

## UNEXPECTED STAGINGS – ON IVAN PETROVIC’S PHOTOGRAPHS

Ever since the exhibition *New Documents*, held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1967, which showcased the photographs of Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander and Garry Winogrand, little-known authors of the time, the perception of ‘documentary photography’ has undergone changes and the relationship between artistic and documentary photographs has become increasingly ambiguous. As the curator of that exhibition, John Szarkowski, explained: “The aim of these photographers has been not to reform life but to know it – not to persuade but to understand.”<sup>1</sup> Namely, documentary photography owed its appearance at this museum institution neither to its formal-aesthetic characteristics, nor to its social engagement, campaigning or ethical teaching. The unproductive division between photography which sought its status in the morphology of art (mainly based on the traditions of painting syntax, as well as on the rhetoric of modernist formalism) and photography as a dedicated instrument of political struggle which somehow directly and genuinely entered the space of facts, was thereby dialectically surpassed.

Such a statement by Szarkowski could even be interpreted as a reactionary ‘step backwards’, because the notions of understanding and knowledge are positioned as inferior to those of change or progress. But only if we interpret literally Marx’s famous epigram in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: “Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.” The vulgar perception of this thesis has led to a kind of delusion according to which changing the world by means of social struggles was almost perceived as a goal contrary to knowledge about the world. That idealism is, in fact, at odds with Marx’s thought – the dogmatic idealism that led to various forms of state violence ‘from above’, even when they were in the service of emancipatory ideals. But Marx’s materialism was different from Feuerbach’s precisely because he understood sensuousness as a *practical* and not as a contemplative activity (as stated in his fifth ninth theses). And it is here that we can try to find a place for art – not as an ‘execution of ideas’, but as an autonomous action, located somewhere between “immediate sensitivity and ideal thought”<sup>2</sup>

Isn’t photography, when it manages to escape purpose and genre categorizations, precisely the best indicator that only autonomous forms of knowledge about the world bring about the conditions for changing it? If anything has become superfluous in photography today, then it is the kind of photography, which, through the self-congratulatory gestures of its authors, asserts that images can change the world even when they do not stimulate some kind of quest for the truth about that world. In the case of Ivan Petrovic’s photographs, the departure from such an assumption is precisely the introduction of the potential of

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<sup>1</sup> John Szarkowski, from the introduction to the catalogue *Arbus Friedlander Winogrand – New Documents 1967*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1967

<sup>2</sup> John Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, Verso, London, 2015, p. 10. We refer here to Roberts’s book as a radical materialist defense of the notion of ‘autonomy of art’.

photography as the actualization of social relations and the form of their knowledge. Although he often refers to his photographs as 'documents', Petrovic is not a documentary photographer. He does not acknowledge the concept of the document as a 'means', he does not understand it in the way expected by instrumental reason, which always seeks for new utilizations; he understands it etymologically, as: *showing something to make it true* – not only in order to make the factual visible, but also to make the visible factual.

For Petrovic, photography is an autonomous practice, an art form that has the capacity to achieve autonomy precisely because nowadays, thanks to both its technical and social distribution, it is the least determined in advance by commodity relations. As an exemplary, egalitarian art, although like all other artistic practices it cannot escape being a subject of commodification, photography represents an opportunity – when it comes to both its production and reception – to find channels for its expansion in the *aleatory* contradictions of the everyday, in coincidences made of real desires, in situations in which the world appears both as the one we belong to and the one we don't belong to. As John Roberts explains, the photographer has the predisposition to arrive as *the unexpected one*. Photography therefore also has the capacity to *violate* the relationship between the subject and the world, and it is always *intrusive* and *invasive*.<sup>3</sup> Photography is a situated encounter in everyday life. And this everyday life is not just a representation of *what is happening in the world* (as in photo-journalism), but a socially intimate encounter with a specific everyday of the world and with an always specific *subject* within the world.

The everyday, on which, in one way or another, Petrovic intrudes *unexpectedly*, is therefore what is known in Russian by the word *быт*. Unlike the syntagmatic 'everyday life' (*повседневная жизнь*), *быт* can be understood as *being*, or rather *existing*, which consists of simple and direct interactions between people, objects, and concrete material facts and practices driven by elementary needs. Photography has the ability to intrude upon realms of faces and things and to make use of the possibility of infinitely reproducing the encounter with *life in the world*, to which, let us repeat, the photographer both does and does not belong. And Petrovic's work is exemplary in this sense. Therefore, we cannot associate Petrovic's 'documents' with some process to do with reproducing events, but with the possibility of interfering with and intruding on material relationships in order to reproduce them in a photographic image, which participates in everyday existence, which is the document of a staged situation, and which becomes 'more factual' than some supposedly genuine representation of facts which would also exist without photography and without being photographically *registered* in the world.

The difference between the artistic and documentary photograph was, therefore, based on the difference established between the photographic image which, previously staged, is the construction of a fictional world, and the one that pretends to give the true image of the world. Not only the technological possibilities of manipulating the indexicality of the photographic record, but also the social relations in which the fictional and the real intertwine in more and more complex ways, question such a distinction. Petrovic's photographs are both staged and not staged, both documentary and not documentary – they no longer make

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<sup>3</sup> See: John Roberts, *Photography and its Violations*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2014

reference to that distinction in order to become and remain documents of everyday life, charged with relationships and conflicts.

Let us, for example, consider one of the most intriguing photographic portraits by Petrovic, that of his father. In this portrait we are not just attempting to penetrate someone's supposed identity, but also to find out something about a complex relationship. In this particular case, it is a formative complex relationship: the relationship between father and son, as a power relationship within the personal sphere, which is always a reflection of the socio-economic distribution of power, based on the division of labour. His father's personality is represented here in the ambivalence between power and fragility, between paternal dignity (underlined by the strict ceremoniousness of the portrait) and everything embodied in the appearance of this distinctive man – everything that reflects his belonging to the working class and those specifically situated circumstances (such as the actual social circumstances of the 'transition' period in Serbia) affecting symbolic relationships, such as the one between father and son. Such a relationship is not complex only because the father has assumed the patriarchal symbolic task of establishing the hierarchy of power in relation to his son, which the son questions, but also because this relationship is pre-conditioned by the division of labour. The photographer here not only establishes a relationship with his father through their coming to an agreement as regards the character of the staging, but also places this relationship at the heart of the dispute over the possibility of identifying productive work and self-determined artistic work. If the photographer's work is the establishment of social relations, and not commodification, then each photograph is a destabilization of the quantification of the working process, the product of a radically different division of work and, as such, always a materialist critique of "instrumental" reason.

Let us, for example, compare this portrait with the work of American photographer Mitch Epstein, in which he takes photographs of his father as a failed businessman, or with portraits by Larry Sultan, in which he shows his father in retirement. Class and geographical differences aside, the main difference is that in Petrovic's photograph his father is not represented in his muted power – where the inexpressible is to be found in the relationship of pity and triumph, and where, to put it simply, the son-photographer eventually 'wins against his father'. It is in the radical impossibility of pity and triumph, in his own feelings of insecurity with regard to a father who continues his struggle which cannot be disciplined or tamed by the photographic image, that Petrovic, as son and photographer at the same time, seeks the inexpressible. The father, framed in such a way that one does not get the impression he is comfortably placed, but rather in tension in relation to the edges of the frame, wears a T-shirt on which, alongside portraits of American Indians, one reads: "HOMELAND SECURITY – FIGHTING TERRORISM SINCE 1492". It is a T-shirt which owes its inscription to the occasion when, in January 2008, the US Federal Service, 'Homeland Security', came across serious resistance to their attempt to use the land around the Rio Grande River belonging to the Apache Indians for building a wall on the border with Mexico.<sup>4</sup> The symbolism of localised resistance and struggle, which for the photographer's father is represented by the Apaches, calls in a contingency for solidarity into a situated existence, the inscribed potential that gives meaning to everyday contradictions and conflicts.

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<sup>4</sup> About this event, see: <https://www.counterpunch.org/2008/01/08/apaches-defend-homeland-from-homeland-security/>

Another of Petrović's striking photographs is the one of a girl with a mask, standing in front of a window overlooking some 'transient' environment deprived of special properties, stopped somewhere between the rural and the urban. The vividness of her dress and jewelry, the garishness of her feather mask (as if there were an allusion to the American Indians here as well), the synthetic curtain pulled aside and the dull glow of white wood under the blink of the flash, document a relationship about which we may not have information, but which we intrude on as a relationship of alienation and desire. The question here is neither to what extent the photograph is staged and to what extent it is documented, nor how much this staging is a matter of joint agreement and how much it has been shaped by the personal preferences of the portrayed and the photographer. It is a document about a specific and situated activity that took place in front of the camera, and about the way in which the relationship mediated by the camera is being built. Therefore, it is characteristic of Petrović's work that a photograph is not only an inscription of an exteriority captured by the camera, but also a very inscription of the role of the camera's intrusion into relationships, which always unravel as being conditioned by class, gender and other material circumstances. In the words of Jorge Ribalta, whose texts Petrović is addressing us to: "We need a kind of staged realism, a negotiated or strategic documentary (equivalent to Donna Haraway's "situated knowledge" or Gayatri Spivak's "strategic essentialism") able to overcome the false opposition between the index (naturalized by Photoshop as its photographic past) and the fake (naturalized in the current and future post-photographic condition)."<sup>5</sup> The role of photography is neither to enable us to reveal the factual, nor to provide us with information; it is here to make possible our 'intrusion' into the middle of what constitutes a situated encounter between the non-aesthetic and the aesthetic, within a specific social context and with a specific subject, which becomes inscribed into the camera by its light configuration.

Finally, let us take as an example Petrović's series of photographs entitled "Salt and Light"<sup>6</sup>, which has not been exhibited so far. This series – which is extremely unusual for local contemporary art, which is often limited to urban backgrounds – shows people and scenes from a rural setting. The most striking quality of this series are the portraits of women who stand or work in the fields – perhaps, in particular, the portrait of a girl and a boy in a cabbage field. Here, one feels the presence of the author's otherwise usually restricted sympathy with those portrayed. Under a low late-afternoon light, which refines the atmosphere but sharpens the details, these portraits avoid the aesthetic-representational codes of both naturalism and idealism. Again, they testify to photographic realism as a visual reflection of the *liminal* (the border between the indefinable and the irreconcilable) and the *aporetic* (as the rhetoric of the established liminal ambivalence). In Petrović's work, we are faced with the question of the ever-delicate (im)possibility of overcoming the normative ideologies of representation.

It is symptomatic, however, that life in the countryside in today's Serbia is so rarely presented in contemporary art. This lack of representation opens the space to ideological and media idealizations and banalizations, such as those which present the village through an affirmative prism of the 'natural way of life', and those that perceive the village only as a hell

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<sup>5</sup> Jorge Ribalta, "Molecular Documents: Photography in the Post-Photographic Era, or How Not to Be Trapped into False Dilemmas", in R. Kelsey, B. Stimson (ed.), *The Meaning of Photography*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass, 2008

<sup>6</sup> The title refers to the only two types of goods that peasants in pre-modern Serbia were buying, as opposed to producing themselves – salt and petroleum for lamps.

of cultural primitivism. If the achievement of any emancipatory and dialectically based politics is precisely the overcoming of false oppositions – just as in Serbia’s social life, there is a contradiction between the ritualistic belief in the potential of ‘our’ people, on one hand, and the unproductive lamentation about their lagging behind, on the other – then Petrovic’s photographs are political, not because he uses photography to explore the politics of daily life, but rather because he prefers exploring the *photographic* as a form of entering an intimate relationship with the politics of the everyday. Therefore, he does not abandon the possibility that it is precisely through unconcealed photographic formalizations – framing, lighting, the distribution of details in the picture and, of course, colours and shadows – that the *photographic*, as a hyperdistributed social-visual experience of everyday life, is constantly reviewed, and that it influences the formation of the codes and ways of recognizing and presenting people at the spot where material circumstances intersect with their mutual relations. For the *photographic*, it is always a question of the relation between forms and conventions under which the intrusion into the social space takes place – as well as the risk under which, in the low afternoon light, the photographer’s shadow unexpectedly and momentarily falls into the picture and remains there as an anamorphic apparition. Photography is always *an event of the image*, not an image of the event.

## NENAJAVLJENE INSCENACIJE – POVODOM FOTOGRAFIJA IVANA PETROVIĆA

Još od izložbe *New Documents* u Muzeju moderne umetnosti u Njujorku 1967, na kojoj su bile izložene fotografije do tada malo poznatih autora, Dajen Arbus, Lija Fridlendera i Garija Vinogranda, shvatanje “dokumentarne fotografije” doživelo je promene, a odnos između *umetničkog* i *dokumentarnog* u fotografiji postao je ambivalentan. Kako je kustos te izložbe, Džon Šarkovski, to obrazložio: “Cilj ovih fotografa nije bio da reformišu život, već da o njemu nešto saznaju – ne da ubeđuju, već da razumeju.”<sup>7</sup> Odnosno, dokumentarna fotografija se tada nije pojavila u ovoj muzejskoj instituciji ni zbog svojih formalno-estetskih karakteristika ni zahvaljujući svom agitacijskom društvenom angažmanu ili etičkoj pouci. Na taj način se, dijalektički, prevazišla neproduktivna podela na onu fotografiju koja je svoj status tražila u morfologiji umetničkog (uglavnom utemeljenoj na tradicijama slikarske sintakse, kao i na retorici modernističkog formalizma) i na onu koja je namenski instrument političke borbe, nekakav direktni i nepatvoreni ulaz u prostor činjeničnog.

Ovakav iskaz Šarkovskog bi se čak mogao tumačiti kao reakcionaran “korak unazad” jer pojmove razumevanja i saznanja pretpostavlja pojmovima promene ili napretka. Ali samo ako bukvalno tumačimo čuvenu Marksovu pouku iz jedanaeste teze o Fojerbahu – onu o filozofima koji su na razne načine samo tumačili svet, dok je poenta u tome da se on promeni. Vulgarno poimanje ove teze vodilo je u onu vrstu zablude u kojoj je promena sveta kroz društvene borbe doživljavana maltene kao cilj *contra* znanju sveta – što je upravo idealizam suprotan Makrksovoj misli, onaj dogmatski idealizam koji je i vodio u razne oblike državnog nasilja “odozgo”, čak i kad su oni bili u službi emancipatorskih ideala. Ali Marksov materijalizam se razlikovao od Fojerbahovog upravo po tome što je osetilno razumevao kao *praktičnu* a ne kao kontemplativnu aktivnost (kako stoji u devetoj tezi). I tu negde možemo i tražiti mesto umetnosti – ne kao “egzekuciju ideja”, već kao autonomno delovanje koje stoji negde između “neposredne osetilnosti i idealne misli”.<sup>8</sup>

Nije li fotografija, kada uspeva da se iskobelja iz namenskih i žanrovskih kategorizacija, upravo najbolji pokazatelj da jedino autonomne forme saznanja o svetu donose uslove za njegovo menjanje? Ako je išta danas u fotografiji postalo suvišno, onda je to ona vrsta fotografije koja, kroz samočestitajuće gestove svojih autora, misli da se slikama može promeniti

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<sup>7</sup> John Szarkowski u predgovoru za katalog *Arbus Friedlander Winogrand – New Documents 1967*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1967.

<sup>8</sup> John Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, Verso, London, 2015, str. 10. Upućujemo ovde na Robertsovu knjigu kao na radikalnu materijalističku odbranu pojma “autonomije umetnosti”.

svet čak i kada te slike ne stimulišu neku vrstu potrage za istinom tog sveta. U slučaju fotografija Ivana Petrovića, odmak od takve pretpostavke upravo je ulaz u potencijal fotografije da bude aktuelizacija društvenih odnosa i forma njihove spoznaje. Iako na svoje fotografije često referiše kao na “dokumente”, Petrović nije dokumentarni fotograf. On pojam dokumenta ne razume kao “sredstvo”, ne razume ga na način na koji to očekuje instrumentalni razum koji uvek traga za novim utilizacijama, već ga razume na etimološki izvoran način: *pokazati nešto kako bi se ono učinilo tačnim* – ne samo kako bi se faktičko učinilo vidljivim, već i kako bi se vidljivo učinilo faktičkim.

Za Petrovića, fotografija je autonomna praksa, forma umetnosti koja ima kapacitet da postigne autonomiju upravo zato što je danas, zahvaljujući svojoj tehničkoj i društvenoj distribuciji, ona možda ponajmanje unapred uslovljena robnim odnosima. Kao egzemplarna, egalitarna umetnost, iako ne može da izbegne da bude, kao i svi drugi umetnički postupci, predmet komodifikacije, fotografija predstavlja mogućnost – i kada je reč o njenoj produkciji, i kada je reč o njenoj recepciji – da svoje kanale prostiranja pronade u *aleatornim* kontradikcijama svakodnevice, u slučajnostima koje sadrže stvarne želje, u situacijama u kojima se svet pojavljuje i kao onaj kome pripadamo, i kao onaj kome ne pripadamo. Kako objašnjava Džon Roberts, fotograf ima tu predispoziciju da može da stigne *nenajavljen*. Fotografija tako ima sposobnost *narušavanja* (violation) odnosa subjekta i sveta, i ona je uvek *intruzivna* i *invazivna*.<sup>9</sup> Ona je situirani susret u svakodnevici, i to u svakodnevici koja nije samo predstavljanje *onoga što se dešava u svetu* (kao u foto-žurnalizmu), već društveno-intimni susret sa specifičnom svakodnevicom života sveta i sa uvek specifičnim *subjektom u svetu*.

Svakodnevica u koju, na ovaj ili onaj način, Petrović nenajavljen upada jeste, dakle, ono za šta na ruskom postoji reč *быт*. Za razliku od sintagme “svakodnevni život” (*повседневная жизнь*), *быт* možemo razumeti kao bivstvovanje, ili bolje *bitisanje*, koje sačinjavaju proste i neposredne interakcije sa ljudima i predmetima kao sa konkretnim materijalnim činjenicama i praksama koje su pokrenute osnovnim potrebama. Fotografija, a Petrovićev je rad u tom smislu egzemplaran, ima sposobnost upada u takvo stanje stvari i lica, te sprovodi mogućnost da beskonačno reprodukuje susret sa *životom u svetu*, kojem, da ponovimo, fotograf i pripada i ne pripada. U tom smislu, ne možemo prosto vezivati Petrovićeve “dokumente” za nekakav postupak reprodukcije događaja, već za mogućnost zadiranja i upadanja u materijalne odnose kako bi se oni reprodukovali u fotografskoj slici koja sudeluje u svakodnevnom bitisanju i koja je dokument inscenirane situacije, koja postaje “istinitija” od neke, navodno, nepatvorene predstave činjenica, koje bi postojale i bez fotografije, i bez toga da ih fotografija *upiše* u svet.

Razlika između umetničke i dokumentarne fotografije ležala je, dakle, u razlici koja se uspostavljala između fotografske slike koja je inscenirana, koja je konstrukcija fiktivnog sveta, i

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<sup>9</sup> Videti: John Roberts, *Photography and its Violations*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2014.

one koja pretenduje na istinitost slike sveta. Ne samo tehnološke mogućnosti manipulisanja indeksikalnošću fotografskog zapisa, već i društveni odnosi u kojima se fiktivno i realno prožimaju na sve kompleksnije načine, dovode u pitanje ovako postavljenu granicu. Petrovićeve fotografije i jesu i nisu inscenirane i dokumentarne – one više ne prave tu razliku da bi postale i ostale dokumenti svakodnevice, koja je nabijena odnosima i borbama. Uzmimo za primer jedan od najintrigantnijih Petrovićevih portreta, onaj njegovog oca: ovde ne prisustvujemo pokušaju da se samo zađe u nečiji pretpostavljeni identitet, već da se sazna nešto o jednom složenom odnosu. U ovom konkretnom slučaju, o formativnom, složenom odnosu: odnosu oca i sina, kao odnosu moći unutar lične sfere, koja je uvek i refleksija socio-ekonomske distribucije moći zasnovane na podeli rada. Figura oca je predstavljena u ambivalenciji između moći i fragilnosti, između paternalnog digniteta (podvučenog strogom svečanošću porteta) i svega onoga upisanog u izgled i pojavu ovog upečatljivog čoveka – onoga što je odraz njegovog radničkog, klasnog pripadanja i svih onih konkretno situiranih okolnosti (kakva je konkretna društvena okolnost “tranzicije” u Srbiji) koje utiču na simbolički postavljene odnose, kakav je i ovaj između oca i sina. Takav odnos nije složen samo zbog toga što otac u odnosu na sina sledi patrijarhalni simbolički zadatak da uspostavi hijerarhiju moći koju sin dovodi u pitanje, već i zato što je taj odnos preduslovljen podelom rada. Fotograf ovde ne samo da uspostavlja odnos sa ocem kroz samu saradnju oko karaktera inscenacije, već taj odnos smešta u srce spora oko mogućnosti identifikacije produktivnog rada i samodeterminisanog umetničkog rada. Ako je posao fotografa uspostavljanje društvenih odnosa, a ne komodifikacija, onda je svaka fotografija destabilizacija kvantifikacije radnog procesa, radikalno drugačije podeljen rad i, kao takva, uvek i materijalistička kritika instrumentalnog razuma.

Uporedimo, na primer, ovaj portret sa serijom američkog autora Miča Epstajna u kojoj on fotografiše oca kom je propao biznis, ili pak s portretima na kojima Lari Saltan prikazuje svog oca u penziji. Na stranu razlike u klasno-geografskom pripadanju, razlika je u tome što na Petrovićevoj fotografiji figura oca nije predstavljena u svojoj utihnuloj moći – gde se neizrecivo traži u odnosu sažaljenja i trijumfa, i gde je sin-fotograf taj koji “pobeđuje oca”, da kažemo to krajnje pojednostavljeno. Petrović, kao sin i kao fotograf, neizrecivo ovde traži upravo u radikalnoj nemogućnosti sažaljenja i trijumfa, u sopstvenoj nesigurnosti prema ocu koji nastavlja svoju borbu, koja ne može biti disciplinovana ili pripitomljena fotografskom slikom. Otac, kadriran tako da se ne stiče utisak da je udobno smešten, već da je napet u odnosu na ivice kadra, nosi majicu na kojoj, uz portrete američkih Indijanaca, piše: “HOMELAND SECURITY – FIGHTING TERRORISM SINCE 1492”. Radi se o majici za čiji je natpis povod bio slučaj kada je, januara 2008, američka federalna služba “Homeland Security” naišla na ozbiljan otpor prilikom pokušaja da se zemlja oko reke Rio Grande koja pripada Apačima iskoristi za izgradnju zida na granici sa Meksikom.<sup>10</sup> Simbolika lokalizovanog otpora i borbe koju za oca predstavljaju Apače

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<sup>10</sup> O ovom događaju, videti: <https://www.counterpunch.org/2008/01/08/apaches-defend-homeland-from-homeland-security/>.



indijanci, prodor je kontigencije solidarnosti u situirano bitisanje, upisani potencijal koji daje značenje svakodnevnim kontradikcijama i sukobima.

Još jedna upečatljiva Petrovićeva fotografija jeste ona devojke pod maskom što stoji ispred prozora koji gleda na neki "prelazni" ambijent, lišen posebnih svojstava, zaustavljen negde između ruralnog i urbanog. Intenzivnost njene odeće i bižuterije, drečavost maske od perja (kao da i ovde postoji aluzija na američke Indijance), ovlaš odgurnuta sintetička zavesa i tupavi sjaj bele drvenarije pod bleskom blica dokumentuju odnos o kom možda nemamo podatke, ali upravo zato u njega upadamo kao u odnos otuđenosti i želje. Ovde se ne postavlja pitanje do koje mere je fotografija inscenirana, a do koje dokumentarna, i uopšte koliko je ova inscenacija pitanje zajedničkog dogovora a koliko ličnih preferenci portretisane ili njenog fotografa. Ona je dokument o jednoj specifičnoj i situiranoj aktivnosti pred aparatom, o načinu na koji se odnos posredovan aparatom gradi. Dakle, karakteristično je za Petrovićev rad da fotografija nije samo refleksija neke spoljašnjosti aparata, već refleksija same uloge upada aparata u odnose, koji se uvek odmotavaju kao uslovljeni klasnim, rodnim i drugim materijalnim okolnostima bitisanja. Kako bi rekao Horhe Ribalta, na čije tekstove Petrović upućuje: "Trebamo nam nekakav inscenirani realizam, dokumentarizam oko kog se pregovara, ekvivalentan onom što Dona Haravej zove *situiranim znanjem* ili Gajatri Spivak *strateškim esencijalizmom*, sposoban da prevaziđe lažnu suprotnost između *indeksa* (naturalizovanog Fotošopom kao njegovom fotografskom prošlošću) i onog *patvorenog* (naturalizovanog u sadašnjem i budućem postfotografskom stanju)." <sup>11</sup> Nije uloga fotografije ni da u njoj odgonetamo činjenično, niti da nas ona snabde informacijama, već da nam omogući da "banemo" usred onoga što sačinjava situirani susret neestetskog i estetskog, unutar specifičnog društvenog konteksta, sa specifičnim subjektom, koji postaje upisan u aparat svojom svetlosnom konfiguracijom.

Konačno, uzmimo za primer i, do sada neizlaganu, seriju Petrovićevih fotografija nazvanu "So i svetlo".<sup>12</sup> Ova serija – krajnje neuobičajeno za ovdašnju savremenu umetnost, ograničenu urbanim situiranostima – prikazuje ljude i prizore iz ruralnog ambijenta. U seriji su ovoga puta najupečatljiviji portreti žena koje stoje ili rade u polju, možda posebno portret devojke i momka u kupusištu, u kom kao da se oseća, inače uvek škrto iskazana, autorova simpatija prema portretisanima. Pod niskim kasnopodnevnom svetlom, onim koje oplemenjuje atmosferu, ali i izostrava detalje, ovi portreti izbegavaju estetsko-predstavljачke kodove kako naturalizma tako i idealizma. Ponovo, oni svedoče o fotografskom realizmu kao vizuelnoj refleksiji *liminalnog* (onog između neodlučnog i nepomirljivog) i *aporetičkog* kao

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<sup>11</sup> Jorge Ribalta, "Molecular Documents: Photography in the Post-Photographic Era, or How Not to Be Trapped into False Dilemmas", u R. Kelsey, B. Stimson (ur.), *The Meaning of Photography*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Naziv se odnosi na jedine dve vrste robe koju su seljaci u predmodernoj Srbiji kupovali, odnosno, koju nisu sami proizvodili – so i petrolej za lampe.

retorike tako uspostavljene liminalne ambivalentnosti. Kod Petrovića se suočavamo sa pitanjem uvek delikatne (ne)mogućnosti prevazilaženja normativnih ideologija reprezentacije.

Simptomatično je, dakle, koliko je u savremenoj umetnosti retko predstavljen život na selu u današnjoj Srbiji. Ovakav nedostatak reprezentacije otvara prostor ideološkim i medijskim idealizacijama i banalizacijama, kako onim koje selo predstavljaju kroz afirmativnu prizmu "prirodnog načina života", tako i onim koje selo vide tek kao pakao kulturnog primitivizma. Ukoliko je postignuće svake emancipatorske i dijalektički utemeljene politike upravo prevazilaženje lažnih opozicija – kao što je u društvenom životu u Srbiji suprotnost između ceremonijalnog poverenja prema potencijalima "našeg" čoveka i neproduktivne lamentacije o njegovoj zaostalosti – onda su Petrovićeve fotografije političke, ne zbog toga što on koristi fotografiju da bi istraživao politiku svakodnevice, već zato što radije istražuje *fotografsko* kao oblik stupanja u intimni odnos sa politikama svakodnevnog bitisanja. On se stoga ne odriče mogućnosti da se upravo kroz neprikrivene fotografske formalizacije – kadriranje, osvetljenje, distribuciju detalja u slici i, naravno, boje i senke – stalno preispituje *fotografsko* kao hiperdistribuisano društveno-vizuelno iskustvo svakodnevice, koje utiče na formiranje kodova i načina prepoznavanja i predstavljanja ljudi na mestu gde se ukrštaju materijalne okolnosti sa njihovim međusobnim odnosima. Za *fotografsko*, to je uvek i pitanje relacije formi i konvencija pod kojima se vrši upad u prostor društvenog – kao i rizik pod kojim, pri niskom popodnevnom svetlu, fotografova senka nenajavljeno i trenutačno upada u sliku i ostaje tamo kao anamorfna utvara. Fotografija je uvek *dogadaj slike*, a ne slika događaja.