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A G N Ė N A R U Š Y T Ė

## PARENTS' ROOM BY AURELIJA MAKNYTĖ AS A TIME-IMAGE

**Summary.** The concept of time-image (*image temps*) coined by Gilles Deleuze could be applied to analysis of works of art that juxtapose objects from different periods of time and combine them into spatial installation-projects. Such exhibitions are designed for the visitor to create their final and ideal version, and have to be 'performed'. This leads to the obliteration of clear concepts as well as to the process of self-creation. Agnė Narušytė uses the concept of time-image as well as Erika Fischer-Lichte's theory of performative aesthetics in her phenomenological analysis of the exhibition *Parents' Room*, which was installed by the Lithuanian contemporary artist Aurelija Maknytė at the gallery Artifex in 2015.

In *Parents' Room*, Maknytė created layers of different periods and places as experienced by different people: a tailor who wrote letters to her daughter from 1965 to 1990, Maknytė's parents, already dead, and herself in two roles: that of a daughter and of a step-mother. The artist does not mask the separateness of the layers; she even reveals the sources: fragments of a family's life, printed materials she collects, artefacts made for different purposes (soviet folded tables for celebrations, shoes for funerals, a sewing machine, sewing patterns cut from soviet newspapers), her own works (an artist's book compiling the tailor's letters, *Father's Act* created in 2001 from her father's autopsy report and *The Role* – an appropriated film by Rūta Šimkaitienė, *The Gardener goes to the Cemetery* (1992) where Maknytė played a step-mother). Both comic and macabre, the stories of other people's lives are condensed in the exhibits installed in the three spaces of the gallery. Like in multiple exposure photographs, the exhibition connects realities that 'have no clue' about each other but are interlinked through accidental coincidences, invisible to them, but planned by the artist. The viewer becomes an all-seeing privileged connoisseur from the 'future' who gets also involved into the exhibition's narrative, thus forming an additional layer.

The viewer who walks around the exhibition and sees, hears as well as feels its elements one by one links them to each other and deciphers different flows of time in this Deleuzian time-image (*image temps*). Therefore, this actual viewer performs the exhibition and creates herself, and through her, exhibition is created (actualized) as well. Although Maknytė has planned the audience's movements and responses, it is impossible to envision the final result, which is characteristic of performative acts. Thus, Narušytė's walk through the exhibition, while carrying out an experiment of phenomenological investigation of lived experience, should be also considered as part of the exhibition creating itself and her own self as becoming.

**Keywords:** Aurelija Maknytė, performative aesthetics, performative act, time-image, recollection-image, Erika Fischer-Lichte, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Thürlemann, Peter Osborne.

Scene of the contemporary art is so much used to exhibitions as 'projects' that few notice how this format affects our experience of artworks, their temporal qualities, and our relationship with the past. As the philosopher Peter Osborne observes, malleability of time has become an important issue in post-conceptual art. Everyday things as well as various *objets trouvés*, iconic images, archaeological artefacts, archival materials and collections are used to construct temporal labyrinths where the viewers are expected to discover their own narrative paths by solving each segment as a *rebus rerum*.

Possible solutions are infinite. Although every object is invested with personal meaning, it is lost in ever changing heterogeneous structures and retains but a faint taste of a particular past moment, especially when an artwork is installed in many different countries. History becomes fictionalized, and the found objects as 'ruins of the past' are simultaneously transformed into Friedrich Schlegel's 'fragments of the future' or Robert Smithson's 'ruins in reverse'.<sup>1</sup> By using them, artists create virtual networks of possibilities where meaning and the work of art always remain 'under construction' –

necessarily incomplete and striving towards an ideal.<sup>2</sup> One of the most widespread means of creating such contemporary present is, according to Osborne, through recollection of historical memory as an authentic experience, a 'concrete presence of particular pasts within the present'.<sup>3</sup>

Osborne criticises such memory-based projects geared for the intensive involvement in the now because they disregard historical complexities and collective experience of the past, which leads to forgetting, while construction of history is always about the future as well as the past and the present.<sup>4</sup> He gives examples of works that uphold a critical attitude, for instance, the Atlas Group, Amar Kanwar and Navjot Altaf. In Lithuania, many artists also use various objects as references to historical memory and construct personal versions or rather fictions of history. The most interesting and talked about among them have recently been *Museum* (2012) and *Labyrinthus* (2014) by Dainius Liškevičius, *Crown Off* (2015) by Žilvinas Landzbergas, *The Diaries of Death* (from 2009) by Kęstutis Grigaliūnas and *Parents' Room* (2015) by Aurelija Maknytė. Only Grigaliūnas would fall into the category of authentic critical testimonies of the past that Osborne would favour, which I have discussed elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Others use the on-going nature of exhibitions as projects to create de-politicised time-images, in which references to history are fragments of authentic experience barely related to concrete historical facts.

Time-image (*image temps*) is a concept coined by Gilles Deleuze when he reconsidered Henri Bergson's philosophy of time, which he then used to interpret films by Orson Welles, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Alain Resnais.<sup>6</sup> Differently from films that reveal time through movement, time-images are 'optical situations' characterised by 'indeterminability' and 'indiscernibility' as well as the vanishing difference between 'what is imaginary or real, physical or mental'.<sup>7</sup> They express the Bergsonian idea of present time as constructed from memory and the simultaneity of all possible intervals of personal time. The present is only the extreme point of the 'infinitely contracted past' because 'time makes the present pass and preserves the past in itself'.<sup>8</sup> The present juxtaposes and mixes recollection-images,

which are actualisations of 'pure recollection' picked by us from various regions in the past, which Deleuze also calls 'strata' and 'sheets'.<sup>9</sup> The time they refer to exists, for Deleuze, in two different states: the first is the 'time as perpetual crisis' and 'time as primary matter, immense and terrifying, like universal becoming'.<sup>10</sup> The artist, according to Deleuze, draws energy from that primary matter, connects the sheets of the past and turns them into something else by extracting 'non-chronological time' and creating 'these paradoxical hypnotic and hallucinatory sheets whose property is to be at once past and always to come'.<sup>11</sup>

Deleuze considers the filmmaker as the creator of such time-images containing specific meanings. Although the philosopher himself, in fact, creates those meanings through interpretation, he does not reflect on his own participation in transforming films into time-images. They are pre-created and stable artefacts to be discovered by an intelligent and sensitive spectator. Contemporary art projects that are always incomplete, process-based and work with recollection-images, however, require an active visitor who would link the sheets of the past presented separately into a coherent (or incoherent) whole of linear or non-chronological time depending on the visitor's personality. Hence, perception of artworks has become performative in essence and has to be reconsidered in terms of performative aesthetics.

Erika Fischer-Lichte has emphasised that differently from performative statements of John L. Austin, performative acts are not so much concerned whether they have been 'successful,' but by the fact that they were performed and disturbed the dichotomy of concepts.<sup>12</sup> This is due to the fact that performative acts, which are bodily actions, are not referential: they do not point towards any pre-existing reality. On the contrary, that reality only creates itself during the performance while both the audience and the performers keep switching roles and engage in self-creation.<sup>13</sup> This is why it is impossible to decide once and for all what is the meaning of such works of art; their meaning cannot be planned because the bodies of actors and viewers interact and keep changing the work by becoming 'elements of the feedback loop, which in turn generates itself'.<sup>14</sup>

Although the premises and focus of three theories discussed here are very different, they all have one idea in common: even if specific pasts are used in process-based artworks favouring uncertainty, they avoid concrete references as well as definite and pre-planned shapes and meanings, but rather invite the viewer or the visitor of an exhibition to perform the work as always a new reality rooted in the present. The result is often a Deleuzian time-image where real facts and objects of the past are moulded into, if not

hallucinatory, then fictional event of self-creation. In this paper, I shall interpret the installation *Parents' Room* by Maknytė as a case study to demonstrate how the time-image works and is created through the phenomenology of the visitor's experience.

*Parents' Room* was installed in the gallery Artifex in Vilnius, in 2015. Aurelija Maknytė (b. 1969) is known as a VJ artist, one of the makers of the avant-garde SMC TV series broadcast by the commercial channel TV1 in 2004–2007 and the creator



Fig. 1. Aurelija Maknytė, installation "Parents' Room", detail. 2015. Photo by Aurelija Maknytė



Fig. 2. Aurelija Maknytė, installation "Parents' Room", view of the exhibition. 2015. Photo by Aurelija Maknytė



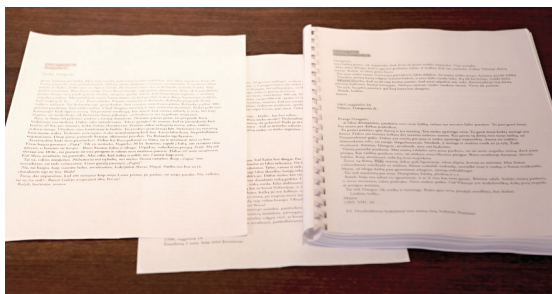


Fig. 3. Aurelija Maknytė, installation "Parents' Room", detail. 2015. Photo by Aurelija Maknytė

of participatory art such as letting strangers live in her flat and rearrange it (*A Week*, 2005), slipping her footage into borrowed tapes (*VHS Studija*, since 2009) or getting everyone to burn fantastic explosions of light into old slides (*Burning Slides*, ongoing). She is also a passionate collector who buys objects, printed materials and photographs from flea markets and then uses them in her works. *Parents' Room* is also made of fragments selected from the artist's and other people's pasts that took place at different historical moments. The artist layers them into a spatial text. The gallery becomes a site composed of different periods and durations as experienced by different people. The artist does not hide the separatedness of the layers and even

reveals her sources: fragments of her family history and artefacts produced for various purposes she has been collecting for a long time, which also are testimonies of different people's lives. I will show how the installation connects realities that 'have no idea about each other' and communicate through chance coincidences invisible to people who had lived in particular periods of time but anticipated by the artist. Thus, it allows the visitor a privileged position from which she can observe the mixing of the past, the present and the future into a time-image.

Let us remember the experience of the exhibition. When the visitor opens the door to the gallery, the wind rustles the templates for making clothes cut from the Soviet newspaper *Tiesa* (*The Truth*) hanging on the adjacent wall (Fig. 1). A tailor's letters to her daughter lie on the sewing machine in the corner (Fig. 2). The artist has purchased a whole collection of them and now presents them typed on an A4 sheets of paper with names of persons and places as well as some details changed so that specific situations could not be identified (Fig. 3).<sup>15</sup> One is tempted to read the letters, but something prevents us from getting too deep into that: a bed raised up to our waist is stuck into the entrance to



Fig. 4. Aurelija Maknytė, installation "Parents' Room", view of the exhibition. 2015. Photo by Aurelija Maknytė



another room on the left (Fig. 4). This object is disturbing because of two reasons. First, this unusual situation of the bed hovering in the air is intriguing. It makes us wonder why it has been installed in such a way. But its juxtaposition with the title of the exhibition offers an answer almost immediately: you are in your parents' room, small and unable to see anything beyond the world defined by your parents. The bed is the boundary of that world and also a frightening sight reminding of the fact that you are being looked after, observed and forced to behave properly. From this follows the second reason: it is not appropriate to read somebody else's letters, even if you have bought them in a flea market. The reason for buying them is suspicious as well. Maknyté admits the moral ambiguity of her activities in an interview.<sup>16</sup>

A close-up photograph of a crumpled piece of light brown paper, possibly a paper bag or envelope. The paper is heavily folded and creased, with some printed text visible, including the word 'moore', the letter 'C', and the letter 'a'. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

remembers her 'strange inheritance' of burial shoes  
and dress:

I thought: is it too early to show all that? But the tailor with her letters also suited here. I decided not to postpone it anymore. After all, art does not have to be comfortable and gratifying. I decided to see what happens if I dare. I decided not to show the dress – one does not have to show everything. Only newspaper bundles and shoes have remained. They have



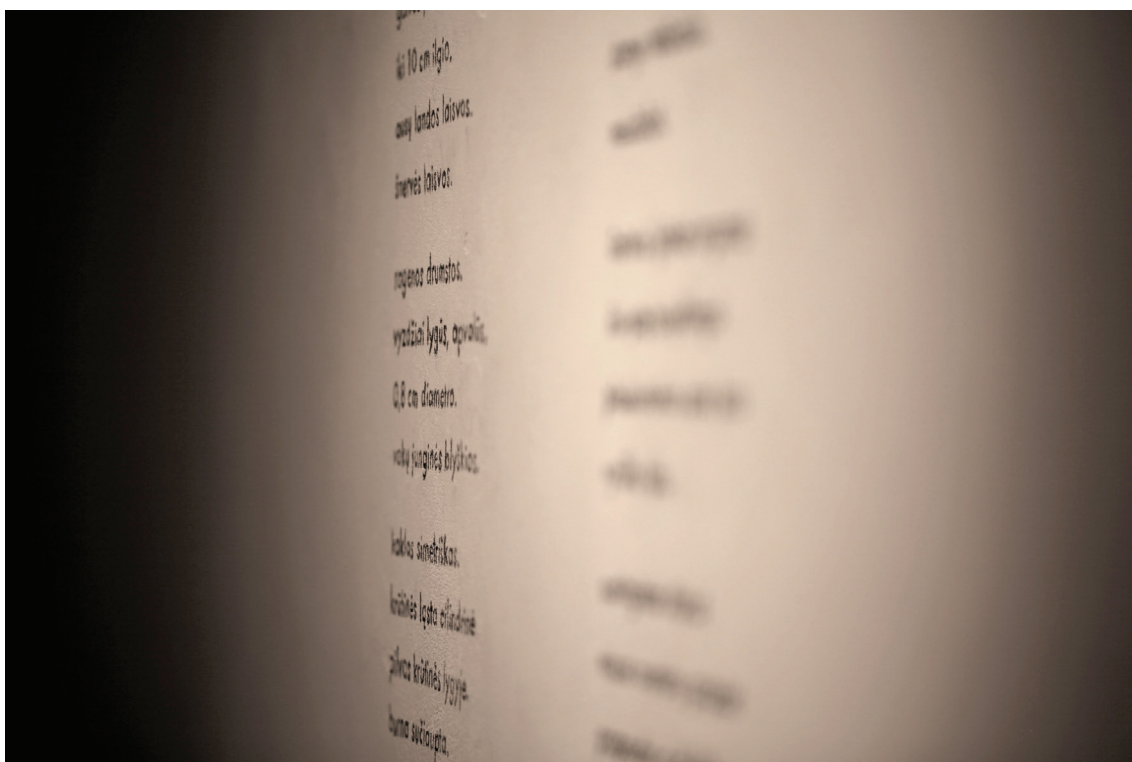


Fig. 7. Aurelija Maknytė, installation "Parents' Room", detail. 2015. Photo by Aurelija Maknytė

left a rebus because they are worn: perhaps  
my mother's plans had changed?<sup>17</sup>

There is one more exhibit in this room: a poem written on the wall. It describes a body with cold precision. Its scariness is explained by the last words of the poem: 'when pressed it pales / and recovers its colour after 1 minute' (Fig. 7). This is a description of the artist's father's autopsy turned into a poem. It was a separate work of art, *Father's Act*, by Maknytė created in 2001 from fragments of the medical act No. 1696 stating the death of her father. She identifies the author of that original, seemingly anonymous, text: it was 'the doctor of medicine A. Zakaras, an expert with experience in expertise since 1960 and the highest qualification category. Act No. 1696. The object of the act is Vaclovas Maknys, b.1938. The act was filled on 24 August, 1998'.<sup>18</sup> Thus, both parents in the title of the exhibition are dead; imaginary coffins stand on the two tables. Maknytė refers to that in her interview:

The tables in the parents' room also have a story. I was looking for so-called tables-books for a long time. Everybody had them and used for varied purposes, including laying out the

dead. Julius Balčikonis answered my call and offered two tables. That suited me very well. When he came to the opening of the exhibition, Julius realised that the tables stood in a death chamber and remembered that his great grandparents were laid out on them too.<sup>19</sup>

This realisation is striking because it reverses the 'message' of the raised bed we had noticed before: the protective fence erected by parents falls, the boundaries disappear and this is frightening because the boundary separating the visitor from death also vanishes.

These experiences of space transformed by carefully placed objects taken from different sheets of the past form the first layer of meaning. It has really become everyone's parents' room. Yet the visitor who observes the change in her sensations notices also that the room moves in time, and not just a little, but essentially, through an entire lifetime: from the dependent, protected and restricted childhood to the final maturity when all support, all protection and all boundaries have disappeared. The same parents' room gets transformed from a grand, immense and safe place seducing with mysteries

of the yet unknown life into a small chapel, which contains only a few things, all simple and clear, and their totality points to the only remaining mystery – death. After the restrictions established by one's parents have disappeared, this mystery remains impenetrable; death belongs to the beyond of this life. In the small space of the gallery, this transition from the original point to the final one happens very quickly, as if one's body grew and stretched fast. As if, having just seen your parents' bed from below, now one is looking at his last place of rest from above. But we have just started uncovering the layers of meaning.

The tailor's letters and newspapers lay still unread in the entry room. If we open them now, after having bid the final farewell to our parents, we would forget the anxiety caused by their death. Life is bubbling in the letters. The mother who writes them talks a lot, and the father, the step-father and other relatives talk through her stories of everyday life. Maknytė has called the daughter Danguolė. This beautiful name resonates throughout the exhibition, including the scary sky of non-existence, which has manifested itself in the death room. It is to her that the mother tells all news about crimes, diseases, work, drinking and love. The relationships of people and their troubles reflect the hum of changing social and political circumstances. The woman's life runs together with the rhythms of nature: the dreary Lithuanian weather corresponds to the feeling that everything is bad, and love throbs together with the currents of spring. Interjections interrupt the story: 'Terrible!' Gross words chop the rhythm of writing. The mother talks a lot, scolds everyone and swears sometimes. But she ends all letters in the same way: 'We shall talk when you come over; write to me, kisses, mum.' This combination of tenderness and roughness creates the feeling of reality, which distinguishes these letters from the polished, smoothed and puttied literary texts; it is complete opposite to what one could read in newspapers.

While the visitor is reading the letters, an entire human life runs past: from the year 1965 when the first letters were written to the daughter who left her hometown to study at university until the beginning of Lithuanian independence. The time runs

very fast here because letters are only short excerpts from the past, fragments that contract the events of a longer time into one hour of writing and one minute of reading. Life becomes like Richard Linklater's film *Boyhood* (2014), which shows 12 years in 160 minutes. In that time, the child turns into a teenager and this process is collated from fragments of becoming filmed several days a year. As the philosopher Dalius Jonkus observed, 'The flow of time as if embodies itself and that embodied time is transforming in front of our eyes.'<sup>20</sup> When we read the tailor's letters, something similar happens, only now we see not a body, which would be really changing in front of us, but the river of social change flowing in bursts. 'Nevertheless,' Jonkus concludes, 'the most important thing here is, I think, not the flow of time but the presence of time.'<sup>21</sup> In fact, when we get interested in the story and drawn into it, we also experience time itself as a category of apperception, given *a priori*, but unyielding to representation or reflection. In this case, we are somebody looking at the world from a distance: Maknytė's exhibition as if gives us a superhuman and supernatural power to see time.

Newspapers are a different matter (Fig. 8). They should convey the speed of change and create a possibility to observe time itself for it is coded in the Lithuanian word for newspaper. *Laikraštis* means 'writing time,' realising it literally. What is not written remains as a hole when the present turns into the past and not only risks to be forgotten, disappear from collective memory but seems to not have ever existed. Moreover, we should not forget that when we write, we create more than there is: every instance of writing is an extra with regard to reality. First of all, it is an extra because reality is denser and metonymically reduced in the text. Secondly, while we write, we understand something new about it as I understand Maknytė's work while writing this text. Through this process, the meaning is added to the reality. The semiotician Felix Thürlemann opposes *poetics* to the iconic imitation of the world as 'surpassing' it, as 'a relationship between the planes of contents and expression, which, when present, at least partially overrides the normally unmotivated (arbitrary) nature of the

“prosaic” discourse.<sup>22</sup> Yet if we agree that meaning is what ‘exceeds’ reality as a non-reflected jumble of haphazard coincidences and causalities, then even the prosaic discourse would have characteristics of poetics, only the layer of poetry would be thinner. Thus, newspapers write time in the sense that unwritten pieces of reality remain unmotivated jumble, and the written ones acquire characteristics of poetry and as such attach to the memory of reality, become its characteristic because it does not exist in another form that someone could check and say if it was really so. The newspaper writes reality as a poetic time that has acquired meaning surpassing all that remains unwritten, which means – the rest of time and space.

What time do the cuttings from the newspapers create? A date is visible on one of them: 31 March 1977, Thursday. I was seven, Aurelija Maknytė was eight. The word *Tiesa* (*The Truth*) written in a thick font catches one’s eye first. Sealed with the coat of arms of the Soviet Union, it is repeated twice. The title of another newspaper, *Vakarinės Naujienos* (*Evening News*), appears once. There are sections of *Reikalingi* (*‘Needed’*), *Dėkoja* (*‘Thanks’*), *Keičia*

(*‘Exchange’*), *Ivairūs* (*‘Various’*). Somebody explains ‘When exemptions apply’ (*Kada teikiamos lengvatos*). There are several condolences surrounded by a black frame. One could read boring leading articles, tedious speeches of ‘comrades of the Party’ about discussions in the Kremlin, but there is also a review of letters called *Jautrumas* (*‘Sensitivity’*). We can learn ‘What an Album Tells Us’ (*Ką pasakoja albumas*). A lonely ‘Artist and her students’ (*Dailininkė ir jos mokiniai*) is hiding somewhere. There is also a glance at the Earth from the space: ‘Humans and Biosphere’ (*Žmogus ir biosfera*). Editors are more interested in creating the impression of thickening: ‘For the high harvest of the fifth year of the five-year plan’ (*Už aukštą penktųjų penkmečio metų derlių*), ‘The knitting-machines hum and burr’ (*Dūzgia, gaudžia mezgimo staklės*), ‘Grain falls into the earth’ (*Į žemę byra grūdai*), ‘The trenches of silage are filling up’ (*Pilnėja siloso tranšėjos*). The rhythm and rhyme of headings swing our memory that starts yielding to the rhetoric of moralizing: ‘Do we always protect the truth?’ (*Ar visada giname tiesą?*), ‘Let us repay goodness with goodness’ (*Už gerą atlyginame geru*), ‘We shall keep our word’ (*Žodį ištesėsime*). The

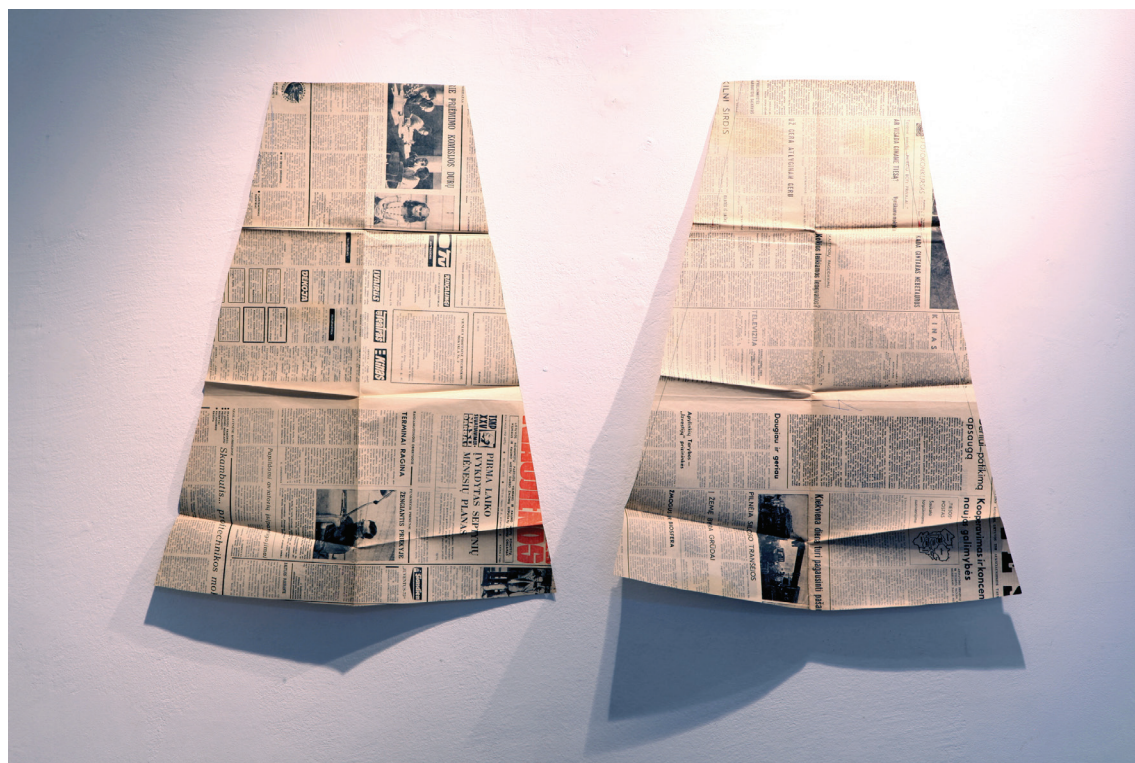


Fig. 8. Aurelija Maknytė, installation “Parents’ Room”, detail. 2015. Photo by Aurelija Maknytė



cold constructions of false statements hammer in: 'The great power of the friendship of nations' (*Didi tautų draugystės jėga*), 'For the sake of the happiness of the Soviet people' (*Tarybinių žmonių laimės vardan*). An unexpected 'Rebuff to the hegemonists of Beijing' (*Atkirtis Pekino hegemonininkams*) flings our attention to the side as well as the demand to 'Defend the independence of Vietnam' (*Apginti Vietnamo nepriklausomybę*). And the constantly repeated imperative 'Proletarians of all countries unite!' has a hypnotizing effect: *Visų šalių proletarai vienykitės! Visų šalių proletarai vienykitės! Visų šalių proletarai vienykitės!*"

In 1977, I did not read such newspapers; I started paying attention to them only in 1982 when Leonid Brezhnev finally died and something started to change. But the rhetoric stayed the same: the same statements, the same headings were repeated endlessly. In other words, the cuttings from newspapers in Maknytė's *Parents' Room*, however strange that may sound, write a time that had stopped to a standstill, which was opposite to the one written in the tailor's letters. The two versions of time do not match although they belong to the same historical time. The newspapers write the same and the same, conjuring up a mantra, which echoes between the present and the past, and the words stiffen into repeated sound-fragments without a meaning: *Dūzgia, gaudžia mezgimo staklės / Į žemę byra grūdai / Pilnėja siloso tranšėjos / Pilnėja siloso tranšėjos / siloso tranšėjos pilnėja / tranšėjos pilnėja / pilnėja / ėja...* The perception of stillness contradicts the discourse about intense time constructed in the newspapers: 'The five-year plan in four years and three months' (*Penkmetį – per ketverius metus ir tris mėnesius*), 'The seven-month plan realised before time' (*Pirma laiko įvykdytas septynerių mėnesių planas*), 'Every day has to increase...' (*Kiekviena diena turi pagausinti...*), 'Deadlines urge' (*Terminai ragina*) and pull to a halt 'Once and for all' (*Kartą visam laikui*). This contradiction is only apparent, however. The newspaper writes the time that stopped to a standstill when the pressure to hurry was written soon after the October revolution. If we compare the rhetoric and contents of

the newspapers with the rhetoric and contents of the letters, we would see that they have nothing in common. These are not only two different speeds of time but also parallel lives that have no points of contact. The templates made out of the newspapers symbolize this disconnectedness of different planes of existence. But the tailor has made them not so much because, as Jolanta Marcišauskytė-Jurašienė writes, everything had to be used while everything was lacking and everything was deficit during the Soviet period,<sup>23</sup> but because newspapers received under obligatory subscription were useless for their primary purpose: to convey objective information.

In the exhibition, the newspaper cuttings get lifted and rustled every time somebody opens the door to the gallery or passes by. They remind of a photograph by Alfonsas Budvytis made in 1981 when he recorded posters on an announcement tower: a detached corner is lifted and briefly covers the sun.<sup>24</sup> That was a minimal and insignificant change in the city that had been changing very slowly, even despite numerous constructions, which also used to take decades. Here, in the gallery, the movement in the air also generates similar mini-changes, makes the stillness vibrate and creates a miniature motivation in the meaninglessness of press messages, thus exceeding the time written in newspapers. Poetry is born in the prose of the gallery.

We could guess that precisely this superimposition of the actual, but extensive, present and the virtual, but intensive, past creates a hypnotic effect in Maknytė's *Parents' Room*. For the image constructed in the present, which is always illusory and imperfect, is uprooted by the reality of the past brimming with unrealised, still untouched possibilities. While the visitor walks around the exhibition, some possibilities are realised by recollection-images brought from different sheets of the past, but one can never forget that both in the past of this project and in the future anticipated by its construction those sheets are folded and crumpled into the dense point of death, which is represented here by two bundles of newspaper. At that point, everything connects to everything, all differences disappear, the multifaceted nature of matter is gone as well as time, as if, time-space before the Big Bang.

Now it is time to consider the fact that stares at us from the wall: the newspaper cuttings have bodily shapes. Their silhouettes help us imagine clothes and bodies that will be dressed in them. The clothes will be simple (such are the lines of the templates). They will remind of a grandmother's waistcoat, cardigans and other unattractive Soviet clothes, which used to hide women and their unrepresentable bodies, unshaped in sports clubs, unembellished in soliariums and massage parlours, not nurtured with creams and ointments, fattish, often floppy and unloved. Such a body could have belonged to the mother who wrote the letters; she sees everyone around her, but not herself. Invisible bodies dressed in invisible clothes lie invisibly on the raised bed and in coffins on the tables. The only visible bodies are newspaper bundles taken from shoes and the autopsy report. The newspaper bundles are the negatives of feet made in the tradition of the inside of the house turned into a hard body by Rachel Whiteread (*House*, 1993). These negatives of feet touched the shoes that were worn, thus they might have cells of the already dead body – or genetic material to recreate a loved person, at least theoretically. It is also possible, theoretically, to recreate a loved one from the autopsy report for the description is very accurate. But that would be a computer generated photograph at best, which requires the viewer to invest himself into its silent pose, which always attests to the subject's death, if to remember *Camera lucida* by Roland Barthes.<sup>25</sup> Both imaginary recreations only confirm the impossibility of such an act and thus present themselves as recollection-images. They are powerful tools of memory, but only as empty constructions that require filling them with the self as their contents. This gives an opening for the visitor to enter this time-image with her own memories, but also presents recollection-images as dead and empty shells.

Here the film *The Role* creates the fourth layer of meaning in the exposition. On the first layer, we saw the becoming of the human being, his transition from the illusion of safety into the condition open to the realisation of non-existence. On the second layer, we observed two simultaneously

written times: the fast moving time of history and the still magical time. The movement of invisible bodies and the suggestion to the visitor to identify with them happened on the third layer. The film *The Role* (*Vaidmuo*) reiterates the theme of identification, but now as that of moulding oneself into somebody else's shoes for the sake of a performance. Barthes observed that film contains two poses tied to the past: that of the actor and that of the role he is playing, both awakening nostalgia in the spectator's mind.<sup>26</sup> This double nostalgia is very strong in the case of the film *The Role* for Maknytė plays in the first film directed by her art teacher Rūta Šimkaitienė, *The Gardener Goes to the Cemetery* (*Sodininkas eina į kapines*). It tells the story of a boy whose mother dies and is replaced by a step-mother performed by Maknytė. In 1992, she looks the same as she does now, even slightly older; some of her hair is tied into a bun. She keeps arranging funerary flowers in the background while the boy stays silent in the foreground. She is both in the present of the exhibition as its author, the subject whose recollection-images we see, and an actor playing her role in the past of this old film. The movement of the film makes her present here and now as films always do according to Christian Metz.<sup>27</sup> Thus present in both the time flow of the exhibition and in the past-present of the film the artist, never changing, is a fixed point, an embalmed body around which everything turns. This slow film repeating the shots of flowers and empty faces is another macabre inclusion in the exhibition. Its cyclic motion is one more version of time that was left not identified in this exhibition. As it loops around the body of the artist, next to the passing life of the tailor and the visitor, a permanent ritual of funeral, meeting and betrothal takes place, necessary to alleviate the flow of time towards death or at least work as an antidote by injecting some meaning into the present, albeit in a mystifying fashion.

Therefore, the present becomes both macabre and funny, adding a touch of the death dance into the pseudonym VJ Makaura used by Maknytė when she does VJ performances – the macabre Makaura. The fun as the fifth layer of meaning comes into this exhibition from the artist's ironic attitude towards her

own life, which she expresses here through the constant performance of changing roles. The younger Aurelija is a step-mother in the film; the older Aurelija is a child in her parents' room, but not quite a real step-mother nor a real child in both cases. Her own child, the grown up son Kasparas, has observed that his grandfather's body described on the wall is the same height as he is now.<sup>28</sup> This should be only a casual remark, not a macabre identification with the dead man, very much like Maknytė did not identify with the dead bodies when she had to lie in the coffin during the filming of *The Gardener Goes to the Cemetery*. She only explored the materials of the coffin, thus discovering unused paper for packaging chocolate ice-cream 'on sticks' between the white silk and shaves lining this bed-coffin. Thus, she came up with an idea to create *The Last Supper* (*Paskutinė vakarienė*): 'to collect the menus offered to prisoners as their last supper before execution.' This remained only as a project due to the abolition of death penalty in Lithuania.<sup>29</sup> In other words, she keeps changing roles and thus hits the tragic flow of the time with irony diverting it from the trajectory. She returns us back to the present suggesting we should stop and have a look around: the space is so full of curious things from which one could create something new.

This move also involves the visitor into the performance. In fact, from the moment when she opened the door to the gallery and heard the rustle of newspapers lifted by the moving air, the visitor has been participating in this performance of recollection by walking through the exhibition and filling the spaces left by invisible bodies. At first, the visitor became aware of the dichotomy of the concepts of life and death signified by different objects. But soon it became clear that their meanings kept switching between life and death as the same object could be used for both living and dying. The socio-political background of Soviet time initially seemed strongly affected by ideological certainties, but while reading letters, they soon melted amidst everyday concerns. The linear flow of time, always tinged by the certainty of death in the future, was also dismantled by using different forms of time. And the

first impression that the artist was talking about her own personal past was finally undone through the discovery of Aurelija switching roles with her parents in the exhibition and even with fictional parents in the film, including the actualised and non-actualised possibilities inherent in assuming different identities. All this could have been left as a collection of scattered sheets of the past but for the tailor's virtual presence. This symbolical figure showed how to sew fragments into a unique shape that had not existed before entering the exhibition. Thus, the artist and the visitor switched roles in the act of self-creation.

To sum it up, we could say that the viewer walking around the exhibition, seeing, hearing and feeling its elements, performs it and thus creates it. Of course, Maknytė had planned some of the visitors' movements and meanings they were bound to read beforehand. But as it is impossible to construct the performance as a finished product, so it is impossible to know for sure what the visitor would make of such an installation. Thus, my walk with this text around the exhibition, while exploring my own experiences of the speeds and trajectories of time, should be considered as part of the feedback loop of self-creation. For me, the most important part of it was to (re)create myself.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Osborne, Peter. *Anywhere or not at all. Philosophy of Contemporary Art*. London: Verso, 2013, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 170–171.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 190–192.

<sup>5</sup> Narušytė, Agnė. The Diaries of Death. In: *The Art of Identity and Memory: Toward a Cultural History of the Two World Wars in Lithuania*. Ed. Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, Rasutė Žukienė. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016, p. 55–84.

<sup>6</sup> Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema II. The Time-Image*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. London: Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 103–130. I have applied this concept for the analysis of artistic research projects exploring the Soviet past in another paper: Narušytė, Agnė. Sovietmetis kaip meninio tyrimo objektas: Kęstučio Grigaliūno, Dainiaus Liškevičiaus ir Eglės Ulčickaitės atvejai [Soviet period as the object of art research: cases of Kęstutis Grigaliūnas,



Dainius Liškevičius and Eglė Ulčickaitė]. *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis*, 79, *Meninis tyrimas: teorija ir praktika*. Ed. Vytautas Michelkevičius. Vilnius: Vilniaus Art Academy Publishers, 2015, p. 55–56.

<sup>7</sup> Deleuze, p. 7–9, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 120, 128.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 128–130.

<sup>12</sup> Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *The Transformative Power of Performance. A New Aesthetics*. Trans. Saskya Iris Jain. Oxon: Routledge, 2008, p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 27, 50.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>15</sup> Later, Maknytė bound the letters in a self-published book of 3 copies: *Lik sveika, manęs aplankyta: motinos laišškai dukrai / 1965–1990 metai / [Farewell, visited by me: mother's letters for a daughter / 1965-1990/]*, a draft publication of digitalised letters, digitalised by Aurelija Maknytė, 2013–2015.

<sup>16</sup> Pankūnaitė, Birutė. Pokalbis nepatogia tema. Aurelijos Maknytės paroda „Tėvų kambarys“ galerijoje „Artifex“ [Discussion on the awkward subject. Exhibition of Aurelija Maknytė „Parents' room“ in the gallery „Artifex“]. In: *7 meno dienos*, 27-03-2015 [interactive]. [www.7md.lt](http://www.7md.lt). Available: <http://www.7md.lt/tarp-disciplinu/2015-03-27/Pokalbis-nepatogia-tema>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Maknytė, Aurelija. Father's Act. In: *maknyte.com*, 2001 [interactive]. Available: <http://maknyte.com/fathers-act-tevo-aktas-2001-2/>.

<sup>19</sup> Pankūnaitė, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> Jonkus, Dalius. Įkūnytas laikas ir akimirkos grožis. Nauji filmai – „Vaikystė“ [Embodied time and beauty of the moment. New movies – „Childhood“]. In: *7 meno dienos*, 21-11-2014 [interactive]. Available: <http://www.7md.lt/kinas/2014-11-21/Ikunyta-laikas-ir-akimirkos-grozis>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Thürlemann, Felix. *Nuo vaizdo į erdvę: Apie semiotinę dailętyrą*. Trans: Lina Kliaugaitė. Vilnius: baltos lankos, 1994, p. 42–43.

<sup>23</sup> Marčišauskytė-Jurašienė, Jolanta. Įeiti į tėvų kambarį. Aurelijos Maknytės paroda „Tėvų kambarys“ galerijoje „Artifex: [Entering parents' room. Exhibition by Aurelija Maknytė „Parents' room“ in the gallery Artifex]. In: *artnews.lt*, 2015 [interactive]. Available: <http://www.artnews.lt/ieiti-i-tevu-kambari-aurelijos-maknytes-paroda-tevu-kambarys-galerijoje-artifex-27960>.

<sup>24</sup> Narušytė, Agnė. *The Aesthetics of Boredom in Lithuanian Photography*. Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 2010, p. 252–257.

<sup>25</sup> Barthes, Roland. *Camera lucida. Reflections on Photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1982, p. 78–80.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>27</sup> Metz, Christian. *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974. p. 8. Quoted by GREEN, David. Marking Time: Photography, Film and Temporalities of the Image. *Stillness and Time: Photography and the Moving Image*. Brighton: Photoworks, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> From my interview with Aurelija Maknytė in 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Maknytė, Aurelija. Last Supper. In: *maknyte.com*, 2008 [interactive]. Available: <http://maknyte.com/paskutine-vakariene-last-supper/>.

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## AURELIJOS MAKNYTĖS PARODA „TĖVŲ KAMBARYS“ KAIP LAIKOVAIZDIS

### Santrauka

Gilles'io Deleuze'o sąvoka „laikovaizdis“ (angl. *image temps*) tinka mąstant apie meno kūrinius, jungiančius objektus iš skirtingų laiko sluoksnių į erdvines instaliacijas – projektus, kurių galutinį ir idealų variantą turi susikurti pats žiūrovas. Tokia paroda įgyvendinama tarsi performansas, išklabinantis sąvokų opozicijas ir paskatinantis savikūros procesus. Šiame straipsnyje, pasitelkiant „laikovaizdžio“ sąvoką ir Erikos Fischer-Lichte performatyvios estetikos sampratą, fenomenologiškai nagrinėjama Aurelijos Maknytės paroda „Tėvų kambarys“, įvykusi Vilniaus galerijoje „Artifex“ 2015 m.

„Tėvų kambaryje“ žiūrovas atranda skirtingų laikotarpių ir vietų prisiminimus generuojančius įvaizdžius, susijusius su įvairiais, vienas kito nepažinėjusiais žmonėmis: siuvėja, rašiusia laiškus dukrai nuo 1965 m. iki 1990 m., A. Maknytės mirusiais tėvais ir ja pačia, atliekančia dukters ir pamotės vaidmenis. Menininkė neslepia sluoksnių atskirumo,

ji net atskleidžia savo kūrybos šaltinius: šeimos gyvenimo fragmentus, kaupiamus spaudinius, įvairiais tikslais pagamintus dirbinius (sovietinius sulankstomus stalus šventėms, laidotuvių batus, siuvamąją mašiną, susiuvančią iš sovietinių laikraščių iškirtus drabužių šablonus), savo pačios kūrinius (menininkės knygą „Lik sveika, manęs aplankyta: motinos laišakai dukrai“, kurioje surinkti siuvėjos laišakai; „Tėvo aktą“, sukurtą 2001 m., ir filmą „Vaidmuo“, savo kūriniu paverstą aproprijuojant Rūtos Šimkaitienės filmą „Sodininkas eina į kapines“, sukurtą 1992 m., kur A. Maknytė vaidino pamotę). Ir komiškos, ir makabriškos kitų žmonių gyvenimo istorijos sykiu kondensuojasi objektuose, instaliuotuose trijose galerijos erdvėse. Paroda jungia tikroves, kurios „neturi informacijos“ viena apie kitą, bet yra susijusios nematomais atsitiktiniais, tačiau menininkės planuotais, sutapimais. Žiūrovas tampa visamatais privilegijuotu žinovu iš „ateities“, taip pat įsitraukiančiu į parodos naratyvą. Taip suformuojamas papildomas patirties sluoksnis.

Po parodą vaikščiojantis žiūrovas regi, girdi ir jaučia pavienius elementus vieną po kito, juos susieja į deliozišką „laikovaizdį“ ir iššifruoja skirtingas laiko tėkmes. Taigi šis žiūrovas „atlieka“ parodą kaip performatyvų aktą ir taip „kuria pats save“, o per jį kuriama ir paroda. Žinoma, instaliuodama parodą A. Maknytė žiūrovų judesius ir perskaitomas reikšmes planavo, bet, kaip ir performanso, taip ir daugybinės ekspozicijos rezultato, neįmanoma iki galo suplanuoti. Dėl to šis „pasivaikščiojimas tekstu“ per parodą, fenomenologiniu metodu tiriant laiko greičių ir trajektorijų patirtis, laikytinas tos parodos kaip kilpos savikūros dalimi.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** Aurelija Maknytė, performatyvumo estetika, performatyvus aktas, „laikovaizdis“, Erika Fischer-Lichte, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Thürlemann, Peter Osborne.

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