

KOCANOVE FANTAZIE

"Photography is...visual science fiction...intuition...dream...frozen time and space..."

Iiko Narahara, in: *Contemporary Photography*, NY, 1982, p.553

1. PORTRETY - HRA S IDENTITOU

- The notion of the camera's 'truthfulness' has become suspect, as the photographers fabricated, altered and appropriated images, freeing the photograph from its customary role as a documentary record. No longer operating under the pretense of the camera as a 'mirror with a memory', and self-portrait as merely the capturing of personality or superficial likeness - photographers' images ask us to reject the notion that identity is a straightforward process." * (In: "FICTIONS OF SELF - Portrait in Contemporary Photography", essay by Trevor Richardson, 1993, p.12.)

Kocanova portretna fotografia vychadza z princípov vytvarej postmodernity: hra sa s identitou, manipuluje obsahy formou interaktívnych priestorových instalácií, koláží, montáží a prekladania negatívov. Tvar sa stáva primárnym subjektom fotografovej tvorby: miera rasy (*Black & White Benetton*, 1993), ľudí a psov (*Like Master - Like Dog or Like Dog - Like Master*, 1995), tvare: blízkych príbuzných a známych (*Family Puzzle I, II*, 1992, 1995; *False Horoscope*, 1994; *Robino*, 1992), ako i historických osobností (*Scorpion*, 1996). V princípe hľadá podobnosti a individuálne zvláštnosti, "trou" kreuje nové identity. Manipuláciou reality, "klamáním" o sebe a druhých provokuje otázky o zmysle objektivity, ktorá v tomto prípade nie je kritériom poznania. "There is no longer a truth of the self, but - to use Lacan's term - only its imaginary. Anyone looking in a mirror, even if seeking to discover their true identity, discovers first of all a fixed image of her or himself. Every self-portrait is inevitably, by its very nature, a doubling, an image of the other...Belief in the truth of the self and belief in the objectivity of the photographic record have perished simultaneously. Every self-portrait, even the simplest and least staged, is the portrait of another." * (In: *Staging the Self*, essay by Jean-Francois Chevrier, London, 1986, p.9.)

V monumentálnych figurálnych kompozíciách sa Kocan sústreďuje na seba: multipluje sa v rôznych teatrálnych inscenáciách pri dlhotrvajúcich expozíciách. Vznikajú nočné veduty mesta, s metaforami svojho vlastného obrazu - stylizované ilúzie o sebe a o svete (*cyklus čierno-bielých fotografií Svetlom do my / From Light Into Darkness*, 1989-1993).

V priestorovej a zvukovej instalácii 'VYRUSIL SI MA alebo OBKLUCIL SOM TA' sa spajaju obidve formy fotografovej autoportretnej projekcie - mixovana tvar a figurálna kompozícia. Dominuje prieskum vlastnej identity, metafora, spochybnenie objektívnej reality: "vidíte moj vonkajšok - moje druhe ja, az potom vchadzate do mojho vnutra". Obvodove fotografie su metamorfozami autorovej tvare; dvanast autoportretov prekryvaju grimasy - iba posledny obraz je pravdivy. 'Prava tvar' nam udava smer - nasledne vchadzame do autorovho 'vnutra'.

II. IMAGINARNE KRAJINY - KRESLENIE SVETLOM.

"Some artists have a special understanding of the camera's ability to record what often is not seen - by the unaided eye. Night photographs remind us of the fundamental nature of a process at once simple and mysterious: the rendering of images through the agency of light. By emphasizing so clearly the action of light on light-sensitive surfaces, the nocturnal image provides a fascinating paradigm for the photographic enterprise as a whole." * (In: NIGHT LIGHT, essay by Keith David, 1989.)

Kocana od zaciatku fascinovala praca so zakladnym principom media: so svetlom. Pri dlhych expoziciach 'kresli do tmy', snima zaznamy vlastnych fantazii v otvorenej krajine. Re-konstruuje realitu, inscenuje tvorbu je interaktívnym happeningom, pri ktorej ma autor kontrolu iba nad prostriedkom 'kresby' - svetelnym zdrojom; finalny obraz je vysledkom tejto interakcie.

Krajinarske vizie maju naslednu chronologiu: koncom 80. rokov vznikaju cierno-biele 'nocturna' mesta, ktore neskor vystrieda farba a novy zaner: krajina (cyklus Kreslenie svetlom: Navraty / Drawing with Lights: Returnings, od 1993). "Zacal som vyhladavat nove, inspirujuce prostredia - z mesta som presiel do hor a volnej prirody. Dlhymi expoziciami a farebnymi svetlami si kreslim vysnivavu, fiktivnu krajinu, v ktorej oziva vymyselná fauna a flora."

Na pohľad banálne krajiny maju vsak zavaznejšie obsahy - referuju o navrate k prírode a naturalnym zdrojom. Su viziou o mutácii civilizovaneho sveta a vysledkom manipulacie reality, spochybnenia objektivity - podobne ako v portretnej tvorbe.

Lucia Benická - Founder and Curator of The House of Photography at Tatranska galeria in Poprad, Slovakia; Writer and Lecturer on contemporary photography; 1996/1997 Visiting Fulbright Scholar in photography.

"Robo Kocan follows in the footsteps of artists such as Cindy Sherman in using photography as a means to manipulate, transform, and examine identity. The result of artist's explorations is both a humorous and insightful commentary on the satire of physical appearance in the creation of human identity."

Sara Kellner, Art Director of alternative arts center HALLWALLS in Buffalo - NY.

"Robo Kocan is the complete postmodernist, to the point of defying the arbitrary restrictions of political correctness that turned postmodernism into a set of predictable conventionalized genres. He is not afraid to speculate visually about a new humanism, so long as it includes a diversity that deconstructs it.

Kocan is a photographic Jacques Derrida. An understanding of his work can be gained through that most elusive term in the Derridian lexicon, *différance*, which refers to the vacancy that opens up when there are no longer any master signifiers regulating discourse. Every repetition of the same proliferates diversity, but somehow retains an inexplicable continuity with (trace of) its predecessor. Derrida and Kocan seek a unity of diversity (a contradiction in terms), not the familiar modern formula of diversity within unity.

At 29, Kocan is still engaged in the first period of his creative life, which has been dominated by experimentation with the stark headshot portrait. He uses the wildest diversity of photographic tactics and techniques (collaging, montaging, photo- grids, time exposure, multiple exposure, negative layering, and multiple projection) to create differences within and between faces, while simultaneously partially merging them. This is the basis of Kocan's neo-humanism, which proliferates diversity while suggesting a non-conceptual unity.

All of Kocan's portrait experiments, some of which are further diversified into elaborate installations, teach the undecidable lesson of *différance*. Those experiments range from serious to playful, and from insightful to banal."

Michael A. Weinstein, professor of philosophy and political science at Purdue University. Writer on photography, his photographic contributions are weekly published in magazine NEW CITY of Chicago.

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* Robo Kocan combines the faces of people close to him, or—in one particular series—people and the animals close to them. Resisting digital technology to do so, he creates collages which seem occasionally rather rough around the edges. His lack of the current obsession with things technological is refreshing, however, and the images often touching. The ambiguity with which he invests the visual identities of these real people is both liberating and unsettling, as are the tenuous ways in which the faces are mixed yet resist a complete blending. Kocan's interest lies in spreading himself and his image around, in mixing up what he—and we—already know in order to playfully emphasize both the ubiquitousness and the fragility of intimate interpersonal connections.*

An Janette Brush, Manager of Collections and Education at the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago.