

When we invited Milcho Manchevski in 1999 to exhibit his photographs at the Museum of Contemporary Art - Skopje, we were motivated by the desire to explore the importance that producing powerful images has in Manchevski's work. As became evident in his later films, and especially in his photographs, creating images itself and the power of the imagination captured in these images are the main driving forces behind the aesthetic and poetic force of this original film auteur.

The series of photographs, which Manchevski showed, was shot on various locations between his two homes - Macedonia and the USA, and in several European cities. 'Street' was the title of that photo exhibition. The title was intended to signify, directly and metaphorically, the notion of travelling in these photographs, showing different urban and rural views, scenes from the romantic Rome parks and from the oriental colorful green markets of Skopje, deserted picturesque buildings and lively characters, local shops in small streets, and the abstract reflections of real life seen in the steel and glass walls of the world's cities.

As far as genre, Manchevski's photographs suggest influence by the great historical example of Henri-Cartier Bresson's documentary 'life' photographs, as well as kinship with the American tradition of 'street photography' and with what in that context can be put under the heading of personal and subjective documentary. Sticking to the classical Cartier-Bresson principles of balancing the composition, the intuition and the 'decisive moment', successfully guides Manchevski in pointing the camera lens towards subjects of his interest. However, another characteristic of Manchevski's photographic procedure is his use of the entire frame of the photograph that in turn brings equal presence and importance to the seemingly peripheral - at first glance imperceptible - details, which he often additionally emphasizes by means of unusual, askew, crooked or lowered angles of shot. By means of such dynamic treatment of the composition, Manchevski makes room for his own subjective motif

interpretation. He often develops these motifs into a series of several related or unrelated photographs, linked in particular micro narrations.

Certainly, the methods of widening the focus, stimulating the eye to shift towards depth and creating polyfocal spatial dynamics brings the photography of Manchevski into close relation with some of the essential features of his film discourse. Writing about this stylistic harmony, the Italian film historian Andrea Morini, emphasizes in his essay about 'Street' that '(...) his incredible ability to suspend and at the same time render the dynamic subject of the frame, is apparent. It may be a single image or a sequence, but what is important is his ability to confer a polysemous structure on his work that permits the discovery of a multitude of interest points that give depth to his communicative power and are never exhausted at the first viewing.

It is precisely this polysemous structure that provides the basis for the new project of Milcho Manchevski's titled 'Five Drops of Dream', which is again realized upon invitation by the Museum of Contemporary Art - Skopje. The selection made from thousands of photographs taken during a period of more than a decade takes again the form of recording a multitude of everyday events, street scenes, film shoots, intimate notes and of course, his continuous travels, including several visits to India, Asia and Africa.

This disparate range of times, spaces and motifs Manchevski unites by applying editing or collage procedures which bring his photographs together into unified compositions, each made up of five individual photographs.

The compositions are mainly assembled by painterly methods of harmonizing or contrasting the formal, visual traits of the individual presentations (street graphism, sculptural characters and objects, full-empty, coloured textures, etc.), which his visually and colouristically saturated photographs offer in abundance.

At the same time, although the content components are seemingly sidelined into the net of numerous formal and colouristic relationships, resulting in the

photographs almost reaching a level of abstraction, Manchevski nevertheless forms his compositions simultaneously by also following the narrative connections in the content of the individual photographs, some of which even contain subtle, ironic social commentary.

However, what the collage structure offers Manchevski is mainly the opportunity to expand to the furthestmost limits the arc between the abstract and the narrative. This is most evident in a set of themes which have been continuously present in Manchevski's photographs, such as: duplicating images in glass reflections; the touch, speech or choreography of hands; shadow play; or the intrigue, eroticism, and mystery of details in his frequent use of unusual and shortened angles of shot. The intensity of this fluctuating exchange of forms, colours, and content, which exists within the frame of the compositions, is such that it is able not only to penetrate beneath the surface banality of everyday life situations and so show their concealed poetry, but also to transform such reality into something that approaches at the same time a musical or poetic composition. 'Five Drops of Dream' therefore makes a unique photographic travelogue on the pleasure and joy in seeing and discovering every moment of existence of the world around us.