

LONDONPROJECTS

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Boris Michajlov

'By the Ground' and 'At Dusk'
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PRESS RELEASE

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Boris Michajlov was born in Khar'kov, Ukraine in 1938 at a time when it was a punishable offence to have a camera in the house. His work is varied, spanning a period of thirty years, ranging from photographs of himself and his friends in staged situations and studio sets, to anonymous scenes documenting the social decay that has taken hold in the streets of Kiev and Khar'kov. Michajlov's images express his fascination for people and the ordinary things they do, and have an unrelenting eye for detail, full of surprising juxtaposition and great humanity.

He works in series, calling into question the validity of a single perceptual possibility. The photographs in the exhibition are from the series, 'By the Ground'. The series consisting of over one hundred sepia-toned photographs taken in May and June 1991 in the streets of Kiev, the Ukrainian capital and in Michajlov's home town Khar'kov. These panoramic images were created with the aid of the 'Horizon' camera which expands the angle by stretching the horizon to 120 degrees and thus emphasising the moment of movement and passing. The sepia brown of the photographs evokes dust, dirt and earth, while at the same time lending the series a certain nostalgic and historical touch. They recall pre-revolutionary Russia as well as Khrushchov's détente in the 1960's. Michajlov calls this evocation of historical images, 'parallel historical association'. The title of the series refers to Maksim Gor'kiy's play 'Na dne' translated 'At the Bottom' which put the social dregs of tsarist Russia on the stage for the first time.

In his blue-toned series 'At Dusk', Michajlov pursues the method of 'parallel historical association'. The series recalls the period of the revolution and the war years of 1941-45 when he was a child evacuee in the Urals. Blue is the colour of the blockade, of hunger, of cold, darkness and war. 'At Dusk' is an impressive documentation of radical social change, following the demise of the Soviet Union and the emergence of a 'society of wolves' in the burgeoning capitalist system. This series was also created using a 'Horizon' camera which is slung at waist level.

Boris Michajlov's first major retrospective exhibition in Europe (1995/96) took place, first at Portikus Frankfurt, and subsequently at the Kunsthalle Zurich, a comprehensive monograph catalogue was published to coincide with the exhibition. Recent Museum exhibitions also include the ICA Philadelphia, USA (catalogue). He is currently living in Berlin, a recipient of a DAAD Grant, and in 1996 was awarded the Coutts 'Contemporary Art Foundation Prize'. Catalogues on both series, 'By the Ground' and 'At Dusk', available from the Gallery

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