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Lithuanian Cultural Identity During the Period of Khrushchev Thaw: Concept of National Peculiarity of Fine Art and Art for the Living Environment

Summary

The article deals with the topic of national identity safety and expression in art and its criticism, which is a partial problem of national peculiarity of art. Towards the end of the Stalinist period, Khrushchev Thaw (from the late 1950s to the early 1960s), when the relative liberalization of public life began, the national peculiarity of art started to be considered not only on the side of the preachers of official art policies, but also in the artists community. Applied art was one of the branches of fine arts where the liberation from the canon of social realism and modernization began at the earliest. The article explores sources from 1955 that reflect the state of applied art and its critical reflection – these are the texts and papers

of the conference in cultural periodicals, that discussed the same year exhibition of applied art and design in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The position of Lithuanian artists community against a superficial and attributive concept of national peculiarity, which had been established in the doctrine of social realism and in which the “national character” of a piece of professional applied art was reduced to a demise of folk art ornamentation and folkloric images, is revealed. The research concluded that criticism of the superficial and attributive concept of national peculiarity and the efforts of the artists community to take care of aesthetic quality of the living environment had a positive impact on the safety and expression of national identity.

Keywords: Lithuanian art during the Soviet era, Khrushchev Thaw, national identity, national peculiarity of art, applied arts.