

Dissemination of Baltic Art Photography in Specialised Magazines from the 1960s to the 1980s: *Sovetskoe Foto*, *Revue Fotografie*, *Fotografia*, and *FOTO*

Valentyn Odnoviun

Lietuvos kultūros tyrimų institutas, Saltoniškių g. 58, 08105 Vilnius
El. paštas: valentyn.odnoviun@vda.lt

The article examines the representation and dissemination of Baltic art photography in specific Soviet, Czechoslovak, and Polish magazines from the 1960s to the 1980s. The analysis of the issues of *Sovetskoe Foto*, *Revue Fotografie*, *Fotografia*, and *FOTO* reveals the extent and proportions of the dissemination of photography of each Baltic republic abroad and its perception by foreign art critics and editors.

Based on factual data, the research may shed light on some myths created around particular Baltic photographers by presenting a clearer image of their role in the regional photography scene. This article supplements the existing research on the topic by contributing to a more holistic understanding of how well Baltic photographers were represented abroad.

KEYWORDS: art photography, *Sovetskoe Foto*, *Revue Fotografie*, *Fotografia*, *FOTO*, Baltic art

Introduction

Art photography in the Baltic countries is commonly viewed and perceived as separate entities that developed within their own fields (territories), with only some major cultural and socio-political events considered impact factors.

From all three countries, the most thorough studies on the history of art photography during the Soviet occupation were conducted in Lithuania, considering the influence of Soviet censorship and control on artistic activity. In her doctoral thesis, *The Sovietization of Expression and Dissemination of Lithuanian Photography*, Margarita Matulytė states that international activity was a result of competition among Lithuanian photographers on the local and all-Union levels.¹ She discusses publications of Lithuanian photographers by foreign publishers in the form of books, almanacs, or exhibition catalogues. Also, her research briefly mentions publications in foreign periodicals, such as *Revue Fotografie* or *Fotografia*, and the dissemination of the works by Baltic photographers in the magazine *Sovetskoe Foto* between 1957 and 1990. According to Matulytė, Lithuanians were published in *Sovetskoe Foto* noticeably more often than Latvian or Estonian photographers. However, Matulytė does not distinguish photojournalism from art photography.

Alise Tīfentāle, in *Fotogrāfija Kā Māksla Latvijā 1960–1969 / The Photograph as Art in Latvia*, focused on the activities of Latvian photographers under the international

¹ Matulytė 2011: 97.

organisation Fédération Internationale de l'Art Photographique (FIAP) as the primary venue for promoting Latvian photography overseas and their presence in local magazines such as *Zvaigzne*. In her research, Tīfentāle points out the importance of foreign photography magazines mentioning the Czechoslovak and Polish ones and their influence on Latvian photographers, mostly members of the 'Rīga' photo club.² The Latvian photographer and art historian Vilnis Auziņš also mentioned that the essential source of information during those years was Czechoslovak magazines, and also *Sovetskoe Foto*.³

In his books *History of Estonian Photography (1839–2015)* and *Anthology of Estonian Photography*, Peeter Linnap thoroughly researched the field of Estonian art photography. Linnap also noted the influence of *Revue Fotografie* and *Fotografia* periodicals on Estonian photography in the mid-1960s. However, after the 1968 events in Prague and Bratislava, publications from Czechoslovakia became less frequently available.⁴ The dissemination of Estonian photographic art abroad was not included in the scope of his research.⁵

These previous studies did not measure the scale of representation of prominent authors from all three Baltic republics. Therefore, there is a lack of quantitative and comparative analysis of the dissemination of Baltic art photography through printed media in the period of 1960s–1980s. At that time, the only photography magazine in the USSR was *Sovetskoe Foto*, while Czechoslovak *Revue Fotografie* and Polish *Fotografia* were popular foreign sources.⁶ These periodicals inspired photographers and offered exposure to new trends. Respected among Soviet photographers, these periodicals also became the most desired platforms for their artistic realisation. While *Sovetskoe Foto* was not a foreign magazine but the only specialised magazine on photography in the Soviet Union, it was also distributed abroad.

This study examines primary sources, such as archives of the issues of *Sovetskoe Foto*, *Revue Fotografie*, *Fotografia*, and *FOTO* from the 1960s to the 1980s. Comprehensive analysis of these magazines is the basis for understanding the representation of Baltic art photography in these publications.

The research quantifies the presence of selected Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian art photographers in each magazine, shedding light on the extent and proportion of the dissemination of art photography from each Baltic republic, and presenting them by way of diagrams. This analysis also identifies the most frequently featured authors in these publications.

2 Tīfentāle 2011: 38.

3 Auziņš 2014: 484.

4 Linnap 2014: 234.

5 Linnap 2016: 528; 2020: 527 and 2020: 1184.

6 In 1975 it split into *FOTO* and *Fotografia*.

The qualitative analysis examines the predominant styles, approaches, and techniques among the authors discussed. It also evaluates how foreign art critics and editors perceived the works of Baltic photographers and provides insights into the reception of their art.

Such a mixed-method approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the dissemination and representation of Baltic art photography in the selected magazines considering both the quantity and quality of the presented works. This research offers valuable insights into creative approaches and artistic influence of Baltic photographers, and dissemination of their art from the 1960s to the late 1980s by focusing primarily on art photography and excluding examples of propaganda and photojournalism.

The primary research material consists of 367 issues of *Sovetskoe Foto* published between 1960 and 1990, 124 issues of *Revue Fotografie* dated 1960–1990, 244 issues of *Fotografia* published between 1960 and 1975 monthly and from 1976 to 1989 quarterly, and 180 issues of *FOTO* published from 1975 to 1989.

For this research, groups and individuals from Baltic countries, who developed the regional art photography field, were selected. Among them are members of the Society of Art Photographers of the Lithuanian SSR, including but not limited to Antanas Sutkus, Aleksandras Macijauskas, Romualdas Rakauskas, Romualdas Požerskis, Vitalijus Butyrinas, and Vitas Luckus; Latvian art photography was mainly represented by ‘Rīga’ and ‘Ogre’ photo clubs Gunārs Binde, Jānis Kreicbergs, Gunārs Janaitis, Jānis Gleizds, Leonīds Tugaļevs, Vilhelms Mihailovskis, members of the ‘Rīga’ photo club, and Egons Spuris and Inta Ruka of the so-called ‘A’ group;⁷ Estonia was mainly represented by the members of the STODOM group and also Valdur Vahi and Viktor Salmre.⁸

Navigating the Boundaries Between Art and Photojournalism in Photography

Photography can perform many functions and placing it in one category is challenging. The proportionality of art and photojournalism in photography may vary, and it is important to distinguish between them. For years, photographers, art critics, and academics have discussed the distinction between art photography and photojournalism. Various authors, such as Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, and John Szarkowski, elaborated on the topic and provided their viewpoints on what differentiates art photography from photojournalism.

⁷ From A group Valts Kleins, Andrejs Grants and Gvido Kajons were presented. Mārtiņš Zelmenis, the member of the group, was not mentioned in any of the four magazines examined in this article.

⁸ From STODOM were presented Kalju Suur, Peeter Tooming, Andrei Dobrovolski, Tatjana (Dobrovolskaja) Putnik, Boris Mäemets, Peep Puks. Other members, Tõnu Tormis and Rein Maran, were not published in these magazines.

Barthes states: ‘Every photograph is a certificate of presence [...] In the photograph, the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation.’⁹ This highlights the unique nature of photography as both a medium of documentation and a form of expression. Susan Sontag argues that ‘photographs are a way of imprisoning reality [...] One can’t possess images’, emphasising the difference between capturing the reality of an event (photojournalism) and possessing an artistic image (art photography).¹⁰ John Szarkowski writes: ‘The history of photography has been less a journey than a growth. Its movement has not been linear and consecutive but centrifugal. Photography, and our understanding of it, has spread from a centre; it has, by infusion, penetrated our consciousness.’¹¹ This underscores the diverse nature of photography and how our understanding of it has expanded over time.

The same can be said for the Soviet art photography scene. Most photography styles and trends practiced by Soviet photographers originated from the West and were transmitted through the socialist bloc countries to the Soviet republics. In the USSR, photojournalism was the only recognized professional use of photography and was often promoted through the *Sovetskoe Foto* magazine with the communist ideological mission. However, amateurs were free to explore the artistic potential of photography; even though the term ‘photographic art’ was used in the press, it was not considered professional photography or art in the official hierarchy.¹²

Censorship in Soviet Photography: Controlling the Flow of Information

In the Soviet Union, the government controlled all forms of communication, including the press, radio, television, publishing, and artistic expression, by employing censorship to promote the communist doctrine. These conditions restricted information and maintained the Communist Party’s dominance. Institutions such as the State Publishing House, the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting, and the Ministry of Culture imposed censorship. In the Baltic republics, the development of art photography was largely determined by these conditions. Photography magazines were subject to censorship and control thus limiting the range of ideas and perspectives that could be expressed.

One of the main official bodies for censorship was the Glavlit (General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press), which had the authority to censor, alter, or restrict any material deemed unsuitable and shut down newspapers, periodicals, and publishing houses that disobeyed its guidelines. Glavlit’s censorship was extensive and frequently affected literature, theatre, music, film, and other arts,

9 Barthes 1977: 87–89.

10 Sontag 1982: 194.

11 Szarkowski 1966: 11.

12 Tifentāle 2011: 26.

including photography; it played a crucial role in retaining the Communist Party's monopoly on power and regulating the flow of information.

Matulytė highlights the role played by both the Society of Art Photographers of the Lithuanian SSR and Glavlit in censorship. The society requested permission from Glavlit for various public activities, including local and international exhibitions, publications, articles, and photography-related events. However, in some cases, Lithuanian art photographers travelled to Riga to send their works abroad to avoid Glavlit's censorship.¹³ In the Estonian SSR, photographs were reviewed by a committee and could be censored by Glavlit even if they did not directly criticise the regime.¹⁴ In general, works created by the Baltic art photographers were regulated before the photographs could leave the USSR and then by the editorial boards of foreign magazines.

In 1971, due to political disagreements and mounting pressure, Jírů resigned from the position of the editor-in-chief of *Review Fotografie*. In 1978, changes in censorship policy led to staff lay-offs and Daniela Mrázková's resignation.¹⁵ According to Vladimír Birgus, the magazine's quality declined at that point.¹⁶ Each change led to increased control and censorship over the magazine. Following the Prague Spring of 1968, the Communist Party took control of the Czechoslovak press and enforced stringent censorship on published material. Consequently, some magazine issues, including the third issue of *Revue Fotografie* in 1969 featuring Luckus's works, were banned in the Soviet Union and subsequently withdrawn.

Writing about Polish periodicals, *Fotografia* and *Foto*, Karolina Ziębińska-Lewandowska noted that in Poland, censorship methods over printed media were like those practiced in the Soviet Union: each piece of material, text, or photograph had to be approved by the censor before publication. However, censorship always perceived the dynamic socio-political changes and adapted to them by taking a stricter or looser approach over time. Such circumstances evoked self-censorship, as authors tried to guess and fit ever-changing criteria.¹⁷ The extensive Soviet censorship system, including Glavlit's role, had a dramatic impact on the development of art photography and its dissemination inside the Soviet Union and in the socialist bloc countries, resulting in self-censorship and limited creative opportunities.

¹³ Matulytė 2011: 231–239.

¹⁴ Verk (Compiler) 2020: 17.

¹⁵ In *Charter 77*, the Czechoslovak government was criticised for neglecting the implementation of human rights; after that, profound structural changes took place in many governmental organisations.

¹⁶ Kocián 2021 (interactive).

¹⁷ Ziębińska-Lewandowska 2014: 13–14.

Quantitative Analysis: *Sovetskoe Foto*

Established in 1926, *Sovetskoe Foto* was the only specialised photography periodical in the USSR. From 1931, it was published by the Ogonek publishing house in Moscow. However, its publication was suspended in 1941 and renewed only in 1957. The magazine belonged to the Union of Journalists of the USSR. In total, it had ten chief editors. From 1959 to issue 8 of 1977 this position was occupied by Marina Bugaeva. Olga Suslova became the editor-in-chief at the time of 1977(9) and occupied this position until 1990(9). The magazine served as a vital platform for photography enthusiasts and professionals in the USSR. The magazine showcased works by Soviet and foreign photographers and played a significant role in disseminating the works by Baltic art photographers. A major part of the magazine was filled with overt and covert Soviet propaganda.¹⁸ The magazine served as a permanent reminder of the socialist realist principles.¹⁹ Nevertheless, being easily accessible and having no competitors within the Soviet Union, *Sovetskoe Foto* was a source of inspiration and information for many artists around the USSR.

Baltic art photographers began appearing in the *Sovetskoe Foto* in the early 1960s, starting with Lithuanian art photographers Antanas Sutkus and Julijus Vaicekauskas in 1962. Latvian and Estonian art photographers made their debut in 1963. From then, all three Baltic republics were regularly featured in the magazine. The development of Lithuanian art photography and the establishment of the Society of Art Photographers of the Lithuanian SSR in 1969 played a significant role in strengthening positions of Lithuanian authors and fostering cooperation with editors and art critics of the magazine.

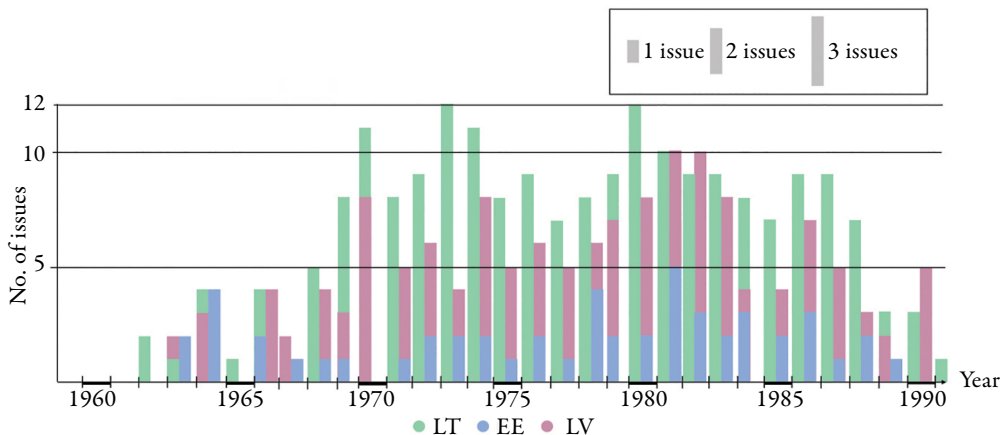


Fig. 1. Representation of art photographers from the Baltic republics in *Sovetskoe Foto*, by the number of issues per year

¹⁸ Tifentė 2011 July 13–17: 7–8.

¹⁹ Tifentė 2011: 42.

Figure 1 shows the number of issues of the magazine that included mentions and/or publications of Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian art photographers yearly. It shows that, regarding the frequency of publications in the *Sovetskoe Foto*, Lithuanian art photographers dominated over their Latvian and Estonian colleagues from 1968 to 1989. Latvian art photographers usually maintained the second place in many issues featuring their names and works. In contrast, Estonian art photographers were featured infrequently with the highest numbers in 1964 and 1978 (four issues each) and in 1981 (five issues). From 1960 to 1990, Lithuanian art photographers were featured in 204 issues of the *Sovetskoe Foto*, which is more than half of all issues published throughout the period (54.8%), while art photographers from Latvia and Estonia were featured in 146 (39.3%) and 52 (14%) issues, respectively.²⁰ These numbers include publications of works and mentions of selected authors in texts.

The dominance of art photographers from Lithuania can be observed. Among the most often featured authors were Sutkus (96 times between 1962 and 1990), Rakauskas (56 times between 1962 and 1990), Marius Baranauskas (47 times between 1963 and 1988), Macijauskas (41 times between 1966–1989), and Butyrinas (39 times between 1969–1990).²¹ Latvia was mainly represented by Binde (49 times between 1966 and 1990), Aivars Āķis (33 times between 1971 and 1990, mainly as texts author), Gleizds (30 times between 1964 and 1990), Ilmārs Apkalns (30 times between 1963 and 1986), and Spuris (30 times between 1969 and 1990).²² Estonian art photography was mostly represented by members of the STODOM group: Peeter Tooming (21 times between 1967 and 1989), who also contributed as the author of texts, and Kalju Suur (10 times between 1964 and 1984); also, by Vahi (12 times, between 1963 and 1986) and Salmre (11 times between 1964 and 1980).²³

In the early 1990s, photographers from all three Baltic republics had less exposure in the magazine. When Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia regained their independence, the interest in being published in the magazine drastically decreased, while the magazine itself was reorganized into *Foto* and published solely in Russia.

²⁰ Additionally, Butyrinas was featured in the eighth-ninth issues of 1991 (8–9), and Binde was featured in 1992 (1), but these publications are not included in the calculation.

²¹ Sutkus – 45 mentions and 51 publications; Rakauskas – 23 mentions and 33 publications; Baranauskas – 26 mentions and 21 publications; Macijauskas – 25 mentions and 15 publications; Butyrinas – 17 mentions and 22 publications.

²² Binde – 27 mentions and 22 publications; Āķis – 22 mentions and 11 publications; Gleizds – 16 mentions and 14 publications; Apkalns – 13 mentions and 17 publications; Spuris – 16 mentions and 14 publications.

²³ Tooming – 15 mentions and 6 publications; Vahi – four mentions and eight publications; Salmre – two mentions and nine publications; Suur – four mentions and six publications.

Quantitative Analysis: *Revue Fotografie*, *Fotografia* and *FOTO*

The magazines *Revue Fotografie* and *Fotografia* were highly influential and sought-after by Soviet photographers. They differed qualitatively from *Sovetskoe Foto* by including less propaganda material. They inspired Baltic photographers and provided a platform for promoting their work abroad and within the Soviet Union.²⁴ The Lithuanian SSR was represented primarily by art photographers from the Society of Art Photographers of the Lithuanian SSR, Latvian art photography by the ‘Rīga’ photo club, and Estonian by the STODOM group.

The Czechoslovak quarterly *Revue Fotografie*, founded and led by Czech photographer Vaclav Jirů, was published from 1957 to 1990 by the Orbis publishing house in Prague. The main focus of the periodical was on creative and art photography. Unlike *Sovetskoe Foto*, the content of the articles in *Revue Fotografie* was primarily theoretical. On its pages, one could find works by art photographers from around the world. The magazine was translated into English, German, French, and Russian and distributed to numerous countries worldwide.²⁵ In the Soviet Union, *Revue Fotografie* first appeared in 1959.

The Polish *Fotografia* magazine was issued monthly from 1953 to 1974. After 1974, the magazine split into two parts. In 1975, it appeared under the new title, *FOTO*. *Fotografia* came back only in 1976, not as a monthly but as a quarterly, and existed until 1989. They did not differ much, but *Fotografia* presented slightly more creative works and new tendencies. It was a subject of the Union of Polish Art Photographers (ZPAF, *Związek Polskich Artystów Fotografików*). Adam Johann became the first editor-in-chief, but Zbigniew Dłubak quickly replaced him. The magazine mainly focused on artistic and amateur photography.²⁶ Most often, articles were authored by Dłubak, Jan Sunderland, Urszula Czartoryska, and Edward Hartwig. Photographers themselves often wrote articles about their trips to other countries (including the USSR) and about foreign artists.²⁷ Although the works by Polish photographers prevailed, the magazine included works by photographers from different Soviet republics referring to them as ‘artists from the Soviet Union’.

The Polish and Czechoslovak art scenes significantly impacted Baltic art photography through the circulation of these magazines. Apart from being a source of

²⁴ Lithuanian art photographers drew inspiration from these magazines, as evidenced by the mentions of the ir publications. For example, in *Revue Fotografie* 1969 (1), Macijauskas expressed his admiration for the magazine as a source of creative inspiration. Concrete evidence of Luckus’s inspiration from the Polish art field may be found in *Fotografia* 1971 (12).

²⁵ Sweden, Australia, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom. Source: Yevlampiev 2015 (interactive).

²⁶ Ciastoń 2018: 33–34.

²⁷ Lewczyński: 1960 (11): 376.

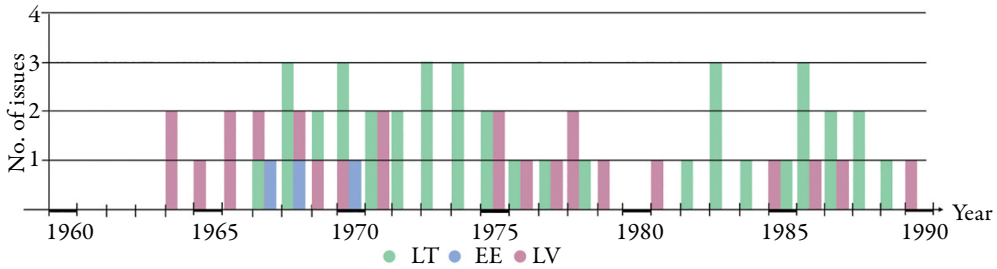


Fig. 2. Representation of art photographers from the Baltic republics in *Revue Fotografie*, by the number of issues per year

inspiration, these magazines offered a platform for photographers to share their work and discuss the possibilities of art.

The first among Baltic republics, Latvian art photographers appeared in *Fotografija* and *Revue Fotografie* in the early and mid-1960s, in 1962 on the pages of *Fotografija*, and in 1964 in *Revue Fotografie*.

During Jírů's tenure as the chief editor of *Revue Fotografie*, which lasted until 1971, he preferred Latvian art photographers as their artistic vision aligned with his own. However, once Mrázková assumed the role of chief editor, there was a discernible increase in the representation of Lithuanian art photographers in the magazine. Figure 2 supports this observation, indicating that Latvian art photographers initially dominated *Revue Fotografie* and *Fotografija* but were overtaken by their Lithuanian counterparts in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Estonian art photographers were rare guests on the pages of *Revue Fotografie* and *Fotografija*. Their presence was limited, with only three appearances in *Revue Fotografie* between 1967 and 1970. From then, Estonian authors were not featured in *Revue Fotografie* at all. Considering Polish magazines, only Tooming was featured once in 1974 in the fourth issue of *Fotografija*.

From 1962 to 1990, *Revue Fotografie* published works by Baltic art photographers, with Lithuanian art photographers featured in over 38 issues (32.8%), Latvian art photographers presented in 25 issues (21.6%), and Estonian art photographers from the STODOM group appeared in three issues (2.6%). In Polish *Fotografija*, Lithuanian art photographers were showcased in 12 issues (3.3%) between 1960 and 1989, and in 13 issues (7.7%) of *FOTO* from 1976 to 1989, while Latvian art photographers appeared 11 times (3.1%) in *Fotografija* and three times (1.8%) in *FOTO*. Estonians were featured only once in *Fotografija*. Of the three republics, Latvians were more commonly seen in Czechoslovak and Polish periodicals in the mid-1960s to early 1970s.²⁸ In *Revue Fotografie*, Latvian art photographers were featured 24 times (20.7%).

²⁸ Binde, Apkalns, Birkmanis, Balodis, Kreicbergs, Spuris, and Tugaļevs.

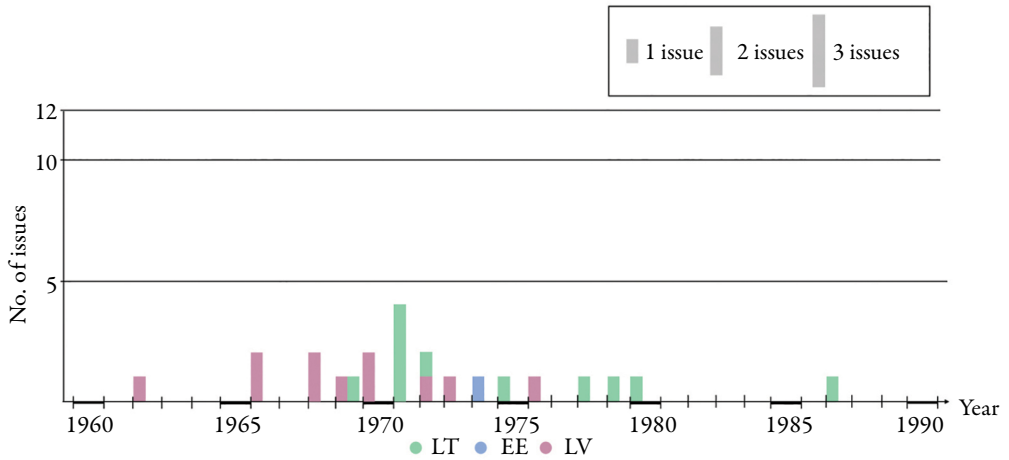


Fig. 3. Representation of art photographers from the Baltic republics in *Fotografia*, by the number of issues per year

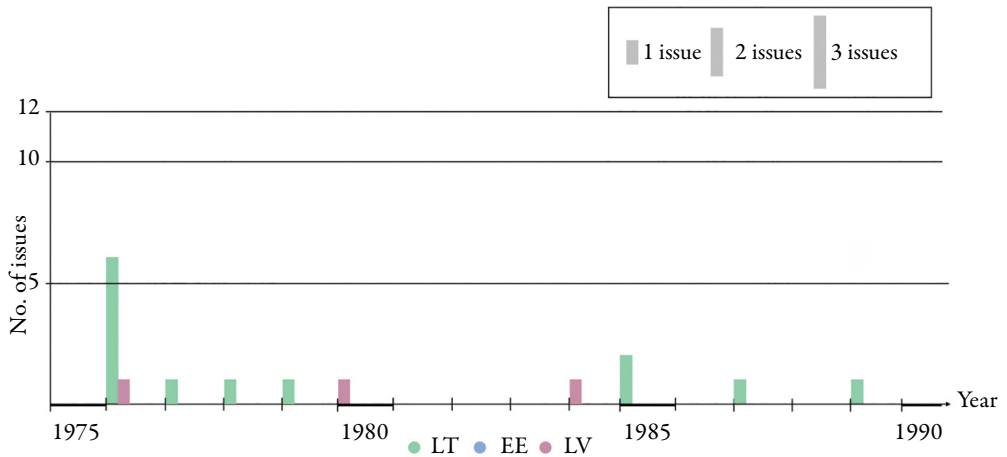


Fig. 4. Representation of art photographers from the Baltic republics in *FOTO*, by the number of issues per year

Binde was the most featured Latvian author in selected Polish and Czechoslovak magazines (11 times in *Revue Fotografie* between 1964 and 1975, eight times in *Fotografia* between 1966 and 1976, and once in *FOTO* 1976 (3)). He solely represented Latvian art photography in seven issues of *Revue Fotografie*, seven issues of *Fotografia*, and one issue of *FOTO*. Among other popular artists featured in these magazines were Kreichbergs (five times in *Revue Fotografie* between 1964 and 1976 and once in *Fotografia* 1970 (1)), Leons Balodis (five times in *Revue Fotografie* between 1968 and 1979 and once in *Fotografia* 1970 (1)), Spuris (five times in *Revue Fotografie* between 1970 and 1986 and once in *Fotografia* 1970 (1)), and Apkalns

(twice in *Fotografija* in 1962 (2) and 1968 (4), once in *FOTO* in 1984 (11), and once in *Revue Fotografie* in 1987 (4)). Also, *Revue Fotografie* featured works by Janaitis, Gunārs Birkmanis, Gleizds, Valdis Brauns, Mihailovskis, Tugaļevs and Andrejs Grants. Birkmanis was also featured in *Fotografija* 1966 (11), while Tugaļevs was published in *FOTO* in 1980 (6).

Antanas Sutkus was among the most often featured photographers from Lithuania (four times in *Revue Fotografie* between 1970 and 1983, seven times in *Fotografija* between 1971 and 1987, six times in *FOTO* between 1976 and 1989); he was followed by Macijauskas (seven times in *Revue Fotografie* between 1967 and 1983, five times in *Fotografija* between 1969 and 1987, and three times in *FOTO* between 1976–1985), Rakauskas (six times in *Revue Fotografie* between 1970 and 1988, three times in *Fotografija* between 1971 and 1975, and twice in *FOTO* in 1979 (4) and in 1985 (10)), and Butyrinas (seven times in *Revue Fotografie* between 1968 and 1985, twice in *Fotografija* in 1971 (3) and 1978 (2), and once in *FOTO* in 1985 (10)). All four magazines also published works by Požerskis, Algimantas Kunčius, Luckus, Rimantas Dichavičius, Vaclovas Straukas, Baranauskas and Jonas Kalvelis. Also, both *Revue Fotografie* and *FOTO* featured photographs by Irena Giedraitienė and Virgilijus Šonta. Lithuanian authors appeared regularly on the pages of *Revue Fotografie*. However, there was a gap in their publications from 1979 until 1981. In both Polish magazines, these gaps were more extensive: from 1980 to 1984 in *FOTO* and from 1981 to 1986 in *Fotografija*.

The presence of Baltic art photographers in *Revue Fotografie* and *Fotografija* underlined the growing recognition of photography as an art form in the Baltic republics in the 1960s. It showcased emerging trends and styles fostering the development of the regional art photography scene. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Lithuanian photographers dominated these publications, while Latvian photographers had a more limited presence. Estonian art photographers' presence was comparatively lower than that of their Latvian and Lithuanian counterparts.

Qualitative Analysis. Dominant Styles and Approaches

In the 1950s–1960s, trends from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the German Democratic Republic reached Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia through magazines and publications, impacting local photography scenes in the Baltic republics.²⁹ However, photographers perceived and interpreted these ideas differently. For instance, under the influence of Polish and Czechoslovak tendencies, Latvian art photography of the 1960s seamlessly blended practical methodology with aesthetic principles, cultivating a distinctive artistic signature. This approach in some cases persisted until

29 Jaškūnienė 1985 (10): 275–281.

the 1980s. During the 1960s–1970s, Baltic art photographers employed various techniques and approaches of popular Neo avant-garde, which did not oppose socialist realism but continued the tradition of pictorial photography and was permitted as long as it stayed within socialist boundaries.

Photographers practised and contributed to these trends with a poetic note, capturing traditional themes such as local landscapes, still lives, portraits, and more.³⁰ Among the noteworthy figures in the realm of photography, whose work is characterised by distinctive approaches and techniques, is Balodis with pictorial works in isohelia; Kricbergs with his photographic landscapes and stills; Gleizds and Ezeriņš with pictorial presentation of a woman body and stills; Tugaļevs with his high-contrast portraits; Brauns with montages of nudes and single shots. From the mid-1970s, Ukrainian-born Latvian art photographer Mihailovskis practised collages; Jaunzems, Spuris, and Āķis (who is both an art photographer and a critic) appeared in periodicals as well. These artists were presented across all four magazines, showcasing their diverse talents and styles.

The works by the best-known Latvian art photographer Binde are reminiscent of the old masters pictorialism, emphasis on shadows, form, and pattern in his work. Binde was passionate about psychological portraits and nudes. One photograph published in 1967 features a nude girl with hands in a prayer-like pose, later becoming part of a series documenting this woman's body every ten years. Another photo visually parallels the female form with a guitar shape.³¹ His less self-censored images were showcased in *Revue Fotografie*, while his work in *Sovetskoe Foto* was more conservative, complying with the Soviet imagery.³²

In the 1960s, Estonian art photographers explored alternative means of self-expression in aesthetics. They combined photography with various literary formats, such as poetry and prose. The STODOM group members mainly discussed the medium's specifics focusing on the dichotomy between the aesthetic and the social. The techniques employed by the group members included not only the Sabattier effect, isohelia (Tooming, Vahi, Puks), and collage (Dobrovolski), but also photography of the everyday (Dobrovolski, Dobrovolskaja, Suur, Boris Mäemets) and proto-conceptual ideas (Tooming).

During this period, Estonian art photographers demonstrated a general aspiration towards subjectivity, which became characteristic of local expressive photography. However, their work leaned more towards conceptual ideas and surrealism than mere pictorial presentation. By the 1980s, Estonian art photographers were not frequently mentioned in the selected periodicals, indicating a decline in prominence.

³⁰ Tifentāle 2011: 44.

³¹ *Revue Fotografie* 1967 (04): 30–31.

³² Binde presented more of his technical experiments in *Sovetskoe Foto* and showcased his more daring nudes in *Revue Fotografie*.

In Lithuania, Povilas Karpavičius and, later, Butyrinas practised interwar styles based on the technical means of photography. Butyrinas went from photographic experiments to surrealist photo collages, which became his main genre up until the late 1980s. His works appeared on the pages of Polish magazines from the early 1970s.³³ Luckus and Macijauskas implemented popular technical approaches in their social reportage. For example, Macijauskas effectively used a wide-angle lens to emphasise the events he captured. At the same time, Kalvelis and Straukas showed their neutral landscapes of the dune in Nida, sometimes retouching them and using montage. Dichavičius showcased his early nudes in the first issue of *Revue Fotografie* in 1968. The images employed strong contrasts to the created graphic body lines that emphasise or obscure certain details. His nudes presented in *Sovetskoe Foto* in the late 1980s³⁴ reveal romantic scene development, while his earlier works in *Revue Fotografie* focus more on the erotic, body part representation.

In the early 1960s, influenced by the so-called ‘humanist’ approach, Lithuanian art photographers focused on defining their styles, aesthetics, and subject matter, distinguishing themselves from Latvian and Estonian counterparts with dynamic reportage-like photography. They began working on long-term series in the late 1960s and mid-1970s, evolving them into nostalgic and romantic projects. Among the most active photographers were Sutkus, who depicted Lithuanian everyday life in a ‘humanist’ approach; Macijauskas, with *Lithuanian Village Markets* (1968–1987), *In the Veterinary Clinics* (1977–1984), which he documented in his recognisable style. As he stated in one of the issues of *Revue Fotografie*, his main goal was to achieve a balance between content and form;³⁵ Kunčius, whose *Sundays* (1968–1985) are more conceptual and urge viewers to perceive the underlying idea after observing depicted people engaged in different everyday life scenes, often appearing in harmony with their surroundings; Rakauskas, who practiced the genre of the nude and later became better known for his famous poetic metaphors of life in his *Blossom* series (1974–1984), which almost solely represented him in all periodicals until the late 1980s. Most of his photographs are staged or photomontages; Straukas’s ‘direct’ depictions in his *The Last School Bell* (1975–1987); and Požerskis with *Village Festivals* (1974–1994).

In the 1980s, Latvian photography shifted to straight photography and was mainly presented in periodicals by Ruka and Andrejs Grants. In 1985, in the third issue of *Revue Fotografie*, Birgus highlighted Grants whose work diverged from traditional pictorial photography that dominated the Latvian art photography scene. It combined everyday life with the subjective view, capturing seemingly mundane moments rich with metaphors that invited interpretation. This approach was already popular among Lithuanians, such as Šonta, with whom Birgus compared Grants in his article.

33 Mentioned in *FOTO* 1973 (1): 10; 1978 (10): 51.

34 *Sovetskoe Foto* 1988 (1): 28–32.

35 Macijauskas 1969 (1): 38–41.

In the Eyes of the Foreign Editors

In the 1970s, the main interest of editors from Czechoslovakia and Poland was in the Lithuanian photography field, which was predominantly shaped by Sutkus, Macijauskas, Rakauskas, Kunčius, and others.³⁶ In *Sovetskoe Foto*, they were presented within the context of the Soviet 'landscape'; in Czechoslovak and Polish publications, they were portrayed as part of the Lithuanian national landscape. The Czech editor Mrázková highlighted these art photographers in several articles during the 1970s, emphasising their contribution to the Lithuanian school of photography.³⁷ Meanwhile, the Polish editor Barbara Szczucka wrote about Macijauskas noting that his market scenes did not appear exotic to Polish viewers but rather familiar to their culture.³⁸

In 1976, Małgorzata Jaročka's brief text in *FOTO* featured Lithuanian art photographers, including Šonta, Šimkus, Macijauskas, Požerskis, Sutkus, and Giedraitienė.³⁹ In her article 'Prostota, Piękno, Sens' (Simplicity, Beauty, Sense) in *FOTO* 1978 (10), Halina Murza-Stankiewicz's mentioned Kalvelis, Straukas, and Kunčius with their recent works from their ongoing series.⁴⁰

Editors of *Fotografia* selected non-cliche and experimental works. For example, in 1971, the magazine published several works from the innovative *Pantomime* series by Vitas Luckus, which nowadays is considered proto-conceptual photography in the Baltic republics, and some of his uncensored social reportage photography.⁴¹

In her article, published in *Sovetskoe Foto* 1989 (8), Mrázková accentuated the underrepresentation of Eastern European art photography in the international context, arguing that the visibility of art photographers suffered from a lack of open sources and proper research in Soviet photography archives. Furthermore, she criticised the selection criteria employed by unqualified individuals, prioritising political considerations over photographic merit. This ultimately led to the neglect of 'progressive' Baltic art photography and numerous talented individuals in the Soviet Union whose contributions remained largely unrecognised on the world stage.⁴²

Conclusions

The complex boundaries between art and photojournalism during the Soviet era proved challenging due to censorship and ideological constraints. However, despite

36 Mrázková *Revue Fotografie*. 1974 (4): 28–33; 1975 (01): 75, 79.

37 Kocián 2021 (interactive).

38 Szczucka *Fotografia*: 1978 (10).

39 Jaročka 1976 (7).

40 *FOTO*. 1978 (10): 302–303.

41 *Fotografia* 1971 (12): 266–273.

42 Mrázková *Sovetskoe Foto* 1989 (8).

these limitations, Baltic art photographers demonstrated creativity and resilience, leaving a lasting impact on the history of art photography in the region.

The dissemination of Baltic art photography in *Sovetskoe Foto*, *Revue Fotografie*, *Fotografia*, and, later, *FOTO* during the 1960s–1980s played a crucial role in promoting and developing this art from within the Baltic republics. These magazines provided a platform for artists to share their work, exchange ideas, and gain recognition locally and internationally, albeit with differing stylistic preferences. The content curated by *Sovetskoe Foto* strictly aligned with the ideology, favouring pro-Soviet imagery. Conversely, international editors gravitated towards more experimental and artistic styles, thereby influencing the submissions of these photographers.

Lithuanian art photographers were most frequently featured in these magazines throughout the period analysed, followed by their Latvian and Estonian colleagues. The presence of Baltic art photographers in these magazines not only facilitated the recognition of photography as an art form in the region but also fostered the development of regional art photography by showcasing the emerging trends and styles. While Western trends influenced Baltic art photographers, their interpretation of these ideas was unique and resulted in diverse expressions of art photography in each Baltic republic. Many art photographers gained recognition during this period employing neo avant-garde techniques and approaches to capture traditional themes with a poetic touch. As the decades progressed, artistic styles and the subject matter continued to evolve, with Lithuanian artists developing ‘humanistic’ photography. While Lithuanians and Latvians practised the straight photography approach, Estonians moved towards conceptual photography.

The analysis of the dominant styles and approaches in *Sovetskoe Foto*, *Revue Fotografie*, *Fotografia*, and *FOTO* reveals a rich and diverse artistic landscape of Baltic art photography during the 1960s–1980s. Despite the challenges of censorship and other restrictions, Baltic art photographers left a unique and enduring legacy in the history of the region's art photography.

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Valentyn Odnoviun

Baltijos šalių meninės fotografijos sklaida specializuotuose žurnaluose 1960–1980 m.: *Советское Фото*, *Revue Fotografie*, *Fotografia* ir *FOTO*

Santrauka

Straipsnyje aptariama Baltijos šalių meninės fotografijos sklaida periodiniuose leidiniuose *Советское Фото* (SSSR), *Revue fotografie* (Čekoslovakija), *Fotografia* ir *FOTO* (Lenkija) 7–9-ajame dešimtmetyje. Šie žurnalai atliko lemiamą vaidmenį propaguojant ir plėtojant meno platformą Baltijos respublikose. Nepaisydami cenzūros ir ideologinių suvaržymų, Baltijos šalių meno fotografai demonstravo įvairų talentą, stilius ir požiūrius, kurie laikui bėgant tobulėjo. Vakarų tendencijos, paveikusios kiekvienos respublikos menininkus, lėmė unikalias meninės fotografijos išraiškas. Tyrimas apėmė visus internetinius ir fizinius žurnalų numerius pasirinktu laikotarpiu. Periodinės spaudos analizė atskleidė turtingą meninį kraštovaizdį, išryškinusį Baltijos šalių meninės fotografijos ištvermę ir kūrybiškumą bei jų ilgalaikę įtaką regiono meninės fotografijos istorijai. Kiekybinė analizė leidžia daryti išvadą, kad lietuvių autoriams labiau sekėsi reklamuoti savo kūrinius užsienyje nei jų kolegoms iš Latvijos ir Estijos.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: meninė fotografija, *Советское Фото*, *Revue Fotografie*, *Fotografia*, *FOTO*, Baltijos šalių menas