

AROUND THE PORTRAIT

We should first examine and understand the photographic practice of Ivan Petrović through a number of his other creative activities and researches when considering the complexities of the photographic medium. Namely, in the past decade and a half Petrović has worked intensively on art production, but also in the areas of education, theoretical interpretations and examining of photographic image from various aspects of its status, function, and meaning in historical and contemporary contexts. What should also be mentioned is his truly dedicated engagement in collecting, organizing and preserving of various photographic materials, which he has been doing for several years with his colleague Mihailo Vasiljević, within the Centre for Photography activities. Due to his interest in conceptual art, avant-garde and documentary film, professional and amateur photography and archival photo material, Petrović develops his photographic work in a broader perspective, seeing multiple uses of photography, its versatility and reception, both in the contexts of art and in the circumstances where it is produced as a mass social / communicational practice. In this respect, the dominant thematic and problematic contents of Petrović's photographic series, rounded up by the author's long years of research, or conceived as a work in progress, are issues of heritage and memory, but also of forgetting and discontinuity in the processes of cultural development and, within this framework, the relations of individual memories and collective history, as well as the role of photography as a document, art object and historical artifact in the constantly transforming socio-political, cultural and technological circumstances.

Ivan Petrović very often approaches his own photographic production as archives, and treats individual photographs or photographs from certain series as material for further reinterpretation, recontextualization and introduction to new narratives and semantic entities. His method of work in such procedures is to select first, and later, as his own curator, to intentionally connect them within the frameworks of various exhibition formats. Thus, the current exhibition *Everything is Good* is also articulated through the existing photographic projects *Documents* and *Night Promenades* that, placed together, juxtapose two periods in his work, but also two approaches – conceptual and technical-technological, as well as various thematic interests in the environments to which he belongs and which he deals with. The *Documents* project, conceived as a compilation of photographic works from 12 series created in the period 1997 to 2009, represents Petrović's continual questioning of photography as a testimony that in the shrewd observation

and recording of the phenomena of everyday life in Serbia brings a specific author's statement about the complexities of the overhanging historical events and the transitional processes through which our society has been passing. On the other hand, Night Promenades is a series of digital photographic records of portraits during nights out and promenade walks, which the artist first recorded in his native Kruševac. His intention in this case is in the initial idea to place the focus on the phenomenon of "dressing" and physical appearances of the people portrayed in groups or individually, which further leads to various conclusions about cultural and subcultural identities in the public space. Carried out as a multiyear research, Night Promenades takes the character of a sort of socio-anthropological visual study that reveals, in the protagonists' appearances, much more details about social dynamics and collective behavior, interpersonal relations and the psychology of the group, about the spaces of manifestation of sociability, the spirit and atmosphere of the community in small urban environments.

Although the photographs from the two mentioned projects joined in one whole – Everything is Good – presented at the Artget Gallery treat the human figure in various contexts, Ivan Petrović does not consider them portrait photographs. Primarily, he defines them as photographs that put a human being and the "personal history of the individual versus official statistics" in the centre of attention. Placed in a new thematic framework, the exhibited photographs are just starting points for the meanings that will be generated within the entirety of their relationships. New relations have been established among them through stories and situations in which they were created in parallel with the contexts and narratives of historical events and flows. No matter to what extent the selected photographs – reports, fragments from small ordinary lives and direct everyday environments – remain in the domain of personal testimonies, Petrović's intervention makes them relevant factors in creating a picture of social reality and its collective memory.

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OKO PORTRETA

Autorsku, fotografsku praksu Ivana Petrovića najpre treba razmatrati i razumevati kroz niz drugih umetnikovih delovanja i istraživanja kada je reč o kompleksnosti fotografskog medija. Naime, Petrovićev rad poslednju deceniju i po intenzivno se razvija u polju umetničke produkcije, ali isto tako i u domenu edukacije, teorijskih interpretacija i proučavanja fotografske slike sa različitih aspekata njenog statusa, funkcije, značenja u istorijskim i savremenim kontekstima. Svakako treba pomenuti i njegov vrlo posvećen angažman u prikupljanju, sistematizaciji i čuvanju različitih fotografskih materijala koji već nekoliko godina unazad zajedno sa kolegom Mihailom Vasiljevićem sprovodi kroz aktivnosti Centra za fotografiju. Petrovićeva interesovanja za konceptualnu umetnost, avangardni i dokumentarni film, profesionalnu i amatersku fotografsku delatnost i arhivsku fotografsku građu, razvijaće njegov fotografski rad u široj perspektivi sagledavanja mnogostrukih upotreba, višeznačnosti i recepcije fotografije kako u umetničkim kontekstima tako i u okolnostima u kojima se proizvodi kao masovna društvena/ komunikacijska praksa. U tom smislu dominantni tematski i problemski sadržaji Petrovićevih fotografskih serijala koji su zaokruženi autorovim dugogodišnjim istraživanjima ili koncipirani kao rad u nastajanju jesu pitanja nasleđa i pamćenja, ali i zaboravljanja i diskontinuiteta u procesima kulturnog razvoja, u okviru čega su i odnosi individualnih sećanja i kolektivne istorije, kao i uloga fotografije kao dokumenta, umetničkog predmeta i istorijskog artefakta unutar konstanto transformišućih sociopolitičkih, kulturoloških i tehnoloških prilika.

Ivan Petrović sopstvenoj fotografskoj produkciji vrlo često pristupa kao arhivi, pri čemu pojedinačne fotografije ili fotografije iz određenih serijala tretira kao materijal za dalje reinterpretacije, rekontekstualizacije i uvod u nove narativne i značenjske celine. Njegove metode rada u ovakvim postupcima jesu najpre selekcija, kao i naknadna auto-kustoska namenska povezivanja u okviru različitih izlagačkih formata. Tako se i aktuelna izložba *Cee je dobro* artikuliše kroz postojeće foto-projekte *Dokumenti* i *Noćne promenade* koji svojim susticanjem sučeljavaju ne samo dva perioda u njegovom radu već i dva pristupa - idejni i tehničko-tehnološki, kao i različita tematska interesovanja za okruženja kojima pripada i kojima se bavi. Projekat *Dokumenti* koncipiran kao kompilacija fotografskih radova iz 12 serija koje nastaju od 1997. do 2009. godine, predstavlja Petrovićevo kontinuirano propitivanje fotografije kao svedočanstva što u pronicljivom uočavanju i registrovanju pojava svakodnevnog života u Srbiji donosi specifičan autorski iskaz o složenostima natkriljujućih istorijskih zbivanja i tranzicionih procesa kroz koje je prolazilo ili u kojima se još uvek nalazi naše društvo. *Noćne promenade* sa druge strane čini serija digitalnih foto-zapisa portretisanih ljudi tokom večernjih izlazaka i šetnji korzoom, koje umetnik najpre beleži u

rodnom Kruševcu. Njegova intencija u ovom slučaju jeste u početnoj ideji da fokus stavi na fenomen „odevanja“ i fizičkog izgleda portretisanih u grupama i pojedinačno, a dalje dovodi do izvođenja različitih zaključaka o kulturnim i supkulturnim identitetima u javnom prostoru. Realizovane kao višegodišnje istraživanje, *Noćne promenade* dobijaju karakter svojevrsne socio-antropološke vizuelne studije koja u pojavnostima protagonista otkriva mnogo više pojedinosti o društvenim dinamikama i kolektivnim ponašanjima, interpersonalnim relacijama i psihologiji grupe, prostorima manifestovanja društvenosti, duhu i atmosferi zajednice u malim urbanim sredinama.

Iako fotografije iz dva pomenuta projekta povezane u zajedničku celinu *Cee je dobro* predstavljenu u Galeriji Artget tretiraju ljudski lik u različitim kontekstima, Ivan Petrović ih ne posmatra kao portretne fotografije. Pre svega, on ih definiše kao fotografije koje u centar pažnje stavljaju čoveka i „ličnu istoriju pojedinca nasuprot zvanične statistike“. Uvedene u nov tematski okvir, izložene fotografije su tek polazišta za značenja koja će se generisati unutar celine njihovih odnosa. Među njima se uspostavljaju novi relacijski odnosi kroz priče i situacije u kojima su nastajale paralelno sa kontekstima i narativima istorijskih događanja i tokova. Koliko god prikazima, fragmentima iz malih, običnih života i neposrednih svakodnevnih okruženja ostajale u domenu ličnih svedočenja, izabrane fotografije Petrovićevom intervencijom postaju relevantni činioци u građenju slike jedne društvene stvarnosti i njenog kolektivnog pamćenja.