

CENTRE  
RÉGIONAL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE  
HAUTS-DE-FRANCE

# CRPV

PRESS RELEASE

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## **BORIS MIKHAILOV**

### **THE SOUL, A SUBTLE COMBUSTION ENGINE**

DECEMBER 8 2018

...

FEBRUARY 24 2019



### Press contact

Juliette Deschodt  
communication@crp.photo  
+ 33 [0]3 27 43 57 97

### CRP/ Centre régional de la photographie

Galerie de l'ancienne poste  
Place des Nations  
59282 Douchy-les-Mines / France

### www.crp.photo

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### *L'âme, un subtil moteur à explosion Boris Mikhailov*

December 8 ... February 24 2019

### Press visite

Friday, December 7 2018 / 1pm  
in the presence of the artist and the  
curator

### Inauguration

Saturday, December 8 2018 /  
12:30pm

in the presence of the artist and the  
curator

### Free admission

tuesday ... friday  
1pm ... 5pm  
saturday, sunday, public holidays  
14h ... 18h

### Afterwork

Visit the exhibition and explore the  
art library around a glass.

#### Thursday, December 20:

eXploreXpo, a meeting intended for  
teachers and groupe guides.

#### Thursday, January 24:

meeting with the editorial team from  
the photography magazine  
Halogénure.

#### Thursday, February 14:

Special Valentine's Day Photo Booth/  
5pm > 8pm

free admission

CRP/ Douchy-les-Mines

### Conversation

#### Wednesday, January 30 / 7:30pm

As part of the *Traitements croisés*  
festival, supported by the Labo de  
l'Univers, a special meeting exploring  
the theme of photographic and artistic  
publication, with the Berlin critic and  
curator Thibaut de Ruyter.

free admission

Cinéma l'Univers

16 rue Georges Danton

59000 Lille

### Screening of David Teboul's film, *J'ai déjà été ici un jour*

#### Tuesday, February 5 2019 / 7pm

In the presence of the director, in  
partnership with the Labo de l'Univers  
and Cinéma l'Univers.

16 rue Georges Danton

59000 Lille

pay what you want

### Finissage

#### Saturday, February 23 / 2pm

with Régis Durand, a critic and curator,  
specializing photography.

In a discussion with curator Muriel  
Enjalran, he will look back at Boris  
Mikhailov's career and work, which  
he was among the first to introduce in  
France.

free admission

CRP/ Douchy-les-Mines

## THE SOUL, A SUBTLE COMBUSTION ENGINE

The CRP/ is dedicating a solo exhibition to Ukrainian artist Boris Mikhailov, an international figure in contemporary photography. In order to echo the region's industrial history, he has chosen to present two series at the CRP/ gallery: *Promzona*, produced for the 2012 Kiev Biennale and now being shown in France for the first time, and *Salt Lake*, created in 1986.

Boris Mikhailov is an artist who is constantly inventing himself, capable of pioneering new formal practices since the 1960s, such as in the series *Yesterday's Sandwich* (1966-68), or staging the homeless of Kharkov in the true urban phantasmagoria *Case History* (1997-98). Through the two series presented in the exhibition, the artist plunges us into his country's history, from the Soviet past to the Ukraine of today. Through his sensitive, nostalgic, but also scathing and socially engaged vision, he offers uncompromising work that takes the form of a fierce observation of humankind and an imaging of history, that of the former Soviet Bloc, from its great moments, to its collapse, to the unkept democratic promises of the transition to capitalism.

With his camera, the artist revisits places in which his own past is rooted. *Promzona* (2011) shows a site where he worked as an engineer forty years earlier in Kharkov, Ukraine's industrial jewel near the coal basin of Donbass. *Salt Lake* is a photographic series created in 1986 in Sloviansk, his father's native city in Donbass.

The images of factories show the still-active traces of the past in Kharkov, a gigantic metal workshop serving the Soviet Union and now serving Ukraine, producing equipment and machines in large numbers since the 1920s. These industrial complexes are relics of a mythical age when the Revolution was led by the power of industry, when artists extolled the beauty of machines. Futurism and Constructivism with Alexander Rodchenko and Vladimir Mayakovsky represented the art of the new Russia. Painting, architecture and photography offered a geometric construction of space that emphasized the basic importance of lines and the dynamism of shapes, a vision similar to the cubist esthetic. By formal analogy, the circular compositions of *Promzona* evoke Braque's and Picasso's tondi. Mikhailov deconstructs industrial shots through his choice of framing angles and his points of view. The arrangement of surfaces and lines generates a geometric beauty. Gangways, ladders and platforms trace an aerial route through conglomerations of pillars and tubes. Through a low-angle effect, the eyes are drawn to the sky, whose azure contrasts with the blackness of the girders and the rust-color of the enormous pipes. A human silhouette shows the ladder, a worker in orange overalls is suspended over a tilted shot like a tightrope walker, or like those workers holding onto girders in Fernand Léger's large painting *Les Constructeurs* (1950). Like actors in a mechanical ballet, on a stage made of angles and intersecting axes, human beings are cogs in a beautiful machine, "Krasnaya Mashina".

*Hearts are like engines, the soul a subtle combustion engine.*  
(Vladimir Maiakovski, *Ecoutez si on allume les étoiles*, 1918).

*Salt Lake* chronicles a few hours by the waterside. Slaviansk is a spa in Donbass, known for the therapeutic benefits of its salt water and mud. We see bathers gathered in happy groups, stretching out on the bank, coating themselves in mud, and chatting in a relaxed, familial atmosphere. It is a sequence showing the simple pleasures of ordinary people, which could recall Marcel Carné's 1929 film *Nogent, El Dorado of Sunday* or Robert Siodmak's film of the same year, *People on Sunday*. The bathers have normal bodies, often chubby and plump, a far cry from the mandatory esthetic canons of Soviet art intended to represent the new man. Soviet bodies are shown in a raw, vulnerable state, without the heroic trappings of propaganda. Nearby, the smokestacks of a factory are coughing out their smoke, as it extracts the salt from this salt lake to make soda. An enormous pipe from the factory is discharging hot water right into the lake. The profiles of high-tension masts, of rails appear on the horizon, without seeming to disturb the insouciance of the people taking waters on the pipe as if it were a jetty. In a very critical way, we observe industry's incongruous presence in this Soviet Nice, and the stamp of the productive apparatus on people's pastimes. Each image is an instant captured in the stream of Slaviansk's peaceful days. Paradoxically, pleasant breaks are possible in the shadow of a dictatorship. The sepia tone chosen for the prints bathes these images in a nostalgic atmosphere retrospectively confirmed by the present day. Slaviansk is currently a battlefield in the violent conflict between the Ukrainian army and pro-Russia separatists.

In Boris Mikhailov's work, photographs are what survive of a bygone continent, and what link us to it: "*It builds the haunted house of the Soviet world, a strange collection of images, each of which carries a trace of a collective hope, private dreams, forgotten sensations*<sup>1</sup>".

**Muriel Enjalran**  
curator and director of the CRP/

<sup>1</sup> David Teboul, *Boris Mikhailov J'ai déjà été ici un jour*, Nicolas Bourriaud, Notes sur Boris Mikhailov, Les presses du réel, 2011, p. 12

## BORIS MIKHAILOV

Born in 1938 in Kharkiv, Mikhailov became a major figure in Ukrainian art by providing a poignant and haunting perspective on the role of the individual in Soviet and post-Soviet conditions.

He began experimenting with photography while working as an engineer in the early 60s. Since then, Mikhailov has produced more than 30 photographic series and published over 20 photobooks. Mikhailov was the recipient of the 2012 Spectrum International Prize for photography, the Citibank Photography Prize (later renamed Deutsche Börse Photography Prize), the 2000 Hasselblad Foundation International Award and the 1999 Krazna-Krausz Photography Book Award. Past solo exhibitions include MoMA, ICA Boston, Tate Modern, Fotomuseum Antwerpen, Berlinische Galerie, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Kunsthalle Wien, and Centro Italiano per la Fotografia, among others.

Represented by the gallery Suzanne Tarasieve, Paris.  
[www.suzanne-tarasieve.com](http://www.suzanne-tarasieve.com)

### **Works presented at the CRP/**

**From the series *Promzona*, 2011,**

14 tirages 180x130 cm, 2011, © Boris Mikhailov,

4 tirages 150x100 cm, 2011, © Boris Mikhailov,

2 tirages 100x100 cm, 2011, © Boris Mikhailov.

Courtesy of the artist and the gallery Suzanne Tarasieve, Paris.

**From the series *Salt Lake*, 1986,**

50 tirages, 60x90cm, 1986, © Boris Mikhailov.

Courtesy of the artist.

Pictures available

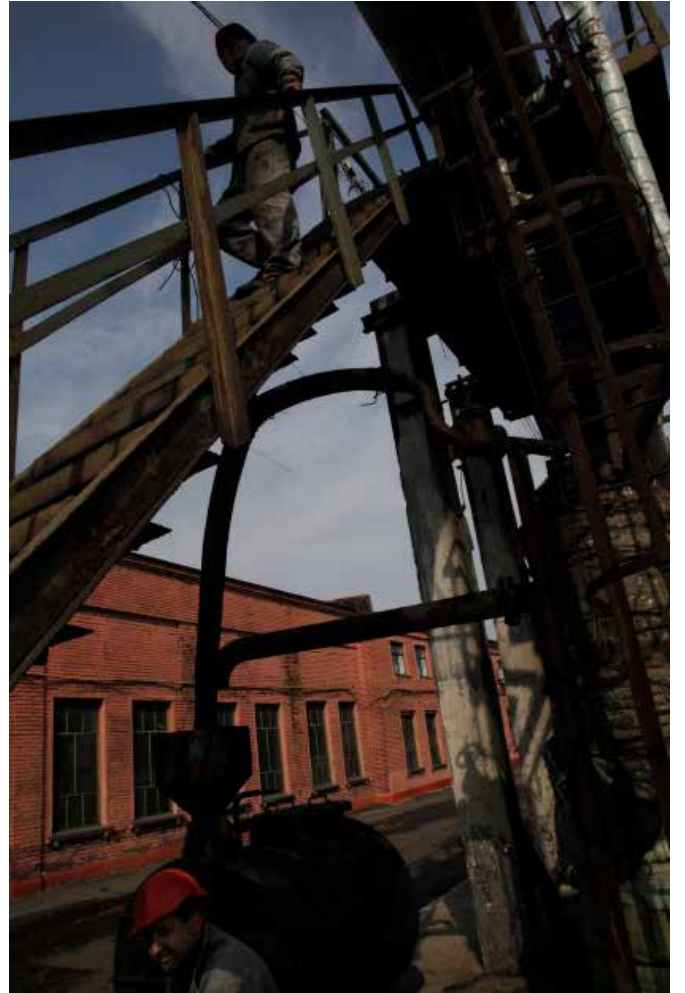


Boris Mikhailov,  
Untitled from the series *Promzona*, 2011,  
Courtesy of the artist and the gallery Suzanne  
Tarasieva, Paris.  
© Boris Mikhailov



Boris Mikhailov,  
Untitled from the series *Promzona*, 2011,  
Courtesy of the artist and the gallery Suzanne  
Tarasieva, Paris.  
© Boris Mikhailov





Boris Mikhailov,  
Untitled from the series *Promzona*, 2011,  
190 x 125cm  
Courtesy of the artist and the gallery Suzanne  
Tarasieva, Paris.  
© Boris Mikhailov



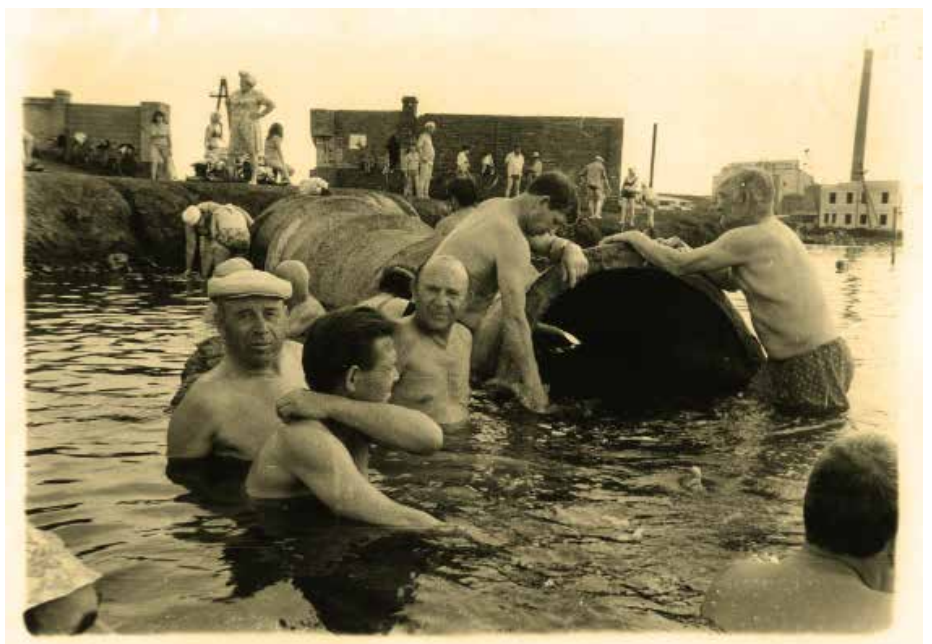


Boris Mikhailov,  
Untitled from the series *Salt Lake*, 1986,  
Courtesy of the artist  
© Boris Mikhailov



Boris Mikhailov,  
Untitled from the series *Salt Lake*, 1986,  
Courtesy of the artist  
© Boris Mikhailov





↗  
Boris Mikhailov,  
Untitled from the series *Salt Lake*, 1986,  
Courtesy of the artist  
© Boris Mikhailov

→  
Boris Mikhailov,  
Untitled from the series *Salt Lake*, 1986,  
Courtesy of the artist  
© Boris Mikhailov

## LE CRP/

The CRP/ Centre régional de la photographie, based in Douchy-les-Mines, develops art centre missions in the field of photography and contemporary images.

In the visual arts sphere, art centres are essential actors promoting the creation of contemporary art and its distribution in France and abroad. Their primary purpose is to support artists by helping them conduct research produce their works, and by transmitting and distributing this art research to the wider public, by means of innovative mediation tools.

Founded in 1982, the CRP/ grew out of a collective of photographers who came from the photo club of the Usinor Denain Work Council. As a mobile association at the time, the CRP spent four years developing exhibitions and organising photography competitions. In 1983, in connection with its photographic commissions and its production of works, the Ministry of Culture recognised the CRP's art library, which became the first of its kind in France in the field of photography. In 1986, the CRP/ moved in to a former post office made available by the town of Douchy-les-Mines, and in 1991 the Ministry of Culture recognised it as a national art centre.

As a centre that supports creativity, at the outset it developed a project to commission works linked with its territory: the Mission Photographique Transmanche (1988 to 2006), which lay the foundations of its collection. This has since been supplemented through the art centre's programme and productions. The CRP/ is one of the few art centres endowed with a collection directly linked to its own production activity.

The CRP/ collection currently contains 9,000 works, with an art library offering the public over 500 works that may be borrowed. Linked to its significant publication activity, it also has a document collection of over 8,000 books.

The CRP's activities include creative support, research, production, distribution and mediation, all of which is developed in a region that is marked by its industrial past, an area that showed a very early commitment to culture. Today the CRP/ is a place of experience transmission, awareness-raising, mediation and training in the field of images, with a trans-regional and national reputation.

The CRP's artistic and cultural vision, championed by its current director Muriel Enjalran, endeavours to be forward-looking, encouraging young artists through its research and support mission, keeping in mind the regional history of images to which its collection testifies. It is regionally rooted while also giving attention to other art scenes abroad, through invitations to artists who come and shift or renew visitors' perceptions of their history and region, and provide access to other cultural and societal issues in the world.

# CRP/

Centre régional de la photographie  
Hauts-de-France  
Place des Nations  
59282 Douchy-les-Mines / France

+ 33 [0]3 27 43 57 97  
communication@crp.photo

[www.crp.photo](http://www.crp.photo)

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