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DOI: 10.17234/SEC.34.8

Original scientific paper

Received:

4th September 2022

Accepted:

13th October 2022

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The article discusses the presence of women in professional photography journals after the Second World War. The research includes printed journals published over a longer or shorter period in Croatia and partly in Yugoslavia, taking into account data on the share of photographs taken by women, articles written by women, but also the way in which women – more precisely, the female body – were used on various occasions in professional photography magazines.

Keywords: women photographers, photography magazines, Naša fotografija, Spot, women perspective, feminist criticism

INTRODUCTION

Although based on previous research on a national level we could conclude that women in other regions also take up photography later in their lives and with a certain degree of difficulty, examples from certain countries, especially from Scandinavia, show how much they were already integrated into various photography spheres since the mid-19th century.¹ When women pick up a camera, they don't do it "just for fun", to paraphrase a chapter title from Naomi Rosenblum (Rosenblum 2010:55). According to this distinguished American historian of photography, at the very beginning of the 20th century, women most definitely understood how the camera works and the nature of the media far more broadly than is commonly thought. Frances Benjamin Johnston, the photographer who created the famous "Self-Portrait (as New Woman)" in 1896,

¹ The paper has been fully supported by Croatian Science Foundation under the project *Ekspozicija. Themes and Aspects of Croatian Photography from the 19th Century until Today* (IP-2019-04-1772).

prepared the exhibition “American Negro Exhibit” (Exposition Nègres d’Amerique) from material recorded when she was hired to take photos at a school in Virginia that educated African-Americans and native Americans for their future professions. The exhibition was presented at the 1900 Paris Exposition, which shows the extent to which individual women authors changed the course of understanding photography and contributed to significant changes and introduction of photography in the social and cultural sphere.² Nevertheless, the prevailing attitude still remains, especially when it comes to works from older periods, that it is rare to come across active women participants in this field, which today can be definitely placed in the context of art photography, of course, with all the hedges that this classification entails. A significant part of photography is examined from the standard perspective of art history, with the addition of facts and data contributing to the transparency of the examined area. However, over the years, there has been an increasing need to approach the field in a fragmentary manner, from the perspective of combined academic and artistic disciplines which makes it possible to interpret certain specificities. In this way, the complexity of photography is also shown through individual topics, local practices, discursive analysis that differs from earlier ways of understanding the medium.

Thanks to the development of technology at our disposal today, we rarely think about the problems encountered by women during the past almost two hundred years – from the inability to use the initially complicated and physically demanding equipment (mostly due to the weight and size of cameras), to limited opportunities for education, and society’s lack of understanding for their creative needs and the prevailing social attitudes that prevented women from more active involvement in photography, among numerous other activities. For many years, women were thought to photograph mostly portraits, landscapes and scenes from their own intimate lives, although those that reached for the camera quickly became aware of the power that the camera gives them beyond the appeal of “typically female subjects”. However, for quite some time, photography did not attract its fair share of critical attention, nor did it significantly influence the art establishment, and such a state of affairs – especially in the context of women’s photography – prevailed until the mid-20th century.

This article focuses on the representation of women in professional photography journals after the Second World War, on the one hand as authors of photographs (and a small number of texts), and on the other as subjects of mostly male gazes. A small part of the visual material could be categorized as what is described as women’s photography in recent theoretical works. This term primarily implies photographs taken

² <https://www.moma.org/artists/7851> (accessed September 1, 2022); <https://awarewomenartists.com/en/artiste/frances-benjamin-johnston/> (accessed September 1, 2022).

by women, without insisting on their own gender identity (which is difficult to determine with certainty due to the passage of time). John Berger wrote that “Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at,” while the issue of the female gaze has been introduced into academic discussion in the 1970s, primarily through the critical writing of Laura Mulvey who asserted that the image of the woman is constructed to give pleasure to the male viewer (Wells 2004:324). In addition, to understand this complex topic, we need to take into account the presence of women in the field of photography and the way they are presented in professional journals, because these aspects indicate the social discourse in which photography is created, published and observed. We should bear in mind that, when it comes to the period between the 1950s and 1970s in the local context, we will find only a small number of women photographers.

The research includes journals published over a longer or shorter period in Croatia and the region, taking into account data on the share of photographs taken by women, articles written by women, but also the way in which women – more precisely, the female body – were used on various occasions in professional photography magazines. The motivation for this research is personal in a way, it stems from my youth and how I perceived the important change brought about in the young generations of that time by the *Polet* weekly, to a certain extent the *Studentski list*, but also several cultural magazines which promoted unrestrained and often provocative artistic language; language that “flirted” with the street as well as with its specific way of expression. Goran Trbuljak, acting in the role of graphic designer (1978–1981), was extremely important for the promotion and language of photography in *Polet*, as he considered visual content was just as important, and perhaps even more important, than the text. An exceptional generation of photographers, who conveyed events from the contemporary urban context to their audience, matured under his guidance.

The urban scene outside the standard forms of “proclaimed” culture was the image we created and reflected in, both as participants and as an audience. Those times also leave us with the memory of freedom in displaying and “use” of the female body, sometimes the male body as well (especially the “issue” of the cover of *Polet* featuring the naked soccer player Milan Šarović); the pages reflected our freed agency in the public space, which often leaned towards destabilizing the system. Although today we may characterize part of this photographic material as sexist, its influence and critical examination of society, politics and culture to a certain extent took place in line with the intentions of the photographers, who were not hired to only illustrate the idea behind someone’s article, but also for their willingness to avoid clichés and actively participate in the performance of photography. Thanks to *Polet* and the so-called youth press, the image of the public was not what most people expected.

Precisely for this reason, a personal recap of the understanding of the position and participation of women in the press during the 1980s was used to look into the status of women in earlier periods, during the postwar decades, when the question of freedom and publicity for the participants in this process, as well as for the audience, carried a completely different significance.

CRITICAL-THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

The attitude to the body, gender issues, socially engaged topics, a documentary style, shooting in public space, experiments with light, and later conceptual reflections on artistic language are just some of the aspects that can be analyzed through the perspective of women photography. As a result of their individual and joint efforts, photography emphatically entered the space of culture and art, interpreting all corners of human activities. However, it lacked a more robust presence in our area up until the 1970s. During this period, women ceased to be “marginal participants” and moved away from traditional value hierarchies, leading to their history no longer being seen as irrelevant and non-historical.

In one of the rare reviews dedicated to the presence of women photographers in the professional press and journals, which deals with the situation in Sweden, we come across several generally applicable questions (Tedroff 2004:206). The situation in women's photography in Sweden is almost the complete inverse of what is happening in our area, as Swedish women came together to form photography studios as early as the mid-19th century, and also independently conducted cultural anthropological research, especially in the northern parts of Scandinavia inhabited by the Sámi, such as Lapland (Dahlman 1991), as, for example, Lotten von Düben did between 1868 and 1871. However, even in this cultural circle, women did not participate in cultural debates to the same extent as men, nor were their works equally represented in the professional press. Their positions have been critically examined in recent years, especially from the perspective of gender relations, in order to gain at least basic insights into the extent to which women participated, if at all, in the changing discourse in photography.

An important question that needs to be asked in this context, mentioned by Tedroff, is: To what extent does the media image of their work speak to the general state of women's photography? Given that the local press from earlier periods very rarely published photographs attributed to women, and that the textual records themselves are so scarce and thus it is difficult to draw any conclusions, it is hard to compare the situation in Croatia and the region with more developed areas. However, regardless

of the scene and however few women were active in photography at that time, this is the primary way of approaching the material and contextualizing their collaboration (or simple appearance) in print media. It is also possible and necessary to focus on the ways in which their status affects general tendencies in photography, but also potentially the development (or at least the emergence) of a feminist perspective. This perspective started to become more prominent only at end of the 1970s, thanks to occasions such as, for example, the international conference *Drug-ca žena – Žensko pitanje, novi pristup?*, (*Woman Comrade – Women’s Issue, a New Approach?*), held in the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade in 1978 (Pejić 2021:158–159).

PHOTOGRAPHY AS AN “AUTOMATOUS MACHINE”



Figure 1: William Notman
“Mrs. Stevenson, as ‘Photography’”, Montréal, QC, 1865
Albumen print

Collection McCord – Notman Photographic Archives
McCord Museum, Montreal

© Purchase, funds graciously donated by Maclean’s magazine, the Maxwell Cummings Family
Foundation and Empire-Universal Films Ltd

An interesting article by Harriet Riches on the position of women in photography provides plenty of data on how their participation in this field developed throughout history (Riches 2015:18–26). Already in the mid-19th century, William Notman recorded “Mrs. Stevenson, as ‘Photography’”, 1865) (fig. 1). The photograph shows a woman in a dress with plenty of pleats that reaches halfway down her calves, with photographs sewn into the material – as a horizontal border composed of square frames in its lower part, portraits in ovals in the middle of the skirt, while the neckline is populated with densely strung photos. Mrs. Stevenson is holding a fan, also decorated with photographs, while her veil is supported by a special headdress in the form of a camera-box with a lens. The background of the studio is painted with an illusionist depiction of a classicist portico, while to the right of Mrs. Stevenson, along the left edge of the frame, hangs a large curtain made from heavy, opaque material which supports an easel with a painting. If we were to insist on details, perhaps we could see photos on the decorative bands around her ankles as well as at the top of her silk shoes, but the quality of the photograph does not allow for any definite claims. The photograph is an albumen print, which was the most commonly used procedure at that time (Gržina 2020:97).

Why mention this example? Primarily because a lot of things related to the photograph are marked by the female gender, especially at a time when most of recorded material was not yet actually considered to be art. Among other things, the value of the photo lies in the fact that the photo depicts a “maid or art assistant,” and such an intoned position is the subject of many discussions about metaphors and linguistic associations related to the photo of that era (Riches 2015:21, 26). We should add that women were represented in the production of albumen, and that they were also entrusted to carry out most of the procedures in the creation of photographs (especially retouching and any kind of “fine” operations). The famous Kodak advertisement “You Press the Button, We Do the Rest” (1888) almost regularly showed women taking pictures. The message is clear, while the intellectual and creative capacity of the female photographer is reduced to a purely mechanical process.

Towards the end of the 19th century, there were a few mentions of female photographers in the local region, but the data are mostly textual, while visual evidence of the activity of women from that period is truly scarce (Gržina 2022:172). The traveling photography studios visiting Zagreb were mostly led by men, except for the mention of the Lentsch sisters, Barbara and Terezija, who stayed in Zagreb on two occasions, in 1857 and 1858, as they worked in Radićeva street and in the “K zlatnom lavu” inn in Frankopanska street for several months, photographing individual and group portraits every day, but also “small photos to insert into rings and locket,” as well as photos that they made in just a few minutes (Gržina 2022:51, 52). We could associate

these photographic miniatures with precision and patience as fundamental female “qualities,” which have often been highlighted precisely in the context of retouching and other “assistant” jobs. And while the image of a woman’s hands carefully inserting a photograph into a piece of jewelry might lead us to a certain line of thinking, the lack of visual content prevents us from drawing conclusions. The Lentsch sisters also proved how familiar they were with technology by moving on from daguerreotype to negative-positive photography (Gržina 2022:59), but all these data are insufficient to draw any conclusions about the female photography scene. More data, considered from the position of gender and class, reproduced in the professional press, can be found in the article “Gender and Class in Interwar Photography: An Interdisciplinary View”, the first in the academic national context to focus on the issue of representation and positions of power that can be observed based on the now far more numerous examples (Šeparović and Rubić 2021). Thus, the visual material covered in this article focuses on the first three postwar decades, but primarily in the context of the professional press, which continuously promoted the medium and educated professional and amateur users.

“THE CUSTOMER WITH THE SIMPLEST REQUIREMENTS”

Before focusing on the selected period, we should mention how, in the 1930s, Kodak placed advertisements for films and papers intended for the local market in the local professional press. The standard set by the message that their procedure is so simple that even a woman could perform it is exceeded by advertisements such as the one which depicts a woman whose head is wrapped in a checkered scarf, smiling broadly, accompanied by the text: “Even the customer with the simplest requirements wants to have beautiful pictures...” (*Fotograf*, 12/1934) (fig. 2). Similar messages are often encountered in the professional press. Women are an “accessory”, photographic success is assured when using them (and when using Kodak as the pioneer of a pervasive marketing push); the advertisements show them standing alone, looking beautiful in their evening dresses, staring longingly at a photo in their hand, which, of course, shows a male figure. The women are always passive, reduced to objects that provide “permanent joy” (*Fotograf*, 3/1931), in flirtatious poses that help sales. Unlike the women, men are focused on their work, they analyze their photos with stern facial expressions while implementing manual finishing touches, and the accompanying text talks about the importance of suitable paper, which “no expert should miss” (*Fotograf*, 7/1931).

Let us return to the question of the extent the media image of their work speaks



Figure 2: Kodak Advertisement
Fotograf, Vol. VII, No. 12, 1. 12. 1934

to the general state of women's photography. Although the field of so-called older photography is only sporadically affected in this instance, the continuity of specific relationships we inherited from an earlier period is reflected in the period following the Second World War. Thus, until the beginning of the 1970s, which marked a time of more intense penetration of women into the field, primarily thanks to the formation of the Women's Section of the Zagreb Photo Club, their general influence in this area came about from the rare female authors whose works were noticed by the exclusively male members of the editorial boards of professional magazines. The writings on photography are even less researched, and a cursory glance reveals that the level of professional communication was focused on mastering technique, while critical accounts of photographers and exhibitions were rare. There was a sporadic tendency to theoretically and critically consider certain topics specific to the medium, but we will not delve into these examinations in this paper.

In the years that followed right after World War II, photography was an important

element in the cultural life of almost any country, it was considered ideal because it shows something that is “impossible to adequately express” (Szege 1947:1) with words. In this context, in magazines such as *Naša fotografija – mjesečnik za stručnu i umjetničku fotografiju* (Our Photography – A Monthly Magazine for Professional and Art Photography) females were depicted as old women – (Gj. Reputin, “Portrait studija”, NF 1/1947), and depending on the position of the photographer when taking the photo and his creative “intuition”, they were given various epithets (fig. 3). Thus, we have Milan Fizi photographing the “Envious Woman”, a group of women with one of them standing apart from the rest. Each of them has a scarf over her head, tied at the chin, with baskets either in their hands or on the sidewalk, and they are probably selling something. The scene makes it difficult to conclude anything about the thought process of the photographer, and we cannot be certain whether the title was suggested by the photographer, or if it comes from the editor. There are several female portraits in almost every volume; they are often called studies, and they are the work of well-known photographers, such as Zlatko Zrnec from Zagreb or Batrić Petrović from Belgrade. The positioning of the characters depends on the photographer’s preferences and photography skills; some portraits are generated from the painting tradition: classic torso cutouts, darkened backgrounds and side lighting that always leaves a shadow over one part of the figure. Women often turn their gaze out of the frame, especially younger women, with pensive facial expressions, and the value of the image is based on the convincing lighting and emphasizing the aesthetic qualities of the characters (*Naša fotografija*, 1/1947). Although it is hard to reach any general conclusions, we can notice that women are passive subjects, while men are often photographed in action – sports activities, field work, welding, sailing or some other activity. Women help children take their first steps and, despite proclaimed attitudes regarding equality with men, they mostly retained their traditional roles. Judging by the photos, a traditional gender division of roles is suggested, as women are primarily mothers, they take care of children and the elderly, while older women pass on stories from the past (*Naša fotografija*, 9/1947, O. Kocijančić, “Baka priča” (Grandmother’s Tale)). Echoes of pictorialism are still dominant, and it is interesting to observe to what extent depictions that belong to bourgeois culture are retained, although an emphasis on the socialist model of modernization and renewal could be expected during this period.

One of the rare photos taken by women is a photograph by Gita Lenz, taken from the magazine *Amater Photographer* (*Naša fotografija* 5-6/1953). The article “Observation Is Everything” is a lyrical attempt to justify seemingly “unimportant” motives, however, it does not provide any information about the author herself. This New York photographer, however, moved up from amateur to professional photography, dedicated to urban life and social documentary, and her photographs range from a preference for humanist

themes to abstraction, such as one of the two photos presented in *Naša fotografija*. The same volume contains a photo by Laura Mizner from Zagreb, one of the few photographers mentioned in the immediate post-war period, and who achieved a significant career in the context of local conditions. Her photo is placed next to two expert texts on the properties of optical glass and light. It is difficult to ascertain how the two texts dedicated to technology are related to the author's often reproduced portrait of a woman in black, which, with its contemporary approach and departure from pictorialism, mostly reflected in the posing in a daylight exterior thereby depriving the scene of any shadows, departs from the standard female representations of that era. The white background and strong graphic element of the window in the upper portion testify to the refined gaze of Mizner, especially when we compare her photo with the amateur shots of authors from Rijeka and Našice, published in the same issue a few pages later. In this incongruity between courting the amateur current, which of course had to be educated, and new, more modern views, a series of "tidbits on photography" plays a special role, as well as an attempt to think and write differently about photography, which at that time was still behind its time.

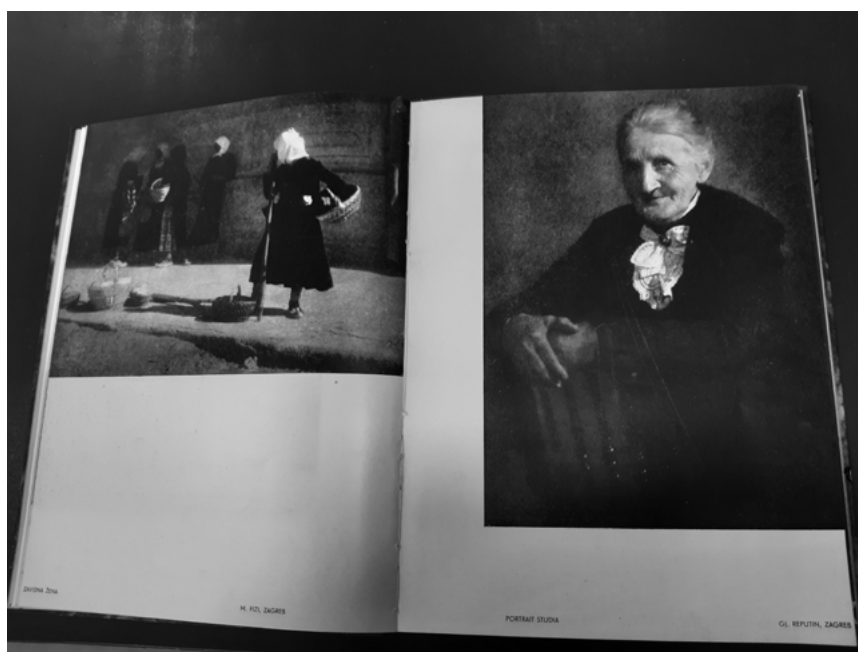


Figure 3: Photo on the left: "Envious Woman" by Milan Fizi

Photo on the right: "Portrait Study" by Gj. Reputin

Naša fotografija – mjesečnik za stručnu i umjetničku fotografiju (Our Photography – A Monthly Magazine for Professional and Art Photography), No. 1, 1947

WOMEN AND PHOTOGRAPHY

One of the rare texts dealing with the relationship between women and photography was published in *Naša fotografija* with only the initial S (9-10/1955:135). The text mentions how many women were employed as retouchers, lab assistants, recorders, as well as those who run their “independent shops,” and expresses the attitude that “their works are not inferior to the work of their male colleagues in any way,” while also highlighting their special finesse in expression. Despite being brief, and although no photographs accompany it, the article tries to present the differences between women and men, and thus it claims that women “are significantly more persistent in their work,” and “When women resolutely start their work, when they have a set path to reach their goal, they do not stop.” The female photographer “is happy to do portraits, and her naturally developed sense of fashion, hair and hand placement is much more developed than that of a man.” The author continues in a similar tone, pointing out that women are better at photographing fashion, costumes, and especially children, “because a woman understands a child’s psyche better than a man.” Furthermore, “women like to photograph flowers, animals, and we also find them in other, more difficult types of photography, working as reproduction technicians, medical photographers, colorists...”; they are better merchants and are better at selling their photographs. However, according to this author, women find special satisfaction in photography, because “in it they see an opportunity for creative work, which always leads to new success.”

The agile editorial board offered its readers similarly intoned texts from time to time, full of banality and traditional understanding of the position of women and their opportunities for creative expression. Many contributions were unsigned, but it should be noted that Milan Fizi was the expert editor during those years, a photographer and pedagogue who taught at the School of Applied Arts and Design in Zagreb between 1948 and 1972, and is the author of one of the most significant textbooks on photography in Croatia (*Fotografija*, 1960), and who was described as a significant and excellent professor by the female students of the mentioned school. We are no longer in a position to determine to what extent he influenced the profile of the magazine; however, it is worth noting that *Naša fotografija* paid attention to educating its readers, and sometimes instructed them to write comments about what they see. In the context of the topic of this article, we will mention “The Meaning of a Photograph” (*Naša fotografija*, 1-2/1955:8), an article signed with the initials A. P., published along with two portraits. One of them shows the profile of a man draped in a judge’s mantle, his head coming very close to the upper edge of the photo, while the large black mass of body takes up almost half of the scene. Below this photograph is a portrait of a woman in

white, looking directly at the viewer, her hands supporting the lapel of a white cloak. The unattributed photographs were taken from Agfa's magazine *Fortschritt und Leistung*, primarily for the purpose of educating the younger generation on portrait photography and the importance of the meaning of a figure in relation to the form, which is mentioned in the text. When it comes to the portrait of the man, the reader is instructed to think about the importance of free space left in the frame, about the meaning of the bulging veins on his forehead and directed gaze, the text for the female portrait mentions that "the expression is mainly based on 'likeability'" – despite her gaze being directed back at the viewer, and the author of the text talks about her white vest, the position of her hands and her posing "as if she were standing in front of a mirror."

The travel observations "Impressions from Italy" were published by photographer Laura Mizner in *Naša fotografija* (5-6/1955), and somewhat later she also wrote about her photography and travel experience in the magazine *15 dana*. The article in *Naša fotografija* is interesting because it refers to a professional trip she took in order to familiarize herself with professional and amateur photography in Italy. How she knew where to go and which studio to visit is not clear, but these are probably contacts she primarily got from the Zagreb Photo Club and the international exhibitions that were organized in Zagreb during that period. The questions she asks are interesting – about art photography, but also about abstract photography, a topic of a discussion she had with a local author in Palermo. In the presentation, she provides basic information about the scene, the differences between the Italian and French "schools" she noticed. Although the article seems brief from today's perspective, its importance lies in the revelation of her personal interests, knowledge, but also her aspirations.

The same volume begins with an interesting cover: a photograph signed as "'Spring of Life' by Deuzaide, France" in the imprint. It is worth mentioning primarily because of how it differently treats its subject – a young mother breastfeeding a child, with a little girl standing right next to it and looking at the child, gently holding it. A row of smiling women's heads occupies the background, like a choir. The central figure – the mother – is a beautiful young woman, completely free in what she's doing, with her head raised and her eyes directed past the photographer's lens³ (fig. 4). This is the work of Jean Dieuzaide, a French photographer (1921–2003) who often took photographs in the south of France, where the photograph from the mentioned cover was taken. Originally titled "Gypsy", it was slightly reframed on the cover, and some of its quality was lost due to the printing quality. However, it remains in use even today, promoting the region in the heart of the Pyrenees, on the border between

³ <https://www.tourisme-couserans-pyrenees.com/animations/le-centenaire-de-jean-dieuzaide-en-ariege-chateau-de-seix/> (accessed August 25, 2022).

France and Spain, where many residents who travel along the southern edge of these Mediterranean countries come from. This woman's depiction differs significantly from many others that ended up on magazine covers, and we can compare it to the cover of the magazine *Hrvatica: časopis za ženu i dom* (Croatian Woman: Magazine for Women and the Home), edited by Marija Jurić Zagorka, published in May 1939. The caption under the photo indicates that it shows a "Bosnian peasant mother", and two poems published in a column on the right of the cover are devoted to the theme of the mother (fig. 5). Also depicted breastfeeding, a Bosnian woman in traditional dress, her head covered with a headdress and eyes directed downwards, does not establish any connection with her environment; she is completely focused on the child and the bliss of the moment, visible on her face. Unlike her, the proud Romani woman in her luxurious floral pattern dress is a completely different type of woman, pausing to perform her motherly duty, but we can imagine her perhaps dancing flamenco soon after. Although they are separated by more than fifteen years, both of these photos entered the public discourse: one during the improvement of the women's positions and advocacy for women's human rights, promoted by Jurić Zagorka, and the other taken at a time when the horrors of the war were starting to be forgotten.

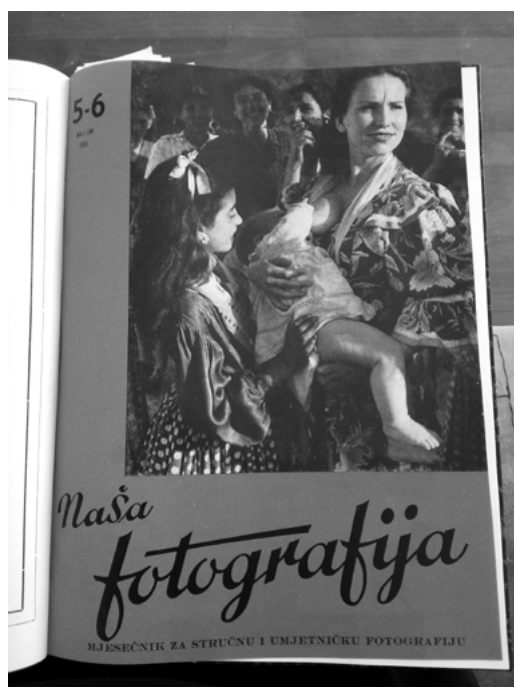


Figure 4: Cover of *Naša fotografija – mjesečnik za stručnu i umjetničku fotografiju* (Our Photography – A Monthly Magazine for Professional and Art Photography), No. 5-6, 1955
Image on the cover "Gipsy" by Jean Dieuzaide, 1951

HRVATICA

ČASOPIS ZA ŽENU I DOM

GOD. I.

SVIBANJ 1939

BROJ 5

Majčin dan



BOSANSKA MLJAKA MAJKA

MAJKA

Ja ne znam, što je majka mila,
Ni majčin što je svu plinu,
Ja ne znam, što je svu mi bila,
Ta da je bila jedva znam.

Ko sam mi lebdela stihla prava,
Kad zadržaj pat me k mihi zva,
Kad zadržaj cijelo je mihi zva.
I blagostol me zadržaj da.

A je sam plaho, štete zvezi,
I propalo sam cijelo svet,
O majko stihla, nemoj zvezi,
Ti ne sm'aj, ne čel od nas poči!

O ludo li sam bio čedo!
Zar mori svet za svu zvezi!
Društvo sam svet taj gleda,
Naj što ga gledam bolan zvezi!

Ah, svuda lebdela svet i zvezi,
O dragi dragi dijeli nas,
Teh samo stihla zvezi zvezi,
Zadržaj nam je kadra glas.

O, upomeno, kina zvezi,
O majko, što mi zvezi svet!
Ti štiti? Ja, bar zvezi,
Što dano mene boli svet!

Ja ne znam, što je majka mila,
Ni majčin što je svu plinu,
Ja ne znam, što je svu mi bila,
Ta da je bila, jedva znam!

HUGO BADAČIĆ ?

DIJETE SVOJOJ MAJCI

Majko, si stalošna pričo moja,
O kako su mudrašna svu tvoja,
Kada su zvezi zvezi mi svu,
Čistomom, jastihla svu svu.
A dobro i mila sli tvoja
Svuda me zvezi, uza me zvezi,
Dijela pali tvoja, zvezi i svu,
Vajda su zvezi, da ne zvezi,
Majke moja, stihla i mila,
Moga sirote dobra si vidi!

KRSTA FRANIĆ

Figure 5: Cover of *Hrvatica: časopis za ženu i dom* (Croatian Woman: Magazine for Women and the Home), Vol. 1, No. 5, May 1939 © Željko Car

Dieuzaideu's photograph was created at the time of Edward Steichen's exhibition *The Family of Man*, which had its premiere in 1955 at MOMA in New York. Although we will not further comment on this event, the extensive research that preceded it and the specific historical moment certainly had an impact on the world photography scene. This was a time of significant change in how the world was perceived, as it had recovered from the horrors of the war, but had not forgotten them. Although it had been considered the greatest photography exhibition of all time (Mason 1955), over time it underwent a necessary critical reevaluation, primarily due to its attitude towards the Other and otherness, as well as because of clichés and general attitudes in line with the expectations of mass culture spectacles (Back and Schmidt-Linsenhoff 2004). Jean Dieuzaide did not participate in the exhibition, but on the other hand, selecting his photo with the motif of a Romani woman breastfeeding for the cover is in line with the dominant photographic narrative of the time. Similar to the Bosnian woman from the interwar period, this photograph also involves a woman from another culture, defined

by her clothes, pose, head position, and a photo like this could not be imagined in print – especially not on the cover – if it were a woman from the domestic cultural context. Today, this complex situation can be looked at in the context of members of other races participating in the development of the art field, and not by being left to the gaze of others, or used to improve the representation of dark-skinned people; the key question nowadays is how to see oneself through complex positions that indicate the characteristics of this position of otherness (Camp 2021). However, the journey to that realization was a long one.

Although considered one of the most important photography magazines in Yugoslavia, the Belgrade-based *Fotografija* (1948–1953), which was then renamed to *Fotorevija* (1954–1957) and finally *Foto kino revija* (1958–1985), was only partially explored on this occasion, primarily due to the unavailability of certain publishing years. By the mid-fifties, it was already clear that it entertained considerable pretensions in how its texts presented photography. The magazine, like most other professional publications on photography, was intended for both amateurs and professional photographers, and a significant number of articles was still devoted to technology and photography techniques. A more ambitious shift compared to other magazines is primarily evident in the translation of texts and writing that approaches theoretical discourse, and the presentation of the magazine is significantly more modern than earlier editions. However, when it comes to women, they were still often reduced to passive subjects, ubiquitous content clichés that were encountered in other environments as well. Thus, in *Fotorevija* 3-4/1955, the sections on photography news and “A little bit of everything” are “illustrated” with a somewhat provocative shot photographed by Vera Gregorić from Belgrade (fig. 6).⁴ It shows a black-haired woman with her head thrown back and her eyelids closed, lustily taking off her dress with one of her shoulders already bare. This kind of editorial decision is not unusual for its era, but if from the 1940s onwards photography had become important information in the context of women’s photography practice, what does this example convey to the viewers? The very position of the female portrait occupying the entire right page, while the left page contains tips related to technique and mistakes during the chemical process, speaks to a certain intent that cannot be linked in any way to the content published before or after these pages.

An important shift on the world stage occurred at that time, which led to more and more articles labeled “socially oriented camera documentation” appearing in illustrated magazines (Rosenblum 2010:181). An example would be the cover of the mentioned issue of *Fotorevija* “On the Way to the City” by Ivan Medar from Zagreb

⁴ Unfortunately, no information about this author could be found. I thank Jelena Matić for her help.

(1911-1991), a member of the Zagreb Photo Club, who photographed two women, an older one on a horse and a younger one leading her, on a dusty road. Both are dressed in traditional dress, which in the 1950s was still one of the identity markers that was happily published in the professional photography press. This scene, in contrast to the aforementioned portrait of Vera Gregorić, informs the readers about social relations – in this particular case, the relations between two women, and even the generational hierarchy, equally belonging to documentary photography and photojournalism, which, according to Rosenblum, are difficult to separate even today (Rosenblum 2010:181). Female photographers in the rest of world did not fare a whole lot better; despite Margaret Bourke-White's photograph being used for the first cover of the famous American magazine *Life*, showing a major construction project – the Fort Pack Dam (1936), and though it seemed that she paved the way for other women in the field of photography thanks to this feat, the reality for her and many other female authors was different. Men continued to dominate, and in the late 1960s, for example, *Life* magazine published only five individual photographs taken by women. They were mostly tasked with “domestic subjects”, while the data for certain other magazines is a bit more favorable (Rosenblum 2010:188). We should take into account the fact that we have started to witness a more intense recognition of women in photography and other art fields only recently, and that we only occasionally come across specific information about their activities in professional publications in various parts of the world.



Figure 6: Photo “Čikota B., Belgrade” by Vera Gregorić
 Fotorevija, No. 3-4, 1955

WOMEN TAKE PHOTOS, AS REPORTS SHOW

In local professional journals, the first comprehensive overview of the women's photography scene was presented in Milanka Šaponja's article "Women Take Photos", published in *Foto kino revija* (5-6:1975). The article is a review of an exhibition held in Belgrade two years after the establishment of the Women's Section of the Zagreb Photo Club (1973), when its members organized a group exhibition in the Art Photography Gallery (GUF) in Zagreb. Traditionally, these exhibitions were organized on March 8, International Women's Day. At the urging of Belgrade photojournalist Srba Vranić, influenced by the establishment of the Zagreb section, the Women's Photography Exhibition was held in Belgrade, organized by the *Politika Bazar* magazine and the Photo Association of Yugoslavia in 1975. As a kind of curiosity, we should mention that the exhibition was held with a strong endorsement from Jovanka Broz, which also indicates the political influence the event had at that time (Križić Roban 2020). On that occasion, both the front and last pages of *Foto kino revija* were "handed over" to women: the cover featuring a photo by Sonja Zalar from Ljubljana⁵ shows a crumbling stone house, with only its outer walls remaining, and a completely dark figure peeking through the door. The back page shows the photo "On the Waterfront" by Adriana Soprano from Rijeka⁶ – a group of children having fun while fishing from a pier, placed between a lighthouse and the mast of a boat. The photo, similar to Zalar's, is dominated by graphism, the contrast between light and dark, and an additional poetic emphasis. The author shot the scene under the full light of the sun, which dominates the upper frame of the photo, and is reflected on the sea surface, leaving the foreground almost completely dark (fig. 7, 8).

Milanka Šaponja's article is interesting because of the information it provides, as well as the writing style; one can notice the "spirit of the times" when the language standard did not insist on the feminine gender in naming their activity ("fotograf" and "autor" are both masculine in Croatian), while the Second World War narrative is still present, mentioned in the context of several women who had the opportunity to engage in photography at that time (Elvira Kohn, Đurđa Koren, Dobrila Stefanović and Milka Vujanović) (Šaponja 1975:11). The author tried to categorize the extensive material thematically, but given the brevity of the text, a more detailed examination was not possible. The article ends with the statement that the exhibition possessed a seriousness "beyond any expectation", was thematically diverse and "on several

⁵ She graduated in biology and was a member of the FG Šolt photo club in Ljubljana. Although very little information is available about the author, she was already taking photographs in the mid-1960s. <https://mao.si/en/collection/zimski-dan/> (accessed August 28, 2022).

⁶ She was active in the Photo Club Color Rijeka, and participated in several group exhibitions.

creative levels,” and the works included those recognized based on their “sincere artistic motives” (Šaponja 1975:7). This was followed by a selection of photographs: In addition to the inevitable shots of children and portraits, two photographs from the period of the Second World War were also printed, more than thirty years after they were taken, bearing in mind the fact that this time period of women’s photography was an almost complete mystery at the time of publishing. In addition to the work of the Slovenian photographer Jelka Simončič “Where To”, made by inverting a negative into a positive, “Composition 2” by Danijela Lušin from Zagreb also stands out, with its curious symbiosis of two photographs indicating her special approach to photography.

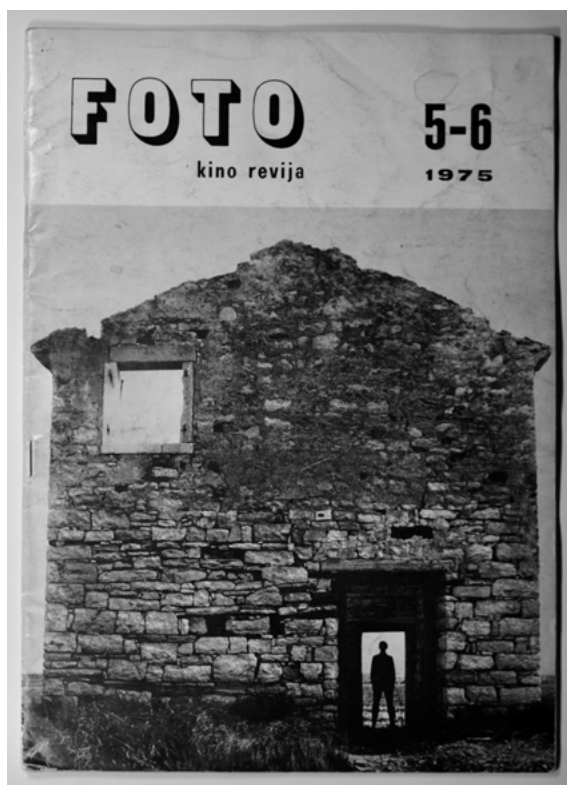


Figure 7: Cover photo “Untitled” by Sonja Zalar
Foto kino revija, No. 5-6, 1975

Considering that I did not have access to all the later issues of *Foto kino revija*, apart from individual copies, it is not possible to conclude to what extent the magazine changed when it comes to the position of women during the 1980s. The section intended for analyzing readers’ works and technical advice was retained, and a few important “steps” towards specific photography topics that influenced the change in

discourse can be noticed;⁷ however, the same treatment of the female body is still visible, from the cover, to the “illustration” of the editorial, as well as in the selection of readers’ photographs that show naked female bodies, their heads turned to the side, or their faces completely invisible (*Foto kino revija* 1982:4).

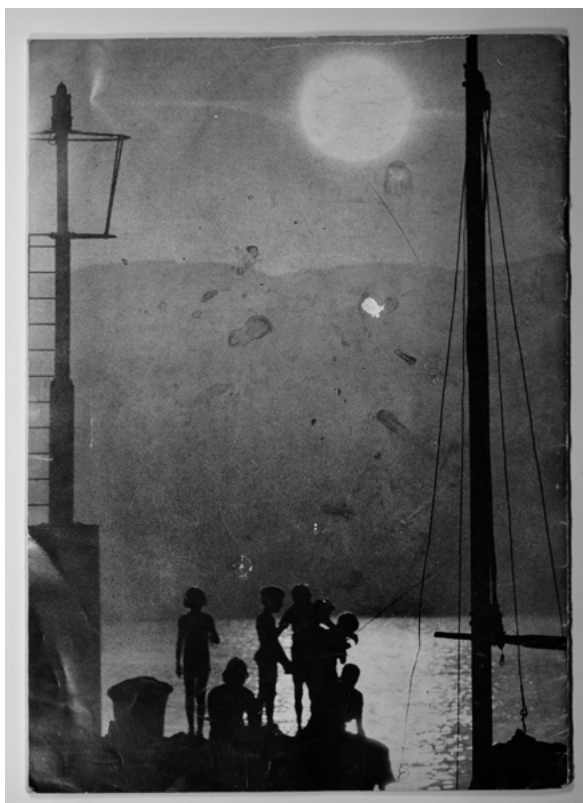


Figure 8: Photo on the back “On the Waterfront” by Adriana Soprano
Foto kino revija, No. 5-6, 1975

⁷ The comment refers to Aleksandar Bogojević’s article “Photography as Photography and Concept” that provides basic information about conceptual photography, which dominated institutional exhibitions during the 1970s, and was the theme of several important exhibitions during those years, for example the series of four exhibitions *New Photography* (1973–1984) organized by the Salon Rotovž of the Art Gallery in Maribor, the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade (*Foto kino revija* 1982:23).

SPOT MAGAZINE AND THE EXPANDING SPACE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Finally, we will refer to the *Spot* magazine, which was an exception in the observed publishing context.⁸ First of all, its distribution started at a time when the leading progressive gallery and museum institutions in Yugoslavia were becoming more intensively connected, cooperating and exchanging programs, with the term “artist photography” becoming more prevalent and introducing a kind of “disorder” into the strict hierarchy on the photography scene. And while most of the mentioned magazines were aimed at both professional photographers and amateurs, promoting education in this area and spreading interest in photography, *Spot* had a completely different focus. Its inception was influenced by the need to develop a general and specific culture of visual communications. As a result, there were changes in the meaning and possibilities of expression with photographs, the need for experiments, as well as for artistic research based on documentarism, supplementing it with a series of procedures that were not necessarily immanent in the photographic field. The selection of advanced and experimental works, along with learning about other environments and emphasis on so-called “artist photography”, did not cause much change in female photographic thought.

The cover of the first issue features a photo of Petar Dabac, “Cube” (1970); although it shows a woman’s face, the photo was published for other reasons. It is a kind of two-dimensional note of the artist’s spatialization of a photograph, as he cut up a photograph and pasted it on the sides of a cube, thus producing volume in space that could be rearranged. This interactive object/puzzle is primarily intended for constructing and deconstructing and introduces the will of the observer into the existence of the work, as indicated by the specific arrangement of squares that simulate the principle of his invention on the cover. The cover of the last issue shows a photograph titled “My Alphabet” (1976) by Katarina Zavarska. The author was presented as part of the topic of photography from the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, and her alphabet was accompanied by a series of photos of lips pronouncing individual letters. She used photography primarily because of its technical anonymity and “contemporary possibilities of intimate confession”, which she states in response to three questions posed to all the selected artists (Kontova and Andjel 1978:9). And while all issues of the magazine showed women as objects of interest in the photographs, of all the

⁸ It was published by the Galleries of the City of Zagreb, an association to which the Gallery of Contemporary Art belonged, the editor-in-chief was Radoslav Putar, and a total of 11 issues were published between 1972 and 1978.

published examples, only fourteen photographs were taken by women. The first issue displayed a photo by Marija Braut, represented as part of the text dedicated to Tošo Dabac, whose studio she visited together with Petar Dabac and Enes Midžić. Slovakian Zuzana Mináčová is featured in the selection of Czechoslovak photography, but the section contains only photographs, with no information about the artists themselves. Nevertheless, from her available work, we could interpret it in the context of feminist art and the questioning of the personal identity and visibility of women in the public space.



Figure 9: Cover of the magazine *Spot*, No. 9, 1976
Cover photo "Waitress's Back" by Fred Lonidier

When it comes to writings on photography, the texts were mostly portraits of individual artists: Željka Čorak wrote about Aleksandar Karoly, Ida Biard about Mitja Koman, Nena Baljković about Gerhard Richter, Etta Lisa Basaldella about Italo Zannier. We could not find any discussion texts, nor any attempt to introduce feminist criticism. From today's position, it is impossible to imagine whether any of the mentioned female photographers could be interpreted without hesitation in the way we usually do, without knowing how they perceived themselves (Raymond 2017:6). Perhaps the attitude towards women, along with the author's critical commentary, was most evident on the cover of issue 9 (1976), which shows an elongated horizontal shot of the back of a waitress (fig. 9). The photograph was taken by Fred Lonidier and

comes from a selection prepared for *Spot* by Allan Sekula, whose text “Toward a Critical Documentary” was also published. The distinct level of social awareness, both of Sekula and the selected photographers, is focused on workers’ rights, on trying to act in circumstances with limited possibilities. The rhetorical strength of the waitress’s back, wrapped in a corset so she could withstand the toil of her day, comes from a photographer who, in the words of Sekula, “deliberately opposes the strategies that succeeded in making photography into ‘high’ art” (Sekula 1976:7).

CONCLUSION: IS IT POSSIBLE TO “SEE DIFFERENTLY”?

To paraphrase John Berger, in the process of recognizing women’s photography work in the post-war professional press of Yugoslavia, we can agree that their stories are disjointed and based on a tacit agreement about what is not said, that which connects discontinuities (Fryer Davidov 1998:3). The insightful, but also selective power of photography, which has always possessed the possibility of economic connection, according to Claire Raymond, is much more complex than the money trail might suggest. And while many published photos and few texts, in the context of gender relations and the way women are treated – and especially, in the context of photography, the treatment of the female body – can be characterized as a typical sexist attitude that views women as an object of some kind of interest (which can be named in various ways), on the other hand, we can see how such behavior encouraged some women photographers to respond in their own way and resist the standards with a subversive way of seeing – a different way of seeing (Raymond 2017:8).

Most photographs are subject to a normative discourse over which the female photographers had no control, nor were they able to inscribe their story in it (except in rare instances). And even if they did, the question remains to what extent were they guided by male role models – colleagues who observed and possibly commented on their work in photo clubs, or at exhibitions, if they attended and participated in them; or on the pages of professional magazines where the dominance of men is evident? If “feminism (...) is indeed for women, among other things, reading literature and theory with their own life – a life, however, that is not entirely in their conscious possession” (Felman 1993:13), if we look back today with our fresh eyes, can we contribute in any way to some kind of “act of survival”, in the words of Adrienne Rich, for women who took photographs, who were photographed or who wrote about photography (Felman 1993:13)? Of course, the vast majority of photos mentioned in the article cannot be read as a feminist critique of representation, but they invite an analysis of the cultural context in which it is created from the standpoint of feminist criticism. Still, the need

and possibility of hindsight allows us to at least ask the question about judgments on gaze; the gaze which, from today's point of view, occurs outside of "adjustment to dominant gender perceptions" (Heron and Williams 1996:XIII).

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Tko me gleda? Koga gledam(o)?

Sandra Križić Roban

U članku se govori o prisustvu žena u stručnoj fotografskoj publicistici nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata. Tijekom istraživanja obuhvaćena su tiskana izdanja koja su kroz dulje ili kraće razdoblje objavljivana u Hrvatskoj i dijelom u Jugoslaviji, pri čemu su u obzir uzeti podatci o zastupljenosti fotografija koje su snimile žene, zatim članaka koje su napisale žene, ali i način kako se žena – preciznije, žensko tijelo – koristilo u raznim prilikama u stručnim časopisima o fotografiji.

Ključne riječi: *fotografkinje, fotografski časopisi, Naša fotografija, Spot, ženski pogled, feministička kritika*



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