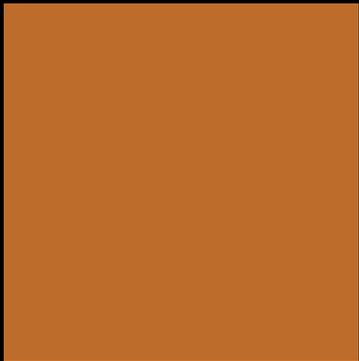
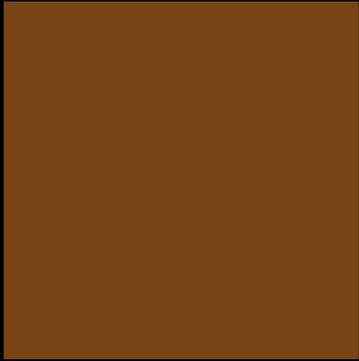




It's impossible for me to forget the exhilaration and awe I felt at the train station upon arriving to Zagreb for the very first time. The desire to get to know the city, and all my youthful fantasies of the beautiful things it will bestow on me... this was something special. It's like a game of seduction between two strangers attracted to one another. And Zagreb has indeed bestowed many beautiful things on me: my job, love, family, home, friends and – most importantly – a place where I can feel at home, where I belong.



project

# THE NIGHT DWELLER

Max Juhasz

Croatia | <http://www.maxjuhasz.com/>

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**M**y fascination with Zagreb has a history - it dates back to the eighties, to a time when I was just a provincial boy, getting off the Vinkovci – Zagreb train to start my training as a professional fireman.

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I was driven to photography much by my then girlfriend and my present wife insisting, not more than a year or two after I had moved to Zagreb. As any beginner photograph buff, I too started by exploring my immediate surroundings and the city. This exploration resulted in photographs which won the group exhibition "Zagreb '93" of the gallery "Spot" in 1993, which is owned by the photo club "Zagreb", of which I was member. With shyness and insecurity, I had applied a couple of my photos for the contest, something I hadn't done before in my life. When the panel finished with their job, I found myself opening my mailbox only to find an invitation with my photo on the cover. Needless to say, I was surprised and probably irreversibly "ho-





oked" to photography without even realizing it. In the exhibition catalogue, an art historian and critic by the name of Branka Hlevnjak compared my photographic approach to Zagreb to the work of our legendary photographer Tošo Dabac, which was immensely encouraging to a young aspiring photographer like me.

Four years later I started working on my series "The night dweller", something that took me two full years between 1997 and 1998 to complete. The series could hardly be considered my first exploration of Zagreb, and certainly not the last. During those years I was already married and father to a baby girl, which understandably brought many commitments of fatherhood. In my thirties, the desire to go out, have fun and experience the night life slowly subsided, to be replaced by some other desires, of calmer nature, and focused on my family. These diminishing feelings were to be somehow used before they disappeared entirely – these craved to be photographed, and thus the "Night dweller" began – as homage to my nocturnal roaming through Zagreb.

Together with my friend and writer Damir Car – with whom I'm currently working on a new project – I've wandered through Zagreb, mostly on Saturday nights. I tried to play the role of a normal observing citizen who went out into the city in search of some fun – or simply out for a walk – without focusing for effects or scenes that were mostly unavailable to the "ordinary" person. I wasn't interested in cooperating with the police or entering the underground scene. I simply took my camera, opened my eyes and wal-

ked into the foggy, melancholy Zagreb nights, photographing whatever came my way.

I used very simple equipment to take my photos; a 35 mm camera of a not so well known brand Chinon, paired with a single Pentacon 29 mm lens and a hand-held light gauge I used to determine the correct exposure. The camera light meter wasn't very good for the conditions – nor was it very reliable in any conditions, for that matter. I opted for simple equipment because I anticipated some less than pleasant situations to occur, considering the photographing was taking place at night, considering the places of my interest and above all considering the people I wanted in my photographs. And my presumptions came to be true, as I've had a couple of very unpleasant experiences during my work on the series, but both the camera and myself managed to get through it with only a couple of scratches. The film used for the series was a 35 mm Kodak negative rated at 1600 ISO, which I "pushed" during development up to 3200, even 6400 ISO. I was adamant not to change the camera, film or the horizontal "movie" aspect ratio, from which I didn't deviate no matter what came in front of my lens.

After two years of work, a lot of expenditures on material and some 11 years of darkness of my photo archive, the photos are finally planned to see the light of day in a little pocket-edition booklet, and the occasional exhibit here or there. True, now that everything revolves around money, and when money is scarce, this plan is proving to be a bit

difficult. But after waiting for so long to show this series to the public, I'm sure I'll be able to fund the endeavour somehow. I feel that one of the more important qualities of every photographer has to be endless patience, paired with absolute faith in what he or she is doing.

The entire "Night dweller" series is comprised of 100 photographs that relate to one another, forming a mood and a story made up of several shorter segments, such as situations and moods in coffee shops, discos, etc. They depict people in those surroundings, drunks, homeless at the Zagreb railway station, some suspicious looking guys... They depict theme parks, the New Year's Eve mood in the city, fairs, lonely puppets in shop windows, striptease in lesser known clubs and places that no longer exist... In the end, the series contains a couple of photographs of a sleepy city, engulfed in the morning fog, the peace and quiet that surrounds its waking moments when an army of workers ride to work in the trams of Zagreb.

Looking at the series from a distance of many years, now that I'm older, I feel that the peace and quiet actually depict the Zagreb I want to see in my photos the most. That's why I've recently begun work on a new series titled "Night Shift – Zagreb", and at the moment I can only say that I believe that Zagreb and I have yet another mission: to friendly share and discover some more secrets; secrets that will – I can say with certainty even now – surely be on film. Black and white film.

selected: Robert Gojevic  
translation: Ivan Pekarik  
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