



PRESS RELEASE



## SOVIET NOSTALGIA: IMAGES FROM A FORGOTTEN ERA

5 November 2009 – 9 January 2010

Galerie Blue Square celebrates the beginning of its third year with a joint exhibition of five photographers who have documented now nostalgic views of the former Soviet Union. The gallery's first exhibition of artists from the East and the West also commemorates the 20-year anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall with a special series of photographs taken by **Vladimir Sichov** depicting Keith Haring painting on the Wall in 1986.

Born in Kazan, in the heart of Russia, **Vladimir Sichov** began taking photographs in the 1960s. His early photographs of street life and, in his words, "everything lying around" were restricted from publication in the Soviet Union. For this reason he became a professional photojournalist, his craft becoming his trade. After moving to Paris at the end of the 1970s, Sichov's first "street photos" were published in "Paris Match" and "Der Stern." These views of life behind the Iron Curtain were some of the first to be shown in the West. Just recently, Sichov returned from Moscow where his Soviet period photographs were exhibited at the State Tretyakov Gallery. Forty years later, Sichov has at last been recognized and praised in his native land for these private street photos.

Canadian photographer **John Lucas** will show photographs from a trip to the Soviet Union he made in 1981 with an SX-70 Polaroid camera. Below, he describes the experience of the first Polaroid photo he took in an Estonian bakery :

*Within seconds of the camera's flash I was mobbed with desperate requests for portraits by a clientele steeped in the privations of a Soviet winter. The demand was clearly insatiable, even with my generous supply of film. At this point I felt I had two choices; to abandon the cake and run, or to impose order on the situation. Without a word of Estonian or Russian, the unique character of Polaroid photography served as my language for convincing an apprehensive waitress to pose in exchange for a photograph. What could be more persuasive than the astonishing materialization of a photograph serving alongside its actuality?*

**Doris Kloster-Folliet**, an American living in France, is best known for her seductive portraits and has been published by Taschen, St. Martin's Press and Carlton Books UK. Her series, *Russian War Heroes*, is a collection of portraits of Soviet generals from WWII. Kloster-Folliet was inspired to document the courageous personalities of these veterans as they entered their final years of life. Her experience working with the Museum of the Red Army to organize and plan the taking of these portraits is also an integral part of their history. Kloster-Folliet's most recent project, *Self-Portraits*, is in one sense transference of the Soviet generals series on to herself. She describes these portraits as "an exploration of the iconic presence of women in visual interpretations of current world events." These photographs were recently exhibited at the Beijing Museum of Contemporary Art.

**Alexey Titarenko** is a native of St. Petersburg who has lived in Paris and now resides in New York. He began taking photographs in the early 1970s. In 1978, he became a member of the well-known Leningrad photographic club Zerkalo, where he had his first solo exhibition. Several works from his most renowned series "City of Shadows" (1992-1994) will be exhibited. Titarenko documents a world of unrealized hopes where time seems to stand still. Two monographs of his work have been published, including *Alexey Titarenko, photographs, essay by Gabriel Bauret* (2003), which was nominated for the Best Photographic Book of the Year at the International Arles Festival in 2004.

**Alexei Vassiliev** first exhibited with Galerie Blue Square in 2008. We asked the artist to explore his archives for early works to show collectors and admirers some of his early influences. The light, color and texture of these photos he took in the 1990s clearly relate to his current large-scale evocative photographs. Described as being at the edge of dream and reality and between painting and photography, Vassiliev's photos allow the viewer to enter a captivating and mysterious universe. Vassiliev has exhibited in France, the US, and Mexico and lives and works in Russia and France.

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