

ΦOTO

Ivan Petrović's exhibition ΦOTO attains its habitus in convergence of author's several year long explorations of the photographic medium, conducted in form of art practice, collection activity, penetrating study and tracing of its multi-layered social roles. The exhibition title itself, a prefix ΦOTO, evokes association of a phenomenon of photographer's shops – a reflective consideration of which represents the basis of this artistic undertaking by Ivan Petrović, and where it appeared as a recognisable sign display. By bringing into the focus past and present function, role and status of photography ateliers, their transformations and gradual disappearance, the artist creates a number of perspectives that produce an insight into economic and technological changes that shape the social horizon, into shifts in cultural characteristics and habits of local environment, into the issues of awareness of the past and its historicisation, in which photography performs an important role, both as an archive document and as a means of construction of personal and collective memory. The exhibition ΦOTO shapes the scope for consideration by the constellation of photographic works, created by Ivan Petrović from 2009 to present, which involve scenes from photography ateliers, their interiors and exteriors, photo-advertisements and photo-equipment recorded in a studio, while the staging of the exhibition was conceptually built by means of photo wallpaper, framed photographs, photographs placed immediately onto the wall, and accompanied by two objects - unopened boxes of black and white photo paper, whose expiry date had passed.

Since their emergence in 19th century, photography ateliers have performed a service function, represented an important social dynamics unit and, seen from the economic perspective, in developed countries rapidly became a means of generous income for their owners. The emergence of photography ateliers on global level was associated to the rise of the petty and middle bourgeoisie, who found in photography a new means of self-representation, suitable for economic and ideological circumstances of the time marked by dissolution of feudal and establishment of capitalist system, a transition from agrarian and small scale manufacturing to industrial production¹. At that time, photographers' production seriously jeopardised the work of portrait miniature painters, many of whom it denied any possibility of further existence. Precisely this transformation and closure of present day photography ateliers, testifies to a new shift towards a different social, cultural and production paradigm, marked by digitalisation and

¹ Gisele Freund, *Photography and society*, Grafički zavod Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1981.

more rapid development of electronic networks, displacement of physical places of production into numerous decentralised hubs of photographic image production and distribution. In that respect, the exhibition by Ivan Petrović also represents an excellent signifier that creates space for deep consideration of transfer from analogue to digital technology, their parallel existence and effects that follow this change in development of the photographic medium.

All photographs displayed at the exhibition have been recorded by an analogue photo camera, developed by a conventional photo-paper procedure, except for the digitally printed photo wallpapers, while the photograph from the inside cover of the catalogue of the exhibition *Photographers* and photos of advertisements for colour films were entirely digitally produced. For the enlargement process, the author used a locally available and accessible technology: silver-gelatin and ink-jet except Lambda procedure². Black and white film, predominantly used in photo sessions, contributed to creating a certain anachronic impression and archive character of the recorded scenes, at the same time initiating a personal potential for identification, remembrance and evocation of memories. A black and white technique of the analogue medium creates a certain ambivalent notion. It seems that the exhibited photographs originate from the time dislocated from the present, precisely from that prosperous era of photographer's shops. However, the content that we see and the fact that, from 2009 to present, that is, in the period in which Ivan Petrović has been recording photographer's shops, many of them ceased to exist³, testify to the present state of economic decline of these, private and predominantly family businesses. In contrast, the colour photo wallpaper representing the details of photo-atelier remnants, placed in a garage after the shop closure and abandoned to deterioration⁴, infallibly brings us back into the present and poses questions on discontinuity, accumulated oblivion, lack of systematic, institutional resolution and perception of the cultural heritage issues.

Part of the exhibition consists of advertisements for colour motion picture films in form of seductive female figures, recommending the product. These advertisements were also produced in black and white technique, their original size was considerably decreased and,

² Certain photo-labs in Belgrade for manual production of colour photographs by chemical process, on account of lack of profitability, have a discontinuity in provision of services and their work depends on periodically collected orders.

³ *Foto Đeram* in Bulevar Kralja Aleksandra Street in Belgrade has closed down; the doors of *Foto Zlatibor* at Balkanska Street, along with several other photographer's shops in Belgrade, are locked.

⁴ It concerns a photographer's shop *Foto Revija* which operated in Kruševac from 1972 to 2006. It was established and run by a couple Jovan and Mara Radović in the commercial premises bought from the photographer Slavko Simonović. After the closure of the shop and its refurbishment for new purposes, the largest part of negative archive and accompanying inventory of this photographer's shop was disposed of, while the remaining saved negatives were given over for permanent use to the Centre for Photography in Belgrade. Part of the photographs from the atelier is presently placed at the family Radović's garage in the town of Veliki Popović.

seemingly, even more reduced, distant and isolated by their placement onto an abstract black surface. This constant process of transposition and thoughtful work on formats creates 'meaning-related knots', which connect different stadia of development and use of the photographic medium, provoking a discussion on its present status: photographic film is very rarely employed, particularly in the field of domestic contemporary art, in the world of professional photographers and artists, while the use of *obsolete* technique mainly characterises the work of amateurs and enthusiasts. In everyday life, however, film and photo paper are practically never used. They frequently become expensive and rare objects. Two boxes of such, unopened photo paper, of make Emax, produced by Fotokemika-Zagreb⁵ from 1965 to 1975, found their place in the exhibition. Like these historical artefacts, other photographs attain dimension of archive testimonials, transforming Ivan Petrović's artistic project itself into a sort of document on how the author, through art production, became involved into a phenomenon that is disappearing and, at the same time indicating a need for a more comprehensive study of photographer's shops, as open memories of local environments and potential actors of their new historicalisations. They also draw the attention to the space and artisan tradition⁶, in the framework of which the photographic medium was developed and applied in consonance with the needs of a society and an individual, imaginatively presented and contextualised according to commercial needs of the time, and whose comprehensive research and, above all, preservation would be of manifold importance for the contemporary art production. Since the creation of his conceptual photographic project *TV or TV* in 2004⁷, based on re-recording and appropriation of the photographic portraits, done through external service of photographer's shop artisans in the late 70s of the last century, of primary school pupils from the surroundings of Kruševac, Ivan Petrović has been developing sensibility and awareness of the effects of the photographer's shops activity, and the need for their consideration through art work and, at the same time, releasing from the state of dispersion and positioning in a single place. In the course of time, this interest resulted in another form of activity – a parallel research and formation of a photographer's

⁵ The first photo-material factory in the former Yugoslavia, *Fotokemika* started work in Zagreb in 1948. Source: Goran Malić, Photography ateliers in Belgrade, in *Photographers*, the catalogue of the exhibition by Zoran P. Stanković, Photo Association of Yugoslavia, 1987.

⁶ Ivan Petrović draws the attention to the catalogue of the exhibition by Zoran P. Stanković *Photographers*, held in Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade in 2005, as an important publication, unique of that kind in Serbia, which treated tradition of artisan photographers in the context of art project. The photograph of the inside cover of this catalogue, published by Photo Association of Yugoslavia, was also included by Ivan Petrović in the presentation of the exhibition FOTO. The copy of the *Photographers* catalogue that Ivan Petrović had did not include a cover page.

⁷ Ivan Petrović's exhibition *Tv or Tv* was first presented at the Gallery of Belgrade Dom omladine (Belgrade Youth Centre), and after that at the Gallery of Dom kulture Studentski grad (Students' City Cultural Centre) in 2007.

shops archive that Petrović initiated in the framework of the Centre for Photography, a co-founder of which he is⁸.

The exhibition ΦOTO touches upon many elusiveness and complexities of the photographic medium, raising the issues of authorship, ownership, personal identity affirmed through photography, relationship between the private and the public, throwing light on so-called *impure* nature of photography, as a medium capable of absorbing the multiplicity and releasing flow in most diverse directions. Through taking pictures of photographer's shops, Ivan Petrović inevitably finds himself in a situation in which he records other people's photographs, seen either as photographer-artisan's works, or images of people depicted. In that sense, it concerns a sort of appropriation, doubling, adding complexity, just as a photograph created in a photographer's shop has two concurrent owners – a photographer who recorded it and a person for whom it was taken. Then the perception and adoption of photography as a commodity, or a service industry product, establish certain norms of agreement and behaviour, assuring trust between actors in this relationship. Relation of trust is also based on satisfying the taste of photography ateliers' clients, which brings us back to the cultural-historical importance of photographer's shops heritage for perception of micro-relations in local environments and everyday life. Similarly, by a constant movement through layers consisting of photography's distinctiveness as a document, art object and historical artefact, Ivan Petrović's art project ΦOTO creates a cross-sections of social texture in which photography omnipresently acts and whose entire media and development perception, as it seems, is excitingly eluding us. However, by forming a constellation of his own photographic works of art, conceptually precisely performed and considered, Ivan Petrović, through his exhibition ΦOTO, produces insights that might offer far-reaching benefits to other methods of research and cognition.

⁸ Centre for Photography was founded in 2011 in Belgrade, for the purpose of research and promotion of photography as a social phenomenon in the broadest sense. The Centre founders are Ivan Petrović and Mihailo Vasiljević.

ФОТО

Izložba *ФОТО* Ivana Petrovića dobija svoj habitus u susticanju višegodišnjih istraživanja fotografskog medija koje ovaj autor sprovodi kroz umetničku praksu, sakupljačku delatnost, pronicljivo proučavanje i trasiranje fotografije u njenim slojevitim društvenim ulogama. Sam naziv izložbe, prefiks *ФОТО*, upućuje na fenomen fotografskih radnji, kojim su one u Srbiji, na prepoznatljiv način, firmopisački obeležavane, a čije promišljanje predstavlja okosnicu ovog umetničkog poduhvata Ivana Petrovića. Dovođenjem u fokus funkcionisanje, ulogu i status fotografskih ateljea, nekada i sada, njihovih transformacija i polaganog nestajanja, umetnik otvara niz perspektiva kroz koje možemo sagledavati ekonomske i tehnološke promene koje oblikuju društveni horizont, pomeranja u kulturološkim karakteristikama i navikama lokalne sredine, kao i pitanja svesti o prošlom vremenu i njegovoj istorizaciji u kojoj fotografija ima bitnu ulogu kao arhivski dokument, ali i kao sredstvo građenja lične i kolektivne memorije. Izložbom *ФОТО*, prostor razmišljanja oblikovan je konstelacijom fotografskih radova, koje je Ivan Petrović beležio od 2009. godine do danas, sa prizorima situacija iz fotografskih ateljea, njihovih enterijera i eksterijera, foto-reklama i foto-rekvizita snimljenih u studiju, pri čemu je postavka konceptualno građena kroz formate foto-tapeta, uramljenih fotografija, fotografija direktno postavljenih na zid, i upotpunjena sa dva objekta, kutijama neotpakovanog, crno belog foto-papira, čiji je rok istekao.

Od svog nastanka u XIX veku, fotografski ateljei predstavljali su mesta uslužne delatnosti, važnu jedinicu društvene dinamike i sa ekonomskog stanovišta, u razvijenim društvima, vrlo brzo su postali sredstvo unosne zarade njihovih vlasnika. Pojava fotografskih ateljea na globalnom planu bila je povezana sa uzdizanjem srednje i sitne buržoazije, koja je u fotografiji pronašla novo sredstvo autorepresentacije, primereno sopstvenim ekonomskim i ideološkim prilikama, u vremenu obeleženom raspadanjem feudalnog i ustanovljavanjem kapitalističkog sistema, prelaskom sa agrarne i malo-manufakturne na industrijsku proizvodnju⁹. U to vreme, rad fotografa, u velikoj meri je ugrozio delatnost portretnih minijaturista i mnogima je uništena svaka mogućnost opstanka. Upravo, transformacija i gašenje današnjih foto studija svedoči o novom pomeranju ka drugačijoj društvenoj, kulturnoj i proizvodnoj paradigmi, obeleženoj digitalizacijom i brzim razvojem elektronskih mreža, izmeštanjem fizičkog mesta proizvodnje u mnoštvo decentralizovanih čvorišta produkcije i distribucije fotografske slike. U tom smislu, izložba Ivana Petrovića istovremeno predstavlja odličan fon koji generiše prostor za promišljanje prelaska sa

⁹ Gisele Freund, *Fotografija i društvo*, Grafički zavod Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1981.

analogne na digitalnu tehnologiju, njihovu paralelnu egzistenciju i posledice koje prate ovu promenu u razvoju fotografskog medija.

Sve fotografije predstavljene na izložbi snimljene su analognim fotoaparatom, produkcijski su izvedene konvencionalnim postupkom na fotopapiru, osim fototapeta koji je digitalno odštampan i fotografije unutrašnje strane kataloga izložbe *Fotografi*, koja je u potpunosti digitalno producirana. U procesu izrade povećanja autor je upotrebljavao kod nas raspoloživu i pristupačnu tehnologiju: srebro-želatinski, ink-jet i lambda postupak¹⁰. Crno beli film, korišćen u najvećoj meri tokom snimanja, doprineo je izvesnom utisku anahronosti i arhivskom karakteru zabeleženih prizora, istovremeno pokrećući, u ličnim okvirima, potencijal identifikacije, sećanja i uspomena. Posredstvom analognog medija crno-bele tehnike, generiše se određeno ambivalentno osećanje. Naime, čini nam se da izložene fotografije potiču iz vremena izmeštenom iz sadašnjosti, upravo iz doba društveno produktivnog rada fotografskih radnji. Međutim, sadržaj koji vidimo i činjenica da su od 2009. godine do danas, dakle, u periodu u kome je Ivan Petrović snimao fotografske radnje, mnoge od njih prestale sa radom, svedoči o sadašnjem stanju ekonomskog opadanja komercijalnih usluga ovih privatnih, u najvećoj meri, porodičnih preduzeća¹¹. Naspurot tome, foto tapet u boji sa prezentacijom detalja ostavštine fotoateljea, koja je nakon zatvaranja radnje smeštena u garažu i prepuštena propadanju¹², nepogrešivo nas vraća u sadašnjost i postavlja pitanja o diskontinuitetu, akumuliranom zaboravu, nedostatku sistemskog, institucionalnog rešavanja i percepcije problema kulturne baštine.

Deo izložbe čine reklame za filmove u boji u obliku zavodljivih ženskih figura koje preporučuju ovaj proizvod. Reklame za filmove u boji snimljene su, takođe, crno belom tehnikom, njihova originalna prirodna veličina je znatno umanjena i, čini se, još više redukovana, udaljena i izolovana, postavljanjem na apstraktnu crnu površinu. Ovaj stalni proces transponovanja i promišljenog rada sa formatima proizvodi značenjske petlje koje uvezuju različite stadijume razvoja i upotrebe fotografskog medija, generišući govor o njegovom današnjem statusu: fotografski film se vrlo retko primenjuje, naročito na polju savremene umetnosti kod nas, da kažemo, u svetu profesionalnih fotografa i umetnika, dok je upotreba *zastarele* tehnologije u većoj meri zastupljena kod amatera i entuzijasta. U svakodnevnom životu

¹⁰ Pojedine foto laboratorije u Beogradu za ručnu izradu kolor fotografija hemijskim procesom, usled nerentabilnosti, imaju diskontinuitet u pružanju usluga i njihov rad zavisi od periodično prikupljenih porudžbina.

¹¹ *Foto Deram* u ulici Bulevar Kralja Aleksandra u Beogradu prestao je sa radom; vrata *Foto Zlatibora* u Balkanskoj ulici, kao i nekolicina drugih u Beogradu, su zaključana.

¹² Reč je o radnji *Foto Revija* koja je poslovala u Kruševcu od 1972 do 2006. godine. Osnovali su je i vodili bračni par Jovan i Mara Radović u lokalu koji su kupili od fotografa Slavka Simonovića. Nakon zatvaranja radnje i prilikom njene adaptacije za nove potrebe, najveći deo negativske arhive i pratećeg inventara ove fotografske radnje je bačen, dok su presotali sačvani negativi ustupljeni Centru za fotografiju u Beogradu na trajno korišćenje. Deo fotografija iz ateljea danas je smešten u garaži porodice Radović u varoši Veliki Popović.

pak, film i foto papir, gotovo niko više ne koristi. Oni, često, postaju skupi i raritetni predmeti. Dve kutije, takvog, neotpakovanog foto-papira, marke Emaks, proizvodnje Fotokemika - Zagreb¹³ iz 1965, odnosno 1975. godine, našle su se, takođe, na izložbi *ΦOTO*. Poput ovih istorijskih artefakata i ostale fotografije dobijaju dimenziju arhivskih svedoštava, čineći i sam umetnički projekat Ivana Petrovića svojevrsnim dokumentom o tome na koji način se autor, kroz umetničku produkciju, bavio fenomenom koji nestaje, istovremeno ukazujući na potrebu temeljnih istraživanja fotografskih radnji kao otvorenih memorija lokalnih životnih sredina i potencijalnih činioca njihovih novih istorizacija. Oni takodje skreću pažnju na prostor i zanatsku tradiciju¹⁴ u okviru koje je fotografski medij razvijan i primenjivan u sprezi sa potrebama društva i pojedinca, maštovito prezentovan i kontekstualizovan prema komercijalnim zahtevima vremena, a čije bi sveukupno istraživanje, i pre svega očuvanje, bilo od višesložnog značaja i za savremenu umetničku produkciju. Još od konceptualnog fotografskog rada *TV ili TV* iz 2004. godine¹⁵, zasnovanom na presnimavanju i aporijaciji fotografskih portreta učenika osnovnih škola iz okoline Kruševca, nastalih vanjskom uslužnom delatnošću fotografa iz fotoateljaja, krajem sedamdesetih godina prošlog veka, moglo bi se reći da Ivan Petrović razvija senzibilitet i svest o efektima delatnosti fotografskih radnji i potrebi da se oni kroz umetnički rad promisle i, istovremeno, izbave iz stanja disperzije i lociraju na jednom mestu. Ovo interesovanje vremenom je otvorilo još jedan vid delatnosti, a to je paralelno istraživanje i formiranje arhiva fotografskih radnji koje je Petrović pokrenuo u okviru rada Centra za fotografiju, čiji je jedan od osnivača¹⁶.

Izložba *ΦOTO* dodiruje mnoge neuhvatljivosti i složenosti fotografskog medija, otvarajući pitanja autorstva, posedovanja, problematizujući prostor ličnog identiteta koji se kroz fotografiju potvrđuje, odnosa privatnog i javnog, osvetljujući takozvanu *nečistu* prirodu fotografije, kao medija koji je u stanju da apsorbuje mnoštvo i oslobodi protok u najrazličitijim pravcima. Fotografišući fotografske radnje Ivan Petrović se, neizbežno, suočava sa situacijom u kojoj fotografiše druge, tuđe fotografije, bilo da ih posmatramo kao dela fotografa-zanatlije, ili fotografije osoba koje se nalaze na njima. U tom smislu radi se o izvesnom prisvajanju, udvajanju,

¹³ Prva fabrika foto-materijala, na prostoru bivše Jugoslavije, *Fotokemika* počela je sa radom u Zagrebu 1948. godine. Izvor: Goran Malić, Fotografski ateljei u Beogradu, u *Fotografiji*, katalog izložbe Zorana B. Stankovića, Foto Savez Jugoslavije, 1987.

¹⁴ Kao značajnu publikaciju, jedinu u Srbiji, kojom se tretira tradicija fotografa zanatlija u kontekstu umetničkog projekta, Ivan Petrović ističe katalog izložbe Zorana B. Stankovića, *Fotografiji*, održanoj u Etnografskom muzeju u Beogradu 1987. godine. Fotografiju prve unutrašnje strane ovog kataloga, izdatog od strane Foto Saveza Jugoslavije, Ivan Petrović takođe uključuje u postavku izložbe *ΦOTO*. Naime, primerak kataloga *Fotografiji* do koga je Ivan Petrović došao nije imao sačuvanu naslovnu stranu.

¹⁵ Izložba Ivana Petrovića *Tv ili Tv* prvi put je izlagana 2004. godine u Galeriji Doma omladine u Beogradu, a zatim u Galeriji Doma kulture Studentski grad 2007. godine.

¹⁶ Centar za fotografiju je osnovan 2011. godine u Beogradu, sa ciljem istraživanja i promovisanja fotografije kao društvenog fenomena u najširem smislu. Osnivači centra su Ivan Petrović i Mihailo Vasiljević.

usložnjavanju, kao što i fotografija nastala u fotografskoj radnji istovremeno ima dva vlasnika, fotografa koji je snimio i onoga za koga ju je snimio. Tada shvatanje i usvajanje fotografije kao robe, odnosno proizvoda uslužne delatnosti, postavlja određene norme dogovora i ponašanja, možemo reći i osiguranje poverenja među akterima ovog odnosa . Relacija poverenja, takođe, je zasnovana na zadovoljavanju uskusa korisnika usluga fotoateljea, tako da se ponovo vraćamo na kulturno istorijski značaj ostavštine foto radnji u sagledavanju mikro-relacija u lokalnim sredinama i životnoj svakodnevicu. Na sličan način, u stalnom kretanju kroz slojeve koji čine osobenost fotografije kao dokumenta, umetničkog predmeta i istorijskog artefakta, umetnički projekat *PHOTO* Ivana Petrovića, pravi preseke kroz društveno tkivo u kome fotografija sveprisutno deluje i čije nam, čini se, potpuno medijsko i razvojno sagledavanje uzbudljivo izmiče. Međutim, formirajući konstelaciju sopstvenih, umetničkih fotografskih radova, konceptualno precizno izvedenih i osmišljenih, Ivan Petrović izložbom *PHOTO* pruža uvide koji bi drugim metodama istraživanja i saznanja bile od dalekosežne koristi.