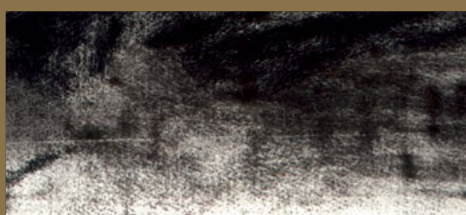
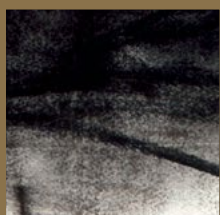
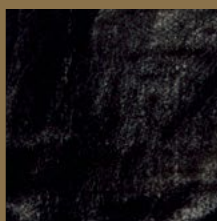
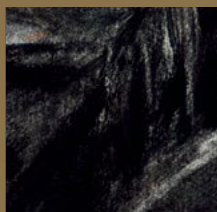
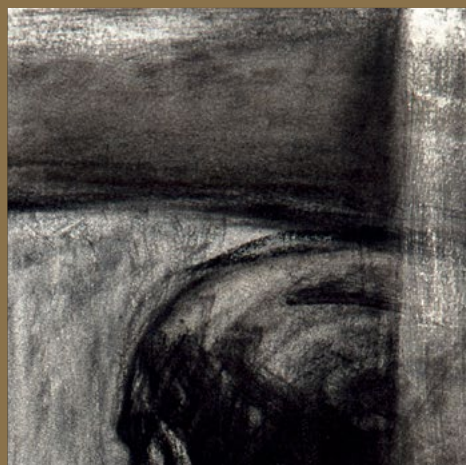


MEMORY AS A JOURNAL

no. 5 2023





William Kentridge
Drawing for History of the Main Complaint, 1996
Charcoal and pencil on paper
120 x 160 cm
Courtesy of the artist

William Kentridge, born Johannesburg, South Africa, is internationally acclaimed for his drawings, films, theatre and opera productions.

His method combines drawing, writing, film, performance, music, theatre, and collaborative practices to create works of art that are grounded in politics, science, literature and history, yet maintain a space for contradiction and uncertainty.

Kentridge's work has been seen in museums and galleries around the world since the 1990s, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Albertina Museum in Vienna, Musée du Louvre in Paris, Whitechapel Gallery in London, Louisiana Museum in Copenhagen, the Reina Sofia museum in Madrid, the Kunstmuseum in Basel, Zeitz MOCAA and the Norval Foundation in Cape Town, and the Royal Academy of Arts in London. He has participated a number of times in Documenta in Kassel (2012, 2002, 1997), the Venice Biennale (2015, 2013, 2005, 1999 and 1993), and Kaunas European Capital of Culture 2022.

Kentridge has created artwork as part of the design of theatrical productions, both plays and operas. He has served as art director and overall director of numerous productions, collaborating with other artists, puppeteers and others in creating productions that combine drawings and multi-media combinations. Kentridge's theatrical productions are performed in theatres and at festivals across the globe.

CONTENTS

p. 4	Editorial. Memory in the Shadow of Crumbling Empires <i>Daiva Price</i>
p. 12	Competing Memories
p. 14	Memory Against the National Grain <i>Prof. James E. Young</i>
p. 22	A Week in August <i>Manca Bajec</i> <i>Drawings by Vesta Kroese</i>
p. 34	‘... Without Being Able to Remember, They Cannot Heal.’ <i>Linara Dovydaitytė</i>
p. 44	Drawings <i>Mindaugas Lukošaitis</i>
p. 50	‘(1944 – 1991)’ <i>Indrė Šerpytytė</i>
p. 58	Memory in the Clash of Past and Present
p. 60	Balancing History in the Course of Time <i>Robert van Voren</i>
p. 68	Remembering so as to Forget <i>Kotryna Lingienė talks with Mindaugas Lukošaitis</i>
p. 78	Memory as Trauma
p. 80	On Traumatic Memory and its Consequences <i>Daiva Price talks with Prof. Danutė Gailienė and Robert van Voren</i>
p. 90	Reverse Memory Engineering by Michael Shubitz <i>Kotryna Lingienė</i>
p. 98	Utilising Unprocessed Collective Traumas: Russian Hybrid Warfare Against Georgia <i>Jana D. Javakhishvili</i>
p. 108	Drawings <i>Alevtina Kakhidze</i>
p. 112	Projects <i>Jenny Kagan</i>
p. 120	Imprint

MEMORY IN THE SHADOW OF CRUMBLING EMPIRES

DAIVA PRICE

Ah, do you really believe
Oblivion has the final say in what is to be forgotten?
For it is often an image from the ashes rising
And stands in flesh, in full reality
Forever framed for every day to come.

Hirsh Osherovitch, 1968
Translated to English by Rytis Zemkauskas

1ST MEMORY. JUOZAS RUTKAUSKAS

First, there was a letter. In 2013, my brother, then a student at New York University, forwarded an email sent to him by Nick Bravin, a professor at the university. It was a story about his research, inspired by the story of his grandmother and the rescuer Juozas Rutkauskas. Three years later, I presented a fictional audio-visual tour with J.R. as one of the protagonists.

Four years later, the professor and I met at a café in Greenwich Village. The story continued.

[...] My current research grew out of a [...] research project I started several years ago to discover if a book called Anya (the name of my grandmother) was in fact the life story of my grandmother misappropriated by an ambitious author in the 1970s. That project, while it involved some difficult people to track down and a few intervening decades to complicate things, turned out to be remarkably manageable compared to what I've been working on lately. I call that part of my project the story of Anya. Since wrapping that part up, I've turned to the story of Anya (my grandmother). She grew up in Vilnius when it was part of the Russian Empire, occupied by the Germans (in WWI), and when it was Poland between the wars. She also returned there from Warsaw after Vilnius was occupied by the Soviets, returned to Lithuania, then seized by the Soviets, and lived in the ghetto there for the full two years it existed. A Lithuanian helped my mother (who was a young girl with my grandmother and her family in the ghetto) escape and adopted her. That same Lithuanian man – named Juozas Rutkauskas – later traveled to Riga to help my grandmother escape from a concentration camp there and brought her back to Vilnius, before she fled the Gestapo to Minsk. [...] I have many documents from Rutkauskas University and military files that I've had translated, and I've conducted interviews with some of his distant family who relocated to Australia (Juozas was caught by the Germans and killed (though I've found no definitive proof of this – the Germans tried to avoid leaving such evidence) for helping Jews and others) – and a woman he either married or lived with [was killed too]. Rutkauskas is a fascinating figure. He was born in Kaunas in 1900 and was (blessed? Cursed?) to live through some of the most interesting times (as the Chinese curse goes); he appears to have fought for Lithuanian independence, to have attended the University of Lithuania in the law faculty, beginning in 1923 after attending gymnasium in Russia, then seems to have been arrested and spent 18–24 months in jail (for what I have not yet been able to determine); then tried desperately to continue his law studies but was refused by the university despite his eloquent pleas

Daiva (Citvarienė) Price is an art curator, researcher, and cultural producer. She is also a lecturer at the Faculty of Arts of Vytautas Magnus University, with an interest in memory and museum studies. Dr. Price is the creator of several memory projects: the collective memory project ‘Sites of Memory’ (atmintiesvietos.lt), the audio guide to historical Kaunas titled ‘Spirit Guide to the Old Kaunas’ and many others.

Dr. Price was part of the creative team that prepared the Kaunas European Capital of Culture 2022 bid and from 2017 was a member of the Kaunas 2022 team. She was the curator of the Audience Development Programme for Cultural Operators between 2017 and 2019. The main programme she curated for Kaunas 2022 was Memory Office, which aimed to break down the city’s stereotypes, stimulate a conscious interest in the city’s complex history, and awaken the city’s multiethnic memory. In 2019, she initiated and curated the CityTelling festival in Kaunas.

She was also the curator of one of the largest Kaunas 2022 events – the Litvak Culture Forum.

(he was admitted, it appears to the philosophy faculty, but I don't think he attended). Around this same time of trouble, he appears to have lost his family (his wife and three kids – interestingly his wife was from Klaipėda and when Hitler retook Memel [Klaipėda – DP], she repatriated to Germany (she was a Lutheran and of German background I think) and she performed for the German troops and Rutkauskas's sons fought in the Wehrmacht in France as Rutkauskas was trying to undermine the Germans in Vilnius), and I'm not really sure what he did between 1928 and 1939 (though I do know as a literate, educated man he wrote letters on behalf of those who were not), but when the capital of Lithuania moved back to Vilnius he worked there at the Statistics Bureau and later at a passport office (which provided ready access to false papers). My grandmother always referred to him as “the judge,” but besides some evidence he may have served as a police district examiner in Salantai, I'm not sure how the title fit (surely he told her he was a judge). Rutkauskas is recognized in Yad Vashem and in Lithuania's Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History¹ as a savior of Jews but no organization has anything but a brief (and inaccurate) biographical sketch of

the man. He kept a complicated organization going, constantly sneaking Jews out of the ghetto and the city, but he was reckless and often drunk. He seems to be one of those larger-than-life kinds of figures, and I would love to be able to piece enough together to sketch him out more fully.

From Prof. Nick Bravin's email

This story has become one of my greatest professional and creative inspirations. The life of Juozas Rutkauskas is a great illustration of the country's history. It convinced me that one man's life can tell us as much about the country's past as the history books. Micro-histories have become the most important tool for getting to know an undiscovered city and the Kaunas people who lived here before us. The story of the life of Rutkauskas, worthy of a feature film script, has encouraged me to tell the forgotten stories of the city, and to take an interest in the city's multi-ethnic past and the stories of the Second World War. Thus, in 2016, Spirit's Guide to the Old City, the first artistic audio-visual tour in Lithuania, was born, telling the story of multiethnic Kaunas and the history of the Holocaust.²

1
Author refers to Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History

2
<https://www.atmintiesvietos.lt/en/routes/spirits-guide-to-the-old-city/>

2ND MEMORY. THE IMPERIAL PAST

In his book *The Great Imperial Hangover. How Empires Shaped the World*, author Samir Puri reflects on the post-imperial world: ‘And, yet empires continue to haunt our minds in all manner of ways, stalking our subconscious understanding of who we are and of our place in the world. Empires have helped to construct national identities and carve out geopolitical realities and mentalities that prove hard to escape’³.

In my opinion, the destiny of people depends on the family in which they grew up. And the destiny of a family depends on the countries in which they live. In my case, those countries are Germany and Lithuania. My name is German, and my last name is Jewish. It reflects both sides of me. The destiny of my family is tied to the entire history of the Second World War and its aftermath in Lithuania and Germany. Nazism, Hitler, Soviet occupation of Lithuania ... My destiny reflects two great dictatorships of the twentieth century.

*Interview with Julijana Zarchi, 2018.*⁴

Samir Puri notes: ‘Empires, however, do not end overnight – they unravel gradually, fraying like a rope under stress, before the strands separate. Even then, threads of a bond with the past can remain in their physical and psychological legacies. [...] The memories, experiences and scars of the past will have contributed to how people feel about themselves, where they locate their people in the wider world, and where such feelings as group pride and group blame are directed.’⁵

These days I keep thinking, what is freedom? Can you be free when you are not at liberty? I remember my service in the Soviet army. We were standing in formation. You had to be fit, neat, your shoes clean. The Russian officers were walking around, shouting at us, and I was thinking: ‘I am still a free man. Well, I can move my toes in my oversized soldier’s boots and you won’t do anything to me. I’m standing here, moving my toes, and you will not stop me. Because I am free. I can still be free’.

A memory shared by Juozas (my father, born 1950), January 2023.

The author of the *Great Imperial Hangover* adds: ‘As citizens of the world, we can look at each other and wonder about the

post-imperial inheritances that others carry as part of their heritage [...] It illustrates why people raised on one set of stories might struggle to empathise with others, and why potentially huge misunderstandings arise between governments, when one assumes right of way on a particular issue where others deny it. World order today comprises numerous post-imperial visions colliding with one another. These movements are akin to shifts in the tectonic plates that underlie world affairs but on a much smaller level, every one of us carries an imperial inheritance that is personal to them’⁶

What inheritance do we carry? What stories have been told to us at school, at home, on TV and in film?

I grew up in the USSR. I grew up with a deep awareness that I was living under occupation. The stories I heard at school and on TV differed from those I heard at home. I grew up with the message that I was not free. Today, I reflect on what living under occupation has done to us. Were we really able to feel free? Was my constant rebellion at school an expression of my personality or a subconscious desire to resist the oppressive system?

In primary school, I was scolded in front of the class for bringing in an Easter egg. The Russian teacher kept comparing the Russian and Lithuanian languages in class, saying that no literary masterpieces could be written in a language as archaic as Lithuanian. Today, I cannot bring myself to speak Russian. The words I once learned are locked deep in my subconscious.

At home, it was a different reality. It was dominated by my mother’s stories about the occupation of Lithuania and her admonition not to watch Russian films because they were a tool of Soviet propaganda. In the background, Polish TV was playing American Westerns on weekend nights. At home, my father’s Luxembourg radio recordings played Western world music jams, and on the shelves was a large library of Western literature.



My father in the Soviet army in Belarus, 1972.

But behind the walls of the house, lies were the most important principle of this society. Even we children knew that to survive was to lie. Every school paper was based on lies about the perfect Soviet reality and the meaningless bourgeois life. This is how we learned to survive in a schizophrenic society where you think one thing and say another out loud. But where is the line between what you think and say to others? What has lying to ourselves and others done to us?

When the Russians came, the villagers started to get drunk, and families started to quarrel. They started forbidding us to go to church, to celebrate festivals; they cut our wages, demanded tributes in the form of grain and livestock, started deporting people, took land away from those who were more well off, and gave it to those who were favourable to the Russian government ... Life became even harder for people. They started to steal from factories and canteens – just to survive. The Russians closed the schools and banned everything Lithuanian. They would come to your house, take down the holy pictures and replace them with Russian ones – with Stalin and Lenin.

Interview with Salomėja Piliponytė-Užupienė, 2020

3

Puri, Samir. *The Great Imperial Hangover. How Empires Shaped the World*. Atlantic Books, London, 2021, p. 1.

4

Memories and interviews used in the text are published on www.atmintiesvietos.lt/en/

5

Puri, Samir. *The Great Imperial Hangover. How Empires Shaped the World*. Atlantic Books, London, Samir 2021, pp.16–17.

6

Ibid., p.289.

7

Ibid., p. 1.

8

George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books, 2013, p.162.

3RD MEMORY. THE GHOSTS OF EMPIRES

How to deal with the memory of loss, especially when it is fresh, when the fall of the empire, the mourning of the empire is still ongoing, and the sadness is still mixed with pride in the imperial history?

Having grown up in an empire, I feel most uncomfortable in the capitals of former empires. From architecture to public discourse, from idle pride to hostility, from unrequited bragging to blame, the ghosts of empires are everywhere. **Have the former empires really reflected on their history enough?**

‘Empires are still shaping the twenty-first century in profound ways through their abiding influences on present generations’, Samir Puri reminds us.⁷ Many countries on different continents find past imperialisms still shape their present – from Britain to China, from the US to the Middle East.

Russia is the last colonial empire in Europe and its possible collapse still frightens many Westerners. For centuries, Russia has been destroying the statehood of its neighbours and their history, culture and identity. But signs of its imperial influence have taken root in Western universities, where Eastern European studies were reduced to Russian cultural subjects – Russian history, literature, music ... For Eastern Europeans, the existence of the Russian Empire is a constant threat and reality. In the West, Russia is imagined as a possible evil, but without which the world is unimaginable. Why?

Because of imperial desires and the unlearned lessons of the Second World War, war in Europe today is no longer an abstract conceptual reality. Today, Ukraine is fighting for its survival, for its museums, its libraries, its schools, for the right to have its own narrative of history. The aggression of one state against another and the horrific war crimes have shown that what we thought was the past has become the horrific present. We are fighting a crumbling empire.

In the morning, we woke up and heard a thunderstorm. My mother stood before the window and I saw the sky was blue. The thunder was, of course, strange: ‘Bah-boom, bah-boom’. Mother said: ‘This is probably war’.

A memory shared by Jaroslavas Okulič-Kazarinas, 2018.

4TH MEMORY. 'FROZEN' MEMORY

Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present, controls the past.⁸

Today, it is difficult to explain to the average Westerner why it is only recently that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have begun to 'discover' their history and, after a long silence, to finally start exploring the subject of the Holocaust seriously. The reality of the Soviet occupation and the use of history as a propaganda tool was alien to Western citizens. However, in this part of Europe where for almost 50 years, historical truth had been forbidden, the 1990s not only became a time of 'reclaiming' history and memory but also witnessed the undertaking of several revisions of the postwar memory culture. The period after the 1990s was when, for the first time after decades of occupation, it was possible to remember our marginalised past.

In 1988, there were plans for the fifteenth-century church of St Gertrude, which had been converted by the Soviets into a warehouse, to be built over with a multi-storey building. The plan was to quietly demolish the church. But the publicity (Gorbachev's Glasnost) and the rebellion of the civic consciousness of the Kaunas people prevented the execution of these plans. After a long struggle, victory was achieved: construction was stopped and the unfinished building was demolished.

A memory shared by Gintaras Vitulskis, 2014

St. Gertrude Church, Kaunas. Photo by Gintaras Vitulskis. © www.atmintiesvietos.lt



5TH MEMORY. THREATENING PAST

February 2014. Occupation of Crimea by Russia. Something in the air changed. There was a sense of threat in the air.

Summer. I woke up at night. I saw him standing at the window. 'The Russians are coming', he said. Then he added: 'I couldn't sleep and watched TV for a long time. Around 3 am the wind picked up, and the branches of the trees began to sway. Then I realised it wasn't the wind, but a helicopter hovering near the window. I could not see any distinguishing marks, and I could not understand what country it belonged to. All I could see were the glowing electronics and two people inside. Then the helicopter pulled back and circled around the house. Then another helicopter appeared and did the same.'

'Which side did the helicopter come from?' – I asked. He waved his hand towards the city centre. 'No, it can't be the Russians', I thought, 'Russia is on the opposite side.'

The next morning we found out that our house was at the centre of a NATO military training zone. In the yard, we found a war machine with a cannon. For several weeks, we kept coming across war machines on the road, and there were warplanes in the air. Strangely enough, these trappings of war made us feel safer.

After the occupation of Crimea, I realised that historical heritage was not a neutral decor in our cities. Invisible and unnoticed for many years, it could become activated by changes in historical and political circumstances – it could start to act as an active beacon of a certain ideology.

Before the Crimean occupation, the bridge in Kaunas Old Town was one of the last bridges not to be stripped of its 'decorative' Soviet symbols with stars and a coat of arms. Lately, this Soviet symbolism has seemed innocuous, because history will not repeat itself, we thought. We were sure we were safe. But in 2014 everything changed. After the occupation of Crimea, these hitherto 'innocent' decorations seemed to have been 'switched on', 'activated' and became signs of a hostile state, heralding a threat.

However, this threat was only felt by us, who had experienced what it meant to be subjected to military aggression by a neighbouring state. In 2018, we had lunch with a cultural delegation from Denmark. Suddenly, one of the guests said: 'You just go on and on about the Russian threat in the European Parliament. It's just so annoying ...'

We realised that there was a deep divide between us and our guests. **It is not possible to convey the historical experience to others in words.**

6TH MEMORY. COMPETING MEMORY

I should tell you something more about my relatively recent interest in Lithuania and its role in WWII. Before I do let me say that your observations echo precisely some of mine in interviewing many people (Lithuanians, Jews, others) with strong feelings about the country and its role in the war. You are right too, of course, that my Baltic Ghosts piece (the magazine's title) omitted many important and fascinating aspects of the intricate and complicated puzzle of Lithuanian identity post-independence (and the impact of the Brown vs. Red choices and victim vs. oppressor labels). [...] The phenomenon I came across most frequently (and that came through most clearly) was this real competition over victimhood (and heroism) that many people feel. This is related to the point you make about lumping all together, either as shooters of Jews (the more extreme 'Nazi hunters' I spoke to put the number of Lithuanian 'shooters' in the tens of thousands and the most stout Lithuanian defenders put the number in the scores -- I think the number is undoubtedly nearer to the several thousand you mention) or saviors of Jews or victims of deportations and cultural repression (Lithuanians by the Poles, by the Soviets, Jews by the Germans (and complicit Lithuanians), by the Soviets, etc.). Whose suffering was worse, more severe, more acute, more lasting, to me seems a ridiculous and fruitless road to go down. Each person's suffering was worst for him or herself and for his or her family. Further, as the saying goes, two wrongs don't make a right, so those who abused, tortured, killed, and violated international laws are not absolved by having been victimized (or had family members, friends, and countrymen victimized) thereafter. At the end, each person is culpable or responsible for his or her own actions and while attempting to characterize events and cultures and peoples is something that historians, politicians, writers, sociologists, journalists, etc. do, once we start to abstract what we gain in the generalities of the big picture we lose in the accuracy of the individual and individual event. In short, Lithuanians were neither all shooters nor all saviors nor all friends of the Germans nor all victims of the Soviets. (To be sure, Lithuania and many Lithuanians faced repression of their language and culture, and many individuals faced deportation, torture, and execution. The losses of Jews, especially those who lived in pre-WWII Lithuania, are well-documented.)

From Prof. Nick Bravin's email

The narratives of the Second World War and the Holocaust have become central elements of Europe's shared memory. However, as many scholars have shown, the memory of communism has no place in this European memory. It is this memory that forms the basis of the identity of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. However, it still remains unknown and misunderstood in Western Europe.

The desire for the suffering of unrecognised victims to be acknowledged sometimes leads to 'competition of victims'. There is a belief among many memory communities that multiple

memories cannot exist simultaneously. In many cases, there is a fear that 'too much' of one memory prevents the articulation of other memories. As historian Michael Rothberg says, memories take place in a sort of 'winner takes all' struggle.

Memory becomes a kind of battleground, as a guarantee of identity and survival. But can't several memories exist side by side, and must one of them prevail? Do we not have to remind ourselves that **it is our duty to include those memories that have remained on the margins?**

7TH MEMORY. PAST AND PRESENT

With the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, I am in a dilemma.

How can we talk about history today when history is repeating itself right now and we are still making the same mistakes? **How have we allowed 'never again' to happen again and again and again?**

How can we talk to the younger generation today about the historical lessons of the twentieth century if we ourselves have not learned from the mistakes of the past?

What is the role of memory in a contemporary world that is once again plagued by wars and a sense of global threat?

In the first week of the war in Ukraine, students from the University of Amsterdam asked me to tell them about the projects I was curating for Kaunas European Capital of Culture 2022. The title of the presentation was 'What can Kaunas bring to Europe?' Most of our programme, Memory Office, focused on the history of the Holocaust and the aftermath of the Second World War. But I couldn't talk about art that time.

On that occasion, I decided that the best thing I, as a Kaunasian, could give young Europeans is historical knowledge about a part of Europe they knew nothing about. About us, where the Second World War did not end in 1945, like in the rest of Europe, but in 1990, when the countries occupied by the Soviets regained their independence. Then I told them about our post-war armed resistance movement, about the events of 13 January, 1991, which claimed 14 lives. At that time, it seemed that the empire was convulsing and trying to survive. Then we talked with Dutch students about whether Europe has learned its historical lessons and whether Europeans were ready to stand up for 'European values'. **What will you do when war knocks on your door? Will you open the door, or will you turn off the lights and pretend you are not home?**

8TH MEMORY. TRAUMA

We lived in a village in Samogitia (Žemaitija), near a forest. Some terrible things happened there. And the children absorbed it all, they heard everything, they were always under stress. It was burned into our subconscious. All my life I have associated the forest with something mysterious, but unpleasant, scary, frightening.

Once the Lithuanian partisans⁹ took my father barefoot and led him all night through the forest. It was his brother's revenge because he didn't want my father's family to live on their parents' land ...

I remember the shots fired by the Soviet 'stribai'¹⁰ at night in the hut ...

My mother told me that a Lithuanian partisan leader was in love with her sister. But she loved the local teacher. The partisan raped her in front of her parents out of revenge. That is how my cousin Julija was born.

A memory shared by Liucija (my mother, 1949–2022), January

How to remember when the past is traumatic?

In March 2022, I was packing my life into boxes and thinking about which things I would need most in my next life in England. When the Russians started attacking the Ukrainian nuclear power plant, I realised that we had to go somewhere further. I had to do it for my children. The sense of war had come to our home.



My mother with her sister (left) and her mother (right), 1952.



Anelė and Salomėja, 1955, © www.atmintiesvietos.lt

This unexpected 'evacuation' made me re-evaluate my life – what have I accumulated and what is most important to me? If I never return to my home in Lithuania, where, we thought at the time, the muddy boots of Russian soldiers would walk, what was the most important thing to take with me, and what must not be left behind? Which photos, which bits of my life should I take and which ones should I leave behind?

A few weeks later, we returned to our house. Thousands of Ukrainians today have nowhere to return to.

Our village was very beautiful. Now it is no longer the case. Only two huts of people who moved here are left – it is unlikely that they know the history of Mackūnai village. The only legacy of our family there are the graves where our parents and relatives are buried.

I don't meet people my age anymore, but there are children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren... It is a pleasure to meet them and tell them our story. About the hard life we lived. I am called to those places by the longing for my homeland, the beautiful nature and the memories of my youth. I see my life in Mackūnai as if through a mist – I was accompanied there by painful experiences and the loss of loved ones. In general, life was very difficult. We had no nice clothes, no shoes, no telephones, no television, except for the radio... And that's not all.

After the front, we came back from the forest. We found an empty land – the whole village had been burnt down, two houses were left standing. We were a big family – seven people in an empty field...

Memory shared by Salomėja Piliponytė-Užupienė, 2020

9TH MEMORY. HEALING MEMORY

When we were organising the 2019 CityTelling Festival and announced a concert in memory of the Kaunas Ghetto Orchestra in our programme, I received an email. It said: 'Good afternoon, I am Joseph Haid, the son of Percy Haid, the composer who composed *Phantasy in Yellow* in the ghetto. I live in the USA. And I am coming to Kaunas.'

Only later, Joseph and his wife Julie admitted that they did not know what to expect when they came to Kaunas. Both of Joseph's parents survived the Holocaust. Joseph never planned to come here. It was too painful.

After the first days of our acquaintance, Joseph and Julie were already planning their return to Kaunas. In September 2022, they were in Kaunas again, at the Litvak Culture Forum. This time with their son.

Can memory serve as a tool for dialogue, for reconciliation, for healing?

I've been working with memory for many years, and I have to admit that our memory is not an 'objective' reflection of history. Our memories are not accurate representations of the past, but only certain reconstructions of it. Memory is subjective because we put into it our worldview and our experiences. It is influenced by our emotions, beliefs, expectations and, finally, time.

Memory is a way of talking about the past today. Whether we share our memories, tell stories, take photographs or make films, we are creating a TODAY'S story of the past. So memory and its tools – stories and images – help us better understand not so much the past but the time we live in and ourselves in that time. Looking back is a way of reflecting on the present and our identity – why are we the way we are? Remembering stories of the past is also an opportunity to create visions of the future – where are we going, what kind of future do we hope for? Memory is a way of healing our souls.

This journal was produced in the context of the war in Ukraine. The sense of war surrounded this magazine. The themes, issues and questions raised in this publication are directly and indirectly related to the war. A war caused by the convulsions of a collapsing empire.

I am grateful to the contributors of this journal, excellent professionals from different fields, who responded to my invitation to contribute with their texts and images to the debate on memory in the modern world.

Issues of responsibility, guilt, value choices in moments of complex historical circumstances, and in the context of war – trauma and traumatic memory – seem to me to be the most important issues in today's world. I am very grateful to them for their cooperation and to those who shared their personal experiences

and memories. Each of the texts, in one way or another, address the topic of historical processes that have taken place and are still taking place in today's crumbling empires.

Prof. James E. Young raises the crucial questions of memory and monuments, and at the same time asks whether focusing on the past substitutes real actions against contemporary genocide? The artist and writer Manca Bajec takes us down her memory lane, reminding us of another war of the twentieth century: the war in the former Yugoslavia. Artists Michael Shubitz and Jenny Kagan, both second-generation Holocaust survivors, share personal stories of their families and those who experienced the Holocaust. At the same time, the journal recalls the crimes of communism, which are explored by artists Mindaugas Lukošaitis, Vytė Saunoriūtė Muschick, Gintarė Valevičiūtė-Brazauskienė and Indrė Šerpytytė.

Perhaps the most important themes in this journal are traumatic memory and psychology. Prof. Danutė Gailienė, Prof. Jana D. Javakhishvili and Prof. Robert van Voren discuss the impact of traumatic experiences on society and its memory. The artist Mindaugas Lukošaitis uses his masterful drawings to depict the horror of war and genocide in Rwanda, Finland, Ukraine, and Lithuania. Memories of the Second World War and post-war experiences quoted in this magazine were published in the 2016 microhistory archive atmintiesvietos.lt. The texts are complemented by several poems, to whose authors I am very grateful.

Special thanks go to William Kentridge, one of the world's most eminent Litvaks, with whom I had the honour to walk the streets of Kaunas and who agreed to share his artwork with this journal. But most of all, I am grateful to the Ukrainian artist Alevtina Kakhidze, who, despite the difficult conditions of war, has kindly sent us her drawings – artistic documents of the war. The Kyiv electricity schedule she shared with me will always remind me of the time we edited this journal and the terrible crimes taking place nearby.

9

Members of armed guerilla resistance

10

stribai, istrebiteliai (in Russian *istrebitel*–destroyer), officially the exterminators, people's defenders, a Lithuanian paramilitary formation that fought against anti-Soviet partisans.

COMPETING MEMORIES

This section of the journal is devoted to the contemporary ‘memory wars’ in which the right to remember, the right to ‘one’s own history’, to one’s own memories, to one’s own identity is fought for. Memory is understood here as a kind of battleground, as a guarantee of identity and survival. Can’t several memories exist side by side, or does one of them really have to predominate? Is it not our duty to include those memories that have remained in the margins?

CONTRIBUTORS:

JAMES E. YOUNG
MANCA BAJEC
LINARA DOVYDAITYTĖ
VYTENĖ SAUNORIŪTĖ MUSCHICK
GINTARĖ VALEVIČIŪTĖ-BRAZAUSKIENĖ
MINDAUGAS LUKOŠAITIS
INDRĖ ŠERPITYTĖ

Memory Against the National Grain¹

JAMES E.
YOUNG

What have monuments
and memory to do
with each other?

James E. Young is a Distinguished University Professor of English and Judaic Studies Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the Founding Director of the Institute for Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies at UMass Amherst. Professor Young is the author of *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* (Indiana University Press, 1988), *The Texture of Memory* (Yale University Press, 1993), which won the National Jewish Book Award in 1994, *At Memory's Edge: After-images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (Yale University Press, 2000), and *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), which won the National Council for Public History Book Award for 2017. He was also the Guest Curator of an exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York City, entitled 'The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History' in 1994, touring to venues in Berlin and Munich in 1994 and 1995 and was the editor of *The Art of Memory* (Prestel Verlag, 1994), the exhibition catalogue for this show.

In 1997, Professor Young was appointed by the Berlin Senate to the five-member Findungskommission for Germany's national 'Memorial to Europe's Murdered Jews', which selected Peter Eisenman's design, finished and dedicated in May 2005. More recently, he was appointed to the jury for the 'National 9/11 Memorial' design competition, won by Michael Arad and Peter Walker in 2004 and opened on September 11th, 2011.

What have monuments and memory got to do with each other? 'Every period has the impulse to create symbols in the form of monuments,' Sigfried Giedion has written, 'which according to the Latin meaning are "things that remind," things to be transmitted to later generations. This demand for monumentality cannot, in the long run, be suppressed. It will find an outlet at all costs.'¹ This is still true, I believe, which leads me to ask just what these outlets and their costs are today. Indeed, the forms that this demand for the monumental now take, and to what self-abnegating ends, throw the presumptive link between monuments and memory into fascinating relief.

In this meditation on 'memory against the national grain,' I would like to explore the ways both the monument and our critical approach to it have evolved over the course of the twentieth century, the ways the monument itself has been reformulated in its function as memorial, forced to confront its own limitations as a contemporary aesthetic response to past injustice. In this contrary approach to the monument, I try to show what monuments do by what they cannot do. Here, I examine how the need for a unified vision of the past as found in the traditional monument necessarily collides with the modern conviction that neither the past nor its meanings is ever just one thing.

Like other cultural and aesthetic forms in Europe and America, the monument – in both idea and practice – has undergone a radical transformation in the modern era. As an intersection between public art and political memory, the monument has necessarily reflected the aesthetic and political revolutions, as well as the wider crises of representation, following all of this century's major upheavals – including both First and Second World Wars, the Vietnam War, the rise and fall of communist regimes in the former Soviet Union and its eastern European satellites. In every case, the monument reflects both its socio-historical and aesthetic contexts: artists working in eras of cubism, expressionism, socialist realism, earthworks, minimalism, or conceptual art remain answerable to both the demands of art and public history. The result has been a metamorphosis of the monument from the heroic, self-aggrandising figurative icons of the nineteenth century celebrating national ideals and triumphs to the anti-heroic, often ironic and self-effacing conceptual installations marking the national ambivalence and uncertainty of late twentieth-century post-modernism.

The status of monuments in the twenty-first century remains double-edged and is fraught with an essential tension: outside of those nations with totalitarian pasts, the public and governmental hun-

1

This essay has been adapted from and elaborates on themes explored in the author's earlier works, including: James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993; James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000; and James E. Young, *The Stages of Memory*, Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016.

2

Sigfried Giedion, ed. *Architecture, You and Me: The Diary of a Development*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958, p.28.

ger for traditional, self-aggrandising monuments is matched only by the contemporary artists’ scepticism of the monument. As a result, even as monuments continue to be commissioned and designed by governments and public agencies eager to assign singular memory and meaning to complicated events, artists increasingly plant in them the seeds of self-doubt and impermanence. The state’s need for monuments is acknowledged, even as the traditional forms and functions of monuments are increasingly challenged. Monuments at the end of the twentieth century were thus born resisting the very premises of their birth. As a result, the monument has increasingly become the site of contested and competing meanings, more likely the site of cultural conflict than of shared national values and ideals.

‘The notion of a modern monument is veritably a contradiction in terms,’ Lewis Mumford wrote in the 1930s. ‘If it is a monument, it is not modern, and if it is modern, it cannot be a monument.’² Believing that modern architecture invites the perpetuation of life itself, encourages renewal and change, and scorns the illusion of permanence, Mumford wrote, ‘Stone gives a false sense of continuity, a deceptive assurance of life’ (p.434). Instead of changing and adapting to its environment, in Mumford’s eyes, the monument remained static, a mummi-fication of ancient, probably forgotten ideals. Instead of placing their faith in the powers of biological regeneration, fixing their images in their children, the eminent and powerful had traditionally sought in their vanity a petrified immortality. In Mumford’s words, ‘they write their boasts upon tombstones; they incorporate their deeds in obelisks; they place their hopes of remembrance in solid stones joined to other solid stones, dedicated to their subjects or their heirs forever, forgetful of the fact that stones that are deserted by the living are even more helpless than life that remains unprotected and preserved by stones’ (p.434). Indeed, Mumford went on to suggest that traditionally it seems to have been the least effectual of regimes that chose to compensate for their paucity of achievement in self-aggrandising stone and mortar (p.434).

In later reflections, Mumford adumbrated his critique of the monumental in ways that both complicated and refined his earlier views. The problem with monumentality, he suggested, may not be intrinsic to the monument itself so much as it is to our new age, ‘which has not merely abandoned a great many historic symbols, but has likewise made an effort to deflate the symbol itself by denying the values which it represents ...’³ In an age that denies universal values, he found, there can also be no universal symbols, the kind that monuments once represented. ‘The monument,’ he continued, ‘is a declaration of love and admiration attached to the higher purposes men hold in common ... An age that has deflated its values and lost sight of its purposes will not produce convincing monuments’ (p.179). Or as put even more succinctly by Sert, Leger and Giedion in their revelatory 1943 essay, ‘Nine Points on Monumentality,’ ‘Monuments are, therefore, only possible in periods in which a unifying consciousness and unifying culture exists.’⁴

But where the ancients used monumentality to express the absolute faith they had in the common ideals and values that bound them together, the moderns (from the early nineteenth century onward) have replicated only the rhetoric of monumentality, in the words of Giedion, ‘to compensate for their own lack of expressive force.’ ‘In this way,’ according to Giedion, ‘the great monumental heritages of mankind became poisonous to everybody who touched them’ (Giedion, p.25). For those in the modern age who insist on such forms, the result can only be a ‘pseudomonumentality,’ what Giedion called the use of ‘routine shapes from bygone periods ... [But] because they had lost their inner significance they had become devalued; mere cliches without emotional justification’ (p.25). To some extent, we might even see such pseudomonumentality as a sign of modern longing for common values and ideals.

Ironically, in fact, these same good reasons for the modern condemnation of the monument may also begin to explain the monument’s surprising revival in late modern or so-called postmodern societ-

ies. Because these societies often perceive themselves as no longer bound together by universally shared myths or ideals, monuments extolling such universal values are derided as anachronistic at best, reductive mythifications of history, at worst. How to explain, then, the monument and museum boom of the late twentieth century? The more fragmented and heterogeneous societies become, it seems, the stronger their need to unify wholly disparate experiences and memories with the common meaning seemingly created in common spaces. Rather than presuming that a common set of ideals underpins its form, the contemporary monument attempts to assign a singular architectonic form to unify disparate and competing memories. In the absence of shared beliefs or common interests, art in public spaces may force an otherwise fragmented populace to frame diverse pasts and experiences in common spaces. By creating common spaces for memory, monuments propagate the illusion of common memory.

Both the reasons for memory and the forms memory takes are always socially-mandated, part of a socialising system whereby fellow citizens gain common history through the vicarious memory of their forebears’ experiences. If part of the State’s aim, therefore, is to create a sense of shared values and ideals, then it will also be the State’s aim to create the sense of common memory, as foundation for a unified polis. Public monuments, national days of commemoration, and shared calendars thus all work to create common loci around which seemingly common national identity is forged.

In this way, monuments have long sought to provide a naturalising locus for memory, in which a state’s triumphs and martyrs, its ideals and founding myths are cast as naturally true as the landscape in which they stand. These are the monument’s sustaining illusions, the principles of its seeming longevity and power. But it is just this seeming naturalisation of national myths that also disturbs contemporary critics of the monument. For as several generations of artists – modern and postmodern, alike – have made scathingly

clear, neither the monument nor its meaning is really everlasting. Both a monument and its significance are constructed in particular times and places, contingent on the political, historical and aesthetic realities of the moment.

Some have even argued that rather than preserving public memory, the monument displaces it altogether, supplanting a community’s memory-work with its own material form. ‘The less memory is experienced from the inside,’ Pierre Nora warns, ‘the more it exists through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs.’⁵ In a similar vein, Andreas Huyssen has suggested that in a contemporary age of mass memory production and consumption, there seems to be an inverse proportion between the memorialisation of the past and its contemplation and study.⁶ It is as if once we assign monumental form to memory, we have to some degree divest ourselves of the obligation to remember. In the eyes of modern critics and artists, the traditional monument’s essential stiffness and grandiose pretensions to permanence thus doom it to an archaic, pre-modern status. Even worse, by insisting that its meaning is as fixed as its place in the landscape, the monument seems oblivious to the essential mutability in all cultural artefacts, the ways the significance in all art evolves over time.

In addition to being challenged at the ontological level, the monument also provoked twentieth-century scepticism on formal and ethical grounds as well. In fact, the early modernist ambivalence toward the monument hardened into outright hostility in the wake of the First World War. Both artists and some governments shared a general distaste for the ways the monument seemed to recapitulate the archaic values of a past world now discredited by the slaughter of the Great War. A new generation of cubists and expressionists, in particular, rejected traditional mimetic and heroic evocations of events, contending that any such remembrance would elevate and mythologise events. In their view, yet another classically-proportioned Prometheus would have falsely glorified and thereby redeemed the horrible suffering they were

called upon to mourn. The traditional aim of war monuments had been to valorise the suffering in such a way as to justify, even redeem, it historically. But for these artists, such monuments would have been tantamount to betraying not only their experience of the Great War, but also their new reasons for art’s existence after the war: to challenge the world’s realities, not to affirm them.

As true to the artists’ inter-war vision as such work may have been, however, neither public nor state seemed ready to abide memorial edifices built on foundations of doubt instead of valour. The pathetic hero was thus condemned by emerging totalitarian regimes in Germany and Russia as defeatist for seeming to embody all that was worth forgetting – not remembering – in the war. Moreover, between the Nazi abhorrence of abstract art – or what it called *Entartete Kunst* (degenerate art) – and the officially mandated socialist realism of the Soviet Union, the traditional figurative monument even enjoyed something of a rebirth in totalitarian societies. Indeed, only the figurative statuary of officially sanctioned artists, like Nazi Germany’s Arno Breker, or styles like the Soviet Union’s socialist realism, could be trusted to embody the Nazi ideals of ‘Aryan race’ or the Communist Party’s vision of a heroic proletariat.

In addition to the ways abstraction was thought to ameliorate a work’s sense of mimetic witness, it also seemed to frustrate the memorial’s capacity as locus for shared self-image and commonly-held ideals. In its hermetic and personal vision, abstraction encourages private visions in viewers, which would defeat the communal and collective aims of public monuments. On the one hand, the specificity of realistic figuration would seem to thwart multiple messages, while abstract sculpture could accommodate as many meanings as could be projected onto it. But in fact, it is almost always figurative monuments, like those commemorating Iwo Jima in Washington D.C. or the Ghetto Fighters in Warsaw, that serve as points of departure for political performances. It is as if figurative sculptures like these were needed to engage viewers with likenesses of people,

3

Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1938, p.438.

4

Lewis Mumford, ‘Monumentalism, Symbolism, and Style’, *Architectural Review* 105, April 1949, p.179.

5

Josep Lluís Sert, Fernand Léger, and Sigfried Giedion, ‘Nine Points on Monumentality’, in Sigmund Giedion, ed. *Architecture, You and Me: The Diary of a Development*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958, p.48.

6

Pierre Nora, ‘Between Memory and History: Les Liex de Memoire’, in *Representations* 26, Spring 1989, p.13.

7

Andreas Huyssen, ‘The Monument in a Post-modern Age’, in James E. Young, ed. *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1994, p.11.

MEMORY AS A JOURNAL

to evoke an empathic link between viewer and monument that might then be marshalled into particular meaning.

In contrast, by referring to the general condition of the world, an inner state of mind, broken trust in humankind, or even art’s inability to represent the real, abstract forms are regarded by many contemporary artists and architects as a more appropriate form of expression. Maya Lin’s 1981 Vietnam Veterans Memorial, for example, succinctly commemorates the nation’s pronounced ambivalence toward the Vietnam War and its veterans in ways altogether unavailable in figuration. To achieve this expression of ambivalence, Maya Lin challenged all of the national Mall’s traditional monumental conventions intended primarily to valorise and redeem their subjects. To a landscape of soaring white, neo-Classical domes, obelisks, and statuary, Lin cut a black, polished granite negative-form V into the ground, a space into which visitors would descend, with a wall of names which would mirror the visitors’ own sombre faces and figures.

In fact, in its consort with two of this century’s most egregiously totalitarian regimes, the conventional figurative monument’s credibility as public art was thus eroded further still. Nearly eighty years after the defeat of the Nazi regime, contemporary artists in Germany still have difficulty separating the monument there from its fascist past. German memory-artists are heirs to a double-edged postwar legacy: a deep distrust of monumental forms in light of their systematic exploitation by the Nazis and a profound desire to distinguish their generation from that of the killers through memory. In their eyes, the didactic logic of monuments – their demagogical rigidity and certainty of history – continues to recall too closely traits associated with fascism itself. How else would totalitarian regimes commemorate themselves except through totalitarian art like the monument? Conversely, how better to celebrate the fall of totalitarian regimes than by celebrating the fall of their monuments? A monument against fascism, therefore, would have to be a monument against itself: against the tradi-

tionally didactic function of monuments, against their tendency to displace the past they would have us contemplate–and finally, against the authoritarian propensity in monumental spaces that reduces viewers to passive spectators.

In fact, just how does a nation like Germany memorialise the mass murder of Jews perpetrated in its name? How does a nation rebuild itself on the bed-rock memory of its crimes? One of the most intriguing responses to Germany’s paralysing memorial conundrum has been the advent of what I would call its ‘counter-monuments’: memorial spaces conceived to challenge the conventional premises of the monument. For a new generation of German artists, the possibility that memory of events so grave might be reduced to exhibitions of public craftsmanship or cheap pathos remains intolerable. They contemptuously reject the traditional forms and reasons for public memorial art, those spaces that either console viewers or redeem such tragic events, or indulge in a facile kind of *Wiedergutmachung*, or purport to mend the memory of a murdered people. Instead of searing memory into public consciousness, they fear, conventional memorials seal memory off from awareness altogether; instead of embodying memory, they find that memorials may only displace memory. These artists fear that to the extent that we encourage monuments to do our memory-work for us, we become that much more forgetful. They believe, in effect, that the initial impulse to memorialise events like mass murder may actually spring from an opposite and equal desire to forget them.

How does a nation memorialise a past it might rather forget? Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz conceived and then

built *The Monument Against Fascism* in Harburg-Hamburg which was actually designed to disappear. Unveiled in 1986, this twelve-metre high, one-metre square pillar was made of hollow aluminium, plated with a thin layer of soft, dark lead. A steel-pointed stylus, with which to score the soft lead, was attached at each corner by a length of cable. As one-and-a-half metre sections were covered with memorial graffiti, the monument was lowered into the ground, into a chamber as deep as the column was high. The more actively visitors participated, the faster they covered each section with their names, the sooner the monument would disappear. After several lowerings over the next seven years, the monument itself vanished on 10 November 1993 with its last sinking. Nothing is left but the top surface of the monument, now covered with a burial stone inscribed to ‘Harburg’s Monument against Fascism.’ In effect, the vanishing monument has returned the burden of memory to visitors: now, all that stands here are the memory-tourists, forced to rise and to remember for themselves.

With audacious simplicity, the Gerzes’ counter-monument thus flouted any number of cherished monumental conventions: its aim was not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by its passersby but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation and desanctification; not to accept the burden of memory graciously but to throw it back at the town’s feet. By defining itself in opposition to the traditional monument’s task, the Gerzes’ Harburg monument illustrated concisely the possibilities and



William Kentridge
Drawing for Monument, 1990
Charcoal and pastel on paper
120 x 150 cm
Courtesy of the artist

limitations of all monuments everywhere. In this way, it functioned as a ‘counter-index’ to the ways time, memory, and current history intersect at any memorial site.

Among the hundreds of submissions in the 1995 competition for a German national ‘memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe,’ one similarly articulated the difficult questions at the heart of Germany’s Holocaust memorial process. Artist Horst Hoheisel proposed a simple, if provocative anti-solution to the memorial competition: blow up the Brandenburger Tor, he said, grind its stone into dust, sprinkle the remains over its former site, and then cover the entire memorial area with granite plates. How better to remember a destroyed people than by a destroyed monument?

Rather than commemorating the destruction of a people with the construction of yet another edifice, Hoheisel sought to mark one destruction with another destruction. Rather than filling in the void left by a murdered people with a positive form, the artist would carve out an empty space in Berlin by which to recall a now absent people. Rather than concretising the memory of Europe’s murdered Jews, the artist would open a place in the landscape to be filled with the memory of those who come to remember Europe’s murdered Jews. A national landmark celebrating Prussian might and crowned by a chariot-borne Quadriga, the Roman goddess of peace, would be demolished to make room for the memory of Jewish victims of German might and peacelessness. In fact, perhaps no single emblem better represents the conflicted, self-abnegating motives for memory in Germany today than the vanishing monument.

Of course, such a memorial undoing would never be sanctioned by the German government, but this, too, was part of the artist’s point. Hoheisel’s proposed destruction of the Brandenburger Tor participated in the competition for a national Holocaust memorial, even as its radicalism precluded the possibility of its execution. At least part of its polemic was directed against actually building any winning design, against ever finishing the monument at all. Here he seemed to suggest that the surest engagement with Holocaust memory in Germany actually lay in its perpetual irresolution, that only an unfinished memorial process would guarantee the life of memory. Instead of a fixed sculptural or architectural icon for Holocaust memory in Germany, the debate itself – perpetually unresolved amid ever-changing conditions – might now be enshrined.

As it turns out, the other great ‘counter-monument’ on the Mall in Washington, D.C. may be the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, where it seems the Holocaust is remembered as a counterpoint to all of the United States’ own self-idealisations. When cultural critics protested that such a museum, though necessary, would be a blight on the mall, the United States Holocaust Memorial Council countered, “This Museum belongs at the center of American life because as a democratic civilization America is the enemy of racism and its ultimate express, genocide. An event of universal significance, the Holocaust has special importance for Americans: in act and word the Nazis denied the deepest tenets of the American people.’ That is, the United States Holocaust Memorial defines what it means to be American by graphically illustrating what it means not to be American.

Putting the memorial museum on the mall has not only Americanised the Holocaust, but it has also set a new national standard for suffering. After seeing the Holocaust formally monumentalised on the Mall, visitors may begin to view it less as an actual historical event and more as an ideal of catastrophe against which all other past and future destructions might be measured – or pitted. Moreover, the Museum has issued an implicit challenge to two other long-suffering American ethnic groups, African and Native Americans, who have responded by proposing their own national institutions for the Mall and nearby. Indeed, when informed that the National Museum of African American History and Culture be located in an existing building of the Smithsonian Institute, Illinois Representative Gus Savage responded angrily that since ‘Jews and



Romualdas Požerskis, Rebuilding of the Three Crosses monument in Vilnius, 1989.

8

As quoted in Cassandra Burrell, ‘Supporters of African-American Museum Object to Smithsonian Control’, in *Associated Press*, 15 September 1992.

Indians had their own place on the Mall,’ so should African Americans.⁷ Given the Mall’s own dark past as the former site of holding pens and slave auctions, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, designed by renowned architect David Adjaye and opened on the Mall in 2016, has come to define ‘memory against the national grain’: not only will it be asked to share an authentic site of African-American suffering with other groups, but it will also be faced with the difficult task of teaching North Americans that the topographical centre of their national shrine is also the site of the United States’ original sin of slavery, its greatest, ineradicable shame.

In the United States, the traditional impulse to anchor memory in historical crisis is further complicated – and exacerbated – by a number of additional factors unique to the contemporary Jewish American experience. For in America’s culture of assimilation, where explicitly religious differences are tolerated and de-emphasised, it is almost always the memory of extreme experience that serves to distinguish the identity of minority groups from the majority population. Indeed, one of the central topoi of the United States new world identity, beginning with the progenitors of the United States’ ‘majority population’ i.e., the pilgrims – is the memory of old world oppression.

With the rise of a new-found ethnic pride among African Americans, Jewish Americans and Native Americans during the 1960s, the power of a vicariously remembered past to bind otherwise alienated groups grew increasingly attractive. As African Americans recalled the enslavement of their ancestors and Native Americans their genocide, Jewish Americans began to recall the Holocaust as the crux of their common heritage. But even as the memory of mass suffering was binding together the members of these communities, it also set the stage for an implicit competition between the various cults of victimisation. Two-dimensional identities constructed solely around the memory of past suffering began to clash as groups asserted the primacy of their tragic pasts over that of others. The

United States was becoming a culture of competing catastrophes.

One of the results of this competition has been a narrowing of each group’s experience, a dividing of these groups’ histories from one another. Instead of learning about the Holocaust through the larger study of Jewish history, many Jews and non-Jews in the United States now learn the whole of Jewish history through the lens of the Holocaust. Likewise, all too many Americans know about African American history is their degraded condition as slaves, or about Native American history is its grisly end. In each case, entire centuries of rich life and culture are reduced to the detritus of destroyed civilisations.

Today, the Holocaust continues to occupy a central place in both Jewish and non-Jewish consciousness. In a plural and diverse society, it has also entered a universal realm, becoming a standard and currency by which many disparate groups measure their pasts, even as they come to know a part of Jewish history. Over time, however, Holocaust memorials and museums in the United States will also be asked to invite many different, occasionally competing groups of Americans into their spaces. In the most ideal of American visions, however, the memory of competing catastrophes will not continue to divide Americans from one another but may lead each community to recall its past in light of another group’s historical memory. In this way, each group might also come to know more about their compatriots’ experiences in light of their own remembered past.

Finally, I would like to conclude with a disturbing little vision I had during the dedication of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1993. Along with millions of others, I watched as Elie Wiesel mounted the stage amid fluttering US flags on the podium and began his dedication speech. And like many others, I was surprised but pleased when he interrupted his speech, turned to face President Clinton and said in so many words, Mr. President, I must tell you that I cannot sleep at night for what my eyes have seen in Bosnia-

Herzegovina. Please, Mr. President, you must do something to stop this terrible slaughter of innocents.

At that moment, the television cameras panned to President Clinton, sitting on the dais behind the speaker. He was clearly moved by this appeal, his eyes glistened sympathetically, and he nodded with a clenched jaw. But because he had not yet acted to thwart the unfolding mass-murder of Bosnian Muslims, now two years in the making, I imagined hearing words that he never actually said: ‘But Elie, I am doing something about the Bosnian Muslims. I am here, with you, remembering the Holocaust.’ We were getting it all backwards. Not only did I fear that we were turning Holocaust memory into a kind of national and self-congratulatory spectacle. But what if Holocaust memory was becoming a substitute for real action against contemporary genocide, instead of its inspiration? For in the end, we must recognise that memory cannot be divorced from the actions taken on its behalf, and that memory without consequences may even contain the seeds of its own destruction.

A Week in August

MANCA
BAJEC

DRAWINGS BY
VESTA KROESE

Revisiting, rethinking, and
contemplating: memories,
monuments, and research in
former Yugoslavia

Manca Bajec is an artist, writer, and researcher whose interdisciplinary work is situated in the realm of socio-politics. She has presented her work worldwide including the Kaunas Biennial; ICA, London; B#Side War Festival, Udine; WARM Sarajevo; 9/11 Memorial Museum, New York; Columbia University, New York; The New School, New York; Goldsmiths, London; and the University of Cape Town. In 2019, she completed her practice-led PhD at the Royal College of Art. She currently works as the Managing Editor for the Journal of Visual Culture and is a Lecturer in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her most recent work, examining colonial memories, was commissioned by Creative Europe as part of a residency in Gran Canaria. Bajec frequently publishes her work, including most recently an excerpt of a new play in an edited publication by Bristol University Press, Policy Press. Bajec lives and works in London and Ljubljana.

1

While monuments dedicated to women are a rare occurrence, in 2020, the same year of the inaugural unveiling of the monument dedicated to Wollstonecraft, the city of Budapest decided to begin a project which would result in the selection of a monument dedicated to women raped in times of war. The project includes a series of discussions, a website (<https://www.elhallgatva.hu/tudastar/>), a collection of personal memories passed down through generations, and a selection committee including two international experts from the field (Milica Tomić and James E. Young). This will be the first of its kind dedicated to highlighting the discussion of these violent acts. Palma Bruder, 'Budapest to become the first European city to commemorate women raped in war times', *Daily News Hungary*, 20 November 2020, <https://dailynewshungary.com/budapest-to-become-the-first-european-city-to-commemorate-women-raped-in-war-times/>, accessed 20 March 2023.

2

BBC News, 'Grim history of Bosnia's "rape hotel"', BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-europe-35992642>, accessed 20 March 2023.

In 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, a new monument was erected very close to where I live in London. It provided an opportunity for the local community to gather and celebrate one of the rare monuments dedicated to women, since according to the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association (PMSA), there are over 828 statues in the UK of which, only 174 are of women (2018).¹ But this sculpture, placed in the middle of Newington Green, a neighbourhood that has recently become a popular place for middle class creatives and that was that same year the site of Black Lives Matter demonstrations and gatherings of solidarity with Palestine, caused outrage when people laid eyes on the odd artwork. Dedicated to a pioneering eighteenth century, local feminist, *A Sculpture for Mary Wollstonecraft* by artist Maggie Hambling, presented itself in a very bizarre form that could hardly be understood as a celebration of this author and icon. My first impression was absolute confusion: what is this attention-seeking large silvery blob? Only the conventional plinth it sits on continues to remind us that we are looking at something of supposed importance. The structure looks a little like someone had used silver spray paint to cover a styrofoam blob. On top of the blob emerges the figure of a miniature naked female. It could easily be mistaken for a mythical character or a folk tale of small nude people that haunt the neighbourhood. Many residents decided to protest the inappropriateness of the naked miniature, which is meant to stand as a celebration of the feminist icon, yet it still remains in place and has become part of the landscape that is now ignored, and I imagine even tolerated by some. What is

yet to be seen, is how this structure will age and whether it will eventually be reconsidered. The question of its ageing, its decay, turns us back to thinkers such as Alois Riegl and John Ruskin, whose thoughts on preservation created a shift in the way we observe and appreciate historical sedimentation. Should the naked miniature simply be allowed to deteriorate or is there something about notions of accelerationism that is somewhat necessary in the twenty-first century, that seeks a different kind of sedimentation? If there is a need for the reconstruction of thoughts of the twentieth century regarding our building and removal or even repurposing of monuments, would now not be the time for these shifts to take place?

In a BBC news report², which is just under four minutes long, we hear the story of a woman who was raped repeatedly and held as a hostage in a hotel that was used as a rape camp during the 1990s Yugoslav Wars. Towards the end of the clip, she is asked what she thinks about the space that has now returned to its original purpose, a hotel. She responds that the place should be torn down and the land to remain completely barren.

We are often in conflict between the need to destroy and remove all memory and reminders of horrific events of the past and to remember them as a need to caution the future generations of the catastrophic potential of wrong paths and turns. There is no right or wrong answer, especially in present day, when we are confronted with ever increasing and overpowering mnemonic tools. These are documentaries,

movies, books, archives, artworks, music but also plaques, temporary memorials, performative ceremonies, demonstrations, all of these are now our tools, and we cannot often escape them even if we might like to. Forgetting has become a luxury that many colonial nations seem to have taken for granted and are now regretting having done so. With artists and scholars on missions to uncover the painful events of the past, we seem to be battling for who might uncover which stone first, and which stones might be buried forever.

In this climate of ‘not forgetting and not yet forgiving’, we encounter the battle for public space. While there may still be barriers as to who has the right to this space, eventually those barriers will fall and there will be a need for a democratic division of power dynamics or maybe things will just stay the same; seemingly democratic, seemingly tolerant to the needs of those, whose histories have not been addressed, who remain to this day oppressed. The regurgitated notion of the shifting role of the monument is as evident as it is inevitable. We all seem to want to find further meaning in a tradition that seems familiar and globally understood. Yet, these shifts that we long for don’t quite align with the current negotiations taking place.

While there was a huge shift in Germany in the 1980s and 1990s with what the US Holocaust scholar James E. Young termed as the ‘counter-monument’, since then we have been somewhat taken aback by the slow-moving debates that brought us not only to Covid-19 but more importantly to a period of unimaginable changes. We call it the toppling of monuments, but but it could be referred to as historical revisionism though it may not have perceived it as a necessarily negative aspect of the movement to reclaim not only public spaces but historical narratives, as is often regarded. We are accustomed to understanding revisionism as a necessarily negative form of rewriting, reconstructing and reintroducing history but in this case, it is more like repairing a broken or twisted narrative; one that either needs to be repaired or untwisted. Either way, the endgame would be that it is seen in its entirety. And when

thinking about revision in this form, how can we not continue or even begin to idealise the need for transformation rather than stability. Stability seems to be a preferred solution to acknowledgement yet without it, any kind of stability will not be long lasting. While with acknowledgement, a state of stability will no longer be needed, instead a further exploration of various nuances of historical thoughts and remembrance will allow for it to become a place of ever-changing reflection and interaction.

Contemplation on the activity and presence of a monument doesn’t happen in isolation, it is always part of a collection of understandings, discussions, thoughts, and histories that, together, inform what we are witnessing. When thinking about the removal of contested monuments and memorials, the building of new ones, and the fascination around how we are to deal with understanding what the role of these structures (tangible or not) is, we must first and foremost think about whom we are building for, with what intent, and who is making those decisions. We pride ourselves in our seemingly democratic ways of organising our societies, but we have done very little to address the democratisation of our histories and collective memories. These have become a thorn in our heel. Academic and artistic research has recently embraced more openly critical discourse on the topic, but can such approaches lead to reconsidering the position monuments and memorials play in the formations of national identity and the developing struggle for their presence in public space. Who is responsible? Why? And does that responsibility also extend to accountability?

This year will mark 22 years since the collapse of the Former Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. Back in the early 1990s, the world, particularly Europe, gasped in shock at the atrocities being committed, particularly as the war split many friendships, families, and acquaintances. The question of commemoration, remembrance, and collective memorialisation became part of everyday life throughout the many years of the Yugoslav Wars. *A week in August* (2014), was envisioned

as the first in a series of works relating to memorialisation and dilemmas of monument building across former Yugoslavia. As it developed for my doctoral thesis, it behaved less as an artwork and rather as a way to begin.

It is built from a convention of auto-ethnography and notions of the journal or travelogue as a method of approaching artistic investigations into and reflections of post-conflict spaces. Set out as a project to investigate the idea of the monument, the ‘trip’ or ‘field-study’, which took place over the course of seven days in the former Yugoslavia, it also intended to create a platform for initiating relationships with some of those involved in the processes of reconciliation and commemoration there, and document encounters with memorialisation projects, within the limits of a short trip. Crossing a large part of former Yugoslavia, the trip was punctuated with meetings across the many cities that were visited. Neither my cameraman nor I, had ever made a trip across former Yugoslavia. We were prepared to document our trip and encounters, however we could not predict that our inexperience, of never having

worked as journalists or researchers in conflict or post-conflict spaces, would inhibit us from being able to engage with the environment in the way we expected. Both coming from Slovenia, we had never experienced the horrors of the wars and were too young to have felt the fear of uncertainty and the looming sense of violence that swept the region when the wars began.

Using an auto-ethnographic approach seemed to be the only way of portraying a conscientious image of a situation in which I was an outsider and would remain as one. As the discussion of appropriation lurks in the shadows of many debates surrounding artistic practices and approaches to dealing with trauma, I was well-aware of my politicised position as the artist voyeur.

The autobiographical and auto-ethnographical perspective has been explored in great depths by a variety of artistic practices. Since the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, many international and local initiatives have formed platforms to explore reconciliation and peacebuilding. Former Yugoslavia has several artists

known both nationally and internationally, working in different mediums, that have acted on these boundaries of using their personal experience to engage with representations of conflict. These types of presentations are common in artistic practices and allow for the artist to present a multiplicity of interwoven stories, facts, critiques and commentaries on situations and topics. They are as much their own personal archives as they are our collective memories. Reflecting for a moment that is frequently debated in relation to representations of trauma in post-conflict spaces: what about the artworks emerging from research but not personal or shared experiences of that particular trauma? What does it mean for an artist to work with conflict not experienced first-hand? This comes back to the question of who has the right to decide on the formats, figures and events of memorialisation? These queries are all rooted within the same historically contentious debate; of political, social, and cultural power.

A week in August elaborates on this position and reflects on how I attempt to maintain a balance when allowing myself to observe and comment from the position of an outsider. And instead of creating a solely visual work, which might provoke an immediate emotive reaction, the work attempts to engage through a form of storytelling that I subjected myself to throughout the trip, therefore creating a form of re-enactment. This perhaps stems from a position that there is a general desensitised mode of observing images that has been created by a consistent over saturation of violent or painful images and that often we – those of us of a certain generation – even form immediate visual associations based on the images that were shown through mainstream media.

The outcries of the Yugoslav Wars were also hidden at times, with some of the most horrific events appearing in mainstream media because of a handful of journalists. It is because of such concerns and responsibilities regarding artworks which comment on conflict spaces that *A week in August* stepped away from a certain type of aesthetic. The title itself of-

fers the first critique, describing not only the time frame but criticising what many locals have voiced as concerns about how the past and present are depicted through the eyes of artists, journalists, researchers, bloggers and NGO workers who step into the situation for a moment and feel capable of describing and depicting it to the rest of the world.

A week in August attempts to do three things; to open discussions into the continuous silent violence of the already abused and violated, then expose the issue of the impossibility of monument-building and the denial of war crimes and finally question the potential of an adaptation of the counter-monument as something that may appear as an auto-ethnographic recollection of events.

It behaves like a peeping hole into a very complex array of elements surrounding the rebuilding of national identities in the aftermath of conflict. Its use of recollection of witnessing through oral narration and diary reflections draws attention to the sensitive nature of the encounters throughout the trip. With the performative element of re-telling the story of the trip to a stranger, who illustrated my memories, I re-enacted what I had experienced. I turned myself into the storyteller/witness, who is passing-on the stories I had heard and situations I was confronted with. It presents itself as only a moment, rather than a monumental gesture, in order to portray the unstable, transient nature of unresolved ideologies which are in fact transglobal – those of an uncertainty which manifests itself as a fear of the past which has shackled the present and is threatening to grip on tightly to the future. It becomes an anchor point. This anchor, whether it is a witness corner or the actual space of a relevant event, speaks about the need for much more than a band aid solution but the consistent research, care, engagement and action that is being conducted by the many exceptional organisations and individuals working on the topic in the region.

Ljubljana > Banja Luka > Sarajevo > Višegrad > Sarajevo > Banja Luka > Prijedor > Trnopolje > Omarska > Banja Luka > Beograd

2,040 km

Note to Reader – In many ways, I myself would describe my research as a form of commemoration – through the observation of destroyed memorials or sites where memorials cannot be built – as a somewhat idealistic infatuation with the possibility of finding a ‘cure’ for hatred.

On this trip I brought my cameraman, Miha, four cameras, and eight 60 minute HDV tapes. I planned the trip on a day-by-day schedule where I would meet survivors, artists, and activists. I prepared some simple questions:

- i. What do memorials mean to you?
- ii. Would you like to have a memorial?
- iii. Do you believe a memorial helps with the reconciliation and alleviation of grief?

I imagined I was going to film a story about a ‘perfect’ memorial. I returned to Slovenia a week later with a couple of pictures of buildings on the Samsung phone I borrowed from my mother. I hadn’t managed any filming or photographic documentation. I hadn’t made any sound recordings or taken any written notes of the conversations I had.

What follows are fragments of my trip as retold to the artist Vesta Kroese. Reverting to the forensic method of witness description composite drawings, Vesta tried to reimagine my experiences and draw according to my descriptions of spaces and situations. These drawings are the souvenirs of the trip.

Ljubljana > Banja Luka > Sarajevo

I woke up at 6.30 am yesterday with my mom ironing away next to the sofa where I was sleeping. My mom always wants me to be very prepared for every occasion no matter the situation. My dad was sitting next to me in his armchair smoking his pipe and waiting to see what my first words were going to be. My parents were both anxious and worried about my ‘first’ research trip. I was late to pick up my travel companion. Instead of leaving at 8 am we were off by 9. Despite the traffic we managed to get to Banja Luka quite quickly. Coming into the city, we were met by a family friend that took us to the local park for coffee and a quick chat. We sat down and quickly started discussing the trip, my reasons for it, and what I would be able to accomplish in one week in August, when most people were away on holiday. I asked my family friend a bit about what life was like now in Banja Luka, the capital of a region where some of the most horrible war crimes were committed during the Balkan war. He repeated a sentence that I had heard before and was to hear again that day. It was strange how quickly things changed. My friend went on to explain that before the war people did not think of each other in terms of nationality or religion. But now things are different. A terrible war that tore friends and families apart continues to linger. He explained that just a day before, two Muslim men had been shot in a café in Trnopolje, a town we were planning to visit. During the war, Trnopolje contained one of the most notorious concentration camps. In August 1992 reporters from ITN and *The Guardian* had filmed emaciated prisoners in the camp. The horrors of the war become front-page news. I knew this trip was going to be difficult, but I only then began to realise that it was likely that most people my age that I passed on the street or saw from the car had lived through the war and had their own distinct memories of it.



We drove from Banja Luka to Sarajevo. We were yet again greeted by another family friend. Again we sat down and had a brief chat about life in Sarajevo; what remained, what was rebuilt, and what was destroyed.

After settling into a hostel in Baščaršija, the city centre, we decided to take a walk and have a beer after a long day. It was almost 10 pm and the city centre was filling with the evening crowds. Music played from cafe terraces, people were drinking coffee and smoking shisha; it was difficult to imagine that twenty years ago this city had been near destruction. That day, someone explained to me that although time passes we must be careful to remember history because it tends to be easily contorted by a collective amnesia.

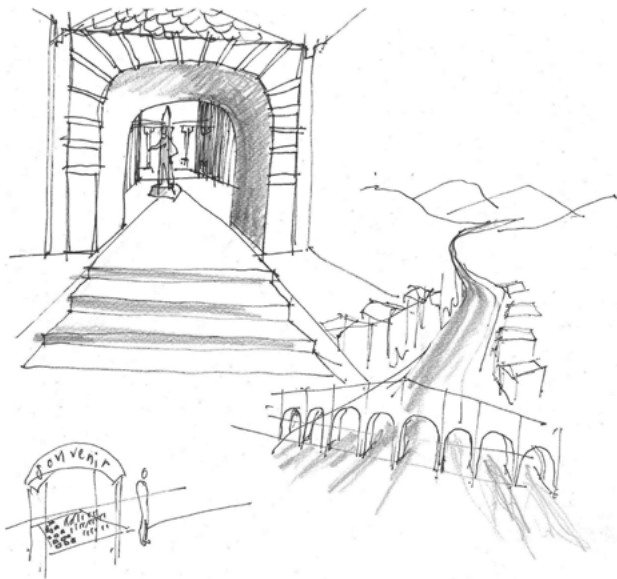
Sarajevo > Višegrad and Drina

Višegrad is one of the towns where most of the Bosnian Muslim population is now gone. As I later found out, it was also one of the cities where most of the executions and torture occurred in public spaces in order to intimidate people. Not many returned. As we drove into Višegrad we tried to find a parking spot where we could wait for Bakira. I made my way to what looked like the centre of the town. In fact, it was a newly built structure by filmmaker Emir Kusturica, known as Andrićgrad, named after Ivo Andrić, the author of *The Bridge on the Drina*. Kusturica has a reputation for being staunchly pro-Serbian. I remember some years ago, my father swore to never watch any of his films again. The glaring sun struck the whiteness of the newly built town, constructed as a set for Kusturica’s new film. A large parking lot dominated the area in front of the city gate. Just past it, a couple of steps lead under an arch and onto a white stone path with small houses on either side. Souvenir shops and restaurants lined the main street. The town opened the day before I arrived, and there were only a few local tourists taking pictures of the crisp, new, mini-town. It felt like a theme park. The restaurants were all open yet no one but the staff were in them. The town square, with its large monument to Andrić, was empty.

I travelled to Višegrad to meet Bakira, a woman who has been fighting for the rights of civilian victims of the war since it ended. She has been active in The Hague, creating an organisation to support female victims of war. Because of her work, rape has now become widely acknowledged as a war crime. I met with Bakira because I had read an article in *The Guardian* by Julian Borger. Julian wrote about Bakira’s struggle to protect a house where Bosnian Muslims were burned alive. The house still belongs to a woman that emigrated to the US. Since the war, the local government decided they wanted to tear down the property, removing any evidence of the fire. The owner of the house has given the right of attorney to Bakira and the Women Victims of War Association. Bakira has been able to find funds to fix the house. The upstairs has been transformed into an apartment for the owner, who might like to return someday, to die in her house.

The lower ground floor, where the murders were committed, has remained intact.

I waited for Bakira in the parking lot of the new mini town. She arrived in a car with another woman in her early forties. They asked us to follow them, and we drove onto a nearby hill. Višegrad is built in a valley on the banks of the famous Drina River. The bridge across the Drina is infamous for being the site of many of the crimes committed during the war. We drove further up the hill and parked. Bakira stepped out of her car and shook my hand. She looked much like the photos I had found on Google but thinner (she mentioned she lost weight while building the house). Walking between houses on an unmarked path, overgrown with weeds, Bakira apologised for not having the keys to the house with her, but said we could look through the windows. The house was built on a slope with others in close proximity. The house had a new façade, appearing from a distance as if it were completely new and without a history. As we approached, the wooden foundations of the house could be seen charred and black. I peeked through the window and saw what I recognised from the photo in *The Guardian* article: a bare, cement column in the middle of the room, a burned floor, and not much else. It was a scorching hot day and Bakira led us into the shade.



There were some bricks in the corner. She picked them up and started stacking them into three piles, making little stools. She offered us a seat, took out her cigarettes and started smoking. She smoked and looked around, then started talking; first about the house, what had happened, the people that had died in there, the babies that died in there, and about how they deserve the peace that at least they now have. It was difficult at first to follow what she was saying because she looked straight into my eyes. Her bright eyes looked so sad I lost my concentration. She explained that this was not a memorial but a room for memory; a room where the pictures of the people who died in there would be placed. A room that the family could visit, a place where people could visit and never forget

what had happened. She was very firm about it not being a memorial. She believed in the idea of wanting the site of the crime to remain as is, untouched.

Bakira spoke very little about her own torture and loss during the war. I knew from what I had read that she had been raped and beaten. I spoke and asked very little. There were so many other things that Bakira said, some I didn’t understand very clearly, some I cannot clearly remember – it was mainly my impression of her that remained. We walked back to the car; she smiled and gave me a hug.

We come to feel that these stories of rape and murder, slaughter and torture are something commonplace. We start to think of it as something that just happens. It is only when you look at someone that has experienced it that the abstraction disappears and the reality of individual suffering makes itself manifests.

Bakira told us we should go and see Vilina Vlas, a hotel in the hills surrounding the town that had been used as a rape centre during the war and was now, once again, a hotel and rehabilitation centre. We drove up through the forested hills. Reaching the top of the hill, there stood the hotel, which seemed a lot larger than in the photos. It was shabby and grey, and parts of the building looked abandoned, but you could see that people were drying their colourful bathing towels on the rusting balconies. We didn’t even step out of the car. We just sat there for a couple of minutes, looking. I wouldn’t have even known what to ask anyone in the hotel. How do you ask at the reception desk whether this is the place where girls and women were tortured, raped and killed? We drove back down the hill and were stopped by an elderly lady. She asked if we could give her a lift to the foot of the hill because she was finding it difficult to walk in the heat. She asked if we were tourists staying at the hotel. I said we were just lost. She asked us to drop her off by the road where there was a group of people gathering, near a cemetery. She was going to a funeral.

Miha and I decided to stop to see the famous Drina bridge. What remained in my mind most, were the stories of people being thrown off it during the war. We parked right by the bridge where there was another shabby hotel and a café. Both were as run down as the previous one. The bridge was being renovated but you could walk over it. On it were strange little souvenir stalls selling small sculptures of the bridge, fridge magnets, paintings on wood and stones. We crossed the bridge and walked up a hill to a viewing point. You could see how isolated and vulnerable the town in between the hills was, divided by the river. We sat in the shade of the café before heading back. We were surrounded by people but with Bakira’s words still fresh, we remained quiet and left quickly. We arrived in Sarajevo to a cool grey rain.

Sarajevo

We sat in the hostel waiting for the rain to stop, and chatted with the staff. The tour guide for the hostel explained that the biggest attraction was the war. Taking tourists to see all the locations they had seen destroyed on the news: the library, the marketplace, the Holiday Inn.

After the rain stopped, Miha and I went to see two exhibitions in a local gallery; one a permanent exhibition about Srebrenica, and another a touring exhibition about the Siege of Sarajevo. There were tours every hour. Both exhibitions were mainly photographic, with large black and white prints hanging on the walls. The exhibition about Srebrenica included an extensive archive with four hours of material to go through. It was gruelling and confusing, with scans of letters between government officials and a lot of footage from the trials in The Hague.



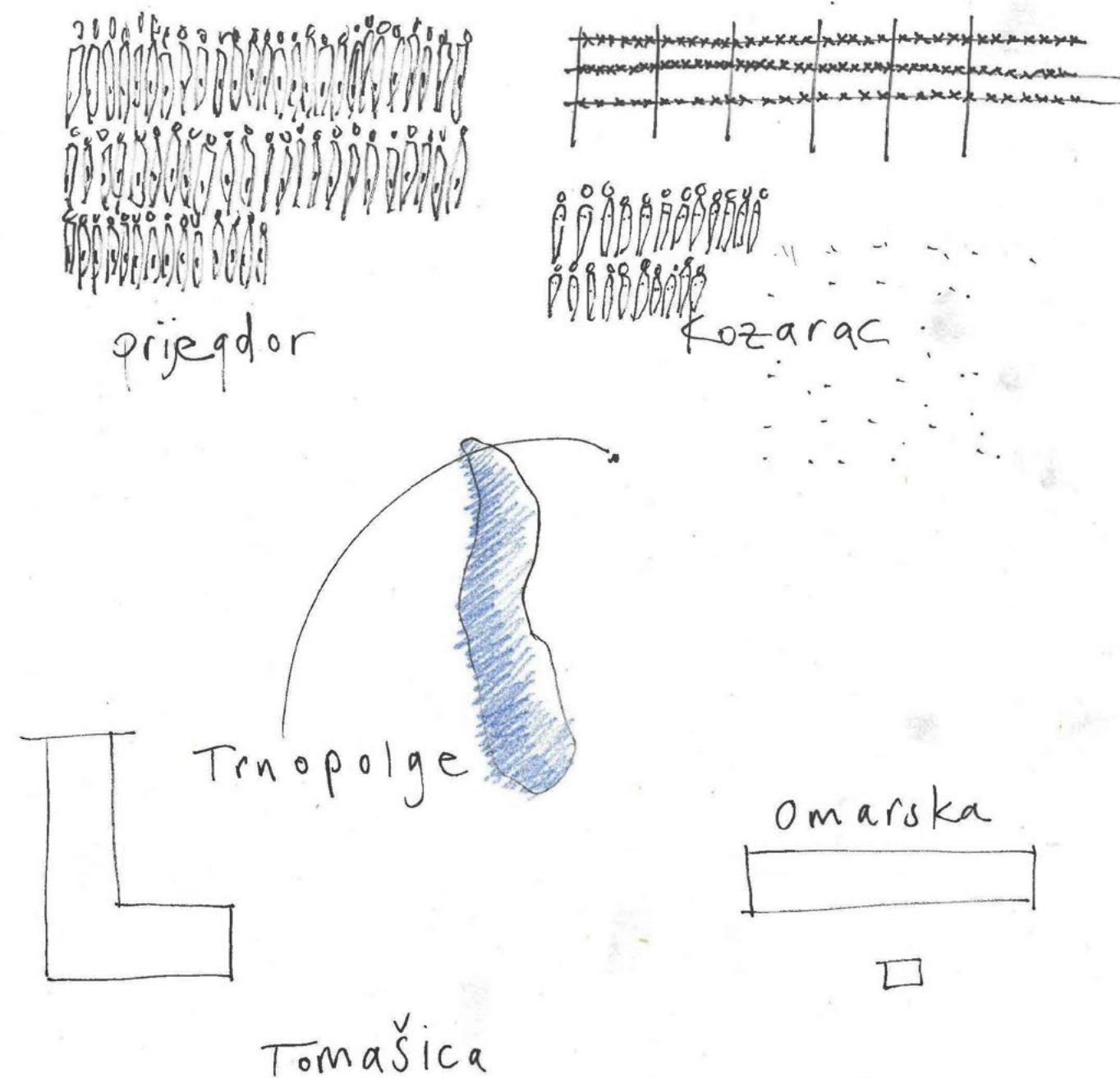
‘The Siege of Sarajevo’ was a smaller exhibition; it described the destruction of the city, the misery of death, and finished with a video about the Miss Bosnia competition that had been held at the Holiday Inn during the war.

On our third day in Bosnia, we went to meet Aida at the Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art (SCCA). We discussed one of their better-known projects about the anti-monument movement. Aida suggested what we should see in the city. She spoke about buildings that were once emblems of the nation and representations of nationhood. We spent the next few hours trying to locate several of the sites. We went to the newly renovated library, where two million books had been burned. It is now completely restored. We also went to look at the market where 68 people lost their lives in a mortar attack. The market was alive and busy even for a weekday. At the back of the market was a supermarket onto which the names of those who died were written. The exact point where the shell landed, creating a hole in the ground, had a large vitrine placed over it to protect it. I approached a couple of men sitting by the vitrine and asked them about it. They commented on how badly it was preserved. The glass vitrine had not been sealed properly and condensation and dirt gathered inside, so it was difficult to see anything. It looked like part of a construction site that had been forgotten about. We continued our war tourism: the former building of the

Olympic Commission; the Museum of History; the National Museum; the oldest Jewish cemetery; the largest Muslim cemetery. From one site to the next we realised that most of these buildings had been completely forgotten about. We would ask for directions on the street but hardly anyone could point us in the right direction.

While looking for the National Museum we were told that it had closed due to lack of funding. We arrived at the site and found two monuments. Both were part of the project run by SCCA between 2004 and 2007 called ‘De/Construction of The Monument’. The first monument, titled Monument to the International Community, is a representation of a tinned beef can on top of a pedestal decorated with the colours of the EU flag. Sadly, or not, most of the gold and blue plastic had been torn off, uncovering the cement beneath. Much of the rest of the monument was covered with graffiti.

The other monument, by the artist Braco Dimitrijević, was a block of stone bearing the inscription: ‘Under this stone there is a monument to the victims of the War and the Cold War.’ Each of the four sides has the same inscription in a different language – Bosnian, French, German, English. Unlike the canned beef, Dimitrijević’s more visually subtle approach seemed to keep people from trashing it. It stood beside the Museum of History, which at first glance seemed



closed as well. The façade was ruined, with chunks of concrete coming loose. Somewhat surprised, we noticed an advertisement for an exhibition, so we went up the stairs to have a look. It was open, so we bought tickets and went to see another temporary exhibition about the Siege of Sarajevo. The exhibition mainly included photographs taken by citizens, objects, homemade weapons, and even a recreation of a typical room during the war. In the middle of the space, a semi-circle of boards displayed a timeline and information about war criminals, their crimes, and sentences. There were images of the cells where the criminals are kept. Most of them were in what looked like apartments that included kitchens, lounges and private workshops.

As I was leaving, I was stopped by the woman who had sold me the ticket. She asked if something was wrong because I was leaving so soon, and explained that I was welcome to come back with the same ticket any time to see the exhibition and the rest of the museum.

Later that day, we drove to the hills above the city. I could never have imagined how many cemeteries one could see. On that sunny day, the bright white stones shone from all sides. As we drove out of Sarajevo, we saw the famous Holiday Inn again and were told it no longer had the accreditation to remain part of the Holiday Inn chain, and had gone bankrupt. Restored to its fresh colours it looked exactly like the images I remembered from television.

Banja Luka > Prijedor > Kozarac > Trnopolje > Omarska

We drove towards Banja Luka, the capital of Republika Srpska, for the next five hours. We arrived around 10 pm and were welcomed with an incredible feast: mushroom soup with mushroom scones, and then a mushroom risotto and quite a bit of wine and rakija. The next morning, breakfast was waiting for us and we had a long chat with my father’s friends. We talked about my parents, shared a few laughs, and then they started to talk about their own experience of the war. They

explained that their daughter had been away on a high school student exchange in the US when the war broke out and that she was unable to return. They didn’t see her again for over a decade. Meanwhile, the father was forced to go into battle, the son was sent into training, and the mother remained alone. After the war, they explained, there was nothing: no food and no electricity. It took a very long time for things to become normal again. The father was hesitant to speak about much of his time in the Serbian army. He just nodded and said that they were horrible times and horrible things happened there.

Later that day, we drove to the region of Prijedor. The area is best known for the concentration camps that were covered in the international news in the summer of 1992. In the village of Kozarac, we were to meet up with Satko, a survivor of one of the camps, in a café beside one of the rare memorials to Muslim victims. Coming into the village, the memorial was placed in the little central square, with parking spaces all around it. Obscuring the memorial were large expensive cars with foreign registration plates: Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, Austria, Sweden, Denmark, France and even some from the US. Satko had invited us to join a group of American students who had also come to the region for the two days of commemoration.

Driving through the village, all the houses were newly built, many were almost mansions, most with the blinds down and seemingly uninhabited. We were taken to a place called Kuća Mira, the Center for Peace. Inside the Center for Peace, we sat in a dining room surrounded by pictures of people who had lost their lives in the war. Satko gave a detailed historical account of how the region was systematically attacked, destroyed, and its citizens transported to the different concentration camps. Kozarac was completely burned to the ground, with only the rubble of the mosque untouched. It had been rebuilt by the families that used to live there, but who mostly live out of the country now and return only a couple of times a year.

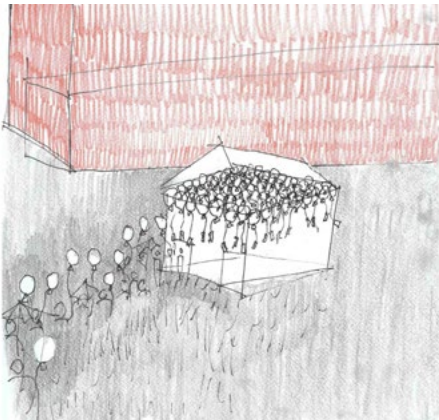


We followed Satko to the first concentration camp, Trnopolje. It was on the side of the main road that led through the village. We parked in front of a former school, which had been part of the camp. A local man came towards us yelling and waving for us to go away. In the region of Prijedor, much like in Višegrad, there is a general public denial of the incidents of genocide that occurred. Satko encouraged us to ignore the man as he continued to explain what the camp looked like, where the barbed wire had been placed and what the conditions in the camp were like. Trnopolje was the camp where the infamous photographs of the emaciated prisoners behind barbed wire were taken. Satko explained that Fikret, the man in the main image that was plastered all over the news,

was forced to hide after the pictures came out. He had dressed as a woman to avoid detection, defecating on himself so that he was pushed aside because he stank. Satko smiled and picked up his mobile trying to call Fikret; after a brief conversation he explained that unfortunately Fikret was away on holiday, so we wouldn’t have the chance to meet him. We stood in front of the empty building that the authorities had begun to renovate in spite of the efforts made for it to remain as it was. On the road in front of the building stood a memorial dedicated to the Serbian soldiers that died in the war. It was a stone eagle with its wings spread, built in a style similar to many 1950s memorials erected by Tito’s Yugoslavia to the heroes of the Second World War. At the foot of the monument lay flowers.

We woke up to another rainy day. It was 6 August and the only day of the year that people are allowed to visit the other concentration camp that lies only a few kilometres away from Trnopolje, in the village of Omarska. The Omarska concentration camp was known for being the more deadly of the two. A working iron mine before the war, it reopened quickly after the war ended. In 2004, Arcelor-Mittal Steel became the majority owner. While the new owners promised they would allow for a memorial to be built, so far they have only allowed part of the former camp to remain untouched in an otherwise operative iron mine.

Driving to the camp, we passed police, the army and private guards. We parked at the end of what was already a long continuous line of cars parked along the road. We walked down the muddy gravel road. Upon arrival, we heard that the commemoration ceremony was going to be cut short because of the rain, and soon after the national anthem and moment of silence, a male voice began reading out the names of those that perished in the camp. The camp was made up of two smaller buildings and a large red hangar. It looked exactly like the images and videos I had seen. I had read about the camp, and I knew that the smaller building, the White House, was where most of the murders were committed. Behind the White House,



white balloons were being filled with helium. People stood next to each other, forming a long line behind the building, and passing the balloons one by one through an open window. It was raining heavily but people stood still, some in silence, some chatting and laughing, and some crying.

I made my way to the entrance of the White House. It was filled with people and camera crews. The back two rooms were filling up with the white balloons, hovering on the ceilings. Women were taking them from one room to another and reading out the names on the cards that dangled at the end of each string. It was a self-initiated intervention that they had been doing for a couple of years. In one of the front rooms an interview was taking place. In another, stood a man, his wife and two daughters. He had scars on his head. A lot of them. There were a couple of people standing around him and he was explaining how he was tortured. Suddenly, he ran towards the back of the room hitting the wall and collapsing to the ground crying. It was the first time in 22 years that he had visited the mine where he had been held captive. The house was filled with whispers and cries; loud enough to hear in snatches, and quiet enough to hear the constant weeping. I kept moving around, entering and leaving the house. It was almost noon, and time to leave the mine. Through a microphone,

a voice asked everyone to take a balloon. A young woman approached me with a balloon. She gave it to me and nodded. I think I got number 436, but I cannot remember the name on it.

At exactly noon we were asked to release them. The wind and rain caused most of the balloons to be blown back onto the ground. People started running after them, encouraging the balloons back into the sky. I watched as an elderly woman kneeled in the grass, trying again and again to lift the balloons from the ground.

Belgrade > Ljubljana

I soon left Bosnia and made my way to Belgrade to meet up with members of the Four Faces of Omarska, a group of artists and thinkers that have been working with the topic of war crime denial and the possibilities of changing the methods of memorialisation. I met Srdjan, one of the members, for a beer to discuss their work and my own. We talked about how things are in Belgrade after the war and how difficult it is for them to work with their topic because the memories of war are completely different for most people. Here, the war meant isolation from the world and a once cosmopolitan city being left behind.

On the long drive back to Slovenia I thought about everything I had seen, trying to replay things in my mind. There was so much I heard that I knew I could never talk about publicly. On the one hand, I do not want to put anyone into uncomfortable or potentially dangerous situations. On the other, many communicated what they had seen and done with solemn stares, their eyes speaking more than their words. I cannot translate those looks; those eyes worn with sadness. What I will remember most clearly is people repeating that before the war no one ever asked whether you were Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian or Slovenian. It didn’t matter then.

The first iteration of *A week in August* was designed and appeared in *Death Part 1*, published by Eros Press in 2014, and edited by Sami Jalili.

‘... Without Being Able to Remember, They Cannot Heal.’

LINARA DOVYDAITYTĖ TALKS
WITH VYTENĖ SAUNORIŪTĖ
MUSCHICK AND GINTARĖ
VALEVIČIŪTĖ-BRAZAUSKIENĖ

Linara Dovydaitytė holds a PhD in art history and is an associate professor in the Department of Art History and Criticism at the Faculty of Arts, Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania, and a research fellow in Museum Studies at the Institute of Cultural Research, Tartu University, Estonia. Her current research interests include memory culture and museum studies, nuclear aesthetics in art, and representations of industrial heritage in contemporary culture. Her recent publications include the co-authored monograph *Learning the Nuclear: Educational Tourism in (Post)Industrial Sites* (Peter Lang, 2021), the chapter ‘Assembling the Nuclear, Decolonizing the Heritage’ in the book *Discovering the New Place of Learning* (Peter Lang, 2022), and the contribution to the special issue of the *Journal of Baltic Studies* ‘(Re)Imagining the nuclear in Lithuania following the shutdown of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant’ (2022). Since 2021 she has been involved in two international research projects: Nuclear Spaces: Communities, Materialities and Locations of Nuclear Cultural Heritage and Practices and Challenges of Mnemonic Pluralism in Baltic History Museums.

Vytenė Saunoriūtė Muschick is a translator and *Kulturvermittlerin* – a German word that in its broadest sense means ‘promoter of culture’. Vytenė studied Lithuanian and Scandinavian philology in Vilnius, Reykjavik, Uppsala and Berlin, and German Studies in Budapest. She translates into Lithuanian from the German and Swedish languages (writing by authors Alina Bronsky, Aldona Gustas, Siegfried Lenz, Karin Alvtegen, Camilla Läckberg, Henning Mankell) and from Lithuanian into German (writing by authors Dalia Grinkevičiūtė, Giedrė Kazlauskaitė, Ieva Toleikytė, Mindaugas Kvietkauskas). For a number of years, she worked as a correspondent for the Lithuanian National Radio (LRT) in Berlin and Belgrade. In 2022, she curated the exhibition ‘Dalia Grinkeviciute 1927–1987. Spaces / Overcome Distances’ at the Maironis Lithuanian Literature Museum in Kaunas. She is the author of *Against the Stream. Sabiha Kasimati* – a friend of fish a graphic novel about an Albanian Ichthyologist“ (Aukso žuvys, 2023).

Gintarė Valevičiūtė-Brazauskienė is a creator of interdisciplinary art. She is actively involved in creating, organising and curating various art projects and exhibitions and teaching creativity master classes. Having completed her postgraduate studies at the Vilnius Academy of the Arts (VAA), she now teaches in the Academy’s Department of Photography, Animation and Media Arts. She is an active participant in its promotion of the potential uses of animation in expanded fields, and exhibits her work in exhibitions and film festivals.

Gintarė’s film and video projects have won awards in international film and media arts festivals. Her film *Maskaradas* (Masquerade) was named the best Lithuanian film at the animation festival, Next Festival. Her documentary film, *Dievas Sukūrė Viską Išskyrus Kilimą* (God Created Everything but the Carpet) was awarded the Silver Crane by the Lithuanian Motion Picture Academy for best short documentary films. Her most recent project includes her role as director, scenario writer, and editor of the interactive film *Purga*.

The Maironis Lithuanian Literature Museum in Kaunas held an exhibition titled ‘Dalia Grinkevičiūtė (1927–1987): Spaces / Overcome Distances’ in 2022, devoted to the physician, writer and dissident who left us the first Lithuanian written account of the Gulag. Today, Grinkevičiūtė’s autobiographical texts, notable for their powerful literary form, are studied in schools, translated into other languages, and have been inscribed in the Memory of the World UNESCO national register – in other words, they have become an integral part of the collective memory of the twentieth century. This new exhibition sought not only to remind us of an important cultural document, but also to encourage a sensory experience for visitors, a personal exploration of the subjects of exile, trauma, and memory. Working in collaboration with artists, designers, and researchers, the exhibition was created by three curators: media artist Gintarė Valevičiūtė-Brazauskienė, translator Vytenė Saunoriūtė Muschick, and photographer Jurga Graf. I spoke with two of them – Gintarė and Vytenė – about the meaning of traumatic memory today.

Linara Dovydaitytė:
Unlike traditional historical displays, your exhibition about the memory of the Gulag appeals to the personal and subjective reaction of the viewer. So, I’ll start with a personal question. Why is Dalia Grinkevičiūtė’s story important to you? What place does the subject of exile have in your own biography?

Vytenė Saunoriūtė Muschick:
I’ve been drawn to the fate and work of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė for quite some time. You might say I’ve given it considerable thought numerous times. As a child, I first encountered her in the Soviet times, in Laukuva, a small town in western Lithuania. Grinkevičiūtė worked there as a physician between 1960 and 1974. When she was dismissed from her job by the local government, she came to live with my aunt, a teacher and poet. As a child, she impressed me with her passionate personality: her artistry,

vitality, the fluidity of her stories. It was interesting to observe and listen how she and my aunt would discuss cultural subjects – theatre, literature, and art, passionately defending their own points of view and interpretations. But when I was around, they never spoke about Dalia’s exile in faraway Siberia, near the Arctic Sea. And my family never told me about it. Why? Probably because they were afraid that a child might tell everything to someone else and attract trouble. This was a forbidden subject in the Soviet Union; it was ‘political’, and ignoring that ban could lead to punishment, or at least unpleasant consequences. I only became familiar with Grinkevičiūtė’s work and her account of exile after Lithuania regained independence, after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1990. When I read her memoirs, I was shocked. Not only because she recounted terrible experiences, but also because I realised, very clearly, *what kind* of country and *what kind* of system I had lived in. I understood clearly then that I could make an important contribution to understanding what went on by bringing Dalia’s book to public attention.

Gintarė Valevičiūtė-Brazauskienė:
Before I met the co-creators of this exhibition, the artist and animator Antanas Skučas and I created an interactive film project called ‘Purga’, based on the sketched memories of Gintautas Martynaitis about the exile on Trofimovsk Island, where Dalia Grinkevičiūtė had also been deported. It wasn’t easy to tackle the subject of exile, because I’m the daughter

and granddaughter of deportees; my entire childhood was filled with talk and stories about my grandparents’ experience in Siberia. When Antanas asked me if I’d like to make a film together, my first thought was: ‘Oh, no. Deportations again.’ It took me a while to reach a decision. The thing that affected my choice the most was revisiting my own family’s traumatic experiences, and my interest in the impact of intergenerational trauma and the idea of an interdisciplinary therapy method developed by psychotherapist Armand Volk, a descendent of Holocaust survivors, who was visiting Lithuania at the time. Volk uses the drama therapy method to heal the wounds left by our ancestors by bringing together different sides affected by historic conflicts, for example the Palestinians and Israelis. The realisation that the past determines present states of mind, choices, and futures, that it’s important to think about historical and collective traumatic experiences, the idea that these traumatic experiences manifest in different forms in later generations, and the desire to actualise displaced traumas to revive collective memory, eventually encouraged me to become involved and address this subject through art.

In an attempt to stimulate reflection on the collective past and raise the importance of taking responsibility for one’s actions or inaction, to have a position on certain issues, we decided that our project would not be limited to the film, and that it needed a broader, more individual involvement from the viewer. We decided to create an expanded cinema project,

combining film and experiential moving image installations for a gallery space.

Dalia Grinkevičiūtė’s memoir wasn’t initially part of our project. I had read many similar diaries and accounts that witnessed experiences of oppression, and all of them intertwined into a single, painful, horrific collective story. Among all the other testimonials about exile, Grinkevičiūtė’s text stood out for its literary richness. The experiences of a fifteen-year-old girl in exile were described in an extraordinarily visual and musical language, and were vividly distinct in their vastness. The text resonated, emitted scents, conveyed the experiences of cold, hunger, death and vitality, love, hatred, and the desire to survive at all costs.

LD:
Dalia Grinkevičiūtė’s account of exile is a shocking documentation of traumatic memory. At the same time, it’s a story about very distant events rooted in the mid-twentieth century. Are the traumas experienced by parents and grandparents important in the lives and experiences of later generations? How can one feel the impact of a past that is not yours? How do you recognise inherited trauma and its effect?

GVB:
From my childhood, the most memorable were the stories my grandfather told. He would tell me that the Russians he met were good people who helped him a lot. The government, of course, was unambiguously evil. When my grandfather had to work in exile, one of his jobs was carrying dead bodies. From his stories, I remember an image of how the bodies would be full of lice that would abandon a dead body in droves. He also told me about the coal mine. One day, during a blizzard, he was late getting to the truck that took them to the mine. His bosses reported him as sick. When the others came back from work, they told my grandfather that his work brigade had been trapped by a mine collapse, that everyone had died, and that he had survived because he missed the

truck ... My grandfather would describe his experiences in exile with incredible brilliance, as if he had no repressed grudges, no anger. He was a wonderful, strong, wise man. He always searched for a way out, for a way to live, and was able to adapt under the harshest conditions without losing his values. When he was released from prison, he found a plot of land in the forest where he grew potatoes and raised animals.

I would say that my father, my grandfather’s son, is more broken. My grandfather used to say that he would sing one song, then another, and he would feel better. He never hid the fact that he was a deportee, and even during the occupation years he would say that he was for a free Lithuania. All of his children, my father too, experienced considerable pressure and bullying for this in school. My father loved to read and he’d participate in poetry reading contests and was always the best, but they’d never give him first prize. They’d congratulate him, but give the award to someone else. He also couldn’t study what he wanted, since he was the child of deportees. He dreamed of being a lawyer, but became an engineer instead. He built up a lot of resentment.

I remember very heated debates about politics at family gatherings. In school, I was also an agitator of sorts, I’d ask my friends who they were voting for. I bore my grandfather’s banner. And then came a time after school when I became apolitical, and later I became interested in other, you might say, anarchist ideas. Then my grandparents passed away and I revisited the past, thinking about my father, too, about his unfulfilled, somewhat tragic life. And that was an opportunity for me to rethink the past. Consequences are passed from one generation to the next, after all. The fact that my grandparents were deported is something I feel. My father would say that three generations is not enough for this heaviness to pass – we will still carry it, one way or another.

Everything that happens to your great-grandparents also happens to you, and what happens to you will reverberate in future generations. This is how charac-



Photos by Jurga Graf, 2022

ter traits develop – we inherit our weaknesses and our strengths. My father would always say: ‘Never leave a single crumb on your plate.’ Even the generation that followed was persecuted by the feeling of hunger, the fear that you might lose everything ... In the collective consciousness, this transforms into an eternal hunger, dissatisfaction, the pursuit of progress for the sake of progress, even perfectionism has the same origins, because you’re never fully satisfied, you don’t feel secure. In other words, you’re never fully satiated – you’re always hungry, but not for food. You keep wanting something more and this creates suffering. If we identify the cause of suffering and acknowledge our inherited trauma which, even when





experienced indirectly, can lead to unconscious actions, choices, and impulses, we have the chance to act consciously, to better understand the present and act responsibly.

VSM:

In Lithuania, we're all touched, in one way or another, by the shared, collective trauma of deportations. Within our families, or among our relatives or neighbours – usually there's someone who lived through them. If not directly, then very close to them. And there was also the constant fear, the uncertainty, that it could happen at any moment. Any time. Particularly during the Stalin years, after the war, from 1945 to 1953. Perhaps you said something in public that was ideologically inappropriate, and you'd be reported or betrayed. Perhaps you were distributing banned literature, or maybe your family had been part of the cultural elite in independent, interwar Lithuania (1918–1940), or maybe they were just successful farmers and worked their own land, or they supported the partisans in the forests who resisted the Soviet occupation, serving as messengers or providing food. All of these people were immediately declared 'enemies of the people', 'unreliable elements', persecuted and deported, i.e., ripped from their usual surroundings and 'moved' to live thousands of kilometres away to the most remote, barely survivable corners of the

Soviet Union and forced to work under slavish conditions. What does this do to people? How does this traumatise them?

Psychologists have begun analysing the long-term consequences of such collective experiences, and have been describing in what ways such painful experiences reach younger generations. How do we identify or feel them? I'm not a psychologist and I can't give a precise answer, but it seems to me that through self-observation and self-reflection, it's sometimes possible to understand this reverberation of past trauma. It manifests differently in each family, depending on what your grandparents and great-grandparents experienced. I think that in our family, that legacy is our reluctance, for no apparent reason, to be photographed. Where does that come from? Perhaps because photos were once used to incriminate people. They could unexpectedly come back to haunt you. My grandfather was a volunteer fighter in the Lithuanian Wars of Independence (1918–1920) and he was decorated for it. So, one photo with that medal became evidence against him in the Soviet period. He was deported. My mother, born in 1946, was also on the list to be deported. But my grandmother took her daughters and ran away to hide. They weren't taken to Siberia, but they did endure several years of constant insecurity after the war. From my mother's stories I know that there was



Photos by Jurga Graf, 2022

always dried bread in her house when she was a child. That bread was saved for surviving a possible long journey into Siberian exile. Being a little girl, my mother would always crush those pieces of bread, so they'd have to dry some more ... And if you would ask me what I ate very often as a child, I would say: 'crisp dry white bread with poppy seeds and freshly squeezed carrot juice.'

So, when the war began in Ukraine one year ago, our entire collective experience seemed to reactivate instantly – and, most importantly, among the younger generation who had no direct experience of Soviet oppression. At first it manifested as a numbing feeling of hopelessness, but then it quickly turned into active fundraising, creating art actions, and organising humanitarian and military aid.

LD:

How did the idea come about to mount an exhibition about Grinkevičiūtė's life and legacy? Why did you decide to hold it at the Literature Museum?

VSM:

Kaunas was the European Capital of Culture in 2022 and it seemed logical that this writer, who was deported from Kaunas as a teenager with her entire family on 14 June 1941, and who, after

escaping exile, returned and hid in Kaunas, burying her journal manuscript for safekeeping, should be remembered and honoured with some sort of event – and even better, with an exhibition. We wanted to take a new look at her work and fate; to focus attention and tell her story in a different way to how it had been recounted before. And it's always better to do this as part of a team, where thoughts and ideas can be generated together. That's how our group came together, three women from different fields. I had translated Dalia Grinkevičiūtė's book into German, and I'd already tried working with visual and audio interludes. I'm drawn to 'mixing' media. That's how our shared journey began, which took several years, from the first ideas to their fruition.

We felt the most suitable place for an exhibition was the Maironis Museum of Lithuanian Literature, because we considered Dalia Grinkevičiūtė first and foremost as an impactful writer. The exhibition spaces are also very nicely arranged there – we displayed part of the exhibition in a small house in the courtyard garden, another part in the attic of the main building, and a peony that was part of the exhibition was in bloom in the inner courtyard. So, the museum and its separate, disconnected spaces suited our concept of focusing attention on the internal and external distances that Grinkevičiūtė had to overcome in her life. In 1941 alone, the journey to her place of exile was nearly 10,000 kilometres. And between 1948 and 1949, she and her mother left, illegally and without permission, to return back to their native Kaunas – overcoming that same distance once more. And then, after her mother's death in Kaunas in 1950, Grinkevičiūtė was arrested again and exiled for the second time to a prison in Siberia, and later to a second exile. She was forced to travel many kilometres during the Soviet period. And one can only imagine the inner distances she had to conquer.

LD:

One of the key questions when exhibiting difficult past events and traumatic experiences is the problem of their transmission and mediation. This exhibition features only one historical document: the authentic manuscript of Grinkevičiūtė's memoir. Everything else is a creative interpretation of her life and texts, seeking not to recreate the past, but to imagine it (anew). The exhibition consists of works created with different media, and its structure resembles an artistic narrative. Tell us how you came up with creating this kind of exhibition format? What does the creative approach give you when we speak about traumatic memory?

VSM:

We wanted to select certain moments from Dalia Grinkevičiūtė's life, reconsider them, and then convey that interpretation to viewers. We talked and discussed at length, deciding which fragments to include in our artistic narrative. We clearly wanted to connect our story with Kaunas, and it was clear that we would start from a safe, happy childhood in interwar Kaunas. As we spoke about a safe, beautiful, colourful childhood, we imagined it like a childhood 'secret', a time when we used to create things with coloured paper as children, hiding them underground under glass. Jurga transferred the idea of that 'secret' into a miniature diorama depicting a childhood birthday party at Dalia's home in Kaunas. We placed the diorama in one room in a small house in the courtyard garden. I chose to use another room in the same house to tell the story about one of Dalia's most harming experiences in Kaunas – the secret burial of her mother's body in the concrete basement of her parents' home in 1950. It was clear to me that I wanted to work with that powerful touching text, reminding me of an Ancient Greek tragedy. That descriptive scene is very specific, simply conveyed and simultaneously shocking. With her own hands, Dalia carved out a grave for her mother in the concrete basement floor, because, as a fugitive deportee in hiding, she couldn't bury her in an ordinary cemetery. I imagined that scene as theatrical, existential – which is why we used darkness and directional



Gintarė Valevičiūtė-B., Antanas Skučas.
And the sky - breathtaking beauty, drawings for the film
 Purga, sound, animation, AR, 2022

theatre lighting in that exhibition room. We can hear Dalia's story about losing and then burying her mother as an audio recording in four different languages. The basement walls had hand-etched quotations from Dalia's memories of her mother in different situations in exile. The etching process took several weeks.

GVB:
We conceived of the exhibition not as a usual museum project, based on the display of original objects and documents, but as an experiential journey created by artists interpreting available documents, objects, and facts. We decided to focus attention on three of the key axes in Grinkevičiūtė's life: her childhood in interwar Kaunas; her experiences of exile in the Arctic; and the scene of burying her mother after the war. In our interpretation of these three stages in her life, we used things that would awaken the senses: scents, atmospheric noises, images, objects, innovative animation (VR, AR), plants. We structured the exhibition as a story, and each of the phases we chose from Grinkevičiūtė's life had their own space in the museum. Although viewers could freely choose how to move between those spaces, we also suggested ways to overcome, to experience distances that revive our memory.

I curated the exile portion. The works and exhibition architecture in the space called "The Arctic Attic. "But in the sky, there was true beauty" were created referencing, interpreting, and quoting from Grinkevičiūtė's description of exile on Trofimovsk Island. We created the narrative in this space using the interactive portion of the animated film *Purga*. Visitors could see selected scenes from the film in a virtual reality (VR) installation, scanning drawings using augmented reality (AR) tools/devices. Thanks to interactive experiences, audiences can watch scenes as if they are part of them, moving through them like observers, coming into contact with depictions of a collective subconscious. Using visual and sound compositions, we tried to create a mood, leaving it up to the viewer to interpret, create, or recreate their own personal memory. We expanded the narrative by

exhibiting originals of Grinkevičiūtė's 1949–1950 manuscript and later memoirs, which have been inscribed into the UNESCO Memory of the World register. All the art objects are connected through a work created by the olfactory group, entitled *Looping Stories of Suffering* – the story of the writer's life and suffering deconstructed into scents – without a beginning or an end. Three contrasting stages of Grinkevičiūtė's life are joined by exploring them through the sense of smell.

Collective memory is expressed and passed on through culture and art, in which it is constantly and newly encoded by the creators and decoded and interpreted by the receivers – those who watch, experience, and participate. Memory is not a static thing: it is fluid, changing, disappearing, re-emerging, renewing itself, taking on new forms or loops, capable of revealing new layers after a time of oblivion. Remembering is not always pleasant. Sometimes it is too painful, as a result of which the memory can be suppressed, repressed, downplayed. A work of art can become a material expression of memory. Those who experience a work receive generally recognisable signs of a more or less collective memory and can interpret them in their own way. At the same time, they're encouraged to look for undisturbed layers of memory within themselves, to look for what has been repressed or hidden; they're encouraged to remember, because it is memory that can become a form of support or serve as a warning when making decisions or choosing whether to act or do nothing today.

LD:
The exhibition is directed toward an active physical, sensory, and emotional experience. As you describe it, viewers are invited 'to repeat the physical and spiritual distances overcome by Dalia Grinkevičiūtė – between Kaunas and Siberia, between a free life and exile.' But what is the purpose of creating a sensory exhibition about trauma that one cannot experience?

GVB:
Testimonials about exile are just fragments of memories passed on through language and imagery, but behind them is the multi-layered physical and emotional experience of the deportees, which people today cannot access directly. Just like it's impossible to animate Gintautas Martynaitis' drawings – it's only possible to redraw them. Dalia Grinkevičiūtė's memories can also not be 'remembered', they can only be quoted, interpreting fragments of images and sounds, complementing them with symbols, transforming into a familiar experience for a contemporary person. One such symbol in *Purga* and in the interactive animations is a fox, an actual inhabitant of Trofimovsk Island.



Photos by Jurga Graf, 2022

The phenomenon of exile – as a traumatic experience passed on from generation to generation – is explored through text, sound, and interactive animation. Descendants live through trauma without directly experiencing it – hunger, cold, violence – and so, without being able to remember, they cannot heal. The narrative of the Arctic space, based on authentic diaries from exile, tests whether a transmitted memory can be transformed into a personal experience and help free oneself from collective trauma and learn to live with its consequences.

VSM:
By creating a sensory exhibition about trauma, we sought to stimulate viewers' imagination through all sorts of senses, so that they themselves could create a relationship both with the subject of exile, and with the life and work of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė. It was particularly important to reach younger audiences, to convey the story to them in an appealing way, using VR. We selected the scents as a medium that could encapsulate the writer's entire life. I think they work very well, because they create different associations for each visitor.

We also included a plant in our exhibition, because we wanted to contribute to the legend of how Grinkevičiūtė's manuscript was discovered. We knew of the testimony given by Nijolė Vabolienė in Kaunas – that she found Grinkevičiūtė's manuscript buried under a peony bush in 1991. It fit the concept of our exhibition that the peonies might bloom for Dalia Grinkevičiūtė's birthday – 28 May. So, knowing that the peonies might still be in bloom on 14 June, the Day of Mourning and Hope in Lithuania, the commemoration of the first mass deportations in 1941, we chose the date for the exhibition's opening. We chose a particular peony from the University Botanical Garden's peony collection known as 'In Honour of Mother', and what an extraordinary joy it was when the exhibition 'participant' planted in the Museum's garden grew and blossomed in 2022, weaving its scent, colours, and shapes into our story!

It's wonderful that the exhibition's virtual tour will remain accessible to viewers

on the website of the Maironis Museum of Lithuanian Literature. Our goal was that after the exhibition closed, teachers and students could have regular access, allowing them to walk through and view the exhibition virtually.

LD:
You created an exhibition about the devastating consequences of the Second World War on the eve of and after the outbreak of a new war. How has Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine today influenced your ideas? What new things did it bring to the exhibition? How do you think Grinkevičiūtė's accounts and the new processes of their mediation and translation work within the new geopolitical context and in the face of memory wars?

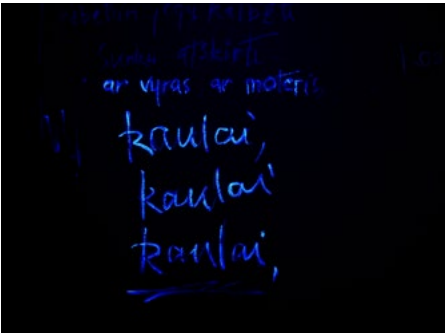
VSM:
As you create an exhibition, you have your own scenario and plan in mind, but I really enjoy it when life introduces adjustments to that plan. In March 2022, I was travelling by train from Berlin to Hamm, when a young woman and her small son got onboard, loaded with bags. We began to talk. She was fleeing the war in Ukraine and going to an assigned place for temporary refuge. She asked me what I did. I told her about the exhibition we were creating, about the Basement Room and the quotations on the walls that would also be translated in different languages. She immediately offered to translate them into Ukrainian. That's how, from a chance meeting on a train, the exhibition came to include quotations translated by Oxana Ovcharenko. That's how I see it: this exhibition is an open process never to finish.

We also had a showcase with translations of Grinkevičiūtė's memoir into other languages. During the run of the exhibition, that also was expanded to include Turkish. I was delighted by a review written by the young Turkish playwright Çağla Özden, which I found by chance on the internet. She was impressed by the inner poise and spiritual strength of Dalia as a young girl. She was particularly

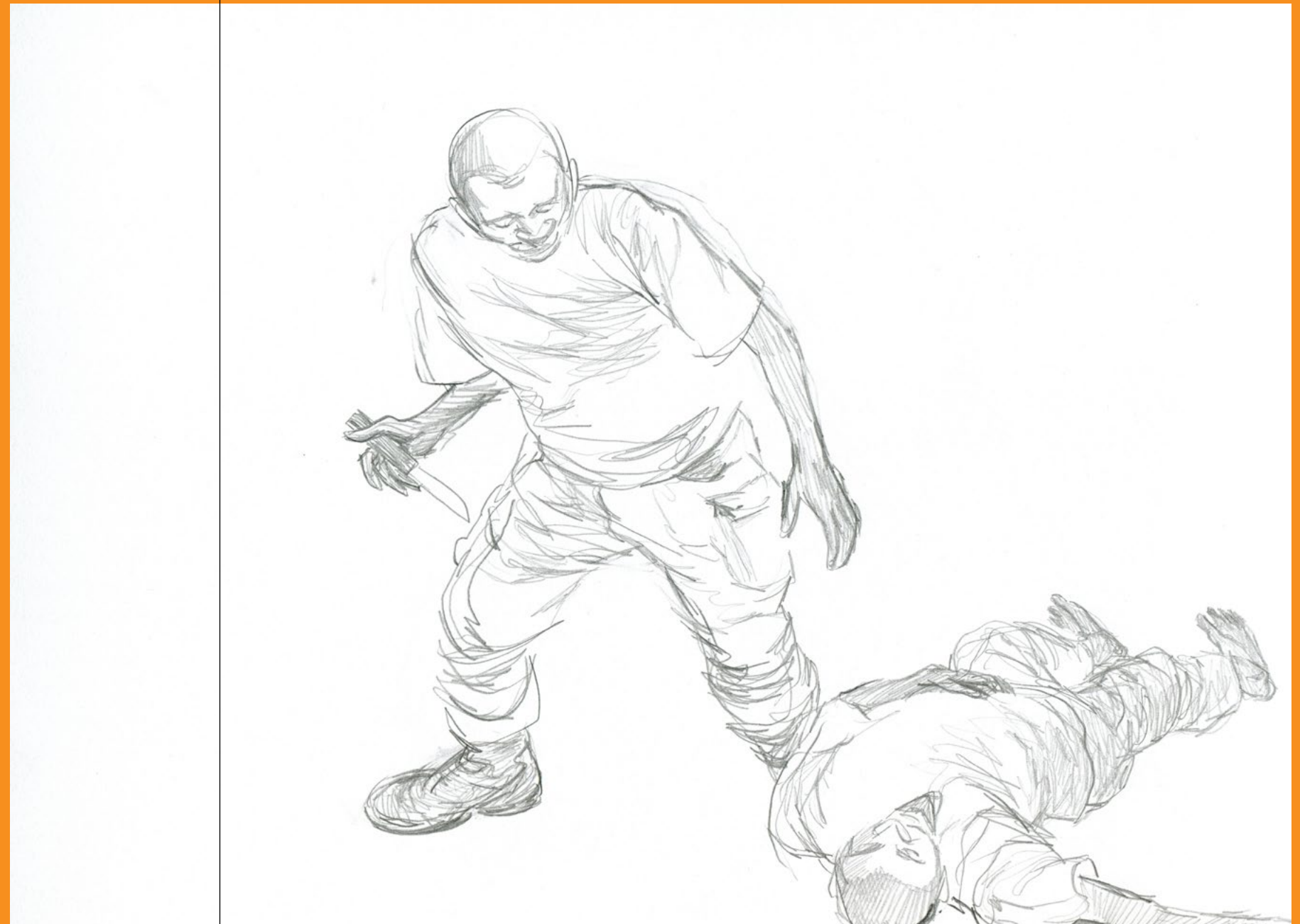
interested in how to stay strong in the face of death, hunger, isolation, humiliation, and loneliness. In other words, how not to become broken. The author of that review found the answer herself within the text, saying that we can overcome everything that happens on the road of life by accepting difficulties, learning from them, and continuing our journey.

GVB:
When we began working on a theme that arose from personal experiences of family and relatives, we didn't think that its general relevance and universality would become apparent so quickly. The concept for this exhibition and the creation of works took place during the pandemic, and the final installation was carried out after Russia launched its massive invasion of Ukraine. The theme of exile became painfully tangible for our generation, which hadn't seen the deportations with our own eyes. This was history, a trauma experienced personally or through loved ones. It's important for a young person to have access to memory and history.

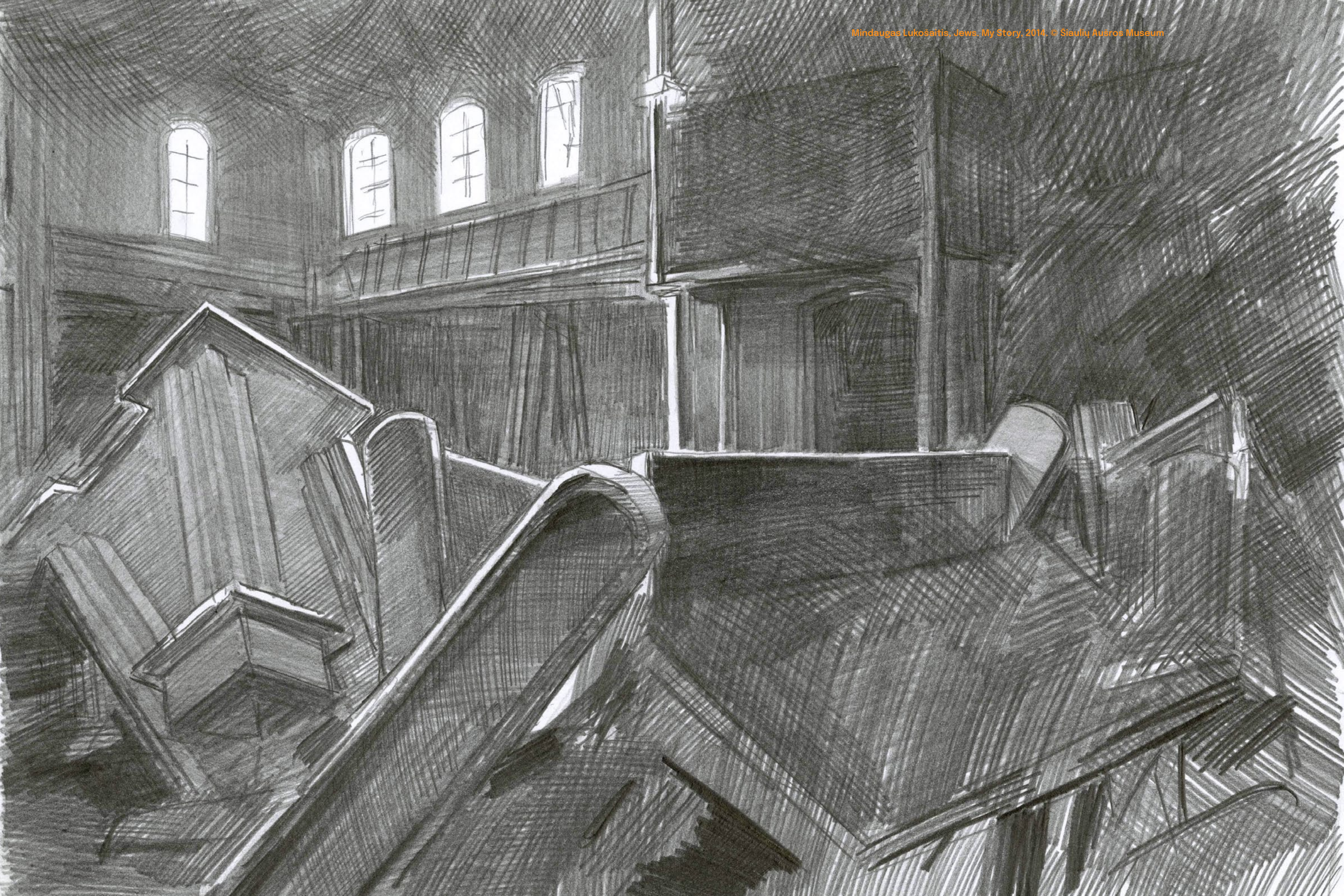
As we mounted the exhibition dedicated to Grinkevičiūtė with a war going on very close by, the importance of the actualisation of responsibility became paramount, and we wanted to reflect on the factors and qualities that help us remain human beings when circumstances, conditions, and everything you have previously lived turns into an incomprehensible, horrific nightmare. How does one remain human under inhuman conditions?



DRAWINGS BY MINDAUGAS LUKOŠAITIS



Mindaugas Lukošaitis, *Rwanda*, 1994





Mindaugas Lukošaitis, *Jews. My Story*, 2014.
© Šiaulių Aušros Museum

‘(1944 – 1991)’ BY INDRĖ ŠERPITYTĖ

Indrė Šerpytytė (b. 1983, Palanga, Lithuania) is an artist based in London, UK. Working in a variety of media, Šerpytytė produces conceptual work exploring issues of history, memory and culture. Whilst dealing with complex historical circumstances she achieves a remarkable openness in the work. Her themes are universal: the ways in which the past affects the present, the ways in which the political influences the personal, the importance of memory. Šerpytytė studied at the University of Brighton and the Royal College of Art, London. Recent solo exhibitions include Block Universe at the Venice Biennale, Rugby Art Gallery and Museum, Galerija Vartai, Parafin (all 2019), CAC Vilnius (2017) and MOCAK Krakow (2015). Recent group exhibitions include Refugees: Forced to Flee at Imperial War Museum, London (2020), Age of Terror: Art Since 9/11 at Imperial War Museum, London (2018), RIBOCA1, Riga (2018), The Image of War at Bonniers Konsthall (2017), Ocean of Images: New Photography 2015 at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2015), Conflict, Time, Photography at Tate Modern and the Museum Folkwang, Essen (2014–2015).

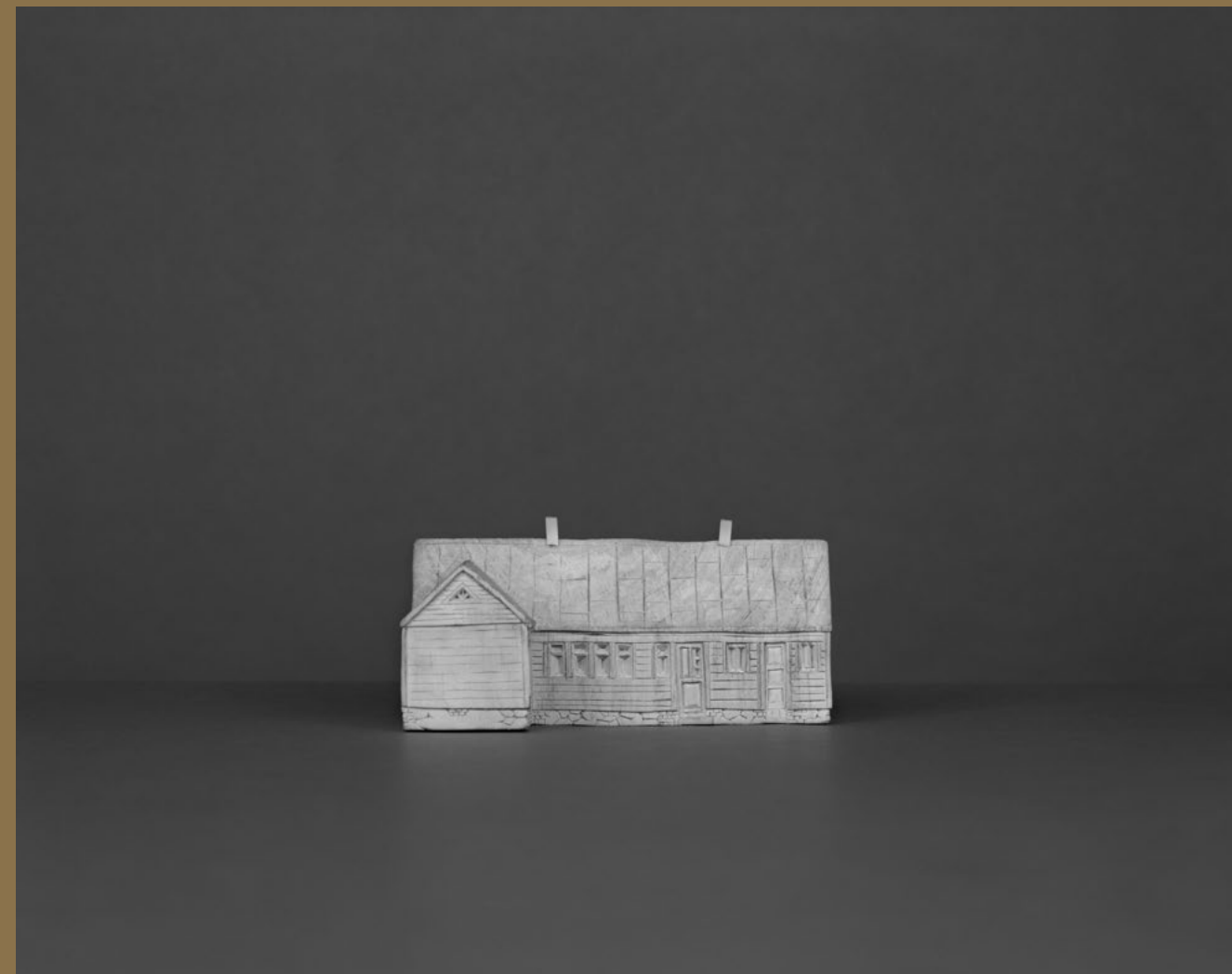
(1944 – 1991) Former NKVD – MVD – MGB – KGB Buildings 2009–2020

The ongoing series ‘(1944 – 1991)’ depicts buildings in Lithuania – many now in domestic use – that were used by the Soviet secret services, including the KGB. Accessing declassified government records, Šerpytytė developed an archive of the buildings and then visited the sites and photographed them. She then commissioned a traditional Lithuanian woodcarver to make models of the buildings – so far over 300 have been made. Finally, Šerpytytė photographed the models in black and white. Her cool and austere presentation of the resulting images – removed from the original sites of trauma by several steps of mediation – opens up a rich space for contemplation. As curator Simon Baker has written, ‘Šerpytytė’s glacial photographs stand in stark contrast to the brutal and unthinking character of both the traumatic events and the unacceptable memorial failure to which they refer and, finally, represent. But rather than sealing off these sites from their unwanted associations with an absentminded history of political oppression, coercion and violence, each sequential link in the chain of the process opens up a little more breathing space and lets in a little more light; just enough room for the flitting wing-beat of the irrational and the chance of recognition that comes with it.’

(1944 – 1991) has been exhibited at the Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art; in ‘Memory Matters’ at Skissernas Museum, Lund; ‘Time, Conflict, Photography’ at Tate Modern, London and the Museum Folkwang, Essen; ‘Ocean of Images: New Photography 2015’ at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; and at MOCAK, Krakow.



6 Central Square, Onuškis, 2009
Lambda fibre based print, mounted on 8 ply cotton
board, framed
50.8 x 62.55 cm



Užusaliai, Jonava District, 2009
Lambda fibre based print, mounted on 8 ply cotton
board, framed
50.8 x 62.55 cm



Memory Matters, Skissernas Museum
Lund, Sweden, 2018

I remember when they tore down the Stalin monument. The windows of our apartment looked out onto the appendix. I could see through the window that the traffic was stopped, and people were no longer allowed to cross the street or go down Parodos Street. A lorry arrived. It was dark, lots of police. I saw them throwing ropes, pulling and pulling down. They put the remains in the truck. A policeman was even standing at the gate of our yard.

A memory shared by Eugenija, 2019

Watching the dismantling of the Lenin monument, I remember this detail: just off Donelaitis Street, under a tree, I saw an elderly couple, probably Russian, holding hands ... They were crying softly. Although they were all in a happy mood, I felt pity when I looked at them: they had believed in him all their lives, and now there was an emptiness in front of their eyes ...

A memory shared by Gintaras, 2014



Romualdas Požerskis,
*Consecration of the
Liberty Monument*, 1989, Kaunas

MONUMENTS

Mindaugas Lukošaitis. *Jews. My story*, 2014,
© Šiaulių Aušros Museum.



In November 1941, there was the so-called ‘Great Action’. That evening they lined us up in rows. They only got to checking our row, where I, my aunt and my grandmother were standing, after dark. I was ill at the time, and had an outbreak of boils, so I looked very tired – as did my grandmother. Only my aunt was able to work. A Jewish policeman walked up to us. He was a friend of my father’s, so he let us through to the ‘good side’, we were not condemned to die. Everyone was surprised. God’s gift to us.

Interview with Dobrė Rozenbergienė about the Kaunas Ghetto, 2017

MEMORY IN THE CLASH OF PAST AND PRESENT

How to talk about history when history is happening today, when the present is in competition with the past?

How to talk about the experiences of past wars when war is happening here and now?

What is the role of memory in a contemporary world that is once again plagued by wars and a sense of global threat?

How do memories shape the present? Where do memories begin?

How does the present shape the relationship with the past?

CONTRIBUTORS:

ROBERT VAN VOREN
MINDAUGAS LUKOŠAITIS

Balancing History in the Course of Time

ROBERT
VAN VOREN

Robert van Voren is a Sovietologist by education. A graduate of Amsterdam University, he obtained his PhD at the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania where he is Professor of Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies. He is also a Professor of Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies at Ilia State University in Tbilisi, Georgia and is Executive Director of the Andrei Sakharov Research Center for Democratic Development at Vytautas Magnus University.

From 1977, he became active in the Soviet human rights movement. In 1980, he co-founded the International Association on Political Use of Psychiatry and became its General Secretary in 1986.

Van Voren holds a number of positions on boards of organisations in the fields of human rights, mental health and prison reform.

He has written extensively on Soviet issues, the Second World War, and issues related to mental health and human rights. More than a dozen of his books have been published.

When my children were growing up and reached adolescence, they naturally became more critical and thus also reacted to some of the words and expressions I was using. Having been born 14 years after the end of the Second World War, in a family in which two uncles had participated in the Dutch resistance but only one returned, the war was still a very vivid past, and this was reflected in the terminology I used. We automatically referred to Germans as *moffen*, a derogatory expression similar to Jerries in English and *les boches* in French. We were still playing a joke on Germans asking us for directions by sending them in the wrong direction or mumbling, ‘first give me back my bicycle’, in reference to the fact that when the Germans fled the Netherlands in September 1944 many stole bikes to get out as fast as possible. The fact that my father would exclaim ‘Good shot – Eastern Front’ when seeing a German on the ski slope with one arm or one leg was for me nothing extraordinary. To my kids, however, these expressions were unacceptable – they didn’t have emotional connotations with the war and to them these were simply unacceptable insults.

I recall this history to illustrate not only that hatred is transferred from one generation to another, gradually losing its sharp edges but still not blunt, but also that there comes a time when the past

has been buried in such a way that it has become a ‘regular’ part of history. However, the Netherlands was ‘only’ occupied for five years, and although a small part of the population resisted and 8,200 Dutch men and women were murdered because of their membership of the Resistance,¹ for the overwhelming (non-Jewish) part of the population these five years were survivable and for many a closed chapter once the war ended. In the late 1950s and early 1960s Germans returned in droves to Dutch beaches and the Dutch began holidaying again to Germany and Austria, even though the Reichskommissar in the Netherlands had been an Austrian Nazi. And when in the late 1970s and early 1980s a new generation of historians started changing the narrative of the war from black and white to shades of grey, it became gradually clear that the Dutch had collaborated with the occupiers on a massive scale, and that their behaviour was far from the heroic picture that was actively promoted.²

In Eastern Europe, that picture was fundamentally different. The Nazi occupation in the Baltic countries was followed in 1944 by a re-occupation by the Soviets and for most of the population the Soviet occupation was even more harsh than the Nazi occupation had ever been, of course with the clear exception of the Jewish part of the population that was almost

1

Roll of Honour of the Fallen 1940–1945, ‘De vijf groepen slachtoffers op de Erelijst’ [The five groups of victims on the Honour Roll], ere lijst.nl, <https://www.erelijst.nl/de-vijf-groepen-slachtoffers-op-de-erelijst>, accessed 20 March 2023

2

Over the past decade a wave of new publications have been published that underscore this issue, such as Michale Citroen, *U Wordt door Niemand Verwacht; Nederlandse Joden na kampen of Onderduik*, Amsterdam: Alfabet, 2021 and Raymund Schuetz, *Kille Mist*, Amsterdam: Boom, 2016.

completely eradicated. In other Central and Eastern European countries, the end of the war marked the beginning of almost 45 years of totalitarianism, initially in the form of Stalinist terror, which in some countries e.g., Romania was at least as ferocious as in Nazi times. Gradually, when total control over society had been established and all potential opposition had been liquidated or otherwise silenced, totalitarian rule lost its grip.

However, repression remained, and the permanent threat of severe consequences of any form of resistance kept the population in place. Some attempts to end totalitarian rule, e.g., the uprisings in East Germany in 1953 and in Hungary in 1956, the Prague Spring in 1968, and the repeated waves of resistance in Poland where Communism never really grounded, did not bring the desired result. It wasn't until the late 1980s, when the system collapsed, due to its own erosion and ossification of leadership that conditions for many improved.

The 45 years of totalitarian rule resulted in the encapsulation of history. History had been turned into a propaganda tool and historiography was a strictly controlled branch of science, since only a 'correct' understanding of the past would help keep the regimes in place and silence any heretic views of the past.

In a country like Lithuania, the darkest page in history – the almost total extermination of the Jewish Lithuanian population between 1941 and 1944 – was put in the freezer and became a non-subject. This, of course, prevented any serious digestion of the painful past and led to a total misconception of what happened during the Nazi occupation. On one hand, Holocaust denial became quite mainstream, and those who dared to raise the issue of active Lithuanian participation in the murder of their fellow citizens – and not in faraway extermination camps as with the Dutch Jews but right there, next to the villages in which they lived and often by neighbours – were lambasted as 'anti-Lithuanian', 'KGB agents' or simply 'traitors'. When I published my book on the Holocaust in Lithuania in Lithuanian in

2011, many remarks on online forums had only one message: take away his Lithuanian passport and kick him out of the country.³ On the other hand, Lithuanians became internationally known as 'Jew killers' and were often seen as the opposite of the Dutch who were referred to as 'Jew saviours' Both notions were fundamentally flawed. Many Lithuanians did try to help their fellow citizens, and the number of Dutch who tried to save Jews was much smaller than internationally portrayed.

In recent years, we have seen a belated revisiting of the past, whereby a younger Lithuanian generation, many of whom were born after the Soviet occupation and are thus less 'tainted' by having lived under totalitarian rule, is seeking answers to the many questions that remain wholly or partially unanswered. In short, Lithuania has started the process that the Netherlands started back in the late 1970s, and thus follows in fact the same historical cycle – the only difference being the 45 to 50 years of 'historical refrigerator', caused by Soviet totalitarian rule.

Lithuania is, of course, not the only country where the overwhelming majority of Jews were killed during the Second World War. The larger part of the extensive Jewish presence in countries like Belarus, Ukraine, and also other Central European countries were exterminated, killed by Nazi Einsatzkommandos and local collaborators, and most of those who managed to survive did so because they were either deported to the Gulag prior to the Nazi invasion as being 'bourgeois', or because they managed to flee together with the retreating Red Army.⁴

Indeed, the cynical tragedy is that in Lithuania most of the Jews who survived the Nazis had been deported by the Soviet occupying forces one week before the Nazi invasion, because they were bankers, industrialists, and others considered to be bourgeois and thus anti-Soviet. But a second tragedy is that some of the national heroes – partisans who fought against the Soviet occupiers after June 1940 – subsequently participated in the mass killing of Jews and thus became not only heroes but also criminals. This fact still haunts



3

Robert van Voren, *Nejsisavinta praeitis Holokaustas Lietuvoje*, Kaunas: Vytautas Magnus University, 2011.

4

The same happened in Poland. Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, 3,300,000 Jews lived in Poland. By 1945 only 300,000 had survived. Of the survivors, approximately 80% escaped the Holocaust as a result of Stalin's deportation deep into the Soviet Union.

Lithuanian society and flares up repeatedly when there are attempts to modify false narratives and create a more honest yet confusing and painful picture. For instance, a memorial plaque dedicated to Jonas Noreika on the building of the Library of the Academy of Sciences in Vilnius was put in place, even though it was perfectly clear that Noreika, alias 'Generolas Vėtra' (General Wind) and one of the prominent partisan heroes in the fight against the Soviet occupation, was also actively involved in the Holocaust.⁵ The fact that Vilnius Mayor Šimašius initially claimed that he could not remove the plaque 'because he does not know who put it there' and was later told in 2019 by Lithuania's General Prosecutor that its subsequent removal had been 'illegal', shows how deep the controversy goes and how complex the discussions in Lithuanian society still are.⁶

There are many examples of this 'undigested' way of dealing with relatively recent history. Visitors to the KGB Museum in Vilnius, officially called the Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights, can find only one small room dedicated to the Holocaust (and similarly, in the adjacent room is a display dedicated to Roma and Sinti killed during the Nazi occupation, with just a few photographs and texts in Lithuanian). Clearly, this was done to counter protests that the museum subscribes to the view that the deportations of Lithuanians to Siberia constitute a genocide, while the largest genocide – the Holocaust – was more or less swept under the carpet. Both rooms not only air the superficiality of this inclusion, but also the tension that still prevails. Is the term 'genocide' rightfully attributed to the deportation of approximately 10% of the Lithuanian population (and thus: did this indeed constitute a genocide?) or is this term been hijacked by those who at the same time deny any Lithuanian active involvement in the killing of Jews?

Interestingly, at the same time, the museum pays only very limited homage to the dissident movement in Lithuania and the national revival of the late 1980s which, ultimately, led to the Declaration of the Reinstatement of Independence in March

1990 and a year later the collapse of the Soviet empire. Again, this is at least a peculiar situation. Lithuanian opposition to Soviet rule was very active, the underground Catholic Church was able to publish one of the best samizdat publications until the end of the USSR, and the role of Sąjūdis in stimulating the erosion of the USSR and ultimately bringing freedom to Lithuania are feats worthy of much attention and a dedicated museum and information centre in the capital city at the very least. Yet there is none. And attempts to develop a 'dissident tour' of Vilnius for Lithuanians and foreign tourists alike, or to have a plaque put up on the building where dissident physicist Andrei Sakharov stayed while he was awarded the 1975 Nobel Peace Prize have all been unsuccessful. Interest was minimal and bureaucracy did the rest.⁷ Thus a truly heroic past is, by and large, neglected and mostly ignored, and more attention seems to be paid to a very distant history when Lithuania was the largest country on the European continent.

While the generation that lived through the worst periods of Soviet repression and survived the deportations of the 1940s is gradually fading away, the younger generations are maybe less affected by the horrors of the past but are still very much influenced.⁸ A case in point being the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which triggered a massive response in Lithuanian society, both in terms of solidarity with Ukrainian refugees (a small country of 2.5 million now housing some 70,000 Ukrainians as well as an estimated 30,000 Belarussian refugees) and anxiety about a possible similar scenario in Lithuania itself. For almost two decades Lithuania tried to warn its European partners of the threat coming from Russia, and most Western governments listened with only one ear, often finding it nothing but irritating. The invasion, which took many by surprise, changed all that. Most of Europe now realises that unless Russia is stopped in Ukraine other countries will fall victim to Putin's imperial policies. However, the feeling that Ukraine's war is 'our war' is incomparably stronger in Lithuania than in, for instance, the Netherlands. For Lithuania, the memory of the Soviet occupation plays a key role.

5

Noreika was eventually captured by the Soviets and hanged in 1946.

6

Lithuanian Radio and Television, 'Removing controversial Jonas Noreika plaque "illegitimate" – general prosecutor', LRT, 21 October 2019, <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1108683/removing-contro-versial-jonas-noreika-plaque-illegitimate-general-prosecutor>, accessed 20 March 2023.

7

See letter A51- /21(3.3.2.26E-VMA) from the Vilnius municipality, 19 January 2021. Also: Lithuanian Radio and Television, <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/nuomones/3/1320339/venclova-vorenas-ar-nobelio-taikos-premijos-laureatas-andrejus-sacharovas-nenusipelne-memorialines-lentos-vilniuje>, accessed 20 March 2023

8

For an expert view on second- and third-generation trauma see Jana D. Javakhishvili, *Trauma caused by the repressions of the totalitarian regime in Georgia and its transgenerational transmission*, Ilia State University, Tbilisi, 2018.

I use the expression ‘Soviet occupation’, but many Lithuanians increasingly prefer to refer to it as the ‘Russian occupation’, as they see the Soviet Union merely as a result of Russian imperialist ambitions, a ‘Friendship of Nations’ sauce that masquerades the true nature of the occupational force. Lithuanians do not stand alone in this. The gradually worsening situation in Europe, which culminated in the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine has triggered a reappraisal of who occupied whom. Many see Russia as the source of all evil, and although of course not only Russian soldiers occupied Lithuania, or other countries for that matter, many of the non-Russian soldiers were also inducted into the Russian/Soviet army as part of the process of Sovietisation.²

I remember meetings with the then Deputy Chairman of the Ukrainian secret service SBU, Volodymyr Prystaiko, who in the 1990s tried to convince me that Ukraine had been occupied by the Russians. At that time his claim seemed outlandish – weren’t Ukrainians actively involved in the Soviet leadership, with Party General Secretaries Nikita Khrushchev and, later, Leonid Brezhnev? Hadn’t he, a Ukrainian, been part of the repressive apparatus himself? I smirked a bit at this suggestion, and considered it more as an attempt by a former KGB officer to clean his own slate, but with time I have come to re-evaluate my position and understand there is at least some truth to this. The fact that up into the highest echelons Ukrainians became part of the system does not mean there was no occupation, if not in word than in practice. Didn’t the same happen in other Soviet republics, where locals joined the ruling elite?

But that makes it all the more complex, because who is Russian or Ukrainian, and who is Soviet? Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Andrei Sakharov, I am sure, never considered himself to be ‘Russian’ as we would now assess that nationality (in particular because the invasion into Ukraine has made things black and white once more). He would rather have considered himself to be Soviet, and his last project that was left unfinished was

the formulation of a new constitution for the USSR as a Confederation of Free and Sovereign States – but definitely as part of the Soviet hemisphere. At that time very few experts imagined a rapid disintegration of the Soviet Union and when I published my book *Perestrojka or Destrojka* in 1988, many considered this as a fully unrealistic option.³ However, Ukrainians who now reject Sakharov as ‘Russian’ forget that he defended Ukrainian political prisoners just as much as Russian ones or Crimean Tatars who had been deported from their Crimean homeland by Stalin and of whom many wound up in the Gulag for trying to return home.

Our memories, and evaluations of the past, are very much coloured by the present, both our own and that of the society within which we live. This makes the reappraisal of the past such a complex and contentious issue. If one would use the current set of values and norms while assessing works by writers and scholars of, for instance, a century or two ago, many would not pass the benchmark. One of the most prominent Lithuanian writers of the late nineteenth century, Vincas Kudirka, was anti-Semitic, yet does that mean that the secondary school named after him in Vilnius should be renamed?⁴ There is here a very thin line that can be easily crossed, and is in my view crossed when one starts removing parts from the works of Roald Dahl or Ian Fleming because they are now considered ‘offensive’.⁵

Less contentious perhaps, are the biographies of people who, during the Cold War, were merely seen as traitors but whose actions are now, thirty or more years later, put in a different and more ‘balanced’ light. A good example of this is the book *The Happy Traitor* about master spy George Blake, who worked for the Soviets out of conviction, was sentenced to 42 years of imprisonment in Britain but managed to escape to the USSR where he died not so long ago.⁶ Blake is indeed a fascinating figure, who caught my attention earlier, partially because of his background in Rotterdam where he grew up around the corner from my mother and uncles and may well have gone to the

9

Many Soviet soldiers came from non-Russian republics, such as Ukraine. Ukrainians made up about 25% of the total number of Soviet soldiers sent to Afghanistan, and some 3,000 of them died, 20% of the total. See: Укрінформ, ‘Понад 3 тисячі українських військових загинули в Афганістані - Полторак’ [More than 3,000 Ukrainian Soldiers Died in Afghanistan] <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/2641196-ponad-3-tisaci-ukrainskih-vijskovih-zagynuli-v-afganistani-poltorak.html>, accessed 20 March 2023.

10

Robert van Voren, *Perestrojka or Destrojka*, Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1988.

11

Robert van Voren, *Undigested Past*; the Holocaust in Lithuania, Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2011.

12

Hayden Vernon, ‘Roald Dahl books rewritten to remove language deemed offensive’, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/feb/18/roald-dahl-books-rewritten-to-remove-language-deemed-offensive> and Brittany Bernstein, ‘James Bond books undergo edit to remove offensive language’, *National Review*, <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/james-bond-books-undergo-edit-to-remove-offensive-language/>, both accessed 20 March 2023.

13

Simon Kuper, *The Happy Traitor*, London: Profile Books, 2021.

14

Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men*, New York: Harper, 1992.

15

His daughter still tries to modify that view by claiming that he also saved a lot of people: Suzanne Liem, ‘Mijn vader omstreden? “Hij heeft op Zuid-Celebes ook veel mensen gered”’ [My father controversial? ‘He also saved many people in South Sulawesi’], *Trouw*, 2 September 2020, <https://www.trouw.nl/verdieping/mijn-vader-omstreden-hij-heeft-op-zuid-celebes-ook-veel-mensen-gered-b12161e9/?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F/>, accessed 20 March 2023. Similarly, the son of Otto von Wächter, Governor in Nazi-occupied Galicia (Ukraine), remains in denial when it comes to his father’s crimes, see David Evan’s 2015 documentary *What Our Fathers Did: A Nazi Legacy*, available to stream online.

same school. But, although I can understand why he decided to work for the Soviets and continue to be intrigued, I will never forget that his treason resulted in the death of at least forty people, and thus he was also a killer. As Christopher Browning writes in his groundbreaking study *Ordinary Men* on Einsatzkommando 101: ‘Explaining is not excusing; understanding is not forgiving.’⁷

Yet in some cases, reappraisal is done in a very instructive and helpful way. In the National Military Museum in Soesterberg, the Netherlands, the Dutch military Raymond Westerling is presented both as the hero that he was considered in the 1940s as one of the commanders during the Dutch attempt to squash the national uprising against colonial power in what is now Indonesia, and as the war criminal that he became when pillaging and burning down whole villages as part of the campaign.⁸ By showing both sides of the same person the museum tries to underscore that one person can have multiple roles and ‘values’. This could have been done with the aforementioned plaque of Jonas Noreika. Putting it in a museum, e.g. the Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights in Vilnius, would not only complete the collection but also contribute to a more balanced appraisal of the complex Lithuanian past.

Such a balanced perception of the past, where black and white images are gradually transformed into shades of grey, is of course not possible in a context such as the daily reality in Ukraine, where a country is actively fighting for its freedom and survival against a ruthless aggressor that wholesales in war crimes. Here the view on history radicalises almost on a daily basis, and there are more and more attempts to eradicate the Russian presence in Ukraine,⁹ while in Russia the opposite is taking place.¹⁰ That this happens in Russia is in a way logical, as the country has turned into a dictatorship or maybe even a totalitarian state on a war footing, and this alteration of history is no different to the rewriting of history in Stalinist and Nazi times. In Ukraine it is understandable, but also bears a risk: you cannot pretend there never was a Russian presence in Ukraine,

that a considerable part of the country spoke and speaks Russian and that many writers and scholars have a mixed ethnic and cultural background. There is, of course, a risk that this desire to ‘cleanse’ the country of symbols of the oppressive past goes too far and develops into a form of brainwashing and denial.

Again, there needs to be sufficient distance to the past to be able to accept and understand that black and white does not exist. In the Netherlands that process started in the late 1970s and early 1980s,¹¹ as mentioned earlier, in Lithuania it happened almost 50 years later because of the Soviet occupational period. When Monique Brinks tried to conceptualise a museum in Potocari on the site of the Srebrenica massacre of 1995, she met heavy opposition when trying to develop an exhibition that showed more than the Muslim side of the story.¹² Twenty-two years passed, but the emotions and traumas were still too raw to accept a more balanced and multi-faceted view of the past. Yet in 2012, even 67 years after the war, there was in the Netherlands a municipal resistance against a monument honouring a German soldier who saved two Dutch children from being killed by protecting them with his own body, which led to his own death. Eventually, the statue honouring him was placed in a garden over which the municipality had no jurisdiction.¹³

The US political scientist David Rieff warns in his book *In Praise of Forgetting*¹⁴ against too much focus on memory and he quotes the Bulgarian philosopher Tzvetan Todorov who felt that people had become ‘obsessed by a new cult, that of memory’.¹⁵ In his book Rieff views collective remembrances as self-serving, often fraudulent, and frequently dangerous. According to him, we would sometimes be better off simply forgetting the grudge-filled chronicles and getting on with living our lives.¹⁶ To Rieff it is merely ‘magical thinking’ to think that remembering the Holocaust will help avert future genocides, as subsequent mass murders and genocides in, for instance, Cambodia and Rwanda have shown. Instead, he believes, collective memory has more often led to

16

Lornezo Tondo and Isobel Koshiw, ‘Friends no longer, Ukraine removes Russian statues and street names’, *The Guardian*, 28 April 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/28/friends-no-longer-ukraine-removes-russian-statues-and-street-names>, accessed 20 March 2023.

17

RadioFreeEurope/RadioFreeLiberty, ‘Russian Government Orders Media Outlets To Delete Stories Referring To “Invasion” Or “Assault” On Ukraine’’, 26 February 2022, <https://www.rferl.org/a/roskomnadzor-russia-delete-stories-invasion/31724838.html>, accessed 20 March 2023.

18

Best illustrated by the inaugural lecture of Prof. J.C.H. Blom, ‘In the ban van Goed en Fout’, Amsterdam, 1983, later published in an abridged edition: J.C.H. Blom, *In de ban van goed en fout: geschiedschrijving over de bezettingstijd in Nederland* [Under the Spell of Right and Wrong: Historiography About the Occupation Period in the Netherlands], Amsterdam: Boom 2007.

19

Kim Bergsma, ‘Waarom de Nederlandse kijk op Srebrenica “extreem problematisch”’ [Why the Dutch view of Srebrenica is ‘extremely problematic’], *Journalistiek en Nieuwe Media Universiteit Leiden*, 1 March 2021, <http://journalistiekennieuwemedia.nl/jnm/2021/03/01/waarom-de-nederlandse-kijk-op-srebrenica-extreem-problematisch-is/> accessed 20 March 2023.

20

Omroep Brabant, ‘Dorpsrel over standbeeld Duitse soldaat Karl Heinz Rosch in Riel’ [Village riot over statue of German soldier Karl Heinz Rosch in Riel], <https://www.omroepbrabant.nl/nieuws/1201976/dorpsrel-over-standbeeld-duitse-soldaat-karl-heinz-rosch-in-riel>, accessed 20 March 2023

21

David Rieff, *In Praise of Forgetting*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.

21

David Rieff, ‘The cult of memory: when history does more harm than good’, *The Guardian*, 2 March 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/mar/02/cult-of-memory-when-history-does-more-harm-than-good>, accessed 20 March 2023.

war rather than peace. As an example, he frequently refers to a meeting with a Serb nationalist politician in Belgrade who, as the war raged in Bosnia, venerated the Serbian guerrillas of the Second World War, while one of his aides portentously handed Rieff a piece of paper reading ‘1453’ – the year when the Ottoman Empire conquered Orthodox Constantinople. Indeed, during the Yugoslav Wars Serbs often referred to events, such as the Battle at Kosovo Polje in 1389 which was lost against the Ottoman Empire and marked the beginning of the end of the Serbian Empire. To them, this was a justification for the wars they unleashed against their neighbours.

National remembrances are in Rieff’s view almost always political, sometimes imposed by victorious armies, at other times drummed up by manipulative politicians seeking to fabricate an epic past to legitimise their present-day intentions. But one has to add, Rieff is not against all remembrance. He believes that we are morally obligated to remember the Holocaust, and praises war crimes trials and truth commissions in Europe, Latin America and South Africa.

I notice myself that with the war in Ukraine progressing I radicalise my views. For many years I had little interest in attempts to ban Soviet symbols, even though to me they were equal to Nazi ones. I did not take part in attempts to put the Soviet Communist party on trial and develop something analogue to the Nuremberg Tribunal of Nazi leaders and the Denazification process in Germany after the war. I preferred to spend my energy on ‘more constructive’ matters, such as the development of more humane and ethical mental health care services in the region. Now, I question my position. I see that allowing Soviet symbols to continue to be used, even as trivial elements of fashion,¹⁷ was fundamentally wrong. When foreign experts working on projects implemented by the organisation I direct returned from Russia with souvenirs that contained Soviet symbols I shrugged my shoulders, but now I realise that I passively allowed symbols of the Soviet Union to re-enter our minds, to become main-

stream again, and thus I had my share in the complete failure to de-Sovietise the core of the Soviet empire: Russia. And with me many others did the same; we all contributed, in some way, to the disaster that has now fallen upon Europe.

I am not a clairvoyant and do not know how long the Russian war against Ukraine will last. What I do know is that because of my age, there is little chance that I will be an active part in the process of developing a more multi-faceted memory of what is happening today. And maybe that is better. It will be new generations of citizens, experts, and scholars who will need to tackle this painful task, but it will, in my view, only be possible when the core of the problem is removed once and for all. Something we failed to do in 1991.

23

Rieff is not alone in his hesitancy towards too much remembering. Also the French philosopher Ernest Rehan in his monograph *What is a Nation?* expresses the view that sometimes it is better to forget: ‘Pour tous il est bon de savoir oublier’. Ernest Renan, ‘What is a Nation?’, text of a conference delivered at the Sorbonne on 11 March 1882.

24

Cecilia Biemann, ‘Soviet Inspired Fashion’, Trendhunter, 12 November 2008, <https://www.trendhunter.com/trends/soviet-inspired-fashion-10-pieces-of-communist-chic-clothing>, accessed 20 March 2023.

We depend on our past as the forest depends on trees and the river depends on riversides. I would even say – we are made by the past. The whole world is.

Wiesław Myśliwski

Remembering so as to Forget

KOTRYNA
LINGIENĖ

Interview with
Mindaugas Lukošaitis

Painter and sculptor Mindaugas Lukošaitis has chosen drawing as his main means of artistic expression. His drawings are suggestive and masterful, touching upon sensitive historical themes, exploring the limits of human choices, morality, sacrifice, courage, hesitation, fear, and at the same time cruelty, duplicity, helplessness, and existential fragility. His first significant series of 100 drawings *Resistance* (2003), dedicated to the memory of the Lithuanian post-war resistance and the partisan fights, received international recognition. In 2004, the series was exhibited at the 26th Bienal de São Paulo and later acquired by the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark. Phaidon included Lukošaitis' works in the list of the world's most interesting and promising artists. Since 2021, Mindaugas Lukošaitis has been a PhD student at Vilnius Academy of Arts.

Lukošaitis has held solo exhibitions in Lithuania and the United States (New York) and participated in more than 40 group exhibitions in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Finland, Sweden, Austria, Hungary, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Luxemburg, Italy, the UK, Turkey, Russia, Brazil and the US. His works have been acquired by the MO Museum in Vilnius, the Lithuanian National Museum of Art, the Šiauliai 'Aušra' Museum, the Lewben Art Foundation, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, and are in private collections in Lithuania and abroad.

Kotryna Lingienė is a journalist working across different media. She has a background in architectural history, and her recent work focuses on various contemporary and historical sections of her hometown Kaunas. Among other projects, she is the editor of the monthly magazine *Kaunas Full of Culture* and a correspondent for Lithuanian National Radio.

Mindaugas Lukošaitis,
Vilnius, 2022



‘Sometimes, a complete state of helplessness overwhelms me. You think that you’re a part of this world and that helplessness is so horrible and cynical. You stop and ask yourself: How is it that the universe is black? Why does this terrible darkness envelop us? We are here, enlightening ourselves, living comfortably, but that existential question of why all of this is happening doesn’t go away. When I’m working I can fall into such a state of horror – and then you think that it’s better to turn on the lights and live in some semi-illusion so that you can actually do something. Of course, you have to make an effort, you have to think. As I created my series there was this childish enthusiasm: I’ll study something, I’ll find the answers to my questions, and then it will all become clear to me. Because I’ll delve into a subject, I’ll start doling out propositions about what is good and what is evil. And when I started to go deeper, I understood that the clarity I had before was clearer, and that my uncertainty had only increased. And because of that, I became less categorical.’

These are the thoughts shared with me by Mindaugas Lukošaitis at our first meeting in a hall in the small town of Vandžiogala, where Mindaugas was presenting a series of drawings he was working on at the time titled *Gyvenimai. Vandžiogala* (Lives. Vandžiogala). I had asked him whether he felt that he was doing everything he could to stop the things he was drawing from happening. In *Rezistencija* (Resistance), *Žydai. Mano istorija* (Jews. My Story), *Ruanda* (Rwanda) – Lukošaitis’ imagination reconstructs versions of tragic events in Lithuania, Europe, and Africa and recreates traumatic moments of historical reality.

It seems to me that Lukošaitis knows what lies in the darkness, better than he’d like to believe. He is able to grasp the deepest nerves, and his uncluttered yet detailed visual expression of the horror of those events can be felt by those who have not experienced such events, or who have experienced something similar, in a different time or in a different corner of the planet. Mindaugas created the *Resistance* series as Lithuania was joining the EU and NATO, but it did not achieve the recognition it deserved in the artist’s home country. Yet the same series was met with acclaim at the 2004 Bienal de São Paulo and the works were subsequently acquired by the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark and exhibited together with Picasso and other world-class artists.

Over telephone in March 2023, we discuss a recent visit Lukošaitis had made to the Ninth Fort Museum in Kaunas. ‘They want to mount an exhibition on the 1943 escape of prisoners who didn’t want to be corpse burners. Over sixty people escaped the fort then,’ Mindaugas says, as he prepares to draw another uncomfortable scene. He also mentions that he’s immersed in his doctoral studies.

KL:
What is your doctoral research subject?

ML:
About drawing before drawing; about the processes a person has to go through – what to do, how to think so that a drawing is



Mindaugas Lukošaitis,
Vilnius, 2022

successful. It would seem this is based on academic drawing, which I am most critical of, and on shared human experiences. For example, how do choreographers make a drawing? What about actors? How do they prepare for a role, how do they fine tune a character or a situation? I don’t look at drawing as a formal process, as contouring, but as a set of experiences, knowledge, and techniques, leading to a goal. Studies are a chance to reconsider yourself, to revise what you’ve done, and to articulate it. And though I try not to talk about my historical subjects during the process, the people around me keep coming back to them and asking questions. I stress that this is just a result, a later stage; and that what comes before it is more important to me in my work.

KL:
But that’s the most interesting thing of all – what leads up to the drawing itself.

ML:
I found that, when I was a student, I hadn’t heard about experiences how to draw, how to create in the general sense, how to arrive at it – these subjects were left to their own devices, ‘well, you’ll figure it out somehow.’ But skills and abilities are based on self-understanding – what you want to say and the things needed to reach that goal have to be understandable to you. From that lack of understanding comes a kind of artistic excess – when the creator themselves doesn’t understand what they are doing. I wouldn’t want to be considered that way, but it does happen.

KL:
Mindaugas, what were your first drawings about, when you still didn’t know anything yet?

ML:
When I’d talk about particular events with people close to me, they’d be surprised: You can’t remember that, you were too small. But I do remember. I started drawing early – making doodles, so to speak. Back then, that was the ultimate pastime. I remember that when I paged through my early drawings, I noticed from the start

that I wasn’t doing contour drawings, like a tree or house from the side, but I would rotate the objects three-quarters of the way – there was this spatial experimentation happening. My father, may he rest in peace, was a sculptor, so the house was full of felt-tip pens and other tools. Now people toss phones to their children to keep them busy, but then they would give you some cardboard and a marker. There were lots of books about art at home, too. The older I get, the more I understand that what I saw in those books, even before I started attending school, perhaps had even more of an influence on me than my studies. My tastes developed in childhood. A lecturer at the Vilnius Academy of Arts once said something strange – he said, ‘I can see when a student has grown up with at least one art publication at home, and when one hasn’t.’

I remember being so drawn to what I’d seen in those books, and dreaming of reaching the same level, even though that seemed an impossible thing, but the aspiration inside of me remained, like a virus. Maybe that’s why, in the contemporary art context, I feel a bit ancient, frozen in time, with my drawings. And maybe that’s why I developed my drawing in my spare time, and I didn’t prioritise it early on in my artistic career. The realism is misleading – and it’s unnecessarily equated with Socialist Realism. But they’re not the same thing. Realism is not a genre or style. It’s an imaging strategy. But I needed to comprehend this, and I’m grateful to the teachers who encouraged me, who would ask me why I was submitting one thing to them, but doing something entirely different – something I actually liked doing – on the side? It took me a while to shift my focus, to find out that drawing was the best medium for me. Now I’m systematising the methods that I searched for and found. For example, the technique of drawing from memory – I’ve already assembled piles of sheets with the letters ‘dr’ in the corner, and I’m trying to reflect the technique of getting to the essence, to get calibrated, to direct and establish myself, and then to release the charge. The initial impression that something is depicted isn’t enough. It’s like orchestration: We listen to an entire piece, to a resonance,



Mindaugas Lukošaitis,
Vilnius, 2022

but it’s performed by many instruments. It’s sewn together with many threads.

My discoveries from drawing from memory became more profound when I began exploring historical subjects. That’s when I understood the need *to remember*. And while I myself can’t remember what I didn’t take part in, with my work I still try to give general knowledge a form that would be appropriate for this time, for contemporary emotion. When you notice that casual drawings dissonate with the chosen subject, you start looking for an approach and a consonance between the chosen method and what you want to portray. This is how a drawing evolves. And it’s been going on since I was three, until now.

KL:
Memory is not the same thing as history, as you just noted. You’ve drawn a lot of things that happened before you were born. On the other hand, you’ve been publishing the Z series online every day for over a year. The way I see it, it has more of your perspective, your values, even anger, than the earlier works. This series seems more personal, but I might be wrong. Is it always important for you to express a position?



ML:
I'd have to talk about professionalism at this point. Whether to approach a subject through a personal perspective or by technique is the artist's choice. Mimicry can become part of a work, it can help put a person in a provocative state. Am I convinced by what I see, or is someone trying to deceive me? Or maybe they're trying to create an intimate connection? All of this can be part of the strategy of your work, in this case the message – you need to choose the relationship. This happens before the drawing. When you really get into it, personalise it, it can get in the way, because you start to portray things that don't fit the story. You start to moralise, to engage in didactics. This is good, that is evil ...

Historians say the problems arise when someone with a contemporary experience goes into the past and tries to apply progressive standards there. At one time, I was really interested in sociology, and what really stuck me was that someone who studies human relationships and phenomena has to be indifferent; they can't have any sympathies for politics or an orientation. It's the same thing here: When you enter into a subject, you can become tendentious and cherry-pick, and stress things of secondary importance. It's important not to lose restraint. But, of course, you can't completely avoid a personal connection! If I were indifferent to a subject, I don't know what pragmatic calculation could encourage me to work. After all, I took it on, which means I care about it. But I set a goal for myself as an artist: not to show others that I'm engaging in my own therapy, that my own psychology is what's important to me here. When I encounter self-therapising in other works, I start to think: Ah, these are *their* problems, but no longer *ours*. Sometimes a distance in time helps in this regard. There are subjects that I'm setting aside for the future. I know I have to do them, but I can't find the key. I feel there are too many emotions stirring.

KL:
From what I've seen in new works by Ukrainian artists, the self-therapy we are talking about is not always

concealed, and that can be very appropriate, powerful, beautiful, and necessary. And if not in the piece itself, then in the caption accompanying it – where an artist pours out how they felt that day. What do you think about that?

ML:
Well, there's something important to consider here: Whether the bearer of memory is a witness to an event, or the witness of a testimonial. Whoever experiences something brings something out of that situation – that initial, authentic feeling – that a witness twice, or three or four times removed cannot grasp. Of course, the first witness has it the hardest and experiences the most dramatic impact. They have to consider the audience they're speaking to. I and anyone else, who have some distance, can view the reception with more sensitivity. Living, painful memories are like deep cuts – they're harsh. It's no coincidence that the testimonials of ghetto prisoners consist of just a few powerful outlines, a few words. You may want to build tension, to mimic that clarity of speech and line, but that's not possible.

KL:
You said you have subjects where you feel too much emotion. Does that mean you don't want to become that first eye witness?

ML:
Maybe it's all a problem of a lack of time. If the subject is narrower, it is easier to work with, and that word 'life' – it can contain an awful lot. I have one such subject 'about everything', but I'm still looking for an approach through it all. It's like preparing for an expedition, which if you fail to prepare for properly will be obvious. Why deceive yourself and others?

KL:
As you create your series about Lithuanian Jews, the genocide in Rwanda, the Lithuanian partisans, and even the city of Vilnius itself, do you think about viewers who may have been part of those events



Mindaugas Lukošaitis,
Vilnius, 2022



themselves, or who may be the descendents of those that were?

ML:
I thought about this the most as I was creating *Jews. My Story*. It was the most sensitive subject, and caused the most waves. I carried it with me from childhood, from the forest and the graves within them. People spoke about it in different ways – whether in a simple, domestic way, or casually or antisemitically. There is no single answer, but we may want one – how? What is this? What happened here? I set it aside several times and told myself I wouldn't do that piece. When I began to draw I realised that, with those drawings, I would be resurrecting such suppressed, blocked images ... The question became whether it was worth awakening the memory – destroying, digging into it – or perhaps better to wait until everything was forgotten. But because I always have a pencil and paper nearby, I came back to it. It became interesting that some of the images and etudes I chose, were not direct – quite the opposite, they were purifying. Now, with the war in Ukraine, we have a lot of grease, blood, and smoke – materials that are close to us and, because we are animals, too, they signal self-preservation, calling us to close ourselves up, not to see or hear anything anymore. This is no longer there in the drawings, only flashes of images that sensitise the viewer's imagination.

When I observe the events in Ukraine, and as I look at the photographs and filmed images, I turn on my 'researcher perspective'. I'm allowed to be a researcher – I'm doing my PhD (*smiles*). I study an explosion – so much material there! Frozen metal – like a waterspout. There's a tank standing in Vilnius now, you can go see it. You look at that spout of water and think – My God, such fluidity, such lightness. What insane force peeled it back so much that the metal looks like silk? For me, that kind of study is an outlet for drawing. I look at rags as I would drapery, and I remember art history again, the rhythm of folds, into which a story is woven. Meanings are conveyed not anatomically, not directly, but through materiality, leaving room for a person to get hooked and plunge into their own personal imagining, to manoeuvre within it. When I was creating *Jews. My Story*, I hadn't yet identified that kind of approach as a strategy; it scared me, I didn't understand what a drawing could do. It's horrible not to control that possibility and later deal with the consequences.

KL:
You mentioned the responsibility felt before releasing a work into the public. I recently read Linas Venclauskas' book *Tekstų byla. Lietuvių antisemitinis diskursas nuo XIX a. antros pusės iki 1940 metų* (The Case of the Texts: The Lithuanian Anti-semitic Discourse from the Second Half of the nineteenth century to 1940). Although there is a long history of propaganda techniques, it's harrowing to realise how articles and messages in the press are used to shape a point of view that incites hatred and mass killings, and to see the

power of a word or image or – in the case I have in mind – a caricature. Do you think about the effect your drawings have? Does this determine whether you publish them?

ML:
I might revisit the 'drawing before the drawing' here. After I began studying the technique of drawing more consciously, I understood that the manner, tempo, and rhythm of a drawing – the mood, and your own disposition, to put it more plainly – can settle in between the lines and programme entirely different things than what you are formally representing. I'm not just talking about symbols that researchers study, I mean the entire overall temperament and the influence it creates. And so, only after studying it, did I understand that, in my own drawings, one thing is *portrayed*, but something else is *seen*. I used to think that professionalism was just a pose, an image, very often a useless one. But when you encounter the excitement of what someone *will see*, then professionalism takes on a different meaning. A true professional is responsible for that, of course.

It's interesting to search for this in other people's work, as well as in film – what it is that stands out. I haven't made any new discovery, because sometimes just from talking to a person that's telling a serious story, it's their body language, smile, gaze, everything about them that reveals what was going on rather than the words themselves. That's the interesting and dangerous part of it all, and also in works of art, when one thing is said, but something different is felt. In general, body language is very interesting to me, and I study it because I don't hear well. Only by looking at the whole can you understand whether the person himself understands what they're doing, drawing, speaking, or showing, or whether their attitude and subject matter come together into one whole, or whether they're just imitating it.

KL:
However, attempts to look for an author's psychology, their life traumas, in their work of art can end quite humorously. My own work contains a great deal of mechanical calculation, you won't find any autobiography there; I do it because it has to be done one way, and not the other.

ML:
There can be a lot of politics in the impact of a work. For me, it's more interesting not to get political, and better to look at it as historical material that simply exists, to build a relationship with the facts and shed light on certain aspects. There are many reinterpreted works in art history, and that's all fine, but if you want to erase or expel something, or to give it some special status, I immediately wonder if that's not a momentary thing more than a professional reflection. Even when we talk about monuments – at what point is a monument propaganda, and when is it just a grave marker? We need a stronger voice from the historians, a more careful scrutiny. I've come across a lot of politically motivated texts in this field, and that should not be the case.

KL:
But it's very a human thing to tug the blanket to your own side, especially if it has to do with your own country, city, or family, which particularly undermines the foundations of professionalism for both scholars and artists alike – after all, that's what this entire magazine is essentially about, the memory wars.

ML:
Absolutely. That's why, when they say that a historian is a scientist, I want to shout back: more like an artist! Or, in that case, then an artist is a scientist! What I mean is their approach to and perspective on a subject. A personal perspective will always be felt from the side, especially if that side is the opposite one. But I very much miss discussions. After all, when there is disagreement over something in the past, we must *remember*, and then you can put that something into a drawer and move on – in other words, forget it. But how to remember, how to give form to memory, and not necessarily a static one? The role of museums is vital here, as well as such programmes as the Memory Office undertaken in Kaunas that create situations where a subject comes back to life.

KL:
Do we need to forget to make room for the present and the future?

I believe so. Otherwise, if we don't put things away, the present begins to compete with history. Especially during the war in Ukraine I've noticed that, for me, a past reflected upon has become the present. Time would appear to be linear, and we are in a new section of it, with old events somewhere behind us. But no, as things have intensified, I entered a spherical state – these events are here and now. The tide of the Second World War has risen again, and this is truly the inertia of an unfinished war. Like those old land mines still lurking in the ground, that overcome time. Those old mines, and the ones being laid around Ukraine today – they're one and the same to me.

KL:
I learned yesterday that Bulgaria, unbeknownst to some of its pro-Russian government ministers, transferred Soviet-era weapons worth one billion euros to Ukraine. It's terrible to say this, but this affair has fascinated me, and this is about that same sphere.

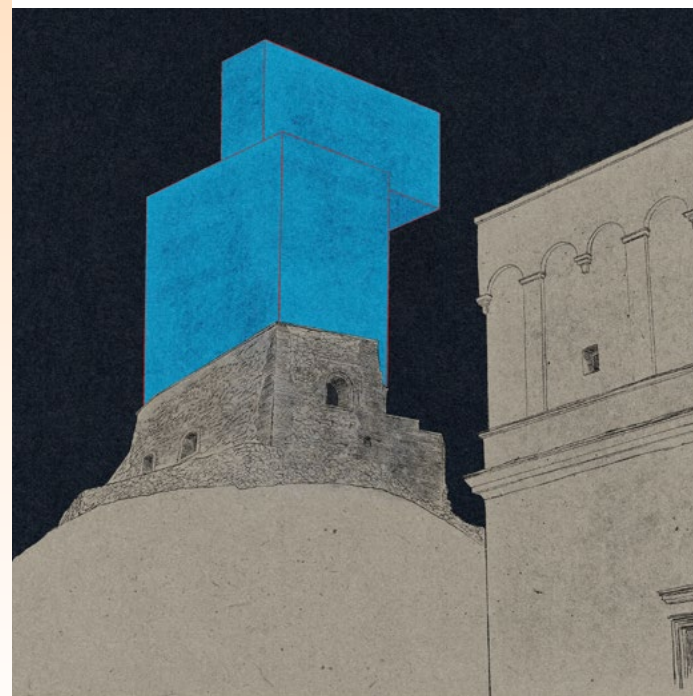
ML:
Yes, it's interesting how it's possible to turn history around against oneself. The current war really does capture all of the tensions and incapacity of memory. This tension-filled time cuts through one's identity. There are no more grey zones, you can't manoeuvre anymore – everything has become sharp and contrasted, illuminated in such a way that we can now see the tail and hooves that were once concealed in the twilight. If you don't say 'yes' or 'no', if you don't pick a side – you're pummelled with

accusations. Identity – whether for an individual or a community, for a nation – is a complex construct, after all. Perhaps your parents or relatives fought on one side, and now you have to perceive yourself anew. Perhaps even more horrible than death itself is the death of identity.

KL:
Now, as you create the Z series, you reflect on an ongoing story that is not yet history. Why?

ML:
I understood that I didn't need the distance of time. It's interesting for me to observe the mechanism – how the imagination expresses itself in the current war, because it is also a war of the imagination. As I draw the stories, I study how propaganda works, I observe which images people react to. It may sound horrible, but this is laboratory work – from materiality to human relationships, exploring everything now seems meaningful to me.

Mindaugas Lukošaitis,
Vilnius, 2022



Mindaugas Lukošaitis,
Vilnius, 2022

MEMORY AS TRAUMA

Traumatic experiences and conflicting memories can lead to tensions in society and between different memory groups. How to remember when the past is traumatic?

How is traumatic memory transmitted? How is trauma received by the second, third generation? How does it affect other generations? How to recognise it?

Can memory serve as a tool for dialogue, for reconciliation, for healing? Empathy is seen as a tool for understanding each other better, a way to reconcile. Is empathy enough to be compassionate?

CONTRIBUTORS:

DANUTĖ GAILIENĖ
MICHAEL SHUBITZ
JANA D. JAVAKHISHVILI
JENNY KAGAN
ALEVTINA KAKHIDZE

On Traumatic Memory and its Consequences

DAIVA PRICE TALKS WITH
PSYCHOLOGIST
DANUTĖ GAILIENĖ
AND SOVIETOLOGIST
ROBERT VAN VOREN

Prof. Danutė Gailienė is a psychologist and has been a professor at Vilnius University since 2001, researching the phenomenon of suicide and collective trauma. She is a member and honorary member of numerous organisations, as well as a founder. Gailienė has authored several hundred scientific articles, and co-authored various textbooks and monographs. In her book *What They Did to Us: Lithuanian Life as Seen through the Psychology of Trauma*, she discusses how traumas of the past are treated by the health sciences, and how they affect public memory and people's lives.

She has received numerous awards for her scientific work and was awarded the Lithuanian Science Prize in 2022 for her series of papers 'Psychological Consequences of Historical Traumas and Social Transformations in Lithuania (2007–2021)'.

Daiva Price:

In this edition of our magazine, we're discussing trauma and memory. How would you define traumatic memory? How do we remember trauma? Is the mechanism of recollection different somehow?

Prof. Danutė Gailienė:

The mechanism of remembering trauma is different, because the effect of trauma on the psyche is so strong. We refer to our usual, everyday memory as biographical or autobiographical memory. It's your narrative. Life events are integrated into biographical memory, and we either remember them or we don't. Traumatic memory is special because the trauma itself is such a shock, such a profound experience, that our psyche cannot cope with it. This experience goes straight into the primal, deep areas of the brain, and traumatic memory seems to take on a power of its own. Trauma can manifest in unplanned, unanticipated outbursts called flashbacks. These are bursts of traumatic experience that erupt into our consciousness and are often unarticulated. They can be brought on by triggers, such as a smell or a random sound. They can launch this mechanism. And until the traumatic experience is integrated and processed, it has a power of its own. Studies show that traumatic memory remains unchanged for years. The memory of people living nor-

mal lives changes: We remember things one way, but then after a time we remember them differently, and we remember different things. Traumatized people can remember the same things for decades. So, a traumatic experience is agonising. Our research with people in Lithuania who've endured oppression showed that, even decades after the experience, they still have nightmares, and flashbacks continue – the impact lasts a very long time.

DP:

What is trauma and what is not? How does trauma differ from difficult experiences?

DG:

In psychology, trauma is defined as the experience of an extreme threat, or facing the reality of death – whether it happens to us, or whether we witness a fatal threat to others. The concept of trauma has become very attractive, and is used in other disciplines – in history and anthropology. A bit of uncertainty has emerged. There is constant debate and deliberation about this term; so, in history, for example, it might be better to speak not of trauma, but about social ruptures.

DP: I have to say that this interview is very personal for me. I've been thinking about these things for many years. So, I want to tell you about my mother,

Robert van Voren's biography can be found on page 59

Daiva Price's biography can be found on page 4

whom I lost just a few months ago. My mother was born in 1949, in postwar Samogitia, in Western Lithuania. It was a difficult time in Lithuania: the start of the occupation, repression, the resistance movement. My grandfather's brother joined the Lithuanian resistance movement. In Samogitia they were called *miškiniai* – the forest men. Because of disputes in the family, he would come at night, with his armed friends, to terrorise his brother's family. During the day, my mother's parents' house would be visited by the so-called *stribai* – the Soviet 'partisans'. My mother, who was still a baby at that time, remembered hearing shots in the farmhouse and a great feeling of fear that plagued her all her life.

My mother was always afraid of the forest and open curtains at night. For much of her life she had depression, although she only began to realise this when she was 40.

This and similar experiences were endured by most people in Lithuania who were born around that time. What did

the Soviet occupation do to Lithuanian society, if we can speak generally, to its mental health?

DG: Yes, we can say in general terms that the Soviet occupation affected Lithuanian society. What affected it? A long-term and very comprehensive traumatic experience. This episode you shared is very strong and shocking, and it clearly shows how such experiences become imprinted on a person, and can last a lifetime. That is one story. But there were all sorts of effects. With different groups of people, they were different: The first Soviet occupation in 1940 had one effect, the Nazi occupation from 1941 to 1944 – another, and the second Soviet occupation from 1945 to 1990 had yet another effect.

Robert van Voren: The longer I am a Sovietologist, the more I realise how destructive the Soviet system has been. It destroyed the social fabric that had developed in the course of centuries; it destroyed every sense of security; it destroyed the whole system of moral values; it made people obedient cogs in a machine and exterminated those who resisted or could not be sufficiently moulded. The result will affect many generations, and life will never be the same as before. In Lithuania, the system existed for 50 years, and 30 years later, it still influences people daily. It influences politics, it influences our sense of security and trust, and it has left a deep sense of suspicion in people. In Russia, the system lasted 75 years and, in a way, continued after a ten-year interval of relative freedom. What we see is a totally demoralised degenerated nation where mothers are given a blender following the death of their son on the front line in Ukraine, and the present is accepted with gratitude. A blender for a son – that symbolises what Sovietism has done to people. In short, society is ill, chronically ill, and still has difficulty living with this illness. And the scars will always remain with us.

DP: Let's take the Soviet occupation for a moment. Perhaps here

we could distinguish two groups of people: Those who were persecuted, tortured, and deported; and a second group that didn't experience persecution directly. We should probably also distinguish between different periods. I was also born under occupation and had a completely different experience to that of my mother. But of course, the occupation affected me, too.

DG: I look at you and I see my youth as a young academic. When we began our research, we also thought that way. We tried to identify them, saying let's study people who experienced repression, deportation, and oppression in the broad sense, and then let's take the people who didn't experience any repressive acts. That way we could study the impact of repression – what effect it had, was it long term, and whether the effect and enduring consequences depended on the type of repression, on whether someone had been imprisoned or exiled, or what threat they had experienced ... But it quickly became clear that this approach was too simple. It didn't include Soviet people who didn't suffer repression directly. That approach doesn't have a place for those who lived in fear, who felt on their own skin that the events themselves, the flow of history, and long-term occupation was so damaging, that people were affected for life. In these studies, we must also speak about those who were affected less directly. But that's another story. As the occupation continued and the regime eased, when it seemed to have resolved that society just need to be tamed, then the measures by which this was done were different – they were insidious and much more cleverly conceived. That damage was less visible, but it was present.

DP: There's a saying about something being 'passed on in your mother's milk'. By that people usually mean certain family experiences, grievances, traumas. What does it really mean?

RVV: I don't know whether it is biological, whether our DNA is actually changed because of trauma that our ancestors experienced. But psychologically, the consequences are clear: what happened to our parents and grandparents is handed over to us, invariably, either because we grew up with the stories of what happened or because there were no stories at all. I don't know what is worse: the constant repeating of the same horror stories or the total silence. One of the reasons why West Germany went through a deep crisis in the late 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s was the fact that a new post-war generation grew up without stories – parents did not talk about what they did between 1933 and 1945. The period was whitewashed, eradicated from memory. And then when those children grew older, and started investigating things as young adults, they found out that papa had not always been so Christian-democrat and righteous and bourgeois, but that he had actually been a Nazi, or a soldier on the front line, or just a very compliant little cog in the system. For these young people, this was unbearable, and they radicalised, turned against their parents, and some even became terrorists.

DG: In academia, we call this the transgenerational transmission of trauma. It's a very interesting question that has only begun to be studied quite recently. This research has ranged from enthusiasm to scepticism. The study of transgenerational transmission began with the study of Holocaust victims. They raised the idea that trauma is borne not only by those who endured the Holocaust, but also by their children and even grandchildren. This has led to considerable research. There aren't a lot of studies on communist terror, but the question remains the same: Do the victims pass on their trauma to future generations? The initial enthusiasm arose from the fact that it seemed that children had also suffered. It later became clear that generalisations had been made from the so-called clinical sample. Our research also confirmed that, on the one hand, children cannot remain unaffected. It's still being debated whether this is a

biological, neurophysical transmission, or more psychological. Some studies show that parents' moods and the anxiety they experience, their posttraumatic difficulties and nervousness, are passed on to their children. Others focus attention more on communication within families. If a family talks about and shares their memories, if children always hear those stories, that also affects them.

Soviet trauma is notable because the period of torture, of varying torture, was very long. Another important thing: The fact that you were a victim of repression was your own fault. When the deportees returned from Siberia, only a few were rehabilitated – but otherwise nobody rehabilitated them. They and their children were 'enemies of the people'. So, parents took steps to keep their children from learning those stories, so that they could adapt and be accepted into university, for example, because otherwise it was risky to say that you were a deportee. Secrecy involved not only the personal decision whether or not to share your history, but it was also politically dangerous. That had its effect. But on the other hand, studies have also shown that victims also transfer something else to their children – they pass on strength. They pass on vulnerability, but also resilience.

DP: It's said that parental trauma is recorded as early as infancy, in the iris of a newborn's eye. What are the biological signs of post-traumatic disorders?

DG: It's hard to say. It's one thing in a prenatal stage, when a woman is still pregnant and experiences trauma, and there is a hormonal, neurophysiological imbalance that can directly affect a person. There is a chance of transmitting heightened anxiety. A person may not know why they're anxious or constantly afraid, but they've received a potential load of anxiety. There is good reason I mention a few assumptions by which we explain how trauma is transmitted: through communication, through the transmission of depressive moods, through ambiguous communication, when

parents say that everything is fine but the children feel that something is wrong. And there is also the biological hypothesis. But there is no single explanation, and trauma works differently in individual cases. Remember that it's still common to say: *'Nereikia perdėti perdavimų'* – or 'No need to exaggerate what's been passed on.' In Lithuania, we've carried out a large scientific study on how adult children of people who suffered repression feel. The study showed that, on the one hand, their psychological state is much better than that of their persecuted parents, and that they show much fewer signs of victimisation, but that they have what we've come to call 'vulnerability', which is a potential opportunity for sensitivity. There are many studies around the world that demonstrate this vulnerability. Children of traumatised people react more strongly when they find themselves in extreme situations, such as when faced with an oncological disease or major challenges.

DP:
90% of Jews were murdered during the Holocaust in Lithuania – a large part of the country's population. In some small towns, the local population was nearly 70% Jewish. And then, in just a few days or weeks, they were gone. A huge void was left behind. And for a long time, this was never talked about. In many cases, this loss is still not fully understood today. What do you think – what did this void do to the inhabitants of those towns? How did the fact that your neighbour, the shoemaker, the butcher, the barber, or the girl you may have secretly been in love with were suddenly gone – how did that affect those who survived in those towns?

DG:
It's true, this subject hasn't been fully reflected upon, understood, or discussed. We didn't touch upon it for a very long time, for many reasons. But it is a fact that this subject is increasingly being talked about and studied in recent years.

And if we can successfully reflect on this subject, it's very clear that there is a lot of pain there, a lot of guilt, and secrets, perhaps also some defamation. There is a great darkness yawning there. I truly wish courage and truth for us, and for all of Lithuania. In trauma psychology we know very well that it's not pain or tears that are the worst things. What matters most is the essence, the truth, how things actually were. Healing can partly depend on that truth. Speaking about, identifying, and telling stories is a healthy thing. But we can't just talk about this in terms of health – moral categories are also important. All of this is an essential human condition. We still need a lot of sensitivity and naming of problems ...

And as far as those who witnessed the Holocaust, we know very little about them – there are hardly any studies. There was silence. Only recently have accounts begun to be recorded. Now we can speculate, we don't know enough yet, and we're just beginning to put that mosaic together.

RVV:
The result was a common understanding that this was never to be talked about. A sort of secret oath. People knew, knew exactly who had done what, who had pulled the trigger, who had looted or raped, but it was covered with a very thick blanket of silence. The Soviet period helped, of course, because on the one hand the Soviets turned against anything Jewish several years after the war and monuments and memories were 'de-Semited', one could say. And then on the other hand, people had other problems, problems of survival because the Soviets nicely resumed the terror where they had left it, at the moment the Nazis pushed them out, and thus the horrors of the past were washed over by the horrors of today. But not washed away, because the memories remained, and the restoration of independence and the return of a sense of normality and freedom also unlocked these memories that started haunting people. The generation that knew in detail who did what is fading away, but there is a younger generation that wants to know, and investigates, and thus part of the picture will be gradually restored, and it



Indrė Šerpytytė
Forest Brothers
2009

Lambda fibre base prints
Unframed:
101.6 x 127 cm
Framed:
104.3 x 129.7cm

is a very nasty picture, that is evident. The process of digestion is only beginning and far from complete.

DP:
When I worked with the European Capital of Culture project, I worked a lot with young people. We included them in the creation of art projects about the Holocaust tragedy. We showed them interviews with Holocaust survivors, and we met those who had witnessed the war. Later, I watched the reactions of young people in an interactive exhibition about the history of Holocaust survivors. What I noticed surprised me. Since I've participated in similar projects with young people in other Western countries, I saw a big difference between the reactions of the two groups to such encounters. The Lithuanian youth, unlike the Westerners, were very passive in the discussions, and reacted fairly indifferently to the complicated, painful stories. One Lithuanian student who had worked in that kind of exhibition commented to me later, 'from childhood we're used to hearing stories about horrific things that happened in Lithuania, so nothing surprises us anymore and doesn't move us much.' I wasn't inclined to completely agree with her, because I think that our knowledge of history is still very fragmented, but what do you think?

DG:
I would say that, first of all, there is no articulatory mechanism. There's no discourse, no custom, no experience, no notion of how to talk about it, how to name it, and even how to reflect on it. When we did a study on Soviet repression, the first thing that emerged was that there was no knowledge of how to talk about it, there were no concepts. Now we know terms such as trauma, but then there was no such word. There were only political words: occupation, Bolsheviks ... But that something was happening within an individual – there was no such field. I think that things have begun to move forward in this area in Lithuania.

To what extent the deep layers of guilt, perhaps fear, are at work here, we don't know. If I had to diagnose this situation, I would say – we're on our way. We've started down the road, but there's still a long way to go.

On the other hand, this younger generation is the 'first generation since freedom'. They were brought up by parents who were not free, including how to reflect on their own well-being. What have these young people received from their families? Different models, one being: Don't stand out, don't even start. Which means don't discuss, because children need to be protected from standing out, or there will be trouble. Another model is: Don't talk. Because there is so much pain, so many secrets, we don't talk about them ... We have to hide them, so that people around us don't see our troubles. All these models came about for political reasons. If that terrible system hadn't affected people, there

wouldn't be this mentality that takes time and effort to free ourselves of.

DP:
In the team of the European Capital of Culture, we agreed that stories told in the language of art speak more to our emotions, to our shared human experience, and can encourage empathy. However, with the outbreak of the war, I started to question more and more the role of art in changing the world. At the same time, the question was: Is empathy enough? Does empathy lead to compassion?

RVV:
Not automatically, but without empathy, there is no compassion, and without compassion, there is no hope for a better future. Art is a beautiful vehicle to express emotion, especially when words fall short of what one wants to say or when one is speechless. Art is one of the most precious and fragile aspects of human nature, one that needs to be cherished.

DP:
Why do people long for the Soviet period? I understand that most confuse nostalgia with their own youth, but how is it possible to forget the repressive side of history?

DG:
Some people never experienced repression – they lived the life of ordinary Soviet people. What repression? On the one hand, that's simply conformism. One gets so used to an abnormal life that the person no longer even feels that its abnormal. What did they have to compare it to? That's the life they were given, no one actually spoke much about repression; they were given a Soviet reality, lived and found their place in it, and enjoyed certain conveniences – much was decided for you so you didn't have to worry much about it. I think it might be a longing for that simplicity, that clarity. But I don't think there are many people who long for it. On the other hand, there's also some

defence there. Rationalisations, disassociations show that your responsibility is also needed here. If you face the truth, it's a breakthrough in your life, it's a challenge, and you have to search for how to find your place in another reality. That's not easy to do. Sometimes it is psychologically easier to blame someone and feel victimised. These processes can be personal and also collective, you can't put everyone on the same page.

DP:
When I was in school and they'd tell me how beautiful the Russian language is and how antiquated and simple the Lithuanian language is, I'd come home and hear lectures from my parents about our country's occupation. My mother wouldn't let me watch Soviet films; she said they were used for propaganda. I realised very early on that we were occupied. I am grateful to my parents, especially my mother, for instilling within me a certain sense of resilience and inner resistance. To this day, Russian culture is a foreign civilisation to me, the culture of the occupiers.

Nevertheless, many of my contemporaries and the older generations embraced Russian culture as part of their identity. Our revered Lithuanian theatre is built on the works of Russian authors and the Russian theatrical school. This phenomenon has been extensively explored in postcolonial theory. But how can you explain this phenomenon from a psychological perspective? How does the culture of the enslaver become like a second skin?

DG:
The fact that things that are foreign to you or have been introduced through deception or force became part of your identity is a reality, and it is very dangerous. That's why we are talking about the fact that

people experienced coercion without even realising that it was coercion. And all kinds of mechanisms kick in here. One of them is when people imagine that they're in control of everything, that they're able to speak one way to the government and another way at home, that they don't succumb to the system and they understand it ... Current research of the Soviet period shows that there was a lot of delusion here. That people had a lot of double moral standards, in other words, that the system had taken hold. It's an illusion that we are consciously aware of everything. Various studies show that, over time, there was less need for the government to make an effort, since people were already censoring themselves and understood where the limits were and wouldn't test them, choosing to play within those limitations. It's that way with Russian culture, too.

This war in Ukraine is a huge shock, and I hope that it is one more step toward a more mature self-awareness on our part. It turns out that we are not so liberated either; we've become more narrow, still very dependent. So, maybe this new step toward self-awareness is very healthy for us. I believe that we face great challenges, very encouraging signs of self-realisation, and also very serious tasks.

DP:
Working with memory projects, I've encountered two extreme points of view. On the one hand, the descendants of Holocaust survivors would feel resentful whenever we spoke of 'traumas' in the plural. I once received a comment that there is only one Trauma. On the other hand, I've been asked on many occasions when will I finally begin to curate projects that speak about what happened to 'us' – that there's been so much written about the Holocaust, but no one is interested in those who suffered on this side of the Iron Curtain. And then there's the so-called Wolf Children, of which there were thousands in Lithuania, and whose voice

no one wanted to hear for decades – neither here, nor in Germany. What has to happen so that victims don't feel the need to compete with one another? Also, can you explain why they feel that need to compete?

DG:
This kind of situation in society can be described as the fragmentation of traumatic memory or as 'cultural complexes'. People who feel insecure grasp for simplified models of the world: 'us vs. them', 'good guys and bad guys'. That state of mind is associated with a multitude of strong emotions and prevents us from seeing the whole picture. Freeing oneself from complexes and creating a healthy cultural identity is a very demanding task. You have to sincerely want to identify the truth, and it demands considerable reflection and thought not only about your own experiences, but those of others, too. This is why the contribution of all the researchers, artists, and community leaders who do this work is so essential.

RVV:
We all want to be unique in one way or another, even if it is only in our suffering. Our suffering should be unique, because if others had the same, it sort of devalues it, making it almost 'normal'. So the Jews only want the word Holocaust used in reference to the mass murder of Jews on the European continent, and that is understandable. But at the same time, it was not the only mass murder, and the victims of other mass murders have an equal right to be remembered. In the 'old EU', there was very little desire to hear about the horrors of the Communist past, and the need to ban Communist symbols and the issue of equalisation of Nazi and Communist crimes. We were seen as a bit irritating, nagging kids wanting to get things their way. Until the invasion of Ukraine last year – which changed the whole perspective. Now people's eyes and ears are open, and I very much hope it stays that way.

But don't forget; there is also the issue of fatigue – how much suffering can we digest, and when is it ever going to end? We live in a world where everything is so global and so visible that on one and the same mobile phone, we can see the war in Ukraine, demonstrations in Tbilisi, trials in Russia, natural disasters in Pakistan and California and, in the end, our head is so full that we just watch TikTok clips. Enough is enough.

DP:
How can we begin to explain the militarism and revanchism of post-imperial societies? I mean, the insensitivity of Russian society to the suffering of its neighbours? How can this be explained? Where have compassion and empathy gone?

RVV:
Well, to start with: Russia is not post-imperial. It is an imperium in a Communist, and now, Putinist jacket, so the way Russian society functions is fully in line with this. And, as I mentioned earlier, it is a totally demoralised, destroyed society. In 2018 we

organised a Leonidas Donskis conference on 'Building Bridges – Thoughts about the Other Russia'. The idea was to show that Putin is not equal to Russia and Russia is not automatically Putin. We had a whole bunch of speakers and lively discussions. In the end, one of my friends, Kolya, from Chelyabinsk stood up, who was visiting us: A human rights activist of the purest kind, you could say. He said – it is all very well what you say, beautiful. But what you forget is that the Russian people have turned into *bydlo*, a grey amoral mass. And we all reacted by saying – well, Kolya, sure we understand, but now you are exaggerating a bit. And now, with the war in Ukraine, we see that Kolya was absolutely right. Bydlo.

DP:
We spoke to an artist from the Balkans about the grievances of the neighbouring countries of former Yugoslavia. It seems that the unhealed traumas of the past still hinder good relations between neighbouring nations. The historical memory of the twentieth century, the wounds of the past, not only provoked the Yugoslav Wars, but also fuel the strife today. What is needed to heal the wounds of the past?

RVV:
Time. Time and honesty. Honesty and openness. Openness and the ability to look at the beam in our own eye. Only time and a sincere desire to live together in harmony and together put the past to rest will help us. But that is an almost impossible task.

DP:
The negation of communist crimes has its consequences. One of them is the injustice felt by its victims. On the other hand, I'm convinced that we still see the consequences of that negation today. The war in Ukraine is one of those consequences. What do you think about that?

RVV:
Absolutely, and I blame myself for not taking the signs seriously enough. We should have banned all references to Soviet symbols. We should have refused to play the Russian national anthem, which was essentially the Soviet national anthem with some different wording. We should have insisted on a total de-Sovietisation of Russia and we should never have allowed Russia to become the heir and thus the successor to the USSR. They should not have been able to have claimed the seat with veto rights at the UN, and we should never have forced Ukraine to give up its nuclear weapons and leave only Russia with them. Fundamental mistakes, the consequences of which we now have to deal with.

DG:
The war in Ukraine is the most horrific and tragic direct result of that negation. The crimes of Communism have gone unnamed, as have the preparators and their criminal acts. Former KGB officials assumed full control of the entire government in Russia and have continued to build their criminal regime with impunity over the past three decades.

DP:
How will this collective trauma affect Ukraine's future generations?

RVV:
The trauma of the war will shape Ukraine for centuries to come. The country that people didn't believe would be viable – and I remember those early days in the 1990s when many people thought Ukraine was a 'joke' – has become the front against unfreedom. That carries a danger because they might start to believe in their uniqueness, and then the pendulum swings too far in the other direction. But the years between 2014 and now have been formative and the basis of what will eventually become a solid and important state in Europe, equal to France, Germany and Poland.

DP:
After the war started, I decided that, instead of a lecture, I would have a discussion with

my university students about their emotional state in the face of war. As soon as I told them that, I could feel their relief – it was as if they'd been given permission to share their enormous, oppressive burden. For most, their mental health was very poor. Nearly all of them were experiencing anxiety or even panic attacks. Some relived memories of personal traumas, such as sexual violence. But when I spoke with people of the same age in the West, I noticed a big difference. This war doesn't seem to affect them emotionally. The geographical distance is understandable. But I still want to ask you: What role does collective memory play here – our country's traumatic memory?

DG:
Our country's traumatic experience plays a central role. And it is precisely the 'experience', and not just some knowledge or information. It was endured by families and existed in the stories of our parents and grandparents. But I also think that our own self-liberation is also a very important thing here. When we resolved to free ourselves from occupation, the first thing we did was identify the truth about our historical traumas. In all the decades since independence, we've been having an ever deeper reflection on that past. This is how historical memory also becomes part of the identity of younger generations.

Kaunas, 1946. © www.atmintiesvietos.lt



Our family became acquainted with the mother of the Lithuanian partisan Kazys Veverskis (pseudonym Senis) under very interesting circumstances. This one time, my mommy went to the post office to run some errands and found a crying woman there. She came to send a parcel to her relatives imprisoned in Siberia, but she could not write their address. Then my mother brought her home to Vasario 16-osios Street, and my father packed everything nicely, wrote down the address, and posted it for her. And this acquaintance was the one that lasted. I remember this woman visiting us for many years concerning in relation to this matter. I called this woman my granny Veverskienė.

A memory shared by Lili Kristina Vaičekauskaitė–Čepauskienė, 2014

Reverse Memory Engineering by Michael Shubitz

KOTRYNA
LINGIENĖ

Michael Shubitz, December 1973, Israel



Born in Israel, Shubitz completed his military service and studied Film and Television at Tel Aviv University. Parallel to his studies, he began working for the German television broadcaster ARD as a camera assistant and later as a cameraman. In 1979, he covered the beginning of the Islamic revolution in Iran. In 1982 Shubitz became a stills photographer for the Israeli Government's press office, covering the so-called first Lebanon war and establishing the video department there. In 1983 he went to Germany to work for the Megahertz film company that had been established by friends of his. Later, he worked for various German broadcasters and in 1985, began making advertising films for the Munich-based company Film Haus München, creating adverts for Germany's biggest companies including Braun, Volkswagen, and Mercedes. After starting a family, he returned to Israel in 1990 where he continued working for ARD as a director of photography, filming documentaries, TV magazine stories and news items. He later became a mentor for ARD's 'think teams' who develop different social media-oriented formats.

Being a son of Holocaust survivors from Lithuania, Shubitz uses the medium format of the still camera for his artistic projects.

It's our first online meeting, and Michael Shubitz has already given me a tour of the apartment he stays in when in Germany. He is a fantastic interviewee because he is full of stories and references. The curator of this issue, Daiva Price, first introduced us in order to talk more about his photography project 'Back to Kaunas'.

As a cameraman for German television broadcasters ARD and Bayerischer Rundfunk, based in Israel, the project presented a new challenge for Shubitz: to pause the movement and create still images. In 'Back to Kaunas', the artist features survivors of the Kaunas Ghetto and their corresponding stories. An exhibition of the photographs first opened in Kaunas in September 2022 as part of the Litvak Forum organised by the European Capital of Culture. It subsequently toured to Ukmergė before arriving at the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum in Vilnius (June 2023).

Behind this photography project (and a new one in the making) lies the story of Michael's own family – one that is still being written decades after the events happened.

Kotryna Lingienė:

I understand that your parents did not speak about the Holocaust. Did they speak of their life in Lithuania at all? What was your childhood like?

Michael Shubitz:

I was born on the street that runs parallel to the beach in Tel Aviv ten years after the Second World War. From my balcony, you could see the beach, you could smell the beach, and my childhood was dominated by a kind of Mediterranean lifestyle – swimming, fishing, sailing, and whatever else the sea offered. From around the age of ten, I was almost never at home because I was enjoying that lifestyle.

While I knew that my parents were from Lithuania, aside from that, I knew very little about their lives there. Relatively early on, however, I realised that my house was different from my social environment. In Israel, you have people from many different countries. My parents, like other people who came from a region once part of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy, talked Yiddish among themselves. I, on the other hand, spoke Hebrew. I cursed in Arabic. I listened to different music to my parents. When I was six, The Beatles came along, and my parents didn't like this at all. They loved jazz, tango, and classical music. When I was a teenager, these differences led to conflict because I would criticise them. I would say, 'Listen, you are from another country. You're the diaspora.'

Nevertheless, they were good parents. We were a happy family. Israel was very simple at that time. It was a poor country, a new country. I had a simple childhood, and many simple things made me happy. Only later in my life did I find a way back

to them, but they were not there anymore. They passed away very young. While I was no different to any other teenager with a disinterest in making a connection with their parents, one might say I was stupid, or maybe I was just empty. It was only later that the empty box started to fill itself with things from the inside.

As an adolescent growing up at that time in Israel, the Holocaust was ever present from early childhood. You heard all the terrible stories. I remember thinking that if my parents weren't telling those stories – it must not have been so terrible for them.

My father passed away when I was 18. It was just as I had begun to show an interest in our family history, but he would not reveal anything. Others of that generation couldn't stop talking about what had happened to their families, but my parents were completely silent.

KL:

I first heard your story during the Litvak Forum in Kaunas in September 2022. What caught my attention was the traumatic experience you recounted of seeing the bodies of victims of a suicide bomber at close range, which subsequently led those treating you for this trauma to ask: 'What happened to your family during the Holocaust?' You replied that you didn't know, and that

prompted the beginning of both an artistic and physical journey to Lithuania. Is that an accurate summary?

MS:

Almost, almost. By accident, I was at the scene in a market in Tel Aviv right after the bombing, and nobody stopped me. It was a Friday, and I could drive through a closed market that is usually a pedestrian walkway. The victims were lying around dead. The amount of blood, the screaming of the shocked and wounded, the body parts lying around, the smell of burnt flesh, the sound of the streaming blood ... Usually, when you come to scenes like this, you are blocked by the police. There is a designated place where they let the press stay to take pictures, but you don't usually see much.

It happened during a very hard period for my wife, as her sister had died. I just kept on working, I had a lot of work, really, and I was not aware something was wrong with me. It was business as usual. My wife was talking to a friend of mine, assuming that I was asleep, but I wasn't. She said, 'Listen, you have to take him. He's not okay.' When she said, 'He's not okay,' it hit me like a flash, 'She's right. I'm not okay. I'm somebody else in my body.'

I stood up, and I didn't say a word. I left the flat half asleep and went to the emergency room. I said, 'Listen, when people come from a suicide bombing with a shock, where do they go?', 'Go two floors down,' they said. I went down and said, 'I need help. This and this happened to me, and I'm not okay.' A psychologist came and said: 'OK, come tomorrow.' I started the treatment, first daily, then weekly. Then life went on, but it helped me a lot.

Quite soon after treatment started, the psychologist and I stumbled upon the fact that I didn't know anything about my parents and that I wanted to know, but wasn't doing anything about it. She said to me, 'You should do it now because it'll haunt you later.' that's where my story with the memory of the Holocaust begins. Moreover, we very soon came to the notion that I am not a cameraman because of chance but because of the position of looking at the world through a hole – that I am doing this dirty job as a part of a much bigger event in my life. It was the summer of 2001.

KL:

Your photographs are rather cinematic, including the backgrounds, which is no surprise knowing that you also shoot film and video. So, let's go back a little bit. When did you start your career as a cinematographer?

MS:

I went to university in Tel Aviv right after my military service. Military service wasn't an easy experience for me. I was 18, very rebellious and did not want to join the army, but I had to. It was August 1973, just a few weeks after my father passed away. On 6 October, the Yom Kippur War started right in front of my eyes in



Michael Shubitz, Sarah Kopelovitz,
as part of the series 'Back to
Kaunas', 2022

the Golan Heights. It was a surprise to us. The Syrian army began attacking us, and very soon, they were trying to get to the base we were guarding.

I was a new soldier in the army. It was my luck and my misfortune. I was on the border, and I had to shoot. I had to kill people because it was them or me. It's a complicated story, but as new soldiers, we went to guard anti-aircraft rockets which we didn't know how to use because we weren't being trained in their use until later in the year. But, because it was Yom Kippur, so many people that were serving there, the regulars, had gone home, and we, the rookies, were sent there to fight a war nobody had bothered to tell us about.

Anyway, we all survived. I survived, and I was not traumatised because I already understood that the world was like this. That the world is shit, there are wars, and people kill each other. This was given to me with mother's milk. It's part of living in Israel. Many people I know carry heavy traumas, but I was swallowing it. I was sent to a kibbutz and had the chance to begin a new and quiet period in the countryside.

Then I decided that I wanted to study cinema. I loved the movies, and I decided I wanted to make them but it was only after I started studying that I realised I was attracted to camera work and was better at that than at telling stories with words.

During my first year in school, I was asked by one of my teachers if I wanted to work a few days with him in the desert for the German television broadcaster ARD. That's how I made my first contacts and started working for them, initially as an assistant while still studying.

A good friend of mine was a director, and we worked together, but then he became Orthodox. It was a wide phenomenon at that time and is still happening today – people suddenly turn to religion, abandon their previous life and start a new one. That's what happened with him, and I was left alone with my camera work. This led me to Germany, where I already had acquaintances from the desert project. I still work with them today, and we are friends.

From 1982 to 1990, I lived in Germany, I got married, and my first daughter was born there.

KL:

Did you decide straight away, back then in 2001, that photography would be part of your journey?

MS:

No, that happened later. First of all, I needed the facts, I needed the story, and I came across a few junctions in this story that opened my eyes.

As part of my research, I went to the website of the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, Yad Vashem, and entered 'Giedraičiai' in the search box. I knew the name of the town because, in the 1980s, my mother had an aneurysm and underwent an operation. After she woke up, she only spoke Lithuanian, which my sister and I could not understand. After a few months, she recovered – she didn't lose her memory, but she needed speech therapy. So, one day, I asked her to tell me what happened during the Holocaust. I taped it (I still have the tape). She mentioned 'Giedraičiai' and I know of it also because my nephew interviewed my mother for school just before her stroke. So, on the Yad Vashem website, I came upon a testimony of someone who experienced the massacre in Giedraičiai. When the war broke out, my mother's family tried to escape to the East, but the border was blocked, so they went back to their home in Kaunas, and found that the neighbours had occupied it. They threatened my mother's family, who then went to Giedraičiai, because that was where my grandfather was born. In the testimony I found online, a person had written about my grandfather, including dates, names, who killed him, how he was killed along with 27 others.

This man, Israel Katz, recorded everything in real-time. He was walking around with a small book. Can you imagine? Walking through such atrocities and writing down names, who did what, where people were buried, who raped who. He understood that he was experiencing something so exceptional that he decided to write it down. This testimony is one of the most shocking stories I have read about the Holocaust because it's so real. I'm in good contact with Katz's family. We have already met in Tel Aviv, and we plan on making a film together. His daughter is still alive; she is 96 years old.

With Katz's help, I was able to find out not only how my grandfather was killed but also what my mother saw. She had told me things that weren't in Katz's document, but I put all the stories together. And, as I am a photographer, I am always thinking in images and shots. During the Lebanon War in 1982, I worked as a stills photographer for the Israeli government. I am very interested in freezing the moment.

KL:

In your project, you present twelve people born in Kaunas who spent their childhoods in the city and saw their family members murdered. Did they easily



Michael Shubitz, *Dita Serling-Zupovich-Katz*,
as part of the series 'Back to Kaunas', 2022



Michael Shubitz, *Danny Chanoch*,
as part of the series 'Back to Kaunas', 2022

agree to be the subjects of these photographs? How did you meet them?

MS:

Some of them I knew, some of them I didn't. Nobody very close – mostly, they were relatives of someone I knew. Actually, there was one guy I have known for many years, and he didn't really want to cooperate with me on this, because of our long history together. But he was from Kaunas, so we worked it out. I met him in Germany recently. Coincidentally, I managed to convince the vice chairman of the Bavarian Parliament to show my exhibition there next year. I hope all of the participants will be able to witness it. I also want to make a trip to Kaunas with three of the protagonists and make a film there. Can I ask you something, Kotryna? What do you think about the pictures?

KL:

I like them. In fact, I would like to meet all those people – their portraits look welcoming. I was not really surprised to learn later that you are a cinematographer – but hey, we have already covered this. But yes, when I looked at the portraits for the first time, I thought they could be stills from documentaries about these people. They're also very different from one another, and that's what I love. I love the differences of the expressions and their eyes. They are a very interesting set of subjects. They're all very different, and they all come from Kaunas, which kind of highlights how multicultural the city once was. I wondered what would have happened to them if they still lived in Kaunas? Maybe some of them would have been my neighbours?

MS:

Thank you. You made my day.

KL:

OK, I also have a personal question. How do you feel

about me feeling guilty when listening to you? I usually have this feeling when I'm talking to people that are family members of Holocaust survivors or family of those who did not survive the Holocaust. I have nothing to do with it, but I can't escape it.

MS:

I understand that. Jews, in general, if you can generalise things like that, also feel guilty about nothing – this is a Jewish joke of sorts. I can follow your feeling. I also feel very uncomfortable with what's happening in the Palestinian areas because, as a cameraman, and a journalist, I saw a lot of bad things being made in my name.

I feel very guilty because I have quite a few Palestinian friends who are telling me what's happening to them, and there's nothing that I can do to change it. This is more understandable guilt. In your case, you are part of a process that we both are in, a process of finding, again, a way to each other. My family lived in Lithuania for hundreds of years, and then they were robbed, raped and murdered. My parents came to Israel with only the clothes they were wearing. That's it. I'd love to get back what was once my family's, but this will not happen. But I, like you presumably, want to make this world a better place.

KL:

Did making this portrait exhibition make you feel better?

MS:

The accident was 21 years ago, and it was not an illness. I was under pressure, having a burnout, but I'm carrying a trauma that is not mine; nevertheless, it hurts me very much. It's unhealable because it's not my trauma. Do you understand the difference?

KL:

Yes. It means that you have to learn to live with it.

MS:

Exactly. It's actually a trip into the inner self, to knowing who I am, to understand many events in my life, why I did what and under a different light, through a dif-



Michael Shubitz, Arnold (Abrasha) Cleves, as part of the series 'Back to Kaunas', 2022



Michael Shubitz, Shalom Eilati-Kaplan, as part of the series 'Back to Kaunas', 2022

ferent filter. It's ongoing, and it will never end. I am not suffering from it, but the people around me are, sometimes.

Seven years ago, I worked on a pilot episode of a documentary about a Palestinian boy who grew up without a hand. He didn't lose it in any fighting or in an atrocity. He was born this way, but his family is the only one who lives in an area that is controlled by settlers, and they're having all kinds of problems and troubles. My producer asked the boy, 'Tell me, don't you want to have a hand?' He replied, 'Listen, I would like to have a hand, but we are very poor people, and I will not get it. Let's talk about something else.' After it was broadcast in Germany, we got 150 emails from people who wanted to donate this boy a hand.

When things like that happen, I see my work as being fulfilled. With this exhibition, my secret wish was that people would come to me and say, 'The pictures are very good, very strong. They are telling a story.' Instead, people talk to me about a healing process. Do you understand what I mean? For me, it's a failure, but it's still part of my artistic journey.

KL:

What motivated you to create the portraits?

MS:

In the beginning, Daiva Price, who invited me to the forum, and I talked about me taking portraits of people who were born in Kaunas. Maybe also second generation, third generation – this was her wish. I said to myself, 'What I really want to do is follow in the steps of my father and meet the people who were in the ghetto, like he was.' Because, as I told you, he spoke very little of his experience. I could sum everything up he told me in five sentences. I told Daiva, 'It will be survivors of the Kaunas Ghetto.' She agreed. And thus it became my personal trip, too.

When I met Dita Zupovich-Sperling, to photograph her portrait and also make a film, I discovered the story of my father's first wife. Dita had met the woman my father had lost. He actually lost her before she was killed, because she became

mentally unwell. So Dita, who is 101 years old and remembers everything, is just one example of how this process has helped me discover my own roots.

KL:

This project sounds a little bit like reversed dementia. Instead of forgetting things about yourself, you are unforgetting them.

MS:

Exactly. One could also call this reverse engineering – like when a US aircraft falls into Russian hands, they try to understand how it was made. I like this concept a lot, actually, my new project is called exactly that – 'Reverse Photographing'. A very disturbing factor that accompanied my research was that I had no photos (except one made in Vilkauskis before the war) to support my imagination and understanding. Everything was burned, left behind, gone with the wind. In this new project, I intend to realise my research in photos. I will create the photos and rebuild the pictorial history of my family. It will consist of a combination of different layers and technologies that together will assemble the missing images. I intend to go to Lithuania and photograph the original places, the cities and villages, streets and houses where my family lived. I will use digital technology and Artificial Intelligence to create photos from daily life scenes, like the birth of a child, weddings, and street life to extreme Holocaust-oriented events like the daily life of the ghetto to deportation and execution where I know that my parents were.

KL:

Last question. When you came to Lithuania for the first time, what impression did you have of us understanding, or rather trying to understand, the past?

MS:

When Daiva spoke to me about this issue of *as a journal*, she described memory as a battlefield. I would like to suggest instead that the collision of the narratives is the real battlefield. The difference in memories of the same event is, so to say, a conflict.

History is always written in at least two versions. Lithuanians talk about Soviet trauma yet call the Shoah 'Nazi occupation'. In my narrative, it is quite the opposite, since the Soviets saved the rest of the Jews. They also punished a few of the perpetrators, including the murderers of my grandfather. I consider myself to be Lithuanian, just as you are, only my family was kicked out of the country. I am sure, as a Lithuanian, that the Nazi occupation was the worst and darkest period in Lithuanian history. Other Lithuanians are certain that it was a good period, and some perpetrators are still honoured officially because they were anti-Soviet, regardless of the fact that their hands were washed with Jewish blood, Lithuanian Jewish blood. It is my blood and my memory. My mother saw her father dragged out of their home, and when I was born, this memory was inside me. I should not have known it, but I cannot escape it. This is what is so strong about memory. It is in our cells.

When the memory is traumatic, one should look the trauma in the face. Again, the guarantee of identity and survival is the narrative. What to do when the memory is hidden, like in my case? Well, take the mask off, but don't fall into hatred. Hatred is a poison that will poison the hater themselves. Yet, it is the memory that we have to preserve to make a better world. How naive we are! Just look the truth in the eyes and don't call it a 'complex history' because Jew-hatred is not complex at all. Xenophobia is straightforward energy.

One of the ways to make the world better is through education, and nothing touches people's hearts more effectively than art. No one is born with hatred towards others because of their skin colour, religion or sexual identity. It is the education, the narrative that causes it. If so, it is also possible to counter those narratives by educating people to love, appreciate and respect each other, and that is what art can do.

I saw, during my visit to Lithuania, many young people who want to learn and understand. They wanted to listen. I have stayed in contact with some of them. I am committed to building that bridge even if the water underneath is troubled.

Utilising Unprocessed Collective Traumas: Russian Hybrid Warfare Against Georgia¹

JANA D. JAVAKHISHVILI

Jana D. Javakhishvili is a Professor of Psychology and Director of the Institute of Addiction Studies at Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia. Her research interests focus on exploring the mental health and psychosocial well-being of war- and political oppression-affected populations. Since 2006 she has been heavily engaged in the projects of the Federation Global Initiative on Psychiatry focused on improving human rights-based mental health care in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, and other war- and political oppression-affected countries. She is the Past President of the European Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. Currently, she is on the board of directors of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. She leads the Global Crisis – Armed Conflict Thematic Group of the Global Collaboration on Traumatic Stress and serves on the editorial board of the European Journal of Psychotraumatology. Since 2020 she has been a Trustee of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma Europe. Since 2018 she has been an advisor to the Andrei Sakharov Research Center for Democratic Development at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania.

Introduction

According to expert opinion, the importance of reflecting on and understanding Russian hybrid warfare in Georgia goes far beyond Georgia, since the country is often used by Russia to pilot hybrid operations before replicating them in other countries and geopolitical contexts (Nilsson, 2018; Bolkvadze et al., 2021).

In the analysis below, the notion of ‘Russian Hybrid War’ (or ‘Russian Hybrid Tactics’¹) is understood as a ‘combination of the threat of military force with political, economic, diplomatic, subversive, and information-based tools to establish dependencies and pressure points that can potentially be utilized to destabilize an adversary and reduce the costs of a conventional military action. It can also be used to realize political goals vis-à-vis a counterpart without resorting to military force’ (Nilsson, 2018, p. 19).

The first section of the text describes how undigested past collective traumas can influence the socio-political life of a large group and hinder development. The second section describes the undigested past traumas that Georgian society failed to process due to both hardware factors (e.g. economic, political and social crises) and software (Volkan, 1997) i.e. psychological factors – shame, unprocessed collective mourning, insufficient memory policies etc. The third section describes modes of Russian Hybrid Warfare operations in Georgia. The fourth section analyses the key messages of Russian propaganda in Georgia. The fifth section draws conclusions based on the presented analysis.

Traumatic Experiences of Large Groups and Related Psycho-socio-political Phenomena

The analysis of the psycho-socio-political phenomena presented here is based on the ideas of the psychoanalysts who dedicated their theories to exploring the unconscious life of groups (Bion, 1961), and especially large groups (Hopper, 2003; Volkan, 1997; Volkan, 2002; Volkan, 2006; Volkan, 2009;

Volkan, 2013). Based on these theories, a picture of how the socio-political life of a large group/nation may develop, after being exposed to collective traumatic experiences related to human-made catastrophe/violence, is presented.

When a generation, which was directly exposed to collective traumatic experiences does not manage to mourn in an authentic way and achieve closure, the undigested trauma is transmitted, or as Volkan calls it (1997), deposited to the next generation, as ‘unfinished business’, with the task to finish it. If the next generation fails to deal with such a heritage, trauma transmits to the next generation, becomes part of collective narrative, and shapes a large group’s identity. Evidence reveals that not only trauma but the resilience that helps to deal with a painful past may also transmit from generation to generation (Kazlauskas et al, 2017).

Mourning is crucial in dealing with a painful past (Klein, 1975; Hopper, 2003; Volkan, 2006). When the authentic process of collective mourning cannot be applied, collective traumatic experiences remain unmourned and are passed to the next generation. If collective trauma is related to human-made catastrophe/violence, the situation implies the ‘Victim-Aggressor-Bystander’ triangle (Hopper, 2003); one of the possible scenarios here is that the bystander takes on the role of a saviour, which turns the triangle into a so-called

¹ The analysis presented in this text was part of the author’s oral presentation at the 5th Nida Forum ‘In the Name of Nation. Threats of Populism in Europe’, 9–10 September, 2022, Nida, Lithuania

‘Bermuda Triangle’ (Berne, 1964). Eric Berne used this metaphor to indicate that there is no solution or closure in a ‘Bermuda’ type relationship. In such cases, non-authentic mourning may take place. Earl Hopper describes three modes of non-authentic mourning (Ibid):

- Sentimental mourning – when those exposed to traumatic experiences consider themselves victims (victimised by the aggressor) and pity themselves; this might be revealed directly via sentimental yelling or indirectly via art, poetry, memorials, memorisation strategies, etc.
- Revengeful mourning – when those who experienced trauma urge for revenge. The target of revenge could be the aggressor(s), but it could also be another object, easier-to-access individual/group/community/society, onto whom the enemy image is projected.
- Victorious mourning – when loss is perceived as a victory and instead of mourning, individual/group/community/society celebrates it.

In contrast to non-authentic mourning, authentic mourning focuses on dealing with the past. If trauma is related to human-made violence, and therefore implies the Victim-Aggressor-Bystander triangle, there are preconditions to facilitating authentic mourning. Namely, the aggressor needs to confess (whether honestly or not) their misdeeds; the bystander needs to validate and confirm that what the aggressor did to the victim/survivor really took place; the victim/survivor needs to receive moral, material, and procedural (Lederach, 1995) compensation/satisfaction for suffering. The societal processes of authentic mourning imply multiple tracks/dimensions, which are in synergy with each other (Javakhishvili, 2018; Hopper, 2003; Volkan, 2006):

- Justice: corresponding legal processes, as in criminal investigation, lustration, court proceedings, if possible – transitional or restorative justice supported by the creation of the corresponding institutional mechanisms, e.g. truth and reconciliation committees, etc.
- Scientific investigation and publications: studying the past from the point of view

of historical, political, economic, social, or other relevant sciences, concluding corresponding lessons, publishing evidence, etc.

- Memorisation policies: symobilisation and memorisation of the history of oppression and suffering, as well as lessons learned via different means: museums, books, art, exhibitions, music, memorials, etc.

All these contribute to informing the public, maintaining inclusive public discussions, concluding lessons learned, and based on that – forming constructive, meaningful public discourses contributing to the prevention of violence in the future.

If there is goodwill to deal with the past from the side of political leadership and society, all the constructive processes described above may take place. Well processed collective traumatic experiences can then serve as a background for posttraumatic growth, development, and societal wellbeing (Volkan, 2007). Though there are a lot of obstacles preventing the formation of goodwill for dealing with the painful past; among them – shame and guilt related to misdeeds among aggressors, inability to prevent atrocities among bystanders, and helplessness among survivors.

If there is no goodwill to deal with the past, Faulkner’s saying – ‘the past is never dead. It is not even past’ becomes even more actual. In this case, a sense of humiliation, helplessness, rage, embitterment, and fear of annihilation prevail in the societal discourses, and society lives in survival mode and stagnation (Hopper, 2003; Volkan, 1997; Javakhishvili, 2014; Javakhishvili, 2018). In this case, societal life is mainly driven by basic assumptions about what could help them to survive (Bion, 1961; Hopper, 2003):

- Dependency basic assumption means that society is looking for a saviour, a messiah; once such a leader is identified/ emerges, followers put all the responsibility for their own survival on the leader’s shoulders. Followers feel helpless and resourceless, while the ‘saviour’ (leader) is perceived as omnipotent and resourceful. At the same time, the group is envious towards such an omnipotent and resource-

ful leader. This corresponds to Melanie Klein’s paranoid-schizoid position in the course of human development (Klein, 1975) and reflects the immaturity of a large group. As a leader fails to meet the unrealistic expectations of the followers, part of society becomes frustrated with the leader, and searches for and identifies an alternative leader; at this stage, envy turns into hatred against the leader, and this is how the basic assumption of Fight & Flight (F & F) starts to unfold.

- F & F split society into two sides fighting against each other, and assume that if the other side disappears (is exterminated), it will help society to survive. Much energy is spent on enmity and internal struggle, instead of development.
- Paring basic assumption assumes that a large group will survive if it can grow/expand; therefore, flirting, sexual relationships, marriage and childbirth are encouraged within the group/society.
- Incohesion basic assumption, according to Earl Hopper, causes the most primitive mode of societal dynamic. It implies extreme forms of zero-sum mentality (Rozicka-Tran et al, 2015) and the fragmentation of society into multiple subgroups – hating, fighting and trying to exterminate (symbolically or physically) each other. As a result, the culture of intolerance and hatred prevails, societal institutes do not function properly, and societal life stagnates.

In the normal societal dynamic, all these basic assumptions appear transiently – they interchange and, what is most important, step out and give space to the so-called Work-group mode (Bion, 1961) of societal dynamic. Work-group mode means that society is united around a constructive consensual mission/task and a culture of solidarity, tolerance and cooperation prevails (Hopper, 2003). But if the group struggles with unmourned grief and, therefore unprocessed collective trauma, it may not move to the work-group mode and may be stuck in the basic assumptions-based societal dynamic.

In what follows, I will demonstrate how what is described above turns a country into an easy target for Russian Hybrid War operations.

Unprocessed Collective Trauma: the case of Georgia

Georgia regained independence from Russia for the first time in 1918, after becoming the colony of Tsarist Russia in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The first Georgian Democratic Republic founded in 1918 strived for integration with the West and lasted just three years, until February 1921, when the country was reinvaded, by what was then communist Russia. Georgia regained independence for a second time at the beginning of the 1990s. The country has been independent for more than 30 years and implemented a number of successful steps towards Euro-Atlantic integration, but the Russian threat is still prevalent.

The twentieth century, for Georgia, was full of traumatic experiences related to Lenin’s Red Terror and Stalin’s Great Purge, which resulted in the repression (imprisonment, execution, exile, deportation) of up to 10% of the country’s population (Junge, Tusurashvili & Bonvech, 2015). Another 10% of the Georgian population was killed in the Second World War.

After regaining independence in the early 90s, the basic assumptions-based psychodynamics started in the country. Full dependency on the first elected president of Georgia after one year of his rule was replaced by Fight & Flight between his supporters and opponents; the country went through multiple (political, social, economic) crises, Russia-catalysed civil war (Fight & Flight basic assumption) and two inter-ethnic political conflicts, which escalated in August 2008 as a five-day war with Russia. Since the 1990s, 20% of Georgian territories are occupied by Russia, two important regions (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) are cut off from the rest of the country, and up to 6% of the general population has been forcibly (internally) displaced. Collective traumas related to the totalitarian past, the Second World War, the civil war and military conflicts of the 90s, and the five-day war with Russia remain unprocessed and unmourned, due to both ‘hardware’ and ‘software’ factors (Volkan, 1997) described above.

From 2003 to 2012 the young pro-Western government – United National Movement (UNM) – implemented a number of successful reforms and significant steps in the direction of Euro-Atlantic integration, efficiently fought corruption and managed to activate a Work-group dynamic in the country. At the same time, they did not put enough effort into dealing with the past, easily slid into authoritarianism and lost trust among the major-

ity of the electorate. The elections in 2012 split the country into two sides – UNM and their supporters vs the Georgian Dream Party (the current government) and their supporters, which again triggered the Fight and Flight basic assumption-based unhealthy societal dynamic.

The Georgian Orthodox Church is very influential in the country. According to sociological studies of the last two decades, the leader of the Georgian Orthodox Church is the most respected person in the country (IRI, 2020²). Although Georgia is a secular state, the church tries to intervene in governance and often succeeds, since for some decades now it has effective leverage to convince the acting governments to listen as it can influence the electorate’s choices. Most of the Georgian population are believers and have spiritual fathers’ who advise them on how to live, what to prioritise and who to vote for during elections (Javakhishvili, 2018).

Two very influential actors in the country – the current government and the Georgian Orthodox Church imply cultural and anti-establishment populism strategies (Kyle & Gultchin, 2018) to maintain power. For the government, the ex-government team’s supporters, almost 50% of the country’s population are ‘outsiders.’ For the church the ‘outsiders’ are the minorities and liberally minded people and institutions – those who try to contribute to the democratic development and those perceived as a threat to the traditional patriarchal values. Because of this, a binary division culture of ‘Us vs Them’ and mutual hatred prevails in the societal discourse, which creates fertile soil for the Russian Hybrid war operations.

The ongoing information war that is part of the Hybrid tactics, widely uses populist messages that ‘land’ on the feelings and emotions related to unprocessed collective traumatic experiences of Georgian society and related annihilation fear.

Russian Hybrid Warfare modes in Georgia

The current Georgian government sticks to the formula ‘Don’t irritate Russia’ that caused a full-scale unfolding of Russian Hybrid Warfare operations in the country, without any resistance from the Georgian State, which imply the following modes:

MILITARY AGGRESSION

Besides the occupation of two important regions of the country, a full-scale war in 2008 and occasional bombings of the Georgian territory in 2009 and 2011 (Nilsson, 2018), since 2008 Russia has been regularly moving the barbed wire separating the occupied territories from the rest of Georgia deeper into the country and thus ‘swallowing’ new territories. Due to such ‘borderisation’ (or creeping occupation), a section of the British Petroleum-operated pipeline that transports oil from Azerbaijan to Georgia ended up on the Russian-controlled side, endangering oil transit through the country (ibid). Georgian farmers living in the conflict zone are gradually losing land and therefore harvests, cemeteries where family members are buried, and houses. In addition, they are exposed to severe human rights violations by the occupying forces who regularly (illegally) detain locals including minors, keeping them in the Russian-controlled territories and demanding payment of a ‘fine’ for release. The torture and killing of detainees has been known in some cases as well³. According to the Georgian Security Service, in 2017 alone, 178 persons were detained illegally⁴.

ISOLATING GEORGIA FROM THE WEST

Russia tries to prevent Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic integration by demotivating both sides: on the one hand, the West (e.g. via an anti-American campaign that is currently being implemented by a group of Georgian parliament members, Russia-funded media and some high-ranking government officials), and on the other hand the Georgian population, by demonstrating that the country will pay a high price for any further step towards Euro-Atlantic integration (including the threat of military aggression).

2

International Republican Institute, ‘Public Opinion Survey of Residents of Georgia. June-July 2020’, 2020, <https://civil.ge/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/IRI-Poll-June-2020.pdf>, accessed 28 April 2022.

3

Tiko Khatchvani, ‘Russian New Strategy in Georgia: Creeping Occupation’, *LSE*, 2019, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/humanrights/2019/02/05/russias-new-strategy-in-georgia-creeping-occupation/>, accessed 27 August 2022.

4

Agenda.ge, ‘Security Service: Georgians illegally detained for crossing occupation line in 2017’, *Agende.ge*, 4 April 2018, <http://agenda.ge/en/news/2018/750>, accessed 27 August 2022.

INCREASING GEORGIA’S ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY ON RUSSIA

In 2013, the Russian market reopened for Georgian wine and agricultural products after being closed since 2006 (as a response to the pro-Western strategy of the previous government). This is creating additional leverage for pressure from the Russian side and increasing Georgia’s vulnerability. Similarly, Georgia reopened for Russian tourism creating a ‘Trojan horse’ effect.

SPYING AND SUBVERSIVE ACTIONS

An especially scandalous case of catching Russian spies in Georgia took place in 2006, when a number of agents were exposed. In response, Russia deported a large number of Georgian economic migrants from Russia. After the current government began its term in 2012, the spies imprisoned by the ex-government were released. Over the last ten years no new cases of spying or subversive actions have been revealed, though the confession of a young man that was spying in Georgia for the Russian Intelligence Service⁵ gives reason to think that Georgia is not a completely Russian spy-free zone.

‘PLANTING’ PRO-RUSSIAN POLITICAL PARTIES

Since the end of 2012, several pro-Kremlin political parties emerged and one succeeded in having representation in parliament with 10% of the electoral vote. This particular party promotes so-called ‘neutrality,’ which, in fact, is all about isolation from the West and integration into the Eurasian union that Putin is trying to build and which is based on ‘Eurasionism’ and the ‘Russki Mir’ ideology (see later the ‘Planting Russki Mir’ paragraph).

‘PLANTING’ PRO-RUSSIAN MEDIA

One of the media tools of Russian propaganda – TV Sputnik – was banned in Georgia in 2014 after a short-term pilot attempt to broadcast, but remains highly active in the country via Georgian-language online TV and its corresponding website. In addition, in recent years, at least four pro-Russian Georgian TV broadcasters (including

one online) have been functioning, and each of those targets a particular segment of the Georgian population in a systematic way: urban youth, urban adults, regional youth and regional adult-population.

‘PLANTING’ ULTRA-NATIONALIST/ FASCIST GROUPS

The funding sources of the newly emerging ultranationalist/fascist pro-Kremlin groups in Georgia are not transparent, although some have been found to have connections with the Gerchikov Fund (established by President Medvedev for the implementation of Hybrid tactics). The language and messages of these groups are identical to what is currently used in Russia to stigmatise liberally minded and pro-Western oriented people/organisations and Western countries. The targets of aggression are also the same – the LGBTQ community, independent media and journalists, Western-funded non-governmental organisations, human rights defenders, etc. On 5 July 2021, on the day that LGBTQ pride was scheduled, ultranationalist groups committed a ‘pogrom’ of the LGBTQ community offices. While LGBTQ community members escaped and survived the pogrom, fascists beat up a cameraman who was filming the pogrom. The cameramen died a few days later as a result of injuries. The law enforcement response to this crime was not transparent and fair.

TRYING TO ELIMINATE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND CHOKE DEMOCRACY

In March 2023, the Parliament of Georgia by a majority of votes (78 voters) adopted the Law on Foreign Agents which requests that all non-governmental organisations that are funded by the foreign countries register as foreign agents. This is a remake of a law on foreign agents adopted by Putin’s government in 2012, which played a crucial role in the elimination of civil society and extermination of democracy in Putin’s Russia. The youth and civil society of Georgia implemented large-scale permanent protest demonstrations

5

Giorgi Lomsadze, ‘Spy’s confession sheds light on Russian espionage in Georgia’, *Eurasianet*, 8 August 2022, <https://eurasianet.org/spys-confession-sheds-light-on-russian-espionage-in-georgia?fbclid=IwAR2C2qTxQPS8r-beCpNulb01UBv2ZipjLu1ZBmEZRD-5KVtcCZgKhTX-tAV1F4>, accessed 28 August 2022.

and the government withdrew the law. However, since then the prime minister and speaker of the parliament, as well as the parliamentary majority, have been maintaining a toxic information campaign stigmatising the youth and stating they were ‘influenced by foreign agents’ and that they are ‘satanists’. Involvement of the government officials in this information campaign is indicative of the collaboration of the ruling party with Russia.

DISINFORMATION, TROLLS AND BOT FACTORIES

Both conventional and social media is used to disseminate disinformation. Usually, this is an orchestrated process and is focused on fragmenting society and spreading a culture of hatred (Kinturashvili et al, 2021). The set of messages disseminated by trolls contain anti-western, pro-Russian, anti-Ukrainian, pro-church, pro-Stalin, as well as pro-governmental messages.

THE GEORGIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AS AN AGENT OF PRO-RUSSIAN INFLUENCE

The Orthodox Christian Church in both Georgia and Russia was repressed in the last century following the Russian Revolution and the recolonisation of Georgia by Russia. During the Red Terror, clergymen were identified by Lenin as a social class to be exterminated. Contrary to this, Stalin revived the Orthodox Church for pragmatic reasons – to turn it into an instrument of population control. The Russian and Georgian churches have remained in close cooperation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. As Georgia failed to implement lustration after regaining independence in the 1990s, the Georgian patriarchy became a powerful transmitter of Russian propaganda in the country.

‘PLANTING’ RUSSKI MIR
Since 2012, so-called ‘Georgian-Russian cultural cooperation non-governmental organisations’ have started to emerge. They are teaching (free of charge) the Russian language and promote and create venues for Russian-Georgian

cooperation (between political scientists, young scientists, ‘folk diplomats’ and other groups) under the umbrella of ‘Eurasianism’. In 2017 one such organisation sent a group of Georgian school-children to the summer camp ‘Artek’ (famous in Soviet times) in occupied Crimea to study the Russian language, which was preceded by a school writing contest on the topic ‘What Russia means to me’ as a means of selecting the most loyal participants. Another track for disseminating Russki Mir in Georgia is Russian tourism – e.g. in 2017 the Georgian National Agency for Tourism allowed the Russian pro-Putin TV channel Rossia to win the Georgian state tender (1.3 million USD) and promote tourism in Georgia among the Russian population. This and similar efforts have caused huge waves of Russian tourists in recent years; many bought real estate and relocated to Georgia, especially in the seaside city of Batumi, which Russians now call ‘a Russian-language town.’

Following the Russian attack on Ukraine in 2022, the migration of Russians to Georgia has reached an unprecedented scale. Russian citizens are arriving in Georgia to escape sanctions⁶, buy real estate, register businesses, and intend to stay and live in Georgia. Although Russia declared military mobilisation, Russian border guards are not preventing their own young men from crossing the Russian-Georgian border, which is indicative that this is in line with governmental policy. According to the official statistics of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, in 2022 alone up to 200,000 Russians crossed the Georgian border. Thus the ethnic, linguistic and cultural landscape in the country is changing dramatically, and this newly ‘planted’ ‘Russian World’ in Georgia gives the Russian government an additional, legally justified reason to reinvade the country⁷. Georgian civil society, alarmed by the scale of the increasing presence of Russki Mir and its security-related implications, is appealing to the government to introduce a visa regime, but without success.

Key messages of Russian Propaganda in Georgia

According to the Media Development Foundation which regularly (annually) monitors anti-Western propaganda in Georgia, the structure of the corresponding narratives is ‘three-tiered’ and pursues the aim to 1) instil fear, 2) sow despair and scepticism, and 3) portray co-religious Russia as a powerful actor and the alternative to the West.’ (Kintsurasvhili, 2021, p. 9).

The key messages of ongoing Russian propaganda in Georgia are based on the annihilation fear of the Georgian population, deeply rooted in collective traumas related to the totalitarian past and wars, where Russia is an evident and uncontested perpetrator. To substitute Russia with an alternative ‘enemy,’ Hybrid tactics create a Substitutive trauma – a pseudo trauma highlighting unrealistic threats and utilising annihilation fear and shared feeling of victimhood among the targeted population. Namely, populist-style messages are used, focused on the reactivation of negative emotions and fears in relation to the Ottoman Empire due to the attacks and related territorial losses that took place before the end of the nineteenth century; projection of those emotions and fears onto contemporary Turkey; and thus changing the perception of Russia from perpetrator to saviour, and the perception of NATO from friend to enemy. In 2021 there was an unsuccessful attempt to provoke territorial dispute with Azerbaijan and thus spread an enemy image from Turkey to Azerbaijan as well.

The populist set of messages implied by Russian propaganda in Georgia is as follows:

- ‘*The West (Europe and America) is trying to take away our Georgianness*’. ‘Georgianness’ is an ambiguous notion that is not defined. This message is usually ‘blended’ with a number of following messages: ‘Europe supports LGBT propaganda, homosexuality and paedophilia’; ‘Integration with Europe means to accept homosexual marriages and paedophilia and thus betray Georgian cultural and religious traditions’ (and ‘Georgianness’).
- ‘*Pro-Western orientation means war*’. This message has become an especially widespread ‘argument’ since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The set of messages here imply the following: ‘The West, especially America and NATO want to engage Georgia in a war with Russia similarly to Ukraine’; ‘Ukraine is not fighting its own battle’; ‘The West – America and Europe want Georgia and Ukraine to fight their battle’.
- ‘*We need to maintain neutrality so as not to irritate Russia*’. The term ‘neutrality’ here is again undefined and implicitly means a pro-Kremlin stance. This message is sometimes coupled with the message ‘Remember what America did to native Americans!!’. In fact, the ‘be neutral’ message means: ‘Keep away from NATO, from the United States, from the West and be with Russia, otherwise you will be annihilated’.
- ‘*If you are speaking of KGB agents you need to speak of Western agents as well*’. This is very much in line with the aforementioned Putin’s ‘foreign agent’ law. The set of messages here consist of the following: ‘Western humanitarian organisations are foreign agents who are spying and trying to provoke changes for their own states’ benefit’; ‘Non-governmental organisations and media organisations funded by foreign foundations are bribed, they are ‘grant-eaters’ and liberals’ (or ‘liberasts’ – a pejorative name for liberals in Russia); ‘They are betraying our national/traditional values and sacrificing our Georgianness for their own benefit’; ‘Georgian civil society is corrupt, not credible, not trustworthy, they are our enemies’.
- ‘*Liberals are Blaspheming God*’; ‘It is not a sin to kill those who are blaspheming God’; ‘Those who are against Foreign Agent legislation are liberals (“liberasts”) and Satanists’. These three messages articulated by the Parliament Majority leader, church representative and prime minister sequentially are indicative of an orchestrated effort of the pro-Russian forces to organise pogroms of the political opponents;

– ‘*If Russia is an occupant, then Turkey is an occupant as well*’. This message attempts to create a time collapse (Volkan, 1997) and move Russia from the role of an aggressor (who currently occupies 20% of Georgian territories) to the role of a saviour. The set of messages here are as follows: ‘Turkey is our enemy’; ‘Russia believes in the same God as we do, only Russia can defend us from the Muslim Turkey’; ‘Turkey is a member of NATO, Turkey is an enemy, therefore NATO is an enemy as well’; ‘Integration with NATO means invasion of Georgia by the Turkish army’.

– ‘*Gareja is Georgian!*’. This is another variation on the ‘Turkey is our enemy’ theme, trying to spread an enemy image towards Azerbaijan as well. In 2021 a Russian intelligence service-affiliated Georgian businessman brought a map to the attention of officials and public in Georgia, based on which some started to argue that the current border division between Georgia and Azerbaijan is not valid, and Georgia should claim territory from Azerbaijan – part of the Gareja desert where David Gareja Monastery complex is located. This was followed by the populist information campaign ‘Gareja is Georgia’ that attempted to create tension between Georgia and Azerbaijan, but which did not happen, though the attempts are still ongoing.

– ‘*Only Russia can return us back our lost territories!*’ Sometimes this message is formulated as ‘If we reunite with Russia, Russia will give us back the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region’⁸. This message is paradoxical and relies on losing effective contact with reality, as it does not take into consideration the fact that it was Russia who catalysed the conflict and secession of these two regions from Georgia.

– ‘*The Lugar Laboratory produces new viruses and bacterial weapons in Georgia*’. The Lugar biomedical laboratory was founded by the National Center for Disease Control

and Public Health with the support of the United States in 2011. It is a leading biomedical laboratory in the region and plays an important role in managing the Covid-19 pandemic. Since 2017, Russia has targeted the Lugar laboratory and spread disinformation to deliver the message that ‘America is dangerous for Georgia and Georgia allied with America is dangerous for the rest of the World.’

– ‘*If you do not want to be a Russian colony, then do you want to be an American colony?!*’. This artificial binary construct contains an evident ‘either or’ thinking error, and an implicit message: ‘Better be a Russian colony!’ because ‘It is not possible to be independent, sovereignty is a myth, free choice is a myth, democracy is a myth.’

To summarise, the Russian Hybrid War against Georgia implies systemic multitrack hybrid tactics focused on the fragmentation of the societal fabric, cultivating hatred, and spreading nihilism within Georgian society. This has resulted in splitting Georgian society into multiple hostile fragments, which is indicative of what Hopper calls (2003) the Incohesion basic assumption.

Conclusions

This analysis reflects on how the tactics of Russian Hybrid Warfare in the republic of Georgia is utilising unprocessed collective trauma and is exploiting the populism of the country’s political and church leadership. It explores the so-called ‘software factors’ – those that relate to the psychology of a large group and leader-followers’ relationships, vs realpolitik-related factors, and demonstrates that not taking care of software factors creates risks for malignant developments on a realpolitikal stage.

Undigested collective traumas and the related fear of annihilation in combination with populist political leadership imposing Manichean binary divisions on the society create fertile soil for Russian Hybrid War operations.

Russian Hybrid Warfare causes significant damage to the targeted society as it hap-

pened in Georgia during the last ten years. It can disorient, fragment, demoralise society and lead to societal regress. The collective undigested trauma is a risk factor which decreases the ability of the society to adequately react and resist the malignant hybrid tactics imposed by Russia.

The lesson to learn is that countries with a young democracy need to consider dealing with the past in a just and reparative way – not as a luxury but as an ultimate priority to create a solid background for both national security and development.

8

The Tskhinvali region is a Georgian toponym for the Russia-occupied region of Georgia, so-called South Ossetia

References

Agenda.ge, ‘Security Service: 178 Georgians were illegally detained for crossing the occupation line in 2017’, Agende.ge, 4 April 2018, <http://agenda.ge/en/news/2018/750>

Eric Berne, Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships, New York: Grove Press, 1964

Wilfred Ruprecht Bion, Experiences in Groups, London: Tavistock, 1961

Nino Bolkvadze, Ketevan Chachava, Gogita Ghvedashvili, Elina Lange-Ionatamishvili, James McMillan, Nana Kalandarishvili, Anna Keshelashvili, Natia Kuprashvili, Tornike Sharashenidze, Tinatin Tsomaia, Georgia’s Information Environment through the Lens of Russia’s Influence, Riga: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2021

Noam Gidron & Bart Bonikowski, ‘Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda’ in SSRN Electronic Journal. doi:10.2139/ssrn.2459387, 2013

Earl Hopper, Traumatic Experience in the Traumatic Life of Groups: The Forth Basic Assumption: Incohesion: Aggregation/Mas-sification or (ba) I:A/M, London &New York: Jessica Kingslay Publishers, 2003

Jana D. Javakhishvili, ‘Soviet Legacy in Contemporary Georgia: A Psychotraumatological Perspective’ in Identity Studies, Vol.5, 2014 pp:20–40 <https://ojs.iliauni.edu.ge/index.php/identitystudies/article/view/196>

Jana D. Javakhishvili, Trauma Caused by The Repressions of Totalitarian Regime in Georgia and Its Transgenerational Transmis-sion, 2018, doctoral dissertation https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350994283_TRAUMA_CAUSED_BY_THE_REPRESSIONS_OF_TOTALITARIAN_REGIME_IN_GEORGIA_AND_ITS_TRANSGENERATIONAL_TRANSMISSION

Robert S. Jansen, ‘Populist Mobilization: A New Theoretical Approach to Populism’ in Sociological Theory, 2011, 29(2), pp.75–96

Wilfried Jilge, ‘Russki Mir: Russian World. On the Genesis of Geopolitical Concept and its effect on Ukraine’, 2016, discussion Moderated by Stefan Meister, DGFP <https://dgap.org/en/events/russkiy-mir-russian-world>

Marc Junge, Omar Tushurashvili, Bernd Bonwetsch, Big Terror in the Little Republic of Caucasus. Tbilisi (in Georgian), 2015

Evaldas Kazlauskas, Danute Gailiene, Ieva Vaskeliene, Monika Skeryte-Kazlauskiene, ‘Intergenerational Transmission of Resil-ience? Sense of Coherence Is Associated between Lithuanian Survivors of Political Violence and Their Adult Offspring’, Frontiers in Psychology, 8, 2017, doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01677

Tamar Kintsurashvili, Tina Goguadze, Mariam Tsutskindidze, Nina Shekeladze, Tamar Gagniasvili, Sopho Goguadze, Khatia Lomidze, Sopho Chkhaidze, ‘Anti-Western Propaganda’, analytical report, Media Development Foundation , 2021, http://mdfgeorgia.ge/uploads//antidasavlurieng2020_compressed.pdf

Andis Kudos, “‘Russian World’ – Russia’s Soft Power Approach to Compatriots Policies. In: Russian Public Relation Ac-tivities and Soft Power’, Russian Analytical Digest 81/10, 2010, pp. 2–6 <https://www.research-collection.ethz.ch/bitstream/han-dle/20.500.11850/26212/eth-2215-01.pdf>

Jordan Kyle & Limor Gultchin, ‘Populists in Power Around the World’, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2018, <https://www.institute.global/insights/geopolitics-and-security/populists-power-around-world>, accessed on 30 August 2022

Niklas Nilsson, ‘Russian Hybrid Tactics in Georgia’, 2018, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program – A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, Washington, Stockholm, http://silkroadstudies.org/resources/pdf/SilkRoadPapers/2018_01_Nilsson_Hybrid.pdf

Joanna Różycka-Tran, Pawel Boski, Bogdan Wojciszke, ‘Belief in a Zero-Sum Game as a Social Axiom: A 37-Nation Study’, Jour-nal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, April 2015, 46 (4): 525–548

Nadia Schadlow, ‘The Problem with Hybrid Warfare. Commentary’, War on the Rocks, 2015, <https://warontherocks.com/2015/04/the-problem-with-hybrid-warfare/>, accessed on 27 August 2022

Anna Tiido, ‘The “Russian World”: the blurred notion of protecting Russians abroad’, Polski Przegląd Stosunków Międzynaro-dowych, Warszawa: Uniwersytet Kardynała S. Wyszyńskiego, No. 5. , 2015, pp. 131–151, <https://czasopisma.uksw.edu.pl/index.php/ppsm/article/viewFile/2413/2262>

Vamik Volkan, Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997

Vamik Volkan, Gabriele Ast, William F. Greer, The Third Reich in the Unconscious: Transgenerational transmission and its con-sequences, New York, NY: Brunner-Routledge, 2002

Vamik Volkan, ‘What Some Monuments Tell us about Mourning and Forgiveness’ in Elazar Barkan, Alexander Karn (eds), Tak-ing Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006, pp. 115–131

Vamik Volkan, ‘Societal Well Being after Experiencing Trauma at the Hands of “Others”: Intertwining of Political, Economic and Other Visible Factors with Hidden Psychological Progress Affecting Victimized Populations’, speech delivered at the conference ‘Measuring and Fostering the Progress of Societies: Second OECD World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy’, Istanbul, 27–30 June, 2007

Vamik Volkan, James Christopher Fowler, ‘Large-group Narcissism and Political Leaders with Narcissistic Personality Organiza-tion’, Psychiatric Annals, Vol: 39 (4), 2009, pp. 214–223

Vamik Volkan, ‘Large-Group-Psychology in Its Own Right: Large-Group Identity and Peace-making’, International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies, Vol.10(3), 2013, pp. 210–246

Vamik Volkan, ‘Large-group Identity, Who Are We Now? Leader-Follower Relationships and Societal-Political Divisions’, The American Journal of Psychoanalysis, 79(2), 2019, pp. 139–155. doi:10.1057/s11231-019-09186-2

DRAWINGS BY ALEVTINA KAKHIDZE

When somebody whose native country had an imperial past hears ‘Glory to Ukraine’, it is hard for them to understand what Ukrainians mean. We say it to mark ourselves free, and solidarise in a common wish to be free, eventually. ‘Slava Ukraini’ IS A LIBERATORY motto. Holding a Ukrainian flag has a different meaning to holding the flag of a former Empire because, in some parts of Ukraine, it is still dangerous to hold a national flag.

Alevtina Kakhidze



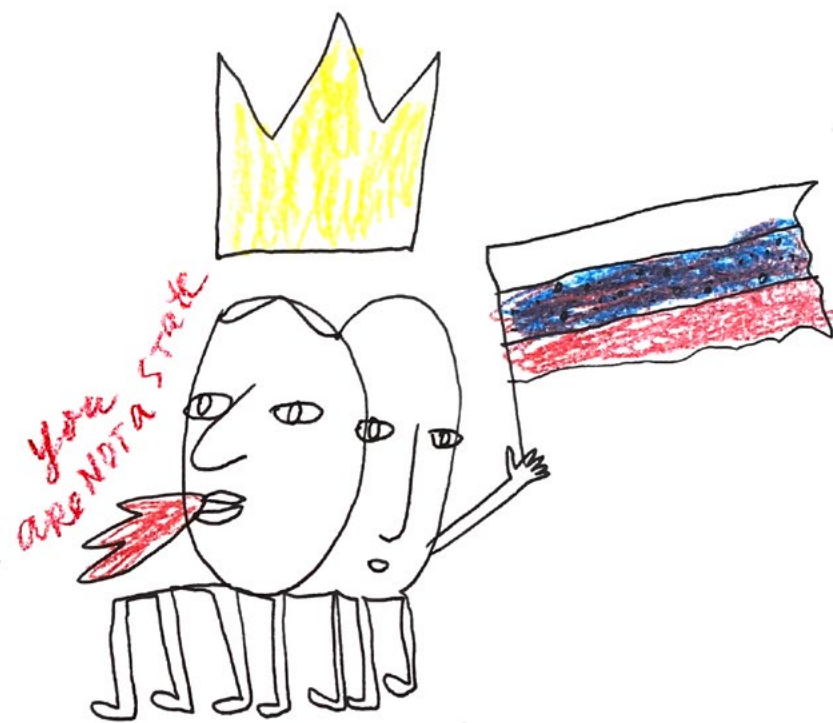
Alevtina Kakhidze is a feminist and media artist, gardener, and curator. She is based in Muzychi, Ukraine, 26 kilometres from the capital Kyiv. Having grown up in the Donetsk region of Ukraine, known for coal mining, she has experienced Ukraine’s abrupt and chaotic changes from the days of the USSR to the imbalanced environment after, including the undeclared war between Russia and Ukraine that is going on today. Kakhidze’s artworks appeal to the criticism of the culture of consumerism, the theme of gardening and plants, and since 2014 depict domestic life in occupied Ukrainian territories.

Alevtina Kakhidze attended the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture in Kyiv (1999–2004) and the Jan van Eyck Academy in the Netherlands (2004–06). She has served as the United Nations Tolerance Envoy in Ukraine since 2018, was the Kazimir Malevich Artist Award winner in 2008, and was awarded the first prize in the Competition for Young Curators and Artists, Kyiv, Center for Contemporary Art at NaUKMA in 2002.

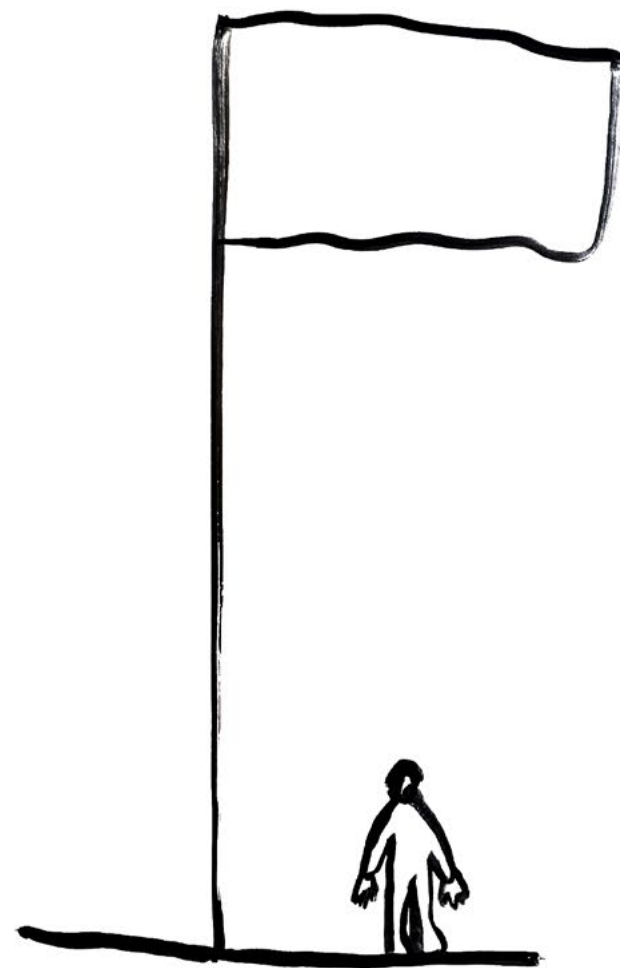




a STATE



a STATE



in former
Imperial
State



IN STATE
OF FORMER
Colony

PROJECTS

JENNY KAGAN

ZHENIA

SUNDAY 22 JUNE, 1941

We are in pieces. Germany has declared war on the Soviet Union. Troops have already crossed into Lithuania and Alik is at summer camp right on the German-Lithuanian border. Papa never thought it would happen so soon, or he would never have let him go. Mama is beside herself and we can't get any information. It's chaos on the streets here – Soviet troops retreating, Lithuanians with white armbands shooting at them. The Shinbergs have gone – they fled before dawn. Now we have to decide – should we go too? I can hear my parents shouting in the next room. Papa thinks we should take our chances with the Soviets. Mama hates the Bolsheviks even more than she fears the Germans. Most of all, she's worried about Alik. So am I!

LATE SUNDAY NIGHT

German bombing overhead – we've been in the cellar for hours. The neighbours are all here – except for the Shinbergs of course. It's hard to write. We are being watched – there's real animosity in the air. The fact that I never set foot in a synagogue doesn't make me any less Jewish in their eyes. Earlier, Papa left the house and turned up with a horse and cart. He said, 'Pack a few things and we'll get on the road', but Mama refused point blank – not without Alik. She said Papa should go alone. She thinks they'll target left-wing sympathisers and he'll be in danger. 'Nonsense,' he said 'I am not running away just to save my own neck.' So here we are.

MONDAY 23 JUNE, 1941

Mama is more nervous than ever – smoking one cigarette after another with shaking hands. Pa went out this morning to hand over his keys to Parama. Now, 7 pm, he is not back. She thinks the worst – always. If only she had more faith. Still no word on Alik.



Jenny Kagan is an artist and lighting designer with 30 years experience of making theatre and art. She is committed to using contemporary art to explore complex narratives with a keen focus on participation and co-authored work.

Her work as a theatrical lighting designer covered a wide range of genres. She lit new productions of the classics at regional theatres such as Edinburgh Lyceum, Bristol Old Vic and Nottingham Playhouse, and worked extensively on new writing at the Bush and Soho theatres among others. For many years she worked internationally on large scale productions for Cameron Mackintosh, lighting productions in London's West End, on Broadway in New York, and in other major cities around the world.

Since 2013 she has been developing a new artistic practice, drawing on the tools of her theatrical roots but re-interpreting them in the field of installation and participatory art. Her ongoing project 'Out of Darkness' is a large scale, interactive, site-specific installation that uses images, music, projection and built environments to tell the stories of her parents' survival during the Holocaust. First shown in 2016 in the UK in Halifax, the work was re-imagined for a major new version produced in Kaunas as part of the programme for European Capital of Culture 2022.

Away from her artistic practice Jenny lives in Kendal in the English Lake District and is a keen hill walker and mountain biker. She is chair of Holocaust Centre North for whom she co-created their permanent exhibition at Huddersfield University in 2018, and an active volunteer with Samaritans and with the homeless charity Crisis.

Her two projects *Zhenia* and the board game *Snakes and Ladders* are featured in the magazine as part of the interactive exhibition 'Out of Darkness'. This exhibition was presented as part of the Kaunas European Capital of Culture 2022 Memory Office programme.

MEMORY AS A JOURNAL

TUESDAY 24 JUNE, 1941

Mama just came home in the most terrible state. She went to the Red Cross this morning – searching for news. She was gone all day – I’ve been getting more and more frantic. She finally calmed down enough to tell me what happened. Mama was grabbed on the street by a ‘white armbander’. He dragged her to the jail, then to the court – but they were full. Eventually, he locked her in a room in the partisan HQ with a group of other women. They told her, ‘First they rape us, then take us down there to the yard and shoot us.’ You can just imagine the state she was in. Luckily Mr Bogdalis was there. She heard him say, ‘You have arrested Zhenia Shtrom. Are you crazy? Don’t you know how much Shtromas has done for Lithuania? Release her immediately.’ She is home now but she is terrified to leave the house again.

WEDNESDAY 25 JUNE, 1941

I’ve just seen Papa! We got a note from him this morning saying he has been arrested. He asked us to bring him some things: underwear, a razor, soap. Mama was too frightened to go out. She keeps talking about the ginger-haired partisan coming to get her again. I wasn’t keen to go alone, but Irena came with me. Pa was washing cars – a young Lithuanian guard watching over him with a gun. She pleaded with him, ‘Come Uncle George, run. Let’s run. Don’t stay here.’ – he smiled and ruffled her hair. ‘And what would happen to this young man if I ran away eh?’ How typical!

THURSDAY 26 JUNE, 1941

We hear horrific tales. Criminals are on the loose and are murdering Jews on the streets. Synagogues have been burned with the rabbis inside. Even closer to home, the world has gone crazy. Lora tells me she heard B&D talking. Should they come and confiscate our belongings – given that I am their friend? Like it was no big deal. Like whether to wear the blue or the grey jacket – whether to raid our home or not. In the end, they decided it would be too awkward – I can’t believe that they could even contemplate such a thing.

FRIDAY 27 JUNE, 1941

I learned a surprising lesson today – that I’m not afraid of my own death. We were dragged out of the house onto the street, pressed against the wall by young partisans holding guns to our heads – and I wasn’t afraid, not of dying. I WAS afraid of being wounded, of having to watch my mother and grandmother die while I bled to death slowly. But not dying per se. I kept hoping that if they did shoot, they’d all shoot at once so we would all die together. Is that a normal reaction? It felt like we were there for hours – my arms were ready to drop off – but it was probably only minutes. In the end, they kept us there while they took what they wanted from our apartment and then let us go. I don’t think they ever planned to shoot us, but at the time it seemed a certainty.

For Mama

*I was told that she was, in fact, magnificent.
There is always a way out, she'd told me.
No need for degradation, she'd insisted.
The cord belt she always wore around her waist,
slipped lightly around her neck
Her feather-like fingers yanking up and to the side
"You just pull, like that - and that's it. See?"*

*So lightly strung I imagined she would snap
it seems she learned perhaps to bend.
They spoke of her caring, her sharing, her strength.
I'm surprised, ashamed of my surprise, and miss her more.
When they found her hanging, still breathing,
they did not cut her down.*

*No typhoid
No gas chamber
No slow starvation
I was told that, in fact, she rose up.*



Hands Up

A short film
Screenplay by
Jenny Kagan

Based on stories
told by
Margaret Kagan

FADE IN

INT. DINING ROOM (KAUNAS JUNE 1941)

SOPHIE 63 years old, twice divorced, assertive to a fault, much admired (by those who don't have to live with her) is writing a letter at the table.

ZHENIA 40 years old, a fragile creature perpetually out of joint with her existence, sits across from her. She has just finished painting her nails bright scarlet and with studied care smokes a cigarette with her right hand, exhaling onto her left to dry the varnish.

SOPHIE - in Russian
(without glancing up from her letter)
I'm sure George will be greatly
relieved when he gets back to find that
his disappearance hasn't interfered
with your manicure.

Tears well in ZHENIA's eyes. She stubs out her cigarette and covers her face. A sound, part sob, part sigh is only partially muffled by her newly painted hands.

MARA 16 years old, small framed, dark haired, a rather intense and serious young lady, sits on the floor with her legs tucked under her, lost in a book. At the sound of Zhenia's distress she puts the book down, comes to the table and drapes her arms around her mother.

MARA - in German
You look beautiful Mama. And I'm
sure Papa will walk through the door
any minute and tell you so himself.

The heat of the day is just fading and through the open window we hear the sudden sound of shouting in Lithuanian. ZHENIA leaps from her seat, SOPHIE's hand stills, MARA looks from one to the other.

INT. STAIRWELL

Three young men run up the stairs. They shout to each other and laugh - at first glance this may be a boisterous gang of lads on a night out together. Only the fact that they wear white armbands marks them out as partisans. That, and the fact that each one carries a gun.

They hammer on the door of the apartment and as soon as it is opened a crack they force their way inside.

When the war broke out, I was already in the fourth grade. During a lesson, my teacher and I saw through the windows the tanks coming across the fields, knocking on the wet earth and soil. The teacher burst into tears and told us that they were occupying our land. Then we all started crying with her. When we returned home, we heard that Lithuania was occupied by the Russians and that our President Smetona had fled. We were small, we didn't understand what was happening ...

Interview with Salomėja Piliponytė-Užupienė, 2020



Kaunas, 1946. © www.atmintiesvietos.lt

hcmf//

Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival 2023

A wide-ranging exploration of new music from Lithuania continues at **hcmf// 2023** through a partnership with the Lithuanian Culture Institute and Music Information Centre Lithuania.

17 - 26 November 2023
hcmf.com

hcmf// 2023: Lora Knieliuskaitė performs the UK premiere of *This Order Goes Wrong* by Dominykas Digimas © Simon Marshall

IMPRINT

Guest editor
Daiva Price

Editor
Kotryna Lingienė

Contributors
Al Zolynas
Alevtina Kakhidze
Daiva Čepauskaitė
Daiva Price
Prof. Danutė Gailienė
Gintarė Valevičiūtė-Brazauskienė
Indrė Šerpytytė
Prof. James E. Young
Jana D. Javakhishvili
Jenny Kagan
Kotryna Lingienė
Linara Dovydaitytė
Manca Bajec
Michael Shubitz
Mindaugas Lukošaitis
Robert van Voren
Vytenė Saunoriūtė Muschick
William Kentridge

English language editor
Gemma Lloyd

Translators
Darius Sužiedėlis
(pp. 34–45, pp. 80–88)
Rimas Užgiris (inserts)

Editorial board
Adomas Narkevičius
Vaiva Grainytė
Rūta Statulevičiūtė-Kaučikienė

The Lithuanian Culture Institute presents Lithuanian culture and professional art abroad and enhances the opportunities on the international scene for cultural professionals and artists, as well as for specialists and organisations working in these fields. The mission of the Institute is to create sustainable international cultural partnerships and promote the value of Lithuanian art. Consistently strengthening the role of Lithuanian culture in the world, the Lithuanian Culture Institute is a state budget institution established by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania.

Publisher
Lithuanian Culture Institute
Z. Sierakausko str. 15, LT-03105
Vilnius, Lithuania
asajournal@lithuanianculture.lt
www.asajournal.lt

Lithuanian Culture Institute team
Ignė Alėbaitė (project coordinator)
Julija Reklaitė
Rūta Nanartavičiūtė
Rūta Statulevičiūtė-Kaučikienė
Vlada Kalpokaitė-Kručauskienė

Acknowledgements

The Lithuanian Culture Institute is grateful to members of the initiative group of ** as a Journal*: Aušrinė Žilinskienė, Dovydas Kiauleikis, Ernestas Parulskis, Gražina Michnevičiūtė, Jogintė Bučinskaitė, Julijonas Urbonas and Kristupas Sabolius.

Principal design
Godspeed Branding

Issue design
Kristina Alijošiūtė

Printed by
UAB „Baltijos kopija“, Vilnius, Lithuania

Paper
Munken Pure
Galerie Art Gloss
Curious Transluents

Fonts
Minion Pro, Epilogue, Bench Nine

Print run
800 copies

Supported by
Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania



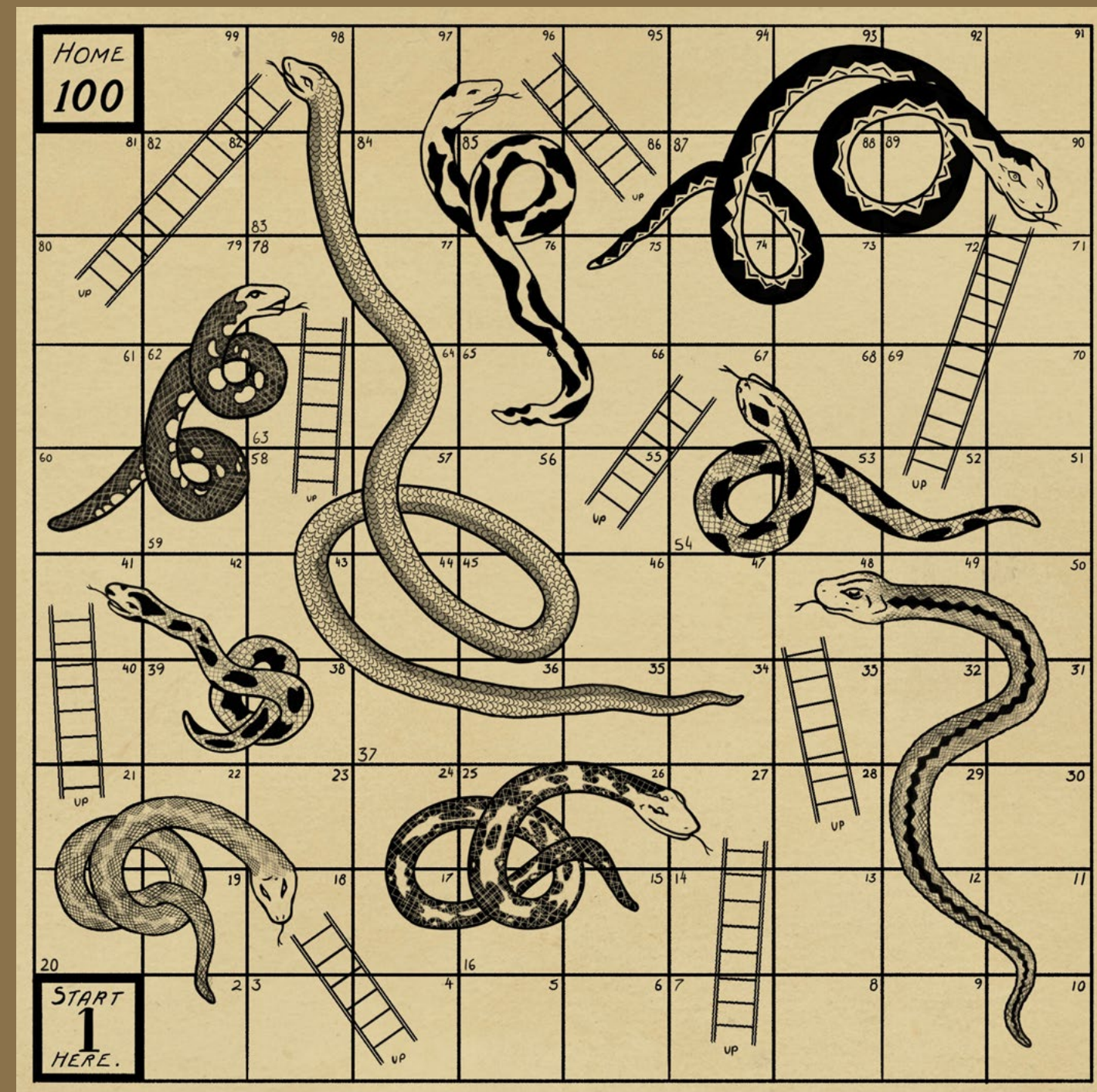
MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF
THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA



Cover image: William Kentridge



A GAME Snakes and Ladders



The sixth issue of ** as a Journal* will focus on the notion of Other. Alterity is a crucial concept in contemporary philosophy, arts, culture, and political practices. The issue will explore the origins of otherness as a counterpoint to identity and will reflect on various meanings of Other: the other person as a source of moral responsibility in moral philosophy, the other as a threat in migration politics, the other as a non-human being (animal, but also alien), the other within the human body – both as an organism (viruses, bacteria, etc.) and a voice (demons, conscience, etc.). The issue's guest editor is Viktoras Bachmetjevas, a philosopher with an interest in ethics, and specifically the thoughts of Emmanuel Lévinas and Søren Kierkegaard. Bachmetjevas will invite artists, writers, and scholars to explore these directions and critically reflect on the different roles otherness plays.



www.asajournal.lt
ISSN 2783-5685

