

Igor Kelčec

Skromni grobar svijetle puti

izbor fotografija iz razdoblja 1986. - 1996.

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Portretna fotografija u domaćim tiskovinama, a prije pojave digitalnih formata i tehnologija trpjela je poseban oblik ponižavanja zajedno sa svojim autorima.

Fotografi koji su '80 - ih i dobar dio '90 – ih prošlog stoljeća proveli na ulici ili u studijima po nalogima i hirovima urednika, bili su izuzetno tehnički obrazovani, nadareni i okrenuti traženju autorstva u zadanim formama koje portretna ili reportažna fotografija ima.

Skučenost tadašnjeg medijskog prostora u tisku uz pokoje izlete gdje je fotografija mogla dominirati, tražila je od fotografa vještinu komunikacije s *modelom* iz koje je onda derivirao i osobni stil svakog od tih *staroškolskih* fanatika, taj neki korak razlike od drugih na tržištu. Tu težnju ka korektnoj fotografiji u najčešće improviziranim uvjetima Igor tada shvaća ozbiljno bez obzira na mlade godine i (ne)iskustvo, no tehnika i tehnologija tadašnjeg tiska u Hrvatskoj, poglavito periodike, samo se malo razlikovala od fotokopiranja na dotrajalom valjku. Dobar dio kvalitete tih radova svjesno je žrtvovan ili ostavljen na tiskarskim pločama tadašnjih tehnologija, no uskrnuće tih radova u javnosti, njihov *drugi dolazak* u punoj kvaliteti i snazi morao se dogoditi, kad-tad.

Igor Kelčec dragulj je hrvatske portretne fotografije i autor kojega je motiv nekada jednostavno htio. Dvojako obrazovan, kao grafičar na ALU, te kasnije za filmskog i TV snimatelja na ADU, pripada skupini *autora s Akademije* čija karijera nije filmska, nego fotografska do same srži. Ipak, film koji on snima već 40-ak godina dugačak je, s puno likova, napetiji od turske sapunice, životniji od Malog mista, i *glavolomniji* od serije Lost. U GNK Kelčec izlaže kratki foršpan koji pokazuje odabrane epizode u rasponu od 10-ak godina, od 1986. do 1996. godine, perioda u kojem su jednakom brzinom umirali Jugoslavija, magazini za koje je radio te tehnologija i pripadajuća industrija 'kemijske' fotografije.

Odabrani radovi koje prvi put vidimo oslobođeni su svrhe i svojevrsnih označitelja vremena i prostora. Sada su to samo portreti, svjedočanstva odnosa fotografa i modela i neke napola mistične upućenosti autora na model i tadašnjeg medijskog sustava koji je to nekako organizirao. Ono što najčešće ostane iz takvih susreta, a zahvaljujući instinktu i, ne budimo skromni, talentu, danas je vrijedan i pomalo zaboravljen dokument, neka mala ali važna stepenica u grobnici vremena i prostora.

Igorov interes ide od ikona urbanog identiteta Zagreba čiji stil je bio jači od njihove potrebe da za sobom ostave neki konkretni trag, pa do izuzetno talentiranih ljudi koji su svojim radom dotakli mnoge od Vardara pa do Triglava, da bi na koncu s jednakom strašću pred objektiv stavio i potpuno anonimne djevojke prepoznajući u njima neku fotografsku vrijednost. Takvu zainteresiranost za polarnost života, od slučajnih likova po redakcijama do međunarodno poznatih lica može imati samo autor koji istinski voli život i to malo ljudsko biće koji se trudi u njemu ostaviti dio sebe.

Takav autor je skroman, gotovo nevidljiv i nenametljiv skromni grobar svijetle puti kojega je dopalo da pokopa i države i tehnologije dok je istovremeno predani posvećenik fotografiji kao mediju. Ta Igorova disciplina skromnosti i poništavanja iz raznih, kako osobnih tako i profesionalnih razloga, daje rezultate tek na duge staze. Ne radi se tu o autoru koji svoju vrijednost vidi u količini medijskih objava o sebi i vlastitom potpisu na trećini fotografije. Ovaj radnik svijetlih očiju iz tadašnjih mračnih komora je samozatajan na van, ali ključajući u sebi. Velika većina njegovih radova neki su osobni obračun s

likovima i vremenom koje je nepovratno proteklo, jer na tim fotografijama ostao je i dio samoga autora bez obzira što se radilo o portretima onih drugih.

Kelčec je jedan od onih ozbiljnih i šutljivih, ponekad previše oprezan, no i pun strasti kada je tuđa strast pred njim te uvijek spreman uložiti sate i sate truda kako bi se prošlo vrijeme, ono stvarno ili fiktivno, nekada i bajkovito, oživjelo kroz fotografiju.

Ne čudi stoga da je Igor i jedan od pionira upotrebe Adobeova Photshopa, te da je jedan dio kasnijeg opusa majstorski izveden uz pomoć toga programa podigao ljestvicu korištenja istoga u domaćim okvirima kroz spoj analogno - digitalnih postupaka.

Njegova pripadnost akademskom okruženju radi erudicije, poznavanja povijesnih prethodnica i avangardi novoga doba, analitičkog razmišljanja i poštovanja prema klasicima koje je mogao susretati na hodnicima obiju Akademija, nije ga sprječavalo da intenzivno bude fasciniran i nadahnut subkulturom. Vrijeme je to tadašnjeg ishlapljelog socijalizma i dolazećeg perverznog kapitalizma kada se otvorio neki procjep u kojem je subkultura mogla nesmetano, kao neka društvena užarena lava, procuriti u javnost i tamo ostaviti traga. Svijet je to u kojem greška postaje oznaka stila, a slučajnost nekog jedva zamjetnog motiva na modelu ili poetika distorziranog režućeg rifa postaje globalna metafora tranzicijskog stanja - iz jednog u drugo *sranje*.

Takav stil i osobe koje ga stvaraju imaju pravo na svoga dokumentarista i dobili su ga u Igoru, koji ih je tretirao kao *mračni predmet želje* u namjeri da i te projekte i autore smjesti na domaći i međunarodni kreativni panteon.

Mogućim postavom izložbe u formi diptiha kojima ova izložba obiluje, tj. spajanjem portretiranih unutar kreativnog algoritma koji je nekada manje ili više vidljiv, teže ili lakše dokučljiv, Kelčec ide korak dalje od običnog grebanja po površini arhive umiruće države i medija na izdisaju, i na koncu svojih sjećanja. Nadigra, neka metafizika kojom su portretirani postavljeni jedni pored drugih govori nam o *stvaralačkoj demokraciji* u pristupu ljudskom biću, o autorskom oku koje naknadnim izvidom vidi neku sakrivenu istinu ili treptaj iste što se utjelovljuje kroz pripadajući mu portretni par. Može to biti zagrebačka kuća rijetko viđene arhitektonike i poseban glumački i ljudski put izvrsnog glumca Bože Alića u nekom ozračju opetovanog nemira i teškog pristajanja na kompromise. Tu je i teško prežaljeni Đoni Štulić s jedne strane financijskog i pop kulturnog spektra moći, i avangardna, nikada dovoljno oplakana i cijenjena grupa Sexa koju je nesretna sudbina na samo korak od međunarodnog uspjeha zauvijek samljela u prašinu, a oboje su proizvodi bivše države i žrtve raspada iste.

Jedni pored drugih ti radovi sada nijemo buče i bezvjerbo propovijedaju o vremenu kada je medijski prostor bio namijenjen onima koji nešto doista kreativno i odgovorno rade i o tome promišljaju. Danas, promišljanje javnih osoba o vlastitoj svrsi zaboravljena je vještina. Čemu uopće misliti o sebi kada je moguće imati milijune sljedbenika (shodno tome i dobru zaradu) na društvenim mrežama jednostavno zato jer u stražnjici imate 2 kilograma silikona i imate sluha koliko je tišine u bučnoj, ali harmoničnoj *noise* himni 'Jeanne Jone' od grupe Sexa.

Takva volja i želja za izravnavanjem svih portretiranih, za dovođenjem svih na jednu izlagačku i onda i ljudsku ravan s koje mogu dati više od samoga portreta, kod Kelčeca govori jezikom aktivnog i živog umjetnika koji odbijanjac postupkom naknadne dodane vrijednosti komentira kako svoj tako i tuđi svijet. Igor ga time uređuje na bolje, dodajući mu jednu novu dimenziju koja raste u vremenu, dok većina naš, upravo u vremenu, onako *dorian greyovski* ishlapljuje i nestaje u tihom jadu.

Izuzev ako Vas, kao mene, kojim slučajem, Igor nema u svojoj arhivi.

Humble Pale-skinned Gravedigger

Prior to the rise of digital formats and technology, portrait photography was, along with its authors, degraded in national print, in as specific way.

Photographers who spent the 1980s and fair share of the 90s on the streets or in studios following the whims of their editors were exceptionally technically educated, talented and authorially inclined in the given forms prescribed by portrait or reportage photography.

The cramped nature of the media space in contemporary print with occasional outings in which photography could dominate, asked for a photographer skilled in communication with a *model* from whom he would derivate a personal style of an old-school fanatic, something to stand apart from the others on the market. Igor took this aim towards concrete photography, in mostly improvised conditions, seriously, despite his young age and (in)experience. However, the technical side and technology of the contemporary print in Croatia, especially the periodicals, was only slightly distinct from photocopying on a worn-out cylinder. Fair share of these works' quality was consciously sacrificed or left behind on the print plates of then current technologies, but the resurrection of the said works in the public eye, their *second coming* in their full quality and power had to take place, sooner or later.

Igor Kelčec is a gem of Croatian portrait photography and an author simply driven by his motif. His dual education, first as a graphic designer at Zagreb's Academy of Fine Art, and subsequently as a film and TV cinematographer, made him part of a group of *Academy authors* whose career was not cinematic, but photographic to its core. Still, the film he has been shooting for over 40 years is long, and filled with numerous characters, more riveting than a Turkish soap-opera, livelier than Malo misto (translator's note – renowned Croatian TV-series from the 1970s), and more *mind-baffling* than Lost. In the Upper Floor Gallery Kelčec is exhibiting a short trailer encompassing chosen episodes in the span of 10 years, from 1986 to 1996, a period during which Yugoslavia, magazines he worked for, technology and affiliated industry of 'chemical' photography were dying at the same rate.

The selected works are for the first time freed from their function, they are not signifiers of a certain time and space. Now they are just portraits, testimonies of a relationship between the photographer and the model, a somewhat mystical inclination of the author towards his model and the given media system which in a way served as its backbone. What now remains of the said encounters, with the helping hand of instinct, and let us not be humble, talent, is a valuable and somewhat forgotten document, a small but important stepping stone in the tomb of time and space.

Igor's interest includes the icons of Zagreb's urban identity whose style overwhelmed their need to leave a concrete mark, as well as extremely talented individuals whose work touched upon the crowds from Vardar River to the Triglav Mountain, but also with the same passion focuses on completely anonymous girls, recognising a certain *photographic essence* within them. Such enthusiasm for life's polarity, from random characters dwelling in newsrooms to internationally renowned visages, can only be attributed to an author who genuinely loves life and the humble human being trying to leave its mark upon it.

Such an author is a modest, almost invisible and unobtrusive, *humble pale-skinned gravedigger* who was tasked with burying states and technologies, while at the same time remaining a dedicated devotee of the photographic media. Igor's discipline in modesty and self-effacement gives results on the long run, because of various, personal as well as professional reasons. This is not an author who measures his worth by the volume of media coverage relating to his persona or his signature occupying the entire third of a photograph. This bright-eyed worker of the once-prevailing dark rooms, is self-effacing on the outside, but sizzling on the inside. Most of his works represent a personal confrontation with characters and a time irreversibly forlorn, for in these photographs he has left a piece of himself as an author, although they are portraits of others. Kelčec is one of those serious and quiet, at times overtly cautious, but passionate folk - as long as his passion is requited- always

Emil Matešić

ready to invest hours and hours of labour to bring back past time - real or fictional, occasionally even fantastic - to life by photographic means.

So, it is no wonder that Igor is also one of the pioneers of Adobe Photoshop and that a part of his later oeuvre, which was skilfully executed with the help of this programme, raised the bar in the Croatian framework, with its combination of analogue and digital processes.

His affiliation to the academic milieu, on account of the erudition, knowledge of historical predecessors and vanguards of the new age, analytical thinking and respect for the classics he could encounter on the halls of both of the Academies, did not prevent him from being intensely fascinated and inspired by subculture. It was the era of depleted socialism in the dawn of perverse capitalism in which a gap of sorts emerged where subculture could, like a scorching social lava, unassumingly leak into the public and leave its trail upon it. It was a world where mistake became a sign of style, and where the coincidence of a barely noticeable motif on a model or the poetics of a distorted growling riff became a global metaphor for the state of transition – from one *shitty situation* into another.

This kind of style and persons creating it deserve to have their own documentarist and in Igor they found him – he treated them like the *obscure object of desire*, with the intent of inaugurating these projects and authors into the national and international creative pantheon. Through the potential layout of this exhibition in the form of an omnipresent diptych, arising from the combination of the portrayed individuals within a creative algorithm, at times more or less apparent, more or less comprehensive, Kelčec moves a step beyond the regular scratching upon the surface of the archive left behind by a dying state and exhaling media, and ultimately his own memories.

There is a certain metaphysical quality, a reigning playfulness in the way in which the portrayed have been set up next to each other. Democratic creativity is displayed in his approach to the human being, an authorial eye that through subsequent insight reveals a hidden truth, or a glimpse of it, in the given portrayed couple. It can be a house in Zagreb with rare architectonics in combination with the special acting and personal path of that extraordinary thespian Božidar Alić who finds himself in a perpetually unrestful ambience, reluctantly agreeing to compromise. Or the painfully forgotten Đoni Štulić standing on the one side of the financial and pop-cultural spectre of power, or the vanguard group Sexa, which was never appreciated and mourned as much as they deserved, standing on the other - bad fortune grounded them into dust while they were one step away from achieving international stardom. They are both products of the dismantled ex-state and victims of its collapse.

Standing next to each other these works create silent noise, faithfully preaching about a time when media space was given to creatives who were responsible and thoughtful in their work. Today the mindfulness of public figures about their own purpose is a forgotten skill. Why be aware of oneself, if you can have millions of followers (and subsequently a healthy profit) on social media simply because you put two pounds of silicon into your behind, or you are as sound-deaf as there is silence in the loud yet harmonic *noise* hymn 'Jeanne Jone' by Sexa. Such will and desire to make all portrayed individuals equal, to display them all on the same exhibitory and human level, where they encompass the form of mere portraiture, which can be found in Kelčec, speaks to us in a language belonging to an active and stimulating artist who uses the bouncing method of subsequently added value in order to comment on both his own world and the world of strangers.

By doing so, Igor upgrades it, adding a completely new dimension which grows in time, while most of us, in the said time, fade away like *Dorian Gray*, disappearing in our own silent misery. Unless, like myself, by sheer chance, you are not part of Igor's archive.

Text by: Emil Matešić
Translated by: Dina Pokrajac

Igor Kelčec rođen je 1965. godine u Sisku. Studirao je grafiku na Akademiji za likovnu umjetnost u Zagrebu, te diplomirao na studiju filmskog snimanja na zagrebačkoj Akademiji za kazalište, film i televiziju. Od 1985. objavljuje fotografije u Poletu, Studentskom listu, i nizu drugih tiskovina i magazina.

Tijekom karijere istražuje mogućnosti fotografskog medija u novim tehnologijama i biva jedna od pionira korištenja Adobe Photo Shopa u Hrvatskoj. Značajan dio opusa vezan je za upotrebu digitalnih tehnologija u kombinaciji s analognim rekvizitima koji su tim radovima dali posebnu notu. Fotografirao je i oblikovao niz omotnica glazbenih albuma (preko sedam stotina), naslovnica magazina i časopisa koji su imali značajan utjecaj na formiranje 'javnog izgleda' pojedinih glazbenih izvođača ili javnih osoba.

Tijekom karijere, do sada, osvojio je četiri Porina za likovno oblikovanje diskografskog proizvoda, a nominiran je šesnaest puta. Snimio je nekoliko ikoničkih fotografija od kojih se ističe dio opusa u kojem su se okušali i neki od najznačajnijih hrvatskih fotografa (Posavec, Krpan, Vesović) s Branimirom Štulićem Đonijem, liderom grupe Azra kao protagonistom. Kelčecev doprinos toj temi moguće je vidjeti na njegovoj prvoj izložbi nakon 35 godina rada u Galeriji na katu, gdje je izložena fotografija koja je bila na omotu albuma "Zadovoljština". Živi i djeluje u Zagrebu. Član je fotografske sekcije ULUPUH-a i predaje fotografiju i povezane predmete na Srednjoj obrtničkoj školi u Zagrebu.

Igor Kelčec was born in 1965 in Sisak. He studied graphic design at the Academy of Fine Art in Zagreb and graduated in film cinematography at the Academy of Theatre, Film and Television in the same city.

Since 1985 his photographs have been regularly published in Polet, Studentski list and a series of printed magazines.

During his career he explored the potential of the photographic media through new technologies and was one of the Croatian pioneers in Adobe Photoshop. A significant part of his oeuvre is grounded in digital technology combined with analogue props, giving his works a specific nuance. He has photographed and designed numerous covers of musical albums (over seven-hundred) and magazine covers which were highly influential in forming the 'public image' of certain musical performers or public figures. He has also won four Porin Awards and has been nominated sixteen times for artistic design of discographic products.

He shot several iconic photos with Azra frontmen Branimir Štulić Đoni as the main protagonist – this part of his oeuvre is kindred to the work of the most important Croatian photographers (Posavec, Krpan, Vesović). Kelčec's contribution to the theme can be seen in his first exhibition in 35 years – at the Upper Floor Gallery – in the displayed photo which once graced the cover of the album 'Zadovoljština'.

He lives and works in Zagreb. He is the member of the photographic section of ULUPUH and teaches

Skromni grobar svijetle puti / Humble Pale-skinned Gravedigger

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