# Dissertationes Academiae Artium Estoniae

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Estonian Academy of Arts
Tallinn 2024

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# MONUMENTALITY TROUBLE
## Monumental-Decorative Art in Late Soviet Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

Doctoral thesis

EKA

## Acknowledgements

and Eastern Europe after World War II and the Collapse of Communism at the Academia Europaea in Wrocław in 2018 and the seminar Likeness in Difference. Perspectives on Baltic Regional Art History organised by the Art Museum of Estonia and the Estonian Academy of Arts.

I have worked as a lecturer, critic and curator throughout my studies. I am indebted to editor Reet Varblane who sadly passed away in 2023. She continuously prompted me to contribute to the pages of the cultural weekly Sirp. I thank the Head of the Centre for General Theory Subjects, Maarin Ektermann from the Estonian Academy of Arts, for inviting me to give courses to fine arts, design, architecture and visual culture students and for making me a faculty member. Cross-disciplinary teaching is in synchrony with researching the synthesis of the arts as it binds together theoretical and practical, individual and communal, artistic and pragmatic concerns. Vitalising discussions with students and fellow teaching staff have significantly influenced this work. During these years, my institutional base has been the Department of Interior Architecture of the Estonian Academy of Arts. While the professorship and friendship of Hannes Praks inspired provocative and drastic teaching methods for reconsidering higher art education, leading master's studios and heading the MA programme alongside furniture designer, design researcher and visual thinker Jüri Kermik has encouraged me to explore spatial metaphors and reconsider the mostly two-dimensional images from a three-dimensional scale, keeping in mind the entire environment that frames an artwork. I am also grateful to interim professor Tüüne-Kristin Vaikla who entrusted me with my first full-time faculty position as a lecturer.

During the fourth and last year of writing, I benefitted from the bracing "Confrontations: Sessions in East European Art History" led by Maja and Reuben Fowkes at University College London's Post-socialist Art Centre (PACT). This programme brought together 21 early career researchers to investigate the entangled histories of East European art' through a series of week-long sessions in Zagreb and Ljubljana in spring 2019, Prague, Brno and Bratislava in fall 2019, Warsaw and Łódź in 2020 and after the Covid-induced break in London in 2022. These meetings with local artists, curators and researchers, visits to leading national and international institutions and seminars sittings have had an immense methodological effect on my thesis. Thank you, Maja, Reuben, Pavlína, Alina, Tomasz, Corina, Ieva, Ivana, Sandra, Hana, Juliane, Dessislava, Constanze, Johana, Asja, Magdalena M., Agata, Daniel, Magdalena Z., and Marta!

# Introduction

# Preface



Image 1. **Tõnis Saadoja, ceiling painting, 2012. Charcoal, acrylic, sandpaper, diameter 700 [cm]. Theatre NO99 (now Sakala 3 Theatre House). Tallinn, Sakala 3. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2012.**

In 2011, Theatre NO99 in Tallinn commissioned a ceiling painting (Image 1) for the institution's foyer from contemporary Estonian painter Tõnis Saadoja. When the artist started painting, he searched for local references. He had assumed that during the Soviet era, there were numerous murals, but available literature could help him little. The once presumably popular and generously state-sponsored genre appeared to have disappeared. Saadoja realised that his monumental undertaking could trigger the reactivation of a forgotten legacy, so the idea of publishing a book of Estonian monumental paintings was born. As an art history student interested in public monuments, Saadoja invited me to conduct historical research. Theatre NO99's desire to address the past and the artist's critical

response offered an attractive framing for studying 20th-century visual and material culture. From the beginning of my analysis, I found myself at the crossroads of multiple modernities,[1] socialist and nationalist ideologies as well as the conflicting imperatives of preservation[2] and the 'procreative power of decay'[3] which continue to weigh upon the present. Just as Saadoja approached his mural as an interdisciplinary 'artist-historian'[4] and 'artist-ethnographer'[5] I aspired to re-interpret late Soviet popular images in the same vein. Therefore, I have dealt with this topic as a critic, curator, populariser, artist and researcher.

I first acquired information about Estonian murals in the spring of 2012. After archival work, conversations with artists, art workers, and heritage experts, and browsing through Soviet-era journals and newspapers I initially gathered information about 300 murals. During the same summer, photographer Paul Kuimet and I drove around Estonia and discovered that roughly half of them were extant. We were able to photograph about 120 of them. Together with Kuimet, Saadoja and the publisher and graphic designer Indrek Sirkel, we selected 100 for the book *Konspekteeritud ruum. Eesti monumentaalmaal 1879–2012* (Notes on Space. Estonian Monumental Painting 1879–2012]).[6] The publication did not aspire to be a history of Estonian murals, but rather deviated between a conceptual catalogue and an artist book. As the publishing of the book coincided with renewed interest and increased investment in public art, and especially the 'percent for art' programme entering into force in Estonia, I focused my text on what valuable lessons on public art could be learned from a historical period when it was a societal priority.

In a broader context, the publication reflected the global shift in researchers' interest in post-war East European art and culture. While previously the spotlight had been more on (neo)avant-garde developments,

1    Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, Multiple Modernities. – Daedalus 2000, Vol. 129, No. 1, pp. 1–29.

2    Lisa Saltzman, Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

3    Caitlin DeSilvey, Curated Decay: Heritage beyond Saving. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

4    Mark Godfrey, The Artist as Historian. – October 2007, No. 120 (Spring), pp. 140–172.

5    Hal Foster, The Artist as Ethnographer? – George E. Marcus, Fred R. Myers (eds.), The Traffic in Culture. Refiguring Art and Anthropology. Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1995. pp. 302–309.

6    Alina Astrova, Eero Epner, Paul Kuimet, Indrek Sirkel, Gregor Taul (eds.), Konspekteeritud ruum. Eesti monumentaalmaal 1879–2012. [Notes on Space. Estonian Monumental Painting 1879–2012.] Tallinn: Lugemik and Theatre NO99, 2012.

now the attention was turning towards everyday life[7] and official culture.[8] Our publication also coincided with the wave of mediatisation of socialist era architecture both in popular and academic format. The early 2010s saw a surge in coffee-table books that presented Eastern Europe as an exotic travel destination of 'totally awesome ruined Soviet architecture' as the architectural writer Owen Hatherley sarcastically put it.[9] As the editor of the volume *Second World Postmodernisms* Vladimir Kulić notes "the bemused astonishment these structures typically arouse is accompanied by a very limited understanding of their origins and meanings."[10] According to Kulić, such exoticising interpretations pointed to the persistence of Cold War stereotypes, which diminished the built environment to one-dimensional reflections of totalitarian politics. In contrast, there have been a growing number of intellectually challenging publications that have attempted to analyse how art and architecture helped to maintain a distinctly socialist space. Likewise, this thesis aims to study how public art represented and produced spatial culture in Soviet Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

## Research topic and conceptual framework

### *Monumental-decorative art*

Public art – most frequently appearing under the heading of monumental art or monumental propaganda – was a well-represented genre and a significant societal tool in the Soviet Union. Besides party political posters and public monuments dedicated to revolutionary leaders and celebrated historical figures, a large amount of energy and funding was devoted to what was then called monumental-decorative art: murals, sgraffiti works, frescoes, mosaics, stained-glass windows and decorative sculptures to render communally charged meaning to the living environment. Although monumental-decorative art was the umbrella term for public artworks

7    The three edited volumes by David Crowley and Susan E. Reid served as an example. See David Crowley, Susan E. Reid (eds.), Style and Socialism. Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe. Oxford: Berg, 2000; David Crowley, Susan E. Reid (eds.), Socialist Spaces. Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc. Oxford: Berg, 2002; David Crowley, Susan E. Reid (eds.), Pleasures in Socialism. Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2010.
8    Alexei Yurchak's seminal study set the benchmark. See Alexei Yurchak, Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
9    Owen Hatherley, Landscapes of Communism: A History through Buildings. London: Allen Lane, 2015.
10   Vladimir Kulić, Introduction. – Vladimir Kulić (ed.), Second World Postmodernisms: Architecture and Society Under Late Socialism. London and New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019, pp. 5–6.

with a generalised idea and broad social visibility, artists and critics would usually stick to the more direct 'monumental painting' (*monumentaalmaal* in Estonian, *monumentālā glezniecība* in Latvian, *monumentalioji tapyba* in Lithuanian and монументальная живопись in Russian) even if they were referring to mosaics or stained-glass pieces.

The term monumental-decorative art originated from the interwar period. However, it became a keyword of art speech during the Thaw – more precisely after the Second Congress of the Union of Soviet Architects in 1955 when Nikita Khrushchev deplored the lavish decoration of socialist realist architecture and paved the way for the construction of prefabricated apartment blocks. In the course of the mechanised process of erecting the microdistricts, Soviet urban planners and architects developed a methodology for synthesising the arts into its new districts: similar template-design buildings created a background against which unique architectural chefs-d'oeuvre – public and community buildings – would stand out. These landmark structures would feature the synthesis of the arts which appeared in the format of monumental-decorative art. The concept of the synthesis of the arts itself is much older – depending on the researchers' preferences, its origins have been associated with Gothic and ancient architecture, or even much earlier historical eras. All in all, one of the underlying ideas of the synthesis of the arts is the belief that architecture alone cannot provide a meaningful spatial design. Hence, architects have sought unity through the interplay of various art forms. Likewise, late Soviet synthesis placed equal value on mural painting, ceramics, textiles, stained-glass and metalwork. [11]

In the late Soviet period, the state of monumental-decorative art would continually take precedence over other art developments. The issue, described at the time as an urgent matter, was discussed in various professional meetings and art journals, and was emphasised in higher art education.[12] The concept itself was inherent to late Soviet philosophical discourse, implying a dialectical relationship: while the term 'monumental' referred to the size and public functions of such works, the word 'decorative' emphasised that this type of art confronted individualistic aesthetics and market-driven 'easel art' which was accused of gallery

11   M. Solodilov, E. Korobova = М. Солодилов, Е. Коробова, Синтез архитектуры и монументально-декоративного искусства в архитектуре советского модернизма на примере Тольятти. [Synthesis of architecture and monumental-decorative art in the architecture of Soviet modernism with Tolyatti taken as an example.] – Градостроительство и архитектура / Urban Construction and Architecture 2017, Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 136.
12   Gregor Taul, Monumental Painting in Estonia: Essay. Paul Kuimet, Gregor Taul (eds.), Notes on Space: Monumental Painting in Estonia 1947–2012. Tallinn: Lugemik, 2017, p. 102.

snobbism. Easel art [станковое искусство] was a commonly used term in Russian-speaking Soviet art theory. It referred to painting, sculpture, and graphic arts and pointed to the idea that such artworks are independent and do not have a direct decorative or utilitarian purpose. In today's terms, studio art is the closest equivalent in English. Soviet art theorists had defined easel art as the antithesis of monumental art already in the 1920s. While easel art can be moved, displayed, sold, censored, discarded, hidden, damaged or destroyed, monumental-decorative art stays in one place and carries a persistent message.[13] In his doctoral dissertation on the synthesis of the arts in 1950s Eastern Europe, Nikolas Drosos also emphasises the dialectical aspect by pointing to binaries such as unique vs reproducible, large vs small, and authored vs anonymous.[14] As a synthesis, monumental-decorative art was thus supposed to be concurrently monumental and decorative, while not wholly matching with either classification. Lithuanian architect and theoretician Algimantas Mačiulis has added that the term also possessed a biased gender dialectic, with monumental denoting masculinity and decorative referring to feminine principles.[15] Another dialectical layer was the confrontation between the micro (decorative) and macro (monumental) level as pointed out by Romy Golan.[16]

To some extent, monumental-decorative art embodied state power as it represented ideological hierarchy and stated who had the right to 'semiotise' the reality.[17] On the other hand, artists involved in producing monumental-decorative art could also distance themselves from the state power and instead focus on the aesthetic and architectural details. Plenty of these artists were directly connected to the slightly critical art scene, with some conveying critical messages about Soviet rule. However, in most cases, the official commissioners themselves managed to rid public art of direct ideological imperatives and turned the broad opportunities to the artists' advantage. Therefore, the division between the official policies of the synthesis and the subjective and transgressive aspects of Soviet material culture was far from straightforward.

13   See, e.g., I. M Chubarov, The GAKhN Dictionary of Artistic Terms, 1923–1929. – October 2017, No. 162, pp. 66–69.
14   Nikolas Drosos, Modernism with a Human Face: Synthesis of Art and Architecture in Eastern Europe, 1954–1958. Doctoral dissertation. New York: City University of New York, 2016, p. 39.
15   Conversation with Algimantas Mačiulis, 21 January 2020. Audio recording in the possession of the author.
16   Romy Golan, Synthesis Undone. Presentation at the conference Shared Practices: The Intertwinement of The Arts in The Culture of Socialist Eastern Europe, Tallinn, 22–24 October 2015.
17   Sergei Kruk, Wars of Statues in Latvia: The History Told and Made by Public Sculpture. – Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire 2009, Vol. 87, No. 3/4, p. 706.

Nowadays, monumental-decorative art is a term that may seem bulky as it is reminiscent of cumbersome Soviet terminology. In contemporary public art discourse, this term is ultimately not used. Most art historians have also refrained from using this word, preferring the synthesis of the arts, monumental painting or the most common Anglo-American concept of public art. However, I have decided to use the word monumental-decorative art because it connects the topic more strongly with the Soviet art discourse. In my thesis, the 'hyper-categorial schema'[18] of monumental-decorative art entails (1) the ambition of producing *and* decorating the socialist space, (2) visual art's connection to architecture; (3) a public commissioner, and (4) an aspiration towards monumentality.

## *Monumentality*

In the broader sense, monumentality expresses a preoccupation with a nation-state's history and identity through representations in the public space.[19] In architecture, monumentalism commonly signifies state-sponsored building design that intends to offer a grandiose glorification of the country. In the same way, public monuments 'tend to talk big', as their purpose is not to be overlooked. As a result, the notion of monumentality connotes a sense of hugeness, something that impresses the world with its importance.[20] Monumentalised sites call for the participation of ordinary citizens and thus articulate their everyday activities and experiences.[21] On the one hand, they are at the locus of the most mundane actions, but on the other hand, the most festive and intense events, and as such a valuable context for observing social life.[22]

German art historian and Slavicist Hans Günther has singled out five fundamental characteristics of the aesthetics of totalitarian ideologies: classicism, folklorism, heroism, monumentality and superrealism.[23] Monumentality was one of the fundamental characteristics of the aesthetics

18   Peter Hanenberg, Per Aage Brandt, Strange Loops and a Cognitive Approach to Genre. – Cognitive Semiotics 2010, No. 6 (Spring 2010), pp. 179–192.
19   Jelle Bouwhuis, Margriet Schavemaker, Monumentalism: An Introduction. – Jelle Bouwhuis, Margriet Schavemaker (eds.), Monumentalism: History, National Identity and Contemporary Art. Amsterdam: NAi Publishers, 2010, p. 72.
20   Joep Leerssen, Size, seriousness and the sublime. – Jelle Bouwhuis, Margriet Schavemaker (eds.), Monumentalism. History, National Identity and Contemporary Art. Amsterdam: NAi Publishers, 2010, p. 124.
21   Bart Verschaffel, The monumental: on the meaning of a form. – The Journal of Architecture 1999, Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 336.
22   See Andrew M. Shanken, The Everyday Life of Memorials. New York: Zone Books, 2022.
23   By superrealism Günther refers to an idealised and mythologised form of realism.

of Soviet ideology.[24] Regardless of the empire in question, monumentality is a concept which is ideologically related to the greatness of an era – thus, in the Soviet Union, its residents were 'privileged' to live at a time when the whole society was striving towards the great goal of communism. While monumentalism traditionally finds its preeminent output in architecture in authoritarian societies, the desire for monumentality extends to all fields of life. Soviet monumentalism demonstrated the superiority of socialism, its alleged collective wealth, prosperity, and the joy of life in literature, film, music and other expressions of culture.[25] Monumentalism was also a key aspect of late Soviet visual culture and a leitmotif in discussions on art, architecture and indeed public monuments and monumental-decorative art.

Latvian semiotician Sergei Kruk has also emphasised the role of monuments and monumentality in understanding Soviet visual culture. Kruk claims that an excellent way to comprehend the uniqueness of Soviet art policy is to contrast the definitions of 'monument' given by the British and Soviet encyclopaedias edited in the same year. While the 1975 Encyclopaedia Britannica accorded to monument a politically neutral function of "recalling to mind or commemorating a specific event or personage", The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia of the same year specified that it is "a medium of propaganda of the ideas of the ruling regime, and it implements an 'active impact' on society."[26] Reuben Fowkes similarly underlines three main functions of socialist era public monuments: (1) to provide the focus for public rituals, (2) to create a distinctively socialist built environment, and (3) to communicate a socialist message.[27] Furthermore, to be noticeable, monumental art must be located in some symbolic place. In the Soviet context, a monument's site signified a dialectical relationship between it and its location, with both heightening each other's significance.[28]

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24   See Hans Günther = Ханс Гюнтер, Тоталитарное государство как синтез искусств. [Totalitarian state as a synthesis of the arts.] – Ханс Гюнтер, Евгений Добренко = Hans Günther, Evgeny Dobrenko (eds.), Соцреалистический канон. [The canon of Socialist Realism.] St. Petersburg: Академический проект, 2000, pp. 7–15.
25   Ibid., p. 11.
26   Sergei Kruk, Semiotics of visual iconicity in Leninist 'monumental' propaganda. – Visual Communication 2008, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 27–28.
27   Reuben Fowkes, The Role of Monumental Sculpture in the Construction of Socialist Space in Stalinist Hungary. – David Crowley, Susan E. Reid (eds.), Socialist Spaces. Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc. Oxford: Berg, 2002, pp. 65–67.
28   Alexander Kotlomanov = Александр Котломанов, Монументальность новой Русской скульптуры. Эпизод 2: 'стена скорби'. [The monumentality of the new Russian sculpture. Episode 2: 'Wall of grief'.] – Вестник СПбГУ. Искусствоведение 2017, Vol. 7, No. 4, p. 444.

In the Soviet Union, monumental art was a general term for denoting art in the public space. Respectively, the artists who worked with the embellishment of public buildings and spaces were called 'monumentalists'. Although monumental-decorative art was not synonymous with traditional public monuments, the two had many similarities in their form and social function.

In terms of form, both appeared as 'larger than life' and aimed to step outside their time and place.[29] They asserted themselves firmly on the viewers, were commonly made of expensive and permanent materials, and took much time to produce. As for their social importance, both were non-commercial, even invaluable and indestructible, as many of them were declared cultural monuments immediately after completion. Artistically, they were often anonymous, as the artists' names were unknown. Like memorials, it was characteristic for monumental-decorative art to be 'turned on and off'; in other words, these works were activated during official processions but remained forgotten for most of the time. Despite their aesthetic qualities, most monumental-decorative artworks, like monuments, were, by the end of the day, bureaucratic and artificial constructs of committees and political haggling. Like monuments, monumental-decorative art encouraged frontality, gathering, and encirclement – the creation of a 'metaphorical roof' which drew together and embraced a crowd. Shanken uses Henri Lefebvre's notion of *bizarrerie* to describe monuments as eerie urban oddities. For Lefebvre, the bizarre was a mild stimulant for the nerves and the mind, a risk-free experience to activate the fantasy. Very often, this is how monumental-decorative art appeared.

As for the differences, monuments tend to focus on loss, death, and disaster, but monumental-decorative art emits positive, unifying and uplifting emotions. Monumental-decorative art has never been that divisive for society, whereas monuments often become places where groups of citizens battle over the meaning of historical events. Unlike removed monuments, monumental-decorative artworks do not leave behind empty plinths and do not come back to 'haunt' society.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Once the Soviet Union collapsed and the three Baltic states gained independence, the issue of monumentality seemed to lose its relevance.

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29   The characteristics for describing monuments in this paragraph come from Andrew M. Shanken, The Everyday Life of Memorials, pp. 9–33.

However, this quietness was short-lived, as monumentality trouble was soon back with dramatic consequences. The erection of provocative new monuments and the removal of socialist statues led to public unrest, which historians have labelled as the 'war of monuments.'[30] Although authorities and intellectuals condemned the monumental distress, the urge for monumentality was back. This situation was not peculiar to the Baltic states, but societies in both East and West went through similar conflicts. Therefore, in 1996, the eminent memory studies scholar Andreas Huyssen could claim that the monument had witnessed a triumphal return.[31]

In the first three chapters of my thesis, I examine how monumentalism – in the form of monumental-decorative art – was practised when it was considered a vital aesthetic and political tool in building a socialist society. The last chapter looks at the after-life of monumental paintings in the post-Soviet period by exploring the sudden and explicit changes which undermined and, at the same time, revived monumentality. While the built environment remained largely the same, the confrontation between two societal orders and cultural contexts was largely contested through visual culture.

## *Socialist space*

Historian Moshe Lewin has argued that we should not draw parallels between the Soviet Union and ideologies like Marxism, socialism or communism, as there was minimal overlap between the reality and the ideals.[32] Instead, Lewin recommends using the term Soviet, which refers explicitly to the councils (совет) that governed both at the level of local communities and republics. In a broader sense, the word denotes the Soviet economic model, which was based on criminalising private property and surplus economy and eliminating fetishised consumption. The basis of the Soviet economy was the rule of the common good.[33]

Late Soviet is a term applied to the post-Stalinist period of the Soviet Union and its satellite states in Central and Eastern Europe. It signifies the shift from a totalitarian dictatorship to a milder authoritarian system in which artists were exposed to subtler, chiefly economic and practical

30   See, e.g., Karsten Brüggemann, Andres Kasekamp, The Politics of History and the 'War of Monuments' in Estonia. – Nationalities Papers 2008, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 425–448.

31   Andreas Huyssen, Monumental Seduction. – New German Critique 1996, No. 69, p. 182.

32   Moshe Lewin, The Soviet Century. London and New York: Verso, 2005.

33   Keti Chukrov, Practicing the Good: Desire and Boredom in Soviet Socialism. Minneapolis: e-flux and University of Minnesota Press, 2020, p. 61.

pressures. The term has some theoretical shortcomings as it encompasses a teleological assumption of the inevitable decline or even the collapse of the system, which may not correspond to the lived experience of socialism as a stable environment.[34] Furthermore, in different contexts the prefix 'late' has come to signify varying time frames, such as chiefly the post-Tito 1980s in the Yugoslav context.[35] My thesis adheres to the most common periodisation of the late Soviet period; that is, the time from Khrushchev's rise to power to the collapse of the Soviet Union. In an earlier version of my doctoral project, I was also working on a chapter which looked further back in time: on the one hand, it explained the formation of monumental painting in the three countries at the beginning of the 20th century and the transition to socialist realism, while on the other hand, it analysed the interwar monumental propaganda of the Soviet Union and described how the ideas of Lenin and Lunacharsky helped shape late Soviet monumental art.[36] However, during the writing process, it became clear that this would make the work even more voluminous, and I limited myself to the late Soviet period.

As for the term 'communism', it was, from the outset, declared as the desired aim of the upcoming classless society. For example, due to its dedication to this purpose, the Communist Party was named as such. Therefore, the term alludes to values which were, on the one hand, expressed in the canons of Marxism and Leninism but, on the other hand, components of the common good which found daily expression in the frontline activities of thousands of establishments. Socialism, on the other hand, indicated the intermediate social organisation that would ultimately lead to communism. However, the dissonance between the ideological construct of socialism and the unfulfilled practical embodiment of the communist utopia led to an extraordinarily protean model of reality. The authorities and the citizens alike produced the socialist space and communist visual culture which at the same time was constantly eroded under the influence of everyday Soviet life.[37]

34   Reuben Fowkes, Visualising the Socialist Public Sphere. – Juliane Fürst et al. (eds.), The CambridgeHistory of Communism, Vol. 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 336.
35   Vladimir Kulić, Introduction…, p. 1.
36   Some of the arguments were later presented at an online roundtable on socialist realism. See Gregor Taul, From Stalinist monumentalism to excessive decoration. Some remarks on Socialist Realist public painting in Soviet Baltics. Presentation at the online roundtable on comparative perspectives on socialist art Re-Reading Socialist Realism. UC Santa Barbara Graduate Center for Literary Research, 1 March 2024.
37   Marina Balina, Evgeny Dobrenko, Introduction. – Marina Balina, Evgeny Dobrenko (eds), Petrified Utopia. Happiness Soviet Style. London, New York, Dehli: Anthem Press, 2011, p. xix.

The Soviet state had a Union-wide law which prescribed that a percentage of public building costs should be spent on synthesising the arts.[38] However, the way each republic treated regulations emerging from Moscow varied. In the Baltics, Lithuania showed excellence in this regard, with hundreds of murals executed via commissions delegated to the local authorities. In Estonia and Latvia, a special State Committee for Monumental-Decorative Art was formed in the late 1960s. While both worked on a daily basis under the Ministry of Culture, the one in Tallinn was formally part of the Council of Ministers of the Estonian SSR – the prime minister's office. This strong position privileged the committee to demand the presence of the arts in every critical construction scheme. The statutes for commissioning boards were loosely declarative, saying that they were formed to develop the synthesis between monumental-decorative art and architecture, to improve the level of the design of cities and other settlements, city squares, parks and public buildings, and to conceptually and artistically guide developments in monumental and decorative art. Therefore, the content of each monumental painting was primarily decided case by case, with all the agents involved (artists, architects, interior architects, committee members, representatives of the client, higher officials, secretaries of this and that office, at times also overt KGB informers) trying to find the most pleasing solution in a round-table situation.

Although certain notions and visuals were illustrative of socialist space and presumably belonged to the 'toolbox' of artists active in monumental-decorative art, the way the socialist space unfolded was more spontaneous. Spontaneity (or *stikhiia*, the Russian term with a Greek origin) was inherent to the 'rigid' one-party-state.[39] From a Foucauldian perspective, the socialist space was produced over a long time via regular dispersions of visual and textual statements involving all the paradoxes inherent to the system. According to Foucault, power is never localised here or there, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation in which

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38   See Anna N. Eremeeva, Oksana N. Markova = Анна Н. Еремеева, Оксана Н. Маркова, Основные этапы и тенденции монументальной пропаганды в СССР. [Main stages and trends of monumental propaganda in the USSR.] – Виталий В. Бондарь, Анна Н. Еремеева, Оксана Н. Маркова, Тамара Ю. Юренева (eds.), Государственная монументальная политика: опыт, противоречия, перспективы. [State monumental policy: experience, contradictions, prospects.] Moscow: Institute of Heritage, 2022, pp. 14–79.
39   Moshe Lewin, The Soviet Century, p. 202.

individuals are simultaneously under and exercising power.[40] Therefore, Soviet citizens were not the target, but they were the vehicles for producing the socialist space. The socialist space was everywhere, not because it embraced everything but because it came from everywhere.[41]

### *Official-public and private-public spheres*

East European art histories have, at times, too easily assimilated Western concepts in the study of socialist art.[42] The anxiety over the use of terminology has recently eased through the acknowledgement that local variants extend the meaning of international terms, while the movements to which they were assigned can no longer be exclusively defined with reference to practices and narratives developed in traditional art centres.[43] One such key term is the 'public'.

German sociologist Jürgen Habermas provided the dominant account of the public sphere as a lost democratic idea in his 1962 book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.[44] According to Habermas, the public sphere arose with the bourgeois society introducing a firm division between the private and the political realms. On the one hand, the private sphere was the space for the bourgeoisie to gain private assets without state interference. On the other hand, the public sphere provided the bourgeoisie with a domain where they could critique the state without claiming to rule. In Habermas' account, the public sphere thus emerged as a realm between society and the state that was open and available to all. In the public sphere, the bourgeoisie set aside their private affairs and devoted themselves to everyday matters. Habermas' pessimistic claim was that with the onslaught of mass media and the rise of the welfare state, the rigid border between public and private life eroded, and thus, the public sphere lost its initial quality. Opponents of Habermas have been eager to criticise his ideal of a singular, unified

40   Michel Foucault, Body/Power. – Michel Foucault. Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977. Trans. Colin Cordon. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980 [1975], p. 58.
41   Erika Grigoravičienė, Art and Politics in Lithuania from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. – Meno istorija ir Kritika / Art History & Criticism 2016, No. 3, pp. 71–78.
42   Tomáš Pospiszyl, Tasks for the Study of East European Art During the Socialist Era. Presentation at Confrontations. Sessions in East European Art History. Academy of Fine Arts, Prague, 23 September 2019. Author's notes.
43   Maja Fowkes, Reuben Fowkes, Central and Eastern European Art Since 1950. London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 2020, p. 12.
44   Jürgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society. Trans. Thomas Burger. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1989 [1962].

public sphere that transcends concrete particularities.[45] An alternative view suggested by authors such as Chantal Mouffe emphasises the agonistic principle and sees the public not as a unitary pre-existing component but as a platform for oppositional subjectivities, politics and economies, which emerges through and is produced by participation in political activity.[46]

However, in discussing the Soviet public sphere, a change in perspective is needed. The private-public dichotomy is incongruous with the study of the Soviet Union, as an autonomous public sphere could not emerge in a Soviet-style society. Historians Ingrid Oswald and Viktor Voronkov propose a tripartite model for considering the public sphere in the late Soviet context. First, there was the state or 'official-public sphere' which claimed "exclusive responsibility for everything and everyone, but was less and less able to meet even the most basic needs."[47] The official-public sphere was separate from what they label the 'private-public sector', which roughly fulfilled the goals of the public sphere in the Western sense. However, it rarely sought opportunities for expression in the state-operated official-public sphere. Instead, the private-public sphere was confined to the subcultural (semi-)private domain of friends and family – notoriously exemplified by the kitchen of the intelligentsia. Thirdly, Oswald and Voronkov classify the 'private sphere', loosely connected to the private-public sphere, as inhabiting the more intimate side of family life.

After Stalin's death, the official public sphere and its formal judicial norms became detached from everyday life with its decency, compromise and justice. As these spheres separated, informal norms became increasingly dominant in daily life, thus undermining the legitimacy of the dominion of law. In this way, society gradually alienated itself from the state or official sphere. Consequently, people in the Soviet Union lived by either trying to avoid contact with the official sphere or interacting with it in a standardised or even ritualised manner. Therefore, some areas of discourse became strictly demarcated, as what was said on official occasions was regarded as 'empty' speech. In contrast, almost anything could be articulated in the private-public sphere – the so-called second public – because it was rarely subject to official control.

45   Rosalyn Deutsche, Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics. Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1996, pp. 287–288.
46   See Chantal Mouffe, For an Agonistic Public Sphere. – Okwui Enwezor, Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein (eds.), Democracy Unrealized. Ostfeldern: Hatje-Cantz, 2002.
47   Ingrid Oswald, Viktor Voronkov, The 'public–private' sphere in Soviet and post-Soviet society. Perception and dynamics of 'public' and 'private' in contemporary Russia. – European Societies 2004, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 108.

Occasionally, the second public found space for physical expression in the official domain. Incidentally, the state itself produced (secondary) spaces such as cafés, youth organisations or research institutes. These institutions, which operated between the official-public and the private-public spheres, could function relatively freely as long as they did not aspire to act as the official-public sphere. The state afforded such deviations as they played a peripheral role in society, and "the ordinary citizen, who had no access to or was even suspicious of these subcultural 'scenes', preferred to enjoy the freedoms of everyday life instead – far away from political matters and goals."[48] The segregation of the state and the private-public sphere was possible if people behaved as loyal citizens and did not act as political agents using alternative platforms. As long as essential goods were guaranteed, the Soviet authorities could rule without critique. Accordingly, citizens could live in peace if they kept themselves distanced from criticising the 'official' realm.

Therefore, despite the objective lack of freedom, subjectively, life in the Soviet Union could be perceived as free. Soviet citizens watchfully learnt to differentiate between those topics they could debate with relatives and friends, those they could not consider, and what was suitable in the official realm. People had no misconceptions concerning the lines separating these distinct communication spaces, so they did not confuse the rules regulating them. Depending on the domain, everyone had to adjust his or her communication behaviour and simulate the role suited to the given situation. Monumental-decorative art held a curious position within this scheme. On the one hand, it was entirely funded by state institutions and thus functioned as the other forms of 'empty speech' emanating from the authorities. However, on the other hand, the procurement process went through various layers of the private-public sphere (artist studios, the informal relations between the commissioning board, client, artist, producers and other agents). Although located in the official-public sphere, it also catered to the production of a private-public sphere.

48   Ibid., p. 109.

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Today 'public' and 'public art' have become catchphrases of the neoliberal culture industry and thus have a strong political connotation. Public money in the public space is one of the main elements determining the policies of government bodies. As a sign of the times, museums and other art institutions go to extremes to reach out to 'different publics.'[49] Burgeoning public art has provoked an explosion in theory, placing the practice in the spotlight and setting expectations for artists. At the beginning of the 21st century, it is also part of a value conflict characteristic of Western societies, where prospects divide into right-left and conservative-liberal axes.[50] While conservative commissioners, donors, and officials favour public art emphasising a unified identity, liberals expect public art to ask complex questions and find transgressive solutions. Such a point of view may tempt researchers to evaluate Cold War era East European public art from a tilted perspective, as the left-right dichotomy was irrelevant to its artistic culture. This is why I use the term minimally in my PhD thesis. Furthermore, neither 'public art' or the term 'public' were used in that form at that time.

However, as the concept has been recently regionally re-evaluated, it could still be a useful tool for discussing monumental-decorative art.[51] For example, Latvian art historian Vilnis Vejš has suggested using public art as an umbrella term under which we could differentiate between three layers: (1) public monuments, (2) monumental-decorative art, and (3) the entire intellectual discourse surrounding the aestheticisation of shared space – including articles, exhibitions and unrealised projects.[52] These spheres were understandably ideological, in as much as they represented the programmatic values of the Communist Party.[53] For that reason Soviet-era public art has received less attention from art historians as the focus has been on neo-avant-garde tendencies or the semi-official artistic culture of the so-called grey zone – which were in fact largely marginal for the general public. Public art was the most common and visible part of the visual culture of the era, in a way, the epitome of 'socialist art.'[54]

49   Jeroen Boomgard, Public as Practice – Jeroen Boomgaard, Rogier Brom (eds.), Being Public. How Art Creates the Public. Amsterdam: Valiz, 2017, p. 26.
50   See Cher Krause Knight, Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.
51   See, e.g., J. R. Jenkins, Picturing Socialism. Public Art and Design in East Germany. London and New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021.
52   Vilnis Vējš, Conversation on 4 June 2020. Notes in the possession of the author.
53   Miško Šuvaković, Remembering the Art of Communism. Analysis of Contradiction: Approaches and Transgressions. – Third Text 2009, Vol. 23, No. 1, p. 16.
54   Tomáš Pospiszyl, Tasks for the Study of East European Art During the Socialist Era…

# Theoretical and methodological framing

*Corpus and research questions*

The thesis is divided into four chronologically structured chapters. The first chapter focuses on the 1950s and 1960s, the second chapter is devoted to the 1970s, the third chapter analyses the 1980s, and the fourth chapter concentrates on the post-Soviet years. All chapters are split into subchapters which do not follow a strict chronological pattern but aim to connect similar artistic phenomena under a unifying heading. For example, some sections focus on typical socialist loci like cafés, houses of culture, sanatoria, guesthouses or the microdistricts. Some units are structured according to the subject matter of the artworks (e.g., scientific-technical revolution, youth, emancipation).

The structure is inspired by and to some extent adopted from Maja and Reuben Fowkes' *Central and Eastern European Art Since 1950* in which a vast amount of information is organised according to decades.[55] In their book each decade follows central events in society. They have not made artworks subservient to larger ideological constructs but have considered them instead in terms of their distinctive place in art history. In my effort of proposing a transnational narration of Soviet Baltic murals, the artworks' distinctive place in art history is somewhat secondary, as the majority of the works have little art historical importance. The focus of the thesis is to discuss how monumental-decorative art contributed to producing a specific spatial atmosphere of the socialist era. To what extent did this aesthetic phenomenon express the ideals and reality of socialism? What kind of visual and spatial aspirations did artists invest in this monumental undertaking? At the same time, my doctoral thesis also raises some art historical questions as it points to the fact that the contacts that Baltic artists had with the rest of the Soviet Union were stronger than has been assumed or presented so far. Thus, besides the emphasis on the institutional background, the first three chapters draw quite a lot on artists' choices and their individual adaptation practices. In the fourth chapter of the work, I focus more on the agency of artworks in relation to their preservation and valuation. I ask which aspects have contributed to the safeguarding of Soviet-era public artworks, what is the legacy of this heritage and how do they contribute to the understanding of the Soviet past in the Baltic countries.

55   Maja Fowkes, Reuben Fowkes, Central and Eastern European Art Since 1950.

*Between art history and visual culture*

This thesis combines art historical methods with the conceptual toolbox of visual culture. The two intervene, complement each other and share approaches such as iconography, historiography and semiotics.[56] Traditionally, borders – cultural, social, political or geographical – have constituted art historical interpretation.[57] Recent art history, on the other hand, has welcomed cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary reflections. When writing the history of monumental-decorative art, I make use of several fundamental art historical methods of telling, such as causality, relation to historical events and social changes, representations in art criticism, and position in relation to other art objects or aesthetic value. As a discipline with a modernist foundation and a focus on progessivist narratives, art history often reflects how changes in beliefs, attitudes, mentalities, intentions, or ideologies correspond to changes in form.[58] I also use this approach in my argumentation. Some dominant art historical accounts have accredited narratives based on rupture and descriptions which jump from one supposedly distinct era or style to the next.[59] Such a discourse in which it is difficult to concentrate on unique species without, simultaneously, examining the entire evolutionary descent, has been lately under fire.[60] I have not refrained from style-based art history nor from using period frames such as the Thaw or Perestroika, and in doing so I rely on the well-established approaches of local art histories. However, I have tried to write in such a way that monumental-decorative art would not appear so much as an addition or a confirmation of the standard narratives, but invite a new examination of them.

As many examples in this study fall into an intermediary space between art and non-art, high and low culture, and visual and verbal signs, a visual culture perspective supports grasping the profound meaning of these images. The latter is also supported by the fact that my aim is to draw attention to the hidden narratives and trajectories which lie beyond

56   W. J. T Mitchell, Showing seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture. Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed.), The Visual Culture Reader. London, New York: Routledge, 2005 [2001], pp. 86–101.

57   Hendrik Folkerts, Global Art History as Critique. – Jelle Bouwhuis, Margriet Schavemaker (eds.), Monumentalism: History, National Identity and Contemporary Art. Amsterdam: NAi Publishers, 2010, p. 92.

58   Donald Preziosi, Poetry Makes Nothing Happen and Architecture is When Theory Is the Residue of a Journey. – Journal of Visual Culture 2016, Vol. 15, No. 3, p. 301.

59   See, e.g., Hal Foster et. al., Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism. London: Thames & Hudson, 2016 [2005].

60   See, e.g., Tomáš Pospiszyl, An Associative Art History: Comparative Studies of Neo-Avant-Gardes in a Bipolar World. Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2017, p. 92.

predominant national narratives of works by 'great men'.[61] Visual culture advocates looking at pictures detached from larger explanatory narratives and concentrates on the fact that images 'work' by producing effects every time they are looked at.[62] Gillian Rose asserts that there are three sites at which images produce meanings: (1) the site of the production of an image, (2) the site of the image itself, and (3) the site where audiences see it.[63] It roughly translates to a respective matrix of (1) the commissioning of public art, (2) the site of the artwork itself, and (3) the artwork's afterlife in the public space. In the chapters dedicated to the Soviet period, I mainly concentrate on the first two parameters. Despite the mural being the 'most public art' in its visibility and understandability, it is exceedingly tricky to assemble first-hand recollections as they hardly appear in written or recorded form.[64] Archives and recently published memoirs also remain silent. However, I have had the opportunity to focus on the effects the images have on audiences in the last chapter dedicated to the post-Soviet period.

## *Transnational research*

Due to, and sometimes despite, the Moscow-imposed official regionalism, Baltic unison and intercultural communication were strong in the late Soviet period. In the arts, this was exemplified by events such as the popular cross-Baltic Tallinn Print Triennial (since 1968), the Rīga Sculpture Quadrennial (since 1974), the Vilnius Painting Triennial (1969) or The Baltic Triennial of Young Contemporary Art in Lithuania (since 1979). In addition to students studying in neighbouring countries, there were many other events, networks and individuals – such as the Tartu-based collector Matti Milius and Tallinn-based artists Leonhard Lapin and Tõnis Vint – that united professionals from the three countries.[65] Baltic unity was covertly fostered by the three countries' joint fate as occupied states. At the same time, Baltic artworlds seemed content with the label of being the Soviet Union's own West.

61   Gillian Rose, Visual Methodologies. An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2002 [2001], p. 11.
62   Gillian Rose, Visual Methodologies…, p. 12.
63   Ibid., p. 15.
64   This is something experienced by researchers of historic public art world-wide. See, e.g., Franz Schulze, Foreword. – Mary Lackritz Gray, A Guide to Chicago's Murals. London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. xv.
65   See Helēna Demakova (ed.), The Self. Personal Journeys to Contemporary Art. The 1960s–80s in Soviet Latvia. Rīga: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, 2011.

Besides inter-Baltic exchange, there were also other cross-border trajectories. Baltic artists also exchanged ideas with professionals based in Moscow, Leningrad and other Soviet cities, and – as I will show – enjoyed numerous commissions all over the Soviet Union. The pervasive comparative aspect of Soviet art life; for example, republican travelling exhibitions, annual All-Soviet expos in Moscow and Leningrad featuring artists from the 16 socialist republics in separate national sections, offered a constant option for self-identification and self-critique: What is it that makes one nation different to others? Where does one stand in comparison to the other republics? How is it possible to describe a national artistic mood? Persistent competition would also lead to national exceptionalism as art world insiders followed such international shows over decades and developed linear analyses in cultural journals.

Besides inter-Soviet relations, many artists closely followed recent tendencies in Western art and the Eastern bloc, with some maintaining active correspondence with art professionals there. Yet, cross-cultural communication was not only a covert strategy adopted by Baltic cultural workers but an ideological requirement of the internationalist Soviet Union. The state subsidised intercultural relationships between 'brotherly Soviet nations', socialist third world countries as well as with the leftists of the capitalist world.

A transnational perspective suits the thesis as cross-cultural trajectories were integral to the era's art life. The research aims to go beyond 'methodological nationalism', which conceives the nation as the self-evident social and political analytical framework.[66] I follow the horizontal art history model as suggested by Piotr Piotrowski based on commonalities, interrelations, and interculturalism.[67] Piotrowski problematised 'vertical' art history written from an inherently metropolitan perspective which positions all art according to the dominant Western story. From this viewpoint, the centre – be it Berlin, Paris, Vienna, London, or New York – provides canons, a hierarchy of values, and stylistic norms which radiate to the rest of the world. Hence, the centre's art determines a paradigm, while the art of the periphery is supposed to adopt its models. Instead, Piotrowski proposed a post-colonial and non-hierarchical

66   Chiara De Cesari, Ann Rigney, Introduction. – Chiara De Cesari, Ann Rigney (eds.), Transnational Memory. Circulation, Articulation, Scales. Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2014, p. 1.
67   Piotr Piotrowski, Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde. – Sascha Bru, Peter Nicholls (eds.), European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies. Volume I. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009, pp. 49–58.

comparative method to introduce the art produced in Eastern Europe not as a derivative but as a particular type of art, contextually shaped by the region's own socio-political forces.[68] Piotrowski emphasised the inner dynamics of a given culture, its selective needs to adopt specific models, and the role played by cultural transfers in particular countries.[69] Instead of oppositions and hierarchies, his method turns attention on the interrelations between localities.

## *Performativity*

Alexei Yurchak proposes performativity to explain the 'hypernormalised' social life in the late Soviet Union.[70] He claims that after Stalin's death, the Soviet Union found it exceedingly difficult to support its ideological base, especially under constant critical scrutiny. In this 'editorial void' where no single person took the sole responsibility to claim what needed to be said, ideological texts such as "documents, speeches, ritualised practices, slogans, posters, monuments and urban visual propaganda" succumbed to a formal stagnation and standardisation by repeating formerly constructed ideological representations. With that shift, the form of the ideological representations became fixed and unchanged from one context to the next. Yurchak uses Mikhail Bakhtin's term authoritative discourse, claiming that from there on, this dogmatic treatise organised all other types of discourse around it. The socialist discourse, or in this instance the socialist space, could not be changed by other agents, as their very existence depended on being positioned to it, having to refer to it, praise it, interpret it, and apply it.

The relentless repetition of quotes from Marx, Lenin and established authoritative documents developed a condition in which the society relied upon the ever-growing mass of articles, preambles, documents, and paragraphs. However, it became less important for citizens to read ideological representations for their referential meanings than to repeat their structural forms. As a result, on the one hand, the ideological discourse became exceedingly rigid, anonymous and detached from the experience of the private-public sphere. On the other hand, the transformation of the discursive regime opened up spaces of indeterminacy, creativity, and unanticipated meanings – often in the context of strictly

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68   Cristian Nae, Central and Eastern European Art since 1950. – ArtMargins Online 22 December 2020. https://artmargins.com/central-and-eastern-european-art-since-1950/, accessed 28 July 2023.

69   Piotr Piotrowski, Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde, p. 52.

70   Alexei Yurchak, Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

formulaic forms and rituals. The way Soviet citizens reacted to obligatory statements became open and subject to diverse performative practices.

While ideological texts aimed to regulate society according to its instructions, most people considered it empty speech. Nevertheless, these blank statements acquired a performative force. Thus, in late Soviet everyday life, constative and performative dimensions of discourse did not constitute binary oppositions but were indivisible and mutually productive. In one of his examples, Yurchak discusses elections where there would typically be only one candidate. In such a ritualised context, voting became as crucial as for whom one voted. In such instances, it became more important to participate in reproducing ritualised acts of authoritative discourse than to engage with their constative meanings. One had to participate in the performative acts to keep the system – or the illusion of the system – operating. As long as the system performed, the state's unfluctuating official-public sphere catered for the existence of vivid private-public and private spheres with its essential constituents of egalitarian education, stable work conditions, affordable housing and healthcare, and diverse practices for the use of free time.

Thus, Yurchak claims, most citizens were content with the status quo. They wished to lead a normal life and even regarded with suspicion the frank Communist Party activists who took the ideological discourse literally. Even more 'dangerous and upsetting' were the dissidents who abandoned the system by questioning its legitimacy. Their provocative denial endangered people around them who kept the performance ongoing. From there derives the title of Yurchak's monograph, *Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More*. Although everyone knew of the failings of the Soviet economy and system at large, the status quo was played out perfectly, and it was impossible to imagine an alternative to this condition. The Soviet Union started to erode once glasnost and perestroika offered parallel and dissident views to the 'fallacy' of the hypernormalised performativity. However, I want to emphasise that despite the focus on the performative, Soviet reality was not a fiction. It was a unique material culture which in many ways corresponded to the country's economic model.

Yurchak's reading of late Soviet art and culture calls for a language that does not reduce the analysis of socialist reality to dichotomies, such as the official and the unofficial, the state and the people, oppression and resistance, repression and freedom, or official culture and counterculture, and other similar moral judgements shaped within cold war ideologies.

The institutional framework for commissioning monumental-decorative art was of a similar ritualised kind in which the participants had to act out constative and performative dimensions of the authoritative discourse. On the one hand, artworks functioned as constituents of the official discourse and prescribed an ideological reading, while on the other hand, their form and content were open to new meanings.

## *Performative monuments*

Relying on J. L. Austin's theory of speech, and driven by the theoretical discussions of performances by Erving Goffman, Jacques Derrida, and Judith Butler, Mechtild Widrich has shown how prima facie ephemeral works of art can better fulfil the functions traditionally attributed to monuments, such as the memorisation of people and historic events or uniting the community.[71] Unlike classical monuments, which often fail in terms of aesthetics, urban design, and in guaranteeing the desired results as signs of memory, 'performative monuments' act as monumental performative statements which cause changes in the actual world. For Widrich, performative monuments can be both commonplace performances (she discusses Marina Abramović and Valie Export), photographs (especially documentation of performance art) and installations (her case study is Thomas Hirschhorn's Bataille's Monument in Documenta 2002) as well as monuments and statues in the traditional sense (such as Maya Lin's Memorial to the Victims of the Vietnam War in Washington or the Holocaust memorials in Vienna and Berlin). Although Widrich consistently avoids a single definition of performative monuments, she characterises them above all in terms of the artist's occupation with the public sphere and space and his or her interest in the past and its political representations. Widrich argues that traditional monuments cannot ensure 'authentic' remembering since they address spectators with divergent past experiences, some with no relevant experience. Successful monuments enable social commemoration through forms and rituals which establish relations to the past event. From this perspective, there is no need for monuments to be massive. As long as a work of art conveys public acts of commemoration, it is a performing monument. A monument becomes a performative monument once it functions as a successful performative utterance of commemoration in which the expectations of the client, artists, artwork and audience meet.

71   Mechtild Widrich, Performative Monuments. The Rematerialisation of Public Art. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2014.

Widrich does not try to convince us that the time of monuments is over or that one should abandon concepts such as nation, state, or monumentality. However, she convincingly argues that temporary installations, performances and even photographs can be more successful in conveying narratives than traditional monuments. Furthermore, she argues that the reassessment and revival of monumental art do not necessarily have to involve the denial of monumentality but should instead affirm and broaden the concept of monumentality. For that, Widrich thoroughly critiques the so-called counter-monuments, such as the Berlin Holocaust Memorial. For her, the initiation and acceptance of performative monuments as proper monuments primarily concerns a shift in language – policymakers should arrive at a presumption that, in addition to sculptures, seemingly ephemeral works of art can be counted as public monuments.

Widrich's analysis ignites a discussion on the performative framework of monumental-decorative art. The agents involved in public commissions had different stated and often unstated goals. For some clients, their chief concern was that a commissioned artwork would outshine that of a competing institution. For some artists, the soul aim was technical innovation. In both instances the 'performative mural' produced the socialist space. But what was the exact meaning and the artworks' location in relation to the official public sphere and the second public sphere is difficult to determine. Since my work is not based on case studies, I do not give direct answers. But a performativity-centred approach to monumental-decorative art could help to make sense of the broader context in which these visuals functioned at the time.

## Literature review

### *Monumental-decorative art*

Starting with Lithuanian art, the thesis draws on *Dailė architektūroje* (Architectural Art) by the architect, architectural historian and theoretician Algimantas Mačiulis.[72] His 500-page study, complemented by several hundred illustrations, emphasises the late Soviet period. While it provides an outstanding description of artworks, its formalist perspective says less about the conditions that framed their production. In addition, the thesis refers to several catalogues about Lithuanian monumental-decorative art published during the Soviet era: *Lietuvių monumentalioji dekoratyvinė*

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72  Algimantas Mačiulis, Dailė architektūroje. [Architectural Art.] Vilnius: Vilnius Academy of Art Press, 2003.

*tapyba* (Lithuanian Monumental-Decorative Painting),[73] *Taikomoji dekoratyvinė dailė* (Applied Decorative Arts),[74] *Lietuvos gobelenas* (Lithuanian Tapestry),[75] *Lietuvos vitražas* (Lithuanian Stained-Glass),[76] as well as the hefty catalogue of stained-glass artists by Algimantas Stoškus.[77] Such catalogues were often accompanied by Russian, English, German and French afterwords, and played an essential role in presenting the art of their country to foreigners, also supporting self-identification. The Lithuanian art press continuously presented its glass art as 'among the leaders in the world.'

As for contemporary views on Soviet-era murals, Marija Drėmaitė's writings on late Soviet Lithuanian architecture[78] and especially her take on the wedding and funeral palaces have been inspirational.[79] Vytautė Auškalnytė's master's thesis analyses the interiors of late Soviet public buildings in the centre of Vilnius and draws out neoclassical, modernist and postmodernist tendencies.[80] Jovita Arūnienė's master's thesis provides a formalist but richly illustrated and historically well-informed account of the architecture and interior design of late Soviet pharmacies, including records of monumental-decorative art.[81] Eimantas Banevičius' master's thesis provides an overview of the state of Soviet period murals in Vilnius public buildings by discussing their preservation potential.[82]

73   Boleslovas Klova, Lietuvių monumentalioji dekoratyvinė tapyba. [Lithuanian Monumental-decorative Painting.] Vilnius: Vaga, 1975.
74   Laimutė Cieškaitė-Brėdikienė, Taikomoji dekoratyvinė dailė. [Applied Decorative Arts.] Vilnius: Vaga, 1980.
75   Daiva Rekertaitė-Načiulienė, Silverija Stelingiene (eds.), Lietuvos gobelenas. [Lithuanian Tapestry.] Vilnius: Vaga, 1983.
76   Stasys Budrys, Lietuvos vitražas. [Lithuanian stained-glass.] Vilnius: Vaga, 1968.
77   Liudvika Ramanauskaitė, Algimantas Stoškus. Vilnius: Vaga, 1989.
78   Marija Drėmaitė, Baltic Modernism: Architecture and Housing in Soviet Lithuania. Trans. Darius Sužiedelis. Berlin: DOM publishers, 2017
79   Marija Drėmaitė, Sovietinė ritualinė architektūra – santuokų ir laidotuvių rūmai lietuvoje. [Soviet Ritual Architecture – Wedding and Funeral Palaces in Lithuania.] – Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis 2014, No. 73, pp. 47–64.
80   Vytautė Auškalnytė, Sovietinio laikotarpio vilniaus miesto visuomeninės paskirties pastatų interjerai. [Soviet Era Interiors of Public Buildings in Vilnius City Centre.] Vytautas Magnus University, Department of Art History and Criticism, 2012.
81   Jovita Arūnienė, Sovietmečio vaistinių architektūra ir interjerai lietuvoje. [Architecture and Interiors of Soviet Pharmacies in Lithuania.] Master's thesis, Vytautas Magnus University, Department of Art History and Criticism, 2012.
82   Eimantas Banevičius, Sovietmečio sienų tapybos būklė Vilniaus visuomeniniuose pastatuose: grėsmės ir saugojimo galimybės. [State of Soviet period mural paintings in Vilnius public buildings: Threats and preservation possibilities.] Master's thesis, Vilnius University, Department of Theory of History and History of Culture, 2018.

Apart from a Soviet-era catalogue on applied art[83] and architectural theoretician Ivars Strautmanis' study on art and architecture,[84] no in-depth research on monumental-decorative art has been published in Latvia. As a starting point, a collection of articles and interviews on late Soviet independent art gives a sufficient English-language overview of the country's artistic culture, with many interviewees explaining the system for commissioning artwork and the artists' experience in making murals.[85] The Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art (LCCA) has been active in exhibiting and publishing research on late Soviet artistic culture, drawing attention to the critical tendencies in kinetic art which on the one hand were situated in the more hidden side of art life during the socialist period but on the other hand still managed to attract the attention of policymakers and earned artists remarkable public commissions. The catalogue of the exhibition *Visionary Structures: From Johansons to Johansons* follows the progress of kinetic visions of Latvian art throughout the past one hundred years.[86] An edited volume[87] by the Latvian National Art Museum follows 'ten episodes' of late Soviet Latvian art which have been so far either neglected or which have called for art-historical reassessments: Elita Ansone's article on figurative expressionism includes analysis of Lidija Auza's murals,[88] Ieva Astahovska surveys kinetic art and its applications in public space,[89] and Vilnis Vējš offers an insight into the fringes of visual art by describing the textile art placed in public spaces.[90] Another helpful source is the bilingual collection of articles on the history of Latvian design in which several articles analyse artistic practices in the public space and help to

83 Ivanova Gundega, Latviešu mūsdienu lietišķā māksla. [Latvian contemporary applied art.] Rīga: Liesma, 1980.

84 Ivars Strautmanis, Māksla arhitektūrā. [Art in architecture.]. Rīga: Liesma, 1982.

85 Helēna Demakova (ed.), The Self. Personal Journeys to Contemporary Art. The 1960s–80s in Soviet Latvia. Rīga: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, 2011.

86 Ieva Astahovska (ed.), Visionary Structures: from Johansons to Johansons. Rīga: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2015.

87 Elita Ansone, Arta Vārpa (eds.), Desmit epizodes 20. gadsimta otrās puss mākslā Latvijā / Ten Episodes in Art of the Second Half of the 20th Century in Latvia. Rīga, Latvian National Museum of Art, 2019.

88 Elita Ansone, Figuratīvais ekspresionisms dialogā ar abstrakto ekspresionismu / Figurative Expressionism in Dialogue with Abstract Expressionism. – Elita Ansone, Arta Vārpa (eds.), Desmit epizodes 20. gadsimta otrās puss mākslā Latvijā / Ten Episodes in Art of the Second Half of the 20th Century in Latvia. Rīga, Latvian National Museum of Art, 2019, pp. 134–173.

89 Ieva Astahovska, Kinētiskā māksla. Kustības tranformācijas / Kinetic Art. The Transformations of Motion. – Elita Ansone, Arta Vārpa (eds.), Desmit epizodes 20. gadsimta otrās puss mākslā Latvijā / Ten Episodes in Art of the Second Half of the 20th Century in Latvia. Rīga, Latvian National Museum of Art, 2019, pp. 210–239.

90 Vilnis Vējš, Ārpus rāmjiem / Outside the Frame. Elita Ansone, Arta Vārpa (eds.), Desmit epizodes 20. gadsimta otrās puss mākslā Latvijā / Ten Episodes in Art of the Second Half of the 20th Century in Latvia. Rīga: Latvian National Museum of Art, 2019, pp. 174–207.

contextualise monumental-decorative art.[91] Especially beneficial is Kristīne Budže's article on Artūrs Riņķis' kinetic sculpture.[92] Furthermore, a study of the graphic language of the 1960s in Latvia discusses several examples of the decades' murals.[93]

As for the Estonian context, my earlier writings on monumental-decorative-art[94] relied on accounts written during the 1980s by art historians Aino Kartna[95] and Ants Juske.[96] Conservators and cultural heritage scholars affiliated with the Estonian Academy of Arts have been active in preserving and communicating socialist murals. Hilkka Hiiop, Helen Volber and Johanna Lamp have examined the removal of murals from buildings destined for demolition.[97] A 2019 exhibition at the gallery of the Estonian Academy of Arts and the accompanying catalogue explored the rescue of one of the most significant Soviet-era frescoes in Tallinn.[98] Another exhibition and a catalogue based on in-depth research explored the murals executed by students of the Estonian Academy of Arts throughout the last century with an emphasis on the late Soviet period.[99]

Several graduates of art history, visual culture and cultural heritage departments have contributed to the widening of knowledge on late

91    Kristīne Budže, Inese Baranovska (eds.), Tieši laikā. Dizaina stāsti par Latviju / Just on Time. Design Stories about Latvia. Rīga: Latvian National Museum of Art, 2018.
92    Kristīne Budže, The Brooch on the hotel façade. Kristīne Budže, Inese Baranovska (eds.), Tieši laikā. Dizaina stāsti par Latviju / Just on Time. Design Stories about Latvia. Rīga: Latvian National Museum of Art, 2018, pp. 196–199.
93    Sandra Krastiņa, Māra Ņikitina (eds.), Uz lielās dzīves trases: 20. gadsimta 60. gadu grafiskā valoda latvijā / On the Track of Great Life: Graphic Language of the 1960s in Latvia. Rīga: Raktuve, 2016.
94    Gregor Taul, Monumentaalmaal. [Monumental Painting.] Jaak Kangilaski (ed.), Eesti kunsti ajalugu. 1940–1991. II osa. [History of Estonian Art, 1940–1991. Part II.] Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2016, pp. 231–239; Gregor Taul, Monumental Painting in Estonia: Essay. – Paul Kuimet, Gregor Taul (eds.), Notes on Space: Monumental Painting in Estonia 1947–2012. Tallinn: Lugemik, 2017, pp. 99–110.
95    Aino Kartna, Monumentaalmaali arengust Eesti NSV-s. [About the development of monumental painting in Estonian SSR.] – Kunstiteadus. Kunstikriitika 1981, No. 4, pp. 155–176; Aino Kartna, Dekoratiivmaalide jälgedel. [Tracing decorative paintings.] – Kunst 1985, No. 2, pp. 27–34.
96    Ants Juske, Eesti uuemast monumentaalmaalist. [About recent Estonian monumental painting.] – Sirp ja Vasar 13 April 1984.
97    Hilkka Hiiop, Helen Volber, Johanna Lamp, Saving the Soviet heritage – Demounting murals from buildings destined for demolition. – Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis 2016, No. 82, pp. 105–116.
98    Anneli Randla, Maris Veeremäe (eds.), Rahutu "Hommik". Dolores Hoffmanni freskopannoo "Hommik" (1963) hävi(ta)mine ja päästmine "Rahu" kinos Koplis / Restless *Morning*: the rescue from destruction of Dolores Hoffmann's fresco *Morning* at the Cinema Rahu (Peace) in Kopli, Tallinn. Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2019.
99    Reeli Kõiv (ed.), Nähtamatu monumentaalmaal / Invisible monumental painting. Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2020.

Soviet monumental-decorative art.[100] Furthermore, several authors who were actively involved with monumental-decorative art during the Soviet period have recently either held prominent solo shows or had retrospective catalogues published which also dissect their mural production. The kinetic artist Kaarel Kurismaa was the subject of a retrospective at Kumu Estonian Art Museum.[101] Rait Prääts, who was one of the most celebrated glass artists during the late Soviet period and achieved several large-scale commissions, had a retrospective catalogue published in 2019.[102] Prominent Soviet-era muralist Eva Jänes is the focal point of two recent publications.[103]

In terms of comparative studies from other ex-socialist countries, art historian Galyna Sklyarenko offers a rigid art historical overview of the Ukrainian context.[104] As a reaction to the full-blown de-communisation process, grassroots activist movements have sought to save and document murals, such as *Soviet Mosaics in Ukraine* led by the Kyiv-based initiative Izolyatsia.[105] As for mapping the public art of the former Soviet Union, GeoAir, a Tbilisi-based organisation that manages international cultural projects and runs a residence programme, has organised a database of murals in Georgia.[106] Georgian conservation activist Nini Palavandishvili and Belarusian art historian Lena Prents have edited a study on late-Soviet Georgian mosaics which documents more than 200 works from the

100 Keiti Kljavin, Kaasaegsus ja kunstide süntees sotsialistliku modernismi kontekstis 1960. aastate Eesti kunstis. [Contemporaneity and the Synthesis of the Arts in the Context of Socialist Modernism in Estonian 1960s Art.] Bachelor's thesis, Estonian Academy of Arts, Institute of Art History, 2010; Anu Soojärv, Monumentaalkunst eksterjööris 1960.–1980. aastatel Eestis: tehniline teostus ja säilivusproblemaatika. [Exterior Monumental Art in Estonia from 1960s to 1980s: Technical Execution and Preservation Issues.] Bachelor's thesis, Estonian Academy of Arts, Department of Cultural Heritage and Conservation, 2015; Anu Soojärv, Peidus pärand. Unustatud teosed ja kunstnikud nõukogude Eesti monumentaalkunstis. [Hidden Heritage. Forgotten Works and Artists in Soviet Estonian Monumental Art.]. Master's thesis, Estonian Academy of Arts, Department of Cultural Heritage and Conservation, 2021.
101  Ragne Soosalu (ed.), Kaarel Kurismaa. Tallinn: Art Museum of Estonia, 2018.
102 Sirje Eelma, Rait Prääts (eds.), Rait Prääts. Lugude Jutustaja / Rait Prääts. Storyteller. Tallinn: R. Prääts, 2019.
103 Eva Jänes, Mai Levin (eds.), Eva Jänes. Geomeetria kaudu harmooniale. Maalid. [Eva Jänes. Through Geometry to Harmony. Paintings.] Tallinn: Eva Jänes, 2019; Reeli Kõiv, Suur pilt arhitektuuris: Eva Jänese monumentaalmaalid. [The Big Picture in Architecture: Eva Jänes' Monumental Paintings]. Tallinn: Eva Jänes and Reeli Kõiv, 2022.
104 Galina Sklyarenko = Галина Скляренко, Матеріали до історії: Монументально-декоративне мистецтво України другої половини ХХ століття. [Materials for history: Ukrainian monumental-decorative art in the second half of the twentieth century.] – Soviet Mosaics in Ukraine. https://sovietmosaicsinukraine.org/media/uploads/text/Stynopis_G._Sklyarenko_MDArt_Stinopis_Galina_Sklyarenko_MDArt.pdf, accessed 30 December 2020.
105 Soviet Mosaics in Ukraine. – https://sovietmosaicsinukraine.org/, accessed 14 July 2020.
106 Soviet mosaics. – http://soviet-mosaics.ge/image-gallery/Location, accessed 14 July 2020.

period.[107] Furthermore, Philipp Meuser and Dmitrij Zadorin's monograph on Soviet mass housing devotes a chapter to the facade decoration of prefabricated dwellings with the Uzbek SSR as a case study.[108] British design historian J. R. Jenkins' monograph *Picturing Socialism. Public Art and Design in East Germany* offers an ample analysis of architectural art and explains public art's relation to socialist modernisation from a design perspective.[109]

In Russia the term monumental-decorative art is still in active use and many studies view Soviet and post-Soviet public art as a unified phenomenon. During the past decades, a vast amount of Soviet era publications and recent academic research has been made available online. Authors from various parts of the former Soviet Union have written about monumental-decorative art in a predominantly formal discourse emphasising the stylistic and technological aspects of the works.[110] A collection of conference papers discussing late 20th-century Russian and Soviet monumental art offers an ideologically neutral historical and theoretical overview of the topic.[111] Shatalova picks up Boris Groys' related discussion on socialist realism[112] and argues that the monumental art of the late Soviet period continued the utopian project of the early 1920s and thus implemented the anti-institutional, anti-market and anti-trade manifesto of the early avant-garde.[113]

107 Nini Palavandishvili, Lena Prents, Art for Architecture. Georgia. Soviet Modernist Mosaics from 1960 to 1990. Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2019.

108 Philipp Meuser, Dimitrij Zadorin, Towards a Typology of Soviet Mass Housing: Prefabrication in The USSR 1955–1991. Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2015.

109 J. R. Jenkins, Picturing Socialism…

110 See, e.g., S. D. Petrenko = С. Д. Петренко, Мозаичные панно и скульптурный рельеф общественных зданий городов Западной Сибири в 1960-е–1980-е годы. [Mosaic panels and sculptural relief of public buildings in the Western Siberian cities in the 1960s–1980s.] – Баландинские чтения: сборник статей научных чтений памяти С.Н. Баландина. [Balandin Readings: Collection of Scientific Readings in Memory of S.N. Balandin.] Novosibirsk: Novosibirsk State University of Architecture, Design and Arts, 2019, pp. 503–508; N. Ponomarenko, E. Lapshina = Н. В. Пономаренко, Е. А. Лапшина, Особенности синтеза искусств и архитектуры советского периода (на примере дворца пионеров и школьников во Владивостоке). [Features of the synthesis of fine arts and architecture of the Soviet period (On the example of the pioneers and schoolchildren palace in Vladivostok.] – Architecture and Modern Information Technologies 2018, No. 2, pp. 252–265; M. Solodilov, E. Korobova = М. Солодилов, Е. Коробова, Синтез архитектуры… [Synthesis of architecture…]

111 Natalia Anikina, Andrei Epishin = Наталья Аникина, Андрей Епишин (eds.), Среда Художник. Время. Монументальное искусство в координатах 2-й половины XX века. [Environment. Artist. Time. Monumental Art in the Coordinates of the 2nd half of the Twentieth Century.] Moscow: BooksMArt, 2016.

112 Boris Groys, The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992 [1988].

113 Oksana Shatalova = Оксана Шаталова, Метафизика формы. [Metaphysics of form.] – Georgi Mamedov = Георгий Мамедов (ed.), Вернуть будущее. Альманах ШТАБа №1. [Regain the Future. Almanac of Stab No. 1.] Bishkek: Школы теории и активизма — Бишкек, 2014, pp. 100–125.

In terms of Soviet era accounts, canonical monographs by the art and architecture historian Vladimir Tolstoy on the USSR's monumental art[114] and decorative art[115] have been helpful sources for determining original discursive practices.

Beyond the socialist bloc, nearly a dozen histories of monumental painting have been written in various European countries. As they lack comparative value from the perspective of this thesis, I do not reference them. However, Johanna Ruohonen's monograph on Finnish public painting[116] is of note here as the situation in post-war Finland offers close reference material for the Baltic States. Ruohonen advocates the term 'public painting' by claiming that the term emphasises the most important aspects of a public artwork – a public site, public functions, and a relationship with its audience. She uses the term as it is used in the concept of public sculpture. Such an expression has not been used in Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania, probably owing to the obscure tone in the respective languages. I occasionally use it in my text, but generally speaking, this imaginative but vague term seems to make the already dispersed terminology even more confusing.

While most accounts on this topic are written from a national point of view, Romy Golan's compelling study concerning the 'paradox of wall painting' in Europe from 1927 to 1957 takes a critically transnational perspective.[117] Golan argues that during the inter-war years, totalitarian and semi-autocratic states aspired to erect walls both metaphorically and physically. Many of these walls were decorated with murals with an aspiration to monumentalise ethnic nationalism. After the war, in many instances, the same architects and artists quickly 'undid' the previous fascist walls and remodelled the murals that were supposed to last until the next millennium. Such un-walling often took the form of mobile, ephemeral or otherwise un-monumental media, such as tapestry – hence the use of Le Corbusier's term 'muralnomad' in the title of her book.

114 Vladimir Tolstoy = Владимир Толстой, Монументальное искусство СССР. [Monumental Art of the USSR.] Moscow: Советский художник, 1978.
115 Vladimir Tolstoy = Владимир Толстой, Советское декоративное искусство, 1945–1975: очерки. [Soviet Decorative Art, 1945–1975: Essays]. Moscow: Исскуство, 1989.
116 Johanna Ruohonen, Imagining a New Society. Public Painting as Politics in Postwar Finland. Turku: University of Turku, 2013.
117 Romy Golan, Muralnomad: The Paradox of Wall Painting, Europe 1927–1957. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009.

Furthermore, Nikolas Drosos' doctoral dissertation *Modernism with a Human Face: Synthesis of Art and Architecture in Eastern Europe, 1954–1958*, is a noteworthy example of the comparative integration of regional narratives from the Soviet Union, Poland and Yugoslavia.[118] Drosos offers a broader Eastern European perspective, exemplifying that while the discourse on the synthesis of the arts reached its peak in Western Europe by the mid-1950s, it remained a central theoretical and practical question in regarding the communist utopia in Eastern Europe until the late 1980s. In his account, synthesis was the central concept of socialist artistic culture. While during the 1950s and 1960s, synthesis was promoted by the authorities as a political instrument, in the 1970s, the project halted amid hypernormalisation. Drosos argues that subversive neo-avant-garde artists continued the utopian project by shifting from the synthesis of art and architecture into the synthesis of art and life. He highlights that as scholarship has focused on the neo-avant-garde practices, art histories have failed to acknowledge the role of the official synthesis. The 'heroised' neo-avant-garde synthesis initially only reached a group of like-minded friends, whereas the official synthesis embraced the whole society.

118 Nikolas Drosos, Modernism with a Human Face.

# 1. The 1960s: Monumental-decorative art at its optimistic best

## 1.1         Khrushchev's Thaw – towards a late Soviet synthesis

The coming to power of Nikita Khrushchev in 1953 and him cementing his position in the next few years initiated changes in the Soviet Union known as the Thaw. The transformations affected all aspects of social life, such as the condemnation of Stalin's cult of personality, the release of political prisoners, and the restructuring of the economy.[119] In one of his ground-breaking speeches in 1954, Khrushchev condemned the artistic excesses of architecture and initiated a new housing programme focused on the industrial production of homes from pre-fabricated concrete panels. Thus, architecture was to lead the way by driving Soviet society towards a de-Stalinised optimistic communist future.[120] The new 'mobile' architecture also initiated innovations in monumental art by asking for a new artistic language in terms of style and the use of innovative materials and technologies. The monumental-decorative art of the late 1950s and early 1960s came to be the representation of such hopeful (social) engineering. To a certain extent, this kind of art also bridged a gap with the early days of the Soviet Union, where the Constructivists with their avant-garde ideas craved a role in contributing to the design of the living environment.

Although synthesis still served the ambition of assisting abstract architecture in conveying meaningful messages through spatial design (as in neoclassical Stalinist architecture), it did not have to result in the creation of colossal and abundantly decorated architectural palaces as 'stone-carved symphonies', but more down-to-earth solutions and forms were preferred. Synthesis had to fulfil key issues of socialist culture: the social purposefulness of art, artistic collaboration and the balance between artistic freedom and social engagement. Architects and artists also had to keep in mind some of the fundamentals of socialist art like realism, national culture and adherence to the party line.[121] Furthermore, as the Lithuanian theoretician Boleslovas Klova put it, monumental-decorative art had to reflect on modern life, it had to be innovative, and of a high ideological, artistic and technical level.[122]

119 In 1957, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were granted the right to plan their economies. Until then, 200 000 enterprises and 100 000 construction sites spread across the Soviet Union were managed from ministerial offices in Moscow. Moshe Lewin, The Soviet Century, p. 221.
120 Vladimir Belogolovsky, Re-examining Soviet Modernism. – Uldis Lukševics, Linda Leitāne-Šmīdberga, Zigmārs Jauja, Ivars Veinbergs, Mārtiņš Rusiņš (eds.), Un-written: Exhibition of Latvia at the 14th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia: Catalogue. Rīga: NRJA, 2014, p. 66.
121 Nikolas Drosos, Modernism with a Human Face, pp. 27, 53.
122 Boleslovas Klova, Lietuvių monumentalioji dekoratyvinė tapyba. [Lithuanian Monumental-decorative Painting.], p. 47.

Image 2. **Antanas Garbauskas, *Towards a Bright Future,* 1962–1963. Stained glass, metal, concrete, approx. 300 × 400. Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania. Vilnius, 51 Gedimino pr. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**

The shift from Stalinism did not happen overnight. Although Baltic architects were quick to implement the change in discourse, the transition from the old architectural styles to new traditions lasted about a decade.[123] Several large-scale buildings in the planning or building phase inherited their colossal size from the previous epoch. In such instances, the re-designed projects removed excesses like facade decorations, mouldings and sculptures. For example, the Republican Library in Vilnius (project 1952, finished in 1963) retained a classical outlook without excessive decoration. In the foyer, the stained-glass piece *Towards a Bright Future* (1962–63) by Antanas Garbauskas (Image 2) treated the ceremonial architecture irreverently. Whereas stained-glass is traditionally used for windows, this work was placed in an internal wall and was artificially lit.[124] Contrary to the confines of the seriousness of neoclassical architecture, the work elicits *joie de vivre*. The work depicts a figure of a mother raising her child towards the sun – the bright future of socialism; this 'holy trinity' is surrounded by loosely arranged compositions *Work*, *Peace*, *Science* and *Art* represented through allegorical symbols such as the atomic nucleus or a microscope.

Another example of such a building from Vilnius was the recently destroyed Cultural House of the Trade Unions.[125] A standard design was adapted by local architect Algirdas Jasinskas and finished in 1958 in a

123 Marija Drėmaitė, Baltic Modernism, p. 57.
124 Vytautė Auškalnytė, Sovietinio laikotarpio... [Soviet era...], p. 9.
125 Monika Gimbutaitė, Buvusiuose Profsąjungų rūmuose rasti A. Stoškaus vitražai. [Stained-glass windows by A. Stoškus found in the former Trade Union Palace.] – 15.lt 22 January 2019. https://www.15min.lt/kultura/naujiena/vizualieji-menai/buvusiuose-profsajungu-rumuose-rasti-a-stoskaus-vitrazai-929-1090892#galerija/169700/4446310?copied, accessed 26 July 2022.

Image 3. **Algimantas Stoškus, *Work and Feast*, 1957–1961. Stained glass, metal, 600 × 255 each. Cultural House of the Trade Unions. Vilnius, Tauras Hill. The building was demolished, and the stained-glass windows removed in 2019 and are now preserved in the Lithuanian Art Museum. Courtesy of 15min.lt. Photo from 2019.**

simplified form. Stained-glass artist Algimantas Stoškus, who was to establish himself as one of the leading Soviet glass artists working in architecture, created three vertical stained-glass windows for the palace entitled *Work and Feast* (1957–1961) (Image 3). Compared to his later works, this was still closer to the socialist realist idiom featuring muscular Stakhanovites and accordingly amplified kolkhoz women. From a stylistic perspective, this work indicates a shift from neoclassicism to socialist modernism, with the artist reducing painting on glass to a minimum and thoughtfully using the thick lead framework of the stained-glass window as a compositional element inherent to the work.[126] A similar stylistic shift is visible in Anortė Mackelaitė's 1962 stained-glass windows at the National M. K. Čiurlionis School of Art (Image 4). Although the women representing different arts have been realised as generalised archetypes akin to the Soviet application of the Severe Style, the heroic characters follow the neoclassical cultural model.

The Severe Style became the foremost expression of a new type of modernity in Soviet painting during the early Thaw. From the mid-1950s, painters in different parts of the Soviet Union developed a more humane, albeit pessimistic, vision of the working classes. Such imagery was still

126 Liudvika Ramanauskaitė, Algimantas Stoškus. Vilnius: Vaga, 1989, p. 31.

Image 4. **Anortė Mackelaitė, stained-glass windows, 1962. Stained glass, metal, 205 × 133 each. National M. K. Čiurlionis School of Art. Vilnius, 11 T. Kosciuškos g.. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**

realistic without the exaggerated idealisation and glorification of Soviet reality. It was inherent for this style to 'shrink' the depth of three-dimensional space. Also, artists reduced the variety of colours to a minimum. The sharply delineated figures became more expressive and 'severe'.[127] Kädi Talvoja argues that by the late 1950s the style developed into something of an official art.[128] Although, by some accounts, the style was 'brain-dead' already by the early 1960s[129] it featured well into the 1970s[130] and acquired the unique feeling of the zeitgeist.

Consequently, as in the second half of the 1950s, it was not yet clear what form the new synthesis should take, artists shaped their murals according to the trending style.[131] One such example from Latvia is the mural

127 Valda Knāviņa, Skarbais stils. Socmodernisma izpausmes latviešu gleznniecībā 20. gadsimta 50.–60. gados / The Severe Style. Manifestations of Socialist Modernism in Latvian Painting during the 1950s–60s. – Elita Ansone, Arta Vārpa (eds.), Desmit epizodes 20. gadsimta otrās puss mākslā Latvijā / Ten Episodes in Art of the Second Half of the 20th Century in Latvia. Rīga: Latvian National Museum of Art, 2019, p. 75.
128 Kädi Talvoja, The official art of the Khrushchev Thaw: The Severe Style as an ambassador of the Estonian national school at Baltic art exhibitions in Moscow. – Journal of Baltic Studies 2018, Vol. 49, No. 3, pp. 333–350.
129 Valda Knāviņa, Skarbais stils / The Severe Style, p. 89.
130 Kädi Talvoja, 'Karm stiil' nõukogude uuringute kontekstis. ['Severe style' in the Context of Soviet Studies]. – Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi / Studies on Art and Culture 2012, No. 1/2, p. 131.
131 The term severe style, coined by the Soviet art historian Aleksandr Kamensky, was fixed in the late 1960s. Until then, Russian critics would synonymously use expressions such as 'monumental easel art', 'the monumental', 'easel monumental', 'laconic' or 'horizontal' style to speak of the time's specific visual art. Their visual proximity explains the multiple uses of the term monumental to describe the new style. Architectural painting, i.e. monumental painting, does not permit heightened expressiveness for technical reasons – mural painting favours a certain kind of 'rhythmics', large colour panes and tectonic compositions. Thus, the Severe Style was characterised by its visual proximity to monumental painting. Valda Knāviņa, Skarbais stils / The Severe Style, p. 89.

Image 5. **Laimdots Mūrnieks and Uldis Zemzaris, *Midsummer Night*, 1959. Oil on cardboard, approx. 150 × 2000. Skrīveri Research Institute of Agronomy. Skrīveri, 7 Zemkopības institūts. In 2018, the mural was removed and partially relocated to Skrīveri Cultural Centre. One part of the mural stayed in the original building but is now on show in another location. Courtesy of Staburags. Photo from 2018.**

*Midsummer Night* from 1959 by Laimdots Mūrnieks and Uldis Zemzaris in the Research Institute of Agronomy in the peripheral village of Skrīveri in the region of Vidzeme (Image 5). In a settlement of 3,000 residents, the institute employed nearly 200 people (compared to today's 20).[132] The 20-metre wide mural placed under the ceiling depicted local people celebrating midsummer underneath a majestic oak tree. By gently stylising the figures and rendering them in high-contrast outlines, the painting defied the classicist tendencies of socialist realism. Although wrought with ideological content, the mural elicits a lethargic impression, far from the pathos of high Stalinism. An example of the same style from Estonia is the mural combining painting and mosaic techniques by Ants Vares in Kuressaare Airport on Saaremaa island (Image 6). The work depicts the mythical hero of the national epic Kalevipoeg and his wife, Linda. Such grand narratives from local folklore and literary culture were to become focal elements of monumental-decorative art in the 1960s and later. What is surprising in this instance is that whereas the 1962 building itself was of modest modernist appearance and the interior featured spectacular cantilevered tubular steel furniture,[133] the mural appeared already out-dated with its laborious imagery.

132 Zanda Ozola-Balode, Skrīveros restaurē vēsturisku panno 'Jāņu nakts.' [Skrīveri restores historical panel painting Midsummer Night.] – Public Broadcasting of Latvia. https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/kultura/maksla/skriveros-restaure-vesturisku-panno-janu-nakts.a283045/, accessed 26 July 2022.
133 The interior equipment resembled the 1930s production of European furniture manufacturer Mücke Melder-Thonet. However, it remains unclear if these seats and tables reached Estonia before, during or after the war or if they were produced locally in the early 1960s after inter-war designs.

Image 6. **Ants Vares, *Kalevipoeg and Linda*, 1962. Oil, ceramics, pebbles, approx. 175 × 200. Kuressaare Airport. Kuressaare, 1 Roomassaare tee. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2012.**

Dolores Hoffmann's 1961 fresco *Morning* in the Rahu (Peace) cinema in Tallinn depicted a typical scene of fishers in the Severe Style. Her mural radiates escapist peace of mind within a romantic seaside setting. Although the viewers were probably unaware of it, the figures in the murals were portrayed based on her artist friends and her favourite writers, such as Ernest Hemingway. His 1952 novel *The Old Man and the Sea* had been published in Estonia in 1957. Besides the mural, the 1959 cinema building itself was a sign of the transformation from Stalinism to the Thaw, as it featured an ascetic facade devoid of columns.[134] While preparing the mural, the artist spent a summer sketching outdoors, in this case on Saaremaa island and away from the urban atmosphere.[135]

134 Hilkka Hiiop, Frank Lukk, Rahutu "Hommik." Freskopannoo "Hommik" hävi(ta)mine ja päästmine Rahu kinos Koplis. [Restless *Morning*. Destruction and rescue of fresco panel *Morning* at Rahu Cinema in Kopli.] – Muinsuskaitse aastaraamat [Heritage Protection Yearbook] 2019, p. 79. Architect Ülo Stöör's memoirs also bare witness to such moods. Ülo Stöör, Ühe arhitekti mälestused II. [Memoirs of an architect II.] Tartu: Ilmamaa, 2014.
135 As for the craving for the rural and the aspect of plein-air painting in 1950s Estonian art, see Heinz Valk, Pääsemine helgest tulevikust. [Escape from a Bright Future.] Tallinn: Kunst, 2010.

# 1.2    Blossoming of the socialist modernist mural in the 1960s

Russian-American architectural historian Vladimir Belogolovsky has argued that from the 1950s onward, the most original architecture and design in the Soviet Union appeared in the periphery, explaining this via distinctive local cultures, specific topographies and climatic differences. In comparison with other Soviet republics, the Baltic States had the closest historical ties to Western traditions, with all three capitals featuring old town cores with textbook examples of Baroque, Gothic, Renaissance, and Art Nouveau architecture.[136] Designers and urban planners would strive to use regional distinctions as an excuse to defend their visions against the singular approach in design and planning. Belogolovsky argues that it produced a specific national modernism. This regional style was only possible thanks to individuals who sought to translate and represent local differences into 'personal modernities.'[137] The story of monumental-decorative art in the Baltic States is, in many ways, a narrative that complements such personal modernities, illustrating how socialist policies of construction created a space for monumental art that combined overt collective and covert individual aspirations.

In Soviet Russia, the showpiece example of the new socialist modernist architecture was the Palace of Pioneers in Moscow (1957–1961). In the Baltics, one of the brightest examples of the birth of post-war modernism was café Neringa in Vilnius by architect twin brothers Algimantas and Vytautas Nasvytis. The name of the café refers to the Curonian spit's resort area and the folkloric giantess Neringa who called the coast of Lithuania her home. The café was set in the city's main thoroughfare and housed on the ground floor of the hotel of the same name, which served foreign tourists. It gave a new modern rhythm to the whole city, being a prominent meeting place for artists, writers, musicians and intellectuals. As such, it legitimised and also propagated modernism in its various manifestations including new architecture, the synthesis of the arts and jazz music.[138]

As was typical for Baltic modernism of the 1960s, the flowing space of the interior was inspired by Nordic architecture and enhanced by murals, the content of which was based on folklore. The main hall was decorated with a mural *Neringa and Naglis* by Vladas Jankauskas and Vytautas Povilaitis

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136 Vladimir Belogolovsky, Re-examining Soviet Modernism, p. 93.
137 Ibid., p. 87.
138 Marija Drėmaitė, Baltic Modernism, p. 59.

Image 7. **Vladas Jankauskas and Vytautas Povilaitis,** *Neringa and Naglis*, **1959. Tempera on concrete. Café Neringa. Vilnius, 23 Gedimino pr. Courtesy of Neringa Restaurant. Photo from 1975.**



Image 8. **Juozas Kėdainis, relief mural, 1959. Plaster, approx. 150 × 250. Café Neringa. Vilnius, 23 Gedimino pr. Courtesy of alfi.lt. Photo from 2011.**

Image 9. **Laimutis Ločeris,** *Hunting,* **1961. Sgraffito. Café Taurus. Vilnius. Destroyed. Courtesy of Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art. Photo from 1975.**

(Image 7). One of the smaller halls included a plaster bas-relief by sculptor Juozas Kėdainis featuring scenes from the area of Neringa (Image 8). Characteristic of the new style, the artists did not aim to create a pictorial illusion of three-dimensional space but instead emphasised the tectonics of the walls and treated the figures in a stylised way. Contemporary critics were quick to claim that, in this case, painting is not an architectural decorum but one of the main components for creating the atmosphere of the space.[139] Right after Neringa, café Taurus was opened in Vilnius in 1961, which was adorned with a bas relief using sgraffito to depict an ancient hunting scene by Laimutis Ločeris (Image 9). Ločeris' work was masterfully restrained, seamlessly representing the cultural aspirations of the Thaw.

An architectural example from Estonia that was similar to Neringa, which on the one hand, signalled the return to pre-war international modernism but, on the other, paved the way to experiments seeking to apply new technologies to the needs of socialist modernisation, was in a sanatorium

139 Boleslovas Klova, Lietuvių monumentalioji dekoratyvinė tapyba. [Lithuanian Monumental-decorative Painting.], p. 30.

built in the north-eastern summer resort of Narva-Jõesuu. The history
of this 1961 building dates back to the 1930s, when a Pärnu sanatorium
designed by architect Nikolai Kusmin was not implemented for various
circumstances. In Narva-Jõesuu, Kusmin used his 20-year-old project,
adjusting it to the needs of the new era. The result was a striking public
building which bridges pre- and post-war architecture. Undecorated white
walls typified pre-war modernism, but the new approach dictated monu-
mental-decorative art. Decorative paintings were commissioned from Valli
Lember-Bogatkina, who painted murals of carefree holidaymakers on the
building's facade, indoors (Image 10) and similarly simple, perhaps even
naive, paintings on glass for the second and third-floor foyers.

Another ground-breaking building from the Thaw in Estonia was the 1960
Flower Pavilion exhibition space in Tallinn, where instead of monumen-
tal-decorative art, the focus was on the symbiosis of sensitive landscape
architecture, elusive architecture, elegant interior architecture and
decorative sculptures (Image 11). Uno Tölpus and Peeter Tarvas designed
the Kääriku Sports Centre ensemble (1962) as an Aalto-inspired flowing
space with several walls decorated with generalised ceramic murals
of young athletes. Lesser-known examples of that period's monumen-
tal-decorative art include the entirely abstract murals in a pie bar in Tartu
from 1961 (Image 12) and sgraffito bas relief from the same year by Enn
Põldroos in the Tallinn Secondary School No 46 (Image 13). The latter
was one of the first post-war prefabricated schools in Estonia. It featured
a fashionable entrance marked by a curved canopy characteristic of the
period, which enjoyed boasting engineering wonders.

Although Latvia's first significant Thaw building – the Rīga Railway
Station designed by the Leningrad design institute Lengiprotrans architects
Vladimir Kuznetsov and Victor Tsipulin in 1957 and finished in 1960 –
was by no means an architectural feat, in terms of its sheer urban volume
and social influence, it was the most vocal announcement of the arrival of
the new era. The colossal building featured a facade with large windows
to fill the great hall with light – a symbol of the period. The hall was
covered with a terrazzo floor, creating a dynamic composition of graphic
shapes and lines, while the ceiling featured jagged panelling to soften the
acoustics. The space was free of any distracting details. The architectural
meaning was maintained by the contrasting use of materials and textures

Image 10. **Valli Lember-Bogatkina, mural painting, 1961. Oil, approx. 100 × 100. Narva-Jõesuu Inter-Kolkhoz Sanatorium (now Narva-Jõesuu Medical Spa). Narva-Jõesuu, 3 Aia tn. Destroyed. Courtesy of Museums of Virumaa. Photo from 1962.**



Image 11. **Architect Valve Pormeister, interior architects Vello Asi and Väino Tamm, Flower Pavilion, 1960. Tallinn, 26/28 Pirita tee. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from the 1960s.**

Image 12. **Unknown artist, wall decoration, 1961. Oil. Pie bar. Tartu, 9 Raekoja plats. Destroyed. Courtesy of Tartu City Museum. Photo from 1961.**

– glass, various types of render, granite and lacquered surfaces.[140] Two sidewalls of the space were covered with extensive metal panels designed by the graphic artist Ģirts Vilks.[141] One wall featured the skylines of the Soviet cities Rīga had connections to, complemented by a mother with fluttering clothes holding a child and a dove (Image 14). The opposing wall depicted an athletic engineer with hurtling aeroplanes and trains behind him (Image 15). There was also a neatly executed tableau of arrivals and departures. As it was painted and not electronic, changing the timetables required considerable time and energy, contributing to it quickly becoming out-dated. Vilks, who in the 1950s illustrated national romantic books in an impeccable socialist realist manner, brought this style with him in the depictions of man and woman. The passionate, emotional depiction of the figures is probably one reason these works were soon removed.

Another herald of the new era in Rīga was the canteen Baltija designed by architect Māris Gundars, which opened its doors in 1962 in one of the first post-war residential districts of Āgenskalna priedes. The space was decorated with an abstract mural composed of dynamic lines by graphic

140 Ilze Martinsone, Nākotnes ielā / On Future Street. – Sandra Krastiņa, Māra Ņikitina (eds.), Uz lielās dzīves trases: 20. gadsimta 60. gadu grafiskā valoda latvijā / On the Track of Great Life: Graphic Language of the 1960s in Latvia. Rīga: Raktuve, 2016, p. 167.
141 Andrejs Holcmanis, Rīgai jauna stacija. [Rīga's new station.] – Māksla 1960 No. 3.

Image 13. **Enn Põldroos, mural painting, 1961. Sgraffito, approx. 150 × 150. Tallinn Secondary School No 46 (now Pelgulinna Secondary School). Tallinn, 7 Mulla tn. Courtesy of Karin Paulus. Photo from 2013.**



Image 14. **Ģirts Vilks, mural painting and decorative metalwork, 1960. Oil, metal, approx. 900 × 2200. Rīga Railway Station. Rīga, 1 Stacijas laukums. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian State Archive of Audiovisual Documents. Photo from the 1970s.**

Image 16. **Aleksandrs Stankēvičs, mural painting, 1962. Oil, approx. 300 × 600. Canteen Baltija. Rīga, 22 Melnsila iela. Destroyed. Courtesy of National Library of Latvia. Photo from the 1960s.**

Image 15. **Ģirts Vilks, mural painting and decorative metalwork, 1960. Oil, metal, approx. 900 × 2200. Rīga Railway Station. Rīga, 1 Stacijas laukums. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian State Archive of Audiovisual Documents. Photo from the 1970s.**

artist and painter Aleksandrs Stankēvičs (Image 16). Such a design all but rejected the naturalism and theatrical positivism of the earlier period and focused on the modernist imperative of 'the power of the picture plane.'[142] One of the earliest post-war modernist murals, of which not even a single photograph has survived, was that by painter and illustrator Kurts Fridrihsons. In 1961, he painted two large-scale semi-abstract murals 'in the style of Jean Arp' for the popular Mežaparks tennis centre in the outskirts of Rīga.[143] According to Borgs, these were repainted in 1963 after Khrushchev initiated his attack on formalism.

142 Jānis Borgs, Lūzuma anatomija. Cēloņi un sekas ceļā uz estētikas apversumu Latvijas grafiskā dizaina attīstībā 20. gadsimta 60. gados. Grafiskais dizains kā jaunas patērētajsabiedrības tapšanas izpausme / The Anatomy of a break. Cause and effect on the way to aesthetic revolution in the development of graphic design in Latvia in the 1960s. Graphic design as an expression of the formation of a new consumer society. –Sandra Krastiņa, Māra Ņikitina (eds.), Uz lielās dzīves trases: 20. gadsimta 60. gadu grafiskā valoda latvijā / On the Track of Great Life: Graphic Language of the 1960s in Latvia. Rīga: Raktuve, 2016, p. 36.
143  Conversation with Jānis Borgs, 4 June 2020.

## 1.3          The City as an art gallery

According to the standardised principles of urban architecture, the central unit of Soviet housing construction was the *mikrorayon* or micro-district: a neighbourhood flanked by larger arteries and built for 6,000–8,000 inhabitants, with residential buildings, a school, preschool and other service establishments for daily life all walking distance from people's homes. Even though eliminating excesses meant that the discipline of architecture faced constraints owing to cost-efficiency, architects and artists tried their best to create enjoyable socialist cityscapes. [144]

Regarding prefabricated residential buildings, architectural innovation was largely limited to three elements: facade decoration, the distinctive design of balconies and loggias and the embellishment of stairwells and entrances. One common way was to assign décor directly on the prefabricated concrete elements. Sometimes mosaics were embedded in concrete slabs in the factories producing the panels.[145] The passion for architectural ornamentation was particularly noticeable in the multi-ethnic Caucasus and Islam-oriented Central-Asian Soviet republics where non-figurative decoration complemented the historical principles of religious art. After the 1966 earthquake in Tashkent, which destroyed most of the buildings in the capital of the Uzbek SSR, a major rebuilding took place with thousands of new houses constructed, hundreds of them with sidewall decorations. These murals were widely distributed and popularised in the Soviet mass media and specialist publications, inspiring a nationwide attempt to modify repetitive facades through ornamentation, making them stand out from the other indistinguishable buildings of the same standard design.[146] Facade decoration also became a significant feature of the 1960s urban space in the Baltics, although in much smaller numbers.

In Soviet Estonia, Mustamäe was the first district in Tallinn to consist of prefabricated buildings located on a site where there had previously

144 According to Belogolovsky, from the late 1950s onwards the word architecture was in official parlance increasingly replaced with or downgraded to the term construction. For example, the journal Architecture and Construction became Construction and Architecture. In 1956, the Academy of Architecture of the USSR was replaced with the Academy of Construction and Architecture of the USSR, with the new president being a builder. Vladimir Belogolovsky, Re-examining Soviet Modernism, p. 62.
145 Philipp Meuser, Dimitrij Zadorin, Towards a Typology of Soviet Mass Housing, p. 73.
146 Ibid., p. 78.

Image 17. **Valli Lember-Bogatkina, Margareta Fuks and Enn Põldroos, end wall decoration, 1965. Paint poured into concrete panels, each panel approx. 250 × 250. Tallinn, 4, 6, 14 and 22 Akadeemia tee. Destroyed except for 6 Akadeemia tee. Courtesy of Tallinn City Museum. Photo from 1965.**

been no urban structure.[147] The war-ravaged capital needed to alleviate its housing shortages, and Tallinners eagerly welcomed the new homes. Town planners disseminated the cultural optimism of the 1960s by proposing it would be possible to create diverse neighbourhoods of the highest quality, with painted walls forming an open-air art gallery. Artist Valli Lember-Bogatkina had visited East Germany, where she found murals she thought could be applied in Estonia. She teamed up with city architect Dmitri Bruns, other artists, and engineers to develop a process for pouring paint into concrete panels.[148] Images depicting gymnasts, children, a kolkhoz woman, a male factory worker, the sun, and a dove on the end walls of the buildings along Akadeemia tee are classic examples of this category (Image 17). Nearby there were at least four more end wall decorations which dealt with the themes of the scientific-technical revolution and space

147 Belogolovsky argues that Mustamäe (architects Voldemar Tippel, Mart Port, Uno Tölpus, 1962–1973) and Lazdynai in Vilnius (Vytautas Čekanauskas, 1972) were the most successful prefab districts in their diverse building typology and social programme projects built anywhere in the USSR. Vladimir Belogolovsky, Re-examining Soviet Modernism, p. 94.
148 Anu Soojärv, Monumentaalkunst eksterjööris… [Exterior Monumental Art…], p. 15.

Image 18. **Enn Põldroos, end wall decoration, around 1965. Paint poured into concrete panels, each panel approx. 250 × 250. Tallinn, 6 Karjamaa. Courtesy of Õhtuleht. Photo from 2019.**

exploration. Another set of buildings in the same district was embellished with murals designed by Enn Põldroos depicting zodiac signs, which were popular references to space themes. Põldroos also designed gable walls in the Karjamaa micro-district in North Tallinn, depicting seagulls characteristic of the neighbourhood near the sea (Image 18). Another of his gable murals depicted a mother with a child reaching towards the atomic nucleus symbol.

These image-bearing wall panels were possible thanks to the self-sacrificing lobbying efforts of the artists and not so much due to the interest of the builders. As the procedure was time-consuming and incompatible with the conveyor-belt method of industrial building production, these images in Tallinn were among the few ever produced in the Baltic states using this

Image 20. **Igor Balašov, *Television Eye*, 1965. Metal, approx. 500 × 150. Estonian Public Broadcasting. Tallinn, 27 Gonsiori tn. The portico features a stained-glass window by Maie-Hele Segerkrantz, 1965. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from the 1960s.**

technique. Although the decoration of residential buildings in the 1960s was rare, the decoration of public buildings in various techniques gained momentum in the 1970s. Some significant examples of facade decorations on 1960s public buildings from Tallinn are the 1962 sgraffito *Gymnasts* by Valli Lember-Bogatkina and Margareta Fuks on the Kalev Sports Hall (Image 19) and the 1965 semi-abstract metal panel by Igor Balašov colloquially called *Television Eye* on the facade of the Estonian Public Broadcasting building (Image 20). The latter building was designed in 1959 and, when finished six years later, was one of the first post-Stalinist office buildings in Tallinn. It featured several examples of monumental-decorative art.[149] Only the *Televison Eye* and an abstract stained-glass window by Maie-Hele Segerkrantz below it have survived.

149 Karolin Jagodin, Harju maakond, Tallinna linn, Gonsiori tn 27. Televisioonihoone eksperdihinnang. [Harju county, Tallinn, 27 Gonsiori tn. Television building expert assessment.] – Eesti XX sajandi (1870–1991) väärtusliku arhitektuuri kaardistamine ja analüüs. [Mapping and analysis of the valuable architecture of Estonia in the 20th century (1870–1991).] https://register.muinas.ee/file/architecture/1353.pdf, accessed 16 July 2022.

Image 21. **Teresė Ivanauskaitė, *Muse*, 1964. Ceramics, approx. 125 × 220. National M. K. Čiurlionis School of Art. Vilnius, T. 11 Kosciuškos g. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**



Image 22. **Vincas Kisarauskas, wall decoration, 1967. Stone, glass, oil, approx. 350 × 2400. Vilnius City Clinical Hospital. Vilnius, 57 Antakalnio g. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Photo from the 1990s.**

In Vilnius, Teresė Ivanauskaitė's 1964 mosaic *Muse* on the facade of the M. K. Čiurlionis Art Secondary School was executed roughly in the Severe Style, depicting four stylised goddesses presiding over the arts and sciences (Image 21). Marija Mačiulienė's metal composition was installed

on the Builders' Place of Culture in Vilnius a year later. It represents the heightened decorative style, which went hand in hand with the period's monumental laconic clarity. As was customary, the subject matter was



Image 23. **Unknown artist, decorative metalwork, 1964. Metal. Shop Bērnu pasaule (Children's World). Rīga, 25 Revolucijas (now Matīsa) iela. Courtesy of National Archives of Latvia. Photo from the 1970s.**



Image 24. **Unknown artist, decorative metalwork, 1966. Metal. Rīga, corner of Gorkija (now Krišjāņa Valdemāra) and Kirova (now Elizabetes) iela. Destroyed. Courtesy of Fotki.lv. Photo from the 1970s.**



Image 25. **Unknown artist, end wall decoration, early 1960s. Aizkraukle Secondary School. Aizkraukle, 10 Rūpniecības. Destroyed. Courtesy of Literatūra un Māksla. Photo from 1962.**

prescribed by the function of the building. In this case, the semi-abstract metal grid portrays a male and a female worker on a construction site. In 1967, Vincas Kisarauskas, who in his studio practice experimented with photomontage and ready-mades and is considered one of the most important painters and graphic artists of 1970s Lithuania, designed an extensive abstract mosaic for the facade of Vilnius City Clinical Hospital[150] (Image 22).

Examples of Rīga's 1960s facades adorned by minimalist decoration include metal panels on the facade of the shopping mall Bērnu pasaule (Children's World) from 1964 (Image 23), a bronze relief depicting a streamlined Hermes on the facade of the Automatic Telecommunication Exchange Centre from 1968, and a depiction of a crane with a rooster on it on an apartment building in the city centre (Image 24). However, relatively few murals decorated the streets of Baltic cities in the 1960s. The present examples come from the capitals; outside the larger cities, only a few examples of facade decorations exist from the Thaw period, such as the Aizkraukle Secondary School mural depicting gymnasts (Image 25). As I will show in the next section, the 1960s can be called the 'decade of the interior' because the political, economic and philosophical changes could be implemented much faster in interior design, a factor that appealed to a generation of young architects, designers and artists.[151]

## 1.4 Material and technical experiments during the 'decade of the interior'

In the 1960s, young artists and designers strove to fuse interior architecture and monumental-decorative art. There was much experimentation, with the primary trend being a graphic, linear-style wall painting. However, from there on, artists would use diverse materials such as bricks, pebbles, glass, ceramics, metal and techniques like sgraffito, glass painting, glass burning and welding.[152] Because of the wide-ranging construction work and the opening and refurbishment of administrative and cultural institutions, there was much demand for interior design solutions for public buildings. Artists and designers were often required to come up with solutions for an entire venue. It would probably be fair to say that the lion's share of all

150 Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, Under the Sign of Expressionism. – Daina Narbutienė, Miglė Survilaitė (eds.), Visas menas – apie mus. Lietuvos menas 1960–2018. / All Art is About Us. Lithuanian Art 1960–2018. Vilnius: MO museum, 2018, pp. 128–156.
151 Marija Drėmaitė, Baltic Modernism, p. 68.
152 Gregor Taul, Monumental Painting in Estonia: Notes, p. 115.

these establishments across the Soviet Union was furnished monotonously and with analogous furniture. Perhaps this was also the case in the Baltic countries, yet dozens of brilliant interiors suggest a specific diversity. This refers to a paradox inherent to the Soviet system. Although the societal system prescribed common and standardised details, shortages in production led authorities and their design teams to design and implement specialist furniture. For managers of establishments that could control the flow of money themselves, it became desirable to distinguish their organisation through notable interior architecture. Therefore, one-off furniture and lighting fittings became a trademark across the Baltic countries.[153]

The interiors of the late 1950s and the early 1960s in Western and Eastern Europe were characterised by the plentiful use of ceramics and mosaics. Romy Golan has explained this by the fact that clay as a relatively ephemeral material contrasted with the tainted monumentalism of pre-war (in Eastern Europe, also post-war) neoclassicism. [154] Ukrainian art historian Galina Sklyarenko has emphasised the cheap cost and widespread availability of ceramics which was not an insignificant factor in the deficit economy.[155] Despite its low production costs, this bright shiny material looked fresh and attractive. It corresponded to the decorative and generalised forms and patterns which had become fashionable. Very often, clay was combined with the most common pebbles.

In Rīga, the first time pebbles smoothed by the sea were used as wall coverings was in 1962 in a shop called *Politiskā grāmata* (Political Book) designed by architects Edvīns Vecumnieks and Imants Jākosbons[156] (Image 26). A similar solution was used in the cinema *Blāzma* (Flare) by architect Juris Skalbergs in 1964 in which sculptor Ruta Svile produced a pebble wall in front of which a 'transparent' staircase characteristic of the period was placed (Image 27). In the same year, the new light-filled Zvejniekciems Secondary School opened, inspired by organic Nordic modernism and designed by Marta Staņa, it featured a pebble mosaic depicting the natural scenery surrounding the school.[157] In terms of material

153 Kai Lobjakas, Kujundustööde ateljee / Design Studio. – Kai Lobjakas (ed.), Kunsti ja tööstuse vahel. Kunstitoodete kombinaat / Between Art and Industry. The Art Products Factory. Tallinn: Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design, 2014, pp. 345–416.
154 See Romy Golan, Synthesis Undone.
155 Galina Sklyarenko = Галина Скляренко, Матеріали до історії... [Materials for history...]
156 Voldemārs Šusts, Virziens pareizs. [Correct direction.] – Māksla 1962, No. 3.
157 Jānis Lejnieks, Marta Staņa. Vienkārši, ar vērienu. [Simplicity with Capacity.] Rīga: Neputns and Riga City Architect's Office, 2012.
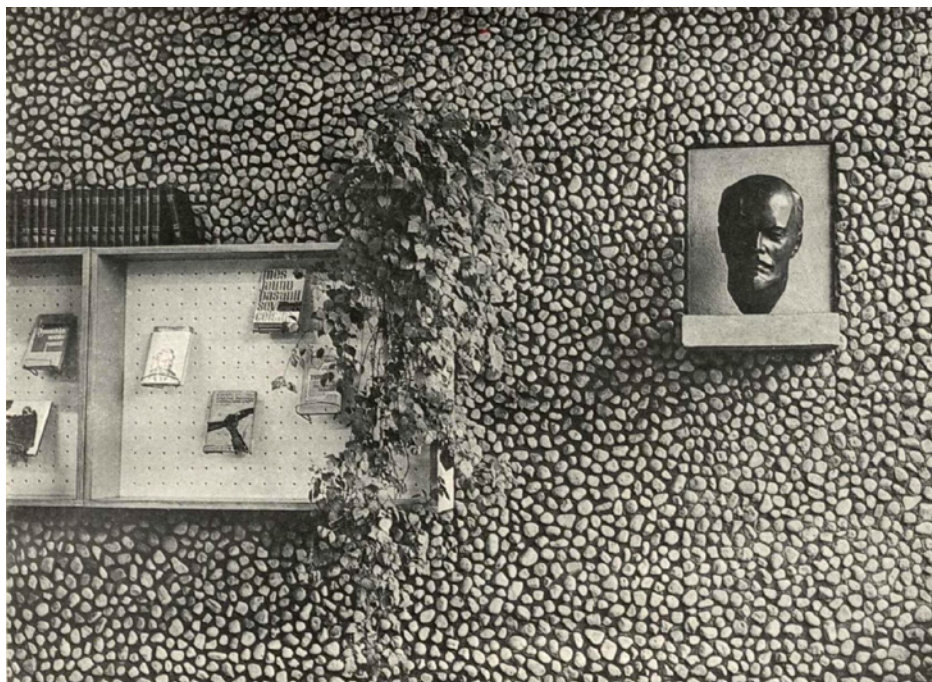
Image 26. **Architects Edvīns Vecumnieks and Imants Jākosbons, decorative wall, 1962. Pebbles, cement. Sculpture of V. I. Lenin by V. Rapikis. Bookshop Politiskā grāmata (Political Book). Rīga, Ļeņina (now Brīvības) iela. Courtesy of Zvaigzne magazine. Photo from the mid-1960s.**



Image 27. **Ruta Svile, decorative wall, 1964. Cement, pebbles. Cinema Blāzma (Flare). Rīgā, 67 Suvorova (now Aleksandra Čaka) iela. Destroyed. Courtesy of Zvaigzne. Photo from the late 1960s.**

experimentation, Rīga's Bérnu pasaule department store, which had opened in 1964 to sell goods for children, pushed the limits furthest as its in-house artist Adrians Pabiāns created enigmatic front window installations based on famous fairy tales. Pabiāns' 'live commercials' became well-known across the Soviet Union, so he regularly received commissions to create kinetic solutions for stores in Moscow, Omsk, Tashkent, Tbilisi, Crimea and others.[158]

In Estonia, artist Lagle Israel explored the artistic possibilities of pebble mosaics. Her *Estonians' Ancient Starry Sky* for Tõravere Observatory took nearly three years to complete (1962–1964), weighs about a tonne, and consists of 20,000 stones (Image 28). For over a year, in preparation for the design, Israel studied ancient celestial knowledge and modern astronomy; alongside reading theoretical texts, she studied manuals for plastering and mixing cement. The mosaic depicts the night sky as Estonians might have seen it in ancient times, with 28 constellations according to local tradition.[159] Valli Lember-Bogatkina created pebble mosaics for the restaurant Trilobiit (Trilobite) in Kohtla-Järve, north-eastern Estonia (Image 29). Similar to Israel's work, it has a solid national sentiment – the mural was made using stones gathered from the local Aa beach, and it depicts a trilobite, an arthropod that became extinct hundreds of millions of years ago and is often found fossilised in the limestone, which is quarried in the area and regarded as the country's national stone.[160] As for the use of ceramics, Anu Rank-Soans' panel at the Central Institute for the Breeding of Chickens and Geese (architect Valve Pormeister, interior architects Vello Asi and Väino Tamm, 1967) is a playful example of the enthusiasm which characterised the decade.[161] The building itself, located some 25 km south of Tallinn, is one of the prime achievements of 1960s organic architecture. The mural, which was also the artists' graduation work, is made of approximately 3,000 glazed hollow ceramic semi-spheres or 'eggs', which create a rhythmic, relatively abstract form, the patterns of which conceal a bird as well as female forms. The work presents a certain modular thinking, which echoed the popularity of cybernetics and fascinated artists at the time. [162]

158 Ervīns Jākobsons, Latvijas slavenākās iepirkšanas vietas. [Latvia's most famous shopping places.] – Laikmeta zīmes. https://www.laikmetazimes.lv/2018/04/02/rigas-slavenakas-iepirksanas-vietas-1dala/, accessed 8 October 8 2021.
159 Niina Raid, Merekivledest mosaiiksein – suuliste rahvapärimuste tõlgendamine kunsti keeles. [A mosaic wall of pebbles – interpreting oral folklore into the language of art.] – Kunst 1966, No. 2, pp. 63–64..
160 Gregor Taul, Monumental Painting in Estonia: Notes, p. 118.
161 Karin Vicente, Anu Rank-Soans. Tallinn: Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design, 2018, p. 104.
162 Ibid., p.12.

Image 28. **Lagle Israel, *Estonians' Ancient Starry Sky*, 1962–1964. Pebbles, cement, approx. 300 × 400. Tõravere Observatory. Nõo Municipality, Tõravere. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from 1964.**



Image 29. **Valli Lember-Bogatkina, *Trilobite*, 1967. Pebbles, cement, approx. 300 × 400. Restaurant Trilobiit (Trilobite). Kohtla-Järve, 10 Tuuslari. Courtesy of Estonian National Museum. Photo from 1980.**
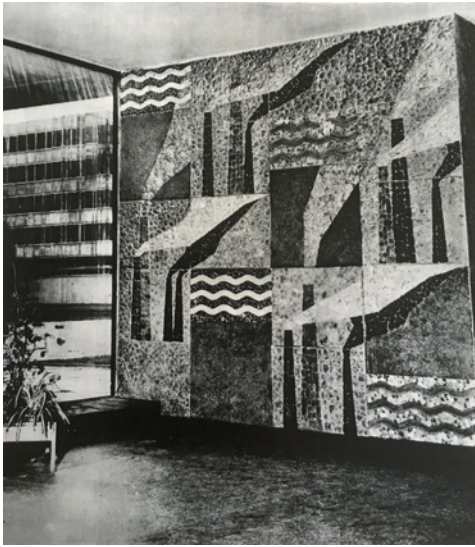
Image 30. **Boleslovas Klova,** *Industry,* **1966. Pebbles, cement, approx. 300 × 300. Kaunas Urban Planning Institute. Destroyed. Courtesy of Boleslovas Klova. Photo from the 1970s.**

In Lithuania, ceramic artist and art critic Boleslovas Klova created a pebble mosaic *Industry* for the Kaunas Urban Planning Institute (1966), depicting the urban landscape through dozens of enthusiastically smoking chimneys. (Image 30) Although factories were supposedly at the heart of socialist visual culture, industrial sites rarely featured in Baltic murals. In 1965, ceramic artist Gražina Švažienė made a ceramic panel in café Vilnius depicting heartily the country's capital. As was typical for the time, it covered one of the end walls of the café in front of which stood a slightly heightened stage for the in-house band. In 1968, the same artist finished an abstract ceramic panel for the cinema Garso (Sound) in Panevėžys, which shows how in the late 1960s, the laconic 'less is more' style began to be replaced by a richer figurative language. (Image 31)

As for medium-specific experimentation, Lithuanian artists were the most eager to try new ways of using artistic glasswork in architectural design. In the 1950s, Kazimieras Morkūnas and Algimantas Stoškus broke with the centuries-old tradition of creating stained-glass windows merely of thin glass and lead frames. Instead, they used large blocks of glass interconnected with cement, which was not limited to filling window openings but could be hanged or placed freely in any environment or built into walls. Local authorities and architects quickly implemented their practices into the new architecture. By 1961, a successful exhibition of Lithuanian stained-glass experiments in Moscow helped to popularise the
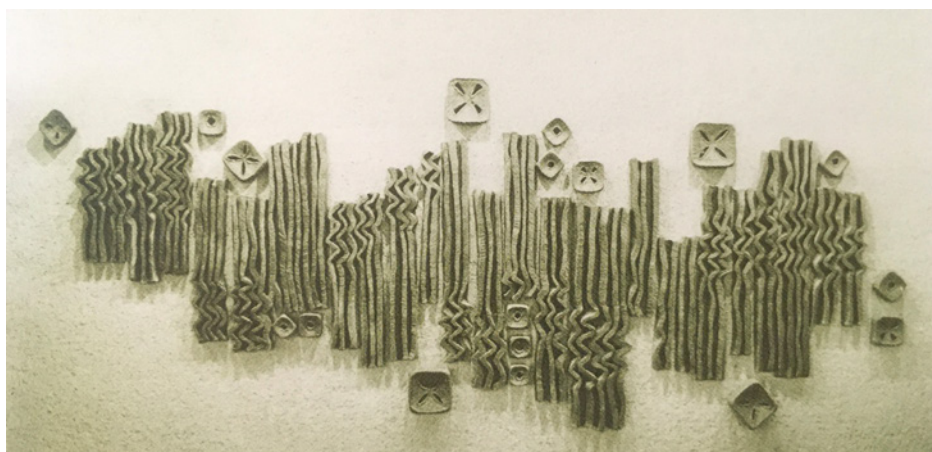
Image 31. **Gražina Švažienė, wall decoration, 1968. Ceramics. Cinema Garso (Sound) in Panevėžys. Destroyed. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

republic as a great 'stained-glass country.' In the mid-1960s, Lithuania experienced a boom in stained-glass production, with dozens of works commissioned for public buildings around the country and in other parts of the USSR. Glass artists also exhibited their installations in various exhibitions in and outside the Soviet Union. A catalogue of Lithuanian stained-glass published in 1968 featured reproductions of nearly 100 works produced during the 1960s.[163]

The work of Algimantas Stoškus was influenced by a research trip to Czechoslovakia in 1958 which he was awarded after participating successfully in the 1957 International Youth Festival in Moscow. Czechoslovakia was then establishing itself as a 'glass art Mecca' – the country had just received the Grand Prix of the 1958 Brussels World's Fair for its national pavilion, which featured an 'ultra-modernist' lumino-kinetic stained-glass installation *Laterna Magika*, considered to be the first post-war multimedia theatre. While in Prague, Stoškus established a life-long acquaintance with eminent glass artists Stanislav Libenský and Jaroslava Brychtová. From then on, Stoškus continually pushed the boundaries of his preferred material. He gave up painting on glass and, with the help of chemists and engineers, began to use glass lumps up to 25 centimetres thick, which he combined with cement and metal structures.

On the one hand, such a process was operationally similar to modern building practices, but on the other hand, it was a critique of standardised

163 Stasys Budrys, Lietuvos vitražas. [Lithuanian stained-glass.]

Image 32. **Algimantas Stoškus, *Fight for Life*, 1967–1968. Coloured cast slab glass, metal, 545 × 640 × 100. First exhibited at the USSR Pavilion at the Osaka EXPO, installed in the Builders' Palace in Vilnius in 1973. Destroyed. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

architecture. Although most of his 1960s works were initially executed as free-standing sculptural works for exhibitions, many were later installed for specific architectural settings. For example, the three-dimensional composition *Fight for Life* (1967–1968), first exhibited at the USSR Pavilion at the 1970 Osaka EXPO, was later installed in the Builders Palace in Vilnius. (Image 32) The panel *Motherland*, made together with Antanas Garbauskas for the EXPO'67 in Montreal, was subsequently installed in the Kaunas Artificial Fibre Plant Recreation Complex. By the late 1960s, his art and stained-glass oeuvre witnessed growing popularity and the number of commissions in Lithuania and the rest of the USSR began to grow. One of his most massive works from that period was a 28-metre-long decorative wall for the cinema Oktyabr in Moscow. (Image 33) The building was designed by one of the most prominent architects in Moscow, Mikhail Posokhin, who had built a good understanding with the artist and would later commission several works from Stoškus. In the 1970s, Stoškus liberated glass entirely from the wall's surface and created installations which integrated glass, movement, sound and even laser beams. Such artistic proficiency and technological investment – at the time, his studio consisted of half a dozen experts, including engineers and chemists – did not exist in the other Baltic states.[164]

164 Liudvika Ramanauskaitė, Algimantas Stoškus.

Image 33. **Algimantas Stoškus, stained-glass decoration, 1965–1968. Coloured cast and chipped slab glass, plastic, concrete, metal, 500 × 2800. Cinema Oktyabr (October) in Moscow. Destroyed. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**



Image 34. **Kazimieras Morkūnas,** *Village of Pirčiupis*, **1961. Coloured glass, cement, metal, 390 × 220. Ninth Fort Memorial complex. Kaunas,75 Žemaičių pl. Courtesy of Frans de Heer. Photo from 2019.**

Kazimieras Morkūnas was another driving force behind the formation of the Lithuanian glass art school by producing dozens of large-scale stained-glass windows. In 1961 he created a work for the Ninth Fort Memorial complex, commemorating the 1944 Pirčiupis massacre. (Image 34) Installed in a melancholy environment, the work made of large chunks of glass represented the horrors of the Holocaust through the mourning figures of women and a stubborn male character of a villager ready to fight back. Thus, stained-glass was considered appropriate for communicating hope and persistence. Konstantinas Šatūnas, who graduated in 1966, was the first to switch to an entirely abstract pictorial language. Over the years, he made more than 100 abstract architectural works.[165] As Lithuania's popularity as a monumental-decorative art hub grew, the Art Institute in Vilnius attracted students from other parts of the USSR. For example, Anatoli Stiško – an artist born in Kazakstan to parents of Ukrainian origin – moved to Lithuania in the early 1960s and started practising his trade after graduating in 1966. Inter-cultural communication worked both ways, as Lithuanian stained-glass artist Irena Lipienė moved to quake-ravaged Tashkent, where between 1966 and 1985, she took part in the reconstruction and artistic embellishment of the city.[166]

## 1.5      The café as the central locus for monumental-decorative art

Café culture was one of the markers of a distinctly Baltic urban atmosphere compared to the rest of the Soviet Union. Unlike in Soviet Russia, where cafés had already been closed during the 1920s and 1930s, many inter-war cafés in Baltic cities and towns survived the war and Stalinist repercussions. The spread of cafés and other catering establishments was also facilitated by economic reforms, which encouraged such activities from economically independent cooperatives. The 'European lifestyle' of the 'Pribaltika' was further stressed because people had considerable contact with relatives and friends who had settled in Western countries during the Second World War. Furthermore, tourism to Finland – a regular ferry connection between Tallinn and Helsinki was established in 1965, although travel itself remained an unfulfilled dream for most people – and access to ' television programmes from neighbouring countries additionally promoted local differences.[167]

165 Žydrūnas Mirinavičius, Vitražininkas K. Šatūnas: 'Stiklas užbūrė mane visam gyvenimui.' [Stained-glass artist K. Šatūnas: 'Glass enchanted me for life'.] – Bernardinai.lt 10 November 2018. https://www.bernardinai.lt/2018-10-11-vitrazininkas-k-satunas-stiklas-uzbure-mane-visam-gyvenimui/, accessed 18 June 2021.
166 Vladimir Belogolovsky, Re-examining Soviet Modernism, p. 88.
167 Ibid., 93.

As there was no or very little market competition in the Soviet Union, the furniture industry remained somewhat inert and uniform. However, cafés and other mass catering outlets often provided an exception to that rule, forming a sector for producing one-off furniture designs. Special orders for interiors were often given to the design section of the local art fund factory, where they were watchfully thought through and then manufactured following the original design concept. Such interiors habitually used rare materials and integrated original monumental-decorative artworks, which contributed to the notion of the 1960s being 'the golden age' of Soviet furniture design.[168]

The Soviet system differentiated between three main types of public eating establishments: canteens, cafés and restaurants. The authorities reduced the number of elite restaurants in favour of more straightforward and democratic venues. The most popular class of public eateries was the café – many of them played the role of canteens during the daytime and became more elite restaurants in the evening.[169] Dining at a restaurant in the evening included listening to live music and etiquette stipulated polite clothing.[170] The social role and societal position of the cafés were more diverse and many of them had a specific clientele in sight. For example, in larger cities, some cafés were specially designed for children. In Tallinn, Tartu, Rīga, Kaunas and Vilnius, there were cafés which brought together artists, intellectuals, bohemians and dissidents, places from which ordinary people would rather stay away.[171] Therefore, cafés were ideologically charged places. Although state enterprises ran them, they had their varying standards. Some represented the myth of non-commitment, liberty and rebellion against the organised society.[172] Stand-out cafés and restaurants with enigmatic interiors also shaped public taste. Writing at the turn of the decade, Latvian architect Oļģerts Ostenbergs argued that as cafés, cinemas, and theatres are the only spaces which have stepped up in terms of the quality of interior design, they have an educational aspect of teaching their users to "keep away from bad taste and provincialism."[173] Therefore, in his article Ostenbergs used cafés as a cover to indirectly criticise uniform housing and the minimal choice citizens had in furnishing their homes.

168 Kristina, Krasnyanskaya, Alexander Semenov, Soviet Design. From Constructivism to Modernism. 1920–1980. Moscow: Heritage Gallery and Zürich: Verlag Scheidegger & Spiess, 2020, p. 352.
169 Ilze Martinsone, Nākotnes ielā / On Future Street, p. 169.
170 See Adrianne Kathleen Jacobs, The Many Flavors of Socialism: Modernity and Tradition in Late Soviet Food Culture, 1965–1985. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2015.
171 Alexei Yurchak, Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More, pp. 141–146.
172 Piotr Piotrowski, Totalitarianism and Modernism: The 'Thaw' and Informel Painting in Central Europe, 1955–1965. Artium Quaestiones 2000, No. 10, p. 123.
173 Oļģerts Ostenbergs, Interjeri krustcelēs. [Interiors at crossroads.] – Māksla 1970, No. 2.

Image 35. **Unknown artist, mural paintings, around 1964. Restaurant Jūras Pērle (Sea Pearl) in Jūrmala. Destroyed. Courtesy of Literatūra un Māksla. Photo from 1962.**



Image 36. **Kurts Fridrihsons, wall decoration, 1967. Restaurant Sēnite (Mushroom). Vidzeme highway 37 km. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Museum of Architecture. Photo from 1967.**



Image 37. **Voldemārs Ķirkups,** *Saule*, **1965. Ceramics, metal, plastics, oil paint, approx. 300 × 500. Café Saule (Sun) in Rīga. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Museum of Architecture. Photo from the 1960s.**

In 1960s Latvia, the restaurant Jūras Pērle (Sea Perl) in the seaside town of Jūrmala (1964, architect Josifs Goldenbergs) became the symbol of the era due to its spectacular architectonic form.[174] The cantilevered restaurant hall overlooking the beach featured murals depicting fish and stylised waves reminiscent of op art (Image 35). Another landmark of the Thaw, the restaurant Sēnite (Mushroom) on the Vidzeme highway was one of the first concrete shell constructions in Latvia (1967, architect Linards Skuja, engineer Andris Bite). The spectacular form of the building, which was a

174 Juris Dambis, Modernism. – Uldis Lukševics, Linda Leitāne-Šmīdberga, Zigmārs Jauja, Ivars Veinbergs, Mārtiņš Rusiņš (eds.), Un-written: Exhibition of Latvia at the 14th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia: Catalogue. Rīga: NRJA, 2014, p. 271.

Image 38. **Unknown artist, decorative metalwork, around 1962. Café Luna in Rīga. Destroyed. Courtesy of National Library of Latvia. Photo from the 1960s.**
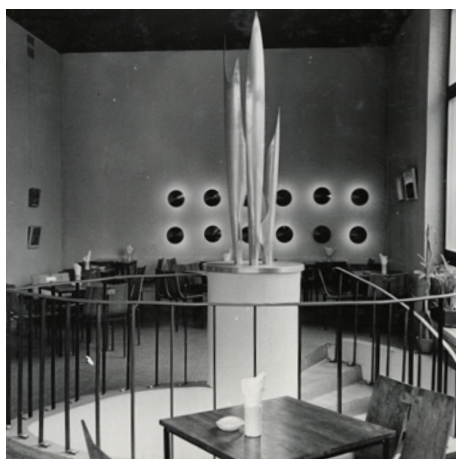


Image 39. **Edgar Viies, *Pegasus*, 1964. Aluminium, height 120. Café Pegasus. Tallinn, 1 Harju tn. Stored in the Art Museum of Estonia. Courtesy of Tallinn City Museum. Photo from 1964.**

sculpture in its own right, was complemented by the moulded shape of the outer wall of the terrace designed by artist Kurts Fridrihsons[175] (Image 36). In Rīga, the first post-war sgraffito panel was created in the first half of the 1960s by Semjons Šegelmans for the café Vecrīga (Old Rīga). His mural depicted the city's highly generalised architectural landmarks, rendering the mediaeval townscape as one of the modern districts. In 1965, lesser-known painter Voldemārs Ķirkups created a mosaic mural for the café Saule (Sun) in Rīga, which featured a particularly colourful – and lit – sun as the focal point of the room (Image 37). As much as the image of the sun was a socialist ideologeme, it also offered a glimpse of the hippie movement. Both Saule and café Luna in Rīga featured metal panels that functioned as partitions but were typical to the zeitgeist; their views remained transparent (Image 38).

The flagship interior design for a café in Tallinn in the early 1960s was Pegasus, located in the recently opened Writer's House in the middle of the Old Town. Although interior architects Väino Tamm, Leila Pärtelpoeg and Allan Murdmaa did not commission a mural for the space, purpose-made lights with round metal plates placed on the walls acted as abstract compositions. These were complemented by Edgar Viies' abstract sculpture Pegasus which has been hailed as a classic of Estonian modernist

175 Ilze Martinsone, Nākotnes ielā / On Future Street, p. 168.

Image 40. **Artist unknown, mural painting, 1966. Approx. 300 × 300. Café Szolnok. Tallinn, 101 Eduard Vilde tee. Destroyed. Courtesy of Tallinn City Museum. Photo from the late 1960s.**



Image 41. **Elmar Kits, Tarvas, 1965. Sgraffito, approx. 200 × 800. Restaurant Tarvas (Taurus). Tartu, 2 Riia mnt. The building was demolished, and the mural was removed in 2014. Currently stored in the Estonian National Museum. Courtesy of Estonian History Museum. Photo from the 1960s**

sculpture[176] (Image 39). The same group of interior architects were active in designing the interior of the nearbyby Gloria restaurant in which the original ceiling lights formed a geometric pattern. One of the walls featured a sgraffito mural which depicted three musicians in a graphically minimalist style. The interior also featured textiles designed for this very interior by Peeter Kuutma. Another well-ordered mural within a mid-1960s environment in Tallinn depicted a horse in café Szolnok (Image 40). The café in the middle of the newly built Mustamäe residential district referred to a Hungarian twin-town from a region known for its horse breeding traditions.[177] Naming eating facilities and shops after other socialist cities was a widespread tradition in the Eastern bloc. Café Moskva (Moscow) on the main square of Tallinn received an extensive metal panel depicting the architectural landscape of the capital of the USSR. The restaurant of the Palace Hotel, which had retained its pre-war bourgeois name, was adorned with a cheerful stained-glass window of dancing youth by Valli Lember-Bogatkina.

Elmar Kits executed one of the most original murals at the Tarvas (Taurus) restaurant in Tartu in 1965 (Image 41). The rhythm of the figures conformed to the columns that were the hall's dominant feature, and the work's monochrome surface interfaced aptly with the interior design. The jazz orchestra and carefree students depicted on the sgraffito went well with the youthful atmosphere of the university town. As a sign of quality, the work featured in the widely distributed All-Soviet catalogue of monumental art.[178] Another classic example of that time from Tartu was the ceramic mural in the restaurant Kaseke (Birch) which depicted the architectural landmarks of the city (Image 42).

Outside the bigger cities there are iconic examples of 1960s monumental-decorative art in cafés in Koeru, Kuressaare and Pühajärve. The Rävala Restaurant in Saku was decorated with wooden reliefs by sculptor Kalju Reitel, depicting mediaeval warriors (Image 43). The text on the wall exclaimed 'Anno Domini 1343', referring to an unsuccessful revolt by the Estonian peasants to rid themselves of Danish and German colonisers. In

176 Juta Kivimäe, Meie modernism: Eesti skulptuur 1960.–1970. aastatel. Näitus Kumu kunstimuuseumis 04.07.-23.11.2014. [Our Modernism: Estonian Sculpture 1960–1970. Exhibition at Kumu Art Museum.] Tallinn: Art Museum of Estonia, 2014, unpaginated.
177 As a sign of cultural exchange, a few years after the café's opening, the art almanack Kunst published an overview of the art and culture in the Szolnok region. See Gábor Rideg, Szolnoki kunst. [Art of Szolnok.] – Kunst 1974, No. 2, pp. 46–47.
178 Vladimir Tolstoy = Владимир Толстой, Монументальное искусство СССР. [Monumental Art of the USSR.], p. 271.

Image 42. **Unknown artist, ceramic mural, 1966. Ceramics, approx. 200 × 400. Restaurant Kaseke. Tartu, 19 Tähe tn. Destroyed. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from the 1960s.**



Image 43. **Kalju Reitel,** *1343,* **around 1966. Siberian pine, approx. 250 × 900. Rävala restaurant-shop in Saku. Removed and displayed in an office building in Tallinn. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from the 1960s.**

Image 44. **Aldona Visockienė and Antanas Visockis, *Battle of Saule*, 1969. Ceramics, approx. 250 × 700. Café Žemaitija (Samogitia) in Šiauliai. Destroyed. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

this way, the institution romanticised and valued the city's historical past by marking it with an anti-imperial and nationally influential reference. The depiction of 13th and 14th-century battles against Western crusaders was prevalent in Lithuania, where the tradition of statehood was longer, and the portrayal of military might took on more monumental dimensions (Image 44).

In Lithuania, Laimutis Ločeris' sgraffito panel *Hunting* in the Taurus café (1961) in Vilnius combined wood, natural stone, plaster and sgraffito (Image 9). The work was reminiscent of ancient cave paintings. It was stylistically inspired by the graphics of Pablo Picasso, whose 1956 and 1965 exhibitions in Moscow resulted in a sort of Picasso-mania and left a strong mark on the memories of Soviet intelligentsia in the Thaw.[179] Some of the highlights of the decade's synthesis in Vilnius were made by the multi-talented moderniser Teodoras Kazimieras Valaitis. With his 1965 decorative partition at Gintaras (Amber) restaurant in Vilnius, he aimed to achieve the same goal that Stoškus had presented with stained glass; that is, to implement the industrial production principles of architecture for monumental-decorative art (Image 45). Consequently, almost a hundred factory-made bronze elements were arranged in a precise rhythm to contribute to a playful composition. The same work was later remodelled and exhibited in the Lithuanian section at the Leipzig Spring Fair, which,

179 See Eleonory Gilburd, Picasso in thaw culture. – Cahiers du monde russe 2006, Vol. 47, No. 1/2, pp. 65–108.
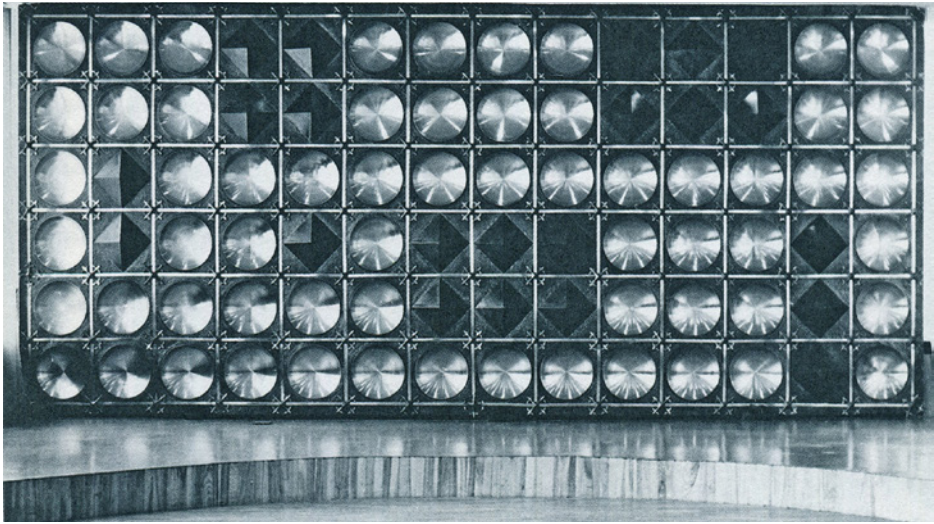
Image 45. **Teodoras Valaitis, decorative wall, 1965. Aluminium, approx. 250 × 500. Restaurant Gintaras (Amber) in Vilnius. Destroyed. Courtesy of 15min.lt. Undated photo.**



Image 46. **Teodoras Valaitis, *Sun*, 1963. Metal, approx. 100 × 100. Café Dainava (Singing) in Vilnius. Preserved in the Lithuanian National Museum of Art. Courtesy of Art Lithuania.**



Image 47. **Anortė Mackelaitė, stained-glass wall decoration, 1964. Cemented lumps of coloured class, 270 × 1000. Restaurant Vasara (Summer) in Palanga. Destroyed. Courtesy of Stasys Budrys. Photo from the 1960s.**

apart from a visit to Poland, was the only trip outside of the USSR for the talented artist who died when he was only 40 years old.[180]

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180 See Kęstutis Šapok, Prieštaravimo dvasia ir šventė už tvoros. Apie Kazimiero Teodoro Valaičio retrospektyvą su jos kuratore kalbasi. [The spirit of opposition and a celebration behind the wall. Kęstutis Šapok talks about the retrospective of Kazimieras Teodoras Valaitis with the curator Giedre Jankevičiūtė.] – Kultūros barai 2014, No. 11, pp. 31–36.

Image 48. **Anortė Mackelaitė, stained-glass windows, 1964. Coloured glass, lead, 240 × 690. Café Dainava (Singing) in Druskininkai. Destroyed. Courtesy of Stasys Budrys. Photo from the 1960s.**

During the 1960s Valaitis also made spatial compositions in Vilnius for the Palanga Restaurant (1965), the Builder's Palace café (1965), the Žirmūnai Restaurant (1969), and outside of Vilnius, a metal composition for the restaurant Nemunas in Alytus (1964) and interior decorations for the restaurant Vasara (Summer) in Palanga (1965). These works present Valaitis as a precursor in creating public decorations using abstract symbolism, which combined a slightly naive stylisation of folk art with a solid modernist touch lent from the vocabulary of cubism and Art Deco. His metal panel *Sun* at the Dainava (Singing) Restaurant is an iconic example of the preference of Lithuanian and Latvian artists for depicting the sun or Saulė, an important deity in Baltic mythology (Image 46). As such, the Baltic sun matched communist and folkloric traditions, although the latter was well integrated into the Soviet discourse on nationalism.

Another recurring subject matter used in cafés was the image of the city, with the view of Vilnius, for example, depicted in Valdas Gurskis' mural in the Vilnius Railway Station Restaurant. Such paintings were characterised by juxtaposing old and new buildings, with the latest constructions usually dominating. In Kaunas, the café Tartu was decorated so that the materials used in the interior – namely dolomite chippings from Saaremaa used in the ceramic mosaics by Vladas Jankauskas – referred to Estonia. Although the twin city's counterpart – café Kaunas in Tartu – did not feature any notable monumental-decorative art, it had the finest location in the town, and with its mischievous placing of windows, it was a prime example of Thaw architecture (architect Voldemar Herkel, 1960–1963). In 1964,

Anortė Mackelaitė created a stained-glass wall depicting aquatic life for the Palanga restaurant Vasara (Summer), which was a landmark building of 1960s leisure architecture in Lithuania[181] (Image 47). In the same year, Mackelaitė produced stained-glass panels for the Dainava café in another resort town, Druskininkai (Image 48). This work depicts monumental figures of men and women, and the graphic language seems ten years older – as if it originated from the immediate post-Stalinist years. Such a difference in one artist's style reflects how the client's taste affected the production of public art.

## 1.6          Picturing socialism for youth

The development of monumental-decorative art in the 1960s reflected the general global transformations in technology, culture and lifestyle. One such global shift was the emergence of youth culture with the coming of age of the first post-war generation. On the one hand, the growth of youth culture resulted from the Soviet Union's developmental logic. On the other hand, it reflected the ideological struggle between the West and the East. The Soviet Union was aware that Western intelligence agencies targeted Soviet youth in particular, and therefore made efforts to advance its socialist youth culture.[182] At the dawn of the 1960s, youth culture in the Soviet Union was still associated with sports and wellbeing. As the decade progressed, authorities had to make certain amendments. Pop culture and rock music became the binding forces, much as it was in the West. Popular products and institutions of the time referred to youth; for example, there was a lemonade called Noorus (Youth) and a newspaper *Noorte Hääl* (Voice of the Youth) appearing in Estonia and both Tallinn and Vilnius featured a Youth Theatre, both of which initiated radical changes in the performing arts. [183] Youth was also one common theme in monumental-decorative art.

In 1969, Enn Põldroos executed a ceramic mosaic called *Youth* for the Tallinn Polytechnic Institute, depicting students in a celebratory mood in between fashionable TV sets, bubbly geometric forms reminiscent of radio waves and a cello as a quintessential reference to café culture and free time (Image 49). As a credibility statement from Moscow, the work appeared in

181 Kastytis Rudokas, 'Vasaros' restorano rekonstrukcija ir plėtra (Išlikęs). [Reconstruction and development of Vasaras restaurant. (Extant).] – Architecture and Urbanism Research Center AUTC. https://autc.lt/architekturos-objektas/?id=1615, accessed 7 August 2023.
182 Moshe Lewin, The Soviet Century, 258.
183 Liisa, Kaljula. Karm stiil Tallinnas. Kaasaegsuse ideoloogia hajumine sulaajastu eesti kunstis. [Severe Style in Tallinn. Divergence of the Ideology of Contemporaneity in Estonian Art During the Thaw Era.] Master's thesis, Tallinn University, Estonian Humanitarian Institute, 2012, p. 71.

Image 49. **Enn Põldroos, *Youth*, 1969. Ceramics, approx. 250 × 750. Tallinn Polytechnic Institute (now Tallinn University of Technology). Tallinn, 5 Ehitajate tee. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2012**



Image 50. **Elmar Kits, mural painting, 1969. Sgraffito, approx. 125 × 400. Keava Breeding Centre of Kehtna Kolkhoz (now the Animal Breeders' Association of Estonia). Kehtna Municipality, Keava Village. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2012.**

the All-Soviet Catalogue of monumental art.[184] A year earlier, metal artist and designer Erik-Arne Uustalu generalised the era's spirit in his aluminium panel *Youth* at the Tallinn Broadcasting House. Also, Elmar Kits' bold semi-abstract murals in small settlements such as Keava (Image 50) and Vana-Võidu idealise youth, depicting vivacious gentlemen and ladies in

184 Vladimir Tolstoy = Владимир Толстой, Монументальное искусство СССР. [Monumental Art of the USSR.], p. 270.

Image 51. **Vitolis Trušys,** *Dance,* **1969. Fresco, 380 × 660. Café Milda in Šiauliai.**
**Destroyed. Courtesy of Boleslovas Klova. Photo from 1969.**



Image 52. **Dagmāra Staprēna and Jānis Svenčs, mural painting, early 1970s. Tempera.**
**Daugavpils Pioneer's House. Courtesy of Jaunā Gaita. Undated photo.**

Image 53. **Elvyra Petraitienė, mosaic, 1977. Coloured glaze, approx. 300 ×1400. Kindergarten in Glaznov, Udmurt Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

fictional landscapes that are difficult to reconcile with socialist Estonia. In Lithuania, Vitolis Trušys created several frescoes in cafés (Image 51) and cultural houses. The image of youth was bound to the myth of Soviet happiness, articulated in the perpetuation of festive feelings. Therefore, young people dressed in national costumes, exuding a general joy, are one of the most recurring images of the 1960s and 1970s monumental-decorative art.

In addition to students and young adults, the authorities paid considerable attention to children, who were cared for by specially decorated kindergartens and schools, uniquely designed Pioneer's Palaces and institutions popularising science and children's cafes. Balina and Dobrenko assert that, in a way, childhood was the prototype of the Soviet utopia, projected onto the private sphere and the realm of national history.[185] In kindergartens, a certain kind of typology of illustrations emerged depicting happy grownups and children in stylised national costumes, humanised animals, personified suns and stars, and due to this in many cases fine artists made very similar works (Images 52 and 53). Schools were more demanding clients, but like kindergartens, they have proved to be unsafe places for murals due to their active use. Therefore, few of them have survived. From an artistic and cultural point of view, the most stimulating are the public artworks related to institutions and building typologies inherent to the socialist system.

185 Marina Balina, Evgeny Dobrenko, Introduction, p. xviii.
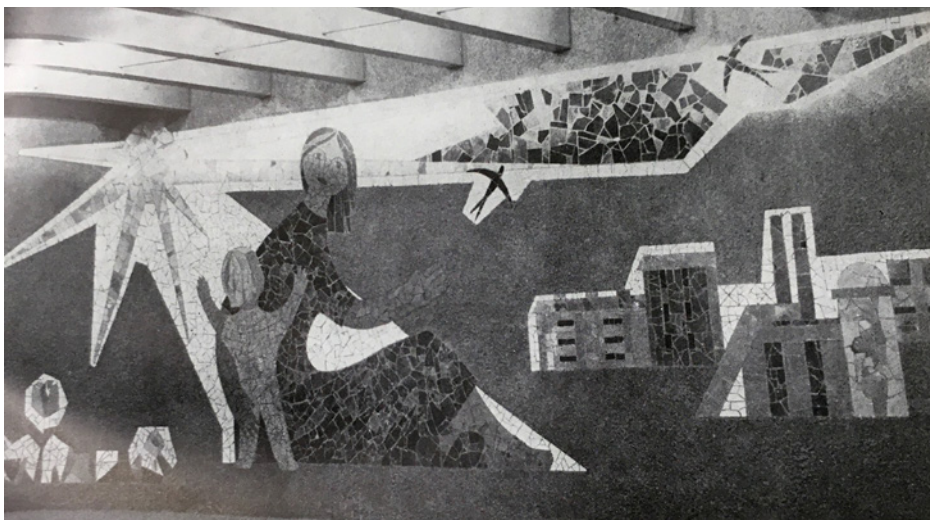
Image 54. **Latvīte Medniece, decorative mural, 1966. Ceramics, plaster, oil paint, approx. 300 × 700. Latvian SSR House of Knowledge (now The Nativity of Christ Cathedral). Rīga, 23 Ļeņina iela (now Brīvības bulvāris). Destroyed. Courtesy of A4D.lv. Undated photo.**

For example, in Rīga in 1964, a former Orthodox Cathedral was transformed into the Latvian SSR House of Knowledge – commonly known as the Planetarium – in which architect Juris Skalbergs and engineer Andris Bite made use of innovative and decorative engineering, such as transparent stairs attached to the wall at one end only. Engineer Aleksandrs Putāns created similar stairway structures for the Pioneris cinema in Rīga. Therefore, instead of illustrative murals, it was often the innovative accomplishment of engineers that allowed architects to endorse the ideas advocated by the new era. In this way, free-standing and suspended stairways, which allowed light to shine through, often became the defining elements of the space.[186]

In the entrance hall to the Planetarium's cinema, ceramic artist Latvīte Medniece created a mural featuring the ubiquitous trinity of the 60s – a mother with a child under the sun (Image 54). Nearby, a more solemn metal panel depicted serious-looking cosmonauts, war heroes and scientists surrounding a curious little girl. Latvīte Medniece's more neutral mural was complemented by the obligatory depiction of factories only after the authorities had deemed the original picture of a mother with a child and the sun too mild.[187] Besides being attended by about half a million people

186 Ilze Martinsone, Nākotnes ielā / On Future Street, p. 168.
187 Artis Zvirgzdiņš, Kristus piedzimšanas Zinību nams. [House of Knowledge of the Nativity.] – A4d.lv. https://a4d.lv/raksti/kristuspiedzimsanas-zinibu-nams/, accessed 13 June 2020.
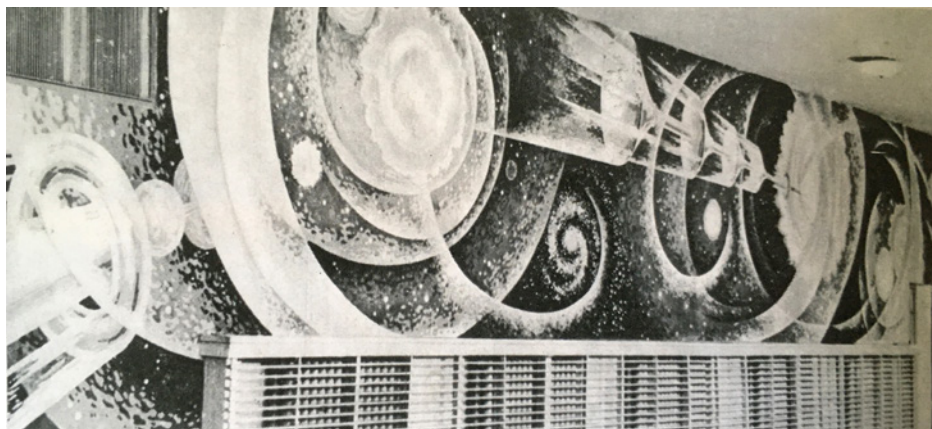
Image 55. **Laimutis Ločeris, *Cosmos,* 1962. Fresco, 350 × 1750. Vilnius Planetarium. Vilnius, 12A Konstitucijos pr. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Boleslovas Klova. Photo from the 1960s.**

each year, the institution ran a café popularly called God's Ear, which was a legendary meeting place for bohemians and intellectuals.[188]

As for the artistic exploration of the technological and social transformations of the 1960s in Lithuania, Laimutis Ločeris' 1962 mural *Cosmos* in the Vilnius Planetarium depicted space travel as a central propaganda theme (Image 55). The sincere exploration of space themes and utopian urban landscapes continued into the 1970s, with schools especially decorated with fantastic cosmic landscapes (Images 56 and 57). Therefore, the belligerent scientific and military undertakings of the space and arms race were habitually disguised 'behind a mask of infantilism and peacefulness', which featured delighted children playing in little space rockets framed by satellites and stars.[189]

.Another unique typology was the children's shop which customers were allegedly only allowed to enter with children. The Bērnu pasaule (Children's World), designed by architects Josifs Goldenbergs and Leons Vaičulaitis, which opened its doors in central Rīga in 1964, was not only popular among locals but was one of the most visited sites by Soviet tourists seeking exclusive products.[190] The mall featured a children's café Mārīte (Ladybug) with a striking interior furnished with steel framed seats and tables, ceiling plates made from aluminium, floor-to-ceiling windows and a mural by Uldis Zemzaris in the naïve art style featuring

188 Ibid.
189 Jānis Borgs, Lūzuma anatomija / The anatomy of a break, p. 36.
190 Ibid., p. 69.
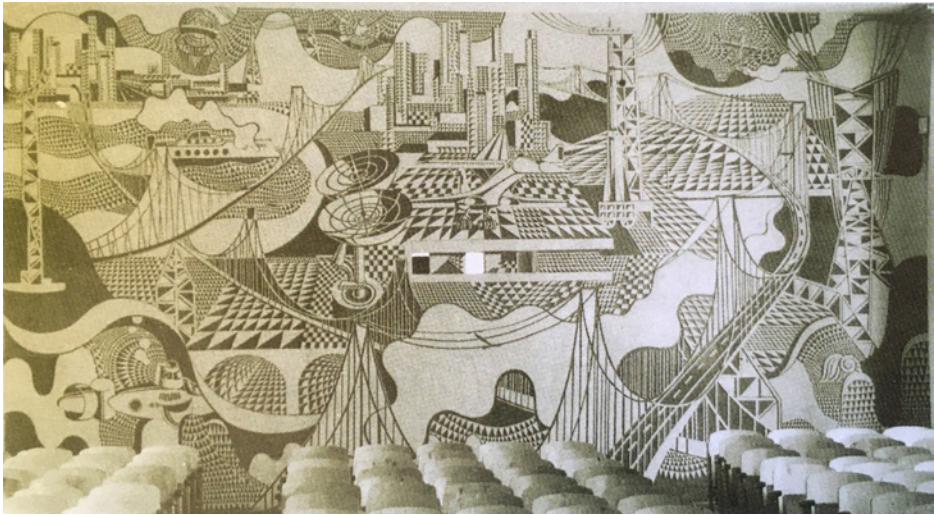
Image 56. **Juozas Vosylius,** *Progress,* **1973. Sgraffito, approx. 350 × 700. Vilnius Secondary School No. 3 (now Vilnius Vytė Nemunėlis Primary School). Vilnius, 13A Vokiečių g. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo**



Image 57. **Arvydas Každailis,** *Flight*, **1974. Oil on cardboard, approx. 200 × 400. Vilnius Žirmūnai children's library. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

Image 58. **Uldis Zemzaris, mural painting, 1963. Sgraffito, approx. 300 × 800. Children's cafe Mārīte (Ladybug) at the department store Bērnu pasaule (Children's World) in Rīga. Destroyed. Courtesy of Laikmeta Zimes. Photo from the 1960s.**



Image 59. **Marija Ladigaite-Vildžiuniene, mural painting, 1966. Children's café Sigutė in Šiauliai. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Boleslovas Klova.**

children playing with cats and dogs (Image 58). Another Rīga institution for children was the Pioneris (Pioneer) cinema, opened in 1962, which featured metal figures of children designed by graphic artist Aleksandrs Stankēvičs.

In 1960s Lithuania, there were children's cafés with noteworthy examples of monumental-decorative art in Šiauliai, Kaunas and Vilnius. A tempera mural by Marija Ladigaitė-Vilžiūnienė in Šiauliai's children's café Sigutė (protagonist of a Lithuanian folktale) mixed stylised naivete with decorative abstractionism and depicted children among animals (Image 59). Filomena Ušinskaitė's murals and stained-glass windows in the Kaunas children's café Pasaka (Fairy tale) (1970–1971) covered the entire space and depicted Lithuanian fairy tales. The stained-glass windows were placed inside small triangular-shaped 'caves', creating the effect of being inside a tent. Birute Žilytė, Algirdas Steponavičius and Laimutis Ločeris left a strong impression on Lithuanian visual culture by creating the mural paintings in the children's café Nykštukas (Dwarf) in Vilnius in 1964 (Image 60). As the artists' style was already known to the public through illustrated children's books, the young inhabitants of the city immediately started to love the joyful murals . The café, featuring live squirrels, became a well-known tourist destination. The painting was a preparation for Birute Žilytė's and Algirdas Steponavičius's tempera mural painting in the Valkininkai children's tuberculosis sanatorium, finished in 1970, which many consider to be the most unique mural of the period (Image 61). The massive composition occupies the entire wall of a thirty-metre-long gallery connecting two buildings, creating a delightful fantasy world for the young

Image 60. **Birutė Žilytė, Algirdas Steponavičius and Laimutis Ločeris, mural painting, 1964. Tempera, plaster, wax, approx. 230 × 1500. Children's café Nykštukas (Dwarf) in Vilnius. Vilnius, 22 P. Cvirkos a. (now Pamėnkalnio gatve). Destroyed in 1998. Courtesy of Nykštukas. Undated photo.**

viewers seeking recovery within a forest environment. The work consists of twelve different scenes in which elements of folklore intertwine with images from local and international fairy tales. Despite the slender space and minimal viewing distance, the artists formed an illusion of an infinite space filled with bright colours and gothic-looking figures.

## 1.7          Avant-garde monumental

The political and intellectual atmosphere of the 1960s changed several times very quickly from one end to the other.[191] The year 1962 was one such formative milestone in the Soviet cultural sphere, made famous by the Moscow Union of Artists' 30th-anniversary exhibition at the Manezh exhibition space. At the height of the Thaw, Soviet leader Nikita

191 Valda Knāviņa, Skarbais stils / The Severe Style, p. 89.

Image 61. **Birutė Žilytė and Algirdas Steponavičius, mural painting, 1970. Fresco, approx 300 × 3200. Valkininkai Children's Sanatorium (now disused). Naujieji Valkininkai. Photo: Pamirsta.lt. Photo from the 2010s.**

Khrushchev visited the show but was infuriated by the unconventional art exhibited by the avant-garde New Reality group. Despite general democratisation, cultural policies were shifting, and a 'hunt' for formalism took hold. In larger Russian cities like Moscow and Leningrad, this resulted in the formation of underground art scenes. Due to this, 1962 has sometimes been titled the end of the Thaw.[192]

In the Baltic States, the authorities attempted to integrate the formalists into the official structures for peace, but perhaps also in the hope of not irritating the decision-makers in Moscow and saving their necks. Artists quickly started working in the modernist idiom as the 'genie had already got out of the bottle'. By the mid-1960s, formalist imagery was not even noticed in the public sphere.[193] In Estonia, such tendencies reached their peak in 1966 with several official exhibitions in Tallinn and Tartu exhibiting works in the visual language of abstract art, pop, surrealism and op art.[194] Inevitably, these trends found their way into monumental-decorative art painting. As the authorities in Moscow increasingly considered

192  Liisa Kaljula, Karm stiil Tallinnas, p. 37.
193 Jānis Borgs, Lūzuma anatomija / The anatomy of a break, p. 37.
194 See Anu Allas (ed.), Kunstirevolutsioon 1966 / Art Revolution 1966. Tallinn: Art Museum of Estonia, 2015.

Image 62. **Konstantinas Šatūnas, stained-glass windows, 1972. Stained glass, metal, approx. 300 × 500. Vilnius Civil Engineering Institute (now Gediminas Technical University). Vilnius, 11 Saulėtekio al. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**
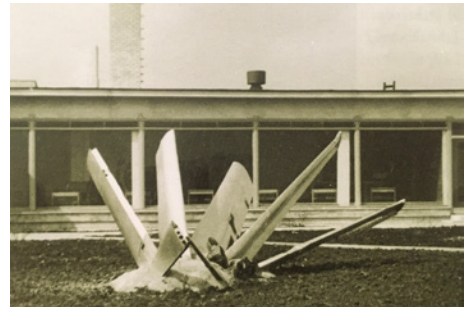


Image 63. **Algimantas Patalauskas, decorative sculpture, 1969. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

'grand' genres, such as painting, sculpture and graphic art, to be inherently ideological, they subjected them to stricter control, and industrial, decorative and applied art were less confined to ideological constraints and, as such, offered a platform for artistic innovation to carry out abstract, pop or conceptual solutions.[195] Nevertheless, all these hybrid phenomena served the ideological needs of the socialist state, and thus it would be problematic to praise abstract, conceptual and other neo-avant-garde tendencies as 'subversive practices.'[196]

In the mid-1960s, the first abstract pieces of monumental-decorative art appeared in Lithuania. Konstantinas Šatūnas preferred ideational pictorial language throughout his career and created several such works in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Image 62). Architect-sculptor Algimantas Patalauskas was a pioneer in terms of introducing abstract metal sculpture into the public space (Image 63). Metal artists Kazimieras Simanonis (Image 64) and Teodoras Valaitis experimented with abstract metal forms in interior spaces. By the mid-1970s, abstract tapestries, ceramic panels and wooden reliefs had become commonplace. Many of these works of optical abstraction and decorative illusion aspired to active user participation in the creation of a socialist 'iconosphere.'[197] The participation consisted in activating the urban space, making it meaningful and providing the

195 See Vents Vīnbergs, When Avant-garde Art Became Design. Interview with Jānis Borgs. Kristīne Budže, Inese Baranovska (eds.), Tieši laikā. Dizaina stāsti par Latviju – Just on Time. Design Stories about Latvia. Rīga: Latvian National Museum of Art, 2018, pp. 172–180.
196 Reuben Fowkes, Visualizing the Socialist Public Sphere, p. 335.
197 Andrzej Turowski, The Art of Light and Movement, or L&M. – Marta Dziewańska, Dieter Roelstraete, Abigail Winograd (eds.), The Other Trans-Atlantic. Kinetic and Op Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1950s–1970s. Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2017, p. 94.
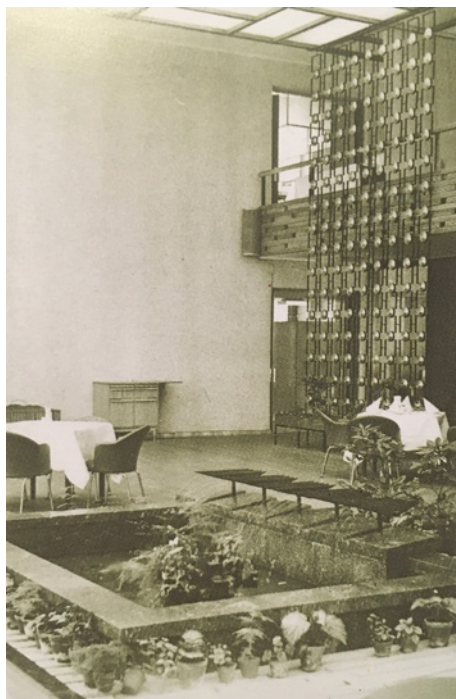
Image 64. **Kazimieras Simanonis, decorative partition, 1967. Metal, approx. 250 × 700. Restaurant of Hotel Sputnik in Moscow. Destroyed. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

viewer with a chance to communicate with the works. Czech art historian Tomáš Pospiszyl, while comparing East European and American abstract tendencies, argues that in the socialist sphere, non-figurative art was rarely or never perceived as pure form. Independent culture in Eastern Europe insisted on a political subtext, even if that undertone was merely opposition to the official art. Therefore, in Pospiszyl's words, art without content or message was almost unimaginable in the East. Therefore, even when Baltic monumental artists sought formal perfection in their abstract expression, there is a good chance they loaded their works with meaningful content.

There were few entirely abstract murals in Estonia in the 1960s, but Elmar Kits' affluent cubist and semi-abstract murals paved the way for further developments (Image 41). Right after the turn of the decade, Enn Põldroos designed an abstract mosaic for the International Style-inspired Radio House in central Tallinn (Image 65). The work formed an integral part of the interior design, accentuating it with colourful and smooth forms associated with spreading radio waves. As for introducing abstract sculpture into the public space, Henriete Nuusberg-Tugi's modest decorative sculpture called *Nucleus* (1967) was one of Tallinn's first

Image 65. **Design by Enn Põldroos; executed by Enn Põldroos, Lembit Sarapuu, Rein Siim, Olev Subbi and Andres Tolts,** *Radio Flower*, **1973. Ceramics, 375 × 1175. New Radio Building (now the Estonian Public Broadcasting). Tallinn, 21 Lomonossovi (now Gonsiori tn). Courtesy of Estonian National Museum. Photo from 1973.**

abstract outdoor sculptures. Jaak Soans' geometric statue in front of the Linda collective farm centre in Kobela from 1969 also signalled a new perspective (Image 66).

Abstraction found a way back to Latvian art through the paintings of Ojārs Ābols. As a devoutly leftist artist and a high-ranking art official – he served as the Head of the Painters' Section of the Latvian Artists' Union from 1973 to 1981 – he was respected by the authorities, could travel relatively freely and was captivated by analysing Western art tendencies from a socialist perspective.[198] Even though he was loyal to the party line and followed socialist realism until the late 1950s and early 1960s, his career was ambiguous, as at the same time some of his works were removed from exhibitions for being too formalist.[199] In a few instances the Painters Section would hold informal exhibitions of 'problem works' which the Artists' Union did not sanction for show in public. In 1968, one such show featured non-representational pieces by Ābols, Uldis Zemzaris, Oļģerts Jaunarājs and Nikolajs Karagodins. Bunkše regards it as the first exhibition of abstract

198 Elita Ansone, Figuratīvais ekspresionisms... / Figurative Expressionism..., p. 163.
199 Conversation with Ieva Astahovska, 21 January 2024.

Image 66. **Jaak Soans, *Rooster*, 1969. Aluminium, height approx. 170. Linda collective farm centre (now Linda Library). Võru county, Kobela village. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2021.**

art in Latvia.[200] Artists' Union functionaries and party hardliners did not perceive abstract artworks as autonomous objects with artistic messages but as purveyors of political information hostile to the Soviet discourse. Hence, the regime regarded any artist whose exhibition works revealed formalist explorations as an apologist for bourgeois ideology.[201] With this in mind, Bunkše calls for the admiration of the courage of the artists who were determined to defend their creative freedom.[202] The situation with abstraction was indeed harsh in the galleries, but due to inconsistent policies, the consequences for using abstract expression differed significantly according to the context – from severe ideological pressure and fearsome interrogations[203] to public appraisal and large-scale commissions.

Consequently, at the same as the authorities harassed abstract easel art, Latvian proponents of op art aesthetics like designers Laimonis Šēnbergs,

200 Inga Bunkše, Abstraktās mākslas meklējumos / Explorations in abstract art. – Elita Ansone, Arta Vārpa (eds.), Desmit epizodes 20. gadsimta otrās puss mākslā Latvijā / Ten Episodes in Art of the Second Half of the 20th Century in Latvia. Rīga: Latvian National Museum of Art, 2019, p. 105.
201 Ibid., 95.
202 Ibid., 127.
203 For example, the modernist artist Jüri Arrak felt so paranoid about the constant subpoenas of the KGB that he decided to destroy all his diaries in the late 1960s. Conversation with Jüri Arrak, 17 May 2014.
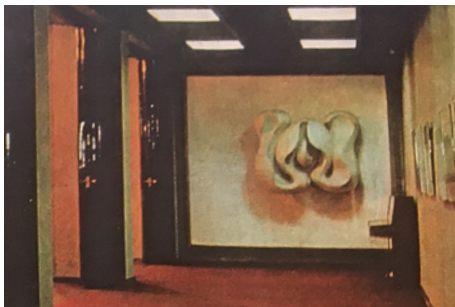
Image 67. **Andrejs Ķiģelis, decorative sculpture, late 1960s–early 1970s.** Chamotte, approx. 100 × 150. Rīga Cinema Amateurs' Club. Destroyed. Courtesy of Māksla. Photo from 1973.



Image 68. **Andrejs Ķiģelis, Māris Ozoliņš and Ināra Gulbe, decorative wall, 1970.** Chamotte, approx. 300 × 600. Pharmacy Mēness (Moon). Rīga, 20 Audeju iela. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.

Ilmārs Blumbergs, and Jānis Borgs were able to distribute non-figurative designs through posters, advertisements and other aspects of applied art.[204] Non-representational ceramic pieces appeared both in and outdoors (Images 67 and 68). A full-blown abstract supergraphics work by arch-modernists Jānis Krievs and Jānis Borgs appeared in the interior of the Sauleskalns Tourist Information Centre with walls, pillars and ceilings covered in geometrical shapes in light colours forming an immersive environment (Image 69). At the same time, Borgs also made a 30-metre-long mural for the sports complex in the Mežaparks sporting facility in Rīga, using bright colours to emphasise movement.[205] In 1971, painter and designer Jānis Osis, together with Borgs, created another op-inspired large-scale supergraphics work for the Rīga 39th Secondary School (Image 70).

These murals also borrowed visuals from the vocabulary of pop art, as the global phenomenon offered a means to establish a direct connection with images from everyday life.[206] Baltic artists who kept themselves busy with the latest developments of art in the rest of the world noted the formal similarities between Western and Eastern 'consumerism.' Whereas Western pop was characterised by its apolitical fascination "with the surface banality of popular culture," artists in the socialist sphere turned "their observations into a sharp political critique of either the contradictions

204 Ramona Umblija, Zīme pret zupu / Sign versus Soup. – Sandra Krastiņa, Māra Ņikitina (eds.), Uz lielās dzīves trases: 20. gadsimta 60. gadu grafiskā valoda latvijā / On the Track of Great Life: Graphic Language of the 1960s in Latvia. Rīga: Raktuve, 2016, p. 106.
205 Conversation with Jānis Borgs, 4 June 2020. No photographs of the destroyed works have survived.
206 Maja Fowkes, Reuben Fowkes, Central and Eastern European Art Since 1950, p. 49.

Image 69. **Jānis Krievs and Jānis Borgs, interior decoration, 1973–1974. Sauleskalns Tourist Information Centre. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art. Undated photo.**
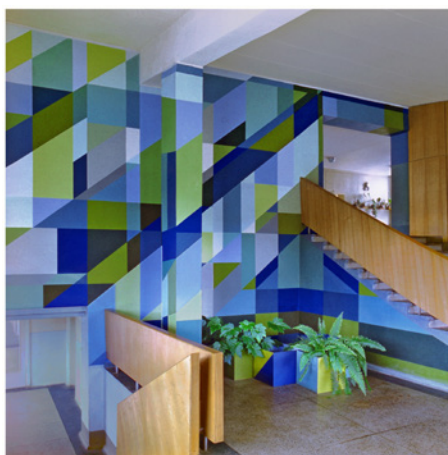


Image 70. **Jānis Osis and Jānis Borgs, wall decoration, 1971. Approx. 600 × 1000. Rīga 39th Secondary School (now Jugla Secondary School). Courtesy of Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art. Undated photo.**

of the socialist system or of its apparent sell-out to capitalist values."[207] Therefore, Baltic pop artists, often working in the sphere of graphic design and applied art, used Western pop with its easily understood, dazzling, Beatles-inspired and even psychedelic visuals to ironically accomplish the Leninist ideal, which had never really been fulfilled: art belongs to the masses.[208] This often meant the serial display of discarded socialist symbols or well-known consumer goods on posters, labels and other objects of applied graphics. At the same time, the use of the motifs borrowed from the hippie movement and especially the 1968 film *Yellow Submarine* – rainbows, sausage-like letters, comic patterns, spectral combinations of luminous colours, flared trousers – embodied international solidarity.[209]

In terms of the visibility of 'flower power' in the monumental-decorative art of the 1960s and early 1970s, Estonian textile artist Peeter Kuutma, who had graduated in 1966, was inspired by the pop designs of the Finnish brand Marimekko and brought similar enlarged floral motifs into his curtains and printed fabrics, which were installed in prominent cafés and restaurants like Rae and Gloria (Image 71) in Tallinn.[210] Eva Jänes' fresco

207 Ibid., p. 349.
208 Jānis Borgs, Lūzuma anatomija / The anatomy of a break, p. 44.
209 Ibid.
210 Helen Adamson, Intervjuu / Interview. – Helen Adamson (ed.), Peeter Kuutma. Tallinn: Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design, 2014, p. 38.

Image 71. **Peeter Kuutma, decorative textiles, mid-1960s. Restaurant Gloria. Tallinn, 2 Müürivahe tn. Destroyed. Courtesy of Estonian History Museum. Photo from the 1960s.**



Image 72. **Eva Jänes, wall decoration, 1976. Fresco, approx. 300 × 1200 on each of the opposing walls. Rakvere Rayon Station for Veterinary Disease Control (now Rakvere Veterinary Centre). Piira Village, 2 Neffi. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from 1977.**

in a rural administrative building depicted similarly magnified plants framed within optical crisscrosses (Image 72). The visual language of pop captivated artists until the end of the Soviet period. For example, in the mid-1980s, Mai Järmut created a somewhat textbook example pop art ceramic panel for the Saue High School (Image 73). In the early 1980s, two murals, *Bread and Milk*, consisting of more miniature panel paintings in a school in the small borough of Kadrina, attentively followed the seriality principle with the result being very close to the absurd and even psychedelic animation films of the 1970s[211] (Image 74).

Although in more moderate doses, a deliberately visual hedonistic youth culture of rock music, psychedelic experiences and sexual liberation that characterised the global sixties also resonated across Eastern Europe.[212] In Latvia, an apt example of such an atmosphere was the mural by Leonids Mauriņš in the café Allegro by the local Komsomol hub in Rīga (Image 75). Characteristic of the period, despite the café and the adjacent cinema being run by the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League and the artwork being created by a 'Komsomol activist', it was visibly influenced by psychedelia and hippie art.[213] Mauriņš, son of painter Lidija Auza, also made another mixed-media mural for the same institution,

211  See Andreas Trossek, Eesti popanimatsioon 1973–1979: joonisfilmist lähikunstiajaloo kontekstis. [Estonian Pop Animation 1973–1979: Cartoons in the Context of Recent Art History.] – Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi / Studies on Art and Culture 2009, No. 1–2, pp. 69–107.
212 Maja, Fowkes, Reuben Fowkes, Central and Eastern European Art Since 1950, p. 64.
213 Conversation with Jānis Borgs, 4 June 2020.

Image 73. **Mai Järmut, ceramic panel, 1985. Ceramics, 96 × 576. Saue High School. Courtesy of Martin Siplane. Photo from 2021.**



Image 74. **Juta Ruut and Ell Melioranski, *Leib* (Bread), early 1980s. Oil on cardboard, approx. 200 × 600. Kadrina High School. Kadrina, 4 Rakvere tee. Removed, new location unknown. Courtesy of Kadri Klementi. Photo from 2013.**

which featured a bright townscape of red gable roofs under a vivid rainbow. Mauriņš used his tidy colour scheme and minimalist design also for the ceiling painting of the Vilgāle village council building, as well as in the mural for the Vecmīlgrāvis trawler fleet base in Rīga and other facilities.[214] During the 1970s, even the provocatively visionary surrealist graphic artist Māris Ārgalis managed to get an official commission by creating a vibrant tempera mural for a fishing collective farm in Roja (Image 76).

Although there are no one-to-one examples of Lithuanian abstract murals from the 1960s, several such designs appeared after the turn of the decade.

214 Tatjana Suta, Glezniecība sabiedriskajos interjeros. [Painting in public interiors.] – Māksla 1977, No. 4.
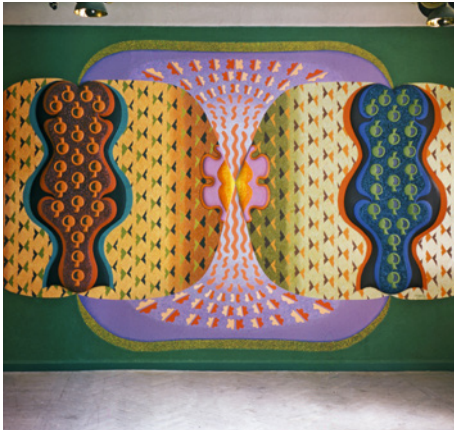
Image 75. **Leonids Maurinš, mural painting, late 1960s–early 1970. Approx. 300 × 400. Café Allegro. Rīga, 24 Ļeņina (now Kalku) iela. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art. Undated photo.**

Image 76. **Māris Ārgalis, mural painting, 1975. Tempera. Roja Fisherman's Collective Farm administrative building. Destroyed. The photograph features Māris Ārgalis and architect Anda Ārgale. Courtesy of Rīgas Laiks. Undated photo.**

Vytautas Povilaitis, hailed as one of the first to pick up abstraction in painting during the 1960s, created several murals in the 1970s and 1980s which made use of the visual vocabulary of the avant-garde. Povilas Ričardas Vaitiekūnas, a pioneer in the 1960s in exploiting primitivist visual language, cleverlyimplemented a naïve style in monumental-decorative art (Image 77). In 1976, painter Linas Katinas covered the whole wall and ceiling space of the Vilnius café Mėtos (Mint) with rainbow lines effectively creating an emotion as of being inside the yellow submarine (Image 78). In the same year, a similarly luminous interior was designed in the restaurant Jūra [Sea] in Klaipėda by Rimtautas Gibavičius.[215]

215 Nijolė Vilutytė-Dalinkevičienė, Sieninė tapyba kavinėje 'Jūra.' [Wall painting in café Jūra (Sea)]. – Klaipeda Municipal Immanuel Kant Public Library. http://www.biblioteka.lt/freskos/ sienine-tapyba-kavineje-jura/#aprasas, accessed 24 November 2021.

Image 77. **Povilas Ričardas Vaitiekūnas,** *The Capricorn Constellation*, **1972. Oil, 210 × 700. Café Astra in Kaunas. Destroyed. Courtesy of Boleslovas Klova. Photo from the 1970s.**



Image 78. **Linas Katinas, wall decoration, 1976. Café Mėtos (Mint) in Vilnius. Destroyed. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

# 2. The 1970s: From enthusiastic monumentalism to routine decorativism

## 2.1        Mannerist monumentalism

The aftermath of the 1968 events in Prague led to more rigid state control over cultural affairs, steering artists away from the societal optimism of the 1960s. Researchers have pointed out that the inactivity of Western leaders regarding the events in Prague caused disappointment with Western cultures among the avant-garde in East Europe – something artists had so far observed with growing support. During that period, several leading Estonian cultural figures turned their backs on Anglo-American culture and began to look for inspiration from their Finno-Ugric roots. [216] This primordial, undiscovered, distant and at the same time close tradition seemed to be a way out for writers and artists for whom both Western capitalist and Eastern socialist societies were fraudulent. To move forward with life, artists found it essential to create positive and constructive narratives supporting their personal and national identity. This topic also haunted artists working with monumental-decorative art.

In a situation where the population of the Soviet Union was growing, construction activity was expanding, the standard of living was improving and purchasing power was still increasing, so were people's expectations rising with regard to leisure opportunities. In addition to residential houses and educational institutions, the state constructed more and more public buildings, which by law had to be supplemented with monumental-decorative art. Therefore, the public art created in the 1970s was more extensive than in the previous decade. But as the generalised approaches of the 1960s were no longer fashionable and had a caricature effect, it was unclear what the new language of monumental-decorative art should be. Many subjects inherent to the socialist visual culture, such as youth, work and leisure, persisted but had to be rethought in light of the new situation. The further the 1970s advanced, the less one could notice common threads in public art production.

Nevertheless, some consistent visuals persisted, such as scenes from nature, local people and vernacular activities, and abstract decorations. Therefore, compared to the more outspoken ideological clichés of the previous decade, it would be tempting to characterise the 1970s monumental art with the term 'consecration of the everyday'. Socialist aestheticism was derived from life yet offered unique objects for the Soviet republics, which were by now increasingly resembling 'petit bourgeois societies' where societal ideals

216 See Linda Kaljundi, Eestlased kui soome-ugrilased. [Estonians as Finno-Ugric People.] – Vikerkaar 2018, No. 1–2, pp. 95–106.

from the 19th century prevailed: art – whether classical or avant-garde – foremost was there to offer redemption from daily life.[217]

Similar artistic processes occurred elsewhere in the Soviet Union. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a reorientation from functionality and stylistic unity to eclecticism, decorative saturation, and the desire to create a dramatised atmosphere.[218] Instead of the more delicate decorative choices of the 1960s, various historical stylings dominated. It felt like artists desired to fill architectural spaces with as much art as possible. To give an Estonian example, in a 1975 interview for the cultural weekly *Sirp ja Vasar*, painter and long-time professor of monumental art Lepo Mikko claimed that "our current monumental art leans to the decorative, the forms are more abstract, figuration has little importance. Hence, concrete content and conceptual expression of thought are replaced by spatial-decorative tasks".[219] Although Mikko had little sympathy for Soviet rule, his words may give the impression that he was nostalgic for collectively constructing a socialist utopia. This feeling had characterised the Thaw years. But as in the 1970s, the state continually retreated from the 'progressive' makeover of the society and urban landscape, the new decorative public art was short of ideological guidelines and often retreated to affirmative, civic messages.[220] Therefore, the gradual withdrawal from monumentality and the increasing dominance of decorativeness reflected changes in the political system. Hundreds of murals which visualised nature and everyday life acted as modest statements of the authoritarian discourse. They were broadly in line with the official ideology, although the concrete meaning of works depended on the specific context.

## 2.2     Peak modernism in the collective farms

The aftermath of the events in Prague in 1968 marked the beginning of the so-called Stagnation in the Soviet Union, which left a hurtful stain on its artistic culture. However, the 1970s signified prosperity for the production of monumental-decorative art. There are both societal and cultural reasons why some of the most spectacular works of art in the public space appeared in the 1970s. While the 1973 oil crisis led to the closure of thousands of factories in the Western world, resulting in mass unemployment and a gloomy

217 Jaak Kangilaski, Kunstielu. – Jaak Kangilaski (ed.), Eesti kunsti ajalugu. 1940–1991. II osa / History of Estonian Art. 1940–1991. Part II. Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2016, p. 14.
218 See Galina Sklyarenko = Галина Скляренко, Матеріали до історії: Монументально-декоративне мистецтво України другої половини XX століття. [Materials for history: Ukrainian monumental-decorative art in the second half of the twentieth century.]
219 Martti Soosaar, Kunstnikega kunstist. Vajadus maalida. [About art with artists. The urge to paint.] – Sirp ja Vasar 14 February 1975.
220 Reuben Fowkes, Visualizing the Socialist Public Sphere, p. 337.

atmosphere, the Soviet Union was virtually untouched by these problems – chiefly thanks to oil exports, which accounted for up to 80% of the USSR's hard currency earnings. The authorities primarily used hard cash for defence purposes, buying Western technology, perks for the elite, and cushioning the impact of the oil shock on its East European satellites.[221] Some of these 'investments' also reached the Baltics, which complemented the locally favourable economic situation and boosted the creation of new architecture and innovative monumental art.

Although the Soviet Union had largely solved the housing shortage in the 1960s, the authorities had created new problems resulting from the homogeneous living environment. Fresh architectural trends and monumental-decorative art aimed to solve the issue by replacing the strict geometry and rationalised architecture with more emotional, plastic and even irrational forms. This tendency, by which decorativeness began to function as a counterweight for functionality, became fashionable in many aspects of spatial culture. For example, furniture became more voluminous as designers enriched it with plastics and decorative upholstery fabrics. The overall lightness of construction, which had been a leitmotif of the furniture of the 1960s, disappeared.[222]

The situation was controversial because although visual culture took on increasingly plastic dimensions, at the same time, the gradually stagnating economy necessitated more standard solutions. For example, in the late 1970s, the state system for the standardisation of furniture elements was established, according to which designers were restricted to 35 to 40 different standard format furniture boards and nine different standard-size elastic elements.[223] As the number of finishing materials made the work of interior designers repetitive, monumental-decorative art alleviated the situation and gave character to the interiors. The various administrative, representative and cultural buildings of the collective farms were particularly prominent in this respect. The recurring narratives of Soviet ideology which had characterised the 1960s visual culture were replaced by 'small stories' which aimed to address the client's singularity.[224]

221 Stephen Kotkin, Armageddon Averted, p. 15.
222 Kristina Krasnyanskaya, Alexander Semenov, Soviet Design, p. 371.
223 Ibid., 379.
224 Anna Suvorova = Анна Суворова, Ревизия модернизма. Монументальное творчество Р.Б. Пономарева. [Revision of modernism. Monumental oeuvre of R.B. Ponomarev.] – Natalia Anikina, Andrei Epishin = Наталья Аникина, Андрей Епишин (eds.), Среда. Художник. Время. Монументальное искусство в координатах 2-й половины XX века. [Environment. Artist. Time. Monumental Art in the Coordinates of the 2nd half of the Twentieth Century.] Moscow: BooksMArt, 2016, p. 141.

In 1965, the then prime minister of the Soviet Union, Alexei Kosygin, initiated significant economic reforms that involved the decentralisation of decision-making in restructuring financial management to increase growth rates and to motivate managers and workers with incentives from profits and sales, rather than solely output.[225] One of the long-term goals was to progress from single enterprises to multi-plant corporations that would plan their production and distribution in a coordinated way. Starting from the early 1970s, such agrarian-industrial complexes, which were both successful in generating new products and encouraging more efficient work practices, were organised across Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.[226] To attract a skilled workforce to the countryside, the incomes in the collective farms were often higher than in the towns, and the enterprises provided attractive housing solutions and desirable free time activities, including the construction of new cultural centres, multipurpose sports and leisure facilities, kindergartens, schools, and inter-farm sanatoria at seaside resorts.[227] Therefore, architecture in the 1970s and 1980s provided a means for communal farms to differentiate themselves and to present their social values and individual success to such an extent that some collective farms employed their own architects or even entire design offices.[228] Novel administrative and cultural buildings acted as local landmarks or even signature structures of cooperative enterprises which by the end of the Soviet era resembled more private corporations. Consequently, managers used architecture and luxurious interior design to attract workers and turn the profits from their production into monumental status symbols.[229] From a Foucauldian perspective, power is effective as long as it produces effects at the level of desire.[230] In the late 1960s and early 1970s, collective farms

225 Andres Kurg, Werewolves on Cattle Street: Estonian collective farms and postmodern architecture. – Vladimir Kulić (ed.), Second World Postmodernisms: Architecture and Society Under Late Socialism. London and New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019, p. 112.

226 In 1973, there were 215 kolkhozes (collective farms) and 164 sovkhozes (state farms) in the Estonian SSR. See Aivar Rätsepo, Eesti NSV kolhooside ja sovhooside märgid: Kataloog / The badges of the collective farms of the ESSR: The Catalogue / Значки колхозов и совхозов Эстонской ССР: каталог. Tartu: A. Rätsepso, 2015, p. 3 The respective numbers were roughly two and three times higher in Latvia and Lithuania. Understandably not all of the enterprises were equally successful. As Moshe Lewin asserts, the Soviet state was 'not run by law, but men,' and thus, the economic, political or cultural situation could differ significantly between different farms. Moshe Lewin, The Soviet Century, p. 176.

227 Laura Ingerpuu, Comparing the socialist rural architecture of the Baltic States: the past and the future of theadministrative-cultural centres of collective farms. – SHS Web of Conferences 2019, Vol. 63, pp. 1–3.

228  Andres Kurg, Werewolves on Cattle Street, p. 113.

229 Ibid., p. 124.

230 Michel Foucault, Body/Power. – Michel Foucault. Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977. Trans. Colin Cordon. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980 [1975], p. 59.

Image 79. **Ilmar Malin, *Birth of the Võhandu River,* 1967. Secco, approx. 200 × 500. Mooste Model Sovkhoz (now Mooste Cultural Centre). Mooste, 3 Lasteaia tee. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2021.**



Image 80. **Elmar Kits, *Harvest Celebration*, 1971. Secco, approx. 250 × 500. Riisipere Sovkhoz (now Riisipere Cultural Centre). Riisipere, 53 Nissi tee. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2012.**

convinced citizens with their 'soft power' and desirable quality of life, whereas in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the authorities found it more challenging to set an affirmative example.

In 1967, Mooste Model Sovkhoz erected its central building, which was designed following a standard design. The building was distinguished by its dramatic – and trendy – placement within the landscape and a mural by Tartu-based artist Ilmar Malin depicting the mythological birth of the Võhandu River (Image 79). Eminent modernist painter Elmar Kits created semi-abstract murals for the Keava Breeding Centre of Kehtna Kolkhoz (Image 50), the Technical College of the Gagarin Model Sovkhoz and most importantly, for the Riisipere Sovkhoz (Image 80). The latter, *Harvest*

Image 81. **Eva Jänes, wall decoration, 1977–1978. Sgraffito, approx. 800 × 200 each. Tamsalu Poultry Factory and Põdrangu Sovkhoz clubhouse (now office building and warehouse). Tamsalu Municipality, Sääse. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from 1979.**



Image 82. **Leonhard Lapin, *Red Pompei,* designed in 1975, implemented partially in 1979. Haabneeme community centre. Destroyed. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from 1979.**

*Celebration*, was completed half a year before his death. The title refers to the seasonal agricultural rite, but the image is recognisable as depicting the biblical Last Supper. Kits portrayed various characters and motifs from the canon of early 20th-century modern art: The Virgin Mary with infant

Image 83. **Leonhard Lapin, *Pantheon*, 1989. Oil on canvas, wood, mirrors, approx. 250 × 500. Aruküla Collective Farm Hobby Centre Pääsulind (now Aruküla Free Waldorf School). Aruküla, 38 Tallinna mnt. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2012.**

Christ, cubist accordion players, Parisian-looking book dealers and the artist himself looking out of the picture plane. One remarkable sgraffito work is that by Eva Jänes in the Põdrangu State Collective Farm clubhouse (Image 81) in which the artist combined abstract forms and motifs taken from nature into a unique ensemble. Each painting in the Põdrangu club is illuminated by the adjacent window in the diagonal wall so that the sgraffito relief becomes even more distinctive and emphasises the synthesis between man and nature. The latter was a frequently recurring theme during the 1970s, with plants, birds and animals suggesting a full-blooded life.[231]

One of the most successful collective farms in Soviet Estonia, the Kirov fishing kolkhoz in Viimsi decorated its library with a geometric stained-glass window by Dolores Hoffmann (1975) and the central building hallway with an extensive mural by Tõnis Soop (1970s). The space between the Kolkhoz's prominent buildings was highlighted by an architectonic installation and landscape design by the architect and *enfant terrible* of late Soviet Estonian art, Leonhard Lapin (Image 82). The interior of the Kirov fish shop located in the Old Town of Tallinn was decorated with paintings by Jüri Arrak in 1988.[232] When in 1989, Aruküla

231 M. Solodilov, E. Korobova = М. Солодилов, Е. Коробова, Синтез архитектуры... [Synthesis of architecture...], p. 139.
232 Hilkka Hiiop, Linda Kaljundi, Linda Lainvoo, Pille Lausmäe, Grete Nilp, Jaanus Samma, Kaduv maailm. 1970. ja 1980. aastate kihistus ajalooliste interjööride restaureerimises. [The vanishing world. The stratification of the 1970s and 1980s in the restoration of historic interiors.] – Muinsuskaitse aastaraamat 2019, p. 106.

Image 84. **Frančeska Kirke and Ludmila Gintere, *Kazdanga 1888. To the market*, 1976. Tempera. Kazdanga State Farm Technical School (now Kazdanga Museum). Kazdanga, 1 Jaunatnes gatve. Courtesy of Tatjana Suta. Photo from the 1970s.**

Kolkhoz decided to renovate the early 19th-century classicist Arukūla manor they turned to Leonhard Lapin who created a geometric composition for one of the halls (Image 83).

In Latvia, Jānis Borgs accomplished two murals for the Ventspils-based fishery kolkhoz Sarkanā bāka (Red Lighthouse) in the mid-1960s, one of which was a 'radically modernist' decoration of the waiting room. The other was a wooden panel titled *Neptūns* (Neptune) for the administration's meeting hall.[233] In 1975, Māris Ārgalis created a Surrealist-inspired mural for an administrative building of the fishery collective farm in Roja, which depicted sea creatures, fishers alongside Poseidon, the god of the sea

233 Conversation with Jānis Borgs, 4 June 2020.

Image 85. **Imants Klīdzējs,** *Latvian lighthouses,* **1986. Ceramics, 350 × 720. Salacgriva fishery kolkhoz (now company Brivais Vilnis (Free Wave). Courtesy of Jēkaba Ceļojumi. Photo from the 2010s.**

(Image 76). In 1976, art academy painting students Frančeska Kirke and Ludmila Gintere decorated the entire staircase wall of the Kazdanga State Farm Technical School in the historic Kazdanga palace (Image 84). The figural composition, which winds along a three-storey baroque staircase, was inspired by the ethnographic drawings of Latvian peasants by the 18th-century Enlightenment figure Johann Christoph Brotze.[234] The subject matter sought to tame the aristocratic edifice and the Baltic German legacy connected to it. During the same time, artists Līga and Laimonis Šēnbergs designed the decorative curtains and the conference hall tapestry of the administrative building of the Babīte forest industry collective farm.[235] In the early 1980s, Lidija Auza designed stained-glass windows for the Liepāja fishery kolkhoz Boļševiks (The Bolshevik) clubhouse in Bārta.[236] In 1986, Imants Klīdzējs created an impressive three-dimensional ceramic mural *Latvian Lighthouses* for Salacgriva fishery Kolkhoz (Image 85).

Serbian art theorist and conceptual artist Miško Šuvaković has suggested the term 'socialist aestheticism' to describe the specific late socialist visual culture which appeared in Yugoslavia 'when bureaucrats and technocrats

234 Tatjana Suta, Glezniecība sabiedriskajos interjeros. [Painting in public interiors.]
235 Ibid.
236 Ingrīda Burāne (ed.), Māksla un arhitektūra biogrāfijās. 1. Sējums. [Art and Architecture Biographies. Volume 1.] Rīga: Latvijas enciklopēdija, 1995, p. 38.

Image 87. **Konstantinas Šatūnas, stained-glass windows, 1972. Stained glass, metal, approx. 300 × 500. Juknaičiai House of Culture. Courtesy of Klaipeda City Municipality Immanuel Kant Public Library. Undated photo.**

Image 86. **Algimantas Stoškus, *Pulse of Life*, 1984–1985. Coloured mould-cast glass, 285 × 250 × 250. Juknaičiai Recreation Centre (now disused). Removed, allegedly in a private collection. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

replaced revolutionaries'.[237] Šuvaković argues that socialist aestheticism was an expression of the interests and tastes of a new managerial class whose goal was to change the world and enjoy it. Although the communist leadership of the Baltic countries did not move away from the general society so drastically, and the 'luxuries' of the public spaces were relatively democratically dispersed, one cannot ignore the fact that some leisure buildings were designed exclusively for the leading workers, which certainly had the appeal of socialist aestheticism.

In Lithuania, the stand-out sovkhoz of Juknaičiai commissioned some of the most impressive socialist aestheticism of the late Soviet period. The luxurious recreation centre designed by Petras Grecevičius and Stanislovas Kalinka for the state farm's workers boasted a three-dimensional stained-glass sculpture, *Pulse of Life* (1984–1985) by Algimantas Stoškus. (Image 86) The work was illuminated by a laser beam and was supplemented with music specially composed by Osvaldas Balakauskas for

the light show. A group of five scientists worked on the technical solution, and on one account, the work embraced up to 200 different colours.[238] Furthermore, Algirdas Dovydėnas created triangle-shaped stained-glass windows for the same building's swimming pool and Regina Sipavičiūtė produced a tapestry for the town's library.[239]

## 2.3    Houses of culture as social condensers

The social condenser is a term which was initially used during the 1920s by Russian Constructivists to describe architectural experiments in communal living.[240] Although the concept received less notice during the late Soviet period, it was picked up by Western architects and theoreticians of the 1960s and 1970s and has been lately used by historians from both East and West to interpret buildings which abridge various social activities of a given community. Houses of Culture – sometimes known as Palaces of Culture owing to the tradition of grand neoclassical structures of the 1950s – were the quintessential social condensers of the late Soviet period, built across cities and countryside to cater for the productive use of workers' leisure time. In smaller localities, where the state did not invest in their construction, local collective farms would develop their central office buildings as administrative-cultural centres. In several instances, factories also built their own cultural venues. Throughout the Baltic states in the 1970s and 1980s, such institutions were among the most important clients of monumental-decorative art, with the most popular expression of this being an extensive mural or a stained-glass piece adorning either the largest hall or a foyer.

In Lithuania, the lobby of the 1972 House of Culture of the model state farm Juknaičiai featured abstract stained-glass windows by Konstantinas Šatūnas in the geometric fashion of *art informel*. Such abstraction was seldom seen in official painting exhibitions (Image 87). The prestigious Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant House of Culture featured an optical tapestry by the merited textile artist Marija Švažienė (Image 88). Besides the aesthetically more demanding pieces, the majority of the works in the collective farms depicted romanticised country folks, as in the Obelaukiai Palace of Culture (Image 89), Vitolis Trušys' 150 square metre fresco in the

238 Liudvika Ramanauskaitė, Algimantas Stoškus, p. 179.
239  See Birutė Skaisgirienė, Klaipėdos vitražų istorijos (1): A. Dovydėno 'Žaliosios' vaistinės vitražų ciklas. [Stories of Klaipėda stained-glass (1): Stained-glass cycle by A. Dovydėnas in Green pharmacy.] – Durys 2021, No. 4, pp. 20–25.
240  See Michał Murawski, Introduction: crystallising the social condenser. – The Journal of Architecture, 2017, Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 372–386.

Image 89. **Šarūnas Šimulynas, *Musicians*, 1970. Obelaukiai House of Culture. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Boleslovas Klova. Photo from the 1970s.**

Image 88. **Marija Švažiene, *Sun's Halo*, 1981. Tapestry. Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant Culture House (now Ignalina Culture Centre). Ignalina, 43 Ateities g. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Daiva Rekertaitė-Načiulienė. Photo from the 1980s.**



Image 90. **Nijolė Vilutytė-Dalinkevičienė and Romas Dalinkevičius, *Natural World*, 1975. Sgraffito, approx. 300 × 1500. Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant Culture House (now Ignalina Culture Centre). Courtesy of Ignalina Culture Centre. Photo from the 2010s.**
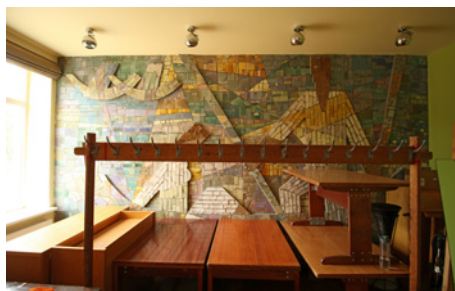
Image 91. **Latvīte Medniece, decorative mosaic, 1967. Ceramics, approx. 300 × 400. Salacgriva House of Culture. Salacgrīva, 3 Ostas iela. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**
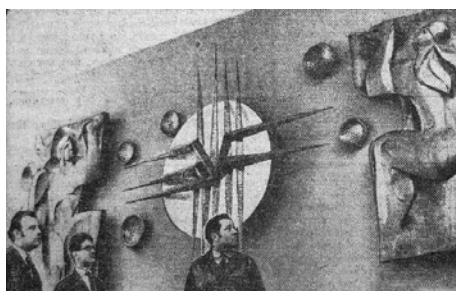


Image 92. **Unknown artist, decorative metalwork, 1970. Metal, approx. 200 × 400. Elektra House of Culture of Rīga Electromechanical Plant. Destroyed. Courtesy of MyRiga. Photo from the 1970s.**

Satkūnai collective farm House of Culture, or Valdas Gurskis' decorative panel in the Duokiškis Palace of Culture. Another common theme was local nature and wildlife, exemplified by Nijolė Vilutytė-Dalinkevičienė and Romas Dalinkevičius' semi-Surrealist sgraffito in the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant Culture House (Image 90). Several cultural edifices with prominent murals were built in small towns with a population of only a few hundred or even fewer.[241]

In Latvia, municipalities and collective farms were less eager to adorn houses of culture with public artworks. In 1967, ceramic artist Latvīte Medniece decorated the Salacgriva House of Culture with a mosaic depicting a local fisherman with a young woman (Image 91), and a few years later, the Sabile House of Culture with a modest ceramic panel featuring stylised men and women taking part in the summer solstice festivities. In 1970, the Elektra House of Culture, which served the workers of Rīga Electromechanical Plant, acquired a thematic metal panel (Image 92).

Daugavpils Palace of Culture featured a stained-glass window of a goddess-like woman by the prominent Latvian glass artist Egons Cēsnieks. In 1979, local artist Andrejs Zvejnieks painted a mural for the Jelgava district House of Culture featuring girls with miniskirts and fashionably dressed young men enjoying their time in the wilderness. In the early 1980s, the urge to tell national stories motivated by the postmodern inclination towards narratives found its extreme case in the Druviena

241 Vaidas Petrulis, Soviet modernism in Lithuania. Lecture at the Estonian Academy of Arts, 12 October 2020.

Image 93. **Brigita and Ralfs Jansons, mural paintings, 1982. Secco. Druviena Culture House. Courtesy of Druviena Culture House. Photo from the 2010s.**

House of Culture, where artists filled several walls with a hall of fame of well-known cultural figures (Image 93). Perhaps the most extravagant work was made by Jānis Krievs for the Daugavpils Builders' House of Culture in 1978. The result was a vast audio-kinetic stage wall in which details of coloured glass were lit from behind by lamps which reacted to the melody of the music being played[242] (Image 94).
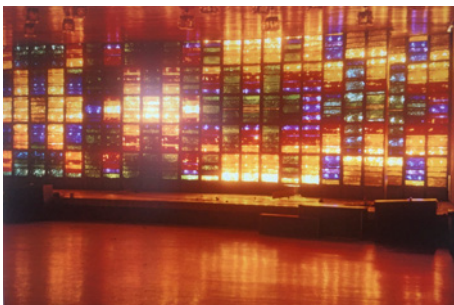


Image 94. **Jānis Krievs, audio-kinetic light stage, 1978. Glass, metal, electronic control unit with sound frequency and intensity analyser, 300 × 1400. Daugavpils Builders' House of Culture. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art. Photo from 1978.**

242 Irēnas Bužinskas, Kāpēc man patīk šis dizains: Jāņa Krieva veidotais interjers Daugavpils Celtnieku klubā. [Why I like this design: Jānis Krievs' interior in Daugavpils Builders' Club.] – Latvian National Museum of Art. http://www.lnmm.lv/lv/apmekle/notikumu_kalendars/9603-kapec-man-patik-sis-dizains-jana-krieva-veidotais-interjers-daugavpils-celtnieku-kluba, accessed 20 August 2020.

## 2.4                                    Art for education

Schools, universities and scientific research institutes encouraged artists to create compositions with significant socio-ideological content. In Lithuania, Vilnius University was one of the principal public art commissioners. In 1979, the institution celebrated its 400th birthday. Preparations for the anniversary started in the 1960s with the restoration of the celebrated campus in the city centre. Restorers uncovered several historic murals during the renovations, encouraging authorities to commission new ones. Thus, the university commissioned dozens of murals and decorative sculptures for the historic campus in the old town and the new Saulėtekis campus. According to the client's scientific focus, the majority of the murals represented Lithuanian history and culture as well as the visual culture of antiquity, Renaissance and Classicism.[243] The juxtaposition of different historical periods and their connection with the heroes of Lithuanian culture created somewhat arbitrary combinations. Still, as Benedict Anderson has emphasised, communities are distinguished from one another not so much by their authenticity but by how they are imagined.[244] The works of art exhibited around Vilnius University played a crucial role in this regard.

In 1970, Rimtautas Gibavičius painted the Hellenistic mural *Nine Muses* for the Philology Faculty's vestibule (Image 95). The mural, which created a total environment with rhythmic geometric patterns, became one of the favourites among the critics of its time and was also prominently reproduced in the All-Union catalogue of monumental art.[245] The established author was handed an even larger commission at the end of the 1980s. The sgraffito work, which told the story of Lithuanian philology, again used the classicist idiom with historical figures placed within a traditionalist architectural background (Image 96). Vytautas Valius also picked up the theme of the nation's past in murals, which occupy the walls of the Philology Faculty's reading room and highlight the classic poem *Metai* (The Seasons) by the 18th century Prussian-Lithuanian author Kristijonas Donelaitis[246] (Image 97).

243 Dalia Ramonienė, Nicolė Tumėnienė, Vilnius Universitetas dailėje. [Vilnius University in Fine Arts.] Vilnius: Vaga, 1986, p. 32.
244 See Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities. London, New York: Verso, 2016 [1983].
245 Dalia Ramonienė, Nicolė Tumėnienė, Vilnius Universitetas dailėje. [Vilnius University in Fine Arts.], p. 33. See also Vladimir Tolstoy = Владимир Толстой, Монументальное искусство СССР. [Monumental Art of the USSR.], p. 251.
246 Dalia Ramonienė, Nicolė Tumėnienė, Vilnius Universitetas dailėje. [Vilnius University in Fine Arts.], p. 33.

Image 95. **Rimtautas Gibavičius,** *Nine Muses***, 1969–1970. Sgraffito. Vilnius University Philology Faculty. Vilnius, 3 Universiteto g. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**



Image 96. **Rimtautas Gibavičius, mural painting, 1990. Sgraffito, approx. 300 × 3000. Vilnius University Philology Faculty. Vilnius, 3 Universiteto g. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**

Image 97. **Vytautas Valius,** *Metai*, **1979. Oil, approx. 300 × 1500. Vilnius University Donelaitis Hall. Vilnius, 3 Universiteto g. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**



Image 98. **Petras Repšys,** *The Seasons*, **1976–1984. Fresco. Vilnius University Centre for Lithuanian Studies. Vilnius, 3 Universiteto g. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**

Petras Repšys' fresco in the Centre for Lithuanian Studies vestibule also represents the traditional life of Lithuanian peasants. The painting combines subjects of paganism with early Renaissance iconography – a period in art history that during the Soviet period was referred to as the height of historical synthesis[247] (Image 98). Repšys, who trained as a graphic artist, painted the fresco *The Seasons* between the years 1976–1984. The mural features around 500 figures and more than a hundred individual scenes based on historical sources, myths, customs, rites, and games, which reflect the premodern worldview.[248] This kind of 'neo-tribalism' which valued and modernised an (imaginary) old life-style related to the environmental and cultural activism which started to spread around the Baltic States in the 1970s.[249] For example, it became popular to purchase run-down farmsteads to preserve them as signs of traditional landscapes. Vējš argues that there was also a rural and environmental inclination in critical art practices as exemplified by the performative events held at Rundāle palace, an art festival in the tiny village of Vecpiebalga, or leading intellectuals collectively tidying up historic graveyards.[250] Thus, one could argue that Repšys' 'shamanic' place-making represented the leading cultural development in artistic culture of the time. Characteristic of the circumstances, it was a nationally conservative tendency.

The profound perspective of Repšys' work is also revealed in another aspect. Namely, it took the artist eight years to complete this painting. During this time, the vaulted room, equipped with scaffolding, partitions and other painting tools, became something of a private studio for Repšys, who invited over friends and colleagues and thus transformed it into a semi-public meeting place for the art community.[251] In the Soviet context, where artists' studios "were like isles of truth, in which real things were collected, where a completely different life was led compared to that in the public domain of the city with its compulsory slogans and impoverished

247 Nikolas Drosos argues that throughout the 20th century, Renaissance was the preferred historical period for synthesisers both in East and West, as it was not tainted by 'capitalist imperialism', which divided architecture and painting into exchangeable commodities, with the latter bound for galleries and private collections. Drosos refers to Fernand Léger, 'a card-carrying communist' who was also popular in the Eastern bloc and wrote in 1946: "The future certainly cries out for the collaboration of the three major art forms – architecture, painting, sculpture. No period since the Italian Renaissance has understood this artistic collectivity. Nikolas Drosos, Modernism with a Human Face…, p. 98.
248 Algimantas Mačiulis, Dailė architektūroje. [Architectural Art.], p. 67.
249 See Daunis Auers, The Curious Case of the Latvian Greens. – Environmental Politics 2012, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 522–527.
250 See Vilnis Vējš, Ārpus rāmjiem / Outside the Frame.
251 Conversation with Lolita Jablonskienė, 24 January 2020. Notes in the possession of the author.

Image 99. **Antanas Kmieliauskas, ceiling paintings, 1978–1979. Fresco. Vilnius University Littera Bookshop. 3 Universiteto g. Courtesy of Dalia Ramonienė. Photo from 1979.**

texture," Repšys' undertaking played a vital role in the local art life.[252] Although the space he created did not play a massive role in the general society, it still broadened how Vilnius' artists and intellectuals imagined the public space.

Parallel to Repšys, Antanas Kmieliauskas worked for nearly a decade on his Renaissance-inspired frescoes in the university's bookstore (Image 99) and Council Hall. On the one hand, these works link to referencing historical styles inherent in postmodern culture. Still, on the other hand, Kmieliauskas' frescoes are so firmly attached to his role models, such as

252 Vita Birzaka, Laima Slava on Boriss Berziņš: interview by Vita Birzaka. Introduction by Stella Pelše. – Helena Demakova (ed.), The Self. Personal Journeys to Contemporary Art: the 1960s–80s in Soviet Latvia. Rīga: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, 2011, p. 113.

Image 100. **Vitolis Trušys, *Lithuanian myths*, 1974–1978. Granite, approx. 300 × 1500. Vilnius University Philology Faculty. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**



Image 101. **Architects Rimantas Dičius, Zigmas Jonas Daunora, Julius Jurgelionis, wall decoration, project from 1966, built in the late 1970s. Relief in concrete. Vilnius University Faculty of Communication. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**

Michelangelo,[253] that his ambition seemed to be to create a perfect copy. The classical architectural idiom of the campus and the Latin foundations of the academe were also represented in the stained-glass windows by Andrius Surgailis. Furthermore, Vitolis Trušys created mosaics for the Philology Faculty, which depicted characters from Lithuanian mythology (Image 100).

253 Algimantas Mačiulis, Dailė architektūroje. [Architectural Art.], p. 71.

Image 102. **Gražina Arlauskaitė-Vingrienė, *Alma Mater*, 1978. Sgraffito, approx. 350 × 800. Vilnius University Faculty of Communication. Vilnius, 11 Saulėtekio av.. Courtesy of Dalia Ramonienė. Photo from the 1970s.**

After Vilnius University and other higher education institutions had developed a new campus complex in the Saulėtekis neighbourhood, several buildings were decorated with monumental-decorative artworks. Although a few works aimed to connect more principally to the new environment – such as Konstantinas Šatūnas' abstract stained-glass or the graphically articulated facades of the three campus buildings (Image 101) – most of the murals continued with standard depictions of historic Vilnius which were set as an example in the old campus (Image 102). Besides the university buildings in Vilnius, educational establishments across the country acquired murals and stained-glass windows. Vitolis Trušys was one of the most productive artists in this field, creating several frescoes in his characteristic style in and around Šiauliai. The main themes for decorating educational institutions with murals were Lithuanian history, culture and nature (Image 103), ancient mythology (Image 104), cosmonautics and science and the steadily recurring sun as a universal symbol of youth and enlightenment.

Compared to the generous visual embellishment of Vilnius University for its anniversary, the 350th birthday of Tartu University in 1982 had a minor effect on the visual appearance of the institution. Enn Põldroos created a panel painting for the main building in which he reinterpreted

Image 103. **Sofija Veiverytė-Liugailienė, Angelina Banytė and Natalija Daškova, _Our Land_, 1978–1980. Fresco, approx. 400 × 2500. Lithuanian Research Institute of Agricultural Economics (now Lithuanian Institute of Agrarian Economics). Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**



Image 104. **Vitolis Trušys, _Orpheus and Prometheus_, 1971. Tempera, 600 × 1400. Šiauliai Teachers Training Institute (now Šiauliai Library). Destroyed. Courtesy of Boleslovas Klova. Photo from the 1970s.**

Image 105. **Enn Põldroos, *Universitas Tartuensis*, 1982. Tempera on canvas, 330 × 480. Tartu University. Relocated in 1990. Tartu, 18 Ülikooli. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2012.**



Image 106. **Ilmar Malin, *Serata Vitae* (Layers of Life), 1970–1973. Secco, approx. 700 × 1000. Tartu University Faculty of Biology and Geography (now Tartu University Faculty of Science and Technology). Tartu, 46 Vanemuise. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2012.**

Image 108. **Inta Dobrāja and Ausma Auziņa, International Friendship Club room decoration, 1976. Daugavpils Pioneers' Palace (now Daugavpils Youth Centre of informal education). Destroyed. Courtesy of Tatjana Suta. Photo from the 1970s.**



Image 107. **Kārlis Dobrājs, *Play Town*, 1976. Oil on wood. Daugavpils Pioneer's Palace (now Daugavpils Youth Centre of informal education). Current state unknown. Courtesy of Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art. Undated photo.**

Raphael's *School of Athens* fresco at the Vatican's Stanza della Segnatura[254] (Image 105). Põldroos' lunette painting is a suitable counterpart for Repšys' work, as in both cases leading modernist painters faced the polemic of historical painting. As historical painting is rooted in the monumental and in national thought it has an ideological basis which ties it to the present and the future.[255] While Repšys' painting addressed the future in a manner imagined via folklore, Põldroos' approach was both national and international. Compared to the two, Ilmar Malin chose a much longer-term perspective on human life when he painted one of the most extensive murals in Estonia in 1973. Located in the Faculty of Biology and Geography, it depicted rather humble humans amid colossal fossils and minerals, thus suggesting that from the standpoint of ecology, human life is little different from that of a trilobite. (Image 106)

One of the flagship examples of Latvia's art synthesis in the 1970s was the Daugavpils Pioneers' Palace, which, following the example of Moscow's famous counterpart from 1962, was not only articulated with murals but sought to combine architecture, interior architecture, furniture, lighting, design and art.[256] Dagmāra Staprēna and Jānis Svenčs decorated an entire

254 See David Ilmar Lepasaar Beecher, Universitas Tartuensis Enn Põldroosi maalil. [Universitas Tartuensis on Enn Põldroos' painting.] – Tartu Ülikooli ajaloo küsimusi 2016, No. 44, pp. 181–185.
255 Jelle Bouwhuis, Margriet Schavemaker, Monumentalism: An Introduction…, p. 86.
256 Tatjana Suta, Glezniecība sabiedriskajos interjeros. [Painting in public interiors.]

fairy tale room with various folkloric and fantastical motifs which urged children to create their narratives independently. Painter Kārlis Dobrājs, who was a conservative realist painter and was known to be rather negative about modernist language in arts,[257] created a de Stijl-inspired wooden panel for the younger playroom (Image 107) and designed various other walls similarly. Interior designer Ausma Auziņa and painter Inta Dobrāja created the International Friendship Club with a stadium-shaped table and a wall decorated with flags and emblems of youth organisations worldwide (Image 108). Artist Valda Mežbārde created an Op-art-inspired mural mixing musical instruments and geometrical shapes for the Music Room, while painter Mārčis Stumbris decorated the recreation rooms.

## 2.5                   Monumental textiles leading towards installation art

Romy Golan has argued that in Western Europe, the modern tapestry was the most noteworthy response to the 'mural question' after World War II.[258] As mural art had been tainted by its political (ab)use by the totalitarian regimes of the 1930s, tapestry offered a way out of the ideologically charged 'mural effect'. Textile artists such as the Frenchman Jean Lurçat insisted that tapestry should no longer be regarded as a supplementary surface tacked on to a wall but a woollen space-maker in its own right. As opposed to the distanced monumentality and permanence of the mural, tapestry "felt like a rough skin under the caress of the hand."[259] Furthermore, tapestry could function as a tactile and haptic corrective to domesticate the optical coldness of the predominant International Style and was, therefore, able to communicate impermanence and contingency.

Although the mural question was less topical in the East as the artistic culture in the Soviet sphere was less affected by the ideological inappropriateness of mural art, textile art still gained increasing popularity in the region. For example, Polish artist Magdalena Abakanowicz gained international fame after winning the Gold Medal at the 1965 São Paulo Biennial. With her soft textured sculptures, which she named Abakans, she managed to transform the subsidiary applied art into a contemporary artistic medium.[260] Abakanowicz and other Polish textile artists were well

257 Conversation with Ieva Astahovska, 21 January 2024.
258 See Romy Golan, From Monument to Muralnomad: The Mural in Modern European Architecture. – Christy Anderson, Karen Koehler (eds.), The Built Surface: Architecture and the Pictorial Arts from Romanticism to the Twenty-First Century. Burlington: Ashgate, 2002, pp. 186–208.
259 Ibid., p. 201.
260 Maja, Fowkes, Reuben Fowkes, Central and Eastern European Art Since 1950, p. 63.

Image 109. **Rūdolfs Heimrāts, textile partitions, 1973. Mixed media. Café Leningrad in Rīga. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Museum of Decorative Arts and Design. Photo from the 1970s.**

received in the Baltics; for example, in 1968, Tallinn Art Hall hosted a survey exhibition of contemporary Polish tapestry which also featured the Abakans.[261]

Rīga emerged as the centre of Baltic textile art. In 1961, the Department of Textile Art, headed by the celebrated professor Rūdolfs Heimrāts, was opened at the Latvian SSR State Art Institute. After the first students had graduated in 1967, fresh textile artists joined contemporary art life each year. Like some of the critically-minded industrial design graduates who could not find specific work in their field and opted for artistic careers, many textile artists dedicated themselves to independent studio work. During the 1960s, it was not uncommon that the most avant-garde ideas were often first expressed in the applied arts, and then transferred to painting and monumental art. Eventually, this turned into a rivalry between competing disciplines.

What was mostly referred to as the master crafts, traditionally regarded as 'applied' or secondary, fought for their right to be appreciated and treated as art. It was not only a terminological dispute but also a pragmatic struggle for the freedom to exhibit one's work in the most representative exhibition spaces, to have better sales opportunities, to gain access to studio spaces

261 Krystyna Kondratiukowa, Uued tendentsid Poola kaasaegses gobeläänis. [New tendencies in Polish contemporary tapestry.] – Sirp ja Vasar 4 October 1968.

and other privileges which in the Soviet system depended on previously developed hierarchies. Therefore, textile artists also sought opportunities to have their work integrated into public interiors. Fascinated by the synthesis of textiles and interiors, artists started experimenting with different techniques and three-dimensional forms.[262] As a result, active textile artists created novel approaches by combining various media like tapestry, knitting, crochet, and weaving in each new piece. Furthermore, as the ideological burden on the so-called applied arts was lower, textile and other applied artists introduced abstraction and different dubious themes into their work.[263] An apt example is the work of Latvian painter Zenta Logina, who started her professional career in the 1920s. In the late 1960s, she was the first in Latvian art to overcome the flat surface of the traditional canvas painting to transform it into a spatial object. As she could not present her near-abstract three-dimensional compositions in official exhibitions, her sister and textile artist Elize Atare executed her design projects as textile pieces, which found their way into shows. With this in mind, art historian Vilnis Vejš has argued that textile art paved the way for the post-medium phase in Latvian art.[264]

In 1973, Rūdolfs Heimrāts created two-sided textile works for Cafe Leningrad in Rīga (Image 109). It was the first public example in Soviet Latvia where textile art was displayed hanging in the middle of a room, acting as a room divider.[265] On the one hand, the work produced seclusion in the blunt rectangular architecture. On the other hand, it had holes, providing opportunites to peek at the other side of the 'wall'. Heimrāts, trained as a ceramicist, preferred to design figural tapestries. Yet, he defended the idea that image-making is stylistically alien to applied art and decorative features should dominate, thereby championing abstraction.[266] Therefore, the central message of a textile work placed in the public space was supposed to be its "space-creating expressive texture".[267]

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262 Rūta Rinka, Dace Ļaviņa, Septiņdesmitie. Skaistuma lietderība. Lietišķās mākslas attīstības procesi 20. gadsimta 70. Gados. [Seventies. The usefulness of beauty. Applied art development in the 1970s.] – Latvian National Art Museum. http://www.lnmm.lv/lv/apmekle/izstades/2010-septindesmitie-skaistuma-lietderiba, accessed 17 February 2020.
263 See Elita Ansone, Figuratīvais ekspresionisms dialogā ar abstrakto ekspresionismu / Figurative Expressionism in Dialogue with Abstract Expressionism, pp. 153–155.
264 See Vilnis Vējš, Ārpus rāmjiem / Outside the Frame.
265 Ivars Strautmanis, Gobelēna un telpas mijiedarbība. [The interaction of the tapestry and space.] – Māksla 1975, No. 1.
266 Inga Bunkše, Abstraktās mākslas meklējumos / Explorations in abstract art, pp. 103–105.
267 Gundega Ivanova, Latviešu mūsdienu lietišķā māksla. [Latvian contemporary applied art.], unpaginated.

Image 111. **Henrihs Vorkals, stage curtains, 1977. Approx 1000 × 2000. Railway Workers' Club in Rīga. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art. Current state unknown. Photo from the 1970s.**

Image 110. **Henrihs Vorkals, tapestry, 1973. Approx 300 × 500. Restaurant Sigulda in Rīga. 25 Gorkija (now Krišjāņa Valdemāra) iela. Destroyed. Courtesy of MyRiga. Photo from the 1970s.**

Heimrāts' student Henrihs Vorkals created a tapestry for the popular Restaurant Sigulda in Rīga (Image 110). As at the time, Vorkals cultivated pop art together with Jānis Borgs at a semi-official exhibition in the artsy Dieva auss café at the Planetarium, references to global pop culture trends are justified.[268] In particular, his stage curtains for the Railway Workers' Club in Rīga are rendered in the kaleidoscopic Swinging Sixties aesthetic, which was widespread in applied art of the time (Image 111). At the Restaurant Sigulda, Vorkals worked with the highly productive interior designer couple Aina Ozoliņa and Auseklis Ozoliņš, who designed a suspended textile work for the banquet hall of the same establishment (Image 112). The Ozoliņš subverted the historic tapestry technique into a provocative design piece with an open fringe suggesting a fashionably independent, if not iconoclastic, attitude.

Aina Ozoliņa and Auseklis Ozoliņš were also behind the interior design of the technophilic canteen of the VEF electronic equipment factory. Although the interior did not possess monumental-decorative art in the strict sense of the word, the designers managed to instil a rigid techno-aesthetic

268 Ieva Astahovska, Janis Borgs: interview by Ieva Astahovska, p. 75.

Image 113. **Aina Ozoliņa and Auseklis Ozoliņš, interior design; Imants Eglītis, kinetic dance floor design; Edīte Pauls-Vīgnere, textiles, 1979. Discotheque of Restaurant Jūras pērle in Jūrmala. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Museum of Decorative Arts and Design. Undated photo.**

Image 112. **Aina Ozoliņa and Auseklis Ozoliņš, ceiling decoration, 1972. Restaurant Sigulda in Rīga. 25 Gorkija (now Krišjāņa Valdemāra) iela. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Museum Museum of Decorative Arts and Design. Photo from the 1970s.**

purposefulness throughout their design. The canteen featured an automated catering system: customers entered the canteen through turnstiles reminiscent of metro stations by inserting sixty kopeks in a slot. They then chose their food from a mechanical belt connected to the kitchen. However, despite the factory's enthusiasm for promoting a high-tech sensibility, the system did not meet expectations. The more reliable human servers soon replaced the malfunctioning scheme.[269] In 1979, Ozolina and Ozolinš were responsible for redesigning the interiors of the Restaurant Jūras pērle in Jurmala. This project was noteworthy for its luxurious discotheque, which featured a kinetic light dance floor by Imants Eglītis and textile decorations depicting surrealistic sea creatures and other forms with erotic undertones by Edīte Pauls-Vīgnere (Image 113). The banquet hall in the same institution featured textile works by Aija Baumane and Raitis Rubenis, filling the walls and the entire ceiling (Image 114). In Jūrmala, Baumane

269 Jānis Krievs, Vides mākslas krustceļi. [Crossroads of environmental art.] – Literatūra un Māksla 15 February 1985.

Image 114. **Aija Baumane and Raitis Rubenis, textile, 1975. Banquet hall of Restaurant Jūras pērle (Sea Perl) in Jūrmala. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Museum of Decorative Arts and Design. Photo from the 1970s.**

Image 115. **Aija Baumane and Raitis Rubenis, textiles, 1979. Youth Recreation Centre Mežezers (Forest Lake) in Plavinas, 1979. Destroyed. Photo: Latvian Museum of Decorative Arts and Design. Photo from 1979.**

and Rubenis decorated the Restaurant Miezitis in a national romantic 'neo-vernacular' fashion. The same duo created flamboyant suspended textiles for the Mežezers Youth Recreation Centre in Plavina (Image 115).

Edīte Pauls-Vīgnere, a student of Vorkals, created an immersive textile installation for the Dzelme (Depth) bar of the Hotel Daugava in Rīga (Image 116). As her design was part of artist-cum-interior designer Ojārs Ābols' experiment to fill the guesthouse with modernist artworks, Pauls-Vīgnere was free to let her imagination fly. She embellished the bar with frayed textiles suspended criss-cross throughout the interior, creating an underwater atmosphere among fish and seaweed. In his review of contemporary tapestry, Ivars Strautmanis hailed it as the most convincing example of the synthesis of tapestry and architecture.[270] Today's art historians have confirmed this conviction.[271]

Furthermore, theatres and cultural houses, with their necessity for stage curtains, offered commissions for textile artists. Most notably, Anita Celma and Juris Gagainis created minimalist-looking stage curtains for the Theatre Workers Society in Rīga, and Dace Māra Kokina made abstract geometrical stage curtains in Valka (Image 117), Inčukalns and Rīga. In

270 Ivars Strautmanis, Gobelēna un telpas mijiedarbība. [The interaction of the tapestry and space.]
271 Vilnis Vējš, Ārpus rāmjiem / Outside the Frame, p. 187.

Image 116. **Edīte Pauls-Vīgnere, textiles, 1972. Hotel Daugava bar in Rīga. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Museum of Decorative Arts and Design. Photo from the 1970s.**



Image 117. **Dace Māra Kokina, stage curtains, 1978. Valka House of Culture. Courtesy of Latvian Museum of Decorative Arts and Design. Photo from the 1970s.**

terms of the subject matter of these pop-like stage curtains, art historian Iliana Veinberga has concluded that during the 1970s, artists did not seek to formulate political or societal attitudes – this came later in the 1980s – but pursued work with semantically loaded themes such as nature, water, atmospheric conditions that could "stimulate the senses and emotions and kindle subjective and not always controllable reactions."[272]

In conclusion, textile art became a widely recognised discipline in Latvia and a vital export article for the Māksla manufacturing workshop of the Artists' Union.[273] Artistic development was inseparably linked to the institutional and theoretical progress of the field. Soon Soviet Latvian textiles were exhibited internationally, most notably at the Lausanne International Tapestry Biennials, where Magdalena Abakanowicz had previously made her breakthrough.[274] Furthermore, together with ceramic artists, textile artists organised international symposia at the Dzintari Artists' House in Jūrmala, which positively influenced the development of both sectors. Thus, in a way, Latvian textile artists were operating in a more international scene compared to their colleagues in painting, sculpture or graphic art.

272 Iliana Veinberga, Septiņdesmito kultūras mantojums – laiks sintēzei. [The legacy of the 1970s culture – a time for synthesis.] – Diena 15 December 2016.
273 Vilnis Vējš, Ārpus rāmjiem / Outside the Frame, p. 187.
274  Giselle Eberhard Cotton, The Lausanne International Tapestry Biennials (1962–1995). The Pivotal Role of a Swiss City in the 'New Tapestry' Movement in Eastern Europe After World War II. – Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings 2012, p. 2.

## 2.6          Kinetic environments

Kinetic art in the Soviet Union stands out as an exciting example of civil commitment by critical artists. As the recent exhibition and catalogue by the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw on post-war kinetic and Op art in the East European and Latin American scenes exemplify, kinetic tendencies were in such a commanding position in socialist countries from the 1960s to the 1980s that it could even be called the official art.[275] Although the advances in science and technology globally dictated the flourishing of kinetic art, the representation of science-based progress was less prevalent in the United States where intellectuals had only recently experienced their country develop and drop a disastrous atomic bomb. In Eastern Europe, fantasies of the machine age, cosmic engineering, and technophilic impulses were more potent, and therefore kinetic art's egalitarian impulses, with its mood for hope, curiosity, and enthusiasm for sharing, had an attractive effect on artists.[276] Besides its fascination with science, new technologies and cybernetics, kinetic art provided artists with an approachable aesthetic, which was, on the one hand, useful for communicating its worth for the authorities, and on the other hand, helpful for interacting with the broader public.[277]

In the Baltics, Rīga was the centre of kineticism. One explanation for this could be the city's sheer size and industrial might.[278] Cybernetics and kinetic art have been seen as an intellectual response to the immense growth of cities and the urban structures reaching a high degree of complexity. Furthermore, Latvian artists of the 1970s could refer to the home-grown legacy of cosmic Constructivism, as several central authors of the Russian avant-garde, like Gustavs Klucis, Aleksandrs Drēviņš, and

275 See Marta Dziewańska, Dieter Roelstraete, Abigail Winograd (eds.), The Other Trans-Atlantic. Kinetic and Op Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1950s–1970s. Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2018.
276 Dieter Roelstraete, Abigail Winograd, The Other Trans-Atlantyk: Theorizing Kinetic and Op Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America. – Marta Dziewańska, Dieter Roelstraete, Abigail Winograd (eds.), The Other Trans-Atlantic. Kinetic and Op Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1950s–1970s. Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2017, pp. 13, 18.
277 Marta Dziewańska, In Praise of Instability: The Exhibition as an Exercise in Historical Imagination. – Marta Dziewańska, Dieter Roelstraete, Abigail Winograd (eds.), The Other Trans-Atlantic. Kinetic and Op Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1950s–1970s. Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2017, p. 21.
278 Rīga also boasted the Institute of Aviation, which welcomed hundreds of students not only from the Soviet Union but across the leftist-leaning countries in the whole world. As for a more subjective take on the cultural prevalence of Rīga, see Helēna Demakova, The significance of memory in the study of Latvian contemporary art. – Helena Demakova (ed.), The Self. Personal Journeys to Contemporary Art: the 1960s–80s in Soviet Latvia. Rīga: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, 2011, pp. 28–29.

Kārlis Johansons, originated from Latvia.[279] In the 1970s, several artists – among them, Valdis Celms, Artūrs Riņķis and Andulis Krūmiņš from the Rīga group and Māris Ārgalis, Jānis Borgs as well as Jāzeps Kukulis, Anda Ārgale, Kirils Šmeļkovs and Kārlis Kalsers from the informal Pollutionists group and the author of several large-scale projects Jānis Krievs – were captivated by the quest for an alternative, ideal space with innovative forms. These artists "came forth with surprising proposals for the residential environment in the city, in nature and even in outer space, which embodied the problems of the era and at the same time veered away from the real social space."[280] The Rīga scene was further empowered by close ties to the Russian kinetic art group Dvizhenie (Movement). Already in 1967, officials had handed them a large-scale commission to put up a temporary urban installation for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution in Leningrad.[281]

Kinetic art was inherently related to the hybrid practice of monumental-decorative art because both involved authors from art, design, engineering, interior architecture and architecture. Secondly, just like with public art, the creative outcome of the kinetic genre resulted in either works of art, exhibitions, paper architecture, outdoor sculptures and installations, monumental art or subversive conceptual proposals. Thus, the two scenes overlapped on the thin line between official cultural life and the semi- or non-official art practices pursued in the second public sphere. The watchword for this zone was 'design', though it also served as a label which legalised experimental approaches in the official art system.[282]

Although these artists created a dozen or more striking works that have found a place in the history of kineticism in Eastern Europe, their actual spatial contribution to the urban space was modest (except for the Rīga railway station bell tower). Many works were installed in semi-enclosed areas, such as hotels and nightclubs, and had little impact on the city's overall well-being. However, looking at it from a Lefebrian viewpoint,

279 See Iveta Derkusova, The Most Recognised Latvian [?] Artist in the World. The Case of Gustavs Klucis (1895–1938). – Kunstiteaduslikke uurimusi / Studies on Art and Culture 2012, Vol. 21, No. 3–4, pp. 30–55.
280 Ieva Astahovska, Foreword. – Ieva Astahovska (ed.), Visionary Structures: from Johansons to Johansons. Rīga: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2015, pp. 10–11.
281 Dušan Barok, Abigail Winograd, Timeline of Events: Between Eastern Europe and Latin America. – Marta, Dziewańska, Dieter Roelstraete, Abigail Winograd (eds.), The Other Trans-Atlantic. Kinetic and Op Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2017, p. 55.
282 Ieva Astahovska, The Agents of Time. – Ieva Astahovska (ed.), Visionary Structures: from Johansons to Johansons. Rīga: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2015, p. 25.

Image 118. **Avgust Lanin, colour and sound panel, 1974. Approx. 400 × 2000. Hotel Tūrists (Tourist) in Rīga. Destroyed. Courtesy of lanin.spb.ru. Photo from the 1970s.**



Image 119. **Māris Gundars, interior and control panel design, 1976. USSR North-Western United Energy System Dispatcher Authority in Rīga. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Centre for Contemporary Arts. Photo from 1976.**

who argued that the production of space is never limited to the built environment but also involves intellectual discourse, public opinion, and the practices of everyday life, the contribution of these artists to the public space of late Soviet Latvia was crucial. Indeed, authors and critics of the period were eager to point out the egalitarian goals of kinetic art as a positive alternative to the 'dehumanised' modern artificial environment.[283] Kinetic art was considered democratic and humanistic in the sense that it did not demand high-brow intellectualism from its viewers, yet was scientifically advanced and aimed to aesthetically and emotionally assist the public. In this sense, the underlining purpose of kinetic art resembled other novel forms of resistance that had emerged in Eastern Europe after 1968: to democratise society rather than the state.[284] Instead of expecting for political change from above, autonomous social groups pressed for change from below.

As for the executed works, one of the earliest pieces was the 1972 kinetic wall of the Hotel Tūrists (Tourist) in Rīga by Russian artist, architect and theorist Avgust Lanin[285] (Image 118). Lanin who remains virtually unknown in the Baltics, was an important cultural figure in his native Leningrad where he actively took part in art life as a graphic artist, designed various kinetic interior solutions for exhibitions, cafés and hotels and disseminated his ideas on the synthesis of the arts through cultural criticism and academic work.[286] The curved decorative wall was almost twenty metres long and four metres high, with hidden lighting fixtures that responded to the rhythm of the music. Like many other kinetic artists, Lanin's visual language derived from Russian Constructivism, emphasising the repetition of a single element. As his writings reveal, Lanin – like many of his peers – was fascinated by the far-reaching idea of using the synthesis of the arts to manipulate people's sensory experience, eventually hoping to use it in the general creation of a more favourable urban space. Yet, he seemed to be aware that the utopian nature of his project was unrealistic,

283 Jāzeps Baltinavietis, Kinētiskā māksla un vides humanizācija. [Kinetic art and humanisation of the environment.] – Padomju Jaunatne 3 February 1979.

284 Klara Kemp-Welch, Antipolitics in Central European Art. London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2017 [2014], p. 3.

285 The work has been previously mistakenly attributed to a collective of Latvian artists (A. Upmanis, V. Petrenko and S. Poļakovs). See Margareta Tillberg, "I will make machines that fly under water": Electro-kinetic art/design in Latvia in 1970–1980. – Ieva Astahovska (ed.), Visionary Structures: from Johansons to Johansons. Rīga: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2015, p. 79.

286 Lanin's family has put together a comprehensive website with an overview of his oeuvre: https://lanin.spb.ru/, accessed 4 January 2020. Among his written pieces they have also scanned parts of Lanin's 1984 doctoral dissertation on the synthesis of the arts in public buildings.

Image 120. **Valdis Celms,** *Song,* **1979. Approx. 300 × 600. Hotel Latvija in Rīga. 600 x 250 cm. Courtesy of Latvian Centre for Contemporary Arts. Photo from 1979.**



Image 121. **Artūrs Riņķis,** *Brooch,* **1979. Stainless steel, diameter 320. Hotel Latvija. Relocated to a new site on the same building. Courtesy of National Library of Latvia. Photo from 1979.**

and the least he could do was apply some of his less grandiose ideas in designing kinetic objects for public places. Of the dozens of projects he envisioned, only a few were implemented. Besides the sound and colour panel in Rīga, he realised a few similar designs in Leningrad and Voronezh.[287]

A few years later, in 1976, architect Māris Gundars designed the control panel of the USSR North-Western United Energy System Dispatcher Authority building in Rīga, of which the photograph by Laimonis Stīpnieks has become a symbol of late Soviet technical aesthetics which sought to raise the quality of workplace conditions[288] (Image 119). In the same year, the electronic company Positron in the Ukrainian city of Ivanovo-Petrovsk commissioned a kinetic piece from Valdis Celms with the aim of having a relaxing effect on the employees. Despite Celms devoting a year to the design, the company eventually pulled out of the expensive project. Celms' free-floating projects reflected the new human condition, which involved the physical sense of outer space after the 1957 launch of Sputnik into Earth's orbit. In 1979, Celms implemented his ideas in designing a

287 See Boris Mazo = Борис Мазо, Август Ланин будоражил умы шестидесятников. [Avgust Lanin excited the minds of the sixties' generation.] – dp.ru. https://www.dp.ru/a/1997/11/05/Avgust_Lanin_budorazhil_um2, accessed 4 January 2020.
288 Margareta Tillberg, "I will make machines that fly underwater", p. 77.

kinetic panel *Song* for the night bar at Hotel Latvija (Image 120). The work synthesised the technological approach of 'painting with light' with the meditative line of creating subjective associations of colour.[289] Kinetic art was not there merely to entertain; the drive behind many such works was to reveal the mechanisms of sight and express visually the complicated structure of the phenomena and relationships around people.[290]

Artūrs Riņķis became fascinated with kinetic art during his studies when one early source of inspiration was the American aeronautical engineer and painter Frank Malina. Riņķis' diploma project involved electronic equipment he had invented for creating kinetic paintings, named the polychrome projector. Riņķis attended exhibitions and lecture series in Moscow and Kazan, which were visited by kinetic art theoreticians and practitioners from the entire Soviet Union.[291] Riņķis, Celms, and Andulis Krūmiņš came of age with a joint exhibition in 1978, which was well-received by the critics. Riņķis himself published a manifesto-like article in the daily newspaper *Liesma*, claiming that "kinetic art is, on the one hand, a new art form and on the other hand a scientific field which experiments with colour, shape, texture, light and movement and will synthesise applied art, scenography, light, music, and theatrical performances".[292] Riņķis' first significant outdoor kinetic object was the *Sakta* (Brooch) placed on the facade of the Hotel Latvija in 1979 (Image 121). He received the assignment from Ojārs Ābols, who was responsible for the artistic embellishment of the first 'skyscraper' in central Rīga. The commissioner wanted a kinetic object on the hotel's facade about something characteristic of Latvia.[293] Riņķis decided to work on the concept of a brooch, a common decorative jewellery item in Latvian folk costumes. The composition consists of polished stainless-steel truncated cones threaded on a vertical axis. While the outer cone is static, the inner ones move. The shiny steel surface reflects the surrounding urban environment.[294] The *kinesis* of the work, its fascination with movement, can be read as an allusion to the movement of the people.[295]

289 Ieva Astahovska, Valdis Celms. – Ieva Astahovska (ed.), Visionary Structures: from Johansons to Johansons. Rīga: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2015, p. 176.
290 Marta Dziewańska, In Praise of Instability, p. 25.
291 Kristīne Budže, The Brooch on the hotel façade. Kristīne Budže, Inese Baranovska (eds.), Tieši laikā. Dizaina stāsti par Latviju / Just on Time. Design Stories about Latvia. Rīga: Latvian National Museum of Art, 2018, p. 197.
292 Artūrs Riņķis, Forma – krāsas – dinamika. [Form – colours – dynamics.] – Liesma 1978, No. 11.
293 Kristīne Budže, The Brooch on the hotel façade, p. 198–199.
294 Ibid., p. 198.
295 Dieter Roelstraete, Abigail Winograd, The Other Trans-Atlantyk, p. 18.

Image 123. **Artūrs Riņķis,** *Universe*, **1984. Information screen design in front of the Planetarium in Rīga. Destroyed. Courtesy of National Library of Latvia. Photo from 1984.**

Image 122. **Artūrs Riņķis, kinetic object, 1980. Height approx. 300. Lauktehnika State Company in Sigulda. Destroyed. Courtesy of National Library of Latvia. Photo from 1980.**

A year later, Riņķis created another kinetic environmental object for the Lauktehnika State Company at Sigulda (Image 122). It vaguely represented an ear of grain, with the metal fan turning around like the *Brooch*'s truncated cones. Marta Dziewańska emphasises that although kinetic art of the period is rarely figurative, it is not possible to call it abstract in the conventional sense since "movement, dynamics, and non-conclusiveness are its very essence, on which its visions of the future are built". Thus, the abstraction of kinetic art does not stem from the tradition of abstract art – kinetic art is non-pictorial, just like architecture or design.[296]

Riņķis also produced the outdoor information board for Rīga's Planetarium (Image 123). The electronic board stood next to the Nativity of Christ Orthodox Cathedral, which had been transformed into the House of Knowledge and informed the public of upcoming events. Alas, the neatly designed object quickly lost its functionalities, and despite the author's efforts to keep it working, it was soon dismantled.[297] Nevertheless, despite its shortcomings, it was an apt example of how kinetic art implemented as

296 Marta Dziewańska, In Praise of Instability, p. 28.
297 Conversation with Artūrs Riņķis, 11 December 2019. Audio recording in the possession of the author.

Image 125. **Jānis Krievs, lumino-kinetic spatial design, 1970s. Liepaja Civil Registry Office. Courtesy of Liepaja Civil Registry Office. Photo from the 1970s.**
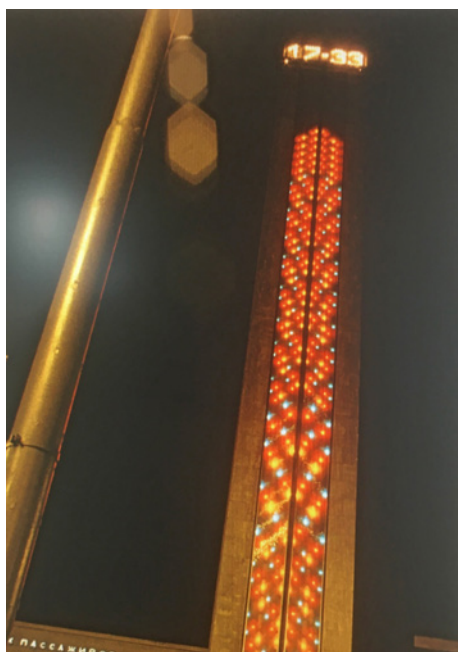
Image 124. **Jānis Krievs, Aivars Bērziņš (design team leaders), kinetic light solution, 1980. Rīga Central Railway Station clock tower. Multi-programmed light system. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art. Photo from 1980.**

a novel product design with user-friendly aesthetics offered an alternative means of communication for the artist. As Roelstraete and Winograd state, for many enthusiasts of kineticism, it was a way for dispersing societal apathy and creating an active spectator – "an undeniably political demarche in the context of the many challenges to (or total lack of) democracy that characterised everyday life".[298]

As the Soviet Union prepared for the 1980 Moscow Olympics, several cities were spruced up. In Rīga, the railway station was also renovated. The design work was entrusted to a brigade of artists and designers led by Jānis Krievs and Aivars Bērziņš. The station gained new information graphics, and the landmark clock tower in front of the station acquired a programmed light system in which the lights changed according to the flow of time[299] (Image 124).

298 Dieter Roelstraete, Abigail Winograd, The Other Trans-Atlantyk, p. 16.
299 Aivars Bērziņš, Jānis Krievs, Dizaina koncepcija Rīgas dzelzceļa stacijai. [Design concept of the Rīga railway station.] – Uldis Pīlēns (ed.), Arhitektūra un dizains. Rakstu krājums [Architecture and Design. Collection of Articles.] Rīga: Avots, 1985, p. 61.

Institutions across the Eastern Bloc implemented similar projects. For example, the Yugoslav artist Vladimir Bonačić with a background in nuclear electronics, who served as the head of the Cybernetics Research Laboratory, created an urban installation entitled *DIN. PR18* in 1969 by using Galois computations to regulate light on boxes installed on the facade of a department store in Zagreb. As Maja and Reuben Fowkes conclude, such works, which combined scientific innovation and public art, pointed to the blending of socialist consumerism and faith in technological solutions to improving society.[300] Jānis Krievs, who had much faith in mechanics, made kinetic pieces for a hotel in Jurmala, the Liepaja Civil Registry Office (Image 125) and the enormous audio-kinetic stage decoration for the Daugavpils Builders' Culture House (Image 94). David Crowley has suggested that in comparison to artists from other Eastern bloc countries, where neo-avant-garde tendencies were laced with a hint of postmodern irony, the Latvian artists' engagement with the early Soviet avant-garde and their visionary projects of the 1970s and 1980s possessed a genuine desire for utopia.[301] Passion and a willingness to compromise helped artists to produce large-scale kinetic solutions. Compared to the active scene in Rīga, if we ignore the work of Kaarel Kurismaa, Lithuania and Estonia have little to add to the legacy of public kinetic art in the late Soviet period.

Estonian artist Kaarel Kurismaa made his first lighting objects with kinetic art in mind in 1976 for the Neptun bar in the Lasnamäe mass-housing district of Tallinn.[302] The breakthrough commission for him was *Kinetic Object* in the new Tallinn Post Office (1980) in cooperation with Härmo Härm (sound and movement of light) and Rait Prääts (stained glass) (Image 126). The object's location was symbolic: the post office in the centre of Tallinn (architects Raine Karp and Mati Raigna) was one of the most prominent structures erected for the 1980 Olympic regatta. Compared to the strict exterior of the building, the interior spoke a more dynamic architectural language. The building featured the country's first escalator, attracting people from all over. The roller staircase, which stopped working and was replaced by ordinary stairs after a couple of years, took customers

300 Maja Fowkes, Reuben Fowkes, Central and Eastern European Art Since 1950, p. 62–63.
301 David Crowley, Art and Environment in Latvia in the 1970s and 1980s. – Ieva Astahovska (ed.), Visionary Structures. From Johansons to Johansons. Rīga: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2015, p. 65.
302 I have discussed Kurismaa's kinetic objects in public space in the catalogue published in the framework of his retrospective show at the Art Museum of Estonia. See Gregor Taul, Kaarel Kurismaa kineetilised objektid avalikus ruumis. [Kaarel Kurismaa's kinetic objects in public space.] – Ragne Soosalu (ed.), Kaarel Kurismaa. Kollase valguse orkester [Kaarel Kurismaa. Yellow Light Orchestra.] Tallinn: Art Museum of Estonian – Kumu Art Museum, pp. 24–30.

Image 126. **Kaarel Kurismaa, Härmo Härm, Rait Prääts, *Kinetic Object*, 1980. Tallinn Post Office. Tallinn, 1 Narva mnt. Destroyed. Courtesy of Kaarel Kurismaa. Photo from 1980.**

onto the main floor's spacious service hall where they were greeted – or scared – by Kurismaa's interactive 'creature'. Media artist and theoretician Raivo Kelomees has described the work in the following words: "It was quite a large and cumbersome device, with flashing lights and, in addition, it was noisy. On top of it were 'postal trumpets' symbolising the institution, from which sighs and buzzing emerged."[303] Initially, the artist had planned to create an object which would produce gasp-like sounds, but this gasp sounded more like a roar, and as it began to annoy the postal workers, its volume was turned down. Eventually, the sound was lost altogether. Kurismaa's work exemplifies how the commissioning body aimed to create a win-win situation where the authorities, the client, the general public and the artists would all be satisfied. In this case, perhaps the group of artists

303 Raivo Kelomees, Postmateriaalsus kunstis. [Postmateriality in Art.] Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2009, p. 145.

walked away with the most significant gain: they had been able to work on an exciting project, had earned good money and could even disorganise the 'aesthetic regime.'

Russian art historian Oksana Shatalova has claimed that despite its alleged anonymity, late Soviet monumental-decorative art achieved Lenin's utopian project of bringing art into the centre of social life.[304] The kinetic experiments which crossed the boundary between art and science corresponded to the strategic concerns and public posturing of the ideology of socialist modernisation.[305] Art historian Iliana Veinberga, who has discussed the legacy of Latvian kineticism from a post-colonialist perspective, has highlighted the variety of agencies artists held in Soviet society.[306] As socialist colonisation dragged on, oppositional artists and designers adopted different strategies of collaborationism and settled for a 'hybrid coexistence' in which they were employed by various research institutes or 'design bureaus.' Thus, despite their provocative oeuvre, their employment helped to normalise the status quo.

## 2.7      Decoratively emancipatory monumentality?

I will finish this chapter with three sub-chapters which somewhat deviate from the chronological structure of the thesis. In sections 2.8 and 2.9, I will show how extensively Baltic monumental artists worked outside the borders of their country. I draw on examples from the entire Soviet period in order to make an argument that monumental-decorative art tied Baltic visual art much more strongly with the rest of the Soviet Union than has been previously assumed or thought. I have also decided to give this sub-chapter focused on gender issues a wider chronological dimension to highlight this aspect as an important talking point.

One of the keys to the 'Soviet riddle' lies in the interplay between emancipation and the factors fettering it.[307] On the one hand, no other country has experienced such a high level of female participation in the world of work and culture, while on the other hand, the same state notoriously closed off discussion, denying fundamental human rights and keeping women away from power. Overall, the genuine emancipation of

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304 See Oksana Shatalova = Оксана Шаталова, Метафизика формы. [Metaphysics of form.]
305 Maja Fowkes, Reuben Fowkes, Central and Eastern European Art Since 1950, p. 372.
306 See Iliana Veinberga, The Designer, Industry and Art during the Second Half of the 20th Century. – Ieva Astahovska (ed.), Visionary Structures: from Johansons to Johansons. Rīga: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2015, pp 82–87.
307 Moshe Lewin, The Soviet Century, p. 311.

women was marred by two limits: their merely symbolic presence in the power structure and a stubborn patriarchal system. The state of monumental-decorative art further complicates the 'messy history' of emancipation in the cultural life of the Soviet Union.[308]

To begin with, the concept of monumental-decorative art itself refers to long-standing art-historical clichés about 'masculine' monumentality and 'feminine' decorativeness structured around the sex of the artist (e.g., the physically demanding mural painting has been considered to be a manly job), the sex of the audience (e.g., decorative art belongs to women's boudoirs), sexed subject matter (e.g., male muralists depict female nudes as national allegories) and even the sex of the substance, that is, the artists' materials and media. By analysing how painting has affected gender connotations, Nicholas Chare has brought out a list of male artists who have, in different contexts, voiced oil paint to represent their sperm – and the wet lime plaster to be female genitalia.[309] These stereotypes persisted to varying extents throughout the Soviet period. Yet, when looking at the number of men and women active in monumental-decorative art and the number of women involved in leading positions, it seems that the overall situation was more favourable for women in this field than, for example, in studio art. Furthermore, in the 1970s, there was talk of a plethora of young female artists dominating Estonian sculpture and graphics – up to the point that the art of the period was 'accused of' softness, of becoming feminised.[310] On the other hand, the considerably large number of women active in monumental-decorative art, sculpture and graphics may point to a latent structural disparity, as compared to painting (where men prevailed), the disciplines mentioned above were considered 'secondary' or 'applied.'

Regarding institutional representation, in Tallinn and Vilnius, the monumental painting departments were run by female artists. The monumental painting studio of the Lithuanian State Art Institute was headed by Irena Trečiokaitė-Žebenkinė from 1951 to 1969 and from there on until 1980 by Sofija Veiverytė-Liugailienė. In 1965, when the Department of monumental painting of the Estonian State Art Institute

308  As for the term 'messy history', see Martha Scotford, Messy History vs. Neat History: Toward an Expanded View of Women in Graphic Design. – Visible Language 1994, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp. 367–387.

309 See Nicholas Chare, Sexing the canvas: calling on the medium. – Art History 2009, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 664–689.

310 Reet Varblane, Mikoff has Always Tried to Break out of the Shell – Gregor Taul (ed.), Mikoff. Skulptuurid / Mikoff. Sculptures. Tartu. Tartu Art Museum, 2016, p. 28.

Image 127. **Eva Jänes, *Days of Mary*, 1980. Fresco, approx. 250 × 500. Väike-Maarja Community Centre. Väike-Maarja, 2 Pikk tn. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2012.**

was formed, Dolores Hoffmann was selected as the dean.[311] During the 1970s, she became one of the frontrunners in monumental painting and the primary supervisor of graduation projects. In about 20 years, Hoffmann supervised 31 diploma works. As has been emphasised, she also took care of her students after graduation and forwarded them jobs whenever possible. However, despite her prominent presence, she was, for a long time, the only woman among the teachers of the painting department.[312]

Estonian artist Kai Kaljo, who became internationally known for her video art in the 1990s, studied at the hands of Hoffmann in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Kaljo has highlighted that despite the apparent monumentalism of the undertaking, the painting of a fresco is an intricate and time-consuming job, "something more akin to applying mascara."[313] In the 1980s, when Kaljo chose to study monumental painting – an unpopular field – she realised that it was considered an unpleasant, ideological area of study associated with propaganda imagery and *khaltura* (shoddy work

311 Mai Levin, Eva Jänes. – Eva Jänes, Mai Levin (eds.), Eva Jänes. Geomeetria kaudu harmooniale. Maalid. [Eva Jänes. Through Geometry to Harmony. Paintings.] Tallinn: Eva Jänes, 2019, p. 110.
312 Reeli Kõiv, Monumentaalmaalist EKA-s läbi kolme aastakümne 1962–1955 / Monumental painting at the Estonian Academy of Arts through three decades 1962–1995. – Reeli Kõiv (ed.), Nähtamatu monumentaalmaal / Invisible Monumental Painting. Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2020, pp. 26–27.
313 Conversation with Kai Kaljo, 14 June 2011. Notes in the possession of the author.

Image 128. **Džemma Skulme, *Dance*, 1967. Cement, watercolour, lacquer. Jaunķemeri balneological sanatorium. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Liesma. Photo from the 1960s.**

done on the side). Therefore, for Kaljo, choosing monumental painting, on the one hand, meant going the easy way – as there was less competition for entry – while, on the other hand, it made it harder for her to be taken seriously as an artist.[314] In Kai Kaljo's example, the question of gender was not so much a focus as was the genre's dubious reputation for its propagandist connotation.

From a gender-critical perspective, it is essential to look at how images represent gender roles. In this respect, the standard confirmed traditional gender roles and conservative values were attributed to the behaviour of men and women. From the 1950s until the end of the Soviet period, for example, depicting country folks in traditional clothes in an imaginary golden age at village celebrations or doing farm work was common. Maids with aprons and muscular men with rolled-up sleeves represented a particular ethnographic ideal and national integrity that extended to gender roles. Images with this theme were widespread in collective farm centres, cultural houses in the countryside (Image 127), and wedding palaces. The ethnographic 'arcadia' was also reflected in places where the pictures acted as tourist attractions, such as hotels and sanatoria (Image 128). The village idyll and the accompanying nuclear family, where the man works in the fields, and the woman raises children, was also depicted in urban cafes,

314 Gregor Taul, Monumental Painting in Estonia: Notes, p. 134.

Image 129. **Nijolė Vilutytė,** *History of Firefighting***, 1977. Vilnius Fire Protection Board. Destroyed. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**



Image 130. **Vladas Jankauskas, Gitenis Umbrasas and Artūras Jonikas,** *Architects***, 1983. Fresco, approx. 300 × 400. Vilnius Municipality. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**



Image 131. **Unknown artist, mural painting, possibly 1980s. Rīga, 44 Kalnciema iela. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2023.**

schools and universities. Another subject that encouraged artists to express imaginary rural life was the depiction of national epic and local myths (Image 98).

One of the most depicted figures throughout the Soviet period was a

Image 132. **Unknown artist, mural painting in Rīga Medical School, early 1960s. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian National Library. Photo from the early 1960s.**



Image 133. **Lepo Mikko, *Science, Technology and Art*, 1964. Ceramics, 250 × 350. Central Library of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR (now Academic Library of Tallinn University). Tallinn, 10 Lenini pst (now Rävala pst). Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from 2010s.**



Image 134. **Antanas Kmieliauskas, *Hope*, 1982. Fresco, approx. 250 × 400. Pharmacy Vilties (Hope) in Kaunas. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**



Image 135. **Gražina Arlauskaitė-Vingrienė, *Feast*, 1982. Fresco, approx. 250 × 1200. Gubernija brewery in Šiauliai. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

man briskly doing physical work and supposedly leading the building of socialism in the factories, construction sites (Image 71), fire stations (Image 129) and other productive areas. In Lithuanian art, commissioners also emphasised the role of a man as a warrior, as works in cafes and cultural institutions depicted battle scenes where brave Lithuanian men fought against the colonising Crusaders (Image 54).

Furthermore, images depicting prehistoric hunting scenes also manifested the archetype of a man as a fighter (Image 19).

However, in the early 1960s, alongside men using their physical strength, men representing scientific and intellectual values also emerged, expressing the Soviet macroeconomic shift from a heavy industry-focused system to a more developed economy. This was manifested extensively

in universities, research institutes and other scientific institutions. With scientific themes came a gender bias. For example, the lion's share of Vilnius University's monumental paintings created in the 1970s depicted only men as scientists. The same also applied to the depiction of engineers and architects. For example, a fresco in the Department of Urban Planning in the Vilnius Municipality featured 12 male architects in the foreground and one female architect in the background (Image 130). The trend of bringing men's intellectual work to the foreground continued until the end of the Soviet period. It even gained momentum during perestroika when more and more national figures and 'founding fathers' were depicted in public spaces. Unsurprisingly, in such a masculine atmosphere, men were sometimes portrayed metaphorically as the world's creators or as the embodiment of a creative spirit. For example, one end wall in Rīga featured a rendition of Rodin's famous *Thinker* (Image 131).

In the Soviet Union, a role not unlike that of the Madonna with a child was given to a more demanding mother figure who often held her child in the air as a trophy, which would lead the communist camp towards a brighter future (Image 132). This was especially so in the 1950s and 1960s. By the mid-1960s, the pathos of this image diminished, but the mother marching, working, or resting with her child or children remained popular. During the 1960s, it was also customary for the heroic mother figure to appear together with a dove, torch, or atom – all of which, in different ways, referred to the Soviet Union's ideological quest for peace (Image 133). In the 1970s, the 'socialist Madonna' disappeared as more story-based images emerged in which women served diverse roles, although many still centred around the family.

In addition, the murals in which women were depicted as metaphors for some general concepts were widespread. In addition to personifying global peace, women were depicted as expressions of friendship or leisure time. Furthermore, sometimes femininity was used as a symbol of life, health and beauty (Image 134). In a few cases, the pictorial language moved away from the general socialist practice, and objectified women as desirable bodies which was more inherent to capitalist visual culture[315] (Image 135).

Women were also typically depicted as protectors of the arts. In the M. K. Čiurlionis Art High School, muses appeared on the facade mosaic and in the foyer's stained-glass windows (Image 21). The Greek goddesses also

315 See Keti Chukrov, Practicing the Good...

Image 136. **Zinaida Dargienė, *Eglė*, 1980. Woollen tapestry, approx. 300 × 900. Restaurant Eglė in Kaunas. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Daiva Rekertaitė-Načiulienė. Photo from the 1980s.**

appeared at Vilnius University (Image 95). As familiar figures in Baltic mythology, women were also depicted as mythical queens and deities (Image 136). In a few cases, Baltic artists glorified the female heroine as a Slavic-style motherland, but such imperialist iconography remained alien to Baltic interiors (Image 146). However, the metaphor of a woman as a mourner was common. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is Helga Ingeborga Melnbārde's ceramic panel inspired by Eižens Vēveris' collection of poems commemorating the Holocaust (Image 137).

As for the portrayal of emancipated women, it was primarily female students and youth. Pictures of young gymnasts and athletes bursting with self-belief (Image 19) and young women and men carelessly spending time together in cafés or village parties were the most ordinary (Images 41, 138). Whereas 'proper' scientists and engineers were depicted as men, female students appeared equally among male learners (Image 139). Another field of intellectual work where men and women were portrayed relatively equally was medicine. However, this may refer to the stereotype that hospitals are staffed by more women than men, albeit not necessarily in senior positions. Only on one occasion, was a well-known woman from the 19th-century national awakening period depicted as a central figure in a monumental

Image 137. **Helga Ingeborga Melnbārde,** *ledēstiet rozes zemē nolādētā...* **(To plant roses in the land of the cursed), 1973. Ceramics, approx. 120 × 150. Location unknown. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Rīga Porcelain Museum. Photo from the 1970s.**



Image 138. **Vytautas Povilaitis,** *Leisure,* **1971. Oil on cardboard, 400 × 600. Fastening Components Plant's Club in Vilnius. Destroyed. Courtesy of Boleslovas Klova. Photo from the 1970s.**



Image 139. **Unknown author, mural painting, 1970s. Approx 900 × 900. Jõhvi Vocational School. Destroyed. Jõhvi, Kutse 12. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2010.**



Image 140. **Jaak Arro and Epp-Maria Kokamägi,** *The Purple of Red Evenings,* **1987–1988. Oil on canvas, approx. 250 × 750. Cinema Mai (May). Removed and stored in Pärnu Museum. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2012.**

painting – Estonian poet Lydia Koidula in Jaak Arro and Epp-Maria Kokamägi's panel painting in the Mai (May) cinema in Pärnu (Image 140).

As for the depiction of physical labour by women, as mentioned above, artworks depicting idyllic rural life were typical, in which women either worked in the fields, took care of animals or wove. In connection with the booming light industries, weavers were also elevated to the leading figures of modern life. For example, panels praising proud female workers from the textile factories in Narva, Estonia and Alytus, Lithuania, were placed prestigiously in public places in both cities (Image 141).

Image 141. **Nijolė Vilutytė-Dalinkevičienė and Romas Dalinkevičius, *Weavers,* 1980. Fresco-sgraffito. Alytus Culture House. Alytus, 1b Pramonės str. Courtesy of Alytus Municipality. Photo from 2020.**

## 2.8   Baltic muralists working across the Soviet Union

As Baltic art histories have tended to emphasise the connections with Western art, the dynamic exchange of ideas within the Soviet Union has been downplayed and demands revision. While critical art undeniably looked in the direction of the Western metropolises, there was considerable interaction and exchange of ideas with the rest of the Soviet Union in the case of monumental-decorative art. From the second half of the 1960s, Baltic artists received more commissions from other Soviet republics. There are several reasons for this. One of the best options to be noticed as an artist was at large pan-Soviet exhibitions in Moscow. The success achieved there helped to establish personal relationships with leading art functionaries. Many Lithuanian monumental artists did exceptionally well in this respect.

Furthermore, the local art factories helped to 'export' their artists to the rest of the Soviet Union by looking for design commissions across the

Union. Successful orders, in turn, helped to increase the budget of the Artists' Union and led to increasing design opportunities. The artistic and constructional quality of the work done supported the success. There was also the symbolic capital, the parable of the region's 'good taste', and the fact that people in the USSR considered the Baltic states as the Soviet Union's own 'foreign country.'[316]

Pre-war Rīga featured several stained-glass workshops to cater for the needs of its middle and upper-class clients decorating the splendid Art Nouveau buildings of the city centre.[317] At the beginning of the Soviet occupation, these workshops were grouped into the cooperative Māksla art factory. As the building of the Moscow metro was underway at the time, Rīga's glass artists were employed to execute the panels for Novoslobodskaya station. Overall, 32 glass panels were made in Rīga and installed in the station in 1951. The design of the windows was prepared by the Russian socialist realist painter and restorer Pavel Korin.[318] Later, Māksla mediated successful commissions such as Vera Viduka's 1970 stage curtains for the Murmansk region Culture House, Ralfs Jansons' mural for the Petrozavodsk theatre (1971),[319] and Egons Cēsnieks' murals and stained-glass pieces in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Armenia.[320] Besides the production of sculptures and metal panels for the facades of various cultural buildings in Soviet Russia, the art factory carried out full-scale interior design solutions which did not necessarily involve applied arts, but spread the word about Latvian interior architects (e.g., Māris Gundars designed the interiors of the University of Novosibirsk and a guesthouse in the Adler Black Sea resort).[321] It was flattering and profitable for the art factory to fulfil orders from Moscow. For the 1980 Olympic games, sculptors Arta Dumpe and the Moscow-born Viktorija

316 Kristīne Budže, When design was in the hands of artists. Interview with Džemma Skulme. The Latvian design environment in the 1920s and 1930s. – Kristīne Budže, Inese Baranovska (eds.), Tieši laikā. Dizaina stāsti par Latviju / Just on Time. Design Stories about Latvia. Rīga: Latvian National Museum of Art, 2018, p. 56.
317 Being a regional leader in this market meant that most of the stained-glass windows in Estonian churches at the beginning of the 20th century were imported from Rīga. See Linda Lainvoo, Grete Nilp, Sõnum värvilisel klaasil. Pilguheit Eesti vitraažikunstile. [Message on coloured glass. A glimpse into Estonian stained-glass art.] – Muinsuskaitse Aastaraamat 2019, p. 86.
318 Подсвечиваемые витражи станции метро 'Новослободская.' [Illuminated stained-glass windows of the Novoslobodskaya metro station.] – Северная линия [Northern line]., https://северная-линия.рф/2017/04/12/Подсвечиваемые-витражи-станции-метр, accessed 27 January 2021.
319 Ingrīda Burāne (ed.), Māksla un arhitektūra biogrāfijās. 1. Sējums. [Art and Architecture Biographies. Volume 1.] Rīga: Latvijas enciklopēdija, 1995, p. 217.
320 Egonam Cēsniekam – 75. [For Egons Cēsnieks – 75.] – Zvaigzne 20 August 1990.
321 Jānis Borgs, Mākslas portrets interjerā. [Portrait of art in the interior.] – Māksla 1982, No. 3.
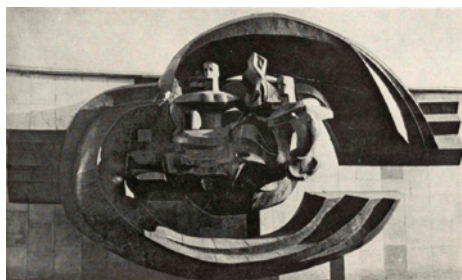
Image 142. **Arta Dumpe and Viktorija Pelše, metal composition, 1980. Central Television Building in Moscow. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Māksla magazine. Photo from the 1980s.**
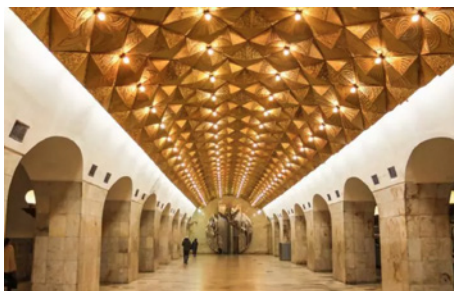


Image 143. **Haims Risins and Arnolds Naika, decorative ceiling design, 1979. Aluminium. Aviomotornaya metro station. Courtesy of rusmania.com. Photo from the 2010s.**

Pelše crafted a sculptural composition for the Central Television Building (Image 142). Haims Risins and Arnolds Naika designed the decorative aluminium ceiling of the Moscow Aviomotornaya metro station, which still adorns the space (Image 143). They also designed and carried out decorative metalwork compositions for the Embassy of the Latvian Socialist Soviet Republic in Moscow, the Palace of Congresses and the Hall of the Kremlin Palace, the building of the Supreme Council of the USSR, the hotel Rossija and several metro stations in Leningrad and Tashkent.[322]

Lithuania was the most efficient in exporting its expertise to the rest of the Soviet Union. Algimantas Stoškus and Kazimieras Morkūnas made their breakthrough during the early 1960s. When there was still an attempt to build the Palace of the Soviets in Moscow, a team of architects led by Alexander Vlasov invited Stoškus and Morkūnas to design the stained-glass walls of the ceremonial hall. Although the project stalled, it opened the door to subsequent assignments.[323] In 1968, Stoškus finished a stained-glass wall piece for the Oktyabr cinema in Moscow (Image 33). The architect of this project was Mikhail Posokhin, who, in the 1960s, served as the chief architect of Moscow and chairman of the State Committee of Civil Construction and Architecture of the State Committee for Construction of the USSR (Gosstroi). Good relations with an architect-bureaucrat of such high standing brought many significant commissions to Stoškus and his Lithuanian colleagues. In 1968, Stoškus created a spatial stained-glass piece for the House of Architects in Moscow

322 Risins Haims. – Ludza Town Library 2024. https://www.ludzasbiblio.lv/kulturvestures-datu-baze/novadnieki/makslinieki/risins-haims/, accessed 17 February 2024.
323 Algimantas Mačiulis, Dailė architektūroje. [Architectural Art.], p. 140.

Image 144. **Algimantas Stoškus, stained-glass composition, 1970–1971. Coloured glass, cement, metal, 180 × 1400 × 100. Administrative building in Moscow. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Liudvika Ramanauskaitė. Photo from the 1970s.**

and a few years later, another massive piece for an administrative building in Moscow (Image 144), which featured lumps of lilac, violet, orange, and red glass typical to his works. Stoškus had firmly established himself as capable of adding luxurious and original glitter to the representative buildings of the Soviet government.

As for a selection of other Lithuanians who managed to convey their ideas in the capital of the USSR, in 1962, Steponas Kazimieraitis decorated the exposition of the Moscow Historical Museum, together with Kazimieras Morkūnas they made a stained-glass piece for the USSR Art Fund Shop, in 1967 Filomena Ušinskaitė created a stained-glass piece for the restaurant Jakor, while the same year Kazimieras Simanonis and Marija Juškevičiutė-Mačiulienė made pieces for the hotel Sputnik.[324] Furthermore, Gintautėlė Laimutė Baginskienė executed a kinetic stained-glass piece for the Mineralogical Museum, Anicetas Jonutis created a tapestry for the Board of Geology (1975), Liudvikas Pocius made a stained-glass piece for the Ostankino Olympic Television and Radio complex in 1980, and Bronius Bružas designed the stained-glass windows of the Lithuanian

324 Boleslovas Klova, Lietuvių monumentalioji dekoratyvinė tapyba. [Lithuanian Monumental-decorative Painting.], p. 43.

Image 145. **Mina Levitan-Babenskienė, *Urge*, 1975. Wool, sisal-hemp, synthetics, 250 × 550. International Oncological Centre in Moscow. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Daiva Rekertaitė-Načiulienė. Photo from the 1970s.**

SSR's embassy in Moscow. Mina Levitan-Babenskienė – one of the most established Lithuanian textile artists – made three tapestries for the International Centre of Oncology in Moscow in the late 1970s. These were abstract tapestries, which nevertheless communicated the client's fight against cancer – each work conveyed a humanist sense of preserving life (Image 145). The same artist also created a monumental tapestry for the Press Centre of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs and later a large-scale spatial tapestry for the Olympic Press Centre, which hung from the ceiling of a colossal lobby. She also made ensemble-forming tapestries for the Moscow Cinema (1987–1990) and the Central Clinical Hospital (1988). Even the non-conforming Kazimiera Zimblytė, who was more a *persona non grata* in Lithuanian authoritative art life, found a way to balance her life along the Moscow underground circles with official commissions by creating a stage curtain for the Gnesin High School of Music in Moscow (1973).

As for the distribution of Lithuanian monumental-decorative art beyond Moscow, I have pinpointed roughly 30 works, but the number was probably much higher. Most prominently, in 1970, Algimantas Stoškus made a stained-glass composition for the eminent Vladimir Lenin Memorial Centre in Ulyanovsk (Image 146). Compared to Stoškus's other works from this period, it was a more literal piece with a symbolic motherland figure in the centre supported by the sun, children and factory workers. The building curiously resembles an oversized imitation of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoy with a nondescript concrete block placed upon slim pillars. As Lenin's hometown celebrated its hero's 100th anniversary in 1970, the city also acquired its first International Style highrise in the form of the Hotel Venets (Crown), which received a stained-glass piece
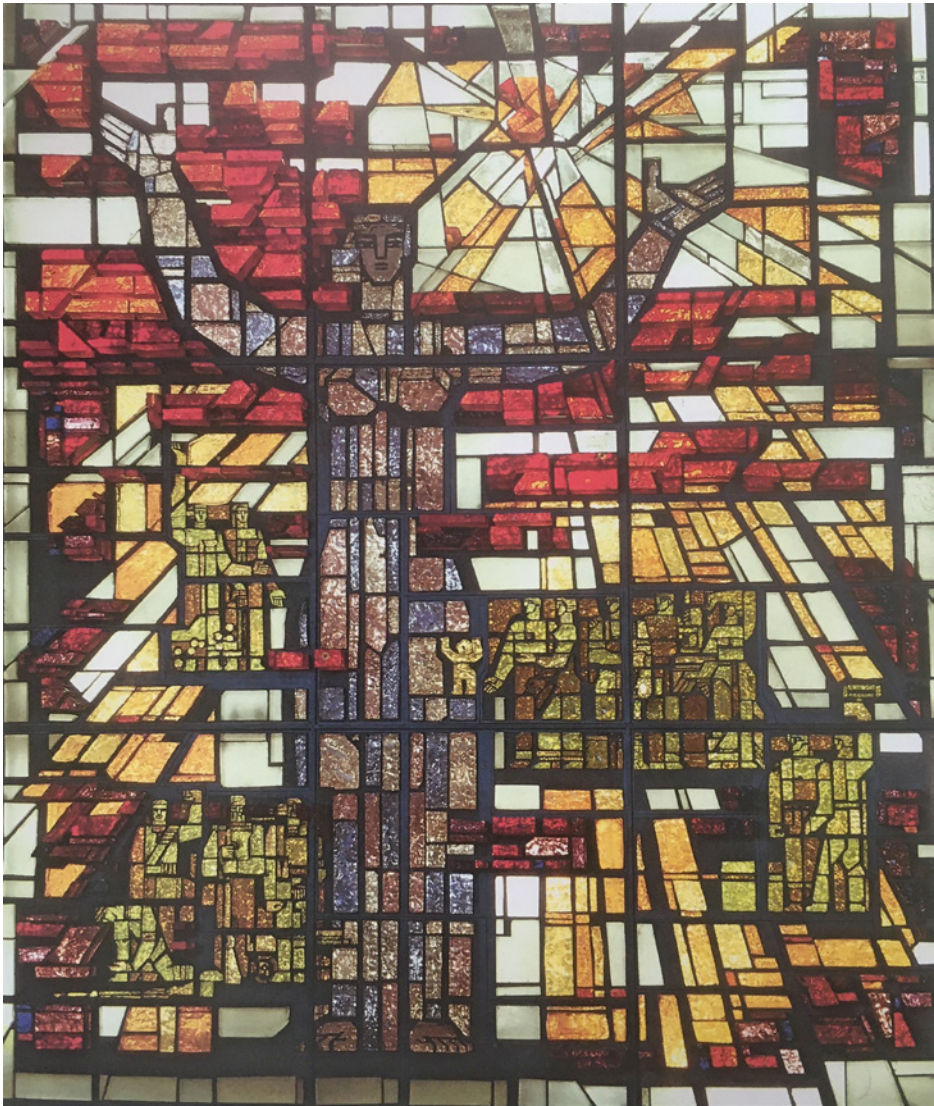
Image 146. **Algimantas Stoškus, stained-glass composition, 1969–1970. Coloured glass, cement, 700 × 600. Vladimir Lenin Memorial Centre in Ulyanovsk. Courtesy of Liudvika Ramanauskaitė. Photo from the 1970s.**

by Lithuanian artist Antanas Garbauskas. Some years earlier, Stoškus and Garbauskas had collectively created a stained-glass work for the House of Artists in Curzuf, Crimea (1965). The summer resorts in the Black Sea region were active in employing Lithuanian monumentalists. For example, glass artist Irena Birutė Gylytė-Vitkauskienė made a stained-glass piece for an administrative building in Yalta (1966), and Gražina Švažienė executed

ceramic panels for guesthouses in Dombay (1972) and Ponyzivka.[325]
Konstantinas Šatūnas was another to receive a commission in the Dombay
skiing resort in the Caucasus mountains by creating a stained-glass window
in the hotel café of the International Youth Centre in 1977.

Lithuanian artists also worked in Estonia (Rachilė Krukaitė's 1967
stained-glass windows at the Tartu City Museum), Kaliningrad (Steponas
Kazimiraitis's 1976 stained-glass windows for the mayor's office),[326] the
Udmurt Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Elvyra Petraitienė's 1977
mural at the kindergarten in Glaznov),[327] Belarus (Honorata Razmienė's
tapestry at the Ministry of Culture of the Belorusian SSR),[328] Ukraine
(Filomena Ušinskaitė's 1968 glasswork at the Restaurant Metchta (Dream)
in Ternopil, Armenia (Stasys Ušinskas's 1964 stained-glass piece *Cosmos*
for Yerevan Institute of Electronics) and even the Russian Far East (Daiva
Rekertaitė-Načiulienė's 1981 stage curtain tapestry of the Pioneer's
Palace in Komsomolsk-on-Amur). Artist Irena Lipienė moved to Tashkent
in Uzbekistan after her studies in Vilnius. She stayed there for 20 years
between 1966 and 1985, working as an art teacher and executing several
stained-glass pieces; for example, in the Artists' Union café (1972) and
Intourist Hotel (1974).

Instead of commissions for monumental art, the Estonian SSR stood
out in other parts of the Soviet Union for its interior architects making
all-embracing room designs for various institutions. The Tallinn-based art
factory ARS was also known for providing exhibition design options for its
employers. The most successful in this area were the artistic couple Helle
and Taevo Gans, who, among several other works, designed the interiors
of the Recreation Centre of the Ministry of Agriculture of the USSR in
Moscow Oblast (1968), the Soyuz Apollo Centre in Zvezdnyi Gorodok
near Moscow (1973), Khaidarkan kindergarten in Kirgizia SSR (1981),
Vjasselka (Rainbow) kindergarten in Belarusian SSR (1985), exhibition
halls for the XII International Student and Youth Festival in Moscow
(1985), the Art Salon of the Central House of Artists by the Art Foundation
of the USSR in Moscow (1987), and the Rosivalyutorg stores and office

325 Algimantas Mačiulis, Dailė architektūroje. [Architectural Art.], p. 155.
326 Иван Марков = Ivan Markov, 'Комсомолка' открыла в Калининграде мозаичного Ленина
к 100-летию Октября [Komsomolska opened a mosaic of Lenin in Kaliningrad for the 100th
anniversary of the October Revolution. – Комсомольская правда 30 January 2021.
327 Laimutė Cieškaitė-Brėdikienė, Taikomoji dekoratyvinė dailė. [Applied Decorative Arts.]
Vilnius: Vaga, 1980.
328 Daiva Rekertaitė-Načiulienė, Silverija Stelingiene (eds.). Lietuvos gobelenas. [Lithuanian
Tapestry.] Vilnius: Vaga, 1983.

complex in Moscow (1989–1992).[329] Like other cultivators of laconic modernist interior design, they refrained from coupling their interiors with monumental art.

As for the few examples of murals in Moscow, Enn Põldroos created a fresco for the Embassy of the Estonian SSR (1983), which depicted Tallinn's song festival ground, dancing and singing people in national costumes, the skyline of Tallinn and a rainbow above. Urve Dzidzara received a vast commission during the Olympics, creating a 60 square metre fresco for the Moscow Scientific Research Institute. Dolores Hoffmann created stained-glass windows for the Fonon Research Institute in Moscow (1983) and the café in Hotel Leningrad in Leningrad (1984). This is only a modest overview of the monumental paintings produced by Baltic artists elsewhere in the Soviet Union. Still, even these figures show how active the communication was between the Baltic art scenes and the rest of the Union.

## 2.9        Working beyond the borders of the USSR

Magdalena Moskalewicz has argued that the allegedly unfavourable circumstances of the Cold War for East European visual art (being cut off from Western art tendencies, lack of travel options etc.) do not hold entirely true in the Polish context, as, for example, in 1961 the Museum of Modern Art in New York organised a sizeable group exhibition of the most recent art from Poland and during the same year three Polish artists participated in another MoMA exhibition, The Art of Assemblage. Moskalewicz asserts that the lack of integration of Polish art into the general (Western) narratives of post-war art was not so much due to objective difficulties but because of the lack of resonance of Polish 'visualism.'[330] Even though one could presumably talk about a particular socialist-era Baltic visualism, which might have appeared foreign to Western counterparts, in general, the opportunities for Baltic artists to exhibit in the West were objectively much more complex compared to Poland and other Eastern European socialist states. Yet some artists that made monumental-decorative art managed to show their work outside the Soviet Union. In most cases, it was in connection with Moscow-led official exhibitions and cultural exchange

329 Karin Paulus, Helle Gans. Taevo Gans. Tallinn: Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design, 2017, pp. 11–13.
330 Magdalena Moskalewicz, An Exercise in Participation: Op and Kinetic Art in Poland circa 1966. – Marta Dziewanska, Dieter Roelstraete, Abigail Winograd (eds.), The Other Transatlantic: Kinetic and Op Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art, 2018, p. 251.

programmes. In addition, as the Soviet Union and its socialist satellite
states played an influential role in construction activities throughout
the Global South, several urban planners, architects, engineers, interior
designers and artists were given the chance to work overseas.[331]

The Soviet Union closely followed its reputation in foreign countries and
strived to promote its soft power through various exhibitions of scientific,
industrial, agricultural, and artistic progress.[332] Such expos allowed
Baltic artists and designers to work in other parts of the world and had a
powerful effect on their practice. The 1966 Leipzig Spring Fair was the first
high-profile international exhibition where the Baltic countries had sections
within the Soviet pavilion. A year later, at the Expo'67 in Montreal,
Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania presented separate cultural programmes
without their exhibition sections. The 1968 USSR exhibition in London
was the first international show where the Baltic countries could present
their national displays with an integral artistic concept.[333]

As for Estonian designers, Bruno Tomberg designed the 1960 exhibition
of Soviet Estonian applied art in Helsinki. In 1966, Maimu Plees and Eha
Reitel created the Soviet Estonian section for the Leipzig Trade Fair. Taevo
Gans designed the exhibition Man and the Biosphere in the USSR pavilion
of EXPO '74 held in the US city of Spokane; Baltic applied arts were
exhibited in Titograd, Yugoslavia (1975); USSR applied art exhibitions
were held in Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Burma, and
Estonian SSR exhibitions were held in Thessaloniki, Greece (1976) and
Izmir, Turkey (1977). Besides helping to organise its designers to work for
international shows, the Art Products Factory in Tallinn also exported a
small amount of its leather studio products to Sweden and the UK.[334]

Lithuanian monumental artists were well-placed to execute murals and
stained-glass pieces for several of the USSR's international exhibitions.
The Moscow architect Mikhail Posokhin designed the USSR pavilions
at EXPO '67 in Montreal and EXPO '70 in Osaka and, in both cases,
turned to Algimantas Stoškus to add artistic glamour to the displays. For

331 Łukasz Stanek, Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa, and the
Middle East in the Cold War. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020, p. 2.
332 Moshe Lewin, The Soviet Century, p. 311.
333 Karolina Jakaitė, Jurij Dobriakov, The Lithuanian Pavilion at the 1968 London Exhibition. –
Art in Translation 2015, Vol. 7, No. 4, p. 522.
334 Anne Tiivel, Nahkehistööde ateljee / Leather Crafting Studio. – Kai Lobjakas (ed.), Kunsti ja
tööstuse vahel. Kunstitoodete kombinaat / Between Art and Industry. The Art Products Factory.
Tallinn: Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design, 2014, p. 67.

Image 147. **Algimantas Stoškus, Antanas Garbauskas, _Motherland_ [detail], 1966–1967. Coloured glass, cement, 160 × 900. Exhibited at EXPO' 67, Montreal, later installed in the Kaunas Artificial Fibre Plant Recreation Complex (now Shopping and Recreation Centre Girstupis). Courtesy of Architectuul. Photo from the 2020s.**

Montreal, Stoškus worked with Antanas Garbauskas, and their triptych _Homeland_ consisted of 25 cm thick lumps of glass, leaving a sculptural impression. The work was later shown at various exhibitions in Vilnius, Moscow and Plovdiv in Bulgaria and was finally installed in the recreation complex of the Kaunas Artificial Fibre Plant (Image 147). For the same pavilion, another Lithuanian monumentalist Kazimieras Morkūnas created a spatial stained-glass composition _Hymn to Labour_, loosely depicting four allegorical female figures representing labour, industry, science, and cosmonautics. Furthermore, Teodoras Valaitis made a decorative metal panel for the oceanography section of the USSR pavilion at the same exhibition in Montreal (Image 148).

In 1968, the USSR held its second Industry and Trade Exhibition in London at the Earls Court Exhibition Centre.[335] The Lithuanian section was designed by Tadas Baginskas and featured as its centrepiece a 6-metre

335 Verity Clarkson, Sputniks and Sideboards: Exhibiting the Soviet 'Way of Life' in Cold War Britain, 1961–1979. – Anthony Cross (ed.), A People Passing Rude: British Responses to Russian Culture. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2012, unpaginated.

Image 148. **Teodoras Valaitis, *Great Northern Road – USSR Research Ship Routes*. Exhibited at EXPO '67, Montreal. Destroyed. Courtesy of Kęstutis Šapok. Photo from 1967.**

high rotating stained-glass installation by Algimantas Stoškus. The artist assembled it from separately cast coloured glass blocks, which weighed around 150 kg each. The vertical form of the composition symbolised a Lithuanian woman in traditional clothing holding the depictions of Vilnius' architectural landmarks. Young musician Feliksas Bajoras composed avant-garde electroacoustic music to accompany the kinetic piece. An article in *The Times* praised the Lithuanian exhibition for its distinctive modernist look and heralded Stoškus as perhaps the Soviet Union's leading stained-glass artist.[336] Stoškus's installation was a costly project, which involved several months of work by a dozen employees working day and

336 Ibid., p. 530.

night.[337] The exhibition's budget was five times bigger than expected, but as such international shows were vital propaganda events, budgetary concerns were secondary. Besides London, Baginskas designed several other exhibitions in which he worked with his wife Gintautėlė Laimutė Baginskienė: both the 1971 USSR mineralogical exhibition in Paris and the 1975 USSR mineralogical exhibition in Milan featured stained-glass panels by Baginskienė. Furthermore, in 1972 Baginskas designed the Lithuanian branch of the USSR pavilion at the International Agricultural and Industrial Fair in Santiago, Chile, for which Baginskienė created stained-glass panels and decorative reliefs.

Besides executing monumental-decorative artworks for exhibitions, Lithuanian artists also made permanent works. Steponas Kazimieraitis created stained-glass windows for the USSR embassy in Conakry, Guinea (1969–1970) and the USSR embassy in Lusaka, Zambia (1973). Algimantas Stoškus created a stained-glass panel for the USSR Embassy in Cape Verde. As a sign of cultural exchange between twin cities, Ona Puškoriūtė-Baliulevičienė and Bronislovas Baliulevičius made ceramic panels for the restaurant Stadt Vilnius in Erfurt, the German Democratic Republic (1976), which depicted architectural highlights of the Lithuanian capital. Łukasz Stanek has concluded that although Soviet industrial and architectural exports primarily established favourable trading conditions and secured oil imports for the state, the participating engineers, architects, designers and artists did not consider themselves 'building socialism.' Instead, it was often an emancipatory experience for the individuals taking part in the bilateral projects.[338]

337 Karolina Jakaitė, Šaltojo karo kapsulé: Lietuvių dizainas Londone 1968. Vieno paviljono istorija [The Cold War Capsule: Lithuanian Design in London, 1968: The Story of One Pavilion.] Vilnius: Lapas, 2019.
338 Łukasz Stanek, Architecture in Global Socialism.

# 3. The 1980s: Excessive décor as nationalist place-making

# 3.1　　　　Art in olympian dimensions

The 1980s was a diverse decade as the beginning and end differed drastically. The era started on a high note for muralists, with universities in Tartu and Vilnius celebrating their anniversaries with large-scale urban facelifts. Rīga and especially Tallinn experienced unprecedented infrastructural investments due to the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympics.[339] However, these years were also characterised by deepening Russification and Sovietisation. Jānis Borgs has stated that it was not quite a repressive period, but depressing due to excessive pressure and 'lack of air to breathe.'[340] Despite the anxiety, it was an extremely creative and diverse time for the arts. Although much of what was innovative in the art of the time had already made its mark in the 1970s, it was in the 1980s when these features explosively manifested en masse.[341]

Critics have described the 1980s as a time of disillusionment in East European art. By the end of the 1970s, it was broadly apparent that there was little way forward for the version of socialism that had so far been put into practice, a verdict that also had unalterable implications for the prospects of its art world.[342] Official culture became an increasingly blurred concept.[343] Grim events at the beginning of the decade, such as the Soviet-Afghan War, the declaration of martial law in Poland, the destruction of Bucharest's old town due to the erection of a People's House and the replacement of entire historic wooden neighbourhoods with concrete prefabricated housing blocks in Tallinn caused alienation, escapism, and irony in art, which in turn found fertile ground in postmodern doublespeak. Nationalist myth-creation in the arts further emphasised such scheming aestheticism.

From the mid-1980s onwards, artistic developments were greatly influenced by the rising number of international connections and the

339 Silver Vahtre, Keskkonna (l)avastamine. Linnaruumist, keskkonnast ja fotolavastuslikust plakatist 1980. aastatel. Tunnistaja märkmed / Discovery and staging of the environment. On urban Space, the environment and photographic posters in the 1980s. A witness account. – Jüri Kermik (ed.), Uus vaev: Eesti noor disain 1980. aastatel / New Pain: Young Estonian Design in the 1980s. Tallinn: Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design, 2018, p. 94.
340 Ieva Astahovska, Janis Borgs: interview by Ieva Astahovska, p. 74.
341 Quoted in Vilnis Vējš, Ārpus rāmjiem / Outside the Frame, p. 149.
342 Maja Fowkes, Reuben Fowkes, Introduction. – Third Text 2018, Vol. 32, No. 4, p. 378.
343 Triin Ojari, Hargnemised vormis ja ruumis. Sisearhitektuurist 1980. aastatel / Divergences in form and space. Interior architecture in the 1980s. – Jüri Kermik (ed.), Uus vaev: Eesti noor disain 1980. aastatel / New Pain: Young Estonian Design in the 1980s. Tallinn: Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design, 2018, p. 162.

burgeoning networks with neighbouring overseas countries.[344] There
had been a lack of such external points of reference during the previous
decades. Yet, abundant Western ideas and information threatened to bury
the individuality of the local art in the new situation. Therefore, the search
for national cultural identity in art, design and architecture intensified by
the end of the decade. As the role models came predominantly from the
Western world, local phenomena, especially those deemed 'Soviet', fell
into disfavour. Inevitably, the otherwise active debate on synthesis became
obsolete and subsequently dissolved.

In 1974, the International Olympic Committee awarded Moscow the right
to hold the 1980 summer games.[345] As Moscow did not have access to
the sea, Leningrad, Rīga, and Tallinn competed to host the sailing events.
Tallinn prevailed. Allegedly Tallinn's chief architect Dmitri Bruns had
realised long before that the Olympics would one day be held in Moscow
and had 'reserved' strategic locations in Tallinn for Olympic venues.[346]
Although the Committee should not have allowed the USSR to hold the
contest on occupied territory, the initiators were Estonians themselves,
who sensed that hosting an Olympic event would benefit their capital
and increase communications with the outside world. Over six years,
Moscow invested 200 million roubles (by one account, roughly 420 million
euros in today's value) in new buildings and infrastructure. Besides the
Olympic Village, a modern airport, a new central post office, the 26-storey
hotel Olümpia (Olympics), the Lenin Palace of Culture and Sport (today
Linnahall), TV Tower and several other structures were built. Naturally,
such construction activities meant extensive art commissions.

Characteristic of the Soviet Union, such a large undertaking also meant the
construction of the so-called Potemkin village – the hosts presented visitors
with an impeccable facade. Tallinn municipality handed the arranging of
the festive appearance of the city to recent graduates of the art institute's
design department. From 1977 designer Matti Õunapuu headed a small
group of architects and designers, including Tiit Jürna, Silver Vahtre and
Taimi Soo – The Olympic Regatta Urban Design Group – who worked

344 Jüri Kermik, Aeg ja koht / Time and place. – Jüri Kermik (ed.), Uus vaev: Eesti noor disain
1980. aastatel / New Pain: Young Estonian Design in the 1980s. Tallinn: Estonian Museum of
Applied Art and Design, 2018, p. 222.
345 Pauli Heikkilä, Sailing in an Occupied Country: Protests by Estonian Emigrants Against the
1980 Tallinn Olympic Regatta. – The International Journal of the History of Sport 2015, Vol. 32,
No. 11–12, p. 1473.
346 Ülo Stöör, Ühe arhitekti mälestused III. [Memoirs of an architect III.] Tartu: Ilmamaa, 2015, p. 371.

Image 149. **Urban design group (Matti Õunapuu, Tiit Jürna, Taimi Soo and Jaak Aavik), urban design in Tallinn during the Baltic regatta, 1979. Destroyed. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design. Photo from 1979.**

under the aegis of the ARS Art Products Factory.[347] Soon, a clash emerged as the authorities were interested in using design as a tool to cover up the ragged Soviet reality while designers sought to reorganise the city from the core. Despite the authorities' indifference, the designers put together an extensive design brief which framed Tallinn's urban design and planning situation. The brief also included a programme for a holistic urban design involving the placing of advertising spaces, planning of supergraphics, harmonised use of signs and logos, the city's own typeface and modular kiosks. The Urban Design Group valued the ideals of social design. It was the first time in Estonia that urban space was designed systematically according to a practical set of rules and a coherent method.[348]

Physical examples of their work which directly reached the urban area included the Constructivist-inspired Olympic advertising (Image 149), park benches, rubbish bins, bus stops, supergraphics and information signage and signs for bus stops. The municipality dismissed the graphic design as it had to be the same throughout the Soviet Union. Although the design group continued working after the Olympic regatta by designing street furniture and other individual objects, the political leadership had little enthusiasm and limited resources for improving the environment and the whole project faded.[349]

As for the examples of monumental-decorative art commissioned for the infrastructure serving athletes, the yachting centre complex, characterised by its Constructivist design principles, boasted non-figurative artworks acting as emotional architectural forms rather than independent works

347 Silver Vahtre, Keskkonna (I)avastamine / Discovery and staging of the environment, p. 79.
348 Ibid., p. 83.
349 Ibid., p. 99.
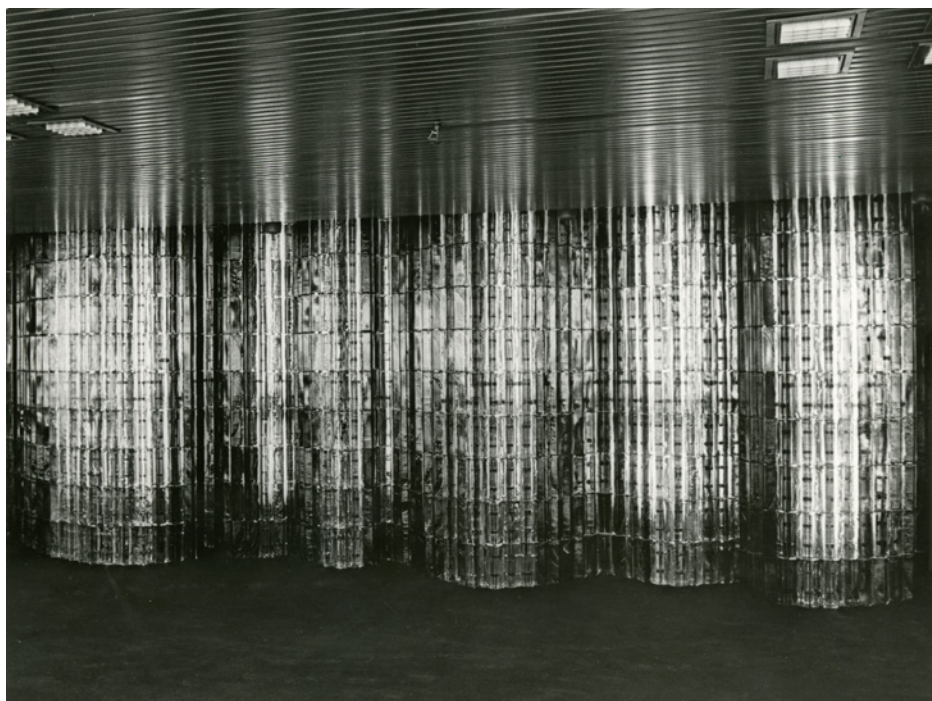
Image 150. **Aet Andresma-Tamm, Mare Lobjakas, decorative partition, 1980. Ceramics, glass, approx. 300 × 800. Tallinn Olympic Yachting Centre. Tallinn, 1 Regati pst. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from the 1980s.**



Image 151. **Lea Walter, tapestries at the Pirita Yachting Centre's Press Office, 1980. Destroyed. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design. Photo from the 1980s.**
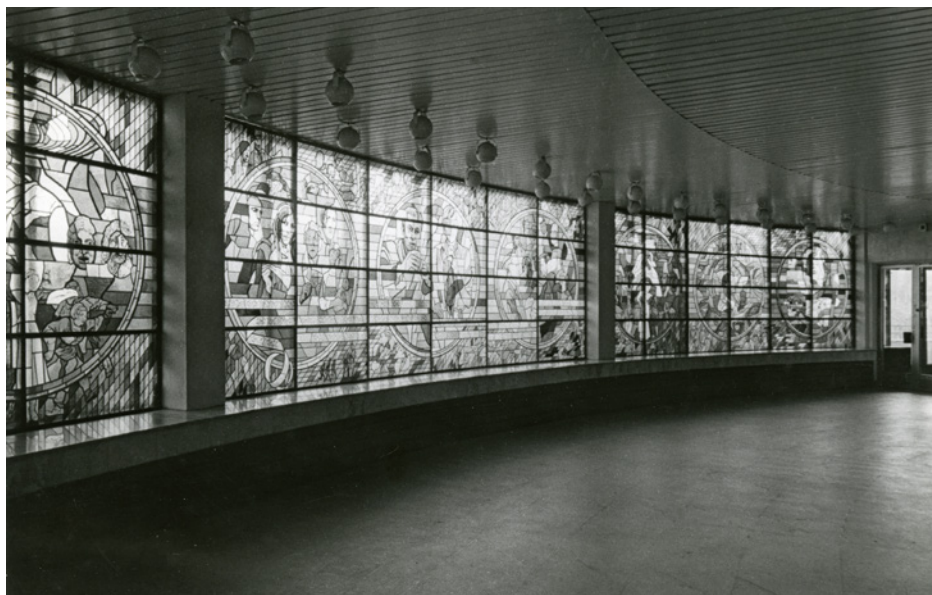
Image 152. **Dolores Hoffmann, *Television – a Window to the World*, 1980. Stained glass, approx. 300 × 1500. Tallinn TV Tower. Relocated inside the building in 2012. Tallinn, 58a Kloostrimetsa tee. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from the 1980s.**

of fine art. A ceramic mural was commissioned from Leo Rohlin for the aquatic centre's end wall, which he designed in an Op Art style with the tones of the glazes being of four different degrees of blue, creating an optical effect.[350] Aet Andresma-Tamm and Mare Lobjakas designed a glass composition for the dance hall, which was lit from behind and thus acted as a kinetic piece (Image 150). Continuing the general rhythm of abstraction, Lea Walter created geometrically designed tapestries for the yachting centre's press office (Image 151). The 314-metre-tall Tallinn TV Tower, also built for the regatta, was designed by Moscow-based engineers at the State Design Institute of the USSR Ministry of Communications. An observation platform and restaurant were added midway up the tower. The second-floor vestibule was decorated with Dolores Hoffmann's stained-glass work (Image 152). Effective in both form and content, her work created an exhilarating visual prelude to the ascent to the observation deck, representing televised reality, and especially how news broadcasts beam pain, suffering as well emancipation from all over the world to living

350 Gregor Taul, Monumental Painting in Estonia: Notes, p. 125.

Image 153. **Design by Enn Põldroos, executed by Hilja Karri, Aino Stamm and Marika Hallangu,** *Lives of People*, **1985. Tapestry, 1000 × 4860. V. I. Lenin Palace of Culture and Sport (now known as Linnahall, out of use since 2009). Tallinn, 20 Mere pst. Courtesy of Estonian National Museum. Photo from the 2010s.**



Image 154. **Author unknown (Misha doll designed by Victor Chizhikov), Moscow Olympic Games advertisement, 1980. Rīga, 40 Lenina (currently Brīvības) iela. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art. Photo from the early 1980s.**

rooms.[351] She succeeded in designing a work that pleased Moscow officials – the composition depicts the global socialist struggle – yet also satisfied the artist's conscience as it describes the fate of her own family.

The colossal Lenin Palace of Culture and Sport, commonly known as Linnahall, designed by Raine Karp and Riina Altmäe, was also built for the Olympic sailing regatta. The ziggurat-shaped megastructure boasted the city's largest venue, adorned with stage curtains designed by Enn Põldroos (Image 153). Although Põldroos had begun preparations for the 500-square-metre tapestry weighing around 1.5 tonnes in 1978, he completed the work only in 1985. The design phase, making the 1:1 working draft and the weaving itself took nearly four years. Art Products Factory weavers wove the tapestry. They started work in September 1981 and finished it in May 1985. Custom looms, 350 cm wide, were made especially for the tapestry. Of Põldroos' monumental works, this one appears to be most strongly influenced by the works of Mexican mural painters. This is probably no accident, as the shape of the Linnahall itself has been compared to the ancient monumental architecture of Central America.

The title, *Lives of People*, may refer to the ancient genre of tragedy, centred on the polis at the intersection of the private and public spheres of citizens' lives. Põldroos's work is remarkable in that it transcends traditional notions of working conditions for Soviet artists. According to the artist, the quality of the yarns produced in the Soviet Union was not good enough, and he urged the authorities to order them from Italy.[352] Subsequently, initial yarn samples were sent to Estonia, based on which the artist mixed the respective colours and painted the 1:1 working draft.

From an ideological perspective, Põldroos's painting is a complex case because, on the one hand, his high position in the art world and his awareness of the highly politicised institutional context could be conceived as an opportunistic effort to obtain a commission from an increasingly refractory regime. On the other hand, Põldroos's undertaking could also be read as an 'ironic simulacrum' of what he knew officials would appreciate best.[353] Põldroos himself claims that since the building was dedicated to Lenin, the authorities assumed that Lenin's portrait would garnish the

351 The number of TV-sets in the Soviet Union increased from 400 in 1940, to 2.5 million in 1958, thirty million ten years later, and ninety million in the 1980s, by which time only 7 per cent of households were without a TV. See Stephen Kotkin, Armageddon Averted, p. 42.
352 Enn Põldroos, Conversation on 8 April 2018. Audio recording in the possession of the author.
353 I am paraphrasing here Romy Golan, who has similarly discussed the work of ex-avant-garde Italian artists who took up fascist mural-making in the 1930s. See Romy Golan, Muralnomad…, p. 51.

centre of the work. Põldroos claims that he managed to make the mayor believe this until the last minute, although, in fact, he never planned to do so. When the work was already at such a stage that no more changes could be made, Põldroos came out with the amendments, and the officials had no choice but to accept the situation.[354]

Besides Tallinn, the Olympics affected Latvia's capital in the hope of tourists approaching the festivities via Rīga. The Central Train Station was pompously redesigned with the lumino-kinetic clock tower of the station evoking a metropolitan outlook[355] (Image 124). Several firewalls around the city were covered with flashy supergraphics and metal plates, which elicited comparisons with the notorious concept of the Potemkin village (Image 154).

## 3.2    Production of national landscapes

Particularly in Tallinn, the preparation for the Olympic Games coincided with – and perhaps caused – a wave of Sovietisation. In 1978, Communist hardliner Karl Vaino became the First Secretary of the Estonian Communist Party, and under him Russification policies obtained new momentum, starting with the quickly increased amount of Russian language instruction in the Estonian school curricula.[356] The expanded construction activity of the yachting regatta led to further foreign workforce assigned to Estonia from other parts of the Soviet Union.[357] As the share of Estonians in the capital's population decreased significantly and the new-comers were more readily given apartments for which the locals had been waiting to no avail, dissatisfaction caused national tensions. In the run-up to the Olympics, the authorities allegedly began arresting dissidents who were not to be allowed to meet foreigners visiting the country. Rumours spread rapidly among cultural spheres and further deepened reluctance and bitterness. After a banned punk concert in the autumn of 1980 caused youth protests that the militia recklessly suppressed, 40 Estonian intellectuals wrote an open letter

354 Enn Põldroos, Conversation on 8 April 2018.
355 Vents Vīnbergs, When Avant-garde Art Became Design, p. 180.
356 Mare Kukk, Political opposition in Soviet Estonia 1940–1987. – Journal of Baltic Studies 1993, Vol. 24, No. 4, p. 397.
357 However, the large influx of workforce from other parts of the Soviet Union was not solely caused by Moscow-led policies. The Baltic countries – especially Latvia and Estonia – had the lowest population growth and highest employment rates in the USSR and were thus obliged to look elsewhere for workers. (See Moshe Lewin, The Soviet Century, pp. 206–207) Mass immigration was the summative effect of Sovietisation, modernisation and economic growth.

to defend the Estonian language and culture.[358] However, the energetic public action provided the KGB with reason for a repressive campaign of coordinated searches, arrests and interrogations in Tallinn, Tartu and Pärnu.[359] At the same time, in Latvia, where the number of ethnic Latvians was falling behind that of recent immigrants, similar interrogations were carried out.[360] For example, the KGB took an interest in artists Māris Ārgalis and Valdis Celms – presumably due to their involvement in the Pollutionists group.

The oppressive policies and the subsequent political show trials laid bare the threat of irreversible cultural and environmental damage.[361] This situation had two fundamental implications for the art scene in the early 1980s. First, a rise in heightened national consciousness and a search for sources of local identity. Nationalism, which had previously been integrated in the service of Soviet power, was now increasingly becoming a sign of rebellion and undermined the Party's legitimacy.[362] Second, Sovietisation led to a quest for a kind of estranged spirituality which facilitated the creation of a local version of decadence and descent into a mythological space.[363] Myth-making more broadly signified the condition of being postmodern, which had become itself a symbol of resistance. [364]

As a comparison, Georgian murals of the period frequently featured grapes which symbolically referred to the Virgin Mary, who traditionally adorned Georgian ecclesiastical murals.[365] Similarly, the iconography of cultural and educational buildings in the Baltics became saturated with national signs and depictions of domestic cultural and historical figures and fables. The most recurring images were idealised depictions of local natural and cultural landscapes. The proliferation of such visuals was directly related

358 Like in the West, the punk scene became influential in the Eastern bloc. See, e.g., David Crowley, Daniel Muzyczuk (eds.), Notatki z podziemia: Sztuka i muzyka alternatywna w Europie wschodniej 1968–1994 / Notes from the Underground: Art and Alternative Music in Eastern Europe 1968 – 1994. Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki and London, Koenig Books, 2016.
359 Mare Kukk, Political opposition in Soviet Estonia 1940–1987, p. 376.
360 By 1991 ethnic Latvians were only slightly in the majority (52%). Vilnis Vējš, Ārpus rāmjiem / Outside the Frame, p. 197.
361 Jüri Kermik, Uus vaev / New pain. – Jüri Kermik (ed.), Uus vaev: Eesti noor disain 1980. aastatel / New Pain: Young Estonian Design in the 1980s. Tallinn: Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design, 2018, p. 16.
362 Katherine Verdery, National Ideology Under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania. Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1991.
363 Triin Ojari, Hargnemised vormis ja ruumis / Divergences in form and space, p. 175.
364 Krista Kodres, Müüdiloojad ja teised. [Myth creators and others.] – Ehituskunst 1991, No. 5, p. 6.
365 Nini Palavandishvili, Lena Prents, Art for Architecture. Georgia. Soviet Modernist Mosaics from 1960 to 1990. Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2019, p. 10.

Image 155. **Author unknown, mural painting in Läätsa Harbour office building, early 1980s. Salme Municipality, Läätsa Village. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2012.**

to the emergence of environmental thinking that had grown in importance from the late 1970s and reached its peak during perestroika when it became a platform for political struggle against Soviet rule.

The local landscape became metonymic of nature, heritage and national culture in the environmental discourse. Therefore, both commissioning bodies and artists were inclined to the 'chthonic element' – a trope inherent to all three Baltic states. Since the late 19th century, visual artists in the Baltics have devoted themselves to painting and *inventing* national landscapes and national types. In the 1980s, this cultural tendency became dominant for several muralists.

In the early 1980s, an unknown artist created a mural for the Läätsa Harbour office building in the peripheral Salme Municipality of Saaremaa island in Estonia (Image 155). I have yet to pin down the author of the mural. From a stylistic viewpoint, it might have been a local autodidact who recognised that it was better to generalise rather than get into details. The result is naïve but has an appeal that resembles the simplified imagery of pop art. Overall, it is a testimony to the eclecticism of the genre of public painting: in many cases, 'art outside' is also 'outsider art'. The mural depicts an idyllic Estonian landscape with a solitary farmhouse. Family farming as the core of rural identity was replaced with collective farms by the Soviets during the 1940s and 1950s. Over 30 years, the

Image 156. **Lagle Israel, mosaic, 1967–1983. Pebbles, cement, approx. 300 × 1200. The Estonian University of Life Sciences Institute of Forestry and Rural Engineering. Tartu, 5 Kreutzwaldi. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2012.**

countryside underwent a vast transformation: dispersed settlement was replaced by tightly clustered villages filled with vast agricultural buildings and three-storey Khrushchovkas. Just as the traditional landscape was disappearing for good, it became fashionable – and economically feasible – for urban dwellers in the early 1980s to buy run-down farmhouses and turn them into summer houses.

Lagle Israel completed a much more detailed and technically masterful landscape in Tartu (Image 156). This labour-intensive mural is a homage to the Estonian landscape as the artist – as in her previous work at the University of Tartu observatory (Image 28) – had collected pebbles over 16 years from all over the country. Furthermore, she did not colour any of the stones with artificial paints but used pebbles in their natural colour; for example, the grey limestone, worn smooth by the waves, from Saaremaa, and the red granite from Ruhnu Island. Some stones she soaked for up to three years in iron-rich spring water to achieve a variety of tones. The mural itself depicted a landscape from the artist's childhood in Viljandimaa County. Initially, the work was intended for the Vanemuine Theatre café, but the builders forgot about the mural when a new construction company took over. The artist was offered a hasty solution that would have left the mural concealed by the café's counter. Israel declined, and thus, she continued working on the mural for nine years, not knowing where it

Image 157. **Leo Rohlin, Estonia's ethnographic map, 1985. Ceramic tiles, approx. 300 × 300. Mereranna Sanatorium. Narva-Jõesuu, 17 Aia. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2012.**

would ultimately be installed. When the new academic building for the Agricultural University was completed, it was proposed that the work be installed in a meeting room there. She agreed to the compromise but at a painful cost, as five metres of the work did not fit, and it was impossible to see the work from a sufficient distance.

An apt expression of a similar tendency from Latvia is the ceramic mural *Latvian Lighthouses* (1986) by Imants Klīdzējs in the administrative building of the Salacgriva fishery collective farm, which depicts lighthouses and, especially dramatically, the country's water bodies (Image 85). The strikingly vast river basins in this burnt clay work are in danger of drying out, thus actualising nature conservation issues. In addition, as the seafront was a military zone in the Soviet Union and a generation of Latvians had lost contact with their maritime culture, while the coastal people of Livonia had all but disappeared, the image may have had a somewhat ambiguous effect at the time.

However, some murals continued the well-known ideological formula of 'socialist in content, national in form'. For example, the Mereranna
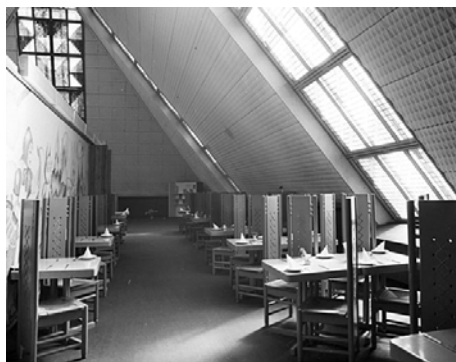
Image 158. **Architect Edgars Šēnbergs, children's café Ki-ke-ri-gū (Cock-a-doodle), 1976. Entertainment complex Daile (Art) in Jūrmalā. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian National Library. Photo from the 1970s.**

sanatorium in Narva-Jõesuu, mainly serving workers from outside Estonia, commissioned an ethnographic map of the Estonian SSR by ceramic artist Leo Rohlin (Image 157). This image of cultural and natural sights with an overview of national costumes confirmed the concept of the friendship of nations inherent to Soviet ideology. Thus, cultural specificities were incorporated into the system of socialist leisure and consumerism.

Heritage also played a principal role in the cultural and social life of the 1980s and inevitably found application in monumental art. Supported by the postmodern interest in historical symbols and reliance on national and regional archetypes, the independence aspirations of the Baltic countries were driven by an ideology of restoration and return: a return to pre-war democracy and property rights, to national symbols and traditions, and to the restitution of hierarchies that had been dismantled by the occupation.[366] Therefore, more buildings began to be (re)created consciously in the historical spirit.[367] Restoration was further supported by expanding tourism which attracted attention to historic buildings within historic city centres and manor houses being restored and opened as museums. Widespread interest in restoration signified the aspiration to value the local culture, heritage, and originality.

In terms of the synthesis of architecture and art inspired by the interpretation of cultural heritage, one of the most significant examples was the entertainment complex Daile (Art) with its impressive children's café

366 Andres Kurg, Werewolves on Cattle Street, p. 124.
367 Hilkka Hiiop, Linda Kaljundi, Linda Lainvoo, Pille Lausmäe, Grete Nilp, Jaanus Samma, Kaduv maailm, p. 105.

Image 159. **Andrejs Zvejnieks, murals on the theme of Krišjānis Barons, 1986. Secco, eight murals each approx. 200 × 100. Jelgava City Library. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. Photo from 2018.**



Image 160. **Ilmar Malin, *Newspapers in Time,* 1983. Tempera, oil, canvas, wood, veneer, four panel paintings each approx. 220 × 110. Editorial office of *Edasi* newspaper in Tartu. Dismantled and stored in the Estonian National Museum since 2017. Courtesy of Tartu City Museum. Photo from the 2010s.**

Ki-ke-ri-gū (Cock-a-doodle) in Jūrmalā, Latvia (Image 158). The complex, which opened in 1976 – although work continued until 1985 – has been regarded as one of the first examples of postmodern architecture in Soviet Latvia.[368] Architect Edgars Šēnbergs' building consisted of two volumes in which a more conventionally modernist flat ground floor was complemented by a three-storey structure with an exceptionally high gable roof, which was a well-defined reference to the historic dwellings of the Vidzeme region. One of the end walls was covered with a narrow high stained-glass window featuring a geometric pattern as an essential indication of vernacular design traditions. The café also featured a mural depicting characters from local fairy tales. Outside, the premises included a pool with geometrically shaped sculptures and a fountain designed by the architect's son Uģis Šēnbergs. Initially destined for the week-long international exhibition *Resorts '76* displaying advances in global tourism, the 'amusement palace' allegedly cost a million roubles. Ten countries participated in the exhibition – Poland, Hungary, the Federal Republic of Germany, Czechoslovakia from the socialist bloc, the non-aligned Yugoslavia and Finland, France, Italy and the USA from the Western world. Interestingly, the USSR did not exhibit its products, saying that the main exhibits were the Daile palace and the city of Jūrmala itself. The purpose of the event itself was confusing for the locals as it was an over-the-top investment organised by the USSR Chamber of Commerce and Industry showcasing top-notch and unavailable design

368 Zvirgzdiņš, Artis. Edgars Šēnbergs. Aizmirstais modernisms. [Edgars Šēnbergs. Forgotten modernism.] – Arhitektūras Platforma A4d.lv. https://a4d.lv/raksti/edgars-senbergs-aizmirstais-modernisms/, accessed 15 March 2021.

Image 161. **Andrus Kasemaa, *The Mahtra War*, 1984. Secco, approx. 350 ×
1200. Central building of the Eduard Vilde Kolkhoz (now Peri Village Centre). Põlva
Municipality, Peri Village. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2012.**

solutions like Italian prefabricated pools and jacuzzis, Hungarian inflatable
beach mattresses, French L'Oréal and Polish Pollena beach cosmetics,
Czechoslovak jewellery, and American camper vans, optics, hunting
rifles and freezer machines which produced ice cubes for home party
cocktails.[369] After the exhibition, the function of the building was changed,
and it provided entertainment for residents and guests. Besides the popular
children's café, it featured a bar and a bowling alley and often hosted
exhibitions and other events.

Besides landscape views and representations of cultural heritage and local
myths, depictions of individuals of national importance became widespread.
On the one hand, individuals metonymically stood for national identity.
On the other hand, the proliferating discourse on the environment also
brought an appreciation of individuality.[370] The national greats acted as role
models for their compatriots. Although portraiture was most concerned
with monumental sculpture, painters also had their say. In Latvia, Andrejs
Zvejnieks filled a whole conference hall in the Jelgava City Library with
murals depicting the life and work of Latvian writer and collector of folk
songs Krišjānis Barons, whose 150th anniversary was celebrated in 1985
(Image 159).

369 See Elita Veidemane, Ugis Šenbergs: Jūrmala un Latvija zaudēja unikālu celtni. [Ugis
Šenbergs: Jurmala and Latvia lost a unique building.] – Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze. https://neatkariga.
nra.lv/komentari/elita-veidemane/409567-ugis-senbergs-jurmala-un-latvija-zaudeja-unikalu-
celtni, accessed 14 June 2023.
370 Triin Ojari, Hargnemised vormis ja ruumis / Divergences in form and space, p. 162.

Image 162. **Author unknown, supergraphics advertising Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald memorial museum in Võru, ca. 1984. Corner of Lenin (currently Jüri) and Tartu streets. Destroyed. Courtesy of Võrumaa Museum. Photo from the 1980s.**

In Estonia, prominent painter Enn Põldroos created a site-specific canvas painting for the University of Tartu in connection with the institution's 350th anniversary in 1982 (Image 105). It is one of the boldest pastiches in Estonian art history, based on Raphael's 1511 *School of Athens* fresco at the Vatican's Stanza della Segnatura, in which the Renaissance master portrayed ancient philosophers. Põldroos approached his *Universitas Tartuensis* in the same way – portraiture – with 37 professors pictured. Like Raphael, Põldroos depicted all his subjects engaged in conversation.[371] In 1983, Ilmar Malin created a set of site-specific monumental oil paintings for the editorial office of *Edasi* newspaper which featured the history of journalism in Estonia depicted through famous editors, historical logos and mastheads, nostalgic illustrations, and powerful political and cultural locations (Image 160).

371 Gregor Taul, Monumental Painting in Estonia: Notes, p. 127.

The intellectual environment of the university campus supported the safeguarding of the heritage of cultural figures, as in 1979, textile artist Mall Tomberg created the city's largest tapestry, abstractly depicting the river Emajõgi and outlining university buildings and symbols, and texts and figures related to the history of the library.[372] Many murals depicted writers and their oeuvre, as literature played an essential role in preserving the national culture. For example, painter Andrus Kasemaa created a vast secco mural for the central building of the Eduard Vilde Collective Farm. The institution owed its name to an early 20th-century leftist writer, and the mural depicted scenes from the author's 1902 novel *The Mahtra War*, which describes an 1858 peasant insurgency (Image 161). The significance of Vilde's work is twofold because, on the one hand, he was an anti-imperial author whose writing was celebrated widely in Soviet Estonia. Not only was this particular kolkhoz but also streets, schools and a theatre were named in his honour. However, on the other hand, historic opposition to Russian imperialism could be understood more ambiguously. To bring one more example of murals celebrating cultural figures, Võru – the hometown of the author of the Estonian national epic *Kalevipoeg* – commissioned supergraphics advertising the memorial museum of Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (Image 162).

## 3.3　　　　　　　Escapist mythologies

The expression of national self-awareness and the affirmation of the people's system of spiritual values found its expression in the representation of local legends and myths. On the one hand, it was a routine part of official culture. On the other hand, each socialist republic had certain taboos of national culture that the authorities detested and artists addressed through Aesop's language. Therefore, metaphorical discourse had a critical role in art and connotations, direct and indirect visual and literary cues, metaphors and hyperbolae were prevalent.[373] Jānis Borgs brings an example of how the urge to strengthen one's identity in opposition to the Union-wide Cyrillic Russian identity found a surprising expression in applied graphics, particularly in the use of gothic lettering. He asserts that this optically complex form of communication began to be used even in the most everyday situations, as in the lists of long-distance

372 Krista Piirimäe, Tartu gobeläänidel. [Tartu on tapestries.] – Sirp 2 November 2012.
373 Ramona Umblija, Notikums. 1984. Laika uzmerijums ar atkapem. [Event. 1984. Estimation of time with deviations.] – Inese Baranovska (comp.), Daba. Vide. Cilvēks. 1984. [Nature. Environment. Man. 1984.] Rīga: Latvijas makslinieku savieniba, 2004, p. 53 quoted in Helēna Demakova, The significance of memory in the study of Latvian contemporary art, p. 31.
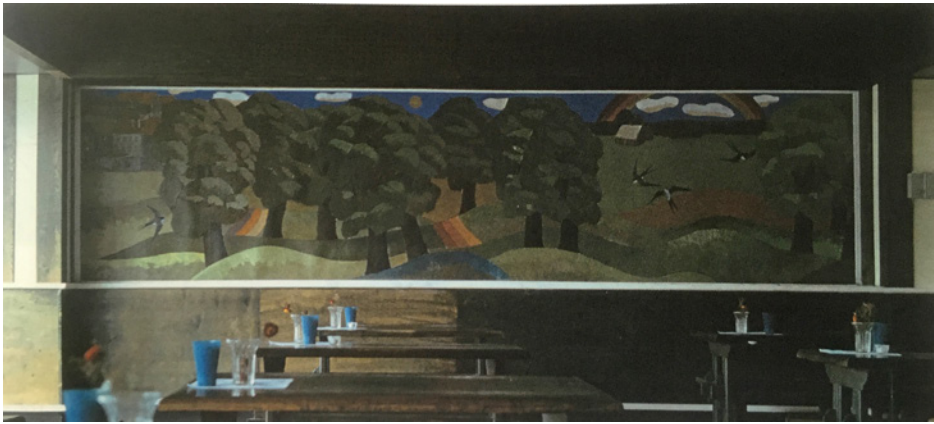
Image 163. **Arvydas Kašauskas, *Summer*, 1986–1987. Oil on plywood, approx. 150 × 600. Café Ąžuolas (Oak) in Vilnius. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**



Image 164. **Aušra Tuminaitė-Kučinskienė, *Eglė, the Queen of Serpents*, 1978. Tapestry, 350 × 680. Klaipėda Wedding Palace. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

bus routes, to say nothing of various diplomas and certificates of merit.[374] As for the choice of colours in visual art, artists increasingly tried to 'accidentally' depict the colours of the forbidden national flag in their works, such as Arvydas Kašauskas in his mural for a café in Vilnius (Image 163).

374 Jānis Borgs, Lūzuma anatomija / The Anatomy of a break, p. 41.

In terms of murals based on local legends, Soviet Lithuania featured several works representing the folk tale of Eglė. In the story, a girl named Eglė (meaning 'spruce') marries the snake prince Žilvinas and thus becomes the snake queen on an underwater island where she raises four children – three sons Ąžuolas (Oak), Uosis (Ash), and Beržas (Birch) and a daughter Drebulė (Aspen). When home-sick Eglė visits her family, her brothers kill her husband. Heartbroken, Eglė turns herself and her children into trees according to their names. For monumental-decorative art, such a narrative was a good fit, as it offered several opportunities to play with natural motifs, human-tree shapeshifting and the ornamentally twisting bodies of serpents. Most importantly, as the narrative linked to ethnic identity, language and collectively imagined national landscapes, it was fitting for the creation of monumental symbolics. Aušra Tuminaitė-Kučinskienė's emotionally loaded tapestry *Eglė, the Queen of Serpents* in the Klaipėda Wedding Palace, placed the myth of creation and destruction in the context of the socialist marriage rituals (Image 164). Birute Žilytė, who had famously painted the scene with Algirdas Steponavičius in 1970 in the tuberculosis sanatorium in Valkininkai (Image 61), created another mural on this topic in Žirmunai kindergarten in Vilnius (1978). In 1980, textile artist Zinaida Dargienė decorated the restaurant Eglė in Kaunas with several tapestries narrating the famous legend (Image 135).

Another Baltic myth that was a basis for several murals is that of Saulė (Sun), who rides daily through the sky on a horse-led chariot. In the evening, she washes the horses in the sea and then enters the silver gates to her castle at the end of the sea. Historically, the Baltic tribes had portrayed the dawning Sun as a ring, a red apple, or a crown. Incidentally, the appreciation of the sun in Latvian and Lithuanian tradition coincided with the (early) Soviet love of Tommaso Campanella's 1602 utopia *La città del Sole* (The City of the Sun). Campanella's text inspired Lenin to design his 1917 plan for monumental propaganda. Namely, in the story, the seven circling walls surrounding the city are adorned with murals which sought to educate its inhabitants and thus acted as illustrated encyclopaedias.[375] Therefore, in Latvia and Lithuania, the sun appeared both as a reference to local mythology, national identity, and to some extent as a representation of the official discourse on the socialist utopia. One fascinating depiction

375 Andrei Epishin = Андрей Епишин, Эстетические принципы нового монументализма 1960-1980-х годов. [Aesthetic principles of new monumentalism of the 1960–1980s.] – Natalia Anikina, Andrei Epishin = Наталья Аникина, Андрей Епишин (eds.), Среда. Художник. Время. Монументальное искусство в координатах 2-й половины XX века. [Environment. Artist. Time. Monumental Art in the Coordinates of the 2nd half of the Twentieth Century.] Moscow: BooksMArt, 2016, pp. 8–9.

Image 165. **Marija Švažienė, *Sun's Halo I–III*, 1978–1982. Tapestry. Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant House of Culture. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Daiva Rekertaitė-Načiulienė. Photo from the 1980s.**





Image 167. **Juozas Balčikonis, Regina Songalaitė-Balčikonienė and Kestutis Balčikonis, *Dusk*. 1982. Batik, cotton, 66 square metres. Sports and Culture Centre of the Lithuanian SSR Ministry of Internal Affairs. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Daiva Rekertaitė-Načiulienė. Photo from the 1980s.**

Image 166. **Liudvikas Pocius, *Day of Sun,* 1977. Stained glass, lead. Vilnius Hospital No. 2. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

of this theme from the 1980s is a three-part cycle of tapestries by Marija Švažienė inside the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant House of Culture, which, due to its high-tech location, combined the mythical origins and the techno-aesthetic abstraction inherent to Op art (Image 165). In contrast, the stained-glass window *Day of Sun* by Liudvikas Pocius in the conference hall of Vilnius Hospital No. 2 depicted the halo-surrounded Saulė riding her horses across the sky (Image 166). As the celebration of the Sun

Image 168. **Gintaras Kraujelis, stained-glass windows, 1986. Stained glass, lead. Republican Construction Association. Vilnius. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

corresponded to the festivities connected with the solstices, artists would also depict rural landscapes during St John's Day.

As creatives sought to form a coherent identity in the complicated political situation, a balance had to be found between the fictional and the real. In the early and mid-1980s, this process took many forms, such as postmodern irony, which could result in over identification with the system or, in the other extreme, the creation of visionary landscapes filled with new fictional narratives, objects, and events. The latter could also result in social disconnectedness and alienation.[376] Designer Jüri Kermik explains how Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979) encapsulated the era's atmosphere. The film was shot in the city centre of Tallinn – a few minutes walk from the art institute – in a partly abandoned chemical production and warehousing complex which had deteriorated into a forsaken wasteland resembling the site of some 'unknown environmental disaster.'[377] When Tarkovsky was preparing his film, he published an essay in the cultural journal *Sirp ja Vasar*, claiming that the Zone is not a territory but a form

376 Jüri Kermik, Uus vaev / New pain, pp. 29–30.
377 Ibid., p. 13–14.

Image 170. **Rimgaudas Žebenka,** *Spring*, **1988. Secco, approx. 400 × 800. Vilnius University Faculty of Natural Sciences. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**



Image 169. **Gražina Arlauskaitė-Vingrienė, mural, 1982. Fresco, approx. 350 × 700. Šiauliai municipality building. 1982. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**



Image 171. **Romas Dalinkevičius,** *Birth of Theatre*, **1983. Sgraffito, approx. 350 × 800. Vilnius Youth Theatre. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

of control under which one could either suffer or break.[378] In this way, Tarkovsky encapsulated the hopelessness of the generation of young artists and designers who came of age during the early 1980s and had no illusions about the state of affairs. Although the mindset of established muralists was perhaps more pragmatic, various murals appeared in public, in which the depicted landscapes were strangely disjointed from reality. In this way, the fictional landscapes offered an antithesis to the current situation.

378 Andrei Tarkovsky, Uue filmi mõtisklusi. [Thoughts about a new film.] – Sirp ja Vasar 28 April 1978 quoted in Jüri Kermik, Uus vaev / New pain, p. 14.

Image 172. **Urve Dzidzaria, *Humans in Nature*, 1979–1980. Fresco, 40 square metres. Central building of Habaja Sovkhoz (now Habaja Village Fresco Centre). Habaja, 19 Kose mnt. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2012.**

In Lithuania, in 1982, the artist family involving pioneering textile artist Juozas Balčikonis, his wife the scenographer Regina Songalaitė-Balči-konienė and their textile artist son Kestutis Balčikonis created 66 square metres of batik textiles to decorate the walls of the café at the Vilnius Sports and Culture Centre (Image 167). Inherent to the batik technique, the richly saturated colours and bizarre iconography rendered a 'trippy' hippy atmosphere which could not have been lost on the public. Similar estranged abstractionism was also preferred in the design of the stained-glass windows of the Republican Construction Association by Gintaras Kraujelis in 1986 (Image 168).

The inclination not to address the contemporary situation also resulted in works in which artists depicted distant historical periods. Most typically, this led to antiquity, as in Gražina Arlauskaitė-Vingrienė's frescoes in Šiauliai municipality (Image 169) or the city's Gubernija (Governor) brewery from 1982, which rendered social life as a Hellenic or Biblical feat.[379] Antiquity, with its visually highlighted gender characteristics, representations of morally impeccable scholars and depictions of classical architectural ornamentation, were also at the centre of several designs by Rimtautas Gibavičius (Images 95, 96), Rimgaudas Žebenka (Image 170) and Romas Dalinkevičius. (Image 171)

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379 The 'ancient' subject matter was because Gubernija is considered one of the oldest still working breweries in the world, producing drinks since 1665.

Image 173. **Mark Kalpin, mosaic murals, ca. 1984. Swimming pool hall of Tartu Apparatus Factory (now Bar Sodiaak). Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2021.**

In Estonia, a similar classicising sentiment described the work of Urve Dzidzaria, who was behind some of the most extensive frescoes of the 1980s. Her fresco *Humans in Nature* from 1980 in the central building of Habaja Sovkhoz depicts a primaeval landscape filled with musicians with lutes, children talking to birds and bountiful orange trees, reminiscent of late mediaeval paintings and tapestries envisioning paradise (Image 172). Her series of stained-glass windows (*Annual Cycle*, 1979–1980) in the same building discards figuration as such and creates atmosphere through floral ornamentation. Other monumental works by Dzidzaria, which communicate an autonomous search for peace, self-fulfilment and a return to nature, include her fresco *Time for Living on Earth* in the clubhouse of the 9th of May Kolkhoz in Väätsa and the fresco *To Get to the Spring* in the clubhouse of the Paide Motor Depot.

Somewhat on the same subject – earthly paradise – but in a much more overflowing fashion, the in-house artist at the Tartu Apparatus Factory, Mark Kalpin, created a mural for the swimming pool hall (Image 173). Mark Kalpin, who is rarely, if ever, mentioned in Estonian art history, is

Image 174. **Raul Meel, panel painting, 1980. Oil on cardboard, approx. 150 × 300. Library of the Academy of Sciences café. Tallinn, 10 Lenini (now Rävala) pst. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2022.**

a symbolic example of the movement of people and artistic ideas within the Soviet Union. Born in Ukraine, he served as a military pilot during the war. He then moved to Estonia, where he graduated from Tartu Art School, which offered high school-level vocational education. He lived in Tartu for 30 years, worked as an artist for the Apparatus Factory, and actively participated in local art exhibitions. In 1990, he emigrated to the United States, where he continued to work as an artist, painting preferably landscapes and still-lifes in an idealised realist idiom. [380] The work in question is made of thousands of pieces of plastic leftovers from the factory. The artist glued them to the base material and painted them with oil paints. Together with Vladimir Tovtin's mosaic depicting a semi-abstract beach landscape at the Tartu Experimental Repair Plant, they represent the technological complexity and richness of colour inherent to Soviet Ukrainian mosaic, which was otherwise lacking in Estonian art.

In terms of abstract landscapes, printmaker and painter Raul Meel created a panel painting for the café of the Library of the Academy of Sciences

380 See Francisco Martínez, Remains of the Soviet Past in Estonia: An Anthropology of Forgetting, Repair and Urban Traces. London: UCL Press, 2018, p. 74.

in central Tallinn in 1980 (Image 174). Art historian Harry Liivrand has
labelled it the first abstract painting commissioned for the public space in
Estonia.[381] He is technically correct here. However, there were abstract
sculptures, mosaics, and textiles up to twenty years before that. Raul Meel
was one of the few artists in Soviet Estonia who could be considered
an underground artist, as his abstract works, which dealt with Estonian
identity, were rarely, if ever, exhibited in official exhibitions.[382] Therefore,
this small albeit high-profile commission complicates the division between
the supported, tolerated and forbidden artists. By the decade's end, Raul
Meel's 'brother in arms' Leonhard Lapin created an elaborate mural
involving canvas paintings and mirrors for the Aruküla Collective Farm
Hobby Centre (Image 83). Lapin had previously worked with the theme
of kaleidoscopically stylised classicist arches and columns in the 1984
*Space and Form IV* exhibition at Tallinn Art Hall.[383] Lapin approached the
renovation of the early 19th century Aruküla manor on the one hand with
strict references to the geometric principles of neoclassicism, while on
the other hand, remaining faithful to the Constructivist and metaphysical
design principles he championed. His *Pantheon*, which refers to the totality
of gods in a belief system, signifies his choice of using the triangle as a
fundamental design code throughout the building.

As elsewhere in Eastern Europe during the 1970s and 1980s, there was a
distinct sense of crisis among architects. Architects felt alienated from their
profession as their profession had been downgraded to the rationalised
mass production of housing, which caused monotony and uniformity. They
sought opportunities in other disciplines to bring change. Among other
formats, this was done through cultural critiques in professional journals
and the form of 'paper architecture' within the framework of exhibitions.
Lapin did both but could also communicate his dissatisfaction through
heritage protection and renovation projects. As a former employer of
the National Heritage Board, he was, in this case, handed the renovation
project of the whole dilapidated manor house. For this, he had to thank
the relatively well-off and liberal-minded collective farm as a progressive
client looking for forward-thinking designs. During the 1980s, several
collective farms invested in renovating their manors and other historic
buildings.

381  Harry Liivrand, Eesti graafika Akadeemilise Raamatukogu kohvikus. [Estonian printmaking
at the Academic Library's café.] – The Association of Estonian Printmakers. https://estograph.
ee/2019/11/05/eesti-graafika-akadeemilise-raamatukogu-kohvikus/, accessed 28 April 2021.
382 See Eha Komissarov, Ragne Nukk, Raivo Kelomees (eds), Raul Meel. Dialoogid lõpmatusega
/ Raul Meel. Dialogues with infinity. Tallinn: Art Museum of Estonia, 2014.
383  Triin Ojari, Hargnemised vormis ja ruumis / Divergences in form and space, p. 177.

## 3.4           Post-industrial megalomania

During the 1980s, the global North's manufacturing was increasingly
moved to the global South, whereas its factories became derelict, and
inner-city areas decayed. In this situation, the 'creative city' based on
cultural economy began to substitute the city of industrial production.
With the proliferation of lifestyle consumption, new uses were found
for old buildings, frequently as museums or media hubs. The belief that
culturally-led redevelopment can solve a range of urban problems linked
to de-industrialisation has remained a dominant narrative in Western
Europe and North America.[384] Along the socialist version of consumerism,
the post-industrial shift in the Soviet Baltics could be placed in the same
period as in other parts of the continent.[385] In Estonia, it was initiated in the
mid-1970s when the municipality decided to build the Linnahall concert
hall in an industrial area on Tallinn's coast because the building had the
potential to 'reconnect the city with the sea and the surrounding territory
with the city', thus effectively transforming the coastal territories into
public leisure spaces.[386]

Soviet authorities also supported the process to hush up the economic
stagnation by attempting to replace the lack of consumer goods with
cultural activities. One of the most striking examples of this trend were
the massive culture houses, concert halls, cinemas and other cultural
institutions built by various government agencies and enterprises in cities
and towns, as well as in villages with only a few hundred inhabitants. In
this respect, Reuben Fowkes has labelled monumental-decorative art as
the décor of socialist consumerism.[387] As the post-industrial shift and the
increasing spread of consumer values coincided with the stagnation of the
Soviet economy, this kind of amplified (cultural) consumption was like a
swan song for socialist Eastern Europe.

Oddly, by the mid-1980s, the illusory visual representation of 'socialist
abundance' became a practical necessity.[388] As there was a lack of
high-quality building materials (e.g., windows for internal partition

384 Malcolm Miles, A Post-Creative City? – RCCS Annual Review 2013, No. 5, p. 123.
385 Andres Kurg, Estonia: the remarkable afterlife of the Linnahall concert hall. – Architectural
Design 2006, Vol. 76, No. 3, pp. 46–53. Kurg relies on Judit Bodnar's study of socialist and post-
socialist urbanism in Budapest. Judit Bodnar, Fin de Millénaire Budapest: Metamorphoses of
Urban Life. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
386 Ibid., p. 53.
387 Reuben Fowkes, Visualizing the Socialist Public Sphere, p. 336.
388 The term 'socialist abundance' is suggested by Marina Balina and Evgeny Dobrenko. See
Marina Balina, Evgeny Dobrenko, Introduction, p. xviii.

Image 175. **Kazimieras Simanonis, chandelier, 1982. Metal, glass, approx. 300 × 300 × 300. Vilnius Culture, Recreation and Sports Hall. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**

walls), elaborate monumental art (resp., stained-glass windows as partitions) became a substitute for industrial design.[389] The proliferation of monumental décor was epitomised by the fact that in the 1980s the central USSR Art Fund produced 300,000 square metres of monumental-decorative art per year (the equivalent of 42 full-sized football pitches), without counting sculpture, metal plates and textile works. In Moscow itself, the amount was 40,000 square metres.[390]

Such excessive designs reflected the changes taking place in Soviet architecture. After twenty years of 'optimistic functionalism', dominated by concrete boxes and clear lines, there began a confusion about where to turn next.[391] The Postmodern atmosphere gave way to looking back and interpreting local architectural histories. Trending brutalism and deconstructivism led to some buildings being given 'extravagant sculptural forms'[392] (Image 177). Most representative buildings and their interiors were still designed in a highly modernist manner which was pleasing to

389 See, e.g., Jānis Osis, Telpa un… mēs. [Space and… us.] – Zvaigzne 20 January 1987 and Ivi Eenmaa, Elu paralleelmaailmades. Meenutusi Eesti Rahvusraamatukogu saamisloost 1982–1997. [Life in Parallel Worlds. Memoirs about the creation of the National Library, 1982–1997.] Tallinn: National Library of Estonia, 2013, p. 199.
390 Petr Radimov = Петр Радимов, Проблема уничтожения и повреждения памятников монументального искусства 1960–1980-х годов. [The problem of destruction and damage of monuments of monumental art of the 1960–1980s.] – Natalia Anikina, Andrei Epishin = Наталья Аникина, Андрей Епишин (eds.), Среда. Художник. Время. Монументальное искусство в координатах 2-й половины XX века. [Environment. Artist. Time. Monumental Art in the Coordinates of the 2nd half of the Twentieth Century.] Moscow: BooksMArt, 2016, p. 110.
391 Marija Drėmaitė, Baltic Modernism, p. 297.
392 Vaidas Petrulis, Soviet modernism in Lithuania. Lecture at the Estonian Academy of Arts, 12 October 2020.

Image 176. **Algimantas Mizgiris, wall decoration and ceiling lights, 1982. Metal. Vilnius Culture, Recreation and Sports Hall. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**



Image 177. **Architects Aušra and Romualdas Šilinskas, Balneology and Physiotherapy Clinic in Druskininkai, 1981. Destroyed in 2006 during reconstruction work. Courtesy of Kaunas University of Technology Institute of Architecture and Construction. Photo from the 1980s.**

the elite.[393] Although the 1980s witnessed a plethora of structures with innovative and original design, almost all of them suffered from building delays, and material and financial shortages.[394] Due to the low building quality, the lifespan of buildings built in the 1980s was often much shorter than that of earlier Soviet-era buildings.

An apt example of a large-scale cultural edifice finished in the 1980s in Vilnius is the eccentrically oversized Vilnius Culture, Recreation and Sports Hall (1982). Designed by architect, theoretician and pioneer of architectural art Algimantas Mačiulis, the building featured several large-scale monumental art commissions, such as the luxurious chandelier in the main lobby by painter and metal artist and jeweller Kazimieras Simanonis (Image 175), distinctive metal wall panels and ceiling lights by Algimantas Mizgiris (Image 176), and the batik textiles by the Balčikonis

393 Karolin Jagodin, Loomingust läbi nelja aastakümne: intervjuu Aulo Padariga / Four decades of interior design works: an interview with Aulo Padar. – Sille Pihlak, Karen Jagodin (eds.), Sisearhitekt Aulo Padar / Interior architect Aulo Padar. Tallinn: Estonian Museum of Architecture, 2020, p. 62.
394 Marija Drėmaitė, Baltic Modernism, p. 297.

Image 178. **Kazimieras Morkūnas, *Feast*, 1981. Stained-glass windows, 180 square metres. Supreme Council of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (now Lithuanian Parliament [Seimas]). Office of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. Photo from the 2010s.**

family discussed earlier (Image 167). The Supreme Council of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, designed by architects Algimantas and Vytautas Nasvyčiai, featured one of the most enormous (180 square metres) Lithuanian stained-glass windows by Kazimieras Morkūnas in which antiquity-inspired allegorical figures rejoiced in front of a golden background (Image 178). The centrepiece of the composition is a woman with a child, symbolising motherhood, while the lower part of the work contains figures representing science and the arts. Although the seat of the legislative power was not a cultural edifice in the strict sense, in the Soviet period, it functioned more as a theatrical event space than an actual parliament. The Supreme Council was essentially a decorative institution in which members were not voted but selected by sex, nationality, education, profession, membership in Communist organisations and the local trade unions. Members convened a few times yearly and ceremoniously voted on already agreed legal acts.[395] As the institution mimicked legislative procedures, the building itself was also a spectacle, with the theatre-like main lobby featuring exuberant monumental art.

Although this and other buildings in the Baltics were scaled up compared to their surroundings, they cannot be called straightforwardly gigantic.

395 See Seimas Palace. – Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas. https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=35418&p_k=2, accessed 5 May 2021.

Image 179. **Julija Šiaučiūnaitė-Vaičienė, stained-glass windows, 1987. Vilnius Pioneers' Palace Children and Youth Centre (now The Lithuanian Children and Youth Centre). Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**



Image 180. **Arūnas Rutkus,** *Fairy Tale***, 1987. Fresco. Vilnius Pioneers' Palace Children and Youth Centre (now The Lithuanian Children and Youth Centre). Courtesy of Arūnas Rutkus. Photo from 2020.**

Compared to mega-structures built elsewhere in the Soviet Union, even the largest buildings in the Baltics maintained some sense of human scale. Belgian architect and theoretician Bart Verschaffel, who has discussed the meaning of monumental form, writes that things become colossal when their monumentality is hypertrophic and reference to the scale of the body gets entirely lost.[396]

In comparison, the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre, designed by the Nasvyčiai brothers and opened the same year on the same street, the city's main thoroughfare, was surprisingly calm and moderate, modestly stepping back from the street with a recessed central entrance. The relaxed interior did not feature any specific monumental-decorative artworks, whereas the entrance was given an expressive forged brass sculpture *Festival of Muses* by sculptor Stanislovas Kuzma, which quickly became the symbol of the theatre.[397]

Furthermore, in 1988 Vilnius saw the construction of the vast concrete conglomerate of the Pioneers' Palace, which featured solemn if not ecclesiastic, stained-glass windows speaking of motherhood and manliness

396 Verschaffel writes: "A colossal environment – see Boullée, see Speer – creates a contrast between a stone that turns into matter and mass and a sublime void. That void, that space with no proportions, cannot be filled any more by a body – be it a royal body – but only by a mass of people. It asks for leadership governing a monstrous, gigantic body or a machine and forces power to turn into a technique. The monumental, however, even where it surpasses ordinary living bodies in size, is defined and measured by the scale of the body. The monumental, in contrast to that which is colossal, does not aspire to the sublime." Bart Verschaffel, The monumental: on the meaning of a form…, p. 335.
397 Lithuanian National Drama Theatre. – Open House Vilnius.https://www.openhousevilnius. lt/2017-en/buildings/17-lithuanian-national-drama-theatre/, accessed 6 May2021.

Image 181. **Architect Boleslovas Zabulionis, decorative glass object at Kaunas Public Library, 1986. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**
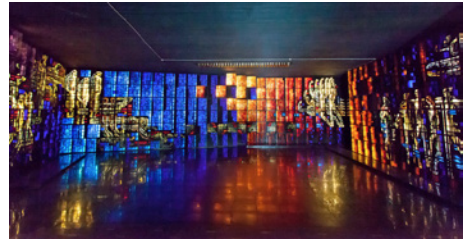


Image 182. **Kazimieras Morkūnas, *Invincible*, 1982. Slab glass, concrete, approx. 300 × 15000. Stained-glass composition in the Ninth Fort Memorial. Courtesy of Howard Koons. Photo from 2014.**

by Julija Šiaučiūnaitė-Vaičienė (Image 179). Painter Arūnas Rutkus added a surreal fresco featuring salamanders, crows, weird characters, and a cake (Image 180). The artist has recalled that the party commission hoped to see pioneers, bunnies, and flowers and was allegedly shocked by what they saw once the work was ready.[398] At the same time, the country's second city, Kaunas, saw the opening of the slightly postmodernist red-brick public library, which featured an inverted glass pyramid in the reading hall (Image 181). In contrast, the Vilties (Hope) pharmacy on the city's main street acquired a decadently neo-historicist interior design highlighted by Antanas Kmieliauskas' eponymous fresco (Image 134). In the centre of the image is an allegorical figure of a woman thought to be the goddess of medicinal plants, holding a lily in her right hand, while a snake looks at a cup held in the other hand – ancient pharmaceutical symbols.[399]

Perhaps one of the grandest projects finished during that period in Kaunas was the highly emotional Ninth Fort Memorial (sculptor Alfonsas Vincentas Ambraziūnas) and the accompanying museum, which featured intense stained-glass compositions by Kazimieras Morkūnas (Image 182). Instead of accusatory finger-pointing or ultra-heroism inherent to Soviet monumentalia, Morkūnas' piece treats the Holocaust and the memory of the victims of Nazism with solemn dignity. Morkūnas, who was one of the most

398 The artist might have exaggerated here. In most cases, decision-making was in the hands of the Art Factory's committee, whose members were used to convince the ideological staff on artistic issues. Thus, one can sense the artist's desire to present his Soviet period commission as a bold anti-Soviet gesture. See Arūnas Rutkus, Freska 'Pasaka' / Fresco 'Fairytale', 1986. Facebook 20 August 2020. https://www.facebook.com/arunasrutkus/posts/10155618344861179/, accessed 7 May 2021.
399  Jovita Arūnienė, Sovietmečio vaistinių architektūra ir interjerai lietuvoje. [Architecture and Interiors of Soviet Pharmacies in Lithuania.], p. 47.

Image 183. **Šarunas Šimulynas, Battle of Pabaiskas, 1988. Stained-glass windows. Deltuva House of Culture. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Maciulis. Undated photo.**
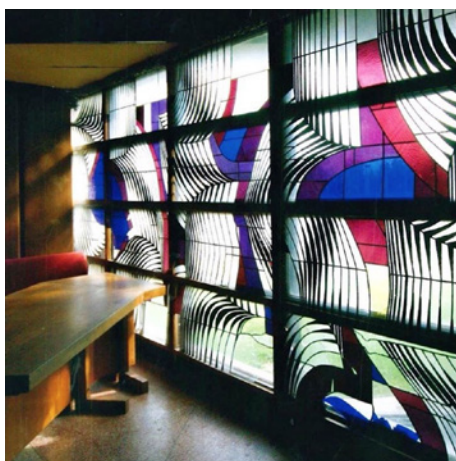


Image 184. **Konstantinas Eugenijus Šatunas, stained-glass windows, 1989. Glass, lead, 240 × 1380. Utena House of Culture. Courtesy of Bernardinai.lt. Undated photo.**

prominent glass artists at the time, also created a monumental stained-glass window depicting the Battle of Saulė for the Saulė cinema in Šiauliai (1986).

Beyond Vilnius, extensive culture houses with public art commissions were built in Alytus, Panevėžys, Utena, Deltuva Darbėnai, and Žemaičių Kalvarija with the last three possessing a modest population of around 1,000 people. Nijolė Vilutytė-Dalinkevičienė and Romas Dalinkevičius created a fresco-sgraffito for the culture house of the Alytus Cotton Factory in 1980 (Image 141), which presented the industrial might of the vast plant. Šarunas Šimulynas executed stained-glass windows for the Deltuva Culture House (Image 183). At the same time, Konstantinas Eugenijus Šatunas made stained-glass windows in his idiosyncratic, flowing, abstract manner for the Utena House of Culture (Image 184).

In 1980s Estonia, large-scale houses of culture which featured monumental-decorative art were built in minor localities such as Paide, Põlva and Lihula. Paide Culture House is an apt example of late Soviet postmodern architecture characterised by the pursuit of monumentality, the combination of different finishing materials and references to architectural heritage.[400]

400 Epp Lankots, Paide kultuurimaja muinsuskaitse eritingimused. [Special conditions for heritage protection of Paide Culture House.] – National Heritage Board of Estonia 2015. https://register.muinas.ee/ftp/Eksperdihinnagud/MKA_Paide_lisadega.pdf, accessed 13 May 2021, p. 4.

Image 186. **Eva Jänes, fresco, 1989. Lihula House of Culture mirror hall. Courtesy of Lihula Culture Centre. Photo from the 2010s.**

Image 185. **Kaarel Kurismaa, stained-glass panels, 1987. Stained glass, lead. Paide House of Culture. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from the 1980s.**

The interior and the exterior form an exciting synthesis integrated by the motif of the square which is used as a unifying design element on floors, walls, ceiling panels, windows, lighting, doors, furniture and even garbage cans. Specially commissioned works of art gave a finishing touch to the interior design: the stained-glass panels of the balcony railings of the dance hall and the rose window above the main entrance were designed by Kaarel Kurismaa (Image 185). As in the case of the Estonian National Library, completed a few years later, a round window borrowed from church architecture placed on the facade (Kurismaa's work is called *Rhythm of Light*) added a solemn look to the whole building. The visually simple multi-coloured compositions are reminiscent of Theo van Doesburg's constructivist stained-glass windows of the 1920s.

Põlva Culture House (1991) was based on Hans Kõll's Paide Culture House project. However, it was completed in budget mode due to a more modest financial plan. The last days of the Soviet economy were characterised by near-extreme circumstances, where all kinds of relations had to be used to complete a building. Accordingly, the construction of the Paide Culture House was characterised by a number of 'special operations'; for example, tank wheels were acquired from the Dvigatel military factory in Tallinn to move the revolving stage, while tires with special dimensions were acquired from a factory in Kohtla-Järve. [401] While the facade of the Paide

401 Ibid., p. 6.
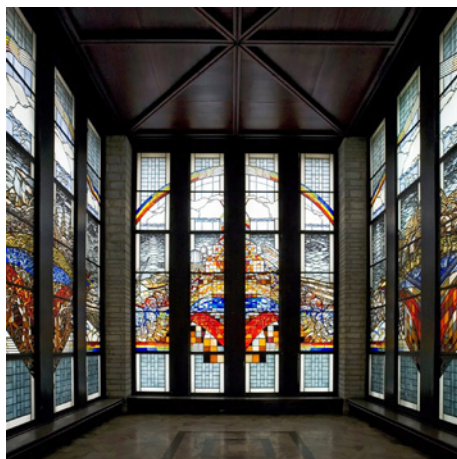
Image 187. **Rait Prääts, *Colours of Creation*, 1987. Stained glass, lead, 72 square metres. Political Education Building (now meeting room of a law office). Tallinn, 10 Lenini (currently Rävala) pst. Courtesy of Rait Prääts. Photo from the 1990s.**

building is covered with dolomite panels and plaster, the Põlva Culture House had to accept silicate brick walls. The interior also became more ascetic, where instead of a complete interior design, only a few details were added to the festivity, including Kurismaa's stained-glass window (1989).[402] Lihula Culture House, which served a town of 1,000 inhabitants is yet another example of postmodernist design which skilfully cites the architecture of the nearby manor house. The main hall boasts a fresco which covers three walls and depicts floral motifs (Image 186).

One of the most boastful interiors with a public function was the Political Education Centre in Tallinn. The art deco inspired interiors featured expensive materials (Sayan marble from Siberia, Czech crystal, precious wood, and dolomite). The interior synthesised different styles, completely independent of the modest limestone exterior architecture.[403] A design competition with three invited participants was arranged to find stained-glass windows for the monumental tower, slightly protruding from the rest of the construction. Rait Prääts, who won the competition, worked for almost three years on the project, accompanied by constant reviews, guidelines, and ultimatums from the officials. Eventually, this was one of the few works in late Soviet Estonia where the artist had to

402 Gregor Taul, Kaarel Kurismaa kineetilised objektid avalikus ruumis. [Kaarel Kurismaa's kinetic objects in public space.], p. 26.
403 Karolin Jagodin, Loomingust läbi nelja aastakümne: intervjuu Aulo Padariga / Four decades of interior design works: an interview with Aulo Padar. – Sille Pihlak, Karen Jagodin (eds.), Sisearhitekt Aulo Padar / Interior architect Aulo Padar. Tallinn: Estonian Museum of Architecture, 2020, p. 62.

Image 188. Evald Okas, *Friendship of the Peoples*, 1987. Secco, 150 × 4270 1500. Formerly History and Revolution Museum of the Estonian SSR (now Estonian History Museum). The hall has been repainted and the artwork placed behind dimmable glass. Tallinn, 56 Pirita tee. Courtesy of Postimees. Photo from 2014.



Image 189. Indulis Zariņš, Aleksandrs Stankevičs, Jānis Osis and Rita Valnere, mural paintings, 1976. Secco. Eduards Smiļģis Theater Museum. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2022.

depict Soviet symbols explicitly (Image 187). Apart from the centrally placed Communist insignia, the work depicted national landscapes and well-known buildings such as the Tõravere Observatory, the Port of Tallinn, and Song Festival grounds. Compared to the formal festivity of the central wall, the sides were more modest, depicting Estonian coastal cliffs, forests, and drumlins.[404]

In 1987, the History and Revolution Museum of the Estonian SSR opened its doors in the late 19th century Maarjamäe Palace in Tallinn. One of its halls featured a 42-metre-long secco painting, *Friendship of the Peoples*, by Evald Okas (Image 188). The palace formed an ensemble with the Maarjamäe Memorial to World War II. As this was an essential political site, the Communist Party's ideology department dictated the content of the painting: people clad in folk costumes of the Soviet republics, the celebration of their friendship and other ideological clichés of triumphant socialism. The anachronistic quality of the mural comes from the fact that preparations for the museum had already started in 1975. Two years after its opening, the History and Revolution Museum of the Estonian SSR was already renamed the Estonian History Museum.[405]

404 Gregor Taul, Rait Präätsi arhitektuuriga seonduv klaasikunst / Rait Prääts' class art with roots in architecture. – Sirje Eelma, Rait Prääts (eds.), Rait Prääts. Lugude Jutustaja / Storyteller. Tallinn: R. Prääts, 2019, p. 62.
405 Gregor Taul, Monumental Painting in Estonia: Notes, p. 131.

The work which best captures the pompous art commissions of the 1980s in Latvia was the renovation of the villa owned by eminent theatre director Eduards Smiļģis into a theatre museum. The artistic side of the restoration was overseen by Smiļģis' collaborator and scenographer Ģirts Vilks, who had also been active in monumental painting since the late 1950s. He decided to cover the ceiling in the main hall with paintings. The conservative if not outright traditionalist painter Indulis Zariņš, who for a long time had served as the head of the art institute's monumental painting workshop, led the work together with Aleksandrs Stankevičs, Jānis Osis and Rita Valnere. The result included particularly romanticised neo-Renaissance imagery, depicting scenes from the oeuvre of national poet and playwright Rainis, along with Greek muses and *commedia dell'arte* masks (Image 189).

## 3.5 Redemptive postmodernism

Recent academic discussion has contested the hierarchic notion of postmodernism being solely the cultural logic of late capitalism,[406] according to which its East European equivalent has been presented as an after-effect of the Western cultural sphere penetrating behind the Iron Curtain. American historian Marci Shore has even argued that it was primarily in Eastern Europe during and after the events of 1968 that the unwillingness to believe in any meta-narratives became clear and thus manifested the emergence of the first postmodern society.[407] From a wider perspective, it was possibly a sign of a global transformation from modernist core narratives to postmodernist plurality as ideologies lost their credibility.[408] An array of novel explanations also help to widen the topic of monumental-decorative art in the 1980s.

Virág Molnár asserts that if one defines postmodernism broadly as a critique of the universalism and formalism of post-war modernism and as a critical reinterpretation of historical and regional traditions, then such tendencies can be identified in Eastern Europe from the early 1970s.[409] If

406 See Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.
407 Marci Shore, A pre-history of post-truth, East and West. – Eurozine 1 December 2017 https://www.eurozine.com/a-pre-history-of-post-truth-east-and-west/, accessed 20 December 2020.
408 See Susan Buck-Morss, Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000.
409 Virág Molnár, The discontents of socialist modernity and the return of the ornament: The Tulip Debate and the rise of organic architecture in post-war Hungary. – Vladimir Kulić (ed.), Second World Postmodernisms: Architecture and Society Under Late Socialism. London, New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019, pp. 47–61.

we consider postmodernism as an artistic and architectural idiom, most authors agree that in Eastern Europe it emerged in the late 1970s.[410] For example, one of the first overtly postmodern architectural projects in Moscow was the 1975 pharmacy with a cross-shaped facade by Aleksandr Larin and Eugene Asse, a building they called *zdanie znak*, or building-sign.[411] Yet, besides some formal characteristics, postmodernism comprised a fragmented set of ideas and practices, which did not form a coherent style, but rather served as a resonant tool for various actors and agendas.[412] As such, it proved to be a versatile 'one-size-fits-all' tendency which accommodated often seemingly contradictory interests.

Thus, postmodern tendencies in socialist countries were not revolutionary gestures against the system but rather attempts at reform from within.

The seemingly playful yet destructive aspect of postmodernity has been viewed as one of the causes of the fall of Communism by various authors, most prominently by Stephen Kotkin.[413] Such an argument claims that as postmodernism sees no place for rigid metanarratives, the idea of a single ideology was dispersed. Quite the reverse happened, argues Russian writer and historian Kirill Kobrin. He finds that the Soviet system did not collapse due to its exhausted ideology – an alleged 'casualty of postmodernism' – but because of disputes over old-fashioned (i.e. 'modernist') issues like borders, ethnic divisions and international aggression.[414] As Vladimir Kulić puts it, despite its general linkage to the conditions of socio-political crisis, postmodernism should not be read teleologically as a cultural signal of the inevitable downfall of the socialist project – the socialist lifeworld

410 Russian art historian Natalia Anikina's enthusiastic assertion vividly exemplifies the adopted Western-centric discourse: "If Soviet modernism lagged behind ten years compared to the West, postmodernism came to us exactly in time, late 1970s." Natalia Anikina = Наталья Аникина, Технологические и композиционные приемы мозаики 2-й половины XX – начала XXI века как стилеобразующий фактор. [Technological and compositional techniques of mosaic of the 2nd half of the 20th – early 21st centuries as a style-forming factor.] – Natalia Anikina, Andrei Epishin = Наталья Аникина, Андрей Епишин (eds.), Среда. Художник. Время. Монументальное искусство в координатах 2-й половины XX века [Environment. Artist. Time. Monumental Art in the Coordinates of the 2nd half of the Twentieth Century.] Moscow: BooksMArt, 2016, p. 24.
411 Richard Anderson, The retro problem: Modernism and postmodernism in the USSR. – Vladimir Kulić (ed.), Second World Postmodernisms: Architecture and Society under Late Socialism. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019, p. 21.
412 Lidia Klein, Alicja Gzowska, One size fits all: Appropriating postmodernism in the architecture of late socialist Poland. – Vladimir Kulić (ed.), Second World Postmodernisms: Architecture and Society Under Late Socialism. London, New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019, p. 98.
413 Stephen Kotkin, Armageddon Averted. The Soviet Collapse 1970–2000. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [2001].
414 Kirill Kobrin, The death of the post-Soviet project in Russia. – Open Democracy. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/death-of-post-soviet-project-in-russia/, accessed 24 May 2021.

maintained its apparent solidity through to its abrupt end. In this respect, socialist postmodernism complicates the definition of official culture and illustrates how the systems assimilated different aesthetic approaches and the changing preoccupations and concerns.[415]

Postmodernism manifested itself irregularly in monumental-decorative art, reflecting the period's specific social and economic conditions. For example, as the countryside held some economic advantage over the urban sphere and collective farms saw intellectually vigorous architects and designers working for them, especially in Estonia (and a little less so in Latvia), a critical discourse emerged which led to radical postmodern gestures in rural architecture.[416] Furthermore, postmodernist thinking could not find its way to representative buildings in the capitals and bigger towns, as the more conservative central authorities expected their interiors to be designed in an authoritative modernist idiom. Principally, the modernist pattern aimed to amplify the exterior architecture in the interior and preferred simple furniture in which form followed the functional logic of architectural elements.[417] On the other hand, postmodern attitudes caused a general shift in the spatial culture. In the 1960s and 1970s, theoreticians and practitioners were worried and sincerely discussed whether and to what extent the synthesis of the arts was possible or feasible. For example, Soviet Estonia's leading art historian Boris Bernstein had argued in 1972 that in the early 20th century, boundaries between styles and art genres were washed away which led to a break in consolidated, unitary stylistic development, and thereby made the synthesis of the arts impossible. This kind of discourse was now redundant. [418] Postmodernism liberated professionals, as the hard edges between architecture, interior design, design, and art became increasingly blurry. Also, clients became more prone to experiments. Furthermore, Ingrid Ruudi has suggested that in Estonia, postmodern architecture and an interdisciplinary approach to design prevailed because architects in Tallinn studied with artists and designers at the art institute. Therefore, a different kind of self-regard and professional positioning was generated in which visuals were strongly valued.[419]

415 Vladimir Kulić, Introduction..., pp. 2–4.

416 See, e.g., Andres Kurg, Werewolves on Cattle Street: Estonian collective farms and postmodern architecture. – Vladimir Kulić (ed.), Second World Postmodernisms: Architecture and Society Under Late Socialism. London and New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019, pp. 111–127.

417 Triin Ojari, Hargnemised vormis ja ruumis. / Divergences in form and space, p. 166.

418 Boris Bernstein, Süntees ja aeg. [Synthesis and time.] – Sirp ja Vasar 7 May 1972.

419 Ingrid Ruudi, Spaces of the Interregnum: Transformations in Estonian Architecture and Art 1986–1994. Doctoral dissertation. Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2020, p. 73.

Image 190. **Ain Padrik (architect) and Aet Maasik (interior designer), mural painting, 1985. Central building of Raikküla Kolkhoz (now a library and office building). Raikküla Municipality, Raikküla Village. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2012.**

As postmodern thought valued local context and environment, it found fertile ground in the public discourse, as artists used it for legitimising sovereignty. In terms of the interaction between art and architecture, it led to increased use of ethnographic references, symbolism, and signs of local identity.[420] On the other hand, the sudden influx of information and the more readily available global visual culture at times led to hypertrophied architectural forms and 'meaningless components' with architects and designers creating buildings of complicated geometries and of 'broken' volumes in which case it was difficult to mark the boundary between the building and the public artwork.[421]

The central building of Raikküla Kolkhoz, designed by Ain Padrik, is a fascinating example of 1980s postmodernist Soviet Estonian rural architecture, where the architectonics cited the design of the surrounding rural landscape. The neoclassical Raikküla manor, with its grand six-column portico, was a few hundred metres away; the standardised

420 Inese Baranovska, National architecture, like going against the flow: Interview with Zaiga Gaile. Environmental design in the late 1980s and early 1990s. – Kristīne Budže, Inese Baranovska (eds.), Tieši laikā. Dizaina stāsti par Latviju / Just on Time. Design Stories about Latvia. Riga: Latvian National Museum of Art, 2018, p. 240.
421 Vaidas Petrulis, Soviet modernism in Lithuania.

apartment buildings were even closer. Padrik wittily synthesised motifs from different eras and achieved a result that conformed to the vision of how the building should meld into the environment. By drawing the outlines of Gothic church windows on the wall, the library of the collective farm was designed to leave the impression of a house of worship (Image 190).The architect and the interior architect Aet Maasik, both cognizant of art history, borrowed the idea for the chapel-type design from manor architecture: the main buildings on Estonian and Livonian estates usually had a family chapel.[422] As a distant relative of Daniel Buren's 'painting as radical gesture',[423] these stripes emit the outlook that in postmodernist buildings and the arts, it is not depths, but surfaces that dominate.[424] However, such narrative postmodernism replete with ironic combinations of historical references and vernacular archetypes was often better understood by the readers of professional magazines than by the actual users.[425] Therefore, although architects sought to enhance the communicative capacity of architecture by engaging with historical forms, it seldom spoke to the public.

Another work from Estonia which makes a good case study is Enn Põldroos' *Universitas Tartuensis* – a pastiche of Raphael's *School of Athens*, as discussed earlier – in the historic main building of the University of Tartu (Image 105). Pastiche is a heavily used and discussed tool for postmodernist layering.[426] This work problematizes clear-cut divisions between modernist and postmodernist values as it is a conundrum of both. Põldroos is one of the arch-modernists of post-war Estonian art and has been titled the most philosophical painter in the country.[427] He has hardly ever excluded humans from his paintings. The artist has continuously tried to juxtapose his figures against aspects of modern life – in this painting represented by a romantic rendezvous between a contemporary-looking couple amid academics. However, besides attention to primary human conditions and his depicted characters' relation to highly loaded semiotic objects, as a modernist, he has always sought to (de)construct minutely combined compositions. Such storytelling and intense citing of art history was unimaginable for

422 Gregor Taul, Monumental Painting in Estonia: Notes, p. 129.
423 Dorothea von Hantelmann, How to Do Things with Art, p. 73.
424 Julian Murphet, Postmodernism and space. – Stephen Connor (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 118.
425 Andres Kurg, Werewolves on Cattle Street, p. 123.
426 Monica Kjellman-Chapin, Traces, Layers and Palimpsests: The Dialogics of Collage and Pastiche. – Konsthistorisk Tidskrift 2006, Vol. 75, No. 2, p. 86.
427 Peeter Urbla, Enn Põldroosile ja tema maalidest. [To Enn Põldroos and about his paintings.] – Sirp ja Vasar 3 January 1975, p. 8.

Põldroos in his earlier work.[428] Ironic gestures towards historical paintings were not uncommon in the art of the early 1980s and became a mainstay of postmodern representational devices. Perhaps the most extreme example of this trend was the life-size three-dimensional recreation of Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper by young artists Pēteris Bankovskis, Valdis Rubulis, Edgars Vērpe, Aija Zarina, and Ainars Zelcs during the exhibition *Nature. Environment. Man* held in Rīga's St. Peters' Church in 1984.

Põldroos' work raises questions about different modes of visualising identity. On the one hand, it is a very modern painting in the sense that it conforms to national identity and tries to foster the university's heritage, while on the other hand, the (re)construction of Tartu's identity through Raphael is undoubtedly a postmodern if not a kitsch gesture. Zygmunt Bauman writes that if the modern problem of identity was how to create individuality and keep it solid and secure, the postmodern problem of identity was how to avoid fixation and keep the options open.[429] In this sense, Põldroos' painting stands well apart from the majority of strictly modernist works which were reproduced next to it in the majestic 1982 All-Soviet catalogue of monumental art.[430]

Compared to Estonia and Lithuania, we see less blatant examples of postmodernism in Latvian architecture and monumental art.[431] The few examples are related to the architects' efforts to resist rational construction policies and their simple rectangularly shaped building volumes. The postmodern layering of styles and citations tried to add artistic quality and emotional expressiveness to architecture and value local traditions. The first noteworthy implementation of postmodernist ideas and formal expression in Latvia was a group of residential buildings in the Jaunmārupe suburb of Rīga (Image 191). Although the complex was based on a standardised residential building project No. 103, which had been nauseatingly repeated across Latvia, the architects could modify the heights of the volumes, create distinct corner sections, and add traditional-looking steep roofs and expressive pediments. From the perspective of monumental décor, the architects decorated the facades with ethnographic ornamentation made of glazed ceramic tiles.[432]

428 See Enn Põldroos, Mees narrimütsiga. [The Man with the Jester's Hat]. Tallinn: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, 2013, p. 279.
429 Zygmunt Bauman, From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity. – Stuart Hall, Paul du Gay (eds.), Questions of Cultural Identity. London: SAGE Publications, 1996, p. 18.
430 Vladimir Tolstoy, Монументальное искусство СССР. [Monumental Art of the USSR.], p. 270.
431 Jānis Krastiņš, Ivars Strautmanis, Jānis Dripe, Latvijas arhitektura no senatnes lidz musdienam. [Latvian Architecture from Antiquity to the Present Day.] Rīga: Baltika, 1998, p. 11.
432 Krastiņš, Jānis, Arhitektūras stili Latvijā. [Architectural Styles in Latvia.] –National Heritage Board of Latvia. https://www.nkmp.gov.lv/lv/media/1597/download, accessed 27 May 2021, p. 143.

Image 191. **Architects Ausma Skujina and Anita Makinska, residential complex in Jaunmarupe, 1983. Courtesy of Laikmeta Zimes. Photo from 2010s.**



Image 192. **Architect Linards Skuja, Viesīte house of culture, 1985–1991. Courtesy of Viesīte municipality. Photo from 2010s.**

Regionalism was not simply an imported side-effect of postmodernism. In the 1970s and 1980s spatial culture, the pursuit of regional architecture became a predominant means to fight the monotony of industrialised architecture. This trend appeared in the 1960s and 1970s in interior design and was especially common in public facilities in smaller towns and the countryside. Drėmaitė asserts that in Soviet Lithuania, the movement was also seen as a spiritual architectural rebellion against soulless modernism.[433] Hereto, the 'search for the roots' went beyond architecture and affected literature, music, film, and history writing.[434] Paradoxically, as the trend was rooted in folklore, the movement found support from the Soviet regime, promoting a cultural policy of traditional people's culture.

An example of such 'critical regionalism' that reflected vernacular traditions and showcased the potential of architecture in transmitting a positive national identity was the exciting Viesīte culture house (1985–1991, architect Linards Skuja) (Image 192). In this case, the architect speculated about the look of pre-Christian Latvian castles. Even in cases where postmodern facade decoration was added to an otherwise modernist structure, architects had to calculate precisely and verify that the extra costs for improving the appearance would not significantly exceed those for the buildings of standard designs. As strict technical, material and financial restrictions were in place until the collapse of Soviet rule – and building managers succeeded in diverting money intended for artistic embellishment – modernism prevailed until the early 1990s in Latvia.[435]

433 Marija Drėmaitė, Baltic Modernism, p. 87.
434 See, e.g., Linda Kaljundi, Uusmetsik Eesti. [Neo-Wild Estonia.] – Vikerkaar 2018, No. 7–8, pp. 68–80.
435 Artis Zvirgzdiņš, Modernism in Latvia – Mass Housing Programs and Search for the Identity. The Case of Series No. 103. Uldis Lukševics, Linda Leitāne-Šmīdberga, Zigmārs Jauja, Ivars Veinbergs, Mārtiņš Rusiņš (eds.), Un-written: Exhibition of Latvia at the 14th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia: Catalogue. Rīga: NRJA, 2014, p. 367.

Image 193. **Petras Mazuras, *Man*, 1985. Bronze. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**



Image 194. **Architect Algimantas Šarauskas and designer Jonas Gerulaitis, interior design, 1983. Hotel Astorija bar. Destroyed. Courtesy of Architecture and Urbanism Research Centre. Undated photo.**

In Soviet Lithuanian architecture, postmodernism made itself heard through expressive sculptural forms which loudly opposed the dominant Soviet architecture.[436] The most distinct example of this development was the Physiotherapy Centre in Druskininkai, designed by Romualdas and Aušra Šiliniskas in 1981 (Image 177). With its plastic and organically cast fluid concrete forms, it resembled a sculpture of monumental scale – or 'poetry in concrete' as Petrulis puts it.[437] The Mykolas Žilinskas Art Gallery in Kaunas (architects Eugenijus Miliūnas, Kęstutis Kisielius, Saulius Juškys, 1981–1988) openly referenced the Acropolis in Athens and made use of deficit finishing materials such as artificial marble and coloured granite plaster. As a fashionable gesture – which was largely opposed by the public – the architects added a public sculpture of a nude male figure (Petras Mazuras, *Man*, 1985) in front of the entrance[438] (Image 193). In terms of interiors, the 1983 refurbishment of Hotel Astorija in Vilnius resulted in an ultimate postmodernist design solution, in which the restaurant and bar by architect Algimantas Šarauskas and designer Jonas Gerulaitis were filled with impressive furniture and an array of finishing materials directly inspired by and citing the work of the Memphis Group[439] (Image 194). The opening of this space became an event in the Lithuanian cultural scene, helping to establish the position of the new architectural language of geometric forms, bright colours, and complex compositions.[440]

436 Marija Drėmaitė, Baltic Modernism, p. 92.
437 Vaidas Petrulis, Soviet modernism in Lithuania.
438 Marija Drėmaitė, Baltic Modernism, p. 296.
439 Karolina Jakaitė, Leedu ja Eesti disaini sidemetest. Näitustest, kontekstidest ja eredaimatest sähvatustest / Design connections between Lithuania and Estonia. Exhibitions, contexts and the brightest creative sparks. – Jüri Kermik (ed.), Uus vaev: Eesti noor disain 1980. aastatel / New Pain: Young Estonian Design in the 1980s. Tallinn: Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design, 2018, p. 247.
440 Rasa Janulevičiūtė, 10 kėdžių: Lietuvos dizaino naratyvai. [10 chairs: Narratives of Lithuanian design.] Vilnius: Vilnius Academy of Art Press, 2018, p. 30.

Image 195. **Saulius Čižikas, *Old Vilnius*, 1988. Fresco-sgraffito. Lithuanian Deaf Association. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**



Image 196. **Vytautas Vanagas, *Forces of Nature*, 1988. Encaustics, approx. 300 × 600. Vilnius Fire Department. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

In 1988, Saulius Čižikas' fresco-sgraffito in the Lithuanian Deaf Association depicted the historical centre of Vilnius as a pictorial amalgam of mediaeval knights, ladies in baroque dresses, high-tech figures of engineers reminiscent of Kalev Mark Kostabi's graffiti-influenced punk style[441] and, as became fashionable at the time, lots of geometric forms (Image 195). Vytautas Vanagas created monumental canvas paintings for the Vilnius Fire Department, in which the ancient encaustic technique was used to render a tetraptych of fragmented elements of fire, water, architecture and nature (Image 196). Rimgaudas Žebenka's mural in the Lithuanian Pathological Anatomy Centre in Vilnius leaned towards the kitsch scale of postmodernism, depicting the circle of life or a *danse macabre*, which juxtaposed modern and traditional medics (Image 197). Glass artist Bronius Bružas similarly created stained-glass windows, combining different historical styles and cultural artefacts. In his work for the café Sodžius (Village) in Palanga, he used neo-mediaeval figures, overweight putti, pop art imagery and hyperrealist painting. Perhaps one of the most sophisticated examples of postmodernist monumental-decorative art in late Soviet Lithuania was the artistic design of the Palace of Ritual Services in Vilnius by Nijolė Vilutytė-Dalinkevičienė (Image 198). Together with architect Česlovas Mazūras, they created a pictorial-sculptural narrative around the stage on which the deceased's coffin was placed. The work was symbolically entitled *Milky Way*, and an emotionally charged lighting design complemented the evocative abstract painting.

441 Heie Treier, Immigrandid Kostabid / The immigrant Kostabis. – Kunst.ee 2011, No. 1–2, p. 18.

Image 197. **Rimgaudas Žebenka, *Ratilio*, 1990. Secco, approx. 300 × 800. Lithuanian Pathological Anatomy Centre in Vilnius. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**
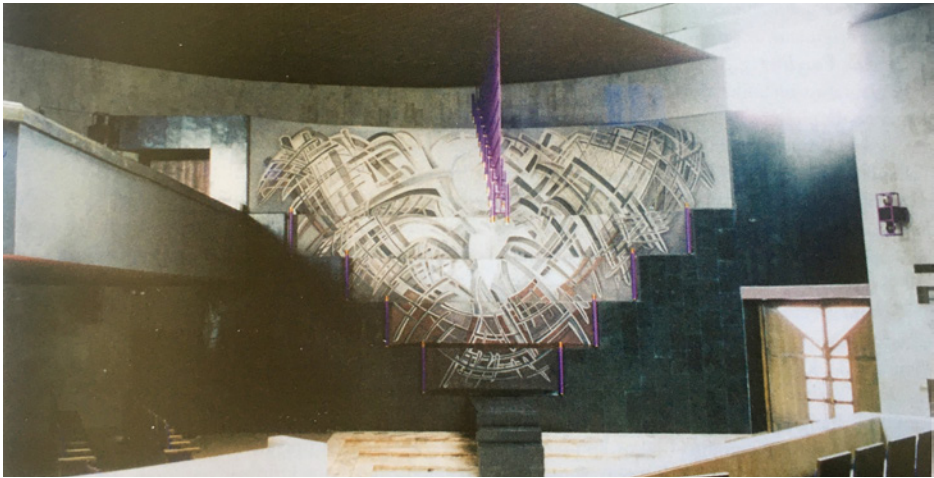


Image 198. **Nijolė Vilutytė-Dalinkeviciene, *Milky Way*, 1989. Fresco-sgraffito. Palace of Ritual Services in Vilnius. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

## 3.6    Resurrection of religious monumental art

Whereas in neighbouring Poland between 1979 and 1989, a total of 2,500 churches and approximately 5,000 chapels were built, only a few were built in the Baltic countries throughout the whole Soviet period.[442] At the same time, hundreds of places of worship were either closed, confiscated, or given another function. In the 1960s and 1970s, some glass artists could either restore or create new stained-glass windows for churches, but mostly these were minor commissions, and the results were predominantly diligent copies of older sacred art. In the 1980s, and especially during perestroika, religion and religious art resurfaced across the Soviet Union.

In Estonia, in 1975, stained-glass artist Dolores Hoffmann made her first religious stained-glass windows for the 13th-century Valjala St Martin's church in Saaremaa[443] (Image 199). She was supported by the local congregation and the National Heritage Board, which was responsible for conservation works at the time.[444] According to the artist, her work at the church led to an incident where a complaint was filed to the art institute's rector against her, claiming she was a religious fanatic. Allegedly, thanks to the diplomatic skills of rector Jaan Vares no sanctions followed.[445] This case helps to describe that blaming someone on the basis of religious devotion was the likeliest option for harming a disliked person. From the mid-1980s onwards, Hoffmann and her student Eva Jänes created a dozen stained-glass windows and mosaics for Estonian churches. Both artists also managed to convey a considerable Lutheran sentiment to monumental artworks which were placed in non-religious contexts.

Eva Jänes' 1980 fresco *Days of Mary* in the Väike-Maarja Community Centre (Image 127) is a curious case as it was painted at the height of the stagnation for the small borough of Väike-Maarja, a settlement from the 14th century named after the Virgin Mary. Jänes, a Christian herself, selected the cycle of feasts of Mary as the theme of her fresco. Although

442 See Izabela Cichońska, Karolina Popera, Kuba Snopek, Day-VII Architecture: A Catalogue of Polish Churches Post 1945. Berlin: DOM publishers, 2019. The statitics comes from Lidia Klein, Alicja Gzowska, One size fits all..., p. 104.
443 The main art historical gem of Valjala Church is the ochre-yellow figural mural located in the choir room dating from the early 13th century, which marks the beginning of decorative painting in Estonia.
444 Monika Reedik, Omapäi kõndiv Dolores Hoffmann. [Dolores Hoffmann walking on her own.] – Eesti Kirik, 22 December 2006. http://www.eestikirik.ee/omapai-kondiv-dolores-hoffmann/, accessed 29 May 2021.
445 Reeli Kõiv, Monumentaalmaalist EKA-s... / Monumental painting at the Estonian Academy of Arts..., p. 29.
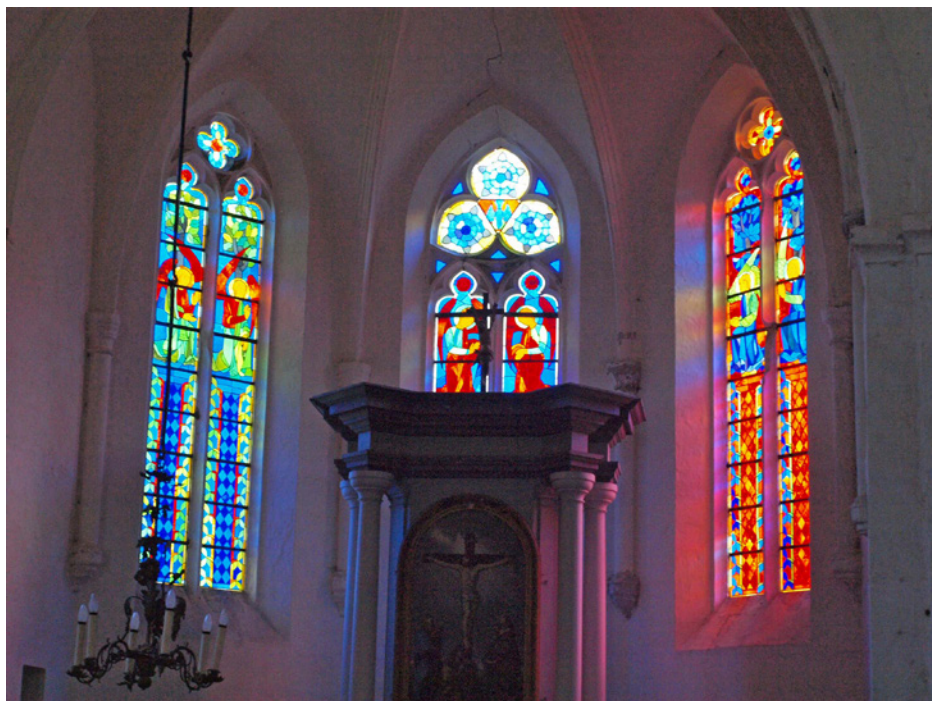
Image 199. **Dolores Hoffmann, stained-glass windows, 1977. Stained glass, lead. Valjala St. Martin's church. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**



Image 200. **Eva Jänes, mural paintings, 1982. Fresco. Vital Statistics Department. Tallinn, 67 Pärnu mnt. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from the 1980s.**

Image 201. **Urve Dzidzaria, *To Get to the Spring*, 1989. Fresco, approx. 150 × 700 Clubhouse of the Paide Motor Depot (now offices and warehouse space). Paide, 42 Pikk. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2012.**

the work formally depicts countryfolk at farm work, on a symbolic level, it represents the traditional cycle of work in which Christian and heathen rituals come together. Religious connotations and paradisiacal imagery are even more explicit in her frescoes for the Tallinn Vital Statistics Department (Image 200). In 1982, a belle epoque art nouveau villa in the centre of Tallinn was renovated to become the city's 'Palace of Happiness' where marriages were registered. Jugendstil, as art nouveau is known on this side of Europe, was out of fashion until the 1970s. However, the exuberant style underwent a revival as postmodernist visual culture dawned. In Estonia, the renovation of the former Luther villa signified a shift – Jugendstil's rehabilitation led to the development of a certain postmodern 'neo-Jugendstil' characterised by maudlin decorative paintings, pink ceramic bricks, retro furniture and chimerical stained-glass windows.

Another Estonian artist whose monumental works from the 1980s conveyed a vivid spiritual impulse is Urve Dzidzaria. Her fresco in the clubhouse of the Paide motor depot uses religious symbols to evoke a pilgrim's progress (Image 201). For example, it depicts people leaving a hostile Cubist city on their way to a spring. As she regularly used markers of art history in her oeuvre, one could say that the rainbow in her work symbolises a bond of friendship between God and man, the air bubbles stand for sincerity or, instead, empty talk and the ruined church arches

Image 202. **Merike Männi, tapestry, 1980. Wool, 600 × 200. Olympic Yachting Regatta Centre chapel (now bicycle store). Current state unknown. Courtesy of Merike Männi. Undated photo.**

speak of faith or the lack thereof. The fresco, with its cheery imagery, was a deliberate contrast to the noisy parking lot and repair shop on the other side of the window.

By the 1980s, stained glass, which had in Estonia so far been associated with sacred buildings, began to be used in many secular spaces. Thus, the last decade of Soviet rule in Estonia was a renaissance of stained-glass decoration because many works were created in both historic and new buildings.[446] In many of the prime examples, like Tallinn's TV Tower, Vital Statistics Department, The Political Education Centre, Niguliste Museum-Concert Hall, the National Library or the cultural houses of Paide and Võru, stained-glass was used as a marker of heightened spiritual presence. Interestingly, the only purpose-built religious edifice erected during the Soviet occupation was the pan-religious chapel for the Olympic Yachting Regatta village in Pirita, Tallinn, as a place of worship was considered mandatory for Olympic facilities. The delicate two-story building, placed in the middle of the athlete's village, featured an abstract tapestry by Merike Männi on one of its end walls, symbolically serving as an altarpiece (Image 202).

446 Linda Lainvoo, Grete Nilp, Sõnum värvilisel klaasil. Pilguheit Eesti vitraažikunstile. [Message on coloured glass. A glimpse into Estonian stained-glass art.] – Muinsuskaitse Aastaraamat 2019, p. 86.

In Lithuania, during the peak of the Thaw, the authorities of Klaipėda were able to finish building a functionalist-inspired catholic church dedicated to St. Mary. It was consecrated in 1960 and featured religious stained-glass windows by Antanas Kmieliauskas. Only a few years later, because of anti-religious policies, the building was confiscated from the congregation and rebuilt as a concert hall to serve the local philharmonic orchestra. The municipality returned the building to the catholic community in 1988.[447] However, even though few new churches were opened, a dozen stained-glass artists could execute their work in historic churches. Therefore, the tradition was continued and developed. Stasys Ušinskas made several stained-glass windows for churches during the war years and, right after the war, 13 stained-glass windows for Christ's Resurrection Church in Kaunas (1945–1947). However, in 1952 the church was confiscated and turned into a radio factory which it served as until 1988. During the 1960s and 1970s, he also made seven stained-glass windows for Berčiūnai church and stained-glass windows for the Church of the Holy Heart of Jesus in Šančiai, Kaunas. Between 1970 and 1985, Anortė Mackelaitė worked on the Anykščiai St Matthew's Church – the tallest church in Lithuania – where she designed brightly coloured stained-glass windows. Antanas Garbauskas made stained-glass windows for the churches at Rietavas (1970–1973) and Inturkė (1972), and Irena Birutė Gylytė-Vitkauskienė for St Theresa's Church in Vilnius (1976). For over ten years, Konstantinas Šatūnas restored the historic stained-glass windows of the Rokiškis church and created new works for churches in Kelmė (1970), Šiauliai (1979), Kaišadorys (1984), and Adutiškis (1984–85). According to Šatūnas, the Dailė art factory was not allowed to work for churches.[448] Therefore, the artist and his aides worked at night after the manufacturer closed. As for the restoration of the stained-glass windows of the Rokiškis church, the Ministry of Culture had approved the work but did not allocate any funding – the budget had to be provided by the pastor.[449] However, by the late 1980s, commissions for churches had become commonplace.

As in Estonia, some Lithuanian artists used official commissions as a way of expressing spiritual and Christian messages. In the Ekranas Culture Palace, Gintautėlė Laimutė Baginskienė created stained-glass windows in the historicist imagery of neo romanticism, which gave the space a unique church-like atmosphere (Image 203). In 1985, Antanas Kmieliauskas

447 Marija Drėmaitė, Baltic Modernism, p. 57.
448 I have not found archival resources to prove his claim.
449 Žydrūnas Mirinavičius, Vitražininkas K. Šatūnas... / Stained-glass artist K. Šatūnas...
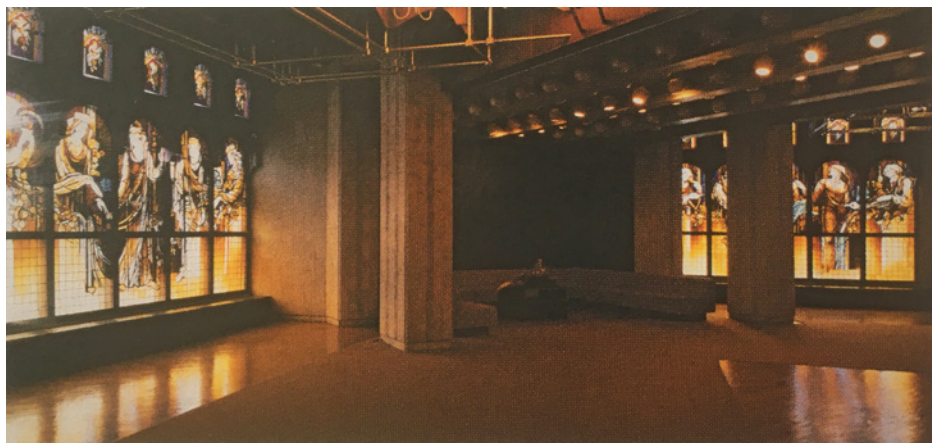
Image 203. **Gintautėlė Laimutė Baginskienė,** *Oak Grew in the Forest*, **1989. Stained-glass windows. Ekranas Culture Palace. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**





Image 205. **Antanas Kmieliauskas, altar painting, 1989. Fresco, 96 square metres. Church of Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace in Klaipėda. Courtesy of Klaipeda City Municipality Immanuel Kant Public Library. Undated photo.**

Image 204. **Antanas Kmieliauskas,** *Autumn Goods*, **1985. Fresco. The Union of Cooperatives of Lithuania. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

created a fresco depicting the autumn harvest in a vigorous neo-Renaissance fashion with a nativity scene, angels, and an idyllic landscape for the Union of Cooperatives of Lithuania building in Vilnius (Image 204). The artist himself has not referred to religion and has instead emphasised that he sought to represent the element of collaboration inherent to cooperatives and wanted to add a modernist touch to the fresco by dividing it into vertically articulated picture planes. [450]

Symbolically, in 1989, the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace in Klaipėda, which had been opened in 1960 and closed shortly after, was re-consecrated. Antanas Kmieliauskas, whose stained-glass windows had been destroyed 30 years earlier, was now able to create a 96 square metre fresco as an altar painting, which combined religious themes with that of the nation's suffering, including representations of forced deportation, Red Army soldiers equipped with rifles and the burning of towns and villages (Image 205). In the 1990s, when a proper boom of ecclesiastical art took place in Lithuania, another three extensive murals by Angelina Banytė and Juozas Vosylius were added to the church.

## 3.7 Perestroika's nationalist place-making

'Place' has been customarily represented as a positive marker against the more anonymous term 'space': a place is local and welcoming. In contrast, space is dominated by a foreign and fearsome other. Doreen Massey suggests a more heterogeneous reading of the term, claiming that place is the locus of denial. This politically more conservative 'place as retreat' fails to address the fundamental forces at work in society.[451] In this way, Massey connects the rise of nationalism in late-1980s Eastern Europe – claims of exclusivity, obsession with home-grown authenticity and hostility towards designated others – with aggressive place-making. Perestroika indeed created a fertile ground for such traditionalist place-making.

During the economic and cultural reforms that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev had initiated in 1985, people in the Baltic states sensed the possibility of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In quick succession, environmental and heritage movements developed into official

450 Indrė Gudelytė, Architektūros ir dailės sąveika 'Lietkoopsąjungos' pastato interjere. [Interaction between architecture and arts in the interior of 'Lietkoopsąjunga' building.] – Mokslas – Lietuvos Ateitis / Science – Future of Lithuania 2011, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 127.
451 Doreen Massey, For Space. London: Sage Publications, 2005, p. 5–6.

organisations with clear political agendas.[452] By 1989, Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians were demanding the right to make their own decisions and started practising this right. For example, in terms of monumental art, starting in 1989, several public monuments commemorating violence used by Soviet rule were erected. Russian philosopher Artemy Magun has argued that contrary to the utopianism of the October Revolution of 1917, perestroika was not directed to the future but to the past.[453] Although Gorbachev called for a modernisation of society, society responded with an enthusiastic interest in the repulsive events of the past, such as the Stalinist executions. Examining this paradox, Magun states that perestroika was, in fact, a conservative revolution and, in this sense, supported the interests of the newly forming class of Soviet bourgeoisie who sought to return to some traditionalist values and principles.

In the case of the Baltics, this return to old values signified an acknowledgement of historical injustices, opposition to Soviet power and its insignia, restoring statehood, re-uniting with the West and returning to the pre-war national and cultural identity. Even though many of these aspirations were idealistic and illusory and were perhaps preceded by the prefix 'imaginary' (e.g., re-uniting with the imaginary West, reinstating the imaginary golden statehood of the inter-war period), one cannot deny the fact that artistic culture was actively involved in the creation of such projections. Benedict Anderson's theory of how nations are a series of cultural artefacts that create and imagine communities supports this claim.[454]

Despite the nationalist call, perestroika was still an unprecedented moment of opportunities for intellectuals and artists – including those previously restricted to dissident and unofficial art circles – to participate in and influence public discourse. Finland-based political scientist Sergei Prozorov, grounding his approach in re-readings of Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben, has identified perestroika as a 'messianic time', as the experience of living through this transitional period was defined by witnessing the unfolding of the messianic. In such a situation, works of art acquired a particularly influential position. They acted as spokespersons for social messages.[455] Therefore, celebrations of national heroes, which

452 Jüri Kermik, Uus vaev / New pain, p. 44.
453 Artemy Magun = Артемий Магун, Перестройка как консервативная революция? [Perestroika as a Conservative Revolution?] – Неприкосновенный запас 2010, Vol. 6, No. 47. http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2010/6/ma17, accessed 7 June 2021.
454 See Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities.
455 Sergei Prozorov, The Ethics of Postcommunism: History and Social Praxis in Russia. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 119.

had already been a mainstay of Soviet cultural policies, gained momentum. In 1985, Latvia celebrated the 150th anniversary of Krišjānis Barons, a folklorist, writer, and publicist who had led the national awakening in the 19th century. Besides exhibitions and monuments, a mural by Andrejs Zvejnieks was opened in Jelgava public library a year later (Image 163). As the artist started working before the publicising of perestroika, the beginning of the process had been intimidating for him as Barons' imagery had not been addressed in the Soviet Latvian public space, and he did not know how far he could go in using national symbols. However, the further he developed his design, the clearer it became that there was no going back.[456]

In Estonia, young painters Jaak Arro and Epp-Maria Kokamägi created a monumental canvas painting, *The Purple of Red Evenings*, for the cinema Mai (May) in Pärnu (Image 140). The title refers to a collection of patriotic poetry by Hando Runnel published in 1982. The anthology and poem of the same name were significant, as the author succeeded both in outfoxing the Soviet censors while using the power of words to instil motifs that were understandable to a large proportion of readers. Runnel's subtexts were visibly at the forefront of the independence movement during the Singing Revolution. This wall painting by the married couple Arro and Kokamägi translated an enigmatic linguistic motif into the expressionist language of painting popular at the time.

Furthermore, it exemplified how opposing parties – Soviet ideologues and Estonian freedom fighters – took advantage of the same strategies carried by monumental art. Memorial complexes, large-scale monuments, and grandiose murals – regardless of their erector – often possess an ideological core that brings together all the components of the work. In this instance, it was the figure of a famous 19th-century female poet submerged in red light. As so often happens, monumental form is filled with pathos that reconciles victory and tragedy with a single sense of heroism.[457] Another example of monumental-decorative art which featured national heroes from the 19th century was Urve Dzidzaria's *Time for Living on Earth* at the clubhouse of the 9th of May Kolkhoz (Image 206). As for the depiction of national landscapes, Peeter Kuutma's tapestry *Light of Virumaa* (1988) in Haljala Community House and Elina Kaasik's

456 Māris Brancis, Kr. Barona zāles otra atdzimšana. [The second coming of the Kr. Barons' hall.] – Latvietis, 4 February 2018. http://laikraksts.com/raksti/7792, accessed 18 June 2021.
457 Alexander Kotlomanov = Александр Котломанов, Монументальность новой Русской скульптуры... [The monumentality of the new Russian sculpture...], p. 451.

Image 206. **Urve Dzidzaria,** *Time for Living on Earth*, **1986–1988. Fresco, approx. 200 × 10000. Clubhouse of the 9th of May Kolkhoz (now Vana Tall guesthouse). Väätsa, 4 Kooli. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2012.**



Image 207. **Silvija Drebickaitė,** *Ancient Lithuanian*, **1986. Fresco, approx. 300 × 250. Restaurant Bočiu (Boy) in Vilnius. Destroyed. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

rug *Mary's Land* in Väike-Maarja Community Centre were examples of visualising idealised national landscapes in textile, while Rait Prääts' stained-glass rose windows on the facade of the National Library of Estonia materialised the tendency in glass art.

The specifically nationalist mood of perestroika in Lithuanian monumental art can be sensed in the titles and subject matter of the murals. Silvija Drebickaitė created a fresco called *Ancient Lithuanians* (1986) for the Bočiu restaurant in Vilnius, where ancient locals lived in harmony with animals (Image 207). The title of Danguolės Brogienės' work in the Lithuanian National Philharmonic was outright patriotic: *I Will Not Leave the Land.* Depictions of historic battles also became commonplace, such as Šarunas Šimulynas's *Battle of Pabaiskas* in the Deltuva Culture House (1988) (Image 183). Juozas Vosylius created a four-part fresco for the assembly hall of the Vėžaičiai branch of the Lithuanian Agrarian and Forestry Science Centre focusing on the theme of Samogitian identity (1986–1991). Konstantinas Šatūnas made stained-glass windows for the lobby of the Šilutė Culture House, in which he made use of the colours of the Lithuanian flag, which the officials had long prohibited.

## 3.8 Supergraphics between socialist murals and capitalist advertising

During the 1980s, several Baltic towns were taken over by the fascination of supergraphics; that is, visual or textual designs predominantly on external walls, executed by wall painters but based on a design by an artist or a designer. The exact definition of the term is open, as on the one hand, it denotes large-scale murals, advertisements, and infographics in the urban space, while on the other hand, it signifies big arrows, numbers, or words painted in interiors spanning the whole length of walls, ceilings and sometimes even floors.[458] During the 1960s and 1970s in the West, it was, for a time, presented as an answer or a tool to solve the aesthetic and social problems facing the urban environment. Examples of such designs with a strong sense of the postmodern appreciation of layers and layering appeared in the Baltics in the mid-1970s. They inspired architects and designers to produce effective results for progressive clients. Andres Kurg and Mari Laanemets have singled out the first use of such monumental

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458 John McMorrough, Blowing the Lid off Paint. – Penelope Dean (ed.), Hunch 11: Rethinking Representation. Rotterdam: Episode Publishers, 2007, p. 65.

Image 208. **Architect Andres Ringo, Pärnu KEK Construction Company wood workshop, 1976. Destroyed. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from the 1970s.**



Image 209. **Author unknown, Moscow Olympic Games advertisement, late 1970s. Rīga, 10 Slokas iela. Destroyed. Courtesy of National Library of Latvia. Undated photo.**

typography in Soviet Estonia in the wood workshop of architect Andres Ringo's 1976 Pärnu KEK construction company[459] (Image 208).

The subject matter of the supergraphics was different, as some visualised ideological content, many informed about cultural events, some communicated social messages or showed the right direction in the urban space, and many acted as advertisements for public and later also first private ventures. In most cases, the commissioner was the municipality which sought ways to beautify empty end walls and diversify the urban environment. Many other institutions, such as industrial enterprises or museums, acted as clients.

Tallinn and Rīga experienced its first wave of the supergraphics boom just before the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games, when funding was granted to refresh and decorate parts of the city most frequently visited by tourists. Nearly a dozen supergraphics from the late 1970s are known from central Rīga. Some festive announcements went beyond the commonly used two-dimensional graphics, as elaborate sculptural panels or even extensive urban installations (such as the ones in Tallinn, see Image 149) were created to inform the public about upcoming events.

For example, in Pārdaugava's Slokas Street, a metal panel featuring a man and a woman holding the Olympic torch was installed (Image 209). An advertisement next to Hotel Latvija (specifically for foreign visitors) featured Misha, the Russian bear mascot, which achieved commercial

459 See Andres Kurg, Mari Laanemets (eds.). Keskkonnad, projektid, kontseptsioonid. Tallinna kooli arhitektid 1972–1985 / Environment, projects, concepts. Architects of the Tallinn school 1972–1985. Tallinn: Estonian Museum of Architecture, 2008, p. 168.

Image 210. **Ojārs Liekniņš, supergraphics advertising Aeroflot, late 1970s. Rīga, Station Square. Destroyed. Courtesy of Ivars Strautmanis. Photo from the late 1970s.**



Image 211. **Bruno Aide, supergraphics for cinema Rīga, late 1970s. Rīga, 61 Kirova (currently Elizabetes) iela. Destroyed. Courtesy of Focus.lv. Photo from the late 1970s.**
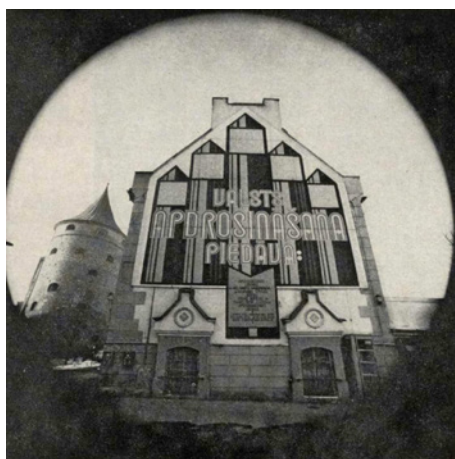


Image 212. **Author unknown (Viktors Timofejevs?), supergraphics advertising State Insurance Agency, late 1970s. Rīga, Basteja (currently Gada Barikāžu) laukums. Destroyed. Courtesy of Ivars Strautmanis. Photo from the late 1970s.**
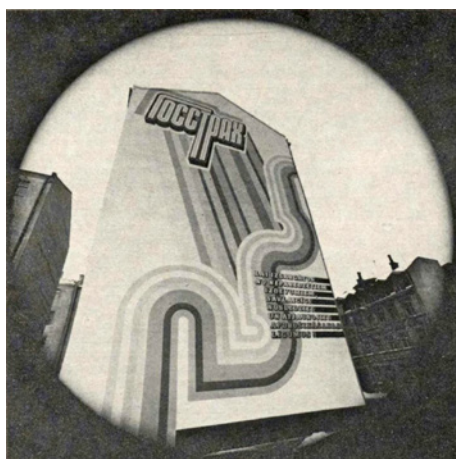


Image 213. **Author unknown (J. Traumanis?), supergraphics advertising the State Insurance Agency, late 1970s. Rīga, Krišjāņa Barona iela. Destroyed. Courtesy of Ivars Strautmanis. Photo from the late 1970s.**

Image 214. **Author unknown, supergraphics with a public message (Friendship of the peoples of the Soviet Union is our strength), late 1970s. Rīga. Destroyed. Courtesy of Ivars Strautmanis. Photo from 1978.**

success as a merchandise item (Image 154). Another sign of Moscow's presence in Rīga and the USSR's economic pose towards Western guests was the Aeroflot advertisement designed by Ojārs Liekniņš facing the central railway station (Image 210). While the logo was set in Cyrillic, which revealed its superiority over the Latvian language set in the Latin alphabet, *Soviet airlines* was written in English under Аэрофлот.

Besides supergraphics directly related to the Olympic games, the city's empty end walls were filled with many other murals. Cinema Rīga received an eye-catching art nouveau-inspired ad which spoke of the theatre's belle epoque look and was in contrast to the high modernist cinema Spartaks (Spartacus) concealing it with its thick sans-serif logo (Image 211). The well-known end-wall of the Jacob's Barracks on the historic Basteja laukums, which has been a place for billboards and murals since the beginning of the twentieth century, received supergraphics advertising the government-owned insurance agency (Image 212). The same institution, Gosstrakh, also advertised its services on the nearby Krišjāņa Barona iela with a similarly groovy disco aesthetics graphic design that bore pop art elements and exemplified the period's obsession with iconic type design (Image 213).

It is fascinating how quickly various government institutions adopted designs like the rainbow flag, which was unwittingly taken from the Western gay pride movement. For example, one ideological supergraphics which boasted the slogan *Friendship of the peoples of the Soviet Union is our strength* was placed on top of a meandering rainbow (Image 214).

Image 215. **Author unknown, supergraphics on the Rīga House of Models, late 1970s. Rīga, Lenina ( currently Brīvības) iela. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art. Photo from the late 1970s.**

Another work in which the reference to gay pride could have been a much more conscious choice was the supergraphics of the Rīga House of Models (Image 215). The fashion house was renowned around the Soviet Union as

Image 216. **From left: J. Traumanis, supergraphics advertising State Insurance Agency; I. Meliņš, supergraphics advertising cosmetic products and household chemicals factory Latvbithim; Jānis Veiss, supergraphics advertising cinema, all 1984. Rīga, corner of Lenina (currently Brīvības) and Blaumaņa iela. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art. Photo from the mid-1980s.**

an advanced manufacturer of casual clothing while Lenina iela (currently Brīvības iela) was the principal gay cruising site in Soviet Rīga and generally a site to present oneself. [460]

460 According to performance artist, art teacher and hippie Andris Grīnbergs, "It used to be a promenade – people would go there to show themselves and observe others. In the evenings, I would go by tram to the marketplace on Matisa Street, walk down to the Laima clock, stroll around for some time and return home because there was nothing else to do." Anda Kļaviņa, Andris Grīnbergs: interview by Anda Kļaviņa. – Helena Demakova (ed.), The Self. Personal Journeys to Contemporary Art: the 1960s-80s in Soviet Latvia. Rīga: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, 2011, p. 250.

Image 217. **I. Blankenburgs, supergraphics informing about fire safety, ca. 1981. Rīga, 30 Barona iela. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art. Photo from the mid-1980s.**



Image 218. **Author unknown, supergraphics advertising state lottery, mid-1980s. Rīga, Gogoļa iela. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian National Library. Photo from the mid-1980s.**

Some supergraphics that advertised state-owned companies or government agencies conveyed social messages to residents. One Gosstrakh commercial urged citizens to ensure – APDROŠINIET! (Image 216). The same street corner featured a mural with three-dimensional spray bottles advertising Latbithim (i.e. the local branch of the All-Soviet household chemicals factory Sojuzbithim) and hand-painted posters advertising films screening at a nearby cinema. The tradition of making hand-painted posters was kept alive by cinema Rīga until the 2000s. At 30 Barona iela, a mural rendered in sharply-designed infographics urged citizens to pay attention to fire safety and reminded residents of the fire brigade number (Image 217). Another supergraphics advertised the state lottery company with a Volga car taken to the skies by a hot air balloon (Image 218) – the majority of the funds spent on the Moscow Olympics were raised with the help of Sportloto. The lottery sales network in the Soviet Union was the largest in the world.[461]

461 A. Sokhoreva, L. Mamonova = А. Сохорева, Л. Мамонова, Лотерея выигрыша. [Lottery winnings.] – O. Pushkina = О. Пушкина (ed.), Современные вопросы естествознания и экономики. Сборник трудов Международной научно-практической конференции. [Contemporary Issues of Natural Science and Economy. Collection of Proceedings of the International Scientific and Practical Conference.] – Prokopyevsk: Kuzbass State Technical University, 2019, p. 256.

Image 219. **Marko Kekišev, supergraphics for the clothing company Baltika, ca. 1990. Tallinn, corner of Lembitu street and Lenin (currently Rävala) boulevard. Destroyed. Courtesy of Estonian Public Broadcasting Archives. Photo from 1991.**



Image 220. **Urmas Mikk, supergraphics for the bus company Mootor, ca. 1990. Tallinn, 46 Juhkentali. Destroyed. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2012.**

The second wave of supergraphics at the end of the 1980s directly resulted from the economic and cultural changes initiated by perestroika, as empty firewalls gave way to more Western-style consumerist advertising principles. The transition period was generally characterised by the increasing value attributed to imagological appearance – a new kind of public was imagined through new typologies and visuals.[462] In Tallinn, it was primarily thanks to the graphic designer Urmas Mikk who served as the municipality's urban designer. Mikk turned the otherwise bureaucratic job into a vanguard position, commissioning various murals in the city centre, many of which he designed himself. Another explanation for the unprecedented upsurge in supergraphics is that until the late 1980s, the municipality was supposed to spend a considerable part of its budget on visual propaganda (posters, slogans, flyers, flags). However, during perestroika, this money was redistributed. At the time, it was highly profitable for an artist or a designer to win a commission: one author recalled that with one honorarium, he took his family for a three-month trip around the United States.[463] Although it was pleasant for an artist to have his or her large-scale work exhibited in the public space, it was still connected to the Soviet concept of *khaltura* – potboiler work to earn extra money in parallel to one's principal work. In most cases, the supergraphics were not related to the artists' independent oeuvre.

462 Ingrid Ruudi, Spaces of the Interregnum, p. 3.
463 Valeri Vinogradov, Conversation on 8 January 2017. Notes in the possession of the author.

Image 221. **Leonhard Lapin, supergraphics on the former Tallinn Power Plant, 1987. Destroyed. Courtesy of Anna-Liiza Izbaš. Photo from the late 1980s.**

The supergraphics business was not only profitable for individual artists, but soon a couple of wall painters in Tallinn started a private company – the first private ventures in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic started to appear around 1987 – producing mural paintings, which carried out many of the municipality's commissions.[464] This was, after all, the beginning of the transformation from the planned financial system to a market economy. There had been little economic necessity for advertising under socialism, but now it became a requirement in which few people had expertise. Thus, early corporate supergraphics were a dubious genre fusing public painting, urban design, and commercial advertising. It celebrated advertising as something desirable – Western, elitist and awe-inspiring – while remaining rooted in the socialist economic model whereby a considerable amount of time and energy was dedicated to surface appearance and quantity in favour of quality. Noteworthy commercial supergraphics created in Tallinn included those designed by Marko Kekišev for the Baltika clothing company (Image 219) and Urmas Mikk for the first private bus company Mootor (Image 220). The patterns left by bus tyres are the central motif of this design, which may be regarded as the skid marks of early capitalism. Initially, the text on the wall read Mootor (Estonian for 'motor'), referring to the name of the company that, in 1990, began to operate long-distance routes to Western Europe.

464 Anna-Liiza Izbaš, *Supergraafika Tallinna linnakujunduses 1980.–1990. aastatel.* [Supergraphics in the Urban Design of Tallinn in the 1980s and 1990s.] Bachelor's thesis, Estonian Academy of Arts, Institute of Art History, 2017, p. 10.
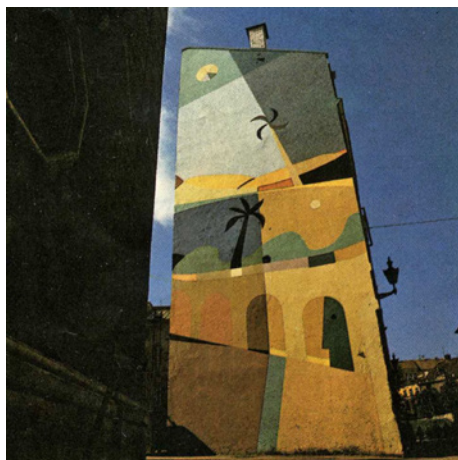
Image 222. **Rein Kelpman, supergraphics, 1988. Tallinn, 6 Vana-Posti tänav. Destroyed. Courtesy of Anna-Liiza Izbaš. Photo from the late 1980s.**



Image 223. **Mari Kurismaa, supergraphics, 1990. Tallinn, 4 Tatari. Courtesy of Anna-Liiza Izbaš. Photo from the late 1980s.**



Image 224. **Algis Milašauskas, Arvydas Jankauskas and Vilius Puronas, supergraphics, 1985. Bakery Tešla (Dough). Destroyed. Šiauliai, 38 A. Kleinerio (currently Trakų) gatve. Courtesy of Mūsu kraštas. Photo from the 1980s.**

Besides supergraphics with a commercial function, several murals were commissioned by the local government to enrich the urban space with decorative images. Leonhard Lapin designed a constructivist-inspired abstract mural for the former Tallinn Power Plant boiler house, which had recently been turned into an energy museum (Image 221). Valeri Vinogradov, a Moscow-born artist who studied painting at Tallinn's State Art Institute in the early 1980s and later remained in Estonia, created geometric compositions for the Tallinn Pedagogical College. At the same time, self-taught painter Rein Kelpman designed a mural which depicted a southern landscape with palm trees and metaphysical architecture, which was in absolute contrast to the northern nature of Tallinn's Old Town (Image 222). The city's chief artist's preference for abstract and semi-abstract decorations, which aimed to conceptualise the architectonic qualities of the urban space and people's movement, is also evident in the murals designed by Mari Kurismaa (Image 223).

As for Lithuania, its capital Vilnius largely bypassed the supergraphics enthusiasm. Instead, it was the fourth largest city Šiauliai which in the 1980s featured around 20 outdoor murals initiated by the municipality's chief artist Vilius Puronas.[465] Šiauliai, an ill-fated town which saw the majority of its buildings destroyed both in the First and Second World Wars, as well as its dominant Jewish population murdered by the Nazis, had no old town. Nearly 80% of its post-war housing belonged to the municipality's Housing Board. Citizens and companies showed little ownership towards the standardised buildings, despite the local government's attempts to improve the situation by repainting houses with better quality facade paint specially acquired from Yugoslavia. From the late 1970s onwards, Puronas turned to the prospective art teachers studying at the Šiauliai Pedagogical Institute to practise their modest painting skills in large-scale mural format. The results were formally and stylistically diverse, but they differed from other cities and served their purpose – according to the head artist Puronas, they instilled faith and pride not only in the novice art teachers but also in other citizens.[466] Judging from the well-executed compositions and smartly chosen typography, it is evident that Puronas – himself a design graduate of the art institute – kept a close eye on the final design layouts.

465 Vilius Puronas, Fasadų dekoras tapyba. [Façade decoration painting.] – Mūsų kraštas 28 October 2016. http://musu.krastas.lt/?data=2016-11-29&rub=1146671142&id=1475163629&pried=2016-10-28, accessed 19 July 2021.
466 Ibid.

Image 225. **Stasys Gabalis, supergraphics advertising printing house Titnagas, 1975. Šiauliai, 52 Vasario 16-osios gatve. Destroyed. Courtesy of Mūsu kraštas. Photo from the 1980s.**



Image 226. **Algis Milašauskas, supergraphics advertising pharmacy Valerijunas, 1982.Šiauliai, 173 Vilniaus g. Destroyed. Courtesy of Mūsu kraštas. Photo from the 1980s.**



Image 227. **Algis Milašauskas, supergraphics advertising a fur salon, 1983. Šiauliai, 257a Vilniaus g. Destroyed. Courtesy of Mūsu kraštas. Photo from the 1980s.**



Image 228. **Ričardas Ničajus,** *Boulevard's perspective*, **1977. Šiauliai, 255 Vilniaus g. Destroyed. Courtesy of Mūsu kraštas. Photo from the 1980s.**

The majority of the supergraphics advertised local enterprises and shops. Algis Milašauskas, Arvydas Jankauskas and Vilius Puronas designed a humorous mural on the facade of a bakery in which the name Tešla (Dough) was rendered in fluid typography reminiscent of graffiti – urban visual culture with which the authors were well familiar by 1985 (Image 224). The image was set on a blue background featuring Leonid Brezhnev's quote in Lithuanian and Russian: "Man grows bread, bread grows man." Puronas recalls that the quote was an ideological necessity as the decorative panel was included in the reports of the local government as an accent of visual agitation on the development of the food industry.[467] It is difficult to say whether the artists used Brezhnev's quote ironically or not, but it is worth considering such appropriation as an example of 'sots art', which, like Western pop art, boldly used various motifs from Soviet visual culture as its means of expression.[468]

Another supergraphics advertised a local printing house in operation since 1923 (Image 225). In a system where typography was limited to a few Soviet fonts, the designers boldly decided to cover the house in art deco lettering. Puronas said this caused resentment among politicians, as it was a direct reference to the inter-war Lithuanian state. The artists con-vinced the authorities that Titnagas (Flint) had been a seriously progressive publishing house at the time. Therefore, monumental-decorative art was used as a vehicle of public memory which strived to give temporal depth to the otherwise post-war urban environment. Several other murals reminded the public of interwar art deco graphics (Images 226, 227), while several used strikingly contemporary visuals to enliven the street facades, such as the mural by Ričardas Ničajus, which somewhat sarcastically – judging by the juxtaposition of war veterans, factory workers, hippies and consumers from others parts of the Soviet Union making use of the wider variety of products sold in Lithuanian department stores – depicted an urban scene from the late 1970s Šiauliai (Image 228).

## 3.9 Graffiti undoing walls: the collapse of the socialist space

I will end the section on the Soviet period with an overview of graffiti. Although typologically and art-historically it is a completely different

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467 Ibid.
468 See Liisa Kaljula, Eesti sots art! Nõukogude visuaalkultuuri märgid Eesti kunstis hilisnõukogude perioodil. [Estonian Sots Art! Signs of Soviet Visual Culture in Estonian Art of the Late Soviet Era.] Doctoral dissertation, Tallinn University, Estonian Humanitarian Institute, 2021.

field, in semiotic terms monumental-decorative art and street art are still two sides of the same coin. If during the Soviet period the aesthetic embellishment of the urban space was undeniably a state monopoly, in the transitional period both artists and activists challenged this and intervened in the public space with independent messages and images. Although the examples given here do not have art historical importance, in sociocultural terms they were signs of a crucial trend, in which the desires specific to the era were expressed.

Throughout the Soviet period, the erection and decoration of walls was a centralised sphere that was difficult for an individual to access. That was also the case with official public art commissions. Estonian neo-avant-garde artist and architect Leonhard Lapin has expressed astonishment that he ever managed to create monumental art during the Soviet period, as commissions were challenging to access. Nevertheless, in the early 1980s, Lapin designed stained-glass windows for the diner of the enormous textile factory Balti Manufaktuur in Tallinn (work destroyed in 2004). He also created concrete architectonic landmarks for a living quarter in Pärnu (1970s) and Viimsi (1979, destroyed), and later during perestroika, a decorative wall design for a repurposed manor house in Aruküla (1989) and supergraphics in central Tallinn (1987, destroyed). According to Lapin, the Ministry of Culture had something of a list of 'banned artists', to which he allegedly belonged.[469] Although there is no documentary evidence of this, and former ministry employees deny it, Soviet authorities undoubtedly monitored artists and used a variety of means of influence if deemed necessary.

Most large commissions were handed to a limited circle of artists. In addition, many enterprises and collective farms employed their artists, who took care of daily agitprop (designing posters, slogans) and large-scale works of art. Just as all publications had to go through the desk of Glavlit's censors, so was the case with exhibitions, murals, and other visual elements, which had to pass artistic and other committees before reaching the public space. Much depended on how scrupulous censorship was in each particular case. There could have been no street art in the sense of free urban creativity or independent political manifestations before the late 1980s because it would have gone outside the bounds of censorship.[470]

469 Leonhard Lapin, Conversation on 21 July 2021. Notes in the possession of the author.
470 Ieva Astahovska, Janis Borgs: interview by Ieva Astahovska, p. 67.

Nevertheless, the Soviet Union and its Baltic provinces featured inevitable inscriptions on the walls that were not officially sanctioned. John Bushnell, the author of the first study on graffiti in late Soviet Moscow, claimed that the appearance of graffiti was related to the birth of subcultures among the Soviet youth.[471] In the capital of the USSR, the first wave of such self-organisation separate from official ideologised associations was triggered by rivalling football fans in the late 1970s who left their manifestations, such as *Спартак – чемпион* (Spartak is the champion) on the walls, fences, boards, and asphalt of the city. According to Bushnell, 'sports stories' comprised half of the urban inscriptions in the 1980s, while the other half consisted of musical preferences and political messages. Bushnell estimates that by the mid-1980s, the authorities were no longer able to keep up with the increasing amount of graffiti.[472] Although graffiti never came close to monumental-decorative art in terms of its visual scope, one cannot ignore its importance when analysing the visual culture of the era, as it signified a symbolic shift in power over who decided on and defined the walls. It was a dialectic situation, as on the one hand, before graffiti could enter the public space, intense physical regulation of the public space had to diminish for people to make themselves heard, while on the other hand, daring graffiti writers helped to foster free expression in the public space.[473] Although graffiti is still criminal in most European cities and artists risk heavy fines and confinement, the stakes were much higher in the Soviet Union. Unauthorised drawings and writings on the walls – especially those critical of the Soviet authorities – could lead to two to five years of imprisonment for abusive hooliganism.[474] However, in most cases, the punishments ranged from serious conversations to severe administrative sanctions such as being expelled from the Communist Youth or university.[475]

In the Soviet Baltic states, there were no rival football fans like in Moscow. Estonia's first significant example of subcultural graffiti was band graffiti, which appeared in the 1960s. It was about putting the names of one's favourite artists or their symbols on the wall. Through it, one identified

471 John Bushnell, Moscow Graffiti: Language and Subculture. Winchester, Mass.: Unwin Hyman, 1990, p.3.

472 Ibid., p. 5–10.

473 Alexis M. Lerner, The Co-optation of Dissent in Hybrid States: Post-Soviet Graffiti in Moscow. – Comparative Political Studies 2019, November, p. 25.

474 Auguste Petre, The code of the streets. Social and artistic experience of the walls of Riga. – Culture Crossroads 2019, No. 13, p. 25.

475 See, e.g., Tiit Pruuli, EÜE jälg: pildikesi üliõpilasnoorsoo elust. [The Trace of EÜE: Pictures from the life of student youth.] Tallinn: Varrak, 2013, p. 542.

him- or herself as a member of a particular youth group.[476] Most of these writings and icons appeared in places where local hippies would gather; for example, in the peripheral Laboratooriumi tänav in the Old Town of Tallinn. The late 1970s and early 1980s punk movement triggered another wave of urban inscriptions. The subculture was fond of using spray paint in decorating their clothes and haircuts and leaving marks on walls, typically in red and black de-aestheticised and provocative forms. The names of various local and foreign punk bands, anarchist catchphrases and the ubiquitous Circle-A symbol appeared increasingly on the walls of the Baltic cities.[477]

Besides its commonly known global stylistic features, it is critical to emphasise the punk movement's strong connection to the local context and its effect on social norms and visual culture.[478] Multimedia artist Kiwa has argued that while the first generation of punks faced very risky situations for their public appearance, the second generation 'perestroika punks' were no longer countercultural, as they sometimes even belonged to the national cultural and political elite (like the poet Merle Jääger) or became commercialised at the earliest possibility (like the punk band Vennaskond).[479] Latvian punk arrived slightly later, allegedly at around 1982, but had a similarly extensive effect in terms of discrediting the status quo in the public sphere.[480] In Lithuania, punk was a later phenomenon (mid- to late-1980s) and had more influence after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[481]

Graffiti as a particular urban art in its contemporary form – bright spray-painted tags and murals – spread over the Soviet Union after the initiation of glasnost and perestroika. As the Soviet populace was given the

476 Rainer Vilumaa, Grafiti Eestis. [Graffiti in Estonia.] – Vikerkaar 2002, No. 10, p. 67.
477 Ibid., p. 69.
478 See Aimar Ventsel, Eastern Europe as Punk Frontier. – Ewa Mazierska, Zsolt Győri (eds.), Eastern European Popular Music in a Transnational Context. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 101–118.
479 Kiwa, Oksekott ja sopajuga. Tartu eksp 1988–1995. [Vomit bag and muck spout. Tartu eksp 1988–1995.] – Presentation at the conference "Öelda kõike ja igal viisil. Tartu eksperimentaalsus 1988–2010" [To say everything in every way. Experimentality in Tartu 1988–2010] at Tartu University Old Anatomical Theatre, 12 May 2022. Notes in the possession of the author.
480 Jānis Daugavietis, Vom Ende der Estraden. Die späten Anfänge des Punk in Lettland. – Alexander Pehlemann (ed.), Warschauer Punk Pakt. Punk im Ostblock 1977–1989. Mainz: Ventil Verlag, 2018, p. 202.
481 Reda Šatūnienė, Pankų subkultūra Lietuvoje: tapatumo bruožai. Daktaro Disertacija. [Punk Subculture in Lithuania: Features of Identity.] Doctoral dissertation. Kaunas: Vytautas Magnus University Publishers, 2008, p. 11.

right to discuss political and social problems in public settings, the influx of Western pop culture directly influenced how people used the more liberal situation. Several Moscow-based graffiti artists who started working at the time have cited American hip-hop films like *Beat Street* (1984; directed by Stan Lathan) as significant influences.[482] In Tallinn, the first graffiti murals were allegedly made by Finnish artists.[483] Also in Latvia, hip hop culture arrived around 1985. As for the availability of paints, the options were slightly better in Latvia compared to Estonia and Lithuania, as the local chemical enterprise Latbithim produced aerosol paints.[484] The first proper graffiti mural in Rīga was made in sequences between 1987 and 1994 in the tram tunnel on Mazā Krasta iela in the city's Moscow district, by pioneering street artists Krys, Malysh and Picasso.[485] It depicted a laughing rat against the backdrop of a crumbling city and the image of Jesus – thus a moralising perspective on the politics of the time. As for the beginning of graffiti in Lithuania, Lina Sedleckienė asserts that the first murals appeared in 1989 and Latvians, including Krys, did them.[486] From there on, Lithuanian graffiti pioneers were able to gather information on their own via media and travel, as one forerunner artist Vincaitis cites his family's 1989 trip to Munich as an evocative meeting with street art.[487]

Reuben Fowkes has argued that after the rebuff of 1968, leftist artists and intellectuals in Eastern Europe lost interest in protest and in changing the public sphere.[488] It is not easy to agree with this statement because several artists actively interpreted and improved the public space in Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian art, design and architecture. Nonetheless, drawing a line between artistic protest and actual political activism is difficult. But indeed, a new wave of protests, civic actions and artists' engagement with the politics of the public sphere only emerged in the late 1980s. This may hold in the case of Lithuania and Estonia, where the punks and other subcultures paved the way for direct political protest. However, in Latvia, visual artists largely initiated a protest culture in the early 1980s. Extensive Russification and Sovietisation, hidden inter-cultural tensions, and

482 Alexis M. Lerner, The Co-optation of Dissent in Hybrid States, p. 6.
483 Rainer Vilumaa, Grafiti Eestis. [Graffiti in Estonia.] – Vikerkaar 2002, No. 7, p. 67.
484 Bubu, Eesti punk eile, täna, homme. [Estonian punk yesterday, today, tomorrow.]
485 Auguste Petre, The code of the streets, p. 21.
486 Lina Sedleckienė, Grafiti subkultūros formavimosi veiksniai lietuvoje. [Graffiti Subculture Development Factors in Lithuania.] Master's thesis, Vytautas Magnus University, Department of Ethnology, 2016, p. 5.
487 Andrius Janušauskas, Lietuvos Graffiti istorija I. Kaunas 1988–1998. [Lithuanian graffiti history I. Kaunas 1988–1998.] Hip-Hop.lt, 3 November 2013 [2007]. https://www.hip-hop.lt/lietuvos-graffiti-istorija-i-kaunas-1988-1998-hiphop-lt-2007/, accessed 1 August 2021.
488 Reuben Fowkes, Visualising the Socialist Public Sphere, p. 349.
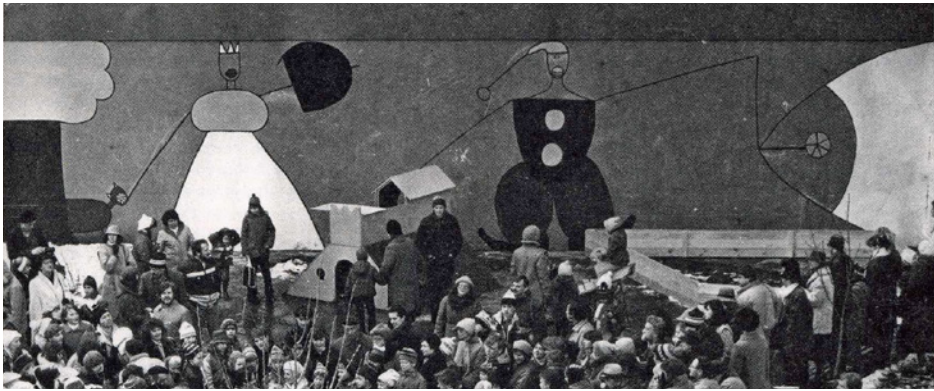
Image 229. **Aija Zarina, wall painting, 1986. Corner of Pēteris Stučka (currently Tērbatas) and Lāčplēša Streets in Rīga. Destroyed. Courtesy of Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art. Photo from 1986.**

far-reaching regress of architectural planning characterised the suppressive and depressing atmosphere of the Brezhnev period in Rīga.

The resentment found its most arousing expression in the annual Art Days, an otherwise routine event in the Soviet Union during which visual artists left their studios for a week to show their work and meet their audience in the public space. Art Days were held across the Soviet Union to promote art in society through exhibitions, lectures, excursions to artists' studios and other activities. In Soviet Latvia, the tradition was established in 1959, and the event took place nationwide. It was organised by a rotating committee formed by the Artists' Union.[489] During these few weeks in April, censorship was 'partially lifted', and cities across Latvia had a carnival-like atmosphere. In the 1980s, artists took advantage of the Art Days to stage daring performances and experimental shows. Although the authorities halted some of the more audacious spectacles, and some artists were detained, the risk that anyone would interfere was lessened as the decade progressed.[490] By the early 1980s, it had developed into a full-blown urban carnival which turned the Latvian capital into a subversive space where it was exceedingly difficult to control what was classified as farce, kitsch, theatrics, original art or out-and-out criticism of Soviet rule. The Art Days possibly experienced its creative zenith in 1984 when St. Peter's Church hosted the exhibition *Daba. Vide. Cilvēks* (Nature. Environment. Man) in amongst the creative mess scattered around the urban space. From there on,

489 Helēna Demakova, The significance of memory in the study of Latvian contemporary art, p. 27.
490 Amy Brzygel, Performing the East: Performance Art in Russia, Latvia and Poland since 1980. London and New York: IB Tauris, 2013, p. 140.
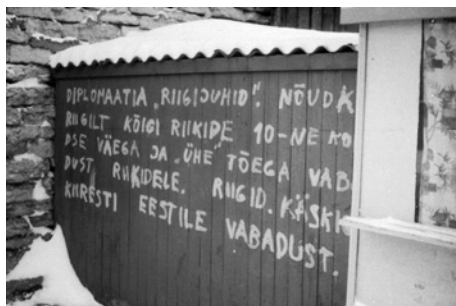
Image 230. **Ülo Kiple, graffiti, late 1980s. Unknown location. The text reads: Diplomatic "heads of state". Demand from state freedom for state with tenfold power and truth. Command freedom for Estonia urgently. Destroyed. Courtesy of Raul Viitung. Photo from the late 1980s.**

installation art and other boundary-diffusing contemporary art phenomena were exhibited in official exhibitions. For example, in an event in 1988 artists Sergejs Davidovs and Oļegs Tillbergs brought a pile of rubbish from a rural building site to the centre of Rīga, which they then turned into their artistic cage where they lay reading the cultural newspaper *Literatūra un Māksla* (Literature and Art) while fellow artist Sarmīte Māliņa walked around and explained what was happening. Soon the militia arrived and arrested the artists only for a call from the head of the Artists' Union Džemma Skulme to help them out of their trouble.[491]

Such a context supported the ongoing fight for the public space as a theatre for individual expression, which culminated in graffiti action in the pedestrian underpass leading to Rīga central railway station during the Art Days of 1986, led by Kristaps Ģelzis, Ojārs Pētersons and Andris Breže. A year later, a similar action was held where Sergejs Davidovs, Artis Rutks and Vilnis Putrams joined the already renowned artists. The graffiti event had an explicitly confrontational and challenging character. On another similar occasion in 1986, artist Aija Zarina painted a Surrealist-inspired mural next to a children's playground on the corner of present-day Tērbatas and Lāčplēša streets (Image 229). Although the painting event was officially sanctioned, well-recognised by the spectators and publicised by the media, the artist's distinctive careless and naïve style had an immense impact on an audience that was accustomed to the walls 'speaking' quite

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491 Sergejs Timofejevs, Atrast neparasto parastaja. Sergejs Davidovs. [To find the unusual in ordinary. Sergejs Davidovs.], Artterritory.com 4 August 2016. https://arterritory.com/lv/vizuala_maksla/intervijas/16977-atrast_neparasto_parastaja._sergejs_davidovs/, accessed 2 August 2021.

Image 231. **Unknown author, political messages in central Tallinn, 1988. Unknown location. The text reads: "Estonia is in danger." Destroyed. Courtesy of Tallinn City Museum. Photo from 1988.**

differently. Aija's[492] mural did not intend to master the movement of people nor did it visualise a certified version of man. As the mural was symbolically placed in a playground, it suggested that the youngest of the *homo soveticus* are free to decide on the stories they live by. In conclusion, by the late 1980s, walls were contested and – without wishing to appear smart in hindsight – appeared to anticipate the changes which were going to happen in the near future.

One of the main principles of graffiti making is to try to force the core culture into peripheral zones and thus legitimate the peripheral (sub) culture represented by the graffiti writer.[493] This was especially so in the late 1980s, when graffiti as a political tool was picked up by freedom fighters and nationalists in their pursuit against Soviet rule. In Estonia, the birth of political graffiti is associated with a man named Ülo Kiple. Although little is known about Kiple's biography, it has been assumed that he was a mentally unstable person seeking 'to save the world.'[494] Since the mid-1980s, the incredibly mobile and productive Kiple managed to write political and messianic messages on the walls of almost all Estonian towns and settlements (Image 230). Kiple preferred capital letters, used wall

492 The artist prefers to be called by her first name.
493 Anti Randviir, Ruumisemiootika: tähendusliku maailma kaardistamine. [Semiotics of Space: Mapping the Meaningful World.] Tartu: University of Tartu Press, 2010.
494 See Ülo Kiple. – Wikipedia, last modified 2 May 2020. https://et.wikipedia.org/ wiki/%C3%9Clo_Kiple, accessed 4 August 2021. See also, Rainer Vilumaa, Grafiti Eestis. [Graffiti in Estonia.], p. 67.

Image 232. **Unknown author, political message in Annelinn district in Tartu, 1988. The text reads: "E. [Edgar] Savisaar for new prime minister, not I. [Indrek] Toome." Destroyed. Courtesy of Tartu City History Museums. Photo from 1988.**

paint, crayons and pencils, wrote on houses, garages, walls, and planks, and almost always signed the message with his first and last names. Sometimes he also wrote in broken English and Finnish, thus seeking international audiences. His discursive arsenal included such political slogans as "Leaders of the world, demand freedom for Estonia!" but he was primarily known for his cryptic notes such as "Disease treatment. Controlled. Distribute world power to all" or "Disease treatment. Controlled: it's loneliness, free canteen and a bed place". His slogan "Disease treatment. Controlled" became a cult phrase that quickly reached other cultural spheres and emphasised that the first buds of private protest in the public space soon magnified into collective remonstration.[495]

From 1987, social banditry spread even further as xenophobic anti-Soviet and anti-Russian political scribblings appeared on street walls. For example, one such exclamation from 1988 read, "The land of Estonia is in danger" (Image 231), while during the same year, a member of the public in Tartu demanded the replacement of the Communist head of state with a young independence-minded politician (Image 232). The stagnant and inconsistent construction of a new living district was a fitting backdrop

495 For example, one of the early highlights of the more liberal publishing policies was Peeter Sauter's (1988) Beat Generation-inspired novella *Tallinn 84*, in which the discouraged protagonist seeks meaning in Kiple's messages. *Disease treatment. Controlled* is also the title of the first significant catalogue of Estonian street art. See Tõnis Palkov, Uku Sepsivart, Andres Siplane, Haiguste ravi. Kontrollitud: raamat tänavakunstist. [Disease treatment. Controlled. A Book about Street Art.] – Tallinn: Eesti Pakendiringlus, 2009.

Image 233. **Author unknown, political message in Annelinn district in Tartu, 1988. The text reads: "Russian army out of Tartu". Destroyed. Courtesy of Tartu City History Museums. Photo from 1988.**



Image 234. **Jüri Liim, *Red-military God*, 1990. Tallinn, Harju Street. Destroyed. Courtesy of Estonian National Museum. Photo from 1990.**

for another political message in which the anonymous artist demanded the expulsion of the Russian army from Tartu (Image 233). Inevitably, pro-Soviet and pro-Russian writers responded with their counter-messages. Vilumaa cites one graffiti from the centre of Tallinn which read in Russian, "Father Stalin, wake up!" which in turn was followed by the straight-forward "Stalin = Hitler."[496]

In July 1990, when the country already considered itself to be an independent democracy – despite the Soviet Union's reluctance to admit it nor any international recognition – the political activists of the green movement Roheline rügement (Green regiment) erected an assemblage *Red-military God* from army waste. They installed it next to the bulldozed ruins of a WW2 Soviet air raid site (Image 234). The fact that it was created by a member of an independent political movement and placed in an otherwise gated territory without permission from the municipality characterised the chaotic public space of the transformation period. As was typical for the era, events such as the inauguration of the Green regiment's 'monument' were popularly attended and followed by heated discussions in the media.[497] In such instances, it becomes visible how freedom was positioned as the ultimate goal in the public space.[498] Malcolm Miles refers to Hannah Arendt who argued that freedom only arises from something that is not part of a causal chain. It appears in transformative enactments that create a momentary public sphere.[499] Miles emphasises that, in this sense, an active public sphere does not require any specific kind of space, be it architectural design or public art. Quite the reverse – institutional public art may find it harder to break the causal chains required to create moments of freedom in the public space.[500]

The art world sought to adopt street art's creative possibilities. To bring a few examples, the exhibition of poster art, *Originaal '89* in the Tallinn Art Salon, used the large windows facing the city's main square as a canvas for graffiti. An art critic who also tried decorating the windows stated that it was undoubtedly the most striking window in the city at the time.[501] In Latvia in 1986, Kristaps Ģelzis made one of the first video works in

496 Rainer Vilumaa, Grafiti Eestis. [Graffiti in Estonia.], p. 70.
497 Piret Pukk, Uljal poisil mitu nime. [A brave boy has several names.] – Päevaleht 11 July 1990.
498 Malcolm Miles, A game of appearances: Public spaces and public spheres. – Art & the Public Sphere 2011, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 179.
499 See Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1958].
500 Malcolm Miles, A game of appearances, p. 177.
501 Harry Liivrand, Kunstisalongis. – Reede 14 July 1989.

Image 235. **A section of the Berlin Wall installed next to the Rīga Freedom Monument, 1990. Removed. Since 1992 it has been part of the *Wall Monument* located in Kronvalda Park. Courtesy of National Library of Latvia. Photo from 1990.**

the country, entitled *Wall*. In the video, the protagonist lurks around the crowded streets of Rīga as if a graffiti writer trying to find a suitable canvas only to be regularly interrupted by inserted shots of a brick wall – understood as a reference to the Iron Curtain.[502] Besides using walls, the work is symbolic because of walking. According to Michel de Certeau, the act of walking is to urban space what utterance is to language. Similarly, as language is realised through speech, urban space is realised by being walked through. Thus, Ģelzis' work meaningfully embraced and actualised the public space.[503] At the end of the video the artist smashes the wall as if breaking out of the socialist camp. As such, walls are finally undone in the Soviet Baltics, as they no longer function as constraints.

So far, walls had stood for the modernist union between the spatial and pictorial qualities of the ideology, but not any more. Symbolically, in November 1990, the Mauermuseum – Museum Haus am Checkpoint Charlie held an exhibition in Rīga dedicated to the political reawakening in Eastern Europe. As part of the show, a piece of the Berlin Wall was placed in one of the city's busiest and most meaningful spots on the boulevard next to the Freedom Monument (Image 235). The fragmented monument quickly became a canvas for street art and political messages and was gifted to the city by the museum.

502 Ieva Astahovska, On Forgetting and Remembering. Relations to the Soviet Past in Latvian Art. – Ieva Astahovska, Inga Lāce (eds.), Revisiting Footnotes: Footprints of the Recent Past in the Post-Socialist Region / Tulkojot Atsauces: Nesenās Pagātnes Nospiedumi Postsociālisma Reģionā. Rīga: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2015, p. 114.
503 See Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984 [1980].

Image 236. **Barricade in Rīga's Jēkaba street, 1991. Destroyed. Courtesy of Wikimedia commons. Photo from 1990.**

Nevertheless, the last years of Soviet rule in the Baltics did not pass as a cohesive linear development towards increasing artistic and media freedom. Until the system's collapse, Moscow did not agree with the total independence of the Baltic states. There was yet to be one more symptomatic episode regarding erecting divisive walls. Lithuania and Latvia declared the restoration of their independence in March and May 1990, respectively, which the USSR did not recognise and threatened to violently seize power in these countries. In early January 1990, OMON, the Special Purpose Unit of the Militia, seized critical institutions in Rīga and Vilnius, and further commando units were sent into the Baltic states. After the Soviet forces had attacked the Vilnius TV Tower and killed 13 civilians during the Bloody Sunday of 13 January, the Popular Fronts in the three countries called on people to gather for the defence of strategic objectives and to build anti-tank barricades around them (Image 236). Despite the Berlin Wall having come down and its pieces already globe-trotting, the Baltic states faced the erection of new walls, which inevitably became the setting for pro-independence and anti-Soviet communication. Symbolically, in 1992, fragments of the Rīga barricades were combined with an element from the Berlin Wall to form a memorial ensemble commemorating the event in Kronvalda park.[504] By now, Tallinn and Vilnius also possess memorials containing pieces of the barricade walls installed next to their parliament buildings.

504 Ojārs Spārītis, Riga's Monuments and Decorative Sculptures. Rīga: Nacionālais apgāds, 2007, p. 34.

# 4. The 1990s–2020s: The after-life of late Soviet public art

## 4.1             Becoming heritage:
## between disruption and continuity

This last section dwells on the after-life of monumental-decorative art. For this, I have traced the fate of the artworks discussed in the previous chapters. Besides their historicisation, the chapter touches upon the memory cultures of the Baltic countries and the changing attitudes towards Soviet heritage.

The post-socialist period has been periodised into three phases roughly by decade. The first stage of post-socialism was a transformative era, sometimes labelled an interregnum, denoting a conceptual and institutional shift during which the old and the new practices were in force simultaneously.[505] Despite some of the old hierarchies holding firm, rapid westernisation took place and neoliberal modernity was seen as a universal future.[506] Discussion of the Soviet legacy was to a large extent based on totalitarianist assumptions and focused predominantly on traumatic experiences.[507] In the second stage, which began roughly in the 2000s, the complete failure of socialist modernisation came to light, and East Europeans came face to face with the negative image of the former Eastern Bloc which led, among other things, to manifestations of nationalism. According to the Budapest-based political scientist Alexander Astrov, as soon as Estonia joined NATO and the EU in 2004, society found itself in an unfamiliar situation of 'ontological anxiety': the sole consolidating narrative (reuniting with the West) that had for long been at the centre of public discussion suddenly lost its relevance. As in Estonia, so in Latvia and Lithuania, mass media increasingly began to tout the need for a new national goal, while politicians embraced the idea of a new social contract.[508] The third phase of post-socialism in the 2010s signalled a generational change that led to a shift in memory politics. A generation with little memory of the Soviet period had entered the stage.

505 See Ingrid Ruudi, Spaces of the Interregnum: Transformations in Estonian Architecture and Art 1986–1994. Doctoral dissertation. Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2020.

506 See Tanel Rander, Ida-Euroopa diskursus ja kolm kuvandit / East European discourse and its three images. – Margaret Tali, Tanel Randel (eds.), Arhiivid ja allumatus: visuaalkultuuri muutuvad taktikad Ida-Euroopas / Archives and Disobedience: Changing Tactics of Visual Culture in Eastern Europe. Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2016, pp. 104–125.

507 Dovile Budryte, Decolonization of Trauma and Memory Politics: Insights from Eastern Europe. – Humanities 2016, Vol. 5, No. 7, p. 6.

508 Alexander Astrov, Estonia. The Political Struggle for a Place in History. – Russian Politics & Law 2000, Vol. 48, No. 5, pp. 7–24.

Dovilė Tumpytė, a curator at the Lithuanian National Gallery of Art, has argued that the Soviet period has been among the most reflected upon elements in Lithuanian art practices. Since the 1990s, the socialist era as a political, ideological, social, economic and cultural medium has been turned into the Other, which has come to determine and define the actual.[509] She suggests three metaphors to discern between different approaches artists have made use of to tackle the socialist/post-socialist past and present: metaphorical interpretation, narrative, and network. Chronologically, her periodisation reflects the aforementioned tripartite argument. The years immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union were described in terms of 'metaphors', which acted as vehicles for denouncing once-rigid Soviet concepts. The 2000s can be described using the keyword 'narrative', which draws on the fact that artists would preferably work in video format and other mediums to help them convey the memories of the Soviet past. In the 2010s, contemporary artists became more interested in general concepts of 20th-century modernisation and the late socialist visual culture within it. She labels this latest tendency as 'network', thus pointing to the commonalities with the rest of Europe and cultures outside Europe. Throughout the 2010s, Baltic artists sought to decentralise memory and remove the chance of someone dictating the rules as to what should be remembered and how.[510] According to Budraitskis, Baltic art discourse in the 2010s is reminiscent of Aleida Assmann's critique of collective memory – memory needs to be decentralised in order for there to be different views on history, memory and events.[511]

The network metaphor aptly describes the context of my research. The completion of Tõnis Saadoja's ceiling painting in 2013 and the accompanying catalogue marked contemporary culture's decentralising approach towards the Soviet heritage, while the institutional background of this commission (financial support from both public and private funders) signified a change in the art world.[512] The shift in heritage politics was made

509 Dovilė Tumpytė, From Metaphorical Interpretation towards Transformation of Spacetime. On Lithuanian Artists' Reflection on the Soviet Past. – Ieva Astahovska, Inga Lāce (eds.), Revisiting Footnotes: Footprints of the Recent Past in the Post-Socialist Region / Tulkojot Atsauces: Nesenās Pagātnes Nospiedumi Postsociālisma Reģionā. Rīga: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2015, p. 97.
510 Ilya Budraitskis, When Memory Becomes Politics. – Ieva Astahovska, Inga Lāce (eds.), Revisiting Footnotes: Footprints of the Recent Past in the Post-Socialist Region / Tulkojot Atsauces: Nesenās Pagātnes Nospiedumi Postsociālisma Reģionā. Rīga: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2015, p. 90.
511 See Aleida Assmann, Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity. New York: Fordham University Press, 2015.
512 See Alina Astrova et. al., Konspekteeritud ruum. [Notes on Space.].

apparent by the wide-ranging study of 20th-century Estonian architecture, after which several Soviet-era buildings were listed.[513] Thus, in 2019, a group of Estonian conservators joyfully concluded an article about the recent preservation of Soviet-era murals: "By now, we have sufficiently distanced ourselves from the ideological burden that encumbered the perception of the art of that time and are more capable of appreciating these works without the interference of political memory. If only there were more works to be appreciated."[514] Alas, the last sentence proved prophetic.

In February 2022, Russia started its full-scale war against Ukraine, and within weeks the heated disputes about Soviet heritage resurfaced. By the end of the year, dozens of monuments deemed inherently Communist had been removed across the Baltics.[515] This put the legacy of Soviet-era public art at a disadvantage. If, in the previous 30 years, only a few monumental-decorative artworks had been demolished for ideological reasons, now the thinking had shifted. For three decades, such artworks had not been considered markers of Soviet rule, but now it was the central government which declared even architectural décor to be ideologically suspicious.[516]

Based on the above, attitudes towards the Soviet heritage in the last decades can be characterised by two mindsets, namely disruption and continuity. The concept of interruption has dominated, while one can also point out tendencies which draw on the acceptance and normalisation of the previous historical period. Although one might be tempted to see a chronological order here in which the ideology of disruption prevailed in the 1990s and 2000s – and again after 2022 – while during the 2010s, there was an emphasis on finding points of contact, a closer look reveals that the two processes are and have been intertwined.

513 Eesti 20. sajandi väärtusliku arhitektuuri kaardistamine ja analüüs. [Mapping and analysis of the valuable architecture of the 20th century in Estonia]. Eesti Kunstiakadeemia, 2012. https://register.muinas.ee/public.php?menuID=architecture, accessed 19 June 2023.
514 Hilkka Hiiop et. al., p. 106. In 2021 a Lithuanian author voiced very similar words while discussing the preservation of Soviet-era murals in Lithuania: "Today, however, after three decades of freedom, one wants to believe that the works of art of that era can already be judged not from the perspective of ideology but from the perspective of historical and cultural memory." Gediminas Kajėnas, Nematomas sovietmečio menas: saugoti negalima naikinti? [Invisible Soviet art: not to be destroyed?], 15min.lt 2021. https://www.15min.lt/media-pasakojimai/nematomas-sovietmecio-menas-saugoti-negalima-naikinti-1108, accessed 19 June 2023.
515 See, e.g., Mark Dunkley, Monumental Decisions: The Impact of the Russo-Ukrainian War on Soviet War Memorials. – The Historic Environment: Policy & Practice 2023, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 227–235; Tomas Kačerauskas, The dissonant heritage: the case of the Soviet memorial in Antakalnis cemetery, Vilnius. International Journal of Heritage Studies 2023, Vol. 29, No. 7, pp. 728–741.
516 See Monuments. – Republic of Estonia Government Office. https://riigikantselei.ee/en/monuments, accessed 19 June 2023.

In Estonia, the post-Cold War context was first and foremost analysed by cultural theorist Hasso Krull, whose collection of essays entitled *Katkestuse kultuur* (Culture of Disruption) identified discontinuation to be the defining theme of post-socialist and post-colonial Estonian culture.[517] According to Krull, disruptions which affected society and culture on every level affected the nation throughout the 20th century. Krull's ideas were prevalent in various cultural spheres, and his terminology was used to point out interruptions in the biographies of individuals and the nation as a whole. One clear example of the interruption in terms of material and visual culture was the damage inflicted by the war and the subsequent Soviet occupation on the heritage of inter-war Estonian culture. For example, only a handful of murals and interior decorations from the period made it through the war and the subsequent Soviet occupation of the Baltic countries. Krull acknowledged the dangers of abrupt discursive changes, and his text pointed to a less opposing stance on Soviet heritage.

During the 1990s, the Baltic states went through extensive anti-Communist iconoclasm, which was mainly targeted at Soviet political monuments. As both government institutions and private citizens removed hundreds of monuments, they were quickly replaced by replicas of statues which had stood in the same sites during pre-war independence. Cultural historian Marek Tamm has called this process, in which the political and ideological landscape was re-semiotised according to new national narratives, 'monumental restitution.'[518] Dario Gamboni likened the wide-ranging destruction of Soviet monuments after 1991 to the wholesale demolition of art during the French revolution. This was because both the French monarchy and the Soviet Union had held art as an essential political instrument, which the succeeding authorities sought to disrupt and undermine.[519] In a similar fashion Jürgen Habermas called the fall of the Iron Curtain a 'rectifying revolution' and described it as a revolution that presented itself as if flowing backwards: in order to catch up with the prosperity and values of the West, the ground had

517 Hasso Krull, Katkestuse kultuur [Culture of Disruption.] – Tallinn: Vagabund, 1996.
518 Marek Tamm, Saale Halla, Ajalugu, poliitika ja identiteet: Eesti monumentaalsest mälumaastikust. [History, politics and identity: Concerning Estonia's monumental memoryscape]. – Marek Tamm, Reet Sepp (eds.), Monumentaalne konflikt. Mälu, poliitika ja identiteet tänapäeva Eestis. [Monumental Conflict. Memory, Politics and Identity in Contemporary Estonia.] Tallinn: Varrak, 2008, pp. 18–50; Marek Tamm, Monumentaalne ajalugu. Esseid Eesti ajalookultuurist. [Monumental History. Essays on Culture of History in Estonia.] Tallinn: Kultuurileht, 2012.
519 Dario Gamboni, The Destruction of Art. Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution. London: Reaktion Books, 2019 [1997], p. 35.

to be cleared.[520] All such metaphors emphasised a shattering spatial and temporal restructuring.

Although the Baltic states removed most of the outright ideological Soviet-era public monuments soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, hundreds of monuments and decorative artworks still survived. In 2020, it was suggested that in Estonia there remained around 200 Soviet public monuments in the public space.[521] The expert group at the Estonian Government Office, which was put together after February 2022 to collect information on grave markers and war memorials bearing symbols of the occupying power, estimated that there were up to 400 monuments or grave markers with symbols of the Soviet occupation in the Estonian public space. Taking as a basis the larger territories of Latvia and Lithuania and their several times larger population, we can assume that these numbers are at least twice as large in these countries.[522] Most of them were quickly forgotten or domesticated, but some of them would later re-activate and haunt these societies. In the late 2000s, Tallinn and Vilnius witnessed several painful conflicts caused by the dubious Soviet monuments.

The struggle around monuments played out in at least three phases: first, the removal of Soviet monuments and the reinstating of pre-war monuments, after which came the controversy about the newly erected monuments to the so-called freedom fighters (men and women who fought on the Nazi side during the Second World War), and third, the belated removal of some of the Soviet monuments which led to instances of severe public violence, such as the Bronze Soldier case in Tallinn. The 2010s saw the erection of several controversial national monuments and memorials (e.g. The Cross of Liberty and the Monument to the War of Independence in Tallinn and The Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in Vilnius), which perhaps rhetorically sought unity in the community but had debatable results. Furthermore, Lithuania made the use of both nazi and communist symbols in public space a criminal act in 2008.[523] Naturally, such an emphasis and commanding public administration of particular

520 Jürgen Habermas, What Does Socialism Mean Today? The Rectifying Revolution and the Need for New Thinking on the Left. – New Left Review 1990, No. 183 (September–October), p. 3.
521 Marek Tamm, Jaak Valge, Rita Valge, Monuments and power: catalogue of the outdoor exhibition of Soviet monuments collected by the Estonian History Museum. Tallinn: Estonian History Museum, 2020, p. 13.
522 See Monumendid...
523 See, e.g., Agata Fijalkowski, The criminalisation of symbols of the past: expression, law and memory. – International Journal of Law in Context 2014 No. 10, pp. 295–314.

signs had an alarming effect on society.[524] So it was no surprise that the contested and condemned monuments proved to be a simple target for those fighting on the ideological front lines.[525] This was made clear by the abrupt iconoclasm of 2022.

In terms 'cultural continuity,'[526] Maja and Reuben Fowkes note that although the East and Central European art worlds have attempted to distance themselves from art of the socialist era, socialist art structures have proved resistant to reform after the passing of the ideology they served.[527] As such, the notion of cultural continuity draws on actual societal and economic continuity. For example, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania still possess considerably strong Artists' Associations divided into subsectors dedicated to different mediums. As remnants of the Soviet era, these 'guilds' maintain expensive properties in the city centres with galleries, studios and workshops, which they allocate or rent to members at lower-than-average market prices. Such unions survived and kept their integrity primarily due to the property, which the concerned parties did not want to lose during privatisation. Despite the changes after 1991, to a large degree, the very same political and cultural elite remained in power.[528] It has also been argued that the art theoretical topics discussed before and after 1991 remained rooted in the same intellectual, philosophical, and emotional repertoire.[529] Therefore, wherever continuity is emphasised, both the lived continuousness of everyday life and the discursive preservation of history, memory and heritage are highlighted.

The 2007, the demolition of the political education centre in Tallinn and its subsequent replacement with a shopping centre has been identified as a clear example of the capitalist spatial reassessments in the post-socialist capital. Originally a building with a superficial function, popularly called Karl's Cathedral after the Communist Party leader Karl Vaino, the architectural landmark developed a nostalgic value for Tallinners in

524 Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Lipu semiootika [Semiotics of flags.] – ERR 4 June 2019 [2004]. https://www.err.ee/948825/toomas-hendrik-ilves-lipu-semiootika, accessed 6 April 2022.
525 Linsi, Laura, Reemaa, Roland, Řiha, Tadeáš. Weak Monument: Architectures Beyond the Plinth. – Laura Linsi, Roland Reema, Tadeáš Řiha (eds.), Weak Monument: Architectures Beyond the Plinth / Nõrk monument: pjedestaalialused arhitektuurid. Zürich: Park Books, 2018, p. 9.
526 Tiiu Jaago, Nõukogude aeg elulugudes – "katkestus" või "järjepidevus". [Soviet era in lifestories – 'disruption' or 'continuity'.] – Mäetagused 2014, No. 57, pp. 7–28.
527 Maja Fowkes, Reuben Fowkes, Central and Eastern European Art Since 1950. London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 2020, p. 9.
528 Costica Bradatan, Serguei Oushakine, Introduction. – Serguei Oushakine (ed.), In Marx's Shadow: Knowledge, Power, and Intellectuals in Eastern Europe and Russia. New York: Lexington Books, 2010, p. 7.
529 Ibid.

the 2000s after the initial euphoria of freedom had worn off. The state privatised the building so that the new owner would treat the architecture in a dignified manner. Unsurprisingly, the new owner demolished the majority of the building to make way for a shopping centre. Only a modest fragment of the one-time ensemble survives. The remaining part included stained-glass windows, which the property owner removed a few years later on his own initiative (albeit returned since then). The controversial demolition process received considerable public attention, including protests to protect the building. When the edifice was nevertheless destroyed, many felt that it was time to wake up in terms of preserving Soviet-era architecture.[530] Subsequently, the National Heritage Board initiated the mapping of 20th-century architectural heritage in Estonia and since then, around 40 buildings have been enlisted from the late Soviet period.[531]

Interest in architecture inevitably raised awareness of architectural art. Tõnis Saadoja's mural at Theatre NO99 and the subsequent book on monumental painting brought to life the declining visibility and disastrous condition of the remaining works. The issue of preservation raised broader questions about the aesthetic value of Soviet murals and about their function as markers of history, place and identity. Mapping the field nurtured scholarly interest and subsequently led to significant conservation projects financed both by private and public parties.

Similar processes of revitalisation can be observed in Lithuania. In the late 2000s, Lithuanian news outlets started publishing reports from rural areas where locals lamented the unsuccessful privatisation campaigns and the subsequent destruction of landmark Soviet-era buildings and artworks.[532] Public outcry against the mismanagement and dangerous situation of Birutė Žilytė's and Algirdas Steponavičius's mural at the Valkininkai sanatorium (Image 61), which had become an official heritage object in 2015, led to a broader discussion about the value of Soviet-era public

530 Anni Martin, Katrin Aava, Esta Kaal, Keerulise lähiajaloo pärandi ümbermõtestamine nõukogudeaegse memoriaalansambli näitel. [Rethinking the Heritage Construction of Complicated Recent History. A Case Study of Soviet Memorial Ensemble at Maarjamäe.] – Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi / Studies on Art and Culture 2021 Vol.30, No. 3–4, p. 40.
531 Laura Ingerpuu, Nõukogude modernism on ilus. [Soviet modernism is beautiful.] – Sirp 30 October 2020.
532 Rita Žadeikytė, Šiaulių kraštas ieško dingusių brangių meno kūrinių. [Šiauliai region is looking for missing expensive works of art.] – Skrastas.lt 26 September 2006. http://www.krastas.lt/?data=2006-09-27&rub=1065924812&id=1159193734, accessed 19 June 2023.

art.[533] The debate on the legacy of Soviet era art and architecture became particularly widespread after the removal of the social realist sculptures on the Green Bridge in central Vilnius, as well as the monument to socialist writer Peter Cvirka, also in the heart of the capital.[534]

The first examples of Soviet-era public art have now become part of officially recognised heritage, even though some members of society and populist politicians have found this alarming.[535] The survival of buildings and the recognition of them as listed monuments are complex processes that depend on a variety of political, social and cultural circumstances. This process is almost always a struggle – at least in the discursive field, but not only there. Heritage is never static or unalterable but is constantly evolving and depends on how the past is currently being used as a cultural, political or economic resource.[536]

Laurajane Smith adds that although heritage discourse in any given context is inevitably changing and developing, in the Western world, there has been a specific emphasis on heritage as *things* linked to the ideas of nation and nationhood, national narratives and dominant social hierarchies. The Western idea of heritage rests on physicality, implying that heritage can be mapped, managed, preserved, and its protection may be the subject of national legislation and international agreements.[537] Authorised conceptions of heritage tend to promote a consensus version of history by relying on state-run institutions to regulate cultural and social tensions in the present. Confrontations are reduced to a minimum and conflicts are represented as case-specific issues.[538] Smith calls for an activist view of

533 Valstybės saugomais paskelbti trys unikalūs kultūros paveldo objektai. [Three unique cultural heritage sites have been declared state-protected.] – Lithuanian National Radio and Television 9 August 2015. https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/kultura/12/99667/valstybes-saugomais-paskelbti-trys-unikalus-kulturos-paveldo-objektai, accessed: 19 June 2023.
534 Gediminas Kajėnas, Nematomas sovietmečio menas… [Invisible Soviet art…]
535 See, e.g., Indrek Kiisler, Helme laseks lammutada nii Maarjamäe memoriaali kui ka linnahalli. [Helme would allow the destruction of Maarjamäe memorial and Linnahall.] – ERR 24 August 2020. https://www.err.ee/1126753/helme-laseks-lammutada-nii-maarjamae-memoriaali-kui-ka-linnahalli, accessed 6 April 2022.
536 Raili Nugin, Tarmo Pikner, Kõikudes lammutamise ja mälestise vahel: kolhoosikeskuste arhitektuuri sotsiaalne pärand. [Between Demolition and Memorial: The Social Legacy of the Architecture of Collective Farm Centres.] – Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi / Studies on Art and Architecture 2021, No. 30, Vol. 3–4, p. 11.
537 However, Smith insists that she is not against heritage as things – materiality matters, but one needs to be aware of how things are used in a performative sense, i.e. how practice makes meaning. Laurajane Smith, Uses of Heritage. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 3–6.
538 Laurajane Smith, The emotional politics of heritage. Lecture at the 9th Winter School of Tartu University Graduate School of Culture Studies and Semiotics, 1 February 2022. Notes in the possession of the author.

heritage, which acknowledges the multidirectional cultural processes of identity formation.

Although monumental-decorative art is conventionally about things, its subject matter is complicated and renders it performative. The dominant public discourse has considered Soviet heritage as a negative burden. From this perspective, the valuing and protection of monumental art is an example of how heritage discourse has helped to broaden the debate on recent history and national identity.[539] As such, Soviet material heritage has become a resource that is used to challenge and redefine commonly received values and identities. This implies that monumental-decorative artworks should not be considered as a unified class of objects forming Soviet heritage but better as individual cases of objects entangled between individuals and communities trying to come to terms with contested memories and processes of identity-making. Accordingly, some of the artworks described here could be regarded as heritage proper – understood as calmly self-regulated and self-referential – while some other works exemplify that heritage can also be inherently dissonant and contested.[540]

## 4.2 From preservation to conservation and restoration

Even though more and more attention is being paid to Soviet heritage and several individual works have become officially protected, preservation still demands energy and money. Therefore, several works worth saving may get destroyed in the meantime. In this subchapter, I first examine the aspects that have contributed to the preservation of monumental-decorative art and review some of the more renowned preserved works which have contributed to the popularisation of the subject. In the second part, I will draw attention to works that have been restored.

Today's prevalent view in conservation practices is that the most effective way to protect the built environment is through its daily use.[541] It helps when the current use is similar to the original purpose of the building.

539 Ene, Kõresaar, Kristi Jõesalu, Estonian Memory Culture Since the Post-Communist Turn: Conceptualising Change through the Lens of Generation. – Raili Nugin, Anu Kannike, Maaris Raudsepp (eds.), Generations in Estonia: Contemporary Perspectives on Turbulent Times. Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2016, pp. 128–156.
540 Laurajane Smith, Uses of Heritage, pp. 3–4.
541 Triin Talk, Siim Raie, Built heritage and spatial quality. – Helen Sooväli-Sepping (ed.), Estonian Human Development Report 2019/2020. Spatial Choices for an Urbanised Society 2020. https://www.inimareng.ee/en/built-heritage-and-spatial-quality.html, accessed 19 June 2023.

Image 238. **Vitolis Trušys, *Harvest*, 1968. Fresco, approx. 300 × 500. Meškuičiai Culture House. Courtesy of Skrastas. Photo from 2013.**

Image 237. **Aulin Rimm, metal relief, 1965. Metal, welding, approx. 250 × 200. Treimani Community House. Häädemeeste Parish, Treimani village. Courtesy of Martin Siplane. Photo from 2021.**



Image 239. **Vytautas Švarlys, *Lithuania*, 1980. Stained glass, lead. Birštonas Culture Center. Courtesy of Marius Vizbaras. Photo from the 2010s.**

For example, Soviet-era culture houses in cities and towns of regional importance have retained their function and thus safeguarded noteworthy interior architecture and architectural art. In Estonia, these include artworks in Mooste Cultural Centre (Ilmar Malin, mural, *Birth of the Võhandu River,* 1967; Image 79), Sindi Community Centre (unknown author, metal panel, *Spinner*, ca. 1965), Riisipere Cultural Centre (Elmar Kits, secco painting, *Harvest Celebration,* 1971; Image 80), Väike-Maarja Community Centre (Eva Jänes, fresco, *Days of Mary*, 1980; Image 127), Abja Culture Centre (Kai Kaljo, fresco, 1991–1992) and the Treimani Community House (Aulin Rimm, metal panel from the 1960s; Image 237), the latter being one of the last places in Estonia where one can experience furniture and interior design from the 1960s.

In Latvia, culture houses in Druviena (Brigitas and Ralfs Jansons, mural, 1982; Image 93), Salacgrīva (Latvīte Medniece, ceramic panel, 1968; Image 91), Gulbene (unknown author, relief on the facade, 1980s), Ligatne (unknown author, panel paintings from the early 1950s) continue to function in their original premises and have been able to conserve the artworks within their buildings. In Lithuania, the Meškuičiai Culture House (Vitolis Trušys, fresco, *Harvest*, 1968; Image 238), Birštonas Culture Centre (Vytautas Švarlys, stained-glass, *Lithuania*, 1980; Image 239) and the Ignalina Culture Centre (Nijolė Vilutytė-Dalinkevičienė and Romas Dalinkevičius, sgraffito work, *Natural World*, 1975; Image 90) are some examples of local cultural institutions that have knowingly protected their Soviet-era artworks.

In 2016, the staff of the Alksniupiai Culture House in northern Lithuania, which used to be the central settlement of the Draugo (Friend) collective farm, initiated a museum dedicated to the 'glorious recent past' of the kolkhoz. As several landmark buildings in Alksniupiai were designed by architect Algimantas Mačiulis and decorated with mosaics by Marija Mačiulienė, the artist couple whose work still survives in the 500-strong village, were special guests at the opening.[542] Alksniupiai and the other examples above testify that several Soviet-era buildings and artworks have survived not so much due to their inherent artistic value but thanks to the continuing status and social significance of the facility they are located in.

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542 Alksniupių jubiliejaus proga atidarytas 'Draugo' kolūkio muziejus. [On the occasion of the anniversary of Alksniupiai, the museum of the Draugo collective farm was opened.] – Radviliškio naujienos 2016. http://www.radviliskionaujienos.lt/alksniupiu-jubiliejaus-proga-atidarytas-draugo-kolukio-muziejus-104?fb_comment_id=737389712985823_1680243072033811, accessed 19 June 2023.

Image 241. **Kornēlija and Māris Ozoliņš, ceramic panel, 1971. Republican United Stomatology Polyclinic (now Riga Stradiņš University Stomatology Institute). Rīga, 20 Dzirciema iela. Courtesy of Latvian National Cultural Heritage Board. Photo from 2021.**

Image 240. **Teodoras Kazimieras Valaitis, metal panel, 1974. Metal, approx. 250 × 250. Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre staff canteen. Vilnius, 1 A. Vienuolio g. Courtesy of Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre. Photo from 2020.**

Nevertheless, several high-profile Soviet-era interiors are in danger of destruction as no new use has been found for the former cultural and administrative buildings. In some places, such properties have been (re)used as municipal or community centres, but they, too, need help maintaining the large buildings due to limited funding options. In Habaja near Tallinn, however, the local leaders managed to revive a long-empty sovkhoz centre and the complex was given a new name – the Fresco Centre – after the painting by Urve Dzidzaria housed within. Their desire to preserve this legacy could be regarded as a successful example of 'productive nostalgia', a phenomenon in which restoring something old and having a nostalgic approach towards it helps to strengthen the community and find constructive solutions to infrastructural issues.[543]

Like municipal cultural centres, several kindergartens, schools, universities, libraries, theatres, civic registry offices and other administrative buildings have not changed hands nor experienced

543 Rebecca Wheeler, Local history as productive nostalgia? Change, continuity and sense of place in rural England. – Social & Cultural Geography 2016, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 471–473.

Image 242. **Valev Sein, stained-glass windows, 1987. Stained glass, lead, approx. 300 × 400. Tallinn Central Children's Polyclinic. Tallinn, 27 Ravi. Courtesy of Carl-Dag Lige. Photo from 2018.**

robust 'euroremont'[544] since 1991 and have helped preserve Soviet-era architectural art. For example, all of the murals which were produced for Vilnius University's 400th anniversary have survived. By contrast, of all the highly original and influential sculptural spatial installations for cafes and exhibitions by Teodoras Valaitis, only one piece has survived – inside the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre's staff canteen (Image 240).

Also, state-run hospitals, which have not seen investments beyond essential hardware, have proved to be effective 'sanctuaries' for socialist art. In Rīga, Kornēlija and Māris Ozoliņs' ceramic panel on the facade of the Institute of Stomatology at Rīga Stradins University has been well kept and was recently renovated (Image 241). In Tallinn, the Central Children's Polyclinic serves as a time capsule where furniture dates from the 1970s and 1980s, framed children's drawings from the same time adorn the walls, and the foyer is decorated with a stained-glass piece from 1987 by Valev

544 Euroremont was a term used to describe the plethora of renovation projects in the 1990s and 2000s making use of the sudden influx of materials of 'Western quality'. However, the rushed use of foreign materials rarely guaranteed a quality outcome.

Sein (Image 242). Another stained-glass window by Renee Aua (1987) disappeared from the same building in recent years. In the Magdaleena Unit of the East Tallinn Central Hospital, Robert Suvi's extensive smalti mosaic fills the foyer with a suspended ceiling and fluorescent tube lights typical to the 1990s refurbishments.

Besides hospitals, some pharmacies which opened during the Soviet period and have continued functioning on their premises have retained original artworks. The most significant examples are the Vilties (Hope) pharmacy in Kaunas with its exuberant glass art and the 1982 fresco by Antanas Kmieliauskas (Image 134), and the Mēness (Moon) pharmacy in central Rīga with a 1970 ceramic relief wall by Andrejs Ķiģelis, Māris Ozoliņš and Ināra Gulbe (Image 68). Another typology which has experienced less abrupt changes concerning ownership or function is religious edifices. For example, in Estonia, in 1970, Dolores Hoffmann created stained-glass windows for St. Martin's Church in Valjala (Image 199) and in Tallinn for the Holy Spirit Church (1987–1996), which are well-preserved.

In many of these examples, the unifying link is that the preservation of artworks has been supported by close contact and care by long-serving staff members, the owner's or administrator's emotional connection to the site, or the community's commitment to local heritage. As Nugin and Pikner assert, based on the example of three Estonian rural localities coming to terms with Soviet architectural legacy, the role of the community is crucial in heritage-related power games.[545] One positive example comes from Latvia, where the staff of the Druviena Culture House together with 200 locals – nearly all of the village's population – rallied for years to get their early 1980s community building, decorated with several murals such as the one by Brigita and Ralfs Jansons, listed[546] (Image 93). Eventually, their struggle was successful, and in 2020 the building became a protected cultural monument of regional importance designated as a typical example of 1980s public architecture.[547] From this

545 Raili Nugin, Tarmo Pikner, Kõikudes lammutamise ja mälestise vahel... [Between Demolition and Memorial...], p. 13.
546 Klinta Ezera, Būt vai nebūt Druvienas kultūras namam? [To be or not to be the Druviena House of Culture?]. nra.lv 21 October 2019. https://nra.lv/latvija/regionos/294902-but-vai-nebut-druvienas-kulturas-namam.htm, accessed 14 May 2022.
547 9290 – Druvienas kultūras nams. [9290 – Druviena culture house.] – National Heritage Board of Latvia. https://mantojums.lv/cultural-objects/9274, accessed 22 June 2023. See also, Elīna Lapiņa, Aizsargājamo kultūras pieminekļu sarakstā arī Druvienas kultūras nams. [The Druvienas Culture House is also on the list of protected cultural monuments.] – ReTV 26 February 2021. https://www.retv.lv/raksts/aizsargajamo-kulturas-piemineklu-saraksta-ari-druvienas-kulturas-nams, accessed 22 June 2023.

perspective, the preservation of Soviet-era public art could be considered an act of collective re-use. Deliberate domestication by the community renders it a new meaning which may or may not contradict the earlier layers of significance.

Thus, successful adaptation is one of the best practices for preserving historical monuments.[548] One captivating example of positive re-use comes from Tartu, from the apparatus factory, which during the Soviet period operated under the Ministry of Apparatus Construction of the USSR. As it had to regularly host Moscow's chiefs, there was an emphasis on luxurious interior design when taking care of guests. Such design work fell on the shoulders of in-house artist Mark Kalpin. For the factory's health centre, Kalpin produced an exotic jungle-themed mosaic depicting pheasants, plant motifs and monkeys, who allegedly represented the artist and his assistants[549] (Image 173). In the 1990s, the swimming pool room was redesigned to meet the needs of the new tenant – Sodiaagi (Zodiac) bar. In this legendary institution in the 1990s, company parties of somewhat dubious value took place. When the tenant realised the pool room was used for the wrong purposes, she turned it into an exclusive banquet hall. Although a time-worn clientele has dominated the last few decades, the long-time barkeeper has wholeheartedly contributed to preserving the work of the craftsman of the apparatus factory.

In situations where Soviet-era public art has fallen into the hands of people who have no emotional connection to it or for whom such works may hinder their economic activities (e.g., a wall carrying a mural needs to be removed), conservationists need to find external factors to prove the artwork's historical or aesthetic significance and need for preservation. One typical guarantee for safeguarding an artwork is its author's reputation. While the names of most monumentalists remain obscure to the general public, the few works by well-known modernist painters are in high regard. Acknowledgement of authorship can positively contribute to the work's preservation, as the owner will most likely have to think twice about the painter's intellectual rights and face possible legal conflicts in the case of demolition. Anonymity makes the destruction of artworks much easier.

As monumental-decorative art sometimes falls under the prerogative heading of ideological art, it is in danger of being erased due to political

548 Francoise Choay, The Invention of the Historic Monument. Trans. Lauren M. O'Connell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001 [1992], p. 24.
549 Francisco Martínez, Remains of the Soviet Past in Estonia, p. 74.

motivations and a lack of will to analyse its worth. For this reason, academic research, successful conservation projects and the dissemination of expert knowledge through popularising publications, articles, exhibitions, TV shows, and public events play a significant role in the preservation of the works. For example, the Latvian National Art Museum held a retrospective of Lidija Auza's oeuvre in 2019. The exhibition featured her monumental panel paintings, which were removed from the Talsi Regional Municipality building for this instance (Image 243). Auza's show in the prestigious museum convinced the local community that instead of considering her work 'slightly contaminated Soviet art' they were now thrilled to see "how glorious and substantial the outstanding works were and what honour they deserved."[550] Widely publicised conservation endeavours have also contributed to public awareness.[551] Several publications and exhibitions by the Estonian Academy of Arts Museum have further popularised the topic and have also pushed academic expectations higher.[552]

In autumn 2021, conservator Anu Soojärv and I co-curated a travelling exhibition of late Soviet monumental art.[553] While we were driving around the country to photograph works we had uncovered during our latest research, the crew of a popular daily TV show joined our trip so that viewers could somewhat dramatically experience the fate of monu-

550 Guna Millersone, Rīgā atklāta Talsu Goda mākslinieces un pilsones Lidijas Auzas darbu izstāde. [An exhibition of works by Talsi Honorary Artist and Citizen Lidija Auza was opened in Rīga.] – Talsu Vēstis 26 March 2019. http://www.talsuvestis.lv/2019/03/26/riga-atklata-talsu-goda-makslinieces-un-pilsones-lidijas-auzas-darbu-izstade/, accessed 6 May 2023.

551 See, e.g., Hilkka Hiiop. Viljalõikuspidu Riisiperes – Elmar Kitse suureteose taassünd. [Harvest Festival in Riisipere – Rebirth of Elmar Kits' masterpiece.] – Muinsuskaitse aastaraamat [Heritage Protection Yearbook] 2004, pp. 62–64; Heikki Aasaru, Keavas restaureeriti Elmar Kitse seinamaalid. [Elmar Kits' murals were restored in Keava.] – Estonian Public Broadcasting, 15 June 2011. https://www.err.ee/379333/keavas-restaureeriti-elmar-kitse-seinamaalid, accessed May 28, 2022; Tõnu Veldre, Kihelkonna koolis taastati seinamaalingud. [Murals restored in Kihelkonna school.] – Saarte Hääl, 29 November 2012. https://saartehaal.postimees. ee/6630935/kihelkonna-koolis-taastati-seinamaalingud, accessed 1 July 2023; Tõnu Karjatse, Renoveeriti Evald Okase suurteos "Rahvaste sõprus". [Evald Okas' masterpiece *Friendship of Nations* has been renovated.] – ERR 28 March 2017. https://kultuur.err.ee/586810/renoveeriti-evald-okase-suurteos-rahvaste-soprus, accessed 28 May 2022; Merit Männi, Kultuurikeskuse visiitkaart vuntsitakse uueks. [The business card of the cultural center will be renewed.] – Järva Teataja 11 April 2017.

552 See, e.g., Reeli Kõiv (ed.), Nähtamatu monumentaalmaal / Invisible monumental painting. Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2020; Reeli Kõiv, Monumentaalmaalist EKA-s... / Monumental painting at the Estonian Academy of Art...

553 Näitus "Monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst Nõukogude Eestis" / Exhibition *Monumental-Decorative Art in Soviet Estonia*. – Muinsuskaitsepäevad 9.-12. september 2021. https://2021. muinsuskaitsepaevad.ee/en/about-the-exhibition/, accessed 20 June 2023.

Image 243. **Lidia Auza, *Kurzeme* (Courland), 1973–1976. Oil and chalk on fibreboard, approx. 350 × 2000. Talsi District Council building. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**

mental-decorative art in *live* action.[554] Such publicity was possible as the National Heritage Board organised the exhibition. After the exhibition, there were talks about initiating a fundamental study to map all remaining architectural artworks and monuments from the Soviet period and develop criteria for their preservation and protection. Eventually, the plan was abandoned due to the National Heritage Board's lack of financial and human resources. Similar ideas about an all-encompassing study have circled in Lithuania. In 2010, artist Vitolis Trušys urged the Ministry of Culture to arrange an inventory of the remaining murals and include the important ones in the register of cultural heritage but to no avail.[555]

However, on a regional level, the Immanuel Kant Public Library in Klaipeda City Municipality initiated the mapping of monumental-decorative art in Klaipėda County in 2019.[556] All known murals were surveyed

554 Heleri All, Muinsuskaitsepäevadel saab imetleda peitu jäänud monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti. – ERR 6 September 2021. https://kultuur.err.ee/1608330077/muinsuskaitsepaevadel-saab-imetleda-peitu-jaanud-monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti, accessed 20 June 2023.
555 Rita Žadeikytė, Šiaulių kraštas ieško dingusių brangių meno kūrinių. [Šiauliai region is looking for missing expensive works of art.]
556 Jurga Petronytė, Ieško mozaikos autoriaus. [Looking for a mosaic's author.] – Vakarų ekspresas 29 May 2021. https://ve.lt/gyvenimas/kultura/iesko-mozaikos-autoriaus, accessed 1 July 2022.

Image 244. **Elerts Treilons, Egons Cēsinieks, Vladimirs Kudojars, mural, 1954. Fresco, approx. 500 × 700. Spilve Airport terminal building (now disused). Rīga, 140 Daugavgrīvas iela. Courtesy of Latvian National Cultural Heritage Board. Photo from the 2010s.**



Image 245. **Egons Cēsnieks, *St. John's Day*, 1958. Stained glass, lead. International Sailors' Club. Courtesy of Latvian National Cultural Heritage Board. Photo from the 2010s.**

and photographed, and in 2020 the same was done with stained-glass windows. Although it was initially supposed to be a two-year project, it proved popular among the locals who helped fill in the missing gaps. In 2021, the project was prolonged for one more year to highlight mosaics. Based on the collected material, the project team created an interactive map consisting of about 180 works.[557] The information on each work includes the author's name, year of creation, brief description, address and contact details of the owner and external web links connected to the artist. Besides the interactive map, three educational documentary films were produced.

If domestic attention does not convince decision-makers, international recognition may drive heritage listing. When the Viimsi Municipal Government renovated a mural in a former military base of the Soviet

557 Freskos. [Frescoes.] – Biblioteka.lt. http://www.biblioteka.lt/freskos/apie/, accessed 20 June 2023.

army, the news was picked up and broadcast by the BBC.[558] Allegedly, the municipality initiated the project due to the approaching local elections and in the hope of gaining positive publicity. Despite the dubious causes, their project exemplified how polyvalent heritage can negotiate a range of complicated social and cultural meanings in the present. Similarly, in Latvia, Ieva Astahovska's exhibition and catalogue *Visionary Structures* at the Bozar Museum in Brussels, which showcased late Soviet kineticism from Rīgā, helped to popularise the topic in the local scene.

The surest guarantee for preserving Soviet-era heritage is the official protection of the artwork or the building in which it is located. One common thing in the Baltics is that many monumental works were protected during the Soviet era and often immediately after completion. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, these lists were revised, but in most cases, official protection continued, perhaps to prevent the hasty destruction of art.

In Estonia, there are about 40 works of Soviet era monumental-decorative art under cultural protection.[559] By decade, the majority (15) of them come from the 1970s. In comparison, 11 originate from the 1960s, seven from the 1980s and one each from the 1940s, 1950s and 1990s. As for technique, three stand out: murals, mosaics and stained glass. The amount of work by male and female artists is roughly the same. Overall, 31 are labelled art monuments. Six are protected as parts of architectural monuments, and one mural is listed as a history monument. By location, ten are located in Tallinn, four in Tartu, and the rest in other parts of the country.

According to the information available at the Latvian cultural heritage register, only a few Soviet-era architectural artworks are protected. The 1954 Spilve airport building was listed in 2012 both as an architectural monument and as an historic interior which "provides a detailed image of interior design in Latvia in the 1950s, combining classicism, folkloric decoration and Soviet symbolism with murals in the socialist realist

558 Martin Morgan, Soviet mural enjoys rare Estonian restoration. BBC 28 September 2017. https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-41427733, accessed 6 May 2022.
559 The information is based on the database of the national registry of cultural monuments as of May 2023. The number is 'around' 40 works because some works are protected as individual monuments, while in some cases, a building or an interior that includes more than one work is protected. Sometimes a single protected work consists of several fragments. See National Registry of Cultural Monuments. – National Heritage Board. https://register.muinas.ee/public.php?lang=en, accessed 22 June 2023.

**Image 246. Audronė Skarbaliūtė,** *Celebration in the Museum of the Motherland*, **1989. Ceramic, approx. 500 × 500. Rumšiškės Culture Center. Courtesy of Žibutė Vanagienė. Photo from the 2010s.**

tradition"[560] (Image 244). Another protected interior from the 1950s is that of Ligatne House of Culture with several socialist realist murals.[561] In Rīga, there is also a 1958 stained-glass window by Egons Cēsnieks at 1a Krišjāņa Valdemāra iela protected since 2018 for its "decorative solution, original theme and substantial finishing"[562] (Image 245). The only works from the post-Stalinist period are the murals mentioned above in the Druviena culture house and Kornēlija Ozoliņa and Māris Ozoliņš's ceramic facade decoration of the Rīga Dental Clinic from 1971, which has been protected since June 2021[563] (Image 241). The monument's description states that the panel is an artistically valuable decorative ceramic work which provides an idea of the creative techniques and stylistic manifestations of modernism in Latvian

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560 See 8809 – Lidostas 'Spilve' centrālā ēka ar aleju [8809 – Spilve Airport central building with alley.] – National Heritage Board of Latvia. https://mantojums.lv/cultural-objects/8807, accessed 22 June 2023; 8810 – Interjera dekoratīvā apdare (3 telpās). [8810 - Interior decoration (in 3 rooms).] – National Heritage Board of Latvia. https://mantojums.lv/cultural-objects/8808, accessed 22 June 2023.
561 3131 – Interjera dekoratīvā apdare (3 telpās). [3131 – Interior decoration (in 3 rooms).] – National Heritage Board of Latvia. https://mantojums.lv/cultural-objects/3131, accessed 22 June 2023.
562 9236 – Vitrāža. [9236 – Stained–glass.] – National Heritage Board of Latvia. https://mantojums.lv/cultural-objects/9228, accessed 22 June 2023.
563 9306 – Dekoratīvs panno. [9306 – Decorative mural.] – National Heritage Board of Latvia. https://mantojums.lv/cultural-objects/9290, accessed 22 June 2023.

decorative arts in the 1970s. In a situation where only a handful of monumental-decorative artworks are protected and where there is no underlying research nor specifically developed criteria for protection, it is difficult for interested parties to justify the need for a single artwork to be listed.

In Lithuania, the situation with regard to protecting Soviet-era heritage could be better. As editor of *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis* Dalia Klajumienė voices, preserving Soviet era murals tends to be technically and ethically more problematic than preserving older works. Writing in 2019 she found that this issue has hardly been addressed in Lithuania and thus "the appearance of at least one article on the subject already gives a stimulus for further considerations and research."[564] There has indeed been more discussion on the topic since then.[565] Yet the actual number of listed late Soviet architectural art is still relatively small; according to the information available in the national registry, there are 15. Most of them (11) were already listed during the Soviet period, possibly soon after they were finished. Of the newly listed works, Birutė Žilytė and Algirdas Steponavičius' 32-metre-long tempera mural in Valkininkai sanatorium (Image 61) and Medardas Šimelis' 1979 tapestry *Plays* for the Youth Theatre in Vilnius were protected in 2014, Natalija Daškova fresco *Folk Festival* in 2018, and Audronė Skarbaliūtė's ceramic panel in Rumšiškės Culture Centre in 2021[566] (Image 246).

In terms of specific periods, none of the 15 works were created during the Stalinist era. Vladas Jankauskas and Vytautas Povilaitis' 1959 mural in the café Neringa in Vilnius is the only example of the cheerful visual culture of the Thaw era (Image 7). Eight works come from the 1970s, and four works from the 1980s. Regarding technique and materials, the selection is mainly limited to murals. Besides 12 wall paintings, the list includes one ceramic panel, one tapestry and one stained-glass window. With respect to gender, 11 are by men and seven by women. In terms of location, nine are in Vilnius, and others in smaller places like Alytus, Birštonas, Ignalina or Valkininkai. The number of different building typologies included is rather limited – five works are from the Vilnius University campus, three from culture houses and two from administrative buildings.

564 Dalia Klajumienė, Pratarmė / Foreword. – Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis 2019, No. 92/93, p. 12.
565 Gediminas Kajėnas, Nematomas sovietmečio menas… [Invisible Soviet art…]
566 Dėl kultūros objektų įrašymo į kultūros vertybių registrą. [Regarding the entry of cultural objects in the register of cultural monuments]. – Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania 2014. https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/legalAct. html?documentId=dfca8ea0012111e4bfca9cc6968de163, accessed 22 June 2023.

In terms of the artists, several distinguished muralists have made their way
onto the list. Romas Dalinkevičius and Nijolė Vilutytė are represented
with two works: the recently restored 1980 mural *Weaver*s in the Alytus
municipality (Image 141) and their 1975 sgraffito work *Natural World*
in the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant Culture House (Image 90). Another
respected monumentalist Antanas Kmieliauskas has both of his listed
murals at Vilnius University (Image 99). The same complex also houses
the protected fresco *The Seasons* by Petras Repšys (1976–1984; Image 98)
and the sgraffito work *Nine Muses* by Rimantas Gibavičius (Image 95).
Sofija Veiverytė-Liugailienė, Angelina Banytė and Natalija Daškova's
listed fresco *Our Land* (1978–1980) is located in the Lithuanian Institute
of Agrarian Economics (Image 103), while Birutė Žilytė and Algirdas
Steponavičius are represented by their mural in the Pušelė sanatorium in
Valkininkai (Image 61).

One of the most potent messages regarding valuing monumental-decora-
tive art is its professional conservation and restoration – a process which
is both time-consuming and expensive. In most cases, restoration projects
are funded by government agencies that manage the public buildings
where the works are situated. In tight budgetary situations, financing
decisions must be thoroughly justified. Students majoring in restoration
and heritage protection have done remarkable work restoring Soviet-era
architectural art in recent years. On the one hand, this can be explained by
this low-cost student workforce. However, on the other hand, universities
have accumulated valuable know-how in the field over the years, and such
restoration projects are invaluable internship opportunities for students.

For example, since 2004 the Department of Cultural Heritage and
Conservation at the Estonian Academy of Arts has been involved in at least
11 such cases from all over the country.[567] In Tallinn, students have worked
with the mural *Friendship of the Peoples*[568] by Evald Okas (Image 188),

567 Information regarding conservation and restoration projects by the Department of Cultural
Heritage and Conservation at the Estonian Academy of Arts can be found in its digital archive.
See Konserveerimine ja uuringud. [Conservation and research.] – Eesti Kunstiakadeemia
digiteek. [Estonian Academy of Arts digital library.] https://digiteek.artun.ee/fotod/aruanded/
konserveerimine, accessed 1 July 2023.
568 Evald Okase pannoo "Rahvaste sõprus" (1987) restaureerimine. [Restoration of Evald Okas'
mural *Friendship of Nations* (1987).] – Eesti Kunstiakadeemia digiteek. [Estonian Academy of
Arts digital library.] https://digiteek.artun.ee/fotod/sundmused_uritused/oppetoo/event_id-84,
accessed 1 July 2023.

Image 247. **Eva Jänes, mural, 1977. Fresco, 300 × 5000. Formerly the Kalev Confectionery Factory canteen (now a grocery store). Tallinn, 139 Pärnu mnt. Partly destroyed. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from the 1980s.**



Image 248. **Leo Rohlin, ceramic panel, 1978. Formerly the Estonian SSR Economic Institute for Raising the Qualification of Senior Workers and Specialists. The building was demolished in 2020, the artwork was dismantled and is preserved in storage. Tallinn, 21 Sütiste tee. Courtesy of Taavi Tiidor. Photo from 2019.**

murals in the former building of the Estonian Academy of Arts,[569] the fresco by Eva Jänes at the former cafeteria of the Kalev Confectionery Factory[570] (Image 247), Leo Rohlin's mural at the former ESSR Economic Institute for Raising the Qualification of Senior Workers and Specialists[571] (Image 248) and Dolores Hoffmann's fresco *Morning*.[572] In the rest of the country they have contributed to the preservation of Stalinist-era murals in Haapsalu railway station,[573] the sgraffito works by Elmar Kits in Keava[574] (Image 50) and Riisipere[575] (Image 80), the stained-glass windows by Kaarel Kurismaa in Paide[576] (Image 185) and the ceramics panel by Anu Rank-Soans in Kurtna.[577]

In addition, conservation students have backed the revival of monumental-decorative art in Latvia. In 2018, students of the Art Academy of Latvia Department of Conservation worked during their summer practice on the 1959 wall painting by renowned modernist painters Uldis Zemzaris and Laimdots Mūrnieks in the Skrīveri Institute of Agriculture[578] (Image 5). In Lithuania, a student from Vilnius University Šiauliai Academy helped

569 EKA freskode demonteerimine. [Dismantling of EKA frescoes.] – Eesti Kunstiakadeemia digiteek. [Estonian Academy of Arts digital library.] https://digiteek.artun.ee/fotod/aruanded/konserveerimine/event_id-4471, accessed 1 July 2023.

570 Karamelli Rimis saab näha Eeva-Aet Jänese seinapannood. [Eeva-Aet Jänes' mural made visible in caramel's Rimi.] – Estonian Academy of Arts. https://www.artun.ee/karamelli-rimis-saab-naha-eeva-aet-janese-seinapannood/, accessed 1 July 2023.

571 Rohlini pannoo teisaldamine. [Dismantling of Rohlin's mural.] – Eesti Kunstiakadeemia digiteek. [Estonian Academy of Arts digital library.] https://digiteek.artun.ee/fotod/aruanded/konserveerimine/event_id-4476, accessed 1 July 2023.

572 Rahutu hommik. [Restless morning.] – Eesti Kunstiakadeemia digiteek. [Estonian Academy of Arts digital library.] https://digiteek.artun.ee/fotod/aruanded/konserveerimine/event_id-4469, accessed 1 July 2023.

573 Juhan Hepner, Tudengid restaureerisid Haapsalu raudteejaamas kaheksa seinamaali. [Students restored eight wall paintings in Haapsalu railway station.] – ERR 8 December 2017. https://kultuur.err.ee/647612/tudengid-restaureerisid-haapsalu-raudteejaamas-kaheksa-seinamaali, accessed 1 July 2023.

574 E. Kitse Vana-Võidu pannoo demonteerimine. [Dismantling E. Kits' mural in Vana-Võidu.] – Eesti Kunstiakadeemia digiteek. [Estonian Academy of Arts digital library.] https://digiteek.artun.ee/fotod/sundmused_uritused/oppetoo/event_id-84, accessed 1 July 2023.

575 Inge Põlma, Kunstitudengid taastasid Elmar Kitse pannoode ilu. [Art students restored the beauty of Elmar Kits' mural.] – Nädaline, 11 June 2011.

576 Elise Lekarkin, Paide kultuurikeskuse kohviku vitraažide konserveerimine-restaureerimine. Tänapäevaste vitraažide kahjustused. [Conservation-restoration of the stained-glass windows in the cafe of the Paide cultural centre. Damages to contemporary stained-glass windows.] Bachelor's thesis, Estonian Academy of Arts, Department of Cultural Heritage and Conservation, 2017.

577 Inna Mikli, Kunstiakadeemia tudengid restaureerisid Kurtna keraamilise seinapannoo. [The students of the Academy of Arts restored the Kurtna ceramic mural.] – Saku Sõnumid 19 November 2019.

578 Zanda Ozola-Balode, Skrīveros restaurē vēsturisku panno... [Skrīveri restores historical panel painting...]

artist Vitolis Trušys to restore his fresco in the Meškučiai Culture House.[579]
A recurring theme in media responses to such undertakings has been the
solidarity effect that the renovation of monumental-decorative art can have
on the community. This feeling of well-being is often intensified by the
artist carrying out the conservation work. For example, in Kurtna, students
who worked with the ceramics panel by Anu Rank-Soanswere able to do
this under the guidance of the artist herself.[580] In Lithuania, Nijolė Vilutytė-
Dalinkevičienė took part in conserving the large mural *Weavers* in Alytus
Culture House, which she had created in 1980 with Romas Dalinkevičius.[581]

For other artworks conserved in recent years in Lithuania, mention
should be made of the stained-glass windows by Bronius Bružas at the
J. Tumas Vaižgantas School in Rokiškis and the stained-glass windows
by Kazimieras Morkūnas at the Kaunas Culture Centre.  In 2012,
Klaipėda-based stained-glass master Virginijus Bizauskas restored 1972
the stained-glass by Stasys Ušinskas in the Kretinga District Cultural
Centre. After the five-square-metre work based on the myth of Eglė the
serpentine queen was restored, staff at the cultural centre voiced their hopes
of the work being designated as a cultural heritage monument.[582] Further-
more,the smalti mosaic by Linas Katinas on the facade of Alytus Sports
and Recreation Centre was conserved in the late 2010s with the help of
European Union funding.[583]

In general, EU subsidies have been effective economic mechanisms
that have helped local governments to renovate Soviet-era buildings
and works of art. However, such funding schemes can have unexpected
and troublesome results. As one of the critical priorities of the common
market is a sustainable economy, local governments were recently given
the opportunity to apply for support for the demolition of depreciated and

579 Algimantas Brikas, Išgelbėta miestelio freska. [The town fresco has been saved.] –
Šiaulių kraštas 4 June 2013. http://old.skrastas.lt/?data=2013-06-04&rub=1065924812&
id=1370271619, accessed April 26, 2022.
580 Hilkka Hiiop et. al., Kurtna pannoo restaureerimistööde tegevuskava ja intervjuu
transkriptsioon. [Kurtna panel's restoration action plan and transcript of the interview.] – Eesti
Kunstiakadeemia digiteek. [Estonian Academy of Arts digital library.] https://digiteek.artun.ee/
static/files/045/final_kurtnamunapannootegevuskava_eka2019.pdf, accessed 1 July 2023.
581 MONUMENTALUMO GALIA: Suspindo restauruotos Alytaus kultūros centro 'Audėjos.' [THE
POWER OF MONUMENTALITY: Mural restored in Alytus Culture Center Audėja.] – Pilotas.lt 12 April
2020. https://pilotas.lt/2020/12/04/kultura/monumentalumo-galia-suspindo-restauruotos-
alytaus-kulturos-centro-audejos/, accessed 31 May 2022.
582 Romualdas Beniušis, Stasio Ušinsko vitražo Kretingoje paslaptys. [Secrets of Stasys
Ušinskas' stained-glass in Kretinga.] – Pajurio naujienos 17 January 2020. https://www.
pajurionaujienos.com/index.php?act=exp&sid=19479, accessed 1 June 2022.
583 Gediminas Kajėnas, Nematomas sovietmečio menas... [Invisible Soviet art...]

energy-intensive administrative buildings and replace them with the same
size near-zero emissions buildings.[584] However, the funding scheme did
not consider the fact that some old buildings may be of aesthetic value.
Therefore, communities will have to decide whether to preserve dilapidated
Soviet-era architecture. At the same time, as any kind of financial
investment helps to develop local life and provide job opportunities, they
are invaluable for the communities.

This is what happened in Peri in southern Estonia, where the administrative
centre is located in a Soviet-era complex that is not under heritage
protection but is still valued as an architectural highlight.[585] The local
municipality planned to demolish part of the building. However, the
conservationists intervened and called for the process to stop. The
situation was made particularly momentous by the fact that just before the
demolition decision, a restoration student had carried out conservation
work on the esteemed fresco by Andrus Kasemaa located inside the
building.[586] Head of the local parish reassured everyone involved that
despite the demolition they aim to preserve the mural 'in one way or
another.'[587] Understandably, this situation initially caused conflict, but
eventually all stakeholders decided to take the time and look for the best
solution together with the architecture and conservation teachers and
students of the Estonian Academy of Arts, who through the spring semester
of 2022 analysed different scenarios for the village centre and the panel
painting.[588] In the end, the heated discussions concerning the future of
the village centre helped the locals to build a sense of belonging to the
community.[589]

584 Riin Alatalu, Nullenergia veab vägisi miinusesse. [Zero energy is forcibly negative.] – Sirp 18
June 2022.
585 Ingrid Ruudi, Eesti 20. sajandi arhitektuuripärandi inventeerimine. Põlva maakond.
[Inventory of 20th century Estonian architectural heritage. Põlva county.] – Estonian National
Heritage Board 2009. https://register.muinas.ee/ftp/XX_saj._arhitektuur/maakondlikud%20
ylevaated/polvamaa/Polvamaa_ehitusparand.pdf, accessed 1 July 2023.
586 Randel Saveli, Andrus Kasemaa seinamaalingu "Mahtra soda" restaureerimistööd Peri
kolhoosikeskuses. [Restoration Works on Andrus Kasemaa's Mural *The Mahtra War* in Peri
Collective Farm Centre.] Bachelor's thesis, Pallas University of Applied Sciences, Department of
Painting and Restoration, 2021.
587 Vidrik Võsoberg, Külakeskus läheb lammutamisele, kuidas säilib väärtuslik seinamaal?
[The village centre is being demolished, how will the valuable wall painting be preserved?] –
Lounaleht.ee 17 June 2021. http://www.lounaleht.ee/index.php?page=1&id=31501&type=2,
accessed 11 June 2022.
588 Mati Määrits, Tudengid aitavad Peri mõisale uut sisu luua. [Students help to create new
content for Peri manor.] – Lõuna-Eesti Postimees 19 January 2022.
589 See Rebecca Wheeler, Local history as productive nostalgia?, p. 481–483.

# 4.3                    Alternative futures

One common condition for Soviet-era architectural art is that the owner
is interested in preserving the work and is aware of its artistic value.
However, she must relocate the work due to ideological, aesthetic or
practical considerations (e.g., remodelling or demolishing a building).
Removal can be relatively simple since many murals are not directly
attached to the wall. By now, conservators have also become skilled at
removing and re-exhibiting wall-bound frescoes. This raises the question
of artistic unity. Prevailing modernist art theories have considered that a
site-specific public artwork is only integral in the very context for which
it was created, so that it can be considered damaged or even destroyed by
being displaced or by its context being modified without having been itself
physically transformed.[590] Conservator Hilkka Hiiop supplements that the
preservation of the authentic architectural framework is undeniably the
safest and most ethical way to preserve a work of art, but adds that when
this proves to be impossible, removing the work is justified. In such cases it
raises the question of the value and meaning of the artwork if its authentic
context is destroyed.[591]

In Tallinn, the Estonian National Opera has been brave enough to
accommodate the 1947 ceiling painting by Elmar Kits, Evald Okas, and
Richard Sagrits in the theatre hall. However, it struggled to do the same
with a ceramic panel by Valli Lember-Bogatkina from 1950. It depicted
the song festival grounds and people in national costumes in an idealised
socialist realist idiom. The mosaic was covered with a curtain soon after
the country regained its independence, and in 2003 it was taken down
entirely and moved to the Song Festival Grounds, where it is on display
next to the artist's other works (Image 249). In its new environment, it
ceased to function as authentic ensemble art. The jovial image with its
bright colours, removed from its original neoclassical interior, appears
out of place in the modern, pragmatic environment. In another example
from Estonia, in 2015, the Viljandi Vocational Training Centre underwent
a total remodelling. The Soviet-era addition to Vana-Võidu manor, where
an Elmar Kits mural was located, was torn down. To preserve the work,
which is under cultural heritage protection, the Estonian Academy of Arts
conservation department students peeled the painting from the wall along
with the layer of plaster it was painted on and then 'pasted' it onto a new

590 Dario Gamboni, The Destruction of Art, p. 25.
591 Hilkka Hiiop et. al, p. 109.

Image 249. **Valli Lember-Bogatkina, *Let's Go to the Great Celebration!* 1950. Ceramic mosaic, approx. 300 × 600. Initially in the Estonian National Opera, now exhibited at the Song Festival Grounds Glass Hall. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2012.**

location.[592] Here the work somewhat benefited from its relocation because the original placement was not successful. The work did not seem to be closely related to the architectural context. Although the new location in the café is not perfect – tables and a table tennis area obscure its view – it helped to give more attention to the work.

To give a few more examples from Estonia, in 2012, Dolores Hoffmann's 20-metre-long stained-glass in the Tallinn TV Tower was removed from a vast but otherwise empty vestibule where it played the central role in the spatial design and re-installed on the back wall of a newly-opened cinema. During screenings, curtains are drawn across the work, so the audience only gets a brief glimpse for some minutes before and after the film. Previously, visitors could see the stained-glass while waiting for elevators; now, they see it before watching a 3D movie. Its post-renovation location and presentation context are so different that it appears to be a completely new work. In Saku, a small town just outside Tallinn, sculptor Kalju Reitel made a wooden panel (2.5 × 9 m) for an eatery in 1966 which depicted ancient Estonian warriors fighting against Teutonic knights in the year 1343 (Image 43). The work was located in a nondescript building designed according to a standard design in 1964. Although the building has effectively remained a restaurant, its owners were worried by the neglect of their tenants and decided to remove the six-part composition and find a new place for it in their offices in Tallinn. Even though the work has become

592 Asso Ladva, Hiigeltaieste heitlik saatus – mõni laos, mõni nähtaval. [The unpredictable fate of gigantic works – some in storage, some in sight.] – Õhtuleht 26 May 2017.

inaccessible to the public in the new location, it was supposedly not an egoistic decision from the owner, but rather a desire to help preserve local history in the hope that someday the panel could be presented in a more suitable place in Saku.[593]

In 2018, the restoration of a mural painting from 1959 in rural Latvia by well-known modernists Uldis Zemzaris and Laimdots Mūrnieks made headlines, reaching the Public Broadcasting famous evening newsreel.[594] The painting *Midsummer Night*, which the journalist hailed as one of Skriveri's business cards, had been located in the building of the Institute of Agriculture for half a century. However, as the institute, which once employed over 200 specialists, has shrunk to just over 20 during the post-Soviet years, they needed to move on to smaller premises. The 20-metre mural consisting of six panels was de-installed and conserved. One panel stayed at the institute's new premises, and five donated to the village's cultural centre a few minutes away. Therefore, not only was the work removed from its original setting, but it was also sliced into parts, and none of its initial composition survived. As Uldis Zemzaris is highly valued in Latvian art history – he is regarded to be one of the first who picked up abstract painting in post-war art – the restoration and new exposition of the work was seen as a success story for the community who used it to mark the 100th anniversary of Latvia's independence.[595]

A not-so-successful example from Latvia was the displacement of the kinetic sculpture by Artūrs Riņķison the facade of Hotel Latvija. The 1979 sculpture was removed during extensive renovation works in the mid-2000s. After the artist voiced his concern, the new owners let him reinstall the work in 2006, but on a different side of the building on the sidewall of a new six-storey block.[596] The new placement was unsuccessful as a street lighting pole and trolley-bus wires hamper the full appreciation of the kinetic object. Despite its failed new location, Riņķis' kinetic sculpture still holds a special place in Latvia as it is one of the few examples of decorative art created in the latter half of the 20th century, which has been preserved and is still located on the site it was erected. [597] The replacement

593 Allar Viivik, Legendaarse Saku restorani pannoo on hästi hoitud. [The panel of the legendary Saku restaurant is well kept.] – Harju Elu 8 June 2020. https://www.harjuelu.ee/legendaarse-saku-restorani-pannoo-on-hasti-hoitud/, accessed 11 June 2022.
594 Zanda Ozola-Balode, Skrīveros restaurē vēsturisku panno… [Skrīveri restores historical panel painting…]
595 Inga Bunkše, Abstraktās mākslas meklējumos / Explorations in abstract art, p. 105.
596 Juris Dambis, Modernism, p. 272.
597 Kristīne Budže, The *Brooch* on the hotel façade, p. 199.

of *Brooch* recalls Jacques Derrida's term *sous rature* – commonly translated as 'under erasure.' It indicates an instance when a word is crossed out but remains legible, rendering the meaning undecidable.[598] In deconstructivist philosophy, it refers to the idea that meaning is derived from difference. After *Brooch* was erased from the facade, it was (mis)placed in an awkward context where it exists and does not – marking an 'impossibility of presence' – inadequate yet necessary.

However, even if Riņķis' work lost much of its original bravura, it is socio-culturally significant that professionals and the general public fight for this kind of work. Architectural historian Andres Kurg has suggested that one reason such spaces continue to fascinate urban activists and critical artists is the way they function in the current urban context, namely that they collide with the neoliberal, profit-oriented spatial system.[599] Kurg makes use of Andreas Huyssen's term authentic ruins, explaining that while current turbo-capitalism has ruled out the slow decay of structures (ruins are either demolished or replaced), Soviet heritage presents a defiant way for how architectural structures may age.[600] As such, material remainders of the Soviet period provide an alternative because of their 'impossible' status – they have not been destroyed, rebuilt or made subject to the heritage industry. Thus, many Soviet interiors are admired not because of a nostalgia for the Soviet-era, but for the defiant way they age and produce temporal and spatial gaps in the late capitalist urban space.

There are also circumstances where the owner has taken care of conserving and dismantling the work. However, since no new location has been immediately found, the work has been stored in museum storage or warehoused in a random hangar in the hope of a brighter future. In 2010, during the demolition of the old Estonian Academy of Arts building, six frescoes were dismantled, which had been executed by students throughout the second part of the 20th century. For nearly a decade, they were kept in storage until fragments in 2019–2020 were exhibited in the new building. Although nothing of the original context of the works remained, and in most cases, only fragments were preserved, it was still a highly symbolic act to convey the atmosphere and continuity of the old building.

598 *Sous rature*. – Wikipedia 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sous_rature, accessed 2 July 2023.
599 Andres Kurg, On Gaps. From Post-Socialism to the City-of-Spectacle. –  Ann Demeester, Ūla Tornau, Vera Lauf, Asta Vaičiulytė, Kestutis Kuizinas (eds.), Vilniaus istorijų knyga. Tariama X Baltijos trienalės antologija / A Storybook About Vilnius. The As If Anthology of the X Baltic Triennial. Vilnius: Contemporary Art Centre, 2010, p. 175.
600 Andreas Huyssen, Nostalgia for Ruins. – Grey Room 2006, No. 23 (Spring), p. 10.

In 2007, a demolition permit was issued for a depreciated Soviet-era cinema in Tallinn. The authorities paid no attention to the fact that the lobby on the second floor boasted a fresco by Dolores Hoffmann. Due to the poor economic conditions, the demolition plans were shelved for a decade, but once it was on the agenda again, a discussion of the artwork's fate broke out. Although the artistic and historic merit might have been sufficient to grant it heritage protection, the different stakeholders came to a compromise that complete preservation was both technically and financially questionable, and it was decided to dismantle some fragments and exhibit them in the refurbished supermarket.[601] Eventually 35 details were removed – slightly less than 10 square metres of the overall 74 square metres. From there on, the remnants of the mural started living their afterlife in public spaces and private collections. In the autumn of 2019, an exhibition at the Estonian Academy of Art gallery and a publication presented the story of the 'destruction and rescue' of the fresco and raised questions about heritage protection on a more theoretical level.[602] Considering the research output involved,[603] the interest from history and conservation enthusiasts and attention from the media,[604] it could be considered a successful experiment in conservation.

In 2014, Tartu's old department store was torn down. The historic building was once home to a legendary café which housed a 1965 listed sgraffito work by Elmar Kits (Image 41). Although the developer invested in the removal of the work and voiced the desire to present the work at the renewed department store, the idea was scrapped due to the lack of a suitable location.[605] Since then, the work has been kept at the Estonian National Museum's depository, with some suggesting that the work should

601 Hilkka Hiiop, Frank Lukk, Rahutu "Hommik" / Restless *Morning*, p. 80.

602 Anneli Randla, Maris Veeremäe (eds.), Rahutu "Hommik"...

603 Frank Lukk, Freskomaal "Hommik". 2018–2019. [Fresco Painting *Hommik*. 2018–2019.] Bachelor's thesis, Estonian Academy of Art, Department of Cultural Heritage and Conservation, 2020.

604 See, e.g., Jüri Muttika, Lammutamisele minevast Rahu kinost päästetakse Dolores Hoffmanni fresco. [A fresco by Dolores Hoffmann is saved from the demolished Rahu Cinema.] – ERR 16 January 2019. https://kultuur.err.ee/889071/lammutamisele-minevast-rahu-kinost-paastetakse-dolores-hoffmanni-fresko, accessed 2 June 2022); Ilmar Saabas, FOTOD. Lammutustööde eel: endises Rahu kinos Põhja-Tallinnas võeti maha kuulus fresco. [PHOTOS. Before the demolition work: the famous fresco was taken down in the former Rahu cinema in Northern Tallinn.] – Delfi 14 January 2019. https://www.delfi.ee/artikkel/85021753/fotod-lammutustoode-eel-endises-rahu-kinos-pohja-tallinnas-voeti-maha-kuulus-fresko, accessed 2 June 2022.

605 Kaarel Tarand, Kuidas teisaldada freskot? [How to remove a fresco?] – Horisont 2014, No. 2, pp. 8–9.

Image 250. **Kazimiera Zimblytė, paintings, 1989. Oil, canvas, approx. 125 × 125 each. Initially located at the Vilnius Palace of Ritual Services. Removed and stored at the Lithuanian National Museum of Art. Courtesy of Algimantas Mačiulis. Undated photo.**

be exhibited in the forthcoming cultural centre to be built in Tartu.[606] The Estonian National Museum with its extensive storage space has also become a temporary repository for Ilmar Malin's 1983 murals which were removed from the former editorial office of the Postimees newspaper (Image 160). Both Kits' mural and Malin's panel paintings were donated free of charge and now belong to the museum.[607] The main focus of the Estonian National Museum is ethnographic material. Visual art is a secondary activity for them, and whether the museum has the capacity and

606 Krista Piirimäe, Elmar Kitse seinamaal saab Sükus väärika koha. [Elmar Kits' mural will have a dignified place at Süku.] – Tartu Postimees 13 September 2021.
607 Raimu Hanson, Postimees kinkis Ilmar Malini pannood ERMile. [Postimees donated Ilmar Malin's panel paintings to the Estonian National Museum.] – Tartu Postimees 31 January 2017.

workforce to deal with such gifts remains questionable. Although a new building opened in 2016, and they still have free storage space, collecting large-scale murals is not sustainable in the long run. The acquisition of murals raises a broader question: If such safeguarding of architectural art increases, nationwide strategic decisions will have to be made – does the country have the capability to store large-scale monumental works in museum collections?

Considering that Pärnu Museum recently adopted the large wall painting by Jaak Arro and Epp-Maria Kokamägi from the demolished Mai cinema, it can be assumed that the topic is becoming more and more relevant in Estonia.[608] If museums have so far accepted their monumental gifts, then soon we will probably see uncomfortable situations where heritage institutions have to refuse such donations. However, the necessary conditions for preservation are not guaranteed in random storage spaces. A worrying example is a 1978 three-dimensional abstract ceramic panel by Leo Rohlin which once adorned the entrance to the Estonian SSR Economic Institute for Raising the Qualification of Senior Workers and Specialists (Image 248). In 2020, a state-owned hospital decided to demolish it without acknowledging the artwork.[609] Thanks to the attentiveness of neighbourhood activists, the demolition process was halted by the National Heritage Board, which removed the work. Somewhat reluctantly, the hospital organised the storage of the saved pieces in a Soviet-era hangar in which the preservation conditions are poor, and it is impossible to say what will become of the work in the future.[610]

In Lithuania, abstract paintings by Kazimiera Zimblytė from 1989 at the Vilnius Palace of Ritual Services (Image 250) were accidentally saved by the fresco painter Nijolė Vilutytė- Dalinkevičienė who was doing renovations on her own work in the same building. Noticing the absence of Zimblytė's canvases, she found them in a storeroom. After contacting the Lithuanian National Museum of Art, the works were conserved and entered

608 Eno-Gerrit Link, Pärnu suurim pannoo kolib ajutisse koju. [The largest panel painting in Pärnu will move to a temporary home.] – Pärnu Postimees 13 January 2021.
609 Uwe Gnadenteich, Kunstniku tippteos pääses vaevu hävingust. [Artist's masterpiece barely escapes destruction.] – Postimees 6 February 2020.
610 Taavi Tiidor, Hilkka Hiiop, Case study: Leo Rohlini ehisseina demonteerimine end. ENSV Rahvamajanduse Juhtivate Töötajate ja Spetsialistide Kvalifikatsiooni Tõstmise Instituudi fassaadilt Mustamäel. [Case study: Dismantling of Leo Rohlin's decorative wall from the facade of the former Estonian SSR Economic Institute for Raising the Qualification of Senior Workers and Specialists in Mustamäe.] – Presentation at the conference Complicated modernism? XXIII Annual Conference of the Department of Heritage Protection and Conservation of Estonian Academy of Art, 30 July 2021. Notes in the possession of the author.

into the national collection. Recently, the National Museum of Art also received a 1967 stained-glass window by Konstantinas Šatūnas, which had decorated the exposition of the Palanga Amber Museum.[611] Furthermore, when the neoclassical Vilnius Trade Union Cultural Palace was demolished in 2019, the museum deinstalled and acquired three stained-glass windows by Algimantas Stoškus (each 6 × 2,5 m)[612] (Image 3). In fact, the forgotten triptych was exposed accidentally during the preparation work for the demolition. It might have been covered with plasterboard during the 1990s.[613] Unfortunately, not all the removed works end up in public collections – in 2001, the mosaic *Oak* by Vitolis Trušys was removed from the facade of the Žarėnai Culture House in Šiauliai district without the author's knowledge. When the local newspaper enquired about the whereabouts of the work five years later, the previous owner certified that he had dismantled and sold the work to a "wealthy businessman from Kaunas, who knows art, and decorated his house with it."[614]

Memory studies scholar Svetlana Boym distinguishes between reflective and restorative nostalgia. While the latter represents a longing for the re-establishment of the past, the former values specific details and glances of the past, ignoring its ideological aspects and focusing on the everyday aspects of the past. Reflective nostalgia may be used as a subversive strategy against hegemonic narratives and thus uses irony and contradiction as a weapon to address phenomena that might be otherwise stigmatised.[615] In recent years, both contemporary artists and conservationists from the Baltic states have turned to reflective nostalgia to highlight socialist modernist visual heritage. One recurring method has been re-staging destroyed or inaccessible murals as photomurals or video projections. In this way, recontextualised images are presented as artworks in their own right.

In 2017, the Litexpo Center in Vilnius hosted an event called *The Mysterious Glow*, dedicated to the mural by Birutė Žilytė and Algirdas

611 Vitražas "Jūratė ir Kastytis". [Stained-glass *Jūratė and Kastytis*.] – Klaipeda Municipal Immanuel Kant Public Library. http://www.biblioteka.lt/freskos/vitrazas-jurate-ir-kastytis/#nuorodos, accessed 6 July 2023.
612 Vilniaus savivaldybė: Profsąjungų rūmai bus nugriauti šių metų pabaigoje, vitražai perduoti muziejui. [Vilnius Municipality: The Trade Union Palace will be demolished by the end of this year, the stained-glass windows will be handed over to the museum.] – Made in Vilnius 31 May 2019. https://madeinvilnius.lt/verslas/nekilnojamas-turtas/vilniaus-savivaldybe-profsajungu-rumai-bus-nugriauti-siu-metu-pabaigoje-vitrazai-perduoti-muziejui/, accessed 11 June 2022.
613 Monika Gimbutaitė, Buvusiuose Profsąjungų rūmuose rasti A. Stoškaus vitražai. [Stained-glass windows by A. Stoškus found in the former Trade Union Palace.]
614 Rita Žadeikytė, Šiaulių kraštas ieško dingusių brangių meno kūrinių. [Šiauliai region is looking for missing expensive works of art.]
615 Svetlana Boym, The Future of Nostalgia. New York: Basil Books, 2001, p. 72–79.

Steponavičius in Valkininkai Children's Sanatorium (Image 61). For the event, a full-size reproduction of the mural was made in which the digital image was printed on an aluminium board.[616] The original work was listed as a cultural monument in 2015. In early 2017, the Lithuanian Cultural Heritage Board allocated funds to restore the mural. However, later that year, the Ministry of Health, which maintained the hospital, decided to close it in the outdated building. Although the Society of Art Historians and the Lithuanian Artists' Union urged the state to continue the restoration work and find a new purpose, the hospital moved out, and the building has been empty ever since. Consequently, the wall painting remains frozen in time for the indefinite future. *The Mysterious Glow* raised public awareness of preserving valuable Soviet-era murals and injected optimism into the art world. The public event brought together different generations and activated divergent memories about Žilytė's and Steponavičius' mystical children's books as well as their mural at the children's cafe Nykštukas.[617]

A year later in 2018, when the private MO Museum designed by Daniel Liebeskind opened in Vilnius, the institution acquired the reproduction to decorate its popular street-level bistro with a 19-metre-long fragment. There is irony in the fact that a socialist mural ends up as an attraction inside a privately-owned gallery. The situation is similar to the OMA designed Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow, where a Soviet-era mural functions as a fashionable oddity which adds a local touch to the otherwise indistinguishable global architecture.[618] The original concept of monumental-decorative art – a public good that ought to exit the galleries and meet the people on the streets – seems to get lost in an upmarket bistro. It is replaced with a vision of a quirky art style.

Inspired by the success of their previous project, Vilnius Gallery created a reproduction of Žilytė and Steponavičius' eminent Nykštukas café mural in 2019. As there was nothing left of the original work, the 2.3 × 15 metre fresco was re-enacted with the help of drafts, archival photos and instructions by Birute Žilytė. Instead of a flat photo mural, the initiators opted for a three-dimensional interpretation, with different details standing

616 Kristina Stančienė, Amputacija ar eutanazija? Birutės Žilytės ir Algirdo Steponavičiaus sienų tapybos likimo vingiai. [Amputation or euthanasia? The fateful twists and turns of Birutė Žilytė and Algirdas Steponavičius' wall painting.] – 7md.lt 20 October 2017. https://www.bernardinai.lt/2019-09-25-atkurta-legendines-vaiku-kavines-nykstukas-freska-ir-interjero-detales/, accessed 14 June 2022.
617 Eimantas Banevičius, Sovietmečio sienų tapybos būklė Vilniaus visuomeniniuose pastatuose: grėsmės ir saugojimo galimybės. [State of Soviet period mural paintings in Vilnius public buildings: Threats and preservation possibilities.], p. 3.
618 See Nikolas Drosos, Modernism with a Human Face, p. 223.
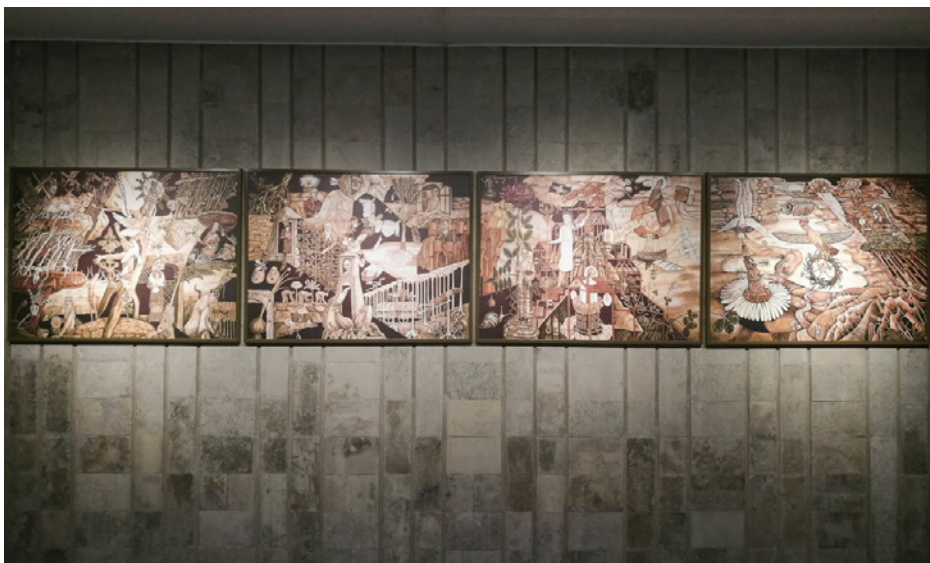
Image 251. **Juozas Vosylius, *Homeland – Samogitian Land*, 1986–1991. Fresco, 96 square metres. Destroyed. Reproduction exhibited at the Vėžaičiai branch of the Lithuanian Center for Agrarian and Forest Sciences. Courtesy of Lithuanian Center for Agrarian and Forest Sciences. Photo from 2018.**



Image 252. **Petras Repšys, *The Seasons,* 1974–1975. Preparatory drawings for a fresco in the hall of the Centre for Lithuanian Studies of Vilnius University. Exhibited in the permanent collection of 20th-century art at the Lithuanian National Gallery. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**

apart on single plywood elements. This time the nostalgic message of the event was emphasised by the fact that in addition to the mural, some of the café's unique furniture was remade based on the photographs.[619] In 2018, a four-part fresco by Juozas Vosylius in Vėžaičiai in western Lithuania was 'preserved' using the same method but in a modest fashion (Image 251). The enormous 96-square-metre mural was created in 1986–1991 and adorned the assembly hall of the Lithuanian Centre for Agrarian and Forest Sciences. The mural was destroyed in the 1990s or early 2000s following the building's privatisation. After becoming aware of the loss, the successors of the institution used photos by Vytas Karaciejus, which had been shot right after the mural's completion. The framed images were then hung on the corridor wall of the institution's new premises.[620]

As previously pointed out, critical artists and conservationists have valued Soviet heritage because it offers an alternative to the one-sided spatial relations of wasteful capitalism. In the case of the re-enactment projects by Vilnius Gallery, socialist visual culture has been placed at the heart of the attention economy. In the neoliberal realm, the aspects of being seen and visibility tend to be at the centre of the discussion of public art.[621] On the other hand, such re-enactments strive to include murals in the art historical canon. As a rule, art that does not offer the possibility of enduring over time is either made durable or, ultimately falls out of the canon of visual art.[622] Ironically, this is the reason why monumental-decorative art has fallen outside of the art historical canon – even though it was conceived as a durable format, it has proved less enduring than ephemeral performances or happenings. In most cases, restoring or re-enacting a mural is too expensive and time-consuming. From this perspective, digital reproduction allows art institutions to positively museify monumental-decorative art.

Besides digital reproductions, galleries and museums sometimes present sketches and design drafts of the original mural. The permanent collection of 20th-century art at the Lithuanian National Gallery presents Petras

619 Atkurta legendinės vaikų kavinės 'Nykštukas' freska ir interjero detalės. [The fresco and interior details of the legendary children's café Dwarf have been restored.] – Bernardinai.lt 25 September 2019 https://www.bernardinai.lt/2019-09-25-atkurta-legendines-vaiku-kavines-nykstukas-freska-ir-interjero-detales/, accessed 14 June 2022.
620 Virginija Šleiniūtė, Vėžaičiuose antram gyvenimui prikelta reikšminga freska-sgrafitas. [In Vėžaičiai, a significant fresco-sgraffito was given a second life.] – Delfi.lt 19 November 2018. https://www.delfi.lt/miestai/klaipeda/vezaiciuose-antram-gyvenimui-prikelta-reiksminga-freska-sgrafitas.d?id=79626859, accessed 16 June 2022.
621 Maaike Lauwaert, High Expectations, Higher Thresholds. – Jeroen Boomgaard, Rogier Brom (eds.), Being Public. How Art Creates the Public. Amsterdam: Valiz, 2017, p. 16.
622 Dorothea von Hantelmann, How to Do Things with Art, p. 13.

Image 253. **Teodoras Valaitis, scale model of a decorative composition for the USSR pavilion at the Osaka World EXPO '70, 1969. Exhibited in the permanent collection of 20th-century art at the Lithuanian National Gallery. Courtesy of Gregor Taul. Photo from 2020.**

Repšys' preparatory drawings for the *Seasons* fresco in the vestibule of the Centre for Lithuanian Studies (Image 252). The drawings are installed on a trapezoidal hanger to give the impression of an overhead vault. The museum believed it necessary to borrow the drawings from the Vilnius University Library and present them in the permanent collection not only for their artistic merit but also because the artist's working manner was unique for its time.[623] During the nearly ten years it took to complete the painting, the vaulted space in the Vilnius University inner-city campus turned into a temporary studio for the artist and functioned as a semi-public meeting place for the art community. The museum found it paramount to emphasise the creation of a somewhat transgressive space within the official premises. The museum also presents original scale models of Teodoras Valaitis' decorative composition in the same exhibition, exhibited at the USSR pavilion at the Osaka World EXPO '70 (Image 253). As very little is left from the artist's idiosyncratic public artworks, the preserved fragment from the Valaitis family collection presents the model as an abstract modernist sculpture in its own right.

623 Conversation with Lolita Jablonskienė, 24 January 2020.

In contrast to Lithuania, the subject of monumental-decorative art is not represented in the permanent exhibitions of either the Latvian or Estonian national art museums. On the other hand, the new permanent collection of the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design in Rīga, which opened in 2022, pays particular attention to three legendary designers and artists Valdis Celms, Jānis Borgs and Arturs Riņķis. The permanent collection of the Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design mentions several monumentalists, but does not open up the topic of monumental-decorative art itself. Nevertheless, Estonian and Latvian art museums cannot be blamed for a lack of interest, as they have sufficiently popularised the subject through temporary exhibitions and art historical research. To give a few examples, in 2013, Kumu Art Museum hosted the exhibition *Notes on Space. Photos by Paul Kuimet*.[624] The photographs presented in the exhibition showed monumental paintings in Estonia that were first published in the 2012 book *Notes on Space*. As for the Latvian National Art Museum, in 2019 it hosted a retrospective of Lidija Auza's work, including her monumental panel paintings from the Talsi Regional Municipal Building.

In Estonia, in 2019, the Department of Cultural Heritage and Conservation at the Estonian Academy of Arts made an exhibition of the fragments of the 74 m² fresco *Morning* by Dolores Hoffmann, which was partially saved from the destroyed Rahu (Peace) cinema. The EKA Museum also acquired some fragments that are now exhibited in the academy. The museum also made a thorough research exhibition about the history of monumental painting studies, exhibited at the academy's gallery in 2020. The show presented monumental painting designs and 12 completed works by 46 artists from 1962 to 1995 totalling 138 works. Curator Reeli Kõiv also edited a catalogue which addressed both the history and contemporary status of monumental painting.[625]

For the publication, I organised a roundtable discussion with five artists to explore their take on the supposedly ideological or anachronistic genre.[626] Urve Dzidzaria, who was active in this field during the Soviet period, mid-career painter Kaido Ole and younger artists Tõnis Saadoja, Kristi Kongi and Merike Estna agreed that due to the prerequisite to remain in a specific space, monumental painting has a natural tendency to be buried

624 See Notes on Space. Photos by Paul Kuimet at Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn, 09.10.2013–05.01.2014 [exhibition booklet]. Tallinn: Lugemik, 2013.
625 Reeli Kõiv (ed.). Nähtamatu monumentaalmaal / Invisible monumental painting.
626 Gregor Taul, Kõige loomulikum osa elust / The most natural part of life. – Reeli Kõiv (ed.), Nähtamatu monumentaalmaal / Invisible monumental painting. Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2020, pp. 35–40.

under cultural layers. All the artists seemed to agree that the large format, connection to a particular space and old techniques like fresco and sgraffito form the basis of monumental painting. However, as the habit and actual knowledge of how to prepare a perfectly wet plaster wall with a trowel and applying pigment to it by hand has largely disappeared, today's monumental painting has little connection to the Soviet paradigm. The discussion concluded that artistic subjects and genres inevitably return in time and that monumental painting is gaining popularity again. However, contemporary monumental painting does not yet have its own identity, as it relies on Soviet nostalgia and could establish itself as much more diverse and radical in the urban space.

Reeli Kõiv's exhibition was entitled *Invisible monumental painting*. 'Invisible', 'void', 'forgotten', 'hidden', and other metaphors radiating spatial neglect seem to be recurring tropes for addressing Soviet murals. Such figurative speech, which to some extent is driven by the desire to get media attention, goes back to the infamous century-old remark by Austrian writer Robert Musil that there is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument.[627] Musil argued that monuments are no doubt erected to be seen and attract attention. However, at the same time, they are impregnated with something that repels attention – like a drop of water on oilskin, and attention runs down them without stopping for a moment. One might think this invisibility is more straightforward in monumental paintings, as interior paintings are hard to come by. Yet, several other aspects add to the invisibility, such as being situated somewhere between painting, decorative arts, architecture and design, as well as the lower position of the artists in the art world.[628] Anu Soojärv's master's thesis also makes use of the symbolism of concealing.[629] An example of using such figurative speech in the Lithuanian context is a thorough article by Gediminas Kajėnas, which claims that during the three decades of independence, most public artworks created during the Soviet era were forgotten.[630]

## 4.4          Recontextualised representations

As a researcher, curator and critic, I have played various roles in dealing with monumental-decorative art. If the academic sphere tends to focus on

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627 Robert Musil, Posthumous Papers of a Living Author. Trans. Peter Wortsman. Hygiene, Colorado: Eridanos Press, 1987, p. 61.
628 Gregor Taul, Kõige loomulikum osa elust / The most natural part of life, p. 35.
629 Anu Soojärv, Peidus pärand... [Hidden Heritage...]
630 Gediminas Kajėnas, Nematomas sovietmečio menas... [Invisible Soviet art...]

conservation and places Soviet heritage in a positively framed ethical and aesthetic canon, contemporary art raises somewhat broader and unexpected questions. In this subchapter, I discuss how Baltic contemporary artists have recently used socialist modernist art to add new layers of meaning to Soviet heritage.

Tõnis Saadoja, for whom it took nearly a year to complete his mural at Theatre NO99, has mentioned that the time spent deciding on the subject matter was even longer.[631] Ultimately, the source for the painting was chosen to be a photograph of a forest taken by the artist. On the one hand, representing nature, a phenomenon drastically older than the building itself or any fabricated mental or physical construction, offered the artist a chance to escape from the burden of addressing troubled memory issues. On the other hand, by depicting a forest scene, the artist acknowledged it as a fundamental symbol in the 'national imagination of landscape.'[632] Such a choice has significant implications.[633] Overall, this simple yet critically loaded picture initiated a discussion about bridging various political establishments and filling the void, both in perceived and conceived landscapes. As such, Saadoja's mural presented itself as a 'theoretical object', which helped me frame this thesis. [634]

When Saadoja started painting the mural, he searched for local references. He had assumed that during the Soviet occupation of Estonia, numerous murals were painted, but available literature could help him little. It appeared as if this once-popular genre had all but disappeared. Saadoja realised that his monumental undertaking could trigger the reactivation of a forgotten legacy. So, the idea of publishing a conceptual compilation of Estonian monumental paintings was born. Saadoja contacted myself and Paul Kuimet to document and research this topic. Kuimet is an artist who works with photography, 16 mm film and immersive spatial installations. While his first photographic series were typological documentations of the urban environment he has since moved on to conceptualise modernisation

631 Tõnis Saadoja, Conversation on 13 March 2012. Notes in the possession of the author.
632 Robert Hughes, An Introduction to the Aesthetics of Jean-Luc Nancy (with Reflections on Estonian Landscape Images. Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi / Studies on Art and Culture 2013, Vol. 22, No. 1/2, pp. 183–197.
633 W. J. T Mitchell, Imperial Landscape. – W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.), Landscape and Power. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 5–34.
634 The theoretical object is a term Mieke Bal suggests to emphasise that literary and artistic objects can, under certain conditions, become triggers of theoretical ideas. Mieke Bal, Meanwhile: Literature in An Expanded Field. – Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association 2003, Vol. 99, No. 1, p. 10.

Image 254. **Paul Kuimet, *Notes on Space*, 2013. Displaying 15 images on 30 billboards in the public space of Kassel, 2017. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2017.**

at large.[635] When Saadoja's mural was ceremoniously revealed in 2013, it was accompanied by a book presentation.[636] The painting initiated another artwork, Kuimet's series of photographs *Notes on Space* which traces art in the public space in Estonia. In the aforementioned first book Kuimet's stance was more neutral and the series came close to the genre of typological photography. Kuimet has been willing to place his photographs in various contexts – publications, exhibitions, large-scale reproductions in the public space – where the conceptual framework has shifted accordingly, and the images have acquired new connotations.

In 2013, Kumu Art Museum hosted Paul Kuimet's solo exhibition *Notes on Space. Photos by Paul Kuimet* in which he presented 38 framed silver gelatin prints from the same series.[637] The photographs were hung on four walls of the museum's project space and divided into four thematic groups: works in interiors which have retained their original spatial context, works in interiors which have lost their original surroundings, outdoor artworks, and stained-glass windows. The exhibition was supplemented by a free-to-take booklet with an essay by curator and writer Daniel Campbell-Blight which did not focus on the represented murals but on the meaning-making of

635 See Laura Toots (ed.), Compositions with Passing Time / Paul Kuimet. Tallinn: Lugemik, 2021.
636 Alina Astrova et. al., Konspekteeritud ruum… [Notes on Space…]
637 See Mike Amundsen, Review: Paul Kuimet's Notes on Space. – ERR News 5 November 2013. https://news.err.ee/108605/review-paul-kuimet-s-notes-on-space, accessed 20 June 2022.

photography.[638] Kuimet's exhibition gave the museum – which had otherwise not touched on the topic in its permanent collection – a chance to include it in their story and museologise the topic with a conceptual twist.

Kumu used the same strategy as Villu Jaanisoo's popular 2006 installation, *The Seagull*, in the permanent collection of 20th-century Estonian art. When Kumu opened in 2016, the museum gave Jaanisoo free hands to interpret its sculpture collection. He picked 83 portrait busts and exhibited them randomly on pedestals and shelves on the walls. The outcome was a visually striking potpourri of wood, stone, plaster, and marble portraits of children, tsars, dictators, army generals, artists, workers and anonymous models with no apparent logic behind the choice or placement of the figures.[639] The installation acted as an artist's anecdote on the chronological imperative of traditional museum collections. Dorothea von Hantelmann has questioned that if the museum is a machine that produces a linear conception of time, development and progress, how can an artwork exist in the museum without subordinating itself to this conception of history?[640] Both *The Seagull* and *Notes on Space. Photos by Paul Kuimet* are significant examples of the museum's ability to open up questions about its narrative structures and provide a more individual voice to the images shown in the museum.

In spring 2017, curators Eva-Maria Offermann and Jacob Birken invited Kuimet to present 15 of these photographs on 30 billboards in the public space of Kassel, Germany[641] (Image 254). As the visuals were displayed on large-scale advertising spaces usually dedicated to commercial ventures, the intervention raised questions about the role of images in the public urban space. In conclusion, Saadoja's painting and Kuimet's photo series are a way of doing historiography in which historical monumentalism is a vehicle of contemporary critical monumentalism. Instead of making big things, present-day monumentalism arises from focusing on historical knowledge and national thought.[642]

638 Daniel Campbell-Blight, Underneath. – Notes on Space. Photos by Paul Kuimet at Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn, 09.10.2013–05.01.2014 [exhibition booklet]. Tallinn: Lugemik, 2013.
639 Gregor Taul, Kunstisemiootiliselt museoloogiast: Kumu skulptuuride ruum. [Museology in the context of art semiotics: The room of sculptures in the Estonian Art Museum Kumu.] Bachelor's thesis, University of Tartu: Department of Semiotics, 2009.
640 Dorothea von Hantelmann, How to Do Things with Art. What Performativity Means in Art. Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2010, p. 14.
641 Paul Kuimet *Notes on Space in Kassel*. – Kunsthochschule Kassel. https://kunsthochschulekassel.de/willkommen/veranstaltungen/events/paul-kuimet-notes-on-space-in-kassel.html, accessed 12 July 2023.
642 Mieke Bal, Introduction. – Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, Leo Spitzer (eds.), Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999, xv.

In 2015, Lithuanian photographer and documentary filmmaker Vilma Samulionytė exhibited her typological series *60 Monuments. Civil Registry Offices*. It chronicles the passage of time in the socialist wedding palaces constructed in 60 county centres around Lithuania.[643] The predominantly Catholic country had tackled Soviet contempt for religious spaces with the production of a new ritual typology of buildings, namely the wedding and funeral palaces (sometimes under the same roof). Each experimental purpose-built palace had its own 'secular altar' around which the wedding ritual culminated with the signing of marital papers. Samulionytė's photographs depict 60 such tables and their surroundings, usually generously decorated with monumental-decorative art. Samulionytė's neutrally composed photographs offer an unprejudiced view of the spaces as they pay respect to the ongoing rituals which take place there. The Soviet-era interiors and rituals have been successfully integrated into the present.[644] Therefore, Samulionytė's work calls for a discussion about the fundamental rites which keep society together regardless of the societal order. Her work became all the more relevant in the aftermath of the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian War, which provoked the removal of the last remaining Soviet monuments in Lithuania. The series seems to exemplify that it is unreasonable to draw a hard line between negative and positive late Soviet content and representation, as both are deeply intertwined with today's everyday life.

Another example from Estonia, in which artists have addressed the legacy of monumental-decorative art is the exhibition *Small Monumentalists* by Silja Saarepuu and Villu Plink, together with muralists Aet Andresma-Tamm and Mare Soovik-Lobjakas first shown in Tallinn Art Hall Gallery in 2018.[645] At the centre of the exhibition was a gigantic empty canvas that filled a good part of the gallery space. Several ropes were fastened around the canvas, which little dolls used to move the piece – reminiscent of how the Lilliputs tied up Gulliver. The tiny dolls, dressed in national costumes, came from the earlier exhibitions by Saarepuu and Plink, where they represented Gogolesque 'little persons' with their big aspirations. Besides the central installation, fragments of (destroyed) monumental works by Andresma-Tamm and Soovik from the Soviet period were displayed in the gallery. By juxtaposing tiny and colossal works, minor characters and powerful topics, and by playing with the mismatch of

643 Vilma Samulionytė (ed.), 60 Monuments / 60 monumentų. Vilnius: NoRoutine Books, 2020.
644 Eglė Mikalajūnė, Spaces Lost Between Content and Representation. – Vilma Samulionytė (ed.), 60 Monuments / 60 monumentų. Vilnius: NoRoutine Books, 2020, pp. 148–149.
645 Small Monumentalists. – Tallinn Art Hall. https://www.kunstihoone.ee/en/programme/small-monumentalists/, accessed 12 July 2023.
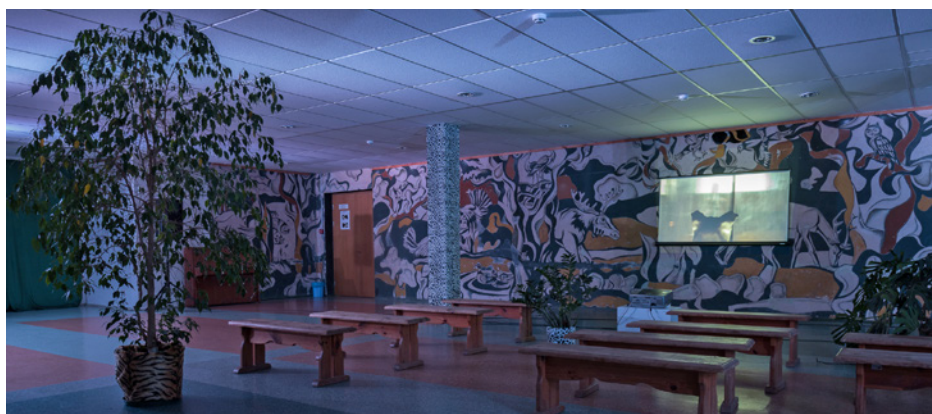
Image 255. **Anastasia Sosunova, *Demikhov Dog*, 2017. Video installation, 7' 23".
Initially exhibited at the Ignalina Culture Centre. Courtesy of Anastasia Sosunova. Photo
from 2017.**

Andresma-Tamm and Soovik-Lobjakas being little-known names despite
their extensive oeuvre, the artists posed an array of questions concerning
contemporary monumentalism.[646]

The way Saarepuu and Plink analysed dissolving monumentalism
evokes parallels with the concept of liquid monumentality as proposed
by environmental law specialist David Takacs.[647] By bringing together
Zygmunt Bauman's idea of liquid modernity and comparing it with
the permanence of monuments, he seeks to discuss the possibility for
great contemporary architecture. Takacs assumes that for millennia the
monument has provided a constructed record of the most outstanding
values found within a people at a particular place and moment in time.[648]
But the monumental has become irrelevant as it desires to project stability
in a world that has become 'liquid'. For Bauman, the liquid world is one
of constant transformation, emerging after the ruling class substituted
solid collective institutions with ephemeral trends built on a free market
economy. In this world, profitability ensures a continuous renewal cycle that
prevents forms from solidifying into lasting symbols. Takacs finds that the
traditional understanding of monumental architecture becomes obsolete in
the liquid world, while flexible 'functional architecture' can be successful.

646 Gregor Taul, Monumentaalsus kuubis luubi all. [Zoomed in monumentality in a cube.] – Sirp
7 September 2018.
647 David Takacs, Liquid Monumentality. A Search for Meaning. Ontario: University of Waterloo,
2011.
648 Ibid., p. 5–6.

Consequently, he suggests that the concrete and glass 'commercial box' is the paragon of liquidity. While the monument of the past reflected permanent truth, the contemporary monument might change its function at any given moment. Although it is difficult to agree with the somewhat totalising opinions of Takac or Bauman , the core of their argument underlines the fact that modernist, national and colonising narratives do not possess any more singular authority over the production of space.

Lithuanian artist Anastasia Sosunova's autobiographical video installation *Demikhov Dog* (Image 255) was first presented in 2017 at the Ignalina Culture Centre in front of Nijolė Vilutytė- Dalinkevičienė and Romas Dalinkevičius' sgraffito work *Natural World* (Image 90). It is a 7-minute video work which stems from the experiments conducted by the Soviet scientist Vladimir Demikhov, who in the 1950s infamously created two-headed dogs who could only survive for hours or days. Reflecting on her own experience of growing up in a Russian-speaking family (albeit a third generation Lithuanian) in the country's periphery not far from the Ignalina nuclear plant, the artist uses the inventor's tryouts as a metaphor to discuss experiences of cultural difference and the rifts of identity for minorities that riddle the region in which she was raised.[649] The initial impetus for the work came from seeing one of Demikhov's canines at the Pauls Stradiņš Medicine History Museum in Rīga. The artist recorded videos with her smartphone throughout the Baltic region and combined them through editing with fictitious characters and chimeric animated realities. The video has a voice-over, an essay by the artist discussing identity and alterity. One of Sosunova's classmates, a native Russian speaker who never learned to speak Lithuanian, reads the text. Thus, he reads it in broken Lithuanian with a weighty Russian accent which highlights the social barriers erected by the language.[650]

The video follows Sosunova among her peers in Visaginas and the neighbouring Ignalina, where people spend their daily lives between activities like folk dancing, night clubbing or the excessive playing of video games. Visaginas is a small town in the north-eastern tip of Lithuania which used to provide the majority of the workers for the Ignalina Nuclear Plant situated 10 kilometres east of the town – just as the inhabitants of Pripyat served the Chernobyl nuclear plant. To make things even more complicated, the citizens of Visaginas would hold their cultural events and spend their

649 Anastasia Sosunova, Demikhov Dog. – Anastasiasosunova.com. https://www.anastasiasosunova.com/demikhov-dog, accessed 27 June 2022.
650 Anastasia Sosunova, Conversation on 8 June 2020. Notes in the possession of the author.

free time in the town of Ignalina, situated 40 kilometres south. The majority of Visagina's population was Russian-speaking, and despite this undergoing change, the region still has an unfavourable reputation in Lithuania.

The video's voice-over essay begins with a reference to the 1920s avant-garde Russian writer Nikolai Zabolotsky, who fantasised in an *avant la lettre* posthumanist text that it would be beneficial for humankind to leave the planet so that other 'animal kingdoms' could try to work out their best possible civilisations on Earth. Parallel to Zabolotsky and his poetic peers, Demikhov started carrying out his controversial Frankenstein-like experiments in his flat with Muscovite stray dogs to see if producing superior two-headed watchdogs to serve humans was possible. While most of the 20-something ill-born hybrids did not live longer than a few days, Sosunova's video work picks up the tangled morality issues of the experiments and uses it as an allegory for alterity and as a hopeful strategy for constructing a coherent personal and national identity within a time and space that makes it exceedingly difficult to achieve.

In the video, Sosunova uses a low-fi 3D model of the Demikhov Dog to refer to the computer-graphics-ladden environment surrounding many of her previous schoolmates. It is common among Russian-speaking Lithuanians to prioritise investments in expensive computers and VR technology rather than their immediate surroundings. Therefore, as the living space itself is ignored, and attention is drawn to video games and the creation of a parallel virtual reality, an escapist illusory public space is created within the confines of a poorly surrounded private space. However, Sosunova does not offer it as a critique but instead wants to draw attention to a pattern she recognises in society and to which she is closely related. Therefore, the computer-aided Demikhov dog, with its dystopian visual language, refers to a dysfunctional state of affairs in which energy and time is invested in illusions, myth-making and provisional identity.

During her school years, Sosunova frequently visited the Ignalina Culture House and had a strong memory of the mural, which seemed outlandish in this setting and had always appeared to her like a depiction of an African safari. Once she started working on the video, she immediately decided that the work must be exhibited within this 'weirdly colonising depiction of the third world.'651 Surprisingly, once she re-entered the space so well-known to her from childhood, she discovered that the mural represented the most

651 Ibid.

ordinary Lithuanian wildlife. The painting's title is *Natural World*, although staff from the culture centre refer to the mural and the space it inhabits as the zoo. She realised the somewhat exotic visual form had made her see the content differently. While at first glance, it seemed to divert the undertones she was seeking in her video, on second thoughts, a whole new set of associations emerged. Her video is about ethnic Lithuanians exoticising Lithuanian Russians, Poles and Jews and vice versa.

At first, Sosunova screened the video for just one evening at the Ignalina Culture House. She did not change anything in the room except adding a screen and a few benches for the viewers. Besides some of the grown-ups, most of the audience came from the local art school where Sosunova had previously given a comic book workshop. Although, according to the artist, it was surprising for some viewers to attend the culture house to view a 'Youtube clip', it was a pleasant evening with lots of discussion. Later, she has shown the video at various contemporary art institutions worldwide. As the video was born as a site-specific installation, Sosunova has, in each new location, aimed to recreate some effects of the original site by either replicating the fresco in different formats or adding animal fur to the viewing benches.

By placing her work next to Vilutytė and Dalinkevičius' sgraffito work, Sosunova also wanted to address the legacy of Soviet-era public art. According to the artist, most Lithuanian schools fall into the totalitarian discourse when addressing the Soviet occupation, thus drawing on popular stereotypes and ethnic confrontations. However, viewing artworks like the one in the Ignalina Culture House calls for a more hybrid take on history. Local Russian-speaking cultural workers commissioned it from well-known Lithuanian artists to cultivate a native identity and foster a stronger feeling of the Lithuanian landscape. In a way, the mural was a Trojan horse within the Soviet empire fostering national identity within a supposedly Soviet and cosmopolitan institution. On the other hand, the mural has now become another Trojan horse, hacked into the Lithuanian cultural environment allegedly by Soviet muralists who encouraged socialist policies. Consequently, Soviet-era monumental-decorative art is instrumentalised as a vehicle for discriminating against 'guilty' artists who worked with the occupation forces.

While Sosunova was preparing to show her video at the Ignalina Culture House, she learnt from Vilutytė-Dalinkevičienė that prisoners had constructed the building. As she started working on the mural while the

house was still in construction, she did not feel safe among the inmates, and the process was a harassing experience. Although this happened in the mid-1970s, forced labour recalls memories of the Gulag, and Vilutytė never had a good feeling about the mural. The meaning of Soviet heritage is inconsistent for society and individuals. Sosunova uses the mural to go beyond simplified dualities regarding memory and history.

Last but not least, for Sosunova, one of the triggers for using the culture house was its 40th-anniversary celebrations in 2016. The staff had decided to organise a party called *Then and Now*, which would activate both former and current workers, teachers and appreciators of culture. Accordingly, the concert was divided into two parts: the first part dealt nostalgically and humorously with the Soviet period with all the related costumes, red flags, aesthetics, paraphernalia and songs; the second part was dedicated to the current cultural sphere. Unsurprisingly, photos and videos were posted on social media and quickly disseminated to media outlets without the context that the event consisted of historical and contemporary parts. Social media users and professional journalists presented the organisers as provincial half-wits and 'useful pro-Russian idiots trying to brainwash local children while showing nostalgia for Stalinism.[652]

Professor Rimvydas Laužikas from Vilnius University's Department of Digital Cultures and Communication compared the event to the Sochi Olympics opening ceremony. At the same time, even the Minister of Culture Liana Ruokytė-Jonsson had to react by stressing that, hopefully, this was 'just a manifestation of bad taste, not a planned provocation.'[653] The staff of the culture house was heavily criticised and stigmatised for several months, and caused many grey hairs, not only for the employees but the whole community connected to the institution. Therefore, celebrating one's (contested) history was considered a roughly punishable act by the Vilnius-centred media elite. In her video, Sosunova juxtaposes this event with the national song and dance festivals as the cornerstones of ethnic pride. As Sosunova notes, these events may draw together third or fourth-generation

652 Mindaugas Jackevičius, Rūta Pukenė, Paaiškino, kas vyko per sovietmetį primenantį koncertą Ignalinoje. [Explanation for what happened during the concert in Ignalina reminiscent of the Soviet period.] – Lithuanian National Radio and Television 28 December 2016. https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/158582/paaiskino-kas-vyko-per-sovietmeti-primenanti-koncerta-ignalinoje, accessed 27 June 2022.
653 Komunikacijos profesorius apie vaidinimą Ignalinoje: sovietmetis nebuvo linksmas ir gražus. [Professor of Communication about the event in Ignalina: The Soviet era was not hilarious and beautiful.] – Alfa.lt 28 December 2016. https://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/50122004/komunikacijos-profesorius-apie-vaidinima-ignalinoje-sovietmetis-nebuvo-linksmas-ir-grazus/?fb_comment_id=1238022082903271_1238804292825050, accessed 27 June 2022.

Lithuanian expats from around the world who do not speak a word of their grandparents' language but are still entitled to feel more Lithuanian than fourth-generation local Russians, Poles or Jews. To conclude, for Anastasia Sosunova, monumental-decorative art and engagement with Soviet heritage is a platform to critique the contemporary reality. By analysing the past, she – like Saadoja, Kuimet, Plink, Saarepuu and Samulionytė - examines alternative social promises and their failures today.[654]

## 4.5    Disappearing, not destroyed murals

According to the preliminary calculations by Darius Pocevičius, a researcher of the Soviet era at Vilnius University, about a thousand works of art were created in the public buildings of Vilnius alone.[655] He believes that at least two or three hundred of them have been completely destroyed. Although he has not examined the entire country, he expects the total list of destroyed works to be up to a thousand. Besides the destroyed works, he has divided the fate of the remaining works into five categories: (1) abandoned but preserved; (2) altered, transformed or fragmented; (3) hidden, covered, but remaining in their original location; (4) dismantled and moved elsewhere; (5) preserved.

In Estonia, the total number of monumental-decorative art pieces produced during the Soviet period was far smaller – I have gathered information on around 400 works, and more than half of them are no longer extant. These numbers are growing. Reeli Kõiv, who has compiled a book on the teaching of mural painting in Estonia, has lamented that during her two-year research project, it became clear on several occasions that destruction could have been avoided if she had got there a couple of years, or sometimes even a couple of months sooner.[656] The situation is similar in Latvia, where I have gathered information of around 100 preserved murals. I estimate that several hundred murals have been destroyed. Besides wall paintings, only a few examples of the era's best architecture have survived.[657] Therefore, original interiors have only been preserved in a few architects' sketches and black and white photographs or exist only 'in some happy territory of memory.'[658]

654 Ieva Astahovska, On Forgetting and Remembering..., p. 117.
655 Gediminas Kajėnas, Nematomas sovietmečio menas... [Invisible Soviet art...]
656 Reeli Kõiv, Monumentaalmaalist EKA-s läbi kolme aastakümne 1962–1955 / Monumental painting at the Estonian Academy of Arts through three decades 1962–1995, pp. 13–14.
657 Juris Dambis, Modernism, p. 267.
658 Ilze Martinsone, Nākotnes ielā / On Future Street, p. 159.

Dario Gamboni writes that most works of art, especially those in public spaces, are generally perceived – if at all – at a shallow degree of attention.[659] Likewise, their destruction is habitually overlooked. However, since they are symbolic artefacts, sometimes their fate matters to society. Monuments and artworks in public space possess what Pierre Bourdieu named symbolic capital – a representational value that affords them cultural meaning and lends their environment a layer of prestige.[660] Once its symbolic capital is deemed illegitimate, public art may be damaged, removed, re-sited or destroyed.[661] In Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the loss of the symbolic capital of Soviet murals has been largely caused by the change in political power and the transition from a socialist economic model to a capitalist free-market economy.

The destruction of art can broadly be divided into two: iconoclasm and vandalism.[662] While iconoclasm implies an intention, sometimes even a doctrine of reasoned destruction, vandalism indicates the absence of a motive. Vandalism also points to public art's fundamental vulnerability, which stems from the unpredictable circumstances of public places, audiences, and duration.[663] In the Baltic states, since the majority of the murals have vanished spontaneously or gradually and without leaving any trace of violent action, it seems problematic to designate it as vandalism. However, when the owner – often a government institution – does not do enough to preserve its property, this suggests being complicit in the vandalism. Such ignorance has, at times, been systematic.

For example, in the 1990s, collectors of non-ferrous metals tried to remove all possible cast-iron details from Soviet-era monuments. The central governments did not take the issue into their own hands and passed the responsibility for preserving monuments onto the shoulders of the municipalities. Not surprisingly, local governments lacked human and financial resources to fight vandalism and natural decay. Such tactical indecisiveness allowed the state authorities to avoid ethical, political or legal considerations in terms of ideologically motivated demolition.[664] Since the governments have not shown good stewardship in keeping their property, the

659 Dario Gamboni, The Destruction of Art, p. 28.
660 Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 114–120.
661 Erika Doss, Guest editor's statement: Thinking about forever. – Public Art Dialogue 2016, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 3.
662 Dario Gamboni, The Destruction of Art, p. 23.
663 Erika Doss, Guest editor's statement…, p. 2.
664 Sergei Kruk, Wars of Statues in Latvia…, p. 706–710.

monuments and murals – reduced to ownerless superfluous stuff – have been demolished for seemingly inevitable natural reasons. Only after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 did the central governments act and, this time, proactively initiated the removal of Soviet monuments in all three countries. In Latvia, the parliament ratified a law by which all monuments – excluding war graves and military graveyards – glorifying Soviet power had to be destroyed by November 2022.[665] Likewise, in June 2022, the Lithuanian parliament drafted a 'desovietisation' law, which proposed the removal of symbols of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes and the information used to promote them from all public places in the country.[666] Even before the law was enforced, several municipalities followed suit and initiated the removal of monuments themselves. The Estonian government began removing Soviet-era war monuments in August 2022.[667]

Russian art historian Petr Radimov has proposed five leading causes for the destruction of Soviet-era public art: (1) natural and climatic circumstances; (2) wear and tear of the material; (3) changed social environment; (4) economic activity of the owner; and (5) the lack of knowledge by the owner.[668] Although sometimes they coincide, in theory, such a model provides a good insight into the causes of the destruction of works of art.

## *Natural and climatic circumstances*

In Nordic climates, murals only survive for a short time outdoors. The same goes for artworks inside buildings that have lost their initial function and stand empty without heating. When a building loses its use and year-round heating, indoor murals are exposed to the same conditions as outdoor works. One example is supergraphics, which, as stated at the time of their creation, would last only a few years and then need to be replaced. For the most part, however, enthusiasm was limited to the first painting; images were left alone. Since then, climatic conditions have worn away the pictures until they have become almost invisible.

665 Oliver Moody, Latvia to tear down hundreds of Soviet monuments. – The Times 1 July 2022. https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/latvia-to-tear-down-hundreds-of-soviet-monuments-kchkx885w, accessed 9 July 2022.
666 Gytis Pankūnas, Lithuania's new 'desovietisation law' – what does it mean? – Lithuanian National Radio and Television 8 June 2022. https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1713721/lithuania-s-new-desovietisation-law-what-does-it-mean, accessed 9 July 2022.
667 Estonia begins removing Soviet-era war monuments. – BBC 16 August 2022. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-62562909, accessed 17 July 2023.
668 Petr Radimov, Проблема уничтожения и повреждения памятников монументального искусства... [The problem of destruction and damage of monuments of monumental art...], pp. 110–112.

Nevertheless, such murals can also be durable – in Rīga, one can even find faded advertising paintings from the pre-war period. As for the 'natural' decay of indoor murals, Latvian artist Jānis Borgs has spoken about his supergraphics which decorated the internal walls of the Sauleskalns Tourist Information Centre canteen[669] (Image 69). When the building was abandoned in the early 1990s it became a ritual for the artist to visit the site every few years to see how nature was taking over the artwork and the whole environment. However, it is clear that before the artwork succumbed to decay, objective decisions were taken which contributed to such an outcome.

*Wear and tear of the material*

Soviet architectural heritage sometimes involves inferior construction quality, which is why private investors are reluctant and incapable of investing in renovation projects as banks prefer not to lend to unrealistic projects.[670] Furthermore, as Soviet consumer goods and finishing materials were 'poor' or 'plain', especially in terms of their textures, design, and technical implementation,[671] it has been especially hard to preserve interiors. Only a few Soviet-era public interiors have survived in Estonia in their original form.[672] Therefore interior architecture has been rightly labelled a 'temporary' or 'vanishing' art form. It is still a widespread perception – and a legal fact in terms of public tenders – that the lifespan of an interior architecture project is only three to five years.[673] The strategic shortening of product lifespans inherent to consumer society likely causes this tendency. Well-planned, thoroughly designed, masterfully built and carefully maintained interiors and furniture can last for decades, if not centuries.

Although wall paintings, which are inextricably linked to architecture, are more enduring than furniture, often, the works of art have been destroyed because they have not matched the new design of the interior. However, the artwork's poor technical quality is often blamed for the destruction. Artists and their technical assistants did not always have access to proper materials and had to use whatever could be obtained. That is why many Soviet-era

669 Jānis Borgs, Conversation on 4 June 2020. Audio recording in the possession of the author.
670 Raili Nugin, Tarmo Pikner, Kõikudes lammutamise ja mälestise vahel… [Between Demolition and Memorial…], p. 29.
671 Keti Chukrov, Practicing the Good: Desire and Boredom in Soviet Socialism. Minneapolis: e-flux and University of Minnesota Press, 2020, p. 76.
672 Triin Ojari, Hargnemised vormis ja ruumis. / Divergences in form and space, p. 161.
673 See Margit Mutso, Mis tehtud? Mis tulemas? [What's done? What's coming up?] – Sirp 14 February 2013; Maria Lee Liivak, Vaiklate ruumiline sünergia. [Spatial synergy of Vaiklas.] – Sisustaja 30 March 2016.

stained-glass windows are now in dire need of a conservator's hand.[674] The fate of kinetic art is especially worrisome as only a handful of such technical experiments have survived. In Latvia's case, where there were more kinetic artworks in the public space than in Estonia and Lithuania combined, only Artūrs Riņķis' *Brooch* on the facade of Hotel Latvija has survived. None of the lumino-kinetic paintings by Jānis Krievs or Valdis Celms have survived in their original locations. The same goes for most of the kinetic works by Estonian artist Kaarel Kurismaa including the well-known *Kinetic Object* which greeted visitors at the Tallinn Post Office (Image 126). The rattling work irritated the staff so much that its sound was soon turned off.[675] In 2002, it was removed from its place and was most probably destroyed. Since then, curators, art historians and conservationists have stood up for Kurismaa's legacy and united in restoring his *Tram-object* – a 1993 life-size monument to the centenary of trams in Tallinn made of brick, concrete and metal and supplemented with a weather vane as a kinaesthetic finishing touch. The work was also listed as a cultural monument.[676]

## Changed social environment

The destruction of monumental-decorative art has been foremost caused by the transformation from the socialist to the capitalist economic mode, which has resulted in the frequent change of ownership of buildings and the conversion of their original function. Often the type of institutions which thrived in the Soviet state (e.g., heavy industry factories, collective farms) found it most difficult to endure and had to retrench in economic distress or go bankrupt. The artworks placed within the property of such firms tended to be destroyed more quickly. As for former factories, finding information about possible works of art is exceedingly difficult because there is little documentation, and it is challenging to track down the people who worked there. To bring just a few examples from Lithuania, Ona Kreivyte-Naruše-vičiene's 15-square-metre ceramic panel disappeared from the Vilnius Vodka Factory (Image 256). In 1975, Bronius Bružas created stained-glass windows for a wood factory in Klaipėda, and these have been destroyed. When the Sparta factory was recently destroyed in Vilnius, a community activist (himself Italian) was able to save a stained-glass window from the building, but all of its murals were destroyed.[677] In Tallinn, Eva Jänes'

674 Linda Lainvoo, Grete Nilp, Sõnum värvilisel klaasil… [Message on coloured glass…], p. 86.
675 Raivo Kelomees, Postmateriaalsus kunstis. [Postmateriality in Art.], p. 145.
676 Urmet Kook, Unikaalne trammimonument võeti kaitse alla. [The unique tram monument was taken under heritage protection.] – ERR 2 November 2020. https://www.err.ee/1153967/unikaalne-trammimonument-voeti-kaitse-alla, accessed 11 July 2022.
677 Gediminas Kajėnas, Nematomas sovietmečio menas… [Invisible Soviet art…]
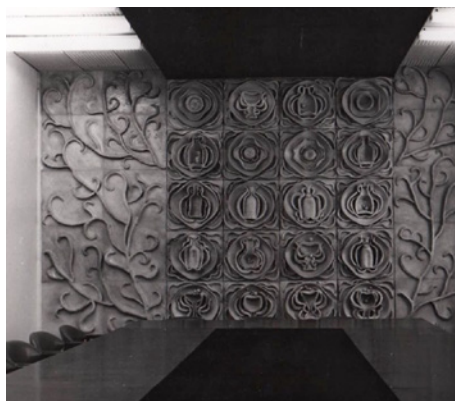
Image 256. **Ona Kreivyte-Naruševičiene, ceramic panel, 1975. Chamotte, 320 × 477. Vilniuaus Degtine Vodka Factory. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Art Lithuania. Undated photo.**



Image 257. **Author unknown (Vladimir Matiiko?), mural painting, 1980–1981. Fresco, approx. 700 × 1500. Volta Factory Culture Club. Destroyed. Tallinn, 47 Tööstuse. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2012.**

listed mural was largely destroyed after the Kalev Chocolate Factory moved out of its premises.[678] More recently, one of the most attractive frescoes in Tallinn which used to decorate the Volta Factory Culture Club (1980–1981) was destroyed when the former club made way for luxury apartments (Image 257).

Another sphere to experience a near total makeover after 1991 was the service sector of cafés, restaurants and shops. By now, Baltic towns have lost nearly all of the original café interiors from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Several 1960s interiors were destroyed in the 1970s and 1980s when they went out of fashion. Canteens located in factories and establishments outside town centres withstood the time pressure better, and economic constraints have forced them to close only in recent years. As several of them were decorated with murals or decorative metalworks, their closure marked the disappearance of decorative artworks in many instances.

In Vilnius, significant works by Teodoras Valaitis have been destroyed in the café Dainava (1963) and restaurants Gintaras (1965), Palanga (1965), Žirmuna (1969) and Šaltinėlis (1974). Silvija Drebickaitė's fresco *Ancient Lithuanians* (1985) in the Bočiai restaurant in Vilnius is also lost (Image 206). Linas Katinas' psychedelic interior decoration of the café Mėtos (Mint) in Vilnius (1976) no longer exists (Image 78). Also in Vilnius, Laimutis Ločeris' 1961 sgraffito work in the former Taurus

678 Gregor Taul, Monumental Painting in Estonia: Notes, p. 122.

Image 258. **Merike Männi, textile decoration, 1976. Hotel Viru night bar. Courtesy of Estonian Centre for Contemporary Art. Undated photo.**
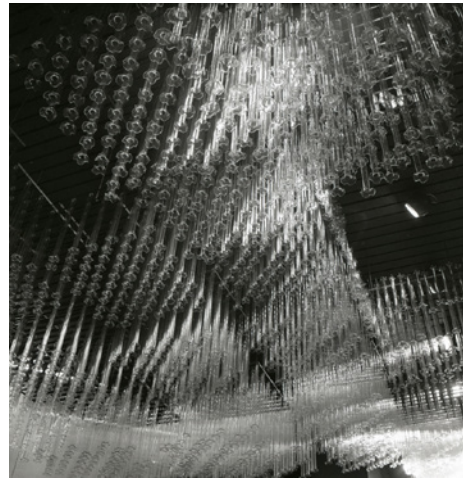


Image 259. **Aet Andresma-Tamm and Mare Soovik-Lobjakas, *Cloud*, 1972. Around 8000 specially produced one-metre-long glass tubes. Hotel Viru restaurant. Tallinn, 4 Viru väljak. The work was dismantled in the early 1990s; most of the glass units were preserved. Courtesy of Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photo from the 1970s. Photo from the 1970s.**

café has been destroyed (Image 9). None of the once popular children's cafés that boasted astounding monumental-decorative art have survived. The 1964 café *Nykštukas* mural by Birutė Žilytė, Laimutis Ločeris and Algirdas Steponavičius (Image 60), a 1973 fresco created by Juozas Vosylius and Vydas Pinkevičius for Klaipėda's children's café Du Daideliai (Two Roosters), Regina Sipavičiūtė's mural at Ziogelis' children's cafe in Panevėžys (1984–1985) and Marija Ladigaite-Vildžiuniene's mural in Šiauliai's children's café Sigute (1966; Image 59) have all disappeared. In Latvia, Edīte Pauls-Vīgnere's textile designs for the Jaunķemeri sanatorium bar with textile fibre bats hanging from the ceiling, was among the last remaining examples of Soviet-era interior design that could still be seen at the beginning of the 21st century.[679] Another architectural highlight with monumental-decorative art, demolished after privatisation, was Jurmala's 1976 Daile entertainment hall.

The economic growth of the late-1990s affected the hospitality industry, with centrally-located hotels and spas oriented towards foreign tourists being quickly remodelled. As soon as Finnish investors bought the

679 Vilnis Vējš, Ārpus rāmjiem / Outside the Frame, p. 187.

Image 260. **Džemma Skulme, mural painting, 1979. Hotel Latvija banquet hall. Destroyed. Courtesy of Ivars Strautmanis. Photo from the 1980s.**

Viru Hotel in Tallinn, exclusive spatial textile works by Merike Männi (Image 258) and the exuberant glass ceiling decoration by Aet Andresma-Tamm and Mare Soovik-Lobjakas (1972) were removed (Image 259). The same happened with the most representative hotels in Rīga, as Valdis Celms' lumino-kinetic object in the night bar (Image 120),

Džemma Skulme's wall painting in the banquet hall (Image 260) and Vera Viduka's tapestry in the conference hall of Hotel Latvija (all 1979) and Avgust Lanin colour and music wall at the restaurant of otel Tūrists (1974; Image 118) were all destroyed. In Vilnius, rapid changes caused the destruction of the remarkable postmodernist bar design of Hotel Astorija by designer Jonas Gerulaitis (1983; Image 194).

Transformation from Soviet socialism to free-market capitalism meant financial hardship for the agricultural sector and entrepreneurs in the countryside who took over the formerly public premises. While on the one hand, the lack of development has helped to safeguard artworks and architectural monuments, on the other hand, bankruptcy or vice-versa rapid growth has caused destruction. For example, the custom-designed *sovkhoz* settlement in Juknaičiai western Lithuania, which once defined a new paradigm in well-planned communal living with outstanding architecture, emotional landscape architecture and attractive examples of monumental-decorative art has fallen into despair.[680] The spatial stained-glass object by Algimantas Stoškus which used to decorate the lobby of the 'spiritual and physical wellness centre' was severely damaged after a fire and is now supposedly in private hands.[681] Another model village called Satkūnai was "once one of the most beautiful in the whole district and now looks like after the war," as one local put it.[682] After the village's culture house was privatised in the 2000s, the new owner sold the stained-glass windows by Steponas Kazimieraitis and got rid of Jadvyga Gervytė-Tvarijonavičienė's tapestry (both 1976). The fate of Vitolis Trušys's mural *Folk Art and Crafts,* which was one of the most extensive frescoes in Lithuania, is unknown.

### The economic activity of the owner

Suppose the owner of a property which includes monumental-decorative art decides to reorganise or even demolish her premises. In that case, preserving architectural art is a costly and time-consuming undertaking. Because murals are almost impossible to sell on the art market, they tend

680 Marija Drėmaitė, Baltic mikroraions and kolkhoz settlements within the Soviet architectural award system. – The Journal of Architecture 2019, Vol. 24, No. 5, p. 670.
681 Monika Kasnikovskytė, Menininkas, ištirpdęs stiklo šaltumą. [The artist who made glass frost.] – Kauno diena 19 September 2013. https://kauno.diena.lt/naujienos/laisvalaikis-ir-kultura/kultura/menininkas-istirpdes-stiklo-saltuma-414521, accessed 13 July 2022.
682 Rita Žadeikytė, Menas neatsilaiko prieš laužtuvą. [Art is defenceless against the crowbar.] – Skrastas.lt 17 May 2010. http://www.krastas.lt/?data=2010-05-17&rub=1065924812&id=1274009301, accessed 1 May 2022.

to be of little or at least disputable monetary value; thus, simple economic calculations result in the loss of the artworks.

Mereranna (Seashore) sanatorium in Narva-Jõesuu in north-east Estonia once boasted an array of impressive artworks. The new owner's business plan has not been successful, and half of the formerly exemplary sanatorium stands empty. Notably, the original murals in the empty part have been preserved, but none have survived in the operational part. Most of the free-standing sculptures and a collection of valued paintings and graphic art have disappeared. The sanatorium was once home to the most significant stained-glass piece in Estonia by Dolores Hoffmann, which is also now lost.[683] Without wanting to cast an ominous shadow on the owner, it can be assumed that the sale of artworks financed the daily expenses related to the maintenance of the hotel. Another sign of the economic rationale is how the owners of apartment buildings all over the Baltics have destroyed murals on their end walls to improve insulation and reduce heating costs.

Several classic murals from the 1960s in Tallinn's Mustamäe and Karjamaa districts have been removed to add up-to-date isolation materials to the walls. The same applies to supergraphics in Rīga and Šiauliai. In one extreme example, the Estonian Ministry of Finance had its outstanding high-rise with a colossal and unique cybernetics-inspired facade composition by Edgard Viies destroyed to be replaced by an inconspicuous concrete-and-glass 'superministry.'[684] Ironically, the kitschy designs of the 1990s, which replaced Soviet-era high-modernist interiors, vanished even quicker and very few examples of that period's interior design, furniture or public paintings survive. Evidence of the rapid transformation is now only available through photographs. Time will tell whether the superministry will have a longer lifespan than the building preceding it.

### *Lack of knowledge by the owners*

Finally, several murals and stained-glass pieces have been destroyed or badly damaged because of plain stupidity or ignorance of basic artistic and architectural heritage procedures. For example, in 2011, renovations started at the Ida-Viru County Vocational Training Centre in Jõhvi in

683 I was able to talk to the property owner while gathering information about the building and staying overnight in 2012. Although the manager was reluctant to show our group some of the remaining architectural artworks, he did offer to sell us Leo Rohlin's mural. (Image 157)
684 Jarmo Kauge, Moemajast superministeeriumini. [From a trendy house to a superministry.] – arhitektuurid.blogspot.com 12 February 2013. http://arhitektuurid.blogspot.com/2013/02/moemajast-superministeeriumini.html, accessed 10 September 2020.

north-east Estonia. The beginning of construction work coincided with the entry into force of the 'percentage art act', which mandated that at least 1% of public building construction budgets be spent on artworks. The first artwork commissioned under the act was Hannes Starkopf's *Cyber-Ant* for the Vocational Training Centre. Ironically, a period-specific 1970s sgraffito work that depicted engineering students wearing bell bottoms and Beatles hairstyles was plastered over during the renovation (Image 139). Since Hannes Starkopf's sculpture was not so successful, the first instance of 'percentage art' instead made the public space poorer, not richer.[685]

In another example from Tallinn, the owners of the Tallinn Olympic Centre in Tallinn seriously defaced a ceramic panel by Leo Rohlin by having it painted green, and without asking the artist's permission.[686] Although the entire complex was placed under heritage protection in 1997 as a unique example of late Soviet architecture, the responsible person must have taken the mural for an ordinary wall. In 2008, probably the only Soviet-era ceiling fresco in Lithuania, Vitolis Trušys' *Orpheus and Prometheus* in the Šiauliai University hall, was accidentally destroyed. A construction company started removing the old roof in late autumn. Before replacing it with a new one, it rained heavily, then snowed and then there was a frost. Within a short time, the fresco deteriorated to such an extent that it was impossible to restore it.[687]

Most recently, many Soviet-era artworks or original interiors by top designers hastily disappeared during the lockdown periods caused by Covid-19. While customers were confined to their homes, the management in some facilities decided to use the time to carry out reconstruction work that had been delayed for years. For example, in Tallinn, one of the last authentic 1980s interiors, that of café Narva, was demolished. Even though the space was not listed and there were no examples of monumental-decorative art, it was still a unique 'time capsule' in the capital.

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I will finish this chapter by reviewing the ideologically motivated destruction of public artworks. The generally negative attitude and

685 Gregor Taul, Eesti monumentaalmaal 1879–2012. [Estonian monumental painting 1879–2012.] – Alina Astrova, Eero Epner, Paul Kuimet, Indrek Sirkel, Gregor Taul (eds.), Konspekteeritud ruum. Eesti monumentaalmaal 1879–2012 [Notes on Space. Estonian Monumental Painting 1879–2012.] Tallinn: Lugemik and Theatre NO99, 2012, p. 99.
686 Gregor Taul, Monumental Painting in Estonia: Notes, p. 125.
687 Algimantas Brikas, Išgelbėta miestelio freska. [The town fresco has been saved.]

Image 261. **Evgeniy Olenin and Eduard Paskhover, mosaic, 1982. Ceramic tiles, approx. 600 × 1400. Kreenholm Textile Mill spinning plant administrative building. Destroyed. Narva, Kreenholm Island. Courtesy of Paul Kuimet. Photo from 2012.**

backward mentality towards the Soviet era automatically devalues objects created during that period as being of lower quality and value or, in short – red. Therefore, baseless vandalism often occurs with a hint of ideologically charged iconoclasm. When the Kreenholm textile plant in Narva went bankrupt in 2010, the entire area was sold to a real estate developer with long-term plans of turning the former factory buildings into a concert hall, shopping mall and apartments. In the first phase of the transformation, Kreenholm island was cleansed of Soviet-era features so that the magnificent red brick tsarist-era buildings would stand out. A facade on one of the Soviet-era production buildings featured a unique mosaic mural depicting three women at work on a textile production line. As the mural was consigned to the Soviet-era edifice, it was demolished along with the rest of the building in 2013 (Image 261).

After the regaining of independence, public monuments were the first to be "defaced, despoiled, removed, re-sited, dismantled, destroyed and/or forgotten" as they were the ones to most "offend, contradict,

Image 262. **Unknown artists, mural, 1987. Secco, approx. 270 × 270. Kihelkonna High School. Destroyed. Courtesy of Reeli Kõiv. Photo from the late 1980s.**



Image 263. **Marija Dūdienė, *State Emblem of the Lithuanian SSR*, 1974. Wool, linen, 374 × 209. Kaunas Wedding Palace. Current state unknown. Courtesy of Daiva Rekertaitė-Načiulienė. Photo from the 1970s.**

violate or challenge the beliefs" of the public.[688] As mentioned earlier, such memory struggles led to wars over monuments in which different memory collectives took to the streets to defend their rights.[689] Compared to monumental sculpture, two-dimensional and indoor works did not cause such disputes. Bronze busts, metal and plaster bas-reliefs, murals and graphics depicting Lenin and other political leaders had already been widely removed during perestroika. Probably most of the ideological images which had decorated meeting rooms and the halls of the authorities were destroyed. However, some of these visuals are occasionally sold as expensive paraphernalia in antique shops.

Portraits of sovereigns commonly run the risk of being discarded or destroyed if the sovereign falls from power – unless it is considered to be too good a picture.[690] For example, in Kihelkonna High School on Saaremaa island, the school-master had commissioned art students to decorate the school's corridors with murals. Despite it already being 1987, they also depicted the infamous side-view of Lenin's head the size of an entire wall (Image 262). Using bright hippie colours and placing Lening

688 Erika Doss, Guest editor's statement…, p. 1.
689 Marek Tamm, Monumentaalne ajalugu…, p. 89.
690 Dario Gamboni, The Destruction of Art, p. 34.

within a geometrical pattern, the image was an ironic gesture worthy of *sots* art sensibility. The director regretted that in the winds of change, Lenin had to be repainted after only a year.[691]

Besides portraits of Lenin, artworks depicting Soviet insignia also came under fire. For example, several Lithuanian wedding palaces had artworks which depicted Soviet state emblems, such as the one in Kaunas by Marija Dūdienė, which was quickly removed (Image 263). Compared to monuments, removing such works did not cause a public uproar and did not bring bad publicity to the owner. Unlike public monuments, tapestries and murals do not leave empty plinths and turbulent squares behind. They gave way to walls and practical solutions, whereas toppled statues become points of convergence for contending visions of national representation, posing the question: What next?[692]

Nevertheless, some murals have indeed caused public uproar. Evald Okas' 1987 secco painting *Friendship of Nations*, initially conceived for the History and Revolution Museum of the Estonian SSR, depicts centrally framed Soviet crests and flags among the apotheosis of the collective spirit (Image 188). Despite its contemptuous content, the museum preserved it as a historical document; from the early 1990s until 2008, the controversial painting was concealed by a curtain. However, at times images emerged in the media in which teachers of Russian-speaking schools had had their pupils lined up for 'ceremonial' photographs in front of the state emblem of the Soviet Union. Just as in the case of the Ignalina Culture House 40th anniversary celebrations, which sparked public outrage, these photographs caused the discharge of the teachers.[693] Both the headmaster and the mayor of Tallinn defended the teachers and argued that it does no one good if such private images are taken out of their original context.[694]

691 Reeli Kõiv, Pannood Kihelkonna koolis Saaremaal. [Panel paintings in Kihelkonnas school in Saaremaa.] – Veebinäitus "Peidus pärand". [Online exhibition *Hidden Heritage*.] https://2021. muinsuskaitsepaevad.ee/exhibitions_post/pannood-kihelkonna-koolis-saaremaal/, accessed 14 July 2022.
692 Myroslava Hartmond, Lenin after the fall. – Niels Ackermann, Sébastien Gobert (eds.), Looking for Lenin. London: FUEL Design and Publishing, 2017, p. 11.
693 Tiina Kaukvere, Täismahus: Okase punapannoo läheb taas kardina taha. [Full story: Okas' red mural goes behind the curtain again.] – Postimees 24 November 2014. https://www. postimees.ee/2999349/taismahus-okase-punapannoo-laheb-taas-kardina-taha, accessed 14 July 2022.
694 Marek Kuul, Tallinna linn ei näe põhjust Linnamäe Vene Lütseumi direktori ametist vabastamiseks. [The city of Tallinn sees no reason to dismiss the director of Linnamäe Russian Lyceum.] – ERR 24 November 2014. https://www.err.ee/524804/tallinna-linn-ei-nae-pohjust-linnamae-vene-lutseumi-direktori-ametist-vabastamiseks, accessed 14 July 2022.

Not all Soviet murals must be preserved at all costs. It is a deeply rooted Western modernist idea that the degradation of cultural artefacts is to be understood in a purely negative vein, as the erosion of physical integrity is associated with a loss of cultural information.[695] Cultural amnesia does not necessarily follow from material erasure, and absence may paradoxically facilitate the persistence of memory and significance. As seen in the examples presented in this chapter, the 'procreative power of decay', which stimulates contemplation through material and bodily responses of repugnance and attraction, can activate and unite communities.[696] Therefore, the after-life of monumental-decorative art has been both a story of destruction and disposal and preservation and persistence, all of which has generated formative social effects.

695 Caitlin DeSilvey, Observed Decay: Telling Stories with Mutable Things. – Journal of Material Culture 2006, Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 318.
696 Ibid., p. 324.

# Conclusion

At the core of Leninist monumental propaganda lay the need to educate the largely illiterate and politically ignorant masses of the 1920s. In the 1930s, monumental art in the Soviet Union came to serve the political propaganda and totalitarian rule of Jossif Stalin. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were incorporated into the Soviet Union, while socialist realist monumentalism transformed cityscapes into monumental artworks with majestic boulevards, ornamented high-rises and spectacular monuments. The subject matter of Stalinist era murals was determined by Red Army heroics, with the 'liberation' of the Baltic countries leading the way. Artists and cultural workers had to quickly adapt to Stalinist governance and the socialist realist canon. Although the visual language of monumental painting in the 1930s had been moderately realistic and formally even similar to the traditionalism of the 1940s, cardinal changes took place in the content matter of murals. In general, Stalinist monumentalism had a short-lived effect in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as only a handful of majestic edifices were erected before the Thaw took hold.

The late 1950s signified a Moscow-lead abandoning of Stalinist flamboyant monumentalism and led to the extensive erection of mass-produced prefabricated residential blocks to ease the lack of living spaces. The authorities sought to solve the anonymity of the prefabricated houses by adding decorative images that emitted optimistic messages of the new decade: space exploration, scientific research, youth culture, and the struggle against Western imperialism. The architecture and design of the 1960s proclaimed the simplicity of geometric forms as the primary aesthetic criterion. By the mid-1960s, people in the Baltic states had adopted the new political and economic system. Several artists and architects subscribed to the idea of a promising mass utopia, communicated through experimental public art. Artists extensively investigated new methods and materials for producing significant interior and exterior spaces.

Against a background of rationalised construction activity and industrial housing construction, the synthesis of the arts assumed an important role, which envisioned the combination of 'mute' architecture and 'speaking' visual art to promote the creation and development of a new socialist public space. From then on, professionals and policymakers constantly discussed the theoretical and practical aspects of the synthesis of the arts. While the synthesis of the arts was both a goal and a means in the service of socialist modernisation, monumental-decorative art was a general name for the artistic techniques used for this purpose. If the synthesis of the arts

was an aspiration, monumental decorative art was a toolbox. Therefore, these concepts were not synonymous because only a few works reached the idealistic level of a synthesis of the arts.

The 1970s marked a period of artisanal professionalisation for monumental art, with a large amount of production accompanied by critical engagement in publications and conferences. In Lithuania, monumental-decorative art developed into a point of national pride, with artworks commissioned for almost all new public buildings. Furthermore, renowned artists worked elsewhere in the Soviet Union and even outside the Soviet Union. In contrast, in Estonia, muralists distanced themselves from the more critical art life, being formal and decorative and of less importance in the general development of artistic culture. In Latvia, the situation was paradoxically the opposite – monumental-decorative art, for which ideological control was less rigid than for gallery art, was a platform used for technical and conceptual innovations in contemporary art, for example, by initiating developments in installation art.

While the debates about the synthesis of the arts were authentic until the 1970s, from then on, one could notice a certain weariness or doubt. As was typical of the Soviet regime, the shift in interest among practitioners and theorists did not mean that changes would occur in policies. Instead, the opposite happened as the production of monumental-decorative art in the 1980s grew exponentially. In such a situation, a voluminous art trend developed into a multifaceted cultural phenomenon in which the fundamental issues of visual art, design and architecture were mixed with everyday life under socialism.

Monumental-decorative art was such a ubiquitous background for daily life that many probably did not notice these images around them. Nevertheless, the images contributed to the making of the socialist space. They helped to visualise the future that socialist modernisation was to lead Soviet citizens into. Even if by the 1970s, many people in the Baltics viewed these promises with irony or reluctance, it cannot be denied that the changes were visible to the eye. Despite the widespread cliché that the Soviet Union collapsed due to its stagnant economy, until the mid-1970s, economic growth was unchanging, resulting in rising incomes, increasing urbanisation, and the emergence of the Soviet version of a consumer society. One of the stereotypes regarding stagnation is the assumption that the planned economy lacked internal dynamics and that the system was divided into rigid components that cared little about the other constituents.

However, the rapidly changing and complex society with different interest groups, the increasingly educated and urbanised population, the rising living standards, significant improvements in the construction of residential buildings , and the relatively successful co-opting of intellectual elites into decision-making created spectacular creativity in the arts.

This period entailed the state negotiating its political directions to the extent that ideological expectations of unrestrained engagement with the socialist mission were replaced by the pragmatic understanding that artists should evade sensitive matters and aesthetic excesses in work destined for public display.[697] They had to find a midpoint in the artistic economy to pursue their careers. In the monumental-decorative art of the 1970s and early 1980s , public commissions formed an integral part of the modus vivendi of several artists whose studio practice was otherwise far from the doctrinal expectations. As such, monumental-decorative art is a captivating research topic because these images, on the one hand, combined the declarative catchphrases of the authorities and, on the other hand, signified individual artistic aspirations and collective efforts towards independence among Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian artists.

However contradictory these aspirations were, in a performative sense, they both helped to normalise and legitimise Soviet rule. One example is national culture and the depiction of history, myths and landscapes. Since the emphasis on national characteristics and the slogan 'national in form, socialist in content' was one of the ideological cornerstones of the Soviet Union, national themes were one of the most common notions in public art. There were some taboos, such as the use of specific historical events or pre-war flag colours. However, the art circles were willing to read between the lines, and artists enjoyed adding hidden subtexts to their work. Although monumental-decorative art was generally a cultural format that was faithful to the authorities, there were ways in which it was also turned into a critical art practice.

One reason monumental-decorative art supported artistic freedom was that Soviet censorship traditionally paid more attention to painting, graphics, and sculpture exhibited in galleries. Those active in monumental-decorative art, which originated equally from monumentalism and decorative art, could argue that just as applied art had historically been non-figurative, so could architectural art operate with abstract images. Especially in the

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697 Maja, Fowkes, Reuben Fowkes, Central and Eastern European Art Since 1950, p. 372.

1960s, this meant that abstract and other modernist formal experiments unseen in gallery exhibitions found an outlet in public spaces. For similar reasons, monumental-decorative art also offered an opportunity for kinetic art, which, as an independent artistic phenomenon, only sometimes had a place in exhibition halls. In Latvia, this trend became an art movement in its own right. Several artists were guided by the example of the Russian constructivists – or Latvian-born 'Russian constructivists' – of the early 20th century and implemented their ideas as extensive installations.

Artists, designers and architects enraged by the environmental damage caused by Soviet rule aimed to improve the quality of the public space. They were not satisfied with the existing urban space and offered alternatives. Criticisms concerned the homogenous urban space, industrial pollution, destruction of nature, and forgetting traditional ways of life. In the 1980s, resistance to Soviet rule among artists was further stimulated by Sovietisation and Russification. The desire among artists, designers and architects to contribute to the improvement of the public space was related to the environmental criticism typical of the era. The intellectual elite were not satisfied with the wasteful and polluting industry of the Soviet power or the neglected urban space and tried to offer alternatives. Criticism by artists was also directed against the destruction of nature and the forgetting of traditional (national) landscapes and ways of life. In a way, monumental-decorative art was one of the few platforms that allowed for a quick intervention and a wide audience.

By the end of the Soviet period monumental-decorative art had become such a large-scale and widespread visual cultural phenomenon that making generalisations about the content of these works is somewhat unjustifiable. There were both critical and pro-Soviet works, but in many ways, monumental-decorative art had evolved into an independent hypertrophied aesthetic phenomenon, which, in the absence of other means, patrons used to flatter themselves and promote their public image. Against this background, it is unsurprising that monumental-decorative art also acquired fictitious functions typical of the so-called Potemkin village. As the Moscow Olympics approached, monumental murals covering the end walls of entire houses were used to hide infrastructural imperfections. Such developments mainly concerned Tallinn and Rīga. At the same time, the universities of Vilnius and Tartu celebrated anniversaries, which meant extensive commissions for public art. Even though in the 1980s, magnificent construction projects were started in many parts of the Baltics, which also meant work for artists, from the middle of the

decade, construction activity in many places stalled. On the one hand, the reason was the stagnant economy and problems in obtaining construction materials. On the other hand, many projects were revised for social and ideological reasons after Gorbachev came to power.

If, in the visual culture of the 1970s and early 1980s, national feelings set the tone as a subtext in art, by the mid-1980s they acquired a powerful position in the cultural sphere. State institutions, who used to spend a large part of their budgets on propaganda, now hurried to use this money for other purposes. In Tallinn, such a tendency led to the widespread use of supergraphics. The traditional tools of monumental-decorative art were no longer in the service of the synthesis of arts or the creation of a socialist common space, as they fulfilled completely new or even contrary roles to their original purposes. For example, mural paintings funded by the municipality were used to advertise the first private companies, and ironically, the artists travelled to the USA to gather inspiration with the money they earned from these commissions.

Although at the end of the 1980s, a few commissioned works oozing with Soviet ideology were also completed, such as Evald Okas' wall painting in the Estonian History Museum, in general, a fundamental shift had taken place in society by that time. In 1988, when the Soviet Union celebrated the 70th anniversary of Lenin's plan for monumental propaganda, artists and architects in Leningrad and Moscow lamented the dispersal of synthesis and criticised monumental art for degenerating into decorative art. Their colleagues in the Baltics paid little attention to the festivities and instead delved into the substantive issues of ethnographic and postmodernist approaches. Eventually, the death of monumentalism passed almost unnoticed. From the mid-1980s onwards, authority over monumental art and visuals in the public space shifted from the officials to the public. Representatives of different subcultures were eager to fill urban and interior walls with the names of their favourite bands and other subcultural messages. Graffiti, which until then had been confined to punk circles and sub-cultural latrinalia, took to the streets, first as decorative and political messages and then as an independent aesthetic practice. By 1989, the single-party power hierarchy had fractured, so competing publics began vigorously re-marking the shared space by removing monuments and erecting new ones. In those years, a large part of Soviet monumental and visual culture, which shamelessly highlighted the imperialist and military foundations of communist ideology, was destroyed.

After the Baltic states regained independence, the processes that had started earlier continued in the afterlife of Soviet monumentalia. After regaining independence, Baltic artists sought new experimental and ephemeral ways of self expression. However, the newly formed liberal states did not distance themselves from traditional monumental undertakings, as political credit was gained by removing Soviet-era ideological monuments and re-installing pre-war statues that the Soviets had destroyed. During the monumental restitution, the authorities hastily removed the most controversial ideological symbols from urban and interior spaces. Thousands of works of art passed into the possession of new owners as part of the economic restructuring, ending up in a difficult situation where their preservation depended on many unpredictable occurrences. However, unlike monumental sculptures, monumental-decorative art fared somewhat better. Only some works were destroyed directly for ideological reasons, and most were domesticated or forgotten. Most destroyed works could be considered victims of the free market as they were removed due to their owners' economic activities. The term monumental-decorative art itself fell into oblivion. The fate of these images only resurfaced during the early 2010s, when a generation of artists and researchers born in the late 1980s but with little personal memories of the Soviet occupation came of age. Furthermore, the time was ripe for the older generations to look back at the Soviet reality from adequate temporal and spatial distance.

The Baltic states have been reusing and rethinking the Soviet spatial heritage for over 30 years. Since more than half of the people of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania live and work in Soviet-era buildings, the Soviet-era built heritage is a 'lived space' in which everyday activities collide with complex memories, hopes and dreams. In a tense situation, some symbolic buildings or works of art have become scapegoats and objects of public unrest on which members of society project collective fears. On the other hand, some structures have acquired the opposite meaning, signifying optimistic cooperation as opposed to the dictates of fast-paced capitalism. Although in the 2010s, it may have seemed that Baltic societies had overcome their post-Soviet traumas and made peace with previous injustices, the hard feelings were reactivated after the full-scale war was launched in Ukraine. Soviet-era monumentality reemerged as a hotly debated issue. On the other hand, several buildings and works of art from the Soviet era have acquired the opposite meaning, signifying a nostalgic, positive and constructive attitude towards historical memory. In this case, the Soviet legacy appears to be a dignified collective effort as opposed to the tiresome dictates of fast-paced capitalism where everything is for sale.

# Kokkuvõte

# Sekeldused monumentaalsusega. Monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst hilisnõukogude Eestis, Lätis ja Leedus

*Taust*

2011. aastal tellis teater NO99 maalikunstnik Tõnis Saadojalt oma fuajeesse laemaali. Enne maalima asumist otsis kunstnik näiteid kohalikest monumentaalmaalidest, eeldades et nõukogude ajal oli monumentaalmaale palju, kuid kunstiajalooalases kirjanduses leidus nende kohta vähe viiteid. Kunagi laialt levinud ja riiklikult heldelt toetatud žanr näis olevat ajaloomälust kadunud. Saadoja leidis, et tema teos võiks initsieerida unustatud pärandi taasaktiveerimise ning nii sündis mõte anda välja raamat Eesti monumentaalmaalidest. Lahkasin toona kunstiteaduse ja visuaalkultuuri magistritudengina monumentide temaatikat, mistõttu uuriti, kas mind võiks huvitada ka n-ö kahedimensiooniliste monumentide uurimine. Teater NO99 soov tegeleda mineviku mõtestamisega ja kunstniku kriitiline positsioon mälu ja pärandi mõtestamisel lõid ahvatleva raami 20. sajandi visuaalsest ja materiaalsest kultuurist kirjutamiseks. Nii nagu Saadoja lähenes oma ülesandele interdistsiplinaarse kunstnik-ajaloolase ja kunstnik-etnograafina, püüdsin tõlgendada ka hilisnõukogudeaegseid teoseid. Järgnevate aastate jooksul olen selle teema uurimist jätkanud nii kriitiku, kuraatori, vahendaja, kunstniku kui ka uurija positsioonilt.

Esimest korda hakkasin Eesti seinamaalide kohta teavet koguma 2012. aasta kevadel. Esmase uurimistöö järel kogunes infot 300 seinamaali kohta. Samal suvel sõitsime fotograaf Paul Kuimetiga mööda Eestit ringi ja leidsime, et umbes pooled nendest olid säilinud. Umbes 120 neist õnnestus meil ka pildistada. Koos Kuimeti, Saadoja ning kirjastaja ja graafilise disaineri Indrek Sirkeliga valisime välja 100 teost raamatusse „Konspekteeritud ruum. Eesti monumentaalmaal 1879–2012". Väljaanne ei pürginud kunstiajalooliseks ülevaateks, vaid toimis pigem kontseptuaalse kataloogi ja kunstnikuraamatuna. Kuna raamatu ilmumine langes aega, mil avalik ruum ja kunst pälvisid üle maailma palju tähelepanu ning et Eestis jõustus nn protsendikunstiseadus, siis keskendusin oma tekstides sellele, mida õppida perioodist, mil see oli ühiskondlikult toetatud kunstivorm.

See trükis peegeldas huvialade nihkumist Ida-Euroopa uurijate seas. Kui varem olid kunstiteadlaste tähelepanu keskmes olnud pigem (neo) avangardsed arengud, siis nüüd koondus tähelepanu igapäevaelule ja ametlikule kultuurielule. Raamatu ilmumine langes kokku ka sotsialismi-

ajastu arhitektuuri vahendamisega nii akadeemilises kui populaarteaduslikus formaadis. 2010. aastate alguses kasvas plahvatuslikult kohvilauaraamatute hulk, mis tutvustasid Ida-Euroopat kui „uskumatult laheda hävinemas nõukogude arhitektuuriga" eksootilist reisisihtkohta. Vladimir Kulići sõnul viitasid sellised eksotiseerivad tõlgendused külma sõja aegsete stereotüüpide püsimisele, kahandades arhitektuuri autoritaarse poliitika lihtsakoeliseks peegelduseks. Seejärel on jõuliselt kasvanud põhjalikumate uurimuste arv, milles analüüsitakse, kuidas kunst ja arhitektuur mõjutasid sotsialistliku ruumi kujunemist. Niisamuti on ka minu doktoritöö eesmärk uurida, kuidas avalik kunst ühelt poolt representeeris ja teisalt tootis ruumikultuuri hilisnõukogude perioodil. Eesti kõrval pööran võrdset tähelepanu Läti ja Leedu kunstile ning esitan seeläbi rahvusülese kunstiajaloo.

## *Terminoloogiline raamistik*

Mõiste monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst pärineb sõdadevahelisest perioodist. Kunstidiskursuses sai see üldlevinuks nn sulaajal – täpsemalt pärast NSVL Arhitektide Liidu II kongressi 1955. aastal, kui Nikita Hruštšov taunis Stalini-aegse neoklassitsistliku arhitektuuri liialdusi ja sillutas tee tööstuslikult toodetud kortermajade ehitamisele. Mikrorajoonide mehhaniseeritud rajamise käigus töötasid nõukogude linnaplaneerijad ja arhitektid välja metoodika kunstide sünteesiks uutesse linnaosadesse: tüüpprojektiga korterhooned lõid fooni, mille taustal paistsid silma ainulaadsema arhitektuuriga avalikud hooned. Neid märgilisi hooneid ilmestas kunstide süntees, mis esines monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti vormis. Hilisnõukogude kunstide süntees väärtustas võrdselt seinamaali, keraamikat, tekstiili, vitraaži ja metallitööd.

Mõiste ise oli omane nõukogude filosoofilisele diskursusele, viidates dialektilisele suhtele: kui termin „monumentaalne" viitas teoste suurusele ja avalikule funktsioonile, siis sõna „dekoratiivne" rõhutas, et seda tüüpi kunst vastandub individualistlikule esteetikale ja turumajanduslikule galeriikunstile, millele heideti ette snobismi. Venekeelses kunstiteoorias kasutati kujutava kunsti põhiliikide maali, graafika ja skulptuuri kirjeldamiseks terminit станковое искусство (otsetõlkes molbertikunst), mis viitas seisukohale, et sellised kunstiteosed on iseseisvad ja neil ei ole otsest dekoratiivset ega utilitaarset eesmärki. Nõukogude kunstiteoreetikud defineerisid molbertikunsti monumentaalkunsti antiteesina juba 1920. aastatel. Kui maali, graafikat ja skulptuuri sai teisaldada, eksponeerida, müüa, tsenseerida, ära visata, peita, kahjustada või hävitada, siis monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst pidi püsima ühes kohas ja kandma püsivat sõnumit.

Monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst kehastas teatud määral riigivõimu autoritaarset positsiooni, olles seotud tippametnikega, kellel oli voli tegelikkust semiotiseerida. Teisalt pakkus monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst võimaluse kunstnikele ka ideoloogilistest sõnumitest distantseeruda ning keskenduda esteetilistele ja arhitektuursetele detailidele. Mitmed sel alal tegutsenud kunstnikud olid seotud kunstivälja kriitilisemate praktikutega ning mõnel kunstnikul õnnestus oma monumentaalteostes edastada otseselt võimukriitilisi sõnumeid. Enamasti aga olid hoopis tellimustega seotud ametnikud need, kellel õnnestus kunst otsestest ideoloogilistest nõudmistest vabastada ja anda kunstnike kasutada monumentaalkunsti laialdased võimalused. Seega oli piir ametliku poliitika ning mõnevõrra transgressiivse kunstikultuuri vahel kohati üsna hägune.

Tänapäeval mõjub nõukogude kantseliiti meenutav monumentaal-deko-ratiivkunsti termin lohisevana. Nüüdiskunsti diskursuses seda terminit praktiliselt ei kasutata. Ka enamik kunstiajaloolasi on selle fraasi kasutamisest hoidunud, eelistades väljendeid „kunstide süntees", „monu-mentaalmaal" või kõige levinumat angloameerika mõistet „avalik kunst" (public art). Oma töös olen otsustanud esile tõsta monumentaal-dekoratiiv-kunsti termini, sest see seob teemat tugevamalt nõukogude diskursusega, kuid loodetavasti võimestab ka nende kümnete autorite töid, kes sel teemal aastakümnete jooksul kirjutanud on. Kõneldes monumentaal-de-koratiivkunstist, raamistan ma oma uurimisobjekti järgmiste põhiliste parameetritega. Neid teoseid iseloomustas (1) sotsialistliku ruumi loomise ja dekoreerimise ambitsioon, (2) kujutava kunsti tihe seos arhitektuuriga; (3) ametliku tellija olemasolu; ja (4) püüdlus monumentaalsuse poole.

### *Monumentaalsus*

Laiemas plaanis tähistab monumentaalsus rahvusriigi ajaloo ja identiteedi representeerimist avalikus ruumis. Arhitektuuris viitab monumentalism riiklikult tellitud ehitistele, mille eesmärk on muuhulgas rahva suurejooneline ülistamine. Monumendid on enamasti suuremahulised, kuna nad ei tohi mingil juhul jääda tähelepanuta. Monumentaalsus on seega ka tunnetuslik kategooria, mis seostub oma tähtsuse pealesurumi-sega. Monumentaalsed paigad organiseerivad inimeste käitumist ning loovad tähendusliku tausta inimeste igapäevastele tegemistele. Ühelt poolt on monumendid kõige argisemate tegevuste, teisalt aga kõige pidulikumate sündmuste toimumiskohas ning seetõttu väärtuslikud uurimisobjektid ühiskondliku elu vaatlemisel.

Saksa kunstiteadlane ja slavist Hans Günther on välja toonud viis totalitaarsete ideoloogiate esteetika põhitunnust: klassitsism, folklorism, kangelaslikkus, monumentaalsus ja superrealism. Monumentaalsus oli nõukogude ideoloogia ja esteetika üks põhiomadusi. Läbi ajaloo on impeeriumid sidunud monumentaalsust ka oma ajastu silmapaistvusega. See tähendas, et Nõukogude Liidu elanikel oli „privileeg" elada ajal, mil kogu ühiskond püüdles suure kommunistliku eesmärgi poole. Ehkki monumentalism väljendub ennekõike arhitektuuris, siis väga autoritaarsetes ühiskondades laieneb monumentaalsuse iha kõikidele eluvaldkondadele. Nõukogude monumentalism demonstreeris sotsialismi ülimuslikkust ja selle väidetavat kollektiivset rikkust, õitsengut ja elurõõmu nii kirjanduses, filmis, muusikas kui teistes valdkondades. Monumentalism oli ka hilisnõukogude monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti juhtmotiiv.

Kuigi monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst ei olnud sünonüümne monumentalistikaga, esines neis palju sarnasusi. Nii monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti teoseid kui monumente iseloomustas üleelusuurune maht ja suunitlus väljuda oma ajast ja ruumist. Mõlemat tüüpi teosed olid tavaliselt valmistatud kallitest ja püsivatest materjalidest ning nende tegemine võttis palju aega. Mis puudutab nende sotsiaalset positsiooni, siis olid mõlemad mitteärilised ja isegi hindamatud, kuna paljud neist kuulutati kohe pärast valmimist kultuurimälestisteks. Kunstilises mõttes on nad sageli anonüümsed, kuna nende autoreid tihti ei tuntud. Nii nagu mälestusmärkide puhul, oli ka monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti puhul omane nende „sisse ja- väljalülitamine", sest need aktiveerusid ametlike sündmuste ajal (tähtpäevade tähistamine kunstiteose taustal jms), kuid suurema osa ajast olid need unustatud ja märkamatud. Oma esteetilistest omadustest hoolimata olid monumentaalmaalid sarnaselt monumentidega siiski erinevate bürokraatlike komisjonide mõnevõrra kroonuliku töö tulemiteks, kehtestades frontaalset ja hierarhilist suhestumist. Kuid sellistel teostel oli ka inimesi ja kogukondasid organiseeriv ja liitev jõud. Shanken kasutab monumentide kui urbanistlike kentsakuste kirjeldamiseks Henri Lefebvre'i terminit bizarrerie (pr k veidrus). Lefebvre'il tähistas bizarrerie igasugust vaimu turgutamist ja fantaasia aktiveerimit läbi riskivabade kogemuste. Suurt osa monumentaal-dekoratiivkunstist võiks tagantjärele samuti kirjeldada kunstiliste iseärasustena.

Mis puudutab erinevusi, siis monumendid keskenduvad tihti kaotusele, surmale ja õnnetustele, samas kui monumentaal-dekoratiivkunstist kiirgub positiivseid, ühendavaid ja meeliülendavaid emotsioone. Monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti teosed on harva ühiskonda lõhestavad, kuid monumendid

muutuvad sageli paikadeks, kus erinevad mälukogukonnad võitlevad aja-
loosündmuste tähenduste pärast. Erinevalt eemaldatud monumentidest ei
tule monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti taiesed ühiskonda tagasi „kummitama“.

*Sotsialistlik ruum*

Ajaloolane Moshe Lewin on väitnud, et Nõukogude Liidu ja ideoloogiate
nagu marksism, sotsialism või kommunism vahele ei tohiks tõmmata
võrdusmärki, kuna tegelikkuse ja ideaalide vaheline kattuvus oli
minimaalne. Nende kolme sõna asemel soovitab Lewin kasutada mõistet
„nõukogude“, mis viitab otseselt küla- ja linnanõukogudele (совет), mis
valitsesid nii kohalikul kui riiklikul tasandil. Laiemas mõttes tähistab sõna
„nõukogude“ majandusmudelit, mis põhines eraomandi ja äritulu krimina-
liseerimisel ning fetišeeritud tarbimise kaotamisel. Majandussuhete aluseks
olid ühishüved.

„Hilisnõukogude“ on mõiste, mida kasutatakse Nõukogude Liidu ja
selle Kesk- ja Ida-Euroopa satelliitriikide poststalinistlike ühiskondade
kirjeldamisel. See tähistab üleminekut totalitaarselt diktatuurilt leebemale
autoritaarsele süsteemile, kus kunstnikel tuli arvestada peamiselt
majanduslike ja igapäevaelu praktilisi aspekte mõjutava poliitilise survega.
Minu lõputöö järgib hilisnõukogude perioodi kõige levinumat periodisee-
rimist, see tähendab aega Hruštšovi võimuletulekust Nõukogude Liidu
lagunemiseni. Doktoritöö varasemas faasis töötasin ka peatükiga, mis
vaatas ajas kaugemale: esiteks selgitas see monumentaalmaali kujunemist
Balti riikides 20. sajandi alguses ja üleminekut sotsialistlikule realismile,
kuid lisaks analüüsisin selles Nõukogude Liidu sõdadevahelise perioodi
monumentaalpropagandat ning kirjeldasin, kuidas Lenini ja Anatoli
Lunatšarski ideed aitasid kujundada hilisnõukogude monumentaalkunsti.
Kirjutamise käigus sai aga selgeks, et see muudaks doktoritöö veelgi
mahukamaks ning piirdusin hilisnõukogude perioodiga.

Mis puutub mõistesse „kommunism“, siis sellega tähistati eesmärki,
mille järgi Nõukogude Liit püüdles klassideta ühiskonna suunas. Ka
Kommunistlik Partei nimetati selle unistuse järgi. Seega vihjab mõiste
ühelt poolt marksismi-leninismi kanoonilistele seisukohtadele, kuid teiselt
poolt struktuursele kollektivismile, mis mõjutas igapäevaselt miljonite
inimeste käitumist. Sotsialism seevastu osutas vahepealsele ühiskondlikule
seisukorrale, mis pidi lõpuks viima kommunismini. Dissonants tegeliku
igapäevase sotsialistliku elu ja kõikehõlmava kommunistliku utoopia vahel
tingis vastuolulise reaalsuskogemuse. Nii võimud kui kodanikud tegutsesid

päev-päevalt sotsialistliku ruumi loomise ja kommunistliku visuaalkul-
tuuri tootmisega, mida samal ajal murendas ja teatud määral isegi tühistas
nõukogulik igapäevaelu.

Kuigi mõned kommunistlikku ideaali esindavad visuaalid ja temaatilised
põhitõed kuulusid monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti põhitööriistakasti, siis
see, kuidas kunstnike, disainerite ja arhitektide käe all sotsialistlik ruum
tegelikus elus vormus, sõltus paljudest juhtustest. „Jäika" üheparteisüs-
teemi iseloomustas spontaansus ja stiihilisus. Foucault'likust vaatepunktist
võib öelda, et sotsialistlikku ruumi loodi ajas ja ruumis hajutatult ning
selleks kasutati nii visuaalseid kui tekstilisi sõnumeid, milles väljendusid
süsteemile omased paradoksid. Foucault' järgi ei ole võim kunagi
täpselt lokaliseeritav ning seda ei saa omada ega vahetada kui kaupa.
Võimu teostatakse võrgustunud suhete süsteemis, milles üksikisikud on
samaaegselt nii võimu kandjad kui selle teostajad. Seega võib öelda, et
ka sotsialistliku ruumi loomisel oli oluline agentsus nii poliitilise võimu
esindajatel, kunstnikel kui ka tavainimestel. Sotsialistlik ruum oli kõikjal
mitte sellepärast, et see hõlmas kõike, vaid sellepärast, et see tuli kõikjalt.

*Ametlik-avalik ja privaat-avalik sfäär*

Nõukogude Liidust kõneledes ei piisa traditsioonilisest privaatse ja avaliku
dihhotoomiast, sest seal ei olnud ruumi autonoomseks avalikuks sfääriks.
Ajaloolased Ingrid Oswald ja Viktor Voronkov on pakkunud välja kolmese
mudeli ühiskondliku elu käsitlemiseks hilisnõukogude kontekstis. Esiteks
riiklik ehk ametlik-avalik sfäär, mis püüdis küll ainuvastutada kõige ja kõigi
eest, kuid oli üha vähem suuteline rahuldama ka kõige elementaarsemaid
vajadusi. Ametlik-avaliku kõrval toimis paralleelselt privaat-avalik sektor,
mis täitis laias laastus Jürgen Habermasi poolt defineeritud avaliku sfääri
funktsioone. Privaat-avalik sfäär ei püüdnud ennast kehtestada ametlik-ava-
likus sfääris. Selle asemel piirduti perekondlike, sõpruskondlike ja subkul-
tuuriliste (pool)privaatsete ruumidega, mille kurikuulsateks näideteks olid
kultuuriinimesi koondanud ühisköögid ja kunstnike ateljeed. Ühiskondliku
elu kolmandaks alaks oli Oswaldi ja Voronkovi sõnul privaatsfäär, mis oli
tihedalt seotud privaat-avaliku sfääriga, kuid puudutas rohkem isikliku elu ja
pereelu intiimsemat tasandit.

Aeg-ajalt leidis privaat-avalik sfäär füüsilise väljenduse ka ametlik-ava-
likus sfääris. Kusjuures riigivõim ise initsieeris sellisid vahealasid nagu
kohvikud, noorteorganisatsioonid või uurimisinstituudid. Need üleminekut-
soonid toimisid suhteliselt vabadena nii kaua, kuni need ei pürginud toimima

ametlik-avaliku sfäärina. Riik võimaldas selliseid kõrvalekaldeid, kuna need mängisid ühiskonnas suhteliselt perifeerset rolli. Monumentaal-dekoratiiv-kunstil oli selles kontekstis kahetine roll. Ühest küljest rahastas ja haldas tellimuskunsti riigivõim ja seeläbi sätestas see ametlik-avalikku ruumi. Teisest küljest läbis kunsti tellimise protseduur ühiskondliku elu erinevaid kihistusi (ateljeed, töökojad, mitteametlikud kohtumised tellijate, kunstnike, arhitektide, komisjoniliikmete ja teiste osapoolte vahel jms) ning kuulus seetõttu nii ametlik-avalikku kui privaat-avalikku sfääri.

### *Kunstiajaloo ja visuaalkultuuri vahel*

Töö seob kunstiajaloo meetodeid visuaalkultuuri kontseptuaalse tööriistakas-tiga. Need erialad täiendavad üksteist, kuid neil on ka ühiseid lähenemisviise nagu ikonograafia, historiograafia või semiootika. Ehkki traditsiooniliselt on kunstiajaloolist lähenemist raaminud kultuurilised, sotsiaalsed, poliitilised või geograafilised piirid, siis viimaste aastakümnete jooksul on soositud üha enam rahvus- ja valdkonnaüleseid käsitlusi. Monumentaal-dekora-tiivkunsti ajalugu kirjutades kasutan kunstiajaloole omaseid põhilisi jutus-tamisviise nagu põhjuslikkus, kunstiteose sidumine ajaloosündmuste ja sotsiaalsete muutustega, käsitlused kunstikriitikas, teoste positsioon teiste taieste suhtes või kunsti esteetiline väärtus. Distsipliinina, millel on tugev modernistlik vundament, peegeldab kunstiajalugu sageli seda, kuidas muutused uskumustes, hoiakutes, mentaliteedis või ideoloogiates kajastuvad vormilistes teisendustes. Sellist lähenemist kasutan ka mina oma argumen-tatsioonis. Mõned domineerivad kunstiajalood on rõhutanud narratiive, mis põhinevad katkestustel ja hüpetel ühest ajastust või stiilist teise. Ehkki selline diskursus on viimasel ajal olnud löögi all, siis ma ei ole siiski loobunud stiilipõhisest kunstiajaloost ega ka ette antud periodiseeringutest nagu sulaaeg või perestroika ning seda tehes toetun kohalike kunstiajalugude väljakujunenud käsitlustele. Küll aga olen püüdnud kirjutada nii, et monu-mentaal-dekoratiivkunst poleks käsitletud mitte ainult rahvuslike kunstiaja-lugude ääremärkusena, vaid kutsuks neile vaatama uue pilguga.

Kuna minu uurimisobjekt langeb vahepealsesse ruumi kunsti ja mittekunsti, kõrg- ja massikultuuri ning visuaalsete ja keeleliste märkide vahele, kasutan neid mõtestades ka visuaalkultuuri uuringutele omaseid vahendeid. See on oluline ka seetõttu, et minu eesmärk on juhtida tähelepanu seni pigem varju jäänud teostele ja seostele. Visuaalkultuuri uuringud pooldavad piltide vaatamist eraldatuna metanarratiividest ja tihti keskendutakse sellele, kuidas kujutised „töötavad" igal uuel vaatamise korral. Gillian Rose eristab visuaalsete kujundite puhul kolme tähendusloome konteksti:

(1) pildi loomise kontekst, (2) pilt ise kui koht ja (3) koht, kus publik seda näeb. Minu teema puhul vastab see umbkaudu maatriksile (1) kunstiteose tellimine, (2) kunstiteos ja selle asukoht ja (3) kunstiteose järelelu avalikus ruumis. Nõukogude perioodile pühendatud peatükkides keskendun peamiselt kahele esimesele parameetrile. Vaatamata sellele, et monumentaalkunst oli oma nähtavuse ja mõistetavuse poolest kõige ligipääsetavam kunst, on mul uurijana olnud keeruline koguda publiku otsest tagasisidet teoste kohta. Selle koha pealt vaikivad ka arhiivid ja mälestusteosed. Küll aga on mul olnud võimalus viimases peatükis keskenduda piltide mõjule ühiskonnas sotsialismijärgsel perioodil.

## Rahvusülene uurimus

Tänu – ja mõnikord vaatamata – Moskva poolt pealesurutud ametlikule regionalismile oli Balti riikide üksmeel ja kultuuridevaheline suhtlus hilisnõukogude perioodil tugev. Kunstis ilmestasid seda populaarsed Baltikumi-ülesed sündmused nagu Tallinna graafikatriennaal (alates 1968), Riia skulptuurikvadriennaal (alates 1974), Vilniuse maalitriennaal (1969) või Baltimaade noore kaasaegse kunsti triennaal Leedus (alates 1979). Lisaks naaberriikides õppivate kunsti-, disaini- ja arhitektuuritudengite suhtlusele oli palju teisi ametlikke ja vähemametlikke üritusi, võrgustikke ja isikuid – nagu Tartust pärit kollektsionäär Matti Milius või Tallinnas tegutsevad kunstnikud Leonhard Lapin ja Tõnis Vint, kes ühendasid kolme riigi kunstielu. Lisaks soodustas varjatult Balti ühtsust kolme riigi ühine okupatsioonistaatus. Samal ajal olid Baltimaade kultuuriinimesed rahul ka sellega, kui neid Nõukogude Liidu lääneks nimetati.

Uurimistöö eesmärk on minna kaugemale „metodoloogilisest natsionalismist", mille puhul rahvust käsitletakse endastmõistetavalt sotsiaalse ja poliitilise analüütilise raamistikuna. Toetun Piotr Piotrowski välja pakutud horisontaalse kunstiajaloo mudelile, mis põhineb ühisjoontel, vastastikustel suhetel ja kultuuridevahelisel suhtlusel. Piotrowski vaidlustas „vertikaalse" kunstiajaloo, mis on kirjutatud metropolide vaatenurgast ning positsioneerib kunsti domineerivate lääne kontseptsioonide järgi. Sellest vaatenurgast toodavad kunstikeskused – olgu selleks siis Berliin, Pariis või New York – kaanoneid, väärtuste hierarhiaid ja stiilinorme, mis levivad ülejäänud maailma. Seega määratleb keskustes tehtav kunst paradigmad, perifeersete asukohtade kunst peaks aga need mudelid justkui küsimusteta omaks võtma. Selle asemel pakkus Piotrowski välja postkolonialistliku ja mittehierarhilise võrdleva meetodi, et esitleda Ida-Euroopa kunsti mitte tuletisena, vaid nähtusena, mis on kujunenud piirkonna enda sotsiaal-

poliitiliste jõudude vahekorras. Piotrowski rõhutas iga kunstikultuuri sisemist dünaamikat, selle vajaduspõhiseid valikuid konkreetsete mudelite omaksvõtmisel ja kultuurisiirde rolli konkreetsetes asukohtades.

## *Performatiivsus*

Aleksei Jurtšak on hilisnõukogude ühiskonnaelu selgitamisel kasutanud performatiivsuse mõistet. Pärast Stalini diktatuuri hukkamõistmist puudus Nõukogude Liidus juht, kes oleks ainuisikuliselt vastutanud ideoloogilise diskursuse eest. Jurtšaki sõnul tekkis seejärel „toimetuslik tühjus", kus seadused, kõned, loosungid, plakatid, ühiskondlikud rituaalid, monumendid ja visuaalne propaganda muutusid standardiseeritud vormeliteks, mida korrutati aastakümneid. Jurtšak kasutab olukorra kirjeldamiseks Mihhail Bahtini terminit „autoritatiivne diskursus", mille järgi riiklik-ametliku sfääri dogmaatiline kõnepruuk muutus sedavõrd domineerivaks, et ka kõige kriitilisematel osapooltel ei õnnestunud sellest välja murda, sest kõik kõneaktid sõltusid ühel või teisel moel sellest. Marxi ja Lenini tsitaatide ja teiste autoriteetsete tekstide lakkamatu parafraseerimine tekitas olukorra, kus ühiskondlik-poliitiline elu tugines üha enam artiklite, seaduste ja määruste massile. Samas aga polnud inimestele enam oluline ideoloogiliste sõnumite sisuline tähendus, vaid domineeris nende vormelite rituaalne kordamine. Selle tulemusena muutus autoritatiivne diskursus paindumatuks ja anonüümseks süsteemiks ning inimeste igapäevaelu ja privaat-avaliku sfääri kogemuslikust vaatepunktist kaugeks ja kohmakaks. Teisalt tingis diskursiivse režiimi taoline transformatsioon tohutu määramatuse, sest kuidagi tuli kodanikel neid vormeleid tõlgendada. Seetõttu muutusid nõukogude inimeste käitumismallid mänguliseks ja kutsusid esile mitmekülgseid performatiivseid praktikaid.

Ehkki autoritatiivse diskursuse eesmärk oli ühiskonda reguleerida, siis enamik pidas seda tühjaks kõneks. Sellest hoolimata omandasid tühjad väited performatiivse jõu. Seega ei kujutanud diskursuse konstatiivsed ja performatiivsed dimensioonid hilisnõukogude igapäevaelus binaarseid vastandusi, vaid olid jagamatud ja vastastikku mõjukad. Ühes oma näites käsitleb Jurtšak valimisi, kus tavaliselt oli ainult üks kandidaat. Ritualiseeritud kontekstis muutus hääletamise akt sama oluliseks kui see, kelle poolt hääletati. Rõhk oli seega pigem autoritatiivse diskursuse rituaalsete aktide reprodutseerimisel kui konstitutiivsete tähendustega tegelemisel. Süsteemi – või Jurtšaki sõnul süsteemi illusiooni – töös hoidmiseks tuli just nimelt osaleda sellistes performatiivsetes tegudes. Nii kaua kuni kogu ühiskond hoidis ühiselt üleval illusiooni toimivast süsteemist, hoolitses stagneerunud

ametlik-avalik sfäär selle eest, et toimiks ka elav privaat-avalik sfäär, mille põhikomponentideks olid egalitaarne haridus, stabiilsed töötingimused, taskukohane eluase ja tervishoid ning mitmekesised võimalused vaba aja veetmiseks.

Jurtšak väidab, et enamik kodanikke olid status quo'ga rahul. Nad soovisid elada normaalset elu ja suhtusid isegi pigem tõrjuvalt liigagaratesse parteiaktivistidesse, kes tõlgendasid ideoloogilisi sõnumeid sõna-sõnalt. Veelgi ohtlikumad ja häirivamad olid teisitimõtlejad, kes ülepea hülgasid süsteemi, seades kahtluse alla selle legitiimsuse. Provokatiivne käitumine seadis ohtu nende ümber olevad inimesed, kellele väljakujunenud olukord sobis. Sealt tuleneb ka Jurtšaki monograafia pealkiri „Kõik oli igavene, kuni enam mitte. Viimane Nõukogude generatsioon." Kuigi kõik olid teadlikud nõukogude majanduse ja süsteemi puudustest, jätkati üheskoos status quo etendamist, sest selle asemel ei suudetud ette kujutada alternatiivi. Nõukogude Liit hakkas murenema siis, kui glasnost ja perestroika pakkusid paralleelseid ja dissidentlikke seisukohti hüpernormaliseeritud performatiivsele „näitemängule". Kuid siinkohal tahaksin rõhutada, et vaatamata performatiivse aspekti olulisusele ei olnud hilisnõukogude tegelikkus väljamõeldis. Tegemist oli ainulaadse materiaalse kultuuriga, mis vastas otseselt riigi majandusmudelile ja selle eripärasele ideoloogilise olukorrale.

Jurtšaki lähenemine inspireerib kasutama keelendeid, mis ei taandaks sotsialismiaja kultuuri analüüsimist dihhotoomiateks nagu ametlik ja mitteametlik, riik ja rahvas, rõhumine ja vastupanu, repressioonid ja vabadus, peavoolu- ja kontrakultuur. Need on paljuski külma sõja ideoloogilise vastanduse raames väljakujunenud moraalsed hinnangud. Monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti tellimise institutsionaalne raamistik vastas paljuski Jurtšaki kirjeldatud mudelile, olles mõnevõrra rituaalset laadi, kus osalejatel tuli vallata nii autoritatiivse diskursuse konstitutiivseid kui performatiivseid dimensioone. Ühelt poolt toimisid kunstiteosed ametliku diskursuse koostisosadena, teisalt oli nende vorm ja sisu avatud uutele tähendustele.

## Performatiivsed monumendid

Tuginedes J. L. Austini kõneaktide teooriale ning ajendatuna Erving Goffmani, Jacques Derrida ja Judith Butleri teoreetilistest aruteludest, on Mechtild Widrich näidanud, kuidas efemeersed kunstiteosed suudavad mõnikord paremini täita traditsiooniliselt monumentidele omistatud

funktsioone nagu näiteks inimeste ja ajaloosündmuste mäletamine või kogukonna liitmine. Erinevalt klassikalistest monumentidest, mis sageli ebaõnnestuvad mälestusmärkidena oma viletsa esteetika, planeeringuliste möödapanekute või kehva kommunikatsiooni poolest, toimivad performatiivsed monumendid monumentaalsete performatiivsete väidetena, mis kutsuvad esile ka tegelikke muutuseid maailmas. Widrichi sõnul võivad performatiivseteks monumentideks olla nii performance'id (ta toob näiteks Marina Abramovići ja Valie Exporti, fotod (eriti performance-kunsti dokumentatsioon), installatsioonid (tema juhtumiuuring on Thomas Hirschhorni „Bataille'i monument" 2002. aasta Documental) kui ka traditsioonilises mõttes monumendid (nagu Maya Lini Vietnami sõja ohvrite memoriaal Washingtonis). Kuigi Widrich väldib järjekindlalt performatiivsete monumentide ühtset defineerimist, iseloomustab ta neid eelkõige läbi kunstniku suhestumise avalikku sfääri. Widrich väidab, et traditsioonilised monumendid ei suuda enamasti tagada autentset mäletamist, kuna need pöörduvad oma ühekülgse lähenemisega publiku poole, kellel on väga erinevad minevikukogemused. Edukad monumendid võimaldavad see-eest sotsiaalset mäletamist läbi vormide ja rituaalide, mis loovad isiklikke suhteid minevikusündmusega. Sellest vaatenurgast ei pea monumendid olema massiivsed. Piisab sellest, kui monument tagab ja vahendab avalikke mälestusakte. Seega muutub monument performatiivseks monumendiks siis, kui see toimib õnnestunud performatiivse mälestusavaldusena, milles saavad rahuldatud nii tellija, kunstniku kui publiku ootused.

Widrichi analüüs sütitab diskussiooni monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti performatiivse mõõtme üle. Kunstiteoste tellimisega seotud osapooltel olid väga erinevad eesmärgid. Mõnede tellijate jaoks oli näiteks kõige olulisemaks mureks see, et nende tellitud kunstiteos oleks lihtsalt naabrist parem. Mõne kunstniku jaoks oli ülim eesmärk tehniline uuendus. Mõlemal juhul olid performatiivsed monumentaalmaalid suuremas plaanis sotsialistliku ruumi tootmise teenistuses. Kuid milline oli iga konkreetse kunstiteose täpne tähendus ja positsioon ametlik-avaliku ja privaat-avaliku sfääri suhtes, on keeruline kindlaks teha. Kuna mu töö ei ole juhtumiuuringute põhine, siis nii otseselt ma sellele vastuseid ei anna. Kuid performatiivsusekeskne lähenemine monumentaal-dekoratiivkunstile võiks aidata just mõtestada laiemat konteksti, milles need visuaalid omal ajal toimisid.

*Uurimisküsimused*

Lõputöö jaguneb neljaks kronoloogiliselt järjestatud peatükiks. Esimeses peatükis keskendun 1950. ja 1960. aastatele, teises peatükis 1970.

aastatele, kolmandas peatükis analüüsin 1980. aastaid ja neljandas peatükis vaatlen perioodi pärast Nõukogude Liidu lagunemist. Kõik peatükid on jagatud alapeatükkideks, mis ei järgi ranget kronoloogilist vormi, vaid koondavad sarnased nähtused ühise pealkirja alla. Näiteks keskenduvad mõned alapeatükid paikadele nagu kohvikud, kolhoosid, sanatooriumid või mikrorajoonid, mis näitlikustavad hästi sotsialistliku ruumi loomist. Mõnedes alapeatükkides on võetud see-eest aluseks kunstiteoste temaatika nagu näiteks teaduslik-tehniline revolutsioon, noorus või emantsipatsioon.

Doktoritöös arutlen, kuidas monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst aitas kaasa perioodi spetsiifilise sotsialistliku ruumilise atmosfääri loomisele. Mil määral väljendas see esteetiline nähtus sotsialismi ideaale ja tegelikkust? Milliseid visuaalseid ja ruumilisi püüdlusi kunstnikud sellesse monumen-taalsesse tungi investeerisid? Lisaks esitan ka mõningaid kunstiajaloolisi küsimusi, osundades asjaolule, et Baltikumi kunstnike kontaktid ülejäänud Nõukogude Liiduga olid tugevamad, kui seni on arvatud. Institutsio-naalse tausta avamise kõrval kõnelevad nõukogude perioodi käsitlevad peatükid ka kunstnike valikutest ja individuaalsetest kohanemispraktikatest nõukogude perioodil. Viimases peatükis keskendun kunstiteoste agentsuse küsimusele, mis seondub nende väärtustamise ja säilitamisega. Küsin, millised aspektid on kaasa aidanud nõukogudeaegsete avalike kunstiteoste säilitamisele ja kaitse alla võtmisele, milline on selle pärandi tähendus ja kuidas aitavad need teosed kaasa nõukogude aja mõtestamisele Balti riikides.

## Peatükkide ülevaade

Nõukogude Liit pidas oma algusaegadest alates monumentaalkunsti oluliseks osaks nii oma ideoloogilises kihutustöös kui laiemalt ühiskonna ümberkorraldamises ja sotsiaalsele moderniseerimisele kaasa aitamises. Kui Balti riigid 1944. aastal Nõukogude Liidu poolt okupeeriti, tuli kunstnikel ning kultuuritöötajatel kiiresti kohaneda uue stalinistliku valit-semisstiili ja sotsialistliku realismi kaanoniga. Ehkki seinamaali visuaalne keel oli 1930ndatel olnud mõõdukalt realistlik ning vormiliselt isegi sarnane 1940. aastate traditsionalismile, siis maalide sisu osas toimusid kardinaalsed muutused. Pärast Hruštšovi võimuletulekut toimusid suured ühiskondlikud, majanduslikud ja kultuurilised muudatused, mis puudutasid ka kunstide valdkonda. Ratsionaliseeritud ehitustegevuse ja tööstusliku elamuehituse taustal omandas olulise rolli kunstide süntees, mis nägi ette „tumma" arhitektuuri ja „kõnevõimelise" visuaalkunsti ühendamist, propageerimaks uue sotsialistliku ühisruumi loomist ja arendamist.

1950. aastate lõpust kuni nõukogude perioodi lõpuni oli kunstide süntees nii teoreetilise kui praktilise küsimusena pidevalt aktuaalne nii erialastel konverentsidel, arhitektuuri- ja kunstiajakirjades kui ka poliitikate kujundamisel. Kui kunstide süntees oli nii eesmärk kui vahend sotsialistliku moderniseerimise teenistuses, siis monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst oli üldnimetus kunstitehnikatele, mida selleks kasutati. Kui kuni 1970. aastateni olid arutelud sünteesi üle autentsed, siis sealt edasi võis märgata teatavat väsimust või kahtlust. Nõukogude hüpernormaliseeritud olukorrale omaselt ei tähendanud praktikute ja teoreetikute huvi nihkumine seda, et avaliku kunsti diskursuses oleksid seejärel toimunud põhimõttelised muutused. Pigem vastupidi. 1970. ja 1980. aastatel kasvas monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti produktsioon Nõukogude Liidus eksponentsiaalselt. Sellises olukorras kujunes monumentaalkunstist mitmetahuline kultuurifenomen, milles segunesid kujutava kunsti, disaini ja arhitektuuri põhimõttelised küsimused vastuolulise nõukogude igapäevaeluga.

Monumentaalkunst moodustas hilisnõukogude elukeskkonnas sedavõrd kõikjal oleva tausta, et paljud ei pannud neid pilte enda ümber tähelegi. Ent just niimoodi vaikimisi moodustasid need osa sotsialistlikust ruumist, püüdes visualiseerida seda, kuhu sotsialistlik moderniseerumine pidi nõukogude kodanikud tulevikus viima. Ent Baltikumis suhtus nii kunstnikkond kui laiem avalikkus sellistesse lubadustesse irooniliselt kui mitte vastumeelselt. Seetõttu on monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti puhul tegemist väärt uurimisteemaga, sest nendesse piltidesse koondusid ühelt poolt avaliku võimu deklaratiivsed loosungid ja teiselt poolt Eesti, Läti ja Leedu kunstnike isiklikud ja kollektiivsed vabadusepüüded ja kohanemispraktikad nõukogude võimuga.

Neoavangardse kunsti transgressiivsed praktikad ja monumentaalkunsti kõige uhkemad tellimustööd moodustasid hilisnõukogude kunstikultuuris ühe mündi kaks külge. Oma vastandlikkusest hoolimata aitasid nad performatiivses mõttes mõlemad toota, normaliseerida ja legitimiseerida sotsialistlikku ruumi. Sarnases võtmes toimis ka rahvuskultuuri representeerimine läbi keele, ajaloo, müütide ning maastike. Kuna rahvuslike eripärade rõhutamine ja hüüdlausele „vormilt rahvuslik, sisult sotsialistlik" panustamine oli üks Nõukogude Liidu kultuurielu ideoloogilisi alustalasid, siis ei ole üllatav, et rahvuslikud teemad olid ühed kõige levinumad kujutised avaliku ruumi kunstis. Kuid selles vallas oli ka tabusid, nagu näiteks teatavate ajalooliste sündmuste või ennesõjaaegsete lipuvärvide kasutamine. Ent kunstipublik janunes ridade vahelt lugema ja kunstnikud nautisid teostesse alltekstide peitmist. Ehkki monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst

võis näida võimutruu kultuurivormina, siis mõnikord pöörati see mõne lihtsa võttega kriitiliseks kunstipraktikaks.

Üks põhjus, miks monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst võimaldas vaba mõtte levikut, oli see, et nõukogude tsensuur pööras traditsiooniliselt rohkem tähelepanu galeriides ja muuseumides eksponeeritavale maalikunstile, graafikale ja skulptuurile. Monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst sai rõhuda sellele, et nii nagu tarbekunst on ajalooliselt olnud mittefiguratiivne, tuleb ka ruumikujundusega tegeleval kujutaval kunstil tegeleda abstraktsete kujunditega. Eriti 1960. aastatel tähendas see seda, et abstraktsed ja muud modernistlikud vormimängud, mis poleks läbi läinud näitustel, leidsid kasutamist avalikus ruumis. Teatud hetkedel kandis monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst oma vormieksperimentide poolest kunstikultuuris seega liidrirolli. 1970. aastatel pakkus monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst sarnasel moel peavarju kineetilisele kunstile, millel iseseisva ja eesrindliku loominguna näitusesaalidesse alati asja ei olnud. Lätis omandas see trend lausa koolkondliku liikumise ilme, kui mitmed kunstnikud juhindusid 20. sajandi alguse (läti) vene konstruktivistide eeskujust ning viisid ellu oma ideid laiahaardeliste installatsioonidena. Nii kineetilise kunsti apologeetide kui paljude teiste disainerite, arhitektide ja kunstnike soov panustada avaliku ruumi parendamisse oli seotud ajastule omase keskkonnakriitikaga. Loovisikud polnud rahul Nõukogude võimu raiskava ja reostava tööstuse ega käest lastud linnaruumiga ning püüdsid pakkuda sellele alternatiive. Kunstnikepoolne kriitika oli suunatud ka looduse hävitamise ning traditsiooniliste (rahvuslike) maastike ja eluviiside unustamise vastu. Monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst oli selles plaanis üks väheseid platvorme, mis võimaldas kiiret sekkumist ja laia kõlapinda.

Ent monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst oli sedavõrd laiamahuline ja laiali valgunud visuaalkultuuriline nähtus, et selleteemaliste teoste sisu kohta üldistuste tegemine on mõnevõrra õigustamatu tegevus. Leidus nii kriitilisi- kui võimumeelseid teoseid. Monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst arenes iseseisvaks hüpertrofeerunud esteetiliseks fenomeniks, mida tellijad kasutasid muude vahendite puudumisel iseenda upitamiseks ja avaliku kuvandi üleskiitmiseks. Seetõttu ei ole üllatav, et monumentaal-dekoratiivkunst omandas ka Potjomkini küla metafoorile omaseid fiktiivseid funktsioone. Moskva olümpiamängude lähenedes kasutati suuri, terveid majade otsaseinasid hõlmavaid maalinguid lagunenud ehitiste ja muude linnaliste puuduste varjamiseks. Toonased investeeringud puudutasid põhiliselt Tallinnat ja Riiat. Kuid samal ajal tähistasid juubeleid Vilniuse ja Tartu ülikoolid, mis tähendas laialdasi avaliku kunsti tellimusi ka nendesse

linnadesse. Kui 1980ndad algasid mitmel pool Baltikumis uhkete ehitus-
projektide ja vägevate kunstitellimustega, siis kümnendi keskpaigast alates
ehitustegevus mitmel pool takerdus. Ühelt poolt oli põhjuseks stagneeruv
majandus ja hädad ehitusmaterjalide hankimisel, teiselt poolt läksid paljud
projektid ideoloogilistel põhjustel revideerimisele pärast perestroika algust.

Kui 1970ndatel ja 1980ndate alguse visuaalkultuuris andsid rahvuslikud
tunded tooni kunsti alltekstina, siis perestroika tuules omandasid need
kultuurisfääris jõulise positsiooni. Riiklikud asutused, mille eelarvest
läks varem mahukas osa propagandale, kiirustasid seda raha nüüd muul
otstarbel kasutama. Tallinnas viis selline tendents supergraafika laialdase
levikuni. Traditsioonilised monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti töövahendid
ei olnud enam kunstide sünteesi ega sotsialistliku ühisruumi loomise
teenistuses, vaid täitsid täiesti uusi või algsetele eesmärkidele vastupidiseid
rolle. Nii kasutati seinamaale esimeste erafirmade reklaamimiseks ning
iroonilisel kombel reisisid kunstnikud selle eest teenitud rahaga USAsse
inspiratsiooni koguma.

Ehkki 1980. aastate lõpus valmis ka nõukogude ideoloogiast nõretavaid
tellimustöid, nagu näiteks Evald Okase seinamaal Maarjamäe lossis, siis
üldiselt oli selleks ajaks toimunud ühiskonnas põhimõtteline nihe, mis tõi
kaasa selle, et sõnumite üle avalikus ruumis ei valitsenud ainult võimu-
institutsioonid, vaid üha enam ütlesid sõna sekka ka indiviidid, firmad ja
kohalikud kogukonnad. Grafiti, mis seni oli piirdunud punkarite siseringi
ja latrinaaliaga, astus tänavatele, seda esmalt poliitiliste sõnumite ja
seejärel iseseisva esteetilise praktikana. 1989. aastaks oli ainuparteiline
võimuhierarhia sedavõrd mõranenud, et konkureerivad konkureerivad
ühiskonnagrupid asusid jõuliselt ühisruumi ümber tähistama, eemaldades
monumente ja püstitades uusi. Neil aastatel hävines ja hävitati suurem osa
sellest nõukogude monumentalistikast ja visuaalkultuurist, mis häbitult
tõstis esile kommunistliku ideoloogia imperialistlikke ja militaarseid
alustalasid.

Pärast Balti riikide iseseisvumist jätkusid varem alanud protsessid. Nn
monumentaalse restitutsiooni käigus eemaldati esmajoones kõige vastu-
olulisemad ideoloogilised tähised linnaruumist ja siseruumidest. Tuhanded
kunstiteosed läksid majanduslike ümberkorralduste raames uute omanike
valdusesse, sattudes keerulisse olukorda, kus nende säilimine sõltus
paljudest ettearvamatutest asjaoludest. Ent erinevalt monumentaalskulp-
tuuridest käis monumentaal-dekoratiivkunsti käsi mõnevõrra paremini.
Vähesed teosed hävitati otseselt ideoloogilistel põhjustel ning enamik

unustati, „kodustati" uute kasutajate poolt või jäeti saatuse hooleks. Need teosed, mis hävitati või eemaldati, jäid enamasti ette eraomanike majandustegevusele ning neid võib seetõttu pidada kapitalistliku majanduse „ohvriteks".

Balti riigid on tegelenud nõukogude ruumilise pärandi taaskasutamise ja ümbermõtestamisega üle 30 aasta. Kuna rohkem kui pooled Eesti, Läti ja Leedu inimestest elavad ja töötavad igapäevaselt nõukogudeaegsetes hoonetes, siis on tegemist „elatud ruumiga", milles argipäevased tegevused põrkuvad vastukäivate mälestuste, lootuste ja unistustega. Pingesituatsioonides on mõnesid nõukogudeaegseid sümboolseid ehitisi või kunstiteoseid kujutatud patuoinastena, millele ühiskonnaliikmed projitseerivad kollektiivseid hirme. Ehkki 2010. aastatel võis tunduda, et Baltimaad on üle saanud postsovetlikest traumadest, siis Ukraina täiemahulise sõja järel need taas aktiveerusid ning aktiviseerus ka nõukogude ruumipärandi teisaldamine. Teisalt on mõned nõukogudeaegsed ehitised ja kunstiteosed omandanud vastupidise tähenduse, tähistades nostalgilist, positiivset ja konstruktiivset suhtumist ajaloomälusse. Nõukogude pärand esineb sel juhul väärika kollektiivse jõupingutusena, mis vastandub rutaka kapitalismi „kõik müügiks" väsitavale diktaadile.

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