COLLECTING ART IN THE TURMOIL OF WAR: LITHUANIA IN 1939–1944

Summary. The article deals with the growth of the art collections of the Lithuanian national and municipal museums during WWII, a period traditionally seen as particularly unfavourable for cultural activities. During this period, the dynamics of Lithuanian museum art collections were maintained by two main sources. The first was caused by nationalist politics, or, more precisely, one of its priorities to support Lithuanian art by acquiring artworks from contemporaries. The exception to this strategy is the attention given to the multicultural art scene of Vilnius, partly Jewish, but especially Polish art, which led to the purchase of Polish artists' works for the Vilnius Municipal Museum and the Vytautas the Great Museum of Culture in Kaunas, which had the status of a national art collection. The second important source was the nationalisation of private property during the Soviet occupation of 1940–1941. This process enabled the Lithuanian museums to enrich their collections with valuable objets d'art first of all, but also with paintings, sculptures and graphic prints. Due to the nationalisation of manor property, the collections of provincial museums, primarily Šiauliai Aušra and Samogitian Museum Alka in Telšiai, significantly increased. The wave of emigration of Lithuanian citizens to the West at the end of the Second World War was also a favourable factor in expanding museum collections, as both artists and owners of their works left a number of valuables to museums as depositors. On the other hand, some museum valuables were transported from Vilnius to Poland in 1945–1948 by the wave of the so-called repatriation of former Vilnius residents who had Polish citizenship in 1930s. The article systematises previously published data and provides new information in order to reconstruct the dynamics of the growth of Lithuanian museum art collections caused by radical political changes, which took place in the mid 20th century.

Keywords: art, collecting, heritage, Lithuania, nazi, nationalism, nationalisation, occupation, Second World War.

Within the context of the European history of collecting, Lithuania is still negligible. In spite of that on a local scale the interest in collecting and its history is noticeably growing, research is being conducted, various aspects of collecting are being written about, among them the formation of museum collections. From the late twentieth century, the country's three major museums (Lithuanian National Museum, Lithuanian Art Museum and M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art) and several regional museums (Šiauliai Aušra Museum, Samogitian Museum of Alka) published catalogues of certain parts of their collections. This article conducts a review of a relatively narrow, but extremely important period of the history of art collecting in Lithuania: the development of the art collections of Lithuanian museums on the eve of and during World War II. This was a hard time for the Lithuanian state and culture. Between 1939 and 1944, the country underwent three political upheavals, with all the consequences that came along with such turmoil.

Occupied by the Soviets in June of 1940, Nazis in June of 1941 and once more by the Soviets in the summer of 1944, Lithuania lost its sovereignty and its territory was altered. Political, geopolitical, demographic, economic, cultural and ideological changes affected the practices of collecting and the history of the country's museums. The greatest changes were effected by the nationalisation of private property, which was implemented from the August of 1940 by the Soviets. As governments and state borders changed, so did the geography of the country's
museums: some were closed, others were opened, and, as a consequence, the content of the collections within them also transformed. Soviet nationalisation filled museums with new exhibits; however, the subsequent Nazi occupation meant that certain pieces of art were looted and lost. During this period, Lithuania was also drained of its collections of art through several waves of resettlement. At first the German and later the Polish wave of displacement “washed away” many privately owned valuable works of art.

On the eve of the war in 1939, significant collections of art were cared for by the Vytautas Magnus Museum of Culture in Kaunas, Šiauliai Aušra Museum and Samogitian Museum of Alka in Telšiai. Vilnius, the historical capital of Lithuania, was, at that time, a part of Poland, thus the collections kept there only became the subject of Lithuanian art collecting from the autumn of 1939, after Lithuania regained control over Vilnius and the Vilnius Region. The other geopolitical change of that year – the annexation of Klaipėda and the Klaipėda Region by Nazis, and their incorporation into the German Reich in March of 1939, did not have any impact on the Lithuanian national or regional art collections, as there were no any art museums in this part of the country; these events simply spurred on the relevant agencies to pay closer attention and take stock of the art collections in the possession of manor house proprietors of German origin around the country. On the other hand, the Soviet Union’s invasion of the Vilnius Region in September 1939 and the connection of this territory to Lithuania in the October of the same year marked a very significant page in the history of art collection.

Based on an agreement signed with Germany, the Soviet Union invaded Eastern Poland on 17 September 1939 and, on 19 September, went on to occupy Vilnius and the Vilnius Region. The Soviet Union governed the region until 28 October, when it handed Vilnius over to Lithuania. During this time, a lot of property was looted and transported to the Soviet Union, including industrial and medical equipment, and cultural valuables as well. Minsk alone was on the receiving end of 26 train carriages full of archival documents from the Vilnius State Archives and the Wróblewski Library. It is impossible to find out with precision what works of art were shipped off to the Soviet Union, simply because no such record exists. The only thing that can be said with any certainty is that most of it was private property, because the city’s museum with its small art collection simply did not intrigue the soviets: it did not seem valuable to them. Lithuanians saw the city’s museums differently.

In addition to working on the many tasks required by cultural colonisation, the Lithuanians who arrived in Vilnius at the end of October 1939 set to work on the establishment of the local art museum. The foundation of the museum, it was decided, would be the art collection of the local City Museum, which was composed of paintings, sculptures and prints put together by the Polish Society of the Friends of Science in Vilnius (Towarzystwo przyjaciół nauk w Wilnie). The public had no access to this collection because the museum’s headquarters, Duchess Maria Oginski’s palace on Sniadecki St. (now House of Writers’ Union in Konstantino Sirvydo St.), purchased by the magistracy in 1938, were in need of substantial reconstruction. Appointed as the director of the new Vilnius Museum of Art was a Lithuanian painter who had just arrived from Kaunas – Adolfa Valeška (1905–1994). As circumstance would have it, he took over the property of the Polish City Museum on 15 June 1940 – the very day of the Soviet invasion of Lithuanian territory. The work that went into the establishment of a specialist museum of art proved to be very timely, as the Soviets immediately began to nationalise the property of private individuals and “bourgeois” establishments as well as organisations – this included works of art.
Heritage Protection, the said objects must be turned over to the care of the state. Thus it is requested that the management and civil servants of the institutions under the Commissariat of Education immediately inform the Department of Cultural Affairs in writing upon the discovery of such objects in their environs. Such written notification is also required if the said objects are still under the proprietorship of the owner, but believed by the reporting agent to be in danger of spoiling or disappearing.5

On 16 August 1940, the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic Council of People's Commissars declared that the land, buildings and associated property of 388 manor houses were to be confiscated.6 The third item of the resolution read as follows: “The estates and outbuildings of the manor houses set for confiscation and redistribution are to be used for the general affairs of the state: for establishing agricultural machine depots, hospitals, schools, rest centres and rural cultural-education centres.”7 As a matter of course, the process was far from smooth, but with it began the consistent destruction of the manor houses themselves and manor house culture in general.

It was the Institution for Cultural Heritage Protection under the Vytautas Magnus Museum of Culture in Kaunas (by order of the Soviet government, the museum was renamed the State Museum of Culture; today, it is known as the M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art) that was charged with the task of registering valuable cultural objects. The Institution for Cultural Heritage Protection was established back in independent Lithuania, but the Soviets allowed it to continue operating without making any substantial changes to personnel arrangements or the nature of the institution’s work. The People’s Commissariat for Education entrusted the care of all movable and immovable cultural heritage to the Institution for Cultural Heritage Protection. The administrators of the property of state and municipal institutions, all religious organisations and communities as well as private individuals were obliged to submit an accurate list of the cultural heritage objects in their possession and descriptions of these objects to the Institution for Cultural Heritage Protection no later than two months after the law came into force. Disobedience meant serious punishment, and the cultural heritage objects in the possession of offenders were supposed to be confiscated. For this purpose, on 21 July 1940, fourteen commissions-brigades were formed to begin the registration of cultural valuables. Their authorisation to act was approved by the People’s Commissariat for Education. The employees of the Institution for Cultural Heritage Protection and the individuals (artists, teachers, museum workers) authorised by the Commissariat for Education had the right to inspect cultural heritage objects at their locations and, based on the rules set out for cultural heritage protection, were duty-bound to take valuable movable heritage objects into their care or, in other words, nationalise them. It is known that this plan was only partially implemented, because many estates were devastated by Soviet troops and local inhabitants, though the valuables in the estates were actively accounted for and transferred to museums.

The inventories of private collections drawn up during the nationalisation process carried out over the period of 1940–1941 are kept these days in the archives of the Lithuanian Cultural Heritage Research Centre. Individual files have also made their way to the Manuscript Department of the Wróblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. The data provided in these files depends on the compiler’s experience, education and accuracy. The majority of the case descriptions are imprecise, obviously prepared by individuals who knew little about art and often limited to very general descriptions, for example: “large painting in gilded frame”, “wood table with ornamented legs”, “book in leather bindings” and so on. Only in rare cases, when a museum worker, an artist with a knowledge of art history, or an art historian (of these there were only two) as well as the owner of the artefact participated in the registration process, were the descriptions more detailed. One such example is the inventory of the small manor house of Misiūnai, which belonged to lawyer, politician and collector Stasys Šilingas (1885–1962).8 The artefacts found at the Misiūnai manor house were registered by two young artists, Alfonas Juškevičius (b. 1908) and Vladas Norkus (1909–1976). It is obvious that their knowledge.
and experience would not have been sufficient for the meticulous description they had prepared, so there is no doubt that it was the owner and creator of the collection himself who helped the young men cope with the task they had been charged with. The inventory of the Misiūnai manor house is a comprehensive and informative account of the collections put together by one of the few representatives of the Lithuanian interwar establishment. Not only does the account let us know about the scope of the collection, but it also lets us understand the nature of the collection and the artists behind each work. Unfortunately, we do not have such meticulous information about the private collections of other famous interwar collectors such as Vladas Daumanas (1885–1977), Cezaris Petrauskas (1900–1978), Leonas Račiūnas (1903–1981) or Zigmas Toliušis (1889–1971). As a sidenote, it is worth mentioning that the artefacts registered remained at the Misiūnai manor house until the end of the war, even though some of the paintings were moved to Kaunas during the Nazi occupation and entrusted to the care of family friend and artist Kazys Šimonis (1887–1978). These were the only works of art to have survived to this day, for those that were left behind at the manor house were lost to a fire after the war – a fire that devoured all of the manor house buildings and everything inside them.

The registration of valuable art was not solely the concern of Soviets and Lithuanians. This issue was also important to the Germans. On 10 January 1941, a bipartite set of agreements was signed between Germany and the Soviet Union, among which was a contract regulating the transferral of individuals of German nationality from the Baltic countries to the German Reich. This was the basis for the formation of the Kulturgutkommission, which operated from Riga. The Latvian communist Peters Baleskanis was appointed its chairman. One of his deputies was Niels von Holst (1907–1993), a representative of the Berlin State Museums. Lithuania’s appointed representatives were to be historian and diplomat Ignas Jonynas (1884–1954), director of the Museum of Culture Paulius Galaunė (1890–1988) and artist Vytautas Kairiūkštis (1890–1961), the curator of the very same museum. Niels von Holst was tasked with collecting information about works of art in the collections of Germans living in the Baltic countries and registering German works kept in Russia’s museums. The notice about such a task, of course, increased the vigilance of Lithuanian museum curators and focused their attention on German-owned manor houses and their art collections. This for instance resulted in the transfer of the art collection in the possession of the barons von der Ropp of the Pakruojis manor house to the Kaunas Museum of Culture. A separate chapter of this article, written by Osvaldas Daugelis, is dedicated solely to this episode.

**IN THE SHADOW OF THE RED STAR: ART COLLECTIONS IN LITHUANIAN MUSEUMS DURING SOVIET OCCUPATION IN 1940 AND 1941**

Within the context of our period of reference, the largest collection of art lay in the possession of the Vytautas Magnus Museum of Culture in Kaunas. It was this museum collection that benefited the most from Soviet nationalisation as well.

The employees of the Museum of Culture began the year of 1940, such a fateful chapter in Lithuanian history, according to their regular routine: registering objects of art, restoring and conserving artefacts, planning exhibitions, celebrating having settled the acquisition of several valuable paintings and objets d’art purchased from the Countess Jadvyga Hutten-Čapskienė (1870–1947) for the museum’s collection through her representatives. New purchases were also made from various exhibitions and added to collections of contemporary artists: on 13 January, several works were acquired at the Exhibition of Lithuania’s Women Artists, on 9 April, the painting *The Bends of the Nemunas* was purchased from elder generation painter Antanas Žmuidzinavičius’ (1876–1966) personal exhibition, on 8 May, a jury selected several works for the museum from the posthumous exhibition of the young expressionist artist Marcė Katiliūtė (1912–1937), who committed suicide being only twenty-five-years-old. Without any inkling of bad things to come, a jury composed of representatives of the Museum of Culture, the Lithuanian Artists’ Association and the Ministry of Education, set off for Vilnius on 25 June, to purchase works of art for the Museum from a collective exhibition.
organised by the Lithuanian Artists’ Association. Their purchases serve as evidence of the fact that the jury, who had arrived in Vilnius just a little over a week after the Soviet invasion on 15 June 1940, had no idea about what was truly going on: among the seventeen exhibits purchased for the Museum’s collection, none of the works of art reflected the new communist ideology in any way or had been painted by an artist that was sympathetic to the left.

One year of Soviet occupation left a deep mark in the history of the Vytautas Magnus Museum of Culture. In compliance with an order issued by the Commissar of Education on 1 August 1940, along with the name of Vytautas Magnus, the museum lost its function as a memorial institution. Soviet cultural policy adjusted the museum’s activity as well: sidelining the work of managing exhibits and organising exhibitions (because little funding was left for the latter), its employees had to begin taking care of artwork coming in from nationalised institutions and manor houses, and raise funds for artwork offered for sale by owners who were experiencing hard times. Almost all of the museum’s employees were involved in the whirlwind operation of registering valuable works of art that began on 20 July 1940, the day the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage came into force, on the basis of which an order was issued to register all cultural objects. The employees went door to door across the city’s houses and apartment blocks, visiting each manor house in the countryside, both large and small, and even larger farms, especially if they belonged to well-known individuals, whose interest in art was publicly known. In part, the registration of valuable cultural objects helped protect works of art, historical furniture and books from the vandalism of former manor house employees and the Red Army. However, only a small portion of the registered objects were actually transferred to museums due to a lack of human resources, transportation and funds. On the other hand, as some objects travelled from the hands of one owner to the next, coincidence frequently played its part. For example, the collection of the famous lawyer Zigmas Toliūonis disintegrated completely: some works of art found their way into the museum, while the fate of other pieces is unknown. What is certain, is that on 4 February 1941, authorised keepers of cultural records Juozas Bagdonas (1911–2005), an artist, and literary figure Borisas Melngailis (1904–1965), confiscated twelve paintings, prints and applied art pieces from the home of Toliūonis in Kaunas, apartment 6 at 11a in Adomo Mickevičiaus Street. The Museum’s collection only received a very different set of the same owner’s possessions; where the rest of valuables disappeared to is a mystery. The artefact handover documents of 23 May 1941, kept in the archives of the M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, indicate that Bagdonas, along with Vytautas Kairiūkštis, the head of the Art Department at the Culture Museum, took 20 wooden “deities” (small sculptures of Christian saints carved by folk artists) and ten works of art that once belonged to Toliūonis, among which were “several sculptural reliefs” and a “marble bust of a Greek goddess”, and transferred them from the warehouse of the Commissariat for Internal Affairs to the Museum. Having lost over 500 books from the family library and paintings by Lithuanian artists (the Institution for the Protection of Cultural Heritage confiscated works by national classics such as paintings by Petras Kalpokas (1880–1945), Jonas Mackevičius (1872–1954), Antanas Rūkštelė (1906–1990) and Kazys Šimonis, and sculptures by Bronius Pundzius (1907–1959) and Juozas Ziparas (1881–1944), the well-known opera singer Vincė Jonušaitė-Zaunienė (1901–1977) rushed to “present” a portion of the registered valuables to the state. It seems that this gesture of goodwill, softened the authorised employees of the Institution for Cultural Heritage Protection, who conceded to allow her to keep a few of her favourite household items: a large wool carpet (420 × 290 cm) woven according to the design of the singer’s contemporary, artist Pulgis Andriušis (1907–1970), a bronze five-pronged candle holder, a Meissen porcelain vase and a statuette of a horse and rider jumping over an obstacle. Of course, it must be said that some of the valuables confiscated through Soviet nationalisation were reclaimed by the owners after the Nazi invasion. For example, in September of 1943, Kaunas resident and factory owner Herbert Tillmans (1907–1977) received his set of nationalised silver and porcelain dishes. However, Tillmans’ case was an exception.
The nationalisation of manor houses contributed first and foremost to the collections of museums of regional focus, especially to the Šiauliai Aušra Museum and the Telšiai Museum of Alka. However, a significant number of valuables were transported to Kaunas, where they were immediately or ultimately transferred to the Museum of Culture. In the current collection of the M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, of exceptional artistic value are works of art confiscated through nationalisation in 1940 from the von der Ropp manor house in Pakruojis, and works of art from the Raguvėlė manor house. It is noticeable that the systematic research of art works that were nationalised and transferred to the museums revealed many mistakes in the inventories. For instance, for a long time it was thought that the Still life with flowers and parrot (Fig. 1), an elegant piece by Neapolitan painter Francesco Lavagna (1684–1724) came in 1940 from the Raguvėlė manor house, however it was not so, and the origin of the painting is as yet unknown. In the Soviet era, the Museum of Culture was actively transformed into a warehouse for nationalised artwork: from the middle of the summer of 1940 to the late spring of 1941, the museum's collection received pieces from the Central Bank of Lithuania, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Municipal Government Office of Kaunas, the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, the Lithuanian Writers' Association, the Lithuanian-French Society, the XXVII book lovers' society, etc. One of the last additions to the museum's collection came from the Office of the President of Lithuania, which amounted to a contribution of 291 exhibits. Representational portraits of politicians, figureheads of national movements and gifts presented to Antanas Smetona (1874–1944), the last president of independent Lithuania, were brought to the museum in April of 1941 by order of Soviet loyalist and newly elected president of puppet state Justas Paleckis (1899–1980). The reserve collection of state awards from the president chancellor's office was also handed over to be kept in the storage rooms of the museum, thus protecting it from destruction. The darkness of the museum's storage spaces were a reliable hiding place for protecting artefacts associated with an independent Lithuanian state from the prying eyes of Soviet censors and ideologues. Meanwhile, the corresponding reserves of Latvia's and Estonia's state awards were destroyed.

Fig. 1. Francesco Lavagna, Still life with flowers and parrot, ca 1700, oil on canvas, 60 × 85.5 cm, M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Mt-1370
The Museum of Culture also provided temporary storage space for the newly established Vilnius Museum of Art. For example, on 4 February 1941, it received for safekeeping 16 works of art acquired by the Vilnius Museum of Art, which were later sent on to Vilnius.

The works of art confiscated from the institutions and organisations of independent Lithuania became exhibits first and foremost of the national collection of art. The museum collection soon acquired its first pieces of modern decorative art, which the museum did not formerly collect. One interesting example of this type of exhibit were the metal vases (1938) created by sculptor Bronius Pundzius, which once decorated the interior of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (Fig. 2).

The contemporary collection also received a few additions handed over by private collectors who had lost their regular sources of income and had been forced to say farewell to works of art that became for them a luxury. For example, finance and banking specialist Professor Vladas Jurgutis (1885–1966) was short of funding for the publication of Banks, a monograph he had written himself, so he proposed to the Museum to buy Grief (1906) one of the most important earlier works by the classic of national painting Antanas Žmuidzinavičius (then known as Susigraužimas and now entitled Sielvartas). The painting had been exhibited at the First Exhibition of Lithuanian Art in 1907, in Vilnius. Several small sketch albums, a couple of glass etchings (Fig. 3) and initial drawings produced by national genius Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911) and kept by the family of the renowned linguist Jonas Jablonskis (1860–1930) were sold to the Museum because...
Jablonskis’ son, air force pilot Vytautas Jablonskis (1898–1963), had been pressed by hard times and altered political circumstances. In order to help a colleague who was experiencing financial hardship, Paulius Galaunė, the director of Vytautas the Great Culture Museum, purchased two paintings and the fragments of a Greek vase from Vilnius resident and art historian Marian Morelowski (1884–1963). Some collectors, having sensed the danger of nationalisation, requested that the artwork in their possession be nationalised and handed over to the care of the Museum. For example, such a wish was expressed by one of the supporters of the Church Heritage Museum in Kaunas, Catholic priest Adolfas Sabaliauskas-Žalia Rūta (1873–1950), who was known both as a collector of folk art and a patron of contemporary Lithuanian art, with many valuable titles of the latter in his possession. The priest’s collection was transferred to the Museum of Culture as a deposit. However, it only became a part of the Museum’s collection in the 1960s, after the owner’s death.

It is difficult to say how, but in autumn 1940, the Kaunas Museum of Culture managed to secure enough funding to purchase works of art from exhibitions. From the collective exhibition of artists from Vilnius, mainly Poles, which took place at the Ogiński Palace in Vilnius (now the House of the Lithuanian Writers’ Association) in the fall of 1940, the Museum purchased twelve paintings, sculptures and prints (Fig. 4, 5). Thus it came to be that a small collection of art works by Polish artists made its way to Kaunas, testifying to the fact that the art of Vilnius was perceived as an integral part of Lithuanian cultural heritage. With this purchase, the concept of national art took on a broader meaning, including art produced by the Polish, Byelorussian and Jewish artists of Vilnius. In addition to this, the Museum of Culture also received a new and valuable injection into its collection of twentieth century art. In other words, a politically motivated purchase made a meaningful addition to the Museum’s collection of contemporary art.

Paradoxically, the barbaric Soviet occupation was in its own way a fruitful period for the museums of Lithuania: the collections of the Kaunas Museum of Culture expanded, significant additions were made to the art collections of the regional museums of Šiauliai and Telšiai, and various historical pieces of furniture, objet d’art and paintings also made it into the newly developing collection of the Vilnius Museum of Art. Of course, this positive image based on the above-presented statistical data does look completely different if one only contemplates the origins of each exhibit and the circumstances under which these exhibits arrived at the museums. In truth, the occupying power’s efforts to concentrate the most valuable art in several easily controllable institutions could be viewed as an ingenious plan that would have allowed it to conveniently hide from society the wealth of Lithuanian history and culture that served as evidence of the country’s uniqueness and potential, not talking about the damages to the traditional culture made by this plundering campaign.

In summarising the dynamic of the development of the Lithuanian collections of art during the years of Soviet occupation there can be added also two more observations: 1) the acquisition of contemporary art threatened to transform into an ideologically convenient tool for the occupant to supervise and control the creative work – this happened later, when the Soviets returned after the Second World War; 2) the Kaunas Museum of Church Heritage
was dissolved because it was unsuitable to the new regime; this also meant the disintegration of its collection, as the Red Army had occupied the seminary of the Kaunas archbishopric and its rectorate, where the museum had been set up. These destructive processes, which noticeably distorted the societal mission of the country’s institutions of memory, were in no way offset by the establishment of a small museum of art in Vilnius, for which, by the common efforts of several energetic leftist artists, space was allocated in the old town hall. In the rush to set themselves up in the building before it was appropriated for some other purpose, the museum staff created a temporary exhibition and opened it up to the public.\(^{31}\) The Vilnius Museum of Art continued its activity throughout the war. After the war, the museum went on to become the basis upon which the current Lithuanian Museum of Art was built.

**Fig. 5. Leon Kosmulski, Red House, 1935, coloured woodcut, 12.4 × 16.4 cm, M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Mg-2144. Acquired on 24 October 1940 from the exhibition of Vilnius Art at Ogiński Palace in Vilnius**

**THE COLLECTION OF THE VON DER ROPP MANOR HOUSE IN PAKRUOJIS AND ITS FATE**

In this article, the process of the nationalisation of landlords’ art collections and its impact on the development of the country’s museum collections is presented through the example of the fate of the German barons von der Ropp collection. This chapter is written by a researcher of the collection, Osvaldas Daugelis.

The collection of art from the Pakruojis manor house arrived at the Vytautas Magnus Museum of Culture in October of 1940. Some of the exhibits found their way into the Šiauliai Aušra Museum; however, researchers have only recently begun to go down this line of investigation and identify the objects that were once part of the von der Ropp collection. In order to highlight the value of the collection that ended up in Kaunas, it should be enough to mention the names of artists such as Danish sculptor Berthel Thorwaldsen (1768–1844), Italian baroque painters Domenichino (1581–1641), Guercino (1591–1661), Giulio Cesare Procaccini (1574–1625), Sassoferrato (1609–1685), Bartolomeo Schedoni (1578–1615) or Dutch Caravaggist painter Dirck van Baburen (1590–1624).\(^{32}\) In the small collection of prints in the Museum’s care is a series of copperplate engravings dedicated to the wedding celebrations of the
Dauphin by the French printmaker Charles Nicolas Cochin le Vieux (1688–1754) and his son Charles Nicolas Cochin le Jeune (1715–1790).

During the first half of the twentieth century until their resettlement to Germany in 1940, the von der Ropp family successfully managed the family manor house near Pakruojis (Pokroy, in German), where they kept a collection of art inherited from their forefathers. The family had sufficient funds to support a lifestyle typical of the landowning nobility. They deservedly took pride in their family's art collection, even though it was only a fraction of what was once a much larger gallery of paintings.

Having taken on Lithuanian citizenship, the Courland barons von der Ropp, continued to practise their Lutheran faith and language, thus preserving their German identity. Cultural ties naturally connected the family to the traditions of the Baltic Germans, who had scattered over a territory stretching along the Lithuanian and Latvian border all the way up to the Northern limits of Estonia.

The beginnings of the family gallery were confirmed in a message that appeared in an 1821 edition of *Kunstblatt*, an art newspaper published in Stuttgart. The author of the message received information about the collection from Heinrich Hase (1789–1842), a resident of Dresden and court advisor, who had had the opportunity of seeing the collection during his visit to Mitau (Mintauja, in Lithuanian, Jelgava, in Latvian). A more comprehensive report on the von der Ropp collection by Hase and a well-known archaeologist and art expert, Karl August Böttiger (1760–1835), was published in a supplement of the *Dresdener Abendzeitung*.

These sources allow us to come to the conclusion that in 1801, the two brothers and barons of Courland, Ferdinand Dietrich Christoph (1779–1844) and Johann Otto Theodor (1783–1852) von der Ropp, purchased several valuable paintings in France that had been looted from Italy and intended for the newly-forming Napoleon I National Museum. Between 1803 and 1805, they successfully purchased paintings in Italy, mostly in Rome, where the financial crisis caused by the Napoleonic wars had forced owners to part with many of their valuables. The von der Ropps had been lucky because the value of the guineas used by their potential English competitors had dropped as a consequence of their war with France. The purchased works of art made it to Courland after 1811 (other sources point to around 1814–1817). At first, they were displayed at the von der Ropps' Feldhof (now Laukumiaža) manor house, and later they were taken to the von der Ropps' residence in Mitau. After the death of his wife Alexandrina Konstantia Katharina Barbara v. Münster (1764–1817), Dietrich Theodor Wilhelm von der Ropp (1748–1824) handed the Pakruojis manor house, which had come as part of her dowry, over to his second son Theodor in 1818. This circumstance caused a stir in the life of the family's collection. In 1821, when the aforementioned court advisor Heinrich Hase collected his information, the collection was still in Mitau, but the young baron, having inherited a large estate without a magnificent manor house and no funds for any kind of construction, it seems, was entertaining the idea of selling the family's collection of art. According to family tradition, the Pakruojis residence emerged somewhere between 1825 and 1835. It was probably at this point that the collection of classical busts was separated from the main collection. For a long time, it remained in the domed hall of the Jaunaucė manor house (Schloss Neu-Autz). This is confirmed by Professor Otto Clemen, who wrote of the von der Ropp collection in Mitau's press during the years of World War I. It was only at the very end of First World War that the collection was moved from Jaunaucė and transported to Germany. It is likely to have ended up in Berlin. Historical sources do not disclose the reasons that forced the owners to part with their beloved works of art. The part of the von der Ropp collection that had been set apart for sale for the construction of the Pakruojis residence fell apart and ended up in various European cities: Berlin, Dresden, Paris, St. Petersburg. However, in Napoleon's war-torn Europe, commerce in the field of art was slow. Buyers were only interested in the most valuable artefacts. For example, Raphael's *Madonna with Child, St. Francis and St. Jerome* was bought for 4,000 talers in 1829 by the Kaiser Friedrich Museum. The canvas that once belonged to the von der Ropp family is shown to this day as the jewel of the Berlin State Museums' painting collection.
The part of the collection that did not get sold was returned to the owners in the early 1830s. From then on, the collection was kept at the Pakruojis manor house, and in the summer of 1859, following the death of the widow of one of its founders, Theodor von der Ropp, the collection was moved to the family’s residence in Raudondvaris, near Šeduva (Schadow or Schloss Schadow).

From the collection’s catalogues, published in 1826 in Mitau, in 1828 in Paris and in 1890 in Cologne, and from various descriptions of the collection published in numerous publications in Germany and Latvia in 1821, 1864 (1859), 1881 (1880), 1916, 1917, 1919, 1937, 1941, 1942 and 1943, we can form a general impression of how the collection took shape, how it developed and how it met its partial demise on 11 November 1890, at an auction hosted by Cologne-based company Lempertz und Söhne. The auction meant the complete dissolution of the collection, as its pieces found new owners and became component parts of various European collections and museums. The family preserved only a small part of this legacy, and its remaining pieces also spread out over the various domains of the von der Ropp family. The largest piece of the former collection returned to the Pakruojis manor house (Fig. 6).43 This part of the collection is closely associated with the name of Leo von der Ropp (1860–1940), because it was this proprietor of the Pakruojis manor house who decided to bring the paintings back from Cologne to Lithuania. Thus, the part of the von der Ropp family’s art collection that was brought into the Kaunas State Museum of Culture (as mentioned before, now the M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art) in 1940 is considered to be the property of Leo von der Ropp, even though the glory of being called its creator falls to his grandfather Theodor von der Ropp.

The emergence of the collection we have been discussing, much like many of the collections put together by the nobles of Central, Eastern and Northern Europe, was inspired by the fashion of the Grand Tour. At the beginning of nineteenth century, the Napoleonic expeditions and the wars waging across Europe put a stop to cultural and recreational tourism, however, after 1815, travellers from the North began to visit Italy in droves once again. Theodor von der Ropp’s collection is a respectful nod to the ideals of the Enlightenment. The canvases purchased by the young man – both those he covertly acquired in Paris and those he acquired in Italy from 1803 to 1805 – were a prime example of a private educated nobleman’s gallery in the era of the Enlightenment, complete with pieces by the recognised masters of antiquity and reflecting the ideals of the Ancient World, the masterpieces of Danish neoclassicist sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen: a relief of Achilles and Briseis (1803), and the sculpture Venus with the Apple (1805) (Fig. 10).

The marble bas-relief based on the Homeric epic decorated the Pakruojis manor library (Fig. 7, 8), as was the habit of the neoclassicist estate in the age of the Enlightenment, all the way up to the collection’s nationalisation and removal from the premises.44 Neoclassicist tastes were also fully represented by the copies of classical sculptures and portraits, which had been turned into a collection of busts. Later, when this collection of busts was separated...
from the Thorvaldsen originals, few remembered their general origin. The only person to note how the busts were linked to the entire collection was artist and restorer Julius Döring (1818–1898), who lived in Mitau, where he taught drawing. Döring wrote a description of the collection, which was published in 1864 in Riga in the periodical Baltische Monatschrift.55 Preserved in the family archive, the second part of the early and rare catalogue of the von der Ropp collection is called the Catalogue des Marbres de Messieurs de Ropp. Here, alongside Thorvaldsen’s sculptures, the catalogue lists eight busts attributed to the very same Danish genius of sculptor art.66 Sources confirm that the Baron von
der Ropp did actually insist that the sculptor carve out copies of the busts for him.\textsuperscript{47} However, curators of the Thorvaldsen Museum believe that they were created by the master’s apprentices and assistants, the Italian Camillo Landini (1781–1825) and Tyrolean Peter Kaufmann (1764–1829).\textsuperscript{48}

Thorvaldsen himself had a high regard for the sculptures commissioned by Theodor von der Ropp. This is confirmed by the fact that the sculptor, having received the owner’s permission, chose to display the relief and the sculpture of Venus (Fig. 10) in 1811 in Berlin. The sculptor received permission to introduce society to his new works, in spite of the fact that this meant a delayed trip to their eventual home in Courland and Lithuania. Not only does this highlight von der Ropp’s ambitions as a collector, but it also demonstrates his education and his understanding of the educational role of art. As mentioned previously, at first, the Thorvaldsen sculptures, along with several other pieces of the collection, were delivered to the Feldhof manor house. They were then moved to Mitau, where they were kept by the Pakruojis von der Ropps at their residence in Bachstrasse. When the construction of the Pakruojis residence was completed, the Thorvaldsen sculptures moved in too. We
have already mentioned that, as family legend has it, the manor house was built between 1825 and 1835, although Döring points to 1831 as the date of completion. The manor house design was the combined work of Theodor von der Ropp and Frédéric Dubois de Montpéreux (1798–1850), a French teacher of Swiss origin and manor house employee. In the summer of 1859, the collection was moved to Šeduva. There, the paintings were restored and displayed in a specially furbished hall with slanted walls. As a side-note, the man who was tasked with the restoration of the paintings, Döring, wrote in his memoirs that this residence was built in 1840 according to the design of the very same Dubois de Montpéreux. The Šeduva residence reflected the ideals of the romanticist epoch, whereas, the magnificent residences of Feldhof, Jaunauce and Pakruojis, with interiors designed according to neoclassicist principles, were typical of the Enlightenment style. This was evidenced by the paintings, the Thorvaldsen sculptures and the copies of classical busts, which reflected the aesthetic adoration of the classically idealised human figure.

This collection was not widely known in Lithuania; however, researchers investigating the Baltic Germans who wrote of collections of art in Courland and other Baltic provinces, did not fail to notice the von der Ropp collection and point it out, on occasion emphasising and praising the culture of the Baltic Germans. From October of 1939, as the resettlement repatriation of Germans from Estonia and Latvia began, German art historians were spurred on by similar aims and began to systematically record all traces of German culture and art belonging to German owners. It was at this point that the role of Dr. Niels von Holst, the head of the Foreign Department of the Berlin State Museums, came to the fore. His attention to the von der Ropp collection (he had planned to visit Pakruojis as far back as 1938) probably inspired Lithuanian and later Soviet interest in the Pakruojis collection as well as talk of Soviet plans to move the collection to Moscow. At the very beginning of the war between the USSR and Germany, just as the front passed through Kaunas, von Holst visited the Vytautas Magnus Museum of Culture and the Institution for the Protection of Cultural Heritage established within it and inspected the works of art from the Pakruojis von der Ropp collection. Evidence of his visit is provided by a small message, which confirms that Sonderführer Dr. von Holst, on a special mission of the Field Command, inspected the works of art from the Leo von der Ropp collection.

Fig. 11. Attestation of Sonderführer Dr. Nils von Holst written on 16 July 1941 about his visit to the Art Museum in Kaunas to see the valuables from the Pakruojis manor, KPCA, f. 17, ap. 2, b. 52, l. 80
from the Pakruojis manor house (Fig. 11). Von Holst remembered his visit to the Kaunas Museum and the impression he was left with by the Ropp collection in one of his wartime articles.

However, let us return to the circumstances of the nationalisation of Pakruojis collection. The valuables of the Pakruojis manor house were registered on 13–29 September 1940 and sent via the Šiauliai Aušra Museum into the care of the Institution for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Kaunas. Participating in the registration process were two residents of Šiauliai: writer and translator Borisas Melngailis (1904–1965) and actor, director and artist Vladas Fedotas Sipaitis-Sipavičius (1904–1992) (Fig. 9). It is likely that they both fostered the hope that they could bring the paintings and sculptures of the Pakruojis collection back to Šiauliai, however, they received orders to send the Thorvaldsen sculptures and the more valuable paintings to Kaunas.

The Šiauliai Aušra Museum retained several of the less valuable paintings, and the archival documents as well as part of the library were sent to the Šiauliai branch of the Central State Library.

A total of 429 artefacts were registered at the Pakruojis manor house, including furniture, works of art and objets d’art; of these 98 were not allowed to leave the country. Alongside the paintings, Thorvaldsen sculptures and prints, the travel ban was also applied to various clocks, glass and porcelain objects, and notably a 12-piece Böttger stoneware tea set. The lists of the valuable objects from the Pakruojis manor house are comprehensive and precise. It seems the surveyors were provided with a lot of information by the then heir of the manor, Julius von der Ropp (his uncle Leo von der Ropp had already departed for Germany), who signed the first pages of the registration inventory lists himself. The owners even suggested the surveyors use

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Fig. 12. Demand of Julius von der Ropp for the Institution of Heritage Protection asking to send to Pakruojis their representative, as he wants to take some of his valuables to the Germany and needs official permission; moreover, some of his personal belongings are inaccessible to him, because they are in the second floor, which was locked by the heritage protection officers and the manor house commissar, January 1941. KPCA, f. 17, ap. 2, b. 52, l. 84
the catalogues of the collection to assist them. Everything that was confiscated survived. Everything that remained in the manor house deteriorated and was later destroyed. In the archives of the Institution for Accounting Cultural Heritage remains a report which observes that the labourers accommodated in the manor house were making use of the historical furniture and local communist figures had taken the best pieces of furniture and used them to furnish their own institutions and meeting rooms in Pakruojis – known as “red corners” – some had even confiscated objects they had fancied and taken them home. According to local lore, Russian soldiers burned the furniture in the courtyard or used it as firewood for their stoves. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact number of furniture pieces in the manor house. It may be the case that where the inventory lists suggest the presence of a single armchair, there could have been six or ten such items. A glance at some old photos reveals that the number of furniture pieces should have numbered in the dozens. The family was only able to keep several small items. At the beginning of 1941, Julius von der Ropp sent a letter to the Institution for the Protection of Cultural Heritage. He informed the institution that heritage protection officers and the manor house commissar had locked the second floor of the building, and the water supply system was frozen (Fig. 12). In these locked rooms lay his personal belongings, which he was asking the Institution to return because he intended to depart for German Reich. As they left, members of the Ropp family brought with them several small paintings, some porcelain and some silverware, but these were nothing compared to what had been accumulated at the manor house before the Soviet nationalisation. Once again, let us remember the attention paid to the Ropp collection by the Nazi Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg für die besetzten Gebiete (ERR) and Niels von Holst, who we mentioned earlier. This was proof of the
fact that the Pakruojis collection was perceived as a significant object of Baltic German culture even in Germany itself, which was home to many collections of similar calibre.

THE ART COLLECTIONS OF LITHUANIAN MUSEUMS DURING THE NAZI OCCUPATION

During the years of the Nazi occupation, the central and local museums of Lithuania continued their work, even in the unfavourable conditions of the time: there was a fuel shortage in winter;\textsuperscript{57} for instance, in 1943, as the general situation in the East Front deteriorated, a number of employees were fired and so on. In fact, the only exception was the regional museum in the Przeździecki manor house of Rokiškis, which was dissolved by order of the Wehrmacht’s military governing body in October of 1942. However, the most valuable exhibits (131 items) were immediately moved from Rokiškis to the Kaunas Museum of Culture (Fig. 14),\textsuperscript{58} thus nothing bad ever happened to them and they are to this day part of the M. K. Ėiurlionis National Museum of Art collection.\textsuperscript{59} Handing over the exhibits to another museum institution had been a wise choice because the Latvian SS division for which the manor house served as a base later did substantial damage to the premises and looted several of the remaining paintings.\textsuperscript{60}

The main position among other Lithuanian museums was kept by the Kaunas Culture Museum, former Vytautas the Great or Vytautas Magnus Culture Museum. The German civil service stood in the way of the Museum’s wish to reinstate the name of Vytautas Magnus banned by the Soviets. The museum sought to attract as many visitors as possible because of the widespread conviction that the visits to the museum and direct contact with art works on display could sustain a hope of survival in the conditions of war, allowing the citizens of the occupied country an opportunity to forget their sorrows and escape the suffocating worries, anxieties and fears of everyday life. Of course, it was only natural that the museum’s exhibition activity was strongly restricted by limited financial resources. The Education Directorate, which administered Lithuania’s cultural life, only issued funding for the annual exhibitions organised by the Lithuanian Artists’ Association in the spring of 1942 and 1943 or

Fig. 14. The visitors at the opening of Wiralt’s solo exhibition in Kaunas Vytautas Magnus Museum of Culture on 3 July, 1943. Photo from the archive of M. K. Ėiurlionis National Museum of Art
events of propagandist nature, for example, the Red Terror exhibition (open to the public in Kaunas from the winter of 1941 to 1942 and afterwards transferred to other Lithuanian cities and towns) or the travelling exhibition of German print art (opened on 2 November 1943). The Estonian graphic artist Eduard Wiiralt’s (1898–1954) solo exhibition (opened on 3 July 1943) can also be attributed to the category of cultural propaganda events, even if it was the private initiative of the Kaunas-based Estonian poet and journalist Alexis Rannit (1814–1985) together with the artist (Fig. 14). However, the representatives of the local government supported it because the exhibition of the classic of the Estonian modern art held in Lithuania was accepted as an evidence of close links between two Baltic countries – the idea, which served to install the concept of the common cultural region of the Ostland territories. Later, Wiiralt’s exhibition was moved to the Vilnius Museum of Art, thus showing its importance once more. After the display, Vilnius’ art museum acquired two woodcuts and three engravings by the Estonian artist (Fig. 15, 16).  

In a joint effort with the Lithuanian Artists’ Association, the Museum of Culture organised solo exhibitions of the art works by two young Lithuanian artists, painter Vytautas Kasiulis (1918–1995) (opened on 4 December, 1943) and graphic artist Alfonsas Krivickas (1919–1990) (opened on 21 May, 1944). Both exhibitions were incredibly successful because they demonstrated that new vital talents managed to surface even under the hard conditions of war and occupation.

The Dailė (Art) cooperative’s exhibition of ceramic art (opened on 2 May 1943) did not require much significant funding because transportation and equipment costs were covered by the organisers of the exhibition themselves. The exhibition attracted large numbers of visitors and was a success both among the local and the German public. Hoping to save the Kaunas Institute of Applied Art – one of two art schools of higher education in the country – from closing, an exhibition of the student work was on display at the Museum for several days from 13 June, 1942. The idea was to demonstrate to the local representatives of German government that the Institute only trained applied arts, design and architecture specialists who could significantly contribute to the development of Ostland and be useful in other territories under German rule. All of these
exhibitions were important events in the cultural life of Kaunas and, in part, Lithuania as a whole. Visitors gladly flocked to them and the press wrote up comprehensive reviews.

The collective exhibitions of the Lithuanian Artists’ Association displayed not only new works of art created during the years of the war, but also a substantial number of pieces that belonged to the Museum. This was, in part, a solution to the difficult problem of transportation under the conditions of war, however, the most important aim was to show the continued development of national art, vitality of national culture and remind visitors of its most prominent examples in a bid to inspire pride and dignity. Some new works of art were purchased as additions to the Culture Museum’s collection of twentieth century Lithuanian art (Fig. 17, 18, 19). Among the newest purchases are examples which were immediately attributed to the category of national art classics by the contemporaries, for example, Vincas Dilkas’ (1912–1997) Portrait of My Daughter Ritutė (1942; purchased for 600 RM), Rimtas Kalpokas’ (1908–1999) landscape The Židikai Church (1943; purchased for 750 RM), and Leonardas Kazokas’ (1905–1881) landscape Kaunas in Winter, full of reflections of the realities of war (1943; purchased for 600 RM).62

The said realities were brilliantly illustrated also by the picture Running of Firewood (1942), a self-portrait of Vytautas Kasiulis purchased in 1943 for 700 RM, and by his contemporary Alfonsas Krivickas’ drawings, which depicted painful experiences of Bolshevik rule.63 By the way, the 1942 collective exhibition of Lithuanian artists helped save some
of the most prominent works of acknowledged sculptor Matas Menčinskas (1896–1942), among which were the incredibly powerful and energy emanating wood sculptures *Pain* (1938) and *The Philosopher* (1935), carved from exotic quebracho wood. Both pieces were loaned to the Museum by the artist just in time, as his workshop ended up in the territory of the Kaunas ghetto, where all his works of art ultimately disappeared.

From the point of view of the studies of the history of national art collections noticeable fact is the acquisition of several German prints by the representatives of the Nazi promoted official style Hermann Kätelhön (1884–1940), Otto Köster and Hermann Prüsmann (Fig. 20, 21). This acquisition based exceptionally on political reasons and demonstrating loyalty of Lithuanians to Germans was made in November of 1943.64

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**Fig. 19.** Filomena Ušinskaitė (1921–2003), Self-portrait, before 1943, tempera on paper, 55 × 44 cm, M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Mt-1077. Purchased from the Lithuanian Artists’ Association Spring exhibition in 1943

**Fig. 20.** Hermann Kätelhön, Kokerei bei Nacht, from the folder Die Arbeit, before 1930, etching, 48 × 39.5 cm, M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Mg-2055. Purchased in 1943 from the travelling exhibition of German graphic art held in Kaunas Vytautas Magnus Museum of Culture
Paradoxically, the Museum’s collections received ample contributions when Lithuanian citizens began to flee to the West from the approaching Soviet army. Of the more notable acquisitions were the paintings by Lithuanian and foreign artists left behind by the lawyer and collector Vladas Dau mantas (1885–1977) as well as his collection of rare books, and artist Adomas Galdikas’ (1893–1969) 96 works, passed on to the Museum by his colleagues, who found them abandoned in Galdikas’ studio at the Institute of Applied Art when the artist left Lithuania for Germany. In short, the acquisitions of artworks made by Kaunas Culture Museum during the Second World War period were more important, as compared with its losses. The situation was different in Vilnius.

The artistic life in Kaunas, the district centre of the Generalbezirk Litauen, was more intense than in the historical capital of Lithuania, Vilnius. The visitors of the Vilnius Museum of Art were only offered exhibitions composed of the museum’s own collections: in 1942, the exhibitions of the images of the old Vilnius and textile art, and in autumn 1943, an exhibition of the museum’s collection of graphic art. These exhibitions were curated by art historian Mikalojus Vorobjovas (1903–1954) and philosopher Lev Karsavin (1882–1952), who found employment at the Vilnius Museum of Art when the Germans closed down the university. As mentioned previously, 1943 saw the exhibition of Estonian artist Eduard Wiiralt’s work, which was transferred to Vilnius from Kaunas. Five exhibits were purchased by the Vilnius Museum of Art from Wiiralt’s solo show. In the spring of 1944, the collective exhibition of Lithuanian artists organised by the Lithuanian Artists’ Association was brought to Vilnius from Kaunas. It was the last wartime exhibition in Lithuania. The big collection of paintings by renowned modernist painter Viktoras Vizgirda (1904–1993) were on display in this show. The author left them behind in the Museum when he fled to Germany.

Fig. 21. Hermann Kätelhön, Zeche Graf Beust, Essen, 1925, etching, 41.8 × 50 cm, M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Mg.2061. Purchased in 1943 from the travelling exhibition of German graphic art held in Kaunas Vytautas Magnus Museum of Culture
as the Soviet army approached. Only on his visit to Lithuania in the 1970s did Vizgirda give his permission for the Museum to keep his works and to include them to the collection of painting. However, 19 of the art works on the display in this exhibition were purchased for the museum’s collection, many of them were and are seen as the highlights of the national art history. The painting 《The Portrait of Ms. E. S.》 (1944) by the talented painter and rector of Vilnius Art Academy at the time Viktoras Vizgirda; the landscape 《Old Vilnius》 (1943) by Antanas Gudaitis; the bas-relief 《Poilsis (The Rest, 1943)》 by influential sculptor Juozas Mikėnas; the woodcut 《Zapyškis》 (1942) by print artist Vytautas Kazimieras Jonynas; and the cycle of woodcuts 《Tragedy on Our Seashore》 (1942) by Telesforas Valius were among them.66 The prints 《Beržoras》 and 《Iš daržo (From the Orchard)》, as well as tempera landscape 《Parkas (The Park)》 by well-known painter and print artist Adomas Galdikas,67 and the bas-relief 《Dainius (A Bard, 1943)》 by Mikėnas were bought on the same occasion.68 That is how wartime circumstances enriched Vilnius Art Museum.

However, the Vilnius Museum’s losses were greater than any acquisition it succeeded in making. German visits to the Kaunas Museum of Culture resulted in relatively minor losses, but in Vilnius the losses were much more significant. The most significant episode of pillage in Kaunas happened on 22 July 1943, when by order of W. Dudzus, Chief of the Culture Policy Department of the General Commissariat, several paintings were loaned from the Museum for the purpose of decorating various German civil government institutions. Among them were landscapes: 《The Hillfort of Medvėgalis》 by Jonas Buračas (1898–1977); 《Nemunas》 by Adomas Galdikas; 《By the Sea》 by Česlovas Janušas (1907–1993); 《Villa d’Este in Tivoli》 by Petras Kalpokas; 《Certosa》 by Jonas Mackevičius; and 《The Lakes of Lithuania》 by Antanas Žmuidzinavičius; also paintings 《Marytė’s Garden》 by Jonas Šileika (1883–1960) and 《Harvesting Potatoes》 by Žmuidzinavičius.69 After the German retreat, the paintings were found at the Metropolis hotel in Kaunas, which served as a guest house for the visitors of the General Commissariat during the war. Jonas Šileika’s missing painting, 《Marytė’s Garden》 (1936), was purchased by his colleague and fellow painter Antanas Žmuidzinavičius in the 1950s for a symbolic sum from a young resident of Kaunas and returned to the museum.

The only serious loss in fact was a valuable collection of bookplates and rare books from Jewish lawyer and bibliophile Viktoras Cimkauskas’ (1896–1944) collection, which was confiscated by the Kaunas branch of the ERR and subsequently never found.70 This collection did not belong to the Museum of Culture, but had been left there for safekeeping. Upon finding out that he would have to move to the ghetto, Cimkauskas handed the collection over to fellow lawyer and colleague Vilhelmas Burkevičius (1885–1971) for safekeeping. In turn, Burkevičius transported the most valuable books and a collection of bookplates bound in two specially-made albums with textile covers in a wheelbarrow to the Museum of Culture and handed them over to the care of museum director and fellow bibliophile Paulius Galaunė.71 Cimkauskas died having been taken from the Kaunas ghetto for a life of hard labour in East Prussia. However, before departing,
he discovered what happened to his treasures he believed to be safely hidden in the depositories of the Museum of Culture, and was shocked by the news.

An attempt at retracing the fate of the dispersed collection (in ERR documentation, the collection is known as the *Cimkauskas Buecherei*)\(^72\) was made by historian Raimundas Klimavičius (b. 1957). Based on his research, it is believed that at least some of Cimkauskas’ books could be in Minsk, among other looted objects that were repossessed from Germany. This is a likely version because books by Cimkauskas were marked with the bookplates with his last name written in Cyrillic – for instance, one made by Latvian art deco artist Sigismunds Vidbergs (1890–1970) – that would explain how it could be mistaken for looted Belarusian property (Fig. 22).\(^73\)

The end of war brought some damage to the Culture Museum and its collection, which required later restoration attempts. In July of 1944 the retreating Germans blew up an electric station in the vicinity of the Kaunas Vytautas Magnus Museum. This resulted in shattered windows and entrances with no door – a new entryway which Russian soldiers, random passers-by and neighbours tried to use at their liberty. According to the Museum of Culture director Paulius Galaunė, it was thanks to the employees who had stayed behind in Kaunas that almost everything was successfully saved; only a few cameras, clocks and three or four carpets left in the care of the Museum by the widow of the artist Kajetonas Sklėrius (1876–1932) had gone missing.\(^74\) A more painful fate was met by the valuables that had been moved to the great safe at the Kaunas headquarters of the Lithuanian Central Bank. It was here that the negatives of folk artefacts accumulated over many regional expeditions were kept in a sturdy wooden chest, a couple of paintings, namely M. K. Čiurlionis’ cycle *Signs of the Zodiac* (1906–1907) and Pieter Paul Rubens’ (1577–1640) *The Crucified*, stood on top of it, while several other valuable paintings were propped up against the wall.\(^75\) Artefacts lay in the cellar of the bank, protected from bullets, bombs and maliciousness, but the keys of the safe were lost in the turmoil of the end of the war. No one could have expected that the danger could be water, not fire, and that the exhibits would be ruined by a flood of the river Nemunas. The spring of 1946 brought in a flood so strong that the water even filled the underground floors of the bank. The works of art were only rescued from the safe after its wall was dismantled; they all needed long and meticulous work of restoration, but were saved.

The losses of Vilnius Museum of Art caused by the activity of the Nazi propaganda professionals and ERR employers were much harder than in Kaunas. In the first days of the Nazi occupation, the art specialists who inspected the museum ordered the destruction of the Jewish artist Jokūbas Šeras’ (Jakub Szer; 1890–1944) paintings which had inscriptions in Yiddish and that had been left behind at the museum after the artist’s exhibition held on the eve of the German invasion. However, some believe that these paintings, which unfortunately were not photographed or registered in any other way, along with the works of other Jewish artists including Zalé (Zalman) Bekeris (1896–1941/42), Chaim Meyer Fainstein or Fainsteinas (1911–1942) and Esther Lurie (1913–1998)\(^76\) could have been moved to the ERR centre in the Charlottenburg district of Berlin.\(^77\) The paintings have still not been found. Having just arrived at his new post, the museum was also visited by the Vilnius district Gebietskommissar Hans Christian Hingst (1895–1955). On 6 August 1941, the director of the Vilnius Museum of Art received a written order to hand over several landscapes from the museum’s collection that would be suitable for decorating Hingst’s office.\(^78\) There is no accurate information about the number of works of art that were looted and how many of them disappeared. However, a Commission for Counting Losses of War recorded on its report from 26 December 1944 that 127 works of art of varying artistic value were never returned to the museum.\(^79\) Among the more important pieces could be mentioned a painting by Vincentas Dmachauskas (1807–1862) *Panorama of Vilnius* (1848), the *Holy Family* of the School of Rubens, a landscape by David Teniers (1610–1690), paintings and prints by the twentieth century Polish artists Bronisław Jamont (1886–1957), Jerzy Hoppen (1891–1969), Leon Kosmulski (1904–1952), Walenty Romanowicz (1911–1945), Krystyna Wróblewska (1904–1994) and others, a collection of...
17th–19th century prints by artists from Vilnius, and a bronze model of the monument to Peter the Great in St Petersburg by Henrik Krüger (1798). A 12-piece porcelain Meissen set of dinnerware (1840–1852) is mentioned among items of applied and decorative art. The list included in the report indicates that two 18th century marble panthers, a Biedermeier style set of furniture, three bronze clocks and two Persian carpets that had once belonged to the museum disappeared from the Gebietskommissar’s residence on Akmenų Street. The document also confirms that the works of Jewish artists Elijahu Kaplan (1912–1944), Esther Lurie and Rachel Suckever (1904–1943) were confiscated by the ERR.

CONCLUSION

Political turmoil and war ushers in the havoc and disorder so hated by museums. The inevitable looting and destruction often spells the doom of various valuable works of art. However, an inspection of the development of collecting in Lithuania’s state and municipal museums from 1939 to 1944 reveals that the Second World War was not a singularly bad period for the country’s museums. The period was marked by the growth of collections in already existing museums, and the formation of the core collection of contemporary national art at the Lithuanian Museum of Art – one of the largest in the country today. On the other hand, a fair consideration of all the pros and cons immediately reveals an apparent truth: that the growth of the museum collections came at the expense and total destruction of an entire cultural stratum – the country’s private collections.

The Soviet occupational regime destroyed the fragile beginnings of private art patronage in Lithuania, gave the final blow to the budding traditions of collecting and made a crucial effort to concentrate the country’s cultural valuables in the hands of the state. The campaign for confiscating objects of cultural value for the benefit of the state did not help preserve even the nationalised property of the country’s manor houses. Only a small proportion ended up in the collections of museums. The life of the museum system and art knowledge circulation in consequence were also distorted by a reform targeted at getting rid of institutions the regime deemed inconvenient: a stance that meant the dissolution and destruction of the Church Heritage Museum in Kaunas, for example.

Another consequence of the war was the departure of cultural valuables along with the post-war wave of forced resettlement of Poles from Vilnius to Poland. According to historian Vitalija Stravinskienė (b. 1972), who researched the post-war displacement of Polish citizens from Lithuania, the Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie alone received 230 17th–20th century paintings, about 240 pieces of applied art, around 450 prints, 57 numismatic exhibits, over 100 photographs and reproductions, various negatives, around 100 sets of archival material, frames, 39 church and monastery inventory drawings and several technical models. Among the paintings to have reached the museums of Warsaw were several works by artists from Vilnius, for example, Ferdinand Ruszczyc (1870–1936), Michał Rouba (1893–1941), and Bronislaw Jamontt. She also wrote that from the end of April 1945 until the end of May 1947, a total of 17 train carriages were filled with cultural items of value as well as pieces of furniture and shipped off to Poland. In reality, a much larger number of artefacts left the country for Poland because many of them had been hidden inside furniture and escaped mention in official lists. Apart from this, many items reached Poland through Moscow, meaning that books and manuscripts were sent to the Polish embassy in Moscow and from there they were moved to Warsaw. Items of value to museums mostly ended up in the Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, however, individuals took their private property with them to their new residences in Krakow, Toruń, Gdansk and Wroclaw.

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Litas. "Iš muziejaus kūrimosi istorijos... "
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Notes

1 In August of 1939, regional historian and lawyer Pelikas Bugailiškis from Šiauliai, historian Konstantinas Jablonskis and lawyer Zigmas Toliušis from Kaunas visited the manors of Švekšna, Vilkėnai, Vėžaičiai, Rietavas, Plateliai, Seda, Luokė and Renavas. In October of 1939, Bugailiškis announced to the council of the Vytautas Magnus Museum of Culture that the owner of the Pakruojis manor house, Baron Leo von der Kopp had set off for Germany, and encouraged the Council to immediately register the artwork that was left behind at the manor house. See Giedrė Jankevičiūtė: Daile ir valstybė. Dailes gyvenimas Lietuvos Respublikoje 1918–1940 [Art and State. Artistic Life in Lithuanian Republic, 1918–1940], (Kaunas, 2003, 152), for more: the chapter "The collection of the von der Ropp manor house in Pakruojis and its fate" of this article.

2 Sigitas Jegelevičius, "1939 metai ir Lietuvos archyvai" [Year 1939 and archives of Lithuania], in Mūsų praeitis (1992) No 2, 82.

3 In August of 1939, regional historian and lawyer Pelikas Bugailiškis from Šiauliai, historian Konstantinas Jablonskis and lawyer Zigmas Toliušis from Kaunas visited the manors of Švekšna, Vilkėnai, Vėžaičiai, Rietavas, Plateliai, Seda, Luokė and Renavas. In October of 1939, Bugailiškis announced to the council of the Vytautas Magnus Museum of Culture that the owner of the Pakruojis manor house, Baron Leo von der Kopp had set off for Germany, and encouraged the Council to immediately register the artwork that was left behind at the manor house. See Giedrė Jankevičiūtė: Daile ir valstybė. Dailes gyvenimas Lietuvos Respublikoje 1918–1940 [Art and State. Artistic Life in Lithuanian Republic, 1918–1940], (Kaunas, 2003, 152), for more: the chapter "The collection of the von der Ropp manor house in Pakruojis and its fate" of this article.


5 Švietimo ministerijos aplinkraštas apie piešiškas ikusių kultūros paminklų apsaugą [Circular issued by the Ministry of Education on the protection of abandoned cultural heritage], 16.08.1940, LCVIA (Lithuanian Central State Archive, Vilnius), f. 629, ap. 1, b. 1a, l. 137.

6 LSSR Liūties komisarų tarybos nutarimai [Resolution No. 139 of the LSSR Council of the People's Commissars], in Tiesa from 26.09.1940.

7 Ibid.


9 Šimonis handed the paintings entrusted to him by Šilingas over to the M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art. The paintings are kept in the museum to this day, as the heirs of the owner have not come to an agreement on how to share their inheritance.


11 The accession register, Archive of the ČDM Board of Directors (M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Kaunas).


13 Copy of document for the transferral of an exhibit, 04.02.1941, Archive of the ČDM Board of Directors.

14 Copy of document for the transferral of an exhibit, 23.05.1941, Archive of the ČDM Board of Directors.

15 Copy of document for the transferral of an exhibit, 12.03.1941, Archive of the ČDM Board of Directors.

16 KPCA (Archive of the Centre for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, Vilnius), f. 7, ap. 2, b. 3, l. 210, 211.
Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, Osvaldas Daugelis


19 Archive of the Department of Visual Art of ČDM. Our thanks for the information go to the head of the Department Genovaičė Vertelkaitė-Bartulienė.

20 Copy of document for the transfer of an exhibit, 03.04.1941, Archive of the ČDM Board of Directors.

21 Daina Kamarauskienė, Istorijos štrichai, 71.

22 Copy of document for the reception-transfer of an exhibit, 04.02.1941, Archive of the ČDM Board of Directors.

23 The accession register, Archive of the ČDM Board of Directors (M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Kaunas).

24 Request written by Jurgutis on 21.10.1940 and addressed to the Director of the Museum of Culture, Archive of the ČDM Board of Directors. However, the Museum had no funds for acquisition of the painting and in 1966 when Jurgutis passed away the picture went to the Lithuanian Art Museum in Vilnius (see Siekvarts, 1906, t. 2430). In Žmudziņiaučiūs collection at ČDM there is only the watercolour sketch of the painting, done in 1905. My thanks for the information go to the curator of Žmudziņiaučiūs collection Jurgita Vainiūnienė.

25 After the exhibition, the painting was purchased by philanthropist Petras Vileišis, and after his death, the work of art was sold to Jurgutis by Vileišis’ heirs for 2,000 litas.

26 Sketchbook No. 7 (1907–1908) was published in facsimile format on the occasion of the exhibition “Dialogues of Colour and Sound. Works by Mikalojus Konstantinas Ciurlionis and his Contemporaries”, held in National Art Gallery in Vilnius, June 20–August 23, 2009.


28 Ibid.

29 Protocol No. 41 of the Council of the Kaunas State Museum of Culture, 06.08.1940, Archive of the ČDM Board of Directors.

30 The accession register, Archive of the ČDM Board of Directors (M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Kaunas).


32 The inventory lists of the State Museum of Culture indicate a total shipment of 18 oil paintings, 1 pastel, 1 watercolour, 5 marble sculptures, 10 engravings and various pieces of applied art (Letter by LSSR Cultural Heritage Chief Conservator V. K. Jonynas to the chairman of the Board for Artistic Affairs of the People’s Commissariat for Education about the property confiscated from German citizens, 31.10.1940, KPCA, f. 1, ap. 1, b. 98, l. 318. The paintings of notable quality in the ČDM collection include Domenichino’s Sibyl (Mt-1391), Guercino’s workshop Diana (Mt-1509), Procaccini’s St. Catherine’s Marriage (Mt-1395), Sassoferatò’s St. Anthony (Mt-1523), Schedoni’s Mary Magdalen (Mt-1383), van Baburen’s The Entombment of Christ (Mt-1333) – an initial version/model for the painter’s altarpiece at the Pietà chapel of the San Pietro in Montorio Church in Rome.


34 Kunstblatt from 25.10.1821, No. 86, 343–344.


36 Ibidem.


38 1831 is the exact date of the completion of the manor’s construction offered by the memoirs of Julius Döring, who visited Pakruojis on his way from Šeduva to Mitau in 1859 (Julius Döring, „Was ich nicht gern vergessen möchte oder Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben“, Bd. 3 [1852–1860], S. 399 [1859], LNA (Latvian National Archive, Riga), f. 5759, a. 2, b. 1110); new edition of the memoirs by idem: Was ich nicht, 740.


40 Letter issued by Staals, the General Officer for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Latvia (Stahls, Generałplwinniaks kultūralo vērtību aizsardzības Latvijā) on 28.12.1919 on the paintings and Thorvaldsen statues, etc. moved from Jaunauce to jelgava (10 Annas St.) by the von der Ropp in 1918, LNA, f. 2661, a.1.5. Also, a letter issued by the committee delegated by the Board for Cultural Protection to the Chief Representative of the Ministry of Education on 10.01.1920, LNA, f. 2661, a. 1.5.1. The latter document indicates that “upon inspection of the Baron von der Ropp’s dwelling at 10 Annas St., and upon having questioned the maid, it became known that in the spring of 1919, after Goltz’s entry into Jelgava, the Baron sent a multitude of paintings to Liepoja with the help of the German legation, and from there on to Germany, which is all confirmed by the empty frames we found in the attic”. For his help in providing references and copies of documents, the author would like to express deep and heartfelt gratitude to a colleague from the Rundale Palace Museum, Jānis Baltiņš.

41 “Greatly esteemed Sir Director! Only today, after a full year, can I send you images of the eight Thorvaldsen busts in the possession of my father. Just after our meeting in Berlin, the plates were broken and it is only now that I have finally got around to preparing a new set, I include their prints here,” wrote Baron Joachim von der Ropp from Berlin on 10 May 1927 to the director of the Thorvaldsen Museum (Archive of the B. Thorvaldsen Museum, Copenhagen). For her help in providing a copy of this document and her invaluable advice and information on the thenceforward legacy in our region, the author is extremely grateful to the former director of the B. Thorvaldsen Museum, Dyveke Helsted (1919–2005).
in Kaunas to see the valuables from the Pakruojis manor, KPCA f. 17, ap. 2, b. 52, l. 80.


55 Photograph shows a few valuables from Pakruojis Manor collection, which were transferred to the Kaunas and Šiauliai museums. Big canvas is a copy of the Portrait of Philip, Lord Wharton by the Flemish painter Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641) – it went to the Šiauliai Aušra Museum; the original was painted in 1632; since 1937 it has belonged to the Andrew W. Mellon Collection housed in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; the smaller one in the hands of Lipaitis, is a mythological painting by a follower of Rubens School Nessus and Deianira (M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, oil on panel, 55,5 × 44 cm, Mt-1332).

56 Demand of Julius von der Ropp for the Institution of Heritage Protection asking to send to Pakruojis their representative, received on 31.01.1941, KPCA, f. 17, ap. 2, b. 52, l. 84.

57 For example, the museum only received coal for heating its rooms at the end of January 1942, when it threatened the Investigation Bureau that it would be forced to discontinue the exhibition on the Red Terror which was on the display at the time because it could not invite visitors to its freezing halls (24.01.1942 letter from Paulius Galauné to the Investigation Bureau, Archive of the ČDM Board of Directors).

58 The painting was part of the collection of Count Jan Aleksander Preździecki (1877–1944) and his uncle Baron Reinhold Tyzenhaus (Tiesenhausen, 1830–1880) in Rokiškis mansion. After nationalisation of the mansion it went to the local museum, established in the same manor and on 9 October, 1941, but after its closure was urgently transferred to Vytautas Magnus Museum of Culture.

59 Daina Kamarauskienė (compiled), kolekcijų istorijos, 110–114.

60 Raimundas Klimavičius, Tarp Scilés ir Charibdės. Lietuvos kultūros vertybių transpozicija Antrojo pasaulinio karo metais [Between Scylla and Charibdis. The Transposition of Cultural Goods of Lithuania during the years of the Second World War], (Vilnius, 2011), 141.

61 A Boy (Claude), 1936, G-524; A Birth of Wood Engraving, 1936, G-2354; The Arab Boy, 1940, G-4503; Virve (Girl in the Field of Rye), 1943, G-4504; Monika (Two Portraits of Monika), 1942, G-4505.

62 The accession register, Archive of the ČDM Board of Directors (M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Kaunas).

63 Ibid.

64 Inventory record of the Art Department of the Vytautas Magnus Museum of Culture, No. 1, 1087–1094.

65 Daina Kamarauskienė (compiled), kolekcijų istorijos, 134.

66 The minutes of the purchase commission of the Vilnius Art Museum, 25.03.1944, Archive of the Lithuanian Art Museum, f. 2, ap. 1, b. 40, l. 15-15ap.

67 Purchase bill no 47, 25.01.1944, Archive of the Lithuanian Art Museum, f. 2, ap. 1, b. 40, l. 3; Purchase bill, 18.03.1944, Archive of the Lithuanian Art Museum, f. 2, ap. 1, b. 40, l. 12.

68 Purchase bill no 48, 25.01.1944, Archive of the Lithuanian Art Museum, f. 2, ap. 1, b. 40, l. 2.
MENO KOLEKCIONAVIMAS PER KARO SUIRUTĖ: LIETUVA 1939–1944

Santrauka

Straišnyje apžvelgiamos Lietuvos nacionalinių ir vietinių muziejų meno kolekcijų raida Antrojo pasaulinio karo metais, tradicinės ir laikinos, ypač aktualių kultūrinės veiklos metu. 

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The author had made the final corrections of the article, authorized the edited text, but failed to see so much expected publication, as he died after one month – 19th of July, 2020.