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CONTEMPORARY LITHUANIAN ARTISTS: CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Summary. By analysing the careers of internationally recognized artists from Lithuania and the relationship between Lithuanian contemporary artists and art galleries and museums, the author explores the challenges faced by today's artists and hypothetically underlines the principles that could be useful for them in seeking to enter into the global art scene.

The essay analyses the lack of cooperation between artists and galleries, and the representation of artists in Lithuanian museums, which is considered to be the base of a contemporary artist's career. The essay assesses the influence of the main participants in the art market upon artists' careers, by investigating the Lithuanian art market's position after the restoration of independence in 1990. Twenty Lithuanian artists, major galleries or representatives of museums (such as the National Art Gallery and the MO Museum, formerly known as the Modern Art Centre) were interviewed for the purposes of this study.

This examination of the Lithuanian art market reveals the peculiarities that artists have encountered, and could help international art market players to better understand the problems that the Lithuanian art market is facing. The author seeks to identify the main factors helping artists to navigate the global art scene and the global art market.

Keywords: Artist career, ArtFacts, Contemporary Art, Art Gallery, Museum, Modern Art Center, Mo Museum, National Art Gallery, Lewben Art Foundation, Collections, Deimantas Narkevicius, Svajone and Paulius Stanikas, Nomedas and Gediminas Urbonas, Art Fairs, Art Vilnius, Vartai Gallery, The Rooster Gallery, Meno Parkas, Contour Art Gallery, YBA, Lithuanian Art Museum, Museum Acquisitions.

Forming a career, whether concerning a graduate specialist, an engineer, or an artist, seems to be a necessity in a modern world that is so influenced by financial markets. The importance of building a career, associated with greater responsibility, higher status, prestige, and influence, one hears about constantly from their school years onwards. However, we often face an element of uncertainty when we start to measure the careers of artists.

The artist, as a participant in the art market, gains a higher status and prestige from participating in reputable international art events, giving them an enhanced reputation and increased recognition, which subsequently lead to a rise in the value of their works, and therefore an increase in their income.

After 1967, when the Times-Sotheby Index was initiated, the cost of art started to be evaluated like any

other commodity, and artists became participants in the art market. Peter Wilson, the chairman of Sotheby's auction house, whilst trying to attract the *nouveau riche* of the 1960s towards art acquisition, decided to position art as both a status symbol and a profitable investment.¹

Today's online network of modern and contemporary art data – *artfacts.net*, provides dynamic artist rankings that can be taken into account whilst evaluating the career of an artist. Although the *artfacts.net* website states that this rating does not reflect the artist's economic success, the ranking is partly based upon financial analysis.²

The easiest, if not the only way for an artist to build an international career, is to be represented by a branded gallery that takes their artists to international art fairs, participates in joint projects with

other galleries, shows their works to the most reputable collectors and museum collections, and seeks invitations from recognised curators to participate in prestigious international events.

However, in the contemporary art world, there are no models or principles that remain fixed. The following two examples serve to prove this:

1. A significant influence on the art world and a shift in the status of the artist was made by the Young British Artists (YBAs) in the 1990s and 2000s. Some of these artists achieved the status of stars before the economic recession began in 2008. From that point, the value of art started to be identified with the recognition-level and financial success of the artist.

2. The Leo Casteli Gallery model, in which an artist creates, and the gallery takes care of them in all other fields of the art system, was more or less active until 2008 but was destroyed after Sotheby's Auction sold works by Damien Hirst delivered directly from the artist and not via the galleries that represented him³. As *The Daily Telegraph* reported: "Figures released by the international art company Artnet quoted in an article in Bloomberg Businessweek have revealed that works produced by Hirst between 2005 and the £111m direct sale of his art in 2008 have resold for nearly 30 per cent less than their original purchase price. One third of the 1,700 artworks by Hirst that have gone under the hammer since 2009 have failed to sell at all."⁴

The art world started to change after the recession of 2008, and it is still unknown how this will influence the status of artists in future.

"The artistic life is much sharper, rigorous and intense nowadays (...) no one will give you a time credit today as they would previously. You have to prove that you are an artist before you are 25. If this isn't the case – you are late" – Lithuanian artist Deimantas Narkevičius.⁵ "Today an artist has seven years to make his career." – Chris Dercon, former director of Tate Modern.⁶ Such approaches, typical of numerous important participants in the art scene, put pressure on young creators. To attain success, artists need similar skills to any other career-seeking

person – communication skills to help them establish relationships with curators, collectors and galleries, reliability (timely orders, compliance with the agreements) to guarantee good recommendations, and a dedication to their profession that enhances their professional artistic skills.

The subject of this essay is the career of a contemporary artist and its possibilities. The first attempts to analyse the emerging art market appeared with the development of the free market economy, yet the possibilities for a Lithuanian artist's career have not been analysed before. On the contrary, the notion of *career* has been rather ignored by artists themselves, whilst those who deliberately sought recognition were treated with some derision or criticism by the artistic community. Such an attitude is especially typical of the older generation, who lived and worked in Soviet-dominated Lithuania. Artists from this generation said that they would avoid from afar such "salons" as Vartai gallery.⁷

The concept of this essay is that careers of artists in Lithuania are restricted by a historical problem – that there are no strong art dealers in the country, active in the international market, with contacts to world-famous collectors. Most Lithuanian artists work independently, not represented by any gallery, yet they seek representation and recognition, factors associated with the sale of their works to reputable collectors.

Artists from Lithuania such as Deimantas Narkevičius, Žilvinas Kempinas, Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas, and Paulius and Svajonė Stanikas, who became world famous, are only a few of many successful figures that could be mentioned. The careers of these artists are analysed in this study in an attempt to reveal what has led to their international recognition.⁸

The purpose of this essay is to analyse the careers of internationally-recognized artists from Lithuania and the relationship of artists with Lithuanian galleries and museums, seeking, hypothetically, to define the principles that should be respected by artists trying to enter into the global art scene.

The issue of the business of art was largely ignored during the initial emergence of the market after the restoration Lithuanian independence in 1990. Lithuanian art institutions were analysed in more detail in 1996 during a seminar entitled “Changes in Contemporary Lithuanian Art: an Institutional Aspect”, in which Lolita Jablonskienė attempted to distinguish between the significance of the local and the global art scenes, offering a definitive articulation of the importance of the global market, whilst Elona Lubytė described in detail the emergence of new galleries and listed the challenges that the emerging art market in Lithuania was facing.⁹

The purposeful activity of a gallery as an art dealer, responsible for an artist's career, was rarely considered at this time. When Vilnius Art Auction was established in 2007, an article by Art Market Agency about artworks as commercial objects was published,¹⁰ and the issues of the role of art critics in the art market and the problematic nature of pricing artworks were first raised.¹¹

This essay is mainly based on unpublished sources, gathered from active communication with professionals from the Lithuanian art system and art market. Responses from over twenty Lithuanian artists, gallerists and museum representatives received from 2015–2016, form part of this research. Lolita Jablonskienė, director of the National Art Gallery (NDG), Romualdas Budrys, director of the Lithuanian Art Museum (LDM), Professor Viktoras Butkus, an entrepreneur and the founder of the Mo Museum, and Diana Stomienė, director of the Vilnius International Art Fair, have all been interviewed.

Internationally-recognized Lithuanian artists with high ratings on *artfacts.net* such as Deimantas Narkevičius, Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonai, Žilvinas Kempinas, and Svajonė and Paulius Stanikai were interviewed for the purposes of career analysis. Answers to all relevant questions about the contemporary art system were received during the short course ‘Representing Artists: Roles and Responsibilities’, attended by the author in November 2016 at Sotheby's Institute of Art, London.

Helpful literature for this study – The books *Permainų svoris. Dailės vadyba Lietuvoje 1988–2006*

(*The Weight of Change. Arts Management in Lithuania, 1988–2006*) by Elona Lubytė, and *Lietuvos dailės kaita 1990–1996: Institucinis aspektas (Changes in Lithuanian Art 1990–1996: Institutional Aspects)* aided the analysis of historical Lithuanian institutional aspects. Culture management aspects explored in this article were based on ideas in Giep Hagoort's book *Art Management: Entrepreneurial Style*. Books analysing global contemporary art practice, helped to understand the principles and rules of the art system – Edward Winkleman's *Selling Contemporary Art*, Don Thompson's *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art*, and Michael Findlay's *The Value of Art. Money, Power, Beauty.*, are studies of global contemporary art practice which all aided this essay's consideration of the principles and rules of the art system. Quotes reflecting on art history were taken from Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H. D. Bouchloh, and David Joselit's *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, and E. H. Gombrich's *The Story of Art*.

THE SHIFTING STATUS OF THE ARTIST IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“An artist is an exception: his idleness is a form of work, and his work is a rest; he is elegant and casual in turn; he puts on, according to whim, the labourer's smock, or decides on the tail coat worn by the man of fashion. He does not follow the rules. He imposes them. Whether occupied in doing nothing or meditating a masterpiece without appearing to be occupied; [...] – whether he doesn't have twenty centimes on him or throws away handfuls of gold, he is always the expression of a great thought and he dominates society.” – Honoré de Balzac describing the status of the artist at the beginning of the 19th century.¹²

Throughout history, artists couldn't always dictate the rules or be proud of their position in society. Substantial changes to the status of an artist began to appear only in the 18th century, when academies became not merely places for artists to meet, but

real schools, with teaching that regarded art as a science, not just a simple craft.¹³

La Bohème from the 20th century in Paris, *la peintre maudit* from Montparnase, and Litvaks from *La Ruche* all gained a particular status in the world at that time. They “stayed away from blatantly modernist art groups, didn’t like uproar, didn’t promote their art, didn’t pay enough attention to the presentation of their works to the public”,¹⁴ all things that could be seen as deliberate ignorance of one’s career. However, the support of merchant-class collectors and patrons emerged at this time, figures who prioritised art over money and who made some of these artists famous at a very young age.¹⁵ Most other artists who ignored the norms, or lived at a distance from society, and who were not discovered by wealthy patrons, very often became famous only after death, as in the cases of Paul Cézanne, Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin, who all died in destitution and hadn’t been able to make a living from their art.

Art became an ideological weapon before the Second World War; creating the new concept of a conformist art career. In 1930 the Union of Artists was founded in Russia, members of which were guaranteed safe living standards.¹⁶

The same methods of governance were imposed on all the occupied countries, including Lithuania after World War II, and the emerging art market had been destroyed; a free market simply couldn’t exist in the context of a planned economy.

Members of the Artists’ Union received state orders and had the opportunities to organise exhibitions, whilst non-conformist artists were not even able to acquire the necessary means for creation. For example, exhibitions in Soviet Lithuania were vetted before opening by the Minister of Culture and representative for Arts from the Central Committee of the USSR, Romualdas Budrys, who was and still is a director of the Lithuanian Art Museum. Only works that passed these controls could stay in the exhibition and be acquired for the state museums’ collections afterwards. This was the only opportunity for artists to exhibit their works and earn money.¹⁷

The Lithuanian Artists’ Union separated from the centralized management system of the USSR in 1989 and active art life began. The first uncensored curatorial art exhibitions were organized, and presentations of Lithuanian art started to take place abroad.¹⁸

The fundamental breakthrough in the status of the Lithuanian artist dates back to 1990, when the first independent art galleries began to emerge, the first sales took place, and opportunities to exhibit works arose, alongside the possibility of representing the country at international art events. Artists become free to create, but were still dependent upon buyers.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE ART MARKET IN LITHUANIA AFTER 1990

It is important to explain why the word *emergence* but not the words *development* or *restoration* is used in the title of this chapter. Could the changes in cultural life before the restoration of independence in Lithuania – the separation of the Artists Union from the aforementioned centralized governance of USSR henchmen, the appearance of the first independent artist groups, the first uncensored art exhibitions – be considered as the formation of an art market in independent Lithuania? In order to answer this question it is necessary to identify the main art market instruments and participants.

Ernestas Parulskis used the term “The art market of Soviet Lithuania” to describe the position of the art scene during soviet times in an essay for the anthology *Art and Money*¹⁹. I would disagree with such a term, since in occupied Lithuania, when art was sold from artists’ studios or acquired from censored exhibitions, the pricing policy didn’t correspond to any free market logic; there was no competition or supply & demand dynamic influencing the sale of artworks. Secret art collectors, conformist artists, and Soviet state art institutions, with no open interaction between themselves, could hardly be seen as constituting an art market.

Artists, collectors, art galleries, auctions, museums, art foundations, fairs, biennials, and curators are considered the main participants in the art market. This list could be much longer, but the influence of

other participants upon the activities and outcomes of the art market is not so significant.

All these participants in the Lithuanian art scene started to work together after 1990, when the first art auctions were held. Private commercial art galleries began to emerge, the state renounced their role as regulator, and in 1993 the Soros Foundation (Open Society Foundations) established the Contemporary Art Centre [CAC]. These particular changes in the art scene allow the last decade of the 20th century to be considered as the beginning of the independent art market in Lithuania. Only these changes enabled Lithuanian artists to take an active role in artistic activities and to join the global art scene and art market.

One significant influence on the Lithuanian art market was the formation of the CAC. The Soros Foundation's support of this institution was very important for the establishment of several artists' careers at this time. The Centre received scholarship funds for supporting local and international art projects, for issuing catalogues, for gathering information about artists, and to hold annual exhibitions in Vilnius. As a result of this funding, Lithuanian artists participated in the international Sao Paulo, Kwang, Rauma, Kotka, and Murka Sobot biennials.²⁰

The financial value of art was not a common subject of discussion at this time – there were no recognized art dealers or collectors, and this led to unclear pricing and prevented the market from any consistent development. Such circumstances didn't allow for artists to make a living from their art. Only when committed collectors Danguolė and Viktoras Butkai established the Modern Art Centre in 2009, when the Lewben Art Foundation founded by Vilius Kavaliauskas became an active participant of Lithuanian art scene, and when the international contemporary art fair *ArtVilnius* was launched, also in 2009, did the Lithuanian art market truly intensify.

After founding the Modern Art Centre, entrepreneur Viktoras Butkus bought approximately 4000 works of what he considered the most representative of Lithuanian modern art. In 2017 the physical construction of the Mo Museum, the first private art museum in Lithuania, commenced under

the project of architect Daniel Libeskind. The Mo Museum is scheduled to open its doors in 2019. The appearance of such a museum will fill a gap in museum representation of modern and contemporary Lithuanian art.

Another institution very active in the Lithuanian art market is the Lewben Art Foundation. This private organisation has purchased much Lithuanian art, and manages a collection spanning from the end of the 18th century up to the present day. Another branch of the foundation, entitled the Lithuanian Expatriate Art Foundation, has a collection consisting of works by members of the Lithuanian diaspora from the early 20th century to the present day. The Lewben Art Foundation is constantly supplementing its activities with new cultural and educational projects, as well as new cultural initiatives. In 2013, the Lewben Art Foundation became a shareholder in the public enterprise *Artnews*, which is managing such websites as *artnews.lt*, *artbooks.lt* and *Echo Gone Wrong*.²¹

In spite of sceptical forecasts and economic crises, another important participant in the art market, the international contemporary art fair *ArtVilnius*, has become firmly established in the local art scene over the last eight years. This fair carries out excellent educational work, gives opportunities for galleries to demonstrate their activities and earn money, promotes Lithuanian artists, and stimulates cultural tourism.

However, the art dealer or art gallery is probably the most important participant in the art market, upon which the artist's career depends. Privately owned art galleries have rapidly expanded in Lithuania since the end of the 1990s, and are now also taking up the role of art dealers, mediating between artists and collectors.

In summarising the peculiarities of the emerging art market in Lithuania, it should be noted that, despite the weak economic situation of the country, all the parties necessary for the smooth operation of an art market have emerged over the last 25 years, and only the closer interaction of all participants is now missing.

THE INFLUENCE OF LITHUANIAN GALLERIES ON THE CAREER OF THE LITHUANIAN ARTIST

Do Lithuanian art galleries established in the emerging market economy work with artists to help them to achieve recognition? How do Lithuanian galleries position themselves – as exhibition spaces or as art dealers, responsible for their artists' careers and representing them in the global art market? This chapter will seek answers to these questions.

Due to historical and political circumstances, the conditions for the emergence of private art galleries in Lithuania that could properly represent artists and work as art dealers were not the most favourable until the end of the 1990s. At this point, public creative organizations such as the Lithuanian Artists' Union, the Kaunas Architects' Union, and various municipality art schools started to establish art galleries.²²

The first private art gallery in Lithuania was the *AL Gallery* in Kaunas, which had operated as the creative workshop of the Kaunas Architects' House since 1987. It was registered as the AL Gallery in September 1989.²³ Within a few years, AL Gallery branches were opened in almost all major cities in Lithuania (beginning with Palanga). Although AL Gallery was already attempting to act as an art dealer, it found it difficult to survive due to the general economic situation in the country between 1987–1990.

With the growing interest in Lithuanian national culture after the restoration of independence in 1990, the number of private art galleries started to grow rapidly. Two private galleries – Juškus Gallery and *Vartai* gallery were founded at almost the same time in late 1990. Straight after the opening of *Vartai*, Saulius Pilinkus, who worked as an art critic, initiated the opening of *Vilniaus Langas* gallery. This gallery has been very active, and new exhibitions have been displayed every two to three weeks since its opening. According to Algė Gylienė, a gallery employee responsible for selecting the works for exhibitions at that time, artists would pay huge amounts of money for the exhibition space, yet usually still recovered this sum in the end, as interest in buying art was huge during this period.²⁴

The Lithuanian Artists' Union took the initiative in the founding of art galleries during the same period: *Arka* gallery opened in 1990, The Gallery of Medals (currently Šv. Jono Gallery) in 1991, and *Meno Parkas*, in Kaunas, in 1997. Managers of these galleries were appointed by the union's council. Since the very beginning, galleries owned by the Artists' Union exclusively exhibited works of union members, and organised only state-supported exhibitions. The situation was highly unfavourable for young artists in particular – artists who didn't take part in these exhibitions couldn't join the Artists' Union, whilst it was also very difficult for young artists to find other gallery spaces for their exhibitions.

A very positive initiative by Arvydas Žalpys, manager of the *Meno Parkas* gallery from 1997, was to accept works from all artists, not only Artists' Union members. His motivation for this change was the possibility of attracting new members to the Artists' Union.²⁵

The art market in Lithuania was just developing its shape at this time – there were no art auctions, no art fairs, and almost no one was collecting contemporary art. For galleries operating in this emerging national economy there were also no financial opportunities to attend international art fairs. There were no commercially viable possibilities of exhibiting contemporary art at this time, so therefore it wouldn't be correct to judge these emerging galleries as art dealers.

One of the biggest obstacles for these galleries in properly representing their artists in the 1990s was an inadequate assessment of the situation by older artists who were used to selling works directly from their studio, and by collectors who were used to interacting directly with artists. This approach is distorting the art market up to the present day.

In developed art markets, the sale of works directly from the studio is considered to be primarily the method of unrecognised, beginner artists.²⁶ There is still a closed circle within the Lithuanian market – galleries cannot guarantee constant sales, because artists won't guarantee not to sell their works from the studio, and they do this because galleries cannot

guarantee a steady income for their artists. The situation is changing little by little in the 21st century, although miscommunication and disagreement between artists and their agents is still considered as inevitable. Misunderstandings appear sooner or later, no matter how well the gallery represents the artist – when an artist becomes famous, their primary gallery becomes too “restrictive” for them. Therefore, it is necessary for galleries that want to maintain their position in the market to constantly search for new artists.

The highly valuable ability to discover and properly represent new talents in the global art market is not yet properly valued in Lithuania. The survey carried out by this writer in 2016 showed that artists themselves are much more active in looking for opportunities, whilst the role galleries play in discovering them is still poor.

As the economic situation in Lithuania improved, particularly after it joined the European Union in 2004, there were no longer any real obstacles for artists and art dealers to participating in the processes of the global art scene. It became easier to participate in international art events, to have the opportunity of studying in foreign academies, and to travel and gain international experience. Together with these opportunities, competition increased, a new abundance of information reached us, and the role of an art agent or art dealer has become even more important in the need to confront these new challenges and to make professional decisions.

Representing artists at international art fairs and biennials became one of the main tasks and biggest challenges for galleries after their engagement in international processes. They could no longer be restricted to merely providing the space for exhibitions.

There are very few new private art galleries in Lithuania that present contemporary art – there are many more institutional galleries belonging to the Photographers’ Union, the Artist’s Union, the Vilnius Academy of Arts and municipalities. These institutions operate more like exhibition spaces – due to the funding received they don’t face the same issues of financial viability, and therefore they shouldn’t be

considered as art dealers. However, some of them take very ambitious initiatives to help artists in the development of their careers. One of them – *Meno Parkas* Gallery in Kaunas, which belongs to the Artists’ Union, has been participating in international art fairs since 2007, and has already attained a very high level of recognition.

Donatas Juškus, the manager of one of the earliest private galleries, *Juškus Gallery*, was probably the only gallerist who used to straightforwardly introduce himself as an art dealer.²⁷ According to Juškus, within 25 years his gallery was never seeking support and was managing to survive purely from its sales. However, none of the artists interviewed considered that *Juškus Gallery* represents the interests of artists very well.²⁸ *Juškus Gallery* has never worked purposefully with the contemporary artists it has represented. When asked to “name the artist whose achievements belong to the gallery, as their dealer,” Donatas Juškus replied: “We do not have such an artist.” *Juškus Gallery* closed in October 2015.

Vartai gallery is the only consistently working and stable private, reputable gallery in the Lithuanian art market since 1990. *Vartai* has been participating in at least four European fairs annually since 2000, such as the *Austrotel Fair* in Vienna, *Arco Madrid*, *Art London*, *Art Brussels*, *Artissima*, *Art Vienna*, and *Art Cologne* amongst others. Asked to name the greatest achievements of the gallery, former director Vitalija Jasaitė cited the opportunity of presenting contemporary Lithuanian art at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009 and the international project *Artscape*, which was part of the Vilnius European Capital of Culture events in 2009.²⁹

According to its website, *Vartai* gallery currently represent thirteen artists, some of whom are internationally recognised. Most of the artists who participated in this survey considered *Vartai* to be the most prestigious Lithuanian gallery.

However, it is not *Vartai* that influenced the careers of such internationally renowned artists as Rey Bartkus, Svajonė and Paulius Stanikas or Žilvinas Kempinas. Kempinas lives in New York, and is represented by the *Brazilian Gallery Leme*. When *Vartai* invited Kempinas to participate in the *Venice*

Biennial in 2009, the artist was represented by the Spencer Brownstone Gallery of New York. The artist couple S & P Stanikas, who pursue their careers whilst living in Paris, agree that *Vartai* is the most reputable gallery in Lithuania.³⁰ Internationally-recognised artists kindly accept gallery offers for exhibitions, and participate in recognised international art projects as gallery artists, although they have no obligations to *Vartai* gallery like most of other gallery-represented artists.

For a gallery operating in the market for twenty-five years, thirteen artists is not very many to have on their list. Moreover, quite a lot of these artists departed without signing an agreement. For example, one artist from the younger generation, Andrius Zakarauskas, left *Vartai* after the opening of his personal exhibition dedicated to 10 years of cooperation with the gallery in 2016, and signed a contract with the *The Rooster Gallery*, which has represented young artists only since five years ago. This would be quite an unusual move in a more developed art market – usually only artists from emerging galleries then seek representation in branded galleries, and not vice versa.

Whilst analysing the long-term activity of *Vartai* gallery as an art dealer, and the impact of this activity on artists' careers, it should be noted that the gallery couldn't give any guarantees to its represented artists. Moreover, the gallery's projects are primarily funded by the Lithuanian Council of Culture.³¹ Still, it must be conceded that *Vartai* is the most influential gallery in Lithuania, with many years of experience in the market, and is considered to be the most trusted by the majority of reputable art collectors. Thus, for artists, representation by such a gallery is a valuable signifier of prestige and recognition.

It is important to highlight the work of *The Rooster Gallery*, which began its activity in 2008, as one of the emerging galleries created with the initiative of young people. This gallery, officially founded in 2011, didn't have a permanent space, and held its exhibitions at different locations. It is dedicated exclusively to young, 18–35 year old, painters. Since 2008, *The Rooster Gallery* has organized exhibitions of its represented artists in Vilnius, group exhibitions

of young Lithuanian painters in Switzerland (Basel and Zurich), France (Dinard), Italy (Lamezia), and Russia (Moscow). It is also a highly active participant in international art fairs, various international projects, and contests. In 2016, the gallery participated in six international art fairs – Art Dubai, Art London, Lucca Art Fair, Yia Paris, Istanbul Art Fair and Vilnius Art Fair³².

The Rooster Gallery was the only one of the surveyed galleries that directly answered the question about the commitment between the gallery and its represented artists, responding that “we work on contract basis.”³³ There are currently nine artists represented by the gallery, which is considerably fewer than most galleries indicate, and only four artists have a long-term representation agreement. It seems that this gallery actually represents the artists listed as an art dealer, and they have clearly-defined mutual obligations.

The gallery is still very young, but it works consistently. Although *The Rooster Gallery's* owner relates that it is still quite hard to maintain the gallery financially, young artists Kristina Ališauskaitė and Eglė Karpavičiūtė, represented by the gallery, claim that they can live from the gallery's sales of their work. To all other issues relating to finance or publicity, both artists answered: “the gallery is taking care of this matter”. This suggests a different approach to its represented artists than other galleries described above – the artist's interests are more important than the gallery's.

After analysing the situation in the Lithuanian art market, this writer in 2017 founded her own gallery.³⁴ The idea of starting a gallery arose spontaneously after realising the unfairness with which artists are confronted, and the lack of galleries able to properly represent them. Even some recognised and award-winning Lithuanian artists had no gallery representation and couldn't live from their sales – Eglė Ridikaitė, awarded as best Lithuanian artist at *Art Vilnius'14* and Raimondas Gailiūnas – best artist at *Art Vilnius'13*, were not invited to join any gallery after they received their awards, and neither did they sell all of the works they entered. Both artists have now joined Contour Art Gallery, which aims

to work closely with them and four other artists, whilst helping them to achieve international visibility and recognition. In the year since the gallery was registered, complete information about artists was collated, a website in four languages was launched, and two international art fairs (*ArtVilnius'17* and *Positions Berlin*) were successfully attended.

It is quite challenging to start out this way, whilst knowing that four of the represented artists are above fifty years of age but not yet internationally recognised. In spite of the fantastic quality of the art they create, they are so far denied the pride of having a high-quality catalogue, representation in recognised international museums, or notable auction sales, all things that most international collectors, who consider acquisition as investment, would immediately look for.

So far, we have to accept the fact that most famous Lithuanian artists, such as S & P Stanikas, Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas, Žilvinas Kempinas, and Deimantas Narkevičius, have reached international recognition without the help of Lithuanian art dealers.

Being art dealers in such a slow art market as Lithuania, galleries need to participate in international art events if they seek to properly represent their artists. It is sad that even the most reputable private Lithuanian art galleries, such as Vartai, are not financially capable of participating in the most prominent art fairs, even by covering part of their expenses with funds from the Lithuanian Council of Culture.³⁵

The fact that the number of Lithuanian galleries participating in fairs is increasing is very positive, and creates the opportunity of introducing more and more Lithuanian artists onto the international market.

For artists who seek recognition, the image of the institution or the collection that represents their work is highly important. The lack of galleries and art dealers in the Lithuanian art market is a significant and worrying problem compared to the representation of contemporary art in Lithuanian museums. This is the topic of the next chapter.

MUSEUM'S ACQUISITION POLICIES IN LITHUANIA FROM 1990–2015 AND THEIR IMPORTANCE TO THE CAREERS OF ARTISTS

By representing art collections, museums are not only enhancing the represented artists' careers, but they are also engaged in educational activity by seeking to attract the attention of potential participants in the art market as well as museum friends and patrons.

Since the restoration of independence in Lithuania, between 1990–2016 state museum acquisitions have essentially been sponsored by the Ministry of Culture (since 2004 re-named the Lithuanian Council of Culture). Unfortunately, these funds are quite poor, and museum acquisitions are somewhat chaotic. Contemporary art in Lithuania is largely acquired by and exhibited by two museums – the Lithuanian Art Museum (on behalf of the National Gallery of Art) and the M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art.

The Lithuanian Art Museum is not very favorable towards contemporary art – it mainly acquires applied art, folk art, and photography, and only a small amount from currently active artists. The museum's 2014 acquisition statistics show that more than half of the works it acquired throughout the year, 905 pieces, were folk art.³⁶

This situation is explained by the fact that despite the cultural decentralization processes that began over 20 years ago in Lithuania, acquisition funds for all museums are still determined centrally by the Lithuanian Art Museum: "None of the Museums of Lithuania receive structural funding to purchase works of art. All departments of the Lithuanian Art Museum are required to submit lists of works desirable for acquisition. These lists are gathered by Romualdas Budrys, the director of the Lithuanian Art Museum, who decides what to keep and what to omit from the final list given to the Lithuanian Council of Culture for consideration. The list commissioned by our curators with desired purchases is then put onto one collective list of works for all the other museums of Lithuania. The funds are not targeted for specific purchases. Final decisions are made by museum representatives who have nothing to do with contemporary art."³⁷

These words, from the director of the Lithuanian Art Museum, Romualdas Budrys, who has managed the museum since 1979, explain the make-up of their acquired collection. Mr. Budrys denies that contemporary art needs to be acquired. In his opinion there are no specialists today that would be capable of guessing if a certain work is of value: – “Who can tell if this masterpiece is a masterpiece? Today’s specialists cannot decide. The only measure is time. In 100 years we will know whether it is an artwork or not. The museum is not a warehouse – the museum has to restore the features of art history”.³⁸ These words, from the director of the Lithuanian Art Museum, Romualdas Budrys, who has managed the museum since 1979, explain the make-up of their acquired collection.

Public museums will never be able to compete with the private collectors and foundations that invest in art. Museums could only benefit if they had professionals able to predict trends and assess young talent and then purchase their artworks earlier, when they are still affordable. Otherwise, according to the head of the National Art Gallery, Lolita Jablonskienė, the Lithuanian contemporary art scene will have to be satisfied with 1–3 pieces of contemporary art acquired per year. This could be affordable using only Lithuanian state acquisition funds or sources gathered from tickets sales or museum friends and supporters. Knowing the opinion of the head of the Lithuanian Art Museum about today’s specialists, the opportunity to buy contemporary art and properly represent contemporary artists in state-owned Lithuanian museums is very poor.

The widespread method of museums relying upon donated works also fails to give the desired results in Lithuania, as whilst artists sometimes donate their works to the National Gallery of Art after exhibitions, this is usually only the case with multiple-edition artworks.

In spite of there already being such an unfavourable situation for contemporary art acquisitions, there was even a case when internal jury by Lithuanian Art Museum refused the donation of an important contemporary artwork – a sculpture by Mindaugas Navakas, which was offered to the museum by a reputable

collector after the artist’s solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Art. When asked about this case, Budrys explained: “Navakas’s work is not a museum object. He would not fit into the museum’s repository. Our mission is to focus on the storage of Lithuanian heritage. We are building a collection of future value that can reveal our era”³⁹. Due to the influence of old, Soviet-style management upon acquisition policy, the best contemporary artworks usually go to private collections or to foreign museums.

After evaluating the last twenty years of acquisition policy in Lithuania, it should be emphasised that Lithuanian contemporary art is mainly acquired by private individuals and art funds. Moreover, the attitude of state museums towards contemporary art tends to be unfavourable for current artists.

Without any doubt, the best development for currently-working artists has been the emergence of the Mo Museum (formerly known as the *Modern Art Centre*) and this will benefit them even more greatly in the future if it is properly managed. After it opens, the Mo Museum plans to promote Lithuanian art in international exchange projects.⁴⁰ Having decided to invest in the construction of the museum with his personal funds, the museum’s patron didn’t stop acquiring works – Viktoras Butkus continues with his acquisitions of modern and contemporary art. At the time of writing, over 3 million euros have been spent on the acquisition of artworks from Lithuanian artists.

The careers of internationally-recognised contemporary Lithuanian artists prove that the artist who is actively involved in global art processes must think about their career, design it, and pay attention to the prestige of the institution they choose to represent them.

Unfortunately, Lithuanian museums are simply not financially capable of acquiring works by already well-known artists.

TWO CASE STUDIES OF RECOGNISED LITHUANIAN ARTISTS

This overview of the careers of these internationally-recognized Lithuanian artists is based upon

interviews with each artist carried out by this writer. They each followed a specific career path from the graduation of their studies in Lithuania, to their first appearances in the international art scene, to featuring in prominent exhibitions in prestigious galleries with globally-recognised artists, to having works sold to reputable collections, and winning prestigious awards.

The artists interviewed had completely different careers as well as different career development models. However, they all started their careers during the very beginning of the emergence of a free market economy in Lithuania.

Deimantas Narkevičius. According to the artist, there is no such thing as a Lithuanian art market – there is a global arena where everyone who wants to participate is equal. Artist Deimantas Narkevičius is ranked Nr. 392 in *Artfacts.net's* world rankings.⁴¹ This is the highest place in these ratings for an artist from Lithuania. The artist is represented by three international galleries – *gb agency* in Paris, *Galerie Barbara Weiss* in Berlin and *Maureen Paley* in London. In his opinion, the opportunities to participate in today's art market are huge regardless of the country where the artist resides, so long as they collaborate with top-level international art market participants. D. Narkevičius sees the contemporary art scene as exclusively global: “There is no such thing as a Lithuanian art market – there is a global arena where everyone who wants to participate is equal.”⁴² According to Narkevičius, a career should in no way be the goal of a young artist, but it certainly has a symbolic value. In his opinion, some of the most important career factors are communication skills and the ability to publicise one's oeuvre. These are the things that an artist must take care of by their self, from a young age (Fig. 1).

Of course, the decisive factors in the career of any artist are the new ideas they bring to the art scene, along with the ability to find relevant media and the ability to use it to their advantage. In analysing the beginning of Narkevičius's career, it is obvious that his first residences abroad, which gave him the possibility of staying at the centre of art events of that time, helped Deimantas to understand the



Fig. 1. *The Head*. Film by Deimantas Narkevičius, 2007.

35 mm film (found footage), transferred onto DVD, colour and black & white sound: Russian and German spoken, English subtitles. 12 minutes. Courtesy Deimantas Narkevičius and Maureen Paley gallery

principles of the art system and the importance of publicity for an artist's career.⁴³

Gaining an understanding of how the art world works in London was the greatest benefit of such trips. However, it is not enough to participate in residencies abroad or to study in foreign schools – one could only benefit from such experience, if they absorb all that the surrounding environment can give them. Narkevičius took the opportunity of getting acquainted with the active stage of art at the time: “there was an opportunity to see what other artists are paying attention to. There was a wave of YBAs – I saw Sarah Lucas's, Damien Hirst's first works, and watched Charles Saatchi making stars, social figures, out of them. The understanding that everything is inside you and not somewhere else, as it seemed to others who stayed in Lithuania, was very important. I walked through galleries, I found out what the value of works after graduation of studies would be, and how it changes when the Saatchi gallery starts to represent the same artist.”

Deimantas Narkevičius's first residencies had a great influence on his work, and gave him impetus to search for innovation, to change, rather than bringing him financial success or social recognition. In the artist's opinion, this is exactly how it should be – selling works for a higher cost at the beginning of a career may encourage a young artist to continue with these works that there was such demand for. Narkevičius considers his year spent in London as

very important for his career, and that trips to new countries are a must for networking and to expand an artist's horizons. He believes it is necessary for students to use whatever opportunities Erasmus programmes offer them.

After returning from London in 1993, Narkevičius continued his studies at the Vilnius Academy of Art and worked as a curator at the CAC from 1994–2005. He was an active participant in exhibitions, and continued to take part in residencies. He considers the most important spur to his international career Deimantas to be the Manifesta 2 biennale, held in Luxembourg in 1998, where he was exhibited as a video artist for the first time with his works *Europa 54°54'–25°19'* and *His-story* (Fig. 2).

The artist represented Lithuania at the 49th Venice Biennale in 2001, and was awarded the prestigious Vincent van Gogh Award,⁴⁴ and also won the Lithuanian National Culture and Art Award in 2008. Among the prestigious international events he participated in were *Manifesta 2*, *Manifesta 10*, and the Sao Paulo, Istanbul, Busan and Gwangju biennales of contemporary art.

In Deimantas Narkevičius's opinion, the artist is not a real participant of the art scene without gallery representation: "You will not make good cinema

without a producer, and you will not succeed in the art scene without gallery representation. The gallery is an agent, representing the artist, mediating and working for the sake of their publicity."

Narkevičius was invited to co-operate with the *GB agency* in 2008, and he joined the *Barbara Weiss* and *Maureen Paley* galleries in 2015. He believes that no gallery should require exclusivity of representation. From the very start of his association with galleries, he never sold one work without informing the gallery. Prices of his artworks are the same in all galleries that represent him, and galleries are consistently informed about all of his new works and editions. If it happens that the artist finds the buyer of a work himself, he then refers the sales process to one of the galleries that represents him in the relevant field. Therefore, it is important to note that this artist not only understands the particularity of the art market, but also that he respects his dealers. Such an artist-dealer relationship should be considered ideal for attaining the best results.

Works by Narkevičius have already been acquired by institutions such as the MoMA in New York, Tate Modern in London, the Reina Sofia museum in Madrid, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Copenhagen, the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville



Fig. 2. *His-story*. Film by Deimantas Narkevičius, 1998

35 mm and 16 mm film. 1 part 7 minutes. 2 part 30 sek. Black & white. Courtesy Deimantas Narkevičius and Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb.

de Paris, the French National Collection and many others. However, the artist argues that the acquisition of one's work by a museum is only beneficial to the artist if the institution in question presents the work in a proper manner. For example, Narkevičius cites his work *Per ilgai ant paaukštino* (*Too Long on a Pedestal*) (1994), acquired long ago by *Lithuanian National Gallery of Art*, as an acquisition which neither effectively reflects the artist's current oeuvre nor serves to promote any information about him. In contrast, the French FNAC Foundation, having acquired two Narkevičius works, *Legend Coming True* (2000) and *Matrioskos* (2005), properly presents them at international contemporary exhibitions.

Thus, in assessing the career of Deimantas Narkevičius, we should note that the artist is represented at the highest level by all the major art market participants – galleries, museums, art fairs, and collections. The significant role of galleries in representing this artist allows his works to be seen at the most prestigious art fairs and to be sold to most reputable collectors. Although, according to the artist, the galleries representing him were the initiators of cooperation, it is clear that the above-mentioned communication skills and sharp attention to the promotion of his work played a vital role in the formation of such cooperation. The fact that the artist is particularly active in participating in the art scene helped secure the attention of these galleries. Whilst being represented by three different galleries, the artist is still active in communicating with international curators and other participants of art scene, showing how closely he influences the course of his own career.

Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas. According to the artists, there is no uniform career model – all models in today's world interfere. Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas are the only artists from Lithuania who have chosen an academic environment for the development of their artistic career. Their work is related to scientific and artistic research. They gained an international reputation due to their active public critical engagement in artistic processes, which was awarded the Lithuanian National Culture and Art Prize.⁴⁵ With the help of different artistic and social practices, they analyse issues of

the relativity of freedom, transform public spaces into platforms for various social groups, and thus encourage local communities to engage in socio-political discourses.

Gediminas Urbonas argues that there is no uniform career model – all models in today's world interfere: "Every participant in the art scene (or art market) is modelling a certain career. But selling works to a collector through a gallery is not the only way of making a career. We do not work with galleries and we have never been represented by a gallery. Through our creative work, or our "research through art," we seek new knowledge that would influence the transformation of the community or society – this is exactly what we understand by 'career.'"

The start of Gediminas Urbonas's career in Lithuania is associated with his membership of the group *Žalias lapas* (*The Green Leaf*) from 1988–1990. Members of the group were trying to approach the international art scene in the manner of such important contemporary art figures as Jurgis Mačiūnas (1931–1979) and Joseph Beuys (1921–1986).⁴⁶ "This was a moment of political breakthrough in Lithuania, and a good opportunity for artists to reveal themselves – to draw attention to the socio-political situation of the country through art. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Lithuanian artists who achieved the highest international recognition are of the same generation."

In answer to a question about Lithuanian artists' possibilities of entering the global art scene, Urbonas highlighted his political motivation and his inspirational breakthrough in a specific culture: "At any specific moment, the art world focuses on countries that are currently facing political changes and attracting the attention of the world. Russian artists attracted attention in 1986–1988, when Sotheby's announced sales of Russian dissident artists. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, interest in Eastern European artists began, lasting until about 1995. After that, attention was drawn to the art of Africa. The Arab Spring has affected the rise of the Mediterranean region. During the Beijing rebuilding before the 2000 Olympics, Chinese artists became prominent on the art scene. A certain region at a certain

point in time will attract greater interest and have more political relevance, the endeavours of which, curators and art institutions will try to exploit.”

Another factor distinguishing an artist is the available state support systems for arts and culture in developed countries. Economically well-developed countries and regions such as Scandinavia, Great Britain, and France, which have reputable cultural institutes such as the British Council, French Institute, the OCA Norway, and FRAME in Helsinki, which try to support their nationals. Artists from these countries have a better chance of getting into international events. The choices of curators are fundamentally influenced by two kinds of motive: political and financial.

Gediminas Urbonas cites the biggest step and the most important creative impulse in his career as the *Ars Baltica* project in 1991: “It was a huge impetus for me. Both the German and Norwegian press wrote about my work thanks to this event, and the work was purchased by a reputable museum.” The artist was invited to create a work for the Rauma biennale in Finland, for the city of Banff in Canada, and he was invited by an international council of curators to participate in the project *Artscape Nordland*. The most important aspect of this project for Urbonas was the possibility of interacting with world famous artists such as Anish Kapoor, Tony Cragg, Cido Meireles’as, Per Kirkeby’is, Luciano

Fabro, Markus Raetz’as, Antony Gormley, and Dan Graham, which aided sales of works to important collectors and articles in the international press.

After he started working with his spouse, the graphic designer Nomeda Kavaliauskaitė-Urbonienė, their most important collaborative appearance was the *Witte de With* exhibition curated by Bartomeu Mari at Rotterdam’s Contemporary Art Centre in 2000. Working with this curator, the artists produced the project *Transaction*, and featured it at the *documenta’11* exhibition in Kassel, curated by Okwui Enwezor in 2002.

Other international projects important to the team’s career are the *Manifesta 2002* exhibition, the 2006 Gwangju Biennial in South Korea, and the Lithuanian Pavilion at the 2007 *Venice Biennale* (Fig. 3). At this stage of their career, not only participation itself, but also awards received from participation became important. They were awarded as Best International Artist in the Gwangju Biennale for their *Pro-Test Laboratory Archive* project. This award also partly influenced the success of the *Villa Lithuania* project at the *Venice Biennale* – the Lithuanian pavilion was selected as the Best National Pavilion at the 52nd *Venice Biennial* (Fig. 4). According to Gediminas Urbonas, such awards contribute to their art sales: “Awards are effective in influencing potential buyers, both in an academic environment with museum



Fig. 3. Pigeon Race. Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas. 1st International Biennale. Lithuanian Pavilion at 52nd Biennale de Venezia 2007. Photo by Urbonas Studio

world, and therefore, even if they choose to study in Lithuania, they should be prepared to join the global art system.

An artist, regardless of which country they reside in, has the theoretical chance of receiving an invitation from a curator or institution involved in international practices at any time, and the artist must be able to assess their prestige and their relevance to their own aspirations. An artist's personal attitude, social aptitude and worldview, as well as their education level, foreign language abilities, and communication skills will be crucial to the dissemination of their oeuvre.

Elona Lubyte describes a model for selling contemporary art by the British statistical agency *Taste Buds*, where four different categories of artists are identified:

- *Established artists* – 7.3%. Artists with works acquired by public museums, solo exhibitions held, recognition in their field, works distributed on the international market.
- *Avant-garde artists* – 3.1%. Recognized artists in a middle stage of their career, whose works are collectible and constantly presented to the national and international market.
- *Emerging artists* – 4.9%. Artists at the beginning of their career seeking to become *avant-garde* artists. Sometimes they become known early due to eccentric works.
- *Most artists* – 84.7%. Most professional artists who choose to live from their creations. Their works are not objects of critical or art institution discourses, and are sold on the local market. There are a lot of successful artists in this group, who live comfortably from the sales of their works and from commissions.⁴⁸

In evaluating the results of this research and being aware the capacity of the Lithuanian art market (few collectors, slow growth in the numbers of those able and willing to buy art, the low representation of current artists in galleries and museums), artists seeking better sales should be targeting the international art market by participating in the global art scene. It is still hard to sell works in the local market and

to live from their sale, even for recognised artists whose works are analysed by art critics and reproduced on the covers of cultural magazines. Therefore, an artist from the emerging art market, having a professional approach to their work, would be better-off seeking to be one of the 7.3 % described above, rather than one of 84.7%.

In the Honoré de Balzac quote at the beginning of Chapter I of this article it is stated that the artist “is always the expression of a great thought and he dominates society.” The one who is most persistent and has exceptional personal skills will be a winner in any business. In the art business it is even more challenging. An artist has to be gifted with extraordinary talent first of all, they need to be ready to experiment, to strive for goals, and to be sociable, because their appearance in society will be judged alongside their financial success, their creativity, their influences, their artistic language and even their personality. It very often happens that personality influences both an artist's reputation and the value of their works.⁴⁹

Therefore, moving to the end of this essay, how can a complex personality, seeking fame and recognition, navigate the art system?

In the book, *Art Management: Entrepreneurial Style*, the author distinguishes the following six elements of artistic leadership:

- *Care or artistic supervision* – assuring the totality of art production.
- *Passion for artistic experimentation* – such passion is the core of artistic innovation.
- *Creative persistence* – Walt Disney, who started his activities from distribution of his comic books to local shopkeepers, went bankrupt. After this experience, he set up an entertainment company worth more than \$3 billion today.
- *Artistic versatility*. Leonardo da Vinci, a Renaissance artist, had a strong background in both art and science. American artist Frank Zappa was a composer, musician, conceptual artist and performer.
- *The will of the artist* – meaning the artist's ability to leave a unique imprint on their era.

- *The Artist's Industry or Entrepreneurship*. This element can be described as the execution of individual practice in the cultural, social and economic environment.⁵⁰

This division includes almost everything that artists seeking career and recognition should concentrate on. Based on the experience of artists, art dealers and other professionals who have been interviewed for this research, I would highlight the following elements, and methods of being active in the global art system, as what young artists, seeking sales in the global art market, should be paying attention to. Of course, it helps if they have knowledge of at least one foreign language.

- *Participation in residencies and study exchange programs* – one of the main ways of being seen by international curators and institutions, and of getting acquainted with the international art scene and its participants. Student exchange programs give artists the opportunity of spending a period of time in another country, giving networking opportunities for their future career. Most students leave to study abroad with erasmus programmes. Residencies usually provide a studio and living space, arrange exhibitions, open days, and meetings with curators, and are an opportunity to communicate with artists from other countries. One of worldwide networks to search for artists' residencies is res artis: <http://www.resartis.org/en/>. It is highly recommended to analyse very carefully all conditions before applying, and to be very precise whilst providing information about oneself, in order to meet all requirements. The way an artist represents their self is of vital importance to a successful application.

- *Participation in competitions and the pursuit of international scholarships* – in order to participate and not get flustered by the abundance of competitions, one needs to carefully check all the information available – which artists have won, how their subsequent career was affected, and which art publications mention one or another winner of a competition. Nowadays it is possible to carry out such research from one's studio, no matter were one resides. The fact is, not every prize is worth seeking, or including in a curriculum vitae, so it is therefore

better to check the background of a competition before dedicating time to participating.

- *Attention to the quality of one's work* – in addition to the above-mentioned attention to autobiographical information, special attention must be paid to the quality of the one's work. Attention should be given to the technical side of the work, aesthetics and precision. No reputable galleries, aiming to participate in reputable art fairs, will present a work with a curved frame or a poorly prepared canvas, no matter how good the artistic idea expressed. By doing so, the gallery would risk losing respect, buyers, or an invitation to the next art fair. What might seem trivial to an artistic personality might look like a serious defect to a collector-entrepreneur.

- *Participating in exhibitions* – it is important for artists to show their works as much as possible when studying and immediately after their studies, in both group and solo exhibitions. Students' works are usually accepted with greater indulgence, and sometimes gain more attention from the press and art critics.⁵¹ Such appearances enhance exposure skills, increase visibility, and encourage communication with other participants of the art scene. It is very important not to make mistakes at the beginning of a career by overestimating one's own work, which might be a barrier to further opportunities. At the start of their career, many prominent artists (such as Warhol and Basquiat) sold works at very modest prices. The above-mentioned attention to the quality of one's work should also be taken into account whilst preparing the exhibition – a work hung crookedly, or the concept of the exhibition being written with spelling mistakes does not credit even the most talented artist, and might be received as disrespect to their audience.

- *Supervision and understanding of the art scene* – an active interest in artistic innovation – visiting exhibitions, international events, analysing critical articles and reviews on the internet and in the press – will not only help one to better understand the trends or subtleties of the art market, but will help avoid the above-mentioned over-estimation of a works' value. This will help the artist not only to

feel the trends, to follow the innovations, but also to facilitate their communication with other participants in the art market. In today's world, an artist who would choose to stay in their studio could probably achieve a very high level of craftsmanship, but it is hard to believe that they might surprise somebody with the originality of their work, without knowledge of what their contemporaries are doing. There are many informative websites covering Lithuanian, Baltic and international art events: *artnews*, *artterritory*, *echogonewrong*, *artnet*, *artsy*, *artspace*, *artprice*, *artmarketmonitor*, and *contemporaryartdaily* amongst many others.

- *Active position in the social sphere, as well as participation in social life, and artists' initiatives* – as the case of Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas has shown, different career models are possible, but socially active artists can not only better express their ideas, but are also more noticeable. Artists actively involved in social life can more easily communicate with curators, art critics, other artists, and the media. Their positions are quoted in the press and in academic publications, drawing greater attention to their artistic activities.
- *Creating an interactive net space to publicize works or creative initiatives* – here one should pay attention to the quality of existing portals. Having an aspiration to enter a higher-level museum, any artist who wants to be seen in the world's famous galleries should know where their works are. Not every gallery's representation of an artist gives prestige or benefit to that artist. If an artist is not represented by a gallery, and is not yet ready for a professional personal website, it is better for them to create their own profile in portals like *behance* or *saatchiart*, or seeking representation in an existing online sales website supervised by local professionals, such as *ArtCart*, *Noar* or the previously-mentioned *artnet*, *artsy* or *artspace* portals.

CONCLUSIONS

Any persistently working, talented artist who is willing to experiment, and capable of creating high quality work with long-lasting value, will be in demand on the secondary art market. But an artist

who wants to be a part of the contemporary global art market must not focus only on creativity – they must become active participants in the art scene. Only active participation in exhibitions, residencies, contests, and international art events will make a successful career a likely possibility.

In evaluating the careers of the artists interviewed for this essay, we should note that artists who achieve international recognition are constantly in active communication with other participants in the art scene, and are participating in global practices. Particular attention must be paid to the intensity of this participation; it happens, for example, that several exhibitions being held at the same time in different parts of the world that each display works by Deimantas Narkevičius. However, this artist, represented by three foreign galleries, not only participates in exhibitions organized by those galleries, but keeps informing them about his new works and sales, whilst also networking with curators, participating in biennials and other international projects, all without the mediation of his galleries. N. and G. Urbonas actively participate in the academic environment, work with communities, have works frequently included in to the programmes of international biennales, and simultaneously create new works and ideas at their own *Urbonas studio*. Such attention to the dissemination of work, and to the quality of work, provides for a successful career, which would be hard to attain for even a very creative, persistent artist who is unwilling to publicize their work.

There is no universal career model in the art world, but it is possible to determine the factors important for an artist's career. Distinctiveness of their oeuvre above all, along with active participation in art practices, attention to the publicising of their works, the quality of the work, a passion for experimentation, choice of tools, and novelty. These factors are reinforced by the personal characteristics of the artist, such as striving for perfection, communication skills, and being active in the processes of the art scene. These factors and characteristics do not depend upon the country where the artist begins their career.

All of the artists interviewed for this research sought recognition and a career in different ways even though they have all started their activity in a country with an emerging economy where, only after the 1990s did the first signs of art market appear. The first and strongest impulse for all of them was to participate in international art practices, which made it possible to be seen by foreign curators, dealers, and art collectors. It is unequivocal that their careers were determined primarily by exceptional creative talent and distinctiveness of oeuvre. There is no suggestion that they achieved high results only because of successful representation, or circumstance. However, in exploring the careers of these artists, and in analysing their responses to the given questions, it turned out that the artists represented by foreign art galleries developed more quickly than most artists represented by Lithuanian art dealers.

Active participation in the global arts scene makes it possible for prestigious art institutions, who are crucial for further career development and sales, to notice and appreciate an artist's works. The professionalism of an institution representing an artist, and the different possibilities of representation open to an artist, exert a huge influence on an artist's further career.

When analysing the current art market situation in Lithuania, one has to admit that Lithuanian art gallery-dealers, and most museums, are not yet fully prepared for representing artists in global practices. Galleries such as *Vartai*, *The Rooster Gallery*, and *Meno Parkas* work professionally but, nevertheless, due to limited financial resources, and poor networking possibilities with major art collectors and famous museums, they are not able to penetrate the highest echelons of the art market, even with state support. Thus, it should be conceded that with the lack of strong gallery-dealers representing artists on the global art market, and the difficulty of artists to live from the sales of their art, there is still a gap in the Lithuanian art market. In turn, weak sales of contemporary art in Lithuania are caused by a lack of Lithuanian collectors with widespread interests.

The situation is particularly unfavourable for contemporary Lithuanian artists when considering

the acquisition policies of Lithuanian museums. The efforts of some museums to properly represent Lithuanian artists are hampered by a constant lack of finances and the conservatism of the head of the Lithuanian Art Museum. The negative attitude towards contemporary art of the director, who has managed the Lithuanian Art Museum since 1979, and who has a decisive voice in acquiring works, has led to the fact that acquisitions of Lithuanian state museums fail to reflect either the creative development of individual artists or the common trends of contemporary art in Lithuania.

Having such a situation in mind, artists seeking to establish their status must seek representation in foreign museums or target foreign art funds. For artists who are not represented by a branded art gallery-dealer, it is almost impossible to sell work to a reputable international museum. Lithuanian artists seeking representation on the global art scene find themselves in a closed circle – museums do not buy their works, and Lithuanian galleries have no opportunities or financial power to present them to high-level global collectors. Due to such a situation, artists are forced to engage in entrepreneurship and actively take care of their careers themselves. The deliberate formation of a career with the aim of selling would not bring recognition to artists. However, adherence to certain principles, without distracting from creativity, can make it possible to become more quickly noticed.

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Notes

¹ Piroshka Dossi, “Money Cultures” (talk delivered at the conference, Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, February 24, 2012), published in “Art Market Watch. Speed! Money and the global art market,” *Artnet.de*, accessed August 14, 2017, <http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/dossi/money-and-the-global-art-market-5-29-12.asp>.

² “Artfacts.net,” Guide, inside information & market analysis, accessed August 20, 2017, <https://www.artfacts.net/tour/artist-ranking/>.

³ Hal Foster, Rosalinda Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H. D. Bouchloh, David Joselit, *Art Since 1900*. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2011), 737.

⁴ Works by Damien Hirst lose 30 per cent of their value, while one third fail to sell at all. *The Daily Telegraph*, November 27, 2012, accessed August 20, 2017: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-news/9705338/Works-by-Damien-Hirst-lose-30-per-cent-of-their-value-while-one-third-fail-to-sell-at-all.html>.

⁵ Deimantas Narkevičius, "Apie trijų milijonų idilę ir kitus metus" [About the Three Million Idyll and About the Next Year], internet newspaper *Bernardinai*, accessed October 14, 2017, <http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2010-04-29-deimantasnarkevicius-apie-triju-milijonu-idile-ir-kitus-metus/44150>.

⁶ Piroshka Dossi. [shortened from full information provided in note #1 above]

⁷ Algimantas Kuras and Viačeslav Jevdokimov-Karmalita, interviews by author, 2015–2016 m., Vilnius.

⁸ There are more artists from Lithuania who have reached international success – e.g. Ray Bartkus, Julijonas Urbonas, Ugnius Gelguda and Neringa Černiauskaitė, but only artists with the highest evaluations on *ArtFacts.Net* were analysed in this research and only those who agreed to be mentioned in this publication are included in the article.

⁹ Elona Lubytė, „Galerijos. Dailės rinkos atsiradimas ir jos problemos“ [Galleries. The Emergence of the Art Market and its Problems], *Lietuvos dailės kaita 1990–1996: Institucinis aspektas*. Straipsnių rinkinys [Changes in Lithuanian Art 1990–1996: Institutional Aspect. Collection of essays]. (Vilnius: International Art Critics Association, 1997 Vilnius), 66–74.

¹⁰ Simona Makselienė. "Investavimas į meną: ar jau laikas?" [Investing in Art: is it Already Time?]. *Verslo žinios* [Business News], (June 29, 2007): 20.

¹¹ Elona Lubytė. *Permainų svoris. Dailės vadyba Lietuvoje 1988–2006* [The Weight of Change. Arts Management in Lithuania, 1988–2006]. (ARX Baltica, 2008), 194.

¹² H. de Balzac, "Traité de la vie élégante", (Paris: Delmas, 1952): 16, quoted in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992): 56.

¹³ E. H. Gombrich, *Meno istorija* [The Story of Art], (Alma littera, 2014), 379.

¹⁴ Antanas Andrijauskas, *Litvakų dailė l'École de Paris aplinkoje* [Litvak Art in the Context of the École de Paris] (Vilnius: Vilniaus aukciono biblioteka, 2008), 54.

¹⁵ The influential art critic of the l'École de Paris, Waldemar George, contributed significantly to the cultural status of the artist-emigrants, whilst the Polish patron Leopold Zborovski supported painters such as A. Modigliani, M. Utrillo, Ch. Soutine and others, and helped them to live, create and become famous. *Ibid.*, 49, 65.

¹⁶ Donald Kuspit, *Forbidden Art: The Postwar Russian Avant-Garde*, Exhibition catalogue, (Los Angeles, California: Curatorial Assistance in association with New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 1998): 84–87.

¹⁷ Algimantas Kuras, interview by author, Vilnius, Lithuania, December 14, 2015 [Painter Algimantas Kuras was managing Lithuanian Art Museum exhibition halls from 1967, later was responsible for the exhibitions in Exhibition Palace (current CAC) for more than 10 years.]

¹⁸ Elona Lubytė. *Permainų svoris. Dailės vadyba Lietuvoje 1988–2006*, [The Weight of Change. Arts Management in Lithuania, 1988–2006], (Arx Baltica, 2008), 118–119.

¹⁹ Simona Makselienė, Ernestas Parulskis, Aistė Paulina Virbickaitė. *Menas ir pinigai. Apybraižos apie meno rinką* [Art and Money. Essays on the Art Market]. (Vilnius: Aukciono biblioteka, 2015), 70.

²⁰ Raminta Jurėnaitė, „Dailę remianti fundacija – Soroso šiuolaikinio meno centras“ [Art-Sponsoring

Foundation – Contemporary Art Centre by Soros], *Lietuvos dailės kaita 1990–1996: Institucinis aspektas*. Straipsnių rinkinys [Changes in Lithuanian Art 1990–1996: Institutional Aspects. essays]. (Vilnius: International Art Critics Association, 1997), 26.

²¹ "Lewben Art Foundation", accessed September 15, 2017, <http://www.lewbenart.com/about-us/>

²² Elona Lubytė, „Galerijos. Dailės rinkos atsiradimas ir jos problemos“ [Galleries. The Emergence of the Art Market and its Problems]. *Lietuvos dailės kaita 1990–1996: Institucinis aspektas*. Straipsnių rinkinys [Changes in Lithuanian Art 1990–1996: Institutional Aspects. Collection of essays]. (Vilnius: International Art Critics Association, 1997), 66–67.

²³ Daiva Stasiukynaitė, letter to the author, May 20, 2015. [longtime AL gallery employee D. Stasiukynaitė worked as a sales assistant from the opening of the gallery and as a director for the last 2 years of the gallery's activity. Letter belongs to author's personal archive].

²⁴ Algė Gylienė, interviewed by author, May 20, 2015 [the co-founders of Vilniaus Langas were art critic Saulius Pilinkus and Valentinas Gylys (spouse of Algė Gylienė).]

²⁵ Arvydas Žalpys, interviewed by author, April 8, 2016.

²⁶ "An artist's first show is usually held at the studio where the art was made (...) visited by collectors and dealers. There the artist waits to be discovered by a mainstream dealer (...) Artists who don't find mainstream gallery representation within a year or two of graduation are unlikely ever to achieve high prices, or see their work appear at fairs or auctions or in art magazines". Don Thompson, *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark. The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art* (Aurum Press Ltd, 2012), 45–46.

²⁷ Donatas Juškus, interviewed by author, April 20, 2015–May 24, 2015.

²⁸ Survey of artists and interviews by author in March–May 2015. Three of the surveyed artists were presented by Juškus Gallery at that time.

²⁹ Vitalija Jasaitė and Nida Rutkiene, interviewed by author, Vilnius, April 3, 2015.

³⁰ Paulius and Svajonė Stanikas, interviewed by author, Paris, May 1, 2015.

³¹ 3 out of 5 applications by Vartai gallery were accepted in the year 2014, covering 54 % of the required amount. Thus, part of the expenses of a private art dealer operating in Lithuania for 25 years is financed by the Lithuanian Council of Culture.

³² "The Rooster Gallery", accessed September 15, 2017, <http://www.roostergallery.eu>.

³³ Jurgita Juospaitytė Bitinienė, interviewed by author, Vilnius, April 8, 2015 and May 18, 2015.

³⁴ "Contour Art Gallery", accessed October 14, 2017, <http://contourart.gallery/artists/>.

³⁵ A fair booth of approximately 80 m² at the Maastricht Fair, including extra expenses, costs a gallery around 80,000 euros. At the ArtBasel Miami Fair the same costs 110,000 USD if accepted (usually not more than 200 applications to participate being accepted out of 650). Don Thompson, 188–191.

³⁶ Lithuanian Art Museum 2014 activity report. http://old.ldm.lt/LDM/PDF/LDM_ataskaita_2014.pdf

³⁷ Lolita Jablonskienė, interviewed by author, Vilnius, October 2, 2015

³⁸ Romualdas Budrys, interviewed by author, Vilnius, December 4, 2015.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Viktoras Butkus, the interview by author, Vilnius, October 23, 2015.

⁴¹ For comparison – Marcel Duchamp 25, Anselm Kiefer 55, Salvador Dalí 107, Jackson Pollock 169, Paul Cézanne 249, Paul Gauguin 331, Žilvinas Kempinas 820. Accessed on August 27, 2017: <http://www.artfacts.net/en/artists/by-ranking.html>.

⁴² Deimantas Narkevičius, interviewed by author, Vilnius, October 31, 2015, February 28, 2016 and April 9, 2016.

⁴³ D. Narkevičius went to the Salzburg Summer Academy of Arts, Austria in 1990 as did most of the students from the Vilnius Accademy of Arts. After this he received an invitation from Delfina Studios in London in 1992, and stayed at the residence of Das Künstlerhaus Boswil (Artists House Boswil), Switzerland in 1995.

⁴⁴ The Vincent Award was established in 2000 by the *Vincent Van Gogh Biennial* in Amsterdam to promote European artists. The main prize is EUR 50,000. Such artists as Peter Friedl, Liam Gillick, Rebecca Warren, Francis Alys and Deimantas Narkevičius were nominees in 2008. Deimantas Narkevičius was selected for the first prize. „Deimantui Narkevičiui skirta „Vincento“ premija“ [Deimantas Narkevičius Awarded “Vincent Award”]. *7 meno dienos* [7 Days of Art], 815. (2008), http://eia.libis.lt:8080/archyvas/viesas/20110307042224/http://www.culture.lt/7md/?leid_id=815&kas=straipsnis&st_id=8689

⁴⁵ The National Prize was given for the significant contribution to art media art and the best pavillion *Villa Lituania* in the international *Venice Biennial*. The concept of the project *Villa Lituania* – the trip of trained peace pigeons to the occupied *Villa Lituania*, the territory of the first Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in Rome, Italy,

which became the property of the Soviet Union after the occupation of Lithuania.

⁴⁶ Rasa Andriušytė, „Dailės grupuotės – organizacinio meno gyvenimo naujovė“ [Art Groups – a Novelty in Organizational Art Life], *Lietuvos dailės kaita 1990–1996: Institucinis aspektas*. Straipsnių rinkinys [Changes in Lithuanian Art 1990–1996: Institutional Aspects. Collection of essays]. (Vilnius: International Art Critics Association, 1997), 56.

⁴⁷ Accessed August 27, 2017: <https://www.artfacts.net/en/artist/nomeda-gediminas-urbanas-studio-18003/profile.html>

⁴⁸ Elona Lubytė. *Permainų svoris. Dailės vadyba Lietuvoje 1988–2006*, [The Weight of Change. Arts Management in Lithuania, 1988–2006], (Arx Baltica, 2008), 42.

⁴⁹ The value of works by Andy Warhol or Jackson Pollock, as well as the Lithuanian painter Šarūnas Sauka mainly arose because of the mythology created around the artists. Some younger generation artists, such as Vilmantas Marcinkevičius, Andrius Zakarauskas, and Algirdas ir Remigijus Gataveckai are using their knowledge of value-creation, and this is a positive approach as long as aesthetic qualities and creativity are the most important things to them themselves.

⁵⁰ Giep Hagoort, *Meno vadyba verslo stiliumi*, [Art Management: Entrepreneurial Style], (Vilnius: Kronta, 2005), 52.

⁵¹ In February 2016 there was an exhibition presenting young painters from Kaunas in *Titanikas* exhibition halls held. As a result, the participants of it were mentioned in a newspaper *Kauno diena* (art critic Aistė Kisarauskaitė), *7meno dienos* (art critic Vidas Poškus), *Artnews* website, discussion was held at the end of the exhibition, the reflection to which was published by the author of this article in a magazine *Kultūros barai*.

Vilma MAČIANSKAITĖ
Contour Art Gallery, Vilnius, Lithuania

ŠIUOLAIKINIAI LIETUVOS MENININKAI: KARJEROS GALIMYBĖS

Santrauka

Analizuojant tarptautiniu lygmeniu pripažintų menininkų iš Lietuvos karjerą ir šiuolaikinių Lietuvos menininkų bei galerijų bendradarbiavimo problematiką bei reprezentacijos Lietuvos muziejuose problemas, šio straipsnio autorė siekia hipotetiškai apibrėžti principus, kurie galėtų būti naudingi menininkams, bandantiems įsilieti į globalią meno erdvę. Meno kūrinių atsiradimas prestižinėse muziejų kolekcijoje dažniausiai pasiekiamas glaudžiai tarpininkaujant galerijai-meno agentui, sukuria pagrindą šiuolaikinio menininko karjerai.

Tiriant Lietuvos meno rinkos situaciją po Nepriklausomybės atkūrimo 1990 m., buvo vertinama pagrindinių meno rinkos dalyvių įtaka Lietuvos menininkų karjerai. Tyrimo tikslais apklausta daugiau nei 20 Lietuvos menininkų, pagrindinių meno galerijų, muziejų: Nacionalinės dailės galerijos, Modernaus meno centro, Lietuvos dailės muziejaus vadovai.

Tyrime išskirtos Lietuvos meno rinkos savybės, su kuriomis istoriškai teko susidurti menininkams, galėtų padėti tarptautiniams meno rinkos dalyviams geriau suprasti problemas, su kuriomis susiduria Lietuvos menininkai, o išskirti sėkmei globalioje meno sistemoje svarbūs faktoriai gali padėti menininkams orientuotis globalioje meno erdvėje ir meno rinkoje.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Šiuolaikinis menas, menininko karjera, ArtFacts, meno galerija, muziejus, modernaus meno centras, Mo muziejus, Nacionalinė dailės galerija, Lewben Art Foundation, kolekcininkai, Deimantas Narkevičius, Svajonė ir Paulius Stanikai, Nomedas ir Gediminas Urbonai, Meno mugės, Art Vilnius, galerija Vartai, The Rooster Gallery, Meno Parkas, Contour Art Gallery, YBA, Lietuvos dailės muziejus, muziejų įsigijimas.

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