ABOUT STRATEGIES OF OPENING AND OPENNESS IN LITHUANIAN MUSEOLOGY

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This is the narrative of a museum employee working during the period of ongoing change that is taking place in our country, Lithuania. After the restoration of independence, a new market economy strategy and the emergence of a private sector can be noted, both related to the new political view. They resulted from the attempt to return to the global context after half a century of Soviet occupation. The museum space is traditionally related to the protection and representation of cultural heritage. In Lithuania, as in the majority of Eastern European countries, museums and their collections are owned by the state. Our country has 93 museums of which 3 are national, 16 supported by the Republic, 56 municipal, 14 departmental and 4 private. A free market is characterised by selfregulatory laws. Exceptions slowly replace previously valid rules. Two private sculpture parks are examples of such exceptions in the slowly recovering Lithuanian cultural scene: the International European Centre Sculpture Museum, 1993, and the Grūtas Park, 1999, featuring disassembled monuments of the Soviet period. The stories of their creation represent two different models for establishing private museums, which, in a general sense, may be characterized as the strategy of opening and openness respectively. The story of the latter type of establishment gives more insight into the essence of the changes that are taking place.

ABOUT "MUSEUM SCIENCE" OR NEW WINDS OF CHANGE

After the first decade of restored independence, when the optimism of the "singing revolution" had calmed down, we experienced quite an inconsistency with regard to changes in museums. We can see that small, new

and private structures are more successful at modernising, while old organisations change very slowly. The era of change in our museums started with the separation. In the Soviet period, all objects stored in the museum belonged to the museum fund of the USSR. The activities of museums were coordinated

186 by the Soviet Ministry of Culture. The current status of museums in Lithuania is based on the Museums Law of 1995, which states that the museum fund of the Republic of Lithuania is a part of the national property of Lithuania. Ministries, urban and regional municipalities, authorities, and private persons may establish museums.

In Soviet times, when the freedom of religion was abolished and churches were closed, branches of state museums were established in the churches to preserve historical collections. This is why, in the 1950s–1960s, the Lithuanian Museum of Fine Arts placed the exhibition of Old Western European and Lithuanian Painting in the classical Cathedral Basilica of Vilnius, the exhibition of Lithuanian folk art in the baroque church of All Saints, and the M. K. Čiurlionis museum of fine arts presented an exhibition of old graphics and applied fine arts in a former baroque monastery in the suburbs of Kaunas, etc. After independence, the act governing the restitution of the rights of the Catholic Church stated that the said church was entitled to independence and the Republic of Lithuania should reimburse it for the losses incurred during the Soviet period and return any of its buildings then in the ownership of the state authorities. The museums which were restored in the wake of radical administrative and organisational changes had to solve complex problems concerning the moving and rearranging of collections and exhibitions. Storage rooms for paintings and sculptures were installed in Vilnius Cathedral Basilica, next to the exhibition.

In Soviet times, as early as at the end of the 1940s Vilnius University was training museum workers and later, the course on museology was taught to students of history at the

university and to students of the history and theory of arts at the State Institute of Fine Arts. However an opportunity to become familiar with contemporary museology in more detail and more systematically came only after the restoration of independence. Neither the museums, nor the nation, expected or were prepared for the changes that came so rapidly. We have experienced the changes as a self-regulating process; not as a series of strategic moves but rather the result of intuitive decisions. Neither the State nor the institutions blown about by the winds of change that accompanied the new ideology have been able to define a united strategy, until now. Public promotion of the cultural decentralisation has given rise to a *dense* structure of branches of national museums – the Lithuanian Museum of Fine Arts controls the Picture Gallery of Vilnius, Radvilos Palace, the Museum of Applied Fine Arts, the National Fine Arts Gallery, Klaipėda Picture Gallery, Klaipėda Museum of Clocks, Palanga Amber Museum, Suduvite Fine Arts Museum, and P. Gudynas Restoration Centre. M. K. Čiurlionis Museum of Fine Arts has Kaunas Picture Gallery, Mykolas Žilinskas Fine Arts Gallery, the Museum of Ceramics, the Museum of Works and the Collections of A. Zmuidzinavicius, the A. and P. Galauniai Home in Kaunas, A. Rakauskaitė and L. Truikis Memorial Apartment in Kaunas, the M.K.Čiurlionis Memorial Museum in Druskininkai, and V. K. Jonynas Small Gallery in Druskininkai. It is obvious that the branches of museums scattered throughout Lithuania and engaged in various kinds of activities would in certain cases operate more rationally as independent subdivisions. Not to mention the maintenance problems of such a number of buildings which frequently increases as a result of the

organisation of events. State museums are forced to change the nature of their activities drastically, learn how to save, raise additional sources of funding, adapt to the new needs of customers, etc.

Another problem originates in the changes in the provision of the museum services. The collections of the Lithuanian museums are now open to the public in the republic (in the exhibition "Christianity in Lithuanian Art" staged by the Lithuanian Museum of Fine Arts, the public was introduced to the history of ecclesiastical art, 1999–2003) and abroad (the works of M. K. Ėiurlionis were presented in international exhibitions – culminating in a personal exhibition of the artist in the Quai d'Orsay Museum in Paris; and in joint projects of Lithuanian and Polish museum workers in 2000, etc.). New expositions and exhibitions are followed by targeted educational programmes. Unfortunately, the state museums have so far failed to realize that this process requires not only a well-developed administrative staff and professional keepers of collections, but also organisers and curators of the exhibitions. The organisation of artistic events is a complex and time-consuming process in which, apart from the directors and administrators, the staff implementing the idea plays a very important role. This role and their competence regarding the national cultural policy, is now considered as especially important, although still not clearly defined in the funding of projects. In my 14 years of employment with the Lithuanian Museum of Fine Arts and having organised 10 exhibitions at my central institution and outside I have learned that the approach of the state museums to the organisation of events is changing particularly slowly.

These remarks are not an attempt to hide

or solve all the problems facing the Lithuanian museums in a time of change. They do, however, serve as an introduction to the following stories about the intentions of two personalities representing different generations and different philosophies in their exploration of the new power of private initiative in the museum field.

ABOUT THE STRATEGY OF *opening*, OR THE ATTRACTION OF THE NEW CENTRE OF EUROPE

The strategy of *opening* reflects an approach which attempts to open up to the global development processes, to return and rejoin the international scene and become an equal part of it. Eight years have passed since the first international sculpture symposium, which was held in 1993 near the private house of Gintaras Karosas. He was a student of sculpture at the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts, with a house, situated in an old suburban woodland abounding in springs, 19 km from the capital. At the moment, this outdoor Museum of Sculptures of the Centre of Europe (area – 55 hectares) has 66 sculptures. Annually it receives about 50,000 visitors. What is the story behind the museum, the first private museum in Lithuania, established by a young student, which in the beginning raised many doubts but which has exceeded the most optimistic forecasts made by its advocates in the course of its being established? The idea of the museum has its roots in the first public political meetings and actions of the "singing revolution" (the Baltic Road of 1989, when during the 50th anniversary of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact the citizens of the annexed Baltic States held hands and demonstrated their determination to restore indepen-

188 dence to the whole world by means of their living chain along the Vilnius – Tallinn Road). At that time we cherished romantic hopes that all our ideas would come true and we could not imagine the efforts needed to achieve our goals. In such an environment the young sculptor had the idea that he wanted "to give a meaning to a geographical centre of the European continent by means of the language of art". In 1898, the fellows of the French National Geographic Institute located the centre close to the Lithuanian capital. G. Karosas started to implement his idea with the creation of the sculptural sign for the new centre of Europe, which later came to be the logo of the museum. In 1991, this sculpture was erected at the location of the new centre of Europe on a plot of cultivated land. The young artist started to look for a place in the vicinity which would be suitable for the location of the new sculpture park. The suburban environment, abounding in hills and forests, stretching close to the

new centre of Europe is reminiscent of the Swiss Alps. Lithuania is a country of forests. Nature with its forests have become indispensable parts of the environment in the consciousness of most of us. The ideas of the young artist were not born in a vacuum. In the 1970s,

Grūtas park. The monument to Stalin.

symposia on granite sculptures were organised in the seaside town of Klaipėda. In the course of time, mainly because of the remote situation and the ambitions of the young artists, they became a place in which to bring to realisation new and modern concepts. In the 1980s the network of sculpture symposia grew (with a metal symposium in Alytus and a concrete symposium in Aukštieji Paneriai, Vilnius), and the first sculpture exhibitions in public spaces emerged, which were replaced by new conceptual art projects in the 1990s. At the beginning of the independence movement, the sculpture garden in Jeruzalė, Vilnius, legalised its activities. It united the artists who had settled in the suburbs of Vilnius and, in the Soviet times, had contributed to the dissemination of the modernisation processes in our environment. Sculptor Vladas Vildziūnas, who was one of the founders of this movement, had been a lecturer when the young artist studied at the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts.

The young artist found an attractive space near the new centre of Europe and, with the help of his parents, built a house, which has now become the home of international symposia and the office building of the first private museum in Lithuania. At the same time he cleared the surrounding forest and excavated ponds in areas around the springs. The reflections of the increasing number of sculptures on the sparkling surface of the water in these ponds have become an important element of the new museum. To implement his idea, the young artist registered a private company *Sculpture Museum of the Centre of Europe* and started looking for sponsors for the first sculpture symposium. In contrast to the state museums which were regularly funded from the national budget, he had to raise sub-

sides by himself. The first international symposium of the Museum of the Centre of Europe was sponsored by Unesco, the G. Soros Open Society Fund Lithuania, private Lithuanian companies, and individuals. Ten sculptors from Greece, Lithuania, the USA, Hungary, and Finland participated in the symposium. Some of them were college students and their organisations subsidised their journey and stay in Lithuania. After a successful first event, with the help of foreign funds and organisations, Karosas familiarised himself with the activities of private sculpture parks in the USA and Japan. These ideas were especially useful in the formulation and adoption of a strategy for a future museum. Its essence was the evolvement of an alternative to the well-developed collective events organised during the first years of the museum and thus it focused on the implementation of strong and ambitious projects. This programme is realised in two ways: by attracting "names" and by the organising of meetings for young artists from Eastern and Central Europe.

In 1996, the first ambitious project was realised in the Museum of the Centre of Europe. The work of Dennis Oppenheim "Armchair-pool" (470 x 523 x 570 cm) was produced, exactly according to the model, in a factory under the supervision of an assistant. The artist was satisfied with the result of the cooperation and agreed that another of his works should be built in the park. Thus, in 1997–1998, a paradoxical, grotesque work was created, "Drinking Structure with Kidney-Shaped Pool" (1000 x 900 x 550 cm), inside which a spectator can experience a variety of sensations because of the uncomfortable space. These works were the first representations of live pop-art classics, not only in Lithuania but also in Central and Eastern

Europe. At the same time, a minimalist concrete "Double-Negative Pyramid" (560 x 1200 x 600 cm) by Sol LeWitt was created following the directions of the artist. Eventually, the initial interest in the park with great artists sending their assistants to carry out their ideas, was superseded by an active and creative process of cooperation. This cooperation with the famous Polish sculptor Magdalena Abukanovič was especially important for the young artist. Abukanovič first visited the park in 1997 when she was looking for a place to exhibit her small sculptures, but she was captivated by the environment and decided to create what has become one of her major compositions – an assembly of twenty-two abstract concrete segments and natural stone pebbles occupying over two thousand square metres, entitled "Space of Unrecognised Growth", 1997–1998. The acquaintanceship and cooperation with this artist taught G. Karosas a new lesson allowing him not only to experience his dream coming true but also to get feedback from that experience. This is how a whole network of meaningful cooperation developed. Between 1999 and 2001, an ambitious steel project by a young Czech sculptor, Aleš Veselý, "The Idea of Sculpture is a Sculpture"

Grūtas park. The monument to Lenin.

190 (880 x 792 x 793 cm), was erected in the park. An innovative ecological composition by a young artist, Mara Adamitz Scurpe, from the USA, "Suspicious Science", with active solar batteries represented new technology. Perceiving the territory of the museum park as his creative space, Karosas together with the invited artists, created his own sculptures ("Monument of the Centre of Europe, 1997, "LNK Infotree", 1998, "For Your Convenience", 1999), looked after the forest and designed the aggregate image of the Centre of Europe.

The extent of the park is increasing along with the number of ponds, the specially trimmed trees are thriving, an asphalt road has replaced the simple gravel path, and a parking area has been built. The museum park has become a favourite visiting and recreation place for young people, gardeners working nearby, and guests of the city, with approximately 50,000 visitors annually. And the young artist is improving not only his artistic skills but also his administrative, organisational and marketing skills. It is not enough simply to interest an artist in the possibility of realising his or her idea in the new post-Communist centre of Europe, financial support for these projects is necessary. The cost of the largest objects is estimated at LTL 200,000–300,000 (USD 50,000–75,000). State support for Karosa's projects amounts only to about five percent of the value of the works. The remaining funds are raised from tickets, local and international sponsors on six levels, from major donors to families and private individuals.

Today the young founder of the first private museum feels he is a citizen of the world as he communicates with artists from all over the globe, makes independent decisions not only about what or how, but also about how

the existing collection of the museum is to be enlarged. And the diverse and ambitious international collection of sculptures exhibited for visitors to the museum is becoming an opening, a "bridge between different cultures", or to be more exact, between 22 countries whose artists created their works in the new Centre of Europe.

ABOUT THE STRATEGY OF *openness*, OR A NEW APPROACH TO THE FUTURE OF SOVIET IDOLS

The strategy of openness is associated with what is new, fearless and permissive, i.e. a free and democratic attitude towards the historical past. Since ancient times new monuments were built and old ones destroyed when one political system replaced another. Ancient Rome had a law "Demantio memori" (Curse of the past) which said that all statues, reliefs or inscriptions created to glorify a condemned person must be destroyed so that the name and appearance of the condemned would be erased from the memory of future generations.

After the restoration of independence, the signs of the old system are being changed. In 1989–1993, in Lithuania 42 monumental Soviet sculptures were dismantled. In 1998, an open competition on the "establishment of the exposition of Soviet monumental sculptures" was announced and was won by a private organisation, to which the dismantled pieces were handed over. Since 2000, they have been exhibited in the Grūtas Park of the Museum of Soviet sculptures, which was visited by nearly 50,000 people in the first year.

It is worth noting that this decision was very controversial in Lithuania. There were passionate opponents and advocates and the argu-

ments of both sides were willingly presented in the free media. The experiences and losses of the past aroused particularly strong feelings. During the black years of occupation from 1940–1956, Lithuania lost 1 million of its population – 240,000 were killed by Nazis, and 360,000 by the Soviets, killed in the resistance movement, an additional 400,000 people were deported and forced to leave the country. Naturally the public attitude towards these painful issues is not homogeneous: some wish to erase from their memory all the names and symbols of this period while others believe that the overthrown idols will help us never to forget our painful history. Everyone is right in their own way. Our neighbours in Latvia melted down the Soviet monuments and moulded bells, which were given to the victims of the repression, while the Hungarians created a public exhibition of the sculptures. Reprints from publications, letters, speeches, and resolutions compiled on a 200-metre-long stand in the vicinity of the park became not only the history of the realisation of the idea but also a testimony to the variety of attitudes in our society.

In contrast to the hero of the previous story, this museum-builder is an experienced, mature, decisive businessman willing to take a risk. In the Soviet period, Jonas Malinauskas was the chairman of a prosperous collective farm. His career started on a pheasant farm, established in 1967, and favoured by visits from the Soviet leaders. After the restoration of independence, this former leader initiated some new activities. In a recreational area in Dzūkija, which abounds in forests he established a private wood and mushrooms processing company. Its current turnover totals LTL 12 million (USD 3 million). The company employs 200 people on a regular

basis and up to 500 in peak seasons. J. Malinauskas' fresh and canned mushrooms are exported to Western Europe, the USA and Israel. It is a family business. His income is invested in the development of the agro-tourism sector, which is new in our country. Next to the Druskininkai resort, famous in the Soviet era but dying today, is a recreation site with tennis courts and a stud farm is being built on repurchased land near the shore of a picturesque lake which is rich in fish. Making complex plans for the development of the recreational business J. Malinauskas had the idea of creating a new space for a cultural attraction. This is how 200 hectares of forest marsh (covered with a soil layer of 0.5–2.5 metres) came to be drained near his private house and facilities erected near the shores of the lake. This former kingdom of marshes and mosquitoes symbolically shelters the idols of the old ideological system. The exhibition in Grūtas Park was put together over two years. The estimated cost of the project – LTL 4 million (USD 1 million) – was met from the capital of a successful private businessman.

In discussing the thematic composition of the park it is worth mentioning that the new owner pursued a rational policy in implementing his idea. Ignoring all heated public discussion, he invited the creators of the former monuments to help him and they willingly participated in the relocation of their works. Meanwhile he started to include an introductory space adding some sort of interpretative material. As you enter the exhibition in the park, there is an information centre which has a collection of Soviet attributes, works of fine art, uniforms, diplomas, the writings of the Marxism-Leninism apologists, and the film chronicle "Soviet Lithuania". Today the exhibits, which for the majority are somewhat ex-

192 otic, are complemented by recent data from historical studies, some statistical materials about the exile, the partisan resistance movements and collectivisation. Research fellows from the state "Museum of Genocide Centre" helped to prepare historical comments for the museum. It was important for the founder that the visitor would have an accurate commentary on historic events. After you leave the historical centre, you enter an island surrounded by a channel and move along a wooden path surrounding the island which is reminiscent of the rails of the railway taking the deported people into exile. The dismounted monuments, with their comments, are located on both sides at equal intervals – Lenin, Stalin, Dzerzinski, Putna, etc. Passing by these stone and bronze statutes is uncomfortable for those who still fear the past. The impression of the past regime is strengthened by the sound of Soviet songs, imitations of the barracks in the exile camps and partisan dug-outs deep in the forest as a background to the monuments. I, who remember the sunset of this system, was disturbed by the literary references. The part of the exhibition showing the portraits of those who opposed of the idea of the current park, carved by folk artists, feels especially out of context. It looks as if the strategy of the founder of the park is to condemn both old and modern opponents. But modern museology recognizes the advantages of the Disneyland-type exposition. In the market environment, demand governs supply. My students, for whom socialism is only a historical concept, liked this kind of exposition. They stated that it was an attractive and instructive way to learn history.

The founder of the park understood the new consumer-orientated needs of the visitors pretty well. As an efficient and caring

owner he reacts promptly to their requirement. A restaurant has been established near the park offering some 'forest food' dishes – with mushrooms. A separate menu for lovers of exotic things offers some Soviet cuisine – a drink of Russian vodka from a glass with the edge dipped in salt with a piece of rye bread and pickles, herring with pickled onions and potatoes from an aluminium dish or red cranberry kisel. The smallest visitors of the park have not been forgotten either. They can enjoy a large playground in a meadow near a pine forest, which is also often favoured by their parents. A nearby enclosure with some animals appeared after one young visitor remarked that his strongest memory of the park was of a white hen in a cage.

The owner of the park has started talking about his latest idea which is to build a gallery of Soviet art, exhibiting the official and representative works of that time, such as the ideological pieces made of stained glass, since the problem of dismounting and preserving them is worrying their still living creators. Our relationship with the history is individual and it is obvious that the concept of Grūtas Park has and will continue to have its advocates and opponents. Nevertheless, it is an idea realised on the initiative of a private person, i.e. his attitude is just one of a wide variety of options in a free and democratic environment.

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