Summary Poznań 9.05.2025

WE, YOU. Binary in Culture

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In my theoretical work, I present the problem of division, the extreme polarisation of social views and economic conditions, which leads to the growth of xenophobic behaviour resulting in consent to au thoritarianism in politics. I show how the situation of a lack of dialogue arises and a specific ‘creation’ is formed, taking over and forcing us into the pattern: WE – good and YOU – bad. Populist politicians take advantage of this situation to gain or consolidate their power through a lack of dialogue and the deliberate creation of ‘enemies’ for their political benefit. I draw attention to the formation of so-called information bubbles, which mean that we only maintain contact with people who think the same as us and share the same political, cultural and social views. This strengthens authoritarian power and divides societies. The capitalist system is largely responsible for the emergence of ideological divisions and their use by politicians. Neoliberal ideology leads to the extreme economic polarisation of people and entire societies, closing the path to social advancement, which causes frustration and translates into increased intolerance and the search for a scapegoat (other, stranger) responsible for the current situation. In terms of economic stratification, we have regressed to the level of nineteenth-century societies. I also refer to historical events that resulted from division and the production of so-called ‘enemies’ or ‘strangers’ and was used by those in power (politicians, businesses, governments) to achieve political benefit. I draw attention to the repetition of patterns that led to the enslavement of individuals, classes and societies in favour of a narrow elite in power. I show an analogy with the political and eco nomic situations around the world today. Division has often brought humanity to the brink, leading to the creation of criminal ideologies and state organizations based on the physical extermination of so

called ‘enemies’/’others’. All these situations began in so-called democracies and transformed over time into extreme authoritarian or totalitarian movements. Currently, we are dealing with a very similar situation: the upsurge of xenophobic sentiments, the rise of populists taking advantage of and creating divisions, the disruption of democratic systems around the world, the emergence of democratic-au

thoritarian hybrids, the refugee problem, Islamophobia, resurgent movements openly flirting with totalitarian ideology and the extreme polarisation of views and economics (for example, in the United States, we are observing the largest division of society since the American Civil War). I draw attention to how easily we can be divided and manipulated by politicians who deliberately fuel the polarisation of views to obtain political benefit.

My practical work will consist of several canvases measuring 170 x 100 cm. This series of works will be in black and white, and these colours will play an important and leading role, dividing all the works in half, thanks to which only white and only black paintings will be created. Both black and white ones will feature the same pattern, cut out using a stencil and then spray paint-ed (white on white and, similarly, black on black), depicting an aggressive crowd of people. This pattern will gradually vanish (fade) on subsequent canvases until it disappears completely. The final two canvases (white and black) will be blank, devoid of any representation. Only the domi-nant colour will remain, black on one side, white on the other (the inspiration here is suprema-tism – an abstract art movement created by Kazimir Ma levich, whose name comes from the Lat-in word meaning ‘supreme’, and the most important suprematist works entitled Black Square on a White Background and White Square on a White Background). Thus, the human factor will be replaced by a pure idea that will take over, becoming a carrier of ideology. The division of this graphic and painting installation into two extremely opposing colour groups will re fer to the thesis put forward in the theoretical work, which states that extreme polarisation and division in culture leads to the creation of dangerous forms of governance, which in the past were associated with totalitarian systems. This binary, which was skilfully fuelled and used in culture, al-ways led to the taking over and strengthening of power by artificially fomenting the conflict between US (whites – ‘good’) and YOU (blacks – ‘bad’).