



## Monuments, Memory, and Mutating Public Space: Some Initiatives in Vilnius

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### Abstract

**Recent movements to endow public spaces in Vilnius with meaning via monument-building initiatives have been attended by inevitable paradoxes. On the one hand, the media extol the significance of certain events or persons; on the other, we hear assertions about the indeterminacy and inconstancy of any collective identity, which seemingly casts doubt on the need for any uniform national (or any other) representation. This creates difficulties in conceiving of forms of public art equally acceptable to all or a public representational space that unifies the national community. The article discusses how monuments transcend their function of simply being a cultural marker or decorative accent and emphasizes that questions of immortalizing the past in a democratic society be solved through public discussion in a maximally transparent public environment and not governed merely by political or financial power.**

Recent actions to endow public space in Vilnius with meaning via monument-building initiatives have, inevitably, been attended by paradoxes. On the one hand, media extol the significance of certain events or persons: such hyperbole not only marks the start of constructing a new monument, but is also reflected in paeans to the symbolic and "exceptional" functions of central urban spaces. On the other hand, we often hear assertions about the indeterminacy and inconstancy of any collective identity, which seemingly casts doubt on the need for any uniform national (or any other) representation. This makes it difficult to conceive forms of public art equally acceptable to all, or a public representational space that unifies the national community. The objective of achieving a stylistic unity of a public space, often declared by urbanists to be an indisputably obvious precondition of urban development, is held by other participants in that space - often appealing to a democratic, constantly changing, and unpredictable way of daily life - to possess no priority whatsoever. Thus the study of places of remembrance unavoidably throws up dilemmas between, on the one hand, the "correct" historical narrative justifying the monument's political significance and, on the other, the currently popular "critical school," which recognizes public space<sup>1</sup> that is open and independent of all "repressive" forms of traditional historical narrative or offers distinctions between "art" and "monument"<sup>2</sup> or choices between "traditional" and contemporary ("multifunctional") conceptions of monument<sup>3</sup>, between "space" and "things,"<sup>4</sup> and so on.

Since daily political life expresses itself in permanently conflicting interests, it is not surprising that priorities in the creation of public squares and monuments become hostage to differences in artistic taste as well as to political pressures, collisions, and ideological rhetoric. Contemporary theories of identity, which testify to a multifarious and equivocal cultural memory, in practice end up being of little use, because final decisions about the purpose of representational spaces are not made by theorists of culture. How many other monuments to Liberty or to our nation's unity should be built in our country? Who are the most important persons to be remembered? What are the occasions not to be forgotten? By what criteria should competitions for memorial statues be judged? All of these questions inevitably become political issues.<sup>5</sup> The selectivity of efforts to immortalize the past is well illustrated by the contrasting opinions flaring up in the media about what needs to be shown, and seen, in public. The irregularly changing viewpoints about these things are expanded upon when one or another opinion, national hero, or date is unexpectedly brought to the fore, even as others are temporarily forgotten. Even though the cultural media have not spared irony in their comments on the anachronistic form of the representative

monuments that have arisen in Vilnius over the last few decades while sponsors have praised them, historical memory and public space cannot be reduced to two positions, that of "monument enthusiasts" on the one side, and that of skeptical cultural critics on the other. As time goes by, ideologically motivated oppositions undergo change themselves.

Recently, the public sphere has been filled with discussions about preserving the Soviet heritage versus the appearance of "retrograde" national monuments. In the latter context, there has also been discussion about a monument in Lukiškių Square in memory of those who struggled for the nation's freedom and suffered from Soviet repression. The need for a new, nationally significant monument at this location arose precisely because, during Soviet times, Lukiškių Square was one of the main official plazas and the one where the Lenin Statue stood. During the subsequent period of independence, several competitions for giving the square a new appearance were announced, but unfortunately, so far none of them has succeeded. The preservation of Soviet heritage has become a topic of discussion. For example, from 2010 onwards, there have been emotionally charged discussions in the media about whether and how the sculptures on the Žalioji tiltas (The Green Bridge) should be torn down or preserved. They are Socialist Realist in style, embody totalitarian art, and recall the former ideology. Many and highly diverse opinions, reflecting different viewpoints on this topic, have been expressed.<sup>6</sup> According to the political scientist Justinas Dementavičius, discussions about monuments relevant to national communities "do not just result from certain ideological visions, but also represent, directly or indirectly, relationships to other historical narratives."<sup>7</sup> Hence, questions about the artistic form of monuments to cultural memory would require broader historical treatment, embracing both philosophical reflections on public space and a view of how dominant political discourses have changed. In this article, emphasizing the historical narratives popularized in public forums, I deal briefly with two things: in the context of the failures related to Lukiškių Square, I discuss the functions of representative squares and, with reference to the disagreements about the fate of the Green Bridge sculptures, issues relating to Soviet heritage.



*Lukiškių Square, Vilnius, 2013,  
the object of numerous discussions on  
memory  
and monuments in public spaces.  
Photo by Almantas Samalavičius.*

### ***The Problem of Representative Squares: Public Spaces for Recreation or Official Ceremonies?***

As distinct from multifunctional public spaces in totalitarian societies, those in democratic societies constantly brim with a variety of human behavior and possibilities for change. The many purposes of public squares are exemplified by main city plazas, which can easily become places for short-term commercial markets, theme parades, political and professional strikes, or active rest and recreation. For instance, all these functions (not just those directly related to its being a street) are served by Gediminas Avenue in Vilnius. And Vilnius's Cathedral Plaza is the churchyard of Lithuania's most significant Roman Catholic church, but when needed, it becomes the site for strictly regimented official state parades and even the inauguration of Lithuanian presidents. Cathedral Plaza has also been the site of entirely different city festivals, the nature of which in the last decade has led to conflicts between church dignitaries, city officials, and civic groups. What's more, the same area is usually open to young people's recreational activities, and certain zones of it are naturally suited for romantic encounters. And is it necessary to point out that the most popular spot for young people to meet is the area around the pedestal of the Gediminas Statue?

No wonder then that issues relating to the visual enhancement of the main city squares (in Vilnius these include Cathedral Plaza, Daukanto Square, Lukiškių Square, and Town Hall Square) might continue to be divisive for years to come. Perhaps it is to be expected that in Lithuania the visual accents of a city's or the whole country's history - and thus the relevant monuments in their squares - are usually erected to commemorate dates of release from political oppression. After revolts or long-lasting wars, there inevitably follow periods of peace, thus the monument-studded reference points of history are in a way tied together by shapes of a hoped-for national unity. For example, 2003 saw the emergence in Vilnius of a monument giving meaning to the history of the nation's unification: Regimantas Midvikis's sculpture honoring King Mindaugas. Then the need for one more monument of similar import was fulfilled in 2009 as the thousand-year anniversary of the first mention of Lithuania in historical records drew near: a nine-meter tall variation in stone on a folkloric spindle designed by Tadas Gutauskas was built in Vilnius's Vingis Park and called Unity Tree. In like manner, the City Council of Vilnius decided in 2007 that Town Hall Square should be renamed Vincas Kudirka Square in honor of the author of the Lithuanian anthem. And in 2009, a bronze sculpture of Kudirka, created by Arūnas Sakalauskas and not originally planned for the festive occasion of Lithuania's millennium celebrations, was also unveiled. These endeavors, promoted by politicians and some civic groups, were roundly criticized by art scholars.

After long discussion, the conditions of a bid, announced in 2008, to redesign Lukiškių Square, stated that the main object should be a composition symbolizing the nation's struggle for independence called Liberty. An earlier intention was to devote this site to memorializing the Unknown Lithuanian Partisan (Freedom Fighter); later, it was decided to settle on a "composition of contemporary memorial architecture" in order to reflect comprehensively the decades-long struggle of the Lithuanian people for freedom.<sup>8</sup> The aim was to bring together representative, memorial, recreational, and societal functions in the same square; financially less-demanding proposals by art scholars to turn it into an ordinary plaza for city dwellers<sup>9</sup> did not gain political support. Since this competition, like the earlier ones, failed for various political, legal, and financial reasons, a bit later a new "double" competition was announced, with two ministries (Environment and Culture) given responsibility for it. In 2011, the Rolandas Palekas Studio won the competition for redesigning the square, and a spot was selected for the monument in memory of those who died fighting for Lithuania's freedom. In October, 2012, the Ministry of Culture announced a competition for best artistic idea for memorializing Lithuanian freedom fighters in Vilnius's Lukiškių Square, with the main provisions of the contest formulated by the Lithuanian Republic's Governmental Commission for the Renovation of Lukiškių Square and the Lithuanian Freedom Fighters Memorial.

Even though the most recent competition also provoked a great number of verbal fights (it was a public secret that various unresolved legal issues relating to the competition conditions deterred many of the more famous sculptors from participating), the Ministry of Culture received twenty-eight competition projects in the spring of 2013, of which eighteen met the competition's technical specifications. In July of the same year, experts chose a project by Vidmantas Gylikis, Vytenis Hansell, and Ramunė Švedaitė entitled Nation's Spirit, which, if everything goes well and financing is secured, is to begin implementation in 2015.

Here we should recall, not only that the earlier competitions for Lukiškių Square came to nothing, but also that in the broader culture-oriented public there are ever more voices opposing the tradition of stately monuments deemed to embody hierarchical thinking and to overwhelm their surroundings. Although some groups in society offered to solve the monument issue on a volunteer basis, without following the procedures requisite for fulfilling official directives,<sup>10</sup> in reality, the procedural side of the issue was given undue importance. Therefore, the whole process is likely once more to be dragged out indefinitely, and the imposition "from above" of a traditional type of monument will eventually result in the loss of even more supporters in society at large. As the young philosopher Kęstutis Kirtiklis put it, expressing a fairly common opinion, "a monument devoted to those who fell for Lithuanian freedom does not need to be expressed in an anachronistic guise expressive of nineteenth-century ideals." In his opinion, it is by no means self-evident "that statues commemorating suffering must themselves be the cause of suffering" by viewers. Even though he doesn't expect Lukiškių Square to ever be transformed into something "cozy," i.e., a place where ordinary citizens would feel comfortable, Kirtiklis, like many of his contemporaries, is not afraid to make suggestions that perfectly illustrate the priorities of those who prefer democratic decision-making:

What if we just sow more grass, lay a few paths, and if we really want a focal point, why then, let's put in a fountain! You don't see the symbolism of those fighting for freedom here? To me, a wellspring is much more evocative of the liberty to which those being honored gave their lives than a lady prostrate before some horrendously gigantic Columns of Gediminas.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, as the absolute majority of projects submitted in the competition make clear, their authors think only in traditional stylistic terms, pay no heed to the multifunctionality of a changing culture, and totally ignore the possibilities of contemporary artistic expression. Besides these misunderstandings concerning the artistic language of the monuments (which have brought on ever more suggestions to cease erecting stone or bronze figures in the city), we see today a growing conflict between the memorial and recreational functions of town squares.<sup>12</sup> According to the influential Vilnius city architect Mindaugas Pakalnis, the commission's latest decision regarding the monument and the appearance of a renovated Lukiškių Square represented a compromise:

For some, it had to be a pompous square, merely a collection of symbols and signs; others wanted something lively; still others yearned for a recreational space in the middle of the city. I think the design chosen [...] represents a compromise between these three views.<sup>13</sup>

Naturally perhaps, it is the central, representative city squares that excite more attention and generate more controversy than outlying squares or spaces. Since the latter depend much less on regulations defining their historical significance, their supervision by means of rules that regulate commercial activities and dog walking and prohibit public drinking, smoking, spitting, and walking on the grass do not limit the natural evolution of visual signs and models of behavior.

Suggestions on how to use public space (including some proposals by contemporary artists), if these are just handed down "from the top," might lack legitimacy "at the bottom" simply because public space, if democratically conceived, is in principle not subject to antecedent instructions.<sup>14</sup> In some of the world's cities, even cemeteries (usually islands of quiet reflection) may eventually be made into places for walking around and even for athletic activities such as running and bicycling. Depending on the season of the year, holidays, time of day, safety, coziness, and other highly subjective factors, the choices the city's inhabitants make can lead to open public spaces becoming either zones of peaceful relaxation or, by contrast, no more than areas of transit from one point to another.

For several decades now, less representative public spaces in Vilnius have been enhanced by both small granite monuments and bronze accents of various sizes or by short-term ephemeral art projects in various stylistic guises, as well as memorial plaques (a clear example of this is the Literatų gatvės project in Vilnius). So far, Lithuania still lacks something close to what is customary in Western societies - a tradition of abstract corporate art, although there are beginnings in this direction.<sup>15</sup> But in Vilnius (as elsewhere) there have already been important popular initiatives: from the Frank Zappa Monument and the Užupis Angel to the sculpture for Romain Gary and the azure metal umbrella, dedicated to the memory of Judita Vaičiūnaitė, in the square next to St. Catherine's Church. Private initiative also gave birth to such playful creations as Algis Griškevičius's *Grasshopper: An Autoportrait* (2008), perched on the Krašto Projektai Building on Konstitucijos Street, and the decorative sculpture Tomcat (Ksenija Jaroševaitė) dedicated to the memory of Jurga Ivanauskaitė and unveiled in 2009 in Jurga Square at the end of Agūonų Street in Vilnius. At the end of 2011, in the square next to the Press Building, a monument/ bench to Andrei Sakharov was unveiled: the memory of this famous defender of human rights was honored at the initiative of the Lithuanian Human Rights Association and the Seimas's Human Rights Committee. It is natural perhaps that efforts to memorialize representatives of popular culture (such as Vytautas Kernagis) are indeed the most popular.<sup>16</sup> In any case, it is evident that the steady cropping up of monuments in the capital city often occurs without any ceremonious occasion, and it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between the memorial and decorative functions of these structures. Such a visual variety of initiatives and artistic creations would be difficult to imagine in the context of a totalitarian facade culture in which univocal monumental expression was the rule.

### ***Dilemmas of Soviet Monuments: Leave Them or Tear Them Down? The Green Bridge Sculptures***

The totalitarian sculptures built the Green Bridge in Vilnius in 1952 have become focal points of heated discussion about Socialist Realism. Four sculptural groups depicting collective farmers, workers, soldiers, and school youngsters (the sculptures were officially named *Agriculture, Industry and Construction, In Defense of Peace, and Student Youth*) came to dominate public consciousness in early 2010, when officials noticed these sculptures were seriously rusted. Understanding they needed to be renovated, Russian restorers and the Municipality of Moscow offered their services.<sup>17</sup> The mayor of Vilnius, Vilius Navickas, however, said in response: "We'll fix those mummies, piled up on the Green Bridge by the Soviets, ourselves."<sup>18</sup> These apparently folksy judgments had an effect on people's rekindled deliberations about historical memory and disputes about whether these cultural objects were "ours" or "Russian." Just as portraits of Lenin and similar ideological leaders were taken down soon after the reacquisition of independence and discussions continued about which works of totalitarian art representing the repressive regime had the "right" to remain in Lithuania's public spaces, so the continued presence of Soviet sculptures on the Vilnius Green Bridge provoked anger. Quite a few commentators suggested there was a place suitable for sculptures redolent of the former Soviet occupation: Grūtas Park, where Soviet ideological sculptures had been privately collected from all over Lithuania.

In this context, it is important to emphasize once more that the Green Bridge sculptures had not troubled anyone for years, and the debates about their "beauty" or "ugliness" took off less because they had suddenly become unattractive to some than because ideological pre-election disputes exacerbated the just-mentioned objective need for them to be renovated.<sup>19</sup> And while Lithuanian politicians were arguing over who should refashion the Green Bridge's cultural heritage, fuel was added to the fire by media reports that the Russian Embassy was frustrated at Lithuania for allegedly "prohibiting the upkeep of monuments to Soviet soldiers."<sup>20</sup> Even though the sculptures on the Green Bridge are essentially decorative art - they certainly do not indicate a burial site, nor are they monuments commemorating a particular event (as the Russian Embassy maintained) - these disputes showed that the way totalitarian art and culture are understood might eventually change too. As Eglė Wittig-Marcinkevičiūtė observed in a review of these discussions, it is doubtful these questions must be expressed in politically correct and neutral academic language.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly enough, when political circumstances change, these same sculptures might not be replaced by others, but "remixed," as it were, by changing their names and dedications and thereby their functions: this is indeed the solution that some Lithuanian artists suggested for the Green Bridge sculptures.<sup>22</sup> New political evaluations of the sculptures also renewed discussion among political scientists researching questions relating to the memorial sites of totalitarian heritage and multiple identity.<sup>23</sup>

Thus in the mid-nineties, no one was much exercised over the meaning and status of these sculptures: they were left in peace as decorative ornaments, and questions of responsibility and ownership hardly bothered anybody then.<sup>24</sup> In stark contrast, today more than one nation's representatives are discussing issues of how these sculptures should be preserved and cared for; and in the media, jurists, historians, political scientists, and artists are vigorously commenting on the symbols of this state-protected cultural monument. Not too long ago, it was still possible to naively believe that the laconic official statements about the sculptures' condition would be followed by credible reports on what the institutions responsible for them had decided to do: to finance their renovation from taxpayer funds or to look for other sources of financing? Moreover, a discussion of different ways to do the renovation work should have interested specialists as well. Instead, what filled the air were spontaneous howls that the Green Bridge sculptures were fit only for Grūtas Park, and it was evident from early 2010 onwards that these sculptures had again been turned into rhetorical weapons of ideology bombarding the national cultural imagination.

In May 2013, talk revived about the "necessity" of taking these sculptures off the Green Bridge - not so much for the purpose of restoring them, but for ideological reasons. A conservative member of the Seimas, Kęstutis Masiulis, like many



others offended mostly by the Soviet soldiers depicted in one of the sculpture groups, asked the Seimas to consider whether it was really necessary to preserve objects displaying Nazi or Soviet symbols (the latter indeed adorn the soldier group). Masiulis proposed amending an existing 2008 law banning objects displaying Soviet or Nazi coats of arms, emblems, banners, flags, uniforms, etc., to also not allow them to be treated as part of the national heritage. Soon thereafter, another well-known Lithuanian politician, Mečys Laurinkus, also expressed a negative attitude towards what he dubbed "Soviet icons" still standing around in the city and appealed to the nation's conscience.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, some cultural preservationists, such as State Monument Preservation Commission Chair Gražina Drėmaitė, opposed these sentiments and contended the sculptures in question were primarily works of art and belonged to our historical inheritance.<sup>26</sup> Some emphasized the point that if you removed just the one sculpture group that directly depicted the occupiers' army, the visual unity of the bridge itself would be impaired. Today, it is at least evident that the ideological status of the sculptures cannot be evaluated unequivocally - at least as long as they are still not renovated and pose an increasing physical danger to passersby, a fact the media regularly remind us of.

The official politics of memory is not necessarily legitimized when state officials grasp the rules of historical memory, and/or citizens (allegedly) heal past traumas or, confronted with visual signs from the totalitarian epoch, rob the emotions resulting from past wounds of their sting. The paradoxes of legitimizing the history of the recent past are well illustrated by the famous controversy surrounding the relocation of the Bronze Soldier of Tallinn in 2007. At that time, it was asserted that if this monument to the Soviet soldier had been moved from the city center immediately after Estonia had regained its political independence, this could have been accomplished without causing any adverse reactions at all - precisely because during that period, numerous remains from the Soviet epoch were being massively removed from city centers throughout the region (including Lukiškių Square in Vilnius). Unfortunately, for specific reasons, conflicts flared up and riots caused by Russian speakers spread through Tallinn after Estonia had already solidified its independent statehood and joined NATO and the European Union.

The new media (the Internet) and politically biased media reports do influence changes in cultural memory and help exacerbate conflict. By these means, even granite and bronze sculptures originally destined to become "tokens of eternity" are turned into objects of manipulation in the public space and suggest that evaluations of the past may not always be easy to predict in an ever-changing present.

Changes in the way monuments are judged and the attendant ideological paradoxes were clearly revealed in a retrospective exhibition called *Non-Existent Monuments: A Walking Tour of Vilnius*, which opened in May 2011 at the National Art Gallery (curators: Eglė Mikalajūnaitė, Rasa Antanavičiūtė, and Živilė Etevičiūtė). The exhibition analyzed issues of historical objectivity and the impermanence of heroes and offered a look at how the Lithuanian capital was endowed with meaning through monuments from the middle of the nineteenth century on. The exhibition showed designs for monuments that were never built, as well as examples of monuments that existed for only a short time in Vilnius. As the curators put it, "in this city, most monuments were more short-lived than the people they were for." In earlier centuries, when monuments were changed, their pedestals or granite were often reused to express a new political system's ideology, although the monuments themselves did not always succeed in reflecting their new mission. In the words of the curators, they became "actors replacing each other on the same stages (plazas intended for glorification) and acting in similar plays (official ceremonies)."<sup>27</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Throwing light on historical facts allows us to understand not only the transient nature of monuments, but also the way many of them naturally change together with changing political systems ("bad" symbols being replaced during transitions by "good" ones), but some of them have a certain existential fragility. As shown by the small sculptures mentioned previously that crop up steadily in contemporary Vilnius and by the appearance of one or another sort of statue-like visual form in this or that location, these phenomena don't obey any recognizable historical logic. And despite the eternity vouchsafed to historical memory by polished granite, monuments created for solemn opportunities seldom become part of an active city culture unless they happen to emerge in the very center of the city, which is full of people anyway. Traditional figurative monuments, as recent experience in Vilnius shows, ultimately become things of no use or significance to contemporary city-dwellers; they're just stone or bronze simulacra of little relevance to people's everyday lives.

Unfortunately, society tends to look at monuments in a rather one-sided way: they are usually dedicated to one quite specific historical period, event, or person rather than another (period, event, or person). Meanwhile, public space (often given unique meaning by even transitory artistic projects) is becoming a place for very different viewpoints, dialogues, and coexistence. However much national heroes, political systems, and wishes inscribed on pedestals by contemporaries might change (sometimes even two or three times in a single lifetime), the functions of granite and bronze sculptures are just not up to the requirements of contemporary public space. Even the most temporary monuments are not changed as frequently as a democratic public space changes in quick response to the daily clashes between different group interests. That's why theories of public space usually emphasize the need for continuous communication, rather than for an unambiguous cultural memory.

The exhibition about nonexistent monuments was interesting in several respects; not just for what it showed to be missing or gone, but also as an exposition of cultural history and stimulating material about the collisions of small and large

histories and the processes of their (re)creation, which may be more significant to a contemporary spectator than any dry statistical accounting of the monuments' (non)being. As the exposition showed, some monuments never appeared in the city, even though in some cases the campaign to build such a monument lasted several years. Vilnius today seems to be almost unique in that there is not a single figure of a hero on a horse, even though such monuments exist in practically all the larger cities of the Western world. Just as prior to World War II it would have been possible to build (although it wasn't) and to preserve the famous monument to Adomas Mickevičius, so the figure of the Soviet ideological writer Petras Cvirka could have been removed from its pedestal on the square named after him (as the bus station named for Cvirka was renamed Islandijos). Thus sculptures, like passersby, can pop up in front of strangers' eyes; they can be remembered or forgotten; but they can also unexpectedly go away.

In the future, we will celebrate more jubilees, and historians will present additional lists of significant names and events. There will also be other enthusiasts eager to commemorate these things "in the proper way" and in the "right" place. The unsuccessful competitions for redesigning Lukiškių Square and building a Liberty Monument, as well as the newly inflamed controversy over the Green Bridge sculptures (with society's attention, not accidentally, focused on the depicted soldiers of the occupying army) and their historical analogues (the 2007 case of Tallinn's Bronze Soldier), all show that a figurative sculpture in the city can, at any time, become not only an issue of artistic taste, but a political matter as well, thereby transcending its earlier function of simply being a cultural marker or decorative accent. In that case, it is crucially important that questions of immortalizing the past in a democratic society be solved through public discussion in a maximally transparent public environment not governed merely by political or financial might.

*Translated by Mykolas Drunga*

#### Notes:

1 Dementavičius, "Atsiminti negalima užmiršti."

2 Jankevičiūtė, "Takoskyra: menas ir paminklai."

3 Nikžentaitis, "Istorinė praeitis ir dabartis ateities Vilniuje."

4 Grunskis, "Paminklas Laisvei."

5 These have not only been discussed by conservatives, as is frequently suggested, but by leaders of many other political parties as well. Thus, the Social Democrat, Vytenis P. Andriukaitis, in a 2006 publication devoted to the project of a National House on Tauro Hill, asserted that "Vilnius has no Eternal Flame, no Tomb the Unknown Soldier; we have no monument to the Battle of Žalgiris (honoring Vytautas and Jogaila); no statues of Kudirka and Basanavičius, Sapiega, Čiurlionis, Maironis, and so on. It should be one of our long-term cultural and civic goals to mark out visibly in our nation's capital the most important dates of Lithuanian history and our most significant historical figures." Andriukaitis, "Ar Gedimino prospektas tikrai gatvė?" 75.

6 Citing examples of various opinions would take up too much space, but their general tenor is indicated by the more radical voices, which urged the Green Bridge be "wiped clean" of Soviet-era "idols." Those calling for historical justice also supported the erection of a Lithuanian Liberty Monument (or one honoring fallen freedom fighters) in Lukiškių Square. More moderate voices thought the totalitarian statues should remain because they no longer posed an ideological danger and were already officially recognized as part of the Green Bridge ensemble listed on the Register of Cultural Treasures and slated to be preserved. Some moderates and skeptics did not support the building of a new monument in Lukiškių Square because of the artistic arguments mentioned above about their "an-timodernism" or "antidemocratic" nature. Discussions were made more fierce by anxieties about sources of financing.

7 Dementavičius, "Atsiminti negalima užmiršti," 112.

8 See Grunskis, "Paminklas Laisvei."

9 As not infrequently suggested by art students and researchers publishing on this subject. See Lubytė, "Laisvės paminklas."

10 For example, in 2012, relatives of the emigre architect Jonas Mulo-kas offered to donate a wayside cross designed by the architect to be placed in this square instead of a monument.

11 Kirtiklis, "Apie paminklus."

12 Lavrinec and Narkūnas, "Lukiškių aikštė."

13 Narušytė and Jursevičius, "Ryto garsai."

14 In this case, the spirit of debate in a democratic society is well illustrated by the community protests that arose in connection with Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*, installed in 1981 in New York's Federal Plaza, a development of great significance in modern art history and often referred to in articles written by Lithuanian scholars of art. Serra's conflict with the public shows that contemporary artists as well as authoritarian politicians can manifest an authoritarian desire to turn a site they've chosen into a place where their project absolutely must be installed and to force viewers to take it in at just that one site, and no other.

15 Two examples of this trend might be Twins, the (earlier mentioned) Gutauskas's sculpture which is situated next to the Eika Business Center on Goštauto Street in Vilnius, and the four-and-a-half meter tall stainless steel wave (by Gediminas Piekuras) in front of the Vilniaus Verslo Uostas office building on the right bank of the Neris River.

16 An important factor here may be the absence of any recognizable and possibly previously imposed boundary separating "historically necessary" monuments from artistic expressions of a more decorative nature. Without any protracted discussions, various groups of people initiated and carried out memorial projects, such as the bench on Gediminas Avenue for the popular Lithuanian song writer and bard Vytautas Kernagis (1951—2008). At the behest of the

Ukrainian community in Lithuania, a statue of Ukrainian poet Taras Ševčenko was unveiled in 2011 in a Vilnius Old Town square at the intersection of Bazilijonų, Arklių, and Visų Šventųjų Streets. The statue was created by the Ukrainian sculptor Vitalij Andri-janov.

17 Tracevičiūtė, "Griūvančias statulas."

18 Urbonaitė, "Vilniaus vadai nesutaria."

19 See Trilupaitytė, "Ar jau metas Žaliojo tilto studijoms?"

20 Delfi.lt, "Rusijos ambasada."

21 Wittig-Marcinkevičiūtė, "Kultūros paveldas."

22 Trilupaitytė, "Ar jau metas."

23 Thus, the discussions about the monuments concerned not just the standard issues of culture and urban design, they also considered the political dimension. See Dementavičius, "Atsiminti negalima užmiršti."

24 As we saw in an LTV2 broadcast on November 17, 2010 (which was a rerun of a show originally aired in 1995), at that time, even the municipality was loath to claim ownership of these statues belonging to "nobody."

25 Laurinkus, "Kodėl drąsi tauta."

26 Ragėnienė, "Žaliojo tilto skulptūros."

27 See the exhibition leaflet.

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