical Modernism is rather incomplete and fragmented. *60 Jahre lettischer Kunst*, a book by Romans Suta published in 1923, contains no analysis of the stylistic influences and analogies. *Latvju māksla* (1925; *Latvian Art*) by Jānis Dombrovskis also lacks any wider analysis. In the 1930s modernist phenomena lost their relevance.

In the period following the Second World War, the most extensive review of the Classical Modernism tendencies of the early 20th century is provided by USA-based Jānis Siliņš in his book *Latvijas māksla: 1915–1940 (Latvian Art: 1915–1940)*. He both analyses the work of some artists in particular and provides more general introductory articles. In the art history of Soviet Latvia, in turn, until the early 1980s the importance of the phenomenon of modernism was played down due to ideological restrictions, and almost no research was carried out on this subject.

The first modern-day publication to take a closer look at the history of Latvian Classical Modernism was the catalogue of the 1990 *Unerwartete Begegnung. Lettische Avantgarde: 1910–1935* exhibition in West Berlin. The materials comprised in the catalogue were later referenced in American art historian Steven Mansbach's monograph *Modern Art in Eastern Europe: From Baltic to the Balkans, ca. 1890–1939*, (1998). Mansbach's research is the first significant work published abroad and in English to offer a more detailed analysis of our modernist trends.

Simona Matuzevičiūtė

Vilnius Academy of Arts

Micro-History without Macro-Context: Burials and Memorial Culture of the 19th C. Manors in Lithuania

Micro-historical research employs a concept of “typical exceptional” exploring macro-history through small events or phenomena. The “typical exceptional” case has little analogues in the master narrative however highlights its previously unobserved features. Inquiry into the funerary practices in the 19th c. Lithuania based on materials from random rescue excavations of the nobility burials raised a question of potential use of the clue, marginal and monadic micro-historical approaches to place a single case study in the context of “the master narrative”. The biggest problem is non-existence or limits of macro-history of memorial culture and everyday life in the Lithuanian manors of the 19th century. The same corpus of material data allows telling multiple narratives. Thus the micro-historical approach instead of accentuating some aspects of existing historical narrative sets directions for future research. Can it still be called micro-history?

Giedrė Mickūnaitė

Vilnius Academy of Arts

Past Things, Present Texts: Medieval Art and Its Histories (A Lithuanian Example)

Middle Ages can be regarded as a depository of national consciousness. It was there that European nations discovered great deeds and vibrant spirits of their ancestors. Material heritage of the Middle Ages represented past greatness, which had to be recalled and re-enacted in the present. The nineteenth-century writings about spiritual forms of gothic architecture resulted into the notion of meaningful (sometimes even intelligent) form, thus providing modernist pursuits with necessary vocabulary for the new art. Viewed from textual perspective, modernism is a continuation of historicism and modernist art is an illustration of historicist qualities of art. Is this view applicable for Lithuania? How do descriptions of medieval artworks relate to the master narrative of Lithuanian history? Which objects would illustrate this narrative and which have to be excluded from this list of illustrations? What about scenarios of history that failed, but which left their marks in art? With these questions in mind I explore texts of Lithuanian art history and test these explorations upon artworks. Finally, I introduce the wall-paintings from the parish church of Trakai (ca. 1420) and suggest their readings based on different scenarios of Lithuania’s medieval past.

Photographic Reconstructions of Memory 1988-2011

In order to ensure silence and cooperation of citizens and prevent resistance, the Soviet system was preoccupied with the destruction and distortion of collective memory. Yet the past as counter-memory was preserved in alternative spaces and everyday speech. The movement for independence in Lithuania, like in most other countries of the Soviet block, was closely linked to the restoration of historical memory and photography was an important tool in the process. This paper will focus on four different stages of this work of memory. The first was the recovery of historical facts through photographs of Soviet atrocities, including images of tortured and killed fighters for independence and photographs of Lithuanian families in Siberia. Then all photographers participated in recording the present, creating history: the meetings, the new atrocities and the victory. The third stage manifested as a kind of nostalgia for the Soviet past, still found by photographers in decaying interiors and old family albums, which meant not so much a longing to go back in time as to find a reliable ground in the changing environment of the transition period. And the fourth stage started recently, when artists and photographers began to look more closely at the traumas of history again with the realisation that the past now gets forgotten as something uncomfortable in the pursuit of wealth and consumption.

Tomas Pabedinskas

Vytautas Magnus University

Lithuanian School of Photography: The Birth of the Myth and Forgotten Alternatives

The paper analyses the formation and the establishment of the “Lithuanian School of Photography” as the theoretical concept as well as the style of creative practice in late sixties. The humanist ideological background and the institutional establishment of the “school” are discussed, giving reference to particular exhibitions, publications and critical texts. The paper also provides critical analysis of the humanist myth in “Lithuanian School of Photography”, based on the structural method developed by Roland Barthes. The analysis shows that a long lasting tradition and popularity of Lithuanian humanist photography was based not on the “natural” expression of universal values, but on many discursive and formal choices of the photographers, who “constructed” the humanist world-view.

Besides the above mentioned analysis of the “Lithuanian School of Photography” the paper also stresses that there have been various alternatives to this mainstream of

Lithuanian photography: photo-graphics in sixties and seventies, the unexpressive photography of low technical quality in eighties and conceptual use of photographic media in the nineties. The paper continues by several case studies of the modern-day exhibitions, which (re)established some of these alternatives as discrete creative movements in the history of Lithuanian photography.

The paper concludes by emphasizing the role of the curator and institutions in the process of retrospectively presenting the history of Lithuanian photography not as the confrontation between “natural” and “truthfull” mainstream humanist photography and more sophisticated creative practice, but as a simultaneous coexistence of various styles of photography, which all depend on the discursive choices of the photographers and the contexts of their work.

Lina Preišegalavičienė

Vytautas Magnus University

The Interaction of Memory and Interior in the Interwar Kaunas Living Space

Interior design is a well known term of art criticism, but in Lithuanian art criticism very little attention is paid to studies of Lithuanian interior design. This paper is one of the first attempts to work in this field, trying to reconstruct an almost forgotten object. It is known that the human memory consists of separate systems of the *conscious* and the *unconscious*. As terms of psychoanalysis they were legalized by Sigmund Freud. Later, Erich Fromm while perfecting the ideas of Freud, split the human memory into two poles, different in their origin: “*having*” (*material*) and “*being*” (*immaterial*). Although interior is a part of architecture, special kinds of stylistic and visual features which are not characteristic for architecture happen to be formed in living spaces. In dwelling differently than in architecture controversial forms of memory are often tangled with each another: *conscious* and *unconscious*, *having* and *being*. These features are formed because of the mingling of *social position*, *memories*, *emotions* and *mentality*. Their interaction with the interior is revealed in the paper in two ways: one is the restoration of forgotten interwar Kaunas living spaces, another one is the observation of how different concepts of memories (*conscious* and *unconscious*, *having* and *being*) affect the stylistic development of living environment. Different forms of human *being* mode – profession, leisure activities – and different forms of human *having* mode – social position, family impact on the residential design. Interior is the space, which reflects the relations between the inhabitant’s *having* mode and *being* mode, between the *conscious* and the *unconscious*.

The task of the paper is to link the facts from biographies of the historical figures with the photographic images of the living environment preserved until nowadays and in such a way to unblock the memory for the interwar Kaunas residential spaces. Almost forgotten interwar Lithuanian personalities are selected for the study: Vladas

Daumantas-Dzimidavičius (1885-1977), Jonas Vailokaitis (1886-1944) and their stylistically different homes. The surviving archival documents and photos suggest that these two persons were extremely educated and of cosmopolitan thinking.

The aim is to find out orientations of mentality which could be crucial for the interior's stylistic development. Two extremely different residential interiors are chosen for the study, as they used to dominate in Lithuania's temporary capital Kaunas during the interwar period: the Daumantas residence was overflown with collector's items and details and representing a *retrospective thinking trend*, whereas the Vailokaitis living interior is quite pure and modern, having the characteristic features of the international *Art Deco* style: it represents cosmopolitan (international) thinking. The chosen memory concepts allow us to understand the mainstream thinking paradigms of the interwar period and to analyse their reflections in the Lithuanian interior of the modernism epoch.

During the process of describing the interiors it has been noticed that a search to represent national identity was common to both directions of thought and the biographical facts complement the conception of *national*. At the time it was often perceived as the notion of Lithuanian state's self-dependence rather than ethnicity.

Maija Rudovska

Latvian Academy of Arts

Expired Monuments: the Case Studies of Latvian Soviet Time Architecture

Why do we honour one monument but forget another? Why does a particular house remain in the collective memory but the other is placed in the shadow? How does it happen? These questions arise when investigating the Soviet architectural heritage in Latvia and focusing on the problematics of relationship between socialist ideology and a construction of national identity.

Specific preconditions were established for developing architecture in Latvia over the period of the Soviet colonization. Carried out under its influence, the processes in architecture were not organic and fluent, but more artificial and deformed if compared to the 'original' – the Soviet Russian example. It expressed a persistent struggle to create explicitly 'Latvian' architecture, thus originating notions such as 'our own' architecture and the 'foreign' one. These features could be found in all three periods of architectural development in Soviet Latvia: during Stalinism, Khrushchev's modernism and in a regional architecture that regained its prominence within a framework of 'postmodernism' in 80s/90s.

In this paper I would like to draw an attention to the Soviet time architecture in Latvia – its processes and stylistics, - from the perspective of postcolonialism and nationalism, questioning how we should adapt these theories to the field of art history and is it appropriate to use them, especially in regard to post-soviet countries. As a pointers I

will take few case studies through which these notions could be revealed.

Maria-Kristiina Soomre

Estonian Academy of Arts, Kumu Art Museum

Art, Politics and Exhibitions. (Re)writing the History of (Re)presentations

My proposal for the conference paper addresses the importance of the relatively new (and fashionable) discipline - history of exhibitions - and its role in the specific context of our regional art history. I am proposing a case study on “The Biennial of Dissent” organized by the Venice Biennial in 1977 as a special event in the institution’s then vast and activist continuous program. The cross-disciplinary festival concentrated on the Eastern European cultural “underground”, the dissident movement and unofficial culture(s), the visual arts being represented by two major exhibitions (“New Art from Soviet Union” and “Czechoslovak printmaking”) plus a convention on the topic “Avant-gardes and Neo-avant-gardes in Eastern Europe”. While the official Soviet participations in the Venice Biennial were all but avant-garde, the show curated by Italian art historians Enrico Crispolti and Gabriella Moncada gathered mainly Moscow and Leningrad school Soviet avant-garde art from the Western collections. My comparative study will consider also other “unofficial art” exhibitions of the time and give an overview of the political, diplomatic and cultural conditions the Venice project was created in. Individual positions of the professionals involved as well as rather emotional personal memoirs are of crucial importance as well. The exhibition design and location speak the language of the utopian and activist cultural politics of the time and should also be considered as important. I would argue the need of an open-minded and cross-disciplinary study in order to fill in the art historical blanks created by the official memory of the Soviet artworld on the one hand and romantic avant-garde revolutionaries on the other. I would shortly reconstruct the rather forgotten events of the Biennale exhibition of 1977 as well as its parallel official and unofficial canons as its background.

Renata Šukaitytė

Lithuanian Institute for Culture Research, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre

The Drift along a Traumatic Past in The Cinematic Worlds of Šarūnas Bartas

This paper seeks to critically examine the formation of traumatic subjectivities in films of Lithuanian filmmaker Šarūnas Bartas, namely *Three Days* (1991), *Corridor* (1995), *Seven Invisible Men* (2005) and *Eastern Drift* (2010) through analysis of the relationship of aural and visual layers in film of Šarūnas Bartas, which relate to the discourse of *trauma culture* (Hal Foster) and *deterritorialization* (Gilles Deleuze). Each

of the mentioned films tackle the relationship between the past and present, local and transcultural, stillness and mobility, individual and communal in a sustained and complex way. Therefore I will reflect Bartas' films from the perspective of both, geopolitical and aesthetical level and explain how social and economical changes relate to his both, aural and visual regime formation.

Bartas' protagonists are nomads glimpsed through the Deleuzian crystalline image. They trek from one place or community to another in quest of relief, freedom or adventure. Their national or cultural identity is not clearly articulated, however they could be recognized as Eastern Europeans (or citizens of a place having similar historic experience) which land have always been a corridor for different nations and a temporary home or place of freedom. To use the term of Vilém Flusser they are like *apparitions* operating in Deleuzian *any-space-whatevers* at the *labyrinthine time*. The nation land represented by archetypical images of bridge, corridor, harbor and home signifies a period of historical transformations and mental transitions in the society.

Skaidra Trilupaitytė

Lithuanian Institute for Culture Research

On the Global Industry of Lithuanian Fluxus: the Story of Political Appropriation

In summer 2007 Vilnius municipality celebrated the purchase of Fluxus works collection from renown Lithuanian-American avant-garde filmmaker Jonas Mekas; according to the media reports most of the collection consisted of George Maciunas items. Mayors' A. Zuokas endeavour here in trying to present Vilnius as a "new capital of Fluxus" was unquestionable. Yet in autumn Vilnius saw a political scandal over purchasing the collection for tax payers' money, because some, especially political oponents of Zuokas, thought that the price Vilnius municipality spent on the collection (5 million USD) was too high. Others also distrusted the mayor for the shady contracts with Guggenheim consortium, the hostage of which the collection apparantly became. The political questioning here seemed understandable if only for the fact that the value of Fluxus items was only determined in New York or by local friends of Mekas and was not tested in international art market. Moreover, the "secret collection" is not open for the public until now because of legal obscurities.

Political "interest" in Fluxus, be it positive or negative, paradoxically, helped some media to deride a provocative Fluxus anti-art. It also prevented a broader understanding of this historical phenomenon. Even apart from the Vilnius' scandal, one must admit that the financial evaluation of Fluxus hardly depends on some "common standards" of the art market. Obvious difficulty arises when one needs to determine the dates and other details of objects that only recently turned into "collectable" items. The common claim by neoliberal Lithuanian politicians (and J. Mekas himself) that

Lithuania has the right, even more so – an obligation - to “possess” a historical Fluxus legacy strangely mach against the idea to explore the variety of Fluxus’ individual and institutional collections worldwide. The Lithuanianship of Maciunas, which was applaud by Zuokas while marketing Vinius as ostensible capital of Fluxus, could be contested in many ways since in a global post-Cold War artistic world, the very idea of artistic citizenship could seem an oxymoron. Generally, the model of the modern artist epitomizes a free spirit and pure individualism, not privileges and obligations that citizenship commonly entails. Yet if Fluxus becomes a political tool for branding new urban places and forging new national narratives, what implications it may have for local art history?

Notes
