

The Northern Caucasus

Davide Monteleone

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At first there was the Russian Empire, Saint Petersburg's splendor, nobles' dynasties set against commons far and distant, scattered on an unlimited country. Later on came communism's turn, with its pyramidal hierarchy, its ideology imposed without any discussion for a "superior common good" that revealed itself utopian and elusive. Walls and curtains finally fell down, but renewal's winds were broken off by the chill of something more indefinite and creeping. Something nobody talks about, but nobody can dispute. A dictatorship replaced by another, worst.

Therefore time passed over counts and masters, hierarchs and politicians, arms of the law and armed arms. And all the past reflects itself in people's eyes. A population that becomes silent and fierce, strong and proud, persons for whom an endearment never last long, family's ceremonial is reduced to the least, men and women live suspended in a time space different from that one of the rest of the world. Places where blood has flown too much, where too often it is forbidden to mourn one's own dead, where screams become mute, and hiding turned into habit. Caucasus' regions.

This project takes into account the countries in which disputes and struggles are not over yet or only apparently seem concluded, as intermittent fires under the political rhetoric of "normalization" and "pacification". I began to investigate the daily life of people living in the Russian Caucasus, who are still divided between the claim for independence and the pride for their diversity, economic subordination, the historical-political and mental affiliation, condemned to an eternal geographic position in an oblivion, the elaboration of a new post-soviet identity.

I've been working from Chechnya to Dagestan, from Northern to Southern Ossetia (just after the 2008's war), all the way to Abkhazia, crossing geographical and political borders. My interest is to carry on a considered path, making notes on the tracks left by the mother land. My aim is to complete, republic after republic, the region's exploration, unifying it through an imaginary yarn that is partly already appeared.

Born in 1974, Davide Monteleone spent the first 18 years moving to various cities of Italy because of the work of his parents. He studied engineering and then stopped to move first to the U.S. and then to England. It was there that he started discovering his interest in photography and journalism. Moving back to Italy in 2000, he completed his studies in photography and began to work with major Italian magazines. At the end of 2001 he moved again, this time to Moscow, where he lived permanently until 2003 working as a correspondent for the photo agency Contrasto. This choice was to be the major determinant of his career. He start working regularly with major national and international newspapers such as D, Io Donna, L'Espresso, New York Times, Time, Stern, New Yorker, just to name a few. Since 2002 he has lived between Italy and Russia, where he is pursuing long-term personal projects and continues his editorial work. He published his first book "Dusha, Russian Soul" in 2007, and "La line inesistente" in 2009. He does not forget the international news, and has won numerous awards including the World Press Photo in 2007 and 2009, the International Photo Award in 2008, Emerging Photographer Grant, Freelens Award and many others. In recent years he started exhibiting and teaching alongside his editorial work.





Republic of Daghestan, 01/2010 - A bomb was triggered on January 12 at the 496th kilometer of the Mozdok-Kazimagomed gas main. The pipe was broken and the gas flow caught fire. According to eyewitnesses, the torch was up to 50 meters high and visible from the settlements located over 10 kilometers away. - © Davide Monteleone/Contrasto



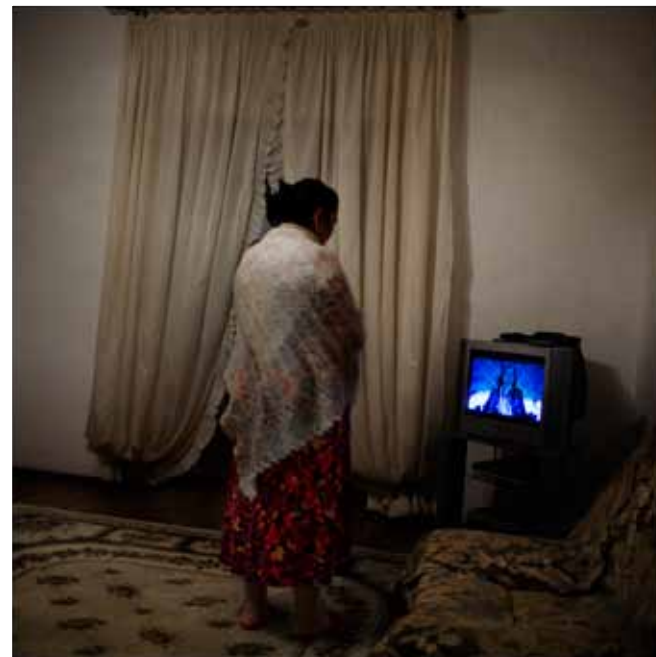
Abkhazia - 10/2008. Days of celebration of victory against Georgia in 1993 and celebration for recognition from Russia. Turkish Abkhazian diaspora in Sukhumi. - © Davide Monteleone/Contrasto



South Ossetia- 08|2008 - Russian Tank crossing the Rosky Tunnel. - © Davide Monteleone|Contrasto



South Ossetia- 08|2008 - Queuing for the bread in Tskhinvali. - © Davide Monteleone|Contrasto



Abkhazia - 10|2008. Days of celebration of victory against Georgia in 1993 and celebration for recognition from Russia. A boy and his father during a funeral. - © Davide Monteleone|Contrasto

Republic of Daghestan, 01|2010 - A bomb was triggered on January 12 at the 496th kilometer of the Mozdok-Kazimagomed gas main. The pipe was broken and the gas flow caught fire. According to eyewitnesses, the torch was up to 50 meters high and visible from the settlements located over 10 kilometers away. - © Davide Monteleone|Contrasto

Republic of Chechnya, 01|2010 - © Davide Monteleone|Contrasto

Abkhazia - 10|2008. Days of celebration of victory against Georgia in 1993 and celebration for recognition from Russia. Abandoned Georgian house around Gali, an area with majority of Georgian entities. - © Davide Monteleone|Contrasto

Republic of Daghestan, 01|2010 - Gubden, the village was part of antiterrorist special operation. Mujahideen group led by Magomedali Vagabov was declared the main target of the operation conducted by Dagestani apostates and Russian infidels, according to a puppet police spokesman. Magomedali Vagabov, also known as Commander Sayfullah of Gubden, is a native resident of the village. - © Davide Monteleone|Contrasto

Abkhazia - 10|2008. Days of celebration of victory against Georgia in 1993 and celebration for recognition from Russia. During a wedding in the countryside of Ochinchira. - © Davide Monteleone|Contrasto

Abkhazia - 10|2008. Days of celebration of victory against Georgia in 1993 and celebration for recognition from Russia. Kodory Valley. Abkhazian Militia Patrolling the Valley. - The Valley is just recently controlled by Abkhazian, in the area still some fight happen and Russian peace Keeper are supposed to control the area. - © Davide Monteleone|Contrasto

Republic of Chechnya, 01|2010 - Stari Atagi, during the celebration of the Dhikr (Arabic: "Remembrance [of God]", "pronouncement", "invocation"). An Islamic devotional act, typically involving the repetition of the names of God, supplications or formulas taken from hadith texts and verses of the Qur'an. - © Davide Monteleone|Contrasto



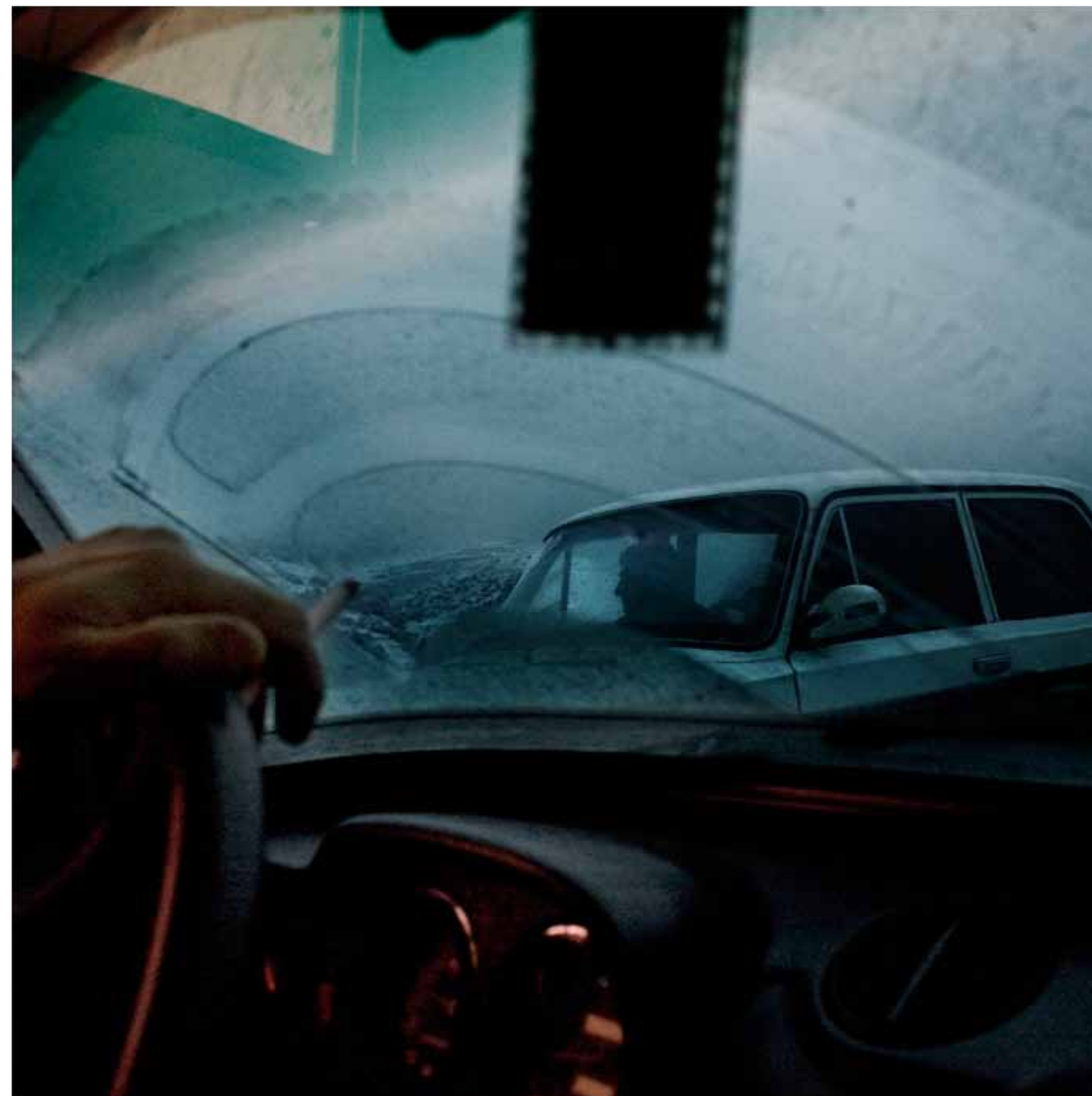
South Ossetia- 08|2008 - Coffin of death People inside a house. - © Davide Monteleone|Contrasto



Republic of Ingushetia, 01|2010 - Nazran, during a wedding. The tradition requires that the bride is brought to the house of the groom, in a room where guests gather men, alternating for three days. The bride is standing in a corner of the room, can not talk to anyone except through an other woman and after payment by the man of a sum of money that is kept in a small bag of white satin. - © Davide Monteleone|Contrasto



Daghestan, Russia - 2009. Ghimri, during a bull sacrifice. Cleansings are going on in the Dagestan settlements. After the settlement of GyMRI they started in Talghi and Gurbuki. The cleansings are carried out by local MVD and attached regular army units whose presence causes the allergy for the whole Caucasus. - © Davide Monteleone/Contrasto



Republic of Ingushetia, 01/2010 - Prigorodny district, During the summer and early autumn of 1992, there was a steady increase in the militancy of Ingush nationalists. At the same time, there was a steady increase in incidents of organized harassment, kidnapping and rape against Ingush inhabitants of North Ossetia by their Ossetian neighbors, police, security forces and militia. Ingush fighters marched to take control over Prigorodny district and on the night of October 30, 1992, open warfare broke out, which lasted until November 6. While Ingush militias were fighting the Ossetians in the district and on the outskirts of the North Ossetian capital Vladikavkaz, Ingush from elsewhere in North Ossetia were forcibly evicted and expelled from their homes. Russian interior forces actively participated in the fighting and sometimes led Ossetian fighters into battle. - © Davide Monteleone/Contrasto