SPIRITED URBAN LIVING 城市生活气质

May 2007  www.xintiandi.com

上海新天地附属刊物 Publication of Shanghai Xintiandi

关于
心灵超市的一切
All About FLOWmarket

真实的幻觉
A Fantasy Revealed

我的祖国
Motherland
Simon Roberts

我的祖国
Motherland

Russia has always fascinated me. As a child, it seemed vast and mysterious. It took up most of the wall map in my geography classroom and was the vital region to capture to win the board game ‘Risk’. There were the glamorous KGB agents up against James Bond, and the Soviet-bashing propaganda of Cold War films like Red Dawn and Rocky IV. I marvelled at the photographs of Yeltsin aloft a tank outside the White House in Moscow on the collapse of the Soviet Union, ushering in a new but uncertain era.

Motherland is meant as a visual statement about contemporary Russia, fifteen 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—whisper their echoes on the consequences of Russia’s turbulent past as opposed to the possibilities of its future-without sidestepping the realities of Russian daily life. As my year there progressed, I came to understand that Russians are beauty where an outsider might only see decaying apartment blocks or featureless landscapes. And whilst acknowledging their country’s deficiencies, Russians nevertheless believe their native land to be a remarkable and exceptional place. They convey an optimism about it that I soon came to share—an optimism born of more than just patriotism. They see Russia as home, their Rodina, and they see its landscapes and people as being unique—set apart, spiritual, resilient, even holy. Russians carry with them an innate sense of the history of the motherland and, through it, feel irrevocably connected to one another. This nebulous spirituality—defining it is impossible—this Russianness, is elusive yet all pervasive.
Friends keep warm by the eternal flame. Field of Mars, St Petersburg
Northwestern Region, December 2004

Post officials on patrol at dawn. Vladivostok,
Far East, October 2004