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Soviet Cities

Labour, Life & Leisure

Arseniy Kotov

The first book by Russian photographer and Instagram sensation Arseniy Kotov showcasing surviving Soviet Modernist architecture from across the former USSR, much of which has never previously been documented

FUEL

215 illustration

16.0 x 20.0cm

240pp

ISBN 9781916218413

BIC AJB

Hardback

£24.95

September 2020



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Book



Key Sales Points

- A book of beautiful images from a photographer with a unique and distinctive approach for capturing the urban landscape. Images are fully captioned with historical and cultural references
- Arseniy Kotov is known world-wide for his incredible Instagram account: [@northern.friend](https://www.instagram.com/northern.friend) which currently has 66k followers
- The book is part of FUEL's collectable Russian series. Designed to the same dimensions as Soviet Bus Stops, Soviet Metro Stations, Soviet Asia, Holidays in Soviet Sanatoriums and Chernobyl: A Stalkers' Guide



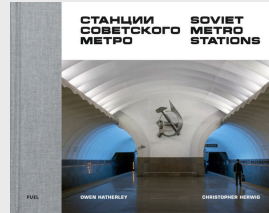
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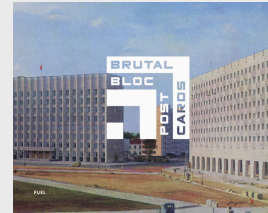
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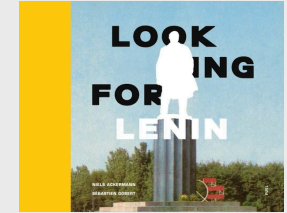
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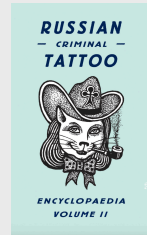
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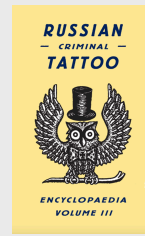
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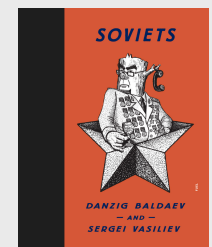
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INTRODUCTION

I have always enjoyed visiting other countries, but when I finished my job at a space rocket factory in Samara, I was forbidden foreign travel for a number of years, so I started to explore different Russian cities. Initially, they appeared very similar to me: Lenin stands in the central square with his hand raised, nearby is a typical round circus building and a theatre with a sloping roof. The edge of the city is populated with familiar dormitory areas, living blocks stretching into the distance and smoking factory chimneys on the horizon.

The more cities I visited, the more I noticed interesting buildings and urban planning features. I was greatly impressed by the huge towers of mysterious scientific institutes and design bureaus, which had previously been used by the space or defence industries, but were now mostly closed.

In dormitory areas I was attracted to the grim monolithic high-rise buildings that tower over regular living blocks. Their powerful forms of bare concrete are constructed with almost no decoration, bright colours or luxury: the distinctive style of the Soviet Union.

Most buildings in Soviet cities were fabricated according to standard designs, as a result, one building can closely resemble the next. But this similarity was compensated by monumental art: facades of some houses were decorated with mosaics, murals, huge stone or metal monumental panels. This art, dedicated to the values of the Soviet people, the history of the country or current events, usually depicted aspirational idols: cosmonauts, engineers, scientists, soldiers, or the common worker, were all venerated for their work building communism.

"Motherland" above the panel house
Krasnooktyabrsky District
VOLGOGRAD, RUSSIA

Monuments were also popular in during this era. Most commemorate either the October Revolution (when the socialists came to power) or the Great Patriotic War (WWII) - the two major events of the young Soviet nation. In the western part of the country, where the majority of battles took place, it is possible to see a war monument in almost every neighbourhood.

In recent years Russian cities have visibly changed. The architectural heritage of the Soviet period has not been fully acknowledged. As a result many unique modernist buildings have been destroyed, while others have become almost unrecognisable through unsympathetic renovation.

It has been difficult for Soviet-era factories to compete in the modern global economy, with many being demolished to make way for shopping malls. Even palaces of culture - perhaps the most beautiful of Soviet buildings - are now used for markets and fairs, while scientific institutes survive by leasing their property.

I was born in 1988 and have no first-hand experience of life in the USSR, but if we can judge the past by its architecture and cultural heritage, it was a great civilization, with the intention of building fair society, to explore nature, and conquer space. This civilization no longer exists and in my photographs I wanted to show what remains, to show where the most outstanding buildings and constructions, to show where soviet people lived, how soviet cities originally looked.

Between 2016 and 2019 I visited all of the post-Soviet republics, staying in over two hundred cities. The photographs presented in this book were made over this period.





Institute of Solar Physics
PARKENT, UZBEKISTAN
Built in 1985

The objective of the institute is to study the action of refractory materials at ultrahigh temperatures, as well as obtaining ultra-pure heat-resistant materials for the aerospace industry. The furnace was also used to test the plating of spacecraft.



A series of rotating mirrors, heliostats direct sunlight to a large parabolic hub consisting of small facet mirrors. The sunlight reflected by the concave concentrator is focused in the technological room of the tower, where it heats the material being processed.



'Friendship' student hostel
Frame-panel building based on 'KMC-101'
MOSCOW, RUSSIA
Built in 1974



Ministry of Transport of the Georgian SSR
TBILISI, GEORGIA
Built in 1974
Architects: G. Chahava, Z. Jalagania

The idea is to use and cover less ground and give the space below the building back to nature. The architect's reference was a forest: the cores are like the trunk, the horizontal parts the crowns. Between the earth and crowns there is a lot of free space for other living beings, which create one harmonious world with the forest.





'Corn-buildings'
MINSK, BELARUS
Built in 1980-1995
Architect: V. Pushkin

All of these buildings looks the same, but inside they are different. During construction, the requirements for apartments changed, firstly there were more one and two-room apartments. In the later ones there are mostly three-room apartments, then even two-level apartments. The latest building is used for offices.



Il-68/22-2 Towers of Yasenevo
MOSCOW, RUSSIA
Built in 1982-1988
Architect: Ya. Belopolskiy

After the completion of the Moscow Ring Road, the district areas were within the city. Mass housing construction began in the 1975s. In parallel, according to the project, a social structure was created (schools, shops, clinics). Yasenevsky microdistricts are some of the best examples of urban planning on the outskirts of the capital.

