Photographic Images of 20th Century Popular Music Captured by the Lenses of Slovenian Photojournalists at the National Museum of Contemporary History

Urša Valič

"*The camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera.*" - Dorothea Lange

"*You don't make a photograph just with a camera. You bring to the act of photography all the pictures you have seen, the books you have read, the music you have heard, the people you have loved.*" - Ansel Adams

"*Today everything exists to end in a photograph.*" - Susan Sontag

INTRODUCTION

As part of the project "Engaged Past: Social-Anthropological Analysis of Transformations of Popular Music in the Area of Former Yugoslavia", the first conference entitled *Popular Music of Former Yugoslavia in the Clutches of the Socialist Past and the Capitalist Present* was held at the National

Museum of Contemporary History on 14 March 2014. This is especially important because the popular culture of an era, or if I limit myself to popular music alone, is an important component of the historical discussion of the region in the course of recent history and therefore deserves a place in the museum as a form of cultural heritage which is worthy of interpretation and representation in order to preserve its forms for posterity. Modern museums are no longer merely treasure troves of objects but are focusing more and more on intangible heritage, for instance stories about objects and people's accounts, which are being preserved and passed on by means of audiovisual media (Valentinčič Furlan 2015; Skrt 2016). As in the case of similar practices based on experiences and implementation in the "here and now", the preservation of the heritage of popular music is limited to accounts and memories, and to the preservation of traces, mostly of sound, in the form of artefacts and audiovisual material such as music recordings (records, CDs, cassettes, etc.), sheet music and texts, and visual production – such as posters, fanzines, videos and, above all, photographs.[1] This paper will focus primarily on photographs or photographic images of (popular) music at the National Museum of Contemporary History.

THOUGHTS ON PHOTOGRAPHY IN RELATION TO POPULAR CULTURE

Popular music and photography have many common features: they are both products of the industrial and technological development of Western culture[2] and as such outline a sociocultural reality that differs

---

1 The primary task of museums is to collect material heritage. The collecting of accounts and memories is an indirect activity of museums, for it greatly enriches the collections of objects with stories about their use or by providing a broader context. More important than the question of collecting stories and accounts about objects is the question of which museum in Slovenia should collect and house artefacts of popular culture, such as cassettes, vinyl records, fanzines and the like, since the collection of (folk) music was previously the domain of other institutions (e.g. the Institute of Ethnomusicology of the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the archives of RTV SLO, and the National and University Library). Collections of posters and other visual production can (could) be seen on display in art galleries and museums, such as the Museum of Modern Art or the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Maribor Art Gallery, and the International Centre of Graphic Arts. There are also private collections, which include vinyl records, posters, flyers and the like, e.g. the private collection of Slavko Franc in the town of Lucija near Portorož, where one can see Rolling Stones artefacts.

2 The principles behind the operation of the optical device called the *camera obscura*, the predecessor of the camera, were in fact first described in China in the 5th century BC, however, historical reviews of the development of photography date its origins to 19th-century Europe, when the French inventor Nicéphore Niépce succeeded in capturing and permanently recording a latent image in 1826.

significantly from that of previous generations, and predict a fundamentally different perception of the world of the generations to come. Thus the invention and development of photography has radically changed the way we see and perceive the world. In his short essay, Jerry L. Thompson said that photography was not only important as an aesthetic medium, but as an *epistemological* one, for the way we understand photography shows how we understand everything else (2013: 4). The power of photography as an epistemological medium lies precisely in its ability to imitate the world around it, i.e. in its *mimetic nature*. At the time of the invention of photography in the 19th century, understanding the world through observable phenomena was the basic paradigm of science (positivism) and art (realism). Ever since its beginnings, photography, especially documentary photography, has most often been viewed as a witness that testifies to the fact that we were actually at a specific place and that something actually happened; it is perceived as an objective imitation of reality. Roland Barthes also talks about this: "The photograph does not call up the past (nothing Proustian in a photograph). The effect it produces upon me is not to restore what has been abolished (by time, by distance) but to attest that what I see has indeed existed" (1992: 73). Such an understanding is also the result of the use of optical devices as a medium that depicts reality differently than the painter's brush. An optical device – a camera – records all that is external, which is why it was objectified and the images it created were never doubted (Terence Wright in Tomanić Trivundža 2005: 441; Bazin 2007: 293).

However, as Susan Sontag has demonstrated in her book on photography (2001), photography is nevertheless an interpretation of the outside world. Anyone familiar with the process of taking photographs knows that the creation of images and the meanings of those images are influenced by the creator of the photograph (photographer) as well as the person who is looking at it or reading it. This relationship between the photographer and observer is never neutral. People enter relationships and relations that have established meanings and from which new meanings are born; hence, the creation and understanding of photographs is not entirely free of ideology.

In order to understand the power of photography in the 20th century, we must also understand its technological side, as an intersection of science and ideology that has greatly altered the sociocultural mindset. According to Jonathan Crary, the development of photographic techniques in the 19th century denoted a transformation in the very nature of visuality, which was undoubtedly more radical than the shift from mediaeval depictions to the Renaissance perspective. The extremely fast development of technology has altered the

relationship between the observing subject and the representation, resulting in the disappearance of the majority of the established cultural meanings which had been derived from this relationship (2012: 1).[3] In his work, Crary traces the history of this development and the importance of optical devices in constructing the perception and subject of the observer. In the desire to avoid technological determinism, he views optical devices as the intersections of philosophical, scientific and aesthetic discourses, which come into contact with mechanical techniques, institutional requirements and socioeconomic forces. "Each one of them is understandable not simply as the material object in question, or as part of a history of technology, but for the way in which it is embedded in a much larger assemblage of events and powers" (Crary 2012: 8). Photography as a practice and object can therefore never be merely neutral, but is a discursive unit or, as Geoffrey Batchen has written based on the theories of John Tagg and Allan Sekula, the photograph always finds itself attached to a discourse or, more accurately, to "a cacophony of competing discourses" that gives any individual photograph its meanings and social values (2010: 19).

Having explained the basic premises for understanding photography, I will now explore the connection between popular music and photography and try to determine the source of the power of photography in popular culture. Vilém Flusser writes that the power and value of photography lies precisely in its transfer or distribution of information. A photograph carries information on the surface of the image, which can be reproduced countless times and transferred to other textual contexts using distribution devices that imbue the photograph with the meaning that is crucial for its reception (2010: 53–60). Therefore, the key element in the transfer of information and, above all, in the reading of messages is its reproduction. An important role in the process is held by the *mimetic ability* of a photograph to seemingly recreate not only space but time as well, and evoke a feeling of contemporaneity, of simultaneity, as has already been mentioned. The depicted image is with me here and now, which, according to Sontag, triggers fantasies and stirs desire (2001: 20).

> Needing to have reality confirmed and experience enhanced by photographs is an aesthetic consumerism to which everyone is now addicted. Industrial societies turn their citizens into image-junkies; it is the most irresistible form of mental pollution. Poignant longings for beauty, for an end to probing below the surface, for a redemption and celebration

---

3 Here, Crary points to the work of Guy Debord on the society of the spectacle, in which the author gives a very good presentation of the new relationships that are manifested through visual representations.

> of the body of the world — all these elements of erotic feeling are affirmed in the pleasure we take in photographs. (Sontag 2001: 27–28)

Sontag continues by saying that people feel a mental compulsion to photograph and by doing so turn the experience itself into a way of seeing: "Ultimately, having an experience becomes identical with taking a photograph of it, and participating in a public event comes more and more to be equivalent to looking at it in photographed form" (2001: 28). The power of concert photography or the popularity of a photograph of a music idol can also be understood in this way. On the one hand, it sends us back to the time when a specific event (e.g. concert) took place, and, on the other hand, an intimacy is formed between the viewer and the musician – he is here with me now, at this very moment. In this case the photograph is a substitute for an experience and evokes specific emotions. By continuously reproducing it, events can be re-experienced and emotions re-evoked. Because photographic reproduction requires specific knowledge and materials that not everyone possesses, a photograph can be marketed. Photography has caused a shift from the field of aesthetics and art to the field of economics and politics. Walter Benjamin (1998) has already pointed this out by saying that works which can be reproduced undermine the authenticity of works of art and of art itself, as the loss of "aura" (as he calls it) leads to the loss of the magic of the work of art, and art becomes a mere tool of political usurpation. In order for that to happen, it must be reproduced again, to return to the beginning of this paragraph, since reproduction enables the transfer and redistribution of meanings.

Accelerated industrialisation in the 19th century and the development of printing techniques have enabled the spread and consumption of photography (Pinson 2010: 19). It was this very development of printing techniques – newspapers, magazines, and especially tabloids – that promoted the circulation and marketing of photographic images, including images of male and female musicians. Breda Luthar writes that at the end of the 19th century, newspapers only rarely printed photographs; however, that changed after World War I.[4] "With the

---

4 Prior to the 20th century, photographs were reproduced in print media in smaller volumes, using the technique of wood-engraving and lithography (Wright 2004). Around 1900, the half-tone print process appeared, which enabled cheaper reproduction of photographs; thus in 1904 the London *Daily Mirror* became the first newspaper to be entirely illustrated with photographs (Lenman 2005: 488). However, it was not until rotary offset lithographic printing was developed in the early 20th century that better reproduction was enabled, which led to the wide use of photographs in the press. With urbanisation, consumerism and the parallel growing interest in sport and mass entertainment, photojournalism likewise began to thrive in the twenties and thirties (Lenman 2005: 490).

development of the popular press, the appearance of the newspaper became a message in itself. In the 1920s, photographs became the main feature of popular daily newspapers and tabloid weeklies, whereas the elite press continued to foster verbality" (1998: 27–28).[5] Luthar continues by saying that in the twenties, pictorial journalism became an important part of a broader cultural transformation: "Technology, commercialisation and the visual imagination of the film generation shaped the cultural environment, in which images joined words to form a story. This was not happening in opposition to traditional culture but within the context of traditional popular culture, which was evident in the way the events in the story were narrativised and in their moral unambiguity" (1998: 29). The ability of a photograph[6] to tell a story or several stories simultaneously in a single image, in which one can always find the conclusion to the story or more; to rekindle some of the feelings/emotions you felt when the event was taking place, is similar to oral literature (storytelling and anecdotalism), which people were familiar with and enjoyed. It is an interesting coincidence that in America the type of tabloid journalism of the 1920s that discussed the affairs of Hollywood celebrities, musicians and even criminals using visual symbols (photographs, typography, and the newspaper's graphic image) was given the name "jazz journalism" (cf. Luthar 1998: 32), similarly to the popular musical genre of that time. Both jazz and photography had a remarkable influence on American society in that period: both were important status symbols of the urban middle class and of the modernisation of America after World War I (see Pinson 2010).

Alongside the development of the press and the spread of the printed word, which according to Benedict Anderson had enabled the formation of new *imagined communities* and the spread of nationalisms in the 19th century (1998), it can be said that in the second half of the 19th century and even more intensively in the 20th century, photography assumed the role of a connective agent. The understanding of photography as a witness, its ability to be reproduced, and its distribution through printing has enabled the understanding of our existence in the "here and now", i.e. our awareness of the simultaneousness of existence, which according to Anderson is a prerequisite for creating the consciousness of an imagined community. Photography and visual images play an important role in our lives, just like the spoken and

---

5 The weekly supplement *Ilustrirani Slovenec* (*Illustrated Slovenian*) began publication at that time, more precisely in 1924 (Luthar 1998: 28).

6 Not only of photographs, but of other works of fine art as well. We cannot overlook the socio-educational role of church frescoes.

written word, as K. Heather Pinson writes: "They shape, stimulate, influence, and antagonize those who internalize the sentiments of a particular society at a particular time. This relationship between the image and the society that created it establishes an ideology around the subject presented in the image" (2010: 17). In addition to the tabloids and newspapers which disseminated images of music stars, we cannot overlook the impact of the invention of the gramophone and radio on the development and spread of popular music. Visual art also played an important role in this, as from the 1940s onwards LP records were inserted in sleeves,[7] which later on often featured photographs of performers. With film[8] (which is basically a series of 24 images per second) and later on television, an image was added to the audio. Thus the visual image of male and female musicians became much more important than the music itself. In 1981, television screens showed The Buggles on MTV singing "*Video killed the radio star. Video killed the radio star. Pictures came and broke your heart*".

HISTORY, PHOTOGRAPHY AND MUSIC: PHOTOGRAPHS OF POPULAR MUSIC AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

At the time of their invention, in the first half of the 19th century, photographic images were quite static due to the long exposure times: for example, in order to make the photograph *View from the Window at Le Gras* (1826), the French inventor of photography, Nicéphore Niépce, exposed photosensitive material to natural light (sunlight) in his *camera obscura* for as long as 8 hours! But what excited man more than the landscape was the reproduction of the human figure. The second famous French inventor of photography, i.e. of the daguerreotype, Louis Daguerre, succeeded in capturing a human figure when photographing *Boulevard du Temple* in Paris (1938): the subject stood in the same spot long enough for Daguerre's lens to capture him and record him on a photosensitive medium "forever". The first photographs, writes Jože Dolmark, were in fact documentary ones

---

7 According to data from Columbia Records, they employed Alex Steinweiss in 1939, who is known among designers as the inventor and designer of LP record sleeves (see Columbia Records Story on their official webpage).

8 It should be noted that the first sound film, in 1927, was *The Jazz Singer* by director Alan Crosland, which starred the singer Al Jolson.

and showed reality from a researcher's perspective. "The first photographs, unique 'commemorative' images of people, places and things, are characterised by a knack for 'recording and prying' into human and natural phenomena" (2007: 299). This immortalising "forever", "for all eternity", and, consequently, the symbolic chasing away of death or persisting in eternity prompted André Bazin to choose the mummy and embalming as metaphors for photography, because: "photography, unlike art, does not create eternity, but merely embalms time and saves it from ruin" (2007: 294). Perhaps it was this very idea of embalming time, of seemingly preserving immutability and chasing away death, that gave rise to the popularity of portrait photography in the 19th century and with it a sort of idolatry of the human figure, including musicians. Jon Sievert writes that there is nothing unusual in the desire to photograph musicians: as far as cave paintings are relevant, we can see that the desire to depict musicians has always been present, if they only had the tools to do it (1997).

Photography has enabled the portrayal of musicians almost from its very beginnings: the first known photograph of a musician is dated 1839 and depicts the most famous Italian violinist, Nicólo Paganini (Sievert 1997). Paganini was photographed in a posture that suggests violin playing, for he has the instrument in one hand and the other hand is raised over his head, holding a bow. (Sievert wonders whether Paganini's portrait was truly the first one or if it was just the most famous.) It should be noted that Paganini passed away in late May 1840, only a year or so after Daguerre had developed and published his process (in 1838 or 1839). This is why Paganini's portrait, which was discovered in a flat in Turin, is considered fake. However, if this portrait is an original, then it informs us of two things: that soon after it was invented, photography became so popular that it spread at an unstoppable speed among the bourgeois class in particular; and secondly, this image of a musician (who was famous and celebrated during his lifetime and was called the "Devil's violinist" owing to his virtuosity) shows that music, whether in the form of its performers or concerts, was an important motif, worthy of and needing to be recorded.

The development of photographic technology, of cameras and reproduction processes alike, enabled the spreading of the popularity of photography at an unstoppable speed. Allow me to mention just a few of the more important innovations that have taken place from the mid-19th century onward. In the mid-1850s, André-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri invented the *carte-de-visite* format, which allowed cheaper and faster reproduction by placing several lenses onto his camera and taking several photographs on a single plate. The reproduction process

was therefore cheaper, and such photographs could be purchased by the less wealthy masses of the middle class. In addition to faster and cheaper reproduction, the popularity of this format was also the result of the fact that photographers were able to imitate the luxury of the wealthy bourgeois class. Therefore, representations formed in this way did not imitate the actual social status but the desired one (Bate 2012: 83). Furthermore, the development of processes and media, such as wet collodion and the gelatine dry plate process, the invention of celluloid film and paper and plastic media, which significantly facilitated the reproduction processes, led to the development of light, portable and, above all, easy-to-use cameras. In the early 20th century, two such cameras were Kodak's Brownie, which became popular because it was easy to use,[9] and the Leica with 135 (35mm) format film.[10] Technological developments made it possible for optical devices, photographic processes and, last but not least, photographs to become increasingly accessible and affordable to all for recording special events and especially everyday moments. Of special importance for the photographing of music events and performers was the fact that technology enabled the capturing of images even in low lighting, e.g. in the dive bars and concert halls where one could listen to and experience popular music.

The logical consequence of this is that today we have tons of photographs that bear witness to one musical event or another. The Photodocumentation Department of the National Museum of Contemporary History houses more than 2 and a half million items of photographic material, both positives and negatives on various media (glass plates, 120 and 135 format film, plastic media, and paper; many of the photographs are kept in neatly arranged albums). The majority of the photographic material (negatives) is kept in the negatives collection in fireproof cabinets (in the dark), at 15°C and 40% relative humidity, in compliance with the recommendations (Vodopivec 2003; Planinc and Buh 2010). Most of the photographs were taken after World War II. They are the work of various photographers; the

---

9 The marketing slogan for the Brownie was *"You push the button, we do the rest"*, because the operation of these cameras was incredibly easy and limited to a few buttons.

10 In the second half of the 20th century, we cannot overlook the digital processing of pictorial signals and the development of digital photography. Digital photography in museums has raised certain dilemmas regarding repositioning and storage, which are still in the early stages of practical application and will have to be addressed more boldly in the future.
Since the topic of this collection of papers mostly covers the period of Yugoslavia in the second half of the 20th century, and since the photographs from that period which are being kept at the National Museum of Contemporary History were mostly recorded on analogue media (plates, films and paper), I will not delve into digital photography here.

department houses the photographs by influential reporters such as Marjan Ciglič, who was a photographer for the *Dnevnik* newspaper for many years, and Edi Šelhaus, who took photographs for the newspapers *Slovenski poročevalec*, *Tovariš* and *Delo*. The collection also includes photographic material by other photographers, such as Sandi (Aleksander) Jesenovec, who worked for the Ministry of the Interior after the war, and was the first editor of *Fotoantika*, a specialised newspaper for photography in museums, and photojournalist Vlastja Simončič, who educated many young photographers. Since the 1980s, the museum has also housed the works of photojournalists working for the magazine *Mladina*, Janez Bogataj and Tone Stojko.[11] This rich collection of materials also contains many images of male and female musicians from the period of post-war Yugoslavia (between 1945 and 1991). They are mostly photographs of concerts, backstage scenes, and portraits of male and female performers, which were published in daily newspapers and magazines – i.e. news photographs; a few shots of male and female musicians were also taken in order to be placed on record sleeves (album covers). When they were taken, most of the photographs were not intended to be put on display in galleries; this decision was most often made later, when going through them. The material kept by the museum has exceptional documentary value that could be ranked alongside many worldwide archives, museums and galleries. The material that shows images of music in the period of post-war Yugoslavia can be roughly divided into three groups.

World War II and the first post-war years (1950s). These photographs are distinguished by war photography (Photo 1). Much of the material is included in the collection of the photography department of the Republic Information Secretariat of the Government of the People's Republic of Slovenia, which was later renamed Foto Slovenija. These photographs recorded the post-war events, reforms, and way of life throughout Slovenia. As regards the depictions of the making of music, the photographs portray musicians commemorating various events, celebrating anniversaries and post-war demonstrations, and in work brigades (Photo 2). The predominant images are those of brass bands and performances by choirs and accordion players. The images of demonstrations most often show images of accordion players,

---

11 For more information on the photographic material (or photographic stocks) and for viewing select digitised material, see the blog of the Photodocumentation Department of the National Museum of Contemporary History http://fototekamnzs.com/; the website of the National Museum of Contemporary History will be updated to enable the obtaining of information directly from the museum's website.

Photo 1. The XIVth Division left Kočevje territory for Bela Krajina in late December 1943 to prepare for the march to Štajerska. Units of the XIVth Division en route toward Suhor in Bela Krajina on December 30, 1943.
Photo: Gojko Pipen, 30 December 1943, Bela Krajina.
National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Photo 2. "Kurirčkova pošta" (literal translation: "little courier's mail").
At the end of all four methods of delivery of "Kurirčkova pošta". The last one came by boat on Ljubljanica river and brought greetings to Marshall Tito and contributions to the children's magazine Kurirček (Little Courier). The photo shows a group of pionirji (pioneers, i.e. scouts) with accordions and flags in Prešeren Square in Ljubljana.
Photo: Marjan Ciglič, 22 May 1963, Ljubljana.
National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana, Slovenia

with singers and a standard-bearer nearby (Photo 3). The motif of an accordion player and standard-bearer can also be seen in photographs from the period of the attainment of independence in the 1990s (Photo 4). All of these depictions refer to popular music as the music of the masses, accessible to everyone. This type of music most often either encouraged people to work or legitimised the political authority – in the latter case reflecting the dominant ideological discourses (in later periods as well). The post-war time was a time of hope, optimism and the building of a new world, but it was also a time of regret and of commemorating the war; consequently, such ideas were also reflected in the photographs that depicted musical performances.

The 1960s and 1970s. This was a time of relative social prosperity and economic stability for Yugoslavia. Due to its inclusion in the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War, Yugoslavia, and with it Slovenia, received important innovations from both the West and the East. This was also a time when Western music, such as jazz and rock 'n' roll, was making strong inroads into Slovenia. In this context, the milestones include photographs of the much-talked-about Louis Armstrong concert in Ljubljana in 1959 (Photo 5), through which the USA wanted to spread its cultural influence in Eastern Europe.[12] They are rather classic photographs depicting the musician on stage in wide and medium-frame shots. We do not find the characteristic portrayal and experiments with lighting that we are accustomed to in American jazz photography. These are news shots, intended for reporting about the event in a newspaper. Slovenia began to hold its first festivals in the sixties: in 1960, the Jazz Festival in Bled was launched (Photo 6), which was later moved to Ljubljana, and in 1962 the Slovenska popevka (Slovenian Song) festival was established (Photo 7). The development of this festival was also influenced by the nearby Italian song contest, which began in 1951 in the small coastal town of Sanremo. Photographs of these festivals include diverse material, ranging from portraits of musicians, their

---

12 Louis Armstrong performed in Ljubljana again in the sixties. The photographing of Armstrong's arrival and the nearly ill-fated concert were described by Edi Šelhaus in *Fotoreporter* (*Photojournalist*) (1982: 185–186). He wrote that he had learnt in the nick of time that the musician's plane was going to land in Zagreb. He and his colleague went to shoot the musician's arrival at the airport, which was crawling with reporters and photojournalists. When the famous visitor appeared, there were flashing lights everywhere and everyone was running towards him. Soon afterwards, Armstrong was picked up by a black Mercedes and taken to Ljubljana at full throttle in a heavy downpour. Šelhaus and his colleague followed them but lost them on the way because their car was too slow. They arrived at the concert too late to shoot the musician's contact with the Ljubljana audience. Because it was already too late to submit the photographs to the newspaper, Šelhaus was for once able to stay at the concert to the very end.

Photo 3. Unveiling of a plaque in honour of combatant Peter Kavčič (nom de guerre Jegorov) in Breznica above Škofja Loka in 1950. Peter Kavčič, from the Škofja Loka battalion, was the first victim of the Home Guard in Škofja Loka and fell on 18th March 1944. The photo shows two participants during unveiling ceremony on a hill next to the waving flag, one of whom is playing the accordion.
Photo: Sandi Jesenovec, 1950, Breznica above Škofja Loka.
National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Photo 4. Accordionist. Celebration after the announcement of the results of the plebiscite.
Photo: Tone Stojko, 23 December 1990, Ljubljana.
National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Photo 5. Louis Armstrong at his first concert in Ljubljana (Gospodarsko razstavišče).
Photo: Marjan Ciglič, 1 April 1959, Ljubljana.
National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Photo 6. The second jazz festival at Bled. After an all-night "jam session", only one listener and a trumpet player remained in the morning.
Photo: Edi Šelhaus, between 8 and 11 June 1961, Bled.
National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana, Slovenia

performances on stage and shots of events backstage, during rehearsals, preparations and just before they went on stage (Photo 8). In the book *Fotoreporter* (1982), Edi Šelhaus wrote that he had staged some of the shots of musicians to make them more dynamic and interesting:

> I was preparing a big news item at the song festival in Bled for the magazine Tovariš. The rope which the singers are pulling I found lying around; I rented a boat so that I could take a picture of them on the lake; I asked coachmen to drive them in their coaches; and finally found a rake so that the female singers could go about doing farm chores. (1982: 256)

The most powerful photographs were those of emotional musicians backstage. A very powerful aspect of these festival photographs is a sort of *show-biz* glamour intended primarily for television viewers;[13] that is, many of the photographs show a television camera and professional studio lights (Photo 9). The photographs also greatly emphasise the external appearance of the performers: their clothes, hair, and fashion in general. For this reason there are a lot of portraits alongside the news photographs of the concert performances. All of this glamour and the dynamics of the photographs communicate the idea of Yugoslavia of that time as a powerful, progressive and successful country.

In 2009, the National Museum of Contemporary History devoted an exhibition to the festival events of the 1960s, which featured photographs by photojournalist Edi Šelhaus and was entitled *The World of Music in the 60s* (the exhibition curator was Jožica Šparovec). In 2012, in cooperation with the Museum of Gorenjska, they hosted an exhibition entitled *Mandolina, zvezde in Bled: Začetki Slovenske popevke na Bledu in svet pred petdesetimi leti* (Mandolin, Stars and Bled: The Origins of the Slovenian Song Festival in Bled and the World Fifty Years Ago, curator Monika Rogelj).

The 1980s and 1990s. Most of the photographs of music-making and musicians from this period can be seen in the collections of Tone Stojko (Photo 10) and Janez Bogataj (Photo 11); the photographs in the collection of the newspaper *Delo* are also important. They were the work of a community of photographers which had mostly been formed within the Fotogrupa ŠOLT group, established in 1963. They were very dynamic and responsive in their work and, as Brane Kovič writes, many of the members who had been trained in another profession chose photography as their main line of work, for they saw photography as a chance to realise their own individual

---

13 The first television broadcast in Slovenia took place in 1958; the first live broadcast was a broadcast of ski jumping in Planica in 1960.

Photo 7. Beti Jurkovič singing on stage at the second "Slovenska popevka" festival at Bled.
Photo: Marjan Ciglič, between 4 and 6 July 1963, Bled.
National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana, Slovenia

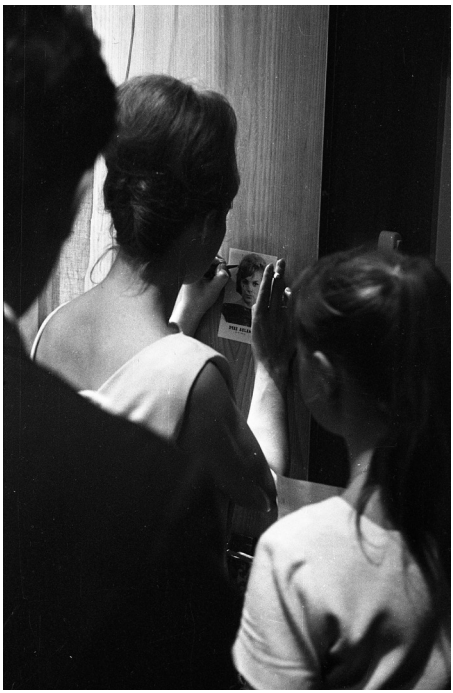

Photo 8. A singer, probably Majda Sepe, giving autographs at the second Slovenska popevka festival at Bled.
Foto: Marjan Ciglič, between 4 and 6 July 1963, Bled.
National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Photo 9. The first music-entertainment TV show "Promenada", on judges and policemen, at the Gospodarsko razstavišče in Ljubljana. The show was directed by France Jamnik, script by Janez Menart, idea by Jurij Souček. In the show featured 130 people from the entertainment orchestra of RTV Slovenija, the opera-ballet ensemble, theatre artists and singers.
Photo: Edi Šelhaus, November 1959, Ljubljana.
National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Photo 10. The group Laibach at the Youth Festival in Celje.
Photo: Tone Stojko, 26 September 1987, Celje.
National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Photo 11. Concert by the band Niet.
Photo: Janez Bogataj, 13 October 1984, Ljubljana.
National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Photo 12. Band Pankrti at the RTV Slovenija studio.
Photo: Janez Bogataj, 12 January 1984, Ljubljana.
National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana, Slovenia

and professional ambitions (1990: 14). Tone Stojko, who has made a name for himself in photojournalism and photography books, also came from that circle. "In both fields he opened up many unconventional views that deviated from the norms with which the selections made for club exhibitions and presentations were burdened. His work

as a reporter and editor of the magazine *Mladina* greatly contributed to the establishment of a different role for pictorial material in print publications" (Kovič 1990: 15).[14] A common motif of Stojko's creative work was music and the making of music, which Stojko felt especially close to, as he and his friends had hosted a youth programme about rock on the Maribor radio station in 1962; later on he signed a contract with the public broadcasting station Radiotelevizija (RTV) Slovenija. Stojko's collection contains not only news-style photographs from concerts, but also studio photographs and staged shots that were, among other things, suitable for album covers (e.g. for the bands Niet and Pankrti) (Photo 12). Similarly to Stojko, Janez Bogataj also worked for *Mladina* and was trained in the art of photography by Vlastja Simončič, whose collection is also kept by the National Museum of Contemporary History.

For Yugoslavia, the period of the eighties and nineties was a time of change: Tito had passed away, the regime was crumbling, and Slovenian society was starting to undergo radical changes as it was trying to find a path of its own under the influence of powerful Serbian unitarism; that path ended with the attainment of independence in 1991. It was a time of exploration, of testing limits, and searching for alternatives. This was also reflected in music and recorded in photographs. The focus was on the alternative scene; in the field of photography this included the abovementioned Fotogrupa ŠOLT and the Student Cultural Centre (ŠKUC) with its gallery. Brane Kovič says that the photographers of the younger generation, such as Jane Štravs and Jože Suhadolnik,[15] had much in common, iconographically speaking, since they were connected through their participation and creative work in an intense cultural environment which differed from the established one. "What differed was not only the topics they were covering, but the very way they were covering them: their work is characterised by an openness and susceptibility to various initiatives or to possibilities for presenting a personal view of the individual aspects in a specific environment, of the action and the dynamic structure which is constantly regenerating, modernising and problematising itself" (1990: 18). Most of their work was presented through exhibitions, and even more so through the youth and student press and marginal publications such as fanzines (1990: 18).

---

14 The photographers who were active alongside the *Mladina* weekly were members of a group called Fotogrupa M.

15 The National Museum of Contemporary History does not keep any photographs by the two aforementioned photographers, but they were both important artists on the alternative scene in the 1980s and 90s.

Photo 13. Pankrti's last concert.
Photo: Tone Stojko, 10 December 1987, Ljubljana.
National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Photo 14. Concert by a punk band at the Študent / FV disco.
Photo: Tone Stojko, March 1982, Ljubljana.
National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana, Slovenia

The photographs of the music-making of that period which are kept by the museum are predominantly photographs of punk and new-age bands, e.g. concert shots and portraits of the bands Laibach, Pankrti, Indust Bag, Otroci socializma (Children of Socialism), Niet, Paraf and others; the collections also contain portrayals of literary

evenings and recitals, and other types of performances. The essential difference between these photographs of the music scene and those from the sixties is that the former show much more interaction with the audience and the boundaries between the stage and the audience are blurred (Photo 13, 14). The photographs themselves are not as polished as the older ones; they experiment more with sharpness and blurriness, which might also be the result of photographing under poor lighting and using wider apertures which reduce the depth of field. These photographs also give the impression of a snapshot, typical of fast street photography. The photographs of the eighties music scene changed the aesthetics of the photographs of popular music of the sixties and invested greater "youthful energy" into them, in the sense of increasing research into and experimentation with the photographic medium and later on with print media, and shattering the basic principles of composition.

Some of the photographs from this period have already been presented by the National Museum of Contemporary History, e.g. in cooperation with the Photon gallery in the retrospective exhibition *Nowt's Getting On: Photographic Retrospective on the 30th Anniversary of the Band Pankrti*. The popular culture of the eighties is also partially presented in the permanent exhibition *Slovenians in the 20th Century* as part of the movement that led to deliberations on the emancipation and independence of Slovenia (curator Nataša Strlič).

CONCLUSION: PHOTOGRAPHY, POPULAR CULTURE AND MUSEUMS

This paper has examined the role of photography in people's lives, the relation between popular music, photography and society, and the multitude of photographs of performers of popular music in socialist Yugoslavia (performers, concerts and other musical performances), which are housed by the National Museum of Contemporary History.

The photographic material which is kept in the museum is only partly on display in the museum exhibitions and can also be accessed via other media, such as the museum's website and social networks. The photographic material can also be seen in various newspapers, such as *Delo* and *Dnevnik*, since newspapers often turn to the museum for the material they need. As has already been mentioned, the original material is kept in fireproof cabinets in the negatives collection (partly also in the photography collection) under controlled climatic

conditions, and has been digitised (scanned and digitally processed). In view of the large volume, a selection of the material must be made prior to publishing it (for exhibitions, monographs, websites and networks, and for other types of publication). The selection criteria, with the exception of contents, are mostly left to the knowledge and taste of the curator and of the (exhibition) designer who is in charge of the visual image of exhibitions and publications.

The museum's central exhibition is *Slovenians in the 20th Century*, which is continuously being modified in accordance with the development of the discipline, primarily of historiography and museology; in the case of the latter, the relationship between the exhibition and the audience is of special importance. The exhibition covers the 20th century: the north wing (to the right of the entrance) contains rooms that present the pre-World War I period, World War I itself (the hinterlands and the fronts), the interwar period (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia – the bourgeoisie, borders, technology, art, politics, and the royal family), and World War II; the south wing presents the time after the war – the post-war period and post-war massacres, the development of the economy, the period of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the attainment of independence, entry into the European Union, and Slovenia's EU presidency. As this is a national museum, the underlying theme of the museum or exhibition narrative focuses on the most important or at least on the turning points in Slovenian history, into which the elements of everyday life and of popular culture have been incorporated. Such contents are actually quite rare. For example, the exhibition on the interwar period (the time of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) features the technology (radio, telephone, the printing press and the like) which contributed to the spread of popular culture. When discussing the popular culture of post-war Yugoslavia, one should not overlook the room that shows the democratic processes which took place at the end of the 1970s and in the 1980s through the prism of popular culture. The panels are hung on wires which are attached to different kinds of shoes, filled with concrete. Each panel is like an individual cell that creates an interconnected whole within the room – it is a symbolic note of the diversity of the multifaceted resistance against a system that was becoming more and more intolerable after Tito's death. The panels provide brief information about some of the objects and photographs. On the one hand, they contain information about the Poster Affair, Radio Študent, *Mladina* magazine, and descriptions of various music and art movements (such as Neue Slowenische Kunst); on the other hand, they present the formation of political parties, and the ideas and processes which later resulted in Slovenia's attainment of independence. Unfortunately, these contents

do not include the photographs and music which was especially intense and recognisable in that period. Considering the collection of photographic material housed by the museum and the intense events in the making of music in post-war Yugoslavia, the exhibition presents very little content which indicates the diversity of the grassroots reactions to or support of the regime.

In conclusion, I would like to present the status of photography in museums and its relation to the creation of museum narratives and "museum truths". This is especially important in light of the realisation that photographs are nowadays a very important epistemological medium and that in fact we cannot imagine a museum exhibition without photography. Regardless of all the different forms of museum (re)presentations, popular culture continues to be denied a more prominent interpretation in Slovenian museums: if we limit ourselves to the photographs of popular music and to the music alone, they remain merely backdrops to museum representations and not the essential contents of museum interpretations.

Elizabeth Edwards and her colleagues (see Edwards 2001; Edwards and Lien 2014; Edwards and Morton 2015) have written several articles about the use of photography in museums. In museums, photographs are used for various purposes, either as museum objects or tools, by going through selection processes from their acquisition to their display. Photographs can play various roles in museums: they can be a technique/method of recording, an object in a collection, or a display technique, whereas on the internet and in advertisements they can be a marketing medium. Because of this mutability and fluidity of the roles of photographs in museums, Edwards referred to photography as a "visual ecosystem" that travels through different museum practices invisibly[16] and which is, precisely because of its fluidity and convenience, vital for every museum. The understanding of photography in museums lacks the understanding of the role played by photography in shaping museum knowledge. Through exhibitions and other educational programmes, museums create "truths" which are rarely questioned. Therefore, museums are knowledge systems in which photography plays a very important role, for it most often supports specific types of "truths" and/or historical narratives. In museums, photographs are most often used to support museum objects, and therefore their power to create meanings is subordinated to the meaning and value of the object. Photographs usually endow objects with a sense of

---

16 All museums focus on movable heritage, i.e. objects.

authenticity and provide them with a broader context. This is precisely why photographs are most often used in museums as backdrops to the object, and their message is most often modified as well (sometimes to the point of being unrecognisable). This often alters their contents as well. In museums, as in other contexts (e.g. in daily newspapers), a photograph is seen as a witness to an era and very little is said about its background and creation. Edwards suggests a different view of photographs in museums, through understanding the role that photography (and its forms) plays in constructing museum knowledge.[17] Photography plays many roles in museums, to which we can add its abilities to document and reproduce, which offer "a highly flexible platform from which to launch interpretations" (Edwards and Lien 2014: 14).

A good example of the presentation of photographs in an exhibition at the National Museum of Contemporary History is the temporary exhibition on the centenary of World War I, *We Never Imagined Such a War* (on display from June 2014 to May 2015). The war was presented through the life stories of various people, including (amateur) photographers such as Stanko Oražem, who developed his own photographs and sent them to newspapers in Vienna. In addition to the photographs themselves, which mostly showed the times at the fronts when there was no combat (because of the lengthy processes and heavy technology which was difficult to move, any shots of the action itself were virtually impossible), the backgrounds were also presented – the people who took the photographs, the technology, the processes and the original shots (on glass media); the context and discourses of the period could be gathered from the life stories and from the timeline, which presented the milestones (the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the Isonzo Front, the death of the emperor, the end of the war, etc.). The photographs were a part of the exhibition (in most cases still used as a backdrop to the objects), but well contextualised.

Like Edwards, Quentin Bajac, the chief curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, has pointed out the need to question the role of photography in museums, which is departing from the understanding of its form (as a museum object or work of art) and nearing a complex understanding of a photograph as a cultural object. It is of great importance that exhibitions present photography

---

17 Edwards sees one exception in the use of photographs in memorial museums (e.g. holocaust museums), in which their ontological message of "I was there" is key. In such museums the visual message is more profound than the documentary one: the photographs appear as memories and reminders. Mieke Bal describes them as "affective images" that present a temporary link between perception and subjectivity (Edwards and Lien 2014: 12–13).

through an understanding of the context of its creation and the methods of its distribution, and that we try to comprehend museum exhibitions as places for the selection and legitimisation of images and artistic practices (all taken from Mauro 2014: 9–15).

John Berger considers a photograph a memory: a remnant of the past, a trace of something that has happened. Hence photography must be incorporated into the social and political memory, but not as a substitute which would encourage that memory to fade. If we refer to popular culture and certain museum exhibitions, the spectacle creates an eternal present of immediate expectation in which memory is no longer necessary or needed. That is why we need an alternative use of photography, as it "leads us back once more to the phenomenon and faculty of memory. The aim must be to construct a context for a photograph, to construct it with words, to construct it with other photographs, to construct it by its place in an ongoing text of photographs and images" (Berger 1999: 45). Berger claims that we most often use photographs *tautologically*, i.e. in such a way that "the photograph merely repeats what is being said in words" (1999: 45).[18] However, neither photographs nor memory are unilinear, but work "radially, that is to say with an enormous number of associations all leading to the same event" (1999: 45).

> If we want to put a photograph back into the context of experience, social experience, social memory, we have to respect the laws of memory. We have to situate the printed photograph so that it acquires something of the surprising conclusiveness of that which was and is. What Brecht wrote about acting in one of his poems is applicable to such a practice. For *instant* one can read photography, for *acting* the recreating of context. (Berger 1999: 45)

This context therefore replaces the photograph in time, according to Berger, but that time is not its own original time but narrated time, which becomes historic time when assumed by social memory and social action: "A radial system has to be constructed around the photograph so that it may be seen in terms which are simultaneously personal, political, economic, dramatic, everyday and historic" (1999: 46).

This is also the only way for us to begin to see the popular culture of former Yugoslavia as a cultural heritage that deserves an important place in museums. And this time not merely as a representation, i.e. a backdrop to the dominant historical narratives, but as an

---

18 Elizabeth Edwards and Sigrid Lien speak of an evidential ballast that duplicates meaning, especially when it comes to using photographs in museum design (2014: 8–9).

interpretation. Owing to the fluid roles which they can occupy in various contexts, photography as an epistemological medium and popular music allow for countless interpretations. The interpretation of the popular culture of former Yugoslavia also entails the re-examining and demystifying of the dominant narratives and myths of the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav nationalistic and revanchist ideology.

REFERENCES

ANDERSON, BENEDICT 1998 *Zamišljene skupnosti: O izvoru in širjenju nacionalizma.* [*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.*] Ljubljana: Studia Humanitatis.

BARTHES, ROLAND 1992 *Camera lucida: Zapiski o fotografiji.* [*Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography.*] Ljubljana: Studia Humanitatis.

BATCHEN, GEOFFREY 2010 *Goreč od želje: Zasnovanje fotografije.* [*Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography.*] Ljubljana: Studia Humanitatis.

BATE, DAVID 2012 *Fotografija: Ključni koncepti.* [*Photography: The Key Concepts.*] Ljubljana: Membrana (ZSKZ).

BAZIN, ANDRÉ 2007 'Ontologija fotografske podobe.' ['The Ontology of the Photographic Image.'] *Kino!* (2–3): 290–295.

BENJAMIN, WALTER 1998 'Umetnina v času, ko jo je mogoče tehnično reproducirati.' ['The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.'] In: *Izbrani spisi*. Ljubljana: Studia Humanitatis. Pp. 145–176.

BERGER, JOHN 1999 *Rabe fotografije.* [*Uses of Photography.*] Ljubljana: Založba */cf.

CRARY, JONATHAN 2012 *Tehnike opazovalca: Videnje in modernost v devetnajstem stoletju.* [*Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century.*] Ljubljana: Založba Sophia.

DOLMARK, JOŽE 2007 'Izum fotografije in boj fotografske podobe za njeno uveljavitev: Nekaj estetskih dilem.' ['Invention of Photography and the Struggle of the Photographic Image to Establish Itself: A Few Aesthetic Dilemmas.'] *Kino!* (2–3): 296–299.

EDWARDS, ELIZABETH 2001 *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums*. Oxford, New York: Berg.

EDWARDS, ELIZABETH AND SIGRID LIEN 2014 'Museums and the Work of Photographs.' In: *Uncertain Images: Museums and the Work of Photographs*. Elizabeth Edwars and Sigrid Lien, eds. Farnham, Burlington: Ashgate. Pp. 3–17.

EDWARDS, ELIZABETH AND CHRISTOPHER MORTON 2015 'Introduction: Between Art and Information: Towards a Collecting History of Photographs.' In: *Photographs, Museums, Collections: Between Art and Information*. Elizabeth Edwards and Christopher Morton, eds. London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic. Pp. 3–24.

FLUSSER, VILÉM 2010 *K filozofiji fotografije.* [*Towards a Philosophy of Photography.*] Ljubljana: ZSKZ and Društvo za oživljanje zgodbe 2 koluta.

KOVIČ, BRANE 1990 'Za fotografijo.' ['Behind/For a Photograph.'] In: *150 let fotografije na Slovenskem: 1945–1990.* Brane Kovič, ed. Ljubljana: Mestna galerija Ljubljana, Arhitekturni muzej Ljubljana. Pp. 8–19.

LENMAN, ROBIN, ED. 2005 *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

LUTHAR, BREDA 1998 *Poetika in politika tabloidne culture.* [*Poetics and Politics of Tabloid Culture.*] Ljubljana: Znanstveno in publicistično središče.

MAURO, ALESSANDRA, ED. 2014 *Photo Show: Landmark Exhibitions that Defined the History of Photography*. London: Thames& Hudson.

PINSON, K. HEATHER 2010 *The Jazz Image: Seing Music through Herman Leonard's Photography*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

PLANINC, LUCIJA AND TINA BUH 2010 'Papir, pergament in fotografsko gradivo.' ['Paper, Parchment and Photographic Material.'] In: *Priročnik za nego predmetov kulturne dediščine.* Motnikar Ana, ed. Ljubljana: Slovenski etnografski muzej, Skupnost muzejev Slovenije. Pp. 66–76.

SIEVERT, JON 1997 *Concert Photography: How to Shoot and Sell Music-business*. Daly City: Humble press. Internet source: <http://www.humblepress.com/Concert/index3.html>, 11. 10. 2015.

SKRT, DARJA, ED. 2016 *Muzeji in avdiovizualno: E-zbornik*. [*Museums and the Audiovisual: E-Collection of Papers.*] Ljubljana: Skupnost muzejev Slovenije. Internet source: <http://www.sms-muzeji.si/ckfinder/userfiles/files/E-zbornik%20PDF%20za%20objavo(2).pdf>, 5. 11. 2016.

SONTAG, SUSAN 2001 *O Fotografiji.* [*On Photography.*] Ljubljana: Študentska založba (Knjižna zbirka KODA).

ŠELHAUS, EDI 1982 *Fotoreporter.* [*Photojournalist.*] Ljubljana: Založba borec.

TOMANIĆ TRIVUNDŽA, ILIJA 2005 'Vizualni simbolizem ali besedilni komentar: Odstopanje od in preseganje realistične reprezentacije v rabi novinarske fotografije.' ['Visual Symbolism or Textual Commentary: Deviation from and Surpassing of Realistic Representation in the Use of Journalistic Photography.'] *Teorija in praksa* 42(2–3): 439–456.

THOMPSON, JERRY L. 2013 *Why Photography Matters*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press.

VALENTINČIČ FURLAN, NADJA, ED. 2015 *Documenting and Presenting Intangible Cultural Heritage on Film*. Ljubljana: Slovenski etnografski muzej.

VODOPIVEC, JEDRT 2003 'Hraniti in ohraniti fotografsko gradivo.' ['Storing and Preserving Photographic Material.'] In: *Zborovanje slovenskega muzejskega društva, Ptuj, 9.–11.10.2003*. Knez Darko, ed. Ljubljana: Slovensko muzejsko društvo. Pp. 68–78.

WRIGHT, HELENA E. 2004 'Photography in the Printing Press: The Photomechanical Revolution.' In: *Presenting Pictures*. Bernard Finn, Robert Bud and Helmuth Trischler, eds. London: Science Museum. Pp. 21–42.