

Sergio Grande
Via Roccaforte, 24 – 10139 Torino - Italy
Phone: +39 011 6993205
Mobile: +39 339 4646769
e-mail: sergio.grande72@gmail.com
website: www.sergiogrande.it

UB Underground

The lives you do not see, or nobody wants to see, do not exist. Mutes like the snow and dark as the path of the night rats, they slide along the peripheral streets, they lower in the underground tunnels looking for protection, a shelter. Also in Ulaan Baatar, as anywhere in the world, those who cannot find their place in the consumption society is forced to follow, to run after a space for existing, a portion of land where to live. The capitalist idea is a guillotine that leaves no way out: “I have money, therefore I am” would say Descartes observing the contemporary society. For those whose living is not legitimated by a sufficient amount of money, the only opportunity left is to occupy abandoned and refused by the rich society, the places where nobody would even think about living. The Mongolian winters reach 30°C below zero and wintertime is a sand storm that cuts the skin and blocks breathing. This, the narrow underground spaces of the town where the large city heating ducts are located (the only “public” heating source during the freezing winters) transform in shelters, in alcoves, for the “street people” of UB. The only revenue source for these persons is reselling plastic bottles and cans found in the city waste dumps. Forgotten like somebody wants to remind, with their white bags full of bottles, they wander like ghosts in the dusty streets of Ulaan Baatar. Then, as if they belonged to an underground world, they go back to their “holes”, in their dark tunnels, sheltering in the shadow of a society that prefers not to look, a society that prefers turning the sight away to avoid making questions to itself and giving answers.



In a country of two millions and five hundred people, the majority of them living in the Ulaan Baatar, the homeless conditions is a big problem for the Mongolian government. Especially in the suburbs, the sidewalks are the “homes” of homeless.



An insurmountable barrier wall keep off these people from mongolian society: their help callings, their voices of protest are ignored from a government who consider them a problem to avoid.



I love New York. Tightly in hand, this bag is a hypothesis of future, a hope of redemption for the people living in this place.



The “Gher Districts” are the slums of Ulaan Baatar made by tents and crumbling wooden and metal sheets houses. In this place the social decay is a huge problem.



Not all people have a tent or house where they can live in. Many of them must live in the street or in an underground shelter. These men are coming back to their underground “home”.



A manhole in the middle of the road brings to a tiny underground place where urban water pipeline passes through.



These underground shelters are the “homes” for those people.



The water pipeline for urban heating is the one and only source of heating that keeps alive these people during the mongolian harsh winter.



Rather than an idea of freedom, the colour of the sky is a heavy stone that hangs these people, who forcing them to live in an underground home.



Like a dip down to the hell, this man is coming down to his home.



In this tiny underground place more than three people live. The place is very tight, claustrophobic, dirty and unhealthy.



The street seems to be a symmetrical plane between the bright world of upstairs and the underground universe of darkness. Those are the two mongolian faces that have no wish to look each other or lend a hand to poor people.



This man is looking for something good to collect and resell in a public waste bin.



In a building site finding a cleaner and comfortable shelter is easier. Unfortunately this place is not accessible.



Those people walk all day long in the suburbs area looking for can and plastic bottles to resell them: this is a new way of recycling.



The relationship with “surfaced dwellers” is not always easy, but the backyards are good places where they can collect the stuff. For that reason the men search carefully the courts.



This man is carrying on his shoulders his bag like the heavy load of his misery world.



At lunch time these people come back home. The underground world is a dark place that nobody would like to see: those men hidden under the floor, seem they don't belong to mongolian society that doesn't want to recognize them.



This dark place is a metaphor of the social condition wherein these men are forced to live. There's not any authorities who has reintegration and rescue programs for them.



They eat, they sleep in a tight place: an apparent normality regulates the rhythms of these underground lives.



In the underground world the sounds play deep and sinister: the roar of cars, the squeak of the rats, the swish of water seem creatures coming from hell to break the sleep, to sign a poltergeist.



The business with Chinese men, the huge sum of money they earn by mineral mines are more important than welfare state. The widespread corruption and the privat interests make sink down the welfare state in to the bottom of the government agenda.



Coming out from the darkness is a rebirth, daily hope act. Outside, the shining town seems it doesn't see, seems it doesn't realize that.



The work starts again. It's time to walk again to search the road like looking for a new destiny, a new solution of life that seems to be still far from dark burrow and very far from indifferent UB streets.