

# Photography in the Focus of Cultural-Critical Discourse: Critical Reflections on Photography in Croatia Between 1941 and the 1970s

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# Photography in the Focus of Cultural-Critical Discourse: Critical Reflections on Photography in Croatia Between 1941 and the 1970s

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## INTRODUCTION

Historical discourse on photography was not a research interest until recently, either in Croatian, barring a few exceptions, or in European and American historiography.<sup>1</sup> Owing precisely to the decisive influence of the cultural-critical discourse on the establishment of photography as an art form, the creation of an audience, the formation of the methodology of the history of photography, as well as on the canonisation of individual oeuvres and works, one of the research goals of the project *Ekspozicija* was to explore (critical) writing about photography from its beginnings.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, this text will present the results obtained through the analysis of a large number of relevant writings about photography (prefaces to catalogues, reviews, criticism, discussions, essays), published in Yugoslav, mostly Croatian, periodicals between 1941 and the 1970s.<sup>3</sup>

An analysis of the early development of the understanding of photography and its nature and the formation of the discourse, reveals that, despite an initial delay explicable by the peripheral political and cultural context in relation to the European centres of photography, it fully corresponds to general trends. It is a fact that early texts about photography in Croatian periodicals appear immediately after its invention in 1839 and primarily focus on the

- 1 The important texts that deal with writing about European and American photography are: (Marien, *Photography and Its Critics*, Eisinger, *Trace and Transformation*, Foa, "Textual Inhibitions").
- 2 Other results of researching writing about Croatian photography within the project *Ekspozicija* are: (Šeparović, "Early Writings on Photography in Croatia", Križić Roban, "Who's Looking at Me?").
- 3 This research did not include the reception of partisan photography that accompanied partisan exhibitions held during the Second World War in the liberated area (in Bosanski Petrovac and Slunj in 1942, in Livno and Otočac in 1943, etc.). More about partisan photography in: (Konjikušić, *Crveno svjetlo*).

discovery and development of the medium or provide information about the early studios and their services, mostly in the form of short notices and advertisements. The development of critical and theoretical thought may be traced only from the beginning of the 20th century, when the first exhibitions were organised, societies were founded, and magazines specialised in photography began to be published. On the territory of today's Croatia, nine journals dedicated to photography were published in the period from 1921 to 1941, some aimed at professional and others at amateur photographers, which reflects a strong division within the field of photography.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the majority of texts deal with the question of whether photography is or is not art, initially following the nineteenth-century Baudelairean understanding of photography as a mechanical transcription of the visible. During the 1920s, photography was recognised as an art medium through the pictorialist demand to imitate painting or graphics and only after 1930, under the influence of the Film und Foto exhibition, among other things, a consensus was reached about the artistic status of photography.<sup>4</sup> This was followed by the first attempts to historicise photography, along with the recognition of the phenomenon of the Zagreb School of Photography and the canonisation of individual oeuvres and works. Most of the articles correspond to the genre of photography criticism, which is characterised by a rather rudimentary discursive level and arbitrary and flawed argumentation, mostly without critical potential, while the doctrine of modernist formalism, combined with the aestheticist understanding of art through beauty, taste and harmony, dominates. Among the critics, there are two clearly pronounced currents—the national and the social, whereby the national, whose most prominent representative is August Frajtić,<sup>5</sup> in the spirit of the idea of “our expression”, insists on shooting “our motifs” (national landscapes, costumes, customs and people), while the social one, represented by Otokar Hrazdira,<sup>6</sup> echoing Marxist ideas, advocates depicting the everyday life and work of the poor strata of society.

4 More in: (Šeparović, “Early Writings on Photography in Croatia”).

5 August Frajtić (1902-1977) was a photographer and promoter of amateur photography. He was the secretary of the Zagreb Photo Club for many years (president from 1943) and the initiator and organiser of courses, annual international exhibitions, the founding of the Croatian Photo-Amateur Association in 1939, and in 1938, he was elected vice-president of the then-founded International Union of Photographers. He was the founder and editor-in-chief of the magazine *Savremena fotografija* (1940-1941). He collaborated in Independent State of Croatia publications and after the Second World War left Yugoslavia and emigrated to Argentina, where he remained for the remainder of his life.

6 Otokar Hrazdira (1898-1944) was a passionate photographer of Czech origin who gained a reputation as a master of artistic photography by participating in numerous international exhibitions in which he often received awards. In the early 1930s in Ivanec, he founded the photo section of the Croatian Mountaineering Society Ivančica, and was also the publisher of the photo magazine *Galerija*, the only international magazine dedicated to art photography in Croatia, whose goal was to affirm photography as an artistic medium, and which, due to its small number of subscribers, achieved only six-monthly issues.

## WRITING ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE SERVICE OF STATE PROPAGANDA (1941–1945)

After the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia as a satellite of the Third Reich in the spring of 1941, conforming to the artistic policy of Nazi Germany,<sup>7</sup> art gained an important place thanks to its strong propaganda and ideological potential.<sup>8</sup> The main goal of merging art with propaganda was the acquisition of cultural legitimacy and the creation of the modern identity of the new state with modified borders (extending to the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina but without Istria and most of the Dalmatian coast) and characterised by totalitarianism, nationalism, anti-Semitism and genocidal terror.<sup>9</sup> Among the collective exhibitions of photography, two organised in Zagreb should be mentioned: *Lijepa naša domovino* [Our Beautiful Homeland], which featured works by Croatian photographers (held in October and November 1941), and *Umjetnički svjetlopis naroda Nove Evrope* [Artistic Photography of the Nations of New Europe], which showcased photographers from the Axis member states (held in December 1942 and January 1943, respectively). According to available sources, only one solo exhibition was held during this period—that of Mladen Grčević in May 1944 in Zagreb.

### *Official Discourse: Photography in the Service of the State*

The catalogue of the exhibition *Lijepa naša domovino* organised by the Zagreb Photo Club, represents the purest example of official narrative. The reproductions and the list of works reveal that the selection was guided by ideological and national principles: only the photographs that advocate conservative and implicitly racist values, glorify the leader, idealise the beauty of the homeland, folklore and the traditional way of life, as well as people (only Croats and Bosnians) were selected. At the same time, there are no Serbs, Jews or Romani people in the photos, which implicitly suggests the idea of purity of the nation. The preface consists exclusively of nationalist slogans in the imperative form, addressed to the photographers (“Take photos of your place and its surroundings!”), encouraging them to photograph Croatian regions and people, which is interpreted as “serving the Croatian people”, whereby the importance of organised photo activity through amateur societies is particularly emphasised (“It is your duty to join the Photo Club!”).<sup>10</sup>

7 More about the organisation of the cultural and artistic field in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in: (Brenner, *Kulturna politika nacionalsocijalizma*, Steinweis, *Art, Ideology & Economics in Nazi Germany*; Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*).

8 More about the organisation of the art scene in the era of Independent State of Croatia and Socialist Realism in: (Šeparović, “U znaku totalitarizama”).

9 Prančević, “Propaganda i primjeri uporabe kiparske produkcije”, 163, 170, 181.

10 *Lijepa naša domovino*.

The publication *Naša domovina* [Our Homeland], a collection of texts on the cultural history of Croats, included an article on photography by August Frajtić,<sup>11</sup> in which he explains and justifies the use of photography for state propaganda purposes. He endorses the promotional role of photography, which can, according to him, “completely objectively and truthfully show various events”, and not only show, but also convince and prove the claim: “It is understandable that our country, in its struggle for the truth, in its desire for a correct representation of the overall life in our homeland, also reached for photography, and that it is used abundantly. For this purpose, various state offices were established, whose purpose is to use photography in the service of the state [...] State photography institutions, then some professional photographers, and then the amateurs [...] supply various newspapers and magazines at home and abroad with their work, in order to spread the word about the Independent State of Croatia [...] and the real truth about our life and events in our homeland.”<sup>12</sup> The state apparatus undoubtedly recognised the political and propaganda potential of photography, as the state-ideological narrative based on radical nationalism, racial laws and the idea of “pure” ethnicity start spreading through images and the discourse that leans on the interwar national (*Heimatkunst*) photographic representation.

#### Photo-criticism

It can be said that exhibition selection, official communication and critical discourse work in harmony, speak the same language and tell an identical story.<sup>13</sup> Actual photographic artistic production is carefully selected, framed with certain political intentions and used as material for adapting art in accordance with a particular political viewpoint and ideology.<sup>14</sup> Discourse serves to explain political ideology; it does not tolerate dissonant tones, it is devoid of polemical and critical potential, but also of a coherent interpretive apparatus, and reduced to national (nationalist) stereotypes. In most cases, it is not photography criticism at all, but cultural and political ideology disguised as art criticism. Elementary concepts of profession, criticism and aesthetics are abandoned, form is given almost no importance, while the focus is on the content, imbued with political connotations—it is idealised, romanticised and mystified in a national key.

In a review of the exhibition *Umjetnički svjetlopis naroda Nove Evrope*, journalist and cultural critic Milan Katić,<sup>15</sup> despite appropriating the

11 For more about August Frajtić, see note no. 6.

12 Frajtić, “Snimačstvo”, 1077.

13 More about art criticism during the Independent State of Croatia in: (Galjer, “Prilog istraživanju likovne kritike u Hrvatskoj – peto desetljeće”).

14 Prančević, “Propaganda i primjeri uporabe kiparske produkcije”, 164.

15 Milan Katić (1900–1969) studied conducting in Zagreb, working as a journalist and music, art, theatre and literary critic from 1927 to 1945. He worked in filmmaking since 1942 and is the screenwriter

format of art criticism, offers up an official state-ideological narrative, based on radical nationalism and “pure” ethnicity. The article is dedicated exclusively to confirming and praising the selection of awards, in accordance with the national ideology, not given to individual authors, but to national selections. Katić makes general assumptions and exclusively considers the content from an ideological and national perspective, using clichéd platitudes, without any critical merit and avoiding even the most rudimentary interpretation: “Finland won first prize. It fully deserves this award, because it responded to the task in the best way. We were shown wonderful Finnish landscapes and given a broad view of the life and work of the Finnish country [...] Italy showed us its ancient culture and new life in wonderful picturesqueness [...] Germany shows us the efforts of today’s country in the great world struggle in an extraordinary way.”<sup>16</sup>

Although most of the texts are typical examples of the ideological-propaganda discourse, a certain number of authors still mention elements of artistic expression, writing from the position of moderate modernist formalism but lacking critical keenness. In his review of Mladen Grčević’s solo exhibition, journalist Stjepan Tomičić<sup>17</sup> discusses the nature of photography, emphasising that photography may be considered as fine art if it contains aesthetic and emotional elements, whereby it “enriches art at large with new, specifically photographic expressive means”. In accordance with the modernist rhetoric, the main emphasis in the text is on the author’s personal experience and individuality, which is reflected in the photographs: “He undoubtedly has his own view of objects [...] with a versatile knowledge of technique, in which there are no leftovers or gaps.” In his photographs, Tomičić primarily considers the atmosphere (“discreet and lyrical sensibility”, “muted drama”), notices an interest in psychology and physiognomy of the depicted characters (“the ability to reveal characteristic features and capture personal life”) and particularly praises Grčević’s contribution in the field of reportage, emphasising his sharpness and insight in depicting events, especially sports motifs, “from which emerges an artistic view of physical efforts and the beauty of the human and animal body and movements”.<sup>18</sup>

of the film *Lisinski* (1944) by Oktavijan Miletić. After the war, he directed numerous documentary films.

16 Katić, “Propaganda i primjeri uporabe kiparske produkcije”.

17 Stjepan Tomičić (1919–1999) published several short stories and wrote about cultural issues in Croatian conservative magazines before WWII (*Mladost*, *Obitelj* etc.), and about politics and art during the war for the official Independent State of Croatia newspapers *Spremnost* and *Hrvatski narod*. After the war, changing his name to Alfons Dalma, he worked as a prominent journalist in Austria. He died in Vienna on 28 July 1999.

18 Tomičić, “Izložba Mladena Grčevića”.

The nationalist cultural doctrine of the Independent State of Croatia encouraged the research of national history, thus, one of the first overview of the Croatian history of photography was created at that time. In the above-mentioned article published in the anthology *Niša domovina*, August Frajtić highlights photographers who were Croats by nationality, while also separately listing and evaluating photographers of non-Croatian origin who worked in Croatia, and likewise mentioning the first Croatian photo societies, exhibitions and journals. He also laments that during the “old” Yugoslavia (meaning Kingdom of Yugoslavia), the Zagreb Photo Club was discriminated, unlike clubs in other parts of the country, pointing out the journal *Foto revija* [Photo Journal] as “an opponent of the development of Croatian photography”: “Furthermore, another non-national consortium published through 8 years, the magazine ‘Foto Revija’ [...], which initially enjoyed the moral and cooperative support of certain Croatian photo amateurs, very quickly [...] became more and more an opponent of the development of Croatian photography.”<sup>19</sup> The possible cause of such an unfair judgment of the undoubtedly most influential and longest-running interwar Croatian journal dedicated to photography lies in the fact that it was an official newsletter of numerous photo clubs, not only Croatian, but also Serbian (from Vršac, Beograd and Kragujevac), Macedonian and Slovenian, as well as in the Jewish origin of its editor-in-chief, Franjo Ernst.

#### SPREADING THE SOCIALIST REALIST DOCTRINE THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY CRITICISM

After the Second World War, Yugoslavia makes an ideological turn towards the socialist-communist system, the Soviet Union becomes the role model for the organisation and strong centralisation of the field of art and culture,<sup>20</sup> and the photography scene slowly becomes established. A photography exhibition was held in Zagreb in July 1948, in which Tošo Dabac, Mladen Grčević and Marijan Szabo, the only photographers that were members of the main art association (Croatian Association of Fine Artists, ULUH), participated. Since 1949, national and international photography exhibitions were held regularly in Zagreb, Rijeka, Split and Osijek, as well as in Belgrade and Ljubljana. Solo exhibitions of prominent photographers—Milan Pavić (1950), Zlatko Zrnec and Ivan Medar (1951) and Tošo Dabac (1953)—held in Zagreb, should also be mentioned.

19 Frajtić, “Snimačstvo”, 1079.

20 More about the relationship between politics and art in the USSR in: (Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*).

Art criticism becomes the main medium for spreading the official Socialist Realist doctrine (the Party line) to all segments of culture and art, which is why prescriptiveness becomes a dominant feature of both art and photography criticism discourse. Criticism represents a corrective to “faulty” approaches, and provides instructions on what and how to shoot in order to guide artists in visualising the key ideas of ideological discourse, which should be translated into the language of art.<sup>21</sup> In an article by one of the main ideologues, Ervin Šinko, the role of criticism in a socialist society is described in detail: “The task of criticism is to help build a socialist social consciousness in art and in the artist”, whereby it is necessary to fight against Western and “bourgeois” ideas: “This task imposes on critics the duty to fight, together with the artist, against the destructive influences of the bourgeoisie, which, though economically and politically defeated in our country, has not stopped and will not stop acting with its ideology for a long time”. Since “the artist does not always have to be aware of the ideology he represents”, special importance is given to the critic, who “must be aware of the special laws of the artistic creative process and must [...] reveal the ideological elements, ideological content, and direction of the work of art, so that not only the reader, but also the artist sees more clearly, understands more deeply what he has achieved. Thus, the critic will actively participate in the shaping of social consciousness and the consciousness of the artist himself.”<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, critics, oscillating between dogmatic and humanistic versions of Socialist Realist doctrine, demand heroic themes that glorify the new socialist reality, especially themes from the rebuilding of the country. Also, the required realism of form actually implies an idealised and typical approach to the depiction of people, as well as respect for the three-dimensionality of form, faithfulness of colours and clarity in the portrayal of faces. Through criticism, it is also made clear what is not acceptable—intimate psychological portraits, ‘fragmentary’ landscapes, still lives and themes from literature, history and fantasy with regard to motifs, as well as obscurity, incompleteness, deformations with regard to form—while artworks with these features were dismissed as ‘capitalist’, ‘bourgeois’, ‘formalist’ or ‘decadent’. In addition to the desired subject-matter and form of the artworks, the criticism also evaluates the content—which implies ‘idejnost’ [ideological commitment] and ‘partijnost’ [party-mindedness]—which actually refers to characteristics of the artist, evaluating whether an author is truly dedicated to socialist values. The focus is on ‘contemporary reality’ and on the artist’s awareness of belonging to time

21 More about Croatian art criticism in the period of Socialist Realism in: (Kolešnik, *Između Istoka i Zapada*, 27-54, Šeparović, “Desirable and Stigmatized”).

22 Šinko, “Buržoaski objektivizam i partijnost”.

and space: “It is precisely this move towards the idyllic and idealising that leads to such extreme results, that in a whole series of photographs—especially those that were rejected by the selectors—it cannot be determined in which country and in which time they were taken. It is no longer a question of technique or style, but of the consciousness of the person who took the photograph [...]. Guided by the eye of a socialist reporter, the camera should and must create an artistic and combat diary of our time”.<sup>23</sup>

#### *The History of Photography through a Socialist Realist Lens*

The new organisation of society affected the establishment of a new relationship with the past, thus the history of Croatian art, including photography, begins to be viewed through a Socialist Realist lens. In most articles, interwar photography is disqualified as “decadent bourgeois formalism” that falsifies social reality and produces unrealistic depictions. It was pointed out that interwar photography was “exclusively influenced by Western photography” emphasising “formalistic solutions to the problems of composition, lines, the play of light and shadow”, whereby the “social reality was idealised, and the image of the world was distorted and broken into the smallest parts”.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, a new class view on the understanding of artistic creation prevails: while in the past only wealthy individuals could engage in photography, which was unreachable to the wider population, “today’s photography is mainly made by young people and working class, through the photo sections of associations of the People’s Technique”.<sup>25</sup> It is pointed out that the interwar photo clubs were “a typical expression of the capitalist social order” and that “with their narrow-minded understandings, they prevented any self-initiative of individuals”, which is why the opportunity for photography to play a role in the “struggle for a fairer social order” was missed. Special importance is given to photography created during the Partisan fight and resistance, as well as to the organisations of the Narodna tehnika [People’s Technique], which organises photography courses and strives for “technical education, along with cultural and physical education, to become an integral part of building every human being”. The main goals of photo amateur organisations are education and the ‘massification’ of photography, i.e., the expansion of photography education to the broadest social masses. Photography was supposed to stop being a privilege and become the right of every individual, whereby “current photography should be an expression of the gigantic efforts of our peoples in building a new and happier life”.<sup>26</sup>

23 Bihalji Merin, “Pohvala fotografiji”, 4.

24 Vučelić, “Povodom izložbe umjetničke fotografije”.

25 Ibid.

26 Bosnar, “O zadacima fotoamaterstva u našoj zemlji”. The fact that such tasks were carefully planned and carried out by the photo

#### *The New Photo Journals*

In postwar Yugoslavia two journals specialised in photography were launched: *Naša fotografija* [Our Photography], published by the professional photographers’ association in Osijek in 1947, and the Belgrade based *Fotografija* [Photography] as an amateur magazine that started coming out in 1948. While the official doctrine of Socialist Realism is represented by the amateur *Fotografija*, *Naša fotografija* remains perhaps the only enclave in the cultural field of that time whose discourse remains almost untouched by the ideology of Socialist Realism.

*Fotografija* begins to be published after the Resolution of the Informbiro, when strong ideological pressure occurs in the artistic field, ideological commissions in charge of implementing the doctrine are established, and Socialist Realism is officially canonised.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, this magazine is founded in order to provide the field of photography with an appropriate critical discourse and the necessary theoretical basis for photographic practice. *Fotografija* only published photos with a socialist-realist content, while criticism was supplied with a socialist-realist apparatus: ‘ideological commitment’ and ‘party-mindedness’ are presented as a postulate for the truthfulness of photography, whereas photographers are required to document the construction of the railway and to adopt the teachings of Marxism and Leninism. (Fig. 1, 2, 3)

On the other hand, the magazine *Naša fotografija*, as the official newsletter of the professional photographers association, began to be published before Informbiro and the canonisation of Socialist Realism, as well as before the first post-war photography exhibitions were organised. The articles are almost completely devoid of the discourse of Socialist Realism, and in terms of the published photographs, although there were some photographs with Socialist Realist iconography, it cannot be said to prevail. A series of arti-

clubs is confirmed by documentation from the Archive of the Split Photo Club. Aside from monitoring the Club’s activities, documents provide the guidelines for the club activities, such as establishing as many clubs as possible, increasing the number of active members and involving as many people as possible, which is called ‘massification’ of the photography field. Members of the clubs are encouraged to participate in photographic ‘competitions’, to go to construction sites of the railway and to record work and life on the construction sites, to subscribe to the *Fotografija* journal, etc. Zemaljskom odboru Saveza foto i kinoamatera Hrvatske [To the National Board of the Association of Photo and Cinematographers of Croatia], 11 October 1950, Raspored odlazaka na omladinsku prugu Banja Luka-Doboj [Schedule of trips to the youth railway line Banja Luka-Doboj], 20. II. 1951, Svima klubovima foto i kino amatera / Zadaci [To all amateur photo and cinema clubs / Tasks], 23 V. 1951, all in folder. *Dopisi 1953*, Split Photo Club Archive.

27 More about ideological pressures after the Informbiro period in the Croatian art field in: (Šeparović, “ULUH oko Informbiroa”).

cles by photographer and teacher Milan Fizi,<sup>28</sup> published between 1947 and 1949, represent a completely formalist discussion on certain aspects of photography in the spirit of classical aesthetics and moderate-modernist formalism—photographic techniques, composition, originality, style, ideas, content, etc.<sup>29</sup> In exhibition reviews, Fizi pays no attention to the photographs with a Socialist Realist subject-matter, referring to them as ‘documents’, while at the same time being enraptured by ‘bourgeois-decadent’ motifs and forms, especially by the effects of light and shadow.

It can be said that the journal *Naša fotografija* is a unique case within early post-war Yugoslav culture, where the Socialist Realist doctrine was not implemented. Although the magazine received a sharp rebuke in the form of an article entitled “Anti-scholarly quasi-wisdom of the journal *Naša fotografija*”,<sup>30</sup> in which it was accused of “propagating bourgeois ideology” and “denying the social character of art”, it did not change its discursive policy. In answering the question of how this was possible in the totalitarian structure of the art world, we will again be aided by the discourse in which the division between amateur and professional photography was often highlighted. Since amateur photography was customarily regarded as art, while professional photography was considered craft, Socialist Realism as an art doctrine was strongly implemented in the field of amateur photography, while professional photography, we might say, passed “under the radar”. (Fig. 4, 5, 6)

#### *Deconstruction of Socialist Realism*

The resolution of the long-standing conflict between amateurs and professionals, inherited from the interwar period, began in 1950 with the establishment of the photography department at the School of Applied Arts in Zagreb. Then, in the wider socio-political field, the deconstruction of Socialist Realism and the reconstruction of modernism followed, all accompanied by the credit-monetary turning of Yugoslavia towards the West. The final break with Socialist Realism in the field of photography criticism was marked by the words of Stojan Desnica in the review of the Sarajevo exhibition held in 1953: “Wasn’t there enough prescription and ‘topics’ that were recognised as ‘real’ and ‘ours’, only hard, eight-hour and overtime working hours, the ultimate spasm of muscles, the roar of

28 Milan Fizi (1904–1976) was a member of the Zagreb Photo Club since 1934. From 1948 until his retirement in 1972, he taught photography and film at the School of Applied Arts in Zagreb, where he raised many generations of artists and photographers. From 1933 to 1952, he participated in numerous national and international photography exhibitions and wrote many articles about photography in journals *Foto revija* and *Naša fotografija*. He is the author of the comprehensive textbook *Fotografija* (1960).

29 Fizi, “Estetika i fotografija” etc. (1947–1949).

30 Milojković, “Antinaučna mudrovanja časopisa *Naša fotografija*”.

machines and the heat of foundries? [...] Is there anything else in life apart from those eight hours in one day? Doesn’t man have children, rest, fun, trips, nature [...] Can he see anything beautiful, bright, smiling, pleasant around him, besides the hard work?”<sup>31</sup>

#### RARE CRITICAL THOUGHTS ON ART PHOTOGRAPHY AFTER 1950

Compared to earlier periods, in which critical and theoretical texts are rare, at first glance, we could assume that the mid-1950s ushered in a more favourable time for writing about photography. However, upon examination of professional journals, relevant critically intoned articles will remain rare. Another problem is a lack of continuous publication of texts, necessary in order to achieve a significant shift in critical writing and interpretation of photography.

An important source of writing about photography is the already mentioned magazine *Naša fotografija*. Although, for the most part, their articles are addressed to amateurs, primarily given the numerous technical tips continuously published throughout the years, occasionally we encounter a certain number of articles that come nearer a critical approach to photography.

At that time, there was no general statement regarding art photography, whereby photography was very rarely addressed in the context of art; it was still considered as belonging more to a technical skill than art. The interpretation of the term in the mid-1950s may be found in the critique of the exhibition of Slovenian photographer Peter Kocjančič by Franc Bajd from Ljubljana. He begins ambitiously, pointing to the so-called “Frankfurt conversations” run by Georg Basner, that took place a year prior, on the occasion of the “big photo exhibition”.<sup>32</sup> Although the article does not mention the exhibition in question, the author states that it was groundbreaking, so very likely he is referring to *The Family of Man*. And, while the event in Frankfurt may not be crucial for the Croatian nor for the Yugoslav scene, it is still mentioned here, primarily because of the type of discourse encouraged in the article. Members of various cultural fields participated in the Frankfurt conversations (official, sculptor, dramatist, art critic, television expert and “ordinary amateur, photography lover”); first they discussed photography as a reflection of time; the second conversation focussed on photography opening its way to art, stressing that “photography is best when it soberly documents what is significant”; the third conversation tackled the role of photography in the contemporary world; while the fourth addressed the extent of possibilities of expression—words, description and pictorial representation. Judging by the stated views, photography

31 Desnica, “Antinaučna mudrovanja časopisa *Naša fotografija*”.

32 Bajd, “Misli o savremenoj fotografiji”, 30.

was interpreted in terms of “independent even as art, although this is not its main goal”.<sup>33</sup> Insistence on an artistic approach was considered a sign of an inferiority complex that photography does not need. The article ends with a critique of the exhibition of the Slovenian photographer, where the vocabulary narrows and the opinion is formed around the mood, about the content that does not hide itself, and about the artist’s sober and thoughtful way of looking. From today’s point of view, the comments seem quite basic, however, they still introduce the discrete language of photography into the discussion, which is a significant shift compared to the earlier period.

In the mid-1950s, photography was often emphasised as a “means of getting to know and bringing people together”,<sup>34</sup> an attitude that to some extent anticipates the exhibition *The Family of Man*, presented for the first time in 1955 in New York, then in 1957 in Belgrade and a year later in Zagreb.<sup>35</sup> Namely, the criticism of the 10th international art photography exhibition in Zagreb, along with the mentioned statement, suggested that photography is the most powerful propaganda tool used all over the world.<sup>36</sup> These statements also echo the previous period of the late 1940s and early 1950s and the fundamental influence of socialist modernism and rigid politics, which would soon become abandoned. The information in the articles is often motivated by an effort to discern the national characteristics of photography. Apart from statistical data regarding the number of pictures sent to be exhibited, technical details prevail, especially about the quality of light, while, from today’s perspective, the very small number of illustrations included in the catalogues and/or magazines presents a particular problem. Namely, without enough visual data, it is not possible to draw conclusions about the quality of the works or their motifs, and we are often left only to imagine what the exhibitions looked like without knowing many details. The question of artistic in photography is raised even in the case of Tošo Dabac, one of the most famous Croatian photographers of indisputable quality, so it remains unclear how the authors of the texts understood art photography. The influence of politics is noticeable in awards decisions, in which both the federal committee and the republican committees for photography participate, while comparisons in terms of quality of production between American and British authors who participated in that exhibition, in relation to domestic ones open up a number of problems that have affected the creativity of Yugoslav authors, in addition to others related to quality of paper, films, the possibility of developing and printing photographs, etc.

The representational meanings of photography in the 1950s were largely limited to credibility and the documentary approach, as Bajd pointed out in

33 Ibid., 30.

34 Frelih, “Ob X. mednarodnoj razstavi umetniške fotografije v Zagrebu”, 10.

35 More on the exhibition in: (Orlović, “Izložba *The Family of Man*”).

36 Frelih, “Ob X. mednarodnoj razstavi umetniške fotografije v Zagrebu”, 10.

his critique. The writings of Milan Fizi, whose book *Fotografija* [Photography; first edition in 1960] (Fig. 7) is considered an almanac encompassing all possible areas, align with such an understanding, while an examination of its content demonstrates the breadth of its scope. This professor, who educated many generations at the School of Applied Arts in Zagreb and exerted a great influence on the scene, took issue with the meaning of representation, especially when he undertook criticism of works that leaned towards abstraction, surrealism, combined techniques such as collage and the like. Given his great influence, it is important to mention his “struggle” with the understanding of photography and his insistence on logical forms intended for the “broad masses”. Fizi advocates photography the presentation of which people understand, while anything that deviates from such an approach almost automatically receives a negative attribute of “exclusiveness”, something new and modern that is often incomprehensible to him. He wrote editorials in a number of issues of *Nаша fotografija*, in which it is evident that he considers photography as “concrete creativity” that serves to show “objects that exist in reality, unlike abstract representations, where something of the concrete reality can only be glimpsed”.<sup>37</sup> His texts assist us in becoming acquainted with the prevailing attitude about the photography scene, where “objects are the starting point of image formation”,<sup>38</sup> which is what he taught young generations of photographers. In his own words, “An old discarded shoe alone in a picture will not represent much. But if we place that old shoe next to the column showing kilometres and record it, its meaning in the picture changes immediately. A new value emerges from their relationship.”<sup>39</sup> This kind of formal narrative is what was expected of photography; it was often a carefully arranged meaning that was banal, and which had a strong impact on the national scene. Only a few photographers will manage to escape this way of thinking, while a meaningful discussion about the role and importance of photography will have to wait until the end of the 1960s.

The dominance of the attitude about the objectivity of photography, which is therefore unlike any other pictorial art, the question of truthfulness and the faithful reproduction of reality are qualities that stand out in a series of writings from the mid-1950s onwards. The period is interesting because it provides an insight into the details on the amateur scene, whereby the magazines served as an educational platform, relatively easily accessible to those interested. However, while we encounter encouragement of contemporary tendencies in other environments, the local photo clubs and magazines fiercely advocate “beautiful and eye-pleasing photos”, while “the direction of photography that is today called contemporary” is described as “pointless failed experiments, pictures without head or tail, the meaning of which no one understands and which look like a mental

37 Fizi, “Predmeti u slici pričaju”, 85.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.



patient”.<sup>40</sup> The problem will escalate with the attitude that, in photography, “art serves only as a reverse, an external sign for internal worthlessness”, while the basic criterion was the satisfaction of people not ready for something new and uncertain. The pictures had to be popular and accessible, portray people and scenes with which viewers could identify.<sup>41</sup>

Even when certain specific terms are used, the writers often do not understand their origin, nor do they delve into the depth of their meaning. Thus, the unknown author of the text “My World” will comment on subjective photography, a term that has a specific meaning in the history of post-war photography—the so-called *non-functionalised* photography, a phenomenon defined by Otto Steinert, specific to Germany, whereby Steinert did not only refer to the aesthetic, but also employed it to encompass the economic and ideological needs of post-war West Germany.<sup>42</sup> Unlike him, the unknown author understands the adjective *subjective* literally, considering that, in fact, everything in photography falls under this term, which he identifies as “my world”. Although the text was published when subjective photography was already defined and in decline (1951–1958), at no point does it refer to Steinert, nor does it describe the position of the subjective, which is formed from the phenomenological position “of the mutual implication of subject and object, from the phenomenological method that involves intending, intuiting, reflecting upon, and describing phenomena”, as Hugunin points out.<sup>43</sup> Such taking over of key words in the context of national photography and criticism does not bring much-needed progress, which may have something to do with ideology. In contrast to this contribution, Miodrag Đorđević, a candidate for Master of Art Photography in the Belgrade *Fotorevija*, reports on the exhibition of subjective photography in Saarbrücken, attempting to explain it to the readership at least to some extent, although he also considers subjectivity to be one of the fundamental characteristics of any photo.<sup>44</sup> Given that, on the national level, truthfulness, documentarity and other representational characteristics of photography were insisted upon, the position of subjectivity in the formally assigned area remains questionable. However, unlike the aforementioned unknown author, Đorđević is still more open to experiments and a new way of seeing, to a small extent beginning to be applied in photographic practice in Croatia and Yugoslavia.

## THE “ZAGREB SCHOOL” OF PHOTO-CRITICISM

To expand the knowledge of art photography criticism, we should mention Mladen Grčević, a photographer who was close to Steichen and advocated

40 Hunert, “Dobra slika”, 113.

41 Karas, “Fotografija i umjetnici”, 150.

42 An., “Moj svijet”, 59.

43 Hugunin, “Subjective Photography and the Existentialist Ethic”.

44 Đorđević, “Subjektivna fotografija”, 8.

the principles of the exhibition *Family of Man* in his own work, while a small section of his oeuvre is dedicated to experiments with light and camera-less photography. In his comprehensive study *Art Photography in Croatia 1891–1940. The Phenomenon of the Zagreb School*,<sup>45</sup> (Fig. 8) he devotes himself to a topic which continuously caused problems when writing about and understanding photography. Grčević observes that the pre-war era magazine *Savremena fotografija* [Contemporary Photography] was one of the foundations of art photography, while Zagreb was a city where the progress of art photography was advocated. Grčević is looking for a collective expression and style that would unite photographers of various generations; however, enumerating the reasons why someone is considered an art photographer remains in the realm of statistics—the number of top-quality works (exhibited and/or rewarded in juried exhibitions, possibly international ones), the number of participations in juried exhibitions, and the like. His study is an important historiographical contribution to the knowledge of the fundamental events in this area, while from the position of critical consideration of the scene written in the mid-1960s—without the need to comment on anything recorded after 1940—it offers basic information about the economic, political and social circumstances that influenced the development of photography. For the sake of curiosity, let us mention that his Master’s degree is one of the first three of such Master’s theses in the world dedicated to photography. Nevertheless, his luminograms and experiments with the medium caught the eye of some critics—Belgrade’s *Fotorevija* publishes the two-part article “Abstract Photography”, which also mentioned Grčević. Although abstraction and experiment are not the only artistic approaches relevant to photography, it is interesting to follow the differences in their treatment and the understanding of creative freedom, without the author getting “lost” between the description of reality, truth and comprehension.<sup>46</sup>

An important shift occurred in 1968, when the editors of the magazine *Život umjetnosti* devoted its 6th issue to photography.<sup>47</sup> (Fig. 9) Grčević wrote the editorial, expressing the view that the medium is “at the same time technique and art, a means of information and an element of expression”, asserting that “in the meantime, photography has taught people to look”.<sup>48</sup> This essential shift speaks to the evolution of the reception of the photographic image, supported by translations of key texts (e.g.,

45 Grčević, “Subjektivna fotografija”, 153.

46 Pantić, “Apstraktna fotografija”, 17.

47 *Život umjetnosti* is a journal first published by Matica hrvatska, and from 1973 by the Institute of Art History, Zagreb, which nurtures the tradition of continuous publication since 1966. Dedicated to the fields of modern and contemporary art, urbanism, architecture and design, the journal covers a wide range of topics from addressing specific phenomena to deliberating on relevant issues at a theoretical level.

48 Grčević, “Za jednu univerzalnu povijest fotografije”, 4.

Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* was published in the same issue, and semiotician Umberto Eco's text in 1970). A kind of "translation" of the specific visual language of photography into text and vice versa began to appear in critiques at that time, which prompted a change in the overall mode of writing about photography. In the same issue of that journal, Stojan Dimitrijević ambitiously undertakes to define the "physiognomy of contemporary photography".<sup>49</sup> (Fig. 10, 11) He is particularly critical in relation to photographic events in Yugoslavia—he calls it an "outsider in the world of exhibition photo"—which has, in his opinion, completely lost touch with the happenings in the world at large. In addition, he describes the local situation as a "voluntary' isolation that is the result of self-satisfaction and belief in one's own genius", adding that "we do not have a single person who would stand for something in the world of today's photography and unfortunately no one even bothers to try to find out why this is so".<sup>50</sup> This archaeologist and university professor, a fan of photography and himself a photographer, will also critically comment on certain exhibitions in the coming period, whereby he views any steps towards conceptual strategies or distance from reality as questionable, even incomprehensible. In his case, too, one can see his adherence to sociology as one of the theoretical starting points of that time, as well as an emphasis on the significance of social circumstances that only a few photographers consider.

#### THE MAGAZINE *15 DANA*—AN EXAMPLE OF EXCELLENT IMAGE CULTURE IN THE 1960S

Subsequently, at the end of the 1960s, two series about photography were published in the magazine *15 dana*. The magazine was published as part of the activities of the Centre for Culture of the Workers' University "Moša Pijade" in Zagreb, contributing to the education of numerous workers who received additional training there from the end of the 1950s onwards. Apart from professional knowledge, they were provided with numerous lectures in various fields of culture. This way, the workers' education was enriched with the content from the magazine, published by that institution, which still constitutes an exceptional compendium of different information.

By researching the *15 dana* archive, (Fig. 12, 13, 14) we become aware of the level of image culture that was fostered in it. Numerous covers featured works by eminent photographers; from Karlo Drašković, who took a striking portrait of an old man at the end of 19th century, through the positive-negative experiments of Nikola Vranić in the 1960s and 1970s, the always excellent Tošo Dabac, all the way to experiments with the medium and borrowing frames from film—when it comes to photography, we encounter an elaborate visual language that, on the thematic level, might

49 Dimitrijević, "Pristup definiranju fizionomije suvremene fotografije", 37.

50 Ibid., 40.

function as an announcement of content of a given issue, and on the level of meaning continuously promotes contemporary photography. Photographs on the covers often function as independent messages, while the image culture advocated by *15 dana* speaks in favour of understanding the specificity of the photographic language, "translated" into the printed medium of the magazine in which it (also) functions as part of the graphic design.

Two series dedicated to photography are important (and still rare) contributions to the development of photography criticism and theory, and were written by Ranko Smokvina and Slobodan Tadić in the late 1960s. (Fig. 15) Thanks to them, we are able to document which photographers were in the focus of their critical observations, which often occur under the influence of sociology, a sort of predecessor of cultural anthropology, and new theoretical knowledge that it will soon start to represent. In a certain way, Slobodan Tadić succeeds Grčević—both studied art history, but their understanding of photography is fundamentally different. The series Tadić published in 1968–1969 is characterised by an engaged mode of writing, precise assessments of individual works, and an understanding of the subject infused with sociological attitudes. His views are the result of accepting the new liberal, left-wing thought originating from the West, relying on the democratisation of culture, while retaining Marxist-oriented criticism. (Fig. 16) Complemented by the artists' statements, detailed descriptions of the shooting circumstances, and pronouncements about the social and political context, Tadić's texts reveal not only his excellent knowledge of media issues—because he himself took photographs—but also his ability to convey the complex meanings that photography mediates. His political attitude, formed in relation to the events in the former Republic of Biafra, Vietnam, the Hungarian revolution, the aggression against Czechoslovakia and the like, is evidenced by the articles and topics he selects. Particularly impressive is the contribution on the 100th East Street in New York, a socio-critical photographic reportage by Bruce Davidson,<sup>51</sup> in which Tadić compares the critical approach of this photographer to the general human state of the soul, describing even the photographs that were not suitable for publication due to details.

In addition to him, from 1968 until 1971, Ratko Smokvina from Rijeka, a photographer, curator and leader of the photo-cinema group of Rijeka students, published a series on photography. This interesting and excessively self-effacing photographer and sailor favoured experimentation with the medium, neo-avant-garde methods, but also life-photography. The selection of topics for *15 dana* demonstrates a broad knowledge of contemporary trends, as well as the history of photography, from which he knew how to select examples of photography of the so-called new era, especially from environments that were at the time very closed off from the West such as the USSR, as well as Yugoslavia. Very early on, he noticed

51 Tadić, "Njujorška 100-ta ulica".

the fundamental problems troubling the domestic scene, from a lack of criteria to not publishing photo books, but also, an avoidance of social and engaged photography, which will remain one of the characteristics of the local scene for a long time.

#### THE 1970S AND THE MAGAZINE *SPOT*—AN UNCOMPROMISING CONCEPT OF MEDIATING CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY

A considerable shift in writing about photography occurs with the appearance of the magazine *SPOT* (1972–1978), launched during a period of major changes in contemporary art, especially concerning its activities and the widening of the field of interest and ways of manifesting and mediating artistic content, influenced by political and social circumstances of the late 1960s. The initiative for launching the only magazine dedicated to photography in the second half of the 20th century in Croatia was provided by Radoslav Putar, the curator and, at the time, director of the Gallery of Contemporary Art (today, the Museum of Contemporary Art). He was motivated by the need to develop the general and specific culture of visual communication, whereby photography was interpreted as a specific mode of expression, of documenting and reporting through images. (Fig. 17, 18, 19)

The international selection of authors of various generations and modes of artistic expression, an early interest in theoretical considerations of multimedia art practices, as well as in experiments such as generative photography, Xerox and other aspects and tendencies of the so-called “new photography”, were manifested in a thought-out and uncompromising concept of mediating contemporary photography. Its visual and textual content aimed at critically examining the environment and circumstances, ensuring the survival of progressive art photography. Overall, eleven issues were published, which were—along with the exhibition “New Photography” launched at that time—crucial for the visibility of visual considerations that marked the 1970s. The editorial board consisted of curators and photographers (Petar Dabac, Enes Midžić, Dimitrije Bašičević, Marijan Susovski, Jozo Četković, Nenad Gattin), who also collaborated with professionals from other Yugoslav republics; i.e., with Slovenian photographers and theoreticians (Zmago Jeraj, Mitja Koman) and theoretician Ješa Denegri from Belgrade.

The editorial board promoted photography as a medium that can, to a certain extent, stimulate the process of determining the culture of the social environment, selecting examples of advanced ideas, new understandings and research. Among other things, an effort was made to consider critically the environment and circumstances of the survival of the progressive artistic context of photography, by understanding photography as a medium of research and proposing new ways of communication according to the principles of semiotics. The culture of using the technology inherent in the medium made it possible for the magazine to publish works that

at the time significantly contributed to the expansion of the discourse within which photography was usually considered. This was followed by the writing of Albert Goldstein, an art historian and literary scholar, who at the end of the 1970s presented a thesis on the posteriority of photography, based on the opinion that “Photography as a tool is a system that employs the photographic process, which deliberately excludes the performance and invention of photography as a language”;<sup>52</sup> photographs are not “memory” or direct evidence recorded almost at the same time as the event, but represent “the use of material or a template to create one’s past”. His writings on *blurred* concepts in photography are based on semiotics, on photography as an autonomous and autochthonous system of signs, an organism that creates its own performance. This innovative comparatist thinking marks a completely new direction that contemporary criticism of photography would take, which reconsidered how photographic perception affects the way of viewing and gaining knowledge.

#### CONCLUSION

Photography is a dynamic field of happenings encompassing flows not only of visual content, but also of meaning and knowledge about the world, about the development of modern society, culture, art, science and other aspects of human life. According to recent research projects on the national level, photography remained on the margins of artistic occurrences for a long time, yet today sovereignly occupies one of the central places within contemporary cultural-critical discourse, as a result of which a need arises for a critical reading of both its historical development and the various roles it plays in society. Its marginalised position led to an utter neglect of theory and criticism, which speaks to a great disproportion in relation to events on the world stage. As early as the late 1960s, it was noted in domestic press that photography held the position of a “complete outsider”, however, this problem would remain unexplored for a long time.

Texts published in the period from the start of World War II to the end of the 1970s offer new insights into the relationship between photography and the socio-political environment, while also providing a better understanding of the scene dominated by amateur photography and a general misunderstanding of the position of this medium in a broader artistic context. At an intersection of thinking about photography as truth and/or document, coupled with a pursuit of the national photographic expression, or else one that should convey the post-war enthusiasm related to the reconstruction and a changed political agenda, this article considers the specificities of writing about photography, which only sometimes involves a critical consideration of the medium. The extent to which this is important is demonstrated by the fact that, on the international level,

52 Goldstein, “Some Comments on a Number of Blurred Concepts in Photography”, 34.

precisely thanks to the development of criticism and theory, photography has become a discursive field and a significant driving force behind the comprehensive development of culture and society, which has encouraged critics and theorists to address it outside of standard paradigms.

As is visible from the relatively modest compendium of domestic publications, it is impossible to consider photography outside the context of social practice, whereby photographers play an important role as social participants who have affected the understanding of the role of photographers, which is neither passive nor innocent, to paraphrase Allan Sekula. In addition, writing about photography is equally not neutral, as evidenced by a number of examples highlighted in the text, especially in the context of the use of art for the purpose of political propaganda and advocacy of a certain ideology.

The paradigm shift that occurred at the end of the 1960s reveals a growing interest and need for understanding the specific language of photography, but which is only occasionally accompanied by an adequate critical apparatus. It starts to appear only in the 1970s, primarily within the circle of the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, as well as related institutions in Belgrade, Ljubljana and Maribor, ready to accept novel ways of operating that paved the way for a new understanding of photography, whereby its place within art was no longer in question.

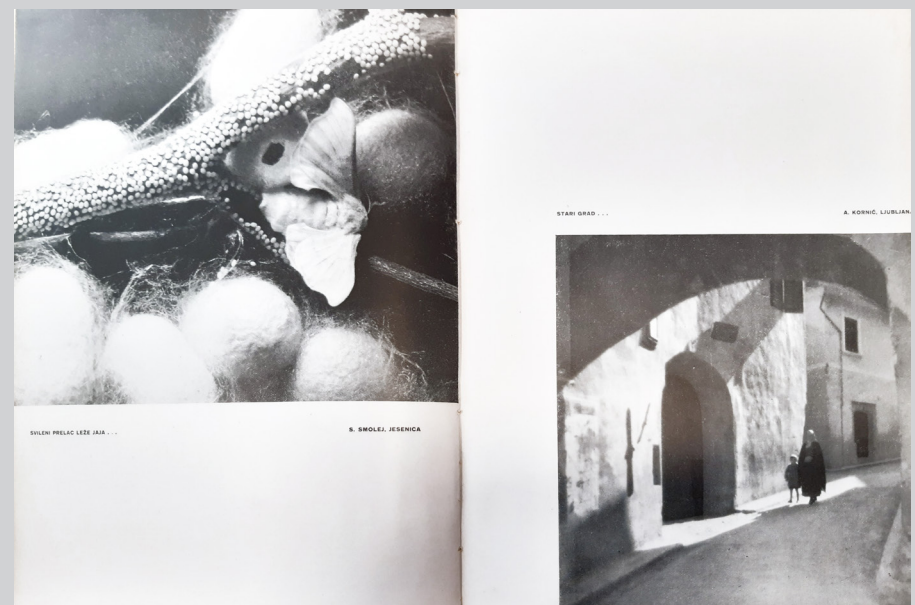
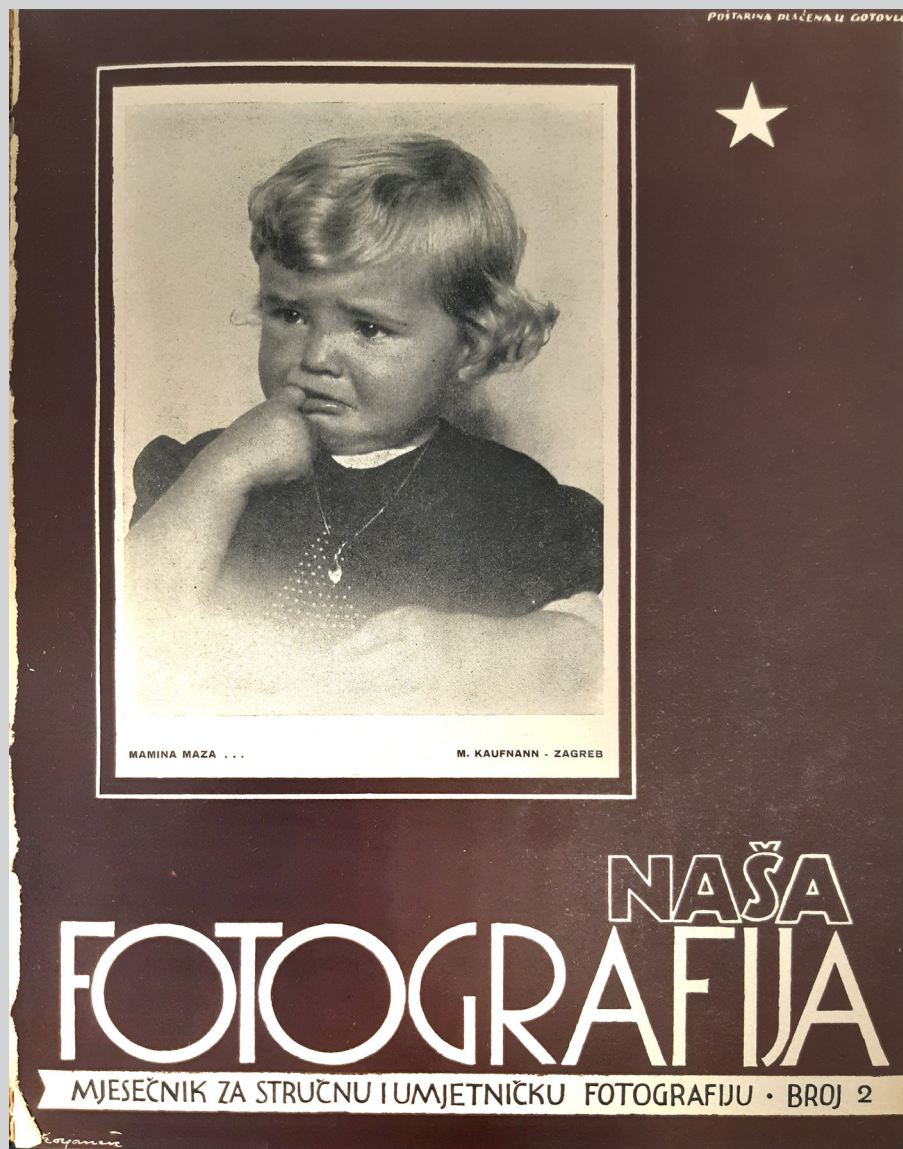
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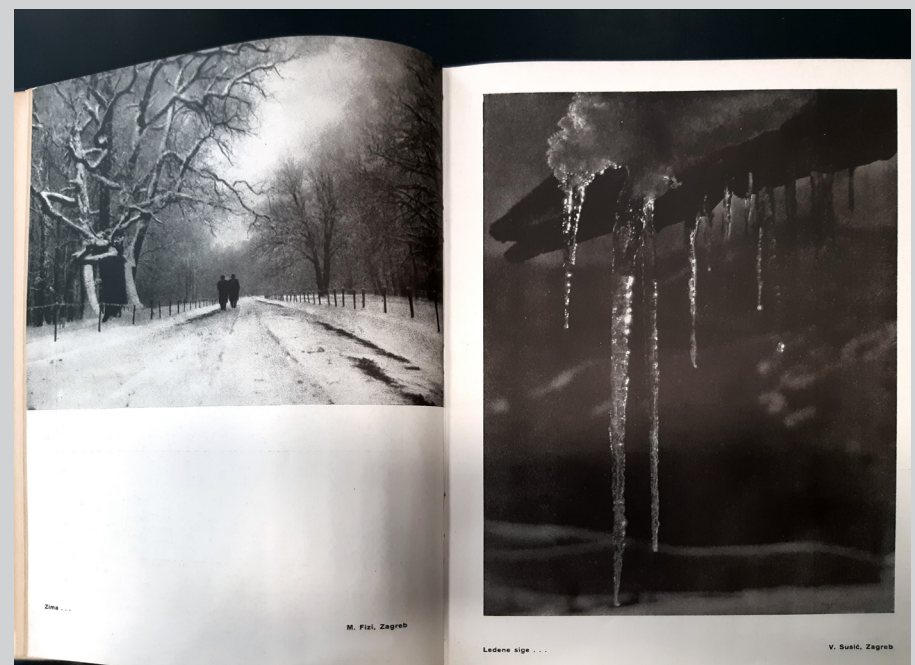
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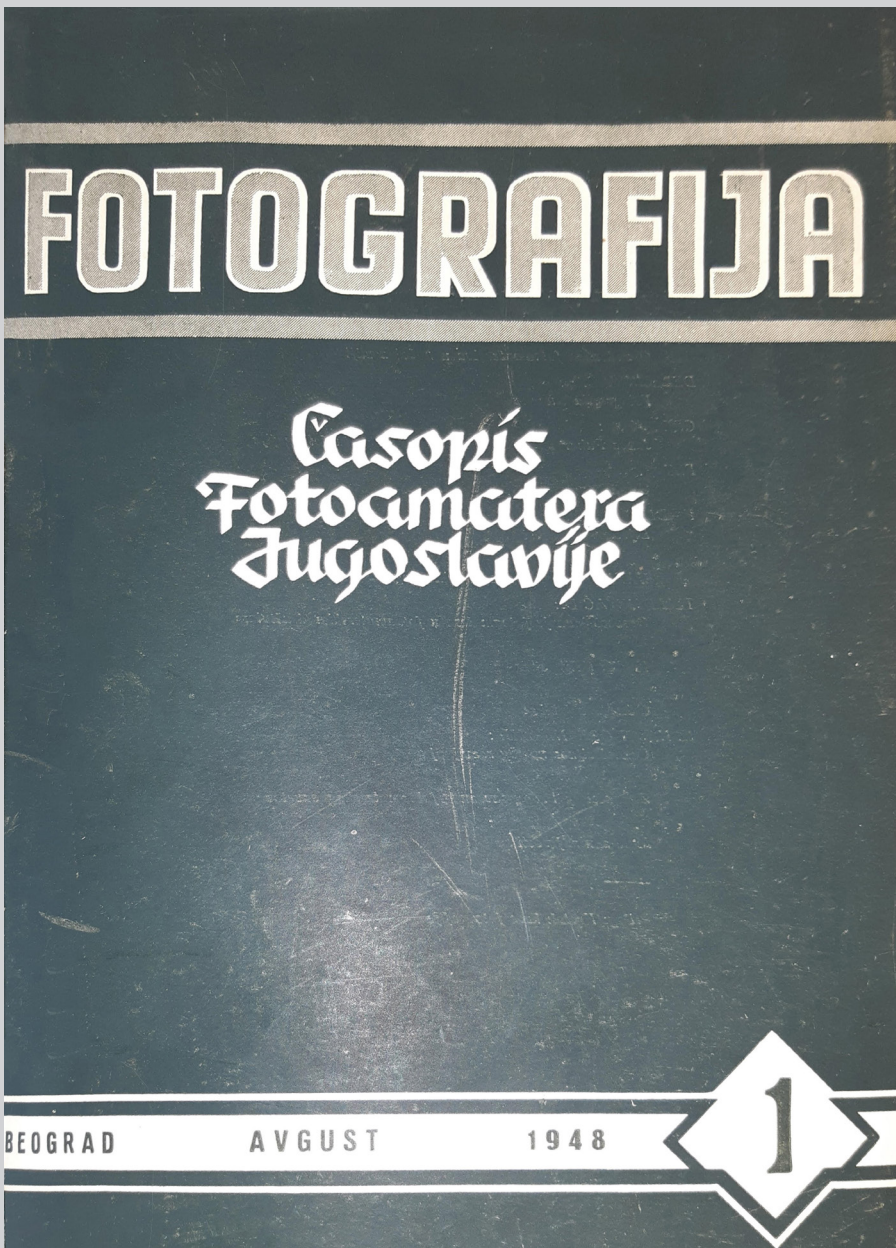
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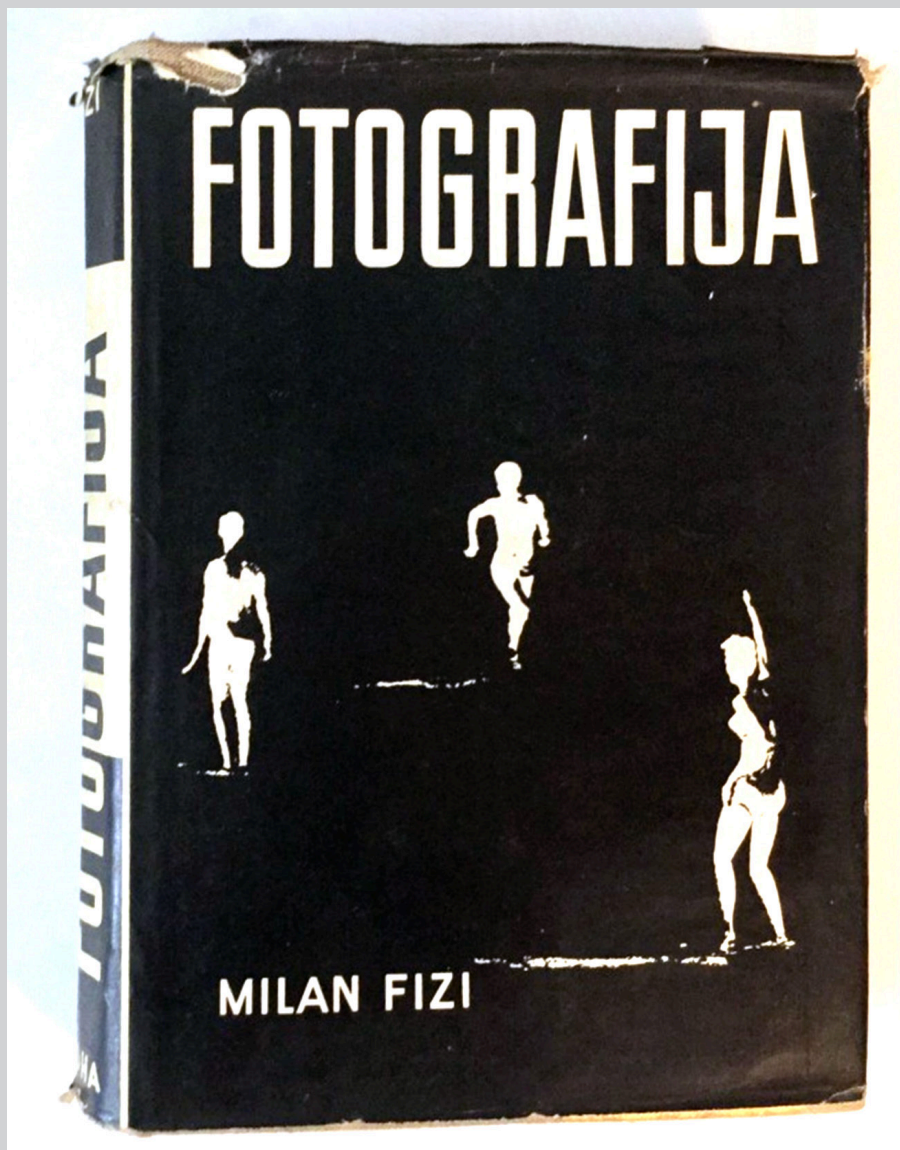
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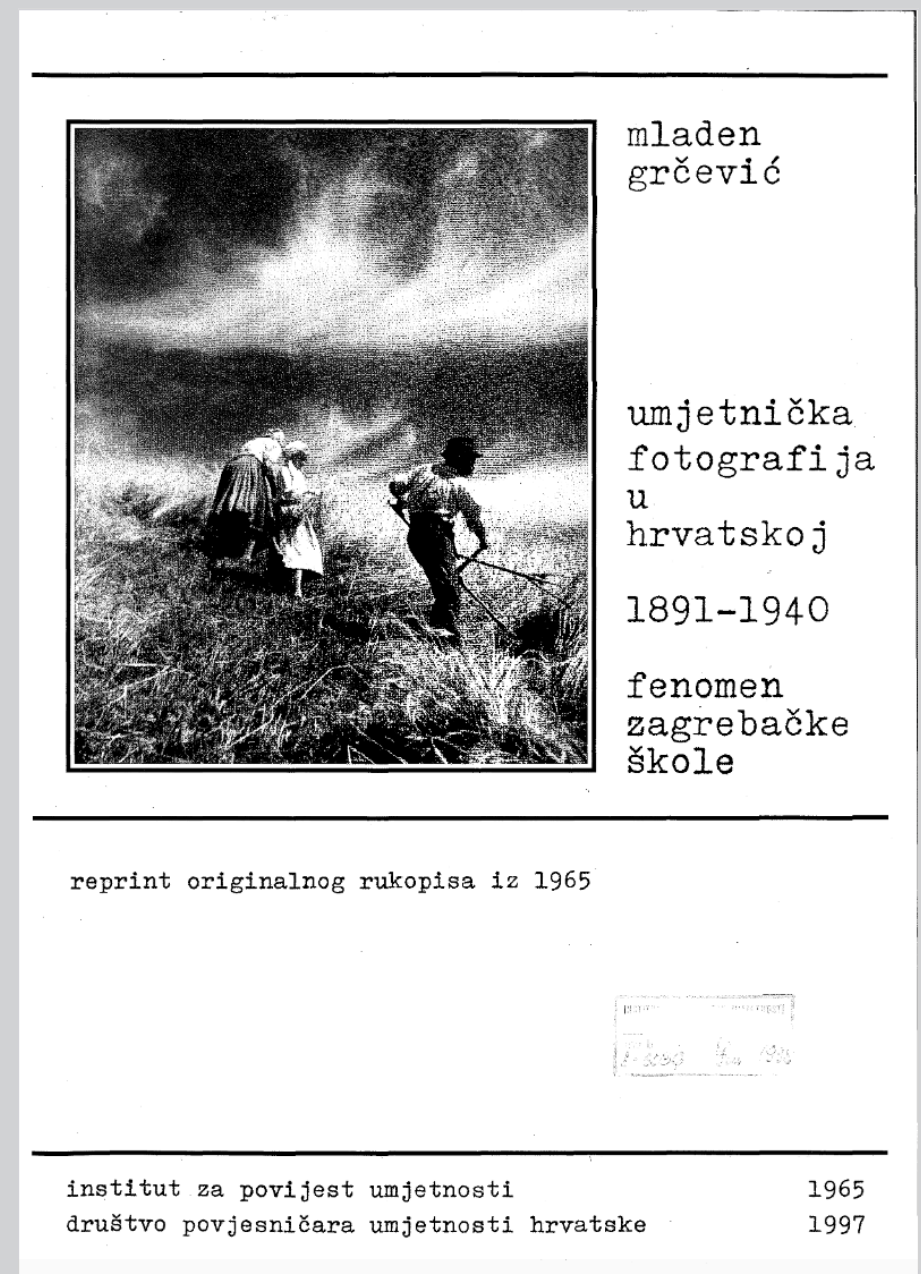
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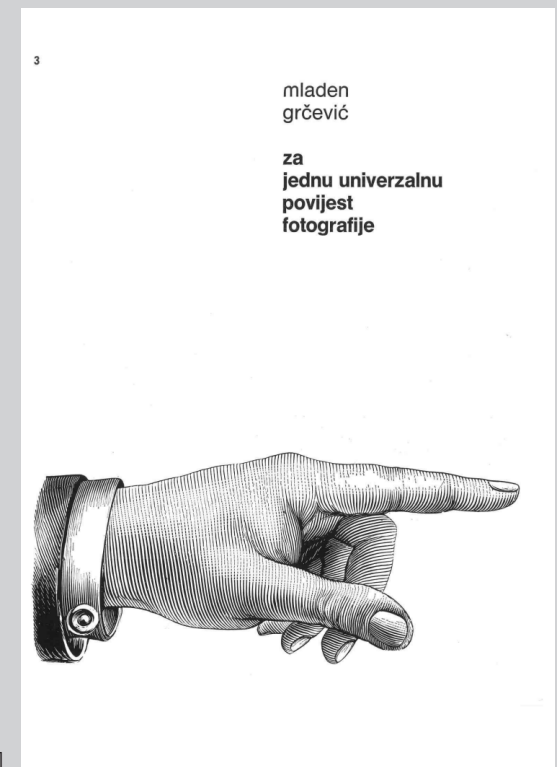


[8]

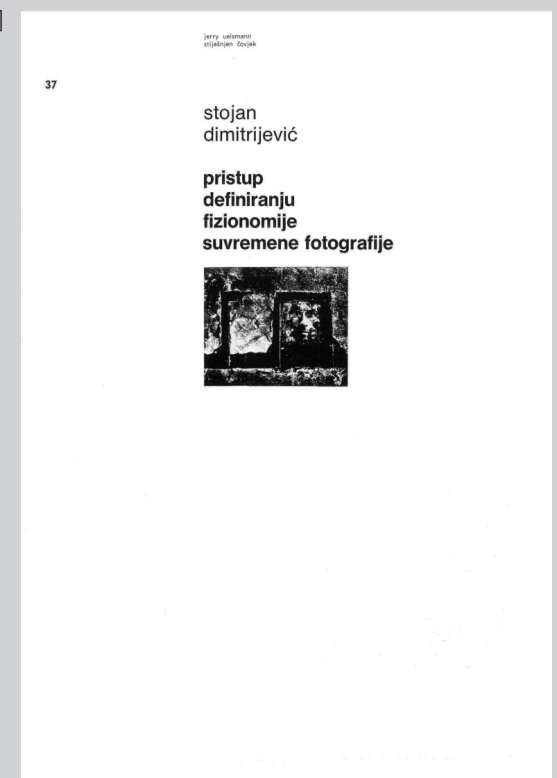




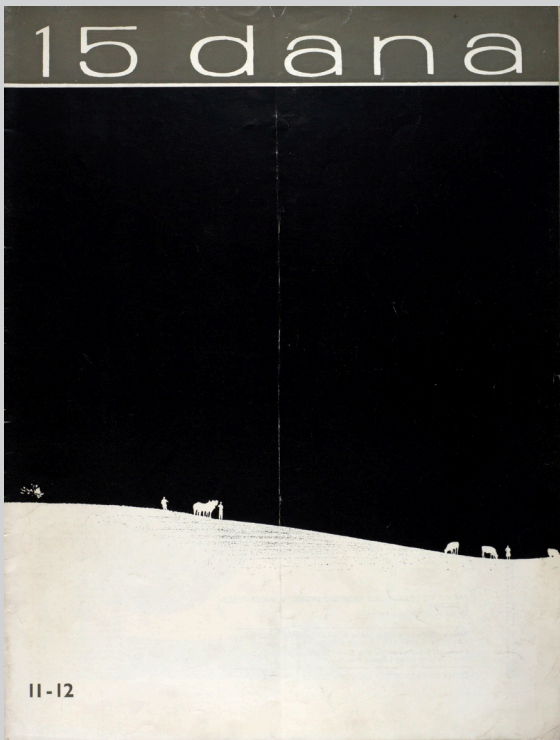
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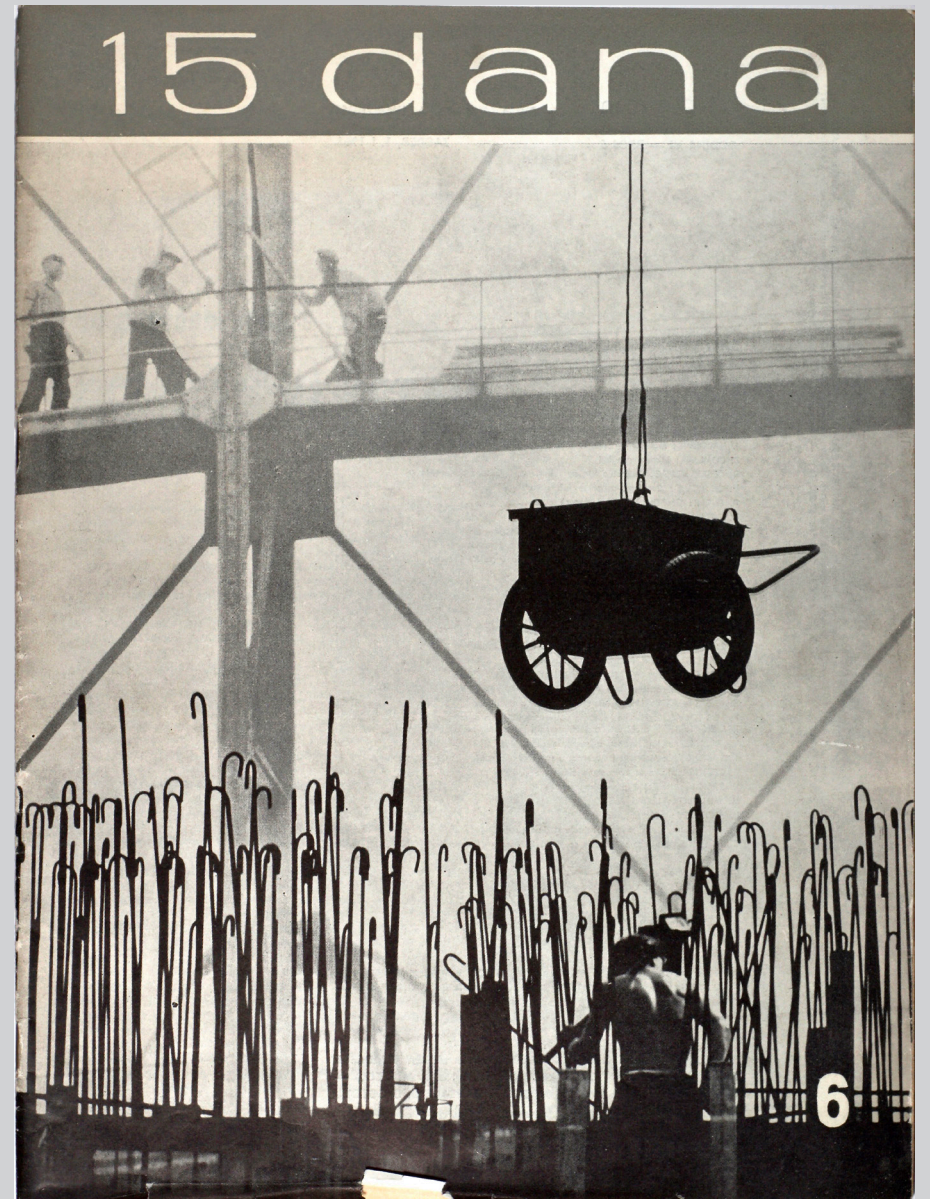
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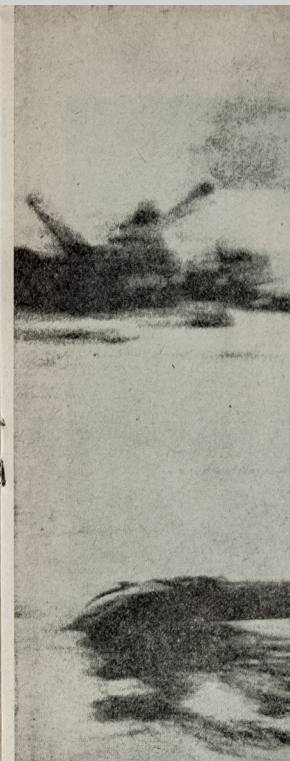
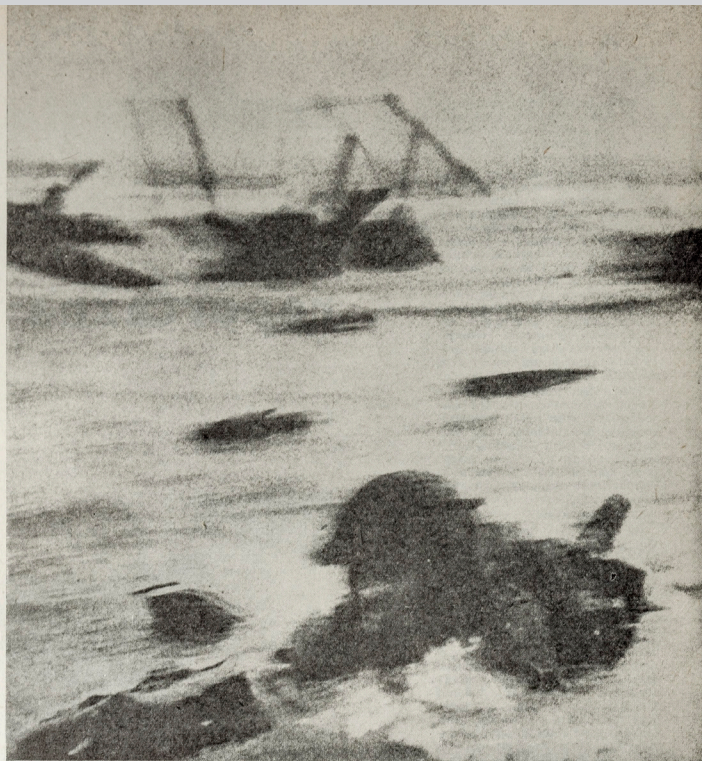
finiran izraz. U gornjem pojasu slike uočljive su teške, crne konstrukcije ratnih sprava isto tako uronjene u sivo, »zrnato« morje. Capa je ovdje izvanredno uočio i iskoristio difuzno osvjetljenje; ono je rezultiralo »osvijenošću« cijelog kadra (potencirano naknadnim tehničkim postupkom) u kojem kontrapunktiraju »mrnje« crnila. Na taj način Capa je sve plastičke elemente podredio realiziranoj ideji određenog poistovećenja čovjeka i mašine u situaciji rata koji krši osnovne principe ponašanja čovjeka prema čovjeku. Krutost i tjeskoba vladaju ovom fotografijom.

Capa je izvanredno poznao tehniku ratovanja (to mu priznaju mnogi visoki oficiri savezničke armije iz prošlog rata); bio je neustrasiv, ili, kako je on to znao reći: »Volim se kockati.«; bio je svjestan mnogostrukosti svih međuljudskih odnosa u ratu i poštovao je svaki trenutak ratnog vrtloga zigošuci ga svojim iskrenim i humanim stavom, ne služeći se virtuoznim tehničkim zahtovima, nego tehniku podređujući zahtjevu ideje koju želi iskazati.

Od 1955. godine dodjeljuje se vrsnim fotoreporterima visoko priznanje s likom Roberta Capa za fotografije koje su, igrom slučaja, uglavnom snimljene u ratnim sukobima u onom dijelu Azije u kojem je Capa poginuo.

Neka mi bude oprosteno što sam ovoliko redaka posvetio samo jednom čovjeku koji pripada

Slika desno: Robert CAPA: Normandija, dan D, 1944.  
Slika dolje: Alexander GARDNER: Gultysburg, 1863

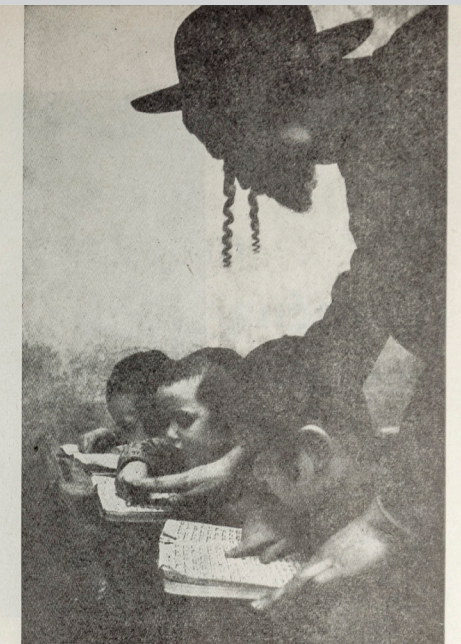


ratnoj reportažnoj fotografiji, koja predstavlja svojevrstan fenomen unutar reportažne fotografije. Međutim, Capina fotografija prelazi granice uskog područja ratne fotografije po svojoj sadržajno-formalnoj dimenziji, koja sadrži Čovjeka sa velikim bogatstvom svog unutarnjeg života. Osim toga, prvi počeci reportažne fotografije vezani su za ratnog fotoreportera Mathewu Bradya (Meljua Bredija) u drugoj polovini prošlog stoljeća. Na žalost, u to vrijeme nije postojala mogućnost reproduciranja fotografije na štampanoj stranici i ta je fotografija imala samo lokalni značaj. Tek je zadnje desetljeće XIX st. donijelo izum polutonskog procesa i prve fotografije pojavile su se u novinama. Fotografija je postala sredstvo masovne komunikacije.

Reportažna fotografija i tada, i danas znači, ne samo fotografsku bilješku značajnog događaja, nego fotografiju koja je »nerežirana«, koja nije snimljena u ateljskom prostoru, nego slobodno slika ljude, »hvata« ih u njihovim različitim aktivnostima, s mnogo spontanosti i neposrednosti. Ona ne podliježe akademskim konvencijama. Razvija se, mijenja svoju fizionomiju, oscilira u kvaliteti, no, uvijek ponovo dokazuje svoju vitalnost produkcijom novih, vrijednih djela.

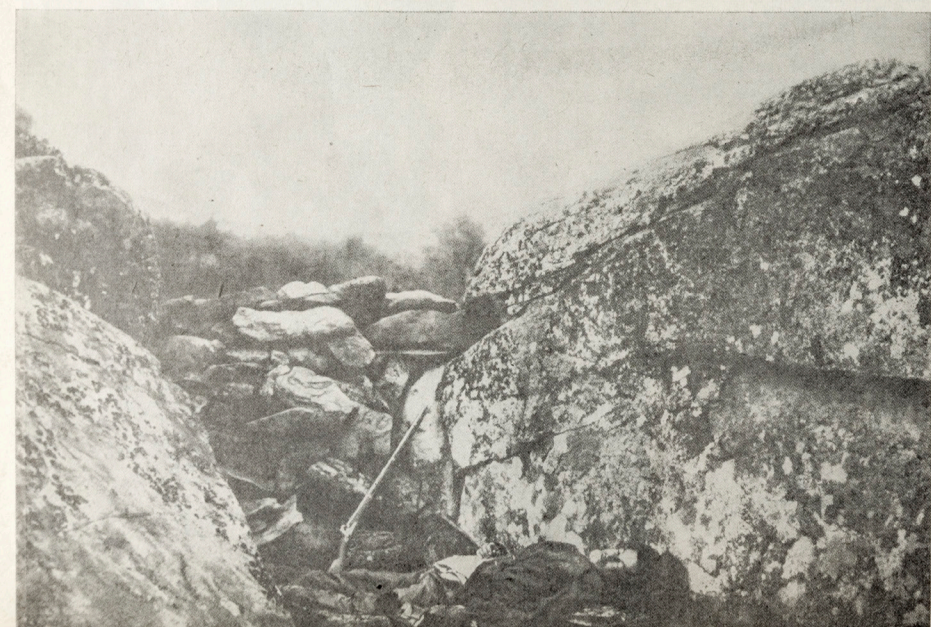
Slobodan TADIĆ

Slika dolje u sredini: CARTIER-BRESSON: Na trkama, Hongkong, 1949.



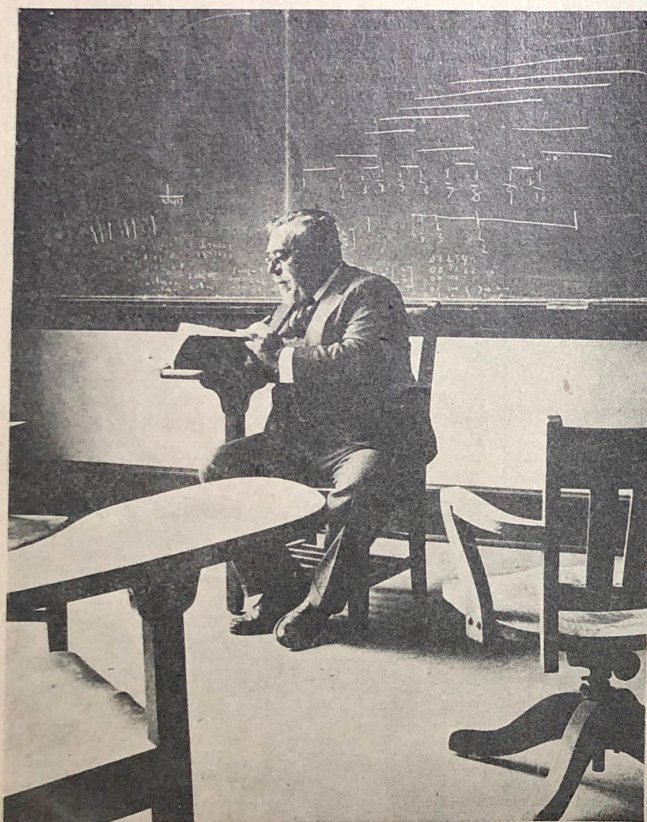
Slika gore: Cornell CAPA: Učenje Talmuda, Izrael, 1955.

Slika dolje: Alfred EISENSTAEDT: Gondoljer, Venecija, 1947.



## foto-reporter

# alfred eisenstaedt



»Norbert Wiener, Cambridge 1950. — Jedna kutija cigara pomogla je da se uspostavi bolji kontakt između fotografa i slavnog kibernetičara. Snimak je nastao u predavaonici nakon predavanja, dok je Norbert Wiener nešto upisivao u Eisenstaedtovu knjigu autograma.

**Kamera je sredstvo pomoću kojeg pokušavam dati smisao svemu.**

André Kertész

Foto-reporterom ili foto-žurnalistom nazivamo svakog tko se bavi fotografijom za novine. Međutim, foto-reporter nije svatko tko se bavi novinskom fotografijom. Čime se bavi foto-žurnalizam? Na ovo pitanje trebali bi odgovoriti oni koji stoje na mjestima urednika fotografije u novinama i časopisima. Ali, odgovori će se razlikovati, a na to upozoravaju i objavljene fotografije u raznim časopisima, gdje je očito da su izabrane po različitim kriterijima.

Treba najprije istaći osnovnu funkciju foto-reportaže. Tu je riječ o povezivanju dva vremenski i prostorno udaljena događaja: snimanja i gledanja (konzumiranja). Fotograf reporter ima dužnost pokazati ono što ljudi nisu mogli sami vidjeti na licu mjesta. Suvremeni čovjek će odmah dodati da je ovdje televizija brža, informativnija, korisnija.

Iako je televizija srodna fotografiji, među njima postoji, barem na sadašnjem stupnju razvoja tehnike, značajna razlika. Za korisnika (konzumenta) televizijska slika je nepo-novljiva, dok je fotografija trajna i u svakom trenutku po želji, upotrebljiva. Prema tome, foto-žurnalizam može i dalje ostati korisno sredstvo ljudskog informiranja.

Drugi je problem kako pojedini časopisi, odnosno njihovi urednici prezentiraju ili uopće shvaćaju fotografiju. Baš na osnovi tog njihovog shvaćanja pojedini fotografi se i opredjeljuju za rad u nekom časopisu, tako da se većinom fotografi istomišljenici nalaze u istim časopisima.

Kad jedan časopis stvori svoj vlastiti stil rada, onda je on postigao novu dimenziju u informiranju čitalaca, tada časopis postaje rasadnik novih ideja i sa sobom vuče svoje pristaše i pobornike takvog načina rada.

Foto-reportera Alfreda Eisenstaedta nalazimo u jednoj vrlo kvalitetno formiranoj cjelini. On je vodeći reporter američkog časopisa »LIFE«. Pored toga on je i jedan od osnivača tog časopisa. Značajne su Eisenstaedtove riječi kad govori o ljudima, psihologiji, uspostavljanju kontakata. O ljudima zato jer su oni njegov najteži objekt snimanja, o psiho-

## film je najjeftinija stvar u fotografiji



»Etiopski vojnici, 1935. — Fotografija je nastala u nastojanju da se prikaže bijedno stanje Etiopske armije. Iako mnogi misle da je postrijedi mrtav vojnici, to nije istina, slika je nastala na jednoj vježbi gađanja.

logiji zato jer on smatra da fotograf mora biti u svakom trenutku gospodar situacije, da mora imati »sve konce u svojim rukama«, i na kraju, općenito o uspostavljanju kontakata, »bogatoga što se samo pomoću njih može prodrijeti među ljude. Zanimljivo je da taj veliki fotograf ne stavlja na prvo mjesto nikakve čisto fotografske značajke, već prije svega općenite — stvaralačke.

Eisenstaedt je do sada snimio 90 naslovnih strana za »LIFE« i bio na 1300 fotografskih »zadataka« (assignment). Razlog tako velikog zaduživanja samo jednog fotografa od strane redakcije ne leži samo u onom prije spomenutom stvaralačkom interesu za ljude već i u virtuoznom poznavanju fotografske tehnike. Ali, i ovdje nalazimo na poseban pristup »tehničkim« problemima. On ih općenito svrstava u dva osjećaja: osjećaj za vrijeme i osjećaj za svjetlo.

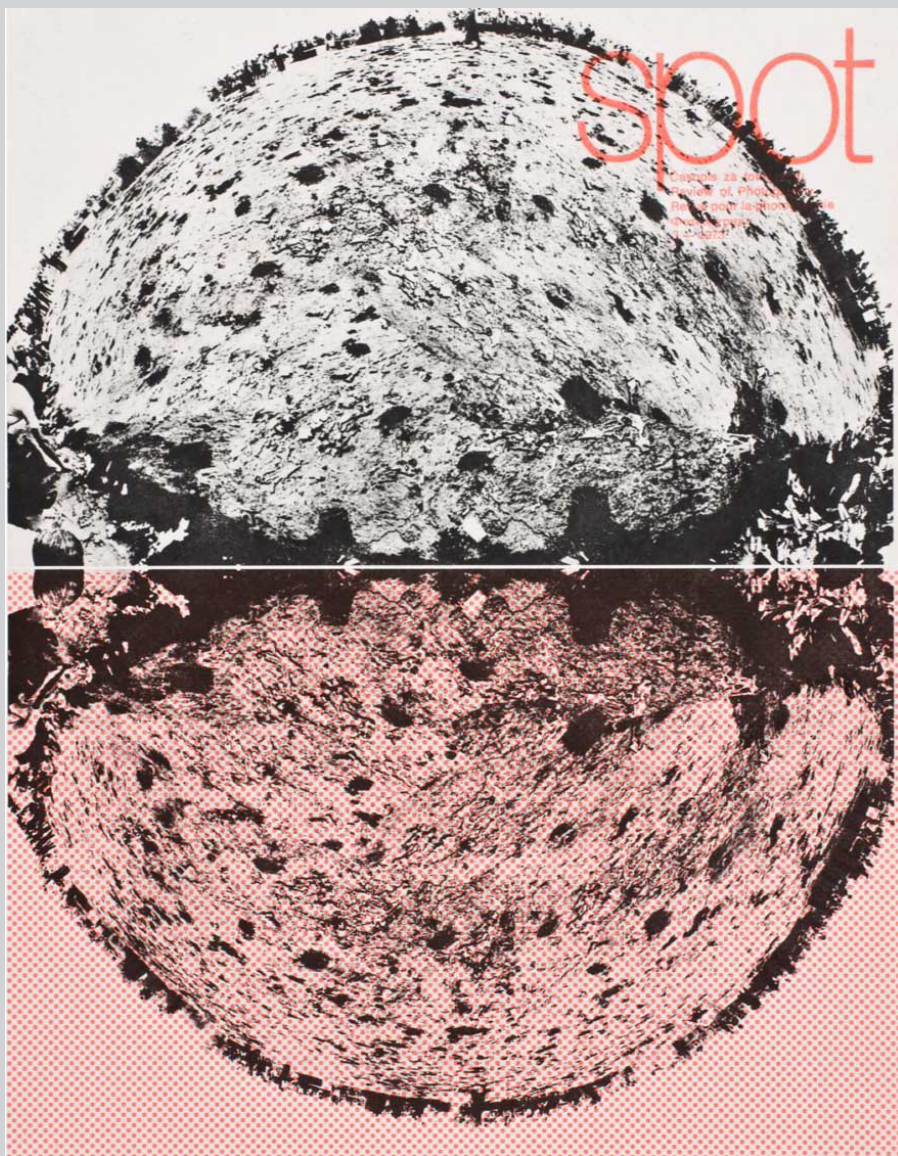
Vremensko trajanje slike koja okružuje fotografa stalno je izvor promjena, koje on mora primijetiti, i izvršiti najvažniju i skoro jedinu odluku kod snimanja reportažnih fotografija, odlučiti se za trenutak, i pritisnuti okidač. Manje je važan, ali ipak značajan faktor svjetla, koji Eisenstaedt tumači sasvim proizvoljno terminom »osjećaj«. Svjetlo na fotografiji nije ono što privlači pažnju, sadržaj je to, ali zato svjetlo slika stvari, ono daje ugodaj koji se kod vrlo dobrih fotografija najčešće vrlo teško i može pripisati svjetlu jer je ono tako vješto ukomponirano u fotografiju da zajedno s objektom i odabranim trenutkom čini nerazdvojnu cjelinu.

Fotografije Alfreda Eisenstaedta iz mladih dana se mnogo ne razlikuju od novijih. U svim tim fotografijama je prisutna težnja fotografa da jednostavnim izrazom prikaže neko zbiljenje, čovjeka ili dio prirode. Iako se tehnika značajno razlikuje od one prije četrdeset godina, on gotovo stalno radi na isti način: snima slike u živo i bez namještanja (candid pictures). Od svojih fotografskih početaka uvijek je upotrebljavao samo raspoloživo svjetlo (available light), još tada kad su fotografske emulzije prema današnjim bile vrlo niske osjetljivosti. Možemo zamisliti kako su izgledala snimanja u »živo« a da ljudi nisu bili svjesni da ih se snima, s fotoaparatom na stativu, s nesavršenim uređajem za izostravanje i s dugim vremenima ekspozicije. Rezultati su ipak bili vrlo dobri. Jedna od tako nastalih je fotografija Thomasa Manna iz 1929. godine, snimljena za vrijeme primanja Nobelove nagrade. Ta je fotografija u to vrijeme bila jedna od rijetkih koja je u sebi nosila snagu dokumenta, ona je kod gledalaca pobuđivala osjećaj prisustvovanja podjeli nagrade. Eisenstaedt s ponosom ističe da mu je neposrednu inspiraciju za takav tip fotografije dao tada čuveni »available light«-fotograf dr Erich Salomon. S dolaskom poznatog »Leica« fotoaparata takav tip fotografije je za Eisenstaedta postao životnom preokupacijom.

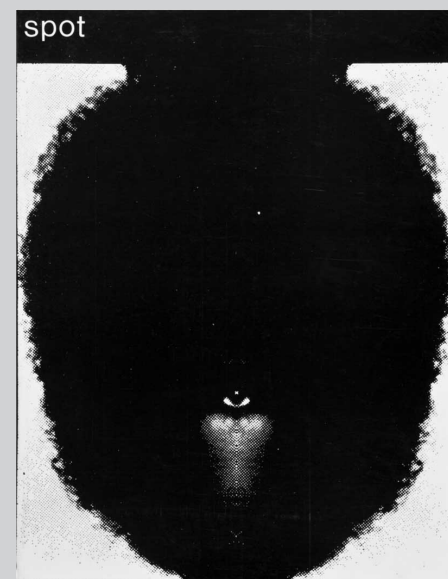
Eisenstaedt na svojim fotografijama ne želi pronalaziti neobične situacije niti neuobičajene uglove snimanja, pa sam kaže da teži samo autentičnosti, realnosti i poštenju. Takvo gledanje na fotografiju uvjetuje i način njegovog rada. Svoju kameru skriva pod kaputom sve dok nije spreman za snimanje i dok nije svjestan da će tim snimkom moći pokazati nešto više.

Sam fotografski postupak za reportažnog fotografa i nije toliko važan. Za Eisenstaedta kažu da ima jedan od najvažnijih foto-reporterskih rekvizita — nalazi se na licu mjesta kada se nešto događa.

Ali, iako postupak nije toliko važan, on je u ovom slučaju značajan zato jer je baš Eisenstaedt svojim stilom rada bio uzor mnogim fotografima.



[ 17 ]



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[ 19 ]

1. *Fotografija*, 1948, no. 1, cover
2. *Fotografija*, 1948, no. 1.
3. *Fotografija*, 1949, no. 2.
4. *Naša fotografija*, 1947, no. 2, cover
5. *Naša fotografija*, 1947, no. 2.
6. *Naša fotografija*, 1948, no. 2.
7. Milan Fizi, *Fotografija*, Epoha: 1960, cover
8. Mladen Grčević, *Art Photography in Croatia 1891–1940. The Phenomenon of the Zagreb School*, cover
9. *Život umjetnosti*, 1968, no. 6, cover
10. Mladen Grčević, “For a universal history of photography”, *Život umjetnosti*, 1968, no. 6, chapter illustration
11. Stojan Dimitrijević, “An approach to defining the physiognomy of contemporary photography”, *Život umjetnosti*, 1968, no. 6, chapter illustration
12. *15 dana*, 1968, no. 11-12, cover photo by Nikola Vranić (“Ploughmen”, 1967)
13. *15 dana*, 1963, no. 6, cover photo by unknown photographer
14. *15 dana*, 1969, no. 2, cover photo – Maria Falconetti as Joan of Arc in the eponymous film by Carl T. Dreyer
15. *15 dana*, 1968, no. 5-6, Slobodan Tadić “Reportage Photography”, spread
16. *15 dana*, 1970, no. 6, Ranko Smokvina, “Photo Reporter Alfred Eisenstaedt”, spread
17. *Spot*, 1973, no. 3, cover by Takashi Kumagai
18. *Spot*, 1973, no. 2, cover by Klaus Staeck
19. *Spot*, 1974, no. 4, cover by Roman Cieslewicz