

**A New Deal** is a report from when seven countries from the former Soviet bloc joined the European Union.

**A New Deal** contains essays, statements and discussions on art from different perspectives from around the Baltic Sea.

**A New Deal** covers: What is artistic freedom? Why are artists still important? In what **way** do experiences in the Baltic countries differ from **those in** Sweden? Does the artist have any responsibilities? To what? To whom?

**A New Deal** discusses: Why are questions concerning culture **for** the new EU-members so little discussed in media? Is it important to defend national differences in **the** process of globalisation?

**A New Deal** presents statements by leading writers and artists including Arunas Gelunas, Peo Hansen, John Peter Nilsson, Rein Raud, Irina Sandomirskaja, Margareta Tillberg and Nomeda & Gediminas Urbonas.

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A NEW DEAL

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Post-Soviet realities meet welfare state models.  
In what way will this reflect on the arts?



Edited by Margareta Tillberg

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This report is the outcome of a day full of expectation and some apprehension. It was a beginning and an end.

Even if quite some time has passed since *A New Deal* took place we feel it is important to publish these discourses. We were both involved in the initiation and organisation of the seminar and we hope that the different attitudes displayed towards this day of great consequence for Europe will be of interest in the light of what has happened since.

We would like to thank all the participants – the lecturers and the audience – for their contribution and, of course, the European Commission, which generously opened its doors for the event.

The Baltic Cultural Centre in Stockholm was a very important player in the cultural exchange that took place between the Baltic and Nordic countries and we are proud of the numerous activities and projects it managed to implement during its existence between 1997 and 2004. Now we are all members of a larger community, the EU, where we hope for further development of cultural relations and exchange.

*Liana Ruokyte-Jonsson*

Former chair of The Association  
for Baltic-Nordic Cultural Exchange

*Johan Etzler*

Former director of the Baltic Cultural Centre

Copenhagen and Stockholm, October 2009

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# **A NEW DEAL: POST-SOVIET REALITIES MEET WELFARE STATE MODELS. IN WHAT WAY WILL THIS REFLECT ON THE ARTS?**

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In what way will this reflect on the arts?**

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**EDITED BY MARGARETA TILLBERG**

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**A NEW DEAL: POST-SOVIET REALITIES  
MEET WELFARE STATE MODELS.  
IN WHAT WAY WILL THIS REFLECT  
ON THE ARTS?**

**MARGARETA TILLBERG &  
JOHN PETER NILSSON**

On May 1, 2004, ten new countries joined the European Union. This was the biggest expansion ever. To the hitherto 15 membership countries were added Cyprus, Malta, Slovenia and seven countries from the former Soviet block: the Central European Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, and the three Baltic states Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The initiative for *A New Deal* came from Liana Ruokyte-Jonsson, Cultural Attaché, Embassy of Lithuania, Sweden. The project group of the seminar consisted of Christian Chambert, Johan Etzler, John Peter Nilsson and Liana Ruokyte-Jonsson. *A New Deal* is a cooperation between the Lithuanian Embassy in Stockholm, the Baltic Cultural Centre of Stockholm City, the European Commission, Sweden and the Swedish AICA (International Art Critics Association). *A New Deal* was a follow-up to an earlier symposium on *Mild dictatorships*. The Association for Baltic-Nordic Cultural Exchange (Föreningen för Baltiskt-Nordiskt Kulturbyte) financed *A New Deal* seminar and the publication of this book. Hans Alldén, Director of the European Commission, Sweden, hosted the seminar.

The idea behind this seminar – *A New Deal: Post-Soviet Realities Meet Welfare State Models* – was to initiate a discussion from a cultural point of view, an angle the project group figured had hitherto not been considered enough in other media. The heading was intended to elicit reflection on the new conditions, first during the last decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, where the

Baltic States became sovereign states again, and secondly to give some thoughts to what the new conditions, now under the EU, would bring.

People working in the field of culture in the countries around the Baltic Sea were invited and asked to present their different perspectives. The keynote speakers' presentations are printed here in full. Arūnas Gelūnas from Kaunas and Margareta Tillberg from Stockholm talked about post-Soviet realities from the eastern and western shores of the Baltic Sea; Nomeda Urbonas and Gediminas Urbonas from Vilnius, and Rein Raud, from Helsinki and Tallinn, shared their views on experiences of artistic freedom in the Baltic countries before and after the Wall.

The participants in the panel discussion were Lolita Jablonskienė from Vilnius; Irina Sandomirskaja, Stockholm; Peo Hansen, Linköping (Sweden), and Rein Raud. The moderator was John Peter Nilsson, Stockholm.

The questions that *A New Deal* discussed were: In what way will this new deal reflect upon the arts? The Baltic countries are squeezed between post-Soviet realities and are now members of the EU. In this position, what role does the so-called Swedish model play in Realpolitik and from a cultural policy perspective? Artistic freedom has been one of the strongest driving forces for the development of the visual arts during the last century. In what ways do the experiences in the Baltic countries differ from those of Sweden in relation to the role of the art market and the grant system? Why are artists still important?

*A New Deal* had its starting point in the new Baltic EU countries' attitudes and strategies during the nineties, once they had become independent from the Soviet Union and met new collaborating partners, of which Sweden was one. What came out of the seminar was that there was not, in fact, a contradiction between these two worlds. Now, almost 20 years after the fall of the Wall, it is rather a matter of finding new visions to unite both the old East and the West.

A certain dispute broke out when Peo Hansen, Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies at Linköping University, directed criticism at the EU by calling attention to the concept that there can only be a true Europe once Europe comes to terms with its identity – for example by “denazifying” its past.

Irina Sandomirskaja, Professor of Cultural Studies at Södertörn University College in Stockholm, followed this up by pointing out that the concept Europe was born as the consequence of a rape by a mythological Greek god – the development of Europe has always been violent since this incident. The question is if the democratic organisation of the EU can alter Europe's acts of violence. No concrete answer was given. Instead the question was left open about finding new forms for a dialogue between preserving the unique national experiences or finding a common platform.

Another theme of discussion was globalization. The world has paradoxically both shrunk and become bigger. The globalization effects have also created new economical, cultural and religious conflicts. Is it important to defend national differences in this develop-

ment? The Baltic participants felt particular strongly about retaining their national identity within the new Europe.

What we are discussing today has to be established. We have to learn to understand that on some level we are always global. Our geography is disturbed, not only our physical surrounding, but also our economical, cultural and ethnical proximity. As this process has become more obvious in the current globalization, we have to start to navigate from our own experiences. But our experiences are not only global. My private experiences, rooted in my own private context, are equally valid as are collective experiences from a world that many of us share and inhabit together.

If I want to position myself in this disturbed geography, I have to tell a story – my story. If this story is true, it is no one else's but mine. Of course, this creates an area for possible misunderstandings, which is also fertile soil for discussion and friction, an untranslatable distance between others and me. Today it is important to fight for a space in the world to tell one's own story. It is not cyberspace and it is not ethno space. It is a mental space, within me and within my fellow human beings. And with this place defined, or in the process of definition – I have created the opportunity to communicate with other people.

Stockholm, February 2006

This book includes the whole seminar. The principal editorial work was finished at the beginning of June 2006 and it has not been updated since.

## **WHAT ARE POST-SOVIET REALITIES FROM A BALTIC PERSPECTIVE? THE LITHUANIAN CASE**

**ARŪNAS GELŪNAS**



I must confess that, to my mind, eaten away by reflection, it took quite a few days to clarify the meaning of the concept of “perspective”. Finally, I came up with a rather trivial and very visualist result similar to the example given in numerous “Introductions to Philosophy”. Perspective, says the definition, is the field of seeing from the particular point in time and in space, limited from the very start by the fixed position of the viewer. In contrast to “God’s view”, embracing all the phenomena from all points in time and in space, this human view is partial, imperfect and tending to change. This definition left me satisfied as it sounded like a suitable justification to those hypothetical Latvians and Estonians or even Lithuanians who could possibly find their variants of “post-Soviet Baltic perspective” misrepresented in my short report.

It would be my guess, that, at least on the emotional plane, the national variants of Post-Communism could differ significantly in the three Baltic countries. The Roman Catholic and Romantic background of Lithuania could affect the shaping of her Modern Institutions and the perceptions of radical change in life in a different manner not only from a rather distant Estonia, but also from her linguistic sister Latvia, both countries sharing a Protestant background. Next, I have to say a few words about my methodology: though I found it extremely difficult to analyze certain aspects with calm detachment, I chose to describe and to quote rather than to make value judgements. Moreover, the five-six pages or so limit of this

text has forced me to choose two or three key motifs to describe – the ones that stood out in my perspective with a stronger clarity than the others.

## MOTIF I: NOSTALGIA FOR THE DRAMATIC ELEMENT

Alfonsas Andriuskevičius, one of the most influential Lithuanian art critics, used to start his series of lectures on Soviet Lithuanian Art with a rather dirty joke. He quoted his own elderly professor of painting as conveying the essence of a Socialist Realist work of art: “The work of art without a dramatic element is like a girl without tits”. This vulgar joke *a lá* Nikita Khrushchev is not only handy in analyzing the pseudo-heroic tendency of Soviet Culture. The “element of dramatic struggle”, in quite different form, could be found in the works of those who fought against the system. “Struggle” could also be understood as juxtaposing fundamental human values – often camouflaged in Aesopian language – against the skin-deep and partial Soviet system values. In his short but important essay *On the Ideological Head Cold*, written in the symbolic year of 1991, Alfonsas Andriuskevičius proposes to treat the fact of the presence or the absence of “the highest human values (and first of all metaphysical)” as the criteria for judging the value of the piece of art of Soviet times. In just a few years this situation changed radically. The Soviet system was gone, the Aesopian language became unnecessary, the role of the rebel and the “hidden spiritual

aristocrat” – ridiculous, and, what is most important, the concrete and clear image of “The Evil” vanished to be replaced by a complex and many-faceted image of “The New Evil” – the Mass Culture and Western Consumerism. The circumstances to perform the “struggle for fundamental human values” were even more difficult as the new evil was not considered to be evil at all by the many members of the newly emerging society. Thus the intellectuals who, in preacher-like manner, were warning society against the apocalyptic dangers of western consumerism were often ridiculed as old-fashioned eccentrics.

Mass culture was not the only evil. A new type of art emerged. Contemporary western art, with its decades of complex trajectories and with all the variety of stylistic forms suddenly emerged on the Lithuanian scene as the set of prestigious standards of sophistication. It had nothing to do with either consumerism or the masses and was very much more elitist than popular. Yet, based on a totally new grammar, it was all Greek to the representatives of the traditionalist school of artists who once considered themselves modernists and at the cutting edge. “We have no criteria for evaluating this” could not hide the confusion one elderly professor of the *Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts* felt in front of a huge installation. Nowhere else was the *generation gap* more evident.

A large number of the older generation felt that new forms of culture threatened their values and undermined their identity. There were others who welcomed the new forms of culture but, nevertheless,

perceived the cultural change as too fast. Once influential, now artists, poets, actors and academics of the older generation could not resist the feeling that their achievements had become unnecessary and that, in a similar fashion to the Soviet times, the national culture was under threat again. Just a week ago, in his public presentation *Intelligentsia and its Role in Politics*, a well-known poet of the older generation and the unsurpassed master of Aesopian language Marcelijus Martinaitis complained about the loss of the “aura” of the people of culture and the decrease of importance of their guiding moral force in society. According to Martinaitis, during the period of Independence, all the moral taboos were shamelessly broken and theft became legal; the Artist became unnecessary. Even in Soviet times, said Martinaitis, it was *more interesting* to be a man of culture: “One could take risks and feel independent from the [Soviet] System. It was more interesting and more dangerous [...] Intelligentsia bore a social aura.”

I have to resist a strong temptation to present a quotation here from Umberto Eco’s article of 1964 called *Apocalyptic and Integrated Intellectuals* on culture “that opposes the vulgarity of the crowd” being the contrast of culture “within everybody’s reach”. Let me try to summarize instead the change of the cultural system. Before: the strictly hierarchical system, where [occupational] government was the only decision-maker and where the meaning of cultural life was strongly associated with thrilling resistance against this force. After: [it was a very short pe-

riod of time replaced with] a very horizontal cultural arena where everyone could say anything without getting punished and where the mode of “struggle” – cold and rational temper of cultural debates and persuasion – was not at all dramatic or heroic. Conclusion: The change of the system was a very sudden need to change the deeply rooted habits and thus a major trauma. This will lead us to the next, even more dramatic, motif.

## **MOTIF II: CULTURAL POLICY: SUPPORT SYSTEM OR MARKET ECONOMY? EDUCATIONAL STRATEGY: MUSEUM, LABORATORY OR THE SUPERMARKET?**

Within a short period of time, the ex-Communists, the ex-anti-Communists and pragmatic youth found themselves at one round table of decision-making. The Kantian question “What ought I to do?” had to be taken with all seriousness as there was no Moscow to send instructions. The taxpayers’ money – a totally new concept, never heard of before – had to be used in the best possible way to suit the taxpayers’ needs. Another new urgent question to be answered was “What are Lithuania’s new forms of culture in order to present herself on the international stage?” All these questions have led to one fundamental one: “What are the quality criteria?” How are we to decide which cultural initiatives are commercial ones and can survive in the market conditions, and which have to be state-supported or funded? This question

is by no means unique in the present-day world, but it has a particularly complicated aspect of being asked in a very narrow circle of specialists of a country of 3.5 million (or, in the case of Latvia and Estonia, even less) who know each other by their first names. The inability to reach a common decision was very often motivated by the need for international expertise. (As, for example, in evaluating the study programmes of the universities by experts from neighbouring universities, struggling for the same state budget money).

The generation gap, already mentioned above, also counted. I was told about one rather interesting event that could be of some importance in the context of this presentation. The Lithuanian Prime Minister, a man in his seventies, was invited to participate at the opening of a contemporary art show. He is reported as saying in front of one of the “most daring” art objects: “Is it this that we are spending the taxpayers’ money for?” Everyone agreed it was a good question to ask...

There was still another challenge – the challenge of “new centralism”. The capital-based culture bureaucrats were blamed for creating New Moscow out of Vilnius. It was noticed by many, that lots of cultural goods (books, concerts, exhibitions, etc.) were not reaching the non-Vilnius areas of Lithuania and that the non-capital municipalities were clearly under-financed. One English artist has told me he was several times encouraged not to leave Vilnius for the “periphery” as there was “nothing to see there”. This

Center-Periphery argumentation exploded with a new force during a recent Presidential Scandal, when President Rolandas Paksas (now forced to resign following his impeachment) totally unsupported by intellectuals, was becoming a new National Hero and a fighter against the “Corrupt Elite” in the eyes of the rural population of Lithuania. The conclusion of this scandal was clear: there are “two different Lithuanias” – one of the “The Elite” and one of “The Beets”, to use the now widespread pejorative term. “How is closer dialogue possible?” is the question we have to answer as soon as possible. This situation of the need for “culture for all”, I believe, brings us close to the problems that Sweden had and still has to solve in shaping the priorities in its cultural policies.

### **MOTIF III: FORECASTS**

Can the new, EU, cultural space make the decisions any easier? I have to end my short report on a rather sceptical note. I find, and increasingly so, the idea of peaceful coexistence of radically different value systems in culture a very difficult problem. History, including history of art, is full of examples of how the models of “coexistence of differences” were vigorously replaced by the simpler and clear hierarchical ones. The clashes between different value systems can bear symbolic attractiveness as with the fall of the Berlin Wall and can also be deadly frightening as the Madrid railway attacks. We are often reminded by the historians of ideas, that the world scene was dominated by

either *hierarchy*, where the strong centre, “the Temple”, provided meanings to the more remote periphery, or the *war*, where several strong centres, “the Duchies”, were striving to become *the* centre. It is quite schematic to subsume all the variety and subtlety of cultural interactions under the dichotomy of hierarchy *or* war, yet, the recent swinging back of the pendulum towards nostalgia for fundamental values and hierarchy makes me very anxious about the future of the system of many voices, in which the only form of struggle allowed is debates.

## **THE COLD WAR FROM A SWEDISH PERSPECTIVE**

**MARGARETA TILLBERG**

I have been invited to talk about "post-Soviet realities from a Swedish perspective". Thanks to being born a Swedish citizen and thus part of a welfare state, I have had the additional advantage of being born with a passport valid for "all countries". With all these inherited privileges, I suppose my role here is to play the "bad guy".

What are my angles of observation? I will not define any general "Swedish perspective", which, of course, would be a futile abstraction anyway. My standpoint is not a static position stuck on the Scandinavian Peninsula but rather a moving one. In this presentation I will move through a series of different geographical places that have been possible for me to visit. This journey is followed by some reflections on the cultural and political life in Sweden, which continues to Moscow and is summed up in a reflective stance. But first I want to share with you my own subjective, kaleidoscopic impressions of what I have seen, heard and experienced. The first part roughly coincides with the Cold War. Perhaps these recollections will give rise to associations amongst you as well. Let's begin from my childhood.

## **I. A TRIP THROUGH TIME AND SPACE 1961–2001**

I was born when the Berlin Wall was built. What East German officials said, "did not happen" – happened. During my first school holidays I went with my family on a trip to Europe. Ten weeks from Gothenburg

(on the Swedish west coast) to Alhambra in south Spain. Through Western Europe heading south, and through Eastern Europe coming home. With my little nose pressed to the window of our white American car (that my father proudly had bought for his first pay check and that caused a stir wherever we went – especially behind the Iron Curtain) – I saw it all with my own eyes. Czechoslovakia we had difficulties in getting into, it was August 1968. The guards at the border looked through everything. But I was more fascinated by the sunflowers and the old man sitting in the sun, whose spit was in all possible colours. From Poland I especially remember the Palace of Culture and Science (I found it stunningly impressive), Chopin's little white house with the grand piano in a park with roses, and Auschwitz (necessary to know about for a seven-year-old, my parents thought).

We returned to Poland many times – for skiing in Zakopane and visiting art museums in Krakow. Once on an outing, my parents were lost – but I knew the way. Not knowing how – but probably because I felt comfortable, at home.

At 15 I started studying Russian at upper secondary school. That was the way to get into that very school, where there was this boy I fancied. My first visit to Russia was in 1982, and I returned to Moscow as a student of Russian language and literature one year later. All that was before Gorbachev and *glasnost*. The man in power was Andropov, a former KGB boss. He was the one who had come up with the brilliant idea of using mental hospitals instead of

prisons for dissidents (that is people who think), and who had found out the effectiveness in breaking people's self-identity and dignity by dissolving their brains by forcing them to take drugs. As a member of Amnesty International, I knew about this. Effective. I knew about the Nazis in the 1930s and their exhibition *Entartete Kunst* – degenerated art. Now, people in my immediate surrounding were stamped as “sick” because they did not conform to the dominating political agenda. And that was different. And in spite of my passport, my exit to freedom, I found that very, very scary. At the Pushkin Institute, where I studied Russian as a foreign language (I was in one of the groups from *kapstrany* – capitalist countries) we learned that the permitted artistic expressions would have to correspond to the “healthy” Socialist Realism (which has nothing to do with the critical social realism in Sweden of the sixties and seventies). What did that mean? That reality was depicted as the “result of future progress”: the result of something that had not yet happened – that was “real”?! The correct way of understanding reality was thus one that lacked any connection whatsoever to anything at all in real life. Socialism, our teachers told us, was still a thing of the future. But nevertheless it had to be depicted. The radio voice (at the student home we had access only to one channel) announced that Moscow was the cleanest capital in the world. But my eyes saw grey-green-yellowish smoke coming out of the factory chimneys. Who could I talk to? My roommate was a communist from London who had a large Lenin por-

trait on the wall – a believer. When we made excursions (*Lenin Mausoleum, Lenin Museum, House of Friendship* etc.) our “capitalist” coats were put in secluded rooms, separated from the “socialist” ones. What was real? What was surreal? Maybe I just did not get it? Maybe it was only a language problem?

Luckily, I found some people who could laugh. Laugh at the thought of the communist paradise that was supposed to have been reached in 1981, 20 years after Khrushchev declared that “the coming Soviet generation will live under communism” in the XXII Party Congress in 1961. Naturally all mankind was included. So now we had lived under “freedom, brotherhood and candour (*iskrennost'*)” for three years. This was in 1984.

At that time my perspective on the Baltic States stemmed from the artists and musicians I knew from Moscow. For them, the Baltics was the “West” – which it was, also geographically. On the west coast you were free – and you could live as a hippie on the beach, listen to the latest (forbidden) jazz and rock concerts (I still have some vinyl records of Trio Ganelin and Stas Namin) and the art academies were much freer there than in Moscow.

With this image I visited Tallinn in the early nineties. To say the least, I was very disappointed. January 1991. Ice-cold. Russia had turned off the oil tap. The object of my trip was *Forma Antropologia* – the last exhibition still sponsored by Soviet money, but the first not to take any notice of the central ideology. It took place at the *Central Art Gallery* in

Tallinn, and the visitors looked to me like Helsinki high-society. Each of the three countries Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania presented five artists. With altogether 15 artists only one woman was included: Ausma Neretniece from Latvia. She had built a construction of wood and steel and from within this cage four differently looking creatures tried to make their way out. One looked like a human being with animal body, another was a wrapped mummy and a third was looking at us with clear eyes but no mouth. Gediminas Urbonas, a young artist from Lithuania was very proud of the expensive materials he had been able to use – white marble and black diabase from Karelia. “On the white chest I have chiselled out an eagle which stands for the freedom I seek and on the black back a horse. My sign is the horse according to the Chinese horoscope and it stands for speed and endurance.”

As an interpreter from Russian I have encountered many problematical situations such as occasions when people in Sweden did not distinguish Russians from Estonians, convinced that all people from the Soviet Union are Russians by nationality. My countrymen's lack of historical awareness that was common in the Sweden of the early nineties. That interpretation which is not only about translating words however, but also about conveying cultural differences became critical when a delegation from the former Soviet Union visited the Childrens' Ombudsman here in Stockholm to talk about the human rights of children. Human rights!? For children!!! And how do



you explain our 'ethics' to someone who has no concept whatsoever of what that could mean?

Since then people from around the Baltic Sea have learned a lot more about one another. A number of art shows have presented Estonian, Latvian, Polish and Russian art here and Swedish artists participate in international biennales and conferences together with artists from Vilnius and Warsaw. When working with the former Eastern bloc art, or whatever you might call it, what interested me was the transition from dictatorship and occupation, from suppression of freedom of expression and isolation to a context where information is in abundance. How did artists understand their role in this? Responsibility? One artist I interviewed said: "I am responsible only to my own genius."

In 1999 I went to Weimar, which was appointed City of Culture the same year. It was completely restored for this event. People from West Germany were to come to East Germany (many for their first time ever) and see that it was not as bad as they had thought. Lecturing on Soviet and Russian art, I also initiated seminars on art in the GDR. The other teachers told me I would get no students interested in this. They were wrong. One of the many students, ten years old when the Berlin Wall fell, said she remembered the milk tasted much better in East Germany than after the occupation of the West. Nostalgia.

## II. SWEDEN IN THE NINETIES

Two tracks: Track one has to do with the phenomenon that intellectuals in Sweden are more inclined towards leftist, socialist opinions, than to the conservative right (although now it is difficult to know anymore, who is who). Anyway, the left-winged, "progressive" ones often hold decision-making positions in the cultural sphere. Some years ago, if I remember right it was in 1999, there was a public debate at the *Kulturhuset* (the major house of culture at the main square in Stockholm) about Stalin. A scarily large proportion (10–20% I think) of the participants considered it fully acceptable to see Stalin and his actions in a rosy, forgiving light (would it be possible to take people seriously as conscious intellectuals if they said the same about Hitler? No.) In the biggest morning paper there was a series of articles with the theme "I forgive myself for having been a communist but now I have changed". A few people made "confessions", but they were really not very many. The majority kept silent, or paid lip service to the winds that currently blew as if the past had never happened. This is now topical again as the leader of the Left Party (*Vänsterpartiet*) proudly proclaims himself to be a communist (whatever that means to him; actually the name of the party changed in the beginning of the nineties and the word "communist" was renounced).

Track Two: The second current tendency of the later years has been towards a strong centralization of media. There are public service media here, like three TV-channels, but other than that the most in-

fluent channels of information, including the major newspapers, are privately owned. During the last few years, a number of independent non-profit-making journals and monthly magazines have lost their state subsidies and disappeared. Freelance writers face increasing difficulties in becoming published – the trade unions at the newspapers stop articles written by non-fulltime employed journalists. There is a fear that the number of independent voices in Swedish media is decreasing.

In general, the public debate is coloured by extreme political correctness, fear of being conspicuous and not pronouncing the “correct” opinions at the right time. To express an opinion which diametrically opposes the accepted consensus at that very moment happens all-too rarely. The journal of the university where I currently work is even called *Consensus*, so it is apparently the word of the day (but somehow it seems like the word of yesterday too, as I recall).

### **III. MOSCOW – NEW YORK – MOSCOW 1988–2004**

At the end of the eighties the most successful Moscow artists moved to the west. Dollar millionaires and invited to the most prestigious art exhibitions and biennales. The visualization of dictatorship tickled the art collectors. The horror image of the east-west frontier was the peak of the sublime. Ilya Kabakov’s living room, placed in a public Soviet toilet, from *Documenta* in Kassel 1992, or AES photoshopped images

of Talibans on the Red Square are among the more spectacular examples. To show is one thing – to understand and to be understood – another.

### **IV. AROUND THE BALTIC SEA**

One of the questions this seminar posits is “Ten new countries entering the EU – post-Soviet realities are meeting welfare state models. In what way will this reflect on the arts?”

We surely face different problems on our respective shores. We all have our spots of shame and dots of pride. Not only Sweden is a very complex place – we all have our histories. To my mind, our different experiences should not be underestimated, our individuality not be downplayed. Our cultural codes differ, our historical backgrounds as well. Even looking at the same objects, we see different things. What we have in common is a period of reconstruction – a process that has already started but which mostly still lies ahead of us. These reconstructions of geographies – of images – of memories are part of an immense project, involving a great deal of effort and a lot of work. But it is necessary. I see a number of problems ahead of us. One crucial issue is who will be given a voice in this project? History has taught us that the one with the fattest wallet dictates the rules whether in Moscow, Stockholm or by Soros.

Whose voice will be able to make itself heard in the media roar? Will the ones who set the political agenda in Sweden allow the new EU-members to have their

own way in interpreting and living out democracy? Who will succeed in publicly taking the right to pronounce interpretations of “democracy”? Whose subjective perspective will win? Will critical Lithuanians and Poles be given a voice in Sweden and about Sweden, and vice versa? Who will care to listen – a crucial problem of the information-saturated “free” world, whereas scarcity of information made people queue for exhibitions in the East. But even in cities the size of Moscow and St. Petersburg with populations exceeding our entire countries, people express worries of having their culture invaded by Americanism and the West.

Many tendencies that cultural workers in Sweden now face and situations we adapt to would, be unacceptable for intellectuals from the countries now entering the EU. My notion of people from the former Eastern bloc is that they (you), as a consequence of totalitarian power, have achieved increased sensitivity towards limitations on having the right to a public voice, to censorship, to interference from power into the private space.

These are intellectuals (you) who have the ability to read between the lines, skilfully interpreting and decoding even scarce and distorted information as well as to track down the subtlest signs of oppression (once you have had it in your system – you recognize it immediately). But is this kind of experience useful in this new deal? Intelligentsia in the former Soviet Union countries – do they still exist? Who has time (meaning money) to formulate concerns about their society?

About something as “unnecessary” as art? Hitherto, we know only very little about each other. So far we have been used to a bigger interest from the east to the west, but I am certain that it would be unwise not to be interested in what is going on at the other side of the water – including the cultural spheres.

The Baltic countries in between Russia, the former Soviet satellites, Scandinavia and Germany are at present in a privileged position. With newly reorganized art institutions and a public space combined with curiosity and open-mindedness when it comes to new experiences. Here, on the other side, the right to publicly announce your opinions has been taken for granted for a long time. Institutions, however, tend to be quickly cemented and positions are maintained due to too cautiously expressed opinions. But who cares anyway? You are optimistic (I hope). We have lived in a state of optimism for 50 years already. The more I work and live with this, the more I realize the need to be humble and cautious towards extremely rich traditions in other cultures with their unique mixture of peoples and crossroads.

For us who are in this very room right now, I am most certain that our opinions and notions differ on just about everything: sex, freedom, self, private and public space, family, integrity, money, dis/respect for young/old people and the future. There is a danger of projecting and imposing our own experiences and interpretations on one another and at the same time it is probably unavoidable. I am sure our contacts will lead to a number of misunderstandings and frustra-

tions. I hope there will be a lot of friction and arguments.

I believe it important to let your artists speak out here and to let our artists visit you – on their own terms. One thing I hope for is that the role of the artists and intellectuals will be important. Involved but independent. As witnesses.

Stockholm, May 1st 2004

**EXPERIENCES OF ARTISTIC  
FREEDOM IN LITHUANIA  
BEFORE AND AFTER THE WALL.  
A CONVERSATION**

**NOMEDA & GEDIMINAS URBONAS**

Lolita Jablonskienė and John Peter Nilsson presented this text in the conference, as Nomeda & Gediminas Urbonas were not able to attend.

NOMEDA URBONAS: What do you think are the markers that chart the experience of artistic freedom before and after the Wall? Conditions? Art market? Motivation?

GEDIMINAS URBONAS: How is the artistic practice articulated? What is the place of the artist in society? You see, I didn't do much before the Wall. I saw what the others were doing... how they were acting.

NU: So what about the art school? Let's talk about these late eighties. Can you elaborate a bit on your relationship to the surroundings, reality there? It was an important moment for society in general, the beginning of the change.

GU: The art school I attended before the Academy was an asylum for artists forming so-called "silent modernism": the ones resisting the universal idea of socialist realism imposed by the state. As our teachers could not get public commissions to build Lenins, for instance, or did not want to because of their love for Kandinsky and Dalí, they formed a type of opposition.

NU: Against the official ideology? In what way?

GU: In a surreal way really, as from the ethical point

they were patriarchal, aesthetics modernist, economically capitalist and politically God-fearing you might say. It was according to the Soviet reality, the key principal of dialectic materialist “law of the unity and the struggle of opposites”. Maybe it was this degree zero, the point of non-identity, when the same day you could become a member of *Komsomol* [The Communist Youth Organisation], join the folklore singing in the afternoon and spend the evening at a punk gathering. Art school was hip, and had a kind of cool attitude – a punk attitude. It was disobedience against the system. To paint a swastika on the school wall was also disobedience as that was an insult to the Russian army. The school was considered privileged compared to others, as the kids of the Soviet nomenclature were brought there. Therefore opposition was allowed more there than in other places.

NU: That was a reason you wanted to become an artist?

GU: No, I had no other choice, as after such schooling you do not learn anything else except art.

NU: I still think you had some motivations anyway...

GU: That's right. I wanted to be an artist, because I wanted to be part of the privileged. Artists were privileged in the Soviet Union.

NU: So you were planning to produce Lenins, drive a

Volga, have a big studio and country house...?

GU: Sort of... yes, that's how the survival strategy was understood.

NU: Well, already these capitalistic, petty bourgeois desires...? So what happened in the end, why didn't you end up like that? Why didn't you do the monuments for national kings on horses but kept doing actions, happenings, installations and other nonsense?

GU: You are right; I felt the change in the market. You know, you can't really extend yourself with these horses...

NU: Tell me how did the *The Green Leaf* start?

GU: Our group *The Green Leaf* was born out of ecological awareness, if you want, which came to light after the Chernobyl catastrophe. This awareness became a framework, which grew into the green party movement, thanks to what *perestroika* allowed us to do.

NU: But what was the motivation to do something? What was the motivation for you to join with such a practice?

GU: It was the feeling that a group activity is cool, the idea of authorship was dissolving by that time. The

*perestroika* movement was fuelled by the rock- and punk bands. It was just the wish to do something cool, cooler than already existing narratives based on a retrospective focus. It seemed to me that “cool” would be working in a team activity, where all the members have particular functions but perform under one name. We started doing performances and that’s how we met with composers, got connected to Landsbergis, did Fluxus readings, and had film screenings of anthology film archives in NY. There was a certain period of group listening to the marginal trends, concrete music, aborigine, microtone, African, a general awareness of the marginalized. I think Fluxus had the major influence on us. By that time we didn’t know how Fluxus became a museum object, we didn’t know the consequences yet. Because we simply didn’t see the museum at that time. By that time, the Fluxus movement or the Fluxus action was understood as a political sign, as a political event. It was perceived as some kind of resistance.

NU: So inevitably you wanted to be in opposition to the overall dominating system?

GU: The Fluxus example introduced us to ways of translating the political sense into some kind of artistic act. On the other hand it was clearly opposing the academic tradition of a local school.

NU: Was being an artist a successful role by that time?

GU: You shouldn’t simplify the fact that there was a terrible Soviet system and there were nationalist artists from oppressed and occupied territories fighting against that system. The system meant people, concrete people, it was all of us. Besides the unifying ideology, this was a horrific time of complete rottenness in all respects: ecological catastrophe, ideological collapse, and economic decay. From this stagnation and depression a new economy of smuggling was born, where Lithuanians were carrying pullovers to Russia, socks to Yugoslavia, buckets and axes to Poland. It was like the grand move of nations – the grand dollar route. And we had to make the decision, to go and take pullovers, vodka, petrol. And I don’t know why we didn’t do that...

NU: Well, why not?

GU: I remember once we were going to Tallinn with my cousin to get 200 litres of cheap petrol and sell it back to Lithuania at double the price.

NU: Yes, but it was not your idea, unfortunately.

GU: It was this very bourgeois, capitalist viewpoint dominating. Smugglers were not working class, but entrepreneurs, profiteers indeed. Anyway, they were not what we wanted to be. They were called profiteers in the beginning, merchants later and now they are respected businessmen. By that time this way was unacceptable for me. It was the moment of choice,

the moment when you had to make a decision. To be an artist for me was not to be with them. It means to do something in opposition to the mainstream, the profit making.

NU: Yes, I remember that motivation to create something that you couldn't sell, which would not fit into the existing system of values. It's clear that at the beginning the change in post-communist countries, in particular Baltic republics, did not mean the possibility of an open society but survival under the market conditions. Return of repressed capitalism was exercised during the Soviet years through the fetishism of capitalist production. And for many people the change meant a return to the pre-war period.

GU: Already in the art school we got to know that there are so-called official artists, the privileged layer, that gets to the information channels, education, that goes abroad, gets all the state commissions. Then there was another layer, that penetrated the art schools, and who were called "silent modernists". The paradox was that there were no class difference between those two. It was a double game. Both had attachments to the national symbols. All winners of Lenin prizes, definitely communists, would collect religious attributes relating to national heritage, had ethnic-style country houses, would celebrate national holidays and visit catholic churches. So they were playing these double games all the time, and there was this performing aspect to it.

NU: So by that time did you feel a need to position yourself somewhere else?

GU: A lot of friends of the artists' families were studying in the art school. No matter whether they were from the "officials" or from the "silent modernists", all of them belonged to the elite. And I felt a gap, since I didn't belong to any elitist group. This was my motivation, a move for me to do something else, to create my own environment, which would be independent from already existing constraints.

NU: So already then you had a revolutionary spirit?

GU: Yes, to demolish the others and take over their positions.

NU: Now you have to explain what happened after the Wall.

GU: I'm thinking about the notion of "after the Wall" in general. Can you recall the moment of the Wall? For me it didn't exist. I think the Wall fell much earlier. I could imagine, in the West that the change really meant a lot. In our environment the changes started much earlier, physically anyway. But we crossed the iron border also only in the nineties, although we were the first generation anyway which benefited from that fall.

NU: In my point of view, there are two important is-



sues related to that time. First of all there was a historical chance to create or introduce the new method here in this context, which was what, in fact, we wanted to prove with our art. The other thing was getting to orientate ourselves in a newly opened market and conjuncture. I had found the last decade a very fruitful period of life, having very definite tasks, a clear vision of what you, as an artist, have to do and a lot of energy to strive for these goals.

GU: It was the moment when it became cool not to leave, not to go somewhere else, but do something on the spot, in Vilnius. There was such a vibe, the actuality, the intuition you could catch in the air. It was about artists' initiative. It was a hype at that time and new constellations were appearing all over: *Muu-ry* in Helsinki, *CRAC [Creative Room for Art and Computing]* in Stockholm, *Atelier Nord* in Oslo and lots of others. In the early nineties, for me personally, there was a natural transition from the collaborations with and within an artistic collective. But at the same time there was a new quality, a quality given by structure. One could make a statement to say that I myself as an artist am able to legitimate my artistic practice, artistic production as institution. It was also a political statement to establish a new kind of institution, independent from the ministry of culture, the artists' union or any other existing structure and think independently how to organize this mechanism – where and how to get funding, how to make it function and so on. This was the framework in which the

inter-disciplinary art programme *Jutempus* emerged.

NU: On the other hand the dialogue with other fields of culture and life was very important. There was a real wish for interdisciplinary practice and it was also a time of a new technological boom here.

GU: I recall a conversation with a student from Stockholm pointing out the lack of resistance among the young generation of artists. As the existing system of institutions are functioning perfectly there is no point to oppose them, just to join them in a perfect embrace. I was thinking a good deal about where from we inherited this need to oppose the system. Probably because we never believed that there is a chance for something that functions perfectly.

NU: Are we *homo sovieticus* in that sense?

GU: Paradoxically, what we really wanted was the very well developed capitalism. But when we finally got it, we were not able to use its offers. We still keep resisting, even its very well functioning machinery, because deep inside we do not believe that something could function perfectly. We are still suspicious.

NU: So what is your relationship with the art market?

GU: Don't be naive, the market always existed here. During the Soviet times the market functioned very

well. You could get commissions; sell your works from the official exhibitions to the museums, libraries, hospitals and all possible public places. Paradoxically they were buying from both official and non-official artists. I think in a way the system was inherited after the Wall. Somehow the gallery never looked sexy for us and it still looks suspicious.

NU: But if we talk about contemporary artistic production?

GU: The market demand for nationalism is a western desire of the East. The western world wants to see us “fascist”, as much as the Russians did. It is not a secret that in the Soviet times, Balts were called “fascists”. And that was a symptom of Russian racism as they gave special cultural definitions to diverse identities and minorities.

NU: We can produce what is needed, even an identity. After the complete break with the historical past, the post-communist subject tries to invent one in order not to disappoint western tutors.

GU: This search for a new identity is a hysterical reaction to the requirements of international markets. The Baltic States try to be nationalistic, traditional, as culturally identified as others, but they still do not know how to do this. Therefore their apparent nationalism is primarily the reflection of and an accommodation to the quest for otherness that is character-

istic of the cultural taste of the contemporary West. Paradoxically such an embodiment is mostly interpreted by public western opinion as a rebirth of nationalism and a return of repression.

NU: Last, but not least we should mention the notion of independence, which is very important when we talk about change. I think for us as artists, the reading and reflection of independence gave us a lot to think about regarding our own relationship to our surroundings. How to be, how to stay independent? How to acquire an independent attitude? Yes, the institution is inevitable and the market is inevitable, until another new Utopia is born. But we have to map out our relations with these power structures all the time. Every time we have to redraw the coordinates anew, asking what is independence at this given moment.

Vilnius, May 1st 2004

## **ARTISTIC FREEDOM, THE SAFETY VALVE**

**REIN RAUD**

The idea of freedom has changed considerably during the course of history, and the main trend has been towards more concreteness, more particularity. Instead of speaking of freedom as such, we speak about freedom of speech, freedom of the press, free enterprise or freedom of choice. This is a positive development, we are told, because instead of an abstract idea we now have to do with down-to-earth, practical matters that actually affect our own lives. Any “freedom from”, the argument runs, is merely an escape from an undesired condition, but what next, what next? Yes, we hear, what is needed is a lot of well-situated “freedoms for”, such as a freedom for a stable job, a freedom for a long-term bank-loan, and a freedom for a suburban home. A “freedom for” indicates a freedom that can be converted into something else. Thus the very word “freedom” has developed a meaning, which, in English, is not synonymous with the word “liberty” any longer. It would, I hope, be preposterous to imagine, for instance, the Statue of Liberty as a monument not to celebrate the abstract idea of freedom but its practical implications, or that the French revolutionaries, had they known better, would have been happy to rephrase their slogan as “fraternity, equality and freedom for”.

These are reminders from our cultural history that freedom has, in its crucial moments, been otherwise, first and foremost a political concept. The famous opening sentence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Le Contrat Social* “Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains” sets its ground very well: freedom is in-

trinsic to us as a right, but we are (well, were, at the time) deprived of it by an oppressive force that governs our living conditions. This is also how freedom was understood in the Baltic States during the long decades of Soviet occupation. Our countries were supposed to be free, though they were not, but they could become free. In several restaurants in Tallinn that are popular with students, artists and intellectuals they serve deep-fried potato peel (and, incidentally, it is fairly popular and does not taste bad at all), because one of the popular slogans of the late eighties was “let us free and we agree to eat potato peel”. This, if anything, seems rather a far cry from “freedom for”, although, I suspect, there always was a certain percentage of Estonians to whom national independence was mainly desirable as a gateway to better economical conditions and who, accordingly, would be willing to forsake it again, if there were sufficient gains to be had.

We are now a free society, which means we complain more about money and have less time and initiative to discuss freedom. Nevertheless, even a casual look at our semiosphere indicates that the abstract idea of freedom is still a powerful drive in our culture, even if it has been forced underground in theoretical discourse. Middle-class suburban types appear in TV commercials mostly to recommend us detergents or dishwashing liquids, but the clothes we are supposed to imagine ourselves in are presented to us as attributes of independent, casual, intrinsically free people who do not have to fight each other for

the system’s breadcrumbs. Cars to be coveted drive through spectacular landscapes at great speed, instead of being stuck in early-morning suburban traffic jams. On the whole, this semiotic idea of freedom has something to do with a majestic and uncontrollable, yet noble, force that is entirely lacking in our dire daily routine. Freedom is a condition of mind, an attitude of reality, untainted by the constraints and hierarchies of the system, the absolute opposite of alienation. For me personally, this psychological (vs. the political or the social) definition of freedom is what matters most. It is possible to be free even in prison, and to be a slave on a royal throne. The freedom of Epictetus is what counts most in the last instance, because this is a freedom that cannot be converted into anything else.

This freedom is also something that needs to be practiced. We know of religions, such as Christianity, of which one can be a non-practicing adept, but not to practice freedom means to give it up. We know that, unless there are critical issues, only a rather small part of the population normally exercises its right to vote in free societies, but I believe almost nobody among the non-voting would give up their right to vote. The same applies even more to the freedom of speech. But although these freedoms stay in place as festive attributes of our society, the fundamental, psychological freedom is somewhat of a luxury most members of the society cannot practice, even if they have retained it in their minds. And this is precisely where, in contemporary society, art comes in.

The cultural practices of art have changed in their function at least as much as the idea of freedom, but for different reasons. Since the great breakthrough at the end of the 19th century, the individual visions the artists have of reality have triumphed over the correct representation of what reality looks like to most other people, and just as well. Modern technologies have rendered quite obsolete most of the representational tasks that arts used to have – after all, it is much cheaper and more efficient to take a photograph of one's family than to commission a group portrait from an artist, and the result, let us admit, is also much more likely to resemble the original. And when the *avant-garde* artists finally broke out of the limits of the “art-work” as a self-contained object, seeing their creations as events they themselves, as well as their audience, were a part of, then, the artists had finally crossed over to a new status and acquired a new social role. Artists have frequently and in many cultures had a certain double position that is simultaneously indicative of the respect for their ability to create and the fear of their difference. At the clearest we see this in the treatment of actors as outcasts and also as people who can have direct contact with the rulers, bypassing the long hierarchical ladders that keep normal people at bay, but a similar marginality has typically characterised other kinds of artists as well.

Our society has delegated a remarkable function to these artists. They are the people who have the right to practice their inner freedom, sometimes going way beyond the limits of moral tolerance in the process.

They can shock their audience and are even expected to do so. They can engage, among other things, in what is normally considered pornography and violence, they can kill animals and photograph naked children, and get away with it if their actions are endorsed by the artistic institution. But they can also exercise other kinds of extravagant behaviour that, in the best cases, opens up truly breathtaking views on the breadth and beauty of the human mind. In order to achieve that, they have to walk on the edge of the reaches of human experience – they have to walk straight and they definitely cannot afford to deceive themselves in the process. Among other things, they cannot accept the illusion that liberty is actually related to the multitude of small freedoms-for. For the general audience, the security of whose lives is based on this self-deception, the artists are a kind of a dangerous Other, sometimes despised for doing nothing useful, sometimes envied for their ability to break with social conventions, and, by the majority vote, pardoned for doing so. Demonstration of freedom is a service they perform to the public. Most TV viewers, who watch the final scenes of a film in which both a sports car with a couple of young lovers passes, at dangerous speed, and a smaller car packed with a nagging family and loads of useless stuff, identify themselves with the lovers and not with the family, which would be much more fitting. Truly great contemporary art shows us the range of our possible mental universe on an even higher level, and prevents us from becoming machines that perform their pro-

grammed tasks of their own volition. Art, seen thus, is the safety valve that prevents our society from exploding as a result of its own too-neat efficiency. Contrary to this, the artists help the system to relegate the experience of genuine inner freedom to the dangerous outskirts of human experience and thus to enable the majority to relinquish their own freedom with more ease.

But all of this is only allowed on the façade. In the inner chambers of the last artistic castle of freedom, there sits an accountant who is constantly busy compiling budgets, writing applications for foundations and contacting sponsors to discuss how big exactly should their logo be. There is also the image-maker, who is always thinking of how to present the next idea so that it contains as many as possible of the terms that the trendiest art critics have lately started using, and the PR manager who keeps a database of people who should be cultivated and follows the calls for entries of major art events in order to grasp in which direction it should be advisable for the artist to move. With its pretence to put things in order, the system has penetrated the defences of the free artist through a back door, in the guise of the arts institution. Pierre Bourdieu has in great detail described to us how the “market of symbolic goods” works, and his analysis leaves us with little hope that artistic freedom will prevail. The sacrifices needed to keep up honesty are simply too great. And thus I am afraid we can expect, in the future, from our artists, only those kinds of extravagant behaviour that we know to ex-

pect, and we can safely enjoy the shocks and surprises that do not really shock and surprise, while we can note with satisfaction that the dangerous Other has been domesticated, that their unseemly clothes are just another kind of uniform, but deep down the artists are just like us, no freer. Liberty is a mirror, and when we cannot bear to look at it, we smash it in order to pick up little splinters of freedoms-for.

## **PANEL DISCUSSION**

### **MODERATOR:**

**John Peter Nilsson,  
vice president of the Swedish  
Art Critics Association, Stockholm**

### **PARTICIPANTS:**

**Peo Hansen,  
political scientist at  
Linköping University, Sweden**

**Lolita Jablonskienė,  
art critic and curator at  
Contemporary Art Information  
Center (CAIC) in Vilnius**

**Rein Raud,  
essayist, translator and  
professor at the universities  
in Helsinki and Tallinn**

**Irina Sandomirskaja,  
language theorist and professor  
of cultural studies, Stockholm**



JOHN PETER NILSSON: I want the panel to continue to discuss: What are post-Soviet realities? Is there anything that can be called that? And if there is, where have they been formed? Is it, as we heard from some of the speakers before, a western construction? Or is it constructed in the former Soviet Union? Or is there a self-image from some sort of post-Soviet countries? We have already been presented with different angles in the previous presentations, and now we will continue. Irina, do you have any reflections on it?

IRINA SANDOMIRSKAJA: The word “post-Soviet” does not satisfy anybody, I guess, because it is basically a coinage after post-modern, post-industrial, post-technological and post-colonial. So to contribute to this whole series of “post”, you also add post-Soviet with some kind of preposition that it is going to be something new. I would say that it is rather a word for researchers to please themselves in the field of research with each other, maybe, rather than in any kind of reality. But if there is any reality in this post-Soviet thing, I would describe it in such a way. This is also true for post-colonial, which is also a huge field of writing and no one knows what it is all about, even though it is academically institutionalized.

You have professors in institutions and everything but you do not know what it is, but I would say “post” begins when you realize that what you thought was an absolute universal unquestionable and only possible reality, actually is over and it used to be a result of a

social contract. OK? So what was absolutely unquestionable under the Soviet rule was the complete faith in the nature of power as complete domination and repression and nothing else. A monolithic picture of power, which simply stands in front of you. It is given forever, it cannot be questioned, it cannot be changed, it cannot be negotiated with, and you cannot do anything about it. It is just there to repress you, to take your freedom away. And that was a very convenient definition at that time, because this explained to you plainly, once and for all, why freedom is not possible and why you should not be making any attempt to change anything, meaning starting a negotiation with something which is in principle non-negotiable. So this thing somehow ends and then you start realizing that it was not a monolith, it was actually a hegemony, which is probably not good news, because hegemony is constructed as a result of a social contract between the one who oppresses and the one who is oppressed. And this is how the oppressed receives, at least *post factum*, some space and some legitimacy as a political agent. And the problem is that it always happens *post factum*. So you think about your past and you realize it was not exactly... That there were openings of space for agency even in conditions of "totalitarianism".

JOHN PETER NILSSON: Peo Hansen, you have been researching political, scientific matters. How do you see the post-Soviet in reality from your Swedish, academic point of view?

PEO HANSEN: I do not think I can speak from a Swedish point of view here, if that is OK. Post-Soviet reality, I think one way to look at it is to say "yes" to the question meaning that apart from ice hockey, the Soviet Union is truly gone. It is gone to the extent that we can talk about the post-Soviet reality and it is gone for various reasons, one being hegemony and the territorial break-up of the Soviet Union and some of its military power. But historically and contemporarily, it is of course not gone. We see that everyday, the way we talk about the "group under the umbrella", the use of the term Eastern Europe or the Baltic States or however they are defined. Their predicaments are still related to Soviet times, which is good and important because otherwise we would not understand these countries' problems or possibilities.

Another way of talking about post-Soviet reality would be to acknowledge: yes, the Soviet Union is gone because we can talk about post-Soviet reality. But it is very different then, because when European powers – France, Britain and so on – lost their empires, or most of their territorial empires, they still had some left, but why did we not raise the question then, in 1975 when Portugal lost Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau? Why did we not start to talk about post-Europe then? And that is a question that interests me a lot and that would be my way of turning the question around.

VOICE IN THE AUDIENCE: Is this a linguistic, semiotic, way to understand the change of history?

PEO HANSEN: No. You could talk about it like that, but for me it is mostly a question of hegemony and power. The reason we can speak about post-Soviet reality is because to some important degree the Soviet Union is crushed but the reason we never talked about a post-European reality is because European power – cultural, political economic – did not disappear with the disappearance of European empires. That would be my response.

JOHN PETER NILSSON: Lolita, the Urbonas from Lithuania in mind, with their tough description of history, talked about the *homo sovieticus*, about the nomenclature, about how it just continues. That is how I understood them. Is there a heritage in Lithuania from the old days that you can still see in your everyday realities? Do you think that this can be changed?

LOLITA JABLONSKIENĖ: I wonder if EU changes something in the Swedish mentality. That would be my first reaction to what you just said. Some of my colleagues, like Arūnas here, know already what I will refer to now, because they took part in the event recently sponsored by the Lithuanian Soros Foundation. These were discussions of culture theorists about the Lithuanian nineties as the new period of independence and/or dependence. I was not involved in that as a speaker but later read the publication resulting from the project, published by the Baltos lankos publishing house. The Lithuanian culture theorists,

especially those of a younger generation see the post-Soviet condition as something, which inevitably and quite vitally links today with yesterday. Post-Soviet thus means “after Soviet”. There is a break between today and yesterday, but not a gap. This, notion of post-Soviet, at least I think, encourages us to admit that there is something which remains from the Soviet period, which is still with us, in our mentality, in our strategies, in the ways in which we deal with society, with economical and intellectual issues. That is how I myself understand the post-Soviet too.

Some interesting metaphors have been suggested by the Lithuanian philosopher Arūnas Sverdiolas that are now quite widespread. He compares life in the Soviet society to life in a test tube. The test tube has both strict borders and an artificially created environment inside – these two factors affected everything in the Soviet society including the way of thinking. The transition period the philosopher calls a sieve – a device to sift the flour. In the condition of the sieve the membrane of the test tube starts breaking, small holes appear in it, which allow certain particles to come in and pass through, but big things do not get through yet. This is what, according to Arūnas Sverdiolas, makes the intellectual field of a transitional society foggy and misty, where small details, bits and pieces reach the consciousness in a chaotic and blurred way – the true archaeology of many of the new phenomena remains undisclosed. One does not know exactly where things come from that exist in this sort of mist. This is the kind of metaphor that I

sympathize with when talking about post-Soviet.

JOHN PETER NILSSON: I want Rein to say more about this “for artistic freedom” – *for* something. Can you develop that also in a broader sense from a cultural theoretical point of view? Is it capitalism that is the step after the “post”? You know what I am trying to ask.

REIN RAUD: Actually I do not, but I would like to come back to some other aspects of what post-Soviet is. Basically for me the term post-Soviet is insulting. It is as though we take an adult who has been sick as a child for a long time and you keep referring to this person as post-sick, as if the sickness would be a sort of basic characteristic of this person. We can say that this person has experiences of hospitals, some pleasant and some more unpleasant perhaps.

Certainly, we do have experiences from different kinds of social systems, but there never was a social contract between Estonians and the Soviet occupation. Estonians are probably exceptional in this sense because we always had access to Finnish television. The Soviets tried to jam it, but then people in Helsinki could not see it either, so they had to stop the jamming. Probably it does not matter, they are still just one million and they speak an incomprehensible language, which people from other parts of the empire do not understand. Estonians do not really speak Russian, which was a problem for the Soviet authorities for a long time. For instance, my brother, who

was born in 1969, managed to graduate with good grades from high school knowing about 20 words of Russian and half of these he could not repeat in the company of ladies. What the Estonian learned from the Finnish television was not contagious but we kind of lived in a double world.

We considered the occupation an ongoing temporary thing and we knew that one day it would be over, so we just had to kind of survive until then. In this sense I find the term post-Soviet not really applicable to us unless we use it in the sense that we could speak about post-Soviet United States of America, which also has changed as the result of the demise of the Soviet Union. Personal experiences of groups of people cannot be labelled with political labels. I strongly object to that. We have been exposed to influences of Russian culture, which have probably also had influence on things like work ethics or other things but they are not directly a “Soviet identity”.

We cannot know what would have happened, for example, if Lithuania had not been occupied by the Soviet Union. Lithuania in the thirties was a very closed society, not really open to Europe, focused on itself and glorifying its national traditions, as you well know. So, what if not...?

LOLITA JABLONSKIENĖ: I think that you are simplifying the issue, because if you take the twenties and thirties and discuss the openness of the society, Lithuania and Estonia would look just like ordinary European society of that time.

But I agree with what you say about the fact that “post-Soviet” is a stereotype but if you see it not as a stereotype, not from the outside, how it is used from the Western perspective, but try to develop it as local narrative like Estonian post-Soviet or Lithuanian post-Soviet, does it then have some sort of methodological meaning? You would probably say no.

REIN RAUD: I would say “no”. I think if you use the term “post-Soviet”, the people who distribute the money understand that you are going to do something important. If you want to do some sort of research on the issues of transition, there is a multiplicity of factors involved of which the Soviet occupation is just one and not even the dominant one.

JOHN PETER NILSSON: Peo, what do you think that the EU wants from these new countries? [*Laughter in the audience*]

PEO HANSEN: The EU wants a lot of things from the new members. First, and foremost, I would say cheap labour, good places for investments and good places for all sorts of economic activities. The established EU countries also want – and we have seen that for many, many years now – these countries as buffer states for unwanted people. So these buffer states are now being moved to places like Belarus and the Ukraine. The border issue, the migration issue, asylum seeker issues have been some of the most important issues for the established EU countries to insure

that the existing states really do their job in this area to keep people out. But also to let some in because, as I say, cheap labour is very important not only from Eastern Europe but from all over the world. I think, for many years to come, the same question will lead to a split between the established EU countries and the new ones.

So, it is an issue with a lot of dimensions. For example, questions of welfare, social policy, those issues have been very downplayed. Compared to migration and free markets they have been basically non-existent and that is why we can also ask how long the period was from post-Soviet or between post-Soviet and pre-EU. Was there any independence in between there? Was there any time to talk about a national agenda? Were there any sorts of negotiations on that or was it just a transition from post-Soviet to pre-EU that happened for a few years or even less? That to me is again quite telling of how the European integration has affected these countries.

JOHN PETER NILSSON: Irina, listening to this now, do you think that there will be a change in the culture exchange into an either or situation between the East and the West?

IRINA SANDOMIRSKAJA: No, I do not think so. I mean things have been going pretty well except for one thing. Art forums will probably not have such good legitimate subjects for discussion as East/West anymore. It will have to be defined in some other

way. It will not be on the agenda any more. The wish, the desire is fulfilled. The problem nowadays is that there is no problem. Everything is just fine. Everything happened precisely the way people wanted it to happen, so what do we do next? That is a problem. The state of becoming formally a part of Europe does not change much.

JOHN PETER NILSSON: Do you see if the national identities are getting stronger within the integration into a bigger community?

IRINA SANDOMIRSKAJA: Well, the national identity will have to get stronger and for different reasons. First, because the European Union is a union of nations, so you just have to be a nation in order to be part of it. Whether you want it or you do not want it, whether you have the strategies, whether you have a national agenda and so on.

Another thing is that probably people will find out that quite a lot of problems will prove unsolvable just because they are considered European problems in the sense that they are not on the national agenda. But it is not clear whether they are on a European agenda either.

Otherwise, I do not think it will change things so extremely, because we understood that mostly the question in this East/West divide as it is formulated now is kind of triple. First is the memory of the Cold War, which everybody wants to erase. It is a huge scandal. We have to accept the fact that a Cold War

not only existed but that actually produced this world.

Another scandal is, of course, money. Female nudity is not scandalous enough nowadays. Arūnas was describing the nostalgia for dramatic elements. How can you complain about the lack of drama? I mean, money is supplying so much scandal and so much dirt. It is the most interesting thing that is happening to people in the ex-USSR nowadays and not necessarily to people who do not have money, but to people who have. Money does so many dirty, strange things that you simply... There is too much drama and it is scandalous. It is very, very dirty.

JOHN PETER NILSSON: Peo asked how to define the different clichés about a post-Cold War situation. If we skip the “post-Soviet” – how should it be defined? In the visual arts we had the exhibition *After the Wall* here in Stockholm and we have the Manifesta exhibitions, maybe as some kind of a fantasy from the West. What is the fantasy from the East towards the West in a cultural sense today? I am very curious about this myself. I am asking you, Lolita, from a visual arts point of view.

LOLITA JABLONSKIENĖ: As a curator at the *Contemporary Art Information Center* in Vilnius, I have to admit that it is very difficult to sell information about our local art, if it does not fit into the cliché that the West wants. It is hardly possible. The Western curators or the Western art market strictly cling

to this bit of exoticism and I would say segregational image of eastern European art, which was so precisely stated in the *After the Wall* exhibition. It was a tool to introduce these artists but it also played a very important role of establishing this image of the Other. I have to tell you just from these recent weeks, when preparing for the European Union. The term used is "expansion", which I think sounds bad. We should call it the "reunification". So, my office had at least five requests, from small galleries to big institutions, about Lithuanian and Estonian artists' works. And all were of the same sort. They asked me, to put it simply, to show beggars, illegal emigrants; to show jobless people and marginalized Russian communities in our countries. It was just terrible. We just had to say no.

The other part of your question, about our situation and how we see Western art: I think that many of the artists who live in the Baltics manage to find smart ways around it and Gediminas referred to it in quite a witty way. You know, our artists are really smart in adjusting to different possibilities, be it a commercial art market, a project market, or an alternative intellectual environment.

JOHN PETER NILSSON: When you talk about the art market, do you think that it is like a commercial market? Arūnas mentioned that the taxpayers' money comes into Lithuanian minds. Is it national states that want to represent themselves or is it private entrepreneurs?

LOLITA JABLONSKIENĖ: Redistributing taxpayers' money in a small country like Lithuania and probably in even smaller countries as Estonia sometimes reminds me of redistributing money in the family. I mean, the state is of a sort where everyone knows everyone and even the taxpayers' money, which is redistributed through the capital city council or the Ministry of Culture sometimes is probably too individualised, I would say. That is probably something very rude to say, but it is a fact.

REIN RAUD: The Estonian government before the Wall had taken a rather anarchistic view of how these things should be done and this is probably one of the very, very few positive steps that the independent Estonian government has taken in the nineties. They have actually reinstated the *Cultural Endowment Foundation* that was a particular Estonian invention that worked very well before the war. I hear that in Latvia and Lithuania something analogical has been set up, that certain monies, not from the taxpayers in the usual sense but from the alcohol taxpayers', from the gambling-, and from the smoking taxpayers', money goes directly to something that is called the cultural endowment. This money is not distributed by officials or the Ministry of Culture, but by the artists themselves.

People are elected to these councils for two or three years and they look at the applications and divide them and they naturally cannot get any money from the endowment themselves during that period. Well,

you could think that somebody gives money to their friends and so on but that is not really so, because you get a stigma for that very easily in a small society. You cannot tell who is going to be on the endowment council next time. Maybe none of your friends is going to be there, so you are not going to get any money for the next stretch at all. I believe this is a very rational and well-functioning mechanism actually.

**LOLITA JABLONSKIENÉ:** A quick remark: The former director of the cultural capital endowment in Estonia actually gambled half of the budget of this, as you remember.

**REIN RAUD:** Well, he was not an artist, you know! [*Laughter*]

**JOHN PETER NILSSON:** We have all met here today, an important day in the history of the European Union. Peo, do you think there is a longing or a fantasy or is there a phantom about what comes into the European family in the sense of theatre, literature, and visual arts? Do you think that there is an agenda within the idea of a new European identity?

**PEO HANSEN:** Certainly there is an agenda. Ever since the European Commission started the European integration project in the mid-eighties, there has been a concerted effort to create, to foster, a sense of European identity amongst the people in the EU. This identity, though, is to me a very old-fashioned con-

struction, because it builds on a sense of superiority with these European booklets, speeches by Romani Prodi and so on. If a nation state would do the same, that is to talk about its nation in those terms, they would be immediately branded as almost pro-fascist or something.

I can demonstrate this with an anecdote. When Günter Grass came to collect the Nobel Prize of Literature in Stockholm, German journalists picked up their watches and timed him, because they wanted to know how long it would take on Swedish soil before Günter would mention the word “Auschwitz”. Seven minutes. What does that tell us? It tells us something about how a nation state has dealt with its past. Now, no one is perfect here, but at least it tells us something, which is good. That the nation state can also be, and has been, to some degree, an antidote to violent nationalism.

In the European identity politics from the European Commission there is no such safety and that to me is quite scary. To me, to speak in the name of Europe is to speak in the name of a whole history and as long as that history is not being dealt with, there will be a very dangerous element left in it. That is something that has to be dealt with. What I am referring to is, of course, colonialism and imperialism, which has to be dealt with if there is going to be any productive European identity, just as if there is going to be any German identity worth something, it has to be denazified. I would say the same thing applies to all national identities and to any collective identity.



IRINA SANDOMIRSKAJA: The new generation, which should have been completely denazified many times by the generation of educators of Günter Grass, develop even worse forms of hatred, not just simply denying the fact of Auschwitz. I think there is a problem with the Other. I once made the mistake of saying “yes” to lecturing in Theresienstadt to a group of Scandinavian art students. I must say that was horrible. I am part in this discourse and I am sorry for that, because the way Auschwitz is conceptualized nowadays – like something that we have denazified out of ourselves – postulates Auschwitz as damage done to somebody else and not to us. I think the problem with this generation, the new generation of deniers who are educated by holocaust educationalists with this very, very clear picture of this poor Other, whom we subjected to such horrible... This is very wrong because Auschwitz was not just eradication of the Other, it was primarily the eradication of the Self and this has not been discussed ever. This is completely essential, but this is Europe. Europe is a place, which has been repeatedly eradicating itself. And to some extent it is continuing to do so.

So I was thinking a more positive thing. I was thinking about sending a proposal to the European Commission about European identity. The current narrative (or collection of narratives as these are sanctioned by the institutions of European integration) can be summed up as the story of “Orpheus descending – Orpheus ascending”. In short, every new EU nation tells itself (and the world) a story about its

descent into the Hades of Soviet occupation, a long journey through the underworld of the communist regime, with the subsequent re-emergence into the sunshine of the community of European values. Even though this narrative has a high convincing potential, I do not think that it could be fruitful in terms of EU’s future development. “Orpheus ascending” returns to “normalcy”, but at the expense of a considerable loss: on his way upward, he loses his Eurydice. Orpheus without Eurydice is the ever-nostalgic Orpheus. He is forever doomed to look back in anguish evoking the dead lover whom he so thoughtlessly abandoned on his way of accession.

Who needs such a uselessly nostalgic, regressive subject in the newly expanded and definitely progressive Europe? I, therefore, suggest a new identity narrative for a new Europe.

The old Greek myth tells us that Europe starts with the abduction of Europa by Zeus in the image of a white bull. Abduction, also called “rape”, therefore, is the foundational gesture that symbolizes the beginning of European history. Europa was a Phoenician princess, who had a brother called Cadmus. The brother wanted revenge over the rapist, Zeus, and he followed the bull to the unknown territories overseas, with an army, in order to avenge his sister’s lost honour and to take her back home. Given the fact that Zeus was no ordinary rapist but the supreme deity of the Greek pantheon, one can assume that the brother’s expedition of rescue/retribution was not a successful one. But it had an unexpected outcome:

while out on their expedition, the Phoenician warriors brought the Phoenician alphabet to the wilderness of Europe-to-be. Summarising, this history can be thought to start from a traumatic episode of displacement (trafficking) of a sexually violated and confused woman. Thus, Europa, the prostituted woman, was seduced and abducted into involuntarily becoming Europe's first colonizer. In a similar way, not quite knowing what they were doing, the warriors in Cadmus's expeditions, those wrathful avengers of the family virtue so cynically abused by the bull – those avengers, in short, turned out to be Europe's first civilizers. The impossible mission of revenge was transformed into an act of unintended gift. Instead of yielding satisfaction for a hurt family honour, it gave the future Europe its first script ever and thus started what we now vaguely refer to when we speak about the European civilization, the elements of its origin, its *Ur-Szene* being rape, revenge, and – optimistically – a gift, even though an unintended one. Isn't that a good story?!

JOHN PETER NILSSON: There is a very hopeful ending. It could be like a mutual understanding through language.

PEO HANSEN: Just a quick response, so I am not misunderstood here. I am not saying that German denazification and all that was a very successful project. All I am saying is that when we imagine and think about German history, no one can say that that

history is something to be proud of. The same for the Soviet Union. We think about violence, when we talk about those two histories.

But is it possible today to talk about Europe without getting any discussion of the true European identity in modern times, which is the identity created through colonialism, imperialism and so on?

JOHN PETER NILSSON: But hopefully through cultural understanding and misunderstanding we can try to keep the beast of Europe under control.

I know that there is a person in the back of the room here...

FAVIA WITTMAN: I am part of the Euro-cultural programme. It is an interdisciplinary programme managed by the European Commission at various universities in Europe. I would like to refer particularly to what Peo Hansen has said. In history, when you compare the post-Soviet and post-Portugal colonializations, why did we not talk about post-Europe? You confuse actually Europe and the European Union. The European Union is a construction from the very recent past. Europe has existed, as your colleague said, since Phoenician times and so on. But it is very important to remember the history of why Europe wanted to get together and particularly the wars that Europe has undergone. And because of the tough results of these wars, it was decided to put down weapons and to melt them down into a European Market, so that peace could be achieved. The acceler-

ation of the enlargement of the EU is just to maintain the peace and to make sure that nation states do not take over again and this is what we are celebrating today. I think the making of a European identity will take much longer, but we take pride in all the diversities that this union is giving us. And we should not really refrain from it and especially not fall into being hostages of the past, of the Nazi era or anything. We should fight against so that this does not repeat itself and this is why the guarantee of the European Union is there to maintain that safety and security will keep this peace going on. And we achieve this together. The post-Soviet republics are now inside Europe not because they are not Europeans but because they were kidnapped once from it and now they are back. Welcome Lithuania to our group! Thank you.

PEO HANSEN: A quick comment. I think this is a problem. When the European integration started in the fifties, one of the biggest myths was that it was a peace project. We can look at it today and see all the various countries being part of the European Union but at war today. Even my cousin in Denmark went to war. We can talk about it historically and say, well, Algeria was actually part of the European Community when it was formed. In Algeria, we had one of the most brutal wars in the post-war era and so part of the European Union at that time included an incredible brutal war, killing over a million people. So, if the European integration could really be a peace force then it should have developed some mechanisms to

stop its member states from going to war all the time.

Those who maintain that the EU was from its inception a peace project that didn't have just peace in Europe in sight but that the project would finally aim at promoting "world peace", often incline towards the ideas and official declarations that the EU's founding fathers Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet put forward. They did this in connection with the launching of the European coal and steel community, which became the start for today's EU. Here a good deal is made of the fact that Schuman at the famous press conference on May 9, 1950 – that today is referred to as the *Schuman Declaration* – began with a call for peace: "World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it." But if you want to approach the content of these words you have to dare to shake up the myth of peace a bit and place it into the fifties' *world* politics context. As the French foreign minister, Robert Schuman was also one of the main administrators of the country's war in Indochina (1946–1954), in which hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives. There were massacres; napalm and the French used the help of 10,000 soldiers who had fought for Nazi Germany. At the same time the Algerian War was brewing and Schuman did what he could in the UN to block discussions about the colonies' liberation.

This is the history I want to talk about, and I can talk about it when we discuss the concept of Europe and European identity in general, but most of all it

has to be integrated into our understanding of the origins of European integration. It serves as a necessary antidote to the over-mythologized historiography of European integration that permeates the contemporary discussions in politics and the media, but also in most academic forums.

JOHN PETER NILSSON: I think that you made that very clear.

CHRISTIAN CHAMBERT: I want to address Peo. In the newspapers you read a lot about the possibility to develop a transnational media and I think it is easier to develop a European identity, if you have transnationally strong media. A channel primarily in France and Germany is Arte. Now we have strong TV-channels, newspapers in each national country. Of course, language is a problem. Do you have any idea what is going on in the EU? Have they any ideas on how to proceed or are there private or other initiatives?

PEO HANSEN: Again, that dates back to the mid-eighties. When the explicit European identity politics started there were a lot of hopes and a lot of visions of what the media could do, but that was back in the days when private media was not so common, at least not in broadcasting media. Now there are other forces in media that are strong and there have not been enough efforts or resources funnelling into that, to do something politically.

NILS CLAESON: I am an artist and also the project leader of something called CRAC. I have experience of making projects together with people in the so-called eastern part of Europe, Baltic States, Russia, Belarus and places like that. The problem, if you want to make exhibition projects or whatever, is basically funding. Talking from a Swedish point of view, it is very hard to get funding if you do not want to pinpoint issues like trafficking, prostitution or gangsters.

And then about Europe. I think that maybe we will have to be a little bit pragmatic. It is better to have a European Union than not to have one. Maybe it is not perfect, but anyway it is a little step to something that can maybe transform into something else.

REIN RAUD: I quite agree. It is much better to have a European Union than not to have one. Maybe one day we will live in a post-union Europe. We have very good experiences with what to do with unions we do not like. Maybe, one day these will turn in handy.

EINAR HERLITZ: I am a physician and I lived in Czechoslovakia half a year during the sixties. I am very interested in those countries. I would like to ask you about this European identity, because now you have opened more to the East and my definition of the European identity is a composite mixture of things from all these countries. The identity here in our part of Europe is very much for materialist consumption.

I remember from my time in Czechoslovakia that

they had much more cultural consumption. It was cheap and people went to cinemas, theatres and art exhibitions every day. I want to ask you, what can you give us in the West of good experiences from the Soviet time? There must be some good things too.

REIN RAUD: What I fear most is that the sort of western-type model of cultural consumption will take over completely in such countries as the Czech Republic or elsewhere, so that this old life style, old habits of cultural consumption will be out of reach for people simply for material reasons, because those people who have most cultural interests in the countries of eastern Europe today have also the least possibilities of going there.

Somewhere in the nineties there was a possibility of genuinely transforming the whole cultural space of Europe, including Western Europe. I think this moment is now past. This very powerful drive that came from the liberating history of European countries was hijacked and put to serve certain economical agendas to make these European countries look for Western investment. So, the answer is: well, sorry, we could have done it, we did not, now it is too late.

ALEXANDER VAINDORF: I am an artist and I want to comment on some issues, which have been brought up here. Just in general, what is happening today is that ten more countries are joining the European Union. They are now all included in the same family, which also means, on the other hand,

exclusion, when we talk about the Soviet state not existing any more. My question concerns this new existence within this framework of the European Union on the one side and Russia, the former oppressor or whatever you may call it, on the other. On a political level we have examples of, as Peo mentioned, a new buffer zone. Actually one of the requirements for Poland to join the European Union was guarding the borders to Ukraine and Belarus with 5,000 EU soldiers.

Another example is from a couple of weeks ago, according to Swedish television, the military area of former Baltic republics is guarded by NATO air forces. And Irina mentioned the issue of money. There is, I am sure, a well-known phenomenon of new Russian money buying football teams. These profiteers – people whom I would actually call criminals – made large amounts of money, like Khodorkovsky. So my question is very important and I think should be discussed: What effect will this co-existence of the new European Union have on other countries and especially Russia?

JOHN PETER NILSSON: It is a very important and big question. A comment, please.

DORINEL MARC: I am an artist and also a refugee from Romania. Alexander is from the Soviet Union. I was thinking that also Romania is yet not in the European Union but I am here as a Swedish citizen. But I am thinking about the others, about Russia and all

the rest and I am just thinking how big will Europe be? And how big do we want to have Europe because Europe is something that belongs to all Europeans. On some maps, from the nineties, Europe is very small and Romania is not even included.

Rein was talking about artistic freedom and I am always thinking about artistic responsibility. As an artist I do not have total freedom and not more freedom than a doctor. We can deal with pornography and all this kind of stuff but we cannot do whatever we want with this. We have the same kind of responsibility as doctors, as policemen and we cannot abuse our freedom as artists. I am thinking about this privilege of being a part of Europe but also of the responsibility that those countries have, as a part of Europe, to think about other people in other countries that are not included yet, to help them to be a part of Europe, to help them to be integrated. Because we cannot be happy alone, if our neighbours are living in misery and under continued dictatorship. I hope that you in the panel and all others of you that are happy today about being a part of European Community also think about the responsibility we all have to integrate the rest of the world in our project.

REIN RAUD: Yes, I completely agree. Artists have a great responsibility but in defining responsibility this is something that is taken on voluntarily. Genuine artistic responsibility is something that the artist decides: Yes, this is my responsibility; I want to do this thing. These are my values. I want to express them

and so on. So, actually responsibility is only possible for a free person. If somebody says, well, students come to the academy and say: You are going to be an artist, so now let us go to the class where we are going to teach you what your responsibilities are going to be. This is not the way to do it. The artist's responsibility has to be and come from an internal completely freely formed ethical position, which is why we cannot deny artists who do not share these responsibilities to also be part of the artistic community.

Those whom I would be rather glad to keep from the artist community are people who trade both their freedom and their responsibility. Well, these pictures of beggars or child prostitutes, will they sell so very well in the West that I might make it my responsibility to point at the social problems and then the critics see that and at the same time genuinely enjoy it – a kind of a double thing. It is a tricky issue but in general: Yes, I completely agree with you that artists should take on the responsibility but I also think that the genuine responsibilities are only something taken up on by a totally free will.

JOHN PETER NILSSON: Any comments on the panel? Maybe Arūnas will give a small comment?

ARŪNAS GELŪNAS: I have no intention for my words to be the last words but I would like to ask: Do we have anything like a shared spiritual language in new Europe like shared mythology and what would that be? It is a very old-fashioned question to ask, but

many theorists and idea historians refer to this problem as being the basic one. Apart from rape, revenge and unintended gifts, do we have anything like shared spiritual language?

## **PARTICIPANTS**

ARŪNAS GELŪNAS (b. 1968) PhD, Vice-Rector and Associate Professor at *Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts*. He was educated as a professional artist at the same academy (1988–1994) and at Tokyo National University of Art and Music (1995–1997) and as a philosopher in Vytautas Magnus University (1997–2001) where he defended his PhD *The Emergence of the New Paradigm of Order in Nishida and Merleau-Ponty*. Gelūnas has held twelve solo exhibitions and has participated in a number of group exhibitions and art projects at home in Lithuania as well as abroad. His scholarly activities include translations of and writings on phenomenology and anthropology of art, modern Japanese philosophy, the comparative philosophy and the “non-substantialist turn” in science and humanities and the integration of the visual into the contemporary interpretational framework and educational discourse.

PEO HANSEN (b. 1966) is a political scientist and Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies at Linköping University, Sweden. He has written extensively on the questions of migration, citizenship and identity in the European Union. His publications include *Europeans Only? Essays on Identity Politics and the European Union* (Umeå University), and *Migration, Citizenship, and the European Welfare State: A European Dilemma* (Oxford University Press, co-authored with Carl-Ulrik Schierup and Stephen Castles).



LOLITA JABLONSKIENĖ, PhD, is an art critic and curator based in Vilnius. From 2000 she headed the *Contemporary Art Information Center* (CAIC), which was an offshoot of the Soros Foundation, and joined the *Lithuanian Art Museum* to work for Vilnius's forthcoming *National Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art*. In 2002 she was appointed chief curator of the *National Gallery*. Jablonskienė was a commissioner of the Lithuanian pavilions at *The Venice Biennial* in 1999 and 2005. She has curated contemporary art exhibitions in her home country and abroad, contributed art critical texts to Lithuanian and foreign press and lectures at the *Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts*.

JOHN PETER NILSSON (b. 1957) has been a curator at *Moderna Museet* in Stockholm, Sweden, since 2004. From 1999 to 2002 he was editor-in-chief for *Nu: The Nordic Art Review*, and 1996–1999 for *Siksi, The Nordic Art Review*. Besides being a freelance art critic for the Swedish daily *Aftonbladet* 1986–2004, he organised several exhibitions as an independent curator, among others The Nordic Pavilion at *The Venice Biennial* 1999. In spring 2006 he co-curated (with Magdalena Malm) *The Moderna Exhibition* 2006 at the *Moderna Museet*, a survey of Swedish contemporary art.

REIN RAUD (b. 1961 in Tallinn, Estonia) has an MA in Japanese Philology (University of Leningrad, 1985) and a PhD in Literary Theory (1994, Universi-

ty of Helsinki). He is a founding member and long-time leader of the Estonian Institute of Humanities. He has been Professor of Japanese Studies, University of Helsinki since 1995 and Rector of Tallinn University since 2006. He is the author of four poetry collections, one collection of plays, three novels, two collections of stories, countless essays and articles in the press, translations from many languages, but most notably from classical Japanese. He was awarded the Estonian Annual Literary Award for the novel *Hector and Bernard* in 2004.

IRINA SANDOMIRSKAJA (b. 1959) is Professor of Cultural Studies at the Baltic and East European Graduate School at the University College of South Stockholm (Södertörns högskola). She has a PhD in Theoretical Linguistics in Russia and is editor of *ID-IOMA*, a Russian-American feminist publication in cultural critique (1991, New York). In 2001, she published a study on the deconstruction and archaeology of Russian and Soviet patriotic speech practices – *Kniga o Rodine: Opyt analiza diskursivnyx praktik*. Her research includes problems of language philosophy, cultural theory, feminist criticism and aesthetics.

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