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**THE WORLD OF VASTSELIINA ESTATE IN 1913:
REINHOLD KARL VON LIPHARDT AS A
PHOTOGRAPHER**

INTRODUCTION

Until the beginning of the digital photo era, many of us had recorded our family history in a strictly systematized or in a more liberal manner in black-and-white or colour photos printed on photo paper. Many of us had also recorded both trivial and important events of our lives in diary entries. The desire to see oneself “immortalized in history” with the help of a work of art has existed from times immemorial, but the invention of photo technologies in the 19th century made this process simpler, cheaper and more accessible. As a result, a painted, drawn or sculpted portrait became an exclusive form of personal documentation, while photographs provided a more democratic way of recording particular persons and events. The technological development of photography since the invention of the daguerreotype technique in the 1830s has led to the simplification of the photochemical process involved in image production.

The historical context of the development of photography is directly related to the main subject of this article, which is a study of a photo album created by Reinhold Karl von Liphardt Jr, which is one of a number of photo albums created by Baltic Germans in Latvia

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in the first half of the 20th century. By the end of the 19th century, not only professional studio photographers but also professional artists had taken advantage of the technical possibilities to obtain an accurate image offered by photography. For professional artists, photography was an aid in documenting the landscape or the person being portrayed. For members of the upper and middle classes, photography was a means of spending their free time creatively and of recording the most important domestic events and situations.

In the early 1990s, thanks to the kindness of Mrs. Brigitte Walbe, director of the *Bildarchiv Foto Marburg* of the Art History Institute of the Phillips University Marburg, known to every researcher of Baltic German cultural heritage, duplicates of photographic materials from the carefully assembled collections of the Baltic German historian and genealogist Georg von Krusenstjern¹ were made available to the author of this article. The collection, *Baltisches Heimatbilder – Archiv Georg v. Krusenstjern*, at the end of his life was bequeathed to the Association of Baltic Knightage (*Verband der Baltischen Ritterschaften*). From the Baltic German families who emigrated from the Baltic states in 1939 and earlier, the owner of the collection has collected more than 15,000 historical photographs with images of the Baltic cultural landscape, cities, manors and churches, including around 10,000 photographic portraits made both in professional photo studios and by amateur companies of photographers as well as photographs of painted portraits. After G. von Krusenstjern's photographs had been included in the *Bildarchiv Foto Marburg* collection, Marburg university specialists selected the most valuable materials and granted the duplicates of the photographs recognized as of little value for their cultural heritage research, including those of Reinhold von Liphardt's (1864–1940) photo albums, to the author of the present article.

Between the 1950s and the early 1980s, G. von Krusenstjern's photographic material collection was enriched with several photo albums that had been entrusted to him by the emigrating Baltic German families for the research of their cultural history. Even though incomplete, as the most important photographs remain in the possession of these families, some such albums have come to Latvia and become material for fragmentary research that cannot

1 Georg Friedrich Benedikt von Krusenstjern (1899–1989) was a German-Baltic historian and genealogist: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg_von_Krusenstjern [accessed 10/04/2023].

be systematized. Among them mention should be made of two such albums with photos of various manors in Vidzeme collected by the owner of the Ropaži manor, Baron von Wolff, Baroness Eveline von Maydell's album with views of Tallinn old town from the 1920s–1930s, and Alexander Studemeister's album of his time as a student at Tallinn (Reval) Dom School, *Bilder aus meiner Schulzeit. 1922–1927*, including school trip photos and postcards from Estonia, Livland and Riga. Some of these photo albums provide curious insights into the adventurous life of the Baltic Germans. Among such photo albums, there are also those that ended up in the National Library of Latvia in the 1990s and that testify to the tsarist army officer Baron Konstantin von Pillar's war experience in his own photographs *I Weltkrieg 1915 – mit dem Kosaken an der Türkischen Front im Caucasus und Klein-Asien*.² In 2005, Bernhard Borchert, grandson of the painter Christian Bernhard Borchert, presented the author of the article with a family relic – the album *Erinnerung an Riga* made in 1893 by the corporate organization *Drachenzahn* with the following dedication: *Zur freundlichen Erinnerung von den Insassen des "Drachenzahns"*. It contains views of Riga and Jūrmala taken by the photographers of the studio owned by the cultural landscape photographer Karl Anton Schulz (1831–1884) and his widow.³ Also, in the summer of 2021, Jēkabpils History Museum, which is located in Krustpils (Creutzburg) Castle, received historical documents and two photo albums as a gift from the descendants of Baron von Korff with photographs taken in 1893–1894 of the interior of the palace and of domestic scenes.⁴ The above allows us to conclude that the turn of the 19th century is characterized by an increased popularity of photography as a documentation technique in the professional as well as amateur milieu, facilitated by the development of both photo chemistry and photo technology.

2 Latvian National Library [LNB], RXA 319, 15. Konstantīns Pilars, 1. Pasaules kara skatu album (1915).

3 Turaidas muzejrezervāts, "Viens no pirmajiem mūsu apkārtnes fotogrāfiem – Kārlis Šulcs", 4 February 2022: <https://www.turaida-muzejs.lv/2022/02/viens-no-pirmajiem-musu-apkartnes-fotografiem-karlis-sulcs/> [accessed 15/04/2023].

4 Sandra Paegļkalne, "Krustpils pils saņem vērtīgu dāvinājumu no baronu fon Korfu radnieka", *Latvijas Sabiedriskie Mediji*, 24 July 2021: <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/kultura/kulturtelpa/krustpils-pils-sanem-vertigu-davinajumu-no-baronu-fon-korfu-radnieka.a414043/> [accessed 15/04/2023].



FIG.1. THE POLYTECHNICUM OF RIGA, NOW THE CENTRAL BUILDING OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA. PHOTO FROM THE ALBUM *ERINNERUNG AN RIGA* (1893).

PHOTOGRAPHER AND HIS ALBUM AS THE SUBJECT OF RESEARCH

What has attracted the attention of the author of this article was an envelope with the inscription *Ratshof* inserted into a magnificent photo album by Georg von Krusenstjern, the creator of the image archive of the Baltic Germans' historical homeland. The envelope contained four photos: three views of the Raadi (Ratshof) manor taken from different angles and a portrait of Reinhold von Liphardt. On its reverse there is an inscription in pencil: *Reinhold v. von Liphardt. Letzter Majoratsherr auf Ratshof*. Both this inscription and the stamp of Georg von Krusenstjern, a confidant of the Baltic German families and the creator of the archive, on the envelope confirm the authenticity of the photographs in the album, which must have come to the creator of the archive directly from the von Liphardt family. Moreover, these photographs have aroused the interest of the author of this article and served as a starting point for his research.



FIG. 2. FRANZ VON LENBACH, *PORTRAIT OF REINHOLD KARL VON LIPHARDT* (OIL ON CARDBOARD, 1902). WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

Both Baltic German and Estonian historians have published voluminous studies on the von Liphardt family, the Raadi manor and the collections of works of art accumulated by several generations of this family, a significant part of which today adorn Estonian museums. While their review is outside the objectives of this article, the article author's intention is to analyse the 181 photographs pasted on the album's twenty-six cardboard pages with gilded margins. With the highest degree of reliability, we can consider Reinhold Karl von Liphardt Jr., owner of Raadi, Vastseliina and several other estates, the creator of the album. He was born in Salzburg to Reinhold Karl von Liphardt, a physicist and the founder of the Salzburg gas factory, and Helena David, on December 9, 1864, old style, and on November 27, new style.⁵ Initially, Reinhold Karl von Liphardt studied medicine under the famous surgeon Ernst von Bergmann who, as the director and head of the department of the First (Royal) Surgery Clinic of the University of Berlin, predicted

⁵ *Genealogisches Handbuch des Adels*, Bd. 99 der Gesamtreihe, hrsg. vom Deutsches Adelsarchiv e.V. (Limburg an der Lahn: C.A.Starke Verlag, 1990). *Genealogisches Handbuch der adeligen Häuser*, Adelige Häuser B Band XIX, hrsg. vom Walter von Hueck (Limburg an der Lahn: C.A. Starke Verlag, 1990), 312–313.

a brilliant medical career for his student.⁶ However, at the age of 24, Reinhold Karl von Liphardt had to take over the family estates of Raadi, Vastseliina and other manors, and this caused a cardinal change of his interests in favour of fine arts.

The *Lexikon deutschbaltischer bildender Künstler* compiled by the Baltic Germans Kuno and Margarete Hagens, mentions that Reinhold Karl von Liphardt turned to painting only in 1905, and after the First World War moved to Italy where he devoted the rest of his life to the study of art history.⁷ Reinhold Karl von Liphardt was particularly interested in the colour scheme of Michelangelo's paintings, and he even copied the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. In 1936, he reported on the results of his research both at the 14th International Congress of Art History in Basel (14. *Internationaler Kongress für Kunstgeschichte, Zürich, Basel, Bern, 31. August bis 9. September 1936*) and presented a report at the *Bibliotheca Hertziana* in Rome. King Victor Emmanuel III appreciated Reinhold Karl von Liphardt's contribution to the study of Italian art and awarded him the title of count, which the recipient reportedly refused.⁸ Reinhold Karl von Liphardt passed away on April 19, 1940, in Gräfeling near Munich.

The information about Reinhold Karl von Liphardt as the last in the line of descent to inherit and own his family estates, or about his devotion to art and art history is scanty. Nevertheless, we may suggest that, judging by the photographs in the album we have every reason to attribute to von Liphardt, he used photography as a means of enriching his emotionally saturated life with yet another means of artistic self-expression. The photographs taken within approximately one year, from the winter of 1912–1913 to the winter of 1913–1914, convey encyclopaedic architectural, social and landscape information about the Vastseliina manor territory. At the same time, it is also an aesthetically valuable testimony of the illusion-filled view of the Baltic German aristocracy on the seemingly eternal idyll of

6 Ernst von Bergmann (*Mediziner*): [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_von_Bergmann_\(Mediziner\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_von_Bergmann_(Mediziner)) [accessed 13/05/2023]; Graf Reinhold von Liphardt, "Ehrung eines baltischen Kunsthistorikers und Malers", *Rigasche Rundschau*, 62, 17/03/1937.

7 Kuno Hagen, *Lexikon deutschbaltischer bildender Künstler. 20. Jahrhundert (unter Mitarbeit von Margarete Hagen)*, hrsg. von Georg-Dehio-Gesellschaft (Köln: Bei Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik Berend von Nottbeck, 1983), 87.

8 Stadtarchiv Zürich V.L. 105, "Kongresse und Tagungen (ab 1899)": <https://amsquery.stadt-zuerich.ch/Dateien/0/D2519.pdf> [accessed 13/05/2023]; Liphardt, "Ehrung eines baltischen Kunsthistorikers und Malers"; Hagen, *Lexikon deutschbaltischer bildender Künstler. 20. Jahrhundert (unter Mitarbeit von Margarete Hagen)*, 87.

the patriarchal life of the estate a year prior to the First World War and the subsequent geopolitical changes in Europe. They not only fundamentally altered the economic, political, social and cultural composition of the Baltics, but also radically transformed the cultural landscape created in the time of the manor-governed system of land ownership and eroded its components to varying degrees. In view of this, Reinhold Karl von Liphardt's photo album can be considered a monumental documentary, yet also aestheticized, visual testimony to an era that was passing away.

PHOTOGRAPHY AS A MEANS OF SELF-EXPRESSION AND PHOTOGRAPHIC GENRES

There is no telling as to which of the means of artistic self-expression – painting or photography – Reinhold Karl von Liphardt learned first, but the year of 1888, when he, a qualified medical doctor, gave up his medical career and took on the responsibilities of managing the family's property, is exactly the time when photography was breaking out of photo studios and ceasing to be just a craft for professionals. In the last decades of the 19th century, photographic image production and processing technologies became simpler and photography entered the everyday life of the upper and middle classes both as a popular pastime and as a new medium for accumulating information that did not require highly specific technical knowledge. This made it possible to capture the significance of the moment, a capacity hitherto associated solely with fine art, and chronologically document the most important moments of a person's life. In the lives of the poorest people, photography replaced the genre of portrait painting and recorded only a few of the most consequential moments in their lives, such as the birth of a child, a wedding, a major career achievement or a funeral.

Thanks to a number of socioeconomic and financial factors, even at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century photography was not accessible to everyone, yet its growing accessibility brought the photographers closer to the representatives of the free professions. For the wealthiest, for whom photography was a trade or a tool for work, or whose means allowed them to practise photography as if it were a type of fancywork or one of the liberal arts, it became a daily companion. They would take photographs of their family members engaged in a variety of leisure



FIG.3. THE FOREST IN LAGERI. FIRST SNOW ON SEPTEMBER 27, 1913 (*LAGERI WALD. DER ERSTE SCHNEE AM 27. SEPTB. 1913*).

activities, such as sports and travel, and they would also resort to photography to confirm their economic prosperity or to capture nature scenes. And it was the latter, that is landscape photography as an occupation comparable to drawing or painting, that opened up opportunities for photographers to create diverse and artistically effective photos.

This is also the case of Reinhold Karl von Liphardt, which suggests that he had excellent photographic equipment at his disposal and that he was well versed in the technologies of photo production and reproduction. But the impressive album, documenting the events of ONE YEAR in almost 200 photos, which is the subject of this article, shows that for the owner of Raadi and Vastseliina manors, taking photos alongside painting was a common practice. Thus, it can be assumed that there would have been several albums in his office or library, which, over the course of many years, documented the daily life of his aristocratic family and the environment of the manor in the exceptionally picturesque region of Southern Estonia, the area of Vastseliina.



FIG. 4. THE LITTLE "QUEEN OF THE NIGHT" (*DIE KLEINE "KÖNIGIN DER NACHT"*).



FIG. 5. VASTSELIINA. PARK. WHEN THE LEAVES FALL (*NEUHAUSEN. PARK. WENN DIE BLÄTTER FALLEN*).



FIG. 6. MILL, DISTILLERY, BREWERY IN VASTSELIINA AS VIEWED FROM THE MILL POND (MÜHLE, BRENNEREI, BRAUEREI IN N. VON D. STAUUNG GESEHEN).

Reinhold Karl von Liphardt's photo album presents a series of chronologically consecutive images and it is similar to a poetic "diary in pictures", whose visually captured scenes could be re-collected and verbally supplemented by the family members who were well acquainted with the micro-world of the manor. The captions to the photos, written in Indian ink in calligraphic handwriting, demonstrate von Liphardt's efforts to achieve a syncretic and emotional unity of the images and the text. The album, thus, can be viewed as a collection of visual-literary maxims. This can be seen, for example, in a close-up photograph of a cactus flower accompanied by the caption "The Little 'Queen of the Night'" (*Die kleine "Königin der Nacht"*), or in a photo of a thick blanket of leaves among stout tree trunks, which is complemented with the mood-suggestive caption "Vastseliina. Park. When the Leaves Fall" (*Neuhausen. Park. Wenn die Blätter fallen*). However, in most cases, the photographer had limited the message to the place name or a designation describing the situation without any poetic or metaphorical component: "The Road through the Village of Möldri to the Station" (*Weg durch d. Möldri Dorf zum Bahnhof*), for example, or a similar topographical

caption "Mill, Distillery, Brewery in Vastseliina as Viewed from the Mill Pond" (*Mühle, Brennerei, Brauerei in N. von d. Stauung gesehen*).

Photography made it easier for artists to create a composition and to capture the details essential for a realistic representation, the ones that were impossible to document when sketching from life or during a portrait painting session. On the other hand, the "man with a camera", or photographer, who kept track of the novelties of the era, tried to assume the role of an academically educated artist and follow the basic postulates of a well-designed composition. In order to capture the contours and texture of objects, to achieve the effect of spatial depth, to render the relationship between light and shadow, to use contrast and other visual principles, they needed to know the peculiarities of optics and the nuances of photochemistry. The turn-of-the-century photographer followed in the footsteps of professional artists and captured the moment as beautifully, aesthetically convincingly and emotionally as possible.

At the turn of the 19th century, photography gained a large following, both as a craft and as a popular leisure activity that provided an individual with an opportunity for artistic self-realisation. With the expansion of the use of photographic visual images in media culture, its interaction, and even competition, with the visual arts proved inevitable. However, in the life of Reinhold Karl von Liphardt, photography was in synergistic unity with his artistic interests and organically complemented them, enriching them, rather than trying to compete with them. In no case should it be claimed that the photos documenting the life of Vastseliina manor in 1913 were only a dispassionate record of the natural and cultural environments and of domestic life. Reinhold Karl von Liphardt was 49 years old when the album was created, and such an experienced member of the international family of artists, collectors, restorers and museologists could not have let the topical European cultural novelties pass by without their making a visible impact on his creative work.

With his collection of photos, enriched with expressive means borrowed from painting, Reinhold Karl von Liphardt entered the broad stream of Symbolist art. As can be seen in the aesthetics of the album design, in the processing of photographs and in the selection of objects and compositions, the photographer had striven to achieve a degree of mastery that allowed him to manipulate the very basics of photographic image creation and processing. Jean-Luc Daval, a theorist of photo history and photo aesthetics, classifies

such an approach to photography as a *pictorialist* style, and calls the photographers who took this approach *pictorialists*.⁹ Pictorialists took pains to highlight the photographed object through the choice of composition as well as technical means. In order to do this, they subjected the very negatives of the image to framing with the cropping method. A lot of effort was invested in creating sharp contrasts and chiaroscuro effects, or, on the contrary, in reducing contrasts and smoothing down the image texture. An attempt was made to achieve the effect of polychrome photography with such chemical techniques as adding colour to the image obtained on filmstock or photographic paper. And, trying to arrange these efforts in a chronological framework, Jean-Luc Daval notes that, between 1900 and 1914, pictorialism was on its victory march.

To raise their self-confidence, one of the ideological tools of the Baltic Germans living in Latvia and Estonia was the publication of books that praised their historical mission, as well as their economic, political and cultural achievements. Among them, there was the three-volume edition *Album baltischer Ansichten. Kurland, Livland, Estland* (1866 – 1867) with graphics based on the drawings by Wilhelm Siegfried Stavenhagen and printed in G. G. Lange's printing house in Darmstadt, using the steel engraving technique.¹⁰ The aestheticized Baltic landscapes in V. S. Stavenhagen's graphics depicted a land shaped "according to German taste", whose nature, culture and administration clearly showed the traces left by the Teutonic Order, the church, the Hansa League and the landed gentry. However, the new publication, replete with photographs, which were then still a new artistic medium, attracted the attention of the new generation of the Baltic Germans. In connection with the 700th anniversary of the foundation of the city of Riga by the Germans, Baltic Germans confirmed their love for the colonized (home)land in the representative publication *Malerische Ansichten aus Livland, Estland, Kurland*¹¹ that had been prepared as a near-poetic guide by the historian and publicist Ernst Seraphim. In addition to the text filled with pathos, the pages of this book also contained 375

9 Jean-Luc Daval, *Photography. History of an Art* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications Inc.; Geneva: Editions d'Art Albert Skira S.A., 1982), 124.

10 *Album baltischer Ansichten: 1. Kurland, 2. Livland, 3. Estland*, hrsg. von Wilhelm Siegfried Stavenhagen (Mitau: Im Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, 1866–1867).

11 *Malerische Ansichten aus Livland, Estland, Kurland*, hrsg. von Ernst Seraphim, (Riga–Moskau: Verlag von J. Deubner, 1901).

photos, obtained from such studios as *Atelier Carl Schulz, Hebensperger & Co, E. V. Eggert, H. Virkaus* and others as well as from amateur photographers. Among them there were quite a few Baltic Germans of aristocratic origin, mostly men, but also a number of women who demonstrated their passion for photography.¹² It was to these amateur photographers, who had contributed many high-quality illustrations to the publication, that Dr Ernst Seraphim dedicated his appreciation in the introduction to the book. He wrote: "We include mainly the most beautiful amateur photographs which have not been published before and which rediscover the most attractive landscapes of our homeland".¹³

The positive influence of the book *Malerische Ansichten aus Livland, Estland, Kurland* on the development of the photography culture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and on the aesthetics of book design is undeniable. The involvement of a large number of co-authors in the creation of this encyclopaedic edition was a mobilizing and educational factor for professional as well as early amateur photographers. *Malerische Ansichten aus Livland, Estland, Kurland* definitely made a powerful impression on the early 20th century Baltic printing culture and popularised the achievements of photo aesthetics among Estonian and Latvian photo studios, associations of photographers and individual enthusiasts. We cannot tell whether or to what extent Reinhold Karl von Liphardt followed the photography movement in Estonia, but the content and aesthetics of his family album suggest that he was aware of the innovations in photography, as his photographs reflect, to a great extent, both the innovations in photographic techniques and the new artistic trends.

PERCEPTION AND REPRESENTATION OF THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT IN REINHOLD KARL VON LIPHARDT'S PHOTOGRAPHS

Reinhold Karl von Liphardt's pictorialist aesthetics is most evident in his landscape photography, which is substantially represented in his album. The photographer's vision is dominated by an idealised,

12 Since the author of this solid book, Dr. Ernst Seraphim, lived in Riga, he had to involve a wide circle of correspondents for the intended publication, among them *C. Baron Stackelberg, N. Graf Tiesenhausen, Fr. E. Von Wetter-Rosenthal, E. Baronesse Stackelberg, Mary v. Harder, B. Freiherr v Uexküll, Hilda Baronese Krüdener*, and a number of others.

13 *Malerische Ansichten aus Livland, Estland, Kurland*, 4.



FIG. 7. LÜCKERTI FOREST. "RIME". THE ROAD TO VASTSELIINA (*LÜCKERTI WALD. "REIF". WEG NACH NEUHAUSEN*).

well-kept and lovingly captured landscape of the manor lands and, possibly, the lands beyond his estate. Every season is lovingly captured in his photographs, which reveal von Liphardt's close attention to seasonal changes in nature. In his works, we see plenty of snow and horse-drawn sleighs on a snow-covered forest road, which is a scenery typical of the Baltic winter, whose harsher qualities can be appreciated only from a romantic perspective. In black-and-white photography it is difficult to capture the inter-seasonal transitions from winter to summer and from summer to winter.

The approach of spring is indicated by the representation of the flood season and ice melting in the photographs of the river bends and streams. The captions accompanying the photos in the diary-like album help to convey the sense of time passing and strengthen the emotional, and even at times dramatic, impression created by the photographs themselves. For example, a photo with a dramatic flood scene is given the title "Flood in Vastseliina" (*Hochwasser in Neuhausen*), to be followed by a slightly later scene with a flood-destroyed bridge and the caption "Bridge Destroyed by Spring Waters at a Birch Grove" (*Vom Frühlingswasser zerstörte Brücke im*



FIG. 8. FLOOD IN VASTSELIINA (*HOCHWASSER IN NEUHAUSEN*).



FIG. 9. BRIDGE DESTROYED BY SPRING WATERS AT A BIRCH GROVE (*VOM FRÜHLINGSWASSER ZERSTÖRTE BRÜCKE IM BIRKENWÄLDCHEN*).

Birkenwäldchen). A photo of a blossoming apple orchard with the laconic caption "Blooming Fruit Trees" (*Bliühende Obstbäume*) heralds



FIG. 10. BLOOMING FRUIT TREES (*BLÜHENDE OBSTBÄUME*).



FIG. 11. DEEP SNOW ON TREES IN FULL FOLIAGE (*VOLLSTÄNDIG BELAUBTE BÄUME IM TIEFEN SCHNEE*).

the full onset of spring, while summer is captured in the images of manor buildings, farm work, and family domestic scenes. The album includes comparatively few autumnal landscapes as black-

and-white photography was not suitable for capturing the vivid colours of the season. However, Reinhold Karl von Liphardt did capture some autumn moods in some of his photos and captions to them. The title given to the photograph of several tree trunks and the ground covered with fallen leaves sounds as if borrowed from turn-of-the-century poems or pieces of music: “When the Leaves Fall” (*Wenn Blätter fallen*). A similarly poetic moment is conveyed in the photograph showing the surprising effects of a sudden snowfall, which, on a whim, has clad autumn trees in a cape of snow. We can imagine the photographer hastening to capture this surprising moment and later giving it the caption: “Deep Snow on Trees in Full Foliage” (*Vollständig belaubte Bäume im tiefen Schnee*).

Forest, meadow, park or water scenes seem to transcend the two-dimensional space of the photo paper, stepping beyond its margins, which is proof of the photographer’s own presence and active participation in the process of capturing the landscape by giving himself a place behind the camera while trying to include in the focus of the lens every fragment of the landscape that he knows so well. At the same time he leaves the viewer with the illusory possibility of infinitely expanding the frame and deepening the field of view. However, the limited possibilities of a two-dimensional and static photograph cannot create the impression of spatial depth and add the effect of movement to it. The photographs in Reinhold Karl von Liphardt’s album do not show any evidence of the use of such refined photographic techniques characteristic of the practice of the turn-of-the-century photographers as placing frosted glass in the dark slide, the use of monocle lenses to obtain a blurred and out-of-focus image or the use of raster paper.

As a deliberate means of obtaining the effect of movement, one can mention the use of a slow-motion camera shutter when photographing rivers to achieve the impression of a slightly blurred stream of water in the image. However, that is not what von Liphardt did when he took a photo of the river near Vastseliina on a sunny summer day and later gave it a neutral caption: “Vastseliina. The River between the Mill and the Sawmill” (*Neuhausen. Fluss zwischen d. Mühle u. d. Sägerei*). The picture shows the stream falling over the rocks, which the camera has captured blurred and “moving” instead of frozen, as would be the case in a common snapshot. Thus, the result should be considered an artistically effective photo that has been obtained



FIG. 12. VASTSELIINA. THE RIVER BETWEEN THE MILL AND THE SAWMILL
(NEUHAUSEN. FLUSS ZWISCHEN D. MÜHLE U.D. SÄGEREI).

with the photographer's technical knowledge and skills. The author's deliberately chosen motif of a sunny day with contrasts between dark and light elements further enhances the emotionality of the idyllic scene, which also testifies to Reinhold Karl von Liphardt's growing mastery as a photographer, who managed to achieve fine artistic results in his photographs even without the use of sophisticated new techniques. The photographer Reinhold Karl von Liphardt's attitude towards the depicted object and its surroundings reflects his personal affinity with the landscape as well as the landowner's self-confidence. In no sense can we talk about a distancing or a dispassionate and alienated view. Whether it is an unusual object in the forest belonging to Vastseliina manor, in the fields or near the farm buildings, or a lovingly recorded family idyll with groups of parents and children, the photographer's participation in the construction of the composition, in the choice of the objects to be included in the focus of the lens, is conscious and interest-driven. There is no other motivation for his photography than to record his habitual environment, to demonstrate a favourable attitude towards the members of his family and to give the landscape captured by the lens of his camera a symbolic or a personal value.



FIG. 13. MISSING ANNOTATION.



FIG. 14. ESKIMO (ESKIMOS).

Similar to the works of 19th century English landscape photographers, Reinhold Karl von Liphardt's landscape photographs are characterized by fine detailing and minutely elaborate views. Landscapes with rock-strewn river banks, scenes of forests and groves captured in a poetic mood, or picturesque branches and leaves perceived with the attentiveness of a botanist reveal the photographer's caring attitude towards nature. His photographs show that within the boundaries of his property, von Liphardt was intimately familiar with the natural environment. Thus, the artistic vision of Reinhold Karl von Liphardt embraces such heterogeneous subjects as groups of trees and tree trunks, well-groomed manor horses, the bringing of the sawed ice to the manor yard for cooling provisions and other mundane activities. Moreover, his art of photography elevates these subjects to the level of metaphorical representation.

Travel has been well represented in the visual arts in the Baltic cultural space. Let us mention the Baltic German artist Georg Wilhelm Timm (1820–1895), Russian Imperial court painter, who, as one of the pioneers of travel art, depicted the exotic nature of Algeria's Arab lands and other parts of North Africa in his mid-19th century drawings, watercolours and oil paintings.¹⁴ Among the early 20th century Latvian orientalist artists we can mention the modernist Jāzeps Grosvalds (1891–1920) who, with an English army expedition corps, in 1918 made a trip "from Alexandria in Egypt, around the Arabian Peninsula to the Persian Gulf, through Mesopotamia to Kurdistan, across its mountains to the Caspian Sea and along it to Baku".¹⁵ This trip resulted in a literary diary, a series of drawings made in pencil as well as gouache and watercolour paintings. Given the above, it is small wonder that photography was also used to record travelling experiences.

Von Liphardt's photo album gives an important insight into the world of Vastseliina manor, which he entered in 1888, immediately after his studies in Berlin, to take over his inheritance and manage the family property. During the twenty-five years he spent there, the Salzburg-born lord of the manor got to know the property of his

14 *Georg Wilhelm Timm (1820–1895) – artist, publisher, traveller*. Exhibition catalogue (Riga: Art Museum Riga Bourse, 2022).

15 Bokalders Visvaldis, "Jāzeps Grosvalda Persijas ainas", Jāzeps Grosvalds, *Tableauf Persans* (Daugava, Stockholm, 1978), 62.



FIG. 15. ROCKS IN THE RIVER AT THE VILLAGE OF MÖLDRI (*FELSEN AM FLUSS B. MÖLDRI DORF*).



FIG. 16. ENTRANCE TO THE PARK (*PARK EINGANG*).

predecessors from both an economic and an aesthetic perspective and, judging by the wide range of genres of his photographs, his “journey” across his manor lands and his photographic record of them is like the efforts of 19th century European painters and photographers to get to know foreign countries and to convey their impressions of them in their travel art. While the views of Cairo, Jerusalem and Alexandria by the early French photographers, such as Jean-Léon Gérôme and Frédéric Goupil-Fesquet, conveyed their authors’ joy of experiencing the exoticism of the Orient¹⁶, the photographs of Reinhold Karl von Liphardt revealed the uniqueness of Southern Estonia.

Reinhold Karl von Liphardt used photography as a perfect means of documenting his cultural environment. From different angles and distances, his camera captured the views of Vastseliina castle ruins, the church and the pastor’s buildings. With the skills of an impeccable architectural photographer, he took pictures of Vana Roosa (*Rosenhof*) and Rauge (*Rouge*) churches, nestled in the trees. Von Liphardt photographed not only the buildings of the mill, pub, distillery and sawmill but also ordinary peasant houses with their sloping wattle fences, typical of the place. One of the photos features a log windmill with sails that are set turning against the direction of the wind. In the research of ethnographic culture, the very robust building of the windmill would certainly help researchers to describe the social and labour ecosystem, including the craft skills of the ethnons that inhabit the region.

“PICTORIAL ETHNOGRAPHY” AND THE ART OF PHOTO ALBUM DESIGN

The cultural and sociological significance of the rural scenes in the photographs in von Liphardt’s album is further increased by the presence of local people in them, rendered with the skill and attention typical of portrait painting. They lived in the estates of Reinhold Karl von Liphardt and, thanks to their ethnographic uniqueness, became photo models for an educated intellectual. Absolutely trusting the photographer’s interested gaze, representatives of the Seto ethnic group look at us from the six photos placed in the album.¹⁷ Shown

16 Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 79–81.

17 *Setos*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Setos> [accessed 09/03/2023 and 12/06/2023].



FIG. 17. MISSING ANNOTATION (LANDSCAPE WITH THE RUINS OF VASTSELIINA CASTLE).



FIG. 18. MISSING ANNOTATION (RUINS OF VASTSELIINA CASTLE).



FIG. 19. "GROAN WALK". MILL. DISTILLERY. BREWERY ("SEUFZER-ALLEE". MÜHLE. BRENNEREI. BRAUEREI).



FIG. 20. MAKKE MILL (MAKKE MÜHLE).



FIG. 21. VASTSELIINA RESIDENTIAL BUILDING (NEUHAUSEN. WOHNHAUS).



FIG. 22. ICE CUBES IN FRONT OF THE MILL (EISBLÖCKE VOR DER MÜHLE).



FIG. 23. MASHA WITH HER 4 CHILDREN. FOR "CARRIAGE AND THREE" THE THIRD CAME ALWAYS IN THE MIDDLE (*MASHA MIT IHREN 4 KINDERN. ZU "TROIKA" KAMEN IMMER DIE 3. IN DER MITTE*).



FIG. 24. RHEA (*RHEA*).



FIG. 25. MÖLDRI VILLAGE (*MÖLDRI DORF*).



FIG. 26. MISSING ANNOTATION.



FIG. 27. THE LAST CHRISTMAS EVENING IN VASTSELIINA (*AM LETZTEN WEIHNACHTS-ABEND IN NEUHAUSEN*).



FIG. 28. A VIEW FROM THE VERANDA INTO THE FROSTED GARDEN (*BLICK VON DER VERANDE IN DEN BEREIFTEN GARTEN*).



FIG. 29. FORGE IN VASTSELIINA (*SCHMIEDE IN NEUHAUSEN*).



FIG. 30. AT THE WATERING-PLACE (*ZUR TRÄNKE*).



FIG. 31. MARKET IN VASTSELIINA (MARKT IN NEUHAUSEN).

either individually or in family or group portrait compositions, they are dressed in brightly coloured folk costumes that are richly decorated with silver chains, strings of coins and huge fibulas. The people of the Seto ethnic group exhibit ethnographic peculiarities characteristic of the Orthodox Slavic inhabitants of the shores of Lake Peipus and they must have attracted the photographer's attention as a phenomenon of vernacular culture for the creation of expressive photo-documentation. However, it is precisely in the context of the ethnographic and cultural history of Estonia that the interpretation of the photos of the Seto ethnic group, perhaps some of the most important photographs in von Liphardt's photo album, raises questions about their authorship.

Estonian folklore researcher, musician and poet Dr Andreas Kalkun drew the attention of the author of this article to the fact that some of the photos, although they were taken around the same time as most of the photos in the album, were taken with the camera of yet another photographer, that of one of the brothers Parikas – Georg Johannes or Peeter.¹⁸ The Parikas brothers' photo studio "Foto Parikas" operated from 1910 to 1949, and they specialized in the portrait genre, taking around 20,000 portrait photos.¹⁹ In the

18 E-mails to O. Spārītis (07/02/2023 and 11/03/2023).

19 *Brothers Parikas*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brothers_Parikas [accessed 12/06/2023].



FIG. 32. THE PEOPLE OF THE SETO ETHNIC GROUP. PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN, 1913/1914.



FIG. 33. GROUP OF SETO PEOPLE. PHOTO: GEORG JOHANNES AND PEETER PARIKAS, 1913/1914.



FIG. 34. GROUP PORTRAIT OF SETO WOMEN IN THE ORTHODOX MONASTERY AT PECHORI (PETSERI). PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN, 1913/1914.

correspondence with Dr Andreas Kalkun it was found out that the photos might have depicted the singer Hilana Tarka (Darja Matrejeva, 1856–1933), well known to Estonian ethnographers.

Two of the six photographs included in Reinhold Karl von Liphardt's album have been published in the latest encyclopaedic study of the history and ethnography of the Seto ethnic group, and both are attributed to the Parikas brothers' studio.²⁰ The first shows a young woman in a traditional and richly decorated folk dress; the second features a young couple, possibly husband and wife. Three other photographs are composed as group portraits. The background in one of the group portraits with the view of the courtyard of a Seto house and the couple in another photograph suggest that both photos were taken at the same time and by the same photographers, namely, the Parikas brothers. Thus, there are reasonable doubts about the

20 *Seto rahvarõivad* (Setomaa: Seto Käsitöö Kogo, 2023), 80 (ERAF 18535) and 352 (EVMF 76:311). The date of the photo of a man and a woman on page 352 of the book is 1927 while Reinhold Karl von Liphardt's album would rectify the date as 1913/1914.

authorship of the ethnographic photographs: who is their author – the Parikas brothers or Reinhold Karl von Liphardt? Dr Andreas Kalkun has also hypothesized that Georg Johannes and Peeter Parikas may have taken all six ethnographic photos.²¹

On the other hand, we would like to suggest that the author of at least two of the six ethnographic photographs – a group of six women on the porch of a residential house decorated with ornately carved balusters and a group portrait of nine Seto women dressed in folk costumes in the yard of the Orthodox monastery at Pechori (Petseri) – could have been von Liphardt himself. However, until the ethnographers have compared all six photographs found in Reinhold Karl von Liphardt's album and the persons depicted in them with those found in the archive of the photo studio "Foto Parikas", there cannot be complete certainty about the authorship of these photographs.

What may have been the purpose of including photographs with a distinctly vivid ethnographic content and form in Reinhold Karl von Liphardt's album? Why does an aristocrat, endowed with a cultivated artistic taste, who creates a poetic family diary with thematic cycles of photographs, put a set of photos taken by other professionals among his own series of photos? In any case, the photos with individual and group portraits of representatives of the Seto ethnic group are not only vivid evidence of Estonian culture, but in terms of detail, selected types, group portrait composition and choice of background, they are striking works of art, whose power of expression elevates them considerably above the emotionality and artistic effect of Reinhold Karl von Liphardt's lyrical landscapes and idyllic family portraits. The problematic question remains unanswered: whether the photographs with ethnographic content were for von Liphardt merely an addition to a collection of peculiar scenes and aesthetic snapshots, or rather a means to cultural and sociological conclusions. Whether Reinhold Karl von Liphardt used his observations for research purposes or just had fun collecting unusual pictures remains unknown. However, both the photographs taken by von Liphardt himself and those taken by other photographers and included in von Liphardt's album stimulate the viewer's imagination even nowadays, a hundred years after the

21 E-mail to O. Späritis (09/03/2023).



FIG. 35. BIG STONE IN LAGERI 36 FEET LONG, 30 FEET WIDE (*GROSSER STEIN IN LAGERI 36 FUSS LANG, 30 FUSS BREIT*).

album was made, as a visual puzzle that may never be solved and yet keeps fascinating us and encouraging us to think critically.

When evaluating the artistic qualities of Reinhold Karl von Liphardt's photo album and its contents, what is of paramount importance is whether his photographs comply with the criteria for art photography. We can answer this question by stating that he did manage to achieve remarkable artistic effects in some of his photographs even though his choice of subjects remained rather limited. Von Liphardt freely handles the camera to skilfully create diverse photographic compositions, operates with a wide range of optical options, creates both wide-angle panoramic landscapes and detailed close-up studies and quite skilfully composes individual and group portraits. Reinhold Karl von Liphardt is a photographer with a subtle understanding of art, and photography as a means of expression allows him to freely operate with a variety of scenes and themes. Nonetheless, his range of subjects remains limited to the documentation of the surrounding nature and cultural landscape,

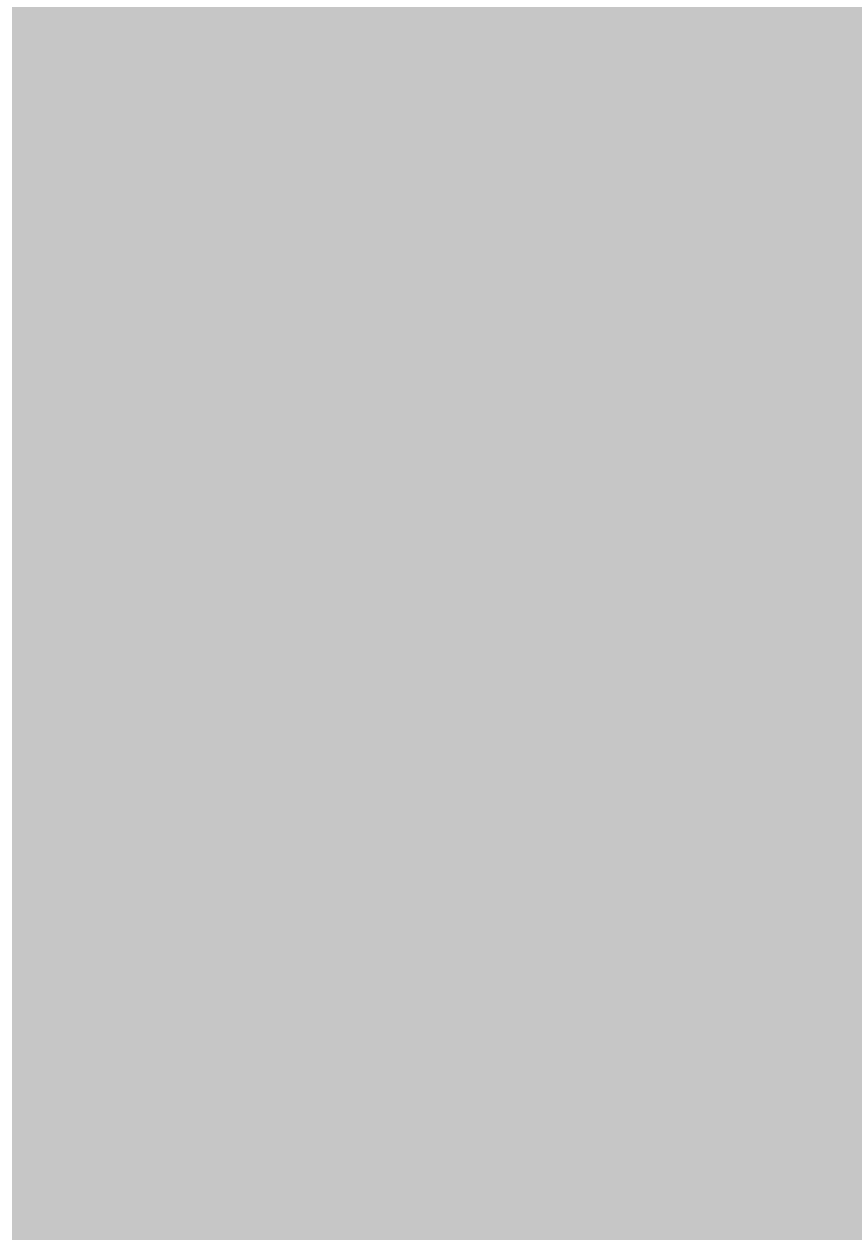


FIG. 36. VASTSELIINA. VIEW OF THE GLEN BY THE DISTILLERY (*NEUHAUSEN. BLICK AUF. D. SCHLUCHT BEI DER BRENNEREI*). COLOURED PHOTOGRAPH.



FIG. 37. AT THE RIVER. AUTUMN LEAVES (*AM FLUSS. HERBSTLAUB*).

his family and domestic life. The fact that he stays within the limits of the artistic reflection of his private life in the composition of the album content seems to distance his photographic output from pure art and makes the thematic cycles of photos in his album closer to amateur photography. In the layout of the album, we encounter collage-type compositions with photos glued one upon another, thus creating a more dynamic page layout, or covering the imperfections of a photo framing with the corner of another photo. Yet another technique of album design, which was also used by Reinhold Karl von Liphardt, can be viewed as dilettantish from a modern point of view. Namely, a certain artistic effect is achieved with irregularly torn edges of photographs, which helps the viewer to focus on the centre of the image and get rid of random or, in the photographer's opinion, unnecessary details in the rectangular frame. Lauma Lanceniece, custodian of the photographic material collection at the Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation acquainted the author of this article with this aesthetics of "rough edges", used in the context of Baltic photography already at the turn of the 19th

century. Irregular tears with denuded bands of white paper of different widths create a painting-like framing of the photograph. However, if such a technique could still be explained as an artistic pursuit in the early 20th century photography, then already in the 1920s–1930s such practice was described as dilettantish. In several landscape photographs, Reinhold Karl von Liphardt attempted to achieve colour effects by hand-colouring matte photo paper with water colours.²² At the dawn of colour photochemistry, the photographer applied this technique in an attempt to impart naturalness to the landscapes by colouring the rocks in a pinkish-brown tonality, giving the sky a pale blue shade, while trying to render the colour of tree foliage with diluted green watercolours. In a similar way, the author of the photographs also coloured the cactus flower in a close-up. Yet, there is currently no answer as to whether the representation of the colours of folk costumes with watercolours in the portraits of the Seto singers is Reinhold Karl von Liphardt's attempt to render the colouring of ethnographic costumes, or an experiment of the Tallinn photographers, brothers Georg Johannes and Peeter Parikas.

CONCLUSION

The author of the article is well aware that the set of photographs in von Liphardt's album is only "a coverage of one year's events in the life of a Southern Estonian manor", which has never claimed to be highly rated for its art photography qualities. The photographs were not intended for public display, but were created solely for the enjoyment of the photographer himself and his family. The author of the article has tried to treat these over a hundred-year-old photo documents with respect and sympathy. He has been motivated by a desire to trace the history of the creation of von Liphardt's photo album, to place it in the context of the first decades of Baltic amateur photography and to see artistic potential in the photographs it contains. By providing an evaluation, within one cultural paradigm, of the content and form of a hundred-year-old photo album as part of the Baltic German culture, which was artificially riven as a result

²² This commentary was provided by Kristaps Latvis, photographic material restorer of the Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation, when consulted on November 20, 2022.



FIG. 38. VIEW OF VASTSELIINA FROM THE DIRECTION OF MECKS (*NEUHAUSEN, WENN MAN AUS MECKS KOMMT*).

of various political and ethnic conflicts, this article aims to make a modest contribution to the sum total of our current knowledge and understanding of Baltic cultural history.

OJĀRS SPĀRĪTIS: THE WORLD OF VASTSELIINA ESTATE IN 1913: REINHOLD KARL VON LIPHARDT AS A PHOTOGRAPHER

KEYWORDS: REINHOLD KARL VON LIPHARDT; VASTSELIINA; HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY; PICTORIAL ETHNOGRAPHY; BALTIC GERMAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

SUMMARY

The main subject of this article is a photo album created by Reinhold Karl von Liphardt Jr, an outstanding representative of the Baltic German landed gentry in Estonia in the first half of the 20th century. In the early 1990s, the director of the “Bildarchiv Foto Marburg” of the Art History Institute of the Phillips University Marburg, Mrs. Brigitte Walbe made the duplicates of the photographic materials from the collection of the Baltic German historian and genealogist Georg von Krusenstjern available to the author of this article.

The article classifies and analyses the 181 photographs pasted in the photo album which, with the highest degree of certainty, can be attributed to Reinhold Karl von Liphardt Jr. (1864–1940), the owner of Raadi, Vastseliina and several other estates. Judging by the

photographs in the album, it can be concluded that von Liphardt used photography as a means of enriching his emotionally saturated life with yet another means of artistic self-expression. The photographs taken in the period from the winter of 1912–1913 to the winter of 1913–1914, convey an inordinate amount of visual information about the landscape, architecture and society in the Vastseliina manor.

Reinhold Karl von Liphardt’s photo album presents a series of chronologically consecutive images and it is similar to a poetic “diary in pictures”. Reinhold Karl von Liphardt used photography as a perfect means of documenting his ecocultural environment. His landscape photographs are characterized by great attention to detail. The cultural and sociological significance of the rural scenes in the photographs is further increased by the presence of local people in them. The Seto ethnic group lived in the estates of Reinhold Karl von Liphardt and, thanks to their ethnographic uniqueness, drew the attention of an educated landlord.

The photos with individual and group portraits of the representatives of the Seto ethnic group are not only vivid evidence of the Estonian culture in the first decades of the 20th century, but also striking works of art, whose power of expression elevates them considerably above the emotionality and artistic effect of Reinhold Karl von Liphardt’s lyrical landscapes and idyllic family portraits.

CV

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