

**Raminta Jurėnaitė**

## Between Compromise and Innovation

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**Lithuania**



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This text was archived at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Zagreb collection, as part of the **Research project** conceived in 1997 by a SCCAN – Soros Centers for Contemporary Art Network, funded by the Open Society Foundation, New York.

The purpose of the project was to select, collect and disseminate texts on contemporary art practices in the Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, around Soros Centers for Contemporary Art, written in and about art of the 1990s. The coordination of the project was carried out by Janka Vukmir, SCCA – Zagreb, today the Institute for Contemporary Art, Zagreb.

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All of the texts we have collected at the time have been later published on the website of the I\_CAN, International Contemporary Art Network, the short-lived successor of the SCCAN.

On the occasion of the exhibition **90s: Scars**, revisiting the art practices and social and political context of the 1990s in the postcommunist countries, the Institute for Contemporary Art is now reoffering a collection of **89 texts and a comprehensive list of then proposed further readings**, on the website of the Institute for Contemporary Art, [www.institute.hr](http://www.institute.hr).

The exhibition 90s: Scars is curated by Janka Vukmir and organized by the Institute for Contemporary Art and the MMSU – Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka, on the occasion of the **European Cultural Capital Rijeka 2020**. Originally planned to open May 14, 2020, at the MMSU in Rijeka, due to COVID-19 crisis, is postponed until further notice.

## Raminta Jurėnaitė

### Between Compromise and Innovation

In the Soviet period, following 1945, Lithuania had neither well-developed school of socialist realism (it was represented only by individual works) nor an active or consistent dissident culture. The development of unofficial art was slow due to the gap which emerged after the massive emigration of artists, fearing a repeat of the deportation that took place in 1940 under Soviet occupation, to the West in the footsteps of the fleeing German troops.

Time seemed to have stopped up to the middle of the 60s. The totalitarian regime in Lithuania slowed down and crippled the development of art for a long time rather than actually altering it.

In order to understand the cultural climate of the period, one should keep in mind that the three Baltic republics did not experience social realism for as long as the republics which had joined the Soviet Union earlier, and that compared to them Baltic art enjoyed much greater freedom despite the fact that overall conditions in all the republics were far more repressive than in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia.

Lithuania lived in isolation for several post-war decades. However, even the occupation did not succeed in totally isolating it. A great many West and East European artistic phenomena were consciously though belatedly reflected and influential in Lithuania. Yet sources were so merge, mainly confined through Polish art magazines, that no movement could truly take root. Lithuanian art brushed against the inquiries of Western art without much consequence for either side. Many movements were simply ignored or rejected due to a specific Lithuanian inclination for traditionalism.

It should be mentioned that the Soviet period had its obsessions. Almost all intellectuals were convinced that security service tapped their phone lines - a practice the State was much too poor to afford. Such irrational phobias were caused by evidence of the activity of the KGB and other services related to it. Art books sent from abroad used to be confiscated at

the post-office, and a recipient would only get a note informing him that the books had been transferred to a special library collections.

Trips abroad and possibilities to exhibit works were strictly restricted before the introduction of Gorbachev's perestroika. When participating in international exhibitions, Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian artists, like all other Soviet artists, were supposed to represent only the Artist's Union of USSR and had one address: Moscow, Gogolevskij boulevard.

The paralysing system of partial prohibitions and "positive censorship", which had been functioning almost up to the mid-80s, indicated what and how one should paint, exhibit or write instead of giving directions concerning the things one was not allowed to do. The system was a product of state ideology, but its everyday direct initiators and executors were cultural administrators and artists. Most of those who served on the boards of exhibitions, the boards of the purchase for museums, the boards of editors and publishers were artists who supported that system or at best struggled against only moderately. Small groups of them, their sketches in their hands would make their way to the Artists' Union with the intention of signing contracts with the Ministry of Culture for their works and official exhibitions. The same artists also participated in the selection work.

Individually conceived exhibitions were out of the question, because each decision was to be made on a collective basis.

In the 70s more important exhibitions, more openly flouting the conventions were held not in central but in peripheral exhibition spaces - the Vilnius Republican Library, the Urban Planning Institute, the Conservatory as well as in the flats of the artists Vytautas Ėrerys and Vladas Vildžiūnas. The joint Baltic painting, sculpture and graphic arts' biennials, triennials and the young artists' quadrennials also pursued a more liberal exhibition policy.

The feeling of menace and the system of its prohibitions were ever-present, though there was no such great mutual distrust in Lithuania as there was in East Germany with its army of security agents. However, double morality was clearly manifesting itself in every sphere of life. By the 60s nobody was afraid to criticise the state policy among colleagues, friends and neighbours. However, at public meetings and conferences, the same people paid lip service to what they ridiculed in private. Avant-garde experimenters did not even make any attempts to come out into the open, and nobody called for the freedom of exhibitions and the press. Nonconformist activities and gestures only happen in small closed circles. Privacy and individualism became key concepts in culture.

The Communist Party in Lithuania was actively supported by very few artists, nevertheless all of them contributed to its strong reign by way of bigger or smaller compromises, a humble acquiescence, tolerance and last but not least - by silence. In such an atmosphere, every single protest, every

bolder gesture or public speech at the gatherings of artists' community had an unbelievably strong influence and consequences. Such actions always received punishment or applause, and sometimes deserved one and the other. At that period in Lithuania there existed no strict boundary between official and unofficial art.

The early 60s witnessed the first attempts of Lithuanian artists to resist an ideologically oriented dictate of the official art. However, it was far from easy to reject the iconographic and plastic idiom, as practised in the thematic picture or monument. The portraits of revolutionaries as well as those of war and peaceful work heroes alternated with science, education, family happiness and childhood allegories, which were taken up in commissioned works that did not apply socialist realism principles, but used a moderately stylised, decorative and somewhat poster-type visual idiom.

These late, so-called "thematic pictures" present a phenomenon which merits comprehensive analysis. They were frequently charged with many-layer, contradictory metaphors. The double morality was accompanied by double symbolism. Significant, ideologically oriented themes were rendered by the images which gave the public a possibility to interpret them in their own way. Such practices were particularly characteristic of the themes involving the World War II and the post-war struggles (the partisan resistance in Lithuania continued up to 1954). Therefore, the spectator, looking at the triptychs created by Augustinas Savickas, and the figures of mothers, which seemed to have turned into the statuettes of saints could follow the suggestion contained in the title and interpret them as the mothers mourning for the sons, who died for the bright future of the Soviet Union, or as mourning because of that future has come to pass. The film "Nobody Wanted to Die" (1965) by Vytautas Palakevičius or the canvas "Death of an Activist" (1969) by Silvestras Džiaukūtas were in their essence official works, alluding to the real post-war drama timidly and with compromises but contemporary spectators welcomed even the slightest allusions to the facts as proof of incredible courage and could not help admiring them and their creators.

The "uninitiated" can hardly even notice the courage displayed by art and art criticism of the period. The development of nonconformism, however, was slow but sure. Without a knowledge of this background, a great many of innovations and revolutionary manifestations that had taken place in Lithuania are incomprehensible today. At that period even a disregard for commissioned themes could be interpreted as bold behaviour. One such trend, somewhat recalling the struggle against socialist realism, was a return to the tradition of the classical modern art. It started in the mid-60s and gradually grew stronger, acquiring a more and more ensured self-

awareness. The major role here belonged to the painter Antanas Gudaitis (1904-1991), who in his work and teaching upheld the pre-war expressionistic tradition of the “ARS” group (he was one of its founders). A younger generation of painters, mainly his pupils, such as Jonas Đvaapas (1925-1976), Vincas Kisarauskas (1934-1988), Leopoldas Surgailis, Augustinas Savickas, Aloyzas Stasiulevičius, Jonas Ėeponis and Valentinas Antanavičius searched for further inspirations in the French Fauvism, folk art, the French School or in the works of Polish artist Wladyslaw Hasior and Italian neorealists. The painters Vincas Kisarauskas and Valentinas Antanavičius were among the first artists who “returned to” assemblage media and included ready-made objects in their compositions. While each of these artists followed his own individual path, their contribution to Lithuanian art was collective in nature. They made an attempt to throw a bridge between the pre-war and post-war periods and to retrieve the lost time. Their recollection of classical Modernism, the reflection of the post-war art of the West as well as their concentration on specific problems of painting were tantamount to an active protest against the official ideology of art. This protest of Lithuanian artists in the context of the Soviet art world met with a response similar to that provoked at the same time by the works of the now-popular Moscow conceptualists. Similar processes were taking place, albeit more slowly, in Lithuanian sculpture. Their effects lasted longer but had a more local character. In the late 60s the artists searched for inspirations in the works of Lipschitz, Giacometti, Brancusi, Moore, Wotruba and Arp. In addition, they also drew upon ancient and medieval traditions as well as those of the local folk art. In this fusion, in the mingling of various impulses and in the tension between figurative art and abstraction and between organic and man-made forms there matured several prominent sculptors-personalities: Teodoras Kazimieras Valaitis (1934-1974), Steponas Đarapovas (1936-1961), Vladas Vildpiūnas, Leonas Strioga, Vytautas Đerys, Gediminas Karalius, Petras Mazūras, Stanislovas Kuzma, Rimantas Đulskis (1943-1995), Vladas Urbanavičius and Ksenija Jarođevaitė. However, these Lithuanian sculptors did not venture far beyond the laws of classical modern sculpture and continued to produce pieces set on pedestals.

A resident of Central and East Europe seems to be more or less a fatalist by nature. Whereas a Lithuanian has an additional historic mission: to suffer and resist oppression. Thus, a paradoxical mixture of submission and a haughty obstinacy developed in the course of time. Otherwise, the “Russian bear” would have long ago wiped our nation off the face of the earth. It goes without saying that it is hard to realise one’s individuality in such a conservative society. The individual is seldom extreme in his wishes and actions. Absolutely new ideas are often born, but in most cases, they

remain as mere promises. Radical movements appear out of nowhere and suddenly vanish or lose their edge.

Small nations, which had suffered from oppression and the threat of conquest try to maintain their identity by mythologizing and glorifying their own past and traditions. The fear of extinction and dilution determines a one-sided view of tradition and creates lots of taboos. Such a situation is equally uncondusive to controversial confessions and attempts at more or less objectivized commentary.

The Soviet occupation, which lasted for fifty years, gave rise to specific relics. Art and the artist preserved the attitudes, which the nations of Central and North Europe had adopted at the junction of centuries, when they were fighting for their national independence. In this region the artist fulfilled an exceptional mission of the nation's herald and prophet. Art preserved the national heritage and acted as a bridge between the past and the future. Out of this came many of the strengths and prejudices of Lithuanian art. It was these circumstances that principally accounted for the universally dominating myth of Motherland in painting, sculpture, graphic arts and literature. Such lofty national obligations condition and limit the expression of individuality. These circumstances served as the basis for the emergence of the ideas of the monumental national ideas in the spirit of the ones proposed at the turn of the century by Stanislaw Wyspianski or Akseli Gallen-Kallela.

The most characteristic work of this kind is the group of frescos in Vilnius University created by Petras Repšys. The artist resolutely bases his work on a complex program integrally embracing the history of Lithuania and makes an attempt to present it to the spectator with an enthusiasm of educator. In order to realise his ideas, Repšys consulted historians, ethnographers, linguists and literary sources. The figures and scenes as well as the attributes and texts which accompany them bear a symbolic character. At the same time, they are not simply themes elevated in retrospect. The style is historical with complicated foreshortenings. Though the artist employs some elements of humour, the whole of the fresco ensemble bears an epic character.

The theme of Motherland serves as the principal myth not only in Petras Repšys' work but in all Lithuanian art. The pursuit for inspiration in a traditional folk art, in its iconography and plastic language was always associated with this particular myth. Every single motif refers to the myth. Any action is turned into a ritual, a figure - into an allegory, a landscape or interior - into a metaphor, a still life or an object - into a relic. It should be mentioned here that these aspirations were shared by artists belonging to various generations - starting with the older artists, such as Leopoldas Surgailis, Vytautas Ėrerys, Leonas Strioga, Riėardas Povilas Vaitekūnas,

through forty and thirty years old such as Mindaugas Navakas, Mindaugas Ėnipas, Artūras Raila, Algis Lankelis, Eugenijus Varkulevičius, Algis Skaėkauskas right up to the youngest ones - Donatas Jankauskas and Darius Bastys. Some of them idealise the image of Lithuania as an embodiment of noble and eternal values. In their pictures lyricism intermingles with melancholy, and the time is abstracted, deprived of the features of any specific historical period. The other artists' approach to the theme displays some elements of grotesque and phantasmagoria, sometimes those of self-irony and humour. The national myth was given diverse interpretations - from the romantic to the mocking, without ever losing its sustaining and stimulating role.

Neo-expressionistic tendency reached Lithuania at an early enough stage. The first manifestations appeared in the work of Antanas Gudaitis, Jonas Ėvapas, Leopoldas Surgailis, Vincas Kisarauskas and Vincentas Geėas as early as the mid-60s, and in the next decade they were adopted and developed by Riėardas Povilas Vaitekūnas, Kæstutis Paliokas, Antanas Martinaitis, Arvydas Ėaltenis, Algimantas Jonas Kuras and Kostas Dereėkevičius. The painters based their work on the profound and original expressionistic tradition of the "ARS" group. As elsewhere, the neo-expressionistic wave in Lithuania became dominant in the late 70s. The next generation of painters, who employ a gesture-type of painting - Mindaugas Skudutis, Arūnas Vaitkūnas, Eugenijus Varkulevičius, Jonas Gasiūnas, Vygantas Paukėtė, Audronė Petraėiūnaitė, Rimvydas Jankauskas-Kampas (1957-1993) - have much in common with the local forerunners of Neo-Expressionism. In comparison with the Western "New Wild", Lithuanian painting is much more moderate. It does not display the impetuosity and brutality which is characteristic of Baselitz, Hödicke, Salome or Fetting. Unlike them, Lithuanian painters do not go to extremes of spontaneity, impulsiveness of gesture, deformation and colouring. Here expression is fused with stability in a highly original way. The painters as well as the sculptors drew inspiration from the expressive and laconic form of folk art and religious wooden sculpture. The majority of them use similar motifs. Their works show a tendency to return to Christian and pagan myths. A spontaneous subjectivism intermingles with symbols. Highly distinctive, Lithuanian spontaneous painting always strives for subtle colouring values. Riėardas Povilas Vaitekūnas seems most vividly to embody the whole range of features peculiar to Lithuanian Neo-Expressionism. The very iconography of his works is highly characteristic. Their dominant theme is the "imagined" (therefore mythologised) Lithuania. His pictures speak of the vanishing and yet eternal Lithuania, in which everything is noble and real. It is an image devoid of temporality. Time is not defined here, while the



place of action is concretised. The ideas of his symbolic pictures come to him at Panemunė, in the Mardasavas village or in his own studio.

The painter manages to find an appropriate style for the expression of the calmness and subdued majesty of the landscape. A horizontal line - which the artist identifies with the river Nemunas, is particularly highlighted in his landscapes. His landscapes display strict simplified forms as well as wide, clearly outlined planes of the dim green and blue colours. The artist refuses vivid, blinding colours and a pretentious drawing. However, the surface of his canvases is not even, the brushstroke is broad but very restless.

Vaitekūnas succeeds in developing an original sketchy monumentality. Human figures loom in these landscapes composed of planes and the ghosts emerging in the clearings are fused with the surroundings in such a way that they seem to grow out of them. The real and the illusory aspects perform the same important role here. Scarecrows, beehives and rough tools are turned into archetypes which sometimes acquire anthropomorphic features.

Only very few painters, such as Vincentas Geėas, Kostas Deređkeviėius, Algimantas Jonas Kuras, Arvydas Ąaltenis, Raimundas Slipys and Mindaugas Skudutis abandoned a universal myth of Motherland in the 60s and 70s in order to face the actual ravages their country was subjected to, and employed for that purpose realism, cartoons and grotesque without giving up an expressionistic tradition.

In Kostas Deređkeviėius' pictures the strong stout women-inhabitants of new residential estates-barracks empty rubbish bins into containers, ride rickety buses or stretch themselves on a small spot of grass. The artist does not embellish anything: the place, the people and their activities preserve their natural features. These motifs also presented a painterly challenge to him. He painted employing expressive sketchy strokes and enjoying analysis of sharp, disharmonious colouring contrasts.

Arvydas Ąaltenis' themes are socially involved, and they touch upon the sores and scars of time. They abound in autobiographical details and personal experience. At the same time these motifs serve as the material for the creation of realistic symbols. Painterly and graphic expressions are equally prominent, and their relationship is full of tension. Deformations of the drawing and the roughened forms as well as the colour contrasts reflect the artist's mood and bear a symbolic character. Ąaltenis' themes are devoted to the present time, yet have formal associations with classical Lithuanian expressive Realism, and the artist has dedicated one of his programmed works - the picture "In Memory of Samuolis" (1986) to its prominent representative.

Another painter of the same generation Algimantas Jonas Kuras is also searching for a drama. His visual idiom is much more abstract and

allegoric. Even his satires of the Soviet public life are characterised by schematisation of the figure into an icon. The major theme addressed by the painter for the past two decades is the disharmony between nature and technology. The painter, who is incidentally the son of a peasant, places in landscapes of luxuriant meadows and uncultivated land objects which look aggressive and rickety. In the twilight these objects undergo a somewhat ghostly transformation, even acquiring some anthropomorphic features. They find no contact with nature and seem to be threatening it. However, Kuras manages to discover new beauty in this ugliness. He is a highly talented colourist. The refined colouring, offsetting his caustic themes, creates a specific tension. The artist provokes a debate on ugliness and beauty, growth and destruction. The pictures created by Geėas, Dereėkeviėius, Ėaltenis, Kuras and Skudutis are also interesting for the way they capture the passing time. What seemed to be fragmented and accidental some time ago, now appears as typical for bygone decades. Lithuanian painting does not use restrained narration. Outside the dominant neo-expressionistic tradition, an important role is played here by the painters Ėarūnas Sauka and Henrikas Nataleviėius, who are more comfortable with the role of bystanders. The experience of Surrealism, magic realism and fantastic realism in their works is transformed into highly original style.

In Sauka's pictures the collective experience of depression, humiliation, claustrophobia and mutation acquires an extremely personal expression. The distinction between the oppressor and the victim disappears. Every action takes place on a stage here. The oddly lighted wings of the stage, the staircase, the pedestals, the bays, the fountains, the vineyards and strawberry plantations as well as the theatre furnishings - the purple and white draperies - are elevated to symbols. Paradise becomes a hell, from which there is no escape. The impression of claustrophobia is created by an illusory closeness and narrowness of the space. The space in a great majority of his pictures is densely filled with the multiplied nude self-portraits producing kaleidoscope-like effect. They are depicted standing, kneeling or fallen to the ground. Each of these poses are immobile and petrified. Sometimes the boundary between the body and statue disappears completely. All the bodily defects and deformations are ruthlessly heightened. Self-pity is no less important than the unmasking self-glorification.

In the country where M. K. Ėiurlionis, one of the forerunners of Abstractionism, lived and worked, and which produced the brilliant though little-known constructivist painter V. Kairiūkėtis, abstract painting had never been dominant. In the post-war years, the development of the abstract art movement was hampered not only by official prohibitions

(abstract works could not be displayed at important art exhibitions until the mid-70s), but also by the all-embracing and suffocating tradition of figurative Expressionism. However, abstract painting in Lithuania was and is being created by a handful of very significant artists. First of all there is Eugenijus Antanas Cukermanas, Algirdas Petrulis, Rūta Katiliūtė, Dalia Kasėiūnaitė, Linas Katinas, Laima Drazdauskaitė, Rimvidas Jankauskas-Kampas (1957-1993), Riėardas Nemeikėdis, Henrikas Ėerapas and Auėra Andziulytė. The work of most of them can be characterised as a contemplative and romantic strand in Lithuanian painting. These artists strive to attain calmness and equilibrium.

However, Lithuanian abstract painting is seldom pure in respect to colour or form. It preserves traces of real landscapes, things or archetypal icons. Some of these painters, such as Rūta Katiliūtė, Kazimiera Zimblytė, Eugenijus Antanas Cukermanas and Linas Katinas, also created objects and projects of a conceptual character at different stages of their creation. Object Art, Conceptual Art and Actionism did not play any particular role in our country for a long time. Mindaugas Navakas and the members of the "POST ARS" group were the first who actively reacted to these developments in Western art.

Though Navakas uses traditional material, paying attention to its natural properties as well as to solid workmanship, he was in 1980s the first Lithuanian artist to consistently adopt the experience of Conceptual Art. Besides, he has destroyed another taboo - he was the first to start creating non-figurative and non-decorative sculptures for the public space in the late 70s. Navakas is the last artist guided by the missionary aspirations of the older generation. His sculpture is born from a need of audacity, and it serves as a challenge to other people stimulating them to accomplish similar feats. At the same time, his ideas display a touch of paradox and hidden sense of humour. He creates constructions which are strong and stable, but nevertheless look like archaic rough works, depicting slightly forgotten archetypes. He creates several autonomous variants of the sculpture from the same elements, every time seeking to engage in a polemic dialogue with the urban environment.

Owing to Navakas, today the problems of the relationship between sculpture and object are absolutely dominant in Lithuanian sculpture today. Sculptors are interested in everyday things, tools, implements, equipment and building constructions, though they do not use them as they are but transform them into archetypal sculptural icons. They search for the things, which are unaffected by the passage of time, which had undergone only minor changes in the course of centuries, as well as for those which can become a document-trace of the present-day social circumstances.

Mindaugas Ėnipas, Algis Lankelis and Vytautas Umbrasas are particularly faithful adherents of Navakas' creative principles.

The youngest artists, such as Artūras Raila, Gediminas Urbonas, Deimantas Narkevičius, Darius Bastys, Donatas Jankauskas, Eglė Rakauskaitė, Gintaras Makarevičius, Audrius Novickas and Darius Piūra, belong to the first generation of artists, who began their creative career much later, after the Gorbachev era when it became possible to follow the development of world art directly instead of "through a pane of glass". They go abroad often enough and successfully participate in international projects. These artists do not emigrate, but they are no longer confined to their environment. They exploit different media and install their works not only in exhibition halls but also in the streets and ruins of the houses. The art of this generation, which was the first after the World War II to escape from isolation in Lithuania, draws no boundary between individual, regional or cosmopolitan aspects.

The youngest Lithuanian artists operate in an area between the local experience and the new impulses accumulated abroad. In the new conditions, they still strongly base their ideas on the local tradition of sculpture, adopting from it an inclination for archetypes as well as the cult of a craftsmanship, material and proportions. At the same time, contrary to this tradition, they accentuate the relativity of the boundary between reality and an artistic fact. They exploit the versatility of associations between contemporary art and life and accentuate the importance of context. While selecting objects, the artists orientate themselves towards a familiar social environment, and - sometimes - towards their own personalities. Everyday things are interpreted as both the objects-fetishes and the elements of a purely sculptural character. Individual mythology and historical allusions intermingle here with social involvement. Some mention is also made of threat, damage and destruction. Biographical moments are associated with archetypal ones and irony merges with monumentalism.

Prior to independence, the contemporary Lithuanian art developed in an atmosphere of protest. There had always been something to fight against - a regime, one's own fear and submission of aesthetic prohibitions. This spirit of contradiction and resistance motivated and gave endurance. Now, artists have to choose, and it is not as easy as it may seem. In the second half of the century the Soviet regime failed to completely isolate Lithuania from the rest of the world. Lithuania succeeded in returning to it, though it is hard to tell whether for long, considering a threatening political situation. Lithuanian artists learnt many things only fragmentarily, time ran much slower for them, and they concentrated their attention on their own, sealed off world. Still, they managed to create a great many original and existentially significant works. However, this situation was totally ruinous

for cultural institutions. Normality must be restored to them. Yet institutions lack the experience and resources and are prone to conservatism. Sometimes even demagogic slogans are employed in order to protect the national culture from cosmopolitanism. In fact, the aim of such measures is to preserve of self-importance which is sinking together with the former atmosphere of cultural backwater. Yesterday's "non-conformist-missionaries" have lost their exceptional significance in society. They try to unite with professional "promoters of culture" and journalists in opposition to any change. It is characteristic that the mass public in Lithuania seems to be much more progressive and open than in other countries. The first actions of the "POST ARS" and "The Green Leaf" realised in the middle of the last decade, failed to provoke or shock the public with their drastic themes, gestures, sounds or media. The passers-by, instead of expressing their anger, were rejoicing, accepting the actions as a promise of new freedom and treating them as a playful intrigue. Today more radical conceptual exhibitions attract crowds of people. However, curiosity and a hunger for such sights on the one hand, and a strong disapproval, on the other hand, do not serve as a favourable ground for a more profound perception of art.

The struggle against new absurdities and paradoxes is much more difficult than against the old ones. Now one must oppose not the old regime but one's own narrow-mindedness.

Lithuania's everyday life is miserable and insecure. The attacks of our own backwardness and destruction are no less dangerous than expansionist rumblings from our gigantic neighbour to return. At the same time, life is offering so many new possibilities. However, time which had been running so slowly for the decades, found itself in a vortex. A painful and comic atmosphere, full of misunderstandings and positive change, is now dominant. In such a complex situation, any attempt to negate or forget the old experience would equal the destruction of one's own heart. But to stay chained to it would mean to stay in the masochism of adolescence.