

Art and Politics in Lithuania from the Late 1950s to the Early 1970s

Key words: art of power, ideological propaganda, art propaganda, themes of the works of art, legitimation of authority, total authority, Artists' Union, artists' interests, non-conformism.

In a democratic system of government the politicisation of art can be defined as a process when art enters the field of politics and becomes an instrument capable of influencing or even changing the social political reality. In the modern day, both art and politics acquired an autonomy which was determined by their close interaction. According to the philosopher Boris Groys, the radical autonomy of art is shown precisely through radical political engagement. But only that which is absolutely free and autonomous can engage in something. It is not by accident that the concept of political engagement came into being in the context of French existentialism, which declared the individual's freedom from social and political violence. But art cannot be politically engaged if it is already political.¹

So what would the *politicisation of art* mean in a non-democratic system of government? I think that the art of a particular period is not only the sum of the works of art, it is also a system comprising the conditions of their production, distribution and reception. In this paper I am therefore going to analyse the coherent politicisation of the whole system. I will pay most attention to: 1) the peculiarities of the *art of power* (Klaus von Beyme),² 2) the interaction of official art policy and artists' interests, and 3) the question of the contra-power of art.

1. By analysing the elements of the functioning and production of the *art of power* in post-Stalinist Lithuania, I will try to answer two questions: 1) Did

Lithuanian art suit the purposes of legitimating Soviet rule and the ideological propaganda? 2) Did the official art support the Soviet system?

There were three tendencies characterising the post-Stalinist period:

1.1. Ideological propaganda through art was gradually replaced by politicised art propaganda. In his book entitled *Art and Propaganda*, Toby Clark writes that although the concept of "propaganda" ought to be associated with the ideas of manipulation, intimidation, and deceit, both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany used this means in public shamelessly.³

At the beginning of the 1970s, the Communist Party in the Soviet Union commanded that the role of visual agitation in the education of the people be strengthened: "While attempting to propagate art, one must remember the most important aim, which is the propaganda of communist ideology by the means of art, and the indoctrination of this ideology into the consciousness of the masses ... Art propaganda and propaganda by the means of art are inseparable"⁴ Visual agitation at that time was comprised not only of party slogans hanging in the streets. Works of art in public spaces, art exhibitions, even art criticism became a means for "mass political work". The press also had to "systematically elucidate the problems of agitation and propaganda by means of art"⁵

An example of the synthesis of ideological and artistic propaganda can be seen in commemorations

of the October Revolution, the Victory of World War II, and other similar events, which, alongside the instruments of political education or meetings with war veterans, included concerts and exhibitions. Following the spring of 1972 in Kaunas, the Ministry of Culture of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (LSSR) was charged with the task of strengthening the “political and aesthetic education” of the Kaunas inhabitants. Plans were developed for the construction of a monument to the Four Communists, a public library, a dance hall, the renovation of the music theatre, literature museum, Town Hall Square. Museums were instructed to intensify the political education of young people and schoolchildren. Decisions were made to organise biennials of young artists, drama festivals, etc. in Kaunas.⁶

Art propaganda proceeded with no shame. During the VI Congress of the LSSR Artists’ Union in 1966, the minister of culture encouraged artists to “thrust ... where the need for art is not understood”. It was proposed that factories and kolkhozes be ranked not only according to their rate of production, but also on the basis of “which of them acquired more and better works of art”. A 1973 Artists’ Union report on cultural education in the provinces states that “graphics artists have found a new, interesting, and very immediate form for the propaganda of works of art – to exhibit works temporarily in kolkhoznic’s homes”.⁷

In 1972, the LSSR Artists’ Union decided to found a bureau of artistic propaganda in order to coordinate the activities of all periodicals, and to propagate art in the press. A list was made of buildings where works of decorative and applied art could be exhibited.⁸ However, only six books, five albums, and seven collections of postcards were included in the plan for artistic publications from 1973 to 1976.⁹

The VIII Congress of the LSSR Artists’ Union in 1973 emphasised that art propaganda attracted considerable attention: “approximately 46,000 works of art were used for the ideological and aesthetic education of the people. Over the 20 years of rule by the bourgeoisie in Lithuania, there were about 80 exhibitions where approximately 10,000 works were

shown ... Therefore, ... these achievements express Soviet art policy superiority over the art policy of the capitalist world”.¹⁰

During the Congress of 1966, it was also stated that art was a weapon, and that “the capitalist world lays great hopes on ideological diversion, and consequently, on diversion through the help of art”.¹¹ In 1974, in a decree directed towards the implementation of a peace programme, the LSSR Ministry of Culture demanded an increase in the ideological efficiency of cultural links, and the use of said links for the purposes of “propaganda of the Soviet way of life, domestic and foreign policies, achievements of multinational socialist culture”. Artists touring abroad had to be provided with propaganda material about their own work, and about the “development of the culture and art of the nation”.¹²

1.2. The ambivalence of the canons of the *art of power*, and the difference between requirements and criteria of evaluation gradually increased.

The concept of socialist realism is essentially contradictory, because the main thesis of dialectic materialism is “the unity and struggle of contradictions”. According to Groys, to think in a dialectic-materialistic way means to think in a coherently contradictory and paradoxical way – to refer to total logics. “The main requirement for the Soviet people was not to think in a Soviet way, but to think both sovietically and antisovietically at the same time – that is, to think in a total fashion”.¹³

In the late 1950s, the canons of realism which originated in the 19th century were denounced, and replaced by a campaign for the renewal of socialist realism. Part of the campaign included a limited return to the national traditions of the past and the legacy of modernism. Thus the norms of socialist realism became even more contradictory, and were apparently overtaken by the artistic practice. Nevertheless, the Lithuanian artists who actively took part in the renewal of socialist realism were quite clearly told that a good socialist realist painting had to examine a significant theme (revolution, industrialisation, kolkhozes, etc.), and be distinguished by a “laconic style, expressivity, artistic generalisation, monumentality, and emotionalism”.¹⁴ It

was specifically these types of paintings that had the greatest value in terms of commissions. In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, the programmes of so-called thematic exhibitions were very laconic and limited to general phrases.

Starting in 1970, the Communist Party declared that it would intensify its direction vis-a-vis the creative intelligentsia, and increase requirements regarding the “ideological-artistic level” of works of art. The propaganda bureau of the USSR Artists’ Union began to write extensive thematic plans for exhibitions. A 1971 plan for commissions recommended the following themes: “triumph of national Leninist politics”, “high morality of Soviet soldiers”, “military cooperation of Warsaw pact countries”, “USSR aid to the people of Vietnam”, “art in the life of the people”. The artists also had to “show the Communist Party’s leading role in all spheres of Soviet life”, and to “highlight the new features of the Soviet man – creator of material and spiritual goods – to show the creative aspect of his work”.¹⁵ Exhibition projects introduced artists to the problems being solved by the Party: “raising the material and cultural living standards of the people”, “development of propaganda forms”, “support for law and order, Soviet democracy, and the social-political and ideological unity of society”.¹⁶ The plans for Lithuanian art exhibitions included themes like the struggle of supporters of the Soviet regime against “bourgeois nationalists”, the October Revolution and Lithuania, the incorporation of Lithuania into the USSR.

It was not only the Party that increased its claim on artists. In 1974, state institutions received a letter from Klaipėda region war veterans complaining that artists at the Palanga (sea resort) artist residence were painting landscapes instead of commemorating the heroic deeds of soldiers during battles in the Klaipėda region. The latter kind of artwork would emotionally affect viewers, and most importantly, “the artists themselves would experience an ideological patriotic impact while creating works on military themes”.¹⁷

However, these barely comprehensible requirements of artists had little in common with the criteria of evaluation and selection of state purchased

artworks. The authorities were mostly concerned about formal quality, and the growing quantity of artworks. It was no accident that the Art Council of the Republic was composed mainly of painters. The protocols of Council meetings, as well as press reviews of exhibitions were limited to the purely formal analysis of works of art.

These thematic plans did not have any significant impact on art, for the canons of political iconography were created by acclaimed masters. In Lithuanian art these canons were quite liberal and abstract. The political and ideological meaning of the message of a work of art was usually very vague, concretised only by the title (quite often devised by the exhibition committee on the eve of an opening). Although the search for diverse means of expression was encouraged, it was in fact mostly works by “mature artistic individuals”, i.e. ones that repeated well-trying schemes, that were purchased and exhibited.

It seems that increased control by the authorities in the 1970s was in fact simulated. For example, it became inadvisable to refer to concepts like “deformation” or “colourism”¹⁸, but not to use the artistic means themselves. The ambivalent norms of the *art of power*, double standards, discrepancy between requirements and evaluation criteria had to create an illusion of disobedience by the artists and Party tolerance towards them, as well as an illusion of the emancipation of art, the illegal liberation from the function of ideological propaganda, an illusion of non-conformism. The myth of the *partijnost* as political engagement was replaced by the myth of autonomous art.

1.3. The shift of the political role of art was determined by the changing principles of legitimation of authority.

During the post-Stalinist period, not only the idea of a class struggle, but also slogans about a decisive historic turning point, the making of a new society and a new man, were renounced. They were replaced by what was actually not a new idea: one according to which the Soviet system incarnates “humanity’s eternal ideals of a better life”, and “the fixed moral values” that in the West were destroyed by thoughtless progress and a tolerance of morally reprehensi-

ble actions.¹⁹ The task of art in the Stalinist period had also been not only to re-educate the citizens of the LSSR (including artists) “in the spirit of communism” – “the new authorities sought to show all the world that the Lithuanian nation had taken a new turn, and that this new direction is supported by the creative intelligentsia”²⁰

The goal of the art policy in the Brezhnev era was to demonstrate and prove to the citizens of the LSSR, and to the world, that the Communist Party cherished culture and art, and that, along with fostering closer relations with the nations of the USSR, it encouraged the prosperity of national cultures. It was emphasised that, compared to “standardised capitalism”, Soviet life was characterised by a “richness of spiritual life”, and that its art showed “the variety of individualities and the inexhaustible spiritual richness of man”.²¹ The “new man” was replaced by the “harmonious, well-rounded personality”.

As guardian of spiritual values, the Party declared war “on the cult of material goods” (consumerism) – but in reality tolerated and even encouraged it. Consumption of cultural production and art was especially promoted. Art truly was the most beautiful commodity in the purposefully organised Soviet “aesthetic” environment. It seems that the authorities were more interested in a high consumption of artworks than in the spread of communist ideas through art, for there was practically no control vis-a-vis the reception of their political content. The Soviet authorities cultivated in their citizens a sense of an aesthetic distance, in order that they apply the principle of distance not only to their perception of art, but also to their perception of the authorities and their policies.

Post-Stalinist Lithuanian art was poorly suited for the communist education of the people, but it served perfectly to legitimate authority. The more it looked like Western modernism and autonomous art, the more it supported the system and maintained the myth of “a little bit of the West in the Baltic countries”, so treasured by the Soviet authorities. The most prominent “non-conformists” ended up exhibiting abroad. The only way that artists could oppose the system was by not creating. And something

like that indeed did happen: in 1972, the minister of culture regretfully announced in the press that the number of purchased paintings, and paintings in artists’ studios had decreased.²²

2. In analysing the interaction between official art policy and artists’ interests, the following questions must be asked: 1) was the politicisation of art merely its forcible employment for the political purposes of the Soviet state? 2) was the subordination of art to politics (i.e. the Artists’ Union to the Communist Party) clear and unequivocal?

In the 1930s, Stalin stated: “Staff determine all”. Groys defines communist society as “a total producers’ dictatorship over consumers”.²³ Totalitarian authority reared a totalitarian power of the one towards others. The Party oppressed Soviet citizens, though many of them were its members. Anyone who had an opportunity to occupy a position of relative power towards some group or individual, certainly did occupy it. The post-Stalinist Soviet society ideally matches Michel Foucault’s definition of power as a performative strategic situation, and not a slightly asymmetrical interaction: “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere”.²⁴

The Soviet creative intelligentsia were closest to the Party’s power mechanism; the latter was the only thing “higher” than them. The best known artists were Party members; some were elected to the Supreme Council. “Communist *partijnost*” – the supposed “strong internal connection of art ... to the goals of the Party”²⁵ – in reality meant that only those artists who were intimately connected to, or who identified themselves with, the Party, could adapt to the volatile requirements of the Party. Bureaucrats responsible for the implementation of official art policy were also artists or art critics.

The artists’ cooperation with the Soviet authorities was determined not only by their need to protect personal interests, but also by the reverberation of avant-garde attitudes such as a predisposition towards artocracy and a desire for power, and the wish to replace the representation of the world by its recreation, and to enter politics and government.²⁶ Organisational aspects of the Artists’ Union (sec-

tion bureaus, the presidium) were analogous to Party structures. Artists seemed to like the fact that the issues of creative work were being discussed as political issues, and that aesthetic solutions acquired the status of political decisions.

The attitude of the artists and the Party regarding the sponsorship of art coincided very well. The Soviet authorities had no knowledge of a problem which was common to democratic states: how to sponsor art in such a way that taxpayers or specific sponsors could not insert their own demands. Productive artists – conformists – were among the best endowed members of Soviet society.

In the early 1970s, long-term contracts with artists began to appear. The purpose of these contracts was “not to accumulate created valuables, but to encourage their beginning, to support those artists who are not successful today, but who definitely will be tomorrow”.²⁷ Artistic production exceeded plans by 20% annually, with unplanned artistic production existing to the tune of 1.5 million rubles. At the VI Congress of the Artists’ Union in 1966, it was decided not to found a proper publishing house (such as Estonia had), because “many art grants would have to be denied”.²⁸ In 1972, approximately 126 grants (of 30-300 rubles) were allocated to artists.²⁹ In 1970, art school graduates began to receive guaranteed payments, and compulsorily registered young artists were given commissions. As the number of artists increased (there were 500 in 1973), so did the demand for more funds in order to purchase their work.

In the late 1950s and during the 1960s, artists struggled for the renewal of socialist realism, a broad concept of thematic painting, “colourism”, and a status of thematic painting for landscape paintings. In the 1970s they struggled for apartments, studios, cars, trips abroad, and a technical base for “experimentation”. It was proposed that a special, exclusive to artists section be created in the artistic production workshops (subordinate to the Artists’ Union), in order to provide them with materials and instruments for their work.³⁰

The Artists’ Union sought to control all spheres connected to art: the art industry, museums, art educa-

tion, the activities of folk artists, art criticism and history, the press, publishing, the art trade, etc. In 1965, the USSR Artists’ Union issued a strict decree stating that all institutions and organisations could commission works of art, or the service of designers, only via the Artists’ Union.³¹ In 1970, the LSSR Ministry of Culture allowed the purchase of artworks only on the recommendation of the Art Council and the Artists’ Union.³² Requests to read Artists’ Union documents for study purposes in the Archives of Literature and Art had to be approved by the Board.³³

The hypertrophied attention to art by the totalitarian powers in the post-Stalinist period probably resulted in a strong and flexible union of art and authority, rather than in a conflict of interests. During the post-Stalinist period the Party had to supervise experiments in renewed socialist realism, and here it could not manage without the artists themselves. Experienced artists supervised new ones, section leaders – rank and file members, heads – groups of artists in artist residences. The exhibition committee, and the Art Council, both composed of artists, controlled the processes of artistic development. Artists were suppressed not only by the Soviet authorities, they themselves wielded a power which even crept into their work through the form of “rigorous style”.

3. Artistic non-conformism: can one speak of the contra-power of art?

Robert Merton, an American sociologist, distinguished the following ways in which an individual adapts to a political system and seeks to overcome alienation: a) “an innovation” inside the system, b) revolt against the system, c) escapism, real or “internal” emigration, d) “rituality” of adaptation.³⁴

From the late 1950s to the mid-1960s, enthusiasm regarding the renewal of socialist realism was typical of the young generation of Lithuanian artists; it was later replaced by the auto-reproduction of “artistic individualities”. In the 1970s, escapist sentiments intensified: artists would rather live by teaching in art schools than by elaborating on “thematic painting”.

I would distinguish two cases of non-conformism in post-Stalinist Lithuanian art. The first, often referred

to in art criticism as semi-non-conformism, is an illusory non-conformism supported by the authorities, a constitutive part of conformism, an effect of the difference between requirements and evaluation criteria. In the 1960s, the sphere of this assumed non-conformism encompassed so-called experimental, semi-public, opened and quickly closed exhibitions in cinemas, publishing houses, the Writers' Union, Conservatory, etc. Artists followed a strategy common to modernism – they tried to create an alternative to dreary Soviet reality, in art.

The second non-conformism is the real, unofficial creative work shown by artists to their close friends in studios or private apartments. It already existed at the end of the 1950s, but became more prolific by the end of the 1960s. The young generation of Lithuanian artists was by then partially acquainted with the works of the Moscow conceptualists³⁵, who deconstructed the specific contact of Soviet ideology and lifestyle. The phenomenon of “realist socialism” inspired Lithuanian painters as well. On the other hand, works that criticised Soviet reality were also partly absorbed by the system, and were shown at official exhibitions.

There was little difference between real non-conformist iconography and the European art of the 20th century. Motifs of violence or confinement were frequently represented, as were monsters or colossi; fantastic beasts, which in European art often represented the horrors of war, became allegories of the Soviet regime in non-conformist art. Motifs of Christian iconography, which expressed “internal emigration” in European art during periods of dictatorship, were also common.³⁶ According to von Beyme, the struggle for abstraction, together with archaism, exotism, or infantilism in certain circumstances can also be understood as a protest against the regime.³⁷ It was exactly these forms of protest that characterised the non-official Lithuanian art of the 1960s.

Today these works of art look impressive, but one can hardly refer to their contra-power: they could not have been a serious challenge to the system because of the lack of theoretical interpretation, and the very limited possibilities of their reception. More exam-

ples of politically engaged art emerged only during the collapse of the Soviet system and the struggle for independence. The autonomy of art was more important to artists than was the subordination of art to political opposition. However, this striving for autonomous art, though sometimes absorbed or even produced by the system and transformed into an instrument of ideological propaganda, in a certain sense was also a manifestation of political disobedience, rebellion, and struggle for freedom.

Notes

¹ Boris Groys, *Logik der Sammlung. Am Ende des musealen Zeitalters*, München, Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1997, pp. 109-110; Boris Groys, *Kunst-Kommentare*, Wien: Passagen, 1997, p. 89.

² Klaus von Beyme, *Kunst der Macht und die Gegenmacht der Kunst. Studien zum Spannungsverhältnis von Kunst und Politik*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1998.

³ Toby Clark, *Art and Propaganda in the 20th Century*, London: Calmann & King Ltd., 1995 (Toby Clark, *Kunst und Propaganda. Das politische Bild im 20. Jahrhundert*, Köln: DuMont, 1997, pp. 7-8).

⁴ A pronouncement of the third plenum of the USSR Artists' Union, 26 June 1974, Lietuvos literatūros ir meno archyvas (Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art, hereafter LLMA), F-146, O-1, E-565, L-21-28.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ LSSR Ministry of Culture decree Nr. 48, 19 September 1972, LLMA, F-146, O-1, E-481, L-10-13.

⁷ LLMA, F-146, O-1, E-564, L-15-16.

⁸ LLMA, F-146, O-1, E-491, L-143-148.

⁹ LLMA, F-146, O-1, E-516, L-45.

¹⁰ Stenograph of the LSSR Artists' Union VIII Congress, 18-19 January 1973, LLMA, F-146, O-1, E-517, L-50-52.

¹¹ Stenograph of the LSSR Artists' Union VI Congress, 19-20 December 1966, LLMA, F-146, O-1, E-344, L-67.

¹² LLMA, F-342, O-1, E-2577, L-161-164.

¹³ Boris Groys, *Das kommunistische Postskriptum*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2006, p. 59.

¹⁴ G. Kęstutytė, 'Kai kurie tematinio paveikslo vystymosi bruožai' ('Some Features of the Development of Thematic Painting'), in: *Literatūra ir menas*, 22 November 1958.

¹⁵ LLMA, F-342, O-4, E-328, L-236-240.

¹⁶ Thematic plan of the USSR *Glory to Work* art exhibition, LLMA, F-342, O-4, E-394, L-239.

¹⁷ LLMA, F-146, O-1, E-565, L-64-66.

¹⁸ The concept of “colourism” in Soviet art criticism from the late 1950s to the early 1970s meant the domination of colour, and less attention to drawing and composition in a painting.

¹⁹ Boris Groys, *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin. Die gespaltene Kultur in der Sowjetunion*, München, Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1988, p. 85.

²⁰ Konstantinas Bogdanas, 'Dailininkų sąjungos veiklos ba-

ruosė' ('At the Domains of the Artists' Union Activities'), in: *Dailė*, no. 2, 2005, p. 10.

²¹ Stenograph of the LSSR Artists' Union board meeting, 13 May 1974, LLMA, F-146, O-1, E-546, L-52.

²² Lionginas Šepetys, 'Estetinė gerovė' ('An Aesthetical Prosperity'), in: *Pergalė*, no. 7, 1972, p. 115.

²³ Groys, 1997, p. 170.

²⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, London: Penguin Books, 1990, p. 93.

²⁵ Nikolajus Tomskis, 'Iš socialistinio realizmo pozicijų' ('From the Positions of Socialist Realism'), in: *Literatūra ir menas*, 3 October 1970.

²⁶ About the political ambitions of the modernist avant-garde see: Eduard Beaucamp, *Der verstrickte Künstler. Wider die Legende von der unbefleckten Avantgarde*, Köln: DuMont, 1998; Klaus von Beyme, *Das Zeitalter der Avantgarden. Kunst und Gesellschaft 1905-1955*, München: C. H. Beck oHG, 2005; Jean Clair, *La responsabilité de l'artiste*, Paris: Gallimard, 1997; Beat Wyss, *Der Wille zur Kunst. Zur ästhetischen Mentalität der Moderne*,

Köln: DuMont, 1996.

²⁷ Šepetys, 1972.

²⁸ Stenograph of the LSSR Artists' Union VI Congress, 19-20 December 1966, LLMA, F-146, O-1, E-344, L-136.

²⁹ Protocols of the LSSR Artists' Union board meetings, 1972, LLMA, F-146, O-1, E-481a.

³⁰ Stenograph of the LSSR Artists' Union VIII Congress, 18-19 January 1973, LLMA, F-146, O-1, E-517, L-78.

³¹ Decree by the USSR Council of Ministers, 22 June 1960, LLMA, F-146, O-1, E-323, L-38.

³² Decree by the LSSR Ministry of Culture, 10 February 1970, LLMA, F-146, O-1, E-442, L-10.

³³ Protocol of the LSSR Artists' Union board meeting, LLMA, F-146, O-1, E-516, L-57.

³⁴ Von Beyme, 2005, p. 517.

³⁵ Ilja Kabakov, Vitalij Komar, Aleksandr Melamid, Erik Bulatov, Dmitrij Prigov et al.

³⁶ Von Beyme, 2005, p. 848.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 851.

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Dailė ir politika Lietuvoje XX a. 6-ojo dešimtmečio pabaigoje – 8-ojo pradžioje

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *galios menas*, ideologinė propaganda, dailės propaganda, dailės kūrinų temos, valdžios legitimacija, totalinė valdžia, Dailininkų sąjunga, dailininkų interesai, nonkonformizmas.

Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjami dailės politizavimo aspektai postalininio laikotarpio Lietuvoje: *galios meno* (Klaus von Beyme) ypatumai, oficialiosios kultūros politikos ir dailininkų interesų sąveika, meninio protesto klausimas.

Galios menui kaip produkcavimo, sklaidos ir recepcijos sistemai šiuo laikotarpiu būdingos trys tendencijos. Pirmą, ideologinę propagandą dailės priemonėmis palaipsniui pakeitė politizuota dailės propaganda. Kai XX a. 8-ojo dešimtmečio pradžioje SSKP liepė sustiprinti vaizdinės agitacijos vaidmenį darbo žmonių auklėjime, šioji nebuvo tik gatvėse iškabinti partijos šūkiai. „Masinio politinio darbo“ priemonėmis tapo dailės kūriniai viešosiose erdvėse, parodos ir net dailės kritika, todėl dailės propagavimas buvo ypač svarbus Dailininkų sąjungos uždavinys. Antra, stiprėjo *galios meno* kanono dvilypumas. XX a. 6-ojo dešimtmečio pabaigoje, prasidėjus socialistinio realizmo atnaujinimo kampanijai, jo normas lėmė dailės praktika, o teminių parodų planuose apsiribota bendromis frazėmis. Kai 1970 m. SSKP sugriežtino reikalavimus kūrinių „idėjiniam-meniniam lygiui“, SSSR Dailininkų sąjungos Propagandos skyrius ėmė kurti išsamias dailės temų programas; dailininkams liepta vaizduoti „lenininės nacionalinės politikos triumfą“, „vadovaujantį komunistų partijos vaidmenį“ ir pan. Tačiau šie reikalavimai buvo menkai susiję su valstybės įsigyjamų kūrinių vertinimo ir atrankos kriterijais, nes iš tiesų valdžiai labiau rūpėjo kūrinių kiekybė ir jų formali kokybė. Reikalavimų ir vertinimo kriterijų neatitikimas turėjo sukurti dailininkų nepaklusnumo, dailės emancipacijos ir partijos tolerancijos iliuziją. Trečia, politinį dailės vaidmenį lėmė valdžios

legitimacijos strategijų kaita. Brežnevo laikais SSKP siekė pademonstruoti pasauliui, kad ji puoselėja kultūrą, meną ir skatina nacionalinių kultūrų suklestėjimą. Todėl, kuo labiau Lietuvos dailė buvo panaši į vakarietišką modernizmą, tuo geriau ji tiko valdžios legitimacijos tikslams.

Hipertrofuotas valdžios dėmesys dailei postalininiu laikotarpiu nulėmė veikiau tvirtą ir lanksčią dailės ir valdžios sankabą, o ne interesų konfliktą. Dailininkų sąjunga siekė kontroliuoti visas su daile susijusias sritis – muziejus, dailės studijas ir švietimą, tautodailininkų veiklą, dailės kritiką ir istoriją, spaudą, leidybą, prekybą kūriniais. Be pačių dailininkų pagalbos partija nebūtų galėjusi prižiūrėti atnaujinto socialistinio realizmo ieškojimų.

Šio laikotarpio Lietuvos dailei būdingos dvi nonkonformizmo pakraipos. Pirmosios pakraipos nonkonformizmas – iliuzinis, valdžios skatintas, nulemtas skirtumo tarp reikalavimų ir vertinimo kriterijų. Antroji – tikroji, neoficiali, tik menininkų dirbtuvėse ar butuose siauram ratui rodyta kūryba – negalėjo tapti rimtu iššūkiu santvarkai dėl ribotos recepcijos.

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