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Being an Actress in the 20th Century: Between Public and Private

The New Woman (*Neue frau*) of the 1920's emerged expressive, fashion orientated and with a cigarette in her hands. It confused many people in that time, since the visual representation of a woman began to change and get more liberated. In my dissertation I present that an image-based culture of interwar period shows the diversity of interesting women artists, living their public and private lives differently, masking their ordinary self underneath a bohemian lifestyle and different visual and social discourses. I use and defend a term *photographic culture*, which was formulated and inspired by writings of Vilém Flusser and his ways of thinking about a technological change and all in all worship of an image.

At that time women faced very modern problems – from the right shape of body to perfect hair. It was important to be representative not only in public, but in private as well. Actresses were public personas and seen as flirty, sexualized objects of attention. Periodic newspapers published stories, witty-satirical representations of an actress wanting to live a reckless life, not suited for a woman of that time. I argue, that the visual image, constructed and presented in illustrated newspapers, was very influential among popular women of that time.

In addition, private archives of actresses not only show their artistic self-representation (often changing appearances with costumes and make up), beauty standards and images shaped by visual culture (mimicking the style of *femme-fatale*, *vamp*), but also other movements rooted in the European cultural history. The material shows an interest in body movement and and culture (*Lebensreform*, *Körperkultur*). Through private images it is seen, that a woman was interested in her body not only in a professional, but also artistic way. Even though the interwar culture of Lithuania also acknowledged sports and gymnastics, it is seen that some artists took their body discoveries further by producing portraits of themselves, their bodies and all in all representation through vernacular imagery and photography. Not only the photographic material, but personally collected articles and magazines show further interest in *Lebensreform* and expressionist dance (*Ausdruckstanz*), baring exactly the same visual similarities and compositions to image produced in Germany, particularly by photographer Gerhard Riebicke. It is seen, that expressionist *movement* brought together artists with the same beliefs and artistic tendencies, masking their private lifestyle under photographic image.