

New from DOM publishers:

Yevgen Nikiforov (Photographer), Olga Balashova, Lizaveta German

Decommunized: Ukrainian Soviet Mosaics

In almost every Ukrainian city there are – or were – monumental mosaics created by Soviet artists, especially in the last thirty years of the USSR. They were elaborated to ornate public spaces and communicate the Communist ideals. However, they were immediately treated as state-commissioned propaganda, not worthy of attention. Many of them were only recently irrevocably destroyed directly after the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Decommunized: Ukrainian Soviet Mosaics presents the first comprehensive study of Soviet monumental mosaics – outstanding artefacts of the cultural heritage of the era. The photographer Yevgen Nikiforov spent three years traveling all around Ukraine (including the presently occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Donetsk, and Lugansk oblasts) in search of the most interesting works of art from the 1950s–1980s, within the context of Soviet Modernism. He covered 35,000 km of Ukrainian roads and visited 109 cities and villages to discover over 1,000 surviving mosaics. The book includes about 200 unique photographs of monumental panels: Officially sanctioned, gigantic representations of workers, farmers, astronauts, and athletes, made of coloured smalto or ceramics, illustrate Soviet life as it was meant to be represented. Some of the pieces featured here were demolished shortly after the photographs were taken, due to the fact that they fell under the category of the so-called decommunization laws that ban communist symbols and slogans. This law was officially adopted in April 2015 and turned indirectly against Russia. It included, amongst other things, the removal of communist monuments, as well as streets and squares with communist names. This volume has thus become a documentary of destroyed artefacts. Short introductions explain the context of the thematic chapters.

Though the content of Soviet art was meticulously controlled by state propaganda, Ukrainian artists managed to develop a visual language that transcends the Socialist Realist canon. Today these works of art serve as historical testimony, and show a new and important page in twentieth-century art history.

This book is published in cooperation with the Ukrainian publisher OSNOVY Publishing, and is part of DOM publishers' programme that directs a critical point of view to the East, along with Ukraine; it also includes the architectural guides of Kiev (2015) and Slavutych (2016).



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