

## "OTZOVIK"

ONLINE MAGAZINE

Review: April 8, 2016

The photo exhibition "Evaporations" by John R. Pepper opened at the 'Art Nouveau Museum' –'Kurlina Mansion' (Russia, Samara)- - today and our first observation was that everything is not so easy in these black and white photos.

The advantages: these type of exhibition bring people together, open up the world of photography in the different way;

The minuses: none

Many of us have cameras, smartphones, on which we try to capture some moments of our lives. And doesn't matter what it was: a fallen gold leaf from a tree, a drop of dew or the smile of a child. We are imprinting LIFE. Our memory, unfortunately, has limits and loses some important details but photography is more constant. And what we see and how those are about I want to speak about.

A few days ago, at the 'Art Nouveau Museum' –'Kurlina Mansion', 'Evaporations' opened. John Randolph Pepper, the Italian-American photographer, is the author of these works. In addition, he is a director of theater and film. I want to first write about my vision, how I perceived his photos on first sight. Be honestly, a simple man from the street doesn't always see what the Master saw --especially, when you come to the exhibition not prepared, without any information about the artist. In this case my perception is different: what I see, what I think are instinctive, direct.

I am very pleased that, in addition to the on camera interview, John Pepper made introductory remarks for the audience and then invited the audience to follow him in halls of exhibition as he gave a talk about his work. At the previous exhibition at this same museum there wasn't such a tour during the opening. However, at the exhibition of the New Orleans everything was simpler therefore more clear. Therefore, perhaps it is wrong to compare these two exhibitions. At this exhibition is only one artist whereas at the other there were several. And the theme of expositions are completely different. As well as is the artist's approach.

So, what did I see as I made my acquaintance with the Master's works? Almost all of the photographs are close to water, sea or river - -all of the photos. Yet, man is present everywhere in these black and white photos.

Pepper was very pleased with the museum and thanked them for providing to him with the space for the exhibition. Of course, the Mansion of Kurlina is one of the most beautiful buildings in Samara! After that we heard about what worries him personally as an artist and how he works with his photos.

Firstly, he never uses a digital camera, and there are no programs to improve the images. He also explained: "I don't look back". He takes a couple of shots and he doesn't come back to

the object and the subject. Just the classical camera, then the chemical process at the laboratory... and we can see the result.

Secondly, there are no pre-conceived compositions and prepared subjects: the photographs find him, spontaneously. John calls himself as a 'street photographer'. As he told us during the talk, long before the sunrise he is outside, in the streets, making these unique images that after he will then show to the world.

Thirdly, why so much water in his photos? Because water is life, water is movement and transformation, the different states (from the solid through the liquid to gaseous) are here at the exhibition. Eight percent of Man consists of water. Thanks to water people find eternity and strength, are purified spiritually and develop physically. But the main thing for this photographer is man, although sometimes he looks a small and insignificant at the first viewing.

The photos are not identified geographically; there are photos of Naples, Geneva, Chicago, New York, St Petersburg, Barcelona... But we don't see the familiar outlines of the cities like on other photos. Before us the setting is not at all remarkable. The sea... a man on the coast... Only the author knows the location - for example that this is the beach of Barcelona. What is important is that the photographer saw the loneliness of urban man, his helplessness in the face of elements. And that is what he photographed.

Pepper was born in 1958 the son of a photojournalist. The first time he took up a camera was when he was 11; at 13 he became an apprentice to the famous Italian photographer Ugo Mulas, one of the best known 'street photographers' of his time. Evaporations has already been in many cities of Russia; from Vladivostok to Irkutsk, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Yekaterinburg, Moscow and now in Samara.

\* \* \*