



6 - 17 November 2019 - 6 passage des Gravilliers, 75003 Paris

Viktor & Sergiy Kochetov, Roman Pyatkovka,
Sergiy Solonsky, Vladyslav Krasnoshchok

Storytelling from Kharkiv : Singular Voices

Curated by Nadiia Kovalchuk

Events in presence of the artists:

Opening	Tuesday, November 5	6 - 9 p.m.
Press preview	Tuesday, November 5	5 - 6 p.m.
Artist Talk	Thursday, November 7	7 - 8 p.m.

Exhibition from Tuesday to Saturday 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. and by app.



For both images: Viktor & Sergiy Kochetov, Untitled, *Double Panoramas* series, 1970s-1980s / 1995, gelatin silver print, toned and hand-coloured, 17 x 60 cm, edition of 3

Is there a way to tell the diversity of the stories lived by a country experiencing profound and radical changes through the so-called "simple" and "transparent" medium of photography? This exhibition proposes to highlight a singular and little-known in Europe experience of an outstanding artistic phenomenon within the former USSR: the Kharkiv School of Photography. From the 1980s until the revolutionary events of Euromaidan in 2013-2014, the artists associated with this movement unveil, with the help of eminently subjective and experimental photography, political events dating back to Soviet Ukraine as well as contemporary ones.

In the mid-70s, in a city that was then one of the great industrial and academic centers of the Soviet Union, in this famous Kharkivian greyness, already related by Anton Chekhov in *A Boring Story* (1889), a group of young and ambitious photographers decides to treat the photographic medium in an unconventional way. Despite the constant censorship of the repressive state, this group will formulate a series of principles that will be imposed on the next two generations of photographers from the Kharkiv School: the commitment to the cause of photography capable to transmit powerfully their inner truth and give substance to their fundamental doubts, disturbing, elusive and polysemic photography.

Some of these photographers, developing a clearly personal aesthetics, reinvent the reality by defying the social taboos of representation. Viktor Kochetov employs the "carnavalization" of everyday life. Referring to the popular Soviet imagery of "*luriki*", he manually colors photographs capturing "non-decisive" moments, invisible in a culture centered on a discourse praising "heroes". The members of the Shilo group (with Vladyslav Krasnoshchok among them) make ingenious use of photographic material that combines questioning the Soviet heritage with the treatment of actual subjects relating to their own experiences.

The body as a sensitive boundary between the outer and the intimate worlds, as a receptacle for hidden desires, is an instrument using which many photographers of the Kharkiv School observe reality and adapt to it.

Facing the painful experience of a sudden loss of guiding landmarks at the time of the breakup of the USSR, Sergiy Solonsky stages a disturbing spectacle of the fragmentation of a body. Roman Pyatkovka's erotic scenes hidden in the interiors of Kharkivian *kommunalka*, refer to a thirst for escape recalling one that suggested by Ilya Kabakov in his installation *A Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment* (1982-1984). The dreams of fugue, on the one hand, and the summary of what the setting of a Soviet apartment is, on the other hand, replace these vain yet jovial attempts to "leap out of the Soviet Union" from the intimate context to the realm of shared social experience.

In the Kharkiv School of Photography, each story requires an appropriate form. The artists tell their personal stories through a willingly iconoclastic, often visually exuberant photography and always full of playful, insolent and subversive spirit.