ENG

VIKTORIIA DORR AND TOMAS HAZSLINSZKY

Hello from Uzhhorod, 2020

postcard, frame, desk lamp

All too often architectural practice loses sight of its humanistic raison d’etre, a danger that inevitably haunts an exhibition in which the structural twining of two buildings risks eclipsing the individual experiences of the people that use them, past, present, and future. Viktoriia Dorr and Tomas Hazslinszky’s Hello from Uzhhorod, queries this by transporting individual experience through the architectural portal of the exhibition. The work features two subjects/objects: a framed postcard image of Zinaida Ivanovna, formerly an employee of the Intourist Hotel Museum in Uzhhorod (according to Ms. Ivanovna, such museums were a convention throughout the Intoursit network); and a Czech modernist desk lamp, a standard piece of local flare distinguishing the hotel from its brethren across the Soviet world (such regionally specific decor was also a convention). Having photographed the lamp with Ms. Ivanovna in room 1320 in Uzhhorod (site of the former museum), the artists requested that the co-organizers install the lamp with the framed postcard in the analogous room 1320 in Khabarovsk.

It could be said that hotels are designed to give strangers a sense of belonging, but is there something suspicious when a stranger belongs too much? A lamp that tightly encapsulates the specific design inflections of Zakarpattia as a region; a postcard that tests the weight of a transported human memory—these implications seem clear. But perhaps these objects, like travelers in a new town seeking a fresh start, recount their past as they choose, encouraged by the familiarity of the space. By depicting an identical hotel, distant images smear together, insinuating the creation of a false memory, or at least one of uncertain quality. Few in Uzhhorod, apart from Ms. Ivanovna, still recall the hotel museum, and, although the analogous room is identical, our partners were unable to confirm or deny that any such hotel museum existed in Khabarovsk. Perched demurely on their shelf, the objects seem to ask us to choose between physical space or human memory, as we seek to locate truth in our past.