

The project *Image Cities* by photographer Anastasia Samoylova represents the winning entry of the inaugural KBr Photo Award, launched by Fundación MAPFRE in 2021, and as a result it is the subject of a book and two exhibitions at the foundation's venues in Barcelona and Madrid in 2023.

The series represents an exhaustive body of work undertaken in numerous locations. It analyzes the integration of the photographic image into urban environments, an ever-increasing phenomenon. Samoylova's project began in Moscow and New York in 2021 and thanks to the award it grew to include Amsterdam, Paris, London, Brussels, Tokyo, Madrid and Barcelona, among others. This list of cities is based on the ranking compiled by the Globalization and World Cities Research Network at Loughborough University, the leading think tank on cities in the age of globalization.

Although Samoylova shows us many cities, they might all be just one, unified by their seriality and the repetition of public images. Thus, as if we were contemplating a portrait of a great global city, her depiction invites us to reflect on photography's role in creating the gap between the brand identity of cities and their everyday reality. Via her images, we journey through cities in the process of construction and transformation, in which the human figure is barely present. These are urban landscapes where cranes, scaffolding, billboards, and dummy façades accumulate, concealing buildings under construction, anticipating in their renderings the promises that await us behind them. Among all this large-scale advertising imagery, the human figure emerges as an endangered, minuscule species that has succumbed to the triumph of consumerism, speculation, and luxury. Men and women stroll indifferently, seemingly self-absorbed, in front of canvases and billboards dedicated to new luxury housing developments, advertisements for technology, jewelry, perfumes, and fashion in sequential *collages* of bright colors and sharp contours, games of reflection and compositions of successive shots.

An outstanding heir to the legacy of documentary photography, which she reinterprets from a contemporary point of view, Anastasia Samoylova, with her *Image Cities* confronts us with the most vibrant complex, and contradictory state of the life of cities.

Victoria del Val