

## Beauty is the Name of a Woman

The exhibition “Beauty is the Name of a Woman” presents a selection of portrait photographs, photographs from everyday life and other works by the Slovenian master photographer Josip Pelikan, who was active during a significant part of the 20th century. The photographs focus on women in various life and social roles.

The women depicted are citizens, visitors to health resorts, witnesses of the time and bearers of its visual memory. Pelikan portrayed women with carefully chosen light, emphasizing their posture, elegance and character, therefore his photographs not only depict beauty, but also reflect the social environment, fashion, habits and time in which they were created.

The exhibition opens a view into the visual culture of the first half and mid-20th century and shows how photography participated in shaping the notions of femininity, sophistication and public image of women. The exhibited works intertwine documentary value, a sense of portraiture and mastery of the photographic medium, so the exhibition is not only a tribute to the female figure, but also to a photographer who knew how to capture the spirit of the times in portraits.

Josip Pelikan (1885–1977) was one of the most important Slovenian photographers of the 20th century, a top portraitist, documentarist and chronicler of Celje. He was born in Trbiž, and he shaped his photographic knowledge through family tradition and education in Vienna. After World War I, he moved to Celje and, during his almost sixty-year working period, built an exceptionally rich and genre-diverse oeuvre. He portrayed individuals and families, recorded the city's everyday life, social life, urban development, architecture, industry and landmark historical events.

Portrait photography occupies a special place in his work, in which he reached a high aesthetic level with a refined sense of light, composition and facial expression. His portraits of women, created in the studio or outside it, testify to technical excellence, knowledge of contemporary photographic trends and a rare ability to unite beauty, dignity and character in a depiction.

Pelikan was not only a craftsman, but also an artistically sensitive creator and an invaluable visual witness of his time. He left behind an extensive heritage of photographs, negatives, equipment and documentation, which today represents one of the most important photographic legacies in Slovenia.

The Pelikan Photo House, a separate unit of the Museum of Recent History of Celje, is today a unique museum and exhibition space dedicated to the photographic heritage of three generations of photographers, based on the life and work of Josip Pelikan. The town house with an attached glass photographic studio, built in 1899 by photographer Johann Martin Lenz, became Pelikan's home and the central place of his work after the First World War.

It was here that a large part of his work was created, and the family heritage was later preserved by his younger daughter Božena Pelikan, after whom the photography gallery in the basement of the house is named. The Pelikan Photo Studio is exceptional in that it unites two authentic photography studios under one roof: an older glass studio from the late 19th century and a younger electric photography studio from 1937.

This provides a comprehensive insight into the history of photography, the photographic craft and the culture of housing from the early 20th century. As a space for memory, research and exhibition activities, it connects the past with the present and preserves the living memory of the man who permanently marked the visual identity of Celje and the wider area with his photographic lens.

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