

CM ART

présente

IGOR MOUKHIN

"PHOTOGRAPHIES"

11.09 - 12.10.2008



Paris - CM ART - Moscou
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IGOR MOUKHIN

Souvent considéré comme une figure essentielle de la photographie russe, Igor Moukhin est déjà largement reconnu dans son pays comme à l'étranger. Son travail a d'ailleurs été présenté à **La Maison Rouge** lors de l'exposition **Sots Art en 2007** et l'on peut retrouver ses images dans la collection du **Museum of Modern Art** ou dans celle de la **Galerie Tretyakov** à Moscou.

L'œuvre de Moukhin, foisonnante et diverse est un témoignage sur la Russie de ces trente dernières années.

Dès 1980, il travaillait dans la veine du *Sots Art* avec notamment les séries « *Fragments* » et « *Soviet Monuments* ». C'est plus particulièrement à cet aspect de son travail que CM Art consacrera sa prochaine exposition.

Moukhin a beaucoup photographié la sculpture à la gloire de l'idéal communiste; passant en revue ces multiples monuments de sportifs ou grands dirigeants du régime, Il nous confronte ainsi à la persistance de ces symboles dans le paysage contemporain et met en exergue par un regard critique et une distance amusée l'obsolescence de ces figures et l'effondrement progressif d'une idéologie. Entre poésie et ironie, ces images révèlent l'absurdité d'un système.

Mais Moukhin ne s'intéresse pas seulement aux traces vieillissantes du passé, il a aussi beaucoup photographié ses contemporains. Ses séries « *Moscow* », « *Girls* » et « *Portraits* » témoignent des grands changements qui ont affecté la Russie des années 1990. En photographiant la vie quotidienne, la sienne autant que celle de ses concitoyens, Moukhin renonce à une critique radicale au profit d'un regard plus optimiste. Son travail n'est pourtant pas dénué d'engagement : il s'entend en quelque sorte comme un manifeste en faveur de la paix. C'est ce qu'il explique dans une interview au sujet de tous les photographes européens venus en Russie documenter la guerre de Tchétchénie : « *Ils montrent tous la souffrance(...). Je ne voulais pas faire ça. Je voulais montrer une autre Russie, celle de la paix* ». ¹

Igor Moukhin a intitulé son dernier livre « *Born In the USSR* ». C'est ce sentiment d'appartenance qui explique la tendresse émanant des images et inscrit son travail entre le documentaire et l'autobiographie, celle d'une génération.

Après avoir présenté une rétrospective du travail d'Igor Moukhin à Moscou en début d'année, CM ART exposera à Paris, à partir du 11 Septembre, une sélection de ses œuvres les plus emblématiques.

¹.Alexander Osipovich, « *Young at Heart* », The Moscow Times, August 19, 2005

BIOGRAPHIE

Né en 1961. Vit et travaille à Moscou.

Expositions personnelles

2008

- "Igor Moukhin" Galerie NA SOLYANKE, Moscou

2005

- «Voyage», Centre de la Photographie, Moscou, Festival "Mode et styles dans la Photographie"

- «Oeuvres choisies», Galerie Art-Café, Moscou

2004

- The Camera Obscura Gallery, Denver - Etats Unis

- Hatton Gallery, Colorado State University, Fort Collins - Etats-Unis

-«Province. Les vacances à Nijegorodsk»: Musée de la Photographie Simbérienne, Oulianovsk et Centre d'exposition HKC, Dimitrovgrad - Russie

- Auditorium parco della musica, Rome - Italie

2003

- Anahita Gallery, Santa Fe - Etats-Unis

- Krinzinger Projekte, Vienna - Autriche

- Maison Stroganovsky, Musée Russe, Saint-Petersburg - Russie

2002

- Maison de la Photographie, Moscou - Russie

2001

- Musée d'Architecture Schusev, Moscou - Russie

1999 et 2000

- Galerie Carré Noir, Paris - France

1994, 1999, 2002, 2004

- XL Gallery, Moscou - Russie

Expositions collectives

2007

- "Sots Art", La Maison Rouge, Paris - France
- "Sots Art", Tretyakov Gallery, Moscou - Russie

2005

- Foto Museum Provincie Antwerpen - Belgique

2002

- Museum of Fine Arts, New Mexico - Etats Unis
- MAK, Vienne - Autriche

1998

- The Museum of Modern Art, New York - Etats Unis

Collections publiques (sélection)

Tretyakov Gallery, Moscou – Russie
Maison de la photographie, Moscou – Russie
Musée d'Art moderne, Moscou – Russie
Musée d'Architecture Schusev, Moscou – Russie
Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY – Etats-Unis
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC – Etats-Unis
Museum of Fine Art, Santa Fe – Etats Unis
Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris – France
Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (FNAC), Paris – France
Denver Art Museum, Denver – Etats Unis
Southeast Museum of Photography, Daytona Beach, Etats Unis
Musée de la Photographie, Riga -Lituanie
Centre Photographique Victor Barkosevitch, Kuopio
Wien Museum, Vienne, Autriche
Collection UBS

EXTRAITS DE LA SERIE SOVIET MONUMENTS ,1988-2005,
Tirages argentiques, 30X40 cm.



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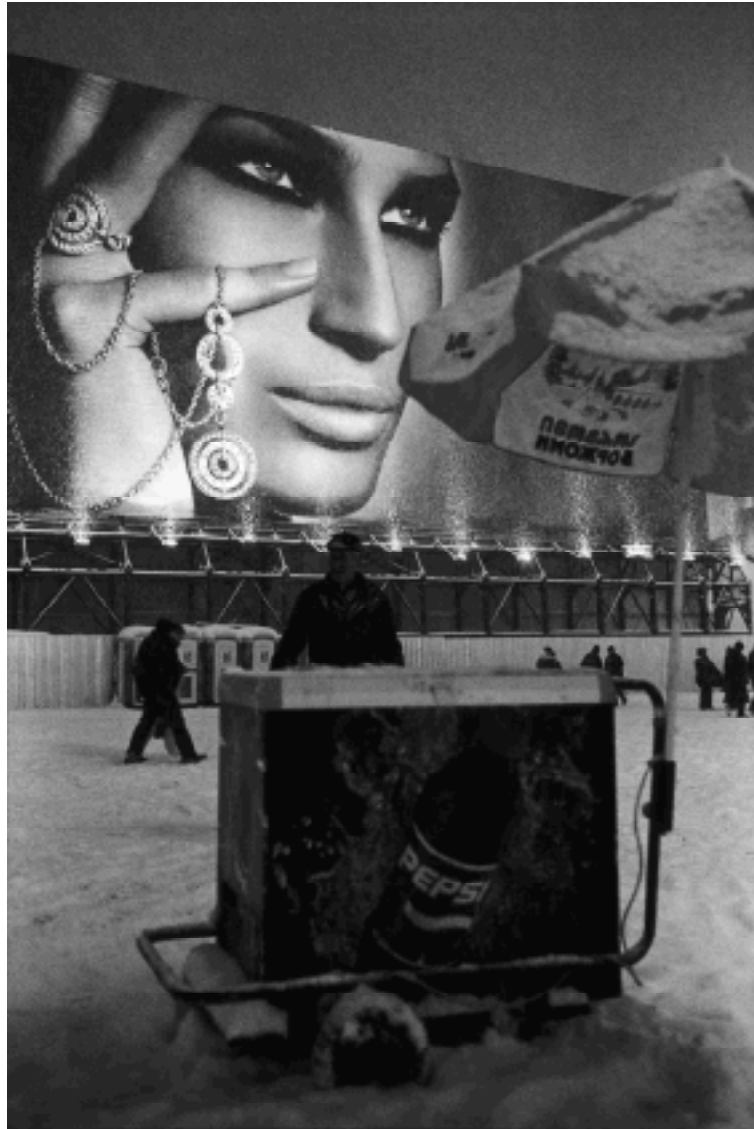
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EXTRAITS DES SERIES
MOSCOW(1995-2008), YOUNG PEOPLE (1985-1989) ET GIRLS(1985-2005)
Tirages argentiques, 40X60 cm.



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Igor Moukhin

by A. D. Coleman

Photographers of Igor Moukhin's generation from the former Soviet Union face an array of formidable challenges as they and their work enter the 21st century. And we, as audience, face comparable tests in interpreting and responding to their bodies of work.

One issue that this exhibition foregrounds is the ongoing problem of positioning and evaluating work that comes to us largely decontextualized, especially when it also comes from a culture not our own, produced by a member of that culture. Like any act of communication, a photograph is in many ways culture-specific. We often assume, wrongly, that photographs speak some international language, when in fact they frequently cross borders both visible and invisible, and as a result call for translation. Igor Moukhin's imagery of Russia, our case in point, is filled with both data and information -- clothing style, body language, physiognomy, signage, locales -- that any Muscovite and many Russians would recognize automatically but to which those in the U.S. do not have ready access.

Moukhin claims Alexander Rodchenko and Lou Reed as influences, suggesting both a grounding in his own cultural history and an international outlook, with -- if we take both those artists as exemplars -- a distinctly rebellious streak. Now represented by Rapho, a respected photo agency in Paris, Moukhin has not only developed a following in his native land but has begun to disseminate his imagery abroad. Along the way, he has done portraits of artists and writers, a series documenting Soviet sculptural monuments, and a set of observations of Paris. But he has become best known for his ongoing chronicle of the daily life -- mostly as conducted in public -- of his fellow citizens, especially the younger set, as post-Cold War geopolitics, geoeconomics, and geoculture reshape Russia.

Certainly one can sense in Moukhin's images a deep identification with his own generation as they strive to move toward an open society while the old order turns into the new chaos, homogenized but hardly resolved by globalization, with ads for McDonald's and Marlboros and Ray-Bans replacing the earlier icons. At the same time, he is not unsympathetic to the plight of his elders, with their disillusionment and nostalgia, their medals and uniforms from the Great Patriotic War, their tattered, fading portraits of Lenin and Stalin.

The photographer presents all of these emblems as relics of a past rapidly eroding away from that older generation, much like the heroic statuary exemplifying socialist realism that seems to appear everywhere but to which no one nowadays pays attention. Moukhin even appears tolerant of those of his peers who have decided to embrace and endorse the reassuring fixities of that past in the face of a shaky present and a fearsomely uncertain future. All of them, he suggests, old and young alike, when push comes to shove, simply strive to get by, taking pleasure in a quiet smoke in a bar, an outdoor game of pool on a sunny day, a little dancing cheek to cheek in a garden on a summer's night.

Born in Moscow in 1961 and Moscow-based ever since, Moukhin was an original member (1989-91) of the influential group Immediate Photography, founded by his contemporary, the artist, teacher, and curator Alexei Shulgin. He comes out of the small-camera tradition of «street photography» as initially formulated by Cartier-Bresson and members of the «New York School» -- Robert Frank, Bruce Davidson, Helen Levitt -- and subsequently elaborated by Mary Ellen Mark, Larry Clark, and many others. This approach, since the 1940s a major tributary of the form we loosely call documentary photography, remains very much alive throughout the world, rumors of its death at the hand of postmodernist theory notwithstanding.

Yet even stating that Moukhin comes out of that tradition makes me uncomfortable with its presumption. It takes for granted his familiarity with and embrace of that tradition, while entirely disregarding the impact on him of the imagery that surrounded and molded him from childhood on: the visual discourse of his own society, with which viewers in the West are of course less familiar. If we assume that, like any of us, Moukhin is a product of his culture, even if an atypical one, how might we start to contextualize this exhibition as evidence of his long-term project?

First of all, the necessarily chaotic thought structures of the Soviet political system in its death throes shaped the educational processes through which Moukhin and his cohort came to photography, along with the cultural and creative environment in which they grew up.

Second, their sense of the history of their medium in general and the tradition(s) from which their particular work springs became skewed by state censorship. Whatever the «official» version of the medium's development may have proposed (a subject that has received no significant scholarship to date, and about which we know far too little), it unquestionably elided large chunks of material and seriously distorted the rest. Nor could photographers and others interested in the medium readily supplement that authorized account with information from alternative sources. Material from the States, the Orient, and elsewhere that circulated freely in the west in the 1980s, during Moukhin's coming of age as a photographer, could not be obtained easily, if at all, inside the eastern bloc. This may explain why Moukhin's work appears stylistically conservative, displaying little of the formal experimentation that Lee Friedlander, Garry Winogrand, Gilles Perress and others after them (and Frank and William Klein before them) applied to comparable subject matter.

Third, their knowledge of their own photographic patrimony -- the multiple histories of photography in eastern Europe, the work produced within their own complex of cultures by those who had preceded them -- had undergone a comparably drastic surgery. Governmental censorship, combined with self-censorship, had resulted in the destruction and/or «disappearance» of many important and previously influential bodies of work by «discredited» or «politically incorrect» photographers and artists; access to archives and collections of surviving material was often restricted; even many books and periodicals originally published within the borders of the U.S.S.R. and its satellites were subsequently banned.¹

Fourth, even their awareness of what their own contemporaries inside the borders of that collapsing system were up to was limited to what appeared in state-sponsored publications and exhibitions, or what circulated surreptitiously and erratically via samizdat exhibitions and publications or through personal contact. Thus Moukhin and his cohort had to invent themselves from scratch or else patch together a crazy quilt of influences as a premise for their own explorations.

Fifth, and finally, during a period in which photography moved to the foreground of public attention in the west (from the early '70s through the late '80s), their work remained largely unknown to those outside the eastern bloc. Since it did not circulate effectively within those confines either, they can be said to have worked in something approximating a vacuum.

Given that photographic equipment and materials were commonly available throughout the U.S.S.R. for all of its existence,² and that photography was encouraged as a hobby and widely practiced on virtually every level -- amateur, professional, applied, fine-art, vernacular, documentary, photojournalism -- it's not surprising that vast amounts of photography of all kinds was produced there. What's noteworthy is that the resulting heap of imagery constitutes perhaps the world's largest remaining trove of twentieth-century photography that has not yet undergone serious critical and historical analysis or circulated widely even in its nations of origin. On many levels, this work is new to us all.

In part this is because it's only recently that photography itself has begun to be taken seriously -- as a field of study, and as a cultural barometer. Simply put, no one anywhere was looking at what was happening in photography in the U.S.S.R. between, say, 1975 and 1985, for what it might reveal about the condition of those cultures, in the same way as they were looking at literature, or at music, or at art.³ The West always knew a great deal about the eastern bloc's oppositional writers and artists, and next to nothing about their equivalents in photography. A cultured world citizen circa 1985 would of course have recognized names like Vitaly Komar and Alex Melamid, or Irina Ratushinskaya, but surely not that of Boris Michailov.⁴

Yet by the mid- to late '80s that photographic work had begun to trickle out -- mostly in group shows, occasionally in a one-person exhibition.⁵ Moukhin, among others, benefitted from that loosening of strictures.⁶ Consequently, there is by now a high-profile presence of historical and contemporary imagery from central and eastern Europe in venues across western Europe, the U.S. and Canada, and elsewhere. But what the contemporary survey shows have offered are mostly hints and glimpses -- tantalizing fragments, provocative in their intimation that behind each of the samples on view lay larger bodies of work whose rewards awaited us (as with Moukhin's monument project, or his portraits of cultural figures), yet hardly sufficient or satisfying in and of themselves. Few of these shows have looked at any image-maker in depth, so the scope and resonance of individual oeuvres cannot even be estimated.⁷

Thus the opportunity afforded by this solo exhibition of Igor Moukhin's photographs constitutes a still-rare occasion in the U.S. It enables us to attend at some length to a substantial representation of the output of a single mid-career photographer whose work began in the period just preceding glasnost and perestroika and continued through the parting of the curtain and into the present. A set of carefully calibrated glimpses from within, both personal and sociological, this exhibition affords us a series of trenchant insights into a culture in dramatic transition -- as well as (in Moukhin's work from Paris and elsewhere) a comparative scrutiny of the world outside those now-porous borders.

The value of Igor Moukhin's work lies in his patient accumulation of acute visual synopses of the quotidian experience of his own people during a time of crisis and opportunity. He has already produced a durable archive of such summations, a repository whose individual pictures resonate with and amplify each other, and whose significance as a chronicle of this era will inevitably increase over time. A mere handful of Moukhin's images to date have become familiar in the U.S., if not to the general public then at least to the knowledgeable audience for photography here. Surely this will change as we become better acquainted with his larger body of work -- especially in relation to that of his contemporaries -- and as the now-jumbled pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that is eastern European photography past and present begin to come together to reveal their still-hidden patterns.

Notes

1 Hence the importance of such exhibitions as «Photography and Soviet Censorship (from the 1960s until 1980s),» mounted by the Giedre Bartelt Galerie, Berlin, from February 6th - March 27th 2004. Its curators described this group show as «one of the first attempts to comprehend censored photography of the Soviet Union from Brezhnev until perestroika.» While the tracking of censorship can never provide us with a plausible picture of what could have developed in a non-censorial environment, it can at least clarify for us the conditions under which production of work and its public presentation took place.

2 However, Soviet and eastern-bloc photographers did not enjoy access to as diversified a toolkit as those from western Europe, the U.S., and Japan had at their disposal. Materials, tools, and processes that photo students and professionals alike took for granted in those countries circa 1980 were often unaffordable or unavailable to their eastern European counterparts.

3 Consider, for example, Vassily Aksyonov's 1983 novel *Skazhi izium*, published in the States as *Say Cheese!* (New York: Random House, 1989). This trenchant satire relates the adventures of a group of dissident photographers during what turned out to be the last decade of the U.S.S.R. as such. To what extent Aksyonov's fable bases itself on actual Soviet and eastern-bloc photographic activity during that period, and to what extent he uses photographers as stand-ins for the samizdat writers among whom he numbered, I cannot say.

4 A recent stream of book-length publications of Michailov's works, and a number of significant honors, have begun to bring him some long-overdue recognition.

5 Emigres and self-appointed ambassadors from the West brought out samples of what the younger generation was up to. Scholars and curators began to fill in the gaps in our understanding of the work done from the revolutionary years up through World War II. Gallerists and private dealers -- many of them scrupulous, some of them not -- began acquiring, gathering and retailing material for which they found/created a developing market. Traveling survey shows, historical texts, monographs, special thematic issues of journals gave further evidence of this burgeoning interest in these issues and images. But the fertile period of Soviet photography between 1916 and 1940 has yet to be fully annotated.

6 Perhaps not coincidentally, Moukhin's first major exposure outside the U.S.S.R. came in a group show bearing the same title as Aksyonov's novel -- *Say Cheese!* -- that traveled to Paris, London, San Diego, and Chicago in 1989-90.

7 For some additional thoughts on these matters, see my response to the editors' survey, «Whose photographs or which photographers from Central and Eastern Europe contributed to European and world photography between 1985 and 1995?» in *Imago* #3 (Winter '96-97), p. 59.

This text was published in a brochure accompanying the exhibition «*Igor Moukhin: Visions of Contemporary Russia*» at the Clara Hatton Gallery, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, in Spring 2004. © Copyright 2004 by A. D. Coleman.

Young at Heart

by Alexander Osipovich

The first girl has a razor blade dangling from her neck, while the second flaunts hip rectangular sunglasses and a short punk haircut. Studiously avoiding eye contact with the camera, they walk down a narrow Moscow side street, followed by a pair of boyish soldiers -- one puzzled, one cheerfully indifferent.

This image from 1988 is among the earliest of nearly 200 photographs in «Born in the U.S.S.R.» the latest book from photographer Igor Mukhin and the first of his books to be published in Russia. Mukhin, 43, is quite possibly Russia's best known living photographer. His works can be found in places such as New York's Museum of Modern Art and Moscow's Tretyakov Gallery, and up until «Born in the U.S.S.R.» his photography albums had been published only in Western cities such as Paris and Rome.

Mukhin first made his name in the late 1980s. As part of Immediate Photography, an underground grouping that included Boris Mikhailov and Alexander Slyusarev, he documented the crumbling remains of Soviet monumental propaganda. Soon, however, he went on to find his own individual style. Rejecting the social criticism of dissident art, he began to strike a more optimistic note, focusing his lens on the day-to-day lives of Russian youth.

This theme is on ample display in «Born in the U.S.S.R.» The teens and twentysomethings who populate Mukhin's photographs are a lively bunch -- they swim, sunbathe, arm-wrestle, hug their boyfriends awkwardly in the street, wave banners at various kinds of political demonstrations, gaze at the fireworks on New Year's Eve and stick their tongues out at the camera.

During a recent telephone interview, Mukhin reflected on discovering his artistic niche. In the mid-1990s, he recalled, many of the West's top photographers came to Russia to document the war in Chechnya. «They all showed suffering,» he said. «So that market was full. I didn't want to do that. I wanted to show another Russia, a peaceful one.»

The result was «People in Love,» a 1996 series that showed couples kissing and embracing in Moscow's public places. The acclaimed series, which consciously evoked Robert Doisneau's iconic pictures of Parisian lovers in the 1950s, was distinctly positive in tone -- and yet in its own way, it carried a resolutely antiwar message.

Politics has a way of creeping into Mukhin's photographs, although it is rarely front and center. In one witty composition from «Born in the U.S.S.R.» taken in 2005, a portrait of President Vladimir Putin is rolled out for a parade in central Moscow, partially blocking a sign for Bank Menatep -- a financial institution linked to Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the jailed former CEO of the Yukos oil company and a prominent Putin critic.

Other photographs in Mukhin's book feature young people at demonstrations. Some wear the armbands of the militant National Bolshevik Party, some drape themselves in antiwar placards, and one smiling man wears a Josef Stalin T-shirt. But Mukhin seems less concerned with political statements and more concerned with the faces of the young people involved. Like his shaggy-haired rock fans from the perestroika era or his adolescent boys and girls clumsily discovering their own sexuality, his demonstrators are simply searching for a new identity.

When asked about his book's title, Mukhin admitted that «Born in the U.S.S.R.» was partially an attempt to capitalize on the current fashion for all things Soviet. But, he added, it was also the sole unifying thread that described all the heroes of his pictures, from vacationers in the Crimea to sailors in Vladivostok. The generation featured in his book is linked by its Soviet background, whether people admit it or not, he said.

«I recently went to Africa as a tourist,» he recalled. «And when we were filling out the arrival forms, everybody was afraid to say that they had been born in the U.S.S.R. They said that they had born in Russia. But that's not really true.»

The generational divide cuts through Mukhin's own family. The photographer said his daughter was born in 1991, so her passport will say she was born in the Soviet Union, unlike her younger brother, born in 2000. «Half her grade was born in Russia, and half was born in the U.S.S.R.,» Mukhin said.

It is the latter half, of course, that has been the focus of Mukhin's work for the past two decades. And «Born in the U.S.S.R.» offers a sweeping look at the generation that straddled communism and capitalism while it was busy growing up. Like Robert Frank's «The Americans,» the landmark 1958 photography album that captured the United States on the verge of the civil rights movement, Mukhin's book documents an era of profound change.

It's a destiny that two punk girls walking down a Moscow alleyway in 1988 could scarcely have imagined.

The Moscow Times, August 19, 2005

Tout Moukhin

by Constantine Rylev

« (...) Pour sa dernière exposition-rétrospective (1990-2006) à la galerie Na Solyanke, Igor Moukhin suit de près l'influence des images-symboles sur l'inconscient collectif. Autrefois, le citoyen russe vivait sous le regard attentif de Lénine, de Marx ou d'Engels ; aujourd'hui, le cow-boy de Marlboro et les jeunes filles dénudées l'invitent à déguster un Pepsi. (...)

Désormais, ces idoles monumentales n'appellent plus à la paix ou au labeur ; elles proposent, avec un sourire mais pour un prix, une tasse de Nescafé ou une montre Rolex. Ce pouvoir des médias a chez Igor Moukhin un aspect proche de la science fiction.(...)

Dans sa série intitulée « Fragments et documents », Igor observe scrupuleusement le destin des ces retransmetteurs hors d'usage : un portrait à moitié effacé d'un héros de Sots.Trouda – du travail socialiste - ou un haltérophile en plâtre perdu dans un parc. (...)

Moukhin décrit minutieusement les masses mouvementées par des impulsions extérieures (la série « Procession »). Des centaines de visages regardent dans une seule direction, des milliers de pieds marchent vers la même destination. Ses clichés de la fourmière humaine sont proches des images constructivistes de Rodtchenko. »

“Vzglyad”, 8 fev 2008

<http://www.vz.ru/culture/2008/2/8/143464.html>

Unstable Monumentality

by Zhanna Vasilieva

Today, photography is unanimously considered to be High Art. By definition, it is linked to time, if only by the camera's exposure.

Photography also has its classics. Aside from the veteran Yuri Rybchinski who is part of the "Classics of Russian photography" (the name given to the Moscow House of Photography's exhibition series, which includes Rybchinski's retrospective recently opened at the Manezh), Igor Moukhin can also be classified as being such. Actually, if one were to ignore their differences in age, social background and technological advances (Moukhin created a slide-show for his benefit), one would prefer to call them the "classics of Soviet photography". It is no accident that Moukhin's album, published three years ago, is entitled "Born in the USSR" (a selection of photographs seen there is presented at his current exhibition at the Na Solyanke gallery).

This epoque is felt even in the works of those who declare its extinction. Moreover, Rybchinski work, that could even today be considered antique, conveys a view on our common past that seems to belong to an unconcerned outsider, whereas Moukhin's visual aphorisms are full of incomprehensible preoccupation with the collective body, wringed with the convulsions of socio-economic change. The first artist possesses a sharp social analysis, while the second one provides the viewer with endless lyricism. However, both of these artists – with a little difference in time, which becomes smaller year after year – were depicting the same subjects: you and I.

"Human life has more than one aspect" – these words taken from a short song by Boris Grebenshukov make the perfect soundtrack not only to Moukhin's Moscow series, but to his work as a whole. Maybe, it just fits to good photography in general – the photography about life. But I shall keep to the subject at present, and that is Moukhin's exhibition at the Na Solyanke Gallery, which not only presents his photographs but also a slide film.

The slide film, at first view, resembles a thematic retrospective in three parts. The first part is called "Fragments and Monuments", the second one – "Corteges", and the third one – "Moscow, the City". The photographs slide by while jolly Soviet marches, plangent folk songs, Scottish patter of "Franz Ferdinand's" lead singer are heard in the background. To say that the music gives another dimension to some of Moukhin's best-known works would be inexact. The film rather unites the distant spaces contained in both the music and the photographs. For example, British rock with its antibourgeois outcry and its rich nonconformist past meets depictions of our demonstrations, with old ladies holding portraits of Lenin, grey-haired grandfathers in their old military uniforms, officers on strike... In other words, those who, during the 90's, were being crushed by the weight of history and who didn't have the strength to face a journey to "Marlboro country" or the bright commercial future that was already taking over. In Moukhin's film, England blends into an image of an old bearded accordionist; one common world is created. Our history of the 90's stops seeming to be a historical malentendu, and suddenly finds its reflection in their rioting 70's. Therefore, the opposition between "us" and "them" "the West" and Russia, so appreciated by all kinds of radicals, becomes almost too weak, too shallow, - at least for any decent ideological conclusion.

Moukhin is, however, not as interested in ideology or publicity as he is in the Man. Or, more precisely, in the Man in a crowd. Often, this Man is lonely, and almost always, craving understanding. He hides behind a mask of polite carelessness, but dreams of openness and communication. That's exactly why the "Corteges" part of the film ends on such a piercing lyrical note. The last photograph, both funny and touching, of an elderly gentleman in a squeaky-clean suit ordained with medals and... a balloon in his hand. The eternal encounter of childhood and old age is enriched by the unison of the heroic and the defenseless. One couldn't possibly call this hero a flâneur, He is not as much an example of the megapolis' estrangement, as he is a reminder of the collectivism of the bygone era – the era that had not yet adopted the proud definition of privacy, and had lived for "everyone's" news and events. Moukhin, who is capable of seeing these heroes and who emphasizes their existence, doesn't do so as a reporter, but as a poet, in Baudelaire's sense of the word.

The fact that Moukhin's works explores, since long ago, the vague frontier between documentary coverage and poetry, between photography and contemporary art, isn't news as such. His photographs can be found in the collections of the Tretiakov Gallery, the MoMA, and the European House of Photography in Paris... But what is more interesting is that art historians often classify Moukhin's experiments as Sots-art, basing such classification on his "Soviet Monuments" series. The series, with its swimmers diving into the opulent Crimean vegetation, its athletes lost in the woods or its proletarian leaders, shamefacedly turned away from the public eye, looks like an ideal of the death of the empire. But in the film, this part is only the beginning, because, a little later, the statues undergo a wonderful metamorphosis. At first, the author explores the shadows, the fragments, the signs of the slow destructions of these concrete giants. Then, after the laughter, which replaced the original fear, comes pity – not because of the fact that behind these giants lies our grandparents' era, but because the world of these monuments suspiciously reminds us of a cemetery. The theme of decrepitude and death suddenly surges to the foreground, baffling and discouraging the spectator.

If this were the end of the film, it would leave us with no hope. But instead, Moukhin begins with the Fragments and Monuments series in order to introduce us to the passions, delusions, battles and temptations found in the two following parts, "Corteges" and "Moscow, the City". There is no happy end; then again, it was never promised. Instead, there is a large photograph in the middle of the exhibition space: a tired old man, sitting down on the concrete sidewalk, and, clinging to him, a smiling, unreasonably joyful boy. "Human life has more than one aspect", n'est-ce pas?

Culture Magazine, No04 (7617), 31 january - 6 february 2008

http://www.kultura-portal.ru/tree_new/cultpaper/article.jsp?number=755&rubric_id=205

Pour plus d'informations concernant Igor Moukhin:

<http://www.moukhin.ru/>

<http://www.cm-art.eu/>