

The Atlas of Beauty

Review

Mihaela NOROC, *The Atlas of Beauty*, Bucharest: Humanitas, 2017

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Abstract

The Atlas of Beauty is a photographic project around the world. Mihaela Noroc, the author of this book, has travelled in different countries and took pictures of women showing in this way the diversity of beauty.

Keywords: photography, art, beauty, culture, values, women.

The Atlas of Beauty represents the materialization of a bold, ambitious, highly appreciated worldwide project, belonging to a wonderful young lady, Mihaela Noroc.

She travelled to over fifty countries, taking pictures of women representing all social environments, without allowing herself to be influenced by any kind of discrimination filter as race, color, age, religion, education, sexual orientation, household versus career professionals, or traditional, vanguards, conservative, artist profiles, achieving on this line an exceptional intercultural transfer.

An wonderful adventure around the world colored by a multitude of experiences turns into an impressive collection of portraits and stories, all of them summoning a tribute to dignity, originality, variety and, especially, to the uniqueness that consists in the power to accept the presence of diversity discovered in each of us.

The approach of the Romanian young woman has become famous all over the world, her project being chased by nearly a million and a half people on social networks *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Trumblr*, but also through publications such as *Huffington Post*, *Business Insider*, *Forbes*, *Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian*, *Sky News*, *The Independent*, *Le Figaro* who have extensively presented *The Atlas of*

Beauty, turning it into the most publicized artistic project by a Romanian nowadays, as well, as some *Super Soul Sunday* shows of the famous Oprah Winfrey, where Mihaela Noroc spoke live about her desires and achievements: “I have photographed more than two thousands women in every corner of the world, and there where the communication was possible, I listen every single life story... through my pictures I wanted to capture the calm and warm feeling from their eyes.”

The Atlas of Beauty, the author’s photographic project, was originally published in several languages, within the prestigious Publishing House Penguin Books, later being released in Romania, in November 2017, at the Humanitas Publishing House, under the title *Atlasul Frumuse ii*. An impressive publication, being part of the category *Book. Art, Architecture and Design*, more exactly, *Art and Photographic Technique*, according to the highest quality standards, in 8g/m paper, containing 352 pages. The book is published in Romanian language, the translation being made from English by Andreea Nita and Iulia Vladimirov.

“*Women of the World in 500 Portraits* is not the printed version of Facebook page, but much more than this...the book contains pictures and stories which I never post online. The Romanian edition printed by Humanitas Publishing House will not be just a translation from English. I insert new pictures, I wrote new texts, I created a new cover and I hope the book will have success in our country, too”, said Mihaela Noroc.

Reading this atlas, I had the immediate feeling of a deep attachment, absolutely not surprised at how human experiences interferes, but deeply thankful that someone had the initiative to combine in such a surprising way the feminine diversity.

The distribution of portraits is remarkable, through the process of contrast to reflect so many similarities. Each page will sent your thoughts over the world corners, apparently so different, but essentially so identical.

Synchronicities, coincidences, activities, similar situations that consist of a dream or survival in the vicinity of tragedies, the same mother worried for her baby somewhere in Nepal or in United States, the same fight for dignity within the protests on the streets of Greece or Brazil; in all these picture there can be felt the life beyond the scenes and the wisdom of those women in painting their existence colorfully.

“The real beauty doesn’t have borders. You can find it in Africa or in Europe, in a village or in a city, in a smile, in a gesture, in an intensive look, in few wrinkles or in a story,” is Mihaela Noroc opinion.

In a world where physical beauty standards are so demanding, the author takes advantage of the evolutionary technique of information on social platforms, come directly in the millions of women's homes and souls, her mission being nothing else than reconnection to the real true values of humanity and not one of those absurd habits imposed by the industry of fashion promoted by mass media corporation.

The author expressed her vision in several prestigious publications:

CNN: "In my opinion, beauty means to keep alive the origins and culture. Being natural, sincere, authentic, special."

THE INDEPENDENT: "The idea is that we are all part of the same family. Beauty means surprising the cultural diversity in these amazing pictures."

LE FIGARO: "In the end, beauty is in our differences, but not defined by trends, race or social status."

Therefore, the material and immaterial patrimony is a pillar of resistance in the preservation of spirituality, beauty and femininity.

Actions as the utilizations of applications that consist of performing Photoshop filter, in order to present a beautiful picture of ourselves, but which is, at the same time, unrealistic, or more seriously when extreme gestures are used, like starvation or many esthetical interventions, develops an excess of physical, abstract beauty generated by the pattern of some standards dimensions and appearances that can only direct to superficiality and involution, thus enhancing the premises of the disappearance of the variety by uniformization of the female archetype.

The real beauty surprised by the photographer uncovers femininity in the total splendor of its accomplishment. The author resuscitates the concept of beauty by capturing the most noble feelings, the most intensive colors in a superficial shadowy world. The women vibrate with a high amplitude, you'll have the impression of smelling their fatigue, the fear of terror, the serenity of sharing satisfaction, happiness, and peace.

They are not famous or reach, but everyone is unique in her own way; the feminine beauty means balance between giving and taking, a millennial philosophy activated in their soul, but insufficiently developed in practice. "The beauty can teach us tolerance, the sincerity, the kindness, and we need these values in our lives more than ever," says Mihaela.

This project is an artistic proof of *kairopraxis*¹ and an infinite manifestation of beauty, love and affection.

For me, this amazing girl is not lucky just being in contact with so many cultures resulted from her trips, she's an example of simplicity, altruism, energy and rare passion; travelling she takes pictures, but in her reports she paints portraits.

I will end with a very evocative Leo Tolstoi's quote: "You wonder how beauty gives us the full illusion of good. When a beautiful woman says nonsenses, you listen to her and you don't observe her stupidity, everything she tells you seems intelligent for you. She talks and acts horrible, and you see in this something cute. But, if she doesn't say nonsenses, she does not do ugly things and besides she's beautiful, then you're immediately convinced that's a miracle of wisdom and morality."

¹ *Kairopraxis* defines those intentional deliberate actions in accordance with moral laws. Using the comparative method in order to debate for its acceptance and for more understanding, several of its characteristics comes in antithesis with *malpraxis* term, who defines human error, improper professional conduct, both from ignorance and indolence, and lack of responsibility, too.

Kairopraxis is based on the ancient Greek notions, *praxis*, who means activity, action, and *kairos*, the Greek Divinity who symbolized the occasion, the opportunity that intervenes in the temporality field to make the good target of action.