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A third alternative: the peculiar case of
Grūtas sculpture park

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Candidate Number: 21017

A Third Alternative: The Peculiar Case of Grūtas Sculpture Park



Dissertation Submitted for the Special Degree of B.A. Honours History of
Art with Study Abroad.

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Introduction	4
Section 1. How are the statues in Grūtas Park transformed by their new Environment?	8
a) The Park's Aims and Interpretative Framework	
b) Alternative Significations	16
Section 2. In What Ways are the Grūtas Park Statues Art Historically Significant?	21
Conclusion	30
Bibliography	33
List of Illustrations	37
Illustrations	38
Appendix A –Catalogue of the statues of Grūtas Park in order of age	47
Appendix B – Park Map	54

Abstract

This Dissertation will explore Grūtas Park in Lithuania which displays the country's Soviet era statuary. The park will be considered as a third alternative between the active destruction or purposeful neglect of the monuments following the fall of the USSR in 1991. In assessing the effect of the statues in their new and unusual museological setting it will be argued that the signification of the sculptures changes through their de-contextualisation. The new meanings however will be shown to be ultimately dependent upon their former significance. As these may vary from different visitor perspectives the aim engendered by the park to expose the ideological content of the statues and 'take the idols off their pedestal' is not necessarily realised.

It will furthermore be argued that despite the focus in the park upon the historical significance of the statues and despite the stigma attached to communist statuary, they are of art historical import. The statues are revealing with regards to Soviet art in general as well as more specifically in Lithuania. The latter will be found to be idiosyncratic in how it aspires towards western ideals of artistic freedom within the ordered and coherent confines of the utopian world vision expressed by communist art. Overall it will be argued that the Grūtas Park, though not a perfect solution, is a highly valuable one in allowing discussion of these issues which are current and more widely applicable.

Introduction: The Power of Monuments

*'I was visiting a factory and spotted Lenin's detached head, lying on the ground. That was the moment.'*¹ –Viliumas Malinauskas.

Disgracing monuments is not a new occurrence. The almost ritual removal of political sculptures at the fall of dictatorial regimes articulates their status as metonyms of power. This is because dismantling such statues and removing their presence from public spaces demonstrates a shift in values wherein they, and the ideology which they represent, are no longer triumphant.

Monuments are loaded entities. Their primary intention is both to preserve and construct the concept of person or idea.² Peter Carrier notes however, 'the function of monuments is diametrically opposed to that of a document: a monument is a symbol designed to perpetuate memory whereas a document is a form of proof claiming a degree of objectivity as historical testimony'.³ The placement of monuments then inherently implies that a subjectively selected interpretation of what is deemed memorable is subjected onto a space. As Charles Merewether posits, monuments thus represent the legitimization of power as the represented form claims supremacy over other imagery and alternative interpretations of history.⁴ It follows that if an image can be used to legitimize and perpetuate power in this way, at the fall of this power it can equally be used to delegitimize it. This sees the downfall of such statues intrinsic in their original intentions.⁵

¹ R.Chalmers, 'Welcome to Stalin World', *The Independent*, 15 February 2001.
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/welcome-to-stalinworld-691811.html> accessed 11 January 2011.

² C. Merewether, 'The Rise and Fall of Monuments', *Grand Street*, 68 (1999), 183.

³ P. Carrier, *Holocaust Memorials and National Memory Cultures in France and Germany since 1989* (Oxford, 2005), 36.

⁴ Merewether, 'Rise', 183.

⁵ E. Gombrich, *The Use of Images: Studies in the Social Function of Art and Visual Communication* (London, 1999), 137.

Furthermore the physicality of sculpture equally has a part to play in the apparent potency of monuments. As observed by Baudelaire, in mirroring the solidity of nature, sculptures share the viewer's space, allowing them to, on some level, transcend the barrier of representation to embody 'something' more real.⁶ It is this invocation of presence, the aforementioned ideological function, and, on a more practical level, their accessibility which accounts for the degree of violence which has sometimes been enforced on these inanimate objects.⁷ One of the most dramatic examples is the destruction of the statue of Josef Stalin by Sándor Mikus in Budapest in 1956 following Khrushchev's denunciation.⁸ The statue was dismantled by a crowd using ropes and tractors and then humiliated by being dragged around the city and mocked as if a person.

Though dismantlement is common, such severe reactions are not as frequent as portrayed by the media whose exploitation of images representing the toppling of monuments to illustrate the fall of regimes should not be negated. The reason, as according to Sergiusz Michalski, is that 'the pulling down of a statue is telegenic and provides the welcome illusion of condensing a much longer historical process'.⁹

What happens after statues have been pulled down is of less media concern and is scarcely examined. Nevertheless such explorations can prove valuable. Carrier, in the light of Holocaust memorials, proposes the notion of monuments 'as prisms of understanding for successive historical and political contexts in which memory cultures evolve'.¹⁰ In this way monuments and their changing reception represent a continued means of shedding light upon the way we understand history over time. Analysis of the modern position of former communist statuary consequently reveals the role of communism and its position in public memory today, so is therefore significant.

⁶ Ibid, 153.

⁷ D. Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution* (London, 1997), 67.

⁸ Ibid, 63.

⁹ S. Michalski, *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage* (London, 1998), 148.

¹⁰ Carrier, *Holocaust*, 32.

Grūtas Park in Lithuania is one of only three sites in which European communist statuary is preserved and is on public display.¹¹ It is notable that so few museums exist considering the amount of countries entrenched by the communist regime of the USSR in conjunction with the sheer quantity of sculptures produced - there were an estimated 70,000 statues of just Lenin in Russia alone.¹² After the fall of the USSR in 1991, many countries simply destroyed this unwanted heritage consisting largely of depictions of important personalities of the regime or heroic allegories.¹³ In others they remain in storage, largely undocumented and inaccessible for research.¹⁴ In the newly democratic nations it is only in the rarest cases that the statues remain intact and in situ.¹⁵

Following the fall of the forty-six year long occupation of Lithuania, its Soviet era monuments lay in various states of disrepair in storage yards around the country.¹⁶ This changed in 1998 when the millionaire entrepreneur Viliūmas Malinauskas won a competition run by the Lithuanian Parliamentary Committee aimed at finding a solution. Grūtas Park was declared the winner by the Arts Council in 1999, the only entry of three not to request state financial assistance.¹⁷ Malinauskas' proposal anticipated using two million dollars of his own private funds. Today, ten years after its opening in 2001 he claims an investment of over two and a half million dollars.¹⁸ The effort taken to create the park involved draining a swamp, the large-scale restoration of works and their

¹¹ Alongside the Szobor Park, Budapest and Muzeon Park of Art, Moscow.

¹² Gamboni, *Destruction*, 57.

¹³ P. Jones "Idols in Stone" or Empty Pedestals? Debating Revolutionary Iconoclasm in Post-Soviet Transition', in S. Boldrick and P. Clay (eds), *Iconoclasm: Contested Objects, Contested Terms* (Aldershot 2007), 241.

¹⁴ Gamboni, *Destruction*, 77.

¹⁵ In Lithuania the only case of this is the Green Bridge Statues in Vilnius which is still a contentious issue see E. Digrytė, 'Istorikė: sovietmečio interpretacijos dažnai apgaudinėja', (Historian: Interpretations of the Soviet Period) *Delfi*, 22 July 2010.

<http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/istorike-sovietmecio-interpretacijos-daznai-apgaudineja.d?id=32608867> accessed 4 February 2011.

¹⁶ Grūtas Park website.

<http://www.grutoparkas.lt/index-en.htm> accessed 10 January 2011.

¹⁷ V. Malinauskas, 'Grūtas Park Audio Guide', 1995, Druskininkai.

¹⁸ Ibid.

transportation.¹⁹ The heaviest piece alone weighs seventy-five tons and cost 120,000 dollars to move.²⁰

As a ‘third alternative’ to complete destruction or purposeful neglect and disregard, the treatment of the monuments in Grūtas Park offers fertile ground for discussion of issues surrounding iconoclasm and museology. Using the park as a case study this dissertation will explore how this new environment transforms the significance of the sculptures in the light of their original function. It will seek to analyse the museological methodology, how this communicates particular messages and attempts to shape collective memory and serve the interests of the various stakeholders. Consequently the dissertation will consider the viewpoints of the park’s creators, supporters, and opposition, as well as domestic and foreign visitors. This will lead to a discussion of the historical and art historical value of preserving the artworks of a contested legacy and whether indeed they even constitute as art.

¹⁹ C. Nelson, ‘Miss the Soviet era? Come to Stalin World’ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 March 2001, 22.

²⁰ A. Ellick, ‘A home for the vilified’ *World Sculpture News*, Autumn 2001, 26.

Section 1.

How are the Statues in Grūtas Park Transformed by Their New Environment?

a) The Park's Aims and Interpretative Framework

In his seminal study Dario Gamboni states that definitions of iconoclasm should be all-encompassing.²¹ Thus, iconoclasm constitutes both the purposeful damage, degradation and destruction of art work as well as deviation from the work's original intentions without necessary physical alteration.²² Following this supposition, the relocation of communist statuary in Lithuania to Grūtas Park represents a form of iconoclasm which, as Robert Darnton and Nathalie Davis suggest of iconoclasm in general, is meaningful and can be read.²³ As Gamboni writes 'Art is rarely designed to be destroyed, thus attacks represent a break in the intended communication and departure from normal attitudes shown towards them'.²⁴ The de-contextualised setting of Grūtas Park transforms the signification of the displayed sculptures and represents new attitudes towards them in several ways. This is done by setting the pieces within an interpretative framework in order to shape particular meanings that relate to the specific agenda of the park.

The park website states that the aim of the park is 'to take the former idols off their pedestals'.²⁵ In Grūtas this is done literally as the majority of the statues, save portrait busts, stand on the ground as opposed to on a platform. The effect of pedestals is that it raises the representation above the crowd. In these elevated positions the statues stand in their own sphere, communicating their role as supreme ideological exemplars. Of the permanency of the sculptured medium Katherine Verdery further comments, 'a statue alters the temporality associated with the person, bringing him into the realm of the

²¹ Gamboni, *Destruction*, 19.

²² Ibid.

²³ Jones "'Idols'", 242.

²⁴ Gamboni, *Destruction*, 11.

²⁵ Ibid.

timeless or the sacred, like an icon'.²⁶ In this way, along with the raised position, the statues become like super-human deities to be worshipped. In some cases this is at quite a height as is evident in the original positioning of the *Lenin* by the renowned Russian sculptor Nikolai Tomsky in the central Lukiškių square, Vilnius (figure 1). The elevation of this monument in relation to the expansiveness of the public space rendered it a dominating and prominent force in the square due to its visibility from all angles, thereby lending a sense of omnipotence.

By contrast, in Grūtas Park the celebratory effect of the physical mass of the pedestal is omitted so that the statue is no longer aggrandized by an external object (figure 2). Instead *Lenin* now stands on a low slab of concrete close to the ground, sharing the space and thereby status of the viewer. At this level the rousing, *ad locutio* gesture loses its scope and force, as the lack of height limits the potential to reach out to the masses below. There is therefore an element of absurdity with regard to the sculpture's loss of its previous function and thus effective ideological castration within this new landscape.²⁷ The sculpture's maintained titanic appearance within the grounded, woodland setting is equally comical. This is due to the contrast between the natural setting and the sculpture's evidently unnatural size which renders it awkward. In these ways by denying the pedestal, the ideological power of the monument is significantly undermined.

Another way in which the statues' former authority is diminished is through the display of the monuments as a group in a museum setting. Grūtas holds eighty-seven statues displayed along a two kilometre walkway.²⁸ Each sculpture is accompanied consistently by an A4 description about the depicted person or allegory. The sheer amount of sculptures over this stretch and the unchanging form of description is overwhelming to a visitor. Consequently the viewer becomes desensitised to the power and prominence these monuments would have held as ideological focuses of a site when viewed individually.

²⁶ P. Williams, 'The Afterlife of Communist Statuary: Hungary's Szoborpark and Lithuania's Grutas Park', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 44 (2008), 196.

²⁷ P. Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford, 2007), 91.

²⁸ Grūtas Park website.

There is equally a great level of repetition in terms of the style and content of the art which further devalues them. The group includes twelve stand-alone Lenin sculptures, alongside a vast quantity of Lenin reliefs. Furthermore there are five pieces depicting Vincas Mickevičius Kapsukas, founder of the Lithuanian Communist Party, two of Stalin and two of Felix Dzerzhinsky, head of the Russian KGB. There are many more personalities similarly doubled within the collection. As a result the statues lose their conviction as embodiments of these personalities by being unveiled as one of many of the same. This also has the comedic effect of turning the representations of great leaders into caricatures as they are no longer alone and solemn, but simply part of a bizarre cast of figures all afforded similar treatment in the park.²⁹ As Paul Williams posits this experience is especially true for a Western tourist as their only understanding of the sculptures in context is through in situ photographs which appear rather sporadically across the display.³⁰

Furthermore as Alexander Mcleod observes ‘seeing dozens of the things brought together makes you realise how ghastly they really were’.³¹ It is very apparent in their grouped status that the sculptures are not only commemorative statues but part of a remarkably coherent visual culture designed to communicate the ideology of the Communist Party. This is evidenced by the amount of statues which, generally speaking, are consistent in terms of style and iconographical features. The portrait busts of *Pranas Eidukevičius* and *Vladas Rekašius*, displayed side by side, are a case in point (figure 3). Despite being by different artists and created decades apart, in 1959 and 1981 respectively, these representations share the realist style and the solemn expression of concentration illustrated by the furrowed brow and gaze into the distance. In fact this stern appearance is evident in the majority of the statues, demonstrating a use of formulaic representation reminiscent of Byzantine icons. On another level, this particular iconographical device works to convey the represented characters’ sobriety, moral gravity and solemn

²⁹ C. Wight, ‘Contested National Tragedies: An Ethical Dimension’, in R. Sharpely, *The Dark Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism* (Bristol, 2009), 141.

³⁰ Williams, ‘Afterlife’, 191.

³¹ M. Pittaway, ‘Dealing with Dictatorship’, in C. Emsley (ed), *War, Culture and Memory* (Milton Keynes, 2003), 290.

dedication to communism. The clearly widespread use of these features exposes it as a consistent trope used by the Party to represent itself in a positive and admirable way. Consequently it is apparent that through the park the cult status of the representations as well as the Communist Party's means of representing itself are exposed.

The propagandist agenda of the sculptures evident in their assembly is further reinforced by their display in tandem with the mock 1940s culture house (figures 4 and 5). This propaganda museum consists of some 1.4 million exhibit items owned by the park.³² Their display offers a vast array of examples of propaganda echoed across different visual media such as graphic works, medals and film. The website claims, 'such a large concentration of monuments and sculptures of ideological content in a single exposition is a rare and maybe even unique phenomenon in the world'.³³ The aim is thereby 'to denounce the ideology of the Soviet propaganda culture'.³⁴ In all, the concentration of artifacts demonstrates the magnitude of the control over visual culture held by the state under socialism. In this way the park effectively discloses its negative content as part of a wider system of manipulation.

The attention afforded by the viewer to the statues in the context of the park is quite ironic as it is perhaps more than they would have received in situ. As Robert Musil formulated 'The remarkable thing about monuments is that one does not notice them. There is nothing in the world as invisible as a monument'.³⁵ This apparent negligence is largely attributable to the integration of such works within the daily urban landscape and the subsequent familiarity which leaves them for the most part unnoticed.³⁶ This convincing idea may shed doubt upon the earlier argument about the occupying power of monuments as justification for the reaction against them at the fall of a regime. Yet conversely it is precisely the status of statues as an everyday subliminal presence which makes their removal such an important step towards change and signifies Gamboni's

³² Grūtas Park website.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ P. Carrier, *Holocaust*, 15.

³⁶ Ibid.

‘break of communication’ so powerfully.³⁷ By putting the statues in the park setting where they are the direct focus a new meaning is negotiated. They no longer constitute a background force in shadowing daily reality but rather become objects directly exposed for analysis by the visitor.

In their new environment the statues are also geographically distanced from their original site. Moreover this location is not easily accessible. The park is situated in the countryside with no direct access by public transport as well as deliberately lacking signposts.³⁸ It has been suggested that rather than perceiving this as a failure from the stance of its commemorative efficacy, the difficulty of access should be regarded as meaningful and in fact a powerful mechanism of communication.³⁹ This is because the statues are thus physically and psychologically distanced from everyday life. In their new peripheral location the monuments are sectioned off from affecting daily routines in Lithuania thereby restricting their power.

Furthermore contextual associations are denied through this distance. The aforementioned *Lenin* statue originally stood gesturing towards the KGB headquarters in Vilnius. This building itself is significant as it can be viewed as a synecdoche of Soviet oppression over the Lithuanian people as this institution is notorious for its severe restrictions over public freedoms as well as imprisonment and torture of citizens.⁴⁰ In the new setting this former connection is not made explicit. As a result the sculpture is isolated and cut off from harmful associations. Williams argues that statues are therefore accessed by the visitor in this setting as if banished, ‘banishment suggests being cast to the wilderness – both politically and geographically – for being “out of step” with the dominant ideology’.⁴¹ Anne-Marie Losonczy conversely proposes the metaphor of a cemetery.⁴² This however suggests that the park is only commemorative and that the statues no longer carry meanings. Consequently Williams’ definition of banishment

³⁷ Gamboni, *Destruction*, 11.

³⁸ Chalmers, ‘Welcome to Stalin World’, 34.

³⁹ Williams, ‘Afterlife’, 190.

⁴⁰ J.J. Lennon and C. Wight, ‘Selective Interpretation and Eclectic Human Heritage in Lithuania’, *Tourism Management*, 28 (2007), 525.

⁴¹ Williams, ‘Afterlife’, 194.

⁴² Ibid.

appears more apt as it takes into account the constant renegotiation of memory as an ongoing process liable to change, so according to Carrier's idea of monuments as 'prisms of understanding'.⁴³

The sense of banishment is also clearly expressed in the unusual museological setting which imitates features of the Siberian Gulag. The park includes replica guard towers, a cattle cart, wooden footpaths and barbed wire fences (figures 6 and 7). This format renders the space thematical which lends gravity to the popular press name 'Stalin World'.⁴⁴ Malinauskas does not favour this title insisting 'there is no effort to make light of things, this is not Disney World'.⁴⁵ Yet, as Craig Wight observes, both are sites where the visitor enters a suspended reality.⁴⁶ The choice of this particular reality is especially significant for Lithuanians as it is estimated that under Stalin 200,000-300,000 of the population were deported to ease the process of collectivization and Sovietization from the initial occupation in 1941.⁴⁷ The Gulag therefore is a signifier associated with personal loss as well as loss of national collective identity through the removal of a nation's people. This is especially pertinent considering the severity of the statement by Mikhail Suslov, the Chair of the Central Committee Bureau for Lithuanian Affairs, 'there will be Lithuania without Lithuanians'.⁴⁸ Thus the park sets the statues within a context of one of the worst atrocities committed by their oppressors.

The immediate impression is that of retributive justice – the concept that these statues, in their capacity as personalities, alongside the regime in general embodied by its visual culture and values therein, are justly exiled there. This idea is reflected in the visitor experience with the sculptures displayed on a set walkway, each piece within their own separate clearing. This contrasts with the freedom exercised in more conventional sculpture parks where the visitor can roam around at their leisure. The set path evokes the idea of visiting the represented personality in their outdoor prison cells. Having these

⁴³ Carrier, *Holocaust*, 32.

⁴⁴ E. Conant, 'Building Stalin World' *Newsweek*, 02 March 2001, 20.

⁴⁵ D. Filipov, 'An outing at the gulag' *Boston Globe*, 16 March 2001, 5.

⁴⁶ Wight, 'Contested National Tragedies', 140.

⁴⁷ J.B. Sedaitis and S. Vardys, *Lithuania: The Rebel Nation* (New York, 1997), 60.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 73.

idealised portrayals in this historically tainted setting also exposes their idealisation as their presence there raises questions about the reality of the admirable qualities that they have been designed to reflect. In this way the museology seeks to support the park's agenda to disclose the negative content of the propaganda, as they are thus unequivocally accessed as disgraced statues of a fallen regime rather than solely sculptural exhibits.

Another effect of the themed museology is that the park is akin to a Soviet bubble. The gulag setting is complemented by the café serving Soviet-style food next to the Soviet-style playground where Soviet-era music is played over loudspeakers. The park further capitalises on this effect by staging mock performances annually on the 9th of May, the Soviet 'Victory Day' over Germany at the end of the Second World War.⁴⁹ These elements lend a sense of historical authenticity and thus conviction. Without this at least admittedly marketed representation of authenticity, as Wight suggests, such a site would be worthless.⁵⁰ This is because its educative aims would be undermined, stripping the communicated messages of integrity. The construction of authenticity suggests that the period represented has historical validity but also, in being historically valid, it is now part of history and firmly in the past. This allows the visitor to access the statues as part of a total 'other', completely separated from today's reality.⁵¹ This corresponds to Michel Foucault's notions of the use of history as *counter-memory* 'a transformation of history into a totally different time' which involves breaking the claim of permanency by exposing historical change.⁵² As the themed setting signifies the concept of historical change in representing itself as a contrast to the present, the sculptures can no longer be regarded as threatening today.

Through the representation of the period as a total 'other' it is furthermore implied that, as well as being historically distant, the statues are part of a foreign rather than a domestic heritage. This is perhaps why there are no such equivalent modes of display for the monuments of Nazi Germany. Lennon and Wight posit that visiting such a site it is a relatively comfortable experience for Lithuanians as it raises few questions about their

⁴⁹ Grūtas Park Website.

⁵⁰ Wight, 'Contested National Tragedies', 137.

⁵¹ Williams, 'Afterlife', 193.

⁵² D. Judovitz, 'Review: Michel Foucault: *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*', *MLN*, 93 (1978), 756-7.

own culpability and is rather an environment of ‘collective pity’.⁵³ According to their study of tourism in Lithuania this accounts for the significantly lower visitor numbers at the Jewish Museum in Vilnius compared to the nearby Museum of the Genocide Victims (MGV), which despite its name, makes no mention of the Holocaust of 200,000 Lithuanian Jews co-inflicted by their fellow ethnic Lithuanians.⁵⁴ The suffering of the people during occupation is not in question, though the Lithuanian historian Egidijus Aleksandravicius observes a nationalist desire for Lithuanians to see themselves as pristine people in its wake.⁵⁵ In Grūtas such wider civic dialogues regarding guilt are escaped through the relatively light hearted display.⁵⁶ By creating a Soviet bubble and a total other the park supports a simplistic binary relation between the monumentalised perpetrators of the foreign regime and the Lithuanian people who are thereby inevitably cast as victims.

A further effect of the new environment is that the statues are transformed from their autocratic function into consumable commodities for the general public.⁵⁷ This is ironic given the diametrically opposed values of communism, for which they were conceived, and capitalism which they now serve. In this way the new setting represents a particularly poignant method of devitalising the former power and significance of the monuments. It is important to note however that the park is not for profit with Malinauskas saying ‘‘I will never financially get back what I have put into it that is not what matters to me’’.⁵⁸ By selling its communist heritage in this way to an estimated 200,000 visitors each year the park nevertheless demonstrates an affiliation to democracy and thereby Lithuania’s new affiliation to the West.⁵⁹

⁵³ Lennon and Wight, ‘Selective Interpretation’, 529.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 528.

⁵⁵ J. Freedland, ‘I see why “Double Genocide” is a term Lithuanians want. But it appalls me’ *The Guardian*, 15 September 2010, 29.

⁵⁶ Williams, ‘Afterlife’, 195.

⁵⁷ G. Lankauskas, ‘Sensuous (Re)Collections: The Sight and Taste of Socialism at Grūtas Statue Park, Lithuania’, *The Senses and Society* 1 (2006), 45.

⁵⁸ S. Shapiro, *The Curtain Rises: Oral Histories of the Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe* (Jefferson: 2004), 175.

⁵⁹ L. Dapkas, ‘Stalin’s World Theme Park Draws Thousands’, *MSN*, 5 May 2006.
http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12635612/ns/travel-destination_travel/ accessed 12 January 2011.

Grūtas Park thus places Lithuania's Soviet era monuments within a clear interpretative framework. This inherently is not a neutral presentation but rather consists of a set of museological choices evidently seeking to construct particular meanings. However in affirming Lithuania's identity and attempting to convey that the statues and their former significance is no longer threatening it may be perceived that to some extent the statues are thereby transformed into counter-propaganda to this purpose.

b) Alternative Significations

Although the park's aim is to mark the end of communism through the exposition of its values, it is necessary to recognise however that there is no singular way of viewing the transformation of the statues in Grūtas Park. As Derrida formulates significations are the subject of a continuous process of deferral and meanings are not fixed.⁶⁰ Furthermore, in the words of Macdonald, 'meaning is dependent on a shared understanding of a given signifying system which is socially constructed'.⁶¹ If this understanding varies, as it inevitably does due to its being based on subjective experiences and situations, meanings will also vary.

From the park's very inception a pressure group named Labora consisting of a loose coalition of more than thirty organisations of former partisans, returned deportees, political prisoners and religious groups was formed in protest.⁶² In their view the statues' mode of display is offensive, rather than being an appropriate response. The outspoken critic and former health minister Juozas Galdikas states the view, 'what is the purpose of this park, to laugh at our pain?'⁶³ Galdikas and another well-known opponent Leonas Kerošerius maintain that the statues should have remained in state hands and that display at the MGTV, a rival competitor, would have been a more suitable option. This is because, as a more traditional museum setting, it would have the capacity to present the nation's

⁶⁰ S. Macdonald (ed), *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Oxford, 2006), 19.

⁶¹ Ibid, 18.

⁶² H. Jarvis, 'Welcome to Leninland', 6 September 1999.

<http://www.relaunch.tol.org/client/article/8189-welcome-to-leninland.html> accessed 11 January 2011.

⁶³ Ellick, 'Home', 27.

history in a more respectful and informative manner.⁶⁴ Thus though Malinauskas defends the park for its open approach to history- ‘now that we are free we must speak the truth and never allow this country to be occupied again’- it is apparent that Labora’s objection results largely from the form of presentation rather than the actual preservation of the monuments *per se*.⁶⁵

In their view the seemingly irrelevant playground and zoo trivialise the represented period, giving it an inappropriately carefree and playful atmosphere despite the dark associations of the historical setting. Its according position as an amusement attraction for tourists is thus considered an affront to the sixty-thousand surviving deportees in Lithuania.⁶⁶ Malinauskas conversely views the park and its museology as representing a means for healing following a national trauma, ‘people can come here and joke about these grim statues, this means that Lithuania is no longer afraid of communism’.⁶⁷ This idea holds some weight due to role of private humour during the occupied socialist years which became a means of personal resistance.⁶⁸ By introducing notions of parody and impersonation, this humour is brought into the open in the park so that in this space the people are granted victory over their tyrants.⁶⁹ Nevertheless according to Galdikas, ‘to Lithuanians a statue of Lenin is not just a statue of a man; it is a wound that will be sore as long as they live’.⁷⁰ From this particular understanding the park’s methods of display are ineffectual as the statues do not carry educative value or exotic authenticity, as they may do for younger visitors or foreign tourists, but instead are embedded with traumatic experiences and memory making comical renegotiations of meaning unlikely.

Labora’s view was additionally exacerbated by different meanings associated with the location of Grūtas which is situated on ground where Lithuanian resistance fighters fought the nine year partisan war between 1945 and 1954. One member states ‘genocide

⁶⁴ Ibid, 26.

⁶⁵ Shapiro, *Curtain*, 176.

⁶⁶ Jarvis, ‘Welcome to Leninland’.

⁶⁷ B. Smith, ‘Stalin’s world, mushroom mogul has monumental plan- gulag theme park: communist statues sprout in Lithuanian Swamp’ *Wall Street Journal Europe*, 24 July 2000, 1.

⁶⁸ Lankauskas, ‘Sensuous (Re)Collections’, 44.

⁶⁹ Williams, ‘After life’, 191.

⁷⁰ K. Connolly, ‘Lithuanians agog at Leninland proposal’ *Wall Street Journal*, 24 June 2000, 24.

makers should not stand on land soaked with the blood of partisans'.⁷¹ The site of the statues at Grūtas is considered highly inappropriate because of the meaning of this geographical space. The group attempted parliamentary action as well as undertaking hunger strikes to protest.⁷² These extreme measures convey the level of feeling against the park. It is thus clear that whilst to some the relocation signifies banishment and the castration of power, to others the statues continue to signify the perpetuation of the regime and its crimes thereby, as according to Keroserius, honouring its perpetrators.⁷³ Thus Grūtas' format is alienating, ironically to some of those arguably most moved by the occupation.

Nonetheless this is not the view shared conclusively by all those affected by the deportations as attested by the government poll which found that seventy percent of those Lithuanians asked were in favour of the theme park.⁷⁴ Grūtas is furthermore officially endorsed by the Lithuanian Genocide and Resistance Research centre who wrote the descriptions on the information boards.⁷⁵ In addition, during its realisation a government commission was established to ensure that sensitivity was maintained.⁷⁶ Consequently more controversial plans were barred such as a railway line running the 120 kilometres from Vilnius which would allow visitors to experience being transported to 'Siberia' by a mock cattle cart, herded by staff in KGB uniforms.⁷⁷ It is evident therefore that measures were taken to prevent the park taking its theme too far. From the reactions of Labora however it is equally apparent that 'too far' is a relative notion.⁷⁸

Another diverging set of meanings generated by the park to be considered is that of those who were affiliated with the Soviet regime as well as of those who lived through occupation and remember it as a continuation of the rest of their life. The notion of the daily life in the socialist years with both happy and sad times is brought into dispute by

⁷¹ Shapiro, *Curtain*, 175.

⁷² Connolly, 'Lithuanians agog', 24.

⁷³ Conant, 'Building Stalin World', 20.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Jarvis, 'Welcome to Leninland'.

⁷⁶ H. Jarvis, 'Baltic tourism set to thrive on Soviet culture' *Vilnius Times*, 20 February 2003, 10.

⁷⁷ Nelson, 'Miss the Soviet era?', 22.

⁷⁸ Gamboni, *Destruction*, 71.

the representation of this time as a ‘total system to be disposed of’ in Grūtas.⁷⁹ The effect of denying memory and thus identity in this way can, as Dubravka Ugrešić argues, stimulate feelings of nostalgia.⁸⁰ Lithuanian historian Ras Čepaitienė fears that collective memory of the Soviet past is beginning to be deceptive.⁸¹ Consequently the ‘otherness’ evoked in Grūtas may stray in signification from its intended meaning as a rejected past to an attractive alternative to the present. Referring to the park’s themed café he writes ‘Soviet sausages and such create the alleged impression the Soviet life was full and lovely, worthy of nostalgia’.⁸² Gedimas Lankauskas correspondingly suggests that it is particularly such sensory evocations of the past which spur such reminiscences.⁸³ Nostalgia is no doubt further motivated by ambivalence to the widespread changes generated by the move towards the West and democracy.⁸⁴ This has not necessarily been straightforward with a downturn in living standards and smaller pensions being some of the negative by-products of the transition.⁸⁵ To some the contrast of nostalgia to the otherwise coherently communicated messages in the park may engender ambiguous feelings regarding the meanings of the statues. To others the statues’ presence in the park therefore unequivocally becomes a signifier of loss rather than of liberation.

Overall it is evident that the altered location of the monuments within Grūtas Park transforms the significance of the statues. It is notable however, as Malcolm Miles suggested in his study on the signs of socialism, that the monuments are not wholly divested of their former meanings.⁸⁶ In fact it is apparent that it is these former meanings and diverged intentions of the pieces which ultimately shape the new inference of the sculptures within a system of difference by means of contrast. The transformations at Grūtas therefore represent a renegotiation of the statues’ meanings rather than the formation of entirely new values. Thus the success of the park as a third alternative impinges on the original signification of the statues which naturally varies from person to

⁷⁹ Williams, ‘Afterlife’, 193.

⁸⁰ Pittaway, ‘Dealing with Dictatorship’, 278.

⁸¹ Digrytė, ‘Istorikė’.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Lankauskas, ‘Sensuous (Re)Collections’, 27.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 45.

⁸⁵ Shapiro, *Curtain*, 177.

⁸⁶ M. Miles, *Art and Theory after Socialism* (Bristol, 2008), 55.

person depending on their age, experiences, economic situations, political affiliations and the current situation more broadly. This, in the light of relocation as iconoclasm, means that Grūtas can be regarded, following Gamboni's formulation, as 'a constructive destructive act' in the way it reinterprets the available material to communicate new values.⁸⁷ In the light of its aims however this is not always a foolproof result.

⁸⁷ Gamboni, *Destruction*, 65.

Section 2.

In What Ways are the Grūtas Park Statues Art Historically Significant?

While illuminating studies regarding the cultural implications of Grūtas Park are beginning to emerge, discussion regarding the sculptural works themselves is lacking. Yet the preservation of the statues, even before exposing their ideological content, is the park's original founding purpose. Furthermore an exploration of the collection in Grūtas Park helps to shed art historical light upon the role of Soviet monuments generally and more specifically in Lithuania, as well as questioning some of the existing stigma and stereotypes popularly surrounding Soviet monuments as part of communism's cultural output. It is useful to bear in mind however that the group is an arbitrary collection of what survived in Lithuania and therefore a somewhat random sample of a much larger body of works.

This art historical significance is firstly evident however in some of the unusual representations in the park. *Lenin* by Petrulis (figure 8) depicts the leader seated in a relaxed fashion with one leg crossing the other. This contrasts the common mode of representation in which he appears erect either in a haranguing pose or with his hands behind his back, of which there are two nearly identical examples in Grūtas (figures 9-10). Such conventions were standardized under Stalin in the 1925 decree for the correct manufacture of Lenin statues following the leader's death in 1924 by a newly founded 'Committee for the Immortalization of Lenin's Memory'.⁸⁸ Correspondingly, amongst the thousands of Lenin monuments created during this period there are only three known pieces in which he is not standing.⁸⁹ Representing Lenin as alert and active serves to support his status as an intellectual and revolutionary leader, which was thus evidently important. This seated *Lenin* however was situated in a context in which the more leisurely pose was apparently considered almost uniquely appropriate; Druskininkai, a Lithuanian spa resort.⁹⁰ The preservation of this piece is therefore interesting in

⁸⁸ Michalski, *Public Monuments*, 115.

⁸⁹ Ellick, 'Home', 28.

⁹⁰ Malinauskas, 'Audio Guide'.

elucidating the unique circumstances under which straying from the 'norms' of representation could be acceptable. Furthermore it shows a different side to the Soviet visual language and, because of the way the iconography fits the context, it suggests a level of humour not usually associated with this imposing art.

Another unusual piece is the double portrait of *Lenin and Mickevičius-Kapsukas* by Bogdanas (figure 11). Mickevičius-Kapsukas, arguably the most prolific Lithuanian protagonist of the Communist Party, is represented passively holding his coat and hat while Lenin takes an active role with finger pointed as if engaged in discussion. Facing Lenin with his head cocked Mickevičius-Kapsukas appears to listen intently, suggesting his respect for Lenin and furthermore the importance of the ideas being expressed. In addition to such representation, the statue was also physically altered to stress a particular interaction between these two national identities. Although originally sculpted as according to life, the sculptor was ordered by the Moscow Sculpture Council's quality control to be changed because the Lithuanian appeared taller than the Russian. Bogdanas comments, 'Lenin was ideologically higher, we had to solve this'.⁹¹ In response Lenin's legs were lengthened, accounting for their now slightly awkward appearance, but nevertheless clearly communicating the Russian's superiority over the Lithuanian. In its original context this was important as it was created in order to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Vilnius University.⁹² Thus the statue clearly reflects the occupier's desire to affiliate itself with the occupied's achievement. The statue therefore demonstrates the means used to communicate power relationships in the USSR as well as the importance of legibly emphasizing Lithuania's subordination. It was indeed likely due to the blatancy of this message that the sculpture was violently beheaded during nationalist protests in 1991 following Lithuania's ignored declaration of independence.⁹³

Gamboni maintains that the treatment of communist era monuments in ex-communist states depends heavily upon the way in which the regime was instated and upheld in that

⁹¹ Ellick, 'Home', 28.

⁹² Malinauskas, 'Audio Guide'.

⁹³ Ellick, 'Home', 28.

place.⁹⁴ Thus the particularly violent cultural repression in the Baltics by the USSR accounts for the wide scale violence and often conclusive destruction of monuments there. In neighbouring Latvia for example many were melted down to be made into souvenir bells, whilst the *Lenin* which stood in Valka was ritually submerged into a marshland.⁹⁵ Gamboni's view is of course limited as the display of statues in Grūtas is a clear exception to the rule. Nevertheless, besides a small private collection in Poland, it is the only park of its kind in a formerly occupied state – the other Soviet sculpture parks are located in the former Eastern Bloc, the Szobor 'Memento' Park in Budapest and Russia's Muzeon Park of Arts in Moscow.⁹⁶ Thus observations regarding the sculptures in Grūtas may be used to suggest similar relationships of power between the occupier and the occupied in other countries which cannot offer this possibility due to destruction or inaccessibility. This makes statues such as the telling representation of the relationship between the Lithuania and its oppressor evidenced in *Lenin and Mickevičius-Kapsukas* even more valuable.

Gender is another aspect within Soviet art which is lacking in research but for which the sculptures at Grūtas are illuminating. Though the Soviet constitution declared equality between the sexes, in practice this was not necessarily effective and women did not tend to reach the highest levels of the Party.⁹⁷ Monumental portraits of women are therefore uncommon and correspondingly there are only three such pieces in Grūtas. Marija Melnikaitė however, though not a Party-member, has two representations (figures 12-13) in honour of her martyrdom whilst aiding Red Army soldiers battling against Germany.⁹⁸ Both pieces are characterized by dynamic poses with legs astride and arms outstretched. This rousing and inspirational gesture expresses her status as a Lithuanian-communist hero and resembles Vera Mukhina's heroic allegorical statue of the *Worker and Collective Farm Girl* for the 1937 Soviet Pavilion (figure 14). As a result, rather than being commemorative the *Melnikaitė* pieces seem to function as generalized types of

⁹⁴ Gamboni, *Destruction*, 54.

⁹⁵ BNS, 'Head of Lenin mushrooms near border', *Baltic Times*, 19 July 2001.
<http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/5218/> accessed 18 April 2001.

⁹⁶ Malinauskas, 'Audio Guide'.

⁹⁷ S. Reid, 'The New Soviet Woman and the Leader Cult in Soviet Art' in M. Ilic, *Women in the Stalin Era*, (Basingstoke, 2001) 94.

⁹⁸ Malinauskas, 'Audio Guide'.

exemplary heroism despite being based on an actual person.⁹⁹ Such forms of representation are notably absent in the male personages. The only apparent exception in the collection is Tomskey's *Lenin* (figure 2). Lenin however fulfilled a unique role as the supreme icon of the Communist Party. His identity and cult was so strongly asserted that he too, like Melnikaitė, represents a generalized type but of himself rather than of idealized Lithuanian, female Soviet heroism. Overall therefore the *Melnikaitė* depictions embody differing concerns to the monuments of male figures. The lack of emphasis on Melnikaitė's physical womanly features such as the breasts or hips disguised by the thick overcoat furthermore further transform her into a type by thereby reflecting the prescriptions of the ideal proletarian woman. This is defined by Cullerne-Bown and Taylor as 'full of masculinity as well as femininity'.¹⁰⁰

The representation of *Stefania Greičiūtė* (figure 15), killed by Lithuanian resistance fighters aged nineteen, additionally demonstrates the differing gendered interests.¹⁰¹ This simple relief contrasts to *Melnikaitė* in form. By comparing it to the relief of *Antanas Sniečkus* however (figure 16), it is clear that Greičiūtė's image again more reflects an idea rather than a person. This is apparent in the great level of attention given to realistically capturing the facial features of Sniečkus compared to the generalised stylisation of Greičiūtė's wherein her image is essentially comprised of symmetrical shapes with nearly no suggestion of individuality. Through the apparent hesitancy to depict both *Melnikaitė* and *Greičiūtė* with commemorative integrity compared to their male counterparts there is an implication that the identities of these women were constructed in subservience to their convenience as exemplars.

Though not every sculpture is as unusual and enlightening with regard to issues of gender or power, as a collection however Grūtas equally facilitates stylistic analysis of the Soviet

⁹⁹ The iconography of Tomskey's *Lenin* is based upon Sergei Eisenstein's 1927 film *October* of Lenin addressing the masses in St Petersburg in 1917 on his return from exile see Michalski, *Public Monuments*, 116.

¹⁰⁰ M. Cullerne Bown and B. Taylor (eds), *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917-1992* (Manchester, 1993), 79.

¹⁰¹ Malinauskas, 'Audio Guide'.

art, which makes the stereotype that it is homogenous appear overly generalised.¹⁰² This can be evidenced when comparing the Deltuva's *Dzerzhinsky* and *Grigas* by Lukoservičius (figures 17-18). In the former the streamlined bronze figure is characterized by an impenetrable smoothness. The body has been absorbed into the simplified contours of the overcoat while the face is made up of angular cavities. In contrast Lukoservičius' work appears to be cut rather roughly in stone with an emphasis on unsmoothed rock in its position on the central axis of the piece while the face consists of boldly articulated shapes with little concern for nuanced detail. Thus not only do both pieces differ from socialist realism in its most conservative form, which is concerned with presenting an illusion of naturalism in its attention to detail - as embodied by the *Lenin* and *Mickevičius-Kapsukas* - but both pieces vary considerably too. This clearly evidences veritable stylistic heterogeneity within the bounds of realism.

By viewing the statues in order of age (see appendix a) it is additionally apparent that increasing stylisation is linked to changes over time. The Grūtas collection contains representatives from almost sixty years of sculptural history, in which a general trend of more progressive and expressive experimentations begins to be visible in pieces from the sixties and develops largely in the seventies. These changes appear tied to concessions made following the death of Stalin in 1953 and Khrushchev's apology. This allowed a greater freedom of expression to emerge in the Baltics, as preserved in the Grūtas collection which is largely made up of work by Lithuanian artists.¹⁰³ This contrasts to the Russian school which generally remained more conservative.¹⁰⁴ There are naturally exceptions to the trend as in *Lenin* and *Mickevičius-Kapsukas* which remains faithful to, albeit doctored, naturalism despite its relatively late date of 1979. Nonetheless, this probably results from Moscow's special interest and subsequent control over this particular commission. By the eighties however it appears that even the most rigidly standardised iconographies could be subject to adaptation, as evidenced in the 1983 *Lenin* by Jokūbonis (figure 19). This quite radical departure from the standard representation exemplifies what the Lithuanian sculpture school achieved over time even within the

¹⁰² Cullerne Bown and Taylor, 3.

¹⁰³ Ellick, 'Home', 29.

¹⁰⁴ Lane, 'Lithuania', 180.

constraints required by the Party to represent its ideological content. The Grūtas collection is thus important in showing that there is a perceivable history of Soviet art in Lithuania set apart from the course of Russian art which makes it worthy of exploration in its own right.

Another possibility afforded by studying the collection as a group is comparing artists' styles. The collaboration between Vyšniauskas and Petrulis in the *Four Communards* (figure 20) depicts four Lithuanian communist workers shot by the Germans. Using the other works in the park by Vyšniauskas and Petrulis it is possible to distinguish each artist's contribution. The erect stance and elongated stylisations in the figure on the far right mirrors that of the *Kryžkalnis Mother* or 'Mother of the Cross Hill' (figure 21) thereby firmly attributing it to Vyšniauskas. Though not as stiff, the mid-right figure shows the same expressively modelled clothing and pursed facial features, though there is still great individualisation. The two left figures appear by contrast more conservative in their realistic proportions and more exacting details, which accords to the style consistently observable in the works by Petrulis, the seated *Lenin*, *Eidukevičius* (figure 3) and *M. Kozlovskis* (figure 22). Such observations of course suffer more broadly from the limitations of connoisseurial inquiry in that they assume that an artist's style is essentially distinctive and would not change according to the context of a commission or according to the compositional demands of the work itself.¹⁰⁵ Comparing the different portrayals of *Lenin* by Jokūbonis (figures 9 and 19) exemplifies this in the contrast between faithful social realism and smooth stylisation. Nevertheless there are visible differences between the work of Vyšniauskas and Petrulis which, alongside the aforementioned considerable stylistic variance, supports the role of a usually neglected aspect in Soviet art, that of the artist.

Issues regarding the role of artists and the statues' status as art in the park emerged in 2007 when seven of the forty-six known artists of the statuary in Grūtas won a lawsuit which entitled them to six percent of the royalties made by the park for the display of

¹⁰⁵ M. Hatt and C. Klonk, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods* (Manchester, 2006), 60.

their work therein by the Lithuanian Copyright Protection Association.¹⁰⁶ Despite this Malinauskas argued that this was unjust considering that this art was ‘created under an occupant regime used to terrorise people’s minds’.¹⁰⁷ Though Malinauskas claims the importance of their preservation- ‘the history of the nation, no matter how painful it might be, cannot be destroyed, it must not be destroyed’- this is stated in relation to their role as historical documents, preserving a record of the time while their value as art is left ambiguous.¹⁰⁸ The view that the statues are not of artistic value is furthermore reflected in the park itself in their function communicating particular messages and essentially as counter-propaganda. This is further reinforced by the information presented in the descriptions and in the audio guide, which is almost exclusively about the represented personalities or aspects of communist life while making almost no mention of artists, artistic form or style. The sculptures are therefore denied of artistic status or credit.

This however follows the modern Western view of art which, as according to Jan Hoet ‘can only be created in absolute freedom’.¹⁰⁹ It is for this reason, alongside the inevitably negative connotations of its endorsement by an oppressive regime, that Golomstock perceives the general attitude to be one where totalitarian art is often deemed unworthy of research.¹¹⁰ In addition it may also be due to the aforementioned tendency to regard it as lacking in innovation. Michalski articulates this, ‘if communism’s main failing was that quantity did not translate into quality the same observation might be made in the domain of monuments, the percentage of original or even laudably quixotic solutions is very small...’.¹¹¹ Though this view has some truth, as discussed with regards to the consistency of iconography, it is predominantly reductive in judging the monument’s ‘quality’ on the basis of their originality and fails to consider other values attained by Soviet art which do not pertain directly to artistic freedom but rather its social and ideological role.¹¹² Groys describes this:

¹⁰⁶ L. Dapkas, ‘Stalin World Statues trigger copyright dispute’, *Associated Press*, 14 February 2007.
http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-29607107_ITM accessed 19 April 2011.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Malinauskas, ‘Audio Guide’.

¹⁰⁹ Gamboni, *Destruction*, 89

¹¹⁰ Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art*, ix.

¹¹¹ Michalski, *Public Monuments*, 132.

¹¹² M. Cullerne Bown, *Art under Stalin* (Oxford, 1991), 17.

The world promised by the leaders of the October revolution was not merely supposed to be a more just one, or one that would provide greater economic security but it was also, and perhaps in even greater measure, supposed to be beautiful. The chaotic unordered life was to be replaced by one of harmony, order and according to a unified artistic plan.¹¹³

This understanding of Soviet art is informative as it judges Soviet art by its own standards. Conversely Hoet's view would deny forms of art which are today considered as valuable, such as Byzantine icons which equally hold values pertaining to social purpose and coherency but a lack of freedom and originality. A wider and more all-encompassing definition of art is thus required in order to appreciate the art historical significance of the statues in Grūtas Park as well as of Soviet art more generally.

Matters are further complicated for the Lithuanian collection in Grūtas because the pieces accord to differing standards and definitions of art. There is a mixture of an overriding realism and consistency, so that they appear coherent as a group and representative of Soviet utopian ideology, coupled with the clear artistic input and evident engagement with stylistic variations striving towards greater artistic freedom. In consequence the pieces can neither be truly used as a defence of Soviet art's uniform approach nor do they truly stand out as sparks of originality within the western canon. The contradictory values embodied in the sculptures account for their ambiguous status and make assessment of their art historical significance challenging. However these idiosyncratic results cause the monuments to stand apart, reflecting work characteristic of the Lithuanian Soviet sculpture school and the peculiar nature of art created under occupation.

Overall the preservation of the statues in Grūtas, although it is an admittedly arbitrary selection of what survived, allows informative observations in terms of style and content, both as individual pieces as well as when viewed as a collection. Their social purpose, above all, means that the statues bear direct and indirect witness to the times in which they were created. It is also evident however that more research is required to make more

¹¹³ B. Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-garde, Aesthetic, Dictatorship and Beyond* (Princeton, 1992), 3.

conclusive and thorough judgements. This would place these statues in the context of all art created under European communism: in Russia, in other occupied states both liberated and those now under neo-communist regimes, as well as the art created in the Eastern bloc and under other communist regimes around the world. Yet, as according to Groys, this would be the subject of many books.¹¹⁴ It would also be challenging considering that it is estimated that only one tenth of surviving pieces are on display while storage predominantly remains undocumented.¹¹⁵ Cullerne Bown correspondingly describes the situation, ‘what the art historian sees is a neglected piece of woodland where, instead of tall trees the predominant features are small tree stumps’.¹¹⁶ Perhaps with greater historical distance eschewing current stigma and revised judgement these stumps will eventually grow into a forest.

¹¹⁴ Groys, *Total Art*, 3.

¹¹⁵ Cullerne Bown, *Art*, 9.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

In conclusion it is evident that Grūtas Park, as a third alternative between destruction and neglect, is peculiar in a number of respects. This is firstly evident in the disparity between the two main aims of the park: preservation and exposition. Despite the former, it is apparent that to a large extent the statues are not considered as art even though they essentially appear in a sculpture park. As discussed however, the transformation of the meaning of the statues in the park is dependent upon their former signification. Thus their current position corresponds to their previous social purpose as propaganda.

The relocation of the statues in the park also transforms their meanings in order to undermine their former power, lay bare their ideological content, demonstrate that they are no longer threatening and affiliate today's Lithuania with different values. In Grūtas the sculptures are consequently above all treated as historical evidence to construct particular meanings about the past. This is nonetheless but one selected interpretation of the history and in using the statues to propagate this as Wight suggests, 'the park can be seen as the final chapter in a long era of subverted cultural values and coerced political obedience'.^{117 118}

The museology is furthermore unusual in the combination between the dark nature of the historical setting and the more light hearted aspects. While the latter perhaps prevents the park from becoming overly didactic it also transforms Grūtas into an amusement attraction. For some the irreverent, themed setting may therefore engender feelings of nostalgia for this lost era while for others it exploits the country's dark past for the purpose of tourism. In the latter view the museology serves to mask the true implications and horrors of the occupation. It is therefore apparent that the park is suspended in a curious position between being overly authoritarian, thereby excluding other views of history, whilst equally not being explicit enough for others. As a third alternative Grūtas is therefore not a perfect solution.

¹¹⁷ Wight, 'Contested National Tragedies', 141.

¹¹⁸ Lennon and Wight, 'Selective Interpretation, 520.

In viewing monuments as ‘prisms of understanding’ however, as well as regarding iconoclasm as meaningful, this predicament is informative of current ambivalence and uncertainty with regards to the legacy of communism in Lithuania.¹¹⁹ Ultimately it demonstrates the difficulty of dealing with a past, which, in the words of Machanon, is ‘so recent and so painful’.¹²⁰ The ambiguous position of the statues themselves, suspended between two contradictory definitions of art, one according to artistic freedom and the other social purpose, equally reflects this.

Since the park’s opening changes in attitude have already occurred in Lithuania with regard to the communist past which shows the current relevancy of the issues discussed. In 2009 the Soviet Bunker museum opened to coincide with Vilnius’ status as European Capital of Culture. Its aim is making the country’s youth and western tourists ‘feel’ what it was like under occupation.¹²¹ With the primary feature being role-playing KGB officers it appears that previously unacceptable notions have been reconsidered as appropriate today. Its heavy-handed approach responds directly to notions of nostalgia which emerge from the display of the statues at Grūtas Park, implying the actual threat that this is perceived to pose in Lithuanian society.¹²² As the majority of the sculptures are now halfway through their twenty-year loan from the government it will be revealing to see at this point how the monuments’ situation will have changed and how this reflects attitudes towards them in terms of what they represent and their statuses as art in the future.¹²³

Overall I would mirror Miles in saying ‘I am aware that I am a foreigner’.¹²⁴ This undoubtedly limits my comprehension of the deeper complexities of the situation. Furthermore it is necessary to recognise that the park and the ideas discussed perhaps have little impact on the everyday lives of the majority of Lithuanians. It is dubitable that

¹¹⁹ Carrier, *Holocaust*, 32 and Williams, ‘Afterlife’, 185, 196.

¹²⁰ C. McHanon, ‘Stalin World owner sees red at critics’ *Chicago Tribune*, 22 January 2002, 8.

¹²¹ Hancox, D., ‘Lithuania’s Soviet Nostalgia: back in the USSR’, *The Guardian*, 1 May 2011.
http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2011/may/01/lithuania-soviet-nostalgia-theme-parks?CMP=tw_t_fd
accessed 3 May 2011.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Williams, ‘Afterlife’, 188.

¹²⁴ Miles, ‘Appropriating the Ex-Cold war’, 55.

they actively consider Grūtas Park on a daily basis, as living in the present is naturally the priority. Nevertheless what is important is that the existence of the park is a means of reflecting present understandings of the past. It offers the possibility to engage with these issues and opens a forum for discussion and debate rather than denying it and denying history.

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***Note on Lithuanian Sources:** Information taken from online press articles in the Lithuanian language have been translated with the help of Karolis Kairelis.

List of Illustrations

All works are situated in Grūtas Park unless otherwise stated.

1. N. Tomksy, *Lenin*, Lukiškių Square, Vilnius (1952-1990).
2. N. Tomksy, *Lenin*, (1952).
3. N. Petrulis *Pranas Eidukevičius* (1959) and L. Žuklys, *Vladas Rekašius*, (1981).
4. Grūtas Park, *View of 1940s Culture House*.
5. Grūtas Park, *View of 1940s Culture House*.
6. Grūtas Park, *View of mock wooden footpath*.
7. Grūtas Park, *View of mock guard tower*.
8. N. Petrulis, *Lenin*, (1981).
9. G. Jokūbonis, *Lenin*, (1976).
10. R. Antinis, J. Kėdainis, N. Petrulis and K. Švasžas, *Lenin*, (1975).
11. K. Bogdanas *Lenin* and *Vincas Mickevičius-Kapsukas* (1959).
12. J. Mikėnas, *Marija Melnikaitė*, (1955).
13. R. Antinis, *Marija Melnikaitė*, (1952).
14. V. Mukhina, *Worker and Collective Farm Girl*, Soviet Pavilion, Exposition Internationale, Paris (1937).
15. M. Narburas, *Stefania Greičiūtė*, (1966).
16. G. Jokūbonis, *Antanas Sniečkus*, (1975).
17. P. Deltuva, *Felix Dzerzhinsky* (1981).
18. D. Lukosavičius, *Bronius Grigas*, (1966)
19. G. Jokūbonis, *Lenin*, (1983).
20. N. Petrulis and B. Vyšniauskas, *Four Communards*, (1975).
21. B. Vyšniauskas, *Kyržkalis Mother*, (1972).
22. N. Petrulis, *M. Kozlovskis*, (1976).

Illustrations



Figure 1. N. Tomskey, *Lenin*, (1952-1990). Lukiškių Square, Vilnius.



Figure 2. Tomskey, *Lenin*, (1952).



Figure 3. L. Žuklys , *Vladas Rekašius*, (1981). N.Petrulis *Pranas Eidukevičius* (1959).



Figure 4. Grūtas Park. View of 1940s Culture House.



Figure 5 Grūtas Park. *View of 1940s Culture House.*



Figure 6 Grūtas Park, *View of mock-wooden footpaths.*



Figure 7 Grūtas Park, *View of mock-watch tower.*



Figure 8. Petrulis, *Lenin*, (1981).



Figure 9 (left) G. Jokūbonis, *Lenin*, (1976).

Figure 10 (right) R. Antinis, J. Kėdainis, N. Petrulis and K. Švasžas, *Lenin*, (1975)



Figure 11. K. Bogdanas *Lenin and Vincas Mickevičius-Kapsukas* (1959), Grūtas Park



Figure 12 (left) J. Mikėnas, *Marija Melnikaitė*, (1955).



Figure 13 (right) Antinis, *Marija Melnikaitė*, (1952).



Figure 14. V. Mukhina, *Worker and Collective Farm Girl*, Soviet Pavilion, Exposition Internationale, Paris (1937).



Figure 15 (left) M. Narburas, *Stefania Greičiūtė*, (1966).



Figure 16 (right) Jokūbonis, *Antanas. Sniečkus*, (1975).



Figure 17. P. Deltuva, *Dzerzhinsky* (1981).



Figure 18. D. Lukoservičius, *Bronius Grigas*, (1966).



Figure 19. Jokūbonis, *Lenin*, (1983).



Figure 20. Petrulis and Vyšniauskas, *Four Communards*, (1975).



Figure 21. Vyšniauskas, *Kyržkalnis Mother*, (1972).

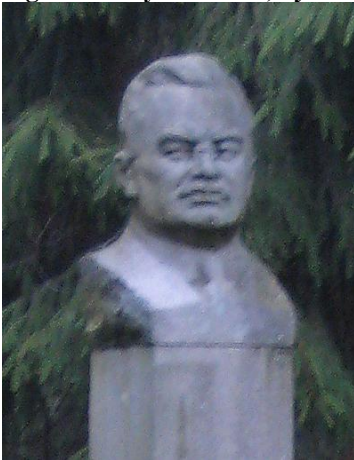


Figure 22. Petrulis, *M. Kozlovskis*, (1976).

Appendix A.

Selected Catalogue of Statues at Grūtas in Order of Age*

Figure			
i.	D. Merkurovas,	<i>Dzerzhinsky</i>	1930
ii.	A.I. Penkovas and German Prisoners of War	<i>Russian Soldier</i>	1947
iii.	N. Tomsy	<i>Stalin</i>	1950
iv.	N. Tomsy	<i>Waving Lenin</i>	1952
v.	R. Antinis	<i>Melnikaitė</i>	1952
vi.	J. Mikėnas	<i>Melnikaitė</i>	1955
vii.	Ptorius	<i>Mickevičius- Kapsukas</i>	1958
viii.	N. Petrulis	<i>Eidukevičius</i>	1959
ix.	P. Vaivada	<i>Mickevičius- Kapsukas</i>	1962
x.	M Narburas	<i>Greičiūtė</i>	1966
xi.	D. Lukoservičius	<i>Grigas</i>	1966
xii.	K. Švasžas	<i>Požėla</i>	1971
xiii.	B. Vyšniauskas	<i>Kryžkalnis Mother</i>	1972
xiv.	P. Vaivada	<i>Uborevičius</i>	1974
xv.	Petrulis & B. Vyšniauskas	<i>Four Communards</i>	1975
xvi.	N. Petrulis, K. Švasžas J. Kėdainis & R. Antinis	<i>Lenin</i>	1975
xvii.	N. Petrulis	<i>Sniečkus</i>	1975
xviii.	Jokunbonis	<i>Sniečkus</i>	1975
xix.	N.Petrulis	<i>Kozlovskis</i>	1976
xx.	L. Žuklys	<i>Meskupas Adonas</i>	1976
xxi.	Gediminas Jokūbonis	<i>Lenin</i>	1976
xxii.	D. Lukoservičius	<i>Baltušis – Zemaitis</i>	1976
xxiii.	Aigalat	<i>Preikšas</i>	1978
xxiv.	K. Bogdanas	<i>Lenin and Mickevičius- Kapsukas</i>	1979
xxv.	J. Narušis	<i>Mickevičius- Kapsukas</i>	1980
xxvi.	P. Deltuva	<i>Dzerzhinsky</i>	1981
xxvii.	N. Petrulis	<i>Seated Lenin</i>	1981
xxviii.	A. Zokaitis & J. Kalinauskas	<i>To Soviet Underground Partisans</i>	1983
xxix.	Gediminas Jokūbonis	<i>Lenin</i>	1983
xxx.	L. Kerbelis (Russian)	<i>Karl Marx</i>	1986

* Selection made on the basis of those statues where both the artist and date are cited alongside the work in Grūtas Park.



i.



ii.



iii.



iv.



v.



vi.



vii.



viii.



ix.



x.



xi.



xii.



xiii.



xiv.



xv.



xvi.



xvii.



xviii.



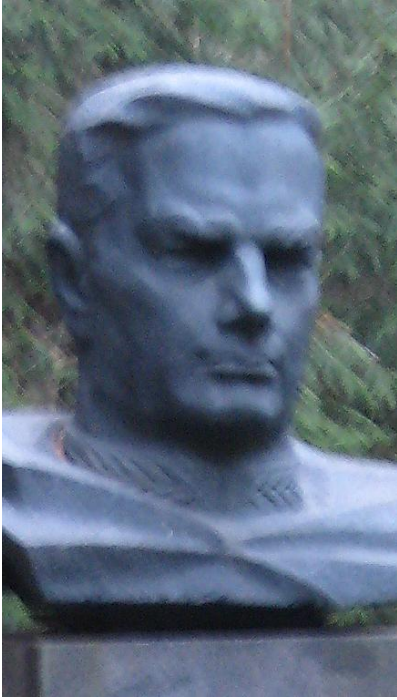
xix.



xx.



xxi..



xxii.



xxiii.



xxiv.



xxv.



xxvii.



xxviii.



xxviii



xxix.



xxx.

Appendix B.

Park Map

