

IN THE MIDDLE OF OVER THERE

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Backwards or forwards, you must decide. We move time forward, bit by bit. You cannot enjoy both with us and with them, because if you go in a circle, you'll fall behind. ["Sag mir, wo du stehst", song lyrics by Oktoberklub, GDR]

Since German reunification, the emblems of the former GDR – flags, medals, certificates, and uniforms – as well as various everyday products, have become the subject of diverse interests, both for exhibition purposes (public and private) and for reuse in new contexts. The symbols and insignia of the first German “Arbeiter- und Bauernstaat” (workers’ and farmers’ state) are now displayed in museums, while simultaneously catering to the market, thus becoming objects of commercial interest.

The photographic series *In the Middle of Over There / Mitten im Drüben* directs our gaze toward these sites where memories are both preserved and traded, immersing us in a peculiar, absurd world where objects are clung to and their meanings stubbornly asserted, even though, with the dissolution of the GDR, they have essentially become meaningless. The enduring existence of these symbols and objects is likely more tied to their role in shaping identity – not so much in preserving the GDR or its political substance, but in fostering a sense of belonging to a particular cultural identity.

This work demonstrates that, despite the completed political system change, the departure from the GDR is a long one – a winding, uncertain journey of farewells, likely with many detours ahead.

Germany

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24 photographs, c-prints, 40 x 40 / 60 x 60 cm

PROJECT GRANT

VG Bild-Kunst GmbH, Bonn, 2005, GER

PUBLICATION

von gestern. Hesperus Verlag, Potsdam, 2005