



PINKHOUSE

GENERATION EUROPE pavilion in Venice 2005
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A new situation has developed in Eastern European countries after the accession to the European Union. As a result mutual relations between civil groups who reside on the territories of different independent countries is changing. The local units that organise themselves around particular interest groups are differentiating. Mutual obligations and liabilities are completely altered by their types and character. Irrespective of various cooperation and competition restrictions in some member states that the EU Constitution concedes to implement, people living in Eastern Europe have managed to become relatively equal citizens of the European Union. Do these citizens, 15 years after the collapse of totalitarianism, the introduction of a consumer society at lightning speed, the stabilisation of aggressive capitalism relations and the privatisation period of state property, are able to become aware of their equality or inequality under the new circumstances? There will always be people who are apt to adjust to changes and there will always be people who are incapable of doing so and therefore will feel discomfort. To what extent are these changes existential and whether it is not true that only the frame of reference has changed in

the same terms of conformity and subordination or the relations of equality and inequality as in the past?

The European cultural space is based on the values and understanding on mutual relations of ancient Greeks and Christianity. They represent the mechanisms in the human mind that restrict natural competitiveness, uncompromising expressions of the survival instinct and aspiration for power, which, as the society develops, constantly interchanges with its opposing side – members of the society are predisposed for autonomy, equality, independence and freedom. The motives of relations, solutions, cultural perceptions are also determined by local and more ancient traditions. For instance, in the Baltic countries Christian traditions are mingled with manifestations of paganism (prior to the period of Christianity).

People in Eastern Europe occupying the European political space are characterised by another mode of relations: other, perhaps harsher, principles of humanism are employed among people in their day-to-day interrelations. The Eastern understanding of the Western democracy is permeated with stereotypes and idealised attitudes. When facing real

situations on the labour market, the relations often become rather harsh; it turns out that people have worshipped just a substitute or surrogate of equality. Ideals are illusory, people from Eastern Europe receive lower remuneration and they do not acquire social guarantees that are due for them. Although it is quite clear, a human being is confused by a double standard: on the one hand, brotherhood and equality are postulated, while, on the other hand, they just function as slogans that actually do not work, as no one is ready to sacrifice a part of their well-being. On the one hand, equal opportunities are manifested for everyone, on the other hand, elitism exists practically in all spheres – in politics, manufacturing, information media and art.

Our pavilion is located in Venice, in a neighbourhood of workers and manufacturing sites. Our purpose is to reveal the situation and show that such a marvellous pearl as Venice, a city-museum, where the qualities of cultural heritage are emphasised, has a totally different part that also represents today's real and true Venice. Similarly, Europe has its problematic zones that do not resemble its official appearance, but where the true life

goes on. There the point of reference about the reality also differs and the problem of social stratification is felt in a much more painful and topical way.

The Pink House is an inflatable building in the form of a Greek order temple; the building has retained the shape of a temple only externally and it indicates its origin in a very simplified manner. The shape refers to cultural symbols and signs of a departed culture that has lost its contents and meaning. The trivial colour emphasizes how a sign, extracted from the context, becomes a part of popular culture. For any social process, interrelation or interactivity to take place it should be related to a certain form of ideology (a structure that explains what is in fact happening). Previously this sign (a temple) perhaps legitimated a certain form of ideology that introduced order in the political relations of power, while at present the sign has become slogan-like and has turned into an exhibit that is sold and purchased in souvenir kiosks. We want to highlight that a similar situation exists in Europe – a disabled person bears representations and social constructions that operate automatically and unconsciously for a long time and that frequently have no actual coverage; social stereotypes are made international without challenging or questioning their status quo. Moreover, these representations often define the external form about a European and the conditions that are developing in order the human being could survive in the new

situation. Culture, ideology, propaganda and advertising create a comforting illusion that a person is the centre of the world. However, at the same time they strengthen the urging feeling that he or she is a statistical unit who is even more humble than a primitive in front of the power of gods and nature. Can we speak about mutual equality in a situation where human interrelations are market relations, when people are things for each other and even a person is alike a thing as he or she has turned oneself into an instrument for achieving external targets, but in relations with people around them – turned into means and never an aim?

Mud fights. A woman is fighting with a man. Personal equality in all spheres is understood as an axiom; it is not a problem itself, there are no discussions about that – its non-existence is regarded as a problem. People tend to be equal in front of power, but power is anonymous - the power of market, success or the society's opinion, the power of "common sense" or even more likely - the power of generally accepted insanity; to a person it creates an identity that can be exposed, forms an understanding about who he or she is because "he or she" is a part of a certain power (of gender, an organisation, a nation, a political party, a union etc.). This (mud) fighting is an aggressive way how to pay attention to the fact that equality is impossible. The human aspiration to restrict competition reaches new borders again and again, and this aspiration tends to overcome these borders, too. Therefore, this fight is endless at personal, social and political levels. We would like to point out that at

present Eastern Europe and Western Europe are not equal partners. We are ready to debate this and face the truth.

Documentary materials about the situation in the relations between Eastern and Western Europe are very personal and represent miscellaneous levels of human experience. These materials are prepared in cooperation with the Open Society "Delna", a Latvian branch of "Transparency International".

We would like to encourage various organisations, higher educational establishments etcetera to organise conferences and discussion seminars on these topics. We are inviting these organisations to register discussion topics in our pavilion in which various discussion panels will take place daily.

The public are welcome to sign up for mud fights on our internet website www.pinkhouse.lv.

Aigars Bikse and Kristaps Gulbis