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HHS! CONTENDER: EVI LEMBERGER

By [Stacy Oborn](#) on April 5, 2010 5:23 PM

Kahao Vargo, Vari, 2009 by Evi Lemberger

Photographer [Evi Lemberger](#) does several things very, very well. First, she has an uncanny sensitivity in rendering interiors as a kind of absent portrait, and then conversely in creating portraits that are capable about speaking on so much more than just the person photographed. Like someone I spent years envying in graduate school, Evi also finds or has the superhero power ability to attract beautifully lush color and natural light into every single shot.



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woman, Lopukhovo, 2009 by Evi Lemberger

The body of work that she submitted is (fantastically) entitled *Ein Nichtort, or: the Fairy Tale about the Galoshes of Fortune*. Documentary in nature, these photographs focus upon the lives of the inhabitants of the border region called Transcarpathia, an area in the Western Ukraine. Disputed territory for the past hundred years, it has "belonged" to seven different countries in the 20th century. The residents speak Hungarian, Ukrainian, Russian, Romanian, Polish, German and other regional languages or dialects, creating barriers to efficient and effective communication. The region also faces up to 90% unemployment and Evi writes that this region tends to be "dismissed by the governments of both Ukraine and Hungary." On her website Lemberger writes of the project:

On a social scale people live peacefully together, although having sometimes 16 different nationalities and numerous religions in one city. Interaction between the different nationalities depends on the multiculturalism in each place. Sometimes it happens that people live together but have almost no connection on a social level. One odd outcome of this multiculturalism is the setting of time. Depending on the inhabitants and the size of the village, the time is set to Hungarian or Ukrainian time.

Ein Nichtort literally means a "non-place," a phrase coined by French cultural theorist and ethnographer [Marc Augé](#). By his definition, a non-place was a location whose very state had become so transient that it could no longer be regarded as a place. Applying his theory to contemporary Parisian society, Augé found four precepts that embodied the principle of non-place, or *ein nichtort*:

(i) the paradoxical increase in the intensity of solitude brought about by the expansion of communications technologies; (ii) the strange recognition that the other is also an 'I'; (iii) the "non-place, the ambivalent space that has none of the familiar attributes of place - for instance, it incites no sense of belonging; (iv) the oblivion and aberration of memory.

While Lemberger's images are most certainly about real people in real spaces, they are also just as certainly about the precariousness of belonging and not belonging, about an inability to be classified and understood by an outside force or society. Seen in this context, these are not then just images of a people or culture living out of place or time, because the crux of the project is the fact that the space these people have inhabited have never had the luxury of a fixed place (understood as such), or even a fixed time (is it Ukrainian time or Hungarian time where these photographs are taken? Maybe it depends on whichever nationality the person asking the question might be). Neither are these images of people living on the margins, but rather of people living in the liminal, a no-man's land of disputed territory that no one seems very anxious to claim.

More of Evi Lemberger's work can be seen [on her website](#).

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