

## industrijska fotografija toše dabca šezdesetih godina dvadesetog stoljeća

## the industrial photography of tošo dabac in the 1960s

IZ FUNDUSA ARHIVA TOŠE DABCA  
FROM THE COLLECTION OF TOŠO DABAC ARCHIVE

1. Tošo Dabac, Radnik u tvornici Rade Končar, cb negativ, oko 1961. / Worker at Rade Končar Factory, b/w negative, around 1961

▼ Unutar teme reportažne fotografije Toše Dabca kao zasebna se pokazala skupina fotografija kojoj kao zajednički nazivnik možemo nadjenuti naslov industrijska. Radi se o fotografijama industrijskih zdanja, tvorničkih pogona, radnika uz strojeve i njihovih portreta.

Industrijska fotografija ovih prostora uopće, pa tako i ona Toše Dabca, do sada nije bila proučavana iz razumljivih razloga: prije svega radi se o fotografiji snimanoj prema narudžbi, dakle fotografiji s jasnom namjenom i izraženom propagandnom potkom, koja je dugo smatrana neumjetničkom. Osim toga, takva vrsta fotografije, izuzev portreta radnika, uglavnom nije bila izlagana na jugoslavenskim umjetničkim izložbama. Čak ni u monografiji *Tošo Dabac fotograf* iz 1980. godine, kojoj je predgovor pisao Radoslav Putar i za koju je načinjen izbor više od stotinu fotografija velikog tematskog raspona, nema niti jedne industrijske fotografije.<sup>1</sup>

Tek su noviji pregledi, primjerice katalog izložbe o 150 godina fotografije u Sloveniji iz 1990. godine,<sup>2</sup> predstavili publici fotografije i toga profila dajući im pritom nedvojbeni umjetnički predznak.

### FOTOGRAFIJE INDUSTRIJSKIH POGONA I PROCESA PROIZVODNJE

U drugoj polovini pedesetih godina 20. stoljeća u fotografiji dolazi do odmaka od romantičarskih tema. Razvija se interes za urbano i za industrijsku realnost, što je logična posljedica izgradnje države. Tiskaju se različite publikacije koje o tome svjedoče. Uzevši u obzir činjenicu da se fotografija smatra najboljim dokazom autentičnosti, a u duhu ideologije socijalizma, sve su te publikacije bogato ilustrirane. Već su fotografi agencije Magnum dokazali kakva je snaga fotografske snimke.

● Within the corpus of journalist photography by Tošo Dabac, it is possible to observe a specific set of photographs, which we may generally characterize as industrial. It comprises photographs of industrial complexes, factory buildings, images of workers at their machines, and portraits of workers.

Industrial photography, including that of Tošo Dabac, has been scarcely investigated so far and for understandable reasons: since it was primarily made on commission, it had a manifest intention and an explicit ideological basis, which was considered un-artistic for quite a while. Besides, this sort of photography was not presented at Yugoslav art exhibitions, with the exception of the workers' portraits. Even the monograph on *Tošo Dabac the Photographer [Tošo Dabac fotograf]* from 1980, which had a preface written by Radoslav Putar and included a selection of over 100 photographs on a broad range of topics, does not contain a singular photograph related to industry.<sup>1</sup>

It was only recently that some overviews, such as the exhibition catalogue on 150 years of Slovenian photography (1990),<sup>2</sup> have presented photographs of this type to the public, unquestionably characterizing them as art.

### PHOTOGRAPHS OF INDUSTRIAL COMPLEXES AND THE PROCESS OF PRODUCTION

In the second half of the 1950s, photography detached itself from its romanticist topics and developed an interest for the urban and industrial realities, which was a logical outcome of state formation. Various publications accompanied that development. Given the fact that photographs are considered the best evidence of authenticity, these publications were richly illustrated, all in the spirit of socialism. Photographers of Magnum

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1 RADOSLAV PUTAR, *Tošo Dabac fotograf, Grafički zavod hrvatske, Zagreb, 1980.* PETER KNAPP, *Tošo Dabac, Zagreb tridesetih godina*, ATD, Zagreb 1994. OTO BIHALJI - MERIN, *Tošo Dabac, Fotosavez Jugoslavije, Beograd, 1967.*

2 SKUPINA AUTORA, *150 let fotografije na Slovenskem*, katalog izložbe, Mesta galerija Ljubljana, Ljubljana 1990.

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1 RADOSLAV PUTAR, *Tošo Dabac fotograf [T.D. the Photographer]*, Grafički zavod hrvatske, Zagreb, 1980; PETER KNAPP, *Tošo Dabac, Zagreb tridesetih godina* [T.D. and Zagreb in the 1930s], ATD, Zagreb, 1994; OTO BIHALJI - MERIN, *Tošo Dabac, Fotosavez Jugoslavije, Belgrade, 1967.*

2 VARIOUS AUTHORS, *150 let fotografije na Slovenskem* [150 years of photography in Slovenia], exhibition catalogue, Mestna galerija Ljubljana, Ljubljana, 1990.



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Zanimljivo je da velik broj iznimnih fotografskih ostvarenja nastaje upravo po državnoj naredbi, suprotno uobičajenom vjerovanju da se umjetnička fotografija nakon Drugog svjetskog rata razvija samo unutar fotoklubova, ili da je socijalistički sustav djelovao represivno na slobodu umjetničkog promišljanja. Publikacije kao što su, primjerice, *To je Jugoslavija*, knjiga objavljena prigodom “dvadesetogodišnjice revolucije naroda Jugoslavije”<sup>3</sup> ili *Revija uvoznika i izvoznika Jugoslavije*, koja je objavljivana uz Međunarodni zagrebački velesajam, a čija je prvenstvena namjena bila pokazati napredak i industrijalizaciju države, opremljene su izuzetno dobrim fotografijama. Za obje su publikacije bili angažirani neki od naših najvažnijih fotografa onog vremena, između ostalih Milan Pavić, Mladen Grčević, Vilko Zuber i Tošo Dabac. Zadaci tih fotografa nisu bili jednostavni kako se na prvi pogled može činiti. Naime, tako specifična grana fotografije kao što je industrijska pretpostavlja ne samo potpuno ovladavanje fotografskom tehnikom, već i dobro poznavanje materije koju se fotografira. Stoga ne čudi što su međunarodno priznata imena domaće fotografije bila angažirana na tom poslu.

Fotografiji je, kako je već rečeno, cilj bio potvrditi jačanje nacionalne proizvodnje pa u skladu s tim nije tretirana kao umjetničko djelo. Naime, iako su u *Reviji* (jednako kao i u knjizi *To je Jugoslavija*) popisani svi autori fotografija, njihova imena nisu pojedinačno navođena ispod svake fotografije, što danas znatno otežava atribuciju. Unatoč tome, već malo pomnijim gledanjem moguće je uočiti i nekoliko različitih poetika, što dokazuje da se dobar fotograf prepoznaje i unutar zadane i naizgled vrlo ograničavajuće teme.

I fotografije Toše Dabca iz istih serija odabranih za ovaj rad bile su objavljivanje u spomenutim publikacijama.

Industrijsku fotografiju Toše Dabca stilski možemo podijeliti u nekoliko skupina. Najbrojnija je ona koja ima jasan ideološki zadatak pokazati nevjerojatan uspjeh industrije mlade socijalističke države. Snaga stroja i samosvijest pripadnika radničke klase najčešća su tema (sl. 1). To su ujedno i fotografije unificiranog pristupa, na kojima je najteže prepoznati autorski potpis. Ipak, kao zajedničku osobinu većine Dabčevih fotografija iz ove skupine možemo prepoznati mahom dijagonalnu kompoziciju, koja osim glavnog događanja u prvom planu često u drugom ima dodatni sadržaj. Ponekad će Tošo i istupiti iz uobičajenog obrasca i neobičnim izrezom dati poznatoj temi novo značenje. Tako primjerice na fotografiji radnika iz zeničke željezare, nastaloj 1964. godine (sl. 2), Tošo prednost pred samim portretom daje materiji, strukturi zida uskoga prolaza. Taj je postupak tim više znakovit, ako uzmemo u obzir da

Agency were among the first to prove the power of photographic image.

It is interesting that a considerable number of exceptional photographs were commissioned precisely by the state, which is contrary to the belief that after World War II art photography was confined to photo-clubs and that the socialist regime was repressing artistic ideas. Publications such as *To je Jugoslavija* [That is Yugoslavia], a book published on the occasion of the “twentieth anniversary of the people’s revolution in Yugoslavia”<sup>3</sup> or *Revija uvoznika i izvoznika Jugoslavije* [Yugoslav Import/Export Magazine], which accompanied the International Trade Fair of Zagreb, with the primary function of documenting the progress and the industrialization of the state, included a number of exceptionally good photographs. Some of the most important local photographers of the time were engaged in both publications, among others Milan Pavić, Mladen Grčević, Vilko Zuber, and Tošo Dabac. Their task was not as easy as it may seem at first sight, for a branch as specific as industrial photography required not only masterful photographic skills, but also thorough knowledge of photographed objects. Thus, it is no wonder that it involved those names in local photography that had already won international recognition.

We have already indicated that the aim of industrial photography was to promote national production and for that reason it was not considered work of art. Even though all authors were duly mentioned in *Revija* (and also in *To je Jugoslavija*), their names were not individually given under each photograph, which makes it exceedingly difficult today to attribute certain photographs to particular authors. However, a more attentive glance can reveal different types of poetics, which proves that a good photographer can be recognized even within a preset and apparently very limiting theme.

Photographs by Tošo Dabac from the series selected for this text were likewise published in these publications.

The industrial photography of Tošo Dabac can be stylistically classified in several groups. The most numerous one was that with a clear ideological task of showing the incredible growth of industry achieved by the young socialist state. The power of machinery and the self-awareness of the working classes are among its most frequent topics (ill. 1). At the same time, these photographs reveal a uniform approach, in which it is very difficult to recognize the authors’ signature. However, one can recognize a common feature in most photographs by Dabac: a predominantly diagonal composition, with an additional content in the background, behind the prominent

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<sup>3</sup> Iz pogovora tekstu *To je Jugoslavija*, Grafički zavod Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1961.

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<sup>3</sup> From the epilogue to the book *To je Jugoslavija* [That is Yugoslavia], Grafički zavod Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1961.

2. Tošo Dabac, Radnik iz željezare u Zenici, cb negativ, 1964. / Worker from the Ironworks at Zenica, b/w negative, 1964

3. Tošo Dabac, Iz željezare u Zenici, cb fotografija, 1964. / From the Ironworks at Zenica, b/w photograph, 1964

4. Tošo Dabac, Vijci, cb negativ, 1964. / Screws, b/w negative, 1964



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4 Primjerice nagrada za fotografiju Filozofija života 1938. na izložbi 6th International Salon u Bostonu.

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4 For example, the photograph Filozofija života [Philosophy of life] was awarded in 1938 at the 6th International Salon in Boston.

je sam negativ znatno širi od autorova izreza te je fotografiji tek naknadnim kadriranjem dodijeljeno željeno značenje.

Vrlo zanimljiv i do sada zanemarivan dio opusa Toše Dabca nastao je u tradiciji fotografije *Nove objektivnosti*. Odličan primjer koji pokazuje srodnost s njemačkom fotografijom tridesetih godina 20. stoljeća autorski je izrez iz 1964. godine, koji prikazuje detalj nekog stroja iz zeničke željezare (sl. 3). Slično je tretiran i motiv na fotografiji *Vijci* iz iste godine (sl. 4), posve blizak poetici Alberta Renger-Patzscha. Zanimljiv je podatak da postoji nekoliko varijanti negativa istoga motiva, što potvrđuje da ta fotografija sasvim sigurno nije nastala slučajno. Radnici na fotografiji *Radnici na čeličnom neboderu u Zenici* (sl. 5), bez obzira što je po njima ta fotografija dobila naslov, očito nisu njezina glavna tema. Oni zauzimaju tek mali prostor u gornjem desnom kutu kadra, dok je pravi interes fotografa zaokupila gotovo apstraktna geometrijska konstrukcija. Najveću sličnost u prikazu iste teme u jugoslavenskoj fotografiji pedesetih i šezdesetih godina 20. stoljeća pokazuje srpski autor Miloš Pavlović (sl. 6).

I u okviru ostalih tema kojima se Tošo Dabac bavio postoje snimci koje karakterizira fotografski pristup istovjetan spomenutom. To je međutim aspekt Dabčeve fotografije kojem tek predstoji pomnije istraživanje.

#### PORTRETI RADNIKA

Zaseban segment unutar tematske cjeline industrijske fotografije Toše Dabca portreti su radnika. Još za života cijenjen kao odličan portretist (upravo su njegovi portreti osvajali nagrade na svjetskim izložbama još od tridesetih godina 20. stoljeća),<sup>4</sup> Dabac jednakim senzibilitetom pristupa i modelima-radnicima. Bilo da ih smješta u njihov prirodni ambijent tvorničkog interijera (sl. 7), ili ih snima u krupnom planu, u njegovom je portretiranju redovito prisutno poetsko uživljavanje, često s romantičnom, gotovo idealizirajućom notom. S neskrivenom empatijom i osjećajem za ljudska lica i sudbine, u portretima stvara vrhunska djela. U načinu gledanja možda mu se tu najviše približio Mladen Grčević svojim portretima radnika. Ponekad je Dabac pak ironičan, s neskrivenom namjerom da prikaže određeni tip, a ne osobu, što rezultira duhovitim snimkama s jasno čitljivim autorskim komentarom (sl. 8).

Industrijskoj fotografiji u okviru povijesti fotografije jugoslavenskih prostora do sada nije poklanjano naročito mnogo pozornosti. To dokazuje i činjenica da osnovni izvori za ovaj rad nisu bili tekstovi iz područja povijesti umjetnosti, već oni političkog i gospodarskog sadržaja.

Jedna od rijetkih publikacija vezanih uz fotografiju iz tog vremena koja donosi nekoliko

primary event. Sometimes he even stepped out of the given model and gave a new meaning to a familiar topic by an unusual cut. For example, on the photograph from 1964, which shows workers from the ironworks at Zenica (ill. 2), he gave preference to the matter and structure of the wall in a narrow passage over the portraiture as such. The procedure is all the more significant if one takes into account that the negative was considerably wider than the author's cut, which means that the photograph was given the desired meaning afterwards, by subsequent framing.

A very interesting and so far neglected section of Dabac's opus was done in the tradition of *New Objectivity*. An excellent example, which shows similarities with German photography from the 1930s, is the author's cut from 1964 showing a detail from some machine in the ironworks at Zenica (ill. 3). A similar treatment was given to the motif of screws on the photographs of the same name, *Vijci*, made in the same year (ill. 4), which stands very close to the poetics of Albert Renger-Patzsch. An interesting piece of information is that there are several existing variants of its negative, which shows that the photograph was by no means made accidentally. Regardless of the fact that the photograph was entitled *Radnici na čeličnom neboderu u Zenici* [Workers at the steel skyscraper of Zenica] (ill. 5), the workers were obviously not its main motif. They occupy only a small space in the upper right corner of the frame, while the principal interest of the photographer goes to the almost abstract geometric construction. The closest analogy in the presentation of the same theme in the Yugoslav photography of the 50s and 60s is that of the Serbian photographer Miloš Pavlović (ill. 6).

There are some photographs on other topics that interested Tošo Dabac, which are characterized by an identical approach. However, that aspect of his photography has not yet been researched in any detail.

#### PORTRAITS OF WORKERS

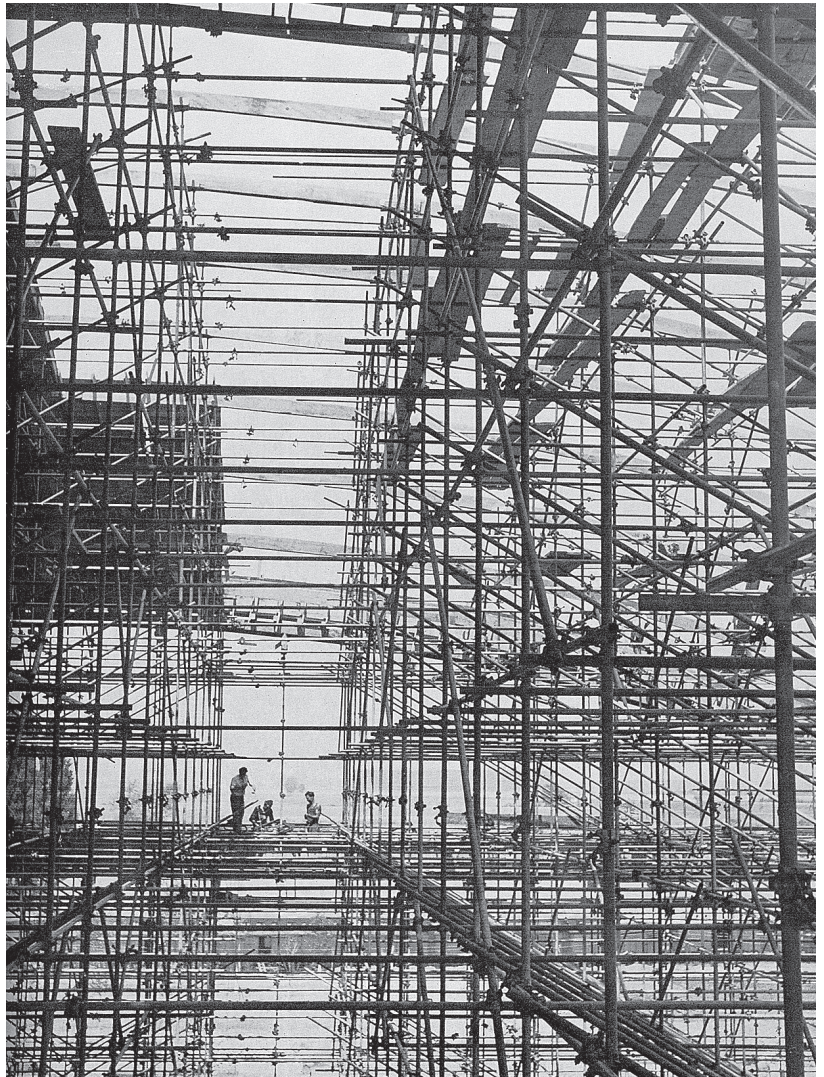
A separate segment within the thematic set of industrial photography by Tošo Dabac consists of the portraits of workers. In his lifetime Dabac was highly esteemed as excellent portraitist (his portraits had been winning awards on international exhibitions ever since the 30s)<sup>4</sup> and now he was showing equal sensibility in his approach to his models from the working classes. Regardless of whether he photographed them in their common ambience of factory interiors (ill. 7) or portrayed them in close shots, one can always notice poetic identification in his portraiture, which often bears a touch of romanticism, almost idealism. With an unconcealed empathy and a feeling for human

5. Tošo Dabac, *Radnici na čeličnom neboderu u Zenici*, cb negativ, 1964. / *Workers at the Steel Skyscraper in Zenica*, b/w negative, 1964

6. Miloš Pavlović, *Monteri*, cb fotografija, oko 1965. / *Assembly Workers*, b/w photograph, around 1965



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primjera spomenute tematike jest *Almanah jugoslavenske fotografije*, koji je 1968. godine izdao Fotosavez Jugoslavije.<sup>5</sup> To je ujedno bio i prvi almanah jugoslavenske fotografije, pa mu je namjera, kako u predgovoru piše Predrag Gatalica, i sam fotograf, pokazati najkarakterističnije pravce domaće fotografije. U izboru radova sudjelovali su Tošo Dabac, Mladen Grčević, Miloš Pavlović i Branibor Debeljković. Zanimljivo je da su upravo ova četvorica autora izložila i fotografije koje bi se mogle svrstati u kategoriju industrijske. Međutim čini se da ih pri odabiru nije vodila sama tematika, već način na koji su motivi tretirani, odnosno njihov eksperimentalni karakter, koji već najavljuje promjene u fotografskom shvaćanju koje će nastupiti sedamdesetih godina.

Publikacija novijeg datuma, katalog izložbe *150 let fotografije na Slovenskem* u tri sveska, svjesno uključuje i industrijsku fotografiju te joj tako daje legitimitet umjetničke. U tom katalogu nalazimo dvojicu autora posve različitih senzibiliteta kojima tema ne diktira stil. U fotografiji Marijana Pfeifera (sl. 9) i njezinom baroknom svjetlu koje potječe od užarene mase prepoznajemo ostatke predratnog piktorijalizma. Drugi pak slovenski autor, Tihomir Pinter, na svojoj fotografiji (sl. 10) prikazuje doduše dvojicu radnika, no on ih estetizira do krajnjih granica. Njegov rad je promišljena oblikovna studija temeljena na odnosu svijetlih i tamnih površina, tj. ritmu koji zajedno tvore.

U nekoliko tisuća snimaka industrijske fotografije Toše Dabca postoje pak elementi stila koji su prisutni i kod obojice slovenskih autora, jednako kao i kod srpskih eksperimentatora, što svakako govori o zajedničkim karakteristikama vremena. Dodamo li tome i realizam fotografija Toše Dabca izabranih za ovaj rad, potvrđujemo misao s početka teksta. Industrijska fotografija Toše Dabca svojom se stilskom i motivskom raznovrsnošću već u usporedbi sa samo nekolicinom suvremenih autora potvrdila kao samostalna tema koja zaslužuje daljnju obradu. ▽

faces and destinies, Dabac has created a number of masterpieces. Regarding the viewpoint, perhaps the closest analogy in workers' portraits is Mladen Grčević. However, Dabac can also be ironic in his unconcealed intention of showing certain types of people, which results in humorous shots with a clearly readable artistic commentary (ill. 8).

Industrial photography has not been given much attention in the history of photography written in the former states of Yugoslavia, which also shows in the fact that the main sources of this text belong to the field of politics and economy rather than that of art history.

Among the rare publications related to the photography of those times, which includes several examples relevant for our topic, is *Almanah Jugoslavenske fotografije* [Almanac of Yugoslav photography], published in 1968 by Fotosavez Jugoslavije.<sup>5</sup> It was the first almanac of Yugoslav photography and thus sought to present its most characteristic currents, which is also stated in its preface written by Predrag Gatalica, himself a photographer. The selection was made by a team that included Tošo Dabac, Mladen Grčević, Miloš Pavlović, and Branibor Debeljković, which is especially interesting for the fact that it was precisely these four authors that exhibited photographs that may be classified as industrial. However, in my opinion, they were not guided in their selection by the topic itself, but rather by the way in which the motifs were treated, or rather their experimental character, which was heralding change in the photographic viewpoint, about to prevail in the 1970s.

A more recent publication is the exhibition catalogue entitled *150 let fotografije na Slovenskem* [150 years of photography in Slovenia], which purposefully included industrial photography, thus supplying it with the legitimacy of art. In this catalogue, one can find two authors with completely different sensibilities, but also one common feature: neither of them was allowing the topic to determine the style. Photograph by Marijan Pfeifer (ill. 9), with its baroque light, light that comes from the glowing mass, reveals the remnants of pre-war pictorialism. Another Slovenian author, Tihomir Pinter, shows two workers on his photograph (ill. 10), but aestheticizing them to the extreme. His work is a well-reflected study in form, based on the relationship between light and dark surfaces, or rather on the rhythm that they produce in concert.

In the several thousands of photographs by Tošo Dabac that may be labelled industrial photography, there are elements of style that can be observed in these two Slovenian authors, as well as in the aforementioned experimenters

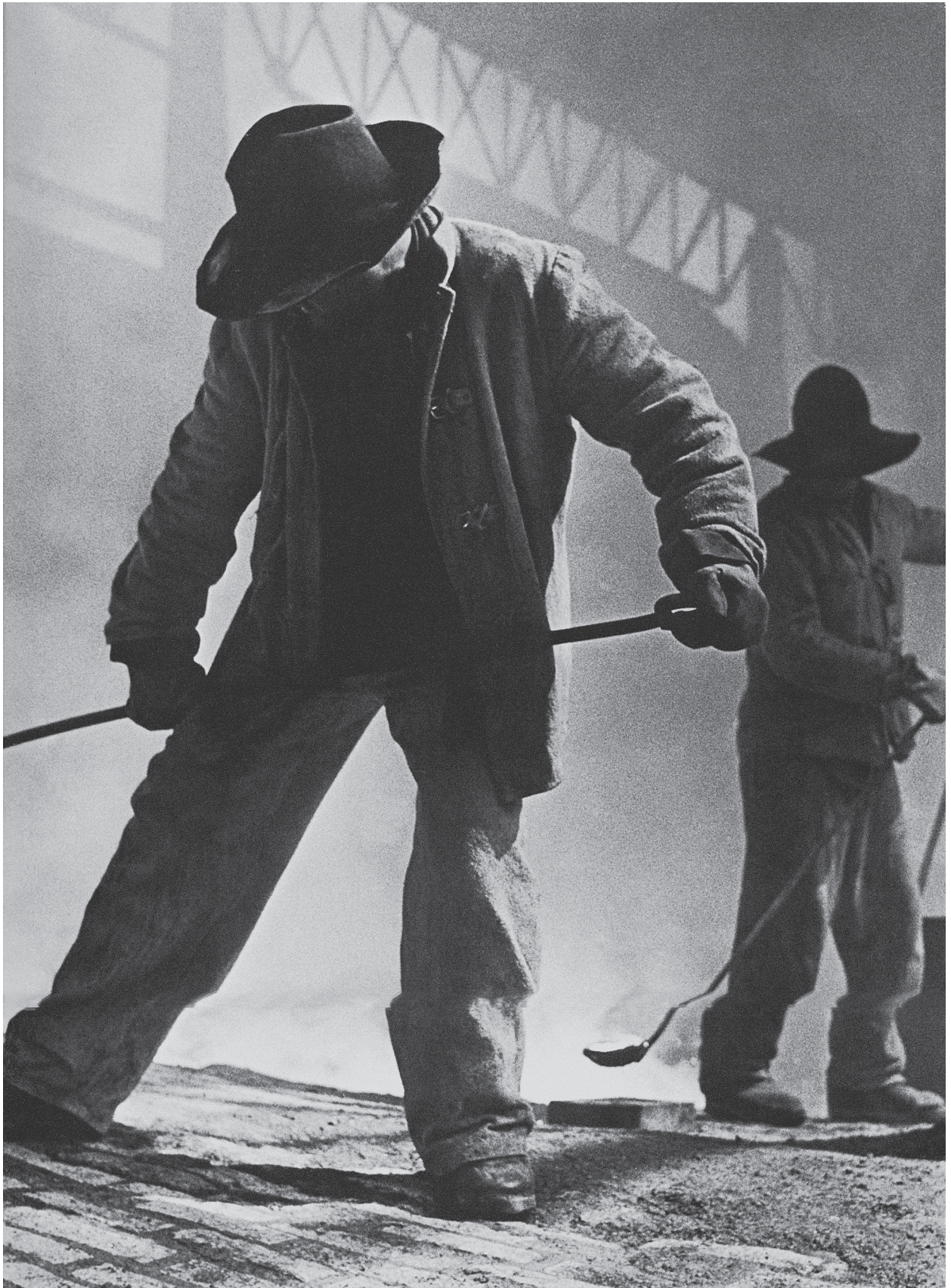
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<sup>5</sup> *Almanah jugoslavenske fotografije*, Fotosavez Jugoslavije, Beograd, 1968.

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<sup>5</sup> *Almanah Jugoslavenske fotografije* [Almanac of Yugoslav Photography] Fotosavez Jugoslavije, Belgrade, 1968.

7. Tošo Dabac, Radnica, cb negativ, oko 1964. / Working-Class Woman, b/w negative, around 1964

8. Tošo Dabac, Radnik Pero Skorić, cb negativ, 1961. / Worker Pero Skorić, b/w negative, 1961







from Serbia, which certainly speaks for the common features of the period. If one adds the realism in the photographs selected for this study, it may corroborate the idea stated at the beginning of this text. Even when compared with only a few contemporaries, the variety of style and motif in the industrial photography of Tošo Dabac deserve a separate treatment as a topic of significance. ○

9. Marijan Pfeifer, *Litostroj*, cb fotografija, 1950. / *Lithographic Machine*, b/w photograph, 1950

10. Tihomir Pinter, *Ritam*, cb fotografija, 1966. / *Rhythm*, b/w photograph, 1966

— Iva Prosoli, diplomirala germanistiku i povijest umjetnosti. Radi kao kustosica u Arhivu Tošo Dabac, Muzeja suvremene umjetnosti u Zagrebu.

— Iva Prosoli, graduated German language and literature and art history. Currently works at the Tošo Dabac Archive, Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb.

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