

**Ana Šuligoj**

# Nedoločljivi

Galerija Krško | 12. september – 10. oktober 2020





# NEDOLOČLJIVI

*Jasna Jernejšek*

Ana Šuligoj je fotografinja mlajše generacije, ki v svoji fotografski praksi raziskuje določene družbene fenomene. V središču njenega zanimanja je univerzalno in vedno aktualno vprašanje o kompleksnosti človekove identitete ter njegove razpetosti med naravo (telo) in družbo (socialne konvencije), identitetno pozicijo in njene vizualne označevalce pa skuša dekonstruirati skozi principe gledališkega performativnega poustvarjanja in vživljanja v različne vloge.

Identificiranje s telesom je usmerjeno predvsem v našo zunanost, vidni del človeka, ki pa ima tudi našemu pogledu nedostopno vsebino, svoj notranji ustroj. V antropologiji in drugih družbenih vedah identiteta označuje kompleksen in spremenljiv skupek fizioloških in psiholoških stanj in doživljanj, ki jih posameznik istoveti s samim seboj, si jih pripisuje, o katerih sodi, da mu pripadajo in so njemu lastna (avtoidentifikacija). Družbena ali kulturna identiteta mu je lahko dodeljena, priznana ali vsiljena skozi ugled, položaj, pravice in dolžnosti. Identiteta je tudi nekaj, s čimer lahko manipulira, jo zgolj prikazuje, se z njo poigrava, od nje pa je tudi odtujen, kar lahko vodi v krizo identitete. Pri tem je telo, ki nas zaradi svojih bioloških zakonitosti (genetika, dednost, staranje, bolezen, smrt) temeljno determinira, središče našega zavedanja in izhodišče identifikacije z lastnim telesom, s skupino drugih teles in človeško vrsto kot tako. S telesom in skozi telo se identificiramo tako posamezniki kot skupine. S telesom naznanjamo svojo prisotnost, pričujočnost v svetu in med drugimi ljudmi; z njim se predstavljamo, izražamo, preko njega komuniciramo z drugimi, lahko ga preoblikujemo ali zlorabljamo.

Družbena apropiacija telesa se lahko vrši skozi različne družbene mehanizme, vzvode in razmerja moči, kar vodi v nadzor nad telesom in različne manipulacije z njim. Razlike v telesnosti so pogosto ideologizi-

rane in stereotipizirane (etnijska, rasa). Zgradbi in videzu telesa radi pripisujemo drugačne in preoblikovane pomene, ki telesnost presejajo. Pogosto predvidevamo, da posameznikova osebnost vpliva na njegove telesne karakteristike, in obratno; iz njegove telesne konstitucije, drža in gestikulacije telesa sklepamo o človekovi osebnosti, značaju, emocijah in razpoloženjih. Prav vsak del telesa ima svojo sporočilnost, ki jo glede na kontekste različno tolmačimo. Telo je tako tudi podoba (image) za druge, je predstava o samem sebi, ki jo kažemo drugim. Ker pa je predstava o samem sebi, ki izhaja iz doživljanja telesa, pogosto obremenjena z različnimi družbenimi konvencijami, je telo tudi vir nezadovoljstva in nelagodja. Dialektika med realnim, (za)željenim in zahtevanim (telesom) pa je značilnost, ki jo pripisujemo tudi fotografski podobi.

V dokumentarni maniri posnet portret je lahko precej zgovoren in nam o portretirancu pove marsikaj – starost, spol, poklic, družbeni status, etnija, rasa, razpoloženje, emocije itd. O vsem tem lahko seveda tudi laže, kajti tako kot lahko naše telo »oblečemo« v določeno identiteto, jo lahko uprizorimo za fotografsko kamero. V seriji *Nedoločljivi* (2014) se Ana Šuligoj dekonstrukcije človekove identitete loti skozi raziskovanje telesnosti, ki determinira njegovo identiteto. Zastavlja si vprašanje, kaj ostane od posameznikove telesne identitete, če odstranimo vse njene vizualne označevalce in jo očistimo družbenih konvencij. Naključno izbrani portretiranci so prekriti z belo rjuho, ki popolnoma zakriva njihovo telesno podobo, fizične lastnosti in kakršno koli drugo individualno prepoznavnost, ki bi omogočala primerjave med njimi. Portreti so posneti pred istim belim studijskim ozadjem, kar jih postavlja na skupni imenovalec. Portreti se razlikujejo zgolj v variacijah gest, pri čemer izgubimo občutek, ali gre za različne posameznike ali zgolj eno osebo. Minimalizem in izčiščena estetika belega na belem dajeta zakritim telesom občutek lebdenja v nedefiniranem prostoru, zaradi česar delujejo nadnaravno. Avtorica se poigrava z različnimi dihotomijami, vezanimi na ambivalentno doživljanje našega sebe: notranjost / zunanost, zakritost / odkritost, prisotnost / odsotnost, vidno / nevidno. V duhovom podobni reprezentaciji posameznikov sugerira na neoprijemljivost identitete; slutnja telesa, ki se zarisuje skozi rjuho, jo naredi še bolj negotovo. Avtoričina zavestna ali nezavedna navezava na tradicijo upodabljanja duhov se

tako dotakne predstave o samem bistvu ali naravi človeka, ki je utemeljena na dualizmu duše in telesa in so ga na tak ali drugačen način v svoje verovanske sisteme uvrstile vse kulture in svetovne religije. Duša je prisposoda življenja, posameznikove esence, zavesti in identitete, ki se osvobodi telesa in nadaljuje svojo existenco v drugačni obliki. Vera v samostojno bivanje duhov kot posebne vrste pričujočnosti, ki imajo v različnih predstavah različni izvor, namen in razloge, da ostajajo med živimi, si to vrsto existence vendarle skuša predstavljati z atributi tako ali drugače razvidne telesnosti. Ena od najpogostejših stilističnih prikazov breztelesne forme je človeške velikosti, odeta v belo rjuho, ki ji daje določeno snovnost. Ne glede na to, ali veri v duhove pritrjujemo ali ne, jih lahko razumemo kot kulturne projekcije, oblikovane na podlagi človekovih potreb in emocij. So rezultat človekove želje po preseganju samega sebe, svoje telesnosti, omejenosti in končnosti življenja ter želje po prestopanju meja neposrednega življenjskega izkustva. Dejstvo, da so naša telesa minljiva, je temeljnega pomena za našo identiteto. Človeku kot samozavedajočemu se bitju je misel na lastni konec nepredstavljiva in je zanj nerazrešljiv paradoks.

Podobno kot depersonalizirane upodobitve duhov, portreti *Nedoločljivih* vzbujajo občutek tujosti in ločenosti. Z odstranitvijo tradicionalnih označevalcev identitete in osebnosti se poudarja njihov status nadnaravnih fenomenov. Obrat od prijaznih prikazni, ustvarjenih z namenom tolažbe in varnosti, k zlonamernim nadnaravnim entitetam, ki ogrožajo existenco živih, odraža predvsem občutenje sodobnega časa, zaznamovano z negotovostjo, s pomanjkanjem občutka existencialne varnosti in smisla ter permanentne krize identitete. Telo, izpraznjeno družbenih konvencij, je nedefinirano telo, ki izpade iz družbenega simbolnega reda. Je fantazma duha, ki teži k ohranitvi svoje subjektivitete in individualnosti, brez (z)možnosti dejanskega vplivanja na trenutno družbeno stanje in realnost, ki jo živimo.

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Južnič, Stane, 1993. *Identiteta*. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede.

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# UNDEFINED

*Jasna Jernejšek*

Ana Šuligoj is a photographer of the younger generation, whose photography practice investigates particular social phenomena. The universal and always relevant issue of the complexity of human identity and its tension between nature (body) and society (social convention) is at the core of her interest. She attempts to deconstruct the position of identity and its visual signifiers through the principles of theatrical performative re-creation and the immersion into various roles.

The identification with the body is focused primarily on our outward appearance, the visible part of man, whose contents, internal structures, are nevertheless inaccessible to our view. In anthropology and other social sciences, identity is made up of a complex and changeable set of physiological and psychological states and experiences that the individual identifies with as his own self and attributes to himself. He considers these to belong to him and be unique to him (self-identification). Social or cultural identity may be assigned, recognised or imposed on him through reputation, position, rights and duties. Identity is also something he can manipulate, merely show it, play with it, he can also be alienated from it, which can lead to identity crises. In all this, the body, which defines us fundamentally due to its biological laws (genetics, heredity, ageing, disease, death), is the centre of our consciousness and the starting point of identification with our own body, group of other bodies and the human species as such. Both individuals and groups identify with and through the body. We announce our presence, our existence in the world and among other people with the body; we present ourselves with it, express ourselves, we communicate with others through it, we can transform or abuse it.

The social appropriation of the body can be executed through various social mechanisms, levers and power relations, leading to control and various manipulations of the body. Differences in corporeality are often ideologised and stereotyped (ethnicity, race). We like to attribute different and transformative meanings to the structure and appearance of the body, which go beyond corporeality. We often assume that an individual's personality has an effect on his or her physical features and vice versa. We infer a person's personality, character, emotions and moods from his bodily constitution, posture and body language. Every part of the body has its own ability to communicate, which we interpret differently according to context. The body also acts as an image to others, it is its own perception, which we project to others. However, since the perception of one's own self that stems from experiencing the body is often burdened by various social conventions, the body is also a source of dissatisfaction and discomfort. The dialectic between the real, desired and demanded (body) is a trait that is also attributed to the photographic image.

A portrait shot in the documentary manner can be rather eloquent in telling us a lot about the person portrayed – age, gender, occupation, social status, ethnicity, race, mood, emotions, etc. Of course, it can also lie about all these, because just as we can “dress” our body in a certain identity, we can also stage it for the camera. In the series *Undefinable* (2014), Ana Šuligoj tackles the deconstruction of human identity through the exploration of the corporeality that determines one's identity. She raises the question of what is left of an individual's corporeal identity if we remove all of its visual signifiers and clear it of social conventions. The randomly selected people portrayed are covered with a white sheet that completely obscures their bodily appearance, physical characteristics and any other individual identity that would allow comparisons between them. The portraits are taken in front of the same white studio background, which adds a common denominator to them. The portraits differ only in the variations of their gestures, by which we lose the sense of whether they are different individuals or just one person. Minimalism and the refined aesthetics of white on white give the concealed bodies a feeling of hovering in an undefined space, making them seem supernatural. The artist plays with different dichotomies as related to

the ambivalent experience of one's self: inside/outside, covering/un-covering, presence/absence, visible/invisible. In a ghost-like portrayal of the individuals, she points to the intangibility of identity, which is made even more uncertain by the anticipation of the body outlined through the sheet. The artist's conscious or unconscious connection to the tradition of depicting ghosts therefore touches upon the idea of the very essence or nature of man, which is based on the dualism of soul and body, and has been included into the systems of belief by all cultures and world religions in one way or another. The soul is a metaphor for life, the individual's essence, consciousness and identity, which frees itself from the body and continues its existence in different form. The belief in the independent existence of ghosts as a special kind of presence, which have different origins, purposes and reasons for remaining among the living within various perceptions, nevertheless tries to imagine this kind of existence with the attributes of a corporeality that makes itself apparent in various ways. One of the most common stylistic depictions of the bodiless form is of human size, clad in a white sheet, which gives it a certain materiality. Whether we attest to a belief in ghosts or not, we can understand them as cultural projections, formed on the basis of human need and emotion. They are the result of man's desire to go beyond himself, his corporeality, the limitations and finiteness of life, and the desire to transcend the boundaries of the direct experience of life. The fact that our bodies are transient is fundamental to our identity. The thought of his own end is inconceivable to man as a self-conscious being and is an unsolvable paradox for him.

Similarly as to the depersonalised depictions of ghosts, the portraits of the *Undefinable* evoke a sense of alienation and separation. The removal of the traditional signifiers of identity and personality emphasises their status as supernatural phenomena. The turnabout from the friendly apparitions created for comfort and security to the malicious supernatural entities that threaten the existence of the living primarily reflects a sense of the current time, marked by uncertainty, a lack of a sense of existential security and meaning, as well as a permanent identity crisis. A body devoid of social conventions is an undefined body that falls out of the social symbolic order. It is a phantasm of the ghost that strives to preserve its subjectivity and individuality, without the possi(a)bility of actually influencing the current social situation and the reality we live in.

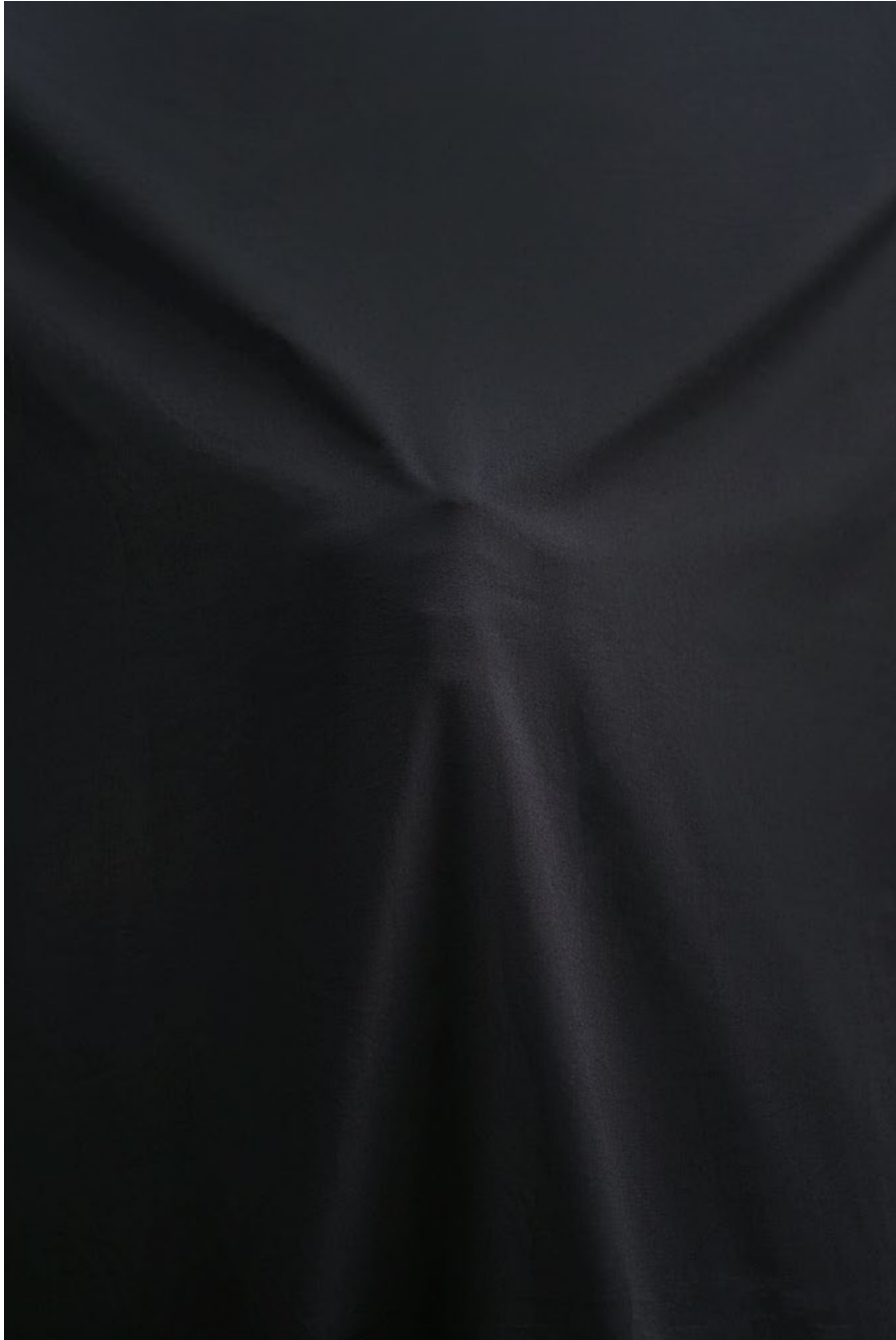
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Južnič, Stane, 1998. *Človekovo telo med naravo in kulturo*. [*The Human Body Between Nature and Culture*.]

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# ANA ŠULIGOJ

Biografija / Biography

Ana Šuligoj (1988) je leta 2014 diplomirala iz fotografije na Akademiji za likovno umetnost in oblikovanje v Ljubljani. Podiplomski študij fotografije je končala na Univerzi Aalto na Finskem. Maturirala je na Umetniški gimnaziji v Novi Gorici, dramsko-gledališka smer, nato je študirala novinarstvo na Fakulteti za družbene vede v Ljubljani. V obeh ustanovah je zasnovala osebno zanimanje, ki ga danes poskuša izražati s fotografijo. Gledališče kot ideja performativnega poustvarjanja in življanja v identiteto drugega, in družboslovje kot znanstveno raziskovanje aktivnosti posameznikov in skupin. Ta pogleda sta se pri Ani Šuligoj s študijem fotografije združila v iskanje odgovorov na prastara, a hkrati popolnoma aktualna vprašanja o izvorih, mejah in koncih identitete: kaj nas določa kot posameznike, do kod sežejo družbeni konstrukti, kaj in koliko prispeva značaj kot »začimba« posameznika in kaj ima z vsem tem skupnega naše telo?

*Ana Šuligoj (1988) graduated in Photography from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana in 2014. She completed her postgraduate studies in Photography at the Aalto University in Finland. She completed her matura exams at the Nova Gorica Art Grammar School, majoring in Drama and Theatre, and went on to study Journalism at the Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana. A personal interest was brought to the fore during her time at both institutions, which she attempts to express through photography today. Theatre, as the idea of performative re-creation and immersion into the identity of another, and the social sciences, as scientific exploration of the activities of individuals and groups. These two aspects merged for Ana Šuligoj with the study of Photography, into a search for answers to the ancient, but at the same time completely topical, questions about the origins, boundaries and ends of identity: what defines us as individuals, how far do social constructs go, what and how much character contributes as the "spice" of the individual and what does our body have to do with all of this?*





# JASNA JERNEJŠEK

Biografija / *Biography*

Jasna Jernejšek (1982) deluje kot samostojna kuratorka, vodja projektov, raziskovalka in tekstopiska na področju sodobnih vizualnih umetnosti. Osredotoča se zlasti na sodobne avtorske prakse, teorijo in zgodovino fotografije ter vizualne komunikacije, ki jih interdisciplinarno prepleta z drugimi družboslovnimi vedami. Diplomirala je iz kulturologije na Fakulteti za družbene vede Univerze v Ljubljani (2007), kjer je zaključila znanstveni magistririj komunikologije (2013) in kjer nadaljuje doktorski študij. Redno piše obrazstavna in kataložna besedila, prispevke pa objavlja tudi v revijah *Fotografija* in *Membrana*. Je predavateljica in programska vodja Oddelka za fotografijo na Visoki šoli za storitve (VIST) v Ljubljani. Poleg vodenja Zavoda Sektor, ustanovljenega z namenom povezovanja, raziskovanja in promocije medijskih umetnosti, sodeluje z različnimi razstavišči doma in v tujini ter nevladnimi organizacijami s področja kulture.

*Jasna Jernejšek (1982) is an independent curator, project manager, researcher and text-writer within the field of the contemporary visual arts. She is particularly concerned with the contemporary art practices, the theory and history of photography, as well as visual communications, which she interweaves in an interdisciplinary manner with the other social sciences. She graduated in Cultural Studies from the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana (2007), where she completed a master's degree in Communication Studies (2013) and is continuing with her doctoral studies. She writes exhibition and catalogue texts, and also publishes articles in the magazines *Fotografija* and *Membrana*. She is a lecturer and programme leader in the Department of Photography at the Higher School of Applied Sciences (VIST) in Ljubljana. Besides managing Zavod Sektor, a non-profit organisation established for the purpose of connecting, researching and promoting the media arts, she also collaborates with various exhibition venues at home and abroad, as well as other non-government organisations within the field of culture.*



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