

demand Washington's attention. Given that the United States made a commitment to Central Asia in the wake of the September 11 attacks and the operation to topple the Taliban in Afghanistan, the US view of the region has been largely colored by security considerations. This Kangas calls the securitization of US policy towards Central Asia (83). With the subsiding security threat to US interests, Kangas wonders whether Washington can afford to stay committed to Central Asia. Furthermore, reflecting on the applicability of game theory to Central Asia, he contends that one should not assume the US step-back from Central Asia would automatically lead to Russian and Chinese advances in the region. Both maintain a range of regional and global interests and Central Asia may not be high on their agenda.

This collection offers interesting new ideas and points to exciting new areas of research. This should be inspiring for scholars of Central Asia.

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Ieva Astahovska et al. (eds) *Revisiting Footnotes. Footprints of the Recent Past in the Post-Socialist Region*. Riga: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2015.

The book *Revisiting Footnotes. Footprints of the Soviet Past in the Post-Socialist Region*, edited by art historians Ieva Astahovska and Inga Lāce from the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art (LCCA) in Riga, boasts a range of multidisciplinary voices from Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine. In their introduction, the editors claim that the time has come to engage in a "culture-anthropological archaeology" (9) and in the book's press release they invite art historians, theorists, artists and researchers to contribute to an analysis of the "persistent Soviet era traces," to an "excavation" or "digging into [...] the past." Two years after the exhibitions *Revisiting Footnotes I* and *II*, as well as the accompanying symposium *Revisiting Footnotes* at the LCCA, the initiators have published a book encompassing all the

major components of this project, realized in collaboration with Drugo More from Rijeka, Croatia, the cultural platform IZOLYATSIA from Kyiv, Ukraine, and the Centre for Contemporary Art KSA:K from Chisinau, Moldova. Unmistakably inspired by widely used archaeological metaphors, constructed by curator Dieter Roelstraete for instance, the editors seem to understand their book as a collection of archaeological findings that the post-socialist strata have brought to the fore since the familiar “historiographic turn in art.” By taking up this idea, I want to ask what it could be, from the perspective of the authors in the book, that the “new” generation is left with after the revolutions of 1989/1991 and the fall of the Soviet Union.

The anthology seems like an insightful premiere of research that reacts to the fading—in fact by now almost nonexistent—socialist experience of the younger generation. Within thirteen short essays and two experimental contributions, the reader is invited to investigate the side effects of growing up in the transitional period of the 1990s and their imprint on art, cultural theory, and identity politics. Amsterdam-based writer and lecturer Margaret Tali claims it is “the struggle between memories, languages and identities that operate on the margins” (83) that characterizes the post-socialist European situation and its pitfalls. Unraveling contemporary art history as a challenging discipline that is confronted with “structural absences in the discourses of post-Soviet art” (76), she criticizes the continuous “silencing” and subsequent invisibility of Romani women in artistic and cultural production (79). Such kinds of domination and “centralization” of societal discourses are also observed in another reflection, by Moscow-based art historian and curator Ilya Budraitskis, who considers the organization of societal discourse through “collective memory” as one of the indisputable “lessons of the past” (88) and, therefore, as a specificity of the post-Soviet present. Beyond discussing the intertwining of “collective memory” with the politics of history and the construction of national-historical narratives, he elaborates on the manifold ways in which contemporary artists are engaged in the “return of expelled and repressed sides of memories” (90). Another obvious “footnote” of today, if we follow the editors’ argumentation,

is the expulsion of utopia after the end of “the most influential utopian movement—socialism” (10). This denial of imaginable alternatives is a common feature of the post-socialist present, especially as detected by sociologist Davor Mišković from Rijeka (15–18) as well as by Astahovska and Lāce (113–125; 65–73). Art historian Dovilė Tumpytė from Vilnius, for her part, does not bemoan this disappearance of utopia; rather, she announces a huge comeback of modernist aesthetics in Lithuanian video art since the 2010s. Referring to corresponding video works and Actor-Network-Theory, she states: “actors from different temporalities [...] clash with one another within the artwork and give rise to a speculative space [...] (112).” For Ieva Astahovska though, fiction has won over speculation—she emphasizes that the current archaeology of the Soviet period by Latvian artists could never have been undertaken without fictional narration (121).

What can already be understood from this short introduction into the book’s layers and depths is that, as a contemporary document, *Revisiting Footnotes* gathers cultural peculiarities of the post-socialist present and the suspension of the “post-Soviet condition,” a term introduced by philosopher Susan Buck-Morss in 2006. The open moderation by editors Astahovska and Lāce, the texts’ short lengths and their associative compilation enables their readers to gain a vivid impression of highly complex topics such as the end of utopia, post-communist identity, the process of decommunization (Tamta-Tamara Shavgulidze, 27-34), decolonization and mythmaking of Eastern Europe (Tanel Rander, 61-64), Soviet cinema (Viktorija Eksta & Ieva Viese, 37-48), post-Soviet autobiographies (Mārtiņš Kaprāns, 51-59), Roma communities, the Lithuanian school of photography (Vytautas Michelkevičius, Agnė Narušytė & Lina Michelkevičė, 35-36), post-politics and the decentralization of collective memory, the outdated figure of the witness, history as fiction, the belatedness of culture, post-communist a-topia and the survival of the so-called “Marxist footnotes” in post-socialist societies (Magdalena Radomska, 139-149).

Especially for researchers, theorists, and art professionals interested in contemporary art and theory from a post-socialist

context, *Revisiting Footnotes* provides a rich source of indispensable local narratives, such as the artist group Slavs and Tatars rediscovering Central Asian Islam (151-58), artist Mykola Ridnyi from Kharkiv diagnosing the chronic belatedness of art and culture in times of war in Ukraine (127-37), or Berlin-based artist Sophia Tabatadze speaking about the reconstructed Soviet manufacturing building *Pirimze* and its ghostly revenant, the new department store *Pirimze Plaza* in the center of Tbilisi, Georgia (19-23). The change of societal habits and behaviors after 1989/1991 is very well captured by artist and activist Tanel Rander from Tallinn, who considers “‘Eastern Europe’ as a denied existence—a shortcut” (63). Pragmatically, he dismantles “Eastern Europe” as a myth, created with the help of “misrepresentations,” “fictionalizations” and “the abandonment of memory” (64).

A strength of this book is the tense coexistence of rather naïve and personal accounts, critical analyses, and an appendix with images and short texts on the works exhibited in *Revisiting Footnotes I and II*. The diversity of the authors’ backgrounds, their working methods, and the artists discussed in this anthology sow hope for it to become one of the first approximations for art historian Piotr Piotrowski’s “horizontal art history,” a new art-historical paradigm aiming to question not only the asymmetrical “art geography” but also “Eastern”/ “Western” stereotyping. This is why this book has the character of a prelude, an improvisatory overture for something which is yet to come: an overdue prelude to the post-socialist future.

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