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FOTOGRAFIJOS RAIŠKOS IR SKLAIDOS LIETUVOJE SOVIETIZAVIMAS

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THE SOVIETIZATION OF EXPRESSION AND DISSEMINATION OF LITHUANIAN PHOTOGRAPHY

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General Characteristic of the Dissertation

Research Subject

A retrospective study covering fifty years of the sovietization of Lithuanian photography reveals complex, creative processes under the influence of ideological supervision over culture. Soviet photography, an established instrument of propaganda for the communist platform, had to render an illusion of absolute truth by constructing a mythical reality based on political values and meanings through the use of totalitarian visual coding methodology and the manipulation of symbols and iconic themes. The totalitarian ideals that were injected into the photographically-reproduced social reality infused Soviet individuals with a selective and subjective view of the surrounding environment, consequently isolating individual consciousness from the capacity to doubt and creating stabilizing conditions for the development of Soviet society. The deliberate and zealous sovietization of photography occurred throughout the first occupation of Lithuania, as well as during its subsequent occupation. A powerful and effective means of spreading Soviet ideology was formed by suppressing all creative processes and squeezing photographic activity into a narrow field of operations. Being the main sphere of expression, photojournalism was equated with photography art; this was particularly beneficial to the inoculation of socialist reality principles.

Photography experienced an acknowledged decline during the political leadership of Nikita Khrushchev. Post-war requirements of photographic style began to receive criticism. However, control over photography, secured during the reign of Stalin, continued up until the restoration of Lithuanian independence. Although general political tendencies in the Soviet Union indicated cultural change, prompting Lithuanian photographers to distance themselves from functional (media) reportage and to advance photography as professional art. sovietization of the field continued, just became more flexible through the introduction of socialist humanism based on the "unified" interests of the individual and the system. Attempts

were made to suppress the innovativeness of the Khrushchev Thaw generation by depicting it as a planned stage of development and using timely diversions, legitimizing it as a suitable instrument for a particular purpose. In the study the focus on the research subject converges and is limited to the field of photography art, as this is the only sphere in which methods of ideological control were continuously modified. Photojournalism, which maintained its propagandist mission and formal illustrative function, was completely sovietization. In preserving their political programme and administrative structure, ideologists of culture's sovietization were unable to maintain a unified iconography to decipher the idiocratic system. The psychological system of internal symbols, not external declarations, was the basis of visual communications in the post-Stalin period. It was no longer (or not only) political ideology that surfaced in photography, but existentialist issues that aesthetically highlighted spiritual expression through symbols and metaphors.

However, these universal values were also challenged by the new trends that could not be suppressed by censorship, abstractly unveiling the crisis through belief in truth and beauty. The Lithuanian school of photography that emerged during the late 1960s conceived a documentary-based conception of photography art. At the close of the 1970s an alternative expression, which contradicted the established norm of values, surfaced in the works of new generation artists who viewed the traditional representations of reality with scepticism. Their work inspired postmodernist tendencies in Lithuanian photography art within an environment of the substantially weakened, though still ideologized, repression of culture. Therefore photography, in terms of function and stylistic form, was not uniform; but its sovietization, though implemented programmatically with no deviation from the party platform, was nonetheless unable to enjoy absolute control over this strategically significant branch of culture.

Photography sovietization studies broaden the characterization of totalitarian culture management, emphasizing the integration of national experience into a Soviet world view formation strategy. Studies on Lithuanian photography, that

were highly acclaimed in the Soviet Union and deservedly targeted as a role model, lack historical critical analysis and are dominated by an idealistic view of the photography phenomenon in Lithuania. In examining various aspects of photographic expression processes, assessment of the independent artistic ideology of Lithuanian photographers is conducted in a subjective, at times even exaggerated, manner without taking into consideration the regimented dissemination of values in a Soviet state. Investigative publications on this historical period are directed at the factographic reconstruction of the development of photography or the interpretation of content; they provide no analysis of historical factors and relationships, no reference to a framework of broader culturalogical and politilogical theories, and in disregard of the fact that Lithuanian photographers were creating a positive image of the socialist system and satisfying Soviet cultural standards through ideological reliability, not artistic mastery alone.

This study provides the first comprehensive historical model of the development of Lithuanian photography, highlighting sovietization as the most contingent factor to have influenced the evolution of stylistic expression, as well as to have regulated the dissemination of photography and public reaction to its visual "messages". One of the most important objectives of photography sovietization can be linked to the construction of a new ideological reality. In order to present a more accurate portrayal of reality in Soviet photography, a new concept, *altreality*, is introduced here; the concept not only refers to the nature of the phenomenon (e.g. *hyper-*) or the degree (e.g. *total*), but also justifies ideological aspirations to represent an idealised version of Soviet reality, i.e. to illustrate it in qualitative dimensions (height, depth, width, distance). The photography of a totalitarian regime had to not only reproduce existing reality, but also create a reality of symbolic values that included a time constituent as well as one of ideological space. Ideologists of the new system assembled its components purposefully, superimposing an *a priori* perspective on societal development. The ideological "truth" that was being formulated in photography portrayed a Soviet model of the future as experience in the present.

This not only constituted a fine line between real and symbolic, but the symbolic reality began to take over. The propagandistic *altreality* function of photography persisted in the post-totalitarian period, though it was supported by a new stylistic lexicon. Reality's mythical setting was replaced by romanticised scenes of daily life. The humanistic views portrayed in these scenes did not contradict party policies. Moreover, they were conveyed with much more meaningful content and in more persuasive form. The *altreality* concept used in this study is countered by another term introduced here, *alterreality*. It describes a twentieth-century alternative to the established portrayal of reality in Soviet photography by Lithuanian artists with a new aesthetic form of expression in the late 1970s. Thus, this study targets three stylistic waves of expression using periodization based on both theoretical historiography and a retrospection of photographic works: the socialist realism in artistic photography that was limited to photojournalism and dominated the field until the close of the 1950s; the new, social setting–based documentary form that surfaced in the late 1960s within an artistic climate (i.e. the Lithuanian school of photography) that distanced itself from photojournalism; and the anti-visualization movement that began in the late 1970s.

Research Topic, Aim and Tasks

This academic study aims to disclose major trends in the development of Lithuanian photography during the Soviet period and to determine their relationship to Soviet ideologists' comprehension of photography in terms of *altreality*, which was executed through various methods of sovietizing expression and dissemination. Therefore, the main topic researched in this study consists of the emergence and control of professional photography art in the public domain: photojournalism of the Stalinist era was analysed as a whole since it was then equated to art, completely sovietized and maintained its propagandistic function throughout the entire Soviet period, while the scope of research for the post-Stalin period was intentionally limited to focusing specifically on artistic expression.

The following undertakings were established in order to achieve the objective:

- to ascertain ideological factors that shaped the characteristics of Soviet photography;
- to recreate the evolution of creative processes in Lithuanian photography during the Soviet era and to trace their political dependence;
- to disclose the metamorphosis of stylistic expression and to examine artistic trends by ascertaining differences in concept, form and function;
- to study spheres of photography dissemination and control mechanisms.

Research Methodology

The actualised issue of photography sovietization is an interdisciplinary subject of research. Scientific knowledge of politology and art sociology is integrated in a historical comparison study, while an art history interpretation approach is utilised to interpret visual communications. The historical view is formed within a context of the relationship between photography and political events, as well as sociocultural factors. An attempt is made to understand the photographers and the development of their artistic styles through common societal links to the complicated historical situation, since Soviet ideology created a closed and, in a certain sense, a sacralised setting and mythical time. In studying the sovietization of a field of art it is necessary to search for links between the system, the individual, and the accumulated creative arsenal. Linking all of these elements into a general structural interface determines the succession of hierarchal and causal connections, as well as the dominant relationships. While examining one or another element of photography, it is no less important to discover changes and influences on the development of Lithuanian photography, as well as to compare any space and time correlations or discrepancies with development in the West.

Particular attention is focused on targeting the formulation of policies on stylistic lexicon and forms of social communication. A comprehensive analysis

intends to unearth the complex relationship between ideological dogma and artistic response, as well as to detect the symbols that defined the epoch (from totalitarian attributes to common values). The generic setting of Soviet culture, one that is in conflict with expressing democratic ideas, preordained the subjugated and integral functions of photography to consist of representing the regime and creating its positive image, while avoiding any exposure of social problems. However, once the ideologization of photography has been substantiated, the problem of interpreting its message still remains. Criteria for visual evaluation are modelled with the use of semiotic analysis methods (symbols, composite diagrams, didactic or narrative references). The semantic continuity of sovietized photography and the factors disrupting it are determined by ascertaining the aesthetic factors and ethical values predominant during the Soviet period, as well as the distinctive global views and typical world outlooks.

Conclusions

Totalitarian ideology constructed a new category for the expression of ideological "truth" and mythical reality: *altreality*, which was instilled in Soviet culture with the use of various linguistic and visual means. Photography was one of the most effective tools of *altreality*, since it portrayed images in a documentary and, therefore, persuasive manner. Socialist realism methodology was used to depict a positive image of the socialist order and to illustrate the happy existence of Soviet citizens. This presented opportunities to manipulate objective reality and create a fictionalized narrative describing a *Homo Sovieticus*, what his values are supposed to be, and how harmoniously the entire social system functions according to those values. During the Stalinist period photography lost its status as an art form, a field that was globally established in the late nineteenth century, acknowledged in pre-war Lithuania, and had performed its restricted propagandistic function in Soviet photojournalism. By featuring examples of typical heroes and chrestomathic depictions of their actions, Soviet ideologists were able to create a unified

iconographic picture that "testified" to the complete victory of communist ideals during the Soviet occupation of Lithuania.

However, attitudes toward *altreality* in photography also changed during the post-Stalin years as certain ideological reforms in the regulation of culture occurred. Elements of day to day life were emphasized in the attempt to elevate humanistic values that were relevant to strengthening socialism. Lithuanian photographers, the first in the Soviet Union to reawaken aesthetic attitudes, not only broadened the spectrum of representing of Soviet life, but also distanced themselves from pseudo-realist expression. Admittedly, they depended on "social requisitions" for work and participated diligently in the propagandistic politics of culture, balancing between journalism and art and dealing with the conflict between official interests and creative ideas. Paradoxically the topic of man and earth, which had a clearly nationalist undertone, became a unifying link because the homeland and its traditional code of ethics was the main source of inspiration for Lithuanian photographers; but there was no direct nostalgic reference to a bourgeoisie past or critical exposure of the present in the photographs. This allowed the works of new generation photographers to be incorporated into the ideological programme being cultivated by the Soviets. It must be acknowledged that the uniqueness of the stylistic language and the versatility of the content remain relevant and influential to this day, while *altreality's* impact has not diminished either. This was determined by the following major factors: a sincere and unfeigned relationship between author and surrounding reality evident in the photographs; individual and original expression based on a synthesis of documentary style and psychologism; the elevation of existential issues.

The third generation of photography artists defined avant-garde trends, disassociated themselves from all representational forms injected during the Soviet era, and announced a purely artistic approach to photographic interpretation. Anti-aesthetic expression, which arose in the late 1970s, conceptually illustrated that photography can be more than just a reflection or a direct result of political and social facts; it demonstrated that it can also be an independent and unique work of

art, an *alterreality*, which is created by the author's consciousness and makes use of reality only for material. Since such a concept was not dominant (dispersion was limited and it was understood by only a small circle in the cultural sphere) and had no influence on public views, the Soviet government treated it as experimental and tolerated it, using it to demonstrate the obviously contemporary positions of Soviet culture.

A doctrine of methodical references and network of regulating institutions were established in the attempt to turn photography into a means of creating *altreality*. Control over principles of expression and dissemination was conducted directly during the initial stage of the sovietization of photography through the enforcement of general party instructions and the regulations of the *Glavlit* (General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press under the Council of Ministers of the USSR). In order to propagate the objectives of communist ideals it was crucial that photographers not deviate from the socialist "truth", presenting it as passionately and optimistically as possible through memorable generic images portrayed in a "language" that the people could understand. *Sovetskoje foto* (eng. *Soviet Photography*) magazine formulated photography's "proper" creative methodology arduously and decisively, assisted by most vigorous artists, historians and critics of Soviet photography. It is here that strategic issues regarding trends in the field were solved, relevant themes analysed, orientational criteria for stylistic expression designated and benchmark authors introduced. Incidentally, Lithuanian photographers were more apt to appeal to the authority of the USSR's Institute of the History of Arts, because its academic researchers of artistic issues in mass communications analysed photography with much more depth and interpreted it more broadly; in addition, they could do so without being directly constricted by party directives.

The Union of Journalists and its local branches within the Republic were actively involved in the professional and political education of photographers and held

courses to raise qualifications. Local photography clubs were also able to directly influence and censor artistic expression, but as of 1969 all administrative functions were transferred to the Photography Art Society of Lithuania. The centralisation of this field of art had both positive and negative consequences: photography was finally acknowledged as a branch of art and photographers were presented with more opportunities to engage in professional artistic activities. The domination of the Lithuanian school of art hindered the development of more diverse forms of expression, while attempts to secure the organisation and increase its store of material resources only served to pander to Soviet ideology and block ideas posed by authors. Even though there was no apparent persecution of alternative thinkers or open suppression of their works, the artists who did not abide tradition experienced didactic pressure and restrictions on the public exhibition of their works. However, it must be noted that there was neither covert, nor public active opposition to this situation (except for the disposition of individual artists).

The evolution of photography in the Soviet era is directly linked with stages in the political process and can be observed in the formation of three artistic waves: the photojournalism of Stalin's socialist realism was all-encompassing; the policies implemented by Nikita Khrushchev created conditions for a new documentary form directed at the social environment; while the devisualization movement conveyed Leonid Brezhnev's stagnation crisis and brought significance to postmodernist views. The differences delineated in these artistic trends are encountered within the creative processes and artistic strategies of photography.

Expression was completely regulated during the occupation period. Photographers were guided by a strictly-regimented construction of images based on the iconography of Soviet symbolism and the creation of generalized content. By avoiding spontaneous documentary photography, which may have led to unpredictable consequences, they implemented Communist Party objectives and participated in the falsification of history. The new documentarians of the Khrushchev

Thaw period turned to humanist world views and sought evidence of them in real life. Publicistic style works elevated the values of an average citizen and of daily life and did not betray party policy or the people; on the contrary, they propagated them, but did so by aesthetic means. The characteristic quality of such expression, labelled a phenomenon of the Lithuanian school of photography, was not based on a single style but on an author's individual view and on an original photographic language amplified by a unique social backdrop. Expressive form, impelling poetic metaphors and true-to-life social conditions provided the field of photography with more artistic power and openness which was not particularly threatening to ideological "security", but did not restrict interpretation of multiple meanings either.

Meanwhile, due to its interchangeable photographic content and organisation of formalistic composition, the expressions originating from the third stylistic wave were unsettling for cultural politicians, as well as the community of photographers that had been forming the criteria for the standard of values in photography art for several decades. This type of photography lost its significance as a visual tool because its meaning lurked in the artefact, which young artists also illustrated in a form that was inadequate for upholding aesthetic principles. Photography was labelled a modern, but nonetheless "superficial" art by the school itself, and the pioneers of the postmodernist philosophy instilled devisualization practices. The sphere of photography experienced marked changes, from declarations of visionary truth to conceptualisation processes that challenge the nature of totalitarianism, despite the fact that there was an attempt to sustain the totalitarian regime up until the very restoration of Lithuanian independence.

Function and stylistic form were not uniform in the Soviet period, and the programmatically implemented sovietization of photography was unable to sustain complete control over this strategically important sphere of culture. During the Stalinist years photography was completely sovietization, and in the Khrushchev Thaw the Lithuanian school of photography was true to ideology and created a positive image of the socialist system, while the alternative photography artists ignored

the mission of creating an *altreality* and avoided the sovietization of expression, but not of distribution.

The regulation of photography was dependent upon internal political tendencies and wavered from strict to more liberal, but centrally operated, administration. The sovietization of Lithuanian photography that occurred in the Soviet era was manifested through instruction and through examination of concept, content and form, as well as through the formation and control of centralised channels of photography dissemination. Management of the distribution of photography was monopolized by institutions which answered to the Communist Party dictatorship: agencies belonging to the Ministry of Culture and *Glavlit*, and other professional and artistic organisations. Therefore, since art was directly dependent on politics, it had no opportunity or niche for illegal operation. The public domain was completely controlled, and the only photography art to reach the people was that which had passed through censorship and ideological screening. Soviet ideologists had confidence in Lithuanian photography - this is demonstrated by the intensity and magnitude with which it was printed in various publications, exhibited in the Republic and the USSR, and chosen to represent the Soviet Union abroad. Mandatory topics and themed exhibits demanded creative liability of the collective to be a top priority and smothered personal initiative. Lithuanian photography artists took full advantage of the opportunities handed down by the government by demonstrating their Soviet allegiance; but by doing so they failed to reveal their full creative potential and, as a result, limited their chances for broader personal exposure and also restricted the emergence of new artistic ideas.

Summary of Dissertation Content

I. Ideological Elements of Photography

Soviet Photography as *Altreality*: Conceptual Domain and Boundaries

The purpose of maximally ideologized art was determined by the socialist regime's glorification programme, but in a simulation of reality instead of a futuristic perspective. The artist was supposed to strengthen and "exhibit" ideologized truth in an inspiring manner. The only guarantee of correctly fulfilling this task was by knowing the results beforehand. It is precisely this type of tendency and style that was instilled in Lithuanian art, including photography, during the initial years of the country's occupation and its reoccupation. The concept of reality in Lithuanian photography was based on general principles of a socialist culture. Like other branches of culture and art, photography was forced to cultivate socialist realism methodologies, while the propagandist function of photography in the central print media was emphasized by a series of publications dedicated to solving issues in this area. Works of art were evaluated according to their significance in strengthening the socialist order and promoting official policies. Party ideologists used credibility, the very nature of photography, for manipulation in order for a photograph that had the status of documented reality to be able to present a fictitious concept of reality as indisputable fact.

In executing the radical sovietization of all spheres of culture, photography, as a cooperative, easily-censored and commanding "weapon", was perfectly suited to complete its propagandistic task by "correctly" depicting Soviet life, which meant creating an iconographic *altreality* environment. Prior knowledge of the clearly formulated objective and the correct result, as well as the necessity to achieve it, created a specific photograph. Reduced to the status of media reportage, this so-called artistic expression suppressed photography's potential and individual creativity. The photographs that were circulated in huge numbers in the press implemented visual

campaigns effectively: the minds of millions retained stereotypical images of what Soviet happiness looks like and what a Soviet person should strive for. Completely exaggerated themes about the liberated working class, families in brother Soviet Republics, the prosperity and accomplishments of agriculture and industry, the heroics of socialist achievers and party leader glorification became the norm in creating an optimistic image of the Soviet order and the new Lithuanian existence.

The socialist realism methods applied to photography had a clear impact on the further development of the field under Nikita Khrushchev as well. That totalitarian principles remained vital is evident in the photographs printed by the media: there was no change in either content or form. However, even in an environment of only minor political reform, photography still experienced considerable change with the emergence of *altreality*-altering artistic personalities: new symbols and images that surfaced functioned on an aesthetic basis instead of using primitive didactic methods. The diachronic function that was becoming established in the sphere of photography (between journalism and art) was a precursor to the birth of subjective, difficult-to-censor visual information in Lithuanian photography. Photojournalists Adauktas Marcinkevičius and Vytautas Stanionis were among the first to communicate using multi-lingual photographic terms in the Soviet press. They did not provoke readers to challenge social conflict, which is naturally characteristic of any regime, especially a totalitarian one, but they brought ideological reality back down to earth and laid it on a plane of comprehensible reality by unravelling the their predecessors' pre-constructed plans.

However, *Sovetskoje foto* magazine never failed to act as a reminder of established Soviet cultural values and, per party instructions, it explained the essence of new directives to photographers: the requirement to feature the glorious achievements of the people was still valid, but it had to be conducted in a contemporary way without seeming staged, and had to avoid portraying indifferent or formal events. Cultural policies essentially did not change after Leonid Brezhnev took over political rule of the country in 1964. On the contrary, a stagnant view of creative

processes emerged, one which did not tolerate, but unavoidably promoted, double standards. Journalistic photography directly fulfilled "social requisitions", but "current events" were just as apparent in the photography art that had begun to disassociate itself from formal documentary photography. The Lithuanian school of photography was recognised after the Lithuanian Photography Exhibition of 1969 in Moscow which featured an artistic programme that emphasized the following: a close and sensitive relationship with one's land; unity between individual and country, man and nature; creative ethics and a sense of responsibility; harmony of beauty and meaning; poetics of cognition. Socialist realism was implemented in official domains, for instance in the *Tiesa* (eng. *Truth*) daily newspaper, the *Švyturys* (eng. *Lighthouse*) publishing house, in official albums representing the Soviet Republic, as well as in thematic exhibitions; meanwhile the aesthetics of modern photography was maintained in humanitarian realms like the *Literatūra ir menas* (eng. *Literature and Art*) and *Nemunas* magazines, as well as in signature albums and exhibits. The new photographic reality, fairly uniform in both Lithuania and throughout the entire Soviet Union, was formed in the 1960s by photographers like Antanas Sutkus, Vitas Luckus, Aleksandras Macijauskas, Algimantas Kunčius, Romualdas Rakauskas, Vilius Naujikas and others. The state of the public Soviet cultural domain, into which the new documentarians began to incorporate themselves, was not favourable or inclined to promote innovative ideas, but the humanistic nature of their views did not contradict party directives. The new form of *altreality* proposed by Lithuanian photographers in the Soviet Union was accepted primarily for its imposing artistic language, which was significantly stronger than in socialist realism reportage: staged scenes of reality were replaced by genuine images without make-up and were both informatively and emotionally effective.

A dual concept influenced the representation of reality and the creation of photographic reality in the 1970s and 1980s. On one hand official ideological attitudes continued to remain in place, on the other the postulates of influential Lithuanian photographic traditions were already having an effect. New generation artists

responded to the entirety of conflicting theoretical directives in different ways: some remained true to tradition and created documentary-based metaphorical photography, others chose alternative expressions and violated the natural doctrines of mimicry for the first time in the history of Lithuanian photography. Incidentally, all photography artists who were protected by the status shield of the Lithuanian school of photography were, without exception, already bravely ignoring the party's demagogical demands in their own works (except for propagandistic projects) – demands that still applied to photojournalists. The Photography Art Society of Lithuania could only preserve this artistically beneficial niche by cooperating with the Soviet government and by declaring its loyalty to communist ideas. The society guaranteed its ideological faithfulness by evaluating the political situation: it was its only means of existence and the only way for it to be able to create and distribute its work both at home and abroad, as well as to be bestowed with better working and living conditions, i.e. to get the whole prosperity "package" that was reserved for the cultural elite and could only be claimed by members of art societies. The society was the first and only public organisation of its kind in the Soviet Union to unite photography artists.

In this time period the society hosted seven exhibits that featured young photographers, introducing new artists who had an opportunity to not only express their loyalty to tradition (Romualdas Požerskis, Virgilijus Šonta, Vytautas V. Stanionis and others), but to also unveil a trend that was in contradiction to modern romanticism (Algirdas Šeškus, Alfonsas Budvytis, Vytautas Balčytis, Remigijus Pačėsa and others). The young artists alleged that the creation of photography is the creation of a new reality and, consequently, defining the boundaries of photography as an art form became an insurmountable point of disagreement. This still young and as of yet unappreciated expression of art was the cause of much scepticism; "what is depicted in this photograph?" became the main standard question. Foremost, the "corrupted" eyes of those who regulated Soviet cultural politics would notice atypical and alien social depictions that could provoke one of the most terrible and

intolerable elements in Soviet reality: the exposure of a spiritual crisis in the society that is not at all in keeping with the Soviet programme of portraying reality. The new artists not only opposed the traditional *altreality*, they picked apart *alterreality* as well, that is, its ideological structure, and demonstrated their solidarity through postmodernist properties. Nonetheless, even back then their unity in searching for new creative strategies created a pretext for speaking about a movement, not individual authors, and stimulated change in theoretical approaches to issues of photographic reality. The niche that embraced the dissemination of *alterreality* was, in truth, rather narrow: avant-garde photographs were not printed in the periodical press or representational albums for the Soviet Union, and they were not shown in the more significant themed or centennial exhibits. In the meantime *Sovetskoje foto*, the methodological and ideological shaper of photography that had expeditiously responded to the escalation of the traditional school of Lithuanian photography and had often published the works of its authors (in comparison to those of Latvian and Estonian photographers), attempted to remain oblivious to the new Lithuanian photographic phenomenon. To accept Lithuania's "new vision" meant stirring the fundamental waters of Soviet photography art that had been formed throughout the decades. This situation shows that the twenty-year concept of *altreality*, which had been created according to a traditional comprehension of the school of photography, remained sufficiently uniform in the public domain.

"Correct" Photography: Image Management

By invoking "one correct" method for socialist realism and being guided by ideologically fundamental principles of visualizing existence "correctly", optimistically and militantly, sovietized photography had to help constructing a person whose morals and ethics met the standards of a proletarian dictatorship. It was required to suitably illustrate manifestations of Soviet life, understand them and portray their most significant Soviet tendencies, promote the new and unmask the old, propagate the ideal citizen as a follower who blindly executes party instructions,

and seek out heroes among the people who were humbly willing to do the dictator's bidding.

Particularly during the Stalinist period, the subject-matter of totalitarian photographs was presented in strict visual formats. The technology of creating images was completely institutionalised and generic. Hierarchal control guaranteed the credibility of a photograph by using the self-preservation instincts of the author (portray this and not that and to present only what is permissible and how), through screening by a publication which approved or edited it so that it would be precise and reliable, and through *Glavlit* censorship (based on the ideological programme).

Engineering a photographic image was justified by a set of fairly obvious principles. An image was supposed to portray a generalised idea, so naturalism and any other details which served to draw attention away from this made the picture not ideological. The choice of topic was also determined by requisitioned task: to depict the great works of the builders of communism, emphasizing only the progress that is characteristic of the Soviet order. Photography was to express the author's communist views and classic position. The subject of the image had to be chosen with particularly care – an uncharacteristic or insignificant subject could illustrate reality inaccurately. Socialist realism in photography was directed at the portrayal of so-called typical elements in socialist reality; however, the elements that were considered to be typical could not be frequently recurring or statistically average, they had to consist of phenomena that fit the meaning of a specific societal strength. The powers bestowed upon photography to create and promote the ideal Soviet order surpassed expectations: the history shaped by photographs in the press is completely positive. This is characteristic of the photography created under strict management during the first stage of sovietization.

After the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Soviet photography theorists urged photographers to make use of the privileges presented by the documentary-style genre. But photographers learned to manipulate through images and flexibly balance between the "can and can't". The first

upheavals in the sphere of photographic image regulation are linked to a division of the Union of Journalists of the Lithuanian SSR, established in 1958, which united and coordinated the creative activities of photojournalists in the Republic. Up until the establishment of the Photography Art Society of Lithuania, this was the main, fairly prestigious organisation that was responsible for perfecting and promoting the expression of photography in the Republic and beyond its borders. Having taken "management" under its wing, the photography division attempted to revise the style of socialist realism and renewed pre-war discussions on the purpose and aesthetics of photography. Another methodical link that had been formed by the photographers themselves was the existence of photography clubs. Photographers from Kaunas, the most active in Lithuania, joined together with Vilnius photographers and satisfied the expectations of amateur photographers throughout the country: in 1966 they were successful in organising a council of Lithuanian photography clubs, which initiated the establishment of the Photography Art Society of Lithuania in 1969. This was not only the first organisation in the Soviet Union to unite photo artists, but also the methodical centre of administration for Lithuanian photography. The practical functions of the society were two-fold: it was needed by photographers who had no official opportunities to develop their creative activities, but it was equally beneficial to the Soviet government because, by taking over responsibility for this sphere, the society had to execute universal control over expression and dissemination. Since an academic theoretical base had never been constructed for the field of photography during the entire Soviet era, as opposed to other branches of art, *Sovetskoje foto* continued to be its fundamental base of methodology, together with a division of the USSR's Institute of the History of Arts that studied artistic aspects of mass communications. The existence of a strong Lithuanian school of photography activated theoretical and creative processes of this branch of art throughout the Soviet Union: its photographers were observed, followed and looked up to. Acknowledgement of the photo artists' hard-sought status and the society's strengthened status prompted the development of more

diverse artistic expression and wider dissemination of works. However, Lithuania's photographers were able to attain such favourable conditions only because they strategically executed political projects, maintained good relations with the partisan and government nomenclature, earned strong ideological backing in Moscow and, most importantly, proved their absolute credibility through their works (which were not primitive and quite skilful).

The pragmatic public relations policies of the Photography Art Society of Lithuania were directed at the integrality of photography in the Soviet cultural realm. Intensive, purposeful coordination and methodological work brought long-awaited results: the situation was truly stable and governable up until 1980. However, the artistic negativism and intentionally amateurish style that emerged from a new generation of photographers threatened the basic principles of traditional photography. Origins of expression and their connection to changes in the field of fine arts were discussed at several public meetings, depicted in two joint painting and photography exhibits held in Vilnius by Algirdas Šeškaus and Raimundas Sližys in 1983, and by Vytautas Balčytis and Eugenijus Antanas Cukermanas in 1984. Placing these two branches side by side presented a new understanding of photography for the first time in Lithuania's photography history, i.e. it renounced its isolation and established photography as a branch of art that is able to function on an interdisciplinary plane. However, the society's board did not demonstrate any "political correctness" on an official level; on the contrary, it attempted to repress the "improper" works created by the young generation and expressed concern regarding the next group to take over the execution of political orders (why, it was the only way to preserve the smoothly functioning structure that had been formed). During Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika*, the Lithuanian school of photography remained a leader but the didactic lexicon began to change. And prior to the restoration of independence the tactics changed as well: visionary artistic ideas could be expressed freely.

Authorship Dilemma: the Collective "I"

The need for photographers in Lithuania to form a community, which began even before the war, was rather beneficial to the government since it expected to see a unified image that reflected the country's national politics. Magazines began to print aesthetic representational illustrations that portrayed an idyllic, rejuvenated country, as well as a Smetonian national realism (Antanas Smetona: first Lithuanian president 1919-1920) that also became the main form of artistic expression. Photography was a means to create a patriotic image of the country. The first photography societies began to assemble through publications, as they did during the Soviet period, and the collective common denominator of "I" was defined by clear doctrine. The *Naujoji Romuva* (eng. *New Romuva Church*) magazine became the stomping grounds for the aesthetics and style of new photography. This Catholicism-oriented publication was able to fortify the then avant-garde views and persuasively disseminate them through both literature and photography. Having obtained the fundamental basics of style from magazine pages, in 1933 the photographers united to form the Association of Amateur Photographers in Lithuania, an organisation that was dedicated to artistic expression.

Within a fairly short period of time, twenty years of independence, Lithuanian photographers succeeded to not only unite into a purposeful movement where creative personalities could be acknowledged, but to form a unique phenomenon of national photography as well. However, in June of 1940 the Soviet government halted activities of all the organisations of independent Lithuania; not only were the creative activities of institutions established before the war halted, but the opportunities for developing aesthetic traditions that had been born during the time were blocked as well. Older professionals disappeared (some were imprisoned, some exiled, some moved to the West) and were replaced by a new generation: Chanonas Levinas, Judelis Kacenbergas, Ilja Fišeris, Michailas Rebi, Eugenijus Šiško and others.

Since continuity of national photography under these new political conditions was out of the question, Lithuanian photographers had to begin anew. Primarily,

a photographer was motivated and fairly consistently nurtured to be a unit within a collective. Both amateurs and professionals were pulled into the social structure, allowing for the formation of a unified and easily-governed community of photography artists. The coordination and course of activities directed at amateurs who gathered together to collectively learn photography were quite purposeful and earnest, and a multitude of photography clubs and circles was established. The most important centre of photography, the Photography Art Society of Lithuania, succeeded in having the status of its artists officially recognised and offered members realistic opportunities for steady participation in local, national and international exhibits, and for printing their works in photography art publications and selling them legally. The Photography Art Society of Lithuania, which united the most active participants of the mass movement of photographers, not only played an essential role in creating a conceptual foundation, it also identified the common ties between aesthetic principles. The centralisation of activities strengthened the collective "I" that was expressed according to tradition, but it did not cause creative individuals to lose their artistic ambition: new revelations for topics and the search for original form are typical of each core representative of the Lithuanian school of photography.

ɪɪ. Creative Processes. The Sovietization of the Expression of Photography

Stage of Socialist Realism: "Artistic" Photojournalism Methods

Due to its specific methodology of expression, totalitarian photography was able to record the experiences of a material culture, as well as present clear ideological principles. The lexicon, consisting of iconographic themes and symbols, was dedicated to expressing an entire set of standards for thinking and behaving in a totalitarian society, creating *altreality*, and "writing" its myth-based history. The impact of political propaganda, not documentary history, became the most significant virtue

in photography. Activeness of society was the only factor that could guarantee an intense pace of building socialism, so photography had to be directed at the masses, it had to reach the consciousness of every "builder", i.e. become communal. As a witness to this heroic moment, the photographer was to heed three main conditions: comprehensiveness (so that not a single moment pertaining to the historical event would be missed), correctness (so that the series of events would be portrayed politically correctly with a focus on the coordinated participation of citizens in all processes), and appropriate artistic form (so that reality be presented eloquently).

"Artistic truth" was posed as the fundamental value and photographers were to create it on documental basis. They used rather primitive distortion methods in an attempt to strengthen the impact of an image, ideologize it or even falsify events in life. Symbols of a sacred idea, transferred from reality to *altreality*, became symbols of "truth". If these were not encountered in the surroundings when they were needed, they were simply built into the picture. The manipulation of reality became justifiable in the name of ideological truth. Correcting the scene became standard: inserting party leader portraits, editing two photographs together for distribution to a crowd at a mass meeting, touching up a shot to cover elements of a bourgeoisie past. A system of consistent brainwashing that used a combination of tools (naive deception and convincing propaganda alike) was conceived.

The essence of the basic method used to depict socialist realism involved the construction of a declarative and generalising snapshot. In attempting to illustrate a certain topic, the photographer chose the setting, exploited a typically suitable environment and characters, and then staged the actions. In such instances specific dates, locations or names, though often noted, became meaningless because the photographer's most important function was to emphasize the image's mainstream value, not its uniqueness. In all cases, specific elements were exaggerated and factographic snapshots gained greater significance, since their evaluation was more greatly emphasized than the process. This was a reliable method because the photographer avoided coincidences and undesirable, obscure elements. The creation

of ideological "announcements" about typical heroes and situations with the use of similar (guaranteed) methods preordained a monotonous portrayal of Soviet life. It is doubtful as to whether the repetitive photo compositions, formal reportage and lack of surprise or provocation attracted the attention of readers, but the totality of their propagation had a hypnotic effect: the "truth" was absorbed effortlessly. However, the fabrication of a documentary shot, executed with primitive tools, did not have as much impact as the power of a real situation caught on camera might have had. This is why photographers often created the scenes for events to be documented on site, making slight corrections and adapting real subject-matter to illustrate the topic. The photographer constructed the shot right there, without affecting events. By choosing an appropriate background, positioning real event participants for a pose and removing disruptive elements, the photographer was simply making the present more beautiful instead of reconstructing an event. A carefully chosen snapshot (selective composition) was effective because it mirrored programmed standards in condensed form.

Photographers utilised instantaneous snapshots for photo chronology. Factographic shots differ from scenic ones in that factographic images do not generalise or summarise. The snapshot is taken spontaneously by catching the most characteristic moment and "clipping" a suitable fragment out of the time and the place. In a printed article the main ideological visual burden fell on the text (the commentary of the image), which often began with the words "we see in the photograph", describing what should be seen in the image. Especially during the first years of the establishment of the totalitarian regime in Lithuania, it was important to explain typical examples methodically, leaving no room for questions, because results had to be achieved with lightning speed: the communism that was being created at the present period of time accommodated the future as well.

The victory model being developed by the totalitarian system was reflected in depictions of society as well; no matter what perspective you viewed it from, it was the very best and the most perfect in the world.

It was not the anthropological, ethnographic or social status that was significant, but the personality of the future individual who was being shaped by the new conditions. The Soviet citizen was presented with sample references that were to be aspired to, picture-perfect portraits that embodied generalised images of an academic, writer, worker, peasant, soldier, pioneer, etc. A photographer's talent was demonstrated by his ability to persuade the subject in the portrait to generate the image he needed, and to reduce the individual to the status of a rubber stamp. The media, filled to the brim with portraits of leaders and working class people of the hour, urged citizens to follow in the footsteps of the heroes.

Very often portraits of an average Soviet person were published alongside the formally executed images of party leaders (whose significance required no explanation). This served to elevate an individual's character and spiritual status in order to form a generalised image of a representative of a certain profession or social class. The photographer was to present a picture of a communism-building, new and ostensibly free person, a master of his own existence. Most importantly the portrait was to elicit that which represents the subject's reliance on Soviet society and to illustrate it so appealingly that other members of that community would want to and would strive to be the same. Photographers were not required to join the ranks of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, although party affinity had to be self-evident in their ability to analyse and evaluate historical processes and to create the image of a modern citizen. Ideological traps even existed in ordinary landscapes that were meant to help citizens acquaint themselves with the vast expanse of the homeland and the changes taking place within it, both in an urban setting and in a natural landscape. Overcoming the most complicated natural barriers was intended to reveal the extent of industrialization and the might of the Soviet individual: conquering taiga and tundra, "assimilating" mountains and prairies. Additionally, emphasis was placed on the declaration that all of this belongs to each and everyone together. While viewing these scenes of glory, citizens of the USSR were supposed to be smitten with bliss and proud of the fact that they had

been fated to live in such a "wonderful" country. The most important task of all was to create a reality of symbolic values: *altreality* was sought with the assistance of all genres of photography, as well as with widespread utilisation of a great variety of "subject-matter" from everyday life.

During the period of totalitarianism, the sole category of documentary photography to which the principles of socialist realism did not apply was photographic reportage that was not meant for the eyes of the public, but for special institutions to have at their disposal as evidence of certain facts. In these cases the Soviet government used photography as a primary source of documentary testimony and evidence of "truth", as opposed to creating a myth. Use of this tool was justifiable in recording the Nazi legacy during the occupation. The Soviet government focused particular attention to documentary photos of the condition of Lithuanian cities after the war: Jan Bułhak took photographs of Vilnius; Mikas Pranckūnas photographed Kaunas; and by decree of the 3rd Byelorussian Front leadership, Povilas Karpavičius led a photography expedition during which the post-war aftermath was documented from Eastern Prussia to Berlin in preparation of criminal testimony against fascist Germany. Mass photography of residents took place in tackling an undertaking that was no less important: citizenship for residents of the USSR. Official passport photos bear witness to this final act of occupation. Photo documents were "flexibly" used by Soviet security agencies. Individuals who drew their attention were often blackmailed and recruited, as well as accused and charged according to photographs containing falsified content or deceitful reportage. The KGB's surveillance and criminal files were overflowing with photographs taken in the woods during the partisan (guerrilla) war. The agency's employees and agents took a fair amount of photographs themselves. The database of incriminating evidence grew and control of the people increased on the basis of photographs in the KGB archives. Although once independence was restored, those very photographs became the main witness and documentary testimony that memorialized the fighters of the freedom movement.

Social Landscape: Milestones of the Lithuanian School of Photography

Favourable conditions for the creation of landscapes were only formed during the Khrushchev Thaw, when postures of socialist realism style that had prevailed for a decade in the stagnant partisan press gave way to new concepts of artistic expression. It is worthwhile to analyse the changes in photography more as a repercussive occurrence rather than a phenomenon that was influenced by a new paradigm in culture, giving new meaning to both the title and the standpoint of Ilya Ehrenburg's 1954 novel *The Thaw*. The hierarchal pyramid fell apart after Stalin's "Cult of Personality" was denounced. It had been using the same old quick fix instrument, the public, only now the binding material was ordinary prose instead of heroic myth. The Thaw was occurring in people's relationships and re-evaluation of values.

This photography of this period, in part because it implemented the party's undertaking of "writing" present-day history, adopted an obviously publicistic mannerism. The humanist aestheticism of photography that was spread by Western artists was also acceptable to Soviet artists who pondered existential issues, only they solved them by different methods. In Soviet ideologist comprehension, humanism did not comprise a system of global viewpoints, because it consisted of somewhat different ethical and ideological factors in countries within the socialist camp: personal optimism, work pathos, friendship of nations and communist morals - precisely the elements that photography was commissioned to find, isolate and augment as values. By interpreting and evaluating creative works according to such criteria, objectivity did not express the fundamental forms and relations in reality, but rather their separation into two opposing political poles: photography representing the capitalist world is not objective, while that which represents the socialist world is objective.

Even though Lithuanian realism was based on humanist aesthetics, it progressed quite a bit further: photographers developed their own unique social landscape. Observation of daily events depicted in the works of photographers did not always acquire a romantic or uplifting mood: there was a fair amount of drama, nostalgia,

demystification and irony. Unfortunately however, the Soviet imagery "market" was dominated by eloquent metaphors and these creations were not fully unmasked. Stylistic expression was "conveniently" wedged into the definition of a Lithuanian school of photography phenomenon. The characterizations that were carefully provided by Soviet historians of art still influence interpretations of Lithuanian works to this day. Admittedly, initial perceptions were sound and objective, but they were directed at culture within the country. For obvious reasons, no correlation with world tendencies was sought at the time: comparisons between Soviet and Western cultures were made only as a basis of opposition. Perhaps this is why the most important feature of the second wave of photography remained unnoticed: a new type of documentary photography that could be linked to an analogous phenomenon in American photography known in histography as the social landscape concept. Pioneers of this stylistic movement, Garry Winogrand, Lee Friedlander and other politically unmotivated photographers, used a synthesis of documentary style and psychologism in their own works by drawing attention to insignificant objects. American and Lithuanian photographers each responded differently to their social environments, although both avoided playing the role of "reformer", "herald" or "prophet". But the new documentary photographers in America and the Soviet Union were observing different societies and models of existence, so creative strategies, not the content of the photographic reality, should be compared.

One of the first in Soviet photography to be programmatically geared towards the observation of daily existence was Antanas Sutkus, whose basic strategy hinged on Henri Cartier-Bresson's "the decisive moment" tactic and the power of aesthetic documentary style. Through his work the author emphasized that each moment is important and that every person you meet on the street is significant. In the contemporary Western world the complex photographic language of the new documentary photography became a symbol of spiritual and intellectual progress. Metaphorical images elicited an instantaneous reaction (emotion, comprehension, recollection, connection) were significantly more effective in the Soviet Union. They represented

the nation's archetypal view of the world and, through it, the universal values of a Soviet country. Romualdas Rakauskas was guided by an idealistic outlook. He depicted vivid scenes of blossoming to symbolize transience, while his photographic language form, metaphorical lyrics, described the condition of his spiritual subject. Metaphorical images did not raise the suspicions of Soviet censors because they did not really provide a basis for detecting concealed anti-Soviet ideas in the Aesopian Language. Lithuanian photographers, particularly those of the traditional school, avoided ideological provocation, although a fair number of works exist that contain multiple meanings in terms of political and social views. These are the works of authors who studied social status. A sufficiently broad range of expression can be discovered in the observation and poetization of everyday occurrences, as well as in a more general interaction with the landscape as well.

For example, the photographs of landscape artist Jonas Kalvelis are not meant to illustrate a geographical corner of Lithuania, they simply utilise the location to create a new artistic expression and special photographic form, as well as to portray both an aesthetic and a social condition. This strategy can also be taken to mean an escape from Soviet realities; withdrawal of the lyrical subject into a nature setting can be interpreted as social seclusion. Algimantas Kunčius treats the subject-matter of reality in a completely different manner: what it means to become part of a people, what connects people to their land and culture – these and other important issues resonate from his photographs. The author features fragments of existence and accentuates a state of social independence: harmony with oneself. It is precisely this type of aesthetically well-balanced serenity that is missing in the works of Aleksandras Macijauskas. This author's narrative is rather temperamental and ironic. Vitas Luckas also thrusts his lens into the thick of things without sentiment, relating experiences or becoming engrossed in stories he collected in the diverse territory of the "homeland" with nearly amateurish nonchalance. Romualdas Požerskis examines human beings in a different manner. His "focus" is significantly softer and warmer, manifested through sincere joy or sympathy.

Rimaldas Vikšraitis, the most explicit documentary photographer in the sphere of social landscape creation, unveiled issues of severe degradation in the countryside and exposed the infirmity of society. The political state of affairs is not the only influential factor promoting major change in social condition and *altreality* photography; the entire postmodern world creates such barriers and introduces new forms of coexistence. Zygmunt Bauman, one of the most influential social theoreticians in the world and a twentieth-century representative of postmodernism, observed that postmodernity itself, a condition that the rather secluded and "secure" Soviet culture was not able to isolate itself from, promotes morality without ethical code. The entire social structure of being changes: humanist integrity disintegrates and a fragmented medium of societal coexistence sets in.

The Devisualization Movement: Constructive Destruction

Social landscape development was dominated by documentarians who usurped the comprehension of fundamental creative principles in photography (means, objectives, contemplation); consequently the new wave that arrived, which can tentatively be called a devisualization movement due to its fundamental creative strategy (alienation from the meaning of the visual content), remained in the background for a good decade (not just during the Soviet period, but also during the first years of independence). The sociocultural status of this situation was directly dependent on the dominant views of the Lithuanian school of photography. The creative sector, which had been seamless from the early 1980s until then, was split into central and outlying sections. A clear boundary cannot be drawn between the two territories, since steady communication was prompted by constantly intersecting interests (both positive and negative), one side's partial recognition of the other and, ultimately, management of distribution channels. The divided state of stylistic lexicon was a consequence of more than just a change in creative ideologies; it was also formed by an unavoidable transformation in society that was apparent in the emergence of marginal culture or subcultures. Conflicting models of cultural self-

comprehension deterred and impeded the activeness of expression. On the other hand, they prompted the substantiation of miscellaneous values. Individual artistic experiments, often regarded as manifestations of inner turmoil and conflicts with the surroundings, actually had more common roots; while the seemingly disruptive original expression had a fairly constructive, conceptual base. Motifs of social alienation, turmoil and apathy, intertwined with themes of liberation from forced ideological "games", represented views of a new nihilistic generation. However, the first openly nonconformist act and incredible show of creative progress during the Soviet period was demonstrated by photographers from Kharkiv, not Vilnius, led by Boris Mikhailov who can be deservingly regarded as the pioneer of Soviet conceptual photography art.

New derivatives of photographic lexicon that were rather unexpectedly emerging in Lithuania invoked critical evaluation. Due to firmly lodged traditional positions the new expression was unable to gain equal footing, but it was not assimilated either. This is because the stage for its acknowledgement was set, at least in part, by the Lithuanian school of photography classics Vitas Luckus and Algimantas Kunčius – the first to question the prerogative of reality as the creative subject of art. The creative individuality of the new wave of artists was primarily evident in the technological ingenuity they employed to transform photo paper into a work of art and to prove that it was considerably more than just a copy of reality. The artists resisted classical maxims and broke traditional standards of form, composition, resolution and other mandatory conditions for creating a "good" photograph. The works of Vytautas Balčytis, one of the most consistent authors of conceptual devisualization, feature kiosks, commemorative plaques, empty billboards, ditches and other objects in "quiet neighbourhoods", everything that art historian Alfonsas Andriuškevičius assigns to a degraded culture. But the author is not looking for hidden metaphysical meaning in these spaces that are no longer significant to the population; he is using them to accommodate his indifference, which sometimes crosses over into irony. The obvious products of ominous *Sovieticus* activities are

not encountered in the marginal spaces examined by Alfonsas Budvytis; on the contrary, the author engages in cheerful collaboration with the environment. He is concerned with a sociocultural realm that is inadequate and unnerving, and one that he hates. Perhaps this is the reason he recreates it in his photographs, as opposed to recording it. Algirdas Šeškus typically uses a completely different method to retreat from Soviet routine by focusing on the nature of an image and the decontextualization of subject-matter. This is expressed in his inconspicuous and "disorganised" snapshots through expressionless, low-contrast and minimalist print formats, as well as his choice of dull, worthless content.

As opposed to the creators of traditional aesthetics who responded directly to the environment through empirical emotional experience, those who devisualized the photographic image followed a deliberate agenda of denaturalization, depsychologism and deideologization; refusing to passively record reality or spawn from it an *altreality*, they created artistic phenomena by striving to discover their own unique (signature) features. In articulating contemporary views, the new lexicon portrayed a radical change in values and the transition from an author's subjective state of expression to a conceptual view of the subject. These strategies brought photography closer to the sphere of art than it ever had been before. Šeškus, Budvytis, Balčytis (Vilnius) and Arūnas Kulikauskas, Gintautas Stulgaitis, Giedrius Liagas, Saulius Paukštys (Kaunas) and other new-outlook Lithuanian artists utilised photography for the constructive, not visual, activity of shaping their own artistic worlds, striving to convey what lurked within, identifying with an object, and portraying things as they knew them to be, not as they saw them. The main creative condition that arose was a state of psychological neutrality, while the purpose of devisualization clearly contradicted reality and became disengaged from the social landscape.

III. Open Discourse. Sovietization of the Dissemination of Photography

The Polylogy Arena and Monoscene:
In Between the Programmed and the Original

The media was the voice of the communist order, and it executed the propagation of *altreality* impeccably. Censorship functioned alongside, though the special regulatory mechanism that was instilled in Lithuania in 1940 had already been altered considerably and differed from the Glavlit that was established in 1922. Information was actually generated instead of simply being screened for approval or denial in order to make adjustments to public processes. In addition to the periodical publications, centralised coordination of propaganda and dissemination of information in Lithuania was also implemented by ELTA, the wire service of the Lithuanian SSR. One of ELTA's main functions was to compile photographic information and thematic series of propagandistic photographs. The dissemination of *altreality* was also executed by publishing books with large circulations. Museums were equally significant and influential as ideological centres of Soviet propaganda. Their exposes and exhibits portrayed condensed versions of party policies. The main focus of a museum, contrary to the classical function, was designed to reflect the Soviet present and build prospects for a communist future. Photography could illustrate these subjects and was used as a tool to expeditiously record and, most importantly, consciously construct reality. This is the reason why a large portion of the exhibits consisted of photographs, together with the accompanying text that increased their impact: quotes, diagrams, slogans.

In its first years the Soviet government not only reorganised old museums, it also established new ones to cover as much territory as possible (Šakiai, Vilkaviškis, Utena, Kaišiadorys, Švenčionys, Kupiškis, Kražiai, Kaunas and Vilnius). As of 1949, sectors dedicated to the construction of socialism were established in all museums. By 1953 all expositions were either transformed or newly installed to depict the evolution of the Communist Party and history of the country during the Soviet years,

to promote the most progressive work methods, to glorify the highest achievers in socialist production, to display examples of collectivization and grand developments in communism, and to present accomplishments in the spheres of education, culture and health. The qualitative value of the expositions was determined by the political correctness of the assembled content, not the display or the setting. Museums were forced to hold short-lived and inferior photo exhibits, e.g. the launch of the spring planting campaign in 1946; the 1947 elections to the Supreme Council of the Lithuanian SSR; the advantages of collective vs. individual farming in 1948 and an anti-religious campaign the same year; "communist education of the general population of the working class" in 1949; the tenth anniversary of the reinstatement of Soviet government in Lithuania in 1950, etc. An equal amount of attention was reserved for elevating Communist Party leaders and Soviet society activists by posting their biographies at photo reproduction stands and accentuating the most important concepts with quotes, while adequate homage for the local hero of the day was shown by roping off a red corner and displaying a commemorative plaque. Incidentally, these practices were conducted throughout the entire Soviet era, not just under Stalin. And although the policies of exhibition often received criticism for entertaining low ideological political standards, as well as for an apolitical portrayal of historical facts, the themes, content, intensiveness and attendance of the exhibits indicated something different: the complete sovietization of museums, as well as the photographs exhibited in them.

During the Thaw, Soviet ideologists transformed the openly propagandistic requirements of photography into a social requisition which was examined during a large scale, Union-wide project: the photography art exhibit *Semiletka v deistvii* (eng. *The Seven-Year Plan in Action*). This annual photography review was dedicated to depicting the results of the national economy's seven-year development plan adopted at the twenty-first congress. Lithuanian photographers, as well as photographers from other Republics, who had participated in the project since 1960 had to illustrate the main topic at their stands: the construction of communism

and the accomplishments of the Soviet people. Another significant contribution by Lithuanian photographers to culture, and consequently to the sovietization of photography, was expressed in 1977 through their participation in *A Wreath for October*, the USSR's first amateur art festival for the working class. To commemorate the 60th anniversary of the October Revolution, the Photography Art Society of Lithuania held a total of nine exhibitions of which a collection of the best Lithuanian photography art, shown in Moscow, had the greatest impact. This active and productive Photography Art Society of Lithuania was the only artistic organisation to be bestowed with the very important responsibility of presenting Lithuania at the 1977 USSR exhibition in the United States.

Congresses were also among the major political events included in the planned list of functions that photo artists were obligated to receive "appropriately". One after another they demanded the elevation of ideological subjects that could not otherwise be encountered in the greyness of everyday Soviet life and could not be presented any other way because vigilant censors would raise the alarm. This is why the same photographs often travelled from one exhibition to another, while any newly inserted works were "correctly" selected by the society's art council. The selection criteria was always sufficiently politicized, dominated by documentary photography, and accompanied by official rhetoric. Incidentally, Lithuanian authors frequently succeeded in finding a compromise which superficially fulfilled all the requirements by adapting their own original work of art to suit the requisition. In doing so they were preserving and, in a certain sense, defending the artistic obligation of photography.

Photography was not exhibited as art under Stalin. The Vilnius National Museum of Art did not host a single photography art exhibit, as it was generally accepted that the sole function of photography was Soviet iconographic representation: to announce, propagate and construct *altreality*. No one dared to openly acknowledge it as an art form until the works of colour photography by Povilas Karpavičius were exhibited by the Soviet Artists' Union of the Lithuanian SSR in 1953. As a monoscene, the personal exhibit was a completely new phenomenon

in a cultural domain that was totally sovietized and recognised only photojournalistic socialist realism. The author's obvious deviation from established norms in image creation signified a breakthrough in the comprehension of photography and stimulated the search for new forms of creative expression. Five years later, Lithuanian photographers were steadily holding exhibitions that placed artistry as a top priority for selection. In 1968 the Museum of Art of the Lithuanian SSR exhibited the works of four photojournalists: Algimantas Kunčius (*Kultūros barai* magazine), Vilius Naujikas (*Mūsų gamta* magazine), Romualdas Rakauskas (*Nemunas* magazine), and Antanas Sutkus (*Tarybinė moteris* magazine); this exhibition is considered to mark the first time photography was treated as an art form by an accredited art institution during the Soviet period. Following this event, and after the artistic movement became generally more active, the prospects of photography art and its dissemination were finally being examined by the press and in government offices. A new stage began with the launch of the exhibition *9 Lithuanian Photographers*, held Moscow in 1969. There was little choice but to acknowledge the unstoppable processes emerging in Lithuanian photography, as well as to present them as a Soviet cultural phenomenon. The artistic excellence demonstrated by Lithuanians not only satisfied the Soviet Union's understanding of professionalism, it also represented the Soviet "stamp of quality" to countries abroad. The Soviet government fully understood the power of influence of the new generation's *altreality* and utilised it to the utmost to serve its own propagandistic agenda. Acknowledged and highly rated abroad, Lithuanian photography was exhibited by the Germans, French, Bulgarians and Czechs at their best exhibition centres. The union participated in nearly all of the most significant photography events in Europe, for instance the Arles and Turin photography festivals, and the Europhoto congress. The propagandistic mission of photography in developing cultural contacts with the world was made absolutely clear. Lithuanian photographers fully understood the price of such trust and opportunity, so they only conducted creative experiments locally and, even then, after careful selection.

In twenty years of activity, the Photography Art Society of Lithuania formed a broad network of art distribution which all members of the society had selective access to (according to criteria of trustworthiness and acclaim). They were observed so closely that not a single photographer dared to even host private, unauthorised exhibits like artists from other genres did. The unsanctioned works of photographers that remained beyond the social order's boundaries, classified as experiments of creative imagination, were only shown groups of close friends.

Coexistence in the Photographers' Community: Control over Art

During the post-Stalin years, the dissemination of works of art remained completely dependent the party policy and the entities controlling its implementation. The Photography Art Society of Lithuania was presented with a full range of opportunities to display Lithuanian photography inside the Soviet Union, as well as throughout the world, under the condition that the photographs depict only a positive image of the country. This requirement was dutifully executed by the society's administrative body. The art council implemented the initial round of censorship, which was directed at ideological circumstances but influenced the general standards of the profession as well. Each photographer selected works for an exhibit discriminatingly for purposes of self-preservation, of course, but self control was also employed while creating the photographs. Few photos that criticize the regime can be found in archives, and those that are encountered frequently expose the system accidentally, not intentionally. Local exhibitions were censored just as scrupulously as any other, while exhibits dedicated to illustrating politically significant events were reviewed even more meticulously than those being sent abroad for foreign viewing audiences. It was only after the breakthrough which weakened stylistic tradition occurred that names of new authors came to light. This proved that the confrontation of two creative movements had not developed into an insurmountable obstacle: the works of young artists were exhibited in moderation, but exhibited nonetheless, both locally and abroad.

The society coordinated each step it took with the institutions that censored the field of photography. Although photographers humbly declared all aspects of their creative activities, particularly means of public dissemination, they did not always receive permission or an affirmative response. But regardless of the conscientious manner in which the society conducted activities, control over the distribution of photography continued to grow stronger. As of 1984, exhibition lists were particularly carefully prepared (usually in the Russian language), administered, and delivered to Glavlit for approval. Even on the threshold of Mikhail Gorbachev's political reform, long after the censorship system was in place and functioning flawlessly, the Ministry of Culture issued an even more precise description of ideological and artistic criteria, which required that all collections designated for exhibition throughout the USSR and abroad must be presented for approval, and that the principles used for creation and selection, as well as the particulars of the subject-matter and the authors, be listed. This wave of activity was not occurring solely in Lithuania. It was instigated by the central office of Glavlit, which predicted approaching changes and was concerned about preserving its status under the new political conditions. By joining the Geneva version of the Universal Copyright Convention in 1973 and by establishing a copyright agency in the USSR with local divisions in the Republics, the Soviet Union created favourable conditions for promoting and using the works of Lithuanian authors in countries abroad. On the other hand this also established another instrument of control over the dissemination of art, since Soviet authors and rights holders could send works of art abroad only after informing the Copyright Agency.

Nemunas magazine, which had published several controversial works that had been seen in print for the first time, was one of the most beneficial niches used by photographers to express artistic ideas and publish new works. Ignoring allegiance to censorship requirements, the magazine's editorial board maintained a policy of open, or at least more liberal, views. Admittedly, the works of authors belonging to the Lithuanian school of photography were more readily published in *Nemunas*, while avant-garde art remained on the sidelines. Amateur photographers who were

not yet members of the society created their own favourable niches in which to display experimental aesthetic works. Gintautas Trimakas and Alvydas Lukys developed their unique views at the amateur photography club of the Vilnius Building and Engineering Institute (now the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University); informal exhibit locations were also used by active members of the photography club at the Kaunas Trade Union: Gintautas Stulgaitis, Saulius Paukštys, Giedrius Liagas and others. But skilful authors who wished to develop their artistic careers and attain recognition sought membership in the society, because the Lithuanian organisation was the only one of its kind in the entire Soviet Union that could officially offer its photographers the opportunity and means to receive the status of professional artist. In essence, the definition of free distribution was two-fold: the society administered control, but also provided unique opportunities.

During the final years of the existence of the Soviet Union, ideological control methods began to change drastically and regulation of all spheres of culture became more relaxed. Though even after censorship was completely abolished in Lithuania following the adoption of the Law on the Press and Other Media by the Supreme Council of the Lithuanian SSR on January 1, 1990, the Photography Art Society continued to have a conformist attitude up until the very restoration of independence: photography exhibitions could be held only under society management and subsequent to approval from Glavlit. But the constrictions placed on art in the Soviet period were already being discussed by young artists at the time in the increasingly emboldened press. Reactions of Western theoreticians and exhibition curators to the obvious changes in photography of the Soviet Union in the 1980s seemed paradoxical as well. They focused more attention on predominant tradition, at least at the beginning of the political reform, and were not even aware of the new processes. Though admittedly, the Photography Art Society of Lithuania was exhibiting original works by devisualization movement authors more and more frequently than ever before at personal and themed photography exhibits, and doing so particularly energetically in various cities throughout the Soviet Union.

Nonetheless, continuity of the ideological school was victorious. The newly acquired freedom of expression and substantially broader opportunities for distribution presumably should have stimulated discussions about dissolving the organisation and creating new means of coexistence. However paradoxical it may seem, when the society's management raised the issue of joining and supporting the establishment of a Union of Art Photographers in the USSR, a group of young authors dissented but suggested only a single alternative: to establish their own union as quickly as possible, before the constituent congress of the USSR's union. As it turns out, the thought of operating autonomously, without the support of a Soviet by-product like a collective, as well as the support of the organisation that runs it, did not even occur. The entire field's national financial backing, event coordination, not to mention the long-established contacts with partners abroad, were all under one umbrella. At a time when significant change was occurring in the creative and academic lives of artists from other genres, accompanied by open discourse, administrative reform and the formation of new communities, the field of photography remained essentially unchanged. Centralised management continued to hinder the expansion of infrastructure for a comparatively long period of time, although the society no longer had the same influence it had enjoyed in the past over the visionary-minded artists who gradually crossed over to other cultural niches and integrated their projects into the sphere of interdisciplinary arts.

Santrauka

Tyrimo problema

Penkiasdešimties Lietuvos fotografijos sovietizavimo metų retrospektyva atskleidžia sudėtingus kūrybinius procesus, kuriuos įtakojo ideologinis kultūros valdymas. Sovietinė fotografija, įtvirtinta kaip programinių komunizmo idėjų propagandos priemonė, turėjo atspindėti absoliutaus teisingumo iliuziją – pasitelkus totalitarinius vizualaus kodavimo metodus, manipuliuojant simboliais ir ikoniniais siužetais, buvo kuriama mitologinė tikrovė, pagrįsta politinėmis vertybėmis ir prasmėmis. Į fotografijoje reprodukuojamą socialinę realybę implikuoti totalitariniai idealai diegė atrankinį ir neobjektyvų sovietinio žmogaus požiūrį į jį supančią aplinką, taip izoliuojant jo sąmonę nuo abejonių ir sukuriant stabilizuojančias sąlygas sovietinės visuomenės vystymuisi. Kryptingas ir aršus fotografijos sovietizavimas vyko pirmaisiais Lietuvos okupacijos ir pakartotinės okupacijos metais. Sustabdžius visus kūrybinius procesus ir įspraudus fotografų veiklą į siaurą funkcionavimo lauką buvo suformuotas įtaigus bei veiksmingas sovietinės ideologijos sklaidos šaltinis. Fotožurnalizmas kaip pagrindinė raiškos sritis buvo sutapatintas su fotografijos menu, kas buvo ypatingai palanku diegiant socrealizmo principus.

Nikitos Chruščiovo politinio valdymo laikotarpiu pripažinta, kad fotografija patyrė nuosmukį, pradėta atvirai kritikuoti pokariu įsivyravusius reikalavimus fotografijos stilistikai, tačiau stalinizmo metais įdiegta fotografijos kontrolė išliko iki pat Lietuvos nepriklausomybės atkūrimo. Nors bendros Sovietų Sąjungos politikos tendencijos suponavo kultūros pokyčius, paskatinusius lietuvių fotografus atsiriboti nuo funkcionalaus (spaudos) dokumentalizmo ir plėtoti profesionalaus fotografijos meno sritį, jos sovietizavimas tęstas, tik kiek lanksčiau – aktualizuotas socialistinis humanizmas, pagrįstas „vieningais" individo ir sistemos interesais. „Atlydžio" kartos novatoriškumą bandyta suvaldyti, pateikiant jį kaip planingą vystymosi etapą, laiku nukreipiant ir įteisinant kaip tam tinkamą instrumentą. Tad tiriamajame darbe šio etapo objektas susiaurėja – išskiriama tik meno fotografija,

nes būtent jos ideologinio valdymo metodai buvo nuolat renovuojami, o fotožurnalizmas, išsaugojęs propagandinę misiją ir formalią iliustravimo funkciją, buvo totaliai sovietizuotas. Kultūros sovietizavimo ideologams, išsaugant politinę programą ir jos administravimo struktūrą, nepavyko išlaikyti vieningos ideokratinę sistemą dešifruojančios ikonografijos. Postalininiu laikotarpiu susiformavusi vizualinė kalba buvo grindžiama ne išorine deklaratyvia, o psichologine vidinių ženklų sistema. Fotografijoje iškilo nebe (arba ne tik) politinė ideologija, o egzistenciniai klausimai, kai simboliai-metaforos estetiškai akcentavo dvasinius reiškinius.

Bet ir šios universalios vertybės buvo kvestionuotos naujų, cenzūra nesuvaldomų meninių tendencijų, konceptualiai atskleidžiančių tikėjimo tiesa ir grožiu krizę. Septintojo dešimtmečio pabaigoje iškilusi lietuvių fotografijos mokykla suformavo dokumentiškumu pagrįstą fotografijos meno sampratą, o 8-ojo dešimtmečio pabaigoje naujosios kartos kūrėjų, kritiškai pažvelgusių į tradicinį realybės reprezentavimą, darbuose pasireiškė alternatyvi raiška, paneigianti įtvirtintos tradicijos vertybes. Jų kūryba inspiravo postmodernistines tendencijas Lietuvos fotografijos mene jau gerokai susilpnėjusio, tačiau dar vis ideologizuoto kultūros suvaržymo aplinkybėmis. Tad fotografija (jos funkcijų ir stilistinės formos apibrėžtyje) nebuvo vienalytė, o jos sovietizavimas, nors ir vykdytas programiškai, nenukrypstant nuo partijos kurso, vis dėlto nepajėgė totaliai suvaldyti strategiškai svarbią kultūros sritį.

Fotografijos sovietizavimo tyrimai išplečia totalitarinio kultūros valdymo charakteristiką, išryškindami nacionalinės patirties integravimą į sovietinės pasaulėžiūros formavimo politiką. Lietuvių fotografijos, kuri Sovietų Sąjungoje buvo pripažinta ir pagrįstai išskirta kaip sektinas pavyzdys, raidos tyrimams trūksta istorinės kritinės analizės, vyrauja idealistinis požiūris į lietuvių fotografijos fenomeną. Įvairiais aspektais nagrinėjant fotografijos raiškos procesus, yra subjektyviai, o kartais ir hipertrofuotai vertinama Lietuvos fotografų nepriklausoma kūrybos ideologija, kuri nesiejama su sovietų valstybėje reglamentuota vertybių sklaida. Paskelbti apie šį istorinį periodą apžvalginio pobūdžio tekstai nukreipti į faktografinį

fotografijos raidos rekonstravimą arba kūrybos turinio interpretavimą be istorinių veiksnių ir ryšių analizės, nesiremiant bendresniu kultūrologinių ir politologinių teorijų pagrindu, ignoruojant tą faktą, kad sovietinės kultūros standartus atitiko ne tik kūryboje demonstruojamas meistriškumas, bet ir ideologinis patikimumas – lietuvių fotografai kūrė pozityvų socialistinės sistemos įvaizdį.

Šiame tiriamajame darbe pirmą kartą pateikiama nuosekli lietuvių fotografijos raidos sovietmečiu istorinio modelio versija, akcentuojant sovietizavimą kaip esminį, labiausiai stilistinės raiškos sanklodą sąlygojantį, o taip pat fotografijos sklaidą ir vaizdo „pranešimų" rezonansą visuomenėje kontroliuojantį veiksnį. Vienas svarbiausiausių fotografijos sovietizavimo tikslų siejamas su naujos idėjinės realybės konstravimu. Siekiant pateikti tikslenę realybės atvaizdo sovietinėje fotografijoje charakteristiką įvedama nauja sąvoka – *altrealybė*, kuri ne tik nurodo į reiškinio pobūdį (kaip, pavyzdžiui, *hiper*-) arba jo mastą (kaip, pavyzdžiui, *total*), bet ir pagrindžia ideologinę siekiamybę sovietinę realybę reprezentuoti idealizuotai, tai yra įvaizdinti ją kokybinėmis kategorijomis (aukštis, gelmė, platybė, tolis). Totalitarinio režimo fotografija turėjo ne inertiškai reprodukuoti esamą realybę, o sukurti simbolinių verčių tikrovę, kurios dėmuo yra ne tik idėjinė erdvė, bet ir laikas. Jos komponentus naujos formacijos ideologai surinkdavo tikslingai, visuomenės vystymosi perspektyvą nubrėžę *a priori*. Fotografijoje konstruojama idėjinė „tiesa" sovietinės ateities modelį pateikė kaip dabarties patirtį. Taip buvo ne tik niveliuota riba tarp realios ir simbolinės tikrovės, bet simbolinė pradėjo dominuoti. Pototalitariniu laikotarpiu propagandinė fotografijos kaip *altrealybės* paskirtis išliko, tačiau pasitelkta nauja stilistinė leksika. Mitinės realybės scenografiją pakeitė romantizuoti kasdienybės vaizdai, per kuriuos skleidžiama humanistinė pasaulėjauta ne tik neprieštaravo partinėms direktyvoms, bet jas išreiškė daug prasmingesniu turiniu ir įtikinamesne forma. Darbe vartojamas ir kitas, oponuojantis *altrealybės* sampratai terminas *alterrealybė*, apibūdinantis XX a. 8-ojo dešimtmečio pabaigoje iškilusių naujos lietuvių estetinės raiškos kūrėjų alternatyvų santykį su įsigalėjusia realybės refleksija sovietinėje fotografijoje. Tad tyrime išskirtos trys stilistinės raiškos

bangos, kurių periodizacija atlikta remiantis tiek teorine istoriografija, tiek foto-
grafų kūrybos retrospektyva: socialistinis realizmas į fotožurnalizmą įspraustame
fotografijos mene dominavo iki 6-ojo dešimtmečio pabaigos, 7-ojo dešimtmečio
pabaigoje nuo fotožurnalizmo atsiribojusioje meno terpėje (lietuvių fotografijos
mokyklos) susiformavo socialiniu peizažu pagrįstas naujasis dokumentalizmas, o
8-ojo dešimtmečio pabaigoje prasidėjo devizualizavimo judėjimas.

Tyrimo objektas, tikslas ir uždaviniai

Šiuo moksliniu darbu siekiama atskleisti svarbiausias lietuvių fotografijos rai-
dos sovietmečiu tendencijas, nustatyti jų santykį su sovietinės ideologijos puo-
selėta fotografijos kaip *altrealybės* samprata, kuri buvo realizuojama, pasitelkiant
įvairius jos raiškos ir sklaidos sovietizavimo metodus. Todėl pagridinis tyrimo
objektas yra viešoje erdvėje funkcionavusi ir kontroliuojama profesionali fotogra-
fija. Moksliniame darbe analizuotas Stalino valdymo periodo su menu tapatintas
fotožurnalizmas, kuris buvo visiškai sovietizuotas ir per visą sovietmetį išsaugojo
propagandinę funkciją, o postalininio laikotarpio tyrinėjimai, tikslingai siaurinant
objektą, yra nukreipti tik į meno reiškinius.

Iškelti tokie pagrindiniai uždaviniai:
- nustatyti ideologinius veiksnius, lėmusius sovietinės fotografijos specifiką;
- rekonstruoti Lietuvos fotografijos kūrybinių procesų raidą sovietmečiu ir atsekti
  jų politinę priklausomybę;
- atskleisti stilistinės raiškos kaitą, aptarti menines kryptis, išaiškinant idėjų, for-
  mų ir funkcijų skirtis;
- ištirti fotografijos sklaidos sritis ir jų kontrolės mechanizmus.

Tyrimo metodai

Aktualizuota fotografijos sovietizavimo problema yra tarpdalykinio tyrimo objektas.
Į lyginamąją istorinę analizę integruojamos politologijos ir meno sociologijos moks-
linės patirtys, o vizualios kalbos aiškinimui taikoma menotyrinės interpretacijos

prieiga. Istorinis požiūris formuojamas fotografijos sąsajų su politiniais įvykiais ir sociokultūriniais veiksniais kontekste. Autorių ir jų meninio braižo formavimąsi bandoma suprasti per bendrus visuomenės ryšius su komplikuota istorine situacija – sovietinė ideologija konstravo uždarą ir tam tikra prasme sakralizuotą erdvę ir mitinį laiką. Analizuojant vienos vaizduojamojo meno sričių sovietizavimą tenka ieškoti jungčių tarp sistemos, asmenybės ir sukaupto kūrybos arsenalo. Siejant šiuos visus elementus į bendrą sąveikos struktūrą nustatoma hierarchinė ir priežastinė ryšių seka, dominuojantys santykiai. Aptariant vieną ar kitą fotografijos reiškinį ne mažiau svarbu atsekti jo pokyčius bei poveikį lietuvių fotografijos raidai, surasti bendrumus arba nesutapimus su Vakarų erdve ir laiku.

Pagrindžiant atskirus autorinės fotografijos raiškos ypatumus ir bendrus programinius sklaidos principus ypatingas dėmesys skiriamas stilistinės leksikos konstravimo principų ir socialinių komunikacijos formų nustatymui. Kompleksine analize siekta atsekti sudėtingus ryšius tarp ideologinių dogmų ir kūrybinės reakcijos, iškelti epochą įprasminusius ženklus: nuo totalitarinės atributikos iki universalių vertybių. Normatyvinės sovietinės kultūros kontekstas, disonuojantis su demokratinių idėjų apraiška, lėmė fotografijos kaip integralios posistemės funkciją reprezentuoti režimą ir kurti jo pozityvų įvaizdį, vengiant socialinių problemų atodangų. Tačiau pagrindus srities ideologizavimą, išlieka fotografijos pranešimo interpretavimo problema. Pasitelkiant semiotinės (ženklų, kompozicinių schemų, didaktinio arba naratyvinio pobūdžio nuorodų) analizės metodus modeliuojamas ir vaizdo vertinimo kriterijų laukas. Nustatant sovietmečiu vyravusius estetinius dėsnius ir etines vertybes, pasaulėjautos ypatumus ir pasaulėžiūros gaires, išryškinama ne tik sovietizuotos fotografijos semantinė vienovė, bet ir ją ardantys veiksniai.

Tyrimo išvados

Totalitarinė ideologija suformavo naują tikrovės išraiškos kategoriją – *altrealybę*, kurią įvairiomis žodžio ir vaizdo priemonėmis diegė sovietinė kultūra. Vienas veiksmingiausių *altrealybės* įrankių buvo fotografija, kuri viziją pateikdavo dokumentine

ir todėl įtikinama forma. Siekiant pabrėžti pozityvų socialistinės santvarkos įvaizdį ir parodyti laimingą sovietinio žmogaus egzistenciją, pasitelktas socialistinio realizmo metodas, suteikiantis galimybių manipuliuoti objektyvia realybe ir kurti mitologizuotą pasakojimą apie tai, kas yra sovietinis žmogus, kokios jo vertybės ir kaip pagal jas darniai funkcionuoja visa socialinė sistema. Stalinizmo laikotarpiu fotografija prarado meno statusą, kurį XIX a. pabaigoje įtvirtino pasaulyje ir pripažino prieškario Lietuvoje, ir atliko siaurą sovietinio fotožurnalizmo propagandinę funkciją. Panaudojant tipiškų herojų pavyzdžius ir chrestomatines jų veiklos inscenizacijas, pirmaisiais Lietuvos okupacijos metais sovietiniams ideologams pavyko sukurti vientisą ikonografinį vaizdinį, „liudijantį" visišką komunistinių idėjų pergalę.

Tačiau postalininiais metais, vykdant tam tikras ideologinio kultūros valdymo reformas, buvo pakeistas požiūris ir į *altrealybę* fotografijoje. Pasitelkti kasdienybės reiškiniai, kuriuose stengtasi įžvelgti humanistines vertybes, aktualias socializmo įtvirtinimui. Lietuvių fotografai, pirmieji Sovietų Sąjungoje atgaivinę estetinę pasaulėjautą, ne tik išplėtė sovietinio gyvenimo reprezentavimo diapazoną, bet ir atsiribojo nuo pseudorealistinės raiškos. Tiesa, jie buvo priklausomi nuo „socialinio užsakymo" ir uoliai dalyvavo propagandinėje kultūros politikoje, balansuodami tarp žurnalizmo ir meno, kompromisiniu būdu spręsdami oficialių interesų ir autorinių idėjų konfliktą. Vienijančia jungtimi tapo žmogaus ir žemės tema, turėjusi akivaizdų tautinį atspalvį – pagrindinis lietuvių fotografų įkvėpimo šaltinis buvo gimtinė su jos tradicine moralės sankloda. Bet fotografijose nebuvo tiesioginių nostalgiškų nuorodų į buržuazinę praeitį, kaip nebuvo ir kritiškų dabarties atodangų, o tai leido naujos kartos kūrybą integruoti į sovietų plėtojamą ideologinę programą. Reikia pripažinti, kad stilistinės kalbos savitumas ir turinio universalumas išlieka aktualūs ir paveikūs iki šiol, o humanistinės *altrealybės* įtaigumas taip pat neprarado savo galių. Tai lėmė šie pagrindiniai veiksniai: fotografijose perskaitomas nuoširdus ir nesumeluotas autorių santykis su juos supančia realybe, individuali ir originali raiška, grindžiama dokumentiškumo ir psichologizmo sinteze, ne vienadienių, o amžinų egzistencinių problemų iškėlimas.

Avangardines tendencijas nubrėžusi trečioji fotografijos kūrėjų karta atsiribojo nuo visų sovietmečiu diegtų realybės reprezentavimo formų ir deklaravo grynai meninę prieigą prie fotografijos interpretavimo. Aštuntojo dešimtmečio pabaigoje iškilusi „antiestetinė" raiška konceptualiai nurodė, kad fotografija gali būti ne tik atspindys arba tiesioginis politinių ir socialinių realijų padarinys, bet ir nepriklausomas, unikalus menininko kūrinys – *alterrealybė*, kurią sutveria autoriaus sąmonė, pasitelkianti tikrovę tik kaip medžiagą. Kadangi tokia samprata nebuvo vyraujanti (turėjo mažą sklaidą, buvo suprantama nedideliam kultūros žmonių būriui) ir neturėjo įtakos visuomenės pasaulėžiūrai, sovietų valdžia ją traktavo kaip eksperimentinę ir toleravo, taip demonstruodama menamo sovietinės kultūros šiuolaikiškumo pozicijas.

Siekiant paversti fotografiją idėjinės „tiesos" ir mitinės tikrovės kūrimo priemone, buvo sukurtas metodinių nuorodų kanonas ir kontrolės institucijų tinklas. Pradinėje fotografijos sovietizavimo stadijoje raiškos principų ir jų sklaidos kontrolė vykdyta tiesiogiai – veikė bendri partiniai nurodymai ir Glavlito nuostatos. Svarbiausia fotografams buvo nenukrypti nuo socialistinio „teisingumo", pateikti jį kuo kovingiau ir optimistiškiau, suprantama liaudžiai „kalba", įsimintinais trafaretiniais vaizdais, taip skatinant komunistinio idealo siekius. Kryptingai ir specializuotai „teisingos" fotografijos kūrimo metodus formavo žurnalo *Sovetskoje foto* redakcija, pasitelkusi stipriausius sovietinės fotografijos kūrėjus, istorikus, kritikus. Būtent čia spręsti strateginiai klausimai apie srities tendencijas, analizuotos temų aktualijos, nurodomi orientaciniai stilistinės raiškos kriterijai ir pristatomi sektini autoriai. Tiesa, lietuvių fotografai labiau apeliavo į Sąjunginio mokslinio tiriamojo menotyros instituto autoritetą, nes menines masinės komunikacijos problemas tiriantys mokslininkai daug giliau analizavo ir plačiau interpretavo fotografiją, be to, galėjo tai daryti tiesiogiai neprisirišdami prie partinių direktyvų.

Fotografų profesinio ir politinio švietimo darbe aktyviai dalyvavo Žurnalistų sąjunga ir jos respublikiniai padaliniai, kurie rengė kvalifikacijos kėlimo kursus. Tačiau meninei raiškai tiesioginę įtaką darė ir betarpišką cenzūrą atliko vietos fotoklubai, o

nuo 1969 m. – iš jų visas administravimo funkcijas perėmusi Lietuvos fotografijos meno draugija. Toks kūrybinės srities centralizavimas turėjo ir teigiamų, ir neigiamų padarinių: fotografija pagaliau pripažinta menu, fotografams atsirado daugiau galimybių profesionaliai meninei veiklai, tačiau lietuvių fotografijos mokyklos dominavimas stabdė įvairesnių raiškų plėtotes, o pastangos išsaugoti organizaciją ir stiprinti jos materialinę bazę vertė pataikauti sovietinei ideologijai ir varžyti autorių idėjas. Nors nebuvo akivaizdžių kitaminčių persekiojimų ar atviro jų kūrybos marinimo, tradicija nesekantys menininkai patyrė didaktinį spaudimą ir jų darbų viešo rodymo apribojimus. Bet tenka konstatuoti, kad tokiai situacijai aktyvaus – slapto ar atviro – pasipriešinimo (be individualių meninių nuostatų laikymosi) nebuvo.

Fotografijos raida sovietmečiu turi tiesioginių sąsajų su politinių procesų etapais. Tai patvirtina trijų kūrybinių bangų susiformavimas: Stalino valdymo periodu buvo totaliai išplėtotas socrealizmu pagrįstas fotožurnalizmas, Chruščiovo vykdoma politika sudarė sąlygas iškilti į socialinį peizažą orientuotam naujajam dokumentalizmui, o Brežnevo stagnacijos krizę išreiškė ir postmodernizmo nuostatas įprasmino devizualizavimo judėjimas. Šių meninių krypčių skirtis atsiskleidžia fotografijos kūrimo principuose ir meninėse strategijose.

Pirmaisiais okupacijos metais raiška buvo visiškai kontroliuojama. Fotografai vadovavosi griežtai reglamentuotu vaizdo kūrimu, kurio pagrindą sudarė sovietinių simbolių ikonografija ir apibendrinančio turinio konstravimas. Vengdami spontaniško dokumentiškumo, kuris galėjo sukelti neprognozuojamą rezonansą, jie įvykdė Komunistų partijos tikslus ir dalyvavo istorijos falsifikavimo procese. „Atlydžio" laikotarpiu naujieji dokumentalistai pasitelkė humanistinę pasaulėžiūrą ir jos apraiškų ieškojo gyvenimo realybėje. Publicistinio pobūdžio darbai iškėlė paprasto žmogaus ir jo kasdienybės vertybes, nes tai ne prieštaravo partiškumo ir liaudiškumo principams, o, priešingai, juos propagavo, bet tai atskleidė estetinėmis priemonėmis. Tokios raiškos bendrumas, įvardytas kaip lietuvių fotografijos mokyklos reiškinys, buvo pagrįstas ne vienu stiliumi, o autorių individualiu matymu ir

originalia fotografine kalba, išplėtotu savitu socialiniu peizažu. Ekspresyvi forma, įtaigios poetinės metaforos, išgyventos ir tikros socialinės būsenos suteikė fotografijai daugiau meninės jėgos ir atvirumo, o tai nekenkė ideologiniam „saugumui", tačiau neribojo ir daugiaprasmės interpretacijos.

Tačiau trečios stilistinės bangos raiška dėl sukeistinto fotografijos turinio ir formalistinio kompozicijos organizavimo trikdė ne tik kultūros politikus, bet ir fotografų bendruomenę, kuri per kelis dešimtmečius suformavo tradicinius fotografijos meno vertės kriterijus. Juk fotografija kaip vaizduojamoji priemonė neteko prasmės, nes esmė slypėjo artefakte, kuriam jaunieji kūrėjai suteikdavo taip pat estetiniams principams neadekvačią formą. Mokyklos atveju fotografija buvo įtvirtinta kaip modernus, bet vis dėlto „rodomasis" menas, o postmodernistinės pasaulėjautos kūrėjai diegė devizualizavimo praktikas. Nors pototalitarinį režimą Lietuvoje bandyta išsaugoti iki nepriklausomybės atgavimo, fotografijos sritis patyrė nemažai pokyčių: nuo idėjinės tiesos deklaracijų iki totalitarizmo prigimčiai prieštaraujančių konceptualizavimo procesų.

Fotografijos sklaidos administravimas buvo monopolizuotas Komunistų partijos diktatui pavaldžių institucijų – Kultūros ministerijos ir Glavlito struktūrų, profesinių ir kūrybinių organizacijų, tad menas, tiesiogiai priklausantis nuo politikos, neturėjo jokių sąlygų ir terpės nelegitimiai veiklai. Viešoji erdvė buvo kontroliuojama, tad visuomenę pasiekdavo filtruota ir ideologinę atranką praėjusi fotografų kūryba. Sovietinių ideologų pasitikėjimą lietuvių fotografija rodo ne tik intensyvus ir gausus jos publikavimas įvairiuose leidiniuose, eksponavimas respublikinėse ir sąjunginėse parodose, bet ir atstovavimas Sovietų Sąjungai užsienyje. Privalomos temos ir proginės parodos į pirmąjį planą iškeldavo kūrybinio kolektyvo atsakomybę ir užgoždavo asmenybės iniciatyvą. Taip demonstruodami sovietiškumą Lietuvos fotomenininkai išnaudojo valdžios suteiktas galimybes, kita vertus, neatskleidė tikro kūrybinio potencialo, o tai slopino ne tik platesnes autorių archyvų atodangas, bet ir naujas menines idėjas.

Mokslinės publikacijos

1. Margarita Matulytė, „Uzurpuota realybė: lietuvių fotografijos sovietizavimo procesai ir kolizijos", in: *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis*, 2010, t. 58: Menas kaip socialinis diskursas, sud. Agnė Narušytė, p. 71–93.

2. Margarita Matulytė, „Totalitarinė fotografija: kova už sielas", in: *Menotyra*, sud. Erika Grigoravičienė, 2005, Nr. 3, p. 21–27.

3. Margarita Matulytė, „Lietuvių fotografijos meno raiška kultūros sovietizavimo kontekste (1958–1970 m.)", in: *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2005, Nr. 1, p. 7–34.

4. Margarita Matulytė, „Sovietinės fotografijos funkcijos ir specifika 1940–1953 m.", in: *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2003, Nr. 2, p. 69–102.

Šaltinių publikacijos

1. *Vilnius. 1944: Jano ir Janušo Bulhakų fotografijų archyvas*, sud. Margarita Matulytė, Vilnius: Lietuvos dailės muziejus, 2009, 360 p.

2. Antanas Sutkus, *Retrospektyva = Retrospective*, sud. Margarita Matulytė, Vilnius: Sapnų sala, 2009, 480 p.

3. Algirdas Šeškus, *Archyvas* (*Pohulianka*), sud. Margarita Matulytė, Vilnius: Lietuvos dailės muziejus, 2010, 312 p.

Trumpos žinios apie doktorantę

Margarita Matulytė – fotografijos istorikė, Lietuvos dailės muziejaus istorinės fotografijos rinkinio saugotoja-tyrinėtoja, Vilniaus universiteto lektorė, Lietuvos fotomenininkų sąjungos ir Tarptautinės muziejų organizacijos ICOM narė.

Gimė 1961 m. Vilniuje. 1994 m. įgijo magistro laipsnio diplomą Vilniaus universiteto Komunikacijos fakultete, 2005–2010 m. studijavo doktorantūroje Vilniaus universiteto Istorijos fakultete. Nuo 1995 m. tyrinėja Lietuvos fotografijos raidą, aprėpdama platų raiškos spektrą: nuo ankstyviausios dagerotipijos iki šiuolaikinės, nuo dokumentikos iki meno. Sudarė per 20 knygų (*Algirdas Šeškus. Archyvas* (*Pohulianka*) (2010), *Vilnius. 1944. Jano ir Janušo Bulhakų fotografijų archyvas* (2009), *Vilniaus elegijos. Boleslovos ir Edmundo Zdanovskių prieškario fotografijų kolekcija* (2009), *Antanas Sutkus. Retrospektyva = Retrospective* (2009), *Lietuvos fotografija*: *vakar ir šiandien = Lithuanian Photography: Yesterday and Today* (2008, 2007, 2006, 2005), *Vilniaus fotografija. 1858–1915* (2001), *Dagerotipai, ambrotipai, ferotipai Lietuvos muziejuose = Daguerreotypes, Ambrotypes, Tintypes in Lithuanian Museums* (2000) ir kt.), paskelbė per 100 mokslinių ir fotografiją populiarinančių straipsnių.

Short Curriculum Vitae of the Candidate

Margarita Matulytė is a historian of photography, curator of the Historical Photography Collection at the Lithuanian Art Museum, Vilnius University lecturer, and a member of the Union of Lithuanian Art Photographers and the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

Born in Vilnius in 1961, she received a master's degree at the Faculty of Communication of Vilnius University in 1994 and was enrolled in the university's doctorate programme at the Department of History in 2005–2010. Since 1995 she has been researching the evolution of photography in Lithuania, covering a broad spectrum of expression: from the early daguerreotype to contemporary, from documentary to art. She has compiled more than 20 books: *Algirdas Šeškus. Archives* (*Pohulianka*) (2010); *Vilnius. 1944. Jano ir Janušo Bulhakų fotografijų archyvas* (eng. *Vilnius. 1944*: *From the Photo Archives of Janas and Janušas Bulhalkas*) (2009); *Vilnius Elegies*: *a Pre-war Photography Collection by Bolesława and Edmund Zdanowscy* (2009); *Antanas Sutkus. Retrospective* (2009); *Lithuanian Photography*: *Yesterday and Today* (2008, 2007, 2006, 2005); *Photography of Vilnius 1858–1915* (2001); *Daguerreotypes, Ambrotypes, Tintypes in Lithuanian Museums* (2000) and others. She has published over 100 articles dedicated to the study and popularisation of photography.