

The Hungarian motels: Exotic dreams and Eastern European style

The peculiar design, screaming colors and kitschy decorations – Hanna Rédling's photographic series "Color TV, Queen Beds, Exotik Dreams" is all about Hungarian motels from the 1990s. Inspired by interiors from the 'West', these motels are truly Eastern European, with their wild and eccentric mix of decoration, colors and materials. **osTraum** talked with Hanna about her motivation for the trip through Hungary in search of authentic motels.

Immersed in the atmosphere of an Hungarian motel

osTraum: The pictures from your series are colorful, sophisticated and exotic. What was your main intention by creating „Color TV, Queen Beds, Exotik Dreams“? What kind of mood did you want to transfer?

Hanna: People forgot about these places, so I wanted to show them what we have here in Hungary. I think Eastern European style is very popular nowadays, but most of the owners of these places are not aware of this fact. In the past years they've started to renovate these places, so they are slowly disappearing. I had to capture them to show how special they are.

After spending the first year to photograph these motels, another path started to unfold. It was not only a simple travel anymore, but it became an inner journey to myself. If something is important to me, I try to translate it to my visual language, so it was also my aim to create the exact atmosphere that I feel when I enter a motel room like this.

It is for this reason that my 3D pictures take place beside traditionally staged self-portraits and still lifes in my series. On one hand these places were built in the 90's, but on the other hand I deal with them in 2020, so creating this kind of a 'post nostalgia' can honestly communicate how I relate to them.

A creative process as a cure for homesickness

osTraum: Your work is dated from 2018 to 2020, what appears as a quite long period of time. Could you tell us more about a creative process behind the project? How did you work on it?

Hanna: In 2016, I've started surfing on booking.com (and on other smaller Hungarian websites) to search original motels from the 90's. That time I've lived in Rotterdam and it was kind of a therapy for me to deal with my homesick.

When I moved back to Hungary, I just continued it and in 2018 I figured 'it's time to go'. So I collected my 'top' places and I've started to organize the photoshoots. I bought vintages clothes, and other tools I could use on the photographs. I usually did my photoshoots at night (I was like a simple traveler), sometimes the owners

didn't know about my plans. Of course when I used community places (like the restaurant or the event room) I let them know about it, and they were quite supportive.

It was a long process, not only because of the travels, but my inner struggles and self-development. All these rooms were like stages for me, places where I could rest, heal, hide or fight with my demons.

Longing for exotic and western dreams

osTraum: What is, in your opinion, so special about Hungarian motels you photographed for the series? What is their situation today? Do they still work as motels, are there some abandoned motels?

Hanna: They still work as motels! They tried to achieve a modern, western style in the 90's. Of course because of their financial problems / situation they had to use a lot of DIY solutions and they reused everything they owned before (like furniture, other interior decorations). This is where their exotic, mixed style is coming from. They are special because at the end of the day they don't look like something else's copy. In these interiors you can easily find references from America or from rich European countries but overall with their use of colors, materials and shapes they represent a true Eastern European style.

osTraum: In which parts of Hungary are located the motels you visited, are there any differences between them?

Hanna: They are located at very different parts of Hungary. Till now on I've visited 16 places (all across the country), but I'm planning to continue my journey in the future. The characteristic of the location doesn't really influence their style.

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Hanna Rédling is a Hungarian photographer based in Budapest. She studied photography at the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design in Budapest and the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam and is currently graduating from the Photography Masters Program of Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design. At the moment, she is also a part of the directing duo ASPIK TEARS with Rebeka Mór.