

Erasing Memory? Toward the Decolonization of Performance Art in Lithuania

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Biography

Marija Griniuk is a Lithuanian artist and a PhD student at the University of Lapland, Finland. Since 2020 she is a lecturer at Vilniaus Kolegija / University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania. Her research concerns new channels of performance documentation derived from biometric data, such as brain activity data.

Abstract

In this paper, a performance artist aims to present reflexive narrative-building as autoethnography through the photographic documentation of decolonization-themed Lithuanian performance art. The question within this paper is how the narratives of Lithuanian performance art deal with decolonization through a reflexive study of the photo documentation of performance art. This question is answered through a reflexive investigation into the photo documentation of three cases from Lithuania. The performance art projects attempt to reinscribe the erased (hi)stories, which use sites of performance as loaded narratives. Photo documentation allows us to look into these performances from the

distance of time and following political or socio-cultural changes. The memory here is the embodied remembrance of the history of the Soviet beliefs and past governmental structures forced on Lithuanian society during the Soviet regime (colonization). Decolonizing Lithuanian post-Soviet memories means using an arts-based method, creating space for a dialogue that understands the impact of the traumatic past on the present culture. The purpose of this research is, through the reflections of a performance artist, using autoethnography and performance as activism, to narrate performance art dealing with photo images of the three studied cases to include the historical memories and decolonization of Lithuania.

Keywords

Performance art, Decolonization, Memory, Palimpsest, Erasing

Introduction

This paper studies the photo material of three performance art cases that are conceptually linked to decolonization in Lithuania. Decolonization is understood as emancipation from colonial status, referring to the context of Lithuania being seen as part of the Soviet Union since 1940, and the act of decolonization is seen within Lithuania as the country regaining independence in 1991 (Butkus, 2007). In relation to memories and erasure, decolonization is seen within performance art as focusing on prioritizing local knowledge and narratives (Mikkonen, 2020). In other words, decolonial narratives aim to recognize local environments and (hi)stories. The term decolonization in the Lithuanian context relates to local Lithuanian history and the im-

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pact of the Soviet Union on the narratives within the domestic community and on international relations and contacts (Butkus, 2007).

The author of this study is a Lithuanian performance artist born in the last decade of the Perestrojka period in Soviet Lithuania who started a performance art career as a professionally trained artist in 2008. The cases in this study are the AN festivals of 1988 (*AN88*) and 1989 (*AN89*), Evelina Šimkutė's socially engaged art projects, *Šilainiai* (2015–present), and the author's own project, *Construction* (2012). These cases were selected due to the following reasons: *AN* festivals were the very first performance art festivals in Lithuanian art history (Griniuk, 2020a), and the content of these performances dealt with the questions of decolonization, erasure, and memory, seen as art activism focusing on freedom in the repressed Lithuanian society of the late 1980s. Evelina Šimkutė's projects target the value of memory and the ecological thinking within the urban gardening practices of Soviet citizens, which is part of the background for an eco-friendly behavior discussion in contemporary Lithuanian contexts. Therefore memory here is seen as the necessity to understand contemporary thinking through the layers of the past. The author's project, *Construction*, was implemented in real time as an artistic response to the changing architectural patterns in Lithuanian cityscapes, due to the demolishing and removing of the remains of the Soviet past. The act of physical erasure by the community enhances memories through these absent (undesirable) objects. All three are live art activities targeting decolonized Lithuanian post-Soviet memories, the memory of repression, and the memory that remains when removing the "remains of the undesirable," as it is named by the artist and researcher Ian Damerell (2015, para. 9). These performances are studied and documented via photographs taken on-site during the real-time art activities and as they respond, through art, to the socio-political context of the current time with the implementation of performance, Lithuanian politics, and government decisions. The author follows a reflexive approach, as the photo material's principal investigator, and narrates and interprets it from the

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position of an artist within the studied phenomenon—performance art. The study is framed around interpretation from the perspective of the author of this article regarding the three cases provided and within a discussion around authorship and the responsibility of both the author and the community, dealing with the questions of erasure and memory.

Though all three cases in this study examine decolonization, they do so in varied ways. Of the three performance events, the *AN* festivals, *AN88* and *AN89*, are early examples of live art activism, evincing the first attempts at collaborative participatory and arts-based methods as decolonizing art in Lithuania. In Šimkutė's *Šilainiai* performances, she analyzes community resistance to post-colonial memories. She also reviews the eco-friendly tendencies of Soviet Lithuania's urban life and contemporary implementations of urban gardening as a community-based activity inherited from a Soviet cultural tradition in the Šilainių district of Kaunas in Lithuania. In the author's project, *Construction*, the Lithuanian community's emotional load and different opinions concerning the physical remains of Soviet architecture and monuments are traced.

The author's reflexive narrative combines reflexive research (Etherington, 2004), 'autoethnography' (Anderson, 2006), and narrative (Somers, 1992). She works with autoethnography when writing retrospectively about the past performances, which were presented in 2012. She utilizes reflexive research when reflecting on the visual material of others' work, through the prism of her experience. Reflexive research (Weber, 2003) builds on the idea of the researcher belonging to the field of study and investigating the research field through her own experience (Etherington, 2004). Therefore, for her, a reflexive narrative involves narrating a (hi)story through her experience as part of the studied phenomenon. The term 'documentation' refers to that practice when carried out using photographic images. It is based on the performance scholar Philip Auslander's (2006) definition of 'documentary documentation', or a tool for registering the images of past actions and providing evidence of their sites. Here, 'performance' follows Schechner's

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(1977) theory and is defined as a ritual where liminal space is created for transformation to happen. Accordingly, the author sees performance as an art activity involving time, the site of the performance, the performing body/ies, and interaction with the audience; because of its broad definition, performance can include all art activities that contain these elements.

‘Colonization’ is explained as political and economic domination and as enforcing new socio-cultural structures on an occupied territory. The definition of colonization is close to that of occupation; indeed, it can be argued that Lithuania was not colonized but occupied by the Soviet regime, but this paper uses colonization or ‘colonialism’. Colonialism stresses that the Soviet regime was, at least in the Baltic states, forced from the outside which brought with it, in addition to economic imbalance and long-distance political supervision, specific ethnic and cultural tensions. These tensions related to the effort to privilege non-local cultural traditions (Annus, 2016) related to the ideology promoted by the Soviet Union. Communist Russia occupied Lithuania, as well as other Baltic countries, and this developed into five decades of colonial rule, from the 1940s to 1991 (Annus, 2012). For example, KGB imprisoned Lithuanians and deported the imprisoned people via Siberia-bound trains during the Soviet regime (Damerell, 2015). Many contemporary Lithuanian families have close or distant relatives who were deported to Siberia during the years of colonization (Damerell, 2015), so the narrative of this colonization by the Soviet regime is very present in contemporary discussions within the local community in Lithuania. Regarding the concept of ‘erasure’, the contemporary Lithuanian community is not willing to see the marks of its colonial past in cityscapes, especially in the capital city of Vilnius (Damerell, 2015). The memory of the painful past, according to the local community, should not be embodied in the architectural fragments or monumental art publicly encountered today. ‘Erasing’ is the act of removing the physical traces of the colonial past (i.e., the history of Soviet beliefs and governmental structures being enforced on Lithuanian society during the Soviet regime) (Annus, 2016). The site of performance (Schechner, 1977) is a

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palimpsest, where performance is the layer that makes the past voices of the site present for the viewer. The presence of the palimpsest is expressed and transformed during the performances at the sites, and this dominates the photographs. Decolonization means utilizing arts-based methods as a space for reflection on the past and future scenarios for the perception of the past.

Cases

In the first two cases, the author reflects on the photographic material as documentation of the AN festivals (AN88 and AN89) and the *Šilainiai* projects by the artist Evelina Šimkutė. In the third case, she uses autoethnography to describe her project, the *Construction performance*. The three cases will be investigated through visual interaction with images and the revision of gathered interviews and notes concerning performances that took place in the past.



Figure 1. AN88 festival (1988). Photo: AN festivals.

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Figure 2. AN88 festival (1988). Performance: *Veteran Morning* (1988) by Tomas Juzeliūnas. Photo: AN festivals.

The first case introduces the AN festivals (AN88 and AN89) that took place in 1988 and 1989, where the first performance events in Lithuania were implemented in a festival format—as interdisciplinary events involving artists and musicians. These events were facilitated in the Lithuanian countryside, in Ažuožeriai in the Anykščiai region in Lithuania by the Lithuanian Composers’ Union and composer Gintaras Sodeika, together with the participating artists and composers: Tomas Juzeliūnas, Šarūnas Nakas, Arūnas Dikčius, Ričardas Kabelis, Rytis Mažulis, Arvydas Baltrūnas, and Austė Nakienė, amongst others (Griniuk, 2019, 2020a). From an interview with A. Baltrūnas, it is known that the choice of the peripheral location of this festival was due to the political content of some performances because such activity could have put artists at risk if realized, for example, in the capital city of Vilnius. During the interview, Gintaras Sodeika revealed that within the spontaneous, unplanned performative actions during AN88 and AN89, the artists used Lithuanian flags that, in the late 1980s, were still legally

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forbidden in Soviet Lithuania.¹ These actions were carried out as a collective initiative, with collective authorship and responsibility.² Collective performances using the Lithuanian national flags clearly express the desire of the AN festival artists to be an active part of the social and cultural change and could today be called participatory art as an act of decolonization. The other example could be the artwork, *Veteran Morning* (1988), by Tomas Juzeliūnas and involving the artists Šarūnas Nakas and Arvydas Baltrūnas (Griniuk, 2019, 2020a). This art piece refers to the routines of WW2 veterans and shows that the artists raised critical questions about the Soviet occupation after WW2, as reflected in the video and photo documentation.³



Figure 3. Evelina Šimkutė and Elizabeth Hudson (UK). *Šilainiai bees* (2019). Photo: Vytautas Paplauskas.

For the second case, the author used the *Šilainiai* project by the artist Evelina Šimkutė. She studied this project using publicly available material, photographs, and video recordings, notes from the conversation with the artist, and by viewing one of the events organized by her. Soviet city planning designed the district of *Šilainiai* in Kaunas in the 1980s. It was similar to other ur-

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ban districts occupied by the Soviet regime in the region at the time. Šimkutė had collaborated closely with Saulius Lukošius, the architect, who, in the 1980s, designed the district of Šilainiai. The implementation of his architectural design was stopped in 1991. Lithuania gained independence, and during the governmental changes, the development of the new district of Šilainiai ceased.

Evelina Šimkutė aims to highlight the value of the archival material on the district of Šilainiai, of the photo documentation of the district's current landscape, and of an outsider's view of this material, by focusing on activating the district as a site for research by the international art community. For her, decolonizing the memory seems to be embodied in the presence of the archive. She archives the architectural elements from the Soviet past, present in the Šilainiai district today (e.g., playgrounds in yards, which have not yet been changed to contemporary ones). She has documented the contemporary cityscape of Šilainiai by conducting photography walks with local youths and children. She has created a dialogue between herself (as an artist and researcher) and the residents and community of the district because they are eyewitnesses of the changes that have taken place in the urban landscape from the Soviet time until now. Šimkutė has organized accommodation for visiting international artists, who have involved the district and the local community in their research projects. Her latest collaboration with the artist Elizabeth Hudson (UK) is the Šilainiai bees action research project with urban gardening activists (Griniuk, 2020b). They have been using the green areas of Šilainiai as sites for self-organized collective gardening since the 1980s when the district was built. The activists, now elderly people, still have collective gardens in the same green areas as they did four decades ago. The Šilainiai bees project culminated in a series of workshops and performances with a bee theme for site-specific urban gardening in Šilainiai.

For the third case, the author studied the photographs of her own performance, *Construction*, which was an artistic response to the intense media discussions in Lithuania in 2012 regarding

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Figure 4. Marija Griniuk, *Construction* (2012). Photo: Tue Brisson Mosich.

the demolition of Soviet sculptures or elements of Soviet reliefs (metal and stone sculptural elements attached to a background of the same material, for example metal or stone) on architectural constructions that remained. A large number of the Soviet monuments had already been demolished by that time (Griniuk, 2017). During the author's project, *Construction*, she visited places in Vilnius where Soviet monuments used to be. In this paper, the narrative of this performance is as the author remembers it after her recent interaction with the photo documentation material and her notes. She designed leaflets with a message about a municipal decision to return these monuments to their original locations in Vilnius. She distributed leaflets with a phone number the inhabitants could call to express their opinions about this (fictional) situation. During the week after the performance in the streets of Vilnius, the author engaged in phone discussions with the people who responded to the information in the leaflets, while located at the Medaliu Galerija gallery. She suggested treating the monuments as artwork, created by the

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older generation of her artist colleagues, for whom the realization of the public monuments was the major, if not the only, method of recognizing their work as professionally trained artists during the Soviet regime. This project was followed by photographic, printmaking, and painting projects with the same title of *Construction*. While all these projects were going on, the sculptures at all of her research sites in Vilnius and Kaunas, Žalgiris Stadium in Vilnius, Aleksotas Bridge in Kaunas, Green Bridge, and other places were demolished or had major redesigns, removing all the physical traces of the Soviet time.

As the author remembers, in 2012, she felt very close to her research—the sculptures, reliefs, and architectural buildings from the time of Soviet occupation—both because in her memory, they had been present throughout her life since childhood and because she resided in the same neighborhood as many of the significant sites of interest: Žalgiris Stadium, Independence Square, and the Green Bridge sculptures in Vilnius. This location allowed her to carry out performative activity on-site and collect video and photo material systematically. In the author's project, *Construction*, she was interested in the phenomenon of memory through studying the constructs built in the 1940s–1980s in Lithuania, which have a visual connection to the aesthetics of that time and the public buildings and elements of public city areas, which are undesirable and incompatible with the contemporary aesthetic. All the constructs that the author has been studying were completely demolished between 2014 and 2019, or majorly redesigned in the case of Aleksotas Bridge in Kaunas, where the reliefs from the Soviet time have been covered by copper plates.

The other object studied within the longitudinal perspective in the author's research is Green Bridge in Vilnius. She started observing this object and the narratives around it in 2012. By coincidence, while editing this paper in September 2020, the author lived in the first house on the left side of the river by Green Bridge (6 Kalvarijų Street), and she encountered the now absent sculptures daily. During her routine movements alongside the bridge, she tried to trace

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other marks of removal on its metal construction. There were many spots that gave a hint that something had been there.

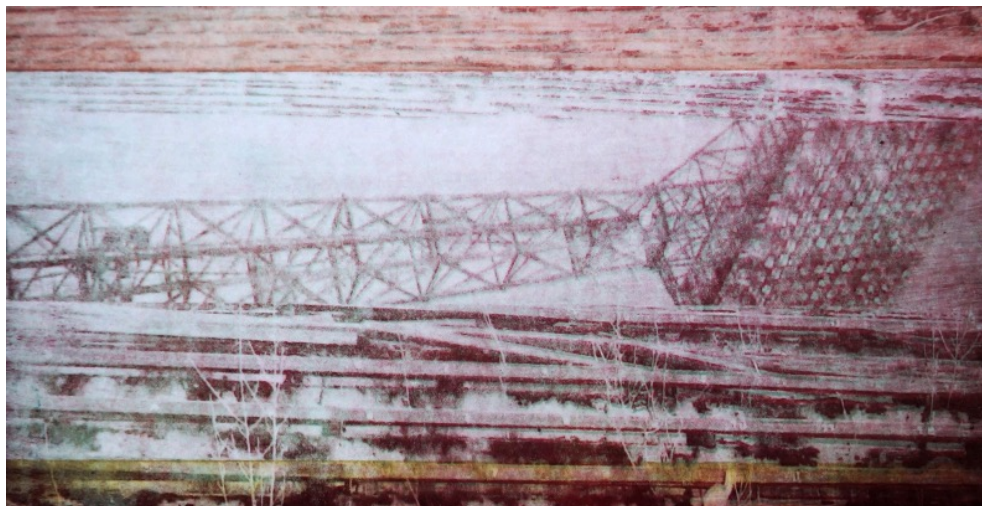


Figure 5. Marija Griniuk, Construction (Žalgiris Stadium) (2016). Photogravure.



Figure 6. Marija Griniuk, Construction (Žaliasis Tiltas/Green Bridge) (2016). Photogravure.



Figure 7. Marija Griniuk, *Construction (Žalgiris Stadium)* (2016). Photogravure.

Discussion

The activation of the concepts of decolonization, memory, sites as palimpsests, and erasing will be discussed in terms of the performative actions of the artworks, which are observed from the documentation. In the first case of the *AN* festivals, before the independence of Lithuania, the artists used performance as a tool for resistance against the Soviet regime. Performance is the artistic gesture of erasing the colonial experience in real time. For E. Šimkutė, decolonizing the memory lies in activating the living memory, the memory embodied in the community, and empowering and valuing local history through art projects. She activates a dialogue about local history through activating the residues of this history—the architecture in the district, urban gardening, or local archives.⁴ For E. Šimkutė, Šilainiai seems to be the palimpsest of local Soviet city planning history, which can be collected, preserved, and redefined by artists, who have an outsider view on the district.

In the author's project, *Construction*, palimpsests such as architecture and monumental art are the sites of her research and performative actions. When she studies these artworks from her photographs and notes, she reflects on them now—when all these constructs have already

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been demolished. The absence of the objects is a strategy for attempting to erase the memory of the objects, but this absence today becomes yet another layer of palimpsest. The artist and researcher Ian Damerell (2015), in his article *Memory and Deceit: The Green Bridge Case*, unfolds the notions of embodied memories in monuments and a memory that is present in the absence of monuments after they are demolished. The constructs that the author has studied and activated through her artworks have direct links to either the memory or the narrative of when they were built. The Green Bridge sculptures by the artists Bernardas Bučas and Petras Vaivada; Juozas Mikėnas, Bronius Vyšniauskas, and Napoleonas Petrulis; and Bronius Pundzius (Lijana Natalevičienė, 2020) exemplify the artistic production (of the mid 1950s), dependent on the values and aesthetics of the time, and here the authorship can only be seen in the act of mounting the monument, but the collective co-authorship is present in the new narrative of removal. The artist is not autonomous but is dependent on the consent of the community, and as in the statement by Roland Barthes (1967) in his essay *The Death of the Author*, the reader becomes the author. In the case of the Green Bridge sculptures, the community, in resisting their presence, becomes the author of the new narrative of the absence of these sculptures. Through the author's performative interventions since 2012, she has aimed to revoke the discussion on the value and authorship of, in the context of this discussion, usually monumental artwork and architecture in times of political change and the memory of trauma connected to the past regime. The question arises what is the role of an artist, and can this artist be autonomous with regard to the value, the memory, and the erasure of the unpleasant and unacceptable colonial past? The artist is present and is an author of the narrative told by one's artwork only if it is accepted by the community of the readers of this narrative. Presence is a matter of common consent and of the context where the artist is working. The power of the author is dependent on the power of the contemporary community and contemporary context. The artist attempts to make sense of the historical layers of this palimpsest as it was discussed in the work by performance studies scholar Stanley E.

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Gontarski (1985). According to the anthropologist Marc Augé (2004), the questions of cultural heritage and the memory connected to the interflow of the desire for memory and desire for forgetting arise as a social construction. So, the presence of the author and the narrative around the artwork are aligned with these two notions of being allowed to remember or to forget, as the social construction. Many contemporary performance artists, such as the cases discussed in this article, are working with the theme of memory and forgetting and attempting to address these constructions as an area of artistic discussion.

This is similar, though with completely different intentions, to the case of the performance artists who worked during the late 1980s in Lithuania. They realized collective action within *AN* festivals, bringing attributes, such as Lithuanian national flags, into the spaces of the performance events. These actions did not have one author and, according to Sodeika, were embodied by the participants of the festivals as the need for political statements from the young artists and musicians in the late 1980s. Artists work on collaborations and are dependent on common agreements. In the contemporary case by the artist E. Šimkutė, she acts by finding connections in the archival material and collectively reactivating this material through collaborations between local stakeholders, local activists, local artists and architects, and the international artist community.

A palimpsest

The site of performance is defined by the author as a 'palimpsest', where performance is the layer that makes the past voices of the site present for the viewer. The presence of a palimpsest is expressed and transformed during the performance. The author sees this transformation as the decolonizing of the memory connected to the site, which is only possible at the moment of the activation of all the layers of the palimpsest. In other words, the location of a performance contains the voices of the past, talking over one another and existing in constant flux concerning

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the time and socio-cultural political context. The site of such a performance can be an urban district or a public art piece (e.g., a sculpture). According to Ian Damerell, “art ‘voices’ change along with the changes that surround them. In short, artworks, placed within a different context, speak with a different voice. Art’s language, like our spoken tongue, changes. It can either disappear or transform beyond recognition” (Damerell, 2015, para. 1). A palimpsest makes it possible to be aware of the entire past, to make sense of creating an image for the present, and to imagine scenarios for the future. The act of removing traces of a colonial past will not delete the colonial history itself. Creating a site for activating the palimpsest, in the case of AN festivals, provided a space for the awareness of national identity, through objects used during the live art events; in the case of the *Šilainiai* projects, it was about gathering the embodied traces of the colonial past in the *Šilainiai* district and seeing them as valuable historical fragments of the cityscape; or, in the case of *Construction*, it involved performing in real time in the changing cityscape: the constructs are being demolished as a municipal gesture of (attempting) the erasure of the colonial memory.

Erasing

Erasing is discussed here as the act of removing the physical traces of a colonial past. In this case, that past includes the Soviet beliefs and past governmental structures enforced on Lithuanian society during the Soviet regime. Damerell (2015, p. 1) writes, concerning public art in Lithuania: “Colonialism in art manifests itself usually in acts of placing, replacing and removal. These are typical actions that establish a changing regime ... The traditional effect of colonialism’s placing or replacing has...taken the form of sculptures that glorify rulers, military men, and, too, poets and playwrights who have contributed to a desired national identity. However, acts of removal are destined to be forgotten, which is, after all, their main purpose.” So, in the study within this article on cases of Lithuanian performance art, it seems that the

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artists, working with performance and socially engaged practices, work with a counteraction to forgetting. Artists suggest remembering instead of forgetting. A desire to remember the Lithuanian national identity is explicitly expressed during *AN* festivals, for example, through a performance using the three-colored Lithuanian flags, which were forbidden at the time of the Soviet regime. A desire to remember history is expressed in the case of the *Šilainiai* projects in terms of creating residues of the past with contemporary art through a dialogue between the local community and invited international artists. This counteraction to forgetting is just as present in *Construction*, which creates a synthetic space for the local community to express its thoughts and attitudes regarding the Soviet public art that was demolished in its neighborhood.

All three of these case projects represent an artist being an eyewitness of the erasing of change. Damerell (2015) claims that the absence (of the public art from Soviet times) created by removal is at least as powerful as original artwork. He stresses the power of the presence in absence. The author will use this notion to look into performance art. In the three cases described in this article, in the author's opinion, the artists are actively operating with the notion of presence in absence, and during their performative acts, they are physically activating this absence. Again, the most vivid example is the performance with the three-colored flags during the *AN* festival in 1988, which was described earlier. The performance here is an artistic take on the resistance to forgetting and erasing a memory. This very same tendency is also seen in contemporary performance and socially engaged art in Lithuania, in the examples of the *Šilainiai* projects and *Construction*. The artists resist forgetting the colonial past because the pain associated with it needs to be activated through artistic discussion to decolonize the memory.

The proper proximity of an artist who is working with the theme of colonial memories to this subject/theme is the key that makes it possible to activate the palimpsest. Performance and socially engaged art projects, dealing with decolonizing the memory, are being situated on the site of a palimpsest (a physical location which has a multilayered history). At the same time,

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the new layer of a palimpsest is being created in action. In the case of *Construction*, while the author was researching and implementing the project, the landscape was changing due to municipal decisions that were changing the cityscape. The construct—present or demolished—is the site of the memory. The physical proximity of the artist to the construct gives legitimacy to activating the palimpsest.

A palimpsest as inclusiveness, participation, and co-existence

With regard to the case of the *AN* festival performance art, it activated national values and resistance against the colonial regime. This was a real-time artistic response to the political situation during the late 1980s, and thus the palimpsest unfolded toward inclusiveness of the local narratives and making them dominant within the participatory performance actions. Just a few years later, after the *AN* festivals, Lithuania became an independent country, and this led to the new layers of the palimpsest within the local artistic community. The narratives of independence and a painful past led the collective voice toward demolishing the monumental artworks of the generation of artists who worked during the colonial regime (1940–1991), whose artistic production represented aesthetically the values of the Soviet Union. This collective voice became the author of the new narrative of the absence of these artworks. The artistic goals of the contemporary performance artists, described in this article, aim to address and include all the layers of the local palimpsest of history, the co-existence of these layers, and the transparency of the local Lithuanian art history narrations and to expand the discussion further into the contemporary international artistic discourse on the issues of decolonization.

Conclusion

This paper addressed the concepts of palimpsest and erasing a memory as an act of decolonization in the local contexts of Lithuanian performance art. The study was implemented using

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the formats of autoethnography and reflexive research by the artist and author of this paper, who was involved in the studied phenomenon. This paper aimed to unveil the strategies of artists' work in terms of live art/performances with a decolonization theme. The utilized photos, videos, and interviews/notes concerned the following cases of Lithuanian performance art: the AN88 and AN89 festivals of happenings and actions (in 1988 and 1989), E. Šimkutė's projects, *Šilainiai* (2015–present), and the author's project, *Construction* (2012). The cases were described and positioned with regard to their conceptual connection to the theme of decolonization. A palimpsest here refers to a site of performance, which, in all of the cases, is site-specific. Erasing is discussed as removing the remains of the colonial past, and the term is used in relation to memories of the Lithuanian colonial past. The author's primary findings from her autoethnography and reflexive narrative are that performance artists in Lithuania work with the concept of post-colonial memories. They are a part of the present discourse about decolonization. In the future, this study could be expanded to include a comparative case analysis of performance art practices based on the theme of decolonization in the whole Baltic region.

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Interviews

Interview with A. Baltrūnas. Interview by M. Griniuk. In person. Reprint, Klaipeda, Lithuania, October 12, 2017.

Baltrūnas' interview with G. Sodeika. Interview by A. Baltrūnas. In person. Reprint, Vilnius, May 9, 2017.

M.Griniuk's interview with G. Sodeika. Interview by M. Griniuk. In person. Reprint, Vilnius, September 25, 2020.

Notes

¹M.Griniuk interview with G.Sodeika

²Interview with A. Baltrūnas.

³The first part of the performance was carefully planned; the performers talked in Russian about the theme of the past war and interacted with the military magazine *For the Motherland* and another magazine with an erotic theme. The other part of the performance was improvised and included audience participation. The performers reorganized the audience into a big crowd of people that moved along the large carpet toward an old theatrical scenographic column. During their movements, the performers and the audience interacted with a variety of objects and threw smoke grenades (Griniuk, 2020).

⁴In one of the interviews, she states that the “Conversation only happened for the first time in 31 years, and a lot of that archive material generally, as you say, it's chucked or it's destroyed; either yes, because we want to destroy it because maybe there's some sensitive information that we don't want to share because we don't know whose hands are going to get it or because we want to write our history, we want to write new history and this history is – not painful to look at—but just we want to forget about or we want to start afresh” (Mawhood, 2016).