

Iván de la Nuez - "In the Ruins of the Future"

After having spent some years gathering information, varied elements and fragments about occidental culture's fascination for former communist countries, it has not been difficult for me to arrive at the following conclusion: As has existed the Western, since 1989 it is possible to speak of a genre which we could call Eastern. (I have discussed various aspects of this in the blog.) Especially, when one sees that what once functioned as a curiosity -between ideological and picturesque- for people such as John Reed, Bertrand Russell, George Orwell or Saul Steinberg, now it can be seen as a compulsion towards what had remained, like a taboo, hidden on the Other Side of the Iron Curtain.

One chapter of the Eastern is, of course, covered by Hollywood. And this door opens to a hypothetical history which takes place between the witch hunts of the Cold War and current devotion towards "Eastern promises". Another obvious chapter is Ostalgia (remembrance in bucolic tones of the fallen empire). We could focus a third chapter on advertising (with its, usually frivolous, use of communist stereotypes as a publicity slogan for market economy). A fourth chapter has to be dedicated to communist astronautics. This implausible, and yet demonstrable, space odyssey which has seduced occidental artists such as Joan Fontcuberta (with his creation of Ivan Istoichnikov, a cosmonaut who disappeared due to the sinister intrigues of Soviet politics); Wolfgang Becker (who uses another astronaut to create an oasis in the tension in *Good Bye Lenin*); or Steven Soderbergh (capable of making a remake of *Solaris*, the mythical film by Andrei Tarkovski based on the no less mythical novel by Stanislaw Lem). Another film, *The Cosmonaut*, -with "Eastern plot" included-, is the first Spanish feature film made thanks to crowdfunding, a cooperative method which collectivises the role of the producer...

We should include in the Eastern, on his own merit, the French photographer Eric Lusito (1976).

The series has spanned a long trajectory, for which the photographer has had to spend time travelling to former communist countries: from those which were part of the former Soviet Union through to Mongolia and Germany. The result, in addition to this touring exhibition, is a book whose title is sufficiently self-explanatory: *After the Wall. Traces of the Soviet Empire*.

Moving on from the boring discussion between "documentary" photography and "artistic" photography, Lusito transports us from the collapsed futurism of the communist space race to the archaic aerials of a Kazakhstani communication system. From currencies (with no exchange given anywhere today) to passports (which lead nowhere) with absolutely no use today except as vintage fetishes. From statues which are still standing today to glimpses of Mongolian "constructivist" graffiti. From social buildings of inexplicable urbanism to the remains of now transgressed wire fences, destroying any original function to impede movement. From the absurd monument to a Zil truck (?) to the vestiges of a nuclear bunker.

Frozen images of the ruins of an epopee made on an excessive scale, these photos are at the same time a monument to this minor epic, everyday and of survival, which people showed under communism.

Relics of a world whose inhabitants also lived a fascination towards the Other Side which today consumes them as well as exhibits them.

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