

## The magic of a post-Soviet beach in Georgia: A photo album by Katrin Shkaruba

### **osTraum: What was the idea behind this photo series?**

**Katrin:** Well, the idea was really heavy... On April 10, 2019 at about 10 in the morning I was attacked by a stranger who physically abused me and attempted to kill me. (Now this person is in prison, he is sentenced for 9 years). This terrible thing has happened on the beach that is photographed in this series. This beach is a really nice quiet place, it isn't affected by criminals or anything, it is located 150 meters walk from my house and I went there that morning to take some nature photographs. There were no people around me that morning, but I was not scared, this is a good quiet place as I have already mentioned above, you can meet crazy and aggressive people everywhere (not only at the post-soviet beaches:)), I was not lucky to meet one that morning. That individual had also broken my camera when I was trying to escape from him (at that time I thought that my life was completely broken like that camera). One month after the incident I was recovering, after that my friends presented me with a new camera (they wanted me to feel that life goes on).

I could not avoid visiting the beach: I have a daughter who was 2 years old at that time and she wanted to go to the beach during the summer season. You cannot explain to a little child why you don't want to go there and enjoy the sun and the sea. I started to take a new camera with me and just take photographs of strangers. Through the lens the place didn't look very sinister to me. I was trying to get rid of traumatic memories and immersed myself in a creative art process. Eventually I achieved the feeling that I'm strong and even this terrible thing had happened to me when I was taking photographs, I will continue to take photographs because I love it!

### **osTraum: What is so special about a post-Soviet beach, in your opinion? How is it different from a beach in Spain or Italy, for instance?**

**Katrin:** When I was a child I spent summer vacations with my parents on Soviet Black Sea summer resorts. I have good memories of that magical time. So I decided to recreate these memories. I've been to different beaches since my childhood (Miami, Cyprus, Italy, Greece, Mexico, etc) these beaches are beautiful, yet different. I really cannot tell if I consider post-Soviet beaches special because of my happy childhood nostalgic memories or because of their distinctiveness and Soviet kitsch style:) Perhaps both.

### **osTraum: In some pictures you apply special colors. What kind of mood or message did you want to transfer with these colors?**

**Katrin:** I wanted to achieve the feeling of magic. As a child from northwestern USSR I thought that the south was magical and spellbinding. Beauty of the sea and subtropical flora made me feel that I'm in a fairytale, even strangers who were around seemed magical. By using these bright and surreal colors I wanted to

describe a child feeling of exotic beauty, heightened emotions, a feeling of a special moment in a great place. You know that it will end but don't want to let it go.

**osTraum: If you like, could you tell us a bit about yourself?**

**Katrin:** I was born in Leningrad in 1983 to Estonian/Belarusian parents. Spent my childhood in Estonia, Russia and Belarus. As a child I loved to look at old photographs in velvet hardcover Soviet photo albums, these were photographs of my grandparents and parents, family friends, many people on the photos I didn't know, I was fascinated with the pictures. Always wanted to create my own 'photo album'. In 2002 graduated from a college with a diploma in programming engineering. Worked in IT for many years although always had a passion for visual arts. Finally in 2015 I started to learn photography and create my own photo album ;) My teacher was a talented fashion photographer Vladimir Lyovin with whom I worked for a year as a fashion photographer. Since then, I photographed for numerous charity and fundraising projects in Belarus. In 2018 I moved to Georgia with my husband and daughter due to my husband's work. At the moment I create my projects about life in Georgia, and occasionally shoot commercial photography as well.