

Boris Mikhailov

Yesterday's Sandwich

preview 15 may 6:30 - 8:00 pm
exhibition 16 may – 10 aug
tue – sat, 10 am – 6 pm

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Sprovieri is delighted to present the fourth solo show at the gallery of Boris Mikhailov *Yesterday's Sandwich*.

The exhibition focuses on the first series conceived by Mikhailov, *Superimpositions*, also called *Butterbrot (Sandwich)*. This body of works evolved between the late '60s and early '70s, although - due to the restrictions of the Soviet era - it existed for a long time just in the form of slideshow, and the single images began to be printed not before the end of the 1980s, when he started to live in the West. The series was for the first time published much later, in 2006, in the book *Yesterday's Sandwich*.

Besides a selection of some of the most iconic printed photographs, the exhibition at Sprovieri showcases the 12-minutes-long slideshow comprising of 184 slides obtained by Mikhailov by projecting slides one on top of the other. The superimposition of the different images creates fascinating 'sandwiches': a surreal fusion between reality and imagination, in which scenes of everyday Soviet life merge with unexpected landscapes and erotic female nudes. The experimentation in the photographs of *Yesterday's Sandwich* - manipulated by hand in a time when digital processes were yet to be conceived - also introduces the cinematic language into his practice by dissolving the distance between two shots. The advanced Soviet cinematography, particularly the work of Andrei Tarkovsky and Sergei Parajanov, represent a close paragon in this sense.

In spite of seeming a product of unconscious fantasy, Mikhailov's dual tableaux actually make a sharp statement against the prevailing realist aesthetic and the range of control proper of that time, which considered photography as a subversive medium. Moreover, some of the *Yesterday's Sandwich* superimpositions elaborate images that had been taken in the context of his *Red Series*, developed roughly at the same time and in which the political dimension of the colour red dominates, symbolising the all-encompassing cultural power of the regime.

Mikhailov's language is an uncompromising and playful view of the beauty and the grotesque of an era. His work has an historical besides an art value, yet is ironic and empathic. His tireless investigations into photographic techniques and styles, as well as his frequent alternation between conceptual and documentary work, have contributed to make him the most prominent photographer to emerge from the former Soviet Union in the past 20 years.

About the artist:

Boris Mikhailov was born in Ukraine in 1938. He lives and works in Berlin.

Recent solo exhibitions include: Ukraine Pavilion, 57th Venice Biennale (2017); Fotomuseum, Antwerp (2016); Kunstverein Wolfenbüttel (2016); MADRE, Naples (2015); Camera Italian Centre for Photography, Turin (2015); Sprengel Museum, Hannover (2013); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2011); and Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2010). A selection of his work was recently featured in the group shows: 'Another Kind of Life: Photography on the Margins', Barbican Centre, London (2018); 5th Odessa biennale (2017); 'Performing for the Camera', Tate Modern, London (2016); 'The Human Condition Session II', Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2016).

Mikhailov is included in important public collections, including: Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; ICA, Boston; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Tate Modern, London; Tel Aviv Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; MoMA, New York.