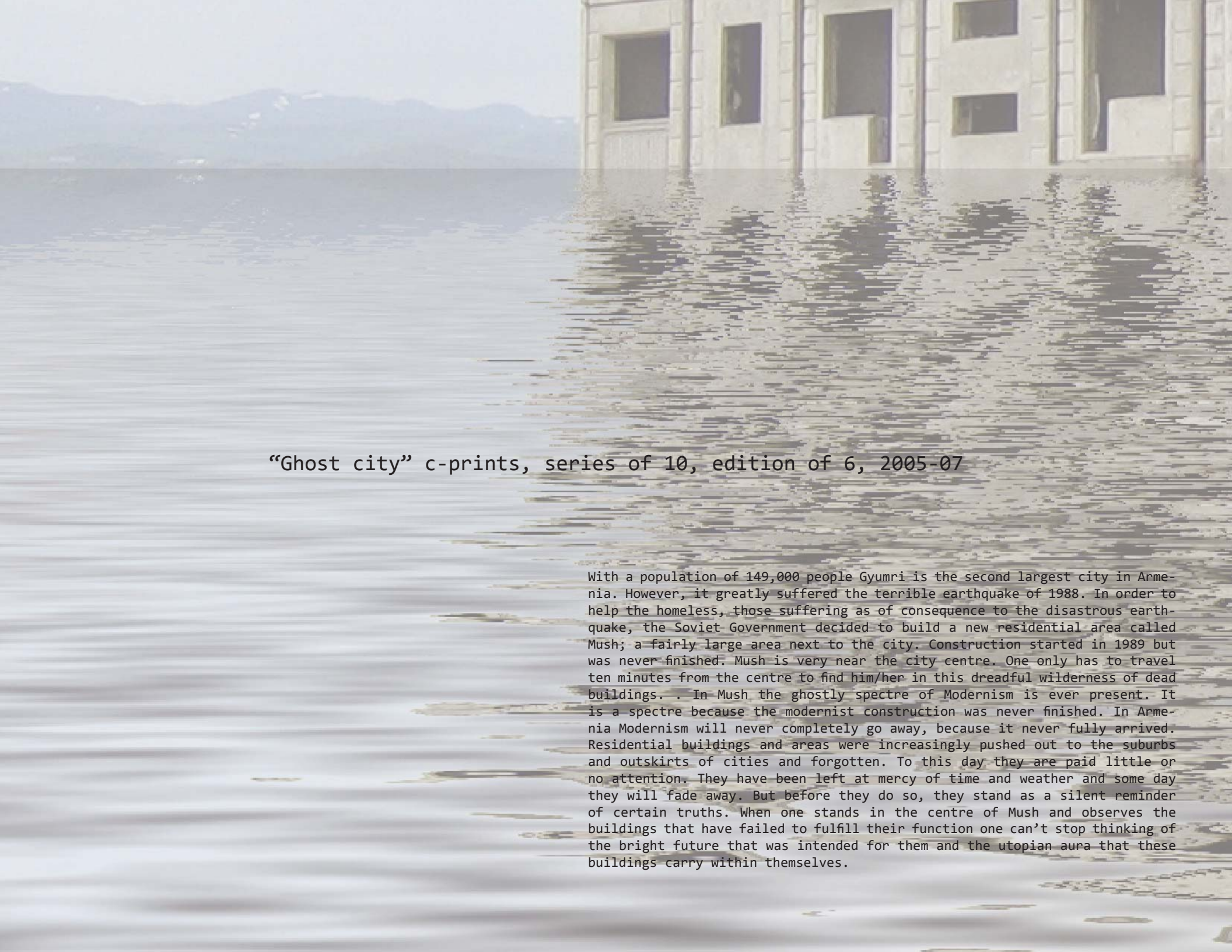


ghost city

V A H R A M A G H A S Y A N

A photograph showing a multi-story building partially submerged in water. The water level is high, reaching up to the windows and doors. The building has a light-colored facade with several windows and doors. In the background, there are mountains under a hazy sky. The water is calm, reflecting the building and the sky.

“Ghost city” c-prints, series of 10, edition of 6, 2005-07

With a population of 149,000 people Gyumri is the second largest city in Armenia. However, it greatly suffered the terrible earthquake of 1988. In order to help the homeless, those suffering as of consequence to the disastrous earthquake, the Soviet Government decided to build a new residential area called Mush; a fairly large area next to the city. Construction started in 1989 but was never finished. Mush is very near the city centre. One only has to travel ten minutes from the centre to find him/her in this dreadful wilderness of dead buildings. . In Mush the ghostly spectre of Modernism is ever present. It is a spectre because the modernist construction was never finished. In Armenia Modernism will never completely go away, because it never fully arrived. Residential buildings and areas were increasingly pushed out to the suburbs and outskirts of cities and forgotten. To this day they are paid little or no attention. They have been left at mercy of time and weather and some day they will fade away. But before they do so, they stand as a silent reminder of certain truths. When one stands in the centre of Mush and observes the buildings that have failed to fulfill their function one can't stop thinking of the bright future that was intended for them and the utopian aura that these buildings carry within themselves.























Ghost City

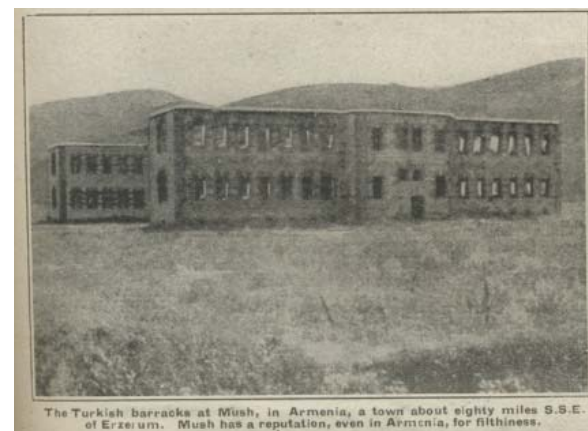
With a population of 149,000 people Gyumri is the second biggest city in Armenia but also famously suffered from a terrible earthquake that took place in 1988. In order to help those who had been made homeless, the Soviet Government decided to build a new residential area called Mush. It is a fairly large area next to the city. Construction was started in 1989 but was never finished. Eighteen years have gone by and a lot of money has been spent but still this residential area is totally empty and totally deserted - a real ghost town.

A ghost town is traditionally a town that has been abandoned, usually because the economic activity that was its mainstay has failed or because of natural or manmade disasters. There are many examples of Ghost Cities dotted throughout the countries of the former Soviet Union; one such example is Pripjat, which lies right next to the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the government didn't have sufficient funds to support some of the smaller cities that had grown up around strategically important objects. The populations of these cities were left to fend for themselves. Nobody could support them because all communications with these places were cut off when the state decided that it didn't have the necessary funds to support these places.

The area around Mush could be called a ghost town but it differs from most other well known ghost towns, which even have some guided tours going to them. Therefore most ghost towns were abandoned, but there are also areas, like Mush, that were only half built when Soviet Union collapsed. There aren't many places like this now because people somehow find a use for them whenever this is possible. The interesting thing about Mush is that it is very near the city centre. You only

have to travel ten minutes from the centre and you find yourself in this dreadful "wilderness" of dead buildings. On the way you can still see people living in temporary shelters that were built in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Every ghost town has its own apparitions roaming around it, but the problem with apparitions is that you're never quite sure if they're there or not. In Mush the ghostly spectre of Modernism is ever present. It is a spectre because the modernist construction was never finished. In Armenia Modernism will never completely go away, because it never fully arrived. There are hundreds of unfinished apartment buildings, office blocks and architectural monuments dotted all over Armenia. They have remained unfinished for many reasons. Residential housing was not a priority for Armenian architects and urban planners in the Soviet period. They were more interested in economizing on residential buildings in order to build large architectural statements, which were supposed to glorify the leading ideology of the time. Large architectural statements gained a new significance in post Soviet Armenia, this time in the context of a new national ideology to glorify and demonstrate the new country's strength. It mattered little that these buildings might, at best, function for only a few years or at worst remain unfinished as well. Residential buildings and areas were increasingly pushed out to the suburbs and outskirts of cities and forgotten. To this day they are paid little or no attention. Perhaps these buildings will never be finished. They have been left at mercy of time and weather and some day they will fade away. But before they do so, they stand as a silent reminder of certain truths. When one stands in the centre of Mush and observes the buildings that have failed to fulfill their function one can't stop thinking of the bright future that was intended for them and the utopian aura that these buildings carry within themselves.

*Vahram Aghasyan
April 2007*



The Turkish barracks at Mush, in Armenia, a town about eighty miles S.S.E. of Erzeurum. Mush has a reputation, even in Armenia, for filthiness.

Modernizm ile müzakere

AGOS 15
Perform: Garanti Güncel Sanat Merkezi'nin İstanbul Misafirleri Pazarı'nda misafir sanatçı olan...



προβλήτο

ΕΚΘΕΣΕΙΣ

ΚΡΗΤΗ/ΜΑΡΤΟΣ 2010
ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΛΟΓΙΑ
ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΛΟΓΙΑ
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ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΛΟΓΙΑ
ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΛΟΓΙΑ

- SELECTED EXHIBITIONS OF THE WORK
- 2010 Neither From, Nor Towards... - Umjetnicki paviljon / Art Pavilion Zagreb, Zagreb
 - 2010 Formerly Exit Five: College Art Galleries, Saskatoon, Canada
 - 2009 ALL & NOW - CSW Centrum Sztuki Wspolczesnej / Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw
 - 2009 "Great expectations" Casino Luxemburg, Luxemburg
 - 2007 Not Only Possible But Also Necessary: Optimism In The Age Of Global War, 10th International Istanbul Biennial
 - 2007 "Heterotopias" First Contemporary Art Biennale Of Thessaloniki
 - 2007 "Grand Bleu: rêves de la mer entre Erevan, Gyumri et Paris", Artcore gallery, Paris

The work exists in public and private collections such as the collection of the museum at the seam. jerusalem,

Social Text

95



Urban Margins:
Envisioning the Contemporary Global South

Benjamin H. Brant
Katerina Anagnostou

Great Expectations

Contemporary photography looks at today's Inner Years

0506.CSW.2009

w05*
ALL & NOW

FESTIVAL CULTURESAPES
armenien

22. November 2009, 18:00 Uhr

VAHRAM AGHASYAN

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OJESIND

About the author
lives and works in Yerevan/Armenia.
He has shown internationally in the
Tenth International Istanbul Biennial,
the Museum Kiasma in Helsinki, First
Contemporary Art Biennale Of Thes-
saloniki. His works had been shown in
“Contemporary video art from Arme-
nia” Musee d’art Contemporain, Lyon,
he was in the group show “Resistance
through art” in the Armenian Pavilion
at the 51st Venice Biennale 2005. His
last solo exhibition in Armenia “Ghost
City” was hosted by the ACCEA - Arme-
nian Center for Contemporary Experi-
mental Art.





Interest towards ruins has accompany the western modernity in waves since 18 century as part of a broader discourse about memory, trauma, forgetting and imagining other futures. There is nostalgia for the ruins, because they still seem to hold the promise that is vanished from our present world.

Ruins seem no longer having a place in late capitalism's commodity and memory culture. As commodities thing in general don't age well, they become obsolete, get recycled or thrown away, buildings are restored to death or torn down. The chance for things to age and to become ruin has diminished in the age of turbo capitalism. The ruin of the twenty-first century is either detritus or restored age. The new is made to look old rather than the old made to look young. Repro- and retrofashions make it increasingly hard to recognize that which is genuinely old in this culture of preservation and restoration. In the case of ruins that which is allegedly present and transparent whenever authenticity is claimed is present only as an absence; it is the imagined present of a past that can now only be grasped in its decay.

However the "dead zones" exist in every part of the world. The term 'dead zone' refers to architects, planners and theoreticians' jargon and more specifically to a discussion about a regeneration plan, to indicate a gaps and marginalized places in urban and none urban spaces.

vahram aghasyan
2010