



Communication Space Školská 28

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Farm Work: Solar Town

Tomáš Pospěch

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Opening: Thursday, January 08, 6pm

Guided tour: Wednesday, January 21, 6pm

This exhibition at the Communication Space Školská 28 takes us back to the 80s. A found archive of photos from the cooperative farm JZD Slušovice bears witness to the unique economic phenomenon and promotional photography of that time. The exhibition presents several works that offer a new interpretation of the JZD Slušovice slide collection.

The name “Slušovice”, for a certain generation, brings up similar feelings, recalling certain product names, like bompary, favoritka, Remoska, Merkur, Pioneer motorcycles, botasky or Wartburg. I was born in the 70s near Slušovice. On Saturdays, it was usual for people to go shopping there, or to the horse races or for lunch, which was served on the plane. I was never taken there, but it must have been something very unique. Adults talked about it with such enthusiasm that I connect it with the wondrous planet from the Soviet children’s books about “Neználek”.

The agricultural cooperatives in mountain villages on the border between Moravia and Slovakia in the 70s brought all this together under the umbrella of “Agrokombinát Slušovice”. Inspired by the example of Tomáš and Antonín Baťa from nearby Zlín, under the leadership of František Čuba, they managed to create small innovative teams that produced a scarce commodity, trade with the West, and at the same time serve as a showcase for Czechoslovak socialist agriculture. In turn, they were bringing the state much prized currency and components from which they built the first computers. Employees had good salaries, went shopping in stores like Kvatro which was something like Tuzex, saved money in their own bank, and paved several kilometers of highway from Slušovice to Zlín.

Roland Barthes wrote somewhere that the wonder of photographs is not only that they replicate reality, but also that they radiate the past. The power of authenticity exceeds the power of presentation. Photographs are time preservers; snippets of the past sticking out absurdly, provided that we do not find sufficient context for them.

First I tried to use the experience and methodology of the art historian to reconstruct displays, like those for which were the slides originally intended. But there remains only a fragment of the scenarios for which they were intended. So I started to work with the photos freely and provided them new contexts. The images themselves undoubtedly evoke strong nostalgia, so in addition, I tried to uncover the various promotional strategies of the period. But simply providing a new context does not overwrite what the pictures show, but rather gives a double reading: we can see the different display systems and promotional strategies that have been used in their creation. Photos bear abundant references to the advertising strategies of that time: medium format negatives, fancy filters, models from the neighborhood, special methods of production. The photographs were created during the years 1978-1989 by the advertising photographer Jan Regal from Zlín. They are supplemented by other works that were created in today’s Slušovice, in relation to this archive.

Tomáš Pospěch

Tomáš Pospěch

(b. 1974) is an art historian, photographer, artist, free-lance curator, and teacher at the Institute of Creative Photography, Silesian University, Opava. He lives in Prague and Hranice. He received a Master’s degree from the Institute of Creative Photography in 1998 and a Master’s in Art History from Charles University, Prague, in 1999. His main professional interests are photography and the fine arts of central Europe. He is the author of more than twenty books, including monographs on Vladimír Birgus and Jindřich Štreit as well as on contemporary Slovak documentary photography, and the volume Czech and Slovak Photography of the 1980s and 1990s, which accompanied an exhibition of the same name. Among the exhibitions he has organized are a retrospective of the work of Jindřich Štreit (held at the Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava, 2006, and the City Gallery Prague, 2007). His articles appear regularly in Ateliér, Fotograf, Imago, Fotografie Magazín, Photonews, Camera Austria, and Reflex. He has taken the more conceptual approach in his own photographs – Castle Owners (2002–05), Landscapes.jpg (2002–05), An Aimless Walk (2004–08), and Castles and Châteaux of the Czech Republic (2004–05, 2009) – in which he works freely with the landscape genre. He is the winner of the 2006 Sittcomm Award.

