

THE REAL PEOPLE WENT AWAY

“The real people went away” is a series of digital images made from rolls of exposed photographic film that the artist received from a friend. Gjeloshi began by testing the film on an old machine for viewing 35mm negatives. The exposures that he discovered were veiled in mystery as they arrived without any context or information: dark nuns walking in the snow, people walking through apocalyptic, crater-filled landscapes, bodies frozen in mystical gestures... He photographed the negatives on his smartphone and used an application to overlay another negative filter, to create a hybrid, positive image saturated in cyan blue. Using this unconventional method to develop, or rather convert, the images digitally, the artist produced a charged, new atmosphere that emphasizes their ethereal and phantom-like presence. Gjeloshi recognized that the images were taken in Shkodër, his hometown, and — without a doubt — after the 1990s, as Hoxha’s regime completely forbade the practice of religion as of 1967. Until the end of the regime, the churches in Shkodër were either destroyed or repurposed into things like a puppet theater or sports palace. Religious observance persisted in private. In the 1990s, it resumed as a communal, public practice and was supported by international aid from the Catholic Church and other missions that poured in when Albania’s borders re-opened.

(Text by Amy Zion)