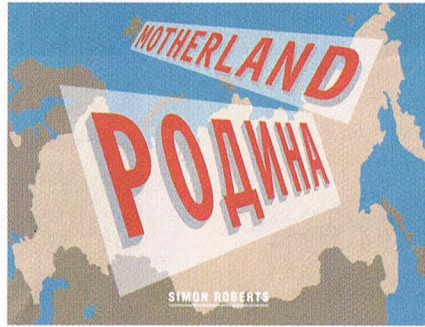


# IN PRINT

wife across the country for a year, even states his mission: He endeavored to create “a visual statement about contemporary Russia 15 years after the fall of the Soviet Union. I wanted to counter some of the photographic representations of Russia that focus on collapse and deterioration.”

Which is not to say that the pictures are reductively hopeful. Roberts traveled even to remote regions, and the stories he tells in words and pictures are those of micro-economies within a vast nation. Some places are fairly bleak. But from a family of displaced Chechens living in a settlement of wooden cubicles inside a derelict factory to the baby-faced director of an Internet marketing company, his portrait subjects present themselves to the camera openly and actively, and we know who they are because Roberts tells us their names and something about them. When Robert steps back and takes in a scene, his photos are quirky and lyrical, worthy of a much bigger page. Whether up close or surveying a scene, we always know where we are because the pop design of the book includes a map on which the locations of Roberts’s images are plotted.

Of course, a map is only one way—and the most literal—to describe one’s journeys, and what is useful in a content-dense book like this is beside the point in a contemplative volume like that of Monteith. The differences in



## **Motherland**

**Simon Roberts**

**Chris Boot**

**192 pages/160 images/\$40**

these books are many, but when comparing them, what it comes down to, as always, is a question of purpose and context. Roberts made a wonderfully successful book, shaped by informative text and lively design. Monteith, on the other hand, made something closer to poetry. There is a value in both kinds of reflection, so qualitative judgments aside, the real value of comparing these books is that it provides an opportunity to contemplate the many ways a photographer can approach a foreign place, and the myriad choices involved in translating those challenging journeys into a book. □

