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INTRODUCTION

The team of the journal *Culture Crossroads* is truly pleased to be presenting this volume to you, our reader. First, since the previous issue, two events have taken place, and we will be experiencing their impact in a long time to come. The former of the events is that *Culture Crossroads* has been reviewed for indexing with Scopus and the decision was positive. Hence, this is the first volume to be Scopus-indexed. The journal team are enormously proud of this achievement. The latter event concerns the streamlining of publication processes – the journal has migrated to a brand new electronic system of journal management. This means, that in future, all publication processes will be state-of-the-art. Second, we are pleased with the content of the volume we are now presenting to you. It is versatile and multidimensional, yet there are three clearly distinguishable and exciting thematic strands. A closer reading, however, finds several cross-thematic conversations going on, which makes this volume even more interesting.

The authors address large issues (creativity, identity, censorship), key turning points in the history of the phenomena they analyse, and identify new exciting trends in art, sometimes questioning the existing boundaries and sometimes finding new similarities.

The first paper in the volume, by Žanete Eglīte – "Creative People, Industries and Places in Small Cities and Rural Areas" – offers a theoretical review of the relation between creative people, creative industries, and creative places in small cities and rural areas. Žanete Eglīte probes into the relationships that are known since Richard Florida's statements, however this overview takes into account the trends set into motion by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another large issue is analysed by two authors – Laura Brutāne and Ketrisa Petkeviča in their paper "Artistic Freedom, Censorship and Self-Censorship in the Film Industry of Latvia". This is an account of the phenomenon which at a superficial glance seems related only to authoritarian regimes, however the study presented in the paper uncovers multi-shaped manifestations of censorship in the creative activities and dominant conditions in which it forms; allows to follow up the sources of self-censorship for artistic activity, and draws conclusions on the conditions and barriers of creative freedom in Latvian society.

The third paper in the triad tackling the very foundations of creativity and self-expression is the paper by Māra Simons – "Russian Speakers from Latvia in Sweden: Between Identities and Memories". This paper reflects ethnographic research on identities that have to be remade, and interpretations of sensitive events, which do not fit the new life situation of the informants. In a sense, the article is about everyday creativity, and specifically the creativity of the constant remaking of what we used to know as true.

Interestingly, the next article that begins the theatre-based strand of themes in this volume, also discusses hybridity and the emergence of known theatrical genres in a new form. Lauma Mellēna-Bartkeviča in her article "Contemporary Music(al) Theatre in Latvia: Problem of Definitions and Formats" concludes that the hybridization of genres and the

devised creation methods necessitate the questioning of former analytical instruments and discourses in order to develop the criticism of performing arts in line with emerging trends.

The next paper looks at performing arts, specifically theatre, as a tool for raising awareness on urgent environmental concerns. Kitija Balcare in her paper "Ecotheatre: Changing Perspective from Who We Are towards Where We Are" examines the processes that allow her to conclude that ecotheatre is becoming the form of environmental activism or, so called artivism, of theatre practitioners in Latvia.

Continuing the thematic strand of performing arts, the article by Dita Jonīte – "Choreographer in Contemporary Theatre: The Case of Latvia" – discusses the new approach to theatrical choreography within the changed paradigm of dramatic theatre. The author examines the ways in which the new generation of contemporary dance choreographers influence the aesthetics of productions and co-responsibility of dramatic actors, thus contributing to the contemporary focus on the living, immediate relationship between theatre and audience.

A new metaphorical perspective on the work of theatre artists is explored in the article by Ramunė Balevičiūtė and Agnė Jurgaitytė-Avižinienė – "Theater Artists Between the City and the Non-city: the Spring of Withdrawals and Returns". The authors discuss four meta-themes that provide insight into the impact of the city and non-city environments on the work of theatre artists. The authors find that it is the change of perspective and creative state that provides impulses for new universes to emerge both aesthetically and psychologically. This article, with its contemplation of creative processes, sets the transition from the "theatre theme" to the next three articles that focus on the visual art.

The first article of the triad, by Laine Kristberga – "Transdisciplinary and Transnational Manifestations in Ojārs Feldbergs' Art: The Concept of Borders" critically focusses on the centre-periphery relationship and examines the role of hybridity and intercultural encounters in art production. Overall, the author questions the suitability of knowledge production systems in terms of the Western art discourse when attempting to interpret the Latvian artist Ojārs Feldbergs.

The next contribution to the volume is by Ketevan Tsetskhladze – "The Art of Perestroika: New Movements in Georgian Art of the 1980s". The author explores the establishment of non-official art groups in Tbilisi, in the context of the broader contemporary art movement and change of 1980s. The article zooms in on the art scene of Tbilisi where the artists within merely one decade managed to create their own aesthetic and theoretical principles.

The concluding paper of the volume also provides a broad-lens exploration of a turning point in the Latvian art scene. Elīna Veilande-Apine, in her article "Foundation and Operation of the Association of Latvian Textile Art (1994–2014)" views the contribution of the independent association in textile art ALTA as seen against the backdrop of transitions happening in textile art globally.

As we have tried to demonstrate by this short introduction, the volume provides intriguing insight into psychology of creativity, as well as various paradigm shifts and changes in the roles of creative professionals. We sincerely thank all the authors and hope that this collection of articles will provide impetus for further exploration of the multi-faceted world of culture and art, identities, borders and transitions.

CREATIVE PEOPLE, INDUSTRIES AND PLACES IN SMALL CITIES AND RURAL AREAS

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Abstract

Richard Florida states that 'creativity' – the ability to generate new knowledge or to convert existing knowledge into economically successful applications – is an increasingly important resource for economic development [Florida 2002]. But 20 years after this statement, creative industries were the sector that had the hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic [UNESCO 2021], affecting businesses and especially, creative individuals. While forced to stay at home, people also changed their daily routines, places to live and many of them moved out of the big cities to smaller ones or rural areas. In many cases, online tools and resources allowed them to continue their creative practices and businesses or created new opportunities. Several questions arise – how do creative people choose the place to live? What are the factors which influence these choices? Can small cities and rural areas compete with large cities, and what are the preconditions for these small cities to attract creative people?

Theoretical review has been developed, and the goal of this article is to formulate the insight into relation between creative people, creative industries, and creative places in small cities and rural areas.

Keywords: *creative people, creative industries, creative places, small cities, rural areas*.

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CULTURE CROSSROADS

Introduction

This paper analyses, how creative people, creative industries and creative places are mutually related. Within a literature review, the author describes these three phenomena:

1) importance of creative people, their contribution in economy, lifestyle preferences and the trend of "jobs follow people" in contrary to previously popular theories of vibrant city life;
2) changes within creative industries, which lead to transformation from traditional industries to intellectual products with added value, not only in the big cities, but also small cities and rural areas;
3) characteristics of creative places, which attract creative people and affect their choices where to work and reside.

Štreimikiene and Kačerauskas mention Florida and other authors, who make the connection between creative activity, creative industries and their subject creative class with economic stability, competitive advantage, and social prosperity inseparable from sustainable livelihoods [Štreimikiene and Kačerauskas 2020]. Also, Sdrali states, economy (creative industries), place (creative spaces), and people (creative talent) are the interlinked variables [Sdrali 2011].

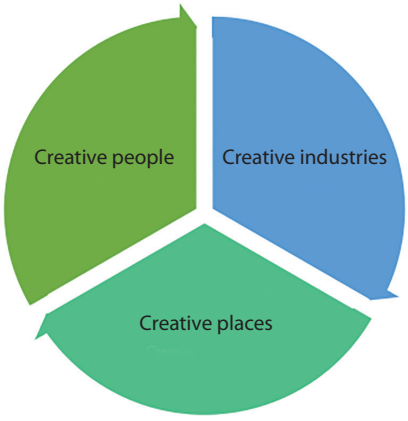

Figure 1. Model adapted after [Greffe 2002] [UNCTAD 2018], [INTELI 2011], [Sdrali 2011].

As the model in Figure 1 depicts, creative people influence creative industries, and creative industries in turn affect creative places, which can foster and provide conditions for creative people – this is an ongoing process. Such interaction depends largely on the specific governance systems and institutional arrangements of the territories – governance, and that of their position in the spatial system and urban

hierarchies, and their level of access to information and communication technologies – connectivity [INTELI 2011].

1. Creative people are the driving force of development. They are facilitators of creativity and innovations [d'Orville 2019]. Entrepreneurship is a fruitful avenue for creative individuals to flourish and that creative individuals will be more attracted to this form of employment than others [Batchelor 2012]. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that creative individuals are more likely to create their businesses, work as individual professionals, or get involved in organisations which require creative forces.

2. Creative industries, operating within art, culture, business, and technologies enable to develop products and services with added value and meaningful artistic components [OECD, 2018]. Creative industries are the sector which gathers creative individuals.

3. Creative places include infrastructure, created environment, institutions, and support services, which combine communication and culture of entrepreneurship [INTELI 2011]. These can be municipalities, creative clusters, and institutions.

In the next chapters, all the three elements – creative people, creative industries and creative places, will be analysed.

Creative people

Creativity is a special kind of renewable resource and human talent. It involves transforming ideas, imagination, and dreams into reality, often blending tradition and innovation. The creative ability depends on creative thinking, that is the ability to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or new possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others [d'Orville 2019]. Creativity provides for inclusive social development and encourages people to take responsibility for their own progress; it also promotes innovations crucial to sustainable development [Brocchi 2008; Soini & Dessein 2016].

Creative people and artists are important, because they develop ideas, metaphors, and messages, which help to foster social networking and experiences. Culture, based on creativity, is fundamental for industries and policy makers to develop and implement strategies, which are more oriented to the people (less "making things", more "providing services"). Therefore, creativity can help businesses and policy makers to communicate more effectively, rethink existing practices and seek new directions, how to stand out. Creativity contributes to innovations, branding, human resource management and communication [CCI development handbook].

To refer to the above, creative people contribute to creative industries, and thus help to develop also creative places. We all know at least one example, where people return to their rural hometown after studying in the capital or developing a career

there. They create their own businesses in fields of crafts, design, music or software development, work as freelancers; many of them have part-time work, so they can divide their time between country house and city workplace. Many of them are high level professionals, and they can choose the place where to spend their time and work. Selada and colleagues define this trend as anti-urbanisation phenomenon, which can be characterized as "lifestyle migration" – when decisions to leave the big cities are related not primarily with economical motivation, but with considerations related to liveability [Selada et al. 2011]. Creative people are more tended to start entrepreneurship [Ward 2004], as creative thinking is important element for formulation of the business idea, and is necessary within each aspect of business development.

Creative people are not a homogenous group of individuals, therefore it's necessary to consider that their preferences, views of life, attitude towards their work and involvement of creativity can be different. In Richard Florida's theory, the creative class is composed of three different occupational groups:

- highly creative occupations (architects, academicals, scientists and engineers, economists and social scientists, physicians and related occupations);
- bohemians (designers, musicians, photographers, visual and performing artists, writers);
- creative professionals (those in certain highly qualified occupational groups such as technicians, consultants, organizational experts, mediators, and brokers) [Florida 2012].

In this aspect, these groups of creative professionals cannot be evaluated as one single segment of social class and share the same values. It means, their work within creative industries and preferences of creative places, can be different – therefore, the assumptions of creative class concentrating only in large urban areas, excluding small cities and rural areas, can be considered as outdated. Selada and colleagues state that creative people are looking for alternative lifestyles to those prevalent in big cities, giving priority to wellbeing associated with sports, healthy food, preservation of the environment and sustainable practices, and to the sense of community and locality [Selada et al. 2011]. If comparing this statement with Richard Florida's concept of the creative cities, where the focus is on talent, technology and tolerance [Florida 2004] in bohemian, vibrant and multicultural environment, we see that priorities are different for those creatives, who choose small cities and rural areas.

Unlike the big creative cities, small cities and rural areas provide several features which seem important to creative people:

- capital of territory, nature and culture, rural lifestyle and quality of life [Gülümser et al. 2011];

- factors of choices, based on amenities offered by cities, can differ among various segments of creative people; this is influenced by their age, lifestyle, stage of life, personal attitude and circumstances [Trip and Romein 2010, cited in Sdrali 2020]. Various groups of people have different understanding and importance of amenities;
- creative people, while working and living in small cities, can contribute to the creative economy. Štreimikiene and Kačerauskas cite Van Heur, who states, that the small cities can use differentiation strategies, focuse on niche markets [Štreimikiene and Kačerauskas 2020].

Thus, it is possible to conclude that creative people are not only oriented to big creative cities, but also to small cities and rural areas, and their choices are based on different reasons than Florida's stated cultural vibrancy, cool neighbourhoods and multicultural society. For example, small cities and rural areas provide more healthy and sustainable lifestyle, cooperation and participation culture, more active involvement in communities. Wedemeier states that the creative class tends to locate ("jobs-follow-people" argument) where the quality of place is high.

Creative industries

If the previous chapter was oriented to the creative people, their contribution in economy, diversity and lifestyle preferences, the next chapter describes creative industries and their importance in development of small cities and rural areas.

Beyond their undoubted impact on social, democratic, and cultural wealth, cultural and creative industries are increasingly being acknowledged as industrial and economic assets [Interreg Europe 2019]. The creative economy is knowledge-intensive and based on individual creativity and talent [Štreimikiene and Kačerauskas 2020]. Creativity and its resulting innovation, due to creative employees [Florida 2004], is shown to be linked to the ability of organizations to perform, grow, and, most importantly, survive [Mumford, Hester, & Robledo 2011, cited in Bachelor and Burch 2012].

Creative industries – including advertising, architecture, arts and crafts, design, fashion, film production, video, photography, music, performing arts, publishing, research and development, software and game development, electronic publishing, TV, and radio – are the driving forces of creative economy. Creative industries are those where "the product or service integrates meaningful artistic or creative components" [Greffe 2002] and situates them at the crossroads of the arts, culture, business, and technology [UNCTAD 2018]. As Howkins states, creative economy is based on innovative ideas, whereas innovations stimulate sustainable economic development [Howkins 2011]. Creative economy fosters growth and contributes

in various ways; for example, it fosters innovations, ideas, technologies and transforming changes, encourages people and fosters local development and economy of rural areas, which are rich with uniqueness of culture, and encourages women [UNESCO 2013]. This is important aspect, as it is possible to conclude that creative industries foster growth not only in urban areas, but also in rural areas.

If applied to small cities and rural areas, as the EU indicated in its Green Paper "Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries" [2010], factory floors are progressively being replaced by creative communities whose raw material is their ability to imagine, create and innovate. In the breakthrough of the post-industrial transition, culture is also increasingly regarded as a fully-fledged economic sector, having impacts on employment and wealth creation as well as on innovation and local competitiveness [Currid 2010]. It means, creative industries, with emphasis on creativity, facilitate the transformation of traditional industries and the development of newly emerging industries through soft power industries, such as culture and leisure [Liu, Chiu 2017]. Creative industries supply goods and services that we broadly associate with cultural, artistic, or simply entertainment value [Caves 2000]. Creativity and intellectual capital are the primary outputs [UNCTAD 2010]. Thus, the previously dominating traditional manufacturing industries can be supplemented with growth of creative industries, ensuring usage of creativity and intellectual capital.

Within aspect of small cities and rural areas, Krätke states that regional concentration of scientifically and technologically creative occupational groups has a significant positive impact on regional economic development [Krätke 2010]. Developed and functioning creative economy can be driving force of structural transformation of economics, socially economic progress, creation of workplaces and innovations, and at the same time ensuring social inclusion and sustainable human development [UNDP 2019]. Creativity can be part of a strategy for economic adaptation in response to the contraction of previously dominant industries such as agriculture, forestry, mining or fishing [Woods 2012]. Furthermore, creative industries provide innovative inputs for other areas of activity in local economies, such as agriculture, handicrafts, furniture, textiles, tourism and gastronomy, promoting their development and prosperity. The effects of knowledge spillovers derived from geographical proximity, induce the transfer of information, technologies, innovative business models and organization forms, to the overall economy [Selada et al. 2011]. Also, Štreimikiene and Kačerauskas complement Selada's statement, defining that creative sectors drive innovation and act as a catalyst for innovations that are taking place in other sectors, such as industries, energy, transport, agriculture, commerce [Štreimikienė and Kačerauskas 2020]. By offering creative goods and services, these industries not only stimulate other sectors of economy but also promote other sectors

as a result of being innovative [Cooke and Propris 2011; Bakhshi et al. 2008; cited in Montalto et al. 2019].

The arts and creative industries are positioned as strategic economic sectors in rural communities, as significant contributors to regional and rural economies, as stimulants to broader economic revitalization, and as tourism-based opportunities [Duxbury and Campbell 2011]. Arts development is widely supported for encouraging participation, well-being, growing 'sense of place' and creating a context for interaction among diverse actors, giving each a voice in solutions to local challenges, thereby empowering communities [McHenry 2011, cited in Roberts and Townsend 2015].

It is important to emphasise that creative industries in small cities and rural areas are not only related with heritage, crafts, tourism, and leisure. As Duxbury and Campbell states, the Internet enables creatives to connect with peers, markets, audiences, sources of inspiration, trends, and tools for self-promotion [Duxbury and Campbell 2011]. Therefore, good quality Internet connection helps workers of creative industries to have their jobs without geographical limitations.

The attraction of creative individuals and enterprises to rural areas enhances their attractiveness to other knowledge workers, entrepreneurs and inward investment [White 2014].

Thus, it is possible to conclude that creative industries are important in development of small cities and rural areas, as they foster growth and contribute in various ways – lead innovations, ideas, transform changes, encourage people, foster local development and economy, also, creative industries facilitate the transformation of traditional industries and stimulate other sectors of economy. Technology and Internet are the main forces which help workers of creative industries and break down geographical limitations.

Creative places

As stated in the previous chapter, the creative industries foster growth not only in urban areas, but also in small cities and rural areas. Creative economy is knowledge-intensive and based on individual creativity and talent. Therefore, the next chapter analyzes the characteristics of creative places, which attract creative people and affect their choices where to work and reside.

The creative economy is strongly related to the concept of 'place' and has been applied to several spatial scales, ranging from 'creative cities' and 'creative 'districts' to 'creative-oriented facilities' [INTELI 2011]. Small cities and rural areas might not have as developed infrastructure and facilities for creative industries and creative people as in the big cities, but still, small cities and rural areas have their qualities which are attractive. Selada and colleagues criticise academic literature and

public policy documents centred on the relation between creativity and territorial development have been essentially oriented to the reality of big cities and metropolis, marginalizing small territorial areas [Selada et al. 2011]. Recent research has started to criticise the assumptions that creativity is boosted more within the creative city model, documenting that creative and arts-based initiatives have been generating new development opportunities in rural and regional settings as well [Conticelli et al. 2020]. During the Covid-19 pandemic, even the new term – Zoom Towns – emerged, describing places near large cities as places that can take the best of the central business district and create new experiences for residents and businesses [Shapiro 2022]. Shapiro also states that the creative economy – particularly the parts of it where intellectual rights are created and monetised, can happen anywhere [ibid.].

Based on various sources of literature, the author concludes five important factors of analysis of creative places and their relation to creative industries and creative people – governance, quality of life, social and symbolic capital, economic activities and cultural facilities, and connectivity.

Governance is a transversal dimension and central in the promotion of a creative economy in small urban communities. It is related with leadership and place management, but also with the coordination of actors, public participation, and territorial cooperation [Selada et al. 2011]. Local public policies and creating favourable conditions for local residents, as well as newcomers and visitors, are important. These factors include not only basic services, education and leisure facilities, but also specific activities to encourage the creative businesses. Within challenges, there is also need to attract and maintain existing, and also potential creative talents [Scott 2004]. Bottom-up, community-engaged cultural and creative tourism, for example, provides a flexible and transversal platform for linking cultural, tourism, gastronomy, social innovation, and local development interests [Duxbury et al. 2019; Goncalves et al. 2020]. Collaboration of various actors in rural areas offers several positive impacts on rural communities [Rosyadi et al. 2020].

Quality of life together with nature and creative heritage of the region are important factors, defined as amenities, which include natural, cultural, symbolic and built assets [INTELI 2011]. As Sdrali states, these specific amenities of many small communities are considered as magnets for the creative class [Sdrali 2020]. These territorial amenities can be classified into the following categories:

- natural amenities: warm climate, distinctive and picturesque countryside with topographical diversity such as valleys, rivers, lakes, mountains and forests, etc.;
- cultural amenities: architectonic and archaelogical heritage, such as castles, churches, aqueducts and bridges, etc., and intangible heritage, like memories, testimonies and legends, and traditions, etc.;

- symbolic amenities: community engagement, trust in relationships, culture of participation, neighbourliness and sociability, social capital, presence of civic associations, etc.;
- built amenities: health and social services, quality schools, hotels, restaurants, bars, meeting places, small studios, live-work houses, etc. [INTELI 2011].

Also, creative people are more likely to have a low-impact lifestyle, more sustainable choices of commuting, more affordable houses and education as an internal source of creativity. Lewis and Donald state that instead of talent, tolerance and technology as the starting points for economic health and growth, there is a useful alternative for smaller cities – ecological footprint, commuting distance, public transit and other sustainable commuting modes, housing conditions and affordability and education [Lewis and Donald 2009, cited in Selada et al. 2011].

The social and symbolic capital is strongly linked with the community and its social interactions. It is related to the immaterial component and social atmosphere of the place – the 'genius loci', as well as to the intangible heritage, such as memories and local identities and local image [Selada et al. 2011]. The ultimate value of rural creativity can be deeply social, by helping rural communities reflecting on and responding to social and economic changing, bringing people together and enabling local strengths and resources to be identifed [Conticelli et al. 2020]. Moreover, in small cities, non-economic dimensions of everyday life are privileged, such as community engagement, a culture of collaboration and participation, and social proximity [Selada et al. 2011]. In small communities, the noneconomic aspects of life are more visible where a strong sense of identity and community spirit prevails [Sdrali 2020].

Economic activities and cultural facilities are associated with the business climate, entrepreneurship level, local economic activities and knowledge, cultural and creative infrastructures (hotels, restaurants, bars, museums, art galleries, events, etc.) [Selada et al. 2011]. As mentioned before in the article, economic base of the small cities is diverse; importance of agriculture and other "traditional" sectors is declining, but other sectors are growing, for example, services and leisure [OECD 2006]. Therefore, as rural communities re-envision and reposition themselves, they are seeking to revitalize, diversify their economic base, enhance their quality of life, and reinvent themselves for new functions and roles [Duxbury and Campbell 2011]. In this context, the phenomenon of "jobs follow people" must be considered – the location choices of individuals are made principally in response to features of the urban environment, shifting the focus from the creative industries to the human factor and its creative habitat [Selada et al. 2011].

The Connectivity dimension is a critical driver for the success of creative urban and rural contexts since it fosters cooperation between creative workers, activities, resources and territories. It encompasses both virtual (digital communications) and physical accessibilities [Selada et al. 2011]. Small cities and rural areas, their ability to attract creative people or creative activities depend also from socially economical potential, and also from physical and virtual accesibility [White 2010]. An important context for rural and remote cultural activities and enterprises has been the availability and capabilities of broadband Internet, which is a key enabler of the move from urban to rural areas [Duxbury 2020]. Digital services and solutions are the latest innovations that benefit citizens, businesses and civil society [d'Orville 2019].

Conclusion

Creative people are the driving force of development. They are more tended to start entrepreneurship, and their skills of creativity and innovation are irreplaceable in this process. A counter-urbanisation phenomenon is reviewed in theoretical literature, which defines "lifestyle migration" – when choices of working and living are not related to economical aspects, but liveability and quality of life. Various groups of creative people have different preferences towards choices of living and working. Also, creative people are more oriented towards healthy and sustainable lifestyles.

Creative industries, operating within art, culture, business, and technologies enable to develop products and services with added value and meaningful artistic components. Creativity can be part of a strategy for economic adaptation in response to the contraction of previously dominant industries such as agriculture, forestry, mining or fishing. Furthermore, creative industries provide innovative inputs for other areas of activity in local economies, promoting their development and prosperity The arts and creative industries are positioned as strategic economic sectors in rural communities, as significant contributors to regional and rural economies. Good quality Internet connection helps workers of creative industries to have their jobs without geographical limitations.

Creative places include infrastructure, created environment, institutions and support services, which combine communication and culture of entrepreneurship. Small cities and rural areas have qualities and traits which differ from big cities, and this is their strong advantage. There are five aspects of creative places and their relation to creative industries and creative people that have been analysed – governance, natural and built environment, social and symbolic capital, economic activities and connectivity. Quality of life, nature and creative heritage of the region are important factors which attract creative people.

After reviewing the theoretical sources of literature, the question arises – which one is the first? Creative people or creative place? The answer is somewhere in the middle, as relation between creative people, creative industries and creative places is an ongoing process – one element influences another; positive changes in creative places attract creative people, who, in turn, are more motivated to develop companies and products of creative industries in these places. Creative people choose places where they enjoy and have access to the economic, social and environmental mix, while small cities and rural areas are able to develop in a creative direction if they have citizens who are able to encourage such changes. A targeted promotion of creative industries creates a unique regional identity, which is becoming a competitive advantage for local creative industries and related creative entrepreneurs. Moreover, the strategy for the development of creative industries does not in any way contradict other economic strategies, they can complement each other.

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ARTISTIC FREEDOM, CENSORSHIP AND SELF-CENSORSHIP IN THE FILM INDUSTRY OF LATVIA

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Abstract

The concept of censorship associates with authoritarian regime; however, it is not unequivocally, i. e., also in a democratic country there may be obstacles that create barriers for artistic self-expression and limit the artistic process by stimulating the topicality of self-censorship. Also, in Latvia the parliamentary democracy creates legal framework that formally excludes the ideological censorship of creative process and artistic creativity. Simultaneously, the society's attitude towards artistic expressions, as well as dominant ideologic values among various groups of society and within the country may create critically condemnatory or supportive framework for certain expressions of art. The main aim of this article is to find out how the artists of today comprehend and explain manifestations of artistic freedom, censorship, and self-censorship in Latvia nowadays. Eighteen in-depth interviews involving the Latvian directors of the films were conducted in the framework of FARP "The art of nationalism: Social solidarity and exclusion in contemporary Latvia". In general, the study (1) reveals multi-shaped manifestations of censorship in the creative activities and dominant conditions in which it forms, (2) allows to follow up the sources of self-censorship for artistic activity, and (3) draws conclusions on the conditions and barriers of creative freedom in Latvian society.

Keywords: *artistic freedom, censorship, film art, self-censorship*.

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Introduction

The article continues an academic discussion on how different restrictive factors in the creative process of art manifest in practice. The focus of the study is the issue of artistic freedom, censorship, and self-censorship in the film industry of Latvia. The phenomenon of artistic freedom in the context of the article is described by theories of philosopher Haig Khatchadourian, whereas censorship discourse is expanded by conclusions of the cultural studies researcher Beate Müller, but researchers Philip Cook and Conrad Heilmann help to explain multidimensionality of self-censorship. The main aim of the article is to establish how artists comprehend and explain manifestations of artistic freedom, censorship, and self-censorship in contemporary Latvia. The empirical part of the study is based on qualitative research methodology that allowed to acquire opinions of the study participants, as well as analyse the reflection of informants on their personal creative process experience and conditions in which it has formed. The study is done within the framework of FARP "The art of nationalism: Social solidarity and exclusion in contemporary Latvia" during which 18 in-depth partly structured interviews were conducted involving film directors from Latvia. The transcripts of the in-depth interviews with the directors have been used as data source for the study. Data is coded using thematical analysis and structured in four topics: perception of the film directors on the concept of artistic freedom, censorship experience within the personal creative activity, private self-censorship experience, public self-censorship experience.

The concept of artistic freedom

The concept of artistic freedom can be interpreted differently. This article examines the detailed explanation on the artistic freedom by the philosopher Haig Khatchadourian. According to Khatchadourian, "*every person has the right to self-realization, and that includes the right for the artist to create freely both as a form of self-realization and as a freedom to create as an existing state. The right to self-realization can be regarded as the main form of freedom, which is the basis of all values*" [Khatchadourian 1978: 25]. The author considers that the artist has the right to create freely, because the creation of good art lets the artist to self-actualize, and this self-realization as a human also includes the self-actualization as an artist [Khatchadourian 1978: 25]. At the same time the author also emphasizes that no rights emerge and exist in the vacuum – the actual use of self-realization rights is limited by the rights of other individual. There can be two theoretical limitations for exercising the artistic freedom rights to create [Khatchadourian 1978: 25]. Firstly, the artist's freedom to create is limited by other persons' right to exercise their freedom and rights. For example, the artist is not allowed to engage in certain lifestyle one deems necessary for oneself or pleasant to own creative process of art, if it in any way forbids or disturbs other artists

to create, and limits or disturbs the lifestyle chosen by other members of the society. Secondly, the artist's own drive for creativity cannot disturb the lifestyle chosen by other members of the society, for example, in author's opinion, it is morally unfair to use one's influence on harming other artists that one envies or opposes their creative process of art. As the author emphasizes such cases are extremely rare and looking from the historical perspective more often quite the opposite is happening – state and people that are not artists based on their own opinion of what is good or bad art press the artists into creating what they supposedly should create [Khatchadourian 1978: 25].

As the legal researcher Simina Tanasescu expresses, the individual freedom is the core value in the contemporary societies and freedom of expression is the basis of human rights in any liberal democracy [Tanasescu 2011: 11]. Tanasescu emphasizes that the art aspires towards absolute, but the freedom can never be absolute. In addition to that, the expression of freedom in the democratic society provides free movement of information that is one of the key foundations in any democratic country and goes hand in hand with precluding the censorship and self-censorship [Bar-Tal 2017: 38]. Freedom of expression is closely related to artistic freedom because once the freedom of expression emerges it allows freely express one's opinion in public, as well as offers an opportunity to receive and share information freely. Unlimited access to all necessary official information is essential for general freedom dimension and a condition for free political climate ensuring well-functioning democratic society.

Censorship and self-censorship

The cultural studies researcher Beate Müller stresses that until about twenty years ago, the term *censorship* was commonly restricted to direct forms of regulatory intervention by political authorities (mostly the state and the church). Two types of censorship were commonly distinguished: pre-publication censorship, or licensing, and post-publication censorship [Müller 2004: 5]. Censorship was seen as a set of concrete measures carried out by someone in a position of authority to exercise the right to censor. Many countries, including Latvia, have encountered censorship, for example, by being under the regime of the Soviet Union. During the Soviet Union the society lived in an era of total information blockage – information was hidden, censored, certain publications and authors were forbidden. As the author Valeria Stelmakh mentions, "*the censorship of the Soviet period as distinguished from, for example, that of czarist Russia had a number of specific features. First, it was not restrained by any provisions of law and hence was arbitrary and not accountable to anyone; second, it was carried out, for the most part, before publication; and lastly, it was performed in secret and anonymously*" [Stelmakh 2001: 144].

Nowadays the concept of censorship has gained new nuances and is perceived more extensively than ever before. Currently, the censorship can be not only institutionalized as a repressive political measure turned towards the artist, but it can also be influenced by the social interaction and communication among members of society. Along with it these various discourse forms regulate what can be said to whom, in what way and what the context is. Respectively with time and these various censorship forms the phenomenon of self-censorship is constantly observed and studied, for example, such authors as Philip Cook, Conrad Heilmann, Beate Müller et al. have reflected upon this subject. According to the contemporary understanding the censorship and self-censorship often are not related to a certain authoritarian regulation but the ones playing an essential role are the culture canon, norms, self-censorship, and self-doubt [Müller 2004: 12]. Whereas the political sociologist Olga Zeveleva with reference to the theories developed by Bourdieu and Matthew Bunn explains that *self-censorship is the type of structural censorship that arises from the way in which social life and access to resources are organised.* Respectively, the self-censorship of content creators (in the case of the study conducted by O. Zeveleva – journalists) is anyway stimulated by state regulation only it has transformed from traditional views as a repressive type of censorship to "hidden" or "deceiving" self-censorship that relates to opportunities for content creators to access resources [Zeveleva 2020: 47]. Sociologist Daniel Bar-Tal explains self-censorship as a situation that any individual can encounter daily, respectively, this process occurs when a person due to various reasons decides to withhold accurate information or, their own thoughts from family, friends, media, or other members of society. In all such cases the individual is convinced that disclosure of information is risky, and it is necessary to hide it [Bar-Tal 2017: 37].

Researchers Philip Cook and Conrad Heilmann in their theoretical papers propose an idea of two self-censorship categories. Namely, self-censorship can be divided into public and private self-censorship [Cook, Heilmann 2010]. In case of public self-censorship, the role, norms, values of society and its attitude towards certain topics are very important [Cook, Heilmann 2010: 2]. In this case the artist limits oneself due to impulses of public discourse. In the case of private censorship, the role is played by author's self-censorship [Cook, Heilmann 2010: 14]. Within its framework there is no relation to how the society defines something, what is or is not acceptable. In both cases the essential difference is clear, respectively, in the first case it is possible to identify certain censor and its agent to be "blamed" for actualizing self-censorship, whereas in the second case the censor and agent is one and the same individual [Cook, Heilmann 2010: 15].

> "*Public self-censorship describes a range of individual reactions to a public censorship regime. Self-censorship thus understood means that individuals*

> *internalize some aspects of the public censor and then censor themselves. Private self-censorship is the suppression by an agent of their own attitudes where a public censor is either absent or irrelevant*" [Cook, Heilmann 2010: 2].

By exploring the self-censorship phenomenon, it becomes clear that not always it is an intentional process where the artist assesses the possibilities to include or exclude potentially contestable content. The ultimate form of self-censorship is the physical destruction of artist's own unpublished work prior to public accessibility [Müller 2014: 25], for which we often find out from the biographies on historical individuals of literature, fine arts, and other art areas. As an example, Müller mentions Kafka, who was severely doubting the quality of his own literary works. Kafka expressed his wish for his friend Max Brod to destroy all his unpublished papers after his death. In this case it is important to note that the political context in which Kafka lived and worked, may affect the scope of actions that can be taken by the artist, however in case of destroying works, it cannot be regarded as the main reason for their destruction. As Müller concludes, "*these limitations of a simple cause-and-effect determinism make the analysis of censorship more challenging: the many factors relevant to censorship – the writer, the text, its code, its medium, the reader, and the context – encourage us to view it as an unstable process of actions and reactions in the struggle for power, publicity, and the privilege to speak out, rather than merely as a repressive tool with predictable results*" [Müller 2014: 25].

Considering the factors of self-censorship, Daniel Bar-Tal distinguishes five motivational conditions why an individual decides to censor oneself, respectively, (1) motivation to protect the in-group, (2) personal motivation to avoid external negative sanctions and gain positive rewards, (3) motivation to protect self-image, (4) motivation to protect a belief, and (5) motivation to protect a third party/group [Bar-Tal 2017: 46]. By exploring these five motivations it can be concluded that content creator or in the context of this study – an artist – during the creation process of his work identifies any existing external risks that can threaten the contextual values, norms, ideas represented in the work thereof offending reputation or image of oneself or other groups/individuals of society. The process of self-censorship includes both personal stimulating factors in the form of expressing one's own opinion, in case of artists – self-expression, and the importance of collective identity, the society's understanding on certain topics, current events [Bar-Tal 2017: 43].

In general, it is possible to conclude that self-censorship includes various personality traits, general and specific world views, values, norms, attitudes, and motivations [Bar-Tal 2017: 60]. The study of this phenomenon has become more complex, however, according to the authors of this article, it is essential not to miss these processes for the purposes of this study, when looking at the development of

creative process, more specifically in this case – films, in order to understand whether and how it is possible to observe the presence of self-censorship in the works of Latvian film directors, thus discovering what values and norms are essential for the creative people of film industry in contemporary Latvia.

Empirical analysis of research data. Opinions and experience of film directors

Trends mentioned below were discovered during the 18 in-depth interviews with the Latvian film directors:

1. Reflections on the concept of artistic freedom;
2. Censorship experience;
3. Private self-censorship experience;
4. Public self-censorship experience.

For the anonymity purposes, the personal names and/or film titles identifying an individual have been substituted with "X" sign in the quotes below used to illustrate the analysis of empirical data.

1. Reflections on the concept of artistic freedom

By reflecting on the concept of artistic freedom, artists mostly admitted that artistic freedom includes the ability to express freely and create art free from any restrictions. Freedom should not be influenced neither by political tendencies, nor ideologies, nor the opinion of surrounding society, nor prevailing processes in the world. At the same time artists face an inner censorship and political processes in the world that can prevent manifestations of artistic freedom.

> *Most likely, for me as an artist, if we discuss me as an artist not as an individual, then the freedom means not being afraid to speak out in terms of what I believe, well, in a sense, that exactly this language used in the art is not affected by the opinion of external persons, not directly influenced by any kind of ideological or political tendencies, in spite of that in the moment when such text, film is created in some sort of sense it is ideological, but ideology in this case is some kind of my own private ideology. Also not being afraid of complex forms of expression that could be uncomfortable for wider film-viewing masses. Freeing oneself from such fears is very complex and personally I think that this freedom cannot be captured in any pure form, you never really reach it. You only try to contrast your own fears from such freedom with your own, so to say, life restrictions, limited lifetime by trying to show that this captivity or moment of fear has no meaning at all.*

Ethical dilemmas are crucial, for example, whether to include children in movies, one of the film directors mentions in this case it is ethical, where as an example we can look at a scandalous French movie, streamed on Netflix, "Cuties".

> *Well, art should have not a single limitation, there should be space to do absolutely anything one wants. The issue concerns the practical execution – related to the ethics of the author, let's say, is it good or bad to include little children in the movies?*

> *The question itself – what is freedom? It is the same for artist or any other person. Freedom of expression. Freedom from perception. Freedom goes hand in hand with responsibility.*

In general, it can be concluded that artistic freedom is extremely important for the film directors, and they cannot imagine creating their art without it. It is worth mentioning that various film directors interpret the artistic freedom differently and there is no single terminology that would describe it, however, there is a common denominator – true freedom to express one's opinion and perspective.

2. Latvian film directors' experience with censorship

Considering the state censorship, artists admitted that they have not encountered it in contemporary Latvia, except one case that is analysed more deeply in the quote below, however, various directors recalled their past experiences during the Soviet Union.

Reflecting on the quote below, the informant, kind of jokingly, says that during the Soviet times there was no censorship as the rules were already clear – what is or not allowed to be displayed – thus the guidelines for everyone were clear, and this indicates to the fact that the existence of censorship was generally known phenomenon.

> *During the Soviet times censorship as such was not existing as we knew what can or cannot be done – it was already somehow in our blood. I was so trained, and the greatest censorship I usually received was from my colleagues: "X, no need for this, it won't go through, it will be too much, do not include this and that." If only once I would have received from my colleagues, we had an editorial board, Moscow won't accept it, we were the greatest, the greatest were here.*

Separately informant also mentions that he has encountered censorship during the process of project creation, where in this case collaborating with various directors,

the Latvian Television ordered to cut out a piece of material with a condition that if it is not done, the movie will not be shown at all.

> *Latvian Television censored and ordered to cut out a piece with a condition that if it is not done, then the movie will not be shown at all, especially some kind of not so complementary passage both in text, and photos about Kārlis Ulmanis.*

Some artists also mention that they have faced the censorship and that it exists in other countries, for example, Russia, Hungary, Ukraine, Belarus, Poland.

> *No, no, of course not in Latvia, but by producing a film in Russia I was suddenly informed that some of those shots cannot be assembled, and such films cannot be shown. I asked – why? Because when I produced a film "X" with a widow X in the shot where she says: "In all truth, Putin, is a great fool", then I was told that it must be cut out as it is not polite* (laughing). *Also, I replied, it is not me who says that, it is the heroine.*

Another director mentions encountering censorship that came from professional colleagues, however, those are just a few cases, and are not related to any certain authority or institution.

> *I have encountered censorship from my closest professional colleagues. There are separate cases that are drastically huge but those are individual, specific cases for whom the reasons are psychological and related to human nature.*

In general, it can be concluded that in Latvia there is no dominant manifestation form of censorship, however, it must be emphasized that in several cases artists faced censorship both in the Soviet Union and in the 1990s. Examples from other countries also can be marked out, as mentioned in the quote above when the censorship is related to showing certain politicians from not so favourable angle.

3. Private self-censorship experience of Latvian film directors

During the interviews with Latvian film directors above mentioned theoretically discussed private self-censorship or extremely distinct self-criticism of an artist towards oneself was discovered. It should be specified that personal censorship refers to aesthetical aspects, not political, as it was in Soviet times. Directors see themselves as this censor, agent that stimulates self-censorship by doubting the quality of production. In such cases artist finds it difficult to explain why it is happening so. Inner intuition, doubts, self-criticism are mentioned here.

> *At other times it is not so, then it is only the inner censor, and that inner censor is terrible, as every morning, today also I come, and the film is almost assembled but I am thinking that it has to be thrown into the Daugava River together with the computer (..) But for me it is so that with years the intuition develops itself, that very often upon starting to assemble, it is a full patience*[1]*. You complete it, assemble and understand that it is absolutely to no good!*

In some of the interviews it can be observed that the self-criticism and desire to censor oneself in some way internally is based on the pressure that the certain form of the film requires, respectively, the result that will be published cannot be changed with time, as for example, it could happen in the theatre when producing plays, therefore this pressure promotes strong self-criticism before publishing the ready production.

> *I believe everyone, at least I do not know anyone who would not have inner self-censorship and I believe that each director is his own worst critic and judge (..) But this inner censorship, of course, exists, because that film may be a lasting value, maybe, if we compare with theatre – you watch a play and it is not memorized, you go home and in a way this play fades away. The film you can watch after two, five, ten years and you still will need to answer to the same questions, is it still relevant, have you not been mistaken in, let's say, your world's vision, the way you have created.*

Along with this pressure the artist is overtaken by doubts, worries on whether his own current opinions on how the film should be, how it should address certain topics and what are the most suitable artistic instruments, will not differ from his own opinions in future.

4. Public self-censorship experience of Latvian film directors

During interviews reflecting on the presence of censorship, artists individually highlight public censorship – willingness to be liked by the society and create their artistic works either by emphasizing certain topics or silencing their inner creative voice to surrender to certain opinions of a society, or in a way that the production would not be received negatively. Based on materials discussed in the theoretical part, such type of censorship can be called public self-censorship.

> *But I think, certainly, self-censorship. Already very unconsciously when choosing topics to be discussed in films, when choosing characters, maybe also*

[1] Patience – a card game.

> *even in more technical processes as actor castings or what is included in the publicity materials of a film... how you are trying to show yourself. There it can be sensed that in a way you divert from who you truly are and that you try to censor yourself for the society's liking.*

Considering the factors promoting self-censorship some film directors reveal what are those topics that still are considered sensitive, possibly unacceptable to the society or where there is a risk of public censorship once the director chooses to include such topics in the creative process of art. Firstly, minority issue is mentioned as one of the most common sensitive topics, especially issues regarding Latvian and Russian nationalities and thereof national relations issues. Secondly, the intolerance towards another minority group, i. e., sexual minorities or LGTBQ+ community, is also mentioned that could potentially contribute to the risk of public censorship. Thirdly, informants frequently refer to sensitive topics as a set that is relevant at the exact moment in the public space, few of the mentioned examples include immigrant issues, scandals of "Cheka bags"[1] that are related to criminal offences done at the time when Latvia was occupied by Soviet Union and alike.

> *For example, from such National documentary films, the topic that would be uncomfortable is the following: who are all KGB and Cheka workers, showcasing that they are still taking some positions, and some uncomfortable situations, and all the "Cheka bags", and maybe those who are not in those "Cheka bags", or what is truly happening with the European funds, that from the state's point of view could be like – wait a minute, we don't want this to surface, and certainly some people would not be interested in doing so. From art, first that comes in mind, even if the relationship between Latvian Russians and Latvians improves, it is also a topic for the society – was it necessary? Or, let's say, I talked with X once, for instance, the Jew issues, if we dig them out ourselves and feel that there is such a surrounding pressure.*

It can be concluded that these are some of the topics that could encourage artists to self-censor their art, artistic vision, by trying to avoid or minimize the exposure of certain groups in their films. At the same time, other film directors reveal that during the creative process in art they feel fully free and are trying to not limit themselves due to biases and stereotypes determined by the society.

[1] Cheka bags – this expression is used in Latvia to denote the collection of data about KGB agents.

Conclusions

In general, the study, firstly, discloses the complex relationship between artistic freedom and censorship in the contemporary society, as well as the conditions it develops, and secondly, allows to follow the self-censorship sources of artistic activity; thirdly, draws up conclusions on the conditions and barriers of artistic freedom in Latvian society.

Corresponding to the aim of the study it was established that theoretically the artistic freedom is based on absolute freedom of expression that cannot be limited in any way. Among the artists, the dominant opinion is that it should be so, however, at the same time the self-censorship issue that is inescapable occurrence in contemporary society, does not lose its importance. Self-censorship can be accomplished in two ways – as private and as public or a self-censorship induced by society [Cook, Heilmann 2010]. It is worth noting that during the interviews the dominant opinion is that the state censorship is not identified as an existing problem in Latvia. Censorship in Latvia does not express itself as an ideological, authoritative prohibition, state normative, but in the individual interview cases it can be observed that sometimes politicians or film buyers give recommendations on what should be displayed in the film and in what way. In general, during interviews a tendency can be observed that the answers of directors when asked to go into details on censorship mostly are leaning towards self-censorship experiences and examples. In conclusion, as previously stated, the main, typical taboo topics towards which it is possible to observe society's intolerance and the risk of self-censorship are various types of minorities – either national or sexual whose inclusion in the creative process of art could amplify the thinking on how, what, in what way, and to what extent include in the production. As well as it is important to consider the topics that are current and sensitive for public space at current moment in general and could potentially create sharper reactions from the society.

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RUSSIAN SPEAKERS FROM LATVIA IN SWEDEN: BETWEEN IDENTITIES AND MEMORIES*

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Abstract

This ethnographic research looks into Russian speakers from Latvia, who now live in Sweden. Russian speakers from Latvia have been adapting to the new life situation after the collapse of the Soviet Union, being challenged by requirements to adjust rapidly. It has not been an easy path, as well for those Russian speakers who were born or grew up already in the independent Latvia. They have been carrying along stories and memories from their families, which did not always fit in the newly rebuilt Latvia. The research investigates how they adjusted and remade themselves to adjust to the new life situation. It looks into their identity and belonging issues and their interpretations of the sensitive historical events.

Keywords: *Russian speakers, Latvia, identity, collective memory*.

Introduction

History is our lost referential, that is to say our myth, was noted by the famous French sociologist Jean Baudrillard [Baudrillard 1994: 43]. Indeed, history in some regards can become a myth, when told from the perspective of different groups of people, who are carriers of their group's collective memory. There can be different stories and narratives about the same event. Both are fitting the reality, but being told from different perspectives, and carrying the frame of the subjectivity along with them.

* The article was researched and written before the current war in Ukraine.

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History and collective memory stories of post-soviet countries have been shifting shapes and are not seldom leaving different groups of people alienated one from each other. This is the case of Latvia with a large Russian-speaking community. According to public information on the website of the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia [Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia no date given], 42% of the total population of Latvia around year 2020 are other nationalities than Latvian. Approximately 30% are Russians and other 12% for the most part are Russian speakers; therefore, this group is addressed as Russian speakers, not solely as Russians.

Russian speakers in Latvia have been living in the separate information space and in a separate community since the renewal of Latvia's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 [Golubovs 2003]. It has happened mostly due to the slow integration process, which involves issues with citizenship and problems to acquire the good command of the sole official language, which is Latvian [Kehris-Brands no date given].

The article aims to investigate how different Russian speakers from Latvia, who now reside in Sweden, formulate their identity and belonging, and what kind of shifts has happened in their perception, related to some questions which are tied together with the collective memory of their group. The research question therefore is posed: how are identity and belonging being negotiated by Russian speakers from Latvia who now live in Sweden?

The first section looks into the formation of the Russian speaking identity in Latvia. The second section reveals the ways how collective memory is being formed and transferred. Methodology section describes how the data was gathered and analysed. A collection of interviews is used to illuminate the navigation of Russian speakers' identity and collective memory, followed by a summary that is offered in the sub-section Discussion, which is followed by the Conclusion.

Russian-speaking identity

Even though Russian speakers in Latvia came from different territories with their own culture, ethnic Latvians often call all Russian speakers 'Russians' [Jurkane-Hobein, Kļave 2019: 165]. Language has been one of the identity markers to build Russian speakers' identity in Latvia, but it is not the only one. After collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 Latvia gained back its independence. Latvia's official language became Latvian, leaving many Russian speakers in a limbo as they were demanded to know the language, which they could manage to live without in Soviet Latvia. Official state policy regarding the learning process was not always supportive. There were other factors as well which influenced the division between the Latvian and Russian speaking communities, like the citizenship issue and educational system

[Cheskin 2016; Much 2014]. No matter of those different obstacles many Russian speakers nowadays have found their ways to adjust. Ammon Cheskin writes that "*on the one hand the policies and discourses associated with the Latvian state make it difficult for Russian speakers to associate and identify with Latvia. On the other hand, Latvia is their home, not even the Soviet Union. There is therefore a natural desire to identify with Latvia on some level*" [Cheskin 2016: 3]. Jurkane-Hobein and Kļave argue though that one can't deny the influence of the Soviet Union's space in forming the identity of Russian speakers in Latvia, especially when it comes to the older generation [Jurkane-Hobein, Kļave 2019: 165].

It is not suggested that Russian speakers are simply becoming 'Latvianised', or that they are slowly assimilating into Latvian culture. Instead, analysis of Russian-speaking discourse demonstrates how certain groups of Russian speakers are increasingly integrating into Latvian society while maintaining/developing, a heightened sense of group identity that is defined both in opposition to, and in synthesis with, Russian and Latvian identities [Cheskin 2016: 4]. David Laitin [1998] outlines the emergence of a specific 'Russian-speaking nationality', distinct from Russian identity. Neil Melvin [1995] suggests that it is the result of the 'Balticisation' of Russian speakers.

Nowadays many Russian speakers have adjusted and have been integrated linguistically, but as pointed out by Cheskin, many of them have maintained a form of separation from the main – Latvian-speaking community [Cheskin 2016: 11]. One of the reasons of this separation might be the Citizenship Law. Many Russian speakers were ineligible for citizenship initially as they could not trace their ancestry to the pre-Soviet Latvia of 1940 [Cheskin 2016]. The Citizenship Law was partially changed and allowed to become a citizen based on linguistic proficiency in Latvian and knowledge of Latvian history [Cheskin 2016: 13], which still has been considered as offensive by some Russian speakers who were born in Latvia and speak Latvian. Another reason for Russian speakers in Latvia for not being able to identify as Latvians might be ethnic Latvians themselves, who, as pointed out by Jurkane-Hobein and Kļave [2019: 174], consider them 'less legitimate' Latvians. It correlates with the research done by Ehala [2018], who writes that one can have strong attachment to the particular identity, but it does not automatically mean that the person can perform authentically in it and be fully accepted as a group member by others in the group. At the same time, the linguistic identity can become more ethnic over time "*when community experiences a common fate, and develops common cultural practices that can become core values*" [Ehala 2015: 186]. That is seen in Russian speakers in Latvia and Estonia, especially when it comes to the younger generation Russian speakers.

Collective memory in post-soviet Latvia

French sociologist, and the 'founding father' of memory studies [Gensburger 2016], Maurice Halbwachs says that *individual memory* is shaped by the *collective memory*, and the *collective memory is composed of individual memory*. There are also groups that hold collective memories across generations [Cordeiro 2021: 766].

Veridiana Domingos Cordeiro [2021] argues that memory is neither a thing that we grasp and convey nor a cognitive skill that retrieves past images and establishes random connections among them. According to him the memory is relational and processual. It is relational because although it is a mental traveling, it hinges upon the interaction with others. Others trigger, change, and influence our memories and vice-versa. It is processual because it lies in the temporal flow. Also, memory likely acquires a material representation through written narratives or other artefacts [Cordeiro 2021: 770].

Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley [2013: 128] point out that "*the transmission of memory is not a straightforward transfer of experiential cargo from one generation to another or between contemporaries; it is the process through which the pasts of others are heard*". There is another aspect of the memory, mentioned by Marianne Hirsch [Hirsch 2008: 114], who talks about the children of Holocaust survivors, calling them as 'generation of post memory'. It can be applied in other contexts as well such as post-soviet experience and the transference of the family memory in both Russian-speaking and Latvian community. Pickering and Keightley are on the same page about it, saying that through our embeddedness in the family the experience of the previous generation is integrated into our own way of being in the world [Pickering, Keightley 2013: 119].

There can be colliding narratives that are related to the same historical event but told differently by different groups of people. Problems can arise if one particular minority community is in conflict with other mnemonic communities in the same society [Nugin 2021: 199]. That is the case of the Russian-speaking community versus Latvian when it comes to the issue of the collective memory, specially related to the events just before and after the Second World War. Besides collision there is a risk to marginalize the memory of the opposite side [Nugin 2021: 200].

The Second World War and the consequences of it is one of those events, which brings along a lot of tension between official Latvia's state narrative and the narrative of Russia. Russian speakers in Latvia have been affected to a large extent by the last one. The victory in the Second World War for most of the Russian speakers in Latvia brings along a positive charge but it has a different emotional charge for many Latvians. Cheskin [2016: 10] puts it in this way: "*from Russia's perspective the Red Army heroically liberated Europe from the grip of Nazism. Within the official Russian narrative, the Baltic States were not occupied, and the Soviet Union was able to bring*

many positive achievements to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. On the other hand, the Latvian historical narrative casts Stalinism in the same evil light as Nazism. The Soviet era is portrayed as brutal, and emphasis is placed on the Soviet Union's illegal occupation of a previously independent nation state."

It is possible to observe that different traces of the collective memory which are transferred via family and affected by the official state narrative and usage of the particular information space, is difficult to reconcile in order to overcome the gap between two communities when it comes to the question about the Second World War.

Methodological principles of research

Phenomenology as a form of qualitative research was used to analyse lived experience by the prism of the Russian speakers from Latvia in Sweden. Jennifer Fereday and Eimear Muir-Cochrane [2006: 81] state that phenomenology "*is a descriptive and interpretive theory of social action that explores subjective experience within the taken-for-granted, "common sense" world of the daily life of individuals*." Furthermore, Alfred Schulz [1967] talks about two distinct senses of comprehending interpretive understanding. The first sense is related to the situation where people interpret or make sense of the phenomena of the everyday world. In the second sense of understanding it by generating 'ideal' types that form the basis to interpret or describe the phenomenon being investigated.

Empirical data consist of 13 qualitative, deep, semi-structured interviews with Russian speakers from Latvia, conducted in Sweden in the end of 2020 and until the beginning of 2022. Ethnographical approach has been used in this research, which is defined as *being highly descriptive writing about particular groups of people* [Silverman 2020: 492]. The practice of ethnographic research involves "*the relationship between researcher and researched is typically even more intimate, long-term and multi-stranded, and the complexities introduced by the self-consciousness of the objects of research have even greater scope*" [Davies 2008: 3–4]. All of the interviewees, except one, were born either in Soviet Latvia or independent Latvia. One of them emigrated to Latvia from Russia just after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Interviews were conducted mostly in Latvian, with some exceptions were Russian or English language were used partly. To maintain the anonymity, their names have been changed.

Interviews and discussion

Identity issues: between Russianness and Latvianness

It has not been easy for Russian speakers in Latvia to define themselves. The paradox of being a Russian speaker but being born in Latvia, has been influencing

their identity formation. It has been even more confusing for those Russian speakers, who are not Russians but carriers of other nationalities. Confusion in this case might be even more present. At the same time Russian speakers, even though sometimes coming from only Russian-speaking environment around them, at some point usually get exposed to the Latvian-speaking community, which might bring along new discoveries and dilemmas. Some of the interviewees have been exposed to Latvians and the language in their daily life only when going to the University. That is the case for Jaroslava, 36 years old, who has been living in Sweden for 16 years. She admits that she lacked communication with Latvians, which made it difficult when she started her studies only in Latvian at the University. That was her first contact with the same age peers coming from Latvian speaking community. Oksana, 45 years old, has been living in Sweden for 23 years, similar to Jaroslava, established contacts with Latvians while studying at the University: *I found myself in another world. I got the feeling that I belong.*

Yelena, 38 years old, has lived in Sweden for two years, defines herself as Russian from Latvia. She comes from a mostly Russian-speaking city Daugavpils, and studied in Russian in the secondary school. She had to pass the naturalization process to gain the citizenship. The exam and the oath given after that made her sort out different inner questions about belonging and identity. As the result of it and after getting to know more Latvians and finding out more about their culture, she developed a strong tie to Latvia:

> *I have strong feeling of love towards Latvia. That became even more clear when I moved to Sweden. I feel proud that I am from Latvia.*

Yelena's husband is a Russian speaker too. In order to transfer a bit of a Latvian culture and the language to their kids, they take them to the Latvian Saturday school in Stockholm.

Another situation is observed with those interviewees who studied in Latvian secondary schools before the University. In those cases, it is possible to see that acquiring a good command of Latvian early on has helped to get to know Latvian community from inside so to say but it has come at the cost of either feeling that native Russian has become weaker or with other types of confusion and dilemmas regarding identity issues. Yekaterina, 34 years old Russian from Latvia, has been in Sweden for four years, says, she was happy to be studying in Latvian already in the primary school, even though nobody in her family could speak Latvian fluently. Her Mum thought it would be best for her to know the language to have it easier later on in her life. Yekaterina remembers that there were occasions that even though her command of Latvian was as a native speaker's, Latvian colleagues sometimes could be hostile towards her based on her nationality. Yekaterina was working in the Latvian

kindergarten and some colleagues said that she should be better working in the Russian day-care as her mentality was not fitting for the workplace.

I do not have Russian mentality as I am Latvianised. I know Latvian traditions and celebrate Latvian holidays, says Yekaterina, who considers her to be more Latvian than Russian at this point. She mentions that earlier on she even considered to change her name to sound more Latvian. Asked if she sees any losses as Russian to be Latvianised, Yekaterina says that she does not, even though her Russian might have been weakened, but she can still use it and communicate on satisfactory level.

Marianna, 32 years old, living eight years in Sweden, unlike her siblings, went to Latvian school. She like Yekaterina admits that her Russian has suffered as she cannot write so well in Russian. Marianna has a Ukrainian and Polish heritage but the language spoken in the family was Russian. Even though her Latvian friends never treated her differently than other kids, Marianna admits that she felt different as it was somewhat emphasized in the family that they all were different from Latvians. She says that it was not stressed in a positive or a negative way; it was just feeling while growing up. Marianna reveals that she felt as Latvian for the first time when moving to Sweden. She is married to a Latvian and speaks only Latvian to her young kids as it feels more natural for her but wishes that they learned Russian too.

On the sensitive questions of history

The Second World War and events around it have been a *hot potato* in Latvian society. It is possible to observe the effect of the sensitivity of those issues in interviews with Russian speakers from Latvia. *I was influenced by parents*, *who watched Russian news,* admits Marianna:

> *I could not analyse myself. I had arguments with Latvian friends sometimes about the occupation issue, for example, because my version of what happened was different from them.*

Marianna tells that she started to analyse and think for herself when in the university and understood that it is not just *black or white,* when it comes to the issues of the history. She says that the feeling of the confusions is still there and the truth is somewhere in the middle between both official versions of Latvian or Russian state. At the same time Marianna admits that she feels ashamed that her older brother, who went to the Russian-speaking school, is going to the Monument of Victory in Riga on May 9. Asked why she would feel ashamed, she explains that brother is holding Russian flag while doing that, even though he has nothing to do with Russia.

Yelena admits she realized that there are two different information spaces only when moving from Daugavpils to Riga. She understood then that things which were

clear and obvious for her at that point, were not the same for Latvians. Yelena admits though that she tries not to be involved in deeper conversations about anything related to conflicts with Latvia and Russia:

> *I try to distance myself from it. The same about the interpretations regarding history. I do not want to formulate or to decide what I think. I do not know if Latvia was occupied or not. Maybe it was. It is history and we need to move on.*

She does not want to take one or another position, when it comes to the different interpretations of the history by Latvians or Russian speakers. She thinks that truth is somewhere in between. The same approach is used by Kristina, 37 years old Russian speaker from Daugavpils, who has resided now in Sweden for two years. She tries to avoid taking sides after being exposed to narratives of both sides.

Alona, 35 years old Ukrainian Russian speaker from Latvia, has been in Sweden for two years, on the other hand, says firmly that she knows that there was an occupation of Latvia. She was exposed to another interpretation until 9th grade when she studied in Russian school and in the family.

One can conclude that the 9th of May is an issue for majority interviewees to avoid taking sides. It is possible to observe that interviewees have been exposed to the narrative of the Latvian side at some point in their lives and that is causing an inner dissonance between the narrative which was accepted in their families.

Discussion

Nowadays identity and memory issues are highly topical. We are allowed to be fluid and become whoever we want to be. Homi Bhabha [2004] talks about a *third space*, a somewhat hybrid and borderline state of being. It is not the identity itself, but the continuous and fluid process of identification, as Bhabha stated when being interviewed in 1990 [Rutherford 2018]. He speaks as well about *unhomely* experience and being *beyond*, which is neither a new horizon, nor leaving behind of the past. This state of being is resonating well with Russian speakers from Latvia, carrying along with them the baggage of Soviet Latvia and trying to adjust to the current state of existence in the present-day Latvia. As it comes through in interviews done in this ethnographical research, there is this feeling of the *third space* present in the way interviewees define their identity. Sometimes the identification with *Latvianness* is clearer and more defined when leaving Latvia as in the case of Marianna. Yelena's case is also interesting as she comes from Daugavpils where majority language is Russian. Growing up in the Russian environment, she managed to develop her attachment to the Latvian culture. All interviewees associate themselves with Latvia and do not

want to be somehow mistaken for Russians from Russia. They are proud to come from Latvia and one can also talk about a Russian-speaking identity in those cases, which, as mentioned by Cheskin [2016: 4], is defined both in opposition to, and in synthesis with, Russian and Latvian identities. Fluidity of transferring from one to another appears as well in answers about the interpretation of the history, for example, occupation of Latvia and the meaning of the 9th of May. Most of the interviewees are well aware of the emotional charge that those questions carry in Latvia. They have been exposed to both sides of the story or two different narratives and in most of the cases they do not want to clearly define their own opinion. One can conclude that it puts one in the difficult situation when you are supposed to choose between your birth country, which is close to you and between the important attributes of the collective memory carried along through the generations in Russian-speaking community in Latvia.

Conclusion

It has been discovered that Russian speakers from Latvia form a somewhat *in-between* identity, which can be called as Russian-speaking identity. It can be defined, as well, as the *third space* [Bhabha 2004], the state of being in a fluid situation when it comes to the identity. They develop attachment to Latvia and want to be associated with it. Feeling of not always belonging or being accepted might linger there. At the same time some younger generation Russian speakers have reached border of blurring the linguistic and the ethnic identity [Ehala 2015], when one can be *one of them* (Latvians) instead of being *other*. But even then, when one is receiving the acceptance of the same age peers, there still might be an inner feeling of being different, *not like them* – Latvians.

When it comes to the collective memory, it has been discovered that it has been transferred and received via family and educational system. Alona mentioned that she was exposed to another version of the history until the 9th grade when she still studied in the Russian-speaking school. It changed when she continued in a Latvian school, working somewhat in the opposition to her family regarding some issues of the interpretation of the history. Cheskin [2016] mentions that younger generation of Russian speakers from Latvia have developed a more flexible view on history as they have been exposed to both competing sets of discourses. That is visible in a few stories told by younger interviewees, when they acknowledge existence of another narrative, for example, regarding Latvia's occupation. It is still majority of interviewees who do not want to choose to be part of one narrative or another one. It is due to their understanding about the high sensitivity of the issue between Russian speakers and Latvians.

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CONTEMPORARY MUSIC(AL) THEATRE IN LATVIA: PROBLEM OF DEFINITIONS AND FORMATS

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Abstract

The article aims to discuss the existing problem in contemporary art criticism, when previous genre definitions and descriptions do not match to current phenomena in question. The contemporary music(al) theatre productions tend to be diverse and often produced as hybrids, interdisciplinary projects that do not allow a single method of analysis characteristic to one of the combined artistic disciplines. The three examples provided are defined by their authors as a contemporary chamber opera, a contemporary musical and opera-film, showing the diversity of music(al) theatre genres emerging today in new form. The author concludes that the hybridization of genres and the devised creation method implies the questioning of former analytical instruments and discourses in order to develop the criticism of performing arts along with the research subject.

Keywords: *musical theatre, music theatre, hybrid genres, definitions, criticism.*

The increasing proportion of interdisciplinarity in musical genres of performing arts often makes the defining of the genre problematic. However, the analysis of particular cases (productions) each time proves that the audience in most cases deals with a unique combination of elements in every single new example. Therefore, the typological classification in contemporary performing arts becomes more and more

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difficult. Subsequently, in order to analyse or describe a new piece or production, the authors choose the easy way to accept the genre invented by the authors. And here we come to the core of this article – the genres used for the subtitling are as diverse as the projects themselves. My aim is not to present any ready results of a research, but to initiate the research instead basing on few examples of music(al) theatre (the use of parenthesis will be explained further) on Latvian scenes of performing arts. The inspiration to research this subject comes from the colleagues working at Latvian Academy of Culture in the project of contemporary theatre glossary in Latvian. However, the strongest impulses to reflect about the potential analysis of the contemporary productions come directly from the projects, performances and symbiotic relationship of the elements allowing to define at least a few characteristic features. Unfortunately, many of contemporary music(al) theatre productions are project-based and performed only a few times, thus limiting the number of potential audience members and opportunities to become subject of academic interests as well.

First thing that is unclear is the distinction between the terms "musical theatre" (*muzikālais teātris*) and "music theatre" (*mūzikas teātris*) that also tend to cause certain confusion, at least in Latvian. In English, *musical theatre* traditionally is one of the alternatives to musical or musical comedy that is a theatrical production characteristically sentimental and amusing in nature, with a simple plot, consisting of music, dance and dialogues [Encyclopaedia Britannica]. In other words, it means a dramatic production combining acting, singing and dancing to tell a story. The proportions of elements might vary as it does both in historical genres (operetta, musicals, vaudeville, opera and other) and in contemporary productions. Music theatre coming from German term (*Musiktheater*) in its turn often refers to the productions in which spectacle and dramatic impact are emphasized over purely musical factors, leading back to the tradition established in the 1960s and 1970s by such composers as Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, György Ligeti, Luciano Berio, Mauricio Kagel and other [New Grove Dictionary of Music 2001: 543–535], meanwhile Walter Felsenstein and his students Götz Friedrich, Harry Kupfer, as well as Christoph Martahler among stage directors must be mentioned in this context.

Among theatre scholars, Patrice Pavis in his revised *Dictionary of Theatre* (2015) demonstrates the changes and uncertainties often observed on scenes. In many definitions even the style of expression points out the floating meaning of the term, because the phenomenon is often described by excluding previous definitions as outdated in comparison to today's situation. According to Pavis, apart from stage music (*musique de scène*), opera or musical theatre (*théatre musical*) the relationship between music and theatre is **complicated and conflicting** (emphasis mine – L.M.B.): the relationship between music and scene are currently changing, they do not serve each other, keeping their own autonomy instead, which benefits both of the

disciplines. Music is not a servant or accompaniment to the stage action. This is not the case of the Romantic opera, where the music eats up the text and theatricality. The role of complementarity of the elements is constantly increasing, uncovering the musicality of the texts and the theatricality of the music. In theatre space music is perceived differently from that in a concert hall. It is more complicated than cinema, where each of the elements is created separately, and, nevertheless, the visual and audial parts work together. Today, says Pavis, the theory of stage music tends to claim that visual and audial perception are fully integrated and cannot be separated anymore [Pavis 2015: 224–225].

In criticism of performing arts, we often experience the problem of defining the audience members, since in Latvian we have to choose between *listeners* and *spectators* marking the distinction, that is completely irrelevant for music(al) theatre as a syncretic phenomenon. None of these words include complete meaning of what is an audience member in music(al) theatre, and each of them used separately loses the syncretic nature of the genre. Sometimes I have intuitively used the slash (listeners/spectators) allowing the reader to catch this important nuance. Pavis applies the compound *spectauditeur*, which automatically melts spectator and listener in one. Besides, he says, historically this problem has come up in opera as the competition between the conductor and stage director, whose perspectives often differ due to their distinct opinions on hierarchy of the elements of the piece, namely, which is more important – the musical score or libretto, music or words or, in one word, content [Pavis 2015: 225]. Paradoxically, opera, the most conservative genre of performing arts already shows the problem of the contemporary music(al) theatre, and at the same time *Gesamtkunstwerk* defined by Richard Wagner, where all elements melt together in order to achieve better artistic result at the end of the day, appears in increasing number of examples on today's scenes. And yet, it is not that simple as it seems. One element can uncover the ideas hidden to other, if we speak about the interconnections between music, text and movement. In music(al) theatre all elements are interconnected in horizontal co-existence that language is not able to reflect as the words are written in rows, following each other and the order of words normally matters.

Discussing the term *opera*, Pavis calls it *theatre d'excellence* that unites the pathos of music and prestige of stage that are complemented by the systematic approach of directing that deliberates opera from the status of slave of the music and extends the borders of necessary and important skills of opera singers and achieves balance between voice and acting. Pavis questions also "the operatization of theatre" (*opératisation du théâtre*), meaning the integration of visuality and musicality (text and music) in order to address the audiences simultaneously in several channels of perception.

Pavis defines music(al) theatre as follows:

> "*This contemporary form of music theatre (to be distinguished from opera, operetta and musical comedy) endeavours to bring together text, music and visual staging without integrating them, merging them or reducing them to a common denominator (as in Wagnerian opera) and without distancing them from the another (as in the didactic operas of Kurt Weil and Bertolt Brecht). (..) The genre took hold during the 1950s, when composers such as Schnebel, Kagel and Stockhausen viewed their concerts as theatrical performances rather than renderings of a score or libretto*" [Pavis 1999: 227].

Pavis resumes that music(al) theatre (the definition in French and English versions of the dictionary gives *musical theatre* and *Musiktheater* as analogue terms – L.M.B.) **still is a vast field where all possible relationship models of performing arts and music material are explored.**

Hence, the debate on where the contemporary music(al) theatre exactly starts – music, text, movement, visual image of the idea, composer or librettist, stage directors, designer or choreographer – leads into U-turn and creates the uncomfortable feeling of human brain tending to interpret long lists hierarchically, where the most important elements come first and the rest follows. For instance, let us recall the notorious problem of choreographer in contemporary theatre – in 2020, the dance scholar Inta Balode debated it with five young choreographers in her article "Towards Invisible Choreography" [Contemporary Latvian Theatre: 2020: 99–117], uncovering an important issue related to the underestimation of choreographer's contribution in contemporary theatre criticism, which roots exactly in this hierarchical perception of the elements that form the stage production and their authors. We will see the perfect illustration of this in the experience integrated in the libretto of the contemporary musical "A Voice from the Belétage", where one of the choreographers and performers tells about her first dance performance.

In this article my idea is to uncover the problem of definitions and formats in contemporary Latvian music(al) theatre, analysing a few examples among contemporary Latvian music(al) theatre productions of 2021: the contemporary chamber opera *Tagadne/Time present* by Krists Auznieks and Reinis & Krista Dzudzilo, the contemporary musical "A Voice from the Belétage" by Platon Buravicky and Maija Treile, and the opera-film *Baņuta* by Franziska Kronfoth and Evarts Melnalksnis based on Latvian original opera *Baņuta* (1921) by Alfrēds Kalniņš and Artūrs Krūmiņš. These productions demonstrate very different conceptual and aesthetical approaches to the music(al) theatre today and stimulate reflection on potential transformations regarding the approaches of performing arts criticism.

Tagadne. Time present

Tagadne. Time present is a unique, multimedia artwork with genre defined by the authors as follows: a **contemporary chamber opera** in one act, four scenes. It was performed only twice on 15 and 16 August 2021 in *Hanzas perons* (Hanseatic platform) – a modern indoors venue in Riga and the organizer of the series of contemporary performing arts events *Pārmijas*. The authors of the idea are Reinis and Krista Dzudzilo, well-known Latvian artists, stage designers and videoartists, who often stage their own performances, choreographer Elīna Gediņa, the music written by Yale graduate Latvian composer Krists Auznieks was played by the chamber orchestra Sinfonietta Rīga under the baton of Normunds Šnē and the solo part for a countertenor was interpreted by Jānis Šipkēvics, who also acts as performer together with trained contemporary dancers Ģirts Bisenieks and Rūdolfs Gediņš. According to Dzudzilos, the first impulse to make a chamber opera of various compositions by Krists Auznieks came from the opus "Fire and Rose", the laureate of the Great Music Award of Latvian in 2017 as the best new composition of the year, which has also become a part of this chamber opera. It is an interesting case as being technically a compilation or a sequence of separated compositions, *Tagadne. Time present* still keeps the dramaturgical line leading from silence to opera, creating a subtle and deep philosophical story. In a way, the case of this chamber opera is similar to a miniature Wagner's Ring cycle, where every opera of the four is an independent artwork, yet only performed in turn the idea of the whole reveals to the audience.

The dramaturgy of the production takes the audience into journey from contemplation of silence though music and poetry towards an opera (birth of silence, birth of word, birth of music, birth of opera). From the silence in dark room of the first scene, where the performers in spotlight slowly move to a ticking clock on the wall. The people sit on the benches, walk around, stand and listen to the silence. The ticks of the clock in the space become a metaphor of time. After the first scene the audience is led to the concert hall, the poems by Thomas Stearns Eliot and String Quartet No 1 by Auznieks followed by "Fire and Rose" and the culminating opus *Ir viens* ("Are One") – the birth of the opera in voice of Jānis Šipkēvics joined to the orchestra. The music in combination with visual and performing arts melt into an instantly present synergy emanating in transcendental spatial and time coordinates and enabling the aesthetic experience that Erika Fischer-Lichte calls *interart* and resumes that artistic practice is what must serve as a starting point for art studies' endeavour today to develop interart aesthetics [Fischer-Lichte: 8]. *Interart aesthetics* analysed by Fischer-Lichte seems to be the most appropriate term to deal with the contemporary hybrid forms of music(al) theatre, however the concept should be developed and approbated as a term. *Interart* eventually is subtler and more precise term than multimedia art or any other.

In an interview, the composer Krists Auznieks confessed that he has always been afraid of multimedia and cooperation with non-musicians as his perception of time in music differs from the majority of Western music in terms of so called "*canons of the orchestral and operatic scores*". "*People tend to react easier to visual stimulus than sound stimulus. Music touches us instantly, but we do not understand it instantly, because the touch is non-verbal and non-representative... If the visual art combined with the music is not attentive enough, it kills the music* (..)" [Lagzdiņa 12.08.2021]. He admits that Reinis and Krista Dzudzilo feel the music deep inside and are very cautious in order not to make the visual art dominate over music as a fundamental yet fragile ingredient in interart aesthetics when it comes to the perception. The use of spatial transformations of the scene/walls, use of videos, letters and "traffic signs" of TIME and ~~TIME~~ (strikethrough used on sign) as symbolic boundaries of entrance and exit of the time dimension offers a minimalistic, but conceptually fulfilled set design that leaves not much to desire for a chamber scale music(al) theatre project.

Music journalist Orests Silabriedis claims that one of the elements justifying the term applied by the authors – a contemporary chamber opera – is the large dark room instead of an opera house, traditional concert hall or top of the hill).

> "*Opera is defined by an orchestra, conductor, voice and staging. The music language is contemporary, the stage production is symbolic and therefore contemporary. And, writing all this, I feel myself trying to argue with potential opponents who will say that this piece has nothing to do with opera. However, this is an outdated theme. What is and what is not a symphony? What is and what is not an opera? The answer probably depends on our expectations regarding the artwork in comparison to what we actually receive*" [Silabriedis 2021].

In mid-October, the opus "Are One" premiered as a final of this chamber opera won the Grand Prix in the composition contest ROSTRUM held in Belgrad, Serbia, in category of young composers praising the value of this music apart from performative expressions. It indirectly reassures that in terms of contemporary music(al) theatre, music is still the core value and the fundamental of the artistic quality of any *interart* attempt. Nevertheless, keeping in mind that this chamber opera is combined of actually four independent compositions initially performed separately, the genre definition and interpretation is still questionable.

A Voice from the Belétage. Contemporary musical

This project subtitled as "Three found voices, one lost opera, different misunderstood authorities and two suicides" is another example of contemporary

music(al) theatre in Latvian. Music has been composed (and performed among other involved musicians) by Platon Buravicky, and the libretto has been written (and performed) by dramatist Maija Treile and three contemporary dance choreographers and dancers – Agate Bankava, Agnese Bordjukova and Inta Balode. This a typical case of devised theatre, where the material is created and performed together. The score is written for keybords, electronic, soprano, mezzo-soprano, saxophone, clarinet and French horn, where singers Monta Martinsone and Laura Grecka, saxophone player Aigars Raumanis, clarinettist Anna Gāgane and horn player Kārlis Rērihs join in not only as musicians, but also actors/performers, who move, talk and play.

First, a short comment regarding the note of genre and the subtitle. Nowadays in Latvian theatres there is a trend to give a subtitle to the productions. Sometimes it is just a hint regarding the genre, sometimes a short description to evoke interest of the audience (for instance, *playing people – MUMU* dir. by Viesturs Kairišs in Mikhail Chekhov Riga Russian Theatre, 2017; *sonata piano four-hands for stage – Based on Book* dir. by Valters Sīlis at *Dirty Deal Teatro*, 2019) and other. In this case we deal with a *contemporary musical*, which otherwise would be a regular genre description, but here expresses the oxymoronic playfulness of the composer, known for his avant-garde and beyond-canon composition techniques. And as if it was not enough with the title "A Voice from the Belétage" (a distant, passive voice of an observer?) the extensive subtitle "Three found voices, one lost opera, different misunderstood authorities and two suicides" form a trailer/teaser that partially describes the dramaturgical structure and content of the production.

"A Voice from the Belétage" was performed four times – in culture space *Totaldobže* as a part of Viskaļi Contemporary Art Festival in Riga, on Melluži open-air stage in Jūrmala, in culture centre *Devons* in Sigulda and Matīši culture centre. The reason of four events is related to the funding received from the State Culture Capital Foundation of Latvia in the programme "Support for the development of musical theatre genre" prescribing that the new production has to be showed at least four times. The format of the project is an interdisciplinary feminist art project defined as *contemporary musical*. It portrays such issues as the role of women in the society and culture, especially in the context of underestimation as well as the place of opera in the context of performing arts. On the level of basic elements, the musical still is a dramatic stage or film consisting of spoken dialogues, melodic songs, music and dance. However, in this case the genre definition seems to be added rather as a description of the result achieved during the creative cooperation than part of initial plan. The artwork is a collective creation by talented and professional artists, combining non-academic approach to composition by Platon Buravicky and the devised theatre method for the libretto created by dramatist Maija Treile and three choreographers dealing with their own experience as female artists and uncovering

to the audience the forgotten opera "Blow, the Wind!" (1960) by Latvian female composer Felicita Tomsone written in the 1950s. There is plenty of references to historical attempts of the women to fight for equal rights starting from British suffragists, Latvian female poet Aspazija combined with the recent experience of the authors, for instance, the choreographer and perfomer Agate Bankava:

> ***Dancer No 1:*** *On 2 June 1960, the State Opera and Ballet Theatre of Latvian SSR premieres the opera "Blow, the Wind!" by Felicita Tomsone. It is the first opera composed by Latvian female composer that has ever been staged. The composer is 59 years old and it is her debut in opera genre. I was 29 when I staged my first dance performance. It was called "3/4 water". After the premiere people told me that the music was great* [Treile 2021: 2].

Each of the involved persons acts as a performer, changing the roles on stage and increasing the performativity, especially when musicians and dancers turn into stage workers, adjusting lights, regulating sound and similar. Also, the production content is a contemporary collage of different styles, elements and performing methods: melo-declamation, vocalization, *recitativo*, two-voice singing, instrumental soundscapes with elaborated solo parts, ensembles with electronic sound effects and other. The interaction of text and music often includes paradoxes of form and content. For instance, in the episode, where the composer performs rap or singers vocalize different kind of documentation, like meeting minutes or press reviews related to the premiere of the opera by Felicita Tomsone. The choreography and dance is a simultaneous expression of sense instead of being any kind of *illustration in movement*. The language of contemporary dance that nowadays still often faces the insufficient preparedness of the audience, in this production is a dynamic structure element, which sometimes adds some ironic theatricality to the music and text. The choreographers and dancers extend their performing to acting, using the spoken voice, playing with intonations and dialects. However, the subject is serious. The amount of facts and numbers included in the libretto is impressive, but the most remarkable is the proportion 51:2, the current data on male and female composer operas staged at the Latvian National opera so far. The estimations say that the next opera composed by a female composer could reach the audience in 2050. It is definitely a speculation, and nevertheless provides a fertile soil for the discussion on gender equality in Latvian performing arts, turning the musical into a social drama.

Opera-film *Baņuta*

Opera-film *Baņuta* (2021) is a particular case in Latvian recent music(al) theatre productions. First of all, it is the only piece based on previously written classical opera, namely the opera *Baņuta* (1920) by composer Alfrēds Kalniņš (1879–1951)

and libretto by Artūrs Krūmiņš (1879–1969). The source opera is considered to be the first Latvian original opera based on ancient Latvian/Lithuanian legend, and it has a notable performing history throughout the 20th century. However, the new production initially was planned to be an interactive performance, which transformed into film due to Covid-19 restrictions, when the international creative team was not able to meet and rehearse, exploring the distant-working methods, filming and discussing the script on *Zoom* and the like. In terms of form opera-film *Baņuta* can be considered a postmodern interpretation of classical work, however, due to the approaches used by the creative team, it aims to become a brand-new artwork of the 21st century. It is an international project merging opera, music theatre, contemporary performativity and artistic deconstruction and recontextualiztion that transforms the traditionally national-romanticist story into a social criticism, non-sentimental psychoanalytic reflection on paradoxical humour. The cooperation with German artists – director Franziska Kronfoth and music theatre troupe *Hauen un Stechen*, the story of Baņuta is put in lights of traumatism of war, violence and personal relationship. Latvian dramatist Evarts Melnalksnis and composer Jēkabs Nīmanis interpret the source material, adding new contexts and contents. Baņuta (interpreted by three performers – German actress Angela Braun and Latvian singers Laura Grecka and Sniedze Kaņepe) takes part in partisan battles, bringing with her the collective experience of the women who have suffered through the wars in 20th century Eastern Europe (and, today, with spreading war over Ukraine, the subject seems to become even more relevant – L.M.B.). The plot has been slightly changed, adding feministic and post-colonial discourse to the previously purely national-romanticist piece. Fighting as a partisan in the mythical Baltic past and in wars in 20th century Eastern Europe at the same time, Baņuta's life is saved by weary and disenchanted Lithuanian prince, Daumants. Speeding away on a motorcycle, he brings the fighter back to his homeland in Romove, a holy Baltic site. There is about to be a wedding, but the preparations are interrupted by ravens. Their black feathers are mirroring Daumants' conscience and act as a reminder of his crime against Jargala, a girl he raped and killed during the war. Soon Daumants is killed by Vižuts, the revenging brother of Jargala and the one, who falls in love with Baņuta afterwards. Being a stranger in Romove, Daumants' community, Baņuta is caught up in sacrificial rituals and eventual revenge. However, she is strong-willed and not ready to accept the fate without saying her word and fighting for her own happiness despite all possible external and internal struggles. Irony and grotesque are used as means of expression to uncover the absurdity of any single meaning attributed to a character, action or deed. The combined aesthetics, genres and methods, where one can track opera, popular culture, folklore, feature movie and music theatre, provides a unique artistic experience opening up new horizons in dealing with cultural heritage

today. For instance, the opera score is enriched by several songs by Alfrēds Kalniņš (he has written about 250 songs for voice and piano, however, only a few of the most popular are used in the film – *Brīnos es/I wonder*, *Vakara ilgās/Evening longings* and *Mysterious cat*, the last one was composed in the USA with lyrics originally in English – L.M.B.) put in the context or contrasting it according to the plot. The composer Jēkabs Nīmanis has both composed original music and made arrangements of operatic score for instrumental quintet. The most daring issue is probably the end of the film using the overture of the opera and adding to it a new song melody sung by Baņuta, thus showing the symbolic path from the past through the present and to the future, representing the whole idea of the project. Probably being the most complex of the mentioned examples of contemporary music(al) theatre, *Baņuta* is at the same time the easiest to research in terms of correct methodology, because technically it is a film and thus can be analyzed within the framework of film criticism, meanwhile the other two remain in floating interdisciplinary space.

Conclusions

The three examples provided here form only a small part of contemporary music(al) theatre in Latvia during the last few seasons, including the hectic time of temporary Covid-19 restrictions. All of them undoubtedly show interdisciplinary characteristics and unique combination of elements that makes difficult the classification basing on similar features. This leads to the statement that currently ongoing process of contemporary performing arts, especially music(al) theatre, is diverse and continuously developing, experimenting with new formats and showing flexibility towards unprecedented situations during the creation and rehearsing phases. On the one hand, nothing is strictly limited or regulated in terms of genres and formats as far as the audience is interested to see it. On the other – the traditional genre definitions do not serve anymore to classify the artworks and criticism lacks adequate, methodology, language and tools to cover the intertwining genres and formats of the contemporary performing arts. The reason roots in the specifics of performing such productions as aforementioned. Firstly, the contemporary music(al) theatre projects are often shown once, twice or a few times and enjoyed by a limited number of audience members. Secondly, due to the limited number of performances, they are not extensively reviewed in music and theatre critics. Thirdly, the methodologic approach is questionable. The hybrid forms are typical for contemporary performing arts, including music(al) theatre, but the uniqueness of every production often does not allow to surpass the descriptive approach, which is not sufficient for academically analytical discourse. Nevertheless, current cultural agenda shows new formats emerging and developing throughout the ecosystem of performing arts. Erika Fischer-Lichte resumes:

> "*For a long time, art studies departments have led solitary lives. Be it musicology or theatre studies, art history, literature or film studies, each discipline clearly defined itself against the others through its specific subject, respective methodology and theoretical approaches.*
>
> *The last decades, however, have seen a tendency to blur the line between these traditional art disciplines based on fundamental new developments within the arts. Two developments in particular stand out in this respect:* ***first, the increasing dissolution of boundaries between different art forms, i. e., between film, theatre, dance, performance, visual arts, music and literature; and, second, the aestheticization of everyday life, i. e., the fusion of art and non-art*** *in such fields as politics, economics, new media, sports, religion and everyday practices. Both tendencies transform art studies with regard to their respective subjects of research and challenge their methodology as well as their theoretical approaches*" [Fischer-Lichte 2016].

In Latvia, we experience and document these transformations in more and more contemporary productions. Therefore, it is essential to figure out the way to deal with them analytically, in the context of terms, definitions and methodological approaches.

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ECOTHEATRE: CHANGING PERSPECTIVE FROM *WHO WE ARE* TOWARDS *WHERE WE ARE*

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Abstract

Looking from the perspective of Anthropocene, there is an urgency of environmental concerns which is growing day by day. While there is an emphasis on environmental education made by NGOs, it is important to analyze the role of the performing arts, especially, theatre, to raise awareness of environmental issues among society.

The article focuses on the development of ecotheatre on a global perspective and also highlights local examples of ecodramaturgy in the performing arts in Latvia.

This article lets to conclude that in the last years (2019–2022) there is a growing trend in Latvia reflecting on environmental topics through medium of theatrical performance and an essential raise in original ecodramaturgy. Also, there is a development of various forms in performing arts related to environmental issues. Ecotheatre becomes the form of environmental activism or, so called artivism, of theatre practitioners in Latvia.

Keywords: *ecotheatre, ecodramaturgy, sustainability, Latvian theatre, environmental activism.*

Scientists are presenting increasingly alarming data on the current state of the environment, providing day by day more pessimistic calculations and unpleasant facts about *status quo* of nature, and, therefore also of the humankind. However,

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this does not lead to a sufficiently active attitude towards nature protection issues in society. Therefore, function of the *ecotheatre* as an emerging ecosocial art practice, is to apply an emotional layer to the scientific data with various artistic strategies of theatre makers, thereby deepening ecological identity of spectators and awakening their social responsibility.

Environmental activist Bill McKibben raised a rhetoric question, asking "where are the plays" and "the goddamn operas" highlighting environmental issues which become so huge that are observable even from the space [McKibben 2005]. American theatre scholar Theresa J. May states that theatre bears an important role helping to understand our own ecological identities and our current relationship in between and among communities and places:

> "*As a living art form, the product of which is lived, affective experience, theatre invites us to live into our historic moment and unfolding crises and changes with open minds and feelers forward. As practice, theatre can breathe life into infinite enmeshment of usness giving form to unexpected intimacies across isolation, bearing witness to ecological vulnerabilities*" [May 2021: 280–281].

Nowadays theatre also functions as a collective imagination reflecting about relationship in between human and nature. *Ecotheatre* is a form of theatre entering physical halls and imaginative stages in site-specific way side by side with the shift of paradigm – from anthropocentric towards ecocentric worldview.

There is a rapid development of *environmental humanities* field in the 21st century. This field of scholarship integrates interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach including various disciplines, from anthropology, sociology to geography, history, as well as to literature and theatre [Hubbel, Ryan 2022: ix]. This field studies relationship between human and environment. As the global climate crisis intensifies, so does the interest of professionals in the arts in the relationship between human and nature.

Theatre has historically been human-centered. However, in recent decades concepts related to ecology and the environment have also entered the field of theatre studies worldwide, shifting this anthropocentric perspective towards ecocentric one: *green theatre, ecodramaturgy, community theatre, ecodirecting,* and *ecological* or *ecotheatre*.

With the growing debate about the challenges of man-made environmental impact and the urgency of environmental issues in the public sphere, performing arts in Latvia are increasingly trying to shed light on the range of these topics as well as to think about sustainability issues in the process of production.

Until now, *ecotheatre* in Latvia has not been studied in depth and systematically in the context of performing arts processes, nor has the conceptual understanding of *ecotheatre* been defined.

What is ecotheatre?

The term *ecotheatre* can be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, *ecotheatre* can be a form of performance that includes thematic messages on environmental issues highlighting the relationship between human and nature or eco-narratives, also dramaturgy that can be viewed from the point of ecocriticism [Chaudhuri 1994]. Also, in performance environmental aspect plays an important, active role [Hudson 2020: 5]. According to researcher Andrew McMurry there are four modes of ecological engagement looking from ecocritical perspective. Firstly, the **ecophobic** mode without any interest in the non-human world or accidental one. Secondly, the **ecophatic** mode where nature is a metaphore for human social experience and self-understanding. Thirdly, the **ecoliterate** mode which represents interplay between nature and human. And finally, the **ecophilic** mode – which passionately speaks about, for or with the non-human world [McMurry 2019: 18].

For instance, one of the first vivid examples of *ecotheatre* in Latvia is the performance-hike *Mārupīte* (2012) created by director Valters Sīlis and playwright Jānis Balodis. This performance is considered to be the first consistent example of ecological theatre in Latvia [Adamaite 2015: 247]. It is based on documentary facts and draws attention to the issue of environmental pollution in river Mārupīte in Riga city as it is considered to be the second most serious ecological catastrophe in the time of independent Latvia. During the performance spectators go on a hike along the river together with the team of performance trying to find out what actually happened there and who has to take responsibility about it as it is perceived as a criminal act against nature.

Researcher Wallace Heim in her paper "Theatre, Conflict and Nature" argues that the contribution of theatre to discussions on environmental issues is not to offer alternatives or raise awareness in contact with nature, but to reveal the inevitability of conflict: she sees the ecological functions of theatre in its ability to detect a crisis of democracy [Heim 2016].

On the other hand, *ecotheatre* can be used as a concept to emphasize and analyze the sustainability aspects of a performance making, taking into account the environmental impact of the processes during the production of performance, during the performance itself and also after it. As *ecotheatre* pioneer researcher Una Chaudhuri emphasizes scenes filled with rich, man-made scenography further underscore the distance between human and the nonhuman [Chaudhuri 1994]. *Ecotheatre* demands awareness of the ecological footprint or impact on the

environment made by creative team of performance. For instance, as a good practice in systematic, not free will approach there could be mentioned the National Theatre of Scotland, which built into its contracts a target for reused materials in their new sets. In Latvia, when speaking about *ecotheatre*, one can see that there are natural materials – reeds, birch twigs, stones – used for costumes and scenography for site-specific theatre or such second-hand materials as donated clothing. For instance, travelling performance-workshop for children "Plastic Hooligans" (*Plastmasas huligāni*, 2019) by Beatrise Zaķe and Pamela Butāne story about sustainability importance illustrates with workshop where children have to collect plastic garbage before coming to the performance. During the performance it is recycled to get new materials made in front of young spectators.

Ecocriticism can help to discover new lines of storytelling on environmental issues, while the most vivid stories related to nature are possible when one is physically present there [Stibbe 2019: 82]. Ecotheatrical performances mostly are taking place outdoors and, therefore, using as less as possible classic scenography solutions. For example, the performance *Mārupīte* takes place in an urban environment without additional scenography solutions, thus reducing the consumption of resources that would be required if the performance took place in a classical theatre hall on stage.

Premiers which reflect on environmental issues in time of pandemic in Latvia were mainly site-specific theatre cases: "Forest" (*Mežs*, 2020) by Valters Sīlis, "Trees Have Stopped Talking Since Then" (*No tā laika koki vairs nerunā*, 2020) by Krista Burāne, "From Ceikste to Aiviekste" (*No Ceikstes līdz Aiviekstei*, 2020) by Jānis Balodis and community theatre in Lubāna. These are performances for which environment largely becomes a co-author at the same time decreasing ecological footprint of performance itself using scenography of nature naturally.

Looking for defining *ecotheatre* as a new concept in theatre studies in Latvia, author of this paper suggests that ***ecotheatre*** is a form of the theatrical performance representing and questioning interplay between human, non-human entities, nature in the context of environmental challenges looking for alternative co-existence ways taking into consideration also sustainability aspects of the performance itself.

Ecodramaturgy: where are we?

In the 1990s, ecocriticism entered literary studies, and gradually this ecocritical view also entered theatre studies and art practice. Ecocriticism can reveal the relationship between human and nature in various ways, such as historical, psychological, political, philosophical, while actualizing the idea of environmental justice [Rižijs 2019: 447]. Ecocriticism also seeks to see the connection between environmental issues and social issues, opening up a new perspective on the co-existence of the human and particular environment including non-human entities.

Consequently, the analysis of performances in ecocritical reading is also gaining relevance. Una Chaudhuri, an American theatre researcher, was the first to address ecocriticism in theatre studies. In her 1994 article "There Should Be a Lot of Fish in This Lake: Toward an Ecological Theater" she refers to several American theatre associations that she believes show new outlines of materialistic ecological theatre practice, renouncing universalization and metaphorization of nature [Chaudhuri 1994].

Nature as a metaphore is such a common aesthetic feature in the drama of realism and humanism that there is a great possibility of missing out on the possibility of *ecotheatre*. It is the metaphorical use of nature that can interfere with the portrayal of real environmental problems.

Looking back into history of theatre and dramaturgy, one can observe that nature has mostly taken its place in the background of performances, played the role of a symbolic force or served as a metaphor for the human. For example, the ancient Greek play "Birds" (414 BC) by Aristophanes reveals the playwright's own knowledge of ornithology and the nuances of twenty-four bird species, creating a satirical work about humans.

Natural elements have also often been used to mark the passage of time, for example, by visualizing the change of seasons or the cyclicality of life as such. The beauty of nature and the threats it poses have also coexisted: in the Greek tragedy, for example, the sea is both peace and danger, and the forest is both magical and frightening. There was even a belief of ancient Greeks that acts of social injustice could bring environmental punishments as the gods could express their irritation through natural disasters [Cless 2010: 21].

Despite the discussions about roots of *ecotheatre*, historically, theatre has been generally considered to be human-centered. Some researchers mention Henrik Ibsen's play "An Enemy of the People" (1882) even giving to that status of grandfather of ecotheatre. However, this play addresses the issue of human dilemmas, not so much cares about environmental issues themselves. Locally binding case study for such dual perception of the play could be mentioned Rūdolfs Blaumanis play *Indrāni* (1904) showing conflict between generations with context of changes in natural landscape.

Even then Chaudhuri wrote that although discussions about deep or shallow ecology seem seemingly distant from theatrical science, they provide a kind of framework for these discussions to continue in the form of *ecotheatre*. Moreover, this kind of investigation, as the researcher calls it, is critical not only because the theatre engages in a socially and politically important debate, but also because such performances are important to the environmental activism movement and to the future of humanity as a whole. She emphasizes that *the ecological crisis is a crisis of values* [Chaudhuri 1994: 25]. Therefore, it is important that theatre has an important role to play in this.

Chaudhuri is opposed by the British researcher Downing Cless, who published his book *Ecology and the Environment in European Drama* in 2010. Cless emphasizes that classical dramaturgy is a matter of interpretation. Respectively, it is also possible to highlight the ecological line in the work of classics. It all depends on the director's intention. So, Cless also introduces the concept of *ecodirecting*. At the same time, the researcher points out that many ecodrama works do not have the structure of the usual message, replacing it with the direct interaction of the environment and actors, including the audience [Cless 2010]. Therefore, *ecodirecting* could be defined as an attempt to emphasize ecological themes in canonical plays.

May in her article "Greening Theater: Taking Ecocritisism from Page to Stage" says there are two strategies for making theatre greener. First, analyzing classical works from the point of view of ecocriticism. Second, creating new, original drama that corresponds to the ecodrama. Both pioneers of the concept ecodramaturgy Chaudhuri and May point out that the usual anthropocentric theatre is looking for answers to the question **WHO ARE WE?** In contrast, *ecotheatre* including *ecodramaturgy*, seeks to answer the question **WHERE ARE WE?** [Chaudhuri 1994; May 2005: 100]. As May states it:

"Theatre is not only a means to find an answer to the age-old question of who we are, but also to the urgent ecological question of where we are?"

Ecodramaturgy tends to step out of the juxtaposition of nature and culture in terms of content, allowing to look at the world from the point of view of ecological justice: *theatre could be a force for healing, justice and resilience* [May 2021: xiii].

The strategy of ecodramaturgy is to ask questions, urging them to actively review and question the existing system, rather than imposing ready-made solutions.

Awareness of ecological identity at stake

The birth of the concept of *ecodramaturgy* dates back to the early 1990s, when May set up the *Theater in the Wild (TITW)* initiative in Seattle, USA. It was based on site-specific performances related to the environment. This was followed by a thematic international conference on *Theater in the Age of Ecology* in 1991, which examined how performing arts responded to the growing environmental crisis. At the conference Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Robert Schenkkan expressed the idea that playwrights should become the creators of new myths.

May emphasizes that a prerequisite for the emergence of *ecodramaturgy* is that the playwright must be educated about environmental issues, especially those that are significant locally. It is important that *ecodramaturgy* works in connection with their place, local problems, thus achieving this emotional connection with them. Recent case study in Latvia could be community theatre "From Ceikste to Aiviekste" (2020) which was built up as site-specific performance in Latgale, Lubāna pointing out

climate changes through the life-story of local Marija Diliavka, a lady who manually made meteorological measurements all her life, is showing also documentary photos representing time and landscape before. This performance includes econarrative about human who is, on the one hand, co-existing with changing landscape and, on the other hand, changing it himself/herself by doing melioration works or fighting with the river.

Later, in 2004, researcher May also co-founded the ecodrama festival *Earth Matter on Stage EMOS*. The fact that *ecodramaturgy* works are not just works to promote a greener attitude is also shown by the guidelines for the playwright competition, which illustrate what works can be submitted to it:

1. plays that put an ecological issue or environmental event/crisis at the center of the dramatic action or theme of the play;
2. plays that expose and illuminate issues of environmental justice;
3. plays that put ecological issues on the community's agenda;
4. plays that give voice or character to the land, or elements of the land;
5. plays that explore the connection between people and place, human and non-human, and/or between culture and nature;
6. plays that grow out of the playwright's personal relationship to the land and the ecology of a specific place etc.

However, the first three works that won the festival's competition in 2004 were about trees and forestry challenges. It is also in line with the works created in Latvia in recent years, which fall into the category of *ecotheatre*: "Tree Opera" (2019) by Anna Ķirse, "Forest" (2020) by Valters Sīlis, "Trees Have Stopped Talking Since Then" (2020) by Krista Burāne, "Ways of Woods" (*Malkas ceļi,* 2020) by Andrejs Jarovojs, marking the trend of this *ecotheatre* development in Latvian theatre processes.

Nevertheless, *ecodramaturgy* is not just works that highlight or explain environmental problems. According to May, the task of *ecodramaturgy* is to allow the viewer to feel more alive, listen and become more aware of their ecological identity when leaving the performance.

Some green questions and features

When analyzing performances, it is possible to use not only the ecocritical view of them, but also a practical analysis tool *Some Green Questions to Ask a Play* developed by May particularly for the performing arts field.

In total these are twelve questions, such as how does the show reflect the environmental problems of its time and place; how does the show reflect the historical philosophical paradigms of man's place in nature; how does the show spread or undermine existing narratives on human use of land; how does the choice of performance space affect the interaction between the audience, the performer and

the environment etc. [May 2007: 105]. The tool was developed by researcher May in 2007 in her work *Beyond a Bambi: Toward Dangerous Ecocriticism in Theater Studies*. She not only discusses the topic of *ecodramaturgy*, but also offers a methodology for its analysis that can be used for theatre performances. It helps to understand if and how nature is gaining a role in the performance and what sustainability aspects it is taking into account.

Ecodramaturgy works are characterized by several common features. For example, external **expert comments**. Scientific data, references to research are often used. For example, in Krista Burāne's performance "Trees Have Stopped Talking Since Then", scientists even participate as performers in the performance itself, increasing the credibility of their opinion. It helps to make believing relationship to facts.

***Verbatim* technique** is also used. It is usually created from the transcription of interviews with people who are connected to a common subject. Such interviews which are conducted by company making performance, including, director, actors, are later edited into a performance dramaturgy or text. This is observed in several performances as main tool drafting performance texts for such performances as "Forest", "From Ceikste to Aiviekste", "Trees Have Stopped Talking Since Then".

One of the features of *ecodramaturgy* is the **presence of other non-human beings** in the performance. Performance "Bee Matter" (*Bišu lieta*, 2021) by Iveta Pole performers are trying to transform into bees, abandoning the human habits, movements and language.

Ecodramaturgy is also evidenced by the signs of **anthropomorphism** or the attribution of features that are characteristic of human, such as the tree that speaks or the spirit of the meadow that walks around. The features of anthropomorphism can be seen in several works. For example, "Forest" and "Trees Have Stopped Talking Since Then" use legends that in ancient times trees spoke, thus illuminating the gap between modern man's inability to understand natural language. "From Ceikste to Aiviekste" represents a talking horse and a spirit of a meadow during the performance.

Documentality is one of the features often shared by *ecodramaturgy*. Real facts, real events and also real records – audio files, video clippings, documentary photos, archive stories. Performance "From Ceikste to Aiviekste" telling life story of the lady who manually made meteorological measurements all her life shows also documentary photos representing time and the former landscape. Performance "Trees Have Stopped Talking Since Then" builds dramaturgy through real figure – the first official gardener of Riga, the capital of Latvia – Georgs Kūfalts who made city greenery projects one hundred years ago. This performance is a social activism form for director Krista Burāne in context with protests for several tree and parks cutting situations in Riga in 2020.

In *ecodramaturgy* forms of the **environmental** theatre and also the **site-specific theatre** play an important role, as they allow to break the division of the classical theatre space between actors and spectators, encouraging a new level of reciprocity and participation. At the same time, this approach also strengthens spectators' connection with the natural environment, if the theatrical performance takes place in nature. It helps to deepen the ecological identity of spectator letting experience performance in natural context.

Conclusion

Summing up, it can be concluded that number of theatrical performances that comply with the principles of *ecotheatre* in Latvia is steadily growing. Most of them are examples of environmental or site-specific theatre, and drama that have been created through co-creation exploring the ways how to look at relationship between human, non-human entities and environment. Bringing in *ecotheatre* on various stages in Latvia it brings also new forms of storytelling in theatre together with activating critical thinking about sustainability aspects of production processes among theatre practitioners.

As there is a rise in performances challenging current interplay between human and nature, there is also a necessity to consider not only origin of *ecotheatre* and *ecodramaturgy* and theoretical principles, but also to analyze *ecotheatre* as phenomenon in Latvia. This research is going to be developed looking how *ecotheatre* becomes a form of environmental activism linking performances to the current environmental issues globally and locally.

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CHOREOGRAPHER IN CONTEMPORARY THEATRE: THE CASE OF LATVIA

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Abstract

As the paradigm of dramatic theatre has changed and the genre of contemporary dance has evolved, a new approach to theatrical choreography has emerged. In Latvia, a new generation of contemporary dance choreographers has been active for two decades. They have significantly influenced both the aesthetics of their productions and developed the degree of the participation and co-responsibility in dramatic actors.

By working together with contemporary dance choreographers, some actors and directors have changed their attitudes toward their body, its role, and the meaning of their movements. There is a growing awareness of how much time, effort, and precision would be required for smart and valuable choreography. This is a new experience and an opportunity for dramatic theatre. To delve deeper, Ben Spatz, researcher and theorist of embodied practice, through his research encourages artists to focus on the process of exploring the body rather than on endlessly developing technical virtuosity.

While the director is still primarily responsible for the staging, the work of the rest of the creative team is often of equal importance. According to the postdramatic theatre theory of scholar Hans-Thies Lehmann and to the performing arts scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte, this development is a general tendency in contemporary theatre – the focus is set on living, immediate relationship between theatre and audience, and in this contemporary art discourse the choreographer plays a very important role.

Keywords: *Olga Žitluhina, contemporary theatre, contemporary dance.*

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CULTURE CROSSROADS

Theatre has changed in the 21st century, and the role of a choreographer[1] in theatre has changed, too. We can see choreographers working across the entire spectrum – from just illustrating the historical period represented, to staging the entire performance. Contemporary theatre is defined as devised theatre, and in most cases, choreography plays an important role in its creative processes. The aim of this study is to identify the main directions of contemporary dance choreographers' activity, identifying different forms of collaboration that can be observed in the theatre of Latvia.

Applying the comparative historical research method, the author of this study has sought to find out the role that performative art processes played in the interwar period and in the Soviet years of the previous century in relation to the choreographer's function in staging. The representations of a choreographer as a member of the creative team, viewed historically, enable us to trace the current developments as part of an ongoing process of boundary expansion and creative pursuits.

Aiming to identify the various current forms of collaboration (between directors, choreographers and performers) in the production of performances, the qualitative research strategy has been applied: theatre productions in which choreographers also participated (participant observation) have been analysed, performers interviewed (partly structured interviews), interviews and media reviews studied (qualitative content analysis).

An overview of the historical development of a choreographer's function in the theatre of Latvia

When professional theatre was still developing in Latvia – in the late 19th and early 20th centuries – the choreographer's duties were performed by the director. Dances and games (which were included in the staging) usually played the role of interludes. It was a common practice to invite professional ballet artists to dance and create choreographies as only they qualified as skilled professionals.

During the interwar period, the most advanced research in the field of stage movement and body expression took place in Daile Theatre. Eduards Smiļģis as its artistic director intended to create contemporary ways of theatrical expression and thus needed a team of distinguished professionals. Almost immediately after having founded his theatre in 1920, he invited to his team Felicita Ertnere, who had studied rhythmoplastics in St. Petersburg, Russia, completed rhythmic gymnastics and plastic arts studies with Sophie Auer (Isadora Duncan's student), and learned the principles

[1] The term "choreographer" within this study refers to the person who works with the performer's body in time and space to create a movement score (in theatre, circus, musical, dance performance, etc.).

developed by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze and François Delsarte. Ertnere applied these practices to regular actor training, and also participated in Smiļģis' productions as an assistant director (then referred to as a movement consultant). Other modern dance adaptors of the pre-war period (Beatrise Vīgnere, Anna Ašmane) were also regularly invited to work on productions in Latvian theatres.

During the Soviet occupation period, modernist tendencies in arts were qualified as unwelcome formalism and thus were replaced by the so-called psychological realism. Consequently, theatrical practices were forced to follow a dogmatic interpretation of Stanislavsky's system, while modernist dance practices were stuck in stagnation. For almost fifty years after the World War II, the stages of Latvia were dominated by traditional theatre, which ensured that a director would stage dramatic plays or adaptations of prose works. This was usually done within the framework of psychological realism, the only legitimate form of theatre in Soviet culture. If a choreographer was invited to join the creative team, it was a ballet choreographer whose task was to stage the dances of the portrayed time period.

However, the performance art researcher Laine Kristberga concludes: "*The political regime was even stimulating the creativity of artists, since they had to find innovative artistic strategies to be able to coexist along the official culture. Undeniably, these strategies were partly subjected to the mechanism of fear (and survival) imposed by the totalitarian regime and, thus, are historically, socially and politically specific. Yet, paradoxically, it also shows that the regime was unable to silence the creative expression, individualism and initiative*" [Kristberga 2021: 341]. In the 1960s and 1970s a new trend surfaced – represented by Riga Pantomime Ensemble with Roberts Ligers and by Ansis Rūtentāls Movement Theatre. Roberts Ligers and Ansis Rūtentāls are regarded as pioneers in the development of contemporary dance practices in Latvia. Their creative activity has left a multi-layered impact. For example, Alvis Hermanis – one of Latvia's most internationally renowned directors – refers to Roberts Ligers as his first theatre teacher.

The 1950s and 1960s marked the pantomime boom in Europe, while the 1970s and 1980s bred a powerful movement of performance art that still focused a lot on physical expression. This artistic quest, notable for its connection with the political protest trends of the time, could be traced not only in the Western world, but also in the Soviet bloc countries. Thus, to quote the dance researcher Sabine Sörgel, the claim for freedom, solidarity and democratic society was asserted: "*It is by creatively affirming the felt quality of life that the dancer expresses freedom as the outward transcendence of self and individuality – the basic condition for freedom and solidarity in a democratic society*" [Sörgel 2015: 4].

Pantomime and movement theatre not only invited performers to express the world non-verbally but also provided a different type of body awareness. For

example, Roberts Ligers was convinced that actors themselves needed to add a personal touch to their movements. Modris Tenisons, Ligers' student, who worked as a mime, a choreographer and a stage designer, (he was also the founder and director of the Professional *Pantomime Theatre* in Kaunas, 1966–1972), emphasized the necessity for pantomime actors to take full control of their bodies, so that they could work as a unified team. Ansis Rūtentāls always strived for discovering the uniqueness of the body of his performers, allowing them freedom of expression. These examples match general quests in the field of contemporary dance. Both pantomime and movement theatre "*have parallels with the development of performance art and the search for a new theatre language in the Western world*" [Kreicberga, Tišheizere, Ulberte 2022: 90].

Alongside avant-garde art, as another protest form characteristic to popular culture, rock music shall be mentioned as well. Hans-Thies Lehmann, with Elvis Presley and "The Beatles" in mind, has claimed that: "*For the first time in the history of the world, music is directed at youth. It is the victory march of youth culture*" [Lehmann 2006: 54]. During the Soviet period – especially in the early 1980s – rock music also served as a form of protest against the regime. Rock music and popular culture influence can be observed in the musicals staged in the Riga Operetta Theatre, as well as in variety show programs with choreography created by Janīna Pankrate. At that time, ballet masters from all over the Soviet Union came to Riga to learn from her. Operetta and even more variety show combined classical dance (all performers had a ballet background) and popular pop music. The principle of combining classical dance fundamentals with current popular culture music is still continued in different dance studios, where children and young people adapt a wide range of dance styles and movements (from jazz to street dance). Contemporary dance in Latvia, on the other hand, has been developing along a more individualised path and is strongly oriented towards research-based art, often breaking down the hierarchical relationship between choreographer and performers, who jointly and equally turn into seekers, performers or creators.

In parallel, theatre has also changed, and in the post-Soviet space in the 1990s the changes were particularly dynamic. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the theatre "*began to explore the new possibilities in a more sensible way (..) More often than before, theatre artists travelled abroad and were finally free to enjoy the newfound freedom of repertoire and the new aesthetic trends from Europe and beyond. Directors broke the restrictions and began to experiment with Western forms and methods in theatre, combining them with their own perception of dramatic material and aesthetic experience*" [Zeltiņa 2012: 26]. Along with the overall paradigm shift in theatre, the role and function of the choreographer in theatre was gradually changed.

Nowadays young actors, directors and choreographers study alongside each other at the Latvian Academy of Culture, get to know each other and learn to create

artistic events together. This ability to collaborate and trust each other comes in handy later on when they meet in professional teams, creating productions in both state theatres and independent theatre projects.

Performer's movement score in performance: from dynamic illustration to transferring a message in movement language

As already hinted, first postmodern performances in Latvia emerged only after the fall of the Iron Curtain, to specify, in the late 1990s. One of the "angry young directors'" generation was Dž. Dž. Džilindžers. When he staged his first production on the main stage of Daile Theatre, Džilindžers collaborated with Olga Žitluhina dance company. Olga Žitluhina had just introduced contemporary dance to Latvia and Džilindžers found it fascinating, but in this first co-production – the rock opera "Fausts. Deus ex Machina" – the dance movements of the girls from Žitluhina's dance company were, however, added only as exotic embellishments and did not merge with the actors' performance (Figure 1), although they supported the aesthetics of postmodern theatre.

Over time, the importance of a choreographer in contemporary theatre kept increasing. In 1999, on the initiative of Olga Žitluhina, the Latvian Academy of

Figure 1. "Fausts. Deus ex Machina", directed by Dž. Dž. Džilindžers, 1999, Daile Theatre (photo: Jānis Deinats).

Culture launched a programme for contemporary dance arts; since then, almost 100 young artists have already graduated. Many of them work regularly as choreographers at the theatre. They often become assistant directors, helping to develop mise-en-scene and the relationships among the characters. The most characteristic example to representing this trend is choreographer Inga Krasovska, who after graduating from the Latvian Academy of Culture was for many years a member of the Daile Theatre creative team, in the status of an assistant to the aforementioned director Dž. Dž. Džilindžers. She assisted the director in his work, composed dance or movement phrases, worked in movement classes with actors individually and in groups for specific productions, and eventually created original choreographies for several musical productions and independently created a dance performance with actors (not only working in the Daile Theatre).

As a result of a series of fortunate coincidences in 2021, Elīna Gediņa and Rūdolfs Gediņš (together with visual artists Krista Dzudzilo and Reinis Dzudzilo) assembled a performance for Daile Theatre's main stage, "Very Good Minutes", as a dialogue between the art of movement and the visual arts. Both choreographers are graduates of the Latvian Academy of Culture and work in a wide spectrum – they can be performers in other colleagues' works or authors of original works; they are able to adapt to the specifics of the show, but they can also slowly and purposefully elaborate their own original creation, such as "Very Good Minutes". However, regarding dramatic theatre, the most outstanding work by Elīna Gediņa is associated with productions created in collaboration with the director Viesturs Kairišs. The director staged five great classic works in different Latvian theatres over a three-year period – "Fire and Night" by Rainis, "Peer Gynt" by Henrik Ibsen, "Salome" by Oscar Wilde, "King Lear" by William Shakespeare, and "Balladyna" by Juliusz Słowacki. In these impressive productions on the main stage, Elīna Gediņa worked with the director both to illustrate the historical characteristics of the productions and also to develop specific movement scores for individual characters. For example, in the performance "Peer Gynt" (Latvian National Theatre, 2016), the plastic movement of the main performer Uldis Anže is an important key to Peer Gynt character played by him. At the beginning of the play, when Peer Gynt tells his mother about a deer he has seen, his own stature also resembles a young and powerful animal, from whose exterior a tremendous strength breaks out. Theatre scholar Edīte Tišheizere writes: "*Uldis Anže plays the degradation of the hero's personality largely through plastic movement, body language is as important in this role as Ibsen's text*" [Tišheizere 2018]. The choreographer has worked with the actor individually, searching precisely for his own authentic movement, suggesting a plastic movement model that, without words, directly correlates with Peer Gynt's path of self-discovery.

In the summer of 2022, Elmārs Seņkovs became the artistic director of the Latvian National Theatre, and his management team included, among others, the choreographer Elīna Gediņa. This is not a common practice in Latvian theatre, but Elmārs Seņkovs is obviously very aware of the needs and specifics of contemporary theatre, as well as of the role of a choreographer in the process of creating large-scale productions. In 2018, Elmārs Seņkovs directed a large-scale production of "Blow, the Wind!" by Rainis, in which, together with the ensemble of actors, the living scenography was created by around 150 members of folk-dance groups under the direction of the choreographer Jānis Purviņš. The contemporary dance choreographer Agate Bankava worked directly with the ensemble, helping the actors to enlive their characters' fates against the backdrop of a huge platform (almost the entire stage was filled by a platform hosting 150 dancers, who changed their position as the mise-en-scene changed).

Besides, Agate Bankava has created two dance performances with dramatic theatre actors at the Latvian National Theatre, thus gradually accustoming both the artists and the audience to new forms of theatrical expression, where actors and dancers perform together (Figure 2). Thus, in the recent period the Latvian National Theatre has made the most interesting progress in the field of stage choreography.

Figure 2. "Visas manas vājības ir tavas lūpas", choreographed by Agate Bankava, Rūdolfs Gediņš, Dmitrijs Gaitjukevičs, 2018, Latvian National Theatre (photo: Kristaps Kalns).

There are also interdisciplinary projects and auteur theatre performances by choreographers on the stages of independent theatres. It is understandable that choreographers want to express themselves creatively with their own ideas from time to time, but it is usually easier to get funding for small-scale projects. Nevertheless, these events, and even more so the preparatory process, are also important experiences. It offers experimental freedom and further exploration of the possibilities of the performers' body. It has been used by all the artists who regularly work as choreographers in dramatic theatre – Elīna Gediņa, Agate Bankava, Jana Jacuka, Liene Grava.

Two productions by Sergei Zemlyansky (guest choreographer from Russia) at Liepāja Theatre (performances without words – "Indulis and Ārija", 2014; "Marriage", 2017) have received special recognition among theatre critics. This is also an important experience for dramatic theatre actors, although less related to the basic principle of contemporary dance – to explore movement and search for the expression of the body. Zemlyansky essentially creates the movement score as an illustration of the playwright's text and demands a great input of energy and strength in order for the choreographer's vision of stage movement to be executed. For the spectator, it is also a breath-taking experience at times, but technically and conceptually it is similar to a show in which performers compete in the virtuosity of different abilities.

As Ben Spatz has pointed out in his study "What a Body Can Do", in acting it is impossible to do anything with technique alone, and the work of a truly creative performer should be connected with physical culture and with cultural identity. Ben Spatz has studied both the Stanislavsky system, which is so overused at the dramatic theatre, and the Jerzy Grotowski method, and he has concluded that according to both methods the emphasis is on the working process. At the same time, the body and movement embody different ideas, thoughts, feelings, stories. So everything that shapes the performer's personality also influences their movement. It shall be concluded that actors have to be aware of their bodies and develop their personalities, and only then we can talk about a real contemporary art process or event.

Contemporary Dance in the Context of Post-Dramatic Theatre

As it has already been mentioned, the dramatic theatre paradigm in Latvia has slowly changed after the fall of the Iron Curtain. According to the post-dramatic theory by the German theatre scholar Hans-Thies Lehmann, this shift is related to an emerging practice of focusing on a live immediate relationship between the performance and the spectator. While the former theatre paradigm focused primarily on dramatic text and its interpretation (when working on a production, the first rehearsals are often dedicated to a full read-through of the script and its analysis), in

contemporary theatre text is often regarded as just one of the structural elements of the whole theatrical production, – besides scenography, music, light design or video projection. In this interdisciplinary art space, a choreographer plays an important role in close collaboration with the performers, focusing on their individual features and being perceived as a co-creator of the final artwork.

Multidisciplinarity encourages choreographers to develop their professional skills and this process is sustained by the opportunity to receiveprofessional training. Olga Žitluhina – the head of the contemporary dance programme at the Latvian Academy of Culture – has described contemporary dance studies as the following: "*It is not about what and if we teach anything, but it is about giving them a chance to understand something. We are giving them opportunities to get the maximum information from the world. We feed them with all sorts of teachers, possible and impossible techniques, and methods, above all, retaining the idea, that there is no such thing as right and wrong. There are only options*" [Jonīte 2016]. As a result, young choreographers are ready to embrace a wide diversity of cooperation forms and working conditions.

What matters most is that in co-operation with contemporary dance choreographers, some actors and directors have changed their attitude towards the role of the body and the movement on the stage. There is a growing awareness of the necessity to invest time, effort and precision in meaningful and sophisticated choreography. Furthermore, there is no generation gap, as young choreographers and older generation stage directors can easily collaborate as well. For example, the choreographer Guntis Spridzāns, whose background is hip-hop culture, has successfully introduced hip-hop to the opera "Carmen" (directed by Marie-Eve Signeyrole from France). Agnese Vanaga has introduced contemporary circus to several Latvian National Theatre productions (directed by Dita Lūriņa and Ināra Slucka). The young choreographer Jana Jacuka has designed movements for puppets and actors in various Latvian theatres (Figure 3).

Choreographers are regarded as an essential part of the productions by Viesturs Kairišs (the artistic director of Daile Theatre since 2020) to the extent that they are referred to as co-authors even on the advertising posters, for instance, the one of "Peer Gynt" where the choreographer is aligned with the playwright, composer, director, and stage designers (Latvian National Theatre, 2016). Previously, when a classic play was staged, we were used to seeing only the name of playwright on advertising posters, and perhaps the director of the production, but that's it.

The outstanding German theatre scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte reminded us in her book "The Transformative Power of Performance" that the actor is not just a medium in space, as the German theatre historian Max Hermann wrote in 1930, and "*foregrounded the specific materiality of bodies and space, which sets in motion*

Figure 3. "Mumu", directed by Viesturs Kairišs, 2018,
Mikhail Chekhov Riga Russian Theatre (photo: Inese Kalniņa).

the performance in the first place" [Fischer-Lichte 2008: 34]. Both Hermann and the renowned German director Max Reinhardt have written and done much to emphasize that theatre is "*based on a fleeting and dynamic process and not an artefact*" [Fischer-Lichte 2008: 35]. And where there is an actor and his or her body, the specific knowledge, experience and skills of the choreographers are also needed.

Inta Balode is optimistic about the convergence of theatre and contemporary dance: "*The continuous work of bringing contemporary choreography to the theatre has the potential to close the gap between the understanding of choreography in the Latvian theatre and dance scene. And this is not to help the "poor" field of dance, but to give audiences the opportunity to experience a broader spectrum of what contemporary theatre is and what it can do to go beyond verbal language*" [Balode 2020: 111]. The theatre choreographers interviewed in Balode's research confirm that despite the positive changes in the field of contemporary art, choreographers are still expected to "set up dances" not only by the majority of the audience, but also by performing art professionals (the "set up dances" here are to be interpreted as poetic action or illustration of music with a very clear function).

Another important aspect should be noted regarding the role of contemporary dance in the context of the theatre in Latvia. On the one hand, contemporary dance artists regularly collaborate with theatre. On the other hand, professional dance

and theatre communities have gone distinct ways when it comes to evaluating their productions. Until 2017, contemporary dance performances were judged by the Theatre Awards jury, but since summer 2017, the dance community has had its own Dance Awards. Every two years, the jury, composed of various dance professionals, evaluates all events in ballet, performing folk dance, contemporary dance and street/show dance. The theatre jury evaluates only the work of choreographers in dramatic theatre productions once a year. Despite narrowing the scope of evaluation, it is often difficult to define genre boundaries and transitions and to distinguish between different competencies. For example, it is unclear who should evaluate a dance performance by a contemporary dance choreographer in the repertoire of the Latvian National Theatre and whether the theatre award jury can evaluate a dance performance staged by a director of dramatic theatre or whether it has the competence to evaluate a choreographer who uses the spoken word. The situation is even more complex for such contemporary art events where elements of visual art, choreography, and theatre are equally important. Here we must deal with the changeability, unpredictability, and openness to a variety of experiences of contemporary art.

Theatre directors work directly with contemporary dance choreographers, who act as intermediaries between the bodies of performers (actors, singers, dancers). Latvian dance critic, curator and performer Inta Balode has imaginatively and very precisely compared the relationship between a director and a choreographer in contemporary theatre to the collaboration between "*an architect and an engineer, or a designer and a sculptor. The choreographer is directly responsible for the idea in a figurative sense and literally translates the message into bodies of the performers. (..) The choreographer is in the role of a priest translating God's message into the flesh*" [Balode 2020: 106]. In other words, the choreographer in theatre is often like an assistant director, who translates the conceptual ideas of the production into the plasticity and stage action of the actors. The choreographer focuses primarily on the individual characteristics of the performers and on the search for movement quality. A contemporary dance choreographer masters rhythm and space and has specific knowledge of a body's capabilities in time and space. At the same time – "*the principles of a physical theater and contemporary dance-based thinking have an increasing impact on the process of theater creation*" [Kreicberga, Tišheizere, Ulberte 2022: 91].

Conclusion

The performers and their bodies are usually in the foreground of a theatrical performance, whenever or wherever it is staged, and whatever the narrative structure or creative aspirations of a director may be. This is true in most cases, even if we consider that performers sometimes work with puppets or other objects. A creative

and talented choreographer focuses primarily on the individual characteristics of performers and on the search for movement quality, and to an equal extent a contemporary dance choreographer masters rhythm and space because he/she has specific knowledge of body's capabilities in time and space.

Contemporary dance choreographers in Latvia contribute to the process of contemporary performing arts in different ways and in different capacities by participating in dramatic theatre productions. While Latvians are slow to trust new things, younger generations are becoming more open and willing to embrace new developments. Hopefully, we will see that the presence of contemporary dance in the theatre of Latvia helps our culture and art space to become even more colourful, innovative and versatile.

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THEATER ARTISTS BETWEEN THE CITY AND THE NON-CITY: THE SPRING OF WITHDRAWALS AND RETURNS

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Abstract

In the West, theater has always been strongly associated with city culture and urbanization processes. By combining the methods and insights of the arts and psychology, the article aims to explore the impact of the city and non-city environments on the work of theater artists, to find out what happens when a creator withdraws from a usual city environment. Qualitative approach – case study analysis – is applied in this research by interviewing two theater artists. The research identified four meta-themes*: move back and forth, together and separately, change of perspective, create a new universe.* Analysis of the aforementioned themes revealed that withdrawal from the city, as from the usual creative space, is useful and productive for the theater artists, but becomes meaningful only when the latter come back to the city. The metaphor of the spring is suitable for describing this process: creativity is most stimulated by dynamics of withdrawals and returns, which determines the change of perspectives and, at the same time, creative states, rather than withdrawal from the city itself. Withdrawal provides impulses for new universes to emerge: both in the aesthetic plane of creation and in the psychological plane.

Keywords: *city, non-city, theater, theatrical place and space, creativity psychology, withdrawal*.

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CULTURE CROSSROADS

In the West, theater has always been closely related to the urban culture and urbanization processes since its emergence in the Athens polis. Although later there was a tradition of travelling theater troupes, theater life was concentrated in larger cities. In addition, the relationship between the city and the theater in different epochs and countries reflected *the parallels between aesthetics, social institutions and politics* [Klivis 2008: 172]. In his book *The Place of the Stage*, Mullaney [1995] argues that the location of the theater in the city clearly showed the place of the theater in public life, its power and influence. It can be said that when the theater is seen as a threat to public morality and political stability, such as in Shakespeare's London, theater buildings are allowed to be built outside the official boundaries of the city, and when it is perceived as a mouthpiece for universally accepted values and a guarantor of stability, for example, in the European capitals of the 18th century, magnificent urban theaters are housed in the central squares. In any case, since the second half of the 16th century, with the emergence of stationary theater buildings in the Western Europe, a theater, located in one or another point of the city, has become a special place, generating certain cultural meanings. With the onset of the Renaissance, actors used to leave city theaters and return to a nomadic lifestyle just because of epidemics, political upheavals, or to make money. The place of the theater has formed certain conventions of both the creative process and the perception of the performance, models of creative and spectator behaviour. As directing emerged at the end of the 19th century, theatrical place and space began to be seen not only as a guarantor of smooth stage communication, but also as a restrictive convention. The first directors-reformers began to experiment not only with stage space, but also with theatrical locations. From time to time, some creators used to *escape* from the theater and create in the nature or in the countryside, away from the city. The episodes of Jacques Copeau, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugen Barba, Peter Brook evidence the effectiveness of the withdrawal from the city's culture.

Today, many artists do not miss the opportunity to go to a creativity camp or residence outside the city. Of course, it is also influenced by cultural policy and funded mobility programmes, however, there is more than the desire of artists to travel and gain new experiences behind this phenomenon. The dynamics of creativity in the city and beyond its boundaries has a direct connection with the creativity of theater artists and with the development of performing arts in general. Thus, the aim of this article is to reveal the influence of the city and non-city environment on the creativity of theater artists by combining the perspectives of theater studies and psychology.

The influence of the city and other environments on the creativity of theater artists is a poorly researched topic. Although a great deal of research has been

devoted to the theatrical place and space itself, the scholars, using the theoretical approaches of anthropology, phenomenology, cultural studies, new historicism and urban studies, mainly study the socio-cultural meanings of space. For example, in his book *Places of Performance. The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture*, Carlson [1989] analyses the importance of the city environment for the spatial meanings of the performance. However, according to Garner [2002: 96], "*given the obvious centrality of the city to theatrical culture (and vice versa), it is remarkable how little attention has been paid to the functioning of theater within the urban landscape and how little consideration is given to the parameters of theater as a specifically urban institution and practice*". Harvie's [2009] work *Theatre & The City* is one of the few examples that analyses theater as part of urban processes. In this book, the scholar, analysing the relationship between the theater and the city (specifically, London and New York) from the perspectives of cultural materialism and performative analysis, seeks to deepen the concept of theater as an exclusively urban practice and explore the representations of cities in dramas, the material circumstances of theater creation in the city, and how they affect the meanings generated by theater [Harvie 2009].

In recent decades, the science of psychology has paid considerable attention to the phenomenon of creativity, however, the main focus is on the personality, the product being created, or the exceptional (genial) manifestations of creativity [Nordin-Bates 2012]. It is only recently that creativity research has started expanding and three new directions have emerged: collaboration, community and social aspects of creativity has been researched. Furthermore, more attention has been paid to *small c* creativity. Last but not least, the creative process itself rather than a final product has been explored more. Researchers agree that creativity requires a broader approach: social and environmental factors seem to play a crucial role in creativity performance. There is considerable informal evidence that social-psychological factors have a significant impact on the productivity and creativity of outstanding individuals [Amabile 2018: 5–6].

The city is a place of attraction for creative people: "*Creative individuals are drawn to cities and places where they can afford to work (they receive the support) and in turn contribute to the city and local economy*" [Runco 2014: 222]. In addition, researchers have found that the larger the city, the more productive each resident is [Bettencourt et al. 2007]. Psychologists have even identified a direct relationship between the pace of life and the population: it turns out there is a link between the walking speed and the population [Bornstein 1979]. There are some questions of whether, despite productivity, the work of theater artists in the city has only advantages. What happens when the artists withdraw from the normal city environment for one or another reason?

Methodology of research

Qualitative approach – case study analysis – used in this research allows a thorough description and examination of the phenomenon of concern [Yin 2017]. The research involved two artists representing different generations and with different experiences. In-depth interviews were conducted with them, data were analysed and interpreted based on the principles of qualitative research. The duration of the interview is about one hour. During the interview, they were asked one broad question about their creative experiences in city and non-city settings. They were asked not to rush and to share their experiences and insights. Then, they were asked some clarifying questions. It was decided not to use the opposition *city – village / nature / province* to allow the interviewees themselves to define the opposite of the city based on their experience.

Both artists had distinctive experiences with creativity in city and non-city environments. The younger research participant had educational, rehearsal and laboratory creative process experiences in non-city environment, however, did not show the completed performance to the audience there. The older research participant had several significant experiences of withdrawal from the city, in addition to regularly conducting artistic projects in various non-city spaces, thus, attracting artists and presenting the completed performances to (local and guest) audiences.

Research results and discussion

While attempting to understand and reveal their experiences in city and non-city environment, the artists relied on different starting points during the interviews. The older research participant started telling his experience by defining a clear distinction between city and non-city environments and his relationship with the urban world. First, it is the determination of the opposition *city – village*. A rural person lives according to the rhythm of the nature, a city dweller – according to the created culture. A city does not change, it is the same, and nature is constantly changing; the non-city (nature, village, forest, mountains) is mysterious, romanticized, mystical, *it is the world of elves and gnomes*.

A city cultivates creativity, gives intelligence, sophistication, and the artist is born in the nature, observing the world and its laws. It is as if different forces are present in the village and in the city: the city imposes a structure, even requires it, and in the non-city environment (e. g., village), that structure already exists, it is profound, archaic. According to the older research participant, the city inevitably affects a human being. A human being has a lot to do, however, his activities are short-lived, he is driven at a great pace, *the city quickly eats everything*. The driving force is competition, creativity comes from competition and the desire to be better.

However, a city is a great space for mediocrity (for example, the path of an average-skilled artist is to travel between cities and re-create a new impression, and to stay in one city, one must be strong). A city is the culture of impression. The interviewee constantly asks the question: is the city only for the strongest or for the average ones too? He also notes that the city offers a lot of negativities in his creation, and idealism in the city is hard to be found. In addition, the research participant is critical of provincialism, stressing that it is not a geographical position, but a spiritual state of stagnation.

The younger participant emphasized the importance of being *out of your city*. This insight was repeated throughout the interview. The research participant highlighted that it is very important for him to leave his daily routine, normal activities and disturbances and immerse himself in the world of work. Despite quite a lot of productive experiences with creative groups in nature, the artist also notices that being in nature itself (especially, when being alone) can also hinder creativity. A forest, a lake, birds can soothe or engage to the level that the work can become unproductive and his state of consciousness – completely disabled. This artist relates productivity with *the environment out of your city*.

However, despite quite different starting points, the following four meta-themes might be observed*: move back and forth, together and separately, change of perspective, create a new universe.* These meta-themes will be based on the research data and the insights of interviewees, and later – discussed in the broader context of the arts and science concepts.

Move back and forth

Both artists emphasize movement from the city. Withdrawal is necessary: repetitive, unusual, distancing, concentrating, allowing to see the essence. What to withdraw from? From noise, routine, people, everyday, usual frames. Often, withdrawal is associated with productivity. However, it is emphasized that it is necessary to go back and present one's work: the impetus is given when you want to show the created work and when the artist already feels that he has something to show. There is a constant change of distance (pulsation), however, the relationship with the center (in this case, the city), which always attracts back, is maintained, thus, the return is important. The artists clearly understand that despite the importance and pleasure of withdrawal (this is often associated not only with productivity but also with depth), they will need to go back and show their work to the public. *An artist is impossible without the city. He has to give to someone*. The older research participant emphasizes that he enjoys living in a small town, but near a big city. It allows maintaining the necessary distance – being in city and non-city at the same time. The younger participant notices that he needs the rituals of returning to his city.

After a longer stay in a new workspace, one needs to say goodbye to it and prepare his return to a normal life and work.

Both interviewees emphasize that, despite withdrawing to get saturated, sated, etc., the ultimate goal of creation is always to give away. *When I have something to give away, I go to the city*, says the older participant. *All creation is sharing*. The artists make it clear that the city is not only a place where you want to hang out, work, or just be, but also a place where you want to *give*.

The research revealed that moving out of the city as a normal creative space is beneficial and productive for theater artists for many reasons: distancing oneself from everyday life, daily routine, normal rhythm of life, creative group behaviour patterns, everyday people and established hierarchy to focus on work, to purify the essence, to try new things, to experience emotional uplift. The space, withdrawn to – a village, the nature, or a smaller city – becomes a place where you *load up* and learn new experiences. It is also important that in an unusual place, artists can create their own creative environment, i.e., it is not pre-prepared and adapted for work. According to Thomson and Jaque [2017: 316], "*the quality of the physical environment in which work is rehearsed and performed also directly influences creative output*." Breakthroughs and bursts of creativity emerge in a new environment, however, their value can only be fully understood and verified when an artist returns to the city. Thus, the creative development of an artist is ensured by the constant dynamics of withdrawals and returns, the visual expression of which could resemble a compressing and stretching spring. The city takes an artist back because the city cannot do without the creativity that shapes its identity, and an artist needs the city as a space of endless choices and possibilities.

It might be that the most effective *escape* from the city or the usual creative space requires leaving not only the place, but also the audience. While creative work in an unusually isolated environment also stimulates creativity, the most significant impetus for the artists' development and creativity is provided by the encounter with *other* audiences. Audiences in small towns and villages with less spectator experience offer a new way of stage communication, referred to as *barter* by Barba [1996: 116].

Together and separately

While talking about human relationships, the artists highlight two different situations: withdrawal from their city and everyday life can be as a personal experience of loneliness or as gathering with creative group. Both artists agree that they would not have done as much with their troupe as they are able to do when they are gone and *closed*. A special connection of unity is created between the performers and the artists or simply the staff members, which is extremely productive, often accompanied by a positive atmosphere. Withdrawing from other people allows building deeper, trust-based relationships that often break down the established

hierarchy. These relationships allow trusting your colleagues more and want to work together. The highest form of satisfaction is when a community starts developing as a result of this work.

Movement from your city can be compared to movement to your inner world. There is a tendency for both artists to associate this movement with greater self-immersion, various experiences of loneliness. This is often described as a deep and intimate presence with oneself. As the older research participant says, *the biggest secret is the loneliness in the nature, because there is no secret on the Internet*. However, after the trip to the inner world, the artist feels the need to return to the society. You cannot get caught up in loneliness, you have to go back to the city, and share the insights you gain. *You cannot do anything alone. I would be like a rural intellectual who walks with a stick and talks about his thoughts ...* (..) *Separately, we are nothing. Only synergy*.

The research results revealed that by leaving the usual place of creativity with all its conventions, routine and established hierarchy of the creative group, mostly based on the authority of the director, the artists tend to apply more group, collective creative methods. As creativity research has demonstrated, group work is more productive than individual work under the certain circumstances: "*Groups are more creative than individuals when they've worked together for a while; when they share a common set of conventions and knowledge and yet also have complementary sets of expertise...* (..) *Groups are more creative than individuals when the amount of shared knowledge corresponds to how well the problem is understood*" [Thomson and Jaque 2017: 146]. Of course, it cannot be unequivocally concluded that group or collective theatrical creativity is more valuable than the work of the *auteur* theater. Although recently there has been an active debate on performance strategies and models, on *vertical* and *horizontal* directing (however, this discussion lacks scientific evidence), it is important to note that creative group work is only superior when there are certain conditions: for example, the group should have worked together before, a balance should be maintained between old like-minded people and newcomers (average level of social closeness) [Uzzi and Spiro 2005: 447–504], etc.

By the way, the advantages of creative cooperation are also proved by the trends in the field of scientific production: upon analysing multitude of data, it became clear that the best research is carried out by the groups of scientists [Jones 2009: 283–317]. It is no coincidence that this research on the impact of the environment on creativity is being carried out by two scientists. It is interesting that a part of this research was carried after *escaping* from the usual academic environment and closing in a creative residence on the Lithuanian seaside.

The model of group creativity also challenges the perception of creativity, provokes new ways of perceiving artistic creation, since, according to the Smith and

Newman's research of 2014, *people may show an intuitive preference for creative works made by an individual vs a group* [Smith and Newman 2014: 303–310]. This could be explained by heritage of cultural tradition, reaching as early as the 19th century, when the creative work of individuals, endowed with exceptional talents, used to get the most attention. The research revealed that the city culture is more characterized by individualism, and there is a need to build a community and become a part of that community in non-city environment.

Change of perspective

Withdrawal (whether individually or with a group) changes the boundaries and the perspective of assessing the environment and the relationships. It is emphasized that there is no distinction between work and leisure: the entire being becomes creative or important. It is noticed that the established schedules change, the ordinary items (e. g., telephones, watches) are no longer used. *The most important thing is to get separated from the usual, routine rehearsal process*, says the younger interviewee.

On the one hand, work in your city is highly predictable, even routine and well-established, on the other hand, it can unexpectedly disturb and unbalance. Upon withdrawing, unpredictability becomes different: it is less unbalanced, and more focused and helps to notice unusual things, to pay attention to unexpected details. As if the focus, the angle of view towards the world changes: *In order to talk about the forest, you have to withdraw from it*, says the older artist. Both artists notice a constant game with boundaries and angles of observation of the world, a change of focus. It is as if there is a constant *ticking of thinking*: it is necessary to withdraw and immerse oneself, to *chew* the obtained information, to look at it again, to be able to *distance oneself from that noise and get into it again*. In case of withdrawal with a group, there is a change in the boundaries of the relationship, as if the normal structure breaks down. From the hierarchical relationships that are often established and usually in theater, they become more equal, allowing everyone to get involved. The topics of conversation, communication itself, immersion in the process also change.

When interpreting the obtained results, the city – non-city – city trajectory can be compared with the zooming in and out of the camera. In general, *creativity is a new mental combination that is expressed in the world* [Sawyer 2012: 7]. Among other factors, creativity is determined by the ability to change the angle of view and distance from the object of attention – this is an insight of the Gestalt psychology. Creativity in the city is characterized by hybridity, relativity, decentering, abundance, several objects of attention at the same time (rhizome state), while entering the non-city environment focuses attention on one thing. This phenomenon also correlates with the opposition of the rhizome [Deleuze and Guattari 1980] and arborescent states.

Although arborescent state is often criticized for its narrowness and oppression, it is useful for creativity as an incubation stage in the creative process, which is often a condition for the emergence of a creative insight. Upon returning to the rhizome environment, the experienced artist brings a new experience that encourages the establishment of new boundaries of the creative world.

Considering the way the creativity upon withdrawal was described by the research participants, especially the younger one, and the value and meaning they give to it, various theories of ritual and rituality, the concepts of a festival and festivity, Gadamer's [1987] *art as a game, symbol and festival* could be used for analysis of experience of withdrawal from the city.

Create a new universe

The artists emphasize that separation is not simply useful by itself, it becomes significant when some insights, products, or experience are born of it. *Separation that makes it possible to create a new universe is a success*, says the younger interviewee. It may happen that withdrawal to the nature or to another city will be just a rest and not a fall into creativity. Separation is valuable when the state is reached where one can *fall* into the world of creative work and take a new reality of a work of art out of it. It is a real satisfaction when a new performance is born out of it that you want to bring back to the city and show it to the audience.

Withdrawal (both individually and in a group) often brings a lot of new insights that are not directly related to creative work. Often, these are the insights into different human relationships. In the experience of separation with others, there is a harmonious complementary cooperation, which is quite clearly opposed to the competitive concept of human relations established in the city. Both artists note that in the city, human relationships are more based on competition, and this is the main engine of creativity. Separation makes it possible to achieve a different, more emotionally supportive and less tense, even playful atmosphere that is not only productive but also satisfying.

The artists often called the city man as a hybrid one: it is like a state where you are everything little by little, distracted by constant commitments and affairs. Separation from your our own city, especially in the nature, makes it possible to be more cohesive and more fully involved in the ongoing process: whether it is a situation of creativity or communication. This is an important part of the personal experience – experiencing a new sense of the artist. Furthermore, unexpected or unfamiliar aspects of personality or professional identity are often discovered.

Thus, withdrawal makes it possible to discover several different *universes:* new creations and new sensations. The experienced theater artists have written about the benefits of withdrawal. For example, in his *Letter from the South of Italy* [1996], Barba,

an Italian director who has worked in many countries, described the experience of living and rehearsing for two months with a small troupe of actors from different states in a small village in central Sardinia. According to Barba, when the work takes place in a space with the word *Theater* on the door, the work of the artists seems to be justified in advance. But what happens when those doors are closed? "*It is a challenge; if we are actors, if we have chosen this condition, how can we demonstrate it? And again, what does our condition become in these new territories? Will we be like mountebanks who entertain? Like propagandists? Like missionaries? How can we justify the fact of being there, strangers and different, doing what we do*?" [Barba 1996].

Upon leaving the theater, the conventional creative space, the theater artists find themselves faced with the need to rethink the fundamental questions of the nature of their work: who am I as an actor, what can I give to the audience of this particular place, and finally, what should be the ratio between the creative process and the output? Thus, it might be argued that the place affects the professional identity of artists, their self-perception, mindset, and sense.

The results of the analysis of the last meta-theme can be interpreted in the context of various contemporary cultural theories. The rhizome concept by Deleuze and Guattari [2004] can be used to explain the correlation between place and self-perception. The city environment can be defined as rhizome – diverse, hybrid, labile and incomplete. It also affects the sensation of the artists creating in the city – as can be seen from the results of the research, this was confirmed by the research participants. Meanwhile, the non-city environment is rooted in: clearly defined self-perception, identification with specific values and attitudes, certain social structures. While it is common to assume that diversity provokes creativity, i. e., the nature of the city encourages creativity, a temporary withdrawal from the city and immersion into a homogeneous environment stimulates creativity even more, as the experience of difference encourages a more open perception.[1] In addition, it is important that in an unusual place artists can create their own creative environment – it is not pre-prepared and adapted to the work. According to Thomson and Jaque [2017: 316], "*the quality of the physical environment in which work is rehearsed and performed also directly influences creative output*."

It might be concluded that creativity is most stimulated by dynamics of withdrawals and returns, which determines the change of perspectives and, at the same time, creative states, rather than withdrawal from the city itself. As psychological research has shown, the ability to be open to different perspectives and

[1] According to the researchers, when exposed to an environment that is unusual for him, a person becomes more open, more tolerant of ambiguity. Following Cheng's research, it might be argued that the person, who defines his identity as a complex rather than homogeneous, has a higher level of creativity [Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, and Lee 2008: 1178–1184].

mental flexibility is one of the conditions for creativity. According to Runco [2014], flexibility allows us to avoid engagement in routine and beliefs and helps to consider different perspectives.

Conclusions

The research substantiates the recently growing need to explore not only the individual world of the artist, but also the creative context, the impact of the environment on creativity. It can be argued that the question, regarding the influence of the city and non-city environments on the artists' work, has provided impetus to consider and to rethink the fundamental issues related to the creative process. The research identified four meta-themes*: move back and forth, together and separately, change of perspective, create a new universe.* Analysis of the aforementioned themes revealed that withdrawal from the city, as from the usual creative space, is useful and productive for the theater artists, but becomes meaningful only when the latter come back to the city. The metaphor of the spring is suitable for describing this process: creativity is most stimulated by dynamics of withdrawals and returns, which determines the change of perspectives and, at the same time, creative states, rather than withdrawal from the city itself. In addition, withdrawal from the city allows reviewing the principles of working in a group, opens the advantages of collective creativity. It was also revealed that the place of creation affects the professional sense and self-awareness of the artists. In short, withdrawal provides impulses for new universes to emerge: both in the aesthetic plane of creation and in the psychological plane.

The research demonstrated that the impact of the city and non-city influences on the creativity of theater artists is a highly complex issue that could be conveniently explored through an interdisciplinary approach that allows the combination of methods and insights from art history and psychology. The research opened some new questions and presupposed the need for a more detailed theory of creativity in the field of theater, which would be met by further research, potentially based on the methodology of grounded theory.

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TRANSDISCIPLINARY AND TRANSNATIONAL MANIFESTATIONS IN OJĀRS FELDBERGS' ART: THE CONCEPT OF BORDERS

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Abstract

In this article the author examines the concepts of transdisciplinarity and transnationalism as methodological tools in art analysis. By applying these tools to the case study of Latvian artist Ojārs Feldbergs and addressing the concept of borders in his art, the author questions knowledge production systems, especially in terms of Western art discourse. The author doubts that in our hybrid globalised world it is still possible to look at artists and their oeuvre through a monoethnic perspective. It is important to be aware of parallel processes, intercultural encounters and sources of inspiration beyond the borders of one country or discipline. Yet, in doing so, the centre-periphery relationship should be addressed critically and the dictate of cultural metropolises as centres should be avoided. Given that Feldbergs' art cannot be seen as a constituent of isolated elements – object (sculpture), space (environment), time, spectatorship – but, indeed, as a complex whole, which is hybrid and synthesised, it is crucial to define Feldbergs' artistic strategies addressing the concept of borders – both physical and symbolic.

Keywords: *the concept of borders, transnational, transdisciplinary, Ojārs Feldbergs, performance.*

As the title of the article suggests, the concepts of "transdisciplinary" and "transnational" will be applied to the case study of Latvian artist Ojārs Feldbergs' (1947) art. Thus, it is already implied that a critical disciplinary methodology will be

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used as a theoretical and analytical framework. One of the goals of such an approach, especially in terms of the application of "transnational", is to address the discourse of art history and the subtle politics of constructing (writing) a history on the basis of comparisons between the region of East-Central Europe and the West. Traditionally, "*the cultural experiences of the Western world and their description* (..) *serve as a universal model, providing paths for 'peripheries' to follow*" [Hock 2018: 2]. In this paradigm, art and culture in the region of East-Central Europe are seen as marginal, peripheral, back-ward and mostly copying the centre, namely, the West. Looking through this perspective, we ignore "*the fact that cultural metropolises within a hierarchically-defined art geography may possess political, economic, and epistemic power, but they, too, are rooted in specific contexts, very much like any other location. Experiences and patterns observed there are particular as well and, hence, should have no stronger claim for general validity as processes unfolding at the margins*" [Hock 2018: 3]. However, as all complex terms, "transnationalism", too, can only be seen as productive in certain contexts and it definitely cannot be universalised to all possible situations.

To integrate the theoretical framework in case analysis, Ojārs Feldbergs must be introduced. In Latvian cultural and art environment, Feldbergs is mostly known as a prominent sculptor whose works have been exhibited on a global scale. In 1991, being inspired by similar practices abroad, Feldbergs founded an open-air art park *Pedvāle* (Figure 1). The art park exhibiting sculptures and works of Land Art of

Figure 1. The Pedvāle Art Park (personal archive of O. Feldbergs).

Figure 2. Ojārs Feldbergs performing with the performance group "Animist" at the Pedvāle Art Park for the film "Homo Ludens" (photo: Anna Maskava, 2021).

both local and foreign artists, along with the renovated Pedvāle Manor have become a significant cultural heritage and art site in Latvia. However, to a lesser degree, Feldbergs is acknowledged as a performance artist – both by scholarly circles and himself.[1] When asked about the performative qualities so vividly manifested in his works of art, Feldbergs replies that he sees performance art and its tools as part of the range of artistic devices that can be employed in his creative practice. For him, it is not only the stone as a material in sculpture, but also the landscape and environment, a relationship with the spectator and performative actions that contribute to the evocative and affective qualities of the work of art. As Feldbergs admits, "*I construct imaginative situations*" (2021), and in many ways Feldbergs can be defined as *Homo Ludens* – a man who plays (Figure 2).[2]

[1] Indeed, only one Master's Thesis has been dedicated to this subject so far. See Zanda Jankovska's Master's Thesis "Performances of the Pedvāle Open-Air Museum (1991–2009)", Art Academy of Latvia (2010).

[2] "Homo Ludens" is also a title of the film (2021) dedicated to Ojārs Feldbergs (the author of the article Laine Kristberga is the producer of the film); available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2V-8R85g8Q&ab_channel=LatvijasPerformancesm%C4%81kslascentrs

A play and playing has a range of semantic varieties. In English a 'play' can also refer to dramaturgical work, whereas in Latvian *spēle* stands not only for play, but also for acting, as, for example, in *aktierspēle*. The semantics already indicate that despite Feldbergs is avoiding any terminology related to performance art, performance and performing certainly form an integral part of the play and playing. Given that Feldbergs' art cannot be seen as a constituent of isolated elements – object (sculpture), space (environment), time, spectatorship – but, indeed, as a complex whole, which is hybrid and synthesised, it is crucial to define Feldbergs' artistic strategies addressing the concept of borders – both physical and symbolic. Hence, the concepts of transdisciplinarity and transnationalism can be seen as useful.

"Transdisciplinary" and consequently "transdisciplinarity" mean "*transcending the established framework of (academic) disciplines*" [Bernstein 2015: 5]. The terms are relatively recent; for the first time they were used in 1970 by the Swiss philosopher and psychologist Jean Piaget at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Congress in Nice, France. These terms are beneficial in knowledge production and epistemic systems, namely, they are useful in addressing the question of a dialogue between different fields of knowledge. An important figure in devising a theory for transdisciplinary work is Romanian theoretical physicist Basarb Nicolescu (1942). According to him, "*transdisciplinarity concerns that which is at once between the disciplines, across the different disciplines, and beyond all disciplines. Its goal is the understanding of the present world, of which one of the imperatives is the unity of knowledge*" [Nicolescu 2014: 19]. The unity of knowledge is jeopardised – Nicolescu even claims that there is "*a catastrophe of knowledge in some sense*" [Nicolescu 2007: 77] – because in comparison to the first universities, where seven disciplines existed divided between *trivium* and *quadrivium* (corresponding to the modern division of Exact Sciences and Humanities), in 2000 there were more than 8,000 disciplines registered and "8,000 disciplines means 8,000 ways to look for reality" [Nicolescu 2007: 77].

Undeniably, since the mid-20th century many tremendous changes have occurred not only in terms of the geopolitical situation, but also the transfer and hybridisation between disciplines and thus knowledge production. Since then, cross-over disciplines characterised by interdisciplinarity, diversity and criticism of previously accepted 'truths', such as "*African American* (*'Black', at first*), *women's studies, and ethnic studies*" [Repko et al. 2020: 38] have emerged with a great emphasis on the discursive integration of the political into the social and *vice versa*. They have been accompanied by environmental studies, human ecology, cultural geography and the studies of the Anthropocene offering new concepts, theories and methodology to

speculate on the interaction between the natural landscape and humans. These are signs of modern education systems,[1] yet also of knowledge hybridisation "[*reflecting*] *the complexity of human life*" [Obrilliant 2021].

In the context of art and cultural production, "*a transdisciplinary artwork is a work that cannot be labelled with the name of a well-established discipline like music, theatre or visual art*" [Craenen]. Moreover, "*transdisciplinary artists (..) experience the framework of a discipline as limiting (..). That brings them to a point where they are no longer even interested in confirming their work as being part of an existing discipline, and in the most extreme cases, as part of the field we call 'art'*" [Craenen]. In this context, "*transdisciplinarity presupposes an attitude of openness and curiosity, combined with a willingness to accept the possibility of other dimensions (..) entering practice*" [Craenen]. On certain occasions, transdisciplinary research is defined as research which "*occurs when researchers collaborate with stakeholders from outside the academic world. Knowledge from outside the academic world, as well as stakeholder values, is integrated with academic knowledge. Together, these insights determine what problem is studied and how this is done, and which interventions are selected to address the problem*" [Keestra et al. 2016: 32]. Such an approach would imply collective and collaborative dimensions, involving several interlocutors. In the current neoliberal political climate, such forms of cooperation resulting not only in research, but also cultural production have become quite a norm in the art and cultural environment, too. However, this strategy has also been criticised by artists and art critics. For example, British art historian Claire Bishop argues that a cultural policy which demands added economic and social value in any art project can result in an unethical situation where socially vulnerable groups can become the objects of social pornography [Bishop 2012: 22]. Thus, attention must be drawn to the forms and methods, and perhaps inherent hierarchical structures, when pursuing transdisciplinary projects with pluralistic authorship.

The second set of terms viewed in this paper is "transnational" and consequently "transnationalism", which consist of "trans" and "national", whereby "trans" from Latin translates as "across, beyond, through" and "national" contains "natio", in Latin meaning "tribe, people, birth". How to determine the hypothetical social and ethnic (not political or geographical) borders between nations, since the term "transnationalism" suggests the crossing of borders? What does it mean to belong to a certain nation in the 21st century? Theoreticians such as Eric Hobsbawm (1992), Anne-Marie Thiesse (1999), Ernest Gellner (1989) argue that the concept of nationhood and the first nation-states date back to the 19th century. "*National*

[1] Surely, knowledge production takes place also beyond officially recognized 'education systems'.

territory is an integral component in the process of inventing nations and nation-states", it is also "*a basic building block in the national collective imagination*" [Kahn, Bint 2014: 222]. Although the concept of the nation-state has been vital in European identity, today it is rather argued that a true nation-state does not exist, since nearly every country in the world contains more than one national group and "*most, if not all nation-states are polyethnic*" [Zijlmans 2014]. Moreover, the sense of national belonging has been transformed by the dynamics of globalization and, consequently, has affected the concept of borders in humanities as well. Since the 1990s scholars in humanities have been continuously questioning the concept of national borders as a human construct and doubting that the national paradigm can be seen as a foundational premise for a discipline [Simal-González 2018: 277].

If we look at the case of Latvia, the question of national identity is particularly complicated. Due to the rather brief history of the state of Latvia (founded in 1918 and the statehood being interrupted by German and Russian occupation regimes) and complex history, involving forced displacement, repressions, and liminal identities – neither Latvian, nor emigrée –, Latvian national identity has been often tested. During the period of Soviet occupation, when all-encompassing Russification policy was implemented, specifically targeting Latvian language and culture, it was especially difficult to maintain Latvianness not only as a concept, but also as a set of practices, behaviours and attitudes. Assimilation into the USSR and becoming part of one homogenic empire that speaks one language – Russian, would have been the ideal scenario for the Soviet authorities and consequently the inevitable end of Latvian national identity. Although Latvia regained its independence in 1991, the consequences of Russian occupation lasting for half a century are still evident in the cultural, social and political environment. Besides, in the current geopolitical situation that started on 24 February 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine, the threat of warfare and subsequent colonisation has become outspoken again. Imperialistic nostalgia for the once lost USSR has been continuously articulated in the political rhetoric of the president of Russia Vladimir Putin. In these circumstances, the concept of transnationalism whereby ethnic, social and cultural boundaries dissolve or become fluid can be seen as too slippery.

On the other hand, if we emphasise national as something particular – a set of characteristic features that serves as a foundation for a discipline, for example, art, we also risk of basing our conclusions on generalised assumptions. In the context of art production, it is very problematic to talk about one homogenic "Latvian art" or "Latvian artists". Surely, the concept of Latvian art has been seen as foundational in forming Latvian national identity. Since the establishment of Latvian state in 1918, museology experts and art historians have tried to forge a canon of culture and art, where certain works and names would belong to. However, we are also very

eager to recognize Latvianness when we address such world-known artists as, for example, Vija Celmiņš (1938) or Mark Rothko (1903–1970). Yet, when we visit the websites of influential Western art institutions, such as MOMA, Celmins is defined as "*American, born in Latvia*" and Mark Rothko is "*American, born in Russia* (*now Latvia*)" [Moma.org]. The place of birth does not grant one particular identity, even more so in a global and postcolonial world. Artistic expression, too, can be seen as "*unidentifiable with a precise culture or precise territory*" [Scafirimuto 2021: 117].

In this context it is important to address the very discourse of art history, namely, how the art history has been produced since its invention as a discipline in the 19th century. Here, the theoretical framework of "transnationalism" becomes a productive revisionist framework since it suggests a "*way of understanding, researching and curating that encourages the idea that art, artists and art histories are connected beyond their countries of origin. The word 'transnational' encourages us all to challenge and revise dominant art histories by highlighting the global exchanges and flow of artists and ideas*" [Tate.org.uk]. According to such a view, we should avoid the Eurocentric or West-centric predisposition and rather opt for more parallel and pluralistic histories acknowledging peripheries and regions, whereby the Baltic States are unequivocally defined as a periphery. For nearly half a century to the rest of the world, the Baltic region had remained hidden behind the Iron Curtain. It resulted in somewhat vague recognition of particular countries – Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia – even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, because in the Cold War narrative there used to be only one Soviet enemy – the USSR. In the aftermath of the occupation regime, Latvia from many perspectives is still considered a post-Soviet space, which of course is a derogatory term implying something backwards, stagnating, corrupted etc.

Here, the concept of borders becomes pivotal – how a nation-state is incorporated into a massive Soviet empire for half a century, how it affects not only the physical borders of the countries, but also the symbolic borders – such as those of national identity, culture, works of art, disciplines of art, as well as art histories. Can we, as a result of a hybrid identity, claim that we should rather be discussing "borderless art"? Who is the transnational artist? When analysing, for example, Mexican-American performance artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña's artistic practice, French art historian Guglielmo Scafirimuto claims that "*the transnational artist is a border crosser, politically and aesthetically*" [Scafirimuto 2021: 125]. Can this framework be applied to Ojārs Feldbergs, too?

Surely, Feldbergs cannot be considered a transnational artist in a physical / nomadic sense, as one who would have lived in exile or who would be a migrant artist – foreigner – in another country. Yet, transnational manifestations in terms of the concept of borders can definitely be explored in his art. The first instance of both

Figure 3. The granite blocks made by Ojārs Feldbergs during the Barricades (personal archive of O. Feldbergs, 1991).

real and symbolic borders in transnational context is provided by Feldbergs himself, when he reflects on the granite blocks made by him during the Barricades in Old Riga in 1991 (Figure 3):

> "*During the barricades of January 1991, I had built my own barricade from granite stone blocks in Old Riga. It remained there until 21 August 1991, blocking the way of OMON's military mobile units and allowing the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia to adopt the Constitutional Law 'On the Statehood of the Republic of Latvia' restoring the independence of our state. Later I realised that this barricade was also a symbolic border. On the one side of this border my life lived during the Soviet times remained, whereas on the other – the life in the liberated Latvia started*" [Feldbergs 2012: 8].

Thus, Feldbergs contemplates on both – the physical and symbolic borders of Latvia. The physical borders of Latvia were violated by the USSR when Latvia was annexed and incorporated in the Soviet empire; however, symbolic borders are the ones that separate the colonial from the postcolonial, the traumatic Soviet past, in which Feldbergs' father was deported to remote and harsh territories of Russia twice [Feldbergs 2021], from the democracy-orientated present, the ideology saturated cultural and belief systems from the freedom of speech. The symbolic border thus

emerges as a site of struggle, conflict and negotiation. It is a metaphorical wound, which needs to be healed to overcome the trauma.

The concept of transnational borders also emerges in the Pedvāle Open-Air Art Park. First of all, transnationalism is expressed through sculptural and Land Art objects that have been produced by artists from other countries such as the USA, the UK, India, Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Belarus, Lithuania, Estonia. Although helpful in terms of definitions and discourse, it is problematic to refer to Land Art, when characterising the Pedvāle Art Park and works of art exhibited there. When the Pedvāle Art Park was founded in 1991, it could not be based on the discipline of Land Art, since it did not exist as a conceptual movement in Latvia. Similarly to other comparatively new and experimental disciplines, such as performance art, it lacked systematic knowledge and was practiced rather intuitively. Land Art emerged in the West in the 1960s and according to a definition, it "is characterised by an immediate and visceral interaction with landscape, nature and the environment" [Tufnell 2006: 15]. Interaction with landscape in Feldbergs' case was established through the discipline of sculpture; however, when sculptural objects are integrated into landscape and environment and, moreover, landscape and environment are being sculpted as objects, certain reciprocity between the artist, object, landscape, spectator, action, and codes of communication emerges. In this sense, the Pedvaāle Open-Air Art Park becomes a site of synthesis, where "*natural landscape, cultural heritage and art* [*are integrated*] *into a single environment*" [Pedvale]. The concept of Land Art, thus would be a point of departure from the perspective of Western art discourse, yet it only echoes with local practices and should not be seen as a guiding principle.

Second, the very idea of the open-air art park resulted from Feldbergs' travels in the 1990s, when he visited several open-air parks in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan. These encounters with other cultures inspired him and motivated to establish a park in Latvia:

> "*For tens of years I had cherished an idea of an open-air art park where I could exhibit my sculptures. (..) I purchased the land and later also obtained the buildings of the manor. (..) I wanted to create my works of art and integrate them into the landscape, as well as invite other artists to participate in the implementation of my dreams. Along with the time of [National] Awakening I had an opportunity to travel around the world and visit art museums and parks. Within several years I visited [open-air parks in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan]*" [Feldbergs 2012:10].

Third, we could also look at Pedvāle itself as a site that is positioned outside and beyond the borders of an institutional space – be it a gallery or a museum. If we draw

comparisons with the development of Land Art in the West, it was precisely this anti-hierarchical and anti-institutional drive that motivated Western artists to create art outdoors in natural landscape and environment. In Soviet Latvia, on the contrary, the art system did not function within art market (because there was no such market); it was regulated and censored by the state. Sculpture as a traditional discipline had to fulfil the ideological function. By founding an open-air art space in 1991, when Latvia regained national independence, Feldbergs provided experimental grounds for different type of art making. Pedvāle became a meeting point, co-creation and exhibition site gathering local and international artists. In this sense, Pedvāle was definitely positioned outside the institutional borders, yet it also needed support because the manor and estate were cultural and historical objects that required proper restoration and maintenance. At the time Feldbergs acquired the estate, it was in a horrible state – just ruins and overgrown fields polluted with garbage and waste. Being motivated by nostalgic attachment to the land of his ancestors, as well as by desire to clean up the mess after the nihilistic and destructive attitude towards nature and ecosystem in the Soviet period, Feldbergs obtained the land along with the ruins of the manor. Yet, it took nearly 30 years to finally restore the buildings and turn the manor into an artist residency, popular amongst international artists (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Ojārs Feldbergs with the performance group "Animist" at the opening of the Pedvāle Manor after its restoration (photo: Monta Šmitiņa, 2020).

As such, Pedvāle became a life-long project and mission for Feldbergs characterised by the artist as metaphorical and symbiotic mode of co-existence:

> "*The borders of the Pedvāle real estate were marked and fixed in the land register. Within these borders my world developed (..). In my thoughts and feelings, I merged with this territory. Its borders were like the contours of a body, its land like a body – flesh. My body merged with this landscape of nature and our bodies as if grew together*" [Feldbergs 2012: 10].

Moreover, transgression of disciplines or transdisciplinary manifestations can be observed in Feldbergs' performative strategies that often become integrated in his works of art, such as the series *Games with the Stone* or otherwise called *The Performance of Stone Planting* that has been implemented since 2007 (Figure 5). It started as a funny experiment to test whether stones grow, since farmers had the so-called stone works, where stones had to be removed from the fields every spring. Feldbergs, in his turn, organised the collective works of stone planting. Over time, he developed the concept and named the stone seed *Petraflora Pedvalensis* [Feldbergs

Figure 5. Stone planting at Pedvāle in 2007
(personal archive of O. Feldbergs).

2012: 242]. The performance is also socially engaging and participatory with ritualistic and even shamanistic qualities attributed to the process, because when a stone seed is planted in the soil the person who plants it makes a wish and whispers a wish to the stone:

> "*Stone planting became a spiritual ritual during which the planters passed their message to the stone seed, and simultaneously with the stone seed that was planted into the soil, a wish was also planted in the planter's soul. During the ritual a bonfire is lit, leaves of the tree of life are burned, sacred spring water of Pedvāle is drunk and poured into the fire so that along the vapour a message is carried to the Great Spirit in the sky. Thus, the four primary elements of the world – earth, fire, water and air – become connected. Many people from all over the world have planted their stone seeds in the stone field of Pedvāle (..). Each planter has passed a personal message to the stone (..) Thus, the soil becomes spiritual. The stone seeds grown along with the planters' faith and hopes*" [Feldbergs 2012: 242].

There is, thus, reciprocity and dynamic relationship between the artist, object, landscape, and spectator. Performance art becomes a conceptual territory where disciplinary borders are tested and transgressed. It should be also added that this performance piece has transnational features, too, since Feldbergs has been planting stones all over the world when visiting other countries for the purposes of his art projects.

Overall, a stone for Feldbergs bears performative qualities. A stone is not only material or substance for a work of art to be implemented in the discipline of sculpture, for Feldbergs it is also a semiotic sign and a dialogic partner in art. As Feldbergs argues: "*I realized that we both – the stone and me – could create a sign, a symbol, that, being materialised in a poetic form, communicated and informed about a certain concept or natural element*" [Pedvale]. A stone also indicates a border between the artist and the work of art, because without the touch of the artist a stone is just a stone. Through the artistic (physical) touch and gesture, a stone is transformed into a meaningful object of art. Whereas through performative engagement of spectators the border between the object of art and spectators is erased. Since the concept of open-air art park anticipates navigation through the park, as well as interaction with the objects, spectators can touch the objects, sit or stand on them, which of course, would not be possible in a gallery or museum space (unless specifically instructed). Spectators thus have an opportunity to build a relationship with stone sculptures, empathically "feel" them not as anonymous numb material, but soulful (neopagan) ancestors who have "seen" and "experienced" events and processes many centuries before us [Feldbergs 2021]. The relationship model between the artist, the object of

art, spectators and space thus is experiential, affective and epistemological. Through the shared experience, feelings and senses, concepts and engagement with the work of art and other spectators, as well as the artist and the space, a stone sculpture becomes more than just an object – it becomes a vehicle for a dialogue between different fields of knowledge. It is an example of transdisciplinary art, and thus, Feldbergs cannot be regarded merely as a sculptor, but, indeed, a transdisciplinary artist.

With the help of this case study and analysis of terminology, we can conclude that there are multiple and complex factors that need to be considered. First of all, we should discuss the methodology used in art history to address the question of analytic tools that are employed in constructing a discourse. Secondly, we should also examine art production – how individuals operate on their own or within systems or networks, what are the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, whether we "look beyond national boundaries to transcultural and transnational exchanges, and processes of interculturalization" [Zijlmans 2014] and pay attention to "the artworks that do or do not transcend or challenge national or geographical determinations (..) in our era of globalization, postcolonialism, and post-communism" [Zijlmans 2014]. The concepts of transnationalism and transdisciplinarity open up hermeneutical opportunities for critical reflection on these issues, although we must remain cautious in drawing too generalised conclusions. These frameworks should be carefully examined in each particular context. Third, when analysing art, we should look beyond the narrow scope of discipline-based analysis and instead opt for more integral and holistic approaches, because it will ensure a more nuanced understanding of artistic practices. Hence, the question of borders is a useful point of departure.

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THE ART OF *PERESTROIKA*: NEW MOVEMENTS IN GEORGIAN ART OF THE 1980s

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Abstract

The study of Georgian art of the *perestroika* is very important, especially in the context of the history of art movements of the 1980s, linked to the establishment of the non-official art groups in Tbilisi.

The aim of this article is to analyze the history of the establishment of the art groups *Archivarius* (1984) and *Tenth Floor* (1986) and to discuss the art movements of the 1980s in Tbilisi. The generation of Georgian artists involved in the non-official art groups fundamentally changed the art scene of that period and played an important role of the development of contemporary art in Georgia. *Perestroika*, associated with Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of openness, contributed to a shift in political and sociocultural discourse throughout the Soviet Union and also played an important role in the artistic processes in Georgia. All the events that took place in the 1980s art scene of Tbilisi portray a vigorous willingness to hasten away from the Soviet dimension and maintain the memory of a historical discourse. Some artists found a way out through emigration; others discovered an intangible shelter via working collectively. *Perestroika* had clearly formed a special environment in which things that were previously unseen became visible. The Georgian *avant-garde* managed to create its own *sui generis* aesthetic and theoretical principles in just a decade, alongside expressing postmodernist hues at certain points.

Keywords: *perestroika, non-official art, Georgian art, art groups, Soviet Union.*

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CULTURE CROSSROADS

Introduction

The period of *Perestroika*[1] was an important time for post-Soviet countries. In general, the social-political events which occurred in the 1980s touched all aspects of living, including Georgian cultural life. The changes were associated with the softening of administrative and ideological control over artistic life. It was evident that the cultural isolation that had been widely established in the 1960s and 1970s was approaching its end. After this period, we saw events which broke away from the official regulations regarding culture. Before the *perestroika*, such activities were systematically suppressed.

Since the 1960s a distinction can be made between official and unofficial art.[2] The unofficial art appeared in Georgia in the years 1974–1975. Georgian non-official art – in comparison with the Russian non-conformist art, which evoked social-political themes – reflected on historical and political aspects, as well as on aesthetic-conceptual issues [Kipiani 2020].

What does the dichotomy of the official/non-official concept imply? Often this confrontation is interpreted as a matter of political or social engagement in contemporary art.

However, the art form and context of the non-official art were essentially different in the late decades of the Soviet republics or even in the cities. In general, the status of non-official art can be explained as follows: unlike the recognized and established Soviet socialist art, non-official art established itself in the so-called underground space. It existed in flats, studios and in open public spaces; however, it appeared in state museums and exhibition halls very rarely even in times of *perestroika*. After the non-official art emerged from the "closed" local context and was presented in international exhibitions it became visible to the general public. The political context of non-official art was not a definitive problem for the Soviet system, inasmuch as in some Soviet republics, art itself did not occur against a political background. The main problem, rather, was the alternative form and context of this art. Thus, the existence of non-official art in daily life propagated the allowance of "different" and indicated the possibilities of the transformation of the existing system.

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[1] 1985–1991 – the ruling period of Mikhail Gorbachev: beginning from his election to the position of central secretary on the committee of the Communist party (11 March 1985) until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Mikhail Gorbachev, during his seven years of governance, implemented two important reforms, called "*Perestroika*" ("reconstruction") and "*Glasnost*" ("openness").

[2] Art which was not recognized by the Soviet State is called non-official, dissident or non-conformist art. Non-official art included several different artistic directions and forms.

Non-official art in the Soviet Union and the West

For the Soviet system, non-official art was the representation of the Western aesthetic and moreover, was considered as an instrument of information and ideological warfare.

The Soviet art scene of the 1980s was very diverse in Georgia, as in other former Soviet republics, in addition to its large permanent exhibitions at the local and international levels. Also of note is the importance of Western interest in non-official soviet art, which can be seen in the quantities of purchased collections in specially organized show-rooms and art auctions.

Western attraction to Soviet non-conformist art was in evidence since the 1960s. We can say that the famous Sovietologist and economist Norton Dodge (1927–2011) was the first foreign collector of Soviet non-official art.[1] Among works by other artists, he kept the art works of several Georgian artists (Gia Edzgveradze, Alexandre Bandzeladze, Keti Kapanadze, etc.) in his collection.[2] In the 1980s, historian and art collector Peter Ludwig began to buy large quantities of Soviet non-official art. In his interview with Martin Kunz, he notes that he and his spouse, art critic Irene Ludwig, became interested in Soviet non-official art during the 1970s and 1980s.[3] By the end of the 1990s they had accumulated a very large collection of non-official Soviet art [Dodenhoff eds. 2021].[4]

Interest toward non-official Soviet art reached its peak on 7 July 1988 at the Sotheby's auction of Russian *avant-garde* and modern Soviet art organized in Moscow.[5] In this auction, Gia Edzgveradze's art works were presented from Georgia. The art works at the Soviet non-official art auction were purchased for seemingly high prices relative to their contemporary standard art-market value. However, very little was known about Soviet non-official art even among art dealers, collectors and art researchers. The auction created new opportunities for painters who worked in

[1] Norton and Nancy Dodges donated their Soviet non-conformist art collection from the 1960s–1980s to the Zimmerli Art museum in 1991. This collection included works not only by Russian nonconformist artists, but also by Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Belarusians, Estonians, Latvians, and many other nonconformist painters from other Soviet republics.

[2] See https://zimmerli.emuseum.com/collections

[3] Martin Kunz interviewed Peter Ludwig at Ludwig's house near Lucerne in 1989. At this time, Martin Kunz was director of the Art Museum in Lucerne. The interview was first published in: Von der Revolution zur Perestroika: Sowjetische Kunst aus Sammlung Ludwig:Ausstellungskatalog/Hrsg.Martin Kunz. Luzern; Stuttgart, 1989.

[4] The collection of the Contemporary Art Museum in Ludwig (Budapest) includes the works of Georgian artists of the 1980s. Among them are: Koka Ramisvhili, Gia Edzgveradze, Mamuka Tsetskhladze, Oleg Timchenko and others. See https://www.ludwigmuseum.hu/

[5] The first auction of non-official art in the Soviet Union was organized by Sotheby's Institute in 1988.

non-official art disciplines, and changed the path of the future for some of these artists.

The ongoing emergence of non-official art from the underground was realized at different scales and in different forms.[1] Non-official art activities clearly took place on the art scene in Moscow in 1986–1988 [Kovalev 1995]. Various exhibitions, concerts and performances spread in the outskirts of Moscow near the Kashirskaya metro station, demonstrating the diversity of the non-official art scene. In addition, its success was evident in the Sotheby's auction. Thus, an interest in and respect for this phenomenon was growing, even in places where it was suppressed or at least ignored. This trend is associated with *Perestroika* in Georgia as well. In 1985–1991, exhibitions in private flats in Tbilisi were still ongoing.[2] Such activities had happened since the 1970s, but at this moment the movement was gaining access to official exhibition spaces.

Establishment of the art groups

There are two important phases to be observed as we explore the creative process in Georgian art in the 1980s. The first includes the years 1970–1980 and the second phase is directly linked to 1984–1985 [Kldiashvili 2015].

In the second half of the 1980s in the time of *Perestroika*, the art scene was becoming more open and diverse in Georgia, as well as in other Soviet republics. During this period, the confusion, chaos and intensified tempo of life was remarkable. In this short phase we can distinguish various activities charged with different contexts.

The establishment of art groups and implementation of practical art collaborations in shared spaces was very characteristic of the *Perestroika* period.

These groups were often formed informally and spontaneously, but sometimes created manifestos or declared their values in advance. Unlike art collectives of other Soviet republics, a characteristic of Georgian art communities was that experiments, research and discovery were their basic features. Their creative life was more oriented towards self-reflection than exterior environmental factors. Consequently, their artistic aesthetic remained inside the creative process. For these art groups, the main driving impulse for artistic exploration was the experience of Western art and its context.

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[1] Comparison between Russian (Moscow and Leningrad) and other Soviet republics' nonconformist art scenes is quite a difficult task due to its different historic circumstances; this area needs comprehensive research.

[2] The center of the Georgian non-official art scene in the 1980s was Tbilisi. All important art initiatives, meetings, exhibitions, performaces and concerts were held in the city.

The history of art groups in the 1980s Georgia has not been fully researched; however, it is possible to gain an overview in the context of recently collected archival documents, which have been processed in this research.

Archivarius

Archivarius (1984) was a group of significant painters, who publicly realized their own exhibitions as one united collective under this name beginning in the 1980s. The name *Archivarius* comes from the German writer Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann's (1776–1822) novella *The Golden Pot: A Modern Fairytale* [Hoffmann 1819], where the main protagonist's name is Archivarius Lindhorst. The idea to form this art group was born in 1983, and by 1984 it was realized [Kacharava 1990].[1] Members of *Archivarius* included: Mamuka Tsetskhladze (b. 1960), Gia Loria (b. 1960), Goga Maghlakelidze (b. 1962) and Karlo Kacharava (1964–1994). Their first exhibition was held in Gia Loria's flat in December 1984. Four painters exhibited their art works under the name of *Archivarius*. At this event, Georgian painter Gia Bughadze made a speech. Besides this was the introduction of the manifesto[2] written by Karlo Kacharava. The second and final exhibition of this art group was held in the hall of the Merani publishing house in 1991. In advance of the art group's formation, its members had declared their shared values, principles and aims, which became the basis of their creativity. Beyond a conceptual understanding of the common principles, each of them had their individual artistic style, but the conceptual approach was a permanent trait in these young artists' art works.

In the first half of the 1980s these young painters were seeking their own forms of creativity, but by the 1990s each of them had found their individual style and aspiration as they continued to work independently. In the *Archivarius* period, the artists of this art group were focused on revealing a spirit of tales and mythology, as well as the nobleness of heroic and knightly ideals. That is why Karlo Kacharava defined his manifesto with the subtitle: "*The Archivariuses – an attempt to establish neoromanticism*". In the works of all four painters, we find religious themes, mystical passages from fairy-tales and characters placed on the border between reality and the mythical. The Hoffmannian approach in the paintings of the members of *Archivarius* is remarkable; it erases existing reality and goes beyond the material, tangible subject matter. Thus, their approach to the construction of storyline, manner of narration

[1] Interview with painter Gia Loria.

[2] The manifesto written in 1984 is lost. The text to which we refer here was read by Karlo Kacharava at the second *Archivarius* exhibition in 1991; it included the earlier version as well. Thus, this text can be identified as a group manifesto.

and characters are integrated into one path within their art works. Since the founding of *Archivarius*, their interest was oriented towards Western culture, literature and philosophy, as well as Christian art and Georgian culture. Art historian Dimitri Tumanishvili[1] considers the art of this group to be one of the most interesting episodes in Georgian art of the 1980s. He also distinguishes the importance of Karlo Kacharava as someone who established, named and then guided this group in its future path. Kacharava was an art historian who represented an intellectual basis for this art group.

The Tenth Floor

Beginning on 1 March 1986, the group members worked together on the tenth floor of the Tbilisi State Academy of Art building. We can identify the date of formation of the *Tenth Floor* group from the date when painter Mamuka Tsetskhladze began to work on his diploma art project. Following on from March, young painters began to gather at Mamuka Tsetkhladze's art studio. As the painter Oleg Timchenko says, those meetings implied active and daily work, art experiments in various materials and explorations of new artistic forms.

Different opinions are expressed about members of the *Tenth Floor* art group in both Georgian and foreign art criticism texts. Few studies and texts about this art group exist [Kacharava 1990; Khatishvili 2000; Kikodze 1989; Mchedlishvili 2013; Merewether 2021; Kacharava 2006; Kacharava 2000], but among all of them the most significant works are those of art historian and artist Karlo Kacharava, who himself was a member of this group. Some of his texts, such as his diaries and notes, still remain unpublished.

This art group formed spontaneously. Unlike the members of *Archivarius*, they did not have any shared ideas or manifestos. It is noteworthy that the *Tenth Floor* art group was the only art group of the 1980s where artists worked collectively in a shared space. The practice of the "collective" collaboration led to the art group and its members developing in an interesting way. The art group included Mamuka Tsetskhladze, Mamuka Japaridze (b. 1962), Karlo Kacharava, Oleg Timchenko (b. 1957) and Niko Tsetskhladze (b. 1959). Gia Loria, Goga Maghlakelidze, Temur Iakobashvili, Gia Dolidze, Lia Shvelidze, Maia Tsetskhladze and Zurab Sumbadze were also actively engaged in the art group. Over the years, the membership of the group changed many times. However, only the art works of Mamuka Japaridze,

[1] The book *Georgian art of the XX century and its historic context* was written on the basis of Dimitri Tumanishvili's lectures, which were recorded for the Tbilisi State Academy of Art's radio program. The text of this book was not intended to be published. However, after the death of Dimitri Tumanishvili, the editors transcribed the audio recordings and published the book with funding from the Shota Rustaveli Georgian National scientific grant in 2020.

Mamuka Tsetskhladze, Niko Tsetskhladze, Karlo Kacharava, Oleg Timchenko, Maya Tsetskhladze and Temur Iakobashvili were presented in an exhibition organized at Mamuka Japaridze's art studio on 25 July 1986. If we consider this art group as a unified system, which worked by experimenting and collective elaborations, and, in addition, if we observe the stylistic similarities of various art works painted in 1986–1987, then we can conclude that Mamuka Tsetskhladze, Niko Tsetskhladze and Oleg Timchenko clearly shared common artistic principles. Art by members of this group shares basic artistic principles of "new figuration". Major themes of their art works are associated with kings, dwarfs, knights and demons, which are expressed in a neo-expressionist manner by the painters. In this period, we can also observe in their art images of animals, which almost completely filled the painting surfaces. In 1986–1987, painters who were engaged in this art group began to experiment with unusual materials like technical paints, iron, wood, charcoal, emulsion and gouache. The majority of these artworks were painted on cardboard using experimental painting materials. The cardboard format allowed the artists to conduct bold experiments.

For the young artists, working in a group was a spontaneous solution to continuing their creative work and development. As Oleg Timchenko recalls, the artistic experiments and collective collaborations in the art group contributed to a boost in their creative progress, which, according to the artist, otherwise would be harder to achieve. The meetings of the young artists on the tenth floor could be called periods of self-reflection, and the adoption and sharing of new art forms and information. After the tenth-floor meetings began, the art group began to take different actions and organized exhibitions for wider publicity.

The art group's first two big expositions[1] were held in the Tbilisi History Museum (Qarvasla). The first one was opened on 8 July 1986. The third exhibition followed at the staircase of Painter's House[2] in 1987. The art group stopped working on the tenth floor in 1986. After that, with the help of Gia Bughadze, they continued to work in several auditoriums in I. Nikoladze's high art school. In 1986–1987 the young artists spent the winter in this space. As a result, the construction of a famous ladder cell panel was planned. As the painter Mamuka Tsetskhladze recalls, the exhibition had a transient character, because it was held not in the exhibition hall of Painter's House but on its staircase. The works of different artists were exhibited on a

[1] The participants were: Niko Tsetskhladze, Oleg Timchenko, Mamuka Tsetskhladze, Karlo Kacharava, Gia Loria, Lasha Sulakauri, Dali Mukhadze, Gia Bughadze, Gia Goglidze, Goga Maghlakelidze, Mamuka Japaridze and Levan Choghoshvili.

[2] "Painter's House" was at Rustaveli avenue N7 before 1991.

panel that was three floors high, positioned through the staircase, and the art pieces themselves were not distinguishable from each other, so nobody could recognize where one work ended and another began.[1]

After 1987, the Tenth Floor art group moved to the art studio of the K. Marjanishvili theatre, where the artist Mamuka Tsetskhladze had started work as an art decorator, and thus he was able to use the space freely in order to work with other painters. At the same time, it is worth mentioning that Gia Bughadze played an important role in acquiring this space for Mamuka Tsetskhladze and the other artists. In most research texts and articles, this change of location to the studio of Marjanishvili theatre is highlighted as having renewed the form of the *Tenth Floor* art group with slightly changed artistic approaches and members. Thus, this period of 1987–1990 for the *Tenth Floor* group can be distinguished as the Marjanishvili art studio period. In 1991 some painters returned to this art studio, but with some new artists who had never worked with them joining as well. We can call these times the second phase of the Marjanishvili art studio period.

The art group at the Marjanishvili studio essentially transformed its methods. Karlo Kacharava, in his article "For the history of the Georgian *avant-garde*", notes that Koka Ramisvhili (b. 1956) had joined to the group. In his diary, at several points in 1989, Karlo Kacharava mentioned a group of artists he called "the five" – Mamuka Tsetskhladze, Niko Tsetskhladze, Oleg Timchenko, Mamuka Japaridze and Koka Ramisvhili. He considered them the nucleus of the art group. It is worth mentioning that the painter Lia Shvelidze (b. 1959) who was not involved in the working process, but participated in exhibitions, also began to engage actively in art collaborations with this group.

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[1] "*We worked on large cardboard and some of it we did in Painter's House. Together with us worked Gia Loria, Lia Shvelidze, Gia Bughadze, Gia Dolidze, Temur Iakobashvili. This was a construction panel, because at that time we had no access to large size canvas, so we cut rolls and then sewed them together. In that way we made very large panels in a size of 10 X 5 and wrapped this up on the wall. That's how we created the canvas for Lia Shvelidze's* Exile from Heaven *and other art works. Painter Temur Iakobashvili created a very interesting art-piece for the staircase, he visited the Tenth Floor art group before and after at the Nikoladze's college as well...*

... It is clear that the exhibition in the staircase was misunderstood by the public, because the spectators expected art works to be hung on the wall, as usual, in the same manner as it was presented in the same building during the summer art exposition. Despite that, visitors saw large-scale panels constructed from different painters' art works through the three-floored height of the staircase. It was almost impossible to identify different part of this panel, as far as one art work was merging into another. In the beginning it was implied that we could make a project in the hall of Painter's House, but at the end we were denied it. Apparently, that provoked us to realize such an exposition..." Interview with Mamuka Tsetskhladze. Recorded in the summer of 2020.

During the Marjanishvili art studio period, a number of artists collaborated with each other and held collective group exhibitions at different times. They were "the five" painters as mentioned above, and also Lia Shvelidze, Gia Loria, Goga Maghlakelidze, Maya Tsetskhladze, Gia Rigvava (b. 1956),[1] photographer Guram Tsibakhashvili (b. 1960),[2] Gia Dolidze, Temur Iakobashvili, Niko Lomashvili, Zura Gomelauri and Dato Chikhladze. Since the founding of the Marjanishvili art studio group, they began to undertake larger art projects. The artists worked on large-size canvases and continued to experiment with various painting materials.

As well as local exhibitions, the *Tenth Floor* group also participated in international events, which took place in international exhibitions in 1988–1989. In 1989, the works of the artists Mamuka Tsetskhladze, Oleg Timchenko, Koka Ramishvili and Niko Tsetskhladze were exhibited at the "Black and White" gallery in Budapest. The initiator and organizer of this exhibition was Agnes Horvat and the curator was Lorant Hage. In the same year in Leningrad (St. Petersburg) at the state Ethnography Museum of Nations of Socialist Republics, an exhibition of Georgian *avant-garde* art of the 1980s was opened. One year earlier, all members of the art group participated at an international symposium of *avant-garde* art in Narva.[3]

The art group worked actively until 1990. In 1991, a new generation of artists joined the main core of the group and used their space during the next two years, as mentioned above. After an exhibition named "America 500", the art group began to lose its main principles of unity. The next exhibition which some members of the group participated in was named "Heat and Contact" and was curated by Suzan Reid in London. It represented the art projects of two British galleries – Mappin Art Gallery (Sheffield) and Arnolfini Gallery (Bristol) [4] – presented others' works as well as those of the art group. According to the catalogue, this event presented painters whose creative lives included the evolution of Tbilisian art within three phases. Thus, the concept of this exposition united two different artistic directions of the 1970–1980s.

[1] In 1987 Gia Rigvava came back from Moscow and in 1988–1989 began to work with the *Tenth Floor* art collective.

[2] The majority of the photo documentation of Tbilisi art scene in 1988–1989 was photographed by Guram Tsibakhashvili.

[3] Participants: Niko Tsetskhladze, Lia Shvelidze, Oleg Timchenko, Koka Ramisvhili, Mamuka Japaridze, Karlo Kacharava, Gia Loria, Niko Lomashvili, Gia Rigvava, Guram Tsibakhashvili and Karaman Kutateladze.

[4] Participants: Aleksandre Bandzeladze, Koka Ramisvhili, Gia Edzgveradze, Gia Rigvava, Oleg Timchenko, Mamuka Japaridze, Niko Tsetskhladze and Iliko Zautasvhili.

Conclusion

Processes in Tbilisi's art scene, in spite of its chaotic and spontaneous character, clearly manifested the strong aspirations of young people to "escape" from the Soviet system and at the same time to preserve historic memory and values. A certain circle of painters found the solution in emigration, but some used collective working principles in order to survive. In the 1980s, the artistic groups *Archivarius* and the *Tenth Floor* were engendered in two different social-political and cultural contexts. Even more, if we compare the *Tenth Floor* art group's first and the second periods (at the studio of the Marjanishvili) we will see not only that their painting style changed but that by 1989–1991 it had already adopted diverse conceptual aesthetics.

As we mentioned at the beginning of this article, although the Perestroika period was brief, it was an especially significant and intense era, which revealed seemingly hidden processes in the underground art scene. Georgian *avant-garde* art traveled a long path to form its worldview and aesthetic principles in one decade. It distinctly manifested the postmodern in both appearance and nuance, with notable differences from the Western version because of its local and historic contexts.

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FOUNDATION AND OPERATION OF THE ASSOCIATION OF LATVIAN TEXTILE ART (1994–2014)

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Abstract

Influenced by political and economic changes in Latvia in the mid-1990s, artists in different fields of art came together and formed independent associations. Aija Baumane (1943–2019), artist and professor, the head of the Department of Textile Art at the Art Academy of Latvia (AAL), founded the Association of Latvian Textile Art (ALTA) together with ten textile artists from different generations.

The aim of the research: to describe the significance of the Association of Latvian Textile Art activities in the first 20 years of operation and to identify changes in textile art since the 1990s. ALTA's attempt to motivate and encourage Latvian textile artists to become involved in world art processes marks a transition in various aspects. New ways for expression were searched and different understanding developed in textile art, and thus the question of the traditionally accepted function of textile work was raised. Until now the operation and significance of ALTA have not been studied, although its impact on the development of the textile art sector is undeniable.

The research is based on ALTA activity materials, mainly documented in the press – "*Literatūra un Māksla*", "*Māksla*", "*Diena*", "*Kultūras Forums*", etc., as well as little studied and not systematized so far archive of the Association of Textile Art, located at the Department of Textile Art of the Art Academy of Latvia since the foundation of the association.

Keywords: *artists association, Aija Baumane, Latvian textile art, textile work*.

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The Association of Latvian Textile Art (hereinafter ALTA) is the only textile artists' organization in Latvia and it unites almost 80 members – professional artists. It was founded in April 1994. In the year of its foundation, ALTA's activities included formation of its members creative biographies database, organization of exhibitions in Latvia and abroad, collection and dissemination of information on international competitions and exhibitions in order to promote ALTA's members individually and the textile art sector as a whole.

Since 1995, the legal status of ALTA has been registered in the Register of Associations and Foundations. Acquisition of legal status was mainly necessary to raise funds. It should be emphasized that both the board of the association and the members performed the work necessary for the existence of the association free of charge.

Preconditions for the establishment of the Association of Textile Art in the early 1990s

Latvian artists obtained their experience of participation in professional organizations during the Soviet period. The professional status of the representatives of the visual arts sector, including textile artists, was determined by the affiliation to the largest artists' organization in Latvia, the Artists' Union of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic (AU LSSR)[1], since 1990 the Artists' Union of Latvia (AUL). As a state institution under the Ministry of Culture, until 1991 AU LSSR organized large-scale exhibitions, planned the procurement of artworks, provided some artists with workshops and co-financed the cost of materials. Each sector of art (painters, sculptors, textile artists, etc.) had its own section, director, board and members. Textile art section from 1976 until 1992 was led by Egils Rozenbergs (1948). The Artists' Union of LSSR and other creative unions were supported by state owned weekly cultural newspaper "*Literatūra un Māksla*"[2] and the cultural magazine "*Māksla*" both delivering a wide coverage of cultural life. However, at the same time as support, AU LSSR and activities of its members in accordance with the understanding of the Soviet era were under the supervision and control of the Communist Party, therefore the AU LSSR and art processes taking place at that time in the 21st century are re-evaluated in more extensive research on art history[3]. In 1992, as the political and

[1] AU LSSR was founded in 1941, until 1991 was a member of the USSR Artists Union.

[2] "Gleznieciba. Laikmeta liecinieki. 20. gadsimta 60., 70. un 80. gadi. Latvijas Mākslinieku savienības mākslas darbu kolekcija" [Painting. Witness of the era. The 60s, 70s and 80s of the 20th century. Collection of works of art of the Latvian Union of Artists] editor Inese Baranovska, 2002, "Padomjzemes mitoloģija" [Sovietland mythology] editor Elita Ansone, 2008, "UN CITI virzieni, meklējumi, mākslinieki Latvijā 1960–1984" [AND OTHER trends, searches, artists in Latvia 1960–1984] editors Vilnis Vējš, Ieva Astahovska, Irēna Bužinska, Līga Lindenbauma, Māra Traumane, 2010, etc.

[3] Ibid.

economic situation in Latvia changed, the AU LSSR ceased to exist, the creative sections lost their unifying role [Zemzaris 1995: 6], and thus both the organization and the artists thought about what to do next.

The events of the Third Latvian National Awakening, political, social and economic changes facilitated the rapid renewal of various cultural organizations, such as the Librarians' Association, the Latvian Architects' Union, the Latvian Cinematographers' Union, etc. In 1999, according to various sources, information was gathered about more than 150 non-governmental organizations [Vinnika 1999], run by activists. Visual artists with similar interest also organized in smaller groups with aim to realize their ideas. Santa Mazika, a researcher of cultural organizations in the 1990s, notes that many young artists, not finding a place in the Artists' Union of the LSSR were forming independent creative units and considers this as a bright feature of the 1990s art processes and names this concept as "new institutionalism" [Mazika 2010: 84]. The term "new institutionalism" refers to organizations "OPEN", "E-LAB", "Pedvāle Open-Air Art Museum", K@2", etc., the content of which is contemporary art, but the form of activity corresponds to the way the artists themselves work [Mazika 2010: 84].

Adaptation to the new conditions also took place in neighboring Estonia and Lithuania. The activities of Estonian textile artists, which began in 1993, played an important role. In Tallinn, Estonian textile artists founded the textile art association *Eesti Tekstiilikunstnike Liit*. The main goals of the organization were to develop the traditions of textile art in Estonia, to collect and disseminate information about Estonian textile art. To this day, the magazine *KOILIBLIKAS* (translated as "moth") is published twice a year; it reflects ongoing activities in the sector and interviews with artists. The experience of colleagues from neighboring countries encouraged Latvian textile artists to look for similar opportunities in Latvia.

The need for new organizations was doubted by painter and writer Uldis Zemzaris. In his 1995 publication "Independents then and independents now" does not hide his skepticism towards the formation of such groups, pointing out that artists are essentially individualists who feel competition with each other [Zemzaris 1995: 3]. Some artists from younger generations also questioned the need for organizations, believing that artists' unions were a legacy of the Soviet era, when their task was to regulate the activities of creative people in return for offering various coveted privileges – social guarantees, public procurement, workshops and even apartments [Balčus 2015].

This time coincided with changes within the textile art sector. After the death of Rūdolfs Heimrāts, the founder of the professional textile art school and the most active developer of the sector in 1992, the textile artist Aija Baumane took over and continued the management of the Department of Textile Art at the Art Academy.

Many colleagues admired Baumane's courage, realizing that prospects were gloomy. As a result of unplanned difficulties – in the following years, the competition for applicants for entrance exams in the applied arts departments of AAL declined rapidly. These conditions were also affected by problems with the supply of materials, the cessation of public procurement and the purchase of works of art for museums [Rozenieks 2004]. It must be concluded that the entire sector was subject to change, and A. Baumane sensed that the textile art sector was in the process of survival.

Textile artists also experienced a need to unite in an independent group. In 1994, the last international symposium took place at the Artists' House of Creativity in Dzintari. Its organizer Egils Rozenbergs (1948) emphasized that symposia were one of the ways to better integrate into the world of art life [Baranovska 1995: 16]. Inspired by the experience of foreign colleagues, a group of textile artists "+ – 48" was formed during the symposium in 1994. The group "+ – 48" united nine former students of the professor and artist Rūdolfs Heimrāts – Egils Rozenbergs, Dzintra Vilks (1948), Inese Jakobi (1949), Lija Rage (1948), Arvīds Priedīte (1946), Pēteris Sidars (1948), Baiba Osīte (1958), Zinta Beimane (1948) and Viesturs Bērziņš (1954–2019).

The first ideas and plans for an organization that would take care of the possible development of the Latvian textile art sector were recorded in a 1993 interview "A year in the length of year" in the newspaper "Diena" in which E. Rozenbergs pointed out that textile artists were thinking about setting up an information centre. "There are several international textile art associations in Europe that publish magazines, organize conferences on textile art issues and would like to cooperate with us" [Kaufmanis 1993: 9]. Apparently, ideas vibrating among textile artists had reached a time to mature and transform into reality. In turn, the participants of ALTA pointed out that the activities of the group "+ – 48" have given the strongest impetus for other textile artists to unite in the Association of Latvian Textile Art.

Foundation and operation of ALTA

The founders of the Association of Latvian Textile Art were 9 textile artists of different generations: Aija Baumane, Edīte Pauls-Vīgnere, Aina Muze (1943–2017), Skaidrīte Leimane (1941), Astrīda Bērziņa (1948), Irisa Blumate (1948), Daiga Štālberga (1963), Iveta Vecenāne (1962), Ieva Krūmiņa (1964), Barbara Ābele (1964), Zane Krūmiņa (1952) and textile art researcher Velta Raudzepa (1951). 72 textile artists gathered for the foundation meeting in April 1994, voted for the statutes and elected members of the Board. Aija Baumane was unanimously elected President of the Association and was the only president of ALTA until 2019. ALTA statutes determined the main goals of the Association – to promote contemporary textile art activities, creative initiative, creativity and the integration of Latvian

textile art into world art processes. At the same time ALTA maintains its ties with the Artists' Union of Latvia and is still one of several associations of AUL creative groups.

Some members of the Board had experience of participation in the Textile Art Section of the Artists' Union, especially in organizing meetings and planning exhibitions. The individual initiative of ALTA members was of great importance. For ALTA to function fully as an organization, its members were interested in promoting the development of ALTA activities. For example, artist Ieva Krūmiņa designed the emblem of the Association.

The founders of ALTA purposefully sought communication opportunities for international contacts. In 1995 A. Baumane sent informative letters about the foundation of ALTA to textile art organizations in several countries. As a result, ALTA established cooperation with the largest textile art organizations in the world – the European Textile Network (ETN) in France (since 2015 in Spain, from 2019 in Germany), Textileart in Denmark, the American Tapestry Alliance (ATA) in the United States.

Support was provided by the researcher of textile art Velta Raudzepa – the head of the collection of the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design[1]. The most significant contribution of Raudzepa is the initiative to organize six[2] Riga International Textile and Fiber Art Triennials in the period from 2001 to 2018. The assumption that international textile art biennials should be considered as an indicator for understanding textile art in order to follow changes in various trends and phenomena has become a driving force in the sector. With this experience, textile artists developed a deeper understanding of what is happening with textile art outside Latvia, as well as the ability to join the chain of large-scale international events – biennials and triennials[3].

In 2001 with its first triennial, Riga also became one of the stages of international textile art events connected with the European Textile Network (ETN), founded in 1991 by several European textile artists with aim of popularizing the use of tapestry technique in diverse manifestations and ideological currents of contemporary art.

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[1] Until 2005 the museum was called the Museum of Decorative Applied Arts.

[2] 2001, 2004 Tradicionālais un laikmetīgais [Tradition and innovation], 2007 Globālā intriga [Global intrigue], 2010 Globālā intriga 2 [Global intrigue 2], 2015 Daudzveidība vienotībā [Diversity and unity], 2018 Identitāte [Identity].

[3] *The International Lausanne Tapestry Biennials* (1962–1995). *Fondation Toms Pauli* – Toms Pauli Foundation is a non-profit organization that aims to organize exhibitions, publish catalogs and make scientific archives available to researchers. The foundation is a member of an international research network working to document the history of tapestries and protect textile use.

Egils Rozenbergs, President of the Artists' Union of Latvia and textile artist, also participated in the foundation of ETN.

In 1991, the ETN had 32 member states[1]. In order for each country to be able to present in depth the local traditions and experience of textile art, an annual conference of the ETN organization, in cooperation with the cultural institutions, museums and ministries of culture of the respective country took place in one of the member states. In 2001, the ETN conference took place in Riga. In honor of this event, the DMDM Museum, the Association of Textile Art and the Ministry of Culture organized an international exhibition "Tradition & Innovation". At the same time several solo exhibitions of Latvian artists were opened and textile art symposium took place in Zvārtava. At the end of the conference, the participants signed the "Declaration on the regular organization of the textile and fiber art triennial "Tradition & Innovation" in Riga".

A. Pumpurs also created a design concept for exhibition catalogs – the catalog of works of ALTA participants "Latvian Textile Art" (1997), "Textile and Fiber Art in Latvia" (Spain, 2004), "Latvian Textile Art" (Italy, Rome, 1998), "Textile Art from Latvia" (Prague, 1999), etc.

Inga Skujiņa (1952) from the artist's point of view expressed an independent opinion in the press and wrote introductory articles for exhibition booklets. In 1992, in the newspaper "*Literatūra un Māksla*", Skujiņa created a series of articles entitled "The Cobra and Rabbit Phenomenon or Three Latvian Textile Art Ladies in the Skin of French Artists" [Skujiņa 1992: 6] to share her impressions gained during her residence in France and her inclusion in the international textile community.

The contribution of Irisa Blumate cannot be ignored. Thanks to her initiative, will and energy, since 1997 until 2000 in Riga, in the foyer of the third floor of the hotel "Latvija", ALTA created the gallery "Rūdolfs". After the reconstruction of "Latvija" hotel in 2001, the cooperation agreement was not renewed.

Most likely the ALTA community did not make full use of the opportunities provided by communication between the artist and the society for mutual understanding, perhaps without understanding the meaning and necessity of communication at that time. In the following years, publications explaining and interpreting textile works in Latvia decreased in number, making it more and more difficult for the public to keep up with rapid changes in the sector. There was mainly a lack of texts on new materials, used techniques and the transformation of textile works from a functional object into non-functional objects. The research on

[1] Austria, Beļģium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Vatican, Hungary, Estonia, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Great Britain, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Romania, Switzerland, Spain, Slovakia, Turkey, Sweden.

the establishment and operation of the Association of Latvian Textile Art is part of the author's doctoral thesis "Textile Art in Latvia at the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century". Thus, this is the first attempt to gather information and provide an explanation of textile art in Latvia since the 1990s. In 1997 art researcher Ruta Čaupova (1939) explained in her paper "Contemporary Art Assessments and Research Questions" that in order to provide a professional assessment of the analysis or explanation of non-traditional visual art expressions (..), issues of creation and dissemination, an art historian also needs different experience and a different orientation of professional knowledge acquisition [Čaupova 1997]. There have been no significant changes in the assessment of textile art, and the opportunities for improving the experience of contemporary textile art researchers are still developing slowly.

There was also a lack of experience and knowledge in carrying out numerous other tasks, especially in bookkeeping, raising funds (support for exhibitions and publishing from the state budget had been practically stopped in Latvia since 1990), establishing international contacts and diplomatic correspondence, and attracting exhibition curators. It is possible that due to lack of time, the collection of creative works of the members of the association was not continued. The catalog is incomplete, only participants who joined between 1994 and 1999 have been added. As far as possible, the AAL Information Center provided support for obtaining the missing information. More than half of the photos in the LTA archive of textile works do not include the name of the author or the year of creation of the respective work of art, therefore it cannot serve as a basis for more extensive research. Many documents have been lost, such as the minutes of LTA members' meetings, which included a regular (once a month) summary of board decisions and intentions. On the first Thursday of each month, the gathering of textile artists was a platform for mutual exchange of ideas and discussions. Skaidrīte Leimane, the secretary of meetings, remembers how joint visits by members to foreign textile exhibitions were planned and carried out. In order to promote the participation of artists in various events, ALTA Board regularly informed about international competitions and exhibitions. In addition to serious work, the planning of informal events was not forgotten also. No less important was the social aspect – exchange of experiences, mutual support and encouragement from colleagues [Leimane 2021].

ALTA exhibitions overview and textile art interpretation trends

One of the main goals of ALTA was to ensure the regular exhibition activities in Latvia, and to involve artists of all generations in this process. The association from the moment of its founding in 1994 until 2014 implemented more than 120 exhibition projects in Latvia. In co-operation with the embassies of the Republic of

Latvia abroad, 42 exhibitions have been established in many countries during these twenty years[1]. Each LTA exhibition was created as a selection of works by a jury of ALTA current year's Board members or independent experts. In twenty years, 223 artists took part in the exhibitions organized by the association.

In 1995, with the first exhibition of ALTA of the same name "The First" in the Arsenāls Exhibition Hall, the annual tradition of organizing exhibitions of the members of the association began, which continues to this day. Despite the fact that it was the free choice of each artist, there was an unwritten rule among the textile artist community that participation in the annual exhibition was mandatory. The aim of these exhibitions was to show the textile works created in the previous year, allowing the artist to determine the choice of theme and appropriate technical performance, thus emphasizing the artist's creative freedom and giving the viewer an idea of the development of Latvian textile art. However, from today's point of view, probably this principle of the exhibition did not become a "formula for success". Although ALTA had chosen a thematic orientation for a few exhibitions, in 2001, the seventh exhibition "Connection", in 2003 the eighth exhibition "World in the World", in 2005 at the AUL gallery "Textile + X", in 2008 "Stone, Paper, Scissors", there were no comments and explanations to get an idea of contemporary developments in textile art. Most of the exhibition events remained unnoticed, without press reviews. For example, compared to the previous decade (1980s), when the boundaries of textiles had expanded, and the main directions of textile art were considered to be decorative expressiveness and tapestry technique [Raudzepa 1998; 150], then the trend of the 1990s marks similar techniques and technical performances, but proportionally more works include a variety of author's techniques, feltings, non-functional textile mosaic works with conceptual orientation. From Inga Skujiņa's publication about the first exhibition of the Association in the newspaper "*Diena*" we learn about the general situation in the textile art sector in early nineties: "There are still an inexplicable number of active textile artists. Seventy artists of all generations are working in spite the loom is not generating income" [Skujiņa 1995: 5]. As we can see from the quote, working but not weaving. It cannot be overlooked that the difficult economic situation in the country reduced the opportunities for artists to create woven textiles. While artists saw change as a challenge to keep working and were not afraid to look for new techniques and materials, then, as observed by Laura Miglone in the publication "At Crossroads of Worlds" in 2003, textile art by spectators was still associated only with classical weaving techniques, and this was also expected from exhibitions [Miglone 2003: 4].

[1] In Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Russia, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Greece, Norway, China, Spain and Australia.

The first three ALTA exhibitions (1995, 1997, 1998) took place in the Arsenāls Exhibition Hall, but starting from the fourth exhibition in 1999, St. Peter's Church became the annual exhibition space. The concept of the association's annual exhibition included the principle that after the works were exhibited in St. Peter's Church, the collection created was completed as a traveling exhibition to the history and art museums of Latvia's regions. Retrospective and anniversary exhibitions are considered to be the most ambitious. In 1996 "The Year of Rūdolfs Heimrāts", in 1997 "Latvian Contemporary Textiles", in 2000 "Nineties", in 2001 "Riga Ornaments", and the 50th anniversary exhibition of Latvian professional textile art "Golden Ratio" in 2011.

In parallel with the exhibitions in Latvia, since the foundation of the association, many exhibitions have been held abroad. It should be noted that the exhibitions were created in cooperation with the support of the embassy of the respective country. An example of this is the long-term cooperation (1997–2007) with the Latvian Embassy in Estonia and the cultural attaché Guntars Godiņš (1958) and the head of the Latvian National Cultural Association in Estonia Juris Žīgurs (1939). Exhibitions took place in the hall of the Tallinn Opera House "Winter Garden" every year in March. In 2001 Batik Exhibition, 2002 Aina Muze's solo exhibition, 2005 Textile Mosaic Exhibition, 2007 Irisa Blumate's solo exhibition, etc. In turn, Estonian textile artists had the opportunity to exhibit their works once a year at Riga Latvian Society House.

In 1999, during the visit of the President of Latvia Guntis Ulmanis (1939) to the Czech Republic, a tapestry exhibition of 45 Latvian artists "Latvian Art – Wall Textiles" was opened in Prague Castle. The author of the exhibition Arnis Pumpurs also created a catalog of works. The catalog shows that less than half (20) were of woven textiles, other of works of art were batik, screen printing and textile mosaics. The course of the exhibition was also covered in several Czech publications.

Most often, a collection of works by an average of 15–25 authors was completed for foreign exhibitions. Such exhibitions were "Material Value" in Prague (2000), Tapestry Exhibition in Hamburg (2000) and Latvian Textile Art Exhibition in China (2001), however, in the Czech Republic, Austerlitz Castle, and in the Eidfjord City Hall and Hydroelectric Power Station building, Norway, 40 artists had the opportunity to exhibit their textiles.

Conclusions

Because of the change in the state system, associations of the creative professions, including the Artists' Union, in the early 1990s lost their original role – controlling activities of their members, organizing exhibitions (promoting the ideology of the system at the time), purchasing works of art, etc. As a result, artists lost their usual

environment and came together in smaller groups to adapt to the new conditions. Aija Baumane together with colleagues and like-minded people founded the Association of Latvian Textile Art to help artists in the textile art sector. The primary goal of LTA was to inform artists and promote their involvement in international art processes, thus popularizing Latvian textile art. The great contribution to the organization of local and international exhibitions shows that the Association has become a driving force for creativity. Simultaneously with the association's goal of becoming an organization representing the sector, A. Baumane respected the personality of each artist, provided support and encouraged for individual achievements, as evidenced by textile works and solo exhibitions. Although the creators of LTA and the community itself have been involved in the development of the textile art sector on a participatory basis, not all objectives set out in the statutes have yet been achieved. For example, it was difficult for the general public to understand the phenomena of contemporary textile art. It must be concluded that this situation is related to the lack of financial, human resources and skills to perform certain necessary work in the association. From the point of view of LTA participants, membership in the association is associated with the expansion of professional experience and a sense of community, which does not exclude healthy mutual competition in an informal and friendly atmosphere.

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