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## PHOTOGRAPIC TYPOLOGY AS A METHOD OF DISPLAYING THE FORMATION OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT IN A MODERN PHOTOBOOK

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**Abstract. Purpose.** *To figure out the directions of development and origins of the modern photobook on the examples dedicated to the effect of the Soviet culture on the formation of the post-Soviet urban environment.*

**Methodology.** *In the process of research, the following methods were used: art analysis, analysis of theoretical and historical preconditions for the development of the typology of a modern photobook that displays the urban environment; synthesis, generalization and systematization of the received information; methods of induction, deduction and comparative analysis.*

**Results.** *It is shown that photobooks, dedicated to the influence of Soviet heritage on the formation of urban environment and landscape, continue the traditions established by the Dusseldorf School of Photography with some differences affected by the rise of publishing and design technologies. It is determined, that the characteristic feature of a modern photobook is a wider freedom in the choice of the target objects, angles of view, shots. But the concept of documenting the same or similar objects remains. Minimalism in the design of the indoor unit and cover, concise use of several options for repeating modular grids — the trends that unite the latest published photobooks.*

**Scientific novelty.** *Typological features and principles of the design of one of the actual directions of the modern photobooks are revealed, which tend to continue the traditions of photographic typology as a form of presenting a photo project. Distinctive features in the formation of the design of such photobooks, associated with the development of modern digital technologies of photography and layout, are defined.*

**Practical significance.** *A retrospective art analysis of photobooks, dedicated to the reflection of the urban environment, was conducted. The research is an important link in the further study of the history of the development of the photobook, as the implementation of the creative project of the photographer.*

**Keywords:** *Ukrainian art; modern photo book; post-Soviet urban environment; photographic typology; design; photo project; Soviet heritage; minimalism*

## INTRODUCTION

The growing rise of photobook publishing reveals a great interest to the photobook as an object of art and the way of expression of the photographer's project. This is evidenced by a large number of the festivals and exhibitions of photobooks in different countries of the world (festivals in Europe, America, Asia, such as Vienna Photo Book Festival, International Biennial of Photography and Visual Arts in Liege (Belgium), FORMAT International Photography Festival in Derby (UK), European Photography Festival in Reggio Emilia (Italy), Lodz Photo Festival (Poland), Art Book Fair Basel in Basel (Switzerland), International Photobook Festival in Kassel (Germany), Photobook Fair Atlanta Celebrates Photography, London Art Book — Photobook Fair in London (UK), etc.). The similar festivals were conducted from 2019 in Ukraine (Kiev photobook festival curated Dmitriy Krakovich, Photobook fair, etc.). One of the directions that interest photographers from European and other countries is the impact of the heritage of the past eras and ages on the appearance on the present environment

The vital issue artists and publishers work with, refers to the documentary photography, displaying the urban landscape of soviet and post-soviet heritage of the countries and its remains in the cities of the former USSR. Moreover, many of these photobooks were included in the lists of the best photobooks of the year, which are created at the end of each year by well-known European and American publications (The Time, the Guardian, The Observer).

## ANALYSIS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCHES

It has to be noted, that unlike other aspects of photography, the scientific study of the photobook has no significant historical tradition: as a relatively new phenomenon, the modern photobook has hardly been studied as a separate problem. The only work was made by M. Parr and G. Badger [11], who considered the issue of photobook in the historical dialectic of development without setting themselves the task of giving theoretical calculations on the design of a modern photobook. They used study the idea of the specific type of the book, in which the main message of the work is expressed by photographs. The history of the gradual establishment of the photobook as a printed product, a publishing product and a design product began in the 1920s. On the example of propaganda publications — newspapers and magazines of the first decades of the twentieth century, published in Germany and the Soviet Union,

these trends in the development of the photobook were considered by Johanna Drucker and a number of other researchers, who identified the features of the photobook as avant-garde movement, with its inherent creative artistic vision [1] It should be mentioned, that only a few of the works connected with photobook, as a phenomenon in art, are devoted to the study of its design [2; 7; 9; 15; 17].

Some of researchers provided the analysis about the concrete photobook layout, as the work of a definite artist, but no general conclusions on the issue was made [16; 18].

The methodological basis of the study is also formed of the works, dedicated to the artistic analysis of the followers of the school of Beher's and the way of design that Edward Rucha used, that became a sample of the photographic typology, as a method for forming the photographer's project. The modern photobook as an art object, in particular, its typology and design features are considered in the works of the authors [12]. Although the bigger attention news devoted to the photo story, as the more developed genres Ukrainian photographers use.

## PURPOSE

Based on the analysis of the scientific sources, design and layout of the artistic photobooks that were influenced by the image of the Soviet city, to identify and summarize the features of photographic typology, as one of the methods for creating the content of a modern photobook.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The theme displaying the elements of Soviet culture that are still preserved in the environment of the modern post-Soviet space can be considered as a continuation of the ideological heritage of well-known schools of photography and specific authors (for example, Edward Rucha), in whose work, the objects which should have been soon demolished because their relevance was lost over time, were fixed in a neutral objective style and formed a specific series.

It was observed that the tradition of depicting the urban environment in a photo book dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. Already at this time, the first photo books were created, which showed exotic monuments and places associated with travel to unusual cities and countries. However, they were not considered works of art.

The pictorial movement reinvented photography as an art form, however the photos they produced, followed the art of etching or

paintings and included much photo manipulations and retouching, rather than the documentary photography as a genre.

Meanwhile, already in 1904, in Sadakichi Hartman's article «A Call for Direct Photography», the ideas of the value of «pure» photography were first voiced: «We expect an etching to look like an etching and a lithograph to look like a lithograph, so why shouldn't a photographic print look like a photographic print?» [13]. The last issues of the magazine «Camera Work» (the editorial purpose of which was to establish photography as a fine art) published by Alfred Stieglitz (США), have completely changed the pictorial soft focus and symbolical concept. In issue 48 Stieglitz introduced the work of a young photographer, Paul Strand, whose photographic vision was indicative of the aesthetic changes. The final issue of «Camera Work» was devoted entirely to Strand, including a variant of Porch Railings, Twin Lakes, which combine direct realistic representation of things and urban scenes with a vision that Stieglitz praised as «brutally direct» [5]. It followed the concept of New Objectivity, that found beauty in the clear lines and forms of ordinary objects. Later the first abstract photography and industrial photo series appeared in the works of Alfred Stieglitz, who made harsh graphic shoots of the New York 1935 (Fig.1).

So in the twenties of the last century the photography started to develop as an independent subject and opposition to the pictorial photography, based on the classical works of art and painting. At the same time, the concepts of photography began to appeal to innovative artistic trends (cubism, fauvism, futurism, abstract art).



Fig. 1. Alfred Stieglitz. «New York, From The Shelton», 1935. <https://gate.agency/stieglitz-genius/>

By the ends of 1930, «straight photography» became the part of photographic practice worldwide in the commercial (advertis-

ment, journalism, design) and non-commercial fields [6].

An example of the ideological bias towards the adoption of a new approach to understanding aesthetics of photography may be linked with Albert Renger-Patzsch (German photographer associated with the New Objectivity) created «The World is Beautiful», which included the works of different artists new vision movement that displayed the objects of nature, urban sites and objects, mechanical equipment, ect., attempted to find the beauty in everyday places and things (Fig.2).

It should be noted that a tradition of documentary straight street style photography is often linked to Ager Atge, who managed to convey of streets and architecture of Old Paris 1889-1924 displaying churches, monuments, and buildings, as well as bars, shop windows, street-peddlers, and prostitutes. He became famous due to the photographers of 1920 Man Ray and Berenice Abbott that were influenced by the visual form of documentation. Ansel Adams, in 1931 said, that Atge's works were clean and direct, representing the earliest expression of true photographic art [14].

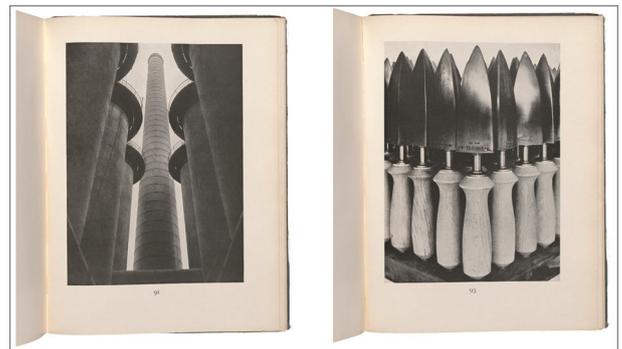
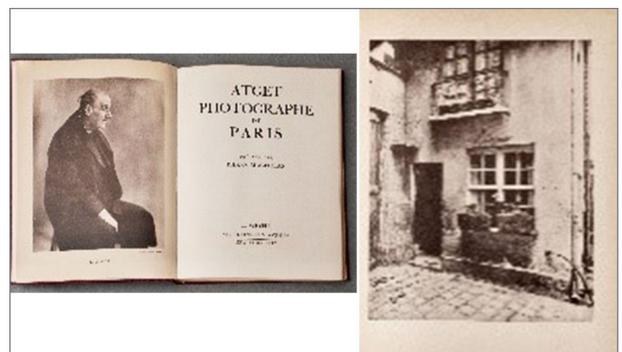


Fig.2. Albert Renger-Patzsch. «The world is beautiful». Munich: Einhorn-Verl, 1928  
<http://fulstonphotography.weebly.com/the-world-is-beautiful.html>



Pic 3. «Atget Photographe de Paris» (Ben Shahn's copy). <https://www.moma.org/interactives/object-photo/publications/781.html>

Magnum Photos was a New York based photographic co-operative founded in 1947 by four photographers, including Robert Capa and Henri Cartier-Bresson, that aimed to give photographers the freedom to record what they see without having to work to the agents of magazines and newspapers [12]. That means that the first precursor of the non-commercial publication house appeared. Due to the emergence of Magnum, a number of artists, who began to publish their photobooks. For instance, Henri Cartier-Bresson («The Decisive Moment», 1952), Robert Capa («Death in the Making» 1938, which was also the first war photobook), Martin Parr, who continue to publish and investigate the issue of contemporary photobooks today («The last resort» 2022, etc.)

Since 1960 the documental photography had followed these traditions and developed with the genre of photojournalism. It has to be mentioned, that the documental genre functioned like an art direction, while photojournalism was the commercial.

As a form of non-commercial art, the straight photography has established as a main tool of creating the photographs project with the development of conceptual art and museum photography as well.

The school of Behers (Düsseldorf School of Photography) and such artists as Ed Rusha (American artist) activated the concept of photo series and photography projects as a typology. The school of Behers gave an important impulse of the urban photography and the way how the art photography can look like. Bechers emphasized «a pattern of sequential experiences», creating a series of images that were connected to one another. They called this approach «typology»; that is the desire «to make families of objects», or «families of motifs» [3]. The «Anonymous sculptures» (1970) has the first typological project, that showed the city in not usual way of and confirmed the new tradition of creating art project. The photos of industrial constructions made in «neutral» straight style was totally new decision of the way how the art of photography could look like [3].

From that time photographic series began to exist in the space of museum or the gallery.

The big influence on the concept of photo projects of Düsseldorf School of Photography had a movement of New topographic, that have opened a completely new comprehension of art landscape and urban photography.

The exhibition's clunky subtitled «Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape» was an exhibition that epitomized a key moment in American landscape photography.

The work of American photographers such as Gohlke, Robert Adams, Stephen Shore, Lewis Baltz, and Nicholas Nixon depicted landscapes of urban America in the 70s. Their print publications were a reflection of the increasingly suburban world around them. They showed the by-products of post-war suburban expansion: freeways, gas stations, industrial parks and residential buildings. In addition, they portrayed these banal scenes in a style that suggested cold detachment. In the exhibition catalogue, curator William Jenkins describes the photographs as «neutral» and «reduced to an essentially topographic state, conveying substantial amounts of visual information but eschewing entirely the aspects of beauty, emotion, and opinion» [8]. One of the most important book published in this manner was the Edward Rusha «26 Gasoline Stations» (1962), «Various Small Fires» (1964), «34 Parking Lots» (1967) [4].



Fig. 4. H. & B. Becher «Anonymous sculptures», 1970. <https://www.marcuscampbell.co.uk/books/photography/bernhard-und-hilla-becher-anonyme-skulpturen/becher>

The minimalist approach to the design of photobooks created later by the Düsseldorf school of photography: the absence of decorative elements, the clear composition of spreads, the laconic presentation of images, — made it possible to rethink the historical architectural heritage and at the same time feel the changes that time brought to the architectural environment. The tradition of the Düsseldorf school of photography makes it possible to interpret the social system as a mythological space.

Numerous photo books by Ukrainian, Russian, and American photographers have now stylistically continued these traditions as well as photography, offering a rethinking of Soviet architecture beyond the political and social assessment of the time.

Since the 2000, the number of publica-

tion houses like Taschen, MoMas, Dewi Lewis Publishing, that aimed to promote photobooks like an independent genre of art book, appeared. The genre itself has achieved a new level of inventiveness, experimentation, awareness, quality, and sophistication giving new opportunities for the photographers. One of the evident, that confirms the interest to the soviet heritage, is the emergence of the independent typographies, that are intended to publish the books on this issue.

Fuel publishing house, based in UK, created a number of publications connected with the Soviet story, which included the urban architecture and symbols related to the soviet culture and Soviet Union. The collection consists the books of the Russian (Arseniy Kotov), Ukrainian, German photographers.

Zupografica, as one of the publication house, dedicated generally to the subject of Soviet architecture, investigates the modernist and brutalist architecture of the former Eastern Bloc and beyond, in a unique and playful way [19]. Among the last books are «Mono towns» (2021), «Eastern blocks» (2021), «Brutal East II» (2021), «Soviet Landscapes of Post-Industrial Russia» (2021), «Brutal Poland» (2020), «Concrete Siberia» (2020). The books contain a concrete short informative texts on the featured cities and buildings provided by the architectural critics and a large piece of photography capturing post-war modernist architecture with post-soviet and Soviet building including housing units, cosmic flying saucers, raw concrete monoliths and dwellers, scattered around the different countries of the former Soviet Union. The main characteristic of photography used is that it attempts to depict a scene or subject in sharp focus and detail, in accordance with the qualities that distinguish photography from other visual media, particularly painting.

The other publishers (Taschen, Osnovy, etc.) that are also renowned, publish the books on different issues included the soviet shifted books. The common goal pursued by the authors is to explore the disappearing world of a totalitarian regime, originally intended for domination and display of power over civilians through the spectacular forms and strict aesthetics. That the reason why the topic of photobooks comprises both architectural urban ensembles and small architectural forms. For example, in the photobook «Soviet Bus Stops», Owen Hatherley reveals the new information about the origins of the Soviet bus stop. Examining the public policies

that allowed these «small architectural forms» flourish, he explains how they reflected Soviet values and why they remained distant outposts of Soviet ideology, despite of their incredible individuality. Ukrainian authors Alex Bykov and Ievgeniia Gubkina are two of the leaders in the fight to save Ukraine's modernist architectural heritage. Based on far reaching research, their book offers a rethinking of postwar Soviet architecture.

The photobook can include the photos of different objects that are somehow connected with the heritage of Soviet era:

The distinctive fragment or the detail of the façade of building or the objects of one type (Fig.5, Fig.10.).

One type of building from the same angles and planes (Fig. 6, Fig.7, Fig. 8).

Different buildings or its groups, that include characteristic features of the époque of the Soviet Union («Chernobyl: A Stalkers' Guide» (2020), «MONOTOWNS» (Fig. 6), «СССР. Cosmic Communist Constructions» (Fig. 11), «Soviet Modernism. Brutalism. Post-Modernism. Buildings And Structures In Ukraine 1955-1991» (Fig. 9), «Hollidays in Soviet Sanator IUMS» (Fig.12).

However, contrary to the works of Behers, the wider freedom in making typologies is given. The objects, the planes and the point of view, as well as layout, of the building can be different. It defines the idea of the USSR constructions as an independent subject and the thing of the past, that exist or survived the modern city. The books display different types of buildings withim one issue.

The tool of creating an image can be also photo history, made with photos that are aimed to convey the atmosphere which tries to interpret and reveal the living conditions of Soviet people. It can be made with the use of the documents of the past as a form with which the photographer work with, with a specific background and story that tries to depict the lifestyle of soviet people or the todays consequences of the soviet regime («Holidays in Soviet Sanatoriums» (2017), «Wonderland Red Hook» (2020) by Jason Eskenazi, «Labour book», «Salo book» (2014 – 2015) by Kiril Golovhenko).

Mostly all the publications connected with soviet architecture and landscapes are the complex work of photographer and journalist or art critic who provide a necessary information about every piece or create the competently constructed introduction about the project.



Fig.5. Oleksandr Burlaka. «Balcony Chic», 2019. «Основи» Publishing, 116 p., 190x168 mm <https://stylus.ua/oleksandr-burlaka-balcony-chic-p556557c12508.html>

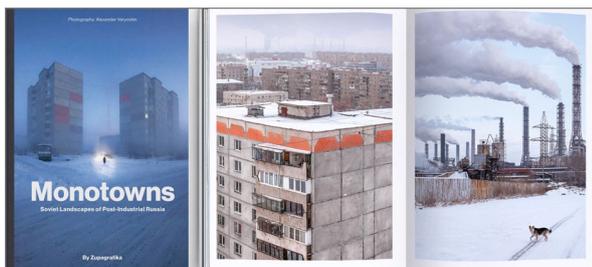


Fig.6. Alexander Veryovkin. «MONOTOWNS», 2021. «ZUPA GRAFIKA» Publishing, 192 p., 9,45 x 0,91 x 6,77 inch <https://www.zupagrafika.com/shop/monotowns>

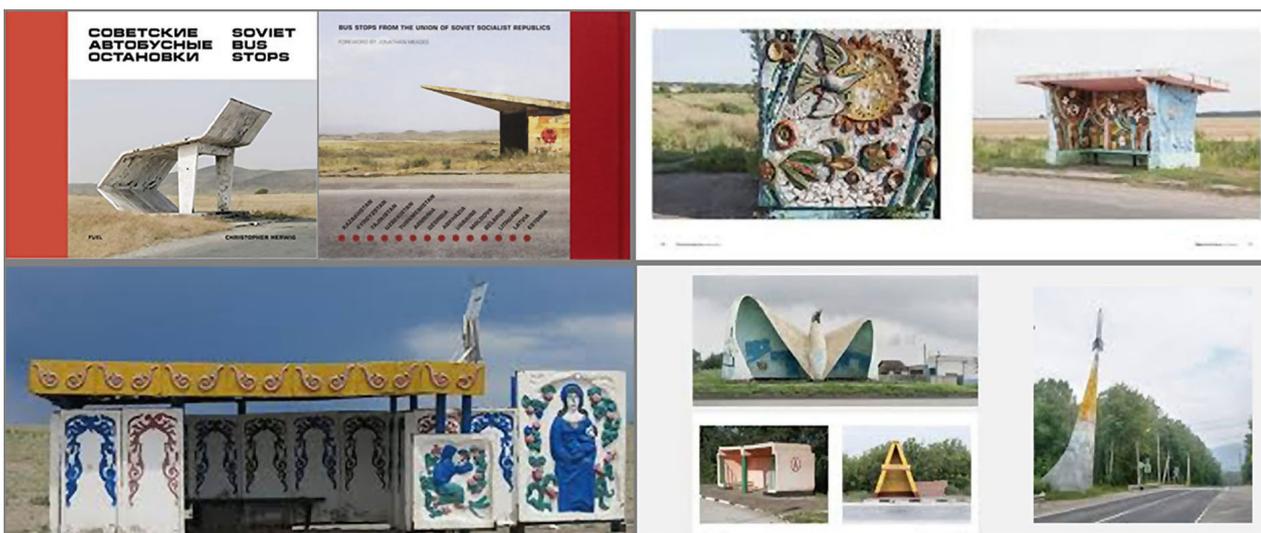


Fig. 7. Christopher Herwig. «Soviet Bus Stops», 2015, 2017. Herwig FUEL Publishing, 192 p., 16 x 20 cm. <https://www.copyrightbookshop.be/en/shop/christopher-herwig-soviet-bus-stops/?add-to-cart=136762>

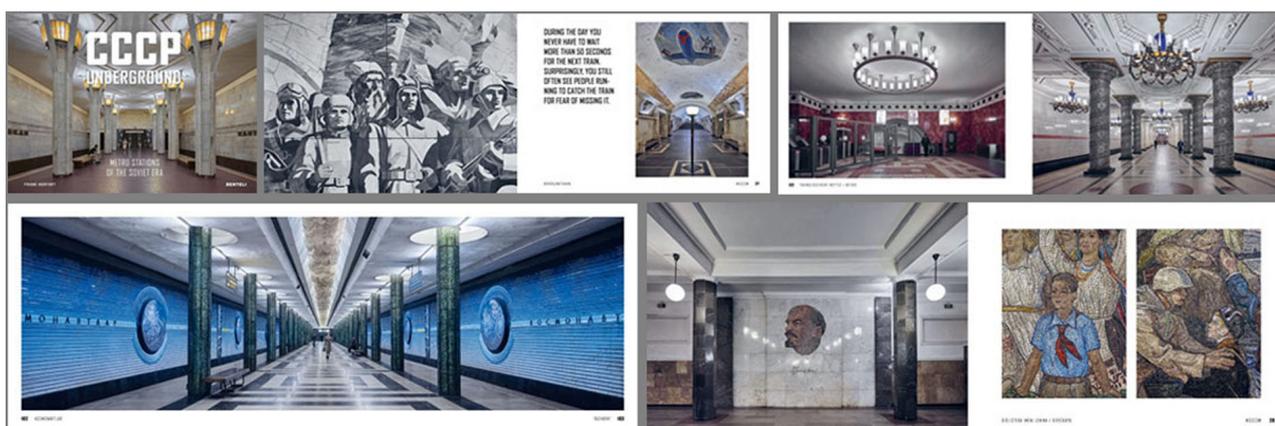


Fig.8. Frank Herfort «CCCP Underground: Metro Stations of the Soviet Era», 2022. Benteli Verlags Publishing, 256 p., 6.97 x 1.06 x 9.45 inches. <https://www.amazon.com/CCCP-Underground-Metro-Stations-Soviet/dp/3716518638>

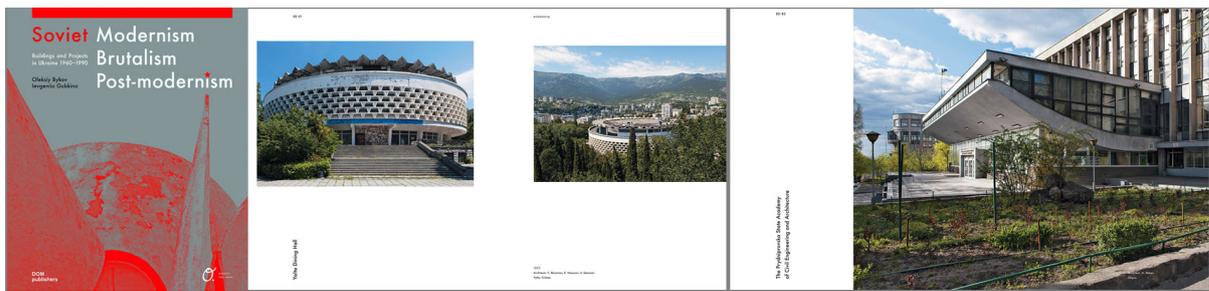


Fig.9. Alex Bykov. «Soviet Modernism. Brutalism. Post-Modernism. Buildings And Structures In Ukraine 1955-1991», 2019. <https://www.yakaboo.ua/soviet-modernism-brutalism-post-modernism-buildings.html>



Fig. 10. Niels Ackermann. «Looking for Lenin», 2021. FUEL Publishing, 176 p. <https://www.amazon.com/Looking-Lenin-Niels-Ackermann/dp/0993191177>

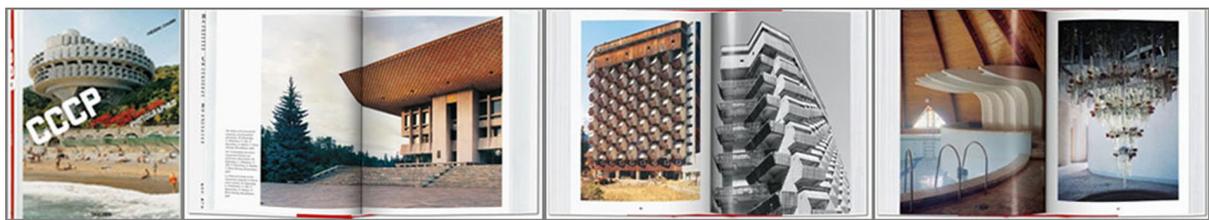


Fig.11. Frederic Chaubin (english) «СССР. Cosmic Communist Constructions Photographed»,2018. 312 p., 260 x 340 мм. <https://www.britishbook.ua/ru/detail/fr-d-ric-chaubin-cccp/>



Fig.12. Arseniy Kotov, Damon Murray, Stephen Sorrell. «Hollidays in Soviet Sanator IUMS», 2021. 240 p., 20.1 x 16.5 cm. <https://www.britishbook.ua/ru/detail/fr-d-ric-chaubin-cccp/>

Stylistically the photobooks are following the traditions which were confirmed «new topographic» with its photo typologies. The style of the photos continues the neutral style that have introduced the Behers and Edward Risha and use an ironic approach to reveal the regime and the past symbols of power and wealth that have lost its significance nowadays or to show the remains of the past that have implemented into the today`s urban space. The characteristic peculiarity of all the photographs made is alter

space without man. The human play only the minor role and is used to show the scales of the building. The main attention is given to the architecture and landscape. The characteristic feature of the contemporary photobook is a wider freedom in choosing the objects of focusing, the angles, plans. But the concept of the documentary depiction the same or similar objects remains.

It was determined that 1-3 modular grids are used, general color correction, the same

solution for different shots in photographs or a combination of them (far shot, detail + long shot, long shot + 2 details or medium shot, 2 long shots from different sides), in one photo book uses a lot of air and white space.

The big text blocks are put on separate page to not to disturb the attention of viewer. The most of the pictures are situated on the separate pages, the maximum amount of photos on the page consist of 3. In this cases the one object is shown from different angles of view or shots.

The cover usually consists of photography from the book and the headline. It also can include partly things associated with soviet stylistic goes to design od magazines made in 1920-1930 by the Russian constructivists, like the usage of the massive monospaced fonts sans serif, big color dies and fills, geometrically constructed. The major part of the books stylistically combines the characteristic peculiarities of the soviet style using typography and dies with the classical modern photobook layout, which can vary.

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## CONCLUSIONS

The conducted researches showed that the main interest of photographers still takes the appearance of environment, which includes exterior and interior of the soviet constructions, the characteristic elements of the building, which define it affiliation on the Soviet Union and the monuments. The approaches and issues that artist concerns were shown. The main trends of the photobook design have been identified.

It is shown that along with the concrete objects (monuments, balconies, bus stops), that goes to the traditions of the typical photographic typology, the wider freedom in depiction is received. It can be evidenced by the use of from several sides or shots (long-medium-close) and types of the objects that artists choose for his project. The formats of the images used can be also different in the most of the books. The tendency of minimalism in design decision continue the traditions of classical album with the latest trends in grids and layout, which can structurally vary.

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## АНОТАЦІЯ

**Сафронова А.В., Сафронова О.О., Сафронов В.К. Фототипологія як метод відображення формування міського середовища у сучасній фотокнизі.**

**Мета:** з'ясувати напрями розвитку і витоки сучасної соціальної фотокниги на прикладі найкращих зразків, присвячених відображенню наслідків впливу радянської культури на формування пострадянського міського середовища.

**Методологія.** У процесі дослідження застосовувалися методи: мистецтвознавчий аналіз, аналіз теоретичних і історичних передумов розвитку типології сучасної фотокниги, присвяченої відображенню міського середовища; синтез, узагальнення та систематизація отриманої інформації; методи індукції, дедукції та порівняльного аналізу.

**Результати.** Показано, що фотокниги, присвячені відображенню впливу радянської спадщини на формування міського середовища та ландшафту, продовжують традиції, закладені Дюссельдорфською школою фотографії із певними відмінностями під впливом розвитку сучасних технологій та дизайну. Визначено, що характерною особливістю сучасної фотокниги є більш широка свобода у виборі об'єктів фокусування, ракурсів, планів. Але концепція документального зображення тих самих або подібних об'єктів залишається. Мінімалізм у

дизайні внутрішнього блоку і обкладинки, лаконічне використання кількох варіантів повторюваних модульних сіток — тенденції, які об'єднують останні опубліковані фотокниги.

**Наукова новизна.** Виявлені типологічні особливості і засади дизайну одного з актуальних напрямів сучасної фотокниги, що продовжує традиції фототипології, як форми подання фотопроєкту. Визначені відмітні особливості у формуванні дизайну таких фотокниг, пов'язані з розвитком сучасних цифрових технологій фотографії та верстки.

**Практичне значення.** Проведено ретроспективний мистецтвознавчий аналіз фотокниг, присвячених відображенню міського середовища. Дослідження є важливою ланкою в подальшому вивченні історії розвитку фотокниги, як реалізації творчого проєкту фотохудожника.

**Ключові слова:** українське мистецтво; сучасна фотокнига; пострадянське міське середовище; фототипологія; дизайн; фотопроєкт; радянська спадщина; мінімалізм.

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