

ARCHITECTURE AT THE END OF THE EARTH

Photographing the Russian North

WILLIAM CRAFT BRUMFIELD



“In this combination of travelogue, diary, and history, William Craft Brumfield brings to life a northern territory... With luminous photographic skill and deft description, he has rediscovered and represented a vast cultural stratum of ecclesiastical architecture, iconostases, cemeteries, and simple wooden huts.”

—**John E. Bowlt**, author of *Moscow & St. Petersburg 1900–1920: Art, Life & Culture of the Russian Silver Age*

“It’s an adventure to journey with Brumfield—by text and image—and discover the astounding variety and quality of the extant architecture heritage in this sometimes nearly trackless zone. As he scans the frozen horizon for onion domes, we owe him immensely for his tireless labors.” —**John Beldon Scott**, author of *Architecture for the Shroud: Relic and Ritual in Turin*

Carpeted in boreal forests, dotted with lakes, cut by rivers, and straddling the Arctic Circle, the region surrounding the White Sea, which is known as the Russian North, is sparsely populated and immensely isolated. It is also the

home to architectural marvels, as many of the original wooden and brick churches and homes in the region’s ancient villages and towns still stand. Featuring nearly 200 full color photographs of these beautiful centuries-old structures, *Architecture at the End of the Earth* is the most recent addition to William Craft Brumfield’s ongoing project to photographically document all aspects of Russian architecture.

The architectural masterpieces Brumfield photographed are diverse: they range from humble chapels to grand cathedrals, buildings that are either dilapidated or well cared for, and structures repurposed during the Soviet era. Brumfield is challenged by the immense difficulty of accessing the Russian North, and recounts traversing sketchy roads, crossing silt-clogged rivers on barges and ferries, improvising travel arrangements, being delayed by severe snowstorms, and seeing the region from the air aboard the small planes he needs to reach remote areas.

These buildings, some of which lie in near ruin, are at constant risk due to local indifference and vandalism, a lack of maintenance funds, clumsy restorations, or changes in local and national priorities. Brumfield is concerned with their futures and hopes that the region’s beautiful and vulnerable achievements of master Russian carpenters will be preserved. *Architecture at the End of the Earth* is at once an art book, a travel guide, and a personal document about the discovery of this bleak but beautiful region of Russia that most readers will see here for the first time.



William Craft Brumfield is a Professor of Slavic Studies at Tulane University. Brumfield, who began photographing Russia in 1970, is the foremost authority in the West on Russian architecture. He is the author, editor, and photographer of numerous books, including *Lost Russia: Photographing the Ruins of Russian Architecture*, also published by Duke University Press. Brumfield is the recipient of a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship and was a Fellow at the National Humanities Center. In 2002 he was elected to the State Russian Academy of Architecture and Construction Sciences, and in 2006 he was elected to the Russian Academy of Fine Arts. He is also the 2014 recipient of the D. S. Likhachev Prize for Outstanding Contributions to the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage

of Russia. Brumfield’s photographs of Russian architecture have been exhibited at numerous galleries and museums and are part of the Image Collections at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C.

256 pages

\$39.95 hardcover, ISBN: 978-0-8223-5906-7

Publication Date: June 12, 2015

Publicity Contact: Laura Sell

lsell@dukeupress.edu or 919-687-3639

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS