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Facing the New Myths: on Lithuanian Art in 1940-1941

Key words: Lithuanian art history, art under the occupation, art and politics, collaboration, communist propaganda art, socialist realism.

I would like to begin by addressing the terminology, and admit that initially I did not want to accept the conference organisers' concept of "Eastern Europe". I have always tried to use the terms "Central Europe" or "Central and Eastern Europe", which both mitigate the opposition of East and West, and serve to indicate that the Czech Republic, Poland, and Lithuania are closer to France and Germany, than, say, to Byelorussia. However, once I began to write about the art world in Lithuania in 1940-1941, I understood that, in this case, the most appropriate term is in fact "Eastern Europe", which has both a clear political significance, and distinctly reminds us of the contours of 20th century European history – and their constant effect on the opposition between East and West.

1940-1941 was a particularly politicised period in Lithuania. On June 15, 1940 Soviet armed forces invaded the territory of the independent Republic of Lithuania. A puppet government was immediately formed in the country, and elections to the so-called People's Parliament (*Liaudies seimas* in Lithuanian) were announced. On July 21, 1940 the People's Parliament proclaimed Lithuania a Soviet republic, and sent an official delegation to Moscow requesting that it be accepted into the Soviet Union. On August 3, 1940 Lithuania was officially incorporated into the Soviet Union, and on August 25, 1940 Soviet law came into force – Stalin's constitution was adopted. The new political system was intensely enforced in all fields of life. Less than a year later, on June 22,

1941 the German army marched into Lithuania. With the approach of the Germans, the Lithuanians rebelled against the Soviets. The restored independent state of Lithuania was announced on June 23, 1941, but by August 5, 1941 the provisional government was disbanded and a new occupational regime was established. Despite the cognate nature of the Soviet and Nazi regimes, they were accepted and judged differently by the people, and understandably made a different impact on the country's art scene. I will not at this time delve into these differences and the reasons behind them, but will offer an overview on the change in Lithuanian art during the relatively brief Soviet occupation of June 15, 1940 – June 22, 1941.

Why an overview of this particular period? Research into the artistic culture of Lithuania during the time of the first Soviet occupation is interesting in itself. At the same time, it helps one to grasp the particularities that art and politics had in common throughout Western culture in the 20th century. The topic is also relevant in terms of other research regarding Lithuanian history. Without the period 1940-1941, the mosaic of the mid-20th century remains incomplete. The first Soviet occupation of Lithuania left a distinctive mark on the life of the country, and it is impossible to comprehensively analyse the much longer period of the second Soviet occupation without evaluating the cultural consequences of the former.



Fig. 1. Lithuanian painter Vaclovas Kosciuska (on the right) and sculptor Bronius Pundzius (on the left) creating the portraits of Stalin. Photo illustrations from the daily *Tiesa*, 28 August 1940

This specific period is, however, practically non-existent in the historiography of Lithuanian art. Or, to be more exact, many nuances are concealed or qualified in its presentation. This is not difficult to understand or explain. For instance, the authors of the three volume history of 20th century Lithuanian art published in the 1980s easily overlooked this period, for they based their study on the formal method – and no serious work of this kind had been done during the Soviet period. More profound research into the first Soviet period was impossible until the political environment changed so as to permit acknowledgment of the occupation of Lithuania as fact. Along with the emergence of the fact that a number of artists collaborated with the authorities, came a tenuous but convenient version regarding the fatal influence of outside circumstances justifying their conformist position. I have endeavoured to reflect this historiographic approach in creating the title for this overview. The text is therefore written with two goals in mind. The first is to present material challenging the version existing throughout historiography that Lithuanian artists collaborated with the occupational forces, though later many of them ostensibly suffered remorse for the rest of their lives. The second is to ascertain the turning-point in the work of the so-called modernists as they attempted to adapt to the requirements of their new clients. This presentation thus aims to delve deeper into the painful and tragic period of the first Soviet

occupation, and to discuss certain features of the art from that period – thereby providing some basis for the reasoning behind them.

Two aspects of significance to the topic at hand include the existing conditions of the art world, and the artists' awareness of themselves – factors which would have determined a variety of behaviours.¹ I will not talk about the conditions of the art world in Lithuania at that time, for they were basically the same as in other totalitarian countries during the 20th century. When referring to a position taken by the artists, one is often reminded to take into account each individual case. But in fact, all of Lithuania's individual cases fit into three basic models of behaviour: a neutral position; an attempt to adapt to a new client; active participation in the consolidation of a new ideology, i.e. a new social order.² Which, in the case of the third, means a conscious collaboration with the occupational authorities. Unfortunately, it must be admitted that it was the latter that predominated in Lithuania.

I cannot present a comprehensive and well-grounded analysis of this situation, because, thus far, research into the art of the first Soviet period has been very fragmented – even the surviving artworks have not yet been registered. A more systematic collection of isolated factual data exists only in a rotary print publication of the third volume of *20th Century Lithuanian Art History*, dedicated to a discussion on art from 1940 to 1960.³ Prepared for printing in the Soviet period and therefore subject to self-censorship, it was published, after stormy debates, in 1990, at a time when the system of censorship was already collapsing, i.e. during the years of the restoration of Lithuania's independence. Time proved that the decision to publish this material was an appropriate one, for after 1990 research into the art scene of the Stalinist period in Lithuania came to a standstill for at least 15 years. Anyway, there is enough material even in this *History* to raise the question of why so few Lithuanian artists distanced themselves from the Soviet regime, and why so few did not try to adapt to the requirements of the new client. This question is far from simple, and it has no single answer. But the search for an answer reveals some characteristic features of the culture, mental-

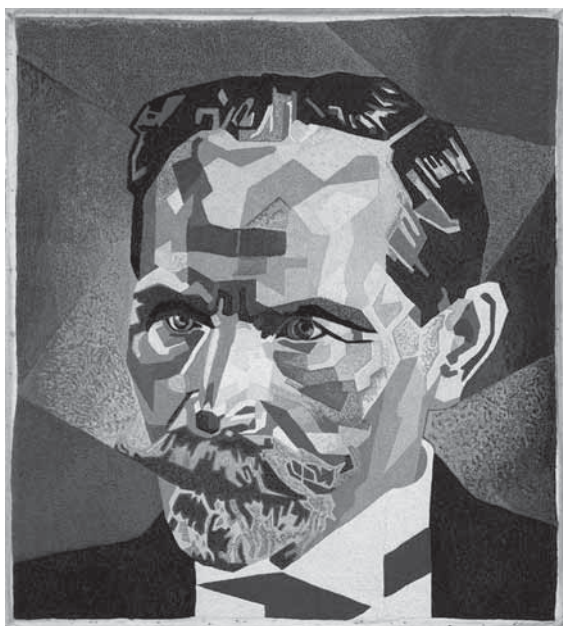


Fig. 2. Balys Macutkevičius, *Portrait of President Antanas Smetona*, c. 1938, silk embroidery, 52 x 47 cm. Courtesy: National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum, Kaunas

ity, values, and understanding of art in Lithuania, and in the other European countries in the 1930s and 1940s, and, as mentioned above, gives a better understanding of the situation vis-a-vis Lithuanian culture after the Second World War.

It goes without saying that in this case we will not be focusing on the work of those artists who consistently developed the themes of social injustice, exploitation of workers, class struggle, and similar issues, who openly expressed their leftist views or even belonged to the Communist Party – and correspondingly, had worked illegally in Lithuania in the 1930s, when the Communist Party was prohibited and persecuted. It was natural that these artists would have welcomed the arrival of the Soviets.

There were also artists like Černė Percikovičiūtė, a talented painter of Jewish origins, who felt marginalised because of her ethnic roots and social position in independent Lithuania, and who sincerely hoped that the new social structure would liberate the “little people”, and grant them more rights and the possibility to express themselves. Incidentally, Percikovičiūtė’s work did not undergo any fundamental changes in 1940. Only in addition to her usual themes, she also painted several images conveying the urgent issues of the new life,

including an expressionist double portrait entitled *Girls Publishing a Wall Newspaper* (also called *Two members of Komsomol* [i. e. All-Union Leninist Communist League of Youth] *Publishing a Wall Newspaper*). This canvas expressed the artist’s support for the new social situation, but, like her former paintings, it remained on the fringes of the public art scene. Works of this nature were not of any interest to the creators of the latest political order because they belonged to the sphere of personal experience. Percikovičiūtė applied an unfamiliar expressionist interpretation to socialist realism, and scrupulously sought for aesthetic appeal rather than ideological suggestiveness.

Several well-recognised artists of the older generation, including a well-known painter with an avant-garde background named Vytautas Kairiūkštis, withdrew from social issues, and dedicated themselves to landscapes and still life motifs, thereby consciously choosing the marginal zones of culture. Most of them, like Kairiūkštis (who was paid a teacher’s, and later a museum curator’s salary), had a permanent salaried position, and could thus afford the luxury of choosing to withdraw from active involvement in the art world, and maintain a position of waiting.

All the same, others of their colleagues who also had a position and a steady income, tried to win the favour of the Soviet authorities. Perhaps they were misled by the propaganda regarding Soviet support for the arts and artists. Those who felt undervalued by the government and society in an independent Lithuania trusted that the new provider would be more generous, and would create the means for artists to survive on the fruits of their creativity alone – without ever considering that this kind of activity would have nothing in common with free creativity.

For example, in 1940, just prior to the occupation, Paulius Augustinavičius, a young graphic artist, said the following in an interview for a cultural magazine called *Naujoji romuva* (*The New Sanctuary*): “In our Lithuania, art is akin to a luxury. Only those who are highly idealistic or materially well-off can dedicate themselves to art. But even idealism takes on a very bitter flavour when



Fig. 3. Balys Macutkevičius, Portraits of Soviet Union Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and Soviet Lithuania Puppet Government Interior Minister Mečislovas Gedvilas. Reproduction from the children monthly *Genys*, no. 5, 1940

there isn't enough to eat...".⁴ Augustinavičius undoubtedly dramatised the situation, and yet it must be acknowledged that his judgement did essentially reflect the reality of the art market in an independent Lithuania, and the weaknesses in its system of sponsorship. Private sponsors weren't able to guarantee artists independent creativity, for they bought relatively few works of art, and government commissions liberated only the occasional artist with long-term lucrative assignments to create works of monumental art, from the need to earn a daily living. There was talk about introducing art stipends that would allow artists a few months to half a year of creative work without worrying about earning enough to survive on, but nothing remotely similar to the US Federal Art Project ever materialised in independent Lithuania. On more than one occasion, the press brought up the example of the Soviet Union in reference to the dream of state support for artists. It is possible that, when it came to sponsorship of the arts, a number of artists believed in the merits of the Soviet system, and eagerly adapted to the new requirements in order to safeguard their own future under the conditions of

the new order. Nevertheless, the speed with which the changes happened, remains shocking.

Let us now discuss several cases that testify to the changes in artists' values, world outlook, and correspondingly, individual style – therein reflecting the spread of the new ideology and the appearance of new stylistic norms.

By the end of the 1930s, the concept of socialist realism was quite well developed in the Soviet Union. There were still a number of theoretical gaps, but it was fairly easy for the censors to distinguish between its acceptable and unacceptable examples. Certain deviations aside, one of its basic principles was an ennobled naturalism, based on the tenets of academic representation. Which is why it is so surprising that artists with distinctly modernist views could accept the prospect of the introduction of socialist realism. One such example is the modernist *Ars* group and its members (among them Antanas Gudaitis, Vytautas Kazimieras Jonynas, and Juozas Mikėnas) – who, in a manifesto published in 1932, proclaimed the classic modernist goals of reforming art in Lithuania. It must, however, be noted that



Fig. 4. Vytautas Kazimieras Jonynas, *St George*, 1934, colour linocut, 24 x 18 cm. Courtesy: National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum

after a brief period of modernist work in the mid-1930s, all of the *Ars* group members began to change their style. They abandoned cubism, fauvism, even art deco iconography and expression, and began to adopt a neo-traditionalist style and vocabulary, which, incidentally, helped them to get well-paid state commissions.

In Juozas Mikėnas' case, transferring to a style that was acceptable to the new Soviet order was not overly painful – he created only a few neo-classicist sculptures on the theme of work, which he had started to develop in the mid-1930s, and produced a sculpture of Vladimir Mayakovski.

One of the leaders of the *Ars* group, the painter Antantas Gudaitis, had leftist views, and made friends with left-oriented literary people who aroused his dissatisfaction with the cultural policy of the ruling Tautininkai (Nationalist) Party, or, to be more exact, with its lack of interest in the development of art. From the very beginning of the Soviet occupation he became actively involved with *Agitrop* (a Soviet art propaganda organisation which began to operate in Lithuania in 1940),

and started to paint a large-format canvas portraying the execution of four communists sentenced to death in Kaunas in 1926. Much later, when recalling that time, he claimed that he was initially blind to the horror and absurdity of Soviet reality – despite the fact that he visited Moscow and Leningrad, together with other Lithuanian cultural personalities, in 1936. Apparently his naive and youthful revolutionary enthusiasm, or more precisely his extremely critical outlook on the political and cultural reality of independent Lithuania, prevented him from seeing the truth. And yet, in the first half of 1940, he passionately argued that “art, the greatest expression of human spirituality, seeks the full and highest creative manifestation culminating in ecstasy and the absolute”; that “art is created not under coercion by need, or by social, aesthetic, or any other considerations, but by compulsion – for the same reasons that people, trees, water exist”; and that “only people confer aesthetic, social, religious, and moral goals to art”.⁵ In the latter half of that same year he suddenly suffered an attack of “amnesia”: it was as if he had completely forgotten his theories of artistic autonomy, and found himself obediently following the new client's dictates. He created a publicity poster for elections to the People's Parliament, and organised to present his large-format work, *The Shooting of Four Communists*, at a retrospective exhibition of Lithuanian art in Moscow.

Gudaitis' conformist efforts are not ultimately so surprising when one considers the fact that, in the late 1930s, he was already trying to adapt to the requirements of the establishment, and utilising a popular neo-classicist form of expression. He painted so-called national models – Lithuanian farm people in ethnic costume going about their traditional work. It was probably then that he felt obliged to betray his creative ideals, in return for his daily bread and a better social position. Ambitious and talented, Gudaitis was truly crushed when, after his studies in Paris, back in Lithuania he did not get a job as a teacher at the Kaunas art college, and was forced instead to work as a lecturer at an evening course for interior decorators and wall painters. His disappointment was obviously reinforced by the Lithuanian authorities when they decided to ex-

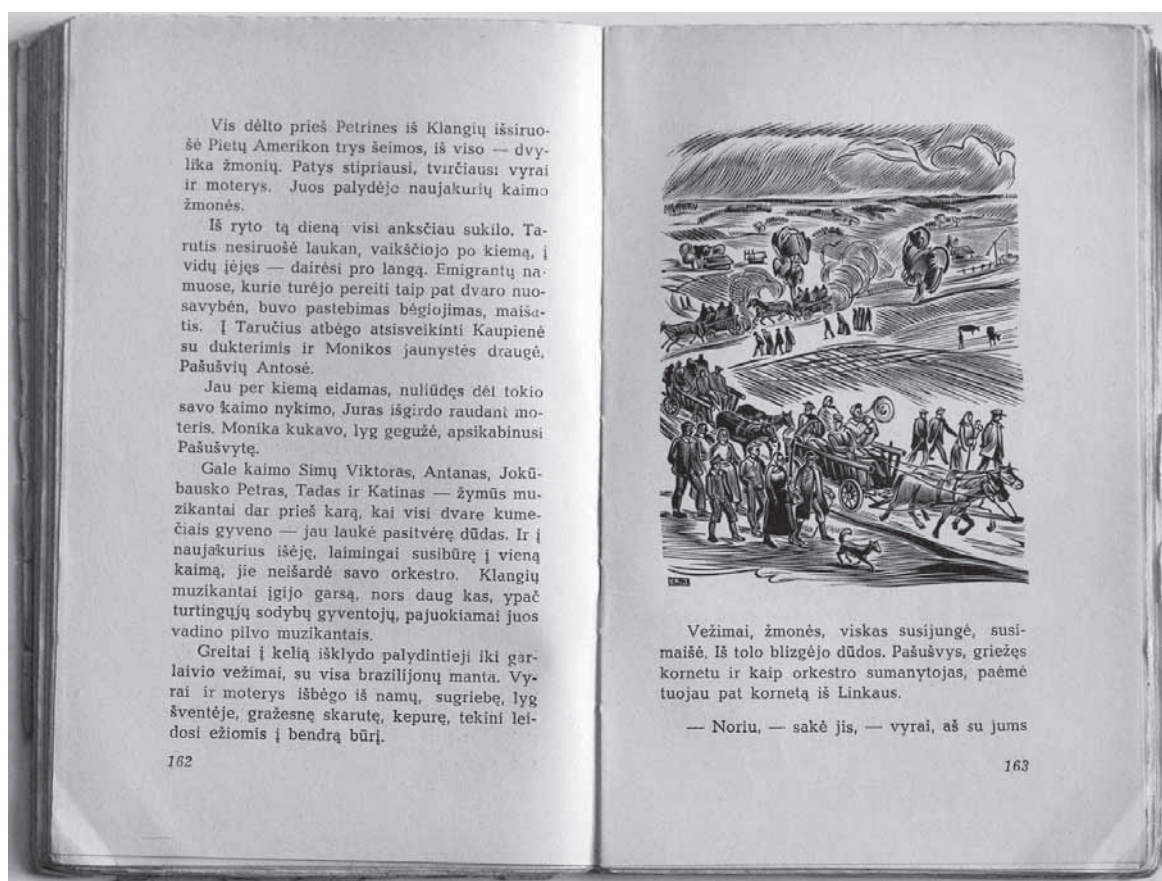


Fig. 5. Double-page spread from the novel *Žemė maitintoja* by Petras Cvirka (Breadwinning Earth, Kaunas: LSSR State Publishing House, 1940) with the illustration by Vytautas Kazimieras Jonynas

hibit a work by Gudaitis' teacher Adomas Galdikas, an artist of the older generation, instead of his own competition-winning triptych, in the Lithuanian section of a 1937 international exhibition in Paris. Apparently these personal grievances, together with the disappointment of the young intellectuals around him in the country's cultural stagnation and the government's sluggishness, pushed Gudaitis to oppose the system in the independent Republic of Lithuania. In 1941 he passionately asserted that it was necessary to engage in a struggle against bourgeois pseudo-classicism, and to represent the workers and peasants – since “the gentlemen's school has made even the models noble and urbane”.⁶ All the same, it is difficult to believe that he was still behaving sincerely during this period.

At the very end of the 1930s, the third member of the above mentioned group of protagonists of modernism, the graphic artist Vytautas Kazimieras Jonynas, very deliberately changed his individual style in the direction of realism, and called on the best exam-

ples of Soviet Russian graphic art. His neo-primitive works, based on studies of folk art and geometrical forms typical of art deco, approached a refined realism that bore certain features of naturalism, and allowed him to convey complex narratives fairly precisely. During the time of the Soviet occupation, cultural ideologists were particularly impressed with the illustrations that Jonynas had started back in 1938 for the epic poem *Seasons* by the 18th century Protestant pastor Kristijonas Donelaitis, which recounted the daily life of the peasants of Lithuania Minor. They also highly valued his wood carvings for a novel called *Breadwinning Earth* by the leftist writer Petras Cvirka [fig. 5]. Jonynas adapted to socialist realism naturally as he followed the work of his outstanding contemporaries – from the German graphic artists, to Vladimir Favorski, the classic of Russian graphic art, and Aleksey Kravtchenko, the pride of Ukraine, whose exhibition, organised in 1939 by the Association of Lithuanian and Soviet Union Cultural Relations, had aroused great interest in Lithuania. Jonynas was a typical case of seeking to



Fig. 6. Telesforas Valius, the chapter title illustration from the poetry book *Mergaitė su žibuoklėmis* by Kazys Zupka (*A Girl with Violets*, Kaunas: Sakalas, 1938)

entice a client by adopting the style and fashion of the day, and his attitude regarding the Soviets is revealed in his later choices. Incidentally, Jonynas was the only one of these three *Ars* members to leave Lithuania when the Soviet army was approaching in 1944. He lived in the French occupied zone in Germany, and after attempting to settle in Paris, moved to the USA.

Young, ambitious, talented artists justified their attempts to adapt by claiming that they believed they could preserve their status as artists within the Soviet cultural system. The efforts of the proponents of modernism were particularly naive. For example, the passionate supporters of expressionism and neo-primitivism who had asserted that creative work was important primarily as an expression of deep and dramatic experiences, and achieved only by utilising deformation, contrast, and the courage to plunge into ugliness, were also quick to change their creative style. It is difficult to find any similarity between the early works of Viktoras Petravičius or Telesforas Valius, and the graphics they produced in 1940 and 1941 [fig. 8 and 9]. Naturally, it was important to demonstrate their loyalty to the new client, and in

this case it was enough to express a minimal similarity to examples of authentic socialist realism. On the other hand, it is unlikely that artists of this tendency would have even succeeded in coming closer to manifesting socialist realism. After returning from his studies at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1938, Petravičius worked very hard to present his personal experiences and to emphasise his emotional nature in as suggestive and strong manner as possible. His expressionist declarations became more effective. His compositions revealed a fluidity that was characteristic of symbolism, and was represented by lines connecting all the actors on the depicted stage – sky, earth, water, plant life, and humans – into a totality breathing a unifying rhythm. It is true that, at the very end of the 1930s, even this impetuous and original artist succumbed briefly to the common trend, and attempted to sustain a more attentive hold on reality. According to Jolita Mulevičiūtė, who has studied Lithuanian neo-traditionalism in depth, his one-man exhibition in 1939 forced the astute art critic Nikolaj Vorobjov to voice his dismay at the increasing realism – and consequent decreasing “formal intensity” – of Petravičius’ engravings.⁷ “Not only has the monumental tectonics of his earlier prints disappeared, so also has the accompanying visionary strength – a fantastic gift, the naive primitive power of images. His style is becoming more detailed, and somehow too ‘human,’” regretted the critic.⁸ If this was an attempt to take into consideration the wishes of the client, and to consolidate his position within the ranks of the country’s artistic elite, then Petravičius should have soon understood that he had taken the wrong path, for it was precisely his illustrations for the Lithuanian folk tale *Daughter-in-law from the Barn*, considered the apex of expressionism, that were highly valued by both his colleagues, and by art lovers. An edition with a French translation, aimed at foreign book lovers, appeared in 1940. True, it was published by a group of left-leaning artists called *Daira*, which had broken away from the Lithuanian Artists’ Union, and which intended to fight for artistic freedom and social guarantees for its members. The group must have accepted the Soviet occupation in a positive light. Apparently the opinions of his col-



Fig. 7. The issue of the daily *Tarybų Lietuva* with the illustration by Telesforas Valius, 12 January 1941

leagues prompted Petravičius to join them in building a socialist culture for Lithuania. All the same, it's unlikely that his cover for Michail Sholochov's novel, *Virgin Soil Upturned*, helped him to get any further commissions [fig. 9]. In the end, Petravičius' spontaneous talent was stronger than his desire to seek out compromises. Although his efforts to adapt to the new regime helped him to get a position as an instructor at the Institute of Applied Arts in Kaunas, he left Lithuania for the West towards the end of the war, just before the second Soviet occupation.

The illustrative graphics adapted for a newspaper called *Tarybų Lietuva* (Soviet Lithuania) by another talented graphic artist, Telesforas Valius, are, on the other hand, very distant from the etchings and book illustrations that he had created in the late 1930s; moreover, professionally speaking, they are amateurish works [fig. 6 and 7]. The naturalism of socialist realism was fundamentally foreign to the artistic strivings of both Valius and Petravičius. The mythologists of historiography interpret such examples of declining artistry as a symptom of the art-

ists' suffering and inner resistance. Nevertheless, it should be noted that they would not have managed, even were they so inclined, to adopt the requirements of socialist realism, because, on the one hand they were not skilled in naturalistic imagery, and on the other, they basically did not comprehend the nature and goals of socialist realism.

In a far better position were those artists of a neo-classical trend, who had only to adapt the iconographic motifs of socialist realism. One such artist was the state-awarded sculptor Bronius Pundzius. Well-recognised in independent Lithuania, he decided to welcome the new rulers, and began to model a portrait of Stalin. This is a rather memorable fact, since his portrait of Antanas Smetona, the last president of Lithuania, was removed with a great uproar from a retrospective exhibition of Lithuanian art in Vilnius during the first days of the Soviet occupation. Pundzius had cultivated a neo-classicist style, and thus did not have to exert himself to adapt to socialist realism. Content to live on his honorariums, he was not particularly concerned whether he was portraying the leader of an independent Lithuania, or the head of the occupiers who had conquered his native country. However, according to historiographic tradition, it was precisely the compromise with his conscience that so broke Pundzius that he became an alcoholic, and suffered an early death. A similar fate awaited the painter and graphic artist Balys Macutkevičius. He had perfected the decoratively geometric portraiture of a genuine art deco spirit, and tried to convey the features of some of the functionaries of the Soviet Union and the new Lithuania, even Stalin himself, by using this favoured style [fig. 3]. He had done exactly the same thing in his representations of the outstanding figures of independent Lithuania in the 1930s [fig. 2]. The strange apolitical stance and reluctance of these artists to acknowledge that artistic creativity is unavoidably linked to moral responsibility, that it expresses a certain point of view, is borne out by their naive attempts to adapt the means of modernistic expression to the plastic manifestation of Soviet ideology.

Here I would like to recall the above mentioned reference to a characteristic of the mentality of

the majority of Lithuanian artists, which can be described as the craftsman's resolve to produce an object that satisfies the buyer's needs. Where does this come from? In the beginning of the 20th century, Lithuanian society strongly empathised with the ideal of the artist as a herald of the nation rising above the masses – an ideal formed by romanticism, that acknowledged the artists' exceptional right to assert values integral to the whole national community. And thereby placed on them the burden of ethical responsibility. However, society in an independent Lithuania regarded art very pragmatically, for it was commissioned primarily by the state, which needed art for propaganda and representational purposes. Under these conditions, artistic ingenuity and freedom was restricted by the most banal economic levers, a situation which subsequently prompted artists to acknowledge the Soviet invaders and their local henchmen as the new client with accompanying rights. It was this fact that led Pundzius and Macutkevičius, who were fairly well known in the field of patriotic propaganda, and other young and talented artists, to eagerly take on the new iconography required by the Soviets. One should not, therefore, be surprised or shocked by the didactic illustrations in Soviet propaganda children's books designed by, for example, graphic artists Domicelė and Petras Tarabilda: they produced books addressed to the future citizens of a free Lithuania in the same optimistic style, and using the same type of figure, and manner of drawing as during the time of independence. It would seem that they felt absolutely no moral discomfort in this regard, and that this kind of accommodating conformed to the ideals of creative freedom that were defended with such passion and sacrifice by all of the 20th century art luminaries, as well as by the founders of the Lithuanian national school of art.

The metamorphosis of the young artist Rimtas Kalpokas, who had studied at the Monza Institute of Applied Art in Italy, took place along a similar vein. In the 1930s, the son of painter Petras Kalpokas (one of the founders of the national school of art, a Lithuanian intellectual of the older generation, and a figure of the national revival movement) mainly worked in applied graphic art, graphic design and

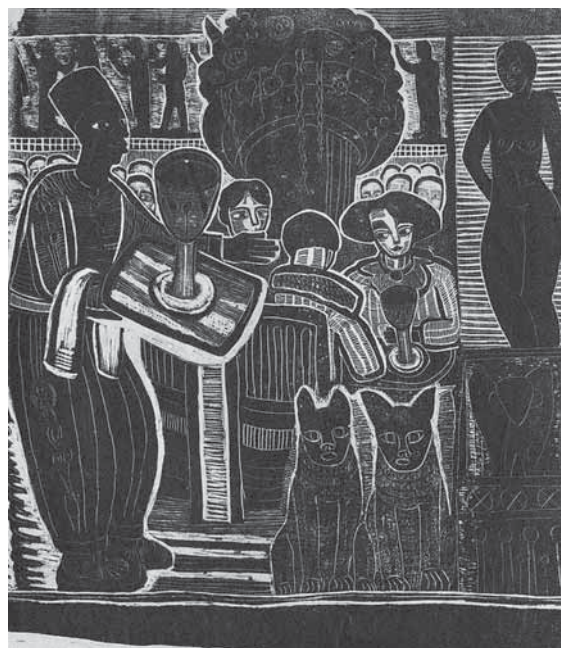


Fig. 8. Viktoras Petravičius, *In the Oriental Café*, before 1936, woodcut, 27.5 x 24.5 cm. Courtesy: Lithuanian Art Museum, Vilnius

mural painting, and as a highly acclaimed illustrator of children's books. What do we see when we compare his illustrations for the rhymed fairy tale *Chimney Sweep* (1939) by the young poet Vytautas Sirijos Gira, and an ode entitled *Stalin's Constitution for the LSSR* (1940) by his father Liudas Gira (which the latter read out during the festivities on August 25, 1940, when Lithuania was officially subjugated to the laws of the Soviet Union)? The latter continues to be the work of a diligent craftsman, produced according to rules that have not changed, but that have adapted to different material. Ethical criteria should, presumably, not be applied when assessing this kind of work. There is another aspect, however, that comes to the fore when assessing the position of highly admired artists like the sculptor Vytautas Kašuba, who once believed in cultivating the honour and patriotic pride of his country's citizens. Kašuba represented those fighters who had paid for Lithuania's freedom with their life, those glorious ancient Lithuanians who had defended their country from the enemy. After the shift of the political regime, however, Kašuba followed on the heels of the others, and tried to ingratiate himself with the new client by peddling his talent and his abilities. His star also rose again during the time of the

German occupation, with the exhibition of a high relief work entitled *Liberation from Prison* (which was accompanied by angry voices claiming that this topical work had been created in 1940 or 1941, and successfully re-adapted in 1942).

An overview of Lithuanian art in 1940-1941 could allow one to say that both the modernists, and the bards of patriotism collaborated with the occupying Soviet authorities. Both chose a path of compromise. The first gave up their artistic ideals and professional ambitions, and the second resolved to reform their historical memory and civic consciousness for the sake of a career. All the same, it must be acknowledged that with the arrival of the second Soviet occupation, the majority of the most talented and ambitious Lithuanian artists chose the fate of an emigrant. In Soviet Lithuania, the work of Jonynas, Kašuba and Petravičius was seen as an example of free art, as a source of the vitality of the nation's cul-

ture feeding those who were suffering oppression.

How should one evaluate the creative biography of those artists, and the impression they made on the national culture? How can one avoid creating new myths, and finally understand how the people of Lithuania lived in the mid-20th century – including in terms of art, and the feelings of those who created it? The answer might only be found in an in-depth study of European culture under occupation during the middle and latter half of the 20th century, which is undoubtedly impossible without case studies.

Notes

¹ See analyses of the effect on the thinking of the artist of a utilitarian outlook on art, consistently fostered in the first half of the 20th century, in Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, 'Visuomenės vedlys ar amato meistras?' ('Spiritual Leader or Craftsman?'), in: *Naujasis židinys – Aidai*, no. 7/8, 1999, pp. 393-397. Also in the intro. articles and interview with sculptor Mindaugas Navakas in the catalogue for the jubilee exhibition of works by Juozas Mikėnas, which raises the issue of similarities in the thinking of regime-serving artists, and a comparison of Mikėnas with Arnold Breker: *Klasikos ilgesys: Juozo Mikėno kūryba tarp Paryžiaus ir Lietuvos (Longing for the Classics: Juozas Mikėnas between Paris and Lithuania)*, ex. cat., compiled by Giedrė Jankevičiūtė and Elona Lubyte, articles by Giedrė Jankevičiūtė and Jolita Mulevičiūtė, Vilnius, 2001.

² Unlike among writers, there were no artists who attempted to flee the regime, or to secretly oppose it in their work. The exception was Juozapas Perkovskis (Józef Perkowski), a graphic artist of landowner origins, who committed suicide on July 24 1940, when the Soviets occupied Lithuania, because he was convinced that he would be arrested and tortured to death in prison or in the camps.

³ Ingrida Korsakaitė (ed.), *XX a. lietuvių dailės istorija. 1940-1960 (20th Century Lithuanian Art History. 1940-1960)*, vol. 3, Vilnius, 1990.

⁴ 'Meno idėjos ir gyvenimas' ('Artistic Ideas and Life'), in: *Naujoji romuva*, no. 22/23, 1940, p. 419.

⁵ Ibid., p. 418.

⁶ J. Cicėnas, 'Pas draugus dekadai kuriančius' ('With Comrades Creating for the Decade'), in: *Vilniaus balsas*, 12 February 1941.

⁷ Jolita Mulevičiūtė, *Modernizmo link: dailės gyvenimas Lietuvos Respublikoje 1918-1940 (Towards Modernism: Artistic Life in the Republic of Lithuania 1918-1940)*, Kaunas: Nacionalinis M. K. Čiurlionio dailės muziejus, 2001, p. 143.

⁸ Mikalojus Vorobjovas, 'Viktoras Petravičius kryžkelyje' ('Viktoras Petravičius at the Crossroads'), in: *Naujoji romuva*, no. 45, 1939, p. 817.



Fig. 9. Viktoras Petravičius, the cover of the novel *Pakelta velėna* by Mikhail Sholokhov (Virgin Soil Upturned, Kaunas: Press Foundation, 1940)

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Naujų mitų akivaizdoje: apie 1940–1941 m. Lietuvos dailę

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Lietuvos dailės istorija, menas okupacijos sąlygomis, menas ir politika, kolaboravimas, komunistinės propagandos menas, socialistinis realizmas.

Santrauka

Straipsnyje apžvelgiama Lietuvos dailininkų kūryba pirmosios sovietų okupacijos metais (1940–1941). Konstatavus, kad daugelis žinomų šalies dailininkų mėgino prisitaikyti prie naujojo užsakovo (kolaboravo su okupaciniu režimu), siekiama įvardyti šio santykio priežastis. Įvykusio lūžio pobūdis ir stiliaus paradoksai atskleidžiami, lyginant nepriklausomybės laikotarpio ir pirmojo sovietmečio žinomų dailininkų kūrinius. Konstatuojama, kad pirmojo sovietmečio patirtis paskatino dailininkų emigraciją. Daroma išvada, kad aptariamas laikotarpis yra ypač svarbus, norint adekvačiai suprasti bei įvertinti XX a. viduryje įvykusį Lietuvos kultūros lūžį ir patirtos traumos pobūdį.

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