

LUPINO, THE ARTIST

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The discourse of the relation between the artist and the consumers exists in a not shorter period of time than as much as hundreds of years ago. Nonetheless it seems the consumers changed more than the artists. The artist changed more in a sense that the artists` technology have changed. For e.g. now the photographs somewhat replace the space of the sculptures; the contemporary paintings are more or less replaced by the works created on the color printer; the garden designs are becoming fairly ambient-installations, using the latest technology (LSD monitors, projections, electro - mechanical devices). But the creativity and the creators are moderately the same; and they are all - as much as they were centuries ago - in a search of some kind of investment. What changed in particular about the artists is perhaps the way they are educated. In the past they were trained by their experienced mentors or educated in the eliteacademies. Now the classic education can even constrain the creativity of the artist, and in many cases it shows to be more harmful than useful. If ambioned and self-esteemed enough one can educate himself by himself, without attending some of those traditional institutions, just by using the devices of the modern technology and the affability of the modern libraries, archives and museums. The attendance at the exhibitions of other artists is now also much more accessible through Internet. Not to mention the issue of the inspiration - this is directly connected with the authenticity of the works of art. Usually artists that don` t spend a lot of time in the so-called art cradles have more time and possibility to become inspired. But the conservative artists shouldn` t be jealous at their more liberal colleagues; their way is not as easygoing as the media is presenting it many times. In many cases the modern artists have to struggle for the bare survival, regardless the way how well educated they are. However if we look at the issue of the investments and investors, and entirely at the consumers, many things were changed. The rich Maecenas in the contemporary art scheme is a non-existing category. Today`s consumers are mainly the middleclassfamily people that buy works of art as presents for the birthday parties of their friends` children and relatives.



1. Who would you like the most to buy your work as a Christmas present?

-My work as a Christmas present - I would like the most that some conservatively religious person buys it so that it will make him less conservative and more open-minded.

Regardless their age it seems all artists had to face the fact that the modern consumers are much a product of the contemporary conservative and puritan culture, with its tendency tending to develop further. One of the artists that didn't have to change its artistic approach is the Croat photographer, painter, sculptor and designer Stefan Lupino. Although he began his career long ago, as a photographer he never (quote) promoted the heroin look which was very in in the 80's and second half of the 90's. His models always looked very healthy and fresh, always positioned in a non - eroticized manner. As I already indicated the taste of the consumers in the last 5 years changed drastically; before it was largely believed that the real art is always provoking and controversial, but now everybody appreciates the subtleness and solidness of the work of art. Of course with this we are entering the risky discourse of the relation between the entire consumerist culture and the art market. This discourse is not so controversial as it probably seems at a first glimpse because some of the doyennes of the art theory do not advice the artists that they should avoid the pleasantness, even the commerciality of their works of art (such as was the theory of Paul Klee), underlining the fact that the artists must always try to communicate with the contemporaneity.

Born in Varazdin, in his 20's with no intention to become an artist, Stefan Lupino went in Italy, where he worked for the security agency. Than he moved to New York where he worked as model and attended the Stella Adler Studio of Acting (the same that was attended from Marlon Brando). He caught the attention of his agent as a photographer with the photographs he did at the Venice carnival. Later he was engaged to take photos of many celebrities and models, but he always kept his artistry; in which he showed much innovation and new approaches that were later copied by his colleagues.



2. Psychoanalysis puts much emphasis on the significance of the childhood in the life of the artist. How do you see the link between your childhood and creativity?

-My childhood was very sport orientated and that is where I have developed my discipline, endurance and the ethics.

His inventiveness and insistence on the creativity rather than to the show-off led him to the less famous models, but the artistic value of his photos was always on the highest level. Though he made his name mainly as a star of the night life in New York in the 80's his photographs from this period reveal a serious, complex artistic credo. I would like to underline that the main achievements in the innovation of the modern photography of Stefan Lupino was (in the 80's) his usage of small, locating reflectors and the fact that *he placed in ordinary 50mmlens (and took out the 35mm one) in the camera.*



3.How did you come with a solution for the lighting in your photos in the 80's- the usage of the small lights and ordinary camera?

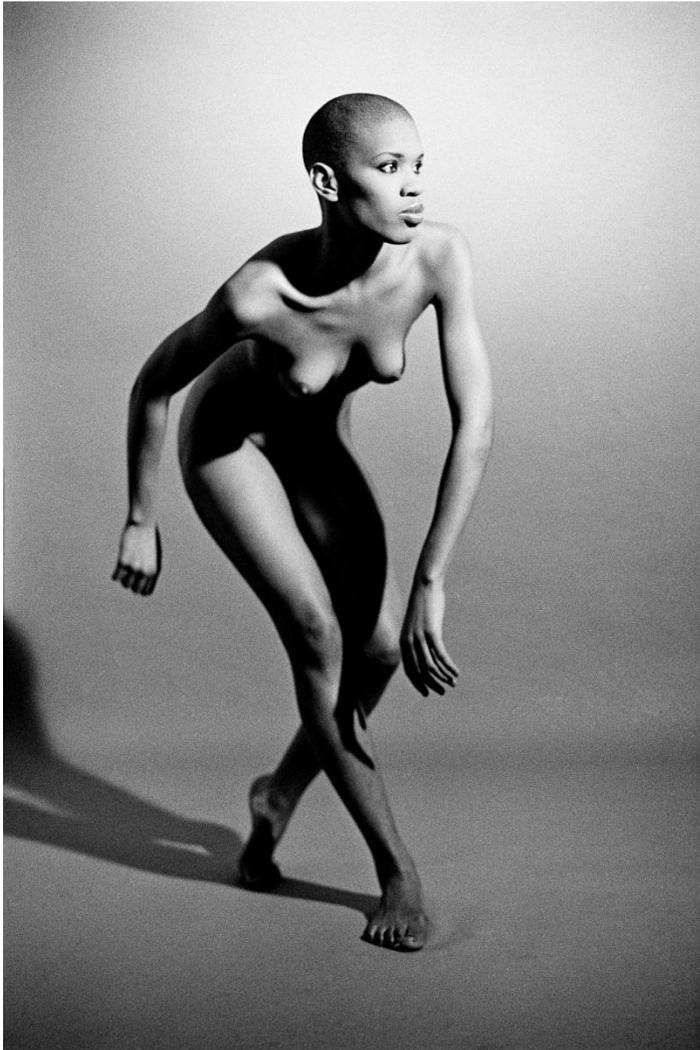
-Because I have realized from the beginning that the eye, stile and direction is much more important than the equipment.

His audiences were surprised from the perfection of his photographs, as they were used to look at this kind of photos realized with more expensive equipment. This approach gave to his works a more immediate; snap-shot kind of look to his prints, which at first was considered as a shock solution, but later largely copied and with a sophisticated usage presented in the leading magazines by his colleagues. For e.g. Richard Avedon gave in the 70's the dynamic, movement look in which for the first time the model was caught in movement, or with a wind in her hair. In the Lupino's photographs from the time of the 80's we have an impression that the photographer is moving or taking the photograph of his own.

4. How did you do that famous photo of the nude in black saloon hills sitting in the background and you nude afore with a camera in your hand? Did you use a mirror or another camera?

-I just used the front mirror.

He showed that the traditional photography can be professional yet containing the artistic concept of its author. In this period he takes photos of plain elegant nudes with a monochromatic, all white or gray background, using mainly female muscled nudes in their thirties in black saloon hills. I would like to add here that in this period he promoted the so-called dignified (not a feminist) look, whose styling was later used by other female leaders, intellectuals and philanthropists. In the 90's again he innovated by using the neon light for the glowing effect of his black nudes. This kind of lighting gives to the shape of the nude kind of stone, picturesque-sculptural look; which is also much underlined by the fact that in this period he does more color photos, rather than in the 80's when he did more black and whites. All the models from this phase (which is the first half of the 90's) seem to have a smile on their face, so I could call this phase a happy one.



Than as I heard from many colleagues of mine he attracted the attention of the critics by his photos of the children with the Down syndrome. In this I believe again he referred to his largely explored theme of the human dignity.



5. Did you want by your photos of the children with the Down syndrome to show that they- these children, are individuals with dignity, somewhat more than the rest of the civilization?

-The Down syndrome children are the wormiest children of all and they give you back greatest joy and happiness.

This children are somewhat placed in an oblivious environment for them, which is supposed to protect them from their handicap. The sparkle in their eyes seems to plead for understanding: We are what we are, we cannot change. So they continue in this gray environment which is completely colored by their humble but massive presence. Sometime in this period he did his photos with the president Franjo Tudjman.

6. How will you describe the president Franjo Tudjman as model? They say he was a person with human warmth?

-President Franjo Tudjman was a great leader and a good person with the weaknesses as we all have.

We don't know how all of the works of this Croat artist correlate, however I noticed one significant line in all of his works (not just the photographs) - which I believe is the presence of the psychology. As the author himself explained he wants to be completely free and liberated with his models which in many instances distanced him from the famous names. In this tendency of his he reveals that the shape of the human body, his face and his clothes create around its object an aura that fluctuates the lively energy. This energy tends to prevent the individual from

its dangerous surrounding or on the contrary, it reveals his willingness to communicate with the encompassing; in chronicling which the artist, Stefan Lupino, insists on the normality of the human psychology. He always portrays his objects as healthy ones and as products of the human nature; more of the nature itself than of the human civilization. Civilization can hide much hypocrisy, so the foreground is usually plain monochromatic, or out of focus, which reveals the tendency of evolving isolation. It is normal for one to want to be isolated, protected, everything should have a shield, we should prevent the human body and its surrounding form decaying, that is completely normal; as the human planet has a shelter from the cosmic radiation, as the baby is protected in the stomach of the mother, that is how everything in the human kind that is progressive should be protected - exposés Lupino, the artist. This tendency is also evident in his furniture designs which divulge massive surfaces. I believe this line of his is mostly evident in his chair for feeding the babies, which is produced from hard metal, and resembles a throne. The artist's message is: It is normal to protect, to nurse the human life, no evolving is possible without the nursing culture of the humanity; this baby-chair should be the throne of the human civilization. According to this, no wonder, I believe, the works of this artist were so popular and influential in the region of South-East Europe; unfortunately no serious study is done/published yet about this, but I have seen dozens of places (restaurants, cafes, galleries...) in Skopje, for which their proprietors say that the furniture interiors were done by the Iliric/Croatian influence and mentioning the name of Lupino.



7. In your furniture designs you use inspiration from the Croatian tradition; did your authentic environment influence the forming of your Lupinism? If yes - in what may?

-My furniture design influence is coming from my life experience and the classical input on me but the critics are saying their versions.

Usually this furniture consists of massive wooden surfaces or improvised metal constructions. Once again from the example of this artist we can see that art can be as beautiful as useful. Thought much of the theory does not deny the fact that the works of art have a certain contemplative effect, much of the critics like to separate the artists on artisans and merchants; or sometimes the same one can be both depending what currently he is doing- works of art or art

objects. The prevailing notion that the serious works of art don't sell well (not during the artists' life time) still dominates the intellectual map of Europe.



8. My impression is that your sculptures are intended to be placed in nature more than in a gallery? Am I right about this?

-Some of my sculptures are definitely meant to be placed in the environment but they are 100 years ahead of time.

What is wrong in this approach is that it completely denies the historical facts; some of the artists did sell well during their life - time, such as Salvador Dali or Andrew Warhol. If developed well the adapting of one's artistic credo to the needs of the consumers can be without harming the artistic value of the final product. The attitude of this artist towards this is somewhat unknown.

9. In your sculpture of the flower you are showing somewhat obscurity in this object; the same as Robert Mapplethorpe did with his photo. Did you have any artistic influence from him? From whom did you have influence; I think you said you admire Helmut Newton?

- I respected both of them but my influence is coming from other dimensions.

Stefan Lupino always showed big interest amongst the consumers for his works, although in his interviews he says he couldn't well express himself if he followed the rules that are usually

required in the working contracts. On his opus is based the name of the artistic discipline - Lupinism. The work of Stefan Lupino is un-dubiously very influential, and positive - because he didn't develop his own mannerism. The term Lupinism was firstly used by the art critic Branka Hlevnjak 3 years ago for the Lupino's exhibition in the Zadar museum. I believe the wider acceptance of it can be soon expected to be accepted because his artistic influence started long ago, back in the 80's; and its relevant presence in the works of so many contemporary artists is undeniable.

~Enjoy the photos beneath; courtesy of the author~









