

## BUILDING

*The museum is a colossal mirror in which man, contemplating himself in all his aspects, and finding himself literally an object of admiration, abandons himself to the ecstasy expressed in all art journals.*<sup>1</sup>

Georges Bataille

The artistic practice of Ivan Petrović is the result of a comprehensive and very dedicated exploration of the photographic medium. From the position of artist/author, his engagement is turned towards the archival function of photography and its documentary character, as well as the strategies that translate the archival photographs as non-artistic objects into an exhibition context (and, thus, the Artworld<sup>2</sup>), granting them the status of *objet(s) d'art*.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, his position as author is twofold – he either takes and selects his own photographs, or discovers various photographic materials and decides on their selection. In both cases, he creates series of images, which, during the selection process, and then on the occasion of particular exhibitions, become further re-contextualized. At the same time, Ivan Petrović is committed to the research and articulation of the social function, historical development and significance of photography in local circumstances. In addition to the nature of the photographic medium, he also reflects on the functioning, purpose and development of photography and its status in the social and institutional art context, using this part of his practice to ask the question about the role and significance of photography in the conditions of the (dis)continuity of cultural heritage.<sup>4</sup> His position of author cannot be separated from that of curator/art historian/anthropologist; it is from both positions that Ivan Petrović is present as a photographer, since they mutually form the main line of the artist's development of thought and action within the heterogeneous

---

<sup>1</sup> Georges Bataille, "Museum", *Contemporary Art and Museum. Criticism of Political Economy in Art*, ed. J. Stojanović, Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, 2013, p. 10

<sup>2</sup> The world of art here refers to the term *Artworld*, which Arthur C. Danto introduced providing one of the first definitions of the art institution. More in: Arthur C. Danto, "The Artworld", *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 61, Issue 19, 1964, p. 571-584

<sup>3</sup> More about this sector of Ivan Petrović's artistic practice in: Mihailo Vasiljević, "Documents from the Archive of Ivan Petrović", *Annual Catalogue of the Museum of Contemporary Art - 2009*, ed. D. Sretenović, Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, 2010

<sup>4</sup> More about Ivan Petrović's activities in this field in: Ivan Petrović, "An Archive of Photo Stores", *Proceedings from the Expert Meeting of Photodocuments in Požega*, ed. S. Varagić Petrović, M. Karić, Independent Film Centre FILMART, Požega, 2013, pp. 65-87; Maida Gruden, "ФОТО", *Ivan Petrović. Фомо* (cat.), Studentski Grad Cultural Centre, Belgrade, 2012

field of photography in the context of its past and present. Without an insight into the aforementioned positions, it is not possible to begin interpreting Petrović's most recent photographic elaborations.

In June 2008, Ivan Petrović was commissioned by the magazine *Forum* to document the then initiated reconstruction of the building of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade. Owing to various circumstances, his photographic work with regard to this building continued, with some interruptions, until September 2012<sup>5</sup>, going beyond the originally commissioned documentary purpose and evolving into an independent art project. During this several-year-long project, the author identified three phases within which the approach to recording the reconstruction of the Museum building was gradually contextualized:

- 1) The creation of the work, a series of photographs *Reconstruction*, showing scenes and details of the interaction between the builders and the museum construction site, with several presentations of the museum interior in reconstruction;
- 2) The annulment of the first constitutively representational phase with the symbolic gesture of undoing the works from the series *Reconstruction*, by participating in the non-exhibition entitled *What happened to the Museum of Contemporary Art?* during the summer of 2012, when one of the works, with a suspended non-representational content, in the form of a photo-wallpaper, was exhibited in the museum building that was still in the state of reconstruction;
- 3) The turning away from the problematization of the socio-institutional connotation and importance of the Museum of Contemporary Art, and focusing on the aesthetic characteristics of its interior seen from the position of the subjective experience of this specific modernist setting.<sup>6</sup>

The series of photographs entitled *Building* was produced during the final stage of Petrović's engagement with the museum space, thus concluding his intense photographic reflection on the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade. The photographs belonging to this series were taken with the analogue medium format camera under the conditions of night shooting outdoors and indoors with artificial light located in the museum's courtyard. Each photographic image was the result of long exposure, in some cases lasting up to 45 minutes, thus producing a stage-like atmosphere in the photographic representations of

---

<sup>5</sup> The artist gave a detailed description of his experiences during his years of photographic work in the building of the Museum of Contemporary Art in: "Some Reflections on the Works 'Reconstruction' and 'The Building'", written on the occasion of the exhibition *The Building* at the City Gallery in Požega.

<sup>6</sup> Compare with: Ivan Petrović, *Op. cit.*

the interior of the building in a nocturnal setting. The photographs the author chose for exhibition at the City Gallery in Požega were printed as large formats and displayed so as to adjust to the given gallery space.

Although monumental, both in their physical and their aesthetic appearance, as well as in the experience they stimulate, the photographs from the series *The Building* do not aim for a representational character. The aforementioned phases of the photographic recording of this space, accurately identified and outlined as such by the author himself, as well as his choice of a loosely specified term – *building*, with which he refers to this collection of photographic works about the very specific building of the Museum of Contemporary Art, point to a dilemma from which this series of photographs actually emerges: *In what way and whether or not one should present a space deprived of its function, i.e. identity?* Petrović found the answer to this problem in refraining from the documentary approach to photographing the building, as well as in overcoming the need to respond to the local circumstances, which excluded the Museum of Contemporary Art as an institution from the domain of public social and cultural significance. Primarily engaged in the visual language of architecture inside and outside the museum edifice devoid of human presence, and already familiar with it from various ‘objective’ positions, he then turned towards discovering his private, subjective relation to this building. In an almost intimate situation of discovering this space at night – indirectly, through the photographic camera and directly, through a series of mini-performances the artist enacted simultaneously with the process of photographic exposure – he created the visual elaborations, or rather, highly aestheticized scenes, that epitomize the artist’s experience of this space. Consciously rejecting the above-mentioned considerations with regard to the given space, as well as the engaged approach and the intention to photographically record the museum building, a process such as creating the images that belong to the series *Building* at the same time functions as *a taking pleasure in* the author’s act of creation – a self-contained act that takes place between the photographic object-building and the subject-author, which has hitherto not been predominant in the practice of Ivan Petrović.<sup>7</sup>

Elaborating on Mihailo Vasiljević’s previous interpretation of Petrović’s work, which recognizes the *documentary manner* of the latter’s photographic position, according to which, *although they are documents of his visual experience, the presented photographs,*

---

<sup>7</sup> The term *take pleasure* here is taken from the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan and his interpretation of the concept of *narcissism of authorship*, which was introduced by art historian Bradford R. Collins in: Bradford R. Collins, “The Dialectics of Desire, the Narcissism of Authorship: A Male Interpretation of the Psychological Origins of Manet’s Bar”, *12 Views of Manet’s Bar*, ed. B. R. Collins, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1996, p. 115-141

by a specific act of selection, become a random expression of his archive<sup>8</sup>, this series of photographs *Building* should also be seen as a private archive in the making. The subject of his archive is not predetermined; it results from the events that took place in the building of the Museum of Contemporary Art. Since it is not representational in character, this archive does not aim at storing knowledge nor collecting comprehensive historical documents; it transfers and promotes the experience of space, which is, above all, an intimate experience for Ivan Petrović; and then, by being exposed in a gallery, it becomes a temporal testimony of the past, which projects the suspended identity of the edifice and its incapacity to fulfill its purpose, reducing it to the level of an obliterated/suppressed image. By discovering the space of the building through the photographic process of creating his images, Petrović is not only honouring this building with a visual presence in the public space from which it was expelled, but also transforming the museum building as a site of suspended identity into a space of imagination, which offers new ways of thinking and narratives about the past, implied in the relations that continue to reveal themselves without hindrance in this *depleted and neglected, monumental and eerie, beautiful and terrifying space*<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>8</sup> Mihailo Vasiljević, *Op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> The descriptions of the building are taken from the artist's previously quoted text.

## ZGRADA

*Muzej je kolosalno ogledalo u kome se čovek ogleda u svim svojim licima, da bi se našao doslovno zavodljiv i prepustio zanosu koji zagovaraju svi umetnički časopisi.*<sup>10</sup>

Ž. Bataj

Umetnička praksa Ivana Petrovića proističe iz višeznačnog i veoma posvećenog istraživanja fotografskog medija. Sa pozicije umetnika/autora njegovo bavljenje okrenuto je arhivskoj funkciji fotografije i njenom dokumentarnom karakteru, te strategijama koje arhivsku fotografiju kao neumetnički predmet prevode u izložbeni kontekst (a time i u svet umetnosti<sup>11</sup>), dajući im tako status umetničkog artefakta.<sup>12</sup> U ovom smislu, njegova pozicija je dvostruko autorska – on stvara i odabira fotografije ili ih pronalazi i selektuje, u oba slučaja kreirajući serije fotografija koje tokom procesa selekcije, a zatim i u određenoj izložbenoj situaciji bivaju dalje rekontekstualizovane. Sa druge strane, Ivan Petrović posvećen je istraživanju i artikulaciji društvene funkcije i istorijskog razvoja i značaja fotografije u lokalnim okolnostima. Podjednako kao i prirodom fotografskog medija, on razmatra delovanje, funkciju i razvoj fotografije i njenog statusa u socijalnom i institucionalno-umetničkom kontekstu, postavljajući ovim segmentom svoga delovanja pitanje o ulozi i značaju fotografije u uslovima (dis)kontinuiteta kulturnog nasleđa.<sup>13</sup> Prva autorska i druga kustosko-istoričarsko-antropološka pozicija sa koje Ivan Petrović nastupa kao fotograf ne mogu se odvojiti budući da zajedno čine glavnu liniju kojom se razvija umetnikovo razmišljanje i delovanje u okviru heterogenog polja fotografije u kontekstu

---

<sup>10</sup> Žorž Bataj, „Muzej“, *Savremena umetnost i muzej. Kritika političke ekonomije umetnosti*, ur. J. Stojanović, Muzej savremene umetnosti, Beograd 2013, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Svet umetnosti ovde se odnosi na pojam *Artworld* koji Arthur C. Danto uvodi dajući jednu od prvih definicija intitucije umetnosti. Više u: Arthur C. Danto, „The Artworld“, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 61, Issue 19, 1964, 571-584.

<sup>12</sup> O ovom segmentu umetničke prakse Ivana Petrovića više u: Mihailo Vasiljević, „Dokumenti iz arhive Ivana Petrovića“, *Godišnji katalog 2009. Salon Muzeja savremene umetnosti*, ur. D. Sretenović, Muzej savremene umetnosti, Beograd 2010.

<sup>13</sup> O delovanju Ivana Petrovića u ovom polju više u: Ivan Petrović, „Arhiv fotografskih radnji“, *Zbornik stručnog skupa Fotodokumenti Požega*, ur. S. Petrović Varagić, M. Karić, Nezavisni filmski centar Filmart, Požega 2013, 65-87; Maida Gruden, „ФОТО“, *Ivan Petrović. Фомо* (kat.), Dom kulture Studentski grad, Beograd 2012.

njene prošlosti i savremenosti. Bez uvida u navedene pozicije nije moguće započeti interpretaciju Petrovićevih najnovijih fotografskih elaboracija.

Juna 2008. godine Ivan Petrović angažovan je da za potrebe časopisa *Forum* dokumentuje tada započetu rekonstrukciju zgrade Muzeja savremene umetnosti u Beogradu. Sticajem različitih okolnosti, njegov fotografski rad u vezi sa ovom zgradom nastavlja se sa prekidima do septembra 2012. godine,<sup>14</sup> prevazilazeći prvobitno naručenu dokumentacijsku intenciju, a razvijajući se u samostalni umetnički projekat. Tokom ovog višegodišnjeg projekta autor prepoznaje tri faze u okviru kojih se pristup snimanju rekonstrukcije zgrade Muzeja gradativno kontekstualizuje:

- 1) Nastanak rada/serije fotografije *Rekonstrukcija* koji prikazuje scene i detalje nastale iz interakcije građevinskih radnika i muzejskog gradilišta uz nekoliko prikaza muzejskog enterijera u rekonstrukciji;
- 2) Poništavanje prve konstitutivno-reprezentacijske faze simboličnim aktom poništavanja radova iz serije *Rekonstrukcija* nastupom u okviru akcije/neizložbe *Šta se dogodilo sa Muzejem savremene umetnosti?* tokom leta 2012. godine kada jedan od radova, sa intencijom suspendovaog nereprezentacijskog sadržaja, u formi foto-tapeta biva izložen u muzejskoj zgradi koja je još uvek u stanju rekonstrukcije;
- 3) Otklon od problematizacije društveno-institucionalnog značenja i značaja Muzeja savremene umetnosti i okretanje estetskim karakteristikama njegovog enterijera sagledanim iz pozicije subjektivnog doživljaja ovog specifičnog modernističkog ambijenta.<sup>15</sup>

Seriya fotografija *Zgrada* nastaje u poslednjoj fazi Petrovićevog bavljenja muzejskim prostorom, time zaključujući njegovo intenzivno fotografsko promišljanje Muzeja savremene umetnosti u Beogradu. Fotografije koje pripadaju ovoj seriji nastale su upotrebom analogne srednje formatne fotografske kamere u uslovima noćnog snimanja enterijera i eksterijera zgrade uz veštačko osvetljenje koje se nalazilo u muzejskom dvorištu. Svaki snimak nastajao je u dugoj ekspoziciji, pojedini snimci u vremenskom intervalu i do 45 minuta, tako provocirajući sceničnu atmosferu u fotografskim prikazima enterijera zgrade u noćnom ambijentu. Fotografije koje je autor izabrao da budu izložene

---

<sup>14</sup> Svoja iskustva tokom godina fotografskog rada u zgradi Muzeja savremene umetnosti detaljno opisuje umetnik u tekstu: "Neka razmišljanja o radovima *Rekonstrukcija* i *Zgrada*", nastalom namenski povodom izložbe *Zgrada* u Gradskoj galeriji u Požegi.

<sup>15</sup> Uporedi sa: Ivan Petrović, *Op. cit.*

u Gradskoj galeriji u Požegi izrađene su u velikim formatima i raspoređene prilagođeno zadatom galerijskom prostoru.

Iako monumentalne, kako u svojoj fizičkoj, tako i u estetskoj pojavnosti i doživljaju koji emituju, fotografije iz serije *Zgrada* ne pretenduju na reprezentacijski karakter. Ne samo na osnovu navedenih faza fotografskog snimanja ovog prostora koje precizno prepoznaje i skicira Ivan Petrović, već i na osnovu odabira nedovoljno određenog termina *zgrada* da označi ovaj skup fotografskih radova koji za predmet bavljenja imaju veoma specifičnu zgradu Muzeja savremene umetnosti, ističe se dilema iz koje se gradi data serija fotografija: *Na koji način i da li uopšte predstaviti prostor lišen svoje funkcije, odnosno identiteta?* Odgovor na ovaj problem Petrović nalazi u oslobađanju od dokumentarnog pristupa fotografskom beleženju zgrade, kao i prevazilaženju potrebe da odgovori na lokalne okolnosti koje Muzej savremene umetnosti kao instituciju brišu iz domena javnog društvenog i kulturnog značaja. Primarno zaokupljen vizuelnim jezikom arhitekture spoljašnjosti i unutrašnjosti muzejske zgrade bez ljudskog prisustva on se okreće otkrivanju privatnog, subjektivnog odnosa prema zgradi koju je već iz više različitih, „objektivnijih“ pozicija upoznao. U gotovo intimnoj situaciji otkrivanja ovog prostora tokom noći - posrednim putem preko fotografske kamere i neposredno kroz niz mini performansa koje umetnik izvodi dok se proces ekspozicije uporedo razvija - nastaju fotografske elaboracije koje u izrazito estetizovanim prizorima sažimaju umetnikov doživljaj ovog prostora. Svesno odbacujući pomenuta značenja vezana za dati prostor, a time i angažovani pristup u intenciji fotografskog snimanja muzejske zgrade, ovakav postupak nastanka fotografija koje pripadaju seriji *Zgrada* istovremeno funkcioniše i kao *uživanje* u autorskom činu stvaranja – samodovoljni akt koji se odvija između fotografskog objekta-zgrade i subjekta-autora, a koji do sada nije dominantno prisutan u praksi Ivana Petrovića.<sup>16</sup>

Nadovezujući se na prethodnu interpretaciju Petrovićevog rada Mihaila Vasiljevića koja prepoznaje *dokumentarni manir* njegove fotografske pozicije u kojoj *iako dokumenti njegovog vizuelnog iskustva, predstavljene fotografije specifičnim činom izbora postaju nestalan medij njegove arhive*<sup>17</sup>, seriju fotografija *Zgrada* trebalo bi tretirati i kao jedan privatni arhiv u nastajanju. Predmet njegovog arhiviranja nije fiksiran, već proističe iz događaja koji su se odvijali u zgradi Muzeja savremene umetnosti. Budući da nije reprezentacijski u svojoj intenciji, ovaj arhiv za cilj nema skladištenje znanja niti sakupljanje celovitih istorijskih dokumenata – on prenosi i prosleđuje iskustvo prostora koje je u prvom

---

<sup>16</sup> Pojam *uživanja* ovde se preuzima iz teorije psihoanalize Žaka Lakana i njegove interpretacije u pojmu *narcizma autorstva* koji uvodi istoričar umetnosti Bradford R. Collins u: Bradford R. Collins, „The Dialectics of Desire, the Narcissism of Authorship: A Male Interpretation of the Psychological Origins of Manet’s Bar“, *12 Views of Manet’s Bar*, ed. B. R. Collins, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1996, 115-141.

<sup>17</sup> Mihailo Vasiljević, *Op. cit.*

liniji intimno iskustvo Ivana Petrovića, a koje daljim izlaganjem u galeriji postaje temporalno svedočanstvo iz prošlosti koja u sebe projektuje nemogućnost ispunjenja namene ove zgrade suspendovanog identiteta svodeći je na nivo zaboravljene/potisnute slike. Otkrivanjem prostora zgrade kroz fotografski proces stvaranja njegovih slika Petrović ne samo da zgradi omogućava vizuelnu prisutnost u javnom prostoru iz koga je istisnuta, već i muzejsku zgradu kao mesto suspendovanog identiteta transformiše u prostor imaginacije koji nudi nove načine razmišljanja i naracija o prošlosti nagoveštenih u relacijama koje se u ovom *ispražnjenom i zapuštenom, monumentalnom i sablasnom, lepom i strašnom*<sup>18</sup> prostoru neometeno ostvaruju i u sadašnjosti.

---

<sup>18</sup> Opisi zgrade su preuzeti iz ranije citiranog umetnikovog teksta.