

Assigned Identity

___ is an ongoing photographic and multimedia exploration of the diasporic experience of a hybrid migrant in contemporary society. It reflects on the individual who moves in search of a better environment for life, education, and opportunity during an era defined by the internet, AI, social media, globalisation, and the political uncertainties of the Western world.

It is a generation of young people sprung into the world with no generational knowledge of it, nor the world knowing of them. They are identity-less individuals finding their place within it.

People migrating are often stripped of their true identity in search of a new one. They begin to look and explore without a clear foundation, without a base idea of self. In a metropolis, identity becomes not just personal but socially constructed, often without the representation of ethnic communities, as these might be too small or discouraged from forming.

Big cities often embrace and nurture apathy as if it were a virtue. This carelessness toward others can intensify a sense of alienation and dislocation from one's own identity. The search for identity from within is directly linked to the quality of external connections with the environment.

My personal journey began in Slovakia, a small Eastern European country shaped by its history as part of the former Eastern Bloc, later moving to London. In Eastern Europe, the Slavic identity is the dominant majority, yet it is frequently overlooked or ignored in the global context. We are white, yet not "Western enough." In the West, Eastern Europeans are often reduced to stereotypes: the strong accented villain, the perpetual builder, the van driver. These are the roles assigned to us, suggesting we are not fit for anything else, a profiling that is usually difficult to escape.

Nations like mine lost much of their cultural heritage and memory under the totalitarian rule of communist regimes influenced by Soviet ideology until 1989. It is now up to our futures to search for a new cultural identity internationally. This state of flux is at the heart of *Assigned Identity*.

The project merges social documentary photography, gesture studies, portraiture, and symbolic imagery, shaped by a distinct grey, sterile, and raw aesthetic often associated with Eastern Europe.

This project speaks directly to those living in the diaspora, particularly from underrepresented Eastern European and Slavic backgrounds. Yet its themes of displacement, transformation, and the search for identity resonate far beyond this group. It speaks to people without cultural heritage or a clear idea of self, who are trying to make sense of who they are, and it embraces anyone who has ever faced a change of environment.

___ Written by Rene Lazovy

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