

Yury Toroptsov

The House of Baba Yaga

Exhibition of 21 large format photographs (1m x 1,5m)

April 30 – July 4, 2010

Park Pablo Neruda, Avenue Gabriel Peri 91700, Sainte-Genevieve-des-Bois, France



The House of Baba Yaga #2. 2008 © Yury Toroptsov.
Courtesy of gallery Photo 12

“The House of Baba Yaga” is a solo exhibition of Yury Toroptsov, 35, in the municipal park of Sainte Genevieve des Bois, a city in the suburbs of Paris, a symbolic place for Russian culture abroad. The exhibition is a part of a vast program of events of 2010 The Year of Russia in France.

“The House of Baba Yaga” depicts the reality and daily life of the photographer’s family house in Grodekovo, a typical village of some three hundred people, north of Vladivostok in the Far Eastern Russia.

Exploring the notion of home, the artist offers to viewers two visions: daylight portraits of

family members currently occupying the house and night photos of the house exterior. For the night photos, Yury Toroptsov uses the visual codes of Russian traditional fairy tale illustrations. Dark shadows, saturated colours create a feeling of another reality.

“Every time when I leave France to go see family in my native Russia” – says the photographer who has been a French resident for ten years – “I have a feeling I am changing worlds, not continents. So big and perceptible is the difference. After thirty hours of travel via the airports of Paris, Moscow and finally Vladivostok, my urban memory and the images of the City of Lights give way to the emerging childhood memories of home.

Each year I spend several weeks in our family house where I grew up, in the village lost in the Siberian jungle. Over the years, the house started to resemble that of Baba Yaga, a character from Russian fairy tales, a witch who kidnaps and eats children. It is especially true when a mysterious light animates the obscure night. The banal objects like pots and jars scattered all over the place become alive. But I am no longer afraid of the witch. Her magic territory is now being occupied by two baby girls, my nieces, who have been recently born.

“The House of Baba Yaga” is a journey to the land of childhood memories of the artist in search of answers. Caught in between two opposing geographically and culturally worlds Paris and Vladivostok, the photographer is looking for ways to define what constitutes a common denominator of those distant worlds, people and their identity and the permanence of myths.

About Yury Toroptsov:

Born in 1974 in a small rural community near Vladivostok, Yury Toroptsov left his native Russia in 1998 to study at the New School for Social Research in New York after having won a prestigious scholarship. Upon obtaining his master’s degree in non-profit management he pursued this career in a non-governmental sector. In 2003 Yury Toroptsov, then a consultant to the United Nations, changed his profession to follow his long-time passion – photography.

Nourished by his Far-Eastern origins, American travels and the current residence in Europe, Yury Torooptsov keeps at the core of his work what constitutes a common denominator for those distant cultures: people and their identity and the permanence of myths. His photographs tell individual and collective stories of people. They pose universal questions beyond those of models concerning the contemporary society. Memories, metamorphosis, profane and sacred are the recurring themes in his photographs.

In 2008 Torooptsov was given a solo show at the Maison Europeenne de la Photographie in Paris. His series, "The House of Baba Yaga" (2008) was shown at Paris Photo in 2008. In 2009 Torooptsov exhibited at the Rencontres d'Arles. His work has been exhibited in various group shows in Paris where he now lives. Yury Torooptsov is represented by Gallery Photo 12 of Valérie-Anne Giscard d'Estaing.

Sainte Genevieve des Bois and the exiled Russians

Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois is situated 24 kilometers South-West of Paris. It's a historical place for the Russian emigration. In 1927 Princess Vera Meschersky with the financial help of Dorothy Paget founded the Russian Home (La Maison Russe) on the premises of Chateau de la Cossonerie for the needs of exiled Russians after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The tenants of the Russian Home were buried in a municipal cemetery now commonly known as the Russian cemetery. Since 1927 some 15 000 Russians from the region, provinces and abroad chose Sainte Geneviève des Bois as their final resting place. Among them, the Nobel Literature Prize winner Ivan Bunin, director Andrei Tarkovski, dancer Rudolf Nureev... For many Russians today the cemetery of Sainte Genevieve des Bois is a place of pilgrimage and memory.

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The House of Baba Yaga #1. 2008
© Yury Torooptsov. Courtesy of gallery Photo 12



The House of Baba Yaga #3. 2008
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