The Lithuanian Pavilion in Chile in 1972: Architect Vladas Vizgirda's Account Fifty Years Later
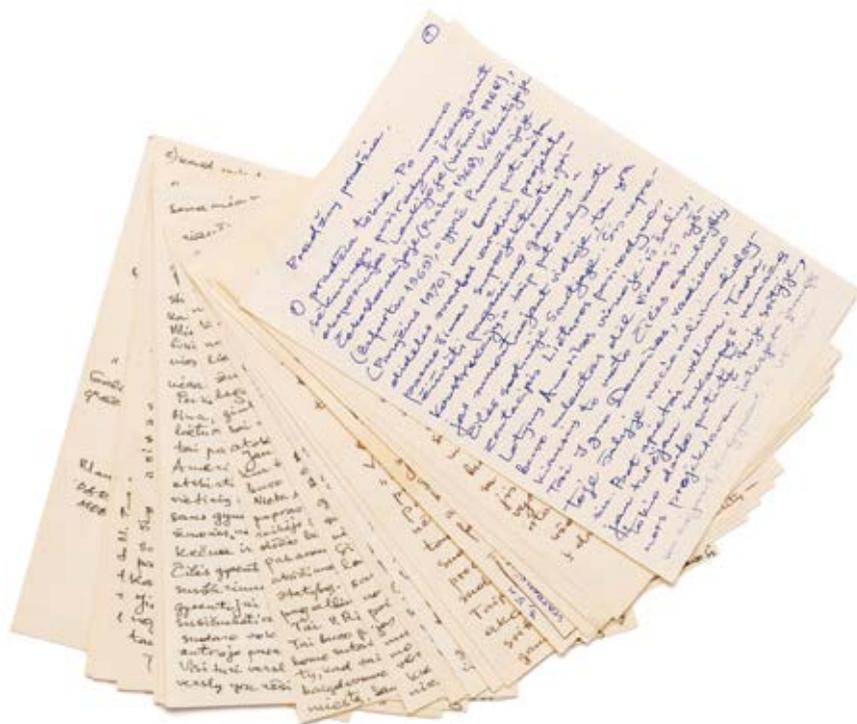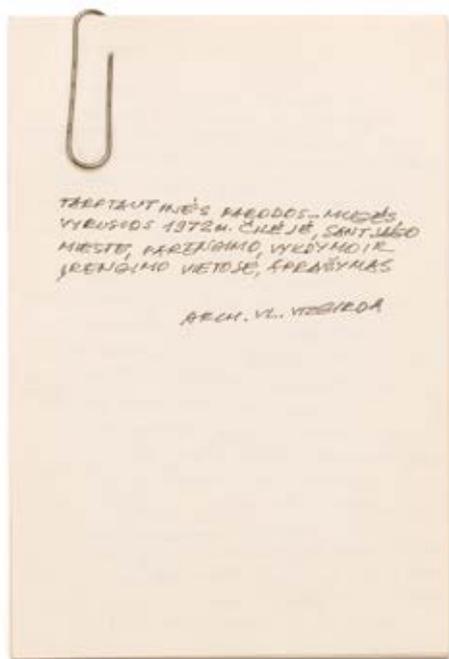
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——— This Archival publication presents a manuscript [Figs. 1–2] of the Lithuanian architect Vladas Vizgirda (b. 1935), in which the author describes the project of an export pavilion of fifty years ago. The Lithuanian SSR received an award for its exhibition in the pavilion of the Soviet Union at the international agriculture and industry fair FISA-72 held in Santiago de Chile. As the leading architect of the *Chile-72* pavilion, Vizgirda reminisces on the conception of the 500 m² display, its architectural and design solutions, the preparation process, the installation works, and the impressions experienced during his almost three-month-long work trip to Chile in October–December 1972. An important part of the published source is a visual narrative consisting of unpublished photographs, which allows us to newly assess the pavilion's modern constructions, minimalist design, and colour solutions, as well as Gintautėlė Baginskienė's design projects created specifically for this pavilion. In the publication of the source, the manuscript is presented unedited, while the introductory text describes the context of the pavilion and outlines the first directions of possible assessments and interpretations.

TARPTAUTINĖS PARODOS - MUZĖS
VYRUSIOS 1972M. CHILĖJE, SANT.IAGO
MIESTE, PARENGIMO, VYKDYMO IR
JRENGIMO VIETOSE, APRAŠYMAS

ARCH. VL. VIZGIRDA

1–2.
A handwritten manuscript consisting of twenty-two pocketbook pages by Vladas Vizgirda,
photo by Karolis Milaševičius

About the Source, its Author, and the Pavilion

Vladas Vizgirda was the designer of the Lithuanian section of the Soviet pavilion [Fig. 3]; he created the architectural concept, construction and design solutions for an exhibition space with an area of 500 m², and himself went to Chile to implement the installation in the autumn of 1972. Born in Kaunas in 1935, he graduated in architecture from the State Art Institute of the Lithuanian SSR in 1962, and quite soon began to specialise in the field of exhibition displays and public interiors, and eventually started to work at the Vilnius Art Production Facility "Dailė". Before the Chile pavilion, he had successfully executed several exhibition projects not only in Lithuania, but also abroad. Moveable exhibitions of Lithuanian folk art designed by Vizgirda travelled to Poland (1966), Germany (1968), Czechoslovakia (1968) and Hungary (1969). However, one of Vizgirda's most ambitious exhibition projects was the USSR industry and trade exhibition in Paris in 1970, where his task was to find a subtle way to showcase Yakutia's precious stones and rare minerals in the Geology Hall[1]. The successful exhibition in France was followed by the Santiago pavilion, one of the major projects in the architect's creative career. According to Vizgirda, the process of creating the pavilion from the idea [Fig. 4] to its implementation took approximately two years, and the trip to the distant Chile, which began on 1 October 1972 in Moscow, lasted approximately three months [Fig. 5].

Twenty-two Pocketbook Pages

Speaking about the prehistory of this manuscript, it should be noted that inscriptions about the pavilion of the Lithuanian SSR at the Santiago fair in 1972 first caught my interest at the Russian State Archive of Economics[2] during my research trip to Moscow in 2018[3]. Later, I came across Vladas Vizgirda's portfolio in the archive of the Design Department of the

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1 For the Paris exhibition, Vizgirda designed twelve original showcases – eye-like convex globes assembled from a great many copper "eyelashes", in the epicentres of which precious stones were placed under the lenses.

2 Отчет директора советсково павильона на международной ярмарке в г. Сантьяго (Чили), 1972, in: RGAE, Fund 635, List 1, File 1089.

3 The focus of my research trip to Moscow on 17–26 April 2018 was the study of the sources about the Soviet Union's Industry and Trade Exhibition in London in 1968 (postdoctoral project at the Vilnius Academy of Arts "Lithuanian Design in International and Baltic Exhibitions in 1966–1985: Sources, Influences, Tensions and Identities", supervisor Prof. Dr. Giedrė Jankevičiūtė).

3.
Architect Vladas Vizgirda with the scale model of
the *Chile-72* pavilion, 1971, photo by Juozas Polis
from the personal archive of Vladas Vizgirda

Vilnius Academy of Arts[4], which contained several sketches of the Chile pavilion, black and white photographs, and a copy of the award [Fig. 6]. In the summer of 2020, I had two conversations with the architect in his home in Vilnius. Several weeks after the first interview, Vizgirda called me and handed me a handwritten manuscript consisting of twenty-two pocketbook pages (130 × 190 mm, slightly smaller than A5 size), yellowed over time, numbered and fastened with a metal paper clip [Fig. 1]. The text was written at several sittings, with intervals of probably several or even a dozen days, as at the beginning, a blue gel pen, starting from the second page – a black ballpoint pen, and, at the end, a black fountain pen was used [Fig. 2]. The text is divided into paragraphs, and separate parts of the account are separated with asterisks. The architect's handwriting is quite legible, and for the sake of authenticity is presented here unedited. Only the spelling of some titles and place names, names of identified mentioned persons, as well as several grammar and punctuation errors have been corrected.

Since it is an account written almost fifty years after the events took place, the architect describes the moments that he found important: from the conceptually most significant highlights of the pavilion to the

4   From 1990 to 2005, Vizgirda was an Associate Professor at the Design Department of Vilnius Academy of Arts.

4.
Architect Vladas Vizgirda
with the scale model of the
Chile-72 pavilion, 1971,
photo by Juozas Polis from
the personal archive of
Vladas Vizgirda

tiniest details of his idea. Along with descriptions that might be interesting for professionals, the author also shares his general impressions of the trip, and speaks with curiosity and amazement about new encounters, experiences and places that he visited. The text is suffused with empathy, as Vizgirda openly talks about personal relations among his travel companions, voices his doubts, and mentions what made him happy, disappointed or puzzled about this project of great personal importance, and what has remained unrevealed and unknown until today.

The project of the Chile pavilion was meant for export; thus, its communication was mostly kept low-key and only in the propaganda angles that were favourable to the system at that time[5].

The Exhibition Context

It was the first time that the Soviet Union had taken part in the international agriculture and industry exhibition FISA, which had deep traditions in Chile[6]. In Soviet times, different republics were traditionally allowed to be represented at international exhibitions and fairs, with a

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[5]   In the period of building the pavilion and after the exhibition, very few publications appeared in the Soviet Lithuanian press, among which Rimantas Žilevičius's article offered a professional analysis: Alfonsas Zdanavičius, "Čilė iš arti", in: *Kalba Vilnius*, 1972, No. 50, p. 12; "Sėkmingi mėnesiai Santjage", in: *Literatūra ir menas*, 1973 01 27, p. 11; Rimantas Žilevičius, "Ne smėlio pilys", in: *Kultūros barai*, 1973, No. 8, pp. 8–11.

[6]   In *FISA-72*, pavilions of other European countries, mostly from the socialist bloc, were also presented, among them Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania and the Federal Republic of Germany.

possibility to have separate pavilions, and sometimes – joint stands[7]. The entire exhibition area of the Soviet Union in FISA-72 was circa 2,000 square metres[8], about a quarter of which was allotted to the Lithuanian pavilion. Like the majority of other export exhibitions, the Santiago exhibition was organised by the directorate of the Exhibition of the Achievements of National Economics of the Lithuanian SSR, which coordinated all the organisational aspects of preparing the exhibition between Moscow[9] and the local institutions.

In Soviet times, "export pavilions" were instruments of Cold War propaganda. According to the official documents of that time, the exhibition was dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the USSR, and on that occasion, the Soviet Union and the Republic of Chile signed various trade and economic agreements for the development of copper ore extraction, chemical and fishing industry, and cooperation in conducting geological surveying works[10]. From 1970, when the socialist Salvador Allende became the President of Chile, the Soviets became even more active in trying to bring Chile into their zone of influence: from economic "cooperation" and interference of Soviet special services to so-called cultural exchange[11]. On the occasion of the exhibition, official visits and tours of the Soviet Lithuanian society, culture and arts delegation with concerts, Lithuanian folk dance performances

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7   E.g. in 1966, at the Leipzig fair, the exhibitions of Lithuania (architect Albinas Purys) and Estonia were presented: for more, see: Marija Drėmaitė, "Die Maske des West-lichen: Sowjetlitauen in Selbstdarstellungen", in: *Fortsetzung folgt: im Zuge der Moderne: ein Jahrhundert Litauen, 1918–2018*, eds. Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, Nerijus Šepetys, Vilnius: Lithuanian Culture Institute, 2017, pp. 61–71. In the Soviet Union's Industry and Trade Exhibition in London in 1968, pavilions of all the three Baltic republics were presented; each had an area of circa 500 m2. The Lithuanian pavilion was designed by the architect Tadas Baginskas, Karolina Jakaitė, *Šaltojo karo kapsulė: lietuvių dizainas Londone 1968*, Vilnius: leidykla LAPAS, 2019.

8   This fact is still to be specified, as until today, different figures are given in the sources – from 2,000 to 3,000 m².

9   The main institution in Moscow was the All-Union Industry and Trade Palace (*Торгово промышленная палата СССР*), which coordinated the preparation for international fairs, trade and world exhibitions.

10   Alfonsas Zdanavičius, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

11   E.g., in 1970–1973, the director Vytautas Žalakevičius produced a "Latin American" trilogy of propaganda films: *All Truth About Columbus* (a feature film of the Lithuanian Radio and Television, 1970), *That Sweet Word: Liberty* (a two-part feature film, a coproduction of the Lithuanian Film Studio and the Mosfilm, 1973), and *The Centaurs*. The action of all three films is set in Latin America. In 1972, a book about South America by a Soviet party journalist was published: Albertas Laurinčiukas, *Varinė saulė*, Vilnius: Vaga, 1972.

5.
Architect Vladas Vizgirda in Santiago, autumn of 1972, from the personal archive of Vladas Vizgirda

and meetings were organised in Chile and Peru[12]. It is important to note that the exhibition took place in a period when tensions ran high in Chile, and there was a looming threat of hyperinflation. Nationalisation programmes and growing taxes provoked strikes, and unable to gain control of the situation, the government imposed a curfew in the autumn of 1972, due to which the opening date of the exhibition was also postponed.

The Historical Lithuanian Connection and the Award

One of the thematic highlights of the Lithuanian pavilion was the 19th-century figure Ignotas Domeika (Spanish Ignacio Domeyko, or Ignacy Domeyko, 1802–1889), a renowned Chilean geologist, mineralogist, ethnologist, mountain engineer, and a long-time rector of the University of Chile

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[12] The head of the delegation was the first deputy Prime Minister of the Lithuanian SSR K. Kairys and the Minister of Culture L. Šepetys, and the artists' group consisted of the opera soloists V. Noreika and N. Ambrazaitytė, the pianist Ž. Noreikienė, the *birbynė* (an authentic Lithuanian wind instrument) player K. Budrius, the *kanklės* (a Lithuanian plucked string instrument (chordophone)) player B. Simonaitienė, and the dancers of the Lietuva song and dance company G. Vaitkevičienė, B. Beržanskytė, K. Tamulevičius, V. Banys and H. Uznys. See: Kazys Budrius, "Jautėm draugiškumą Tarybų Sąjungai", in: *Literatūra ir menas*, 1972 11 25, p. 2.

6.
A diploma of *El Gran Premio de Honor* for the artistic design of the pavilion, photo from the Vladas Vizgirda's portfolio in the archive of the Design Department of the Vilnius Academy of Arts

(1867–1883) who was of Lithuanian descent. Born into a Polish-speaking family of Lithuanian nobles in the territory of today's Belarus, Domeyko lived in Vilnius in 1816–1832, studied at Vilnius University, and took part in the uprising of 1831. One of the sections of the pavilion was dedicated to Domeyko [Fig. 7] and, according to Vizgirda, this Lithuanian connection was decisive in choosing to present the Soviet Lithuanian pavilion at the Santiago international fair in 1972[13].

The exhibition spaces were divided into theme sections or so-called boxes, which were fully built from assembled construction details[14]. On display were machine industry products [Fig. 8], television sets, Lithuanian furniture, clothes and footwear, a separate section of textiles, and sections of the food industry and books. Like all export exhibitions, souvenirs and,

13   One can assume that it was a way to mark the 170th anniversary of Ignacio Domeyko's birth. For example, in commemoration of his 200th anniversary, UNESCO proclaimed 2002 the year of Ignacio Domeyko.

14   Although at that time, above all in export projects, sustainability was not an issue, the construction details and materials of this pavilion were designed in a way that they could be reused. When the exhibition ended, they were indeed gifted to the Republic of Chile (true, it is unknown if they were actually installed somewhere).

most importantly, amber artefacts were showcased. Although carefully selected top-quality and appealing items that were actually in production were on display, as often happened in export exhibitions, some of the items exhibited in Chile were exclusive "exhibition" pieces, such as machines meant specifically for the non-domestic market. The fields of sports (bicycles), architecture and culture (in enlarged photographs) were distinguished as separate thematic groups [Fig. 9]. Since the showcased objects were extremely diverse, the main goal of the architect of the pavilion was to find a uniform all-inclusive style. He created it with the help of modern minimalist architectural solutions, without overloading the display with details, paying much attention to the rhythm of light, the arrangement of construction volumes and objects, and introducing visual dominants of several colours. It did not go unnoticed: in the last days of the exhibition (on 24 November 1972), the 37-year-old architect Vizgirda was awarded a diploma of El Gran Premio de Honor for the artistic design of the pavilion (*en la Categoría "A la Mejor Composición Técnica"*) [Fig. 6].

The White and Orange Colours, and Special Art and Design Projects

Even though the international prize was awarded, the artistic-creative aspect of the pavilion and its interesting design solutions did not receive proper acclaim. That is why an important part of the published source is a visual narrative. The architect's text is illustrated with photographs and visual artefacts from Vizgirda's personal archive[15]. Along with his manuscript, the architect allowed me to use some slides and photographs of the pavilion (several of them are signed by Jack Ceitel)[16]. Highly valuable are the pavilion's interior views in colour, as the Soviet-period publications contained only black and white images, and, in this case, colour combinations have great importance. They reveal the organic arrangement of the white wooden constructions and the surfaces of the showcases, connected with rounded corners (in the architect's words, with an addition of "a soft cut-out shape"), and the subtle play of their rhythms against the orange background of the roll carpet [Fig. 10]. In a publication of 1973, this combination was

15 I am very thankful to Vladas Vizgirda.
16 Jack Ceitel (b. 1930), a photographer of Lithuanian descent who lived in Chile since 1940.

compared to the whiteness of the Lithuanian snow and the (implied) orange colour of Chilean oranges[17]. The well-thought-out distribution of light in the pavilion's spaces, and the careful and sparing selection of exhibits helped to emphasise the atmosphere of minimalist simplicity. As we can see from the photographs, the entire set-up was not crammed with exhibits and objects, and the compositions of some thematic showcases were playfully arranged, e.g. a collage of triacetate fabrics, illustrating textile innovations [Fig. 11]. Colour images also allow us to newly assess the visual accents created especially for this pavilion: a map of the Lithuanian SSR and a stylised project of the flag of Soviet Lithuania[18], both created by the stained-glass artist and glass designer Gintautėlė Laimutė Juodenytė-Baginskienė[19] (1940–2021) [Figs. 12, 13, 17]. Both projects were executed in relief, in the same artistic manner, using cut-out and painted wood panels and enamel, in colours dictated by the Soviet Lithuanian flag – white, red and green. The highlight of the display was the so-called flag panel at the entrance. It was a very effective and technologically interesting solution, evocative of psychedelic art in its artistic style. The wavy surfaces of the flag were flanked by white elegant graphically carved layers reminiscent of snowdrifts or dunes, which opened a three-dimensional space [Fig. 13]. This composition of modern form was grounded and "Sovietised" by the inscription "Republica Socialista Sovietica de Lituania" in capital letters in the centre of the composition, and the Soviet coat of arms, which was hung slightly higher. In the interpretation of the map, the white lines are the most puzzling: did they imply the boundaries of the ethnic lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, or merely show the neighbouring Soviet republics? For more substantial answers, further research is needed, which might help to uncover preparatory sketches

17 Rimantas Žilevičius compared this colour combination to the whiteness of the Lithuanian winter, "quiet and predisposing to meditation", placing it in opposition to the orange carpet, and alongside quoted Vizgirda's words explaining what the Lithuanian spirit meant to him – it was "an atmosphere of tranquillity, restraint, noble simplicity", Rimantas Žilevičius, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

18 Specially commissioned decorative motifs of a map, a flag or the country's name were a rather characteristic choice in export exhibitions. It can be mentioned that in the Leipzig fair, Teodoras Kazimieras Valaitis created an entrance decorative panel LTSR (LSSR) from metal discs; see Marija Drėmaitė ir Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, "Į Vakarus per Maskvą: eksportinio SSRS įvaizdžio bendraautoris", in: *Teodoras Kazimieras Valaitis 1934–1974*, sud. Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, Vilnius: Lietuvos dailės muziejus, Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 2014, pp. 179–201.

19 Vizgirda collaborated with Gintautėlė Baginskienė for the Paris exhibition of 1970 as well; there, a decorative map of natural resources of the USSR created by the artist (in the repoussé technique) was displayed. Her glass design objects were exhibited at the Soviet Union's Industry and Trade Exhibition in London in 1968, see Jakaitė, *Šaltojo karo kapsulė*, pp. 90–94.

7.
A photocopy of the postage stamp dedicated to *Ignacio Domeyko* in commemoration of his 200th anniversary (1952) from the personal archive of Vladas Vizgirda

for the project, their thematic descriptions, or visitors' reviews. The same can be said about other aspects of designing and building the pavilion, whose assessment calls for additional archival and contextual research. Some facts mentioned by Vizgirda also need specification and comparative analysis. The success of the design of the Lithuanian pavilion at FISA-72 in the context of the Cold War race would once again confirm that the pro-Western modernist style of architects and designers of the Baltic countries was an apt choice for the Santiago international fair. Looking from today's perspective, a negative aspect of this success comes into view (though the author himself does not address it) – in a certain sense, the modern pavilion contributed to establishing the image of "success" of Soviet-occupied Lithuania.

Despite certain inaccuracies that might have remained in the text, Vizgirda's description is a valuable source of research on 20th-century exhibition architecture and design, which alongside reveals the socio-political, cultural and artistic intersections between Latin America and Eastern Europe in the 1970s. It has its place in the tradition of world exhibitions and pavilions, and the history of research on export pavilions of the Soviet period. Details of the account and examples presented in the technical vernacular may catch the interest of not only architects and designers, but also historians, culturologists, anthropologists, sovietologists, as well as authors writing about the relations of Eastern Europe and South America.

8–9.
Interior of the pavilion of the Lithuanian SSR in FISA-72, the sections showing amber souvenirs, architecture and culture in enlarged photographs of the Gate of Dawn in Vilnius and the House of Perkūnas in Kaunas, architect Vladas Vizgirda, photo by Jack Ceitel from the personal archive of Vladas Vizgirda

Karolina Jakaitė ———— *The Lithuanian Pavilion in Chile in 1972:*
Architect Vladas Vizgirda's Account Fifty Years Later

Architect Vladas Vizgirda's Written Account about the Participation in the International Exhibition-Fair in Santiago de Chile in 1972

The Beginning of Beginnings

That's how it all started. After I successfully installed the exhibitions in Poland (Warsaw, 1968), Czechoslovakia (Prague, 1968), Germany (Erfurt, 1969), and, most importantly, France (Paris, 1970), I was entrusted with a large and important project, personal full-scale project implementation – to create the design, to oversee the production of articles and constructions, and to take part in installing them on site, in the capital of Chile, Santiago. This representation of Lithuania in the Latin American country had to do with one of the most distinct personalities of Chile of that time – Ignas Domeika [Ignacio Domeyko], who is considered a national hero in that country. But more about that later.

By that time, I had already accumulated considerable experience in this field, though I was basically designing interior furnishings for museums, bookshops and other public buildings.

The Council of Ministers of that time discussed the choice of the country and the representation of the Lithuanian pavilion. Why was Chile chosen?

The main factor, as I already mentioned, was the prominent Chilean scientist, teacher, the university's founder and rector, a Lithuanian who descended from the Žemaitija[20] region, Ignacio Domeyko. He emigrated to Chile after the uprising of 1830–1832, having graduated from Sorbonne University. Thus, it was justly decided to relate us to the country of our compatriot, in which he was titled a national hero because of his contribution to the history of Chile. Thus, being charged with this important task, I set out to work right away without counting the hours.

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Having familiarised myself with the task and the guidance papers, I realised that I needed to find a universal solution without knowing the concrete location. The only known quantity was the area – more than

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20 Samogitia, or Žemaitija, is one of the five ethnographic regions of Lithuania.

500 m². That is why I needed to find a conceptual and artistic solution that would be suitable for any location. According to the guidance papers, the sections of the Lithuanian pavilion had to be arranged in the following way:

a)   Heavy industry (precision machinery, tools etc.)

b)   Light industry (textile, footwear, clothes, carpets)

c)   Furniture industry (a bedroom set)[21]

d)   Book publishing (adult and children's books)

e)   Architecture (large-size "slides")

f)   Souvenirs (jewellery, dolls etc.)

g)   Sports (bicycles etc.).

All these sections were aimed to reflect the level of economic development of Lithuania of that time.

A separate section had to be devoted to Ignacio Domeyko.

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My main objective as an architect was working out a spatial, artistic and compositional idea. It could be achieved only by attuning the arrangement of exhibits to capture the visitors' attention and interests. In my opinion (which turned out to be completely correct), it depends on the relation of light and dark in the exhibition space. The exhibits were spotlighted with artificial lighting, while the direction of the visitors' movement in the exhibition space was darkened. Orange was chosen as the colour of the roll carpet. It was the only large colour spot, which added a touch of solemnity, as if you were walking on a red carpet [Fig. 10]. This carpet also created the effect of sound insulation. Extraneous sounds in the exhibition space have a negative effect on the general mood. All that was confirmed in practice. However, first of all, all this material along with the exhibits needed to be "dressed" in a constructive robe.

I chose as few as three elements, which formed the basis of the entire display structure: a) pillars, b) flooring panels, c) wall and ceiling (plafond) panels [Figs. 14–15]. All the structural elements were quite lightweight, with wood veneer planking, covered with white enamel, with the exception of the heavy floor panels, which had to be covered with deep dark orange carpet. The main elements were pillars, which constituted the larger

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21 One of the key furniture exhibits was the bedroom set Vaiva (1964), designed by a designer of the Furniture Design Bureau Brigita Adomonienė.

10.
Interior of the pavilion of the Lithuanian SSR in FISA-72, the sections showing textile and ceramic art, architect
Vladas Vizgirda, photo from the personal archive of Vladas Vizgirda

11.
Interior of the pavilion of the Lithuanian SSR in FISA-72, the sections showing textile and the production of
shoes, architect Vladas Vizgirda, photo from the personal archive of Vladas Vizgirda

part of the exhibition display. They performed the function of connecting the floor and the ceiling panels. To make them something more than just dull constructive supports, I added a soft cut-out shape, which elegantly decorated the entire exhibition space [Fig. 16].

The concept of the entire display had to be accentuated by two decorative elements: an artistic detail at the entrance, and a map with the contour of the territory of Lithuania. It had to be the cherry on the cake. I have in mind the decorative highlight at the entrance [Fig. 12]. I asked the artist Ginta Baginskienė [Fig. 17] to create both the decorative and the informational elements, as I found her creative idiom appealing. While I was preoccupied with the structure of the exhibition, the artist showed interesting first drafts. The first one – the motif of the main entrance – was a wavy relief with the colours of the Lithuanian flag of that time, which was a dominant element extending from the floor to the ceiling. It was not a straightforward rendition of the motif of the flag – after all, it was only the flag of a "surrogate" Lithuania. The second important detail was the map of the territory of the Republic of Lithuania. It was an informative rather than artistic element, with artistic execution. The sketches that the artist presented looked promising. The first motif of the flag in particular held a promise of success. All our hopes were fulfilled on site [Fig. 18].

It remained to implement everything that we had planned. And we got down to work.

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The production process was entrusted to the specialists of the Vilnius Art Production Facility "Dailė", who had a huge experience in this kind of work (mostly fulfilling state orders). Since I also worked there in the group of architects, I could easily follow and oversee the entire production process. Woodwork constituted 95 percent of all works, including the decorative highlights of the display. Top-notch specialists in their field were involved. Some objects had large dimensions – up to 3.5 m (pillars). We could not transport boxes of that size to the customs office, thus, customs clearance was conducted on site, in the production facility.

12.
A map of the Lithuanian SSR designed especially for this pavilion by Gintautėlė Baginskienė, photo from the personal archive of Vladas Vizgirda

13.
A stylised project of the flag of Soviet Lithuania, designed especially for this pavilion by Gintautėlė Baginskienė, photo from the personal archive of Vladas Vizgirda

For transportation, we needed to design packaging that would meet international standards. The entire cargo consisted of boxes of various size. There were approximately 200 pieces. All the elements, manufactured articles and exhibits were sent to Leningrad (Saint Petersburg), and from there, together with other constructions of the Soviet Union pavilion, they were shipped to Chile. The shipment was scheduled to arrive a month before the established date, leaving us a month for the installation and for setting up the display. All we had to do was to wait for the notification that the shipment had arrived.

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A month passed by quite quickly. Special outfits were made for each member of our "landing force"[22], something like a uniform. Now we had to wait until each candidacy was approved by Moscow, confirming that we were not enemies of the regime and could be trusted. This particularly concerned those like myself, who were not members of the "glorious" party. Until this day, I can't understand why they approved me. At that time, it was almost a miracle. Besides, my views were totally on the wrong track from the perspective of official ideology. That is why I am still wondering if they trusted me because I had an "anchor" here – family, children and parents, or if the judgement was made on the basis of professionalism, and there was nobody else to replace me with. There had been some cases when the authorities would not allow the artist to travel and would send "a specialist in plain clothes" instead. It had come close to that when I designed the Geology Hall of the USSR pavilion. My departure was not approved, but it came to a point that on site, in Paris, the opening of the hall came under threat. These so-called "substitutes" could not read the drawings, and so, a week before the opening, they found me on vacation on Palanga beach. I was told to show up in Moscow the next day, where a ticket to Paris was waiting for me.

We would say jokingly: before you land in your destination, don't even mention that you're going there.

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22 A term used by the architect in reference to the members of the delegation that travelled to Chile, probably about 15–20 persons. Vizgirda mentioned the main ones: the head of the delegation Meris Kaniauskas (b. 1923), an ideological party figure, who published a book about France in 1965 (*Susitikimas su Prancūzija*, Vilnius: Vaga, 1965), a Spanish interpreter Beatričė Strimaitienė, a machine constructor Apolinaras Čepulis, a representative of a textile factory, and three assistants – fitters (Vladas Riauba, Rutkauskas and Vytautas Zaranka).
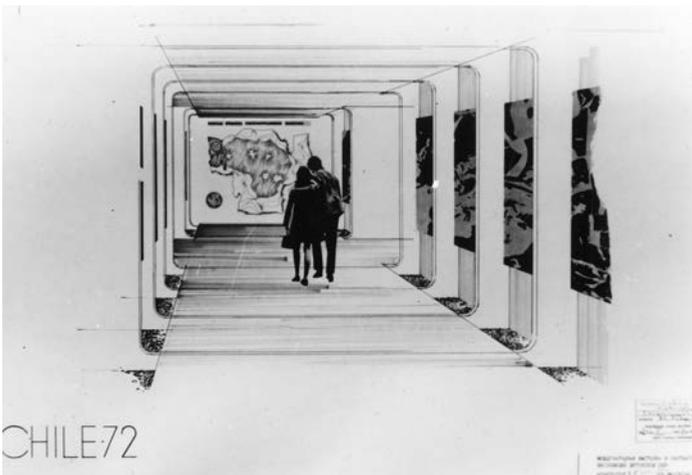
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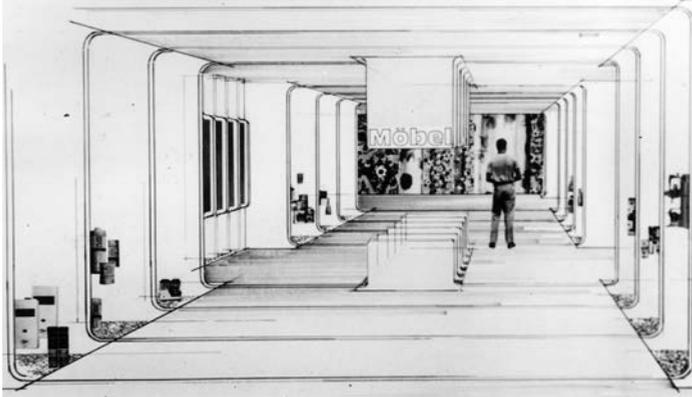
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14–16.
The project of the pavilion
of the Lithuanian SSR in
FISA-72, architect Vladas
Vizgirda, photo from
the Vladas Vizgirda's
portfolio in the archive of
the Design Department
of the Vilnius Academy
of Arts

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And so, finally, in late September 1972, we were notified that permissions had been granted, and on 1 October, we were all expected to gather in Moscow, and from there we were to start our trip to the other side of the globe. The itinerary was as follows: Moscow – Paris – New York – Panama – Lima – San Paulo (Brazil) – Buenos Aires – Santiago. The trip lasted 42 hours with transfers and landings for refuelling. We arrived in our final destination at midnight, dead tired, and couldn't wait for a bus to come and take us to the hotel. It was spring, but the temperature was as high as 30–35 degrees Celsius during the day. The air was saturated with the scent of blooming flowers. The range of colours and smells was out of this world. We were accommodated in a skyscraper hotel in the centre of Santiago[23] [Fig. 19]. Having slept like logs, in the morning we had to get up.

What did I know about that country at the time? That it extended along the entire South American continent for about 4,100 km in a narrow strip along the Pacific coast. That it had a population (at that time) of ~10 million people, two universities (a public and a Catholic), that the language was Spanish, the currency was the escudo[24], and the level of its military preparation was one of the best in the continent. Everything else remained to be seen and learned live.

Our acquaintance with the country started from early morning. Already in the morning we learned that the exhibition would not take place as scheduled.

The equipment and exhibits of the USSR pavilion had gotten wet during a storm during the crossing. It took time to get everything dry and repaint all the constructions. Lithuanian diligence saved us from that: all our manufactured articles and elements had been very neatly packed. We were even glad to hear the news. It meant that we wouldn't need to hurry, and, besides, we would have quite a lot of time to explore the country's life.

When we went out, it seemed that life in the city went on as normal. But in reality, it was not as it seemed. We discovered that political tensions ran high. The President of Chile, Salvador Allende, was popular

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23 Hotel Tupahue (San Antonio 477, Santiago) at that time was a 5-star hotel, a 12-storey building in the city's main square, which is still in operation. Vizgirda kept the hotel envelope and two sheets of headed writing paper as souvenirs.

24 Among the souvenirs kept by Vizgirda is a one-escudo banknote.

among the people. He was an erudite, a former physician, now President, and kept company with such famous people of Latin America as the artists Diego Rivera, Siqueiros, the Chilean poet and Nobel Prize winner Pablo Neruda, and others. He had a strong mind to work for his country's good, but many of his reforms were blocked by his opponents in the parliament – the opposition sabotaged them. By his decrees he had nationalised a great deal of private property and abolished foreign monopolies. That is why large-scale businessmen and latifundium owners were extremely opposed to him. They organised frequent strikes, which often ended in riots. Several days later we had a chance to observe it. Strikes would start from early morning, and around midday, crowds would be dispersed with various means: water cannons, batons etc. Shop windows were broken, cars were set on fire, barricades were built on the streets, fires burned. On one hand, there were large-scale landowners, and on the other – the legal Communist party of Chile, whose members were secretly arming themselves. It was obvious that sooner or later, it would come to a bad end. Our delegation was keeping itself apart. We were focused on our work.

Already on the second day, we went to see the location where the pavilions of the countries were to be built. The location was approximately 15 km outside the city, in the Exhibitions Square. We were astonished to see the place. It was a simple cemented square. Nothing more. So, we had to start in an empty field. The shipped boxes were already there. That's how we started. We unpacked them, I marked the contours, the fixture points and the limits with chalk, and we started to build. In the beginning, I managed with three assistants – fitters. They were Vladas Riauba, Rutkauskas and Vytautas Zaranka. Fine men and excellent specialists. We worked as a team. Every day. It may seem routine. But it wasn't. In late afternoon, when we finished working, we would go out and explore the city of millions. The city of Santiago does not have an old town district. Like all South American cities, it is contemporary, and has modern architecture. Its urban planning is also characteristic of all South American cities: a grid of horizontal and vertical streets. A swift river runs through the middle of the city. The urban area is flanked by the Cordillera range on one side and the Andes with

17.
Stained glass artist and glass designer
Gintautėlė Laimutė Juodenytė-
Baginskienė, 1960s, photo from the
personal archive of Tadas Baginskas

their snowy peaks on the other [Fig. 20]. The city is green and has wide open spaces. Old Catholic churches are comfortably nestled next to modern architecture. There were hardly any Lithuanians in Chile, or at least we didn't see or meet them. Across the Cordillera was Argentina, a country with a huge number of Lithuanian emigrants. Because of its climatic zone, it was the most favourable place to live in South America. It was very easy to distinguish a person with European features from Chile's indigenous inhabitants. They are short, dark-skinned, with native Indian features. Very warm and outgoing. The Quechua and Araucanian tribes, the original inhabitants of Chile, still exist. These people carry themselves quite solemnly among others. Both young and old inhabitants are not fluent in English or can't speak it at all. A large part of the population is of German descent, having emigrated to Chile after the Second World War. They are quite well-off,
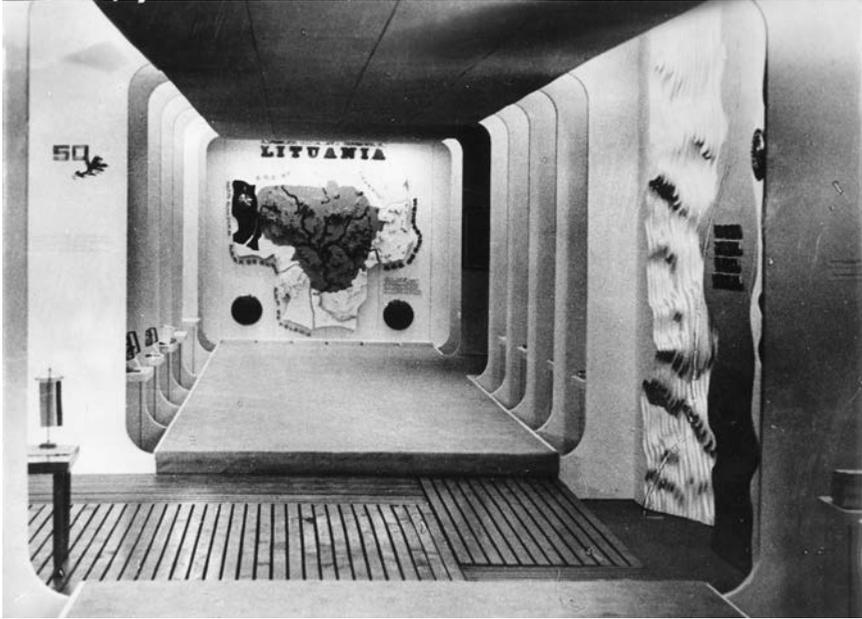
18.
Entrance of the pavilion of the Lithuanian SSR in FISA-72, photo from the personal archive of Vladas Vizgirda

run businesses and are quite entrepreneurial. Thus, many businesses are in the hands of foreigners. And the locals don't like it.

A few more words about the city, the capital. Like in Brazil, where the giant statue of Christ towering over Rio has become a symbol of that country, in Santiago, a huge Virgin Mary rises on the highest peak, which has also become a landmark of Santiago. The beautiful San Cristóbal Park with amazing vegetation extends at its foot. I also visited the Museum of Regional Ethnography whose collection boasts the awards of all presidents of Chile. Among them were the awards that the president of pre-war Lithuania, [Antanas] Smetona, conferred on the head of Chile of that time. True, they had an erroneous label claiming that these were the highest awards of Poland. We pointed it out to a museum employee and asked him to correct the mistake. But it is difficult to say if it was done.

Now I'd like to go back to the national hero of Chile, as they call him, Ignacio Domeyko. Together with our new friend whom we met back

19.
The hotel envelope from the Hotel Tupahue (San Antonio 477, Santiago) in the city's main square, where Vladas Vizgirda was accommodated in autumn 1972. Vizgirda kept this envelope and two sheets of headed writing paper as souvenirs from Chile

in Lithuania, Apolinaras Čepulis[25], a fine man and an excellent constructor of precision machinery, we visited the house of our compatriot Ignacio Domeyko. His relatives – two great-grandchildren, both of them university professors – gave us a very friendly welcome, though they did not exactly understand our intention. During all that time, before our arrival in Chile, the Polish embassy had been keeping the Domeyko family under its wing. By the embassy's efforts, our compatriot, just like Adomas Mickevičius[26], was appropriated by the Poles. When we introduced ourselves as Lithuanians and told them that he came from the same country, they showed us two huge folders with documents from Ignacio Domeyko's archive. Leafing through the papers, we found a diploma from the Sorbonne University in Paris, which clearly stated that it was conferred to a Samogitian[27] noble. My friend Apolinaras Čepulis took a photo of that document. As far as I know, he has kept that important copy of the document.

25 Apolinaras Čepulis (b. 1933), a constructor of precision machinery, who worked as a product engineer at the Vilnius Drill Factory, a product manager at the Vilnius Sanding Machine Factory, and as the head of the Vilnius branch of the Institute of Scientific Research of Dicing Machines. In 1966, he finished postgraduate studies at Vilnius University, and in 1967, defended a dissertation of Doctor of Technical Sciences. Today, he is known as a writer, a member of the Lithuanian Writers' Union since 2005, and has written three novels.

26 Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), a world-famous poet whose Lithuanian name is Adomas Mickevičius, considered himself to be both a Lithuanian and a Pole. He wrote in Polish but spent his formative years in Lithuania.

27 Samogitia or Žemaitija is one of the five ethnographic regions of Lithuania.

True, I have to mention that we took to Chile a wooden bas-relief dedicated to our compatriot, which was created by the artist and sculptor Leonas Žuklys. I only know that the head of our delegation Kaniauskas presented it to the University of Santiago, whose rector Domeyko was. I don't know how exactly it happened, we were not informed[28].

Let's go back to our work. Work gave me great pleasure – to see that your idea starts taking a concrete shape. The structure of the Lithuanian pavilion began to fall into place. We were not really interested in seeing how the pavilions of other countries were being installed. Almost all the South American countries were present, as was North Korea (for unknown reasons) and several individual Western European companies. The Singer pavilion that imitated a huge world-famous sewing machine stood out among others. The display was set up inside the machine. Apart from that, other pavilions did not make a larger impression. Sundays were free; thus, we tried to take a break from work by making trips to the neighbouring cities. We visited a lovely resort at the Pacific Ocean, Viña del Mar, and the city of Valparaíso – a port in a beautiful bay. The more we saw the country, the more we liked it [Figs. 21–22].

While we were at work, quite far away from the city, political tension inside the city was building up. After the incident when the motorcade of the chief army general Pratz[29] was gunned down in the very centre of the city and he was killed, the President would go home by helicopter – from the roof of the President's office to his residence outside the city. That general supported Allende, that's why he was eliminated by hostile forces. He was replaced by another general, Pinochet, who later staged a coup and changed the course of Chile's history.

One event followed another. It was getting rather scary. On top of everything, a curfew was imposed. From 6 p.m. it was forbidden to go out. Shootings were heard all around [Fig. 23]. We had to stay in the hotel or its bar. So, we had a chance to taste some really good Chilean wines. Their wine was indeed excellent. An incident that happened before these events was a good proof. In that year the grape harvest was very poor in France. Knowing the qualities of Chilean wine, the French bought a large quantity

29 The precise name and surname of the general could not be identified.

20.
The city of Santiago, 1972, photo from the personal archive of Vladas Vizgirda

of these wines and bottled them in France with a label "Made in France". When this fact came to light, the French embassy in Santiago was vandalised. That's just one example.

Meanwhile, a Lithuanian millionaire, Vladas Rasčiauskas, arrived from Boston like a "gift" to us, and "took care" of us during the curfew, in the restaurant on the hotel's roof. Never in our life did we have so much seafood. The only thing that he asked of us was to sing beautiful Lithuanian songs. He told us about the twists and turns of his life. How he went bankrupt three times, how once 90 per cent of the skin on his face burned during a fire, and how he got back on his feet. As soon as he had eard about the plans to hold an exhibition in Chile in which Lithuania was involved, the energetic Lithuanian jumped on the plane. He said that he was testing the grounds. Yet, he found the atmosphere too restless. Otherwise, he would have started bringing Lithuanian Americans there by plane. But he didn't like the environment. He said it was not good for business. Because of the curfew, the exhibition opening was postponed for another week.

Karolina Jakaitė ——— *The Lithuanian Pavilion in Chile in 1972:*
Architect Vladas Vizgirda's Account Fifty Years Later

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21–22.
The boarding passes, museum and theater tickets, receipts from cafes and restaurants, reminding the places he visited during his three-month-long work trip to Chile in October–December 1972, pasted into the pages of the book *The Roads of Chile*, from the personal archive of Vladas Vizgirda

The works in the pavilion were coming to an end. We were tuning up the machines, setting up the display of textile, footwear, furniture, clothes, souvenirs, books etc. When we laid the orange carpet, it added festivity to the pavilion. We didn't lack anything. We had done our homework well.

We would also bring our own food, thus we didn't have to think about where and what to eat.

And finally, the long-awaited opening day came. Since the patrons of the exhibition were large-scale latifundia owners, it was not the
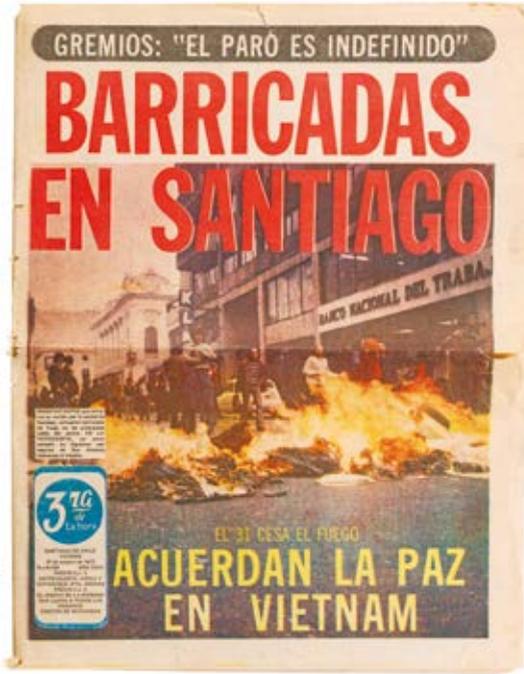
President, who was in conflict with them, but the general Pinochet with his military suite, all spruced up like turkeys, that showed up at the opening.

We were waiting for reviews. The large family of one of our fitters, Rutkauskas, arrived from Argentina, and the owners of German pubs, the Germans who emigrated after the Second World War, came to see the exhibition. Some of them had been to Lithuania before or during the war. They had a liking for us. We gifted Lithuanian souvenirs to everyone: dolls dressed in national costumes, booklets, badges. It should be mentioned that the pavilion had a special exhibition badge with the inscription "LITUANIA", created by the designer Vidas Gibavičius[30].

Having finished work, we took turns on duty in the pavilion, explaining and answering visitors' questions [Fig. 24]. The majority of the visitors were Chileans. They were very interested in knowing where Lithuania was. The curfew was lifted before the opening of the fair. Thus, I managed to

30 It was designed by Vidas-Kazimieras Gibavičius (1940–2020), an artist who was born in deportation, in Siberia, and finished a seven-year school. Having studied design at the State Institute of Art in 1966, he worked as a planning designer in various institutions, mainly in the planning-design group of the Art Production Facility "Dailė".

24.
Visitors at the pavilion of the Lithuanian SSR in FISA-72, in front of the Lithuanian books exposition, architect Vladas Vizgirda, photo from the Vladas Vizgirda's portfolio in the archive of the Design Department of the Vilnius Academy of Arts

visit a couple of theatres during the remaining time [Fig. 21]. These were not musical but popular operetta and drama theatres.

And finally, as the month of the fair was coming to a close, happy news reached us: our pavilion was awarded the grand honorary prize, Gran Premio de Honor, for the best artistic design. I felt really happy about it. I knew that I was the first among Lithuanian architects in the Soviet republic to receive an international prize. It was a huge step forward in my career. Somewhat later, we learned that besides an official diploma, there was also a considerable monetary award. But it remained a secret who took it or shared it. I discovered that later. But I thought: let them choke on it. I didn't care. I was tired, not so much from work as from tension and impressions. Just a few more words about the prize. Most importantly, in the diploma of the prize, the word "sovietica" was missing, as if we did not belong to the

Soviet Union, much to the dissatisfaction of the heads of the USSR pavilion. Just this one word or rather its absence meant that Lithuania's affiliation was not indicated. The inscription read: "REPUBLICA SOCIALISTA LITUANIA" [Fig. 6]. I WAS VERY HAPPY ABOUT IT. Having taken the prize, the head of the delegation with the diploma (and the money?) went home immediately. We were also eager to go home. I missed my wife, children, my nearest and dearest. Lithuania seemed to be the most beautiful place. I spent almost three months in Chile, and during that time I picked up some Spanish. I could make myself understood on the street, in shops etc. That language was quite easy to memorise, very musical, mellifluous. The entire continent speaks Spanish. At work we hired Chilean handymen to perform simple tasks. When we couldn't understand each other, the interpreter Beatričė Strimaitienė would help us. She was born in Argentina, in Buenos Aires, and her family re-emigrated to Lithuania. She was not only fluent in the language, but also familiar with the customs of the neighbouring countries. I could continue writing about other things, such as:

a) Chile was the only country among the constitutional democracies of South America, which did not have a coup d'état for more than forty years, while in the neighbouring countries, dictatorships with overthrow of power were quite frequent,

b) there are several times more women in the country than men, who go to the USA to make money, though the birth rate is quite high,

c) it is a country of huge social inequality,

d) they have top-notch wine for the price of a newspaper,

e) Chile takes pride in copper and its artefacts (2nd place in the world),

f) rodeos take place there,

g) illegal cockfights are held, often ending in lethal injuries,

h) pornography and bordellos are prohibited in that Catholic country,

i) the secret services quite unceremoniously follow and search newcomers like ourselves. A proof of that was our messed-up suitcases with broken locks in the hotel,

j) like all southerners, Chileans have quite a nonchalant attitude to work. We had some local people working as hired help at the pavilion. If something more complicated had to be done, they would say: *mañana*, which means "tomorrow" in Spanish. They kept repeating that every day.

I could write so much more about this beautiful distant country, but <...> let's stop here.

<div align="right">Vladas Vizgirda, July – August 2020</div>

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Santrauka

Lietuvos paviljonas Čilėje 1972 m.: architekto Vlado Vizgirdos pasakojimas po 50 metų

Karolina Jakaitė

Reikšminiai žodžiai: tarptautinės eksportinės sovietinio laikotarpio parodos, Šaltasis karas, *Fisa-72*, Baltijos modernizmas, parodų dizainas, Ignotas Domeika.

Šaltinio publikacijoje pristatomas lietuvių architekto Vlado Vizgirdos (g. 1935) rankraštis, kuriame autorius aprašo prieš 50 metų įgyvendintą eksportinio paviljono projektą. Tai buvo Lietuvos SSR ekspozicija Sovietų Sąjungos paviljone tarptautinėje žemės ūkio ir pramonės mugėje *Fisa 72*, vykusioje Santjago mieste Čilėje, kuri pelnė apdovanojimą už meninį apipavidalinimą. Vizgirda, kaip pagrindinis *Chile-72* paviljono kūrėjas, aprašo savo atsiminimus pasakodamas apie 500 m² ploto ekspozicijos koncepciją, architektūrinius ir dizaino sprendimus, pasirengimo procesą, parodos instaliavimo darbus ir patirtus įspūdžius beveik tris mėnesius trukusioje komandiruotėje Čilėje 1972 m. spalio–gruodžio mėnesiais. Svarbi publikuojamo šaltinio dalis – vizualinis pasakojimas, susidedantis iš nepublikuotų fotografijų, leidžiančių naujai įvertinti modernius minimalistinio dizaino paviljono sprendimus.

Vizgirdos aprašymas yra vertingas XX a. parodų architektūros ir dizaino tyrimų šaltinis. Jis įsirašo į pasaulinių parodų ir paviljonų tradiciją, sovietmečio eksportinių paviljonų tyrimų istoriją. Specialybine kalba pateiktos pasakojimo detalės ir pavyzdžiai gali sudominti ne tik architektus bei dizainerius, bet ir istorikus, kultūrologus, antropologus, sovietologijos tyrėjus, taip pat autorius, rašančius apie Rytų Europos ir Pietų Amerikos ryšius.