

ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME:

**Guided tour with the curator
and the artist:**

Saturday, 10 October 2020, at 10 am

Artist and curator talk:

Wednesday, 4 November 2020, at 6 pm



Exhibition Colophon:

Aleš Gregorič : The Scent of Skin
16 September–15 November 2020

Ivan Grohar Gallery
Škofja Loka Museum
www.loski-muzej.si

Represented by: Aleksandra Saša Nabergoj

Curator: Boštjan Soklič

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Aleš Gregorič
The Scent of Skin

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Aleš Gregorič is one of the most prominent Slovenian photographers, who stems from analogue black-and-white photography, and has been active in the field of colour photography for the last few years. He is a creator who combines different photographic methods and approaches, fuses them and actualises them within the context of contemporary art. His works are exhibited in cycles, which are (non) related in terms of content. He also makes use of new technologies as required. The figurative cycle entitled *The Scent of Skin* consists of 12 large-format photographs, which disclose the artist's usually brief and lucid view of the body in space and time.

Gregorič does not borrow his scenes but finds and interprets them in his own way. His position does not mean defending conventional photographic realism or mimetic form since he is not only interested in the look of things, but also in the mystery of their appearance, the riddle of their presence. One such emblematic image from *The Scent of Skin* cycle is certainly a photograph of a sandpit with an old car and a pondering driver in front of an electrical distribution station. It does not look like anything special even though it seems to be located on some other, unknown planet. Imbued by a similar atmosphere is also the view from a height of a red-haired male figure (in an urban environment) with a pointed rifle, which pulls us in with its bizarre atmosphere. The priests in rapture on a podium under an image of the pope and the crucifix try to overcome the unbearable discomfort of living in the material world by singing, even though every, even the sweetest, song has its end. The realisation of the bitterness that could (conditionally) follow the presented subject matter in the next (imaginary) shot can only be guessed at. In the opposite direction, it is possible to think about what caused the mournful ap-

pearance of a forgotten body in a secluded and damp forest in one of the images. The people in Gregorič's photographs seem lonely even when they are in company. They are always somewhere else and not where their presence is. It can be felt that the artist perceives this duality as an opportunity for his interpretations, both in terms of photography and subject matter. A dark-skinned man entering a room and a woman on the bed are a couple trapped in the vacuity of an apprehensive moment. All they have left is isolation and silence.

Gregorič deals with the depiction of portraits and figurative compositions, paying special attention to framing the depicted reality and following the positioned characters in selected ambiances. His motifs are generally portrayed by following an impulse for the best expression for his own commentaries or deeply experienced stories. He is currently concerned with the theme of the multitude of man's activities, luring the viewer to an awareness of belonging to his species, to the feelings of transience of all things (*vanitas*) as well as to the perception of the impressive moments that make up the tapestry of life. His works are analytical commentaries on the internalised experiences and the fruits of a special fascination with seemingly banal situations and the complications of everyday life. In artistic terms, his photographs establish connections with the painters who have used, expanded upon and uniquely transformed already existing images in a postmodernist manner and through new arrangements by using processual transformations of photographic and electronic starting points composed of pixels.

Gregorič's photographic works are not decorative or flashy, but rather mysterious due to their ambiguity as far as subject matter is concerned. As such, they offer an opportunity to formally upgrade the field of expression as a platform of discourse on topics that could be provocative, philosophical, exciting or otherwise. The starting point of his photographic language is a scene, whose symbolic and sociological significance, even though torn from its wider context, clearly suggests to the viewer a single but key fragment of a story, often seemingly trivial, which we fill in with our imagination since we are not fully acquainted with it. It can evoke an emotional reaction, an association, a flash, maybe even a reflection.

By establishing unusual figurative relations, Gregorič intentionally creates new experiential-artistic situations and unusual dynamic relations between compositional elements in outdoor or indoor spaces. The art language of Gregorič's images is universal and existential in nature. His photographs show the other side of the contemporary world, different from the one the mass media and the social networks force-feed us with. He juxtaposes materialism, individualism and consumerism as the dominant pattern of civilisation with anonymous individuals without big stories; those that remain somewhere on the sidelines. They personify melancholy, discomfort, loneliness and hopelessness. This image also has obvious parallels with the way in which film is framed, something that comes spontaneously to Gregorič. The first, direct visual effect of the "frozen" frame is often truly cinematic, except that its narrative structure is subjective, completely left up to the viewer. The artist subtly creates memories of events in the viewer that have in fact never taken place on the factual (personal) level of the observer of the artwork. He proves to us that

the construction of memory in each individual is a complex, regular practice in everyday life, which determines the understanding and experience of ourselves, our own past and identity.

The schematised scenes with the simplified determinants of space and colour summarise all the characteristics of Gregorič's personal poetics, imbued with a spirit of the time and a specific iconography, ranking the artist among the most interesting contemporary Slovenian photographers. Among those that strive for a renewed representation of the figure, the portrayal of man and the world in which he lives. Scenes filled with contradictions, chaos, smells, skins of all types and disharmony. This position has obviously become Gregorič's artistic credo since the artist has always persisted in the figurative principles of the photographic manner as opposed to any formalisation and striving for the aesthetic. The ordinary, left to Gregorič's lucid optics, seemingly transforms the exhibition into a "visual journey", and provides the viewer with an insight into the artistic conception of the milieu, which really interests the photographer and which he will probably continue to explore in the future.