

Dejan Grba

THRILLER

Bogdan Vojnović works in the restricted areas of ruined industrial compounds, and *Glassworks* is a new series of digital images produced during his visit to the public company Glass Industry in Pančevo, Serbia. It is methodologically close to the British video artists Jane and Louise Wilson, and conceptually to the photo-essay *An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar* (2007) by the American artist Taryn Simon.¹ Just like the study of obscure and inaccessible sites in *An American Index...* disqualifies the superficial American identity broadcasted by the media and popular culture,² *Glassworks* deconstructs the mental filtering that contemporary Serbs apply mostly for the sake of survival, while the foreign visitors to Serbia use it for good times' sake.

Vojnović establishes a curious blend of documentary sublimation and pseudo-sublime aesthetization of banal landscape, stylistically similar to the Düsseldorf School of photography. The sublimation of banal landscape is achieved by the choice of locale, by framing, and by merging multiple shots into large-scale compositions. The pseudo-sublime aesthetization is accomplished by enhancing the details and by manipulating lumino-chromatic values of the image. The sublime landscape is crystallized through focused observation and intense contemplation of nature. The pseudo-sublime landscape forces us to face the nature of reality, with its limited set of options.

Unlike the digital artists who obliterate their scenery, such as Anthony Aziz and Sammy Cucher (*Dystopia*, 1994-1995) or Alexander Apóstol (*Residente Pulido*, 2001), Bogdan Vojnović accentuates the visual complexity of disorder in devastated landscape. A devastated landscape may suggest loss, as in Polanski's *The Pianist* (2002), or possibilities, as in Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979), or both, as in classical thriller. Vojnović's 'post-industrial' thriller *Glassworks* transforms the ex-Yugoslav landscape into a kind of S/M Arcadia.

True to the idea of Caspar David Friedrich that the artist should depict not only what he sees before him, but also what he sees within him,³ Bogdan Vojnović adds that which is non-existent to the imagery of that which ceased to exist, and the viewer of his landscapes becomes Rückenfigur in Magritte's *La reproduction interdite* (1937).

¹ Dworkin, Ronald / Christina Kukielski / Salman Rushdie. *Taryn Simon: An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar*. Göttingen: Steidl, 2007.

² Grba, Dejan. „An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar.“ *Politika (Kultura - Umetnost - Nauka)*, July 12, 2008.

³ Börsch-Supan, Helmut. *Caspar David Friedrich*. New York: George Braziller, 1974. p. 7.