

Summary

PATRYCJA CEMBRZYŃSKA / Vladimir Putin. The iconography of power

Vladimir Putin is both a political leader and the biggest celebrity in Russia. Putin memorabilia such as vodka “Putinka”, chocolate Putin figures, T-shirts with the portrait of Russia’s President etc. flood the market and sell well. His politics of authoritarian governance is fortified by kitsch which appeals to low-brow tastes but nonetheless helps to consolidate his power. How do pictures strengthen or unmask the myth of Russia’s leader as a statesman? How is the Putin phenomenon bound up in the political economy of spectacle? The essay presents an iconographic analysis of Putin’s portraits by Nikas Safronov, Dmitri Vruble & Viktorya Timofeyeva, and the Blue Noses Group. It investigates anti-Putin posters and the visual presence of Putin on magazine covers showing the President of Russia as Hitler, one of Stalin’s confidants, Napoleon, Joker, the Winter King/Queen and Tsarina Putina. By going beyond art historical analysis into pop culture studies, the essay draws attention to political caricatures and the ways of “queering” Putin.