



Below One of the few times I've wished for colour film is to show the beautiful blue sky above the old church, on the left, now under restoration. For me, this street is a scene straight out of a di Chirico painting, with only the rhinoceros missing

film was never apparent with natural forms. In preparation for photographing Moscow, I took shots of San Francisco every day, learning how the camera sees city spaces – even though each city has its own spatial aspects. By the time I arrived in Moscow, I felt prepared: the Linhof had become a natural extension to my hands and eyes.

The baroque procedure of buying film in Moscow began immediately. Anywhere else it would seem a pedestrian enough pursuit, but nothing in Moscow is done simply. I found myself on a grand boulevard waiting with my friend, Victor Pushkin, who had arranged, somehow, to get dozens of rolls of 120mm Tri-X from a stranger, at half the price I would find in a camera store. After an anxious wait,

a sweating fellow arrived with a brown bag in his hand. I have always been rigorously careful about storing my light sensitive materials, and yet here I was on the streets of Moscow giving money to a man for a bag of film that might have seen the back of a yak in Kazakhstan in desert temperatures for all I knew.

Giving up control is, for me, both the most difficult and the most rewarding thing about spending time in Moscow. I never photograph cityscapes just to show the beautiful or the ugly, nor to push a seeming political agenda – I take pictures simply to show. All of my images are handheld, and the editing process is very painful. Slowly I must again apply critical thought, and attempt to remove myself from my visual affections and prejudices. One of the

Left A graceful giraffe strolling with one of Stalin's skyscrapers as a backdrop, the visitors appear to be in a cage. I was first attracted to the Moscow Zoo because of the beautiful photographs by Rodchenko

Right Moscow is very pedestrian friendly, with a marvellous Metro system and passageways under streets to allow safe crossing – all essential, given that drivers seem to ignore pedestrians entirely

hardest things is trying to forget a much-loved image and assess the remaining pictures to see what kind of a story is being told.

Even for those of us fortunate enough to live in interesting and photogenic capitals, the truth in what we see every day is still miles away from the Eiffel Towers, Golden Gate Bridges and Chrysler Buildings we see on postcards. When we go out in the morning, we repeatedly see the same inconsequential details: a cracked wall, the happenstance of a rare and surprisingly lyrical light falling on something. I have tried to show Moscow as a longtime resident might see it, at once fascinated, repulsed and accepting. As city populations grow they remain fascinating places to photograph, laboratories of the living with their various successful solutions to urban growth. I love them deeply. ○

