

THE AESTHETICS OF LONELINESS THE FADED REMAINS OF THE “AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE”

A road movie in photographs: “Make American Great Again” is an oft-quoted slogan these days. Yes, the old “American Dream” has been lost, as the photographer Emmanuel Georges shows us. In his artist’s book, *America Rewind*, the Frenchman captures memories of times long gone.

Berlin, February 21, 2017 – Using an analogue, large-format camera, the photographer Emmanuel Georges (*1965) documented his more than 25,000-kilometer trip that went from Atlantic City to Houston, Las Vegas, Butte, Minot, Detroit, and all the way back to Philadelphia. The result is a photographic road movie portraying the poignant beauty of the American hinterlands: abandoned motels, shuttered movie theaters, overgrown façades, and faded billboards are silent testimony to long-gone days.

Today, tedium and loneliness characterize the landscape passing by. The transitions between civilization and nature seem to be fluid in the vastness of the sparsely settled “flyover states.” “Actually, these landscapes look like they’re from the Hopper era,” says Georges, commenting on the motifs of his photographs. “That means that even the sense of loneliness has left these places and they are now really and truly empty.”

Georges’s curiosity about remote places and the narrative tension of his photographic series thread their way through his oeuvre. In the aesthetics of the abandoned, the French photographer searches for elements that remain alive, that recall the past to mind. “The driving force is the search for whatever has remained intact, the same way that you look for things in a second-hand shop.” Georges’s photographs seem like a plea for the necessity of enjoying life, even during hard times, even when there’s not much left to do but watch sports on TV or restore old muscle cars while sipping a can of beer.

Georges discovered his love of traveling and his particular soft spot for America in his youth: by 1986 he had produced his first series of works about the United States—those days, in black-and-white. There followed expeditions to Argentina, Cuba, and many other countries, which the artist also recorded in photographs.

As a professional graphic designer, Georges has a particularly good eye for typography and color. So, for example, he makes use of the different lighting conditions that manifest over the course of a day, creating an epic, cinematographic tension that underscores the road movie quality of his series, *America Rewind*.



EMMANUEL GEORGES
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