

PRESS RELEASE

Boris Mikhailov

The Wedding

Book Launch: 19 April, 6:30 – 8:00 pm

SPROVIERI

23 Heddon Street London W1B 4BQ

Sprovieri is pleased to announce the launch of Boris Mikhailov's latest publication 'The Wedding', in the presence of the artist. The series, previously exhibited at the Sprovieri Gallery in London in 2008, has been bound into a limited edition book with a text by Adrian Searle and published by Mörel Books.

Challenging and provocative, Mikhailov's photographs document human casualties living in post-communist Eastern Europe after the demise of the Soviet Union. They are unflinching and ruthless depictions of poverty and the homeless (also known as Bomzhes) living in the margins of Russia's new economic regime without social support or care.

'The Wedding' presents a simulated wedding between two homeless people often naked and in sexual poses, set amongst their own surroundings. The photographs remind us of something: perhaps the dreams we are glad we never followed, or the guilt from injustices we never fought against. Either way, we look upon them with a victimising empathy combined with dark humour. The absurdity of these strangers' wedding and their tragic life makes us question what it means to be tragic – and whether their world of madness is in fact our ideals corrupted by comfort.

The artist does not avoid moral complexities, paying his models to pose in these ambiguous interventions, thus emphasising the tenuous relationship between photographer and model, voyeur and victim. It is Mikhailov's intention to demonstrate the vulnerability and helplessness of his subjects, defending his belief that it is better to document and draw attention to the suffering and degradation of his subjects than to ignore it. The harsh realism of these works acts almost as an ironic retort to the airbrushed deceptions of the Soviet-approved 'Socialist Realism'. Mikhailov brings us to confront our own fright of such vulnerability, by drawing parallels through a wedding, a vow of protection and servitude.

The Wedding is a limited edition publication of 1000 books. In addition there will be a special edition of 30 hand-bound in leather.

Ukrainian-born Boris Mikhailov is one of the leading photographers from the former Soviet Union. His seminal 'Case History' series (1997–8) will be exhibited at the MoMA of New York from May to September 2011. Concurrently, Tate Modern, London, will be displaying two important earlier works by Mikhailov at their new room for 'Photography: New Documentary Forms' from May 2011 to March 2012.

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