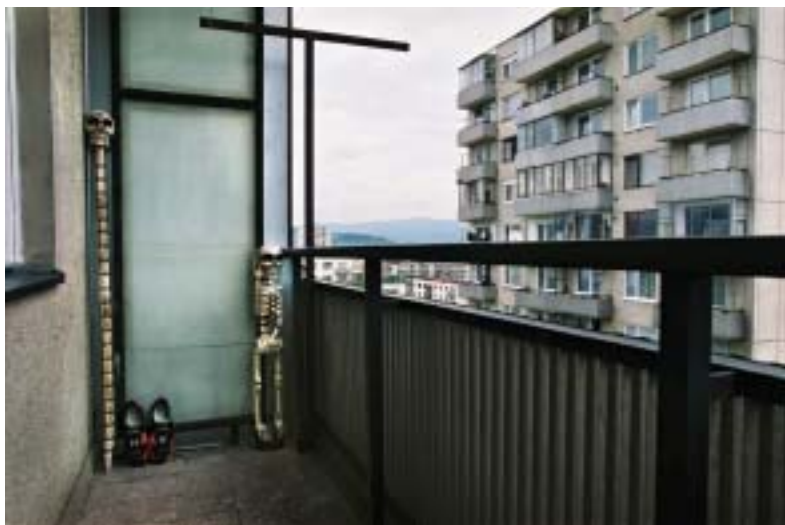




Andrej Balco *Suburbs*

While in the 1970's and 1980's documentary photography in Slovak photographic works stood in the shadow of staged photography and intermedia works and was distinctively represented only by a few photographers of older and middle age generation, especially *Martin Martinček, Karol Kállay, Lubo Stacho, Juraj Bartoš and Stano Pekár*, today its position is far more distinct. Main credit for this is taken by authors, who started to gain ground in the 1990's: *Andrej Bán, Alan Hyža, Martin Marenčin, Martin Kollár, Jozef Ondzik, Lucia Nimcová* and some others. Among them is counted also *Andrej Balco* (born 1973), who contributed to this by many documentary cycles and by successful work of a photographer of several Slovak periodicals.

Series of colour photographs under the name **Suburbs** is for the present the peak of his hitherto work. A part of the series has been recently successfully defended as a thesis at the end of **Balco's** baccalaureate study at the Institute of Creative Photography at Silesian University in Opava. He has captured in the series different situations in unsightly prefabricated house suburbs in Bratislava, Pezinok, Michalovce, Košice and Velké Kapušany: three girls in swimsuits (one of them even in monokini) are sunbathing on the asphalted roof of a house in Pezinok, on which they have created an oasis of calm, despite its uninviting appearance and lack of romanticism; a group of men are carrying a huge cross among uniform Bratislava prefabricated houses; a boy is sleeping in a standardized suburb bedroom under an exotic wall paper with jumping dolphins; a bored, middle-aged couple are sitting side by side, chain-smoking. Similarly to *Martin Kollár*, **Andrej Balco** can find in apparently completely trivial scenes elements of grotesque and absurdity, counterpoints of various motifs, connection of dismal everyday life and aspiration to escape from it, of the real and



Andrej Balco – Suburbs ~ previous page: Košice, 2004 ~ this page from top: Pezinok, 2004; Bratislava 2003; Pezinok, 2004; Košice, 2004; Pezinok, 2004; Krompachy, 2004

surreal, of the material and spiritual world. His photographs have a specific humour, which, nevertheless, is not an end in itself, but, in a telling abbreviation, helps to emphasize symbolic expression of many relevant sociologic and psychological themes of human relations, relationship of man to dismal uniform environment, the mingling of a traditional lifestyle with global consumerism. In his photographs is important also their formal side with refined, and at the same time original compositions and creative use of colour.

In the presented cycle, Andrej Balco confirms his today's position, which cannot be overlooked, even though, in comparison with some of his colleagues, it is still underestimated on the Slovak photographic scene.

Vladimír Birgus







Andrej Balco – Suburbs – from top: Pezinok, 2004; Michalovce, 2004; Pezinok, 2004; Pezinok, 2004; Modra, 2004; Prievidza, 2004

ANDREJ BALCO – Born ~ September 25, 1973 ~ Address ~ Za hradbami 17, 902 01 Pezinok, SK, info@andrejbalco.com, www.andrejbalco.com
 EDUCATION ~ 1999 Faculty of Social Work, Trnava University in Trnava, SK ~ 2006 Institute of Creative Photography, Silesian University in Opava, CZ

GRANTS AND AWARDS ~ 2002 Czech Press Photo, certificate of merit – reportage, Prague, CZ ~ 2004 VII/Altemus, workshop for young photographers from Eastern Europe, Pellisane, FR ~ 2004 PhotoDocument.sk, annual creative grant of the advertising agency Vaculik Advertising, Bratislava, SK ~ 2005 Mio Photo Awards / Prize of the Jury (Shimao Shinzo), Osaka, Japan

AGENCIES ~ 2005 YOUNG PHOTOGRAPHERS UNITED, www.ypu.org ~ 2006 SPUTNIK PHOTOS, International Association of Photojournalists, www.sputnikphotos.com ~ 2006 choice images Agency, www.Choiceimages.org

SOLO EXHIBITIONS ~ 2001 Pohoda 2001, International Festival of Photography, Pezinok, SK ~ 2003 Photographs, the One Hundred and Thirteen Gallery, Bialystok, PL ~ 2003 Photographs, Far away from the Bar Gallery, Horní Bečva, CZ ~ 2006 Suburbs, Artist's Gallery in the foyer of the Art Cinema, Brno, CZ

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (Selected) ~ 2000 People from Mníšek, Technical Museum, Košice, SK ~ 2001 8x3 Ludová Banka Gallery, Bratislava, SK ~ 2001 Czech Press Photo, Prague, CZ ~ 2002 Family album.sk, State Gallery, Banská Bystrica, SK ~ 2002 Family album.sk, Koniarik Gallery, Nitra, SK ~ 2002 Family album.sk, Orava Gallery, Dolný Kubín, SK ~ 2002 Family album.sk, Museum Bruntál, CZ ~ 2002 It is the best with Mum and Dad, Ján Koniarik Gallery, Trnava, SK ~ 2003 Degree works ITF 1998 – 2003, House of Art, Opava, CZ ~ 2003 Czech Press Photo, Prague, CZ ~ 2004 Mio Photo Awards, Osaka, Japan ~ 2004 OSCE exhibition, Warsaw, PL ~ 2004 Czech Press Photo, Prague, CZ ~ 2004 Digital Olympus, Mostar, International Month of Photography, Bratislava, SK ~ 2005 Patnáct Fifteen, Prague House of Photography, Prague, CZ ~ 2005 Patnáct Fifteen, Opera Gallery in Ostrava, Ostrava, CZ ~ 2005 Mio Photo Awards, Osaka, Japan ~ 2006 Graduates of the Institute of Creative Photography PPF of Silesian University in Opava 1991 – 2006, House of Art, Opava, CZ ~ 2006 Graduates of the Institute of Creative Photography PPF of Silesian University in Opava 1991 – 2006, Opera Gallery, National Moravian-Silesian Theatre, Ostrava, CZ



Andrej Balco – Suburbs, *Veľké Kapušany*, 2004; *Veľké Kapušany*, 2004