From Breton Calvaries to Lithuanian Chapels. Jurgis Baltrušaitis and Lithuanian Folk Art, Between Art History and Diplomacy, Anachronism and Anatopism

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In 1934, Jurgis Baltrušaitis was at the same time a medieval art historian, well-connected within Parisian intellectual circles, a teacher of art history at the university of Kaunas, and a diplomat at the Lithuanian legation in France. Those three roles explain why and how he initiated the exhibition *Art populaire baltique*, held at the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris in 1935, where he compared French medieval sculpture and Lithuanian folk sculpture. Influenced by Henri Focillon's meditations on the specific, often diverging, temporalities of the life of forms in art, he also intended to bring France and Lithuania closer at a time of growing fears of Nazi and Soviet threats. His writings about Lithuanian folk art, questioning the margins, the circulation of styles and artistic patterns, the stratifications of time and the survival of forms, the relationships between center and periphery, are fully part of his personal and intellectual trajectory.

Keywords: museum history, Jurgis Baltrušaitis, Lithuanian folk art, medieval art, history of art history, history of exhibitions

Introduction

In 1934, Jurgis Baltrušaitis held three different positions at the same time: diplomat at the Lithuanian legation in France; medieval art historian under the guidance of Henri Focillon, his father-in-law, focusing on French medieval sculpture and architecture; teacher of art history at the university of Kaunas.[1] His work on Lithuanian folk art, which resulted in the exhibition *Art populaire baltique* (*Baltic Folk Art*, 1935), held at the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro[2] in Paris, was directly linked to each of these commitments. The promotion of

1 A first overview of this research, with a more general focus on Lithuanian ethnographic collections kept in France, was published in French in 2023: Raphaël Bories, "Les petits dieux de bois et les statues-colonnes. Jurgis Baltrušaitis et l'art populaire lituanien en France, entre histoire de l'art et géopolitique," *Revue des musées de France* 2023 (2023-3), pp. 78–91. It was Annamaria Ducci who authored the first study of Baltrušaitis's work on Lithuanian folk art: "Lietuvà: l'orizzonte lituano nell'opera di Jurgis Baltrušaitis," in *La favola dell'arte*, Clara Baracchini (ed.), Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2008, pp. 85–99.

2 The Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro had been created following the 1878 Paris World's Fair to preserve and show ethnographic collections from all over the world. Its European collections were transferred to the Musée de l'Homme in 1937, and are now kept at the Mucem in Marseille.

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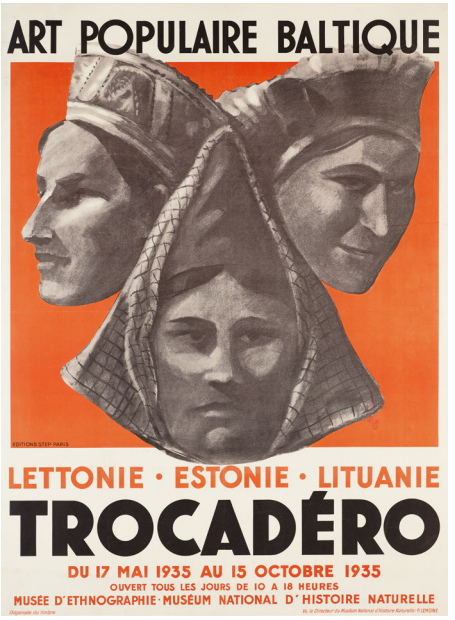
1. Breton Calvary at Saint-Thégonnec. Photograph by Henri Monnet, 1940. Marseille, Mucem, inv. Ph.1940.19.3.

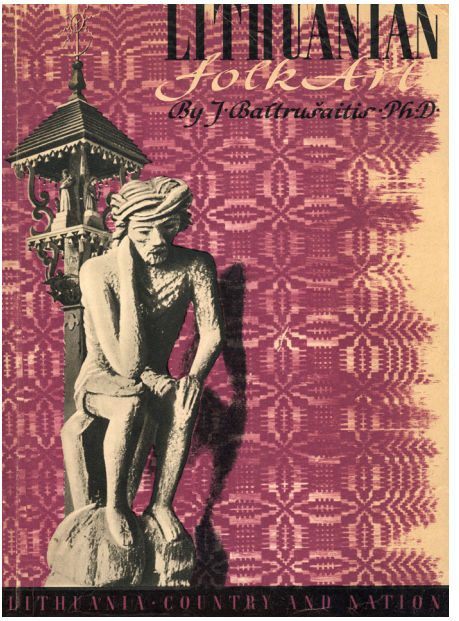
2. Lithuanian cross by Vincas Svirskis. Photograph by Balys Buračas. Kaunas, Vytautas the Great War Museum, inv. VDKM BBN 590.

Lithuanian culture in France was important from a diplomatic point of view in the geopolitical context of the 1930s. His trips to Kaunas allowed him to gain familiarity with Lithuanian folk art, the collections held in museums there, and the scholars working on it. His work on French medieval art influenced his approach to Lithuanian folk sculpture. Finally, his kinship with Henri Focillon put him in contact with important cultural figures in Paris, such as Paul Rivet and Georges Henri Rivière, director and deputy director of the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro since 1928.[3] It was to them that Baltrušaitis offered his help in 1934 to gather ethnographic material from Lithuania to be shown in the museum's permanent display. But a much more ambitious project developed from this starting point: to organize the first major exhibition dedicated to European folk art at the museum, and to make it about

3 André Delpuech, Christine Laurière and Carine Peltier-Caroff (ed.), *Les Années folles de l'ethnographie. Trocadéro 28-37*. Paris: Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, 2017. For more on Rivet, see Christine Laurière, *Paul Rivet. Le savant et le politique*. Paris: Muséum national d'histoire naturelle, 2008; for more on Rivière, see exh. cat. *Georges Henri Rivière. Voir c'est comprendre*. Marseille, Mucem, 13 November 2018 – 4 March 2019, Germain Viatte, Marie-Charlotte Calafat (ed.). Marseille/Paris: Mucem/RMN, 2018.



3. Poster for the *Art populaire baltique* exhibition, 1935. Print on paper. H. 0,58 cm; L. 0,80 cm. Marseille, Mucem, inv. 2023.6.1.



4. Cover of *Lithuanian Folk Art* by Jurgis Baltrušaitis, 1948. Marseille, Mucem, inv. E1A 47 38.

the Baltic countries. The exhibition *Art populaire baltique* (Fig. 3) and Baltrušaitis's writing on Lithuanian folk art (Fig. 4) intertwined diplomacy and art history, and only by combining these two aspects and by replacing them in their geopolitical and intellectual context can they be fully understood.[4]

Cultural Diplomacy and the Folk Art Exhibition

The exhibition *Art populaire baltique* was at the intersection of several types of events regularly held in Paris and elsewhere since the second half of the 19th century: first of all, the World's Fairs, where national pavilions were displays of patriotism, identity-building of "imagined

4 The archives regarding the exhibition are now kept in Paris, Archives de la Bibliothèque Centrale du Muséum national d'histoire naturelle (ABCMNHN); only a few letters regarding the subject still exist in Baltrušaitis's personal archives (according to his wife Hélène, many documents had remained in Kaunas at the start of the Second World War and were lost); photographs from the exhibition taken by Valdemārs Ģinters are kept in Riga, National History Museum of Latvia; Baltrušaitis's first writings on Lithuanian folk art appeared in the guidebook to the exhibition, Jurgis Baltrušaitis, "L'art populaire lituanien," in exh. cat. *Art populaire baltique. Lettonie Estonie Lituanie.* Paris, Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, 17 May – 15 August 1935; an extended version of this text was published in English: *id.*, *Lithuanian Folk Art.* Munich: T. J. Vizgirda, 1948, and later in French: *id.*, "Éléments de l'art populaire lituanien," *Studi Baltici* 10, 1969, pp. 1–41.

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communities,"[5] and cultural diplomacy. Many of them had sections dedicated to folk art: a large part of the European collections of the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro were gifts from foreign governments coming from those sections after the World's Fairs of 1878, 1889, and 1900. The Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro had in fact already hosted a small Lithuanian exhibition during the 1900 World's Fair, when Lithuania could not have its own pavilion, since it was not an independent state at the time.[6] *Art populaire baltique* also took place in the context of the interwar period, when the "rise of the art exhibition" had reached a new level: whereas the large art exhibitions of the late 19th and early 20th century, with their strong nationalist tone, were organized in cities and countries with a direct relationship to the exhibited artists, many exhibitions were "exported" to other countries after the First World War.[7] Lithuania was among the many nations that organized such traveling exhibitions: in 1931, Lithuanian folk art was shown in Stockholm, Oslo, Copenhagen, Göteborg and Malmö.[8] Paris, the "capital of the 19th century,"[9] was still the "capital of the arts[10]" during the interwar period; it was at the center of the international system of exhibitions, and many foreign countries were willing to pay the costs necessary to show their national art in the city, often at the Musée du Jeu de Paume.[11] A few of these exhibitions had sections dedicated to the folk art of the represented country: Romania (1925), Canada (1927), Sweden (1929), Poland (1931), and later Latvia (1939). It was in this context, and with these examples in mind, that the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro organized its first major exhibition dedicated to European countries with *Art populaire baltique* (a smaller exhibition about Romania had opened at the museum in December 1933). From a museographic point of view, the exhibition was characteristic of the modern principles established by Georges Henri Rivière for the renovation of the Musée d'Ethnographie

5 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1983. See also Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La Création des identités nationales. Europe, XVIIIe-XXe siècle*. Paris: Seuil, 1999.

6 Juozas Kriaučiūnas, "Lithuania at the Paris World's fair," *Lituanus* pp. 28–4, 1982; Remigijus Misiūnas, *Lietuva pasaulinėje Paryžiaus parodoje 1900 metais*. Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2006; Miglė Lebednykaitė, "Lietuvių etnografijos rinkinys Europos ir Vidužemio jūros civilizacijų muziejuje Marselyje (Mucem), Prancūzijoje," *Budas* 191–2 and 192–3 (2020), pp. 56–73 and 33–44.

7 Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum. Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art exhibition*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2000, esp. Chapter 6, "Patriotism and the Art Exhibition," pp. 98–106, and Chapter 7, "Botticelli in the Service of Fascism," pp. 107–127.

8 Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, "State Strategy of International Art Exhibitions in Interwar Lithuania 1918–1940," *Arts* 13(1), 19, 2024.

9 Walter Benjamin, *Paris, capitale du XIXe siècle. Livre des passages* ["Das Passagen-Werk"]. Paris: Le Cerf, 1989.

10 Exh. cat. *Paris, Capital of the Arts, 1900–1968*. London, Royal Academy of Arts, 26 January – 19 April 2002, and Bilbao, Guggenheim Museum, 21 May – 3 September 2002, Sarah Wilson (ed.). London: Royal Academy of Arts/Prestel, 2002.

11 Michela Passini, "Les expositions d'arts étrangers au musée du Jeu de Paume (1923–1939). Des constructions transnationales de patrimoines nationaux," in *Autopsie du musée*, Agnès Callu (ed.). Paris: CNRS-Éditions Alpha, 2016, pp. 143–151.

5. Lithuanian folk sculpture and engraving in the *Art populaire baltique* exhibition, 1935. Photograph by Valdemārs Ģinters (?). Riga, National History Museum of Latvia, inv. MDDK ZA 4622:7.

6. Lithuanian dresses and textile in the *Art populaire baltique* exhibition, 1935. Photograph by Valdemārs Ģinters (?). Riga, National History Museum of Latvia, inv. MDDK ZA 4622:3.

7. General view of the Lithuanian section in the *Art populaire baltique* exhibition, 1935. Photograph by Valdemārs Ģinters (?). Riga, National History Museum of Latvia, inv. MDDK ZA 4622:1.

du Trocadéro: items were displayed in large glass cases, each with its own lighting system; clothes were hung in the cases without the use of lay figures; photographs were added next to the objects to explain their context and use (Fig. 5, 6, 7).

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Since 1924 Baltrušaitis was a student, and since 1931 the son-in-law, of Henri Focillon, who at the time was an important and well-connected figure among French intellectuals, and who was well acquainted with Paul Rivet, the director of the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro. His adoptive daughter Hélène, who would become Baltrušaitis's wife, even worked at the museum for some time. Those preexisting contacts probably facilitated Baltrušaitis's approach and his proposal in early 1934 to present ethnographic collections from Lithuania at the museum. It seems that the idea to organize an exhibition not just about Lithuania but about all three Baltic states also came from Baltrušaitis and Lithuanian diplomacy, in the context of rapprochement between Lithuania and Latvia and Estonia that would lead to the creation of the Baltic Entente.[12] Baltrušaitis's major role in the project was clearly stated by Rivière:

> Mr. Jurgis Baltrusaitis, priva [sic] docent at the university of Kaunas (Lithuania) has distinguished himself with his authoritative works on the art of Europe and the near East. Furthermore, he is a friend of France, with which he is connected through his kinship with Professor Focillon, but also through his deep knowledge of the art and civilization of our country. As a new token of this friendship, he initiated the Baltic folk art exhibition, which revealed to the French public the original culture of his Lithuanian fatherland.[13]

Baltrušaitis acted as secretary general of the exhibition, with Marie-Anne Cochet of the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro as curator: under the instructions of the Lithuanian ambassador in Paris Petras Klimas, the art historian was careful not to interfere with the Estonian and Latvian sections, to avoid giving the impression that the project was controlled by Lithuania. To organize the Lithuanian section of the exhibition, Baltrušaitis worked closely with Magdalena Avietėnaitė,[14] head of the Press Office of the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with Paulius Galaunė, director of the M. K. Čiurlionis Gallery,[15] who had already collaborated together for the organization of the Lithuanian folk

12 Inesis Feldmanis, Aivars Stranga, *The Destiny of the Baltic Entente. 1934-1940*. Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 1994; Julien Gueslin, "L'Entente baltique, une « Petite Entente du Nord » ? (1918-1940): petits États, projets régionaux et perceptions françaises," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 288–4, 2022, pp. 81–97.

13 Typewritten note by Georges Henri Rivière, ABC-MNHN: 2 AM 1 K37b. Translated by the author, as for the other texts in French.

14 Avietėnaitė wrote in a letter that efforts were made to gather collections to be sent to Paris, "knowing the importance of the *Musée ethnographique du Trocadéro*." Letter of May 23, 1934 to Paul Rivet, ABCMHNH: 2 AM 1K37b.

15 At the time, Galaunė and Baltrušaitis were the two people who taught art history at the university of Kaunas: Aušrinė Kulvietytė-Slavinskienė, "Menotyra Vytauto Didžiojo universitete tarpukariu," *Meno istorija ir kritika 7*, 2011, pp. 77–87. In her memories of her time in Kaunas in the 1930s, Hélène Baltrušaitis remembered Galaunė as a "very kind friend." In his correspondence with Galaunė about the *Art populaire baltique* exhibition, Baltrušaitis shared the floor plan of the Lithuanian section and some technical details, but he also complained about the demands of Estonian and Latvian curators. I thank Irma Liauzun, museologist at the *Galaunių namai-muziejus* in Kaunas, for the communication and translation of these letters.

art exhibitions in Scandinavian countries. The collaboration between Baltrušaitis, Avietėnaitė, and Galaunė shows that the promotion of Lithuanian folk art was a common objective of diplomats and cultural institutions. The interest for the Baltic countries to organize an exhibition in Paris is further shown by the fact that they paid for most of the expenses, from the transport and insurance of the collections to the catalogue costs.

The exhibition, which opened in May 1935, had important political implications: it was placed under the high patronage of the presidents of France, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and the press release insisted on the fact that it would strengthen the Franco-Baltic friendship. The same press release indicated that it would be the first display of intellectual cooperation between the three countries after the signing of the Baltic Entente in September 1934. The expression "intellectual cooperation" reflected the vocabulary of the League of Nations and its International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, founded in Paris in 1926, in which Focillon was very active with another close friend of Rivet, Paul Valéry. The press release for the exhibition insisted that it was significant that this event took place in Paris: France was one of the countries responsible for the international order created after the First World War, which allowed the Baltic countries to gain their independence, and that order seemed increasingly fragile in 1935, threatened as it was by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Increased cultural cooperation between the Baltic countries, and between France and the Baltics, was therefore part of larger geopolitical movements and realignments. These cultural and geopolitical preoccupations can be read in Focillon's preface for the catalogue of the exhibition, as well as in Baltrušaitis's essay on Lithuanian folk art in that same catalogue, where he writes that "the Western world of forms is bound by the Breton Calvaries and the Lithuanian chapels."[16] (Fig. 1, 2) Using the formal categories of art history, he defined Lithuania as the easternmost part of the Western world, closer artistically to France than to Russia. He also used the category of the "West" (*l'Occident* in French), which was a crucial part of Focillon's work of 1931, *L'Art des sculpteurs romans*. Focillon used it to define the specific character of Romanesque sculpture, in opposition to Josef Strzygowski's theories about its eastern and Aryan origins. During the 1930s, as the geopolitical situation grew more and more tense in Europe, Focillon's definition of the West assumed an increasingly political meaning, as the foundation of a humanistic civilization, opposed in every way to the Aryan and Nordic view of the Middle Ages, defended by Strzygowski and embraced by the Nazi regime.[17]

16 Jurgis Baltrušaitis, "L'art populaire lituanien," in exh. cat. *Art populaire baltique. Lettonie Estonie Lituanie.* Paris, Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, 17 May – 15 August 1935.

17 Michela Passini, *La fabrique de l'art national. Le nationalisme et les origines de l'histoire de l'art en France et en Allemagne, 1870-1933*. Paris: Éditions de la maison des sciences de l'Homme, 2012; *id.*, *L'œil et l'archive. Une histoire de l'histoire de l'art*. Paris: La Découverte, 2017; Annamaria Ducci, *Henri Focillon en son temps. La liberté des formes.* Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2021.

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Folk Art History: Between Anachronism and Anatopism

If the interwar period was rife with international tensions, it was also a flourishing period for the study of folk art in Europe – in part because of these tensions. For Focillon, folk art was a shared inheritance that could bring the people of Europe closer to each other; part of his work on the subject was done in relation with the League of Nations, whose main objective was to prevent wars, and in particular in the context of the League's International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation and its International Museums Office.[18] Such was the case of the first international congress of folk art in Prague in 1928, where Focillon tried to define folk art, placing it in "the steppes of time, in that vast monotony of days, where a lot can be done, but where nothing happens."[19] This timeless approach to folk art can also be read in his introduction to the *Art populaire baltique* exhibition catalogue, where he writes:

> Within the very landscapes that constitute the foundations of these active nations, there is still something of the most archaic forms of the earth. The glacial movements have modelled the ground into wide and shallow valleys. Between the melancholy of dunes and the huge forests, the villagers follow a millenary dream.[20]

Focillon's almost geomorphological approach to folk art reflected some of the debates that took place two years earlier, at the 13th International Congress of Art History of 1933 in Stockholm, where questions of artistic geography were debated, including the importance of the physical environment in the development of art.[21] In the catalogue's introduction, Focillon also describes the Lithuanian crosses as examples of "admirable permanency," "where the unconscious memory of solar divinities are revived within a Christian symbol." He does not completely ignore the changes brought about by history and exchanges, acknowledging the fact that many Lithuanian folk sculptures had Western models, some of them quite recent; yet he still concluded that those models had acquired "the age of those that chose them," and that some wooden Christs, Virgins, and saints were "older than Christianity"[22]: according to Focillon, regarding folk art, permanency was a much stronger defining factor than change. Baltrušaitis's position is similar but slightly more nuanced, and he describes the "eternal play of these two opposing forces: stability versus motion"[23] without indicating that

18 Annamaria Ducci, "Henri Focillon: l'arte popolare e le scienze sociali," *Annali di critica d'arte* 2, 2006, pp. 341–389 and *id.*, "Le musée d'art populaire contre le folklore. L'Institut International de Coopération Intellectuelle à l'époque du Congrès de Prague," *Revue germanique internationale* 21, 2015, pp. 133–148.

19 Henri Focillon, "Introduction," in *Art populaire. Travaux artistiques et scientifiques du 1er Congrès international des arts populaires*, Vol. 1. Paris: Duchartre, 1931, p. XII.

20 Henri Focillon, "Introduction," in exh. cat. *Art populaire baltique, op. cit.*

21 Michela Passini, *L'œil et l'archive*, *op. cit.*, esp. Chapter 5, "Géographies de l'art : approches spatiales et enjeux idéologiques."

22 Henri Focillon, "Introduction," in exh. cat. *Art populaire baltique*, *op. cit.*

23 Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Lithuanian Folk Art*, *op. cit.*, p. 13. The quotations from Baltrušaitis all come from the 1948 English publication *Lithuanian Folk Art*: it is

one is more important than the other. His writings on Lithuanian folk art try to characterize more precisely its chronological and spatial specificities, influenced by Focillon's meditations on the particular, autonomous, often diverging temporalities of the life of forms in art.[24] He insists on the fact that even though archaic beliefs and means of expression have survived in Lithuania up until his time, the country has never been isolated: Lithuanian folk art presents some aspects of prehistory and paganism, of the Byzantine and Slavic worlds, of Western Europe's late Middle Ages, of the baroque and classical eras. Baltrušaitis attempts to articulate all these influences with the permanency of folk art as defined by Focillon:

> Ornaments belonging to the most different cultures are mingled on the same carved board. Chronology is upset. Sheltered by the Ages, popular art embraces them all. This diversity of sources however, does not disturb its unity. Having access to all inheritances it grows richer without betraying itself. Acquired elements are reconstructed, they bear impressed upon them the mark of its spirit, as does the soil which feeds it.[25]

Out of all the influences that Lithuanian folk art drew from, the Western Middle Ages were the most important according to Baltrušaitis, persisting "in spite of the new waves which might have submerged them."[26] For him, "medieval man survived in our makers of images,"[27] especially in the woodcarvers, the cross-crafters, the *dievdirbiai* ("God-makers"), whose works – the crosses and the *dievukai* ("little gods") statuettes – had become, thanks to the studies of Jonas Basanavičius and the poetry of Jurgis Baltrušaitis Senior, symbols of Lithuanian culture and national identity.[28] Some of the similitudes that Baltrušaitis Jr. points out between Lithuanian folk art and medieval art he explains by mechanisms of "survivals," a notion that was used by both art historians and folklorists since the 19th century. He considers that the Passion, the Pietà, the Virgin of the Seven Sorrows, the Christ of Sorrows (*Rūpintojėlis*), with their popular pathos, were so important in Lithuanian folk sculpture that they should be considered "survivals" from the late Middle Ages, kept unchanged as the first Christian images to reach Lithuania in the 15th century, where they were preserved "as a kind of relic of the first Christians in this country."[29] But the 15th century, when a more or less Christianized Lithuania had frequent and direct contacts with the West, is not the only medieval period with which Baltrušaitis compares Lithuanian folk sculpture: for him, "the statues bearing clumsy heads are sometimes more akin to the characters of the 12th century than to

an extended version of the 1935 text written for the exhibition catalogue of *Art populaire baltique*, with additional examples and developments, but which remains very faithful to the ideas first expressed 13 years earlier.

24 Henri Focillon, *Vie des formes*. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1934, especially the last chapter "Les formes dans le temps."

25 Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Lithuanian Folk Art*, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

28 Viktorija Daujotytė, "Happy is he, who rises to the heavens...", in *Vincas Svirskis' Wooden Miracles*, Margarita Matulytė (ed.). Vilnius: Lithuanian National Museum of Art, 2021, pp. 15–34.

29 Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Lithuanian Folk Art*, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

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those of the great Gothic altar pieces."[30] As the art historian points out, there has of course been no direct contact between the Lithuanian woodcarvers and 12th-century French sculpture: the similarities cannot be explained through a diffusionist approach mixed with the theory of survivals but are due to "an accidental coincidence of conception."[31] Baltrušaitis writes that "the rudeness of the means, the necessity of solid construction, the innate taste for geometric forms, coupled with a craving for the strange and the supernatural, bring about the same deformations as we find in the statuary of the 12th century, certain aspects of which also show popular traits."[32] In his comparisons, he refers to the Virgins of Auvergne, the Christ of Perpignan, the *Majesté de sainte Foy de Conques*, and the statue pillars of Chartres. His descriptions of sculptures remained general and never specifically designated an item or another, but many can be applied to the pieces that were exhibited in Paris – or from his own personal collection. Even though engravers copied Dürer's models or were inspired by Veronese and sometimes used perspective, Baltrušaitis adds, using psychoanalytical vocabulary, that "they unconsciously used the means of expression and the images of the Western Middle Ages."[33] The art historian points to the small wooden votive chapels placed in the woods and the meadows as examples of such mixture of influences, describing them as "a fantastic miniature architecture, a Pompeian style of the Middle Ages."[34]

"A Pompeian style of the Middle Ages" in Lithuania: as Baltrušaitis puts it, "the chronology is upset," and so is the geography. Other references with which he compares different aspects of Lithuanian folk art include antique rhytons, Doric temples, ziggurats, pre-Hellenic Thessalian houses, early medieval Irish crosses, the Greece of Homer, the smile of archaic korai, contemporary toy soldiers, and the "naïve" painting of Henri Rousseau.[35] Baltrušaitis and Focillon were eager to use anachronism ("the sin of the sins – the most unforgivable of sins,[36]" according to the historian Lucien Febvre) and anatopism as heuristic tools to understand art and the life of forms. The usefulness of anachronism has been reevaluated during the last few decades by historians and art historians alike,[37] who have argued for its "controlled use" despite the risks of

30 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*

33 Jurgis Baltrušaitis, "L'art populaire lituanien," in exh. cat. *Art populaire baltique*, *op. cit.*; while he kept the references to Dürer and Veronese in the ulterior version of the text, this particular sentence with the use of the "unconscious" was removed.

34 Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Lithuanian Folk Art, op. cit.*, p. 45.

35 A comparison that is also a reminder that the taste for folk art, extra-European arts, outsider art, and naïve art in the first half of the 20th century are often intertwined. André Breton's wall constitutes a prime example of this phenomenon and its ties with the artistic avant-garde of the time.

36 Lucien Febvre, *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVI^e siècle. La religion de Rabelais*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1942, p. 15.

37 Nicole Loraux, "Éloge de l'anachronisme en histoire," *Le genre humain* 27, 1993, pp. 23–39; Jacques Rancière, "Le concept d'anachronisme et la vérité de l'historien," *L'inactuel* 6, 1996, pp. 53–68; Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2000; Alexander Nagel, Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*. New York: Zone Books, 2010.

"subjectivist interpretation" that it also presents. During the interwar period in Paris, the *Cahiers d'art* and *Documents* journals also juxtaposed works of art and objects from different times and different places – Georges Henri Rivière was associated with both, and many of the authors writing in *Documents* worked at the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro. During the same years, Aby Warburg, who was also very interested in the notion of "survival" (*Nachleben* in German), used anachronism as a research method for his Bilderatlas Mnemosyne[38]; Walter Benjamin also dedicated thoughts to the matter, as did Carl Einstein,[39] who was a regular collaborator of *Documents* too. But the methodological choice of anachronism was among the reasons for the dispute between Meyer Schapiro and Focillon; the starting point of this heated exchange was Baltrušaitis's book *La Stylistique ornementale dans la sculpture romane*,[40] a book that Schapiro described as "a work emerging from the ultimately Platonic studio aesthetic of recent times and the passionate feeling for primitive art" linked with the theory of "French post-Impressionism and Cubism."[41] Focillon defended the methods of his student – and his own – in a letter to Schapiro:

> On the other hand, I am sure you are well aware that we thought long and hard before adopting the idea of the film, which seemed naive to you, and that rigorously trained professional historians think twice, as they say, when they venture outside the ready-made frameworks of evolutionary mechanics and their popular rules. Does it mean to cease being a historian to seek to recreate an intellectual process, and the steps of the mind rigorously attested by thousands of monuments?[42]

In the *Art populaire baltique* catalogue, echoing Baltrušaitis's anatopic comparison between Breton Calvaries and Lithuanian chapels, Focillon writes that "[b]etter than in the fellows of the calvaries in Armorica, Gauguin would have recognized [in Lithuanian folk sculpture] the ability of silent peoples, attentive to the voices of time, to think of God, the absolute, pain and death."[43] By mentioning Gauguin and his fascination for Brittany and its traditions, Focillon reminds the reader that the interest for folk art was largely created through the eyes of artists[44]; art historians such as himself and

38 Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante. Histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2002.

39 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps*, *op. cit.*

40 Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *La Stylistique ornementale dans la sculpture romane*. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1931.

41 Meyer Schapiro, "Uber den Schematismus in der romanischen Kunst," *Kritische Berichte zur kunstgeschichtlichen Literatur* 5, 1932/33, pp. 1–21; reedited in *id.*, "On Geometrical Schematism in Romanesque Art," in *Selected Papers*, I. *Romanesque Art*. New York: George Braziller, 1977, pp. 265–284, here p. 243. Baltrušaitis himself linked his interest in Romanesque sculpture and its geometry to the influence of Constructivism.

42 The entire letter – written in French – is quoted in Walter B. Cahn, "Schapiro and Focillon," *Gesta* 41-2, 2002, pp. 129–136, which is a thorough analysis of the episode and of the epistemic disagreements between the two scholars.

43 Henri Focillon, "Introduction," in exh. cat. *Art populaire baltique*, *op. cit.*

44 Exh. cat. *Folklore* (Metz, Centre Pompidou – Metz, 21 Marsh – 4 October 2020 and Marseille, Mucem, 4 November 2020 – 22 February 2021), Jean-Marie Gallais, Marie-Charlotte Calafat (ed.). Marseille/Metz/Paris: Mucem/Centre Pompidou Metz/La Découverte, 2020.

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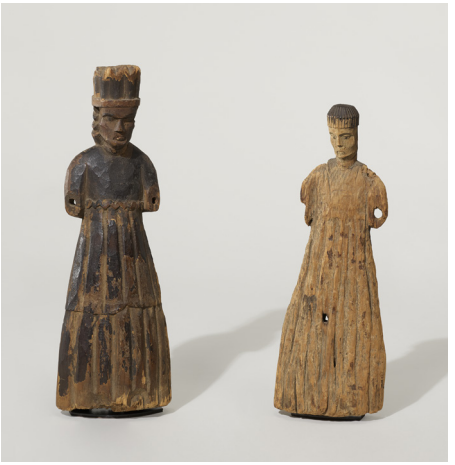
Baltrušaitis also contributed to its (fleeting) recognition. What distinguished the two researchers from many of their colleagues was that they could be described as artists almost as much as art historians: Focillon was the son of an engraver, Baltrušaitis of a poet, and they both grew up surrounded by painters, writers, sculptors and playwrights; Focillon was known – and criticized as well as admired – for his sophisticated prose, rife with metaphors and stylistic devices; after the Second World War, Baltrušaitis shared many of his research interests with surrealists such as André Breton and Roger Caillois, from mirrors to anamorphosis, from the fantastic to the *pierres imagées*. To borrow from a category defined by Focillon, that of visionary artists,[45] he and Baltrušaitis could be described as "visionary art historians." Their use of metaphors, comparisons, anachronism and anatopism, of which their short works on Lithuanian folk art are prime examples, might sometimes seem extravagant and lacking in methodological rigor; but they are also tools used to underline the stratifications of time that works of art embody, and to make their readers consider and focus on items of low standing within the hierarchical values of their time – much like organizing an exhibition about them in Paris.

The *Art populaire baltique* exhibition was the last one organized at the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro: the demolition of the building where it was hosted was decided during the event, and soon began the construction of the Palais de Chaillot for the 1937 World's Fair. The Musée d'Ethnographie was replaced by the Musée de l'Homme; some of the items offered by Lithuania were continuously exhibited from the opening of the European galleries in 1951. The three wooden statues were some of the very few Lithuanian artifacts that could be seen in a Western museum during the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union.

8. Saint George and Christ in Jurgis and Hélène Baltrušaitises' apartment, 1987. Photograph by Dominique Auerbacher.

Baltrušaitis also reworked, expanded, and republished his 1935 text about Lithuanian folk art, in English in 1948, and in French in 1969. The chapters remained the same as the ones in the 1935 catalogue, which corresponded to the subsections of the exhibition: architecture, crosses and chapels, sculpture, painting and engraving, domestic art. The comparison between "Lithuanian chapels and Breton Calvaries" was replaced by another: "The hermit of the Nemunas river dreams the same dreams as the makers of images and the monks who once decorated the small

45 Henri Focillon, "Esthétique des visionnaires," *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique* 23, January-Marsh, 1926, pp. 275–289.



9. Lithuanian folk sculptures from the collection of Jurgis Baltrušaitis. Marseille, Mucem, inv. 2022.8.1 and 2022.8.2.

10. Lithuanian folk sculptures in Jurgis and Hélène Baltrušaitises' apartment, 1987. Photograph by Dominique Auerbacher.

Romanesque churches."[46] This substitution might have been less visually obvious at first glance, but it reflected more accurately Baltrušaitis's ideas about the position of Lithuanian folk art in time, and not just in space. It also shows that his comparisons and uses of anachronisms were not mere subjective fantasies, but were carefully considered. The publication of the 1948 version of the book was rendered difficult, according to the editor, because "the rich materials for illustrations and text were inaccessible behind the Iron Curtain." Baltrušaitis notably updated the historical introduction, very significantly in the context of the aftermath of the Second World War, when he remained involved with the Lithuanian diplomatic service in exile:

> Under Russian domination, an era of decay began, which was marked by revolts, repressions and disasters. [...] The folklore, the ancient folk songs served as a rallying sign. But it was only after World War I, after having suffered a long German occupation, that the country recovered its independence. Twenty years of fervent and pious work showed what a small but free nation is able to accomplish. The country was happy at last – World War II destroyed this. Renewed occupations and deportations, a new exodus, destruction by fire and iron, subjugations by neighboring nations succeeded one another without interruption. Few peoples have had so tragic a fate, even in war-ravaged Europe. But Lithuania will not be subdued. She believes in the power of justice.[47]

Aside from the Musée de l'Homme, there was at least another place in Paris where a much more limited audience could see Lithuanian folk sculpture during the Cold War: the apartment of Jurgis

46 Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Lithuanian Folk Art*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

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and Hélène Baltrušaitis. A few of these *dievukai* were photographed in 1987 by Dominique Auerbacher, at the initiative of Jean-François Chevrier.[48] More than 50 years after the *Art populaire baltique* exhibition, their presence shows that Baltrušaitis's commitment toward Lithuania continued throughout his entire life, by means of his political and scientific action: Saint Jurgis, his patronymic saint, sat on the Baltrušaitises' fireplace near a crucified Christ (Fig. 8) that was exhibited in the 1935 exhibition (Fig. 7) while it belonged to Focillon, who had probably received it as a gift from his son-in-law. Two statuettes,[49] probably from the Aukštaitija region, look like they could have inspired one of the art historian's comparisons (Fig. 9): "extended bodies stiffen into pillars. [...] Elongated shapes frozen in a trunk remind one of the statue pillar of Chartres."[50] In his apartment, they were placed on piles of books, between a Persian miniature, a Russian icon, and two prints from Athanasius Kircher's *Mundus subterraneus* (Fig. 10): this mix of items constitutes a reminder that, far from being a separate domain of his work as an art historian, Baltrušaitis's writings about Lithuanian folk art, as well as his passion for questioning the margins, the circulation of styles and artistic patterns, the stratifications of time and the survival of forms, the relationships between center and periphery, are fully part of his personal and intellectual trajectory.

48 Jean-François Chevrier, *Portrait de Jurgis Baltrušaitis*. Paris: Flammarion, 1989.

49 Acquired by the Mucem in 2022 (inv. 2022.8.1 and 2022.8.2).

50 Baltrušaitis, *Lithuanian Folk Art*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

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