

We are all aware that society uses its institutions and coercive mechanisms to standardize our behaviors and form a system without ever calling it that. In an attempt to create obedient and functional members of the community, it expands cultural values, sets the standards of labor and lays down criteria for socialization and education. One surely recognizes the development of civilizational principles in this, but there is also an intent to curb any attempt at resistance. It engineers consent to enthrone a universal horizon for all, even though we live in a time that makes the balance of power hard to imagine.¹

Zuzana Pustaiová poses the question: is there a chance for those who do not fit the established rules? In many ways we can testify that *diversity* has become a brand that is sold to people to blow away their difficult thoughts and encourage them to optimistically believe that the world wants to improve. At the same time, ironically, those who are *all the same* always come first, and those who are *different* come last. Being the same as others is greeted, while being different is condemned. It seems that only those who have integrated themselves into the world of mass consumption, where *plural identities* successfully maintain the commodification that governs every inch of our lives, are truly welcome. Looking at the current social landscape, Pustaiová points to the unrealistic desires that modern life imposes on people, from the ideology of healthy life, the cult of the body and social adaptability, to the general efficiency and social responsibility. Yet, she decides not to deal with these topics too seriously, as her allies are humor and playfulness and she uses them to create a world where rules are tolerable, or at least subject to change. The staged photos mock the perfection of the advertising industry, showing how the ordinary man responds to the imperatives of the present lifestyle, indirectly announcing its successes and failures. Characters from *One Day Every Day* series reverse the idealized standards and high principles of representation policy. They do it in favor of a genuine, ordinary everyday life, which is not far from normal, it is only *different*.

Emphasizing the aspect of the *unconscious* where stimuli are successfully assimilated into desires, fears or obsessive thoughts, Pustaiová uses a process of repetition and exaggeration, introduced by the Surrealists, and adopts the automatism and the pace of the unconscious as a way of balancing the internal, psychic reality and the external reality. Hence the multitude of the extraordinary comic details such as multiplied artificial nails, a bunch of cigarettes in the

Cf. Nick Srnicek & Alex Williams, *Postkapitalizam i svijet bez rada*, Rad i misao, Rijeka-Zagreb, 2020, p. 150.

mouth, piles of tampons and toilet paper rolls, post-its, flying pizza cuts, paper disguises. The multiplication process refers to the excessiveness of the tasks foisted on us by everyday life, so all the scenes from the photos often cross the boundaries of the comfort zone and discreetly release a glint of discomfort. The artist's manner of presenting the unconscious origin of the elements that form our conscious life, as an entanglement of irrational impulses and common-sense decisions, corresponds to a collage manner of building a composition, joined with the method of photomontage. In many photographs, the characters hide their faces, or change their appearance by wearing a mask, which also evokes one of the typical methods of the surrealism – let's mention only Hannah Höch or Grete Stern, and among the contemporary authors Aïda Muluneh, Amina Benbouchta and Hannah Whitaker.

The *One Day Every Day* series is set at the core of social processes where torn individuals oscillate between their attempts to accommodate to desirable behaviors and useful roles and their tendencies to go beyond the established frameworks, which under the guise of diversity aim to uniformize everyone and neutralize any dissatisfaction in the process.

Dismissing the image of the present as the only possible reality, Zuzana Pustaiová's work seems to silently analyze the image of the future, provoking our imagination and articulation of new values.

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