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View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture.

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Monumentality ephemerated

Monuments, which are generally considered visual, become the object of visual research much less frequently than any other art form. However, closer investigation shows that monuments are an interesting model or even frame of analysis. They are quite peculiar, and paradoxical objects, as they controversially combine many different kinds of things: the immaterial traits of collective imaginaries and the heavy materiality of stone or bronze, fluctuations of memory and the conservation of ideology, object and remnant, arrested past and an attempt to change the future.

1.

Russia is currently going through a period of instability that is caused, not only by today's situation of an almost uncontrolled globalized world economy, but also by the transitional form of (post)socialism. There is a temporal factor that affects the very structure of the status quo. What is undergoing a noticeable change are not only the external conditions of existence, but also the sense of time. The "dashing 1990s" were a time to move forward – at least, such was the general feeling. In the 2000s there

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was a kind of break; for some, it was a moment of "looking around" and even backwards. Therefore, the link with the past inescapably became a focus of attention. Somehow, many came to the idea that it was the past that could offer support for this unstable situation; it began to be looked at as a source of models for the present. This has been confirmed by studies of the last few years, both those produced in artistic milieu (Viktor Misiano, the head of the oldest journal of contemporary art in Moscow expresses it thusly: "it seems we are going back into past"[1]), as well as in sociological surveys (they reveal a sort of nostalgia for "the first state in centuries of Russia's history that made possible a decent existence for
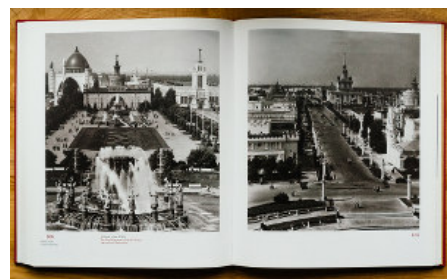
ordinary people[6]", and this is a nostalgia neither for the period of Catherine the Great, when Russia was expanding its territory, nor for 1930-1950, when the Soviet Union gained a superpower, but for the time of Brezhnev, with its stability and ensured social benefits, free education and medicine, millions of book print runs and vast amounts of readers). Therefore, it is not at random that memorials and monuments are becoming subject of scholarly interest for those who strive to grasp the features of transformation in social and cultural spheres. Monuments seem to be able to demonstrate the contradictory nature of these processes and the "proportion," if you will, of the "old" and "new" in what this country has been going through since the 1990s.

What monuments appear before the wandering eyes of a citizen, accustomed to an abundance of visual products that she or he receives mostly in digitally distributed and intangible ways? Heavy - literally so - remnants of the past, an anachronism, meteorites, not burnt in the upper atmospheres of thin abstract data that moves in networks or on screens.

The first feature of their paradoxical dimension is that they balance (no matter how ridiculous this verb is for objects whose weight is usually not less than several tons) on the edge of the old monumentality and "new materiality" as a possible subject of trendy Object Oriented technology, interested in things not necessarily connected to "humans" as their possible users.

The second feature is their specific way of giving expression to the past. Whose past do they imagine, why and on what basis? In Russian and Polish, "monument" is etymologically directly linked with "memory." What we will come to if we try to unwind this link between monument and memory - first, in general terms, and then returning to the case of Moscow?

2.

Of course, this is not the place to expound upon a version of "what is memory as such," neither in terms of rigorous science (neurophysiology or physiology), nor in terms of culture systems (although we all surely remember the complex theories of memory created by Sigmund Freud or Henri Bergson at the turn of the 19th century, when scientific experiments changed ways of conceptualizing memory). As Marc Bloch, a historian, one of the founders of the Annales school, aptly noted, culture

had great expectations about memory[3]. What about the culture of the turn of the 20th century? It seems to be very concerned with the possibility of memory loss or lack. The paradox is that, on the one hand, modern technologized culture provides a variety of data stores in large quantities (the amount of "memory" is one of the key characteristics that determines the price of the PC and other gadgets). On the other, fewer and fewer events and details remain in the memory of citizens who prefer to record things with cameras, and store them on CDs, flash drives and other devices, "just in case," which practically means "not for use".

Historical upheavals of the 20th century, which caused the deaths of millions, launched the "work of mourning" and forced people to look for opportunities to "work through" traumatic material in order to facilitate the psychological state and, if not explain, then at least deal with how this could have happened at all. As a result of this work, memory spread into areas that had not previously been associated with it directly. It might look as though memory was scattering, dispersing, especially

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with the physical disappearance of those who could talk about events directly. There came, for example, the discourse of the "places of memory." The concept of a "place of remembrance" (*lieux de mémoire*) was developed by Pierre Nora in order to research problems arising between memory and history, not only through some geographical memorials and monuments, but also through symbols, historical figures, and even categories, which unite groups of people in certain commemorative practices.

Other complex examples of the interaction between the mechanisms of memory of certain groups and ideological and political practices are triggered in such increasingly popular forms as "industry of memorial tourism to the sites of the former concentration camps."[4] There are also, quite often, "spontaneous memorials" that appear, especially in the form of bringing flowers to a place where something happened, as is the case with the gate of Buckingham Palace in London on 31 August 1997, or Manhattan after 9/11, or Moscow subway sites of terroristic attacks. In this context, is the emergence of virtual memorial sites nothing but a transfer of familiar objects to another symbolic field? In our opinion, it is not enough to say that "all these are examples of how culture is involved to shape,

organize and localize the collective memory in time and space."[5] Is this not a question of why culture prefers this or that form of shaping memories in this or that period of time, or why it proposes, intrudes and fixes specific material forms for something that is so fleeting and so little controlled as memory?

As many practices get presented (also) in the Internet in recent years [6], it is worth recalling one of the conceptions of memory formulated to justify the "externalization" of memory and make it a significant and necessary part of anthropogenesis. This is one of the main projects of Bernard Stiegler[7] – to connect such psychological forms of experience as memory and some acts of consciousness (including those analyzed by phenomenologist Edmund Husserl and named as primary and secondary retentions and protentions) with those "sites of memory" that are not directly present in consciousness and are not directly related to it. Stiegler argues that although the role of technology was long suppressed by philosophy, it is important to account for how it determines the conditions of human existence, primarily due to the functions of memory. For Stiegler, it is essential to assume that the subject can represent her or his own past (thanks to secondary retention discussed by Husserl), and is also able to get some access to a collective past that was not part of her or his personal experience. In order to better explain how the latter is possible, it is imperative, in Stiegler's view, to introduce the tertiary retention, or memory, which means the storage of the past in ways that allow it to be restored (and reactivated). The past that was not a part of the personal experience of a given subject, but was lived through by others, is transmitted through the externalized technical memory. That is, it turns out that part of the work of consciousness has already been done by technology. In other words, primary retention is not only contaminated by other forms of memory, but in fact is caused by them.

Modern critics of Stiegler's approach write that on the one hand, such a technical supplement of time-consciousness does not replace or eliminate the synthetic activity of the perception of the present, although it complicates its base. On the other hand, unlike the tele- and audiovisual technologies that for Stigler define conditions for tertiary memory, digital technology today operates largely without reaching the threshold of memory images, which is to say, they act in invisible and almost insensible manner. Technology today allows one to "see" not only highly expressive emotional states that "old masters" tried to capture in paintings, but

transitions between these states, which are now valued as equally important. It is worth stressing that they are shown in flow, changing, transforming, one into the other, like anger into grief, "now," acting on the viewer and changing her or his forms of experience in the process of looking. Which in fact to some extent sublates the very conditions of possibility of talking about these states in terms of the externalization of memory.

It should be added that in the early 1990s, Jean-François Lyotard, who was invited by Stigler for a talk, also addressed the problems associated with memory, albeit from a slightly different perspective. Unlike Stigler, Lyotard referred to the development of technology extremely skeptically and spent his last years reflecting on the boundaries between matter and spirit, explicitly problematized by technology. On the one hand, he seemed to accept Stiegler's point that new technologies based on electronics and computer science were to be treated as material expanding our ability to remember. On the other hand, however, he deduced from this that technology acted as if there were no rupture between matter and spirit, with the difference between them being only in degree, not in substance. Elsewhere I have discussed this in more detail;[8] here I will only repeat the conclusion, that Lyotard saw this indifference as objectivation: if there is no difference, it is only "matter" that exists, and we have no idea what this matter is about. Accordingly, objectivation needs more and more complex dispositifs that would help a monadic "individual" to deal with the "matter" that surrounds it. Memory is included here as a device of stabilization for an "individual," and this stabilization makes the monadic element predictable.

Further, Lyotard saw that these technologically activated processes of blurring the boundaries between the material and the spiritual problematized what we call the body. In the years that followed, many authors demonstrated concern for the fate of the human body and its nature, as fashion and food industries, cosmetic medicine, prosthetics, and research on artificial intelligence, robotics, information technology, and biochemistry, are moving deeper into the body and changing its properties, problematizing what was earlier considered inalienably human. Along with rising discussions of the female body, injured body, and the synthesized body, Lyotard commented that not only does the body of a human individual become a problem, but also a social body, as well as institutional and political bodies. One could add that also the body of monument is no longer tied to a specific space-time

and comes in combinations with other bodies, forming constellations which are not stable and subject for further "transmitions" and new "ensembles." Of course, since the publication of Lyotard's works, culture has learned to cope with some specific things based on information streams, but these things seem to be more operational, while the fundamental questions are still unsolved. Today it is clear that most young people already have the skills to exist in a "culture télégraphique," as Lyotard called it, thus answering his concern of how the government is going to teach future citizens telegraphy as it teaches schoolchildren the letter. Some skills were formed beyond the level of state, as it turned out. But the problem of the body's boundaries seems to be even sharper then before, because biopolitics, which smashes the body's boundaries and objectifies it, is often being received uncritically.

The ideas of late Lyotard are important here, because he considered these – in his estimation catastrophic – processes of displacing the human by technologies in the framework of memory. He stressed the importance of human memory for a continuation of culture (not for manufacturing symbolic products, but for free activities in the form of literature, art, etc.) and opposed it to practices of "rememmoration" as one of the features of contemporary situation, that is, as the invasion of what he calls the meta-instance in spontaneously ganging up and disconnecting flows of data. Such an invasion establishes a chain of mediating forms between events (or between possible encounters of monadic elements). This produces a kind of unity in the place of random "ensembles" of elements, and has the advantage of preserving them from disseminating and making them available regardless of time and place (this is also another way to describe télégraphie). But it has the tragic disadvantage of diminishing the very possibility of an encounter which disappears going through numerous mediating forms. What this meta-instance makes possible is not the retention of the past in the present as present, but the synthesis of the past as such and its reactualization as past in the present (of consciousness). This is rememmoration.

The activity of rememmoration, according to Lyotard, increases exponentially. Mediating meta-instances are placed one after the other, in «bad infinity». The more meta-instances are being placed in order to prevent a unity of elements from possible intervention or dangerous influence from the outside, the less possible an encounter, or an event itself becomes. Interactions turn out to be increasingly

complicated, at the same time, by the same operations that reduce the likelihood of an unprogramed encounter, which Lyotard considered human in character. This dehumanizing complication could be opposed, as Lyotard thought, by a special mechanism of memory that he called, with reference to the work of Freud, "working through" ("perlaboration" was his translation of "Durcharbeitung" from German). This work demands an investment of a lot of energy, because it is a technique

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that acts without rules. The technology in this case aims neither at appropriation nor expansion. The task of "working through" is to go beyond the synthesis, or, if you will, to go beyond the memory of what has been forgotten. In this suggestion Lyotard seems to go further than Stiegler or Halbwachs, because he speaks about the question of how to remember what could not be forgotten, because it could not have been recorded. Lyotard tried to explain it by referring to what in psychoanalysis is called anamnesis: how to face the primal scene, if the only things registered are the traces? How to deal with "a light mirror," which is a-technological? It seems to make sense to try to remember something that has not been recorded, if the inscription breaks the recording medium into pieces.

And although (as is so often the case with Lyotard) this text is moving to some spot, elusive and almost mysterious, at certain point even turning to Shobogenzo and its metaphors of a light mirror, it is important to emphasize that it is talking about a memory that cannot be objectified, that escapes the impact of meta-instance, whose nature is entirely "spiritual" and "imagery". Lyotard respected disembodied memory, whereas he saw digital technology as shading a border between the corporeal and intellectual, actually penetrating into the intellectual and adopting its functions, thus exposing them to objectification and alienation. In Lyotard's view, technology should be set aside to rescue these fragile zones which have for centuries been considered "human." These zones are not fixed, and are not subject to conservation or transfer. If there is no way to mediate them, the task of non-objectivation is in a way completed. Though one could see Lyotard as a rigorous conservative in questions of media, technologies, and new materiality, his late work opens up onto "media" at least to some extent, and forces one to think that not everything could be mediated.

Lyotard gives quite a striking example by insisting on the fact that memory is immaterial and cannot be object-incorporated. Accordingly, any attempt to materialize it is a form of violence against its nature and can hardly be produced by itself for its individual carriers, carriers of individual memory. This means that objectifications of memory come from the outside. If we stick to Lyotard's framework, we have to admit that these attempts are made by a system tending to maintain its status quo in a calculable and predictable form, transforming the future into the sequence of what does not happen (because the very fact of happening introduces uncertainty), and what might be called a fixed present without a future. And here we come to one more important point. Though the work of deep inner layers of the human that Lyotard links with memory seems to be oriented towards things that have passed, their subtle connection to the non-recorded and non-forgotten opens a dimension for a change that characterizes a future. That is why the elaboration of the non-recorded is a resource for further steps in the creation of culture.

If we try to translate this into the discourse about monuments, it is to argue that they can only be official. Not so much because the production of such large and heavy things is expensive, and requires collective efforts and advanced technology, which is certainly true, but because usually it is only the state with its apparatus, ideology, and military equipment, supported by the legitimate right to use violence, that can impose the official version of "how it was," as well as how it will be – and put it in a monumental form. Here the state would act as a meta-instance, organizing chains of mediation between individual memories, chains that would inevitably transform the nature of these memories, and their structural form in a time to come. Thus a kind of duplication, marked by the spelling of "rememmoration", reveals an ambiguous function of the monument: to com<u>memorate</u>, but to commemorate repeatedly in a specifically fixed form. And this is at least the third feature of the paradoxical dimension of monuments.

This reference to Lyotard explains why the link connecting memory and the monument is effected by what is called "memorial design," with certain rules implemented by it. It is no accident that monuments as such are considered "inert"[9] : they are to be looked at with a supplementary knowledge of who has erected them and why, in order to be seen at all. It then becomes clear why people write about monuments in terms of "owning history"[10] : monuments are signs of such

owning, of the violence of those whom Walter Benjamin called "the winners of history" and whom he did not want to represent, instead giving voice to the defeated[11].

3.

In our opinion, the memorial design of contemporary Moscow is determined by two connected circumstances from the 20th century history, that is, the events of 1917 and the General Plan of the Reconstruction of Moscow of 1935. The Bolsheviks came to power and began very consistently to pursue the logic of exhibiting "their" monuments[12], violently erasing visible traces of what had been placed in various locations during the preceding royal period, or erecting monumental complexes on

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wasted lands. Concentrically diverging from the center of power condensed in the Kremlin after Moscow was again declared the capital (1918), they cleared the space immediately adjacent to the walls of the Kremlin next to the Manege, densely built up since its construction in 1817, blasted the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour towering near the Kremlin, put a monument to Yuri Dolgoruky in place of the monument to "white" general Skobelev on the main street leading to the Kremlin, and dismantled Sukharev Tower. They rushed on and on, into a huge unexploited space, building Gorky Park near the fields of Undull garden on the former lands of nobles and royal family, VDNH on the territory adjacent to the Sheremetievs family landhouse, and laid basis for the future Victory Park on Poklonnaya Hill, where, according to legend, Napoleon waited for the keys to Moscow.

In the 1920s the "historical necessity" of restructuring Moscow was consistently emphasized; the impossibility of its existence on the former basis. Moscow had to be rebuilt anew, on socialist principles: the elimination of private property, the creation of a public social security system, the replacement of former economic (NEP) enterprises (mainly trade), improving the living conditions of workers in the first place, etc. The reconstruction of the city was thus also a pursuit of political goals. The Bolsheviks had to prove to both foreigners and Soviet citizens that only the socialist system is the best for the Soviet Union, and it was necessary to introduce this system as the best in the world. For example, the famous Moscow subway was

not built simply as transportation system, but as an outstanding work of art, a "glee space."[13]

The restoration work that begun after the end of World War I was disturbed by the outbreak of World War II in the summer of 1941. In 1931, at the June Plenum of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party, the areas of the city to be reconstructed were first identified. In 1935, for the first time in history, the Master Plan for the Reconstruction of Moscow was adopted, which was to identify plans for urban development in the next 10 years. Lazar Kaganovich was appointed responsible for the reconstruction and personally supervised all the work.

However one assesses the reconstruction process – bearing in mind that Moscow grew in size, began its move to the megapolis and become cleaner – it is undeniable that in the 1930s Moscow lost the uniqueness of the city-museum inherent to it before. And it was in the 1930s that the modern look of Moscow was formed.

Although the later destruction of monuments had not been enshrined in legislative acts of the 1930s, the process of reconstruction could be described by the following formula, taken from the International, the proletarian hymn based on a poem by French poet Eugène Pottier (1871) in the Russian translation of A. Kotz. The poem, published in London in 1902, became the anthem of communist parties, socialists, and anarchists; the official anthem of the Russian Federation (1918-1944); the Soviet Union (1922-1944); the Far Eastern Republic (1920-1922); the Ukrainian SSR (1918-1949); and the Byelorussian SSR (1919-1952).

The whole world of violence we destroy to the ground, and then we have ours, we construct a new world ...

Весь мир насилья мы разрушим до основания, а затем Мы наш, мы новый мир построим..

This aspect of "destroying to the ground" is to be stressed, as this seems to be a guide to install new monuments. This is not just a rejection of old monuments – this is their destruction; physical, material, cleaning "to the ground." This government did not leave traces of the former, had no poetic treatment of ruins, or at least practical use for them; it desired no layers and did not intend to keep any. Only new monuments to the new system on a new basis.

This practice of erasures helps to understand the specificity of monuments that Moscow now has. They are not as much monuments to past events as they are ways of picturing the future that are monumentally fixed. The process of their realization in heavy matter deprived them of the utopian spirit, imposing them upon the new citizens of a new city, notwithstanding the fact that they might be dreaming of other monuments to other events.

This is illustrated by the aforementioned example. In 1931, the area in front of the southern façade of the Manege near Trinity gates of the Kremlin was named Manezh Square. Until the 1930s this area was filled with food stores, shopping markets, and small hotels. In 1932 the demolition of buildings on Loskutny alley and the east side of Mokhovaya Street began. Most buildings there were demolished by 1934. At the site of the quarter two tunnels were built connecting service branches between the Sokolnicheskaya and Filevskaya subway lines. By 1935, only a small undistinguished quarter was left, directly adjacent to the newly constructed hotel "Moscow." The future Manezh Square was totally cleared by 1938 and stayed empty until the 1990s, being nothing other than a large transport interchange. Characteristically, there are no photos on the internet of this interim period with traffic on the square.

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The solemn laying of the foundation stone for the Cathedral of Christ the Savior took place on 10th September 1839. The temple became a witness of battles against the Napoleonic troops of Napoleon, and the names of the heroes were inscribed on a marble slab at the bottom of the gallery. The cathedral took 44 years to build. In 1931 it was blown up by order of the second head of the Soviet state. It was rebuilt in 2000, and the boards with the names of the heroes of the War of 1812 were restored. They are there today, but only very few people remember that it is literally a Cathedral-monument.

Sukharev Tower was dismantled, not only as an annoying hindrance to the tram lines and the technical improvement of Moscow, but also as a symbol of the old traditional merchant (kupzi) Moscow ("building materials," i.e. fragments of the building of Peter I epoch, had been transferred to Gorotdel "for use in tiling the

streets").

A monument to Yury Dolgoruky, "the founder of the city," the first Prince of Suzdal, was established in 1954 on Sovetstkaya square (so called up to 1993), opposite to Mossovet (now Mayor of Moscow). At this exact place stood a monumental equestrian statue of the hero of the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878, the General of Infantry Mikhail Dmitrievich Skobelev. The monument was opened on 24th June 1912 and demolished on the 1st of May 1918. On either side of the figure of the "white general" rose a sculptural group of loyal soldiers, and bas-reliefs depicting episodes of the Russian-Turkish war were placed in the niches. Its erection was an anticipated event. Now there is no trace, neither in the form of a memorial board, nor in the memory of several generations. And even the prince of Suzdal is no longer recognized by young people.

The destruction of monuments was motivated by different reasons: the development of traffic, the need to build an important object on the site of the demolished monument, etc.[14] However, in practice these explanations say a lot about the new government's indifference to the cultural heritage of the country, which went hand in hand with its ideological motives: to prove the superiority of the socialist system over the formation of pre-revolutionary Russia. In order to do this, Moscow embarked on a campaign to build monuments. Ideological and practical problems were solved at one stroke, often without a clear distinction between purely utopian, ideological, and functional plans.

4.

The VDNH (Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy) provides many clear examples of these processes of demolition "to the ground." This complex is particularly interesting in that it offers a kind of convergence point between the history of the Soviet and post-Soviet states. Both willingly create the new citizens of the new states. The convergence of these two histories shows how in certain respects an old logic of monumental design has been actualized á la the

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International, only in a less inspired form, without its socialist coloring; but whether it is instead in capitalist shades is an open question.

At first glance, this area seems quite peaceful: pavilions, fountains, paths, ponds, a place for walking, framed by a large amount of planted trees and even forests, which provides a relatively favorable environment, rare for modern Moscow. The VDNH now spreads over a vast territory, since its unification with the Ostankino reserve park around the former Sheremetyev estate, and the Botanical Garden (the fences between them were demolished in the 1990s), making up more than 500 hectares.

The decision to create the Exhibition was adopted at the Second All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers in February 1935, at the very beginning of the reconstruction of Moscow. The opening of the exhibition was scheduled for the 1st of August 1937, for 100 days only, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Soviet regime. It was rescheduled twice: in 1938 Commissar Chernov was arrested and shot and Vyacheslav Konstantinovich Oltarzhevskiy[15] was put in exile. The new chief architect of the exhibition became Sergei Egorovich Chernyshev, one of the authors of the General Plan of Reconstruction of Moscow in 1935.

The first all-Russian agricultural and handicraft-industrial exhibition was organized on the territory of modern Gorky Park in 1923. The plan was designed by Ivan Zholtovsky and Alexey Shchusev. The exhibition, based on the idea of the World's Fair, was divided into Soviet and foreign departments (about 600 foreign manufacturers were invited). Despite the name (All-Russia), the exhibition presented pavilions of Soviet republics as well, and there were national elements in their architectural appearance. If earlier exhibition halls needed to be included in the existing space, in the case of the first VSHV exhibition the space was expanded over the territory that was specially chosen for building this architectural complex. The territory around it was empty, and had to be made into an artistic exhibition space.

From the outset[16], it turned out that the exhibition halls occupied a far greater number of square meters than expected, which prevented the architects from taking advantage of the favorable location of the exhibition and using its access to water. One of the features of the exhibitions (a feature that later became characteristic for VSHV-VDNH) is that economic factors were secondary. The money issue, and the question of self-sufficiency, was not even raised. In addition, in accordance with the logic of erasures and destructions of former buildings

discussed above, the construction of pavilions did not imply any connection with surrounding area and already existing objects. In 1937 one of the critics expressed the opinion that the entire territory of the exhibition must be linked to the Ostankino park, and primarily with the architectural masterpiece of the park - Ostankino Palace. However, his opinion was not win out. The exhibition was created as space that depicted the contrast between the old, the outdated, and the new that had yet to be built.

In the following decades there were several ideological moves that led to "erasures" and acts of dismantling in the Exhibition area. The history of VDNH shows that "layering" was evaluated only negatively; it was necessary to get rid of it. The strategy of "façadizm" (i.e., leaving only the façade of buildings with a complete change in their internal contents and functions) was not enough; more radical changes were required in order to rebuild. That is why pavilions were assembled and disassembled several times. First, aiming to oppose the old regime, the section "Old and new village" was introduced, as early as the Exhibition of 1923 (to represent the 'old' village, actual houses were specially brought to the Exhibition). At the VSHV of 1939, the 'old' village disappeared and only the 'New Village' was left: real achievements of the present were to be brought to the fore. Residually the theme of this opposition is reflected in one of the first projects of the 1939 exhibition: the "Kto-kogo" ("Who will win?") pavilion. In 1963, the pavilions dedicated to republics of the USSR were "redeveloped" into pavilions representing branches of industry (Pavilion of Kazakhstan became the "Metallurgy," the pavilion of Belarus – "Electrical Engineering," etc.). Industrial and agricultural advances were to be exhibited in them. The show with achievements of different republics was brought into the Main pavilion. In 1965 there was a new reconstruction of VDNH; some pavilions were demolished, such as "Kirghiz SSR," "Turkmen SSR," "Tatar ASSR," "Bashkir Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic" and others, and some pavilions were rebuilt or acquired new facades ("Azerbaijan").

Until the 1980s, the Exhibition seemed an extremely significant and symbolically charged place. There is no wonder that even the artist Erik Bulatov has a painting called "Welcome!", with two words written across an image of the "Friendship" fountain at VDNH. And Moscow conceptualist artist Andrej Monastirsky wrote a fantasy essay about the mythology of VDNH[17].

In 1992, the exhibition lost its financial support from the state. Since then, there has been an interweaving of different forms of ownership: on its territory there are objects covered by federal law, buildings and facilities owned by OAO "VVC," private facilities, federal properties, etc. The post-Soviet period of the VDNH and its place in urban space point to a peculiar mix of meanings: on the one hand, that of the "market", where market relations determine the present and the future of this place, and on the other, it is a cultural artefact. The exhibition is a cultural artefact, regardless of the value of the objects located in its territory, as its planning structure and some parts of the landscape are objects of cultural heritage of federal importance.

Small traders were let into Exhibition area in the 1990s, as its management was forced to ordain the building for rent, and in a few years a market arose. In the late 1990s, Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov became interested in the Exhibition: in his view, numerous shopping "points" spoiled the view of the Exhibition. In 1998, at the initiative of the Government of Moscow, the entire territory of the VDNH-VVC was incorporated into the specially protected natural area "Park Ostankino." There are a large number of restrictions governing a territory of this type, including a ban on capital construction. The only achievement of these years was the project of 2006 proposing the construction of eight pavilions of the so-called "International Exhibition Center." Before the crisis of 2008 only one pavilion was built - №75 (new pavilions have no names, only numbers), which stands on the outer boundary of the buffer zone.

In the meantime, the majority of the territory became increasingly desolate. In the year 2009, the VDNH got a new director, the former governor of the Sakhalin region, and one of his first moves was the decision to rent out some of the pavilions to CIS countries for 50 years for a nominal fee of 1 ruble. The impetus for the adoption of such a decision could be the rapidly deteriorating condition of the buildings of the architectural ensemble (under the terms of the contract, CIS countries were to reconstruct buildings at their own expense), as well as the problem of finding ways to use the site and its functions (the historical ones, as well as those that were newly formulated). Thus, the pavilion "Estonia" is at the disposal of Kyrgyzstan, "Siberia" ("Coal industry") is leased to Armenia (although the pavilion "Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic" is now used as "Health"), etc. The main pavilion was given to the "Assembly of the Peoples of Russia" and became the "House of

Friendship of Peoples of Russia" (although the pavilion of the RSFSR (№71), which has been called "Nuclear Energy" since 1963, is still preserved). Later, private investors were invited to work on the Exhibition, and a new plan of the territory development appeared: the construction of 470 thousand square meters of real estate and 75 thousand square meters of underground parking. It is important to note that for this purpose the "Greenhouse Building" and "Shipbuilding" pavilions were demolished, and the construction of large oceanarium began in their place. The implementation of the redevelopment plan of 2011 encountered a problem, an inability to change the protected status of the space as "noteworthy" in order to allow for the capital's construction. So the plan was "frozen." Now the pavilions are not used; they are aging and getting destroyed, in some cases under unclarified circumstances (such as the burning of the pavilion "Veterinary Medicine," one of the few members of the original complex of mid-1930s).

Let us underline again the words and the overall rhetoric circulating while these (re)construction works of post-soviet time were and are being realized. As can be seen from this brief exposition of the recent history of the VDNH complex, the erasure-construction process did not stop, although formally, "Soviet logic" should have ceased to exist. This old logic has revealed itself more than once, in each of the proposed plans of VDNH reorganization. People refer to it as an act of erecting something new while sweeping away the old, in the belief that the new is better, more modern, and more functional. Thus a desire to erase both histories manifests itself, as if there had not been 70 years of the communist past, nor more than 15 years of "shameful" petty trade, which, of course, was in no way connected to cultural tasks. Signs of opposition have been repeatedly suppressed. And while the demolition of other pavilions was averted, today the VDNH space is suspended, because no decision has been made as to whether to specify the space for cultural reflection on the past or to convert it for modern use. Meanwhile, its historical and architectural heritage fades into the background - there is no museum nor tourism in this area. And is it possible that the very legislative inability to demolish and sweep the entire complex, which creates the necessity of fitting it into modern urban planning, which conflicts with the logic of the mid-1930s, explains the hesitation to of deciding upon plans for the use of this space.

Of course, VDNH is only a part of a more general process affecting other monumental objects and those now clamoring for monumental status. As in the

1930s, the demolition of monuments, Soviet ones this time, continues ("the town of the Institute of Road" in Sviblovo, the "Red builder" settlement, and some other objects, do not exist any longer), and the architectural view of the capital is scratched by some new buildings. The demolition of the big "Moscow" hotel near the Kremlin, built in the early 1930s, was explained as an "objective necessity," although, according to the opinion of architects, this building, with its elements of

From: Yevgeniya Gershkovich, Yevgeny Korneev, eds., Stalin's Imperial Style (Moscow: Trefoil Press, 2006), photo: Krzysztof Pijarski

constructivism, had not appealed for such "reconstruction." Then, erecting a model of the Tatlin tower (as a "Monument to 3rd International" (sic! – recall the phrase from the anthem) in the center of Moscow City, in the "new utopian space of the new Moscow,"[18] as well as the construction of the complex as a whole, can also be considered as demonstrating the influence of the same Soviet logic, as once again, it is intended to demonstrate that Moscow City towers are "better, stronger, more functional"[19] then anywhere else in the world. Its smallest towers (2000 Tower and North Tower) are 104 meters and 108 meters high. They are higher then the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, which is only 100 meters high. The Moscow Tower of 301,6 meters is a part of Capital City architectural ensemble and the highest building of CIS. Moscow City necessarily spreads beyond (29 meters higher then The Shard in London and more stable: the developers of Federation Tower use B90 concrete, which is twice as firm as in the case of the Shrad ,in order to prevent the fall of a tower "in case it is hit by external objects"). A sense of spreading above and beyond is also at work in the underground level of this ensemble, which includes not only parking areas, trade centers and an aeroexpress station connecting it to airports of Sheremetievo and Vnukovo, but also a subway station, Vistavochnaya, which "presents a cosmic future" (citations from official Internet page). With the colors of cosmic symbolism and illuminated by frosty morning red sunlight the towers of Moscow City look very alien, foreign, out-of-space. One glance at the towers protruding from the urban landscape, and one sinks into aberration and dizziness, and loses a sense of one's place in space.

The towers were mentioned because they are the most excessive, in their size and their dissimilarity, in relation to the surrounding space, while also being similar to buildings of that type across the globe – London, Taiwan, or Warsaw. They are very
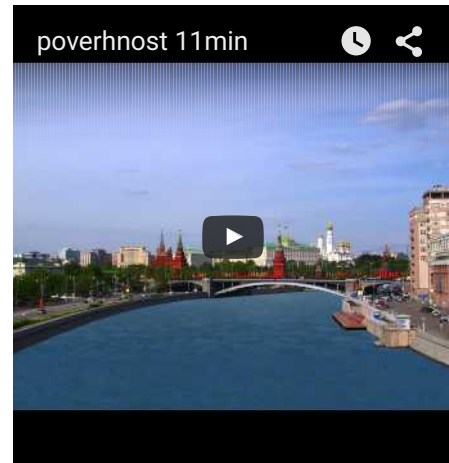
aggressive in their visuality: visible from any part of Moscow, but relevant to none of them. This irrelevance causes a strange effect – they seem to be seen, but this vision has something spectral in character; it is unclear whether the image comes from outside, when you see it, or from within, out of the corners of memory, conscious or not; or whether it is imagined, evoked from films or animation.

As we have described in the preceding pages, decades of destructions and erasures, or, if you go back to the dictionary of Lyotard, sweeping (*balayage*), have led to the fact that the monuments of Moscow do not refer to the past, because in the sweeping there is no reactivity, only forward movement. It is rather unlikely that Lyotard linked bad infinity, which for him characterized telegraphy and the development of technology, with the socialist coun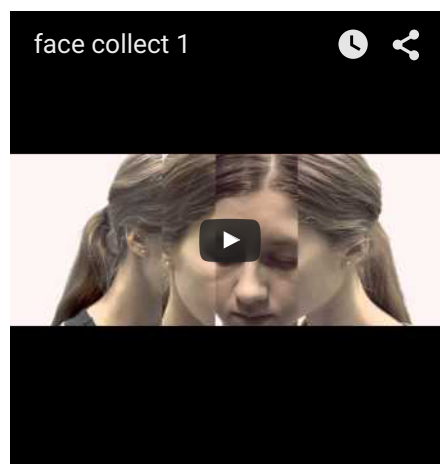tries, at least we do not know of any such examples. But this project of monumental destruction, supported, of course, by the industrial achievements of the USSR, was sweeping away traces of the past, and the slogan "Time, forward!" builds on the logic of contemporary technological systems described by Lyotard. Without looking back, instead going toward the "better, more functional, more progressive Future," Soviets made memory aberrations a rule.

Lena Koptyaeva, *Poverhnost*

Constant erasures do not allow the gaze to turn back in order to see what it slips upon. These processes made normal the situation in which it is not monuments that trigger the work of memory, but other things – and very often they are private things – which cannot be united into something big and standing on the square, like toys played by two or three generations of family members, or some crockery pieces, or family photo albums. There is a very complex history of traumas of the Soviet period, but they do not seem to have reached the level of accepted visuality. Thus, the ephemeral, driven inside the monuments because of the illegality of operations of externalization of memory, dissolve into thin air, hanging these stone masses almost in a dead zone of visuality. It might be the case that the youth do not recognize Yuri Dolgoruky, because visuality is not correlated with the knowledge that they receive from other sources.

However, conscious researchers of visuality and molhuds[20] already perceive it to be a problem: how to navigate among the various objects that they find in the city, objects that belong to different generations of time. That is why, in my conclusion, I would like to refer to the work of Lena Koptyaeva. Her audience sees a familiar postcard landscape. But the artist makes tangible, visible, a moment of thinning materiality, its dispersion, the flicker of different topologies. Everything seems in place – the proper number of Kremlin towers, the House on the Embankment on the right, a traffic jam along the

Lena Koptyaeva, *Face Collect 1*

river, tourists with cameras. Everything seems real, normal, but - something is wrong. This is mercury-opaque, synthetically generated "water," produced digitally and "bathed" in the granite shore. A simple gesture, converting just one element of the image - but the effect of defamiliarization is obvious: neither the well-known surroundings of the site, nor the pleasant atmosphere of a warm day, not even the sound of voices outside the camera frame can return the viewer to the "immediate perception." It is not just the usual view of the sights of the city, it is more than this – a "supplemented" sight, and the viewer sees, if I may say so, more than what she or he sees.

Footnotes

1   „Our new future" (editorial), *Moscow Art Magazine*, 1 (2012): 6.

2   Natalia Tikhonova, "Nasledie imperii v obshchestvennom soznanii rossiyan" [Legacy of Empire in the Public Consciousness of Russians], in *Nasledie imperii i budushchee Rossii* [The Legacy of Empires and the Future of Russia], ed. Alexey Miller (Moscow: Liberal'naya missiya; Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2008), 103–138.

3   See Marc Bloch. *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1949), translated as *The Historian's Craft* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953).

4   Adrian Parr, *Deleuze and Memorial Culture. Desire, Singular Memory and the*

Politics of Trauma (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2008), 15.

5   Ibid. 55.

6   One of the recent projects of that type is RipCemetry, presented by a team of Italian developers, a free mobile app that aims to become the first "social cemetery." Users will be able to create virtual memorials for people and pets alike and to adorn them with pictures and videos. Now organizers look for a financial support via Indiegogo campaign. (See: http://www.ripcemetery.com, accessed April 1, 2015, and https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/ripcemetery#/, accessed April 1, 2015).

7   See Bernard Stiegler, *De la misère symbolique, tome 2: La Catastrophe du sensible* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 2004), also Idem, *La technique et le temps, tome 1: La faute d'Epiméthée* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1994).

8   See Nina Sosna, Ksenia Fedorova, eds., *Media between magic and technology* (Moscow-Ekaterinburg: Armchair Scientist Press, 2014).

9   See for example: "Memorials by themselves remain inert.., dependent on visitors for whatever memory they finally produce" (James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 4).

10   According to Adrian Parr, Cathy Caruth claims that "we own history only in so far as history is turned into a *majoritarianlanguage* that functions to subject us to the security of a determinate subject position (Cold War, America as a world superpower and guardian against communism)" (Parr, *Deleuze and Memorial Culture*, 59; the reference is to Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 24, emphasis added – NS).

11   See: Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," in *Selected Writings, vol. 4: 1938-1940*, ed. Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 389-400.

12   In the first years of the Soviet state a special law was adopted, restricting the demolition of monuments to members of the former reigning house. Monuments were being demolished together with their bases, although there might have been

new monuments erected to the new leaders on old bases, as was noticed later.

13   See: Mikhail Ryklin, *Spaces of Jubilation* [Prostranstva likovaniia] (Moscow: Logos, 2002). German translation: Michail Ryklin, *Räume des Jubels – Totalitarismus und Differenz. Essays* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2003).

14   The Moscow situation has not been described by scholars, therefore I would like to refer to a quite informative thesis by Maxim Kharin, *Reconstruction of Moscow in 1930s* (Moscow, 2008), http://www.dissercat.com/content/rekonstruktsiya-moskvy-v-1930-e-gg, accessed April 1, 2015.

15   Assistant of Alexey Shchusev, chief architect of the All-Russian agricultural and handicraft industrial exhibition; the first chief architect of the future VSHV-ENEA, who won the design competition for planning and architectural design shows.

16   Some materials and data used here were prepared by Catherine Kudryavtseva for her MA paper "Problems of preservation and use of Stalin's architectural heritage" (Higher School of Economics, Moscow, 2014).

17   Andrei Monastyrsky, "VDNKH—Capital of the World (ASchizoanalysis)" (1986, in Russian), *Russian Journal*, January 22, 1999 http://old.russ.ru/journal/okrest/99-01-22/monas.htm, accessed November 11, 2015.

18   See Arja Rosenholm and Irina Savkina (eds), *Topographies of popular culture* (Moscow: New Literary Observer, 2015), 43.

19   See: *Москва-Сити-описание района-башни*, *метро Выставочная*, *Экспоцентр Источник* (Moscow-City. District desription: Expocenter, towers, Vistavochnaya subway station), http://www.msk-guide.ru/moskva_city.htm. accessed August 9, 2015,

20   This is how the Open Space internet platform, now defunct, described the young artists who appeared in the capital in the 2010s.