WE OUR DIVERSE WORLD
Joe Zammit-Lucia
is the endangered

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Anhleman tackles a tricky topic

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From Russia with love

In the afterword to his new book, MOTHERLAND, photographer Simon Roberts alludes to the vast scale of Russia in being "the vital region to capture to win the board game Risk". In July 2004 Roberts set off with his wife (and camera) on a journey that would take them a year and 75,000km from east to west, recording the landscapes and diverse peoples that make up the biggest country of the world. The distances are great and the ethnicity of the inhabitants contrasting, yet their sense and understanding of the concept of MOTHERLAND (or rodina) is a pervasive theme. In an introduction to the book, Russian literature scholar Rosamund Bartlett provides an interesting context for the photographs with her discussion of the motherland concept within Russian history and by quotation from some of the country’s best-known writers. We follow Roberts’ journey via more than 150 images as a document of contemporary Russia unfolds through his landscapes and intimate portraits. As his camera moves on from one area to the next, Roberts provides extended captions covering the historical background to the way the people here live today. The work makes a refreshing change from much of the reminiscent documentary we have seen from the former Soviet Union. Roberts’ images record the diversity of the country and its people, who through their shared national pride, attachment to place and modest self-esteem make clear that, although for many life remains hard, the Motherland is not the miserable place some would have us believe.


Work from MOTHERLAND, by Simon Roberts, will be on show at Photofusion, 174 Electric Lane, Brixton, London SW9 from 13 April to 26 May, and in the Print Sales Gallery at The Photographers’ Gallery, London, until 14 April.

Nikhot Ksirinov and Ruffia Maharanova, Omsk, Western Siberia.

Road safety sign, Mogadan, Far East Russia. Both images from MOTHERLAND © Simon Roberts, published by Chris Boot.