

THE SLOVENE IMPRESSIONIST PHOTOGRAPHER AVGUST BERTHOLD

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Introduction

August Berthold (Augustin Arthur Josef Berthold, 1880–1919) was the first photographer in Slovenia to raise photography from the status of a craft to a higher level of artistic quality, comparable to the state of photography elsewhere in Europe at that time. A contemporary of Slovene Impressionist painters, he worked in the early twentieth century, at a time when trends in style, aesthetics, techniques, and ideas led to the emergence of art photography, or, as it was also called, fine art photography.¹ At the time there was something almost akin to a rivalry between photography and painting, with photography striving not only to imitate painting, but also to become recognized as an art form in itself. For this reason photographers tried to achieve visual effects similar to those in painting, depicting their subjects in slightly blurred, hazy, and, above all, soft tones, so that the images conveyed impressionistic, momentary visualizations of nature. This type of photography is usually described by the term pictorial photography.² The special, new style that developed was based on the interplay of light and color, on softening sharp lines, and in particular on mastering the impressionistic effect in all its details. Great emphasis was placed on representing shimmering light, airiness, and the atmosphere; composing the color surface into dapples, spots, shadows, highlights, and trembling impressions seemingly seen through a translucent veil. This pictorial effect enabled photographic prints to compete with paintings, drawings, or graphic prints, which was grist for the mill for one of the chief purposes of pictorial photography: that photography become recognized as one of the visual arts.

¹ The term referred to the photography of that time, in particular that produced by the so-called “noble” prints: autochrome, carbon print, gum print, platinum print, bromoil print, photogravure, and gelatin silver print (Homer 1983: 168–69).

² In 1869 Henry Peach Robinson published his book *Pictorial effect in photography*. The book represents the basic aesthetic and technical views on pictorial photography, a trend that emerged in the late nineteenth century. Robinson believed that the best aesthetic expressiveness in a photograph was achieved with picturesqueness or the pictorial effect, found in the narrative genre and landscapes. The basis of the pictorial effect is composition and chiaroscuro. Composition consists of the selection, arrangement, and combination of objects. Its principal object is harmony and unity. By the preservation of a harmonious balance of lines and light and shade, the pictorial effect can be produced. So the pictorial effect is the combination of certain forms, lights, and shadows, [...] harmoniously brought together (Robinson 1971:10–29).

In Impressionist painting, objects appear as reflections of light, and Impressionist artists often tried to capture the reflections and transitions of light with short, quick brushstrokes. To achieve the same effect photographers turned to the so-called “noble” print. Among them, Berthold favored the gum print process. By adding various pigments and making his prints on coarse, rough drawing paper he gave his photographs the appearance of monochrome chalk or charcoal drawings. They represent the photographer’s intense creativity and involvement and come close to the expressiveness of Impressionist painting. At the focus of his interest were the effect and the use of light, which enabled him to experiment with endless tonal nuances. Like *plein air* painters, photographers observed the interplay of light and shadow in natural surroundings, especially on trees and water surfaces. The aestheticization of nature in photography reached its peak in the so-called intimate landscape, which encompassed the subjects of trees, forests, wood clearings, meadows, stormy skies, seashores exuding a thick, humid atmosphere, sunrises, and sunsets. Berthold became acquainted with the intimate landscape in the works of the photographers Hans Watzek, Hugo Henneberg, and Heinrich Kühn,³ who were active members of the Camera Club, established in Vienna in 1887. They were experts in the gum print process and had refined sophisticated nuancing of light and shadows in their works. Their intimate landscape photographs were full of light contrasts, and Berthold became familiar with their expressive power early in his artistic career.

The realization that photography could come close to painting by making use of the interplay of light confirmed Berthold’s choice of photography as a creative medium. In addition to Impressionism, Secession, which introduced a number of novelties in photography, was instrumental in forming the aesthetic principles he was to follow. Nature became the ideal; stylized natural forms were represented as equivalents of human feelings. At a lecture delivered in Munich to an audience of artists, the philosopher Theodor Lipps stressed that Secession visually aimed at the “mental effect of the organized arrangement of lines”; this also became the aesthetic point of departure for the photographers of that period (Peters 1979: 317). Like other early twentieth-century photographers, Berthold sought out the interactions between light and dark surfaces and arranged them in compositions by giving emphasis to the lines of his chosen motifs. His

³ These photographers called themselves the Trifolium (trefoil) and marked their works with a trefoil. They developed the so-called combination print, which produced a photograph from several superimposed layers. This allowed them to express a broad range of light tones. As Heinrich Kühn liked to stress: “I have spent my lifetime studying the conditions and have come to know when and under what circumstances it is possible to depict nature in a similar light as that in which it actually occurs. In the combined gum print I have created an important printing process” (Koschatzky 1989: 266, 271).

previously warm brown toning gave way to cooler gray-brown, gray-blue, or even black toning. The Secessionist influence is further visible in principally vegetal motifs and lines, with the central characteristic of images becoming the S-line found in nature, in slender tree saplings, in birch tree trunks, in meandering river bends, the long necks of swans, as well as in the female figure, particularly S-shaped at the time due to the then fashionable corsets. The S-line coincided with another Secessionist feature, the format. The elongated, slender, narrow, upright rectangle (16 x 8 cm) became the standard photographic format. This was the format used by Berthold for his prints, in addition to the other formats that were the norm at the time: the *carte de visite* format (9 x 6 cm), habitually mounted on a correspondingly larger card (10.5 x 6.5 cm), and the cabinet format (13 x 9 cm or 14 x 10 cm), also mounted on slightly larger sturdy cards. This larger format allowed for a lot of space on both sides of the main motif, usually a portrait, which the photographer tended to fill with pieces of furniture or other selected elements. Printed on the back were the studio emblem, the photographer's name and address, and his exhibitions. Visible on recto was the corresponding (usually dry) stamp with the photographer's name. In landscape photography, particularly when printing so-called intimate landscapes, Berthold would enlarge the format to also beyond twenty centimeters. Significantly, following such influences and arriving at such realizations through numerous photographs allowed him to explore the various options and limits of the medium of photography, both in terms of the photographed reality, on the one hand, and the organization of the composition and the aesthetic approach to the chosen subject, on the other.

August Berthold's career as a photographer

August Berthold was born in 1880, in Puštal on the outskirts of Škofja Loka, a town that was a regional hub of cultural activity in the early twentieth century. Berthold associated with the Slovenian Impressionist painters⁴ Rihard Jakopič, Ivan Grohar, and Matej Sternen, and the caricaturist Gvidon Birolla. It was probably through them that he learned of the possibilities regarding studying abroad, especially in Munich and Vienna, the two closest and largest centers of artistic and intellectual development for Slovenian artists at that time. Berthold definitely traveled to Munich; there is the photograph *A Part of the Munich Outskirts* to prove it, a work he sent to the *1st Yugoslav Art Exhibition* in Belgrade in 1904. But the center that impacted his development as a photographer more significantly was Vienna; numerous notable exhibitions of photography

⁴ The representatives of Slovene Impressionism are the painters Rihard Jakopič, Ivan Grohar, Matija Jama, and Matej Sternen. Their art represents the acme of Slovene fine art of the first half of the twentieth century and in terms of its artistic exquisiteness is on a par with European fine art of the time.

were staged there in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Vienna had an important school of photography at the time, the *Höhere Graphische Bundes-lehr-und Versuchanstalt Wien*. Berthold studied there in 1902 and 1903 at the department of *Photographie und Reproduktions-Verfahren*.⁵ Having an inquisitive spirit and a thirst for knowledge, he garnered a great deal of knowledge on photography also on his own, outside of school. Upon his return from Vienna, sometime between 1904 and 1906, he opened a photographic studio in Ljubljana, at (what is now) Tavčarjeva Street 13. The studio was pleasantly furnished, had all the modern equipment and enough work space also for the use of long-focus lenses. It faced east and had an iron construction supporting a glass roof and wall, which provided a good combination of natural and artificial light for high-quality studio work.

The last decade of the nineteenth century and, in particular, the beginning of the twentieth century saw a boom in photographic exhibitions in Europe. They were bolstered principally by young photographers, full of new ideas about and views on photography and seeking independence from the old, conservative photographers' associations. They came together in far more dynamic and, in terms of ideas and style, progressive groups,⁶ with the aim to raise photography to a higher level of quality and attain the coveted recognition of photography as an art form, equal to painting and printmaking. They were fully aware of the need for public presentations of their photographic achievements, and exhibitions were a good way of reaching the general public. Photographers often "joined" exhibitions of painting as a complementary or partly independent component, or else organized independent exhibitions of photography. Avgust Berthold early on realized the importance of photographers being well organized and exhibiting their works; exhibitions were a challenge that drove him to produce higher quality works, enabling him at the same time to affirm himself in the wider European space. He was aware of the great creative level of his works and he confidently sent them to notable exhibitions abroad, winning several commendations and a medal.

Berthold's first public presentation was at the *1st Yugoslav Art Exhibition* in Belgrade in 1904 (Tošič 1983: 42). He was the only art photographer participating in the exhibition. His works were gum prints; the gum printing process produced results expressively similar to the works of the Impressionist painters exhibiting in that show. In terms of genre, most

⁵ He attended the first and second semesters of the academic year 1902–1903. I have been able to trace this data at the *Höhere Graphische Bundes-lehr-und Versuchanstalt Wien*, Leysenstrasse 6.

⁶ There were the Camera Club in Vienna, the Linked Ring Brotherhood in London, the Photo – Club de Paris, the Association Belge de Photographie, and Photo – Secession in the U.S. (Melon 1987: 80–100).

works were landscape photographs—that is, impressions of the intimate landscape; he only exhibited one portrait photograph, that of the painter Rihard Jakopič. Already the following year (1905) Berthold took part in his first international exhibition in Brussels, Belgium: the *Exhibition of Arts and Crafts in Honor of the 75th Anniversary of Belgium's National Independence*. Here he won a commendation and a very interesting medal with the King's portrait in profile. From then on Berthold participated in one major international exhibition every year. Thus he showed his work at the *2nd Yugoslav Art Exhibition*, staged in Sophia in August and September 1906. Again, he was the only photographer to participate in the show, which underscored the subject-matter unity in the works of Slovenian artists; they all expressed a love of nature and a great feeling for the land and for the transitions of color tones and light effects. On the back of the cards on which his photographs were mounted, Berthold would put, in addition to his name, only three of the exhibitions he had participated in: the 1905 exhibition in Brussels, the *International Photographic Exhibition* in Brno in 1907, and an exhibition in Christiania (now Oslo) in 1908. At the latter he showed one of his favorite subjects: drooping, melancholy birches (figures 1 and 2). He again exhibited the birch motif in 1910 in Budapest, at a very comprehensive international exhibition of photographers from Europe and the United States. Berthold's period of exhibiting came to an end in 1911, when he showed his works for the last time at the Jakopič Pavilion at the *6th Art Exhibition*. Invited to participate in that spring show in addition to painters, a group of photographers staged a complementary *1st Exhibition of the Association the Club of Slovene Amateur Photographers in Ljubljana*. The photographic exhibition attracted a great deal of attention.⁷ It won acclaim from both the painters and the public and broached much discussion fostering critical opinion concerning the merits of Slovene photography, which at that time was on a par with the rest of Europe. In the early twentieth century Berthold was thus the only Slovene photographer recognized and esteemed also in Europe, while at home he was valued and respected as the greatest Slovene authority on photography and an admired author of innovative and high-quality works.

Photographic production

August Berthold's photographic legacy comprises works of very high expressive and technical standards. Virtually all the prints he sent to exhibitions and which represent the acme of his creativity have survived. A majority of his best work was produced between 1904 and 1914. In terms of subject matter and motif, Berthold's photographs can be divided into the following groups: a) landscape photography, including intimate landscapes,

⁷ After 1911 Berthold ceased exhibiting; no documentation is available of his ever participating in another exhibition.

seascapes, and mountain landscapes; b) still life; c) genre photography, with a focus on peasant and child genres; d) architecture photography; e) portraiture, where the family portrait and the character portrait (usually of notable personalities) predominate; f) documentary photography; and g) nude photography. Landscape, genre, and portrait photographs represent Berthold at his best, and are consequently given greatest attention in this text. He himself chose works with such themes to send to exhibitions, as they best represented his principally pictorial orientation.

Landscape photography

Photographers strove to produce certain effects in their viewers by such means as composition, smooth transitions between light and shadow, careful use of tonal qualities, and arrangement of lines. The goal was to prove that their works were comparable to handmade works of art. William Morris was quoted as saying: “Get the effect, no matter how—empty an ink-bottle over it if you like, but get the effect that you want. It is nobody’s business how you get it” (Doty 1960: 31). Photography became a medium of expression; the nature motifs in intimate landscapes suggested moods and atmospheres, in addition to displaying technical effects.

In his landscape shots Berthold would usually focused on some visually very defined, striking natural feature or particularity, positioning his camera so that he achieved a diagonal composition, which made the image more dynamic. Using methods of composition and the angle of lighting, he strove to convey the atmosphere or the narrative quality of a subject—for instance, a sense of drama, the mysteriousness of the moment, gloominess, melancholy, a certain numbness of nature, or else its lyrical or joyful aspects. When making the prints, he often cropped the shots; cropping enabled him to give further emphasis to a motif, or achieve a desired effect, a better compositional balance, harmony, symmetry, and rhythm. He was attracted by the light and the atmosphere found in the natural surroundings in different seasons, parts of the day, or weather conditions. His shots taken in slightly misty mornings or late afternoons, when all the light nuances in nature come together into a unified whole and give a sense of the atmosphere, clearly defined visual elements, the power of light, and the volumes of the masses, are very picturesque and effective. He tended to avoid multiple highlights. The brightest light was in the center of the image, around the main motif. He liked to put medium light and slightly shaded planes into dramatic interplay with the main motif. The subjects of Berthold’s landscape photography are woods, individual trees, wood clearings, marshy ground, streams, forest footpaths, the sea, the mountains (figure 1)—in short, nature in all the seasons. He had an inclination for intimate landscapes with the motif of melancholy birch trees, slender and tall against the sky, and full of various connotations. Birches

evoke myriad deep emotions and perhaps best recall the special sensibility cultivated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With their undulating, dynamic lines the slender trees lent themselves to the typical aestheticized, Secessionist emphases. The photographer could arrange the composition with the vertical lines of the birches, develop the foreground and background, and establish perspective. Berthold's deliberate expression of depth and perspective can be observed in the blue-toned *Birches*, 1905 (figure 2). The upright format further accentuates the spatial relationship between the foreground, concentrated in the light on the water, and the diagonal line of trees retreating into depth, as a rhythm of lines and surfaces.⁸ In his birch-tree photographs taken between 1905 and 1910 (figure 3), the photographer effectively brought together form, movement, rhythm, and the character of the vertical white tree trunks with the relations between the light and dark surfaces. His shadows remained light, and he achieved an overall effect of light. He gave his prints further variety by experimenting with cropping and toning in diverse pigments.

Capturing light in the tones and nuances found in nature or in a closed space is a very demanding task in photography. Berthold's contemporary, the Vienna photographer Heinrich Kühn gave it quite some thought (Kühn 1902: 93–102). He came to the conclusion that light objects in not overly strong sunlight and with virtually no middle tones produce the effect of a ray of sunshine, bright and cheerful. Dark photographs, on the other hand, have a serious, severe, gloomy effect; care must therefore be taken to juxtapose the light and dark tones to give a photograph expressive power and spontaneity. Contrast and mood or atmosphere are important, and they can be achieved with toning, as can be seen in many of Berthold's prints made between 1906 and 1911. An excellent example is *In the Woods*, with its soft transitions between light reflections and the darker and lighter dappled shadows through the crowns of trees converging toward the center of the source of light. The image is slightly blurry and in accordance with the ideals of pictorial photography: there is a distinctly hazy atmosphere, an individual interpretation of the subject matter, and that new sensibility. Light playing on tree trunks by the water, on green meadows, on swaying, arching tree crowns captured in skillful compositions is the subject of the

⁸ The motif of birch trees in myriad variations was most predominant in Germany in the last decade of the nineteenth century. There was the *Worpsweder Naturlyrismus* group of painters who in their works brought together the intimate landscape and the linear and formal expressive elements of a naturalistically rendered landscape, with the aim to stylize natural forms. As Rainer Maria Rilke put it: "The dignity of the *Worpsweder*s is in that they use nature as poets do, to present their inner world and their uniqueness in the finest of emotional nuances." The birch tree was a very popular motif, since its stylized form can represent many nuances of moods. The group saw its first success at an exhibition in the Munich Palace in 1895 (Peters 1979: 317–19).

photographs *Night*, *Evening*, *Marshy Landscape*, and *Trees by the Water*. Nature is presented in all its beauty, but at the same time also in its distance and unapproachableness, with a touch of chill in the clear, bright morning, the sunny day, or the dark evening mood (figure 4).

Figure 1. *Marshy Landscape*, 1906, gum print, brown pigment, 10.8 cm x 16.2 cm, mounted on cardboard, private collection.



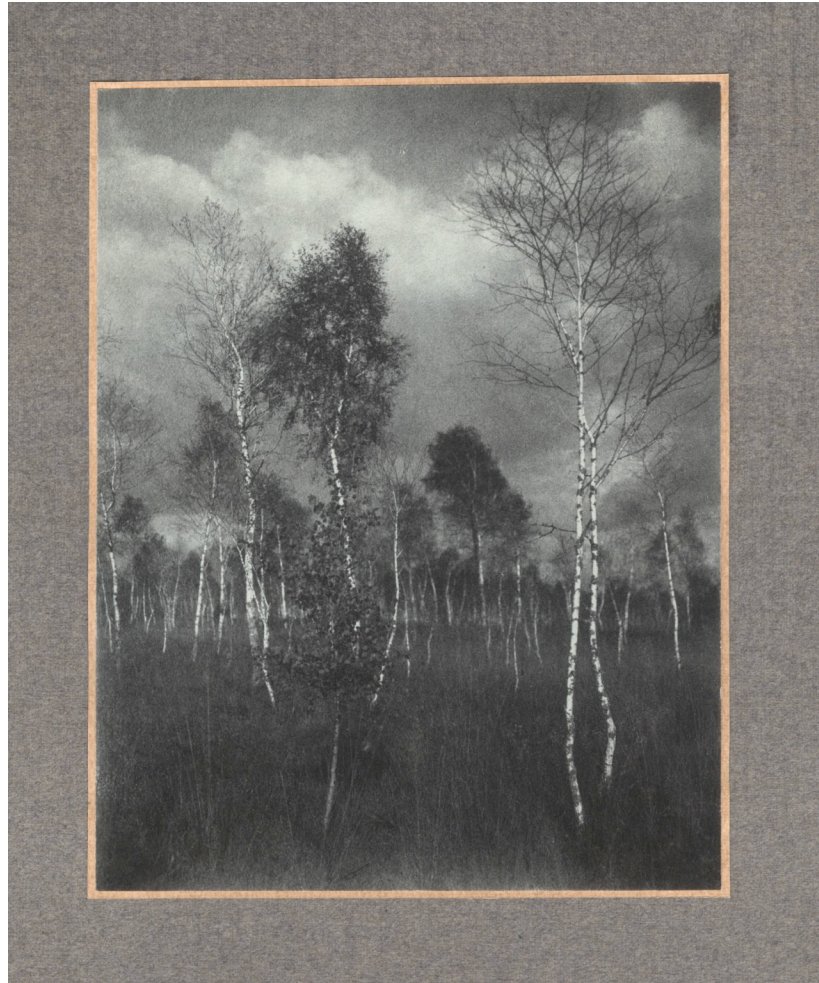
The photographer arrived at his interpretation of nature by seeking out unity in lines, harmony between light and shadows, and by deliberately arranging contrasts into a whole. Like Impressionist painters, Berthold believed in a subjective perception of natural subjects, which led him to use a soft focus and consequently often to produce diffuse images. As a true representative of pictorial photography, he learned to see things through the lens of his camera like an Impressionist, in terms of the way they reacted in and to light. The play of light, and subsequent accurate cropping and an adequate, harmonious color toning, enabled him to find soft and subtle tonal harmonies.

In Berthold's oeuvre, landscape photography and more specifically the intimate landscape represent his profoundest communion with nature. They taught him to selectively observe, allowed him to hone his photographic skills in terms of composition and the interplay of light and shadow, and to discover the significance of contrast. It was in landscape photography that he pushed the limits of his creative scope, and he valued it so highly that he most often sent works of this type off to exhibitions.

Figure 2. *Birches*, 1905, gum print, blue pigment, 27 cm x 13.2 cm, private collection.



Figure 3. *Landscape with Birches II*, 1906, gum print, gray pigment, 12.8 cm x 16.2 cm, mounted on cardboard, private collection.

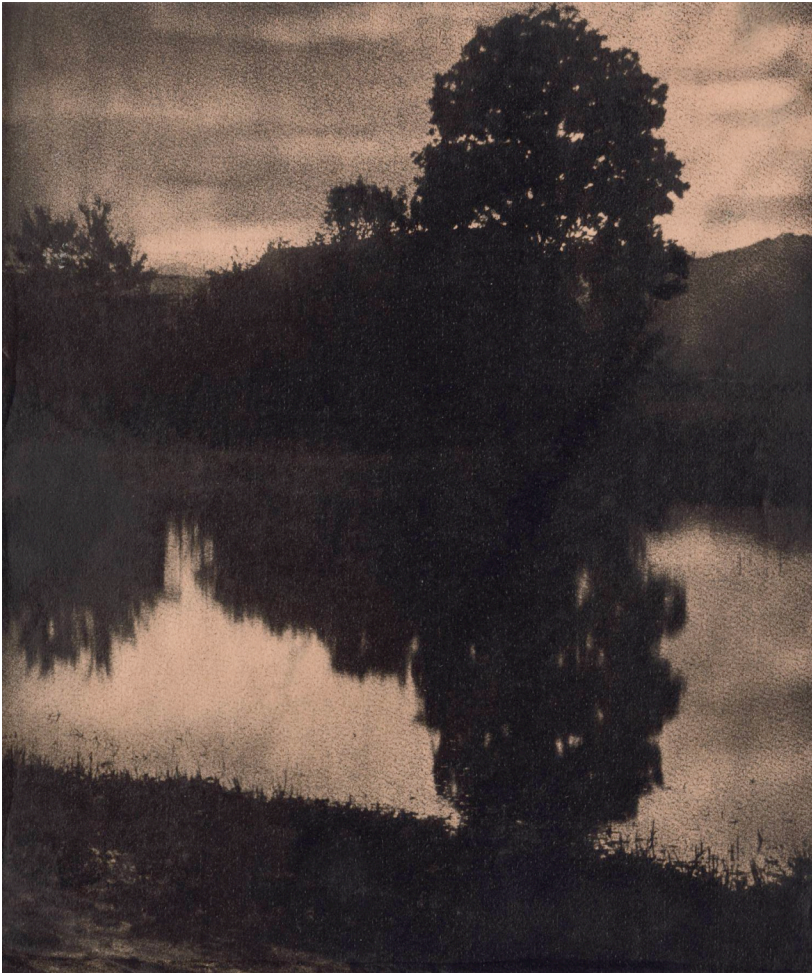


Genre photography

The peasant, bent and straining in some typical farm-labor posture, represented the archetype of a man closely tied to the earth, nature, and homeland. The early twentieth century was a time of the awakening of national consciousness in Slovenia, resulting in tendencies to unite the Slovene nation and join other Southern Slav nations in a state federation. Photography turned out to be a powerful tool in stimulating national consciousness, uniting as it did its documentary aspect with personally

expressive and suggestive components. When searching for motifs of peasants at everyday chores, Berthold first turned to his home background, Škofja Loka and its environs. He would go walking in the meadows, climb hillocks, and stroll through villages, looking for subjects that would yield dynamic, narratively strong shots. His genre photographs depict country people plowing, sowing, making hay, harvesting, or resting.

Figure 4. *Evening*, 1904, gum print, blue-ochre pigment, 17.8 cm x 23 cm, private collection.



Berthold's most famous genre photograph is the *Sower* (figure 5). The piece broaches certain questions regarding its origin, on which views

are somewhat divided. What is also significant is its patent similarity with what is probably the paramount painting in Slovene fine art of the twentieth century, Ivan Grohar's *Sower* (1907).⁹ The catalogue of the 2nd *Yugoslav Art Exhibition* in Sophia, August–September 1906, served as the basis for determining the dates of several photographs, and in particular the *Sower*, which is listed as no. 156 and was obviously first shown precisely at this exhibition (*II. južnoslavjanska hudožestvena izložba* 1906: 24). Since the show opened in the summer of 1906, the photograph must have been taken that spring. We can pinpoint the exact spot of origin: a field near the village of Suha near Škofja Loka, with a view of the overgrown riverbank of the Sora. The farmer's figure, position, and motion are very deliberate, with an elaborateness that gives the entire composition visual balance. The farmer's body is captured in a brisk, dynamic stride and in the specific motion of scattering seed. The light is caught in his fluttering white shirt and almost seems to be the thing that drives him into motion. The darker surfaces—the field stretching diagonally and coming as high as the sower's waist, the slope of the hillside in the background, and the mountain Hom in the distance—give the image a dynamic nature. The photograph is toned in a reddish hue and printed on rough drawing paper, which further enhances the visual effect of the coarse graininess. The sharpness of the light contrasts decreases into the depth of the image. The *Sower* is an ensemble of dynamic picturesque elements and light nuances that balance the motif of the sower in the foreground with the background of slightly blurry outlines, withdrawing the image from the realm of clear-cut representation and making it a record of what is momentary, fleeting, and hard to recapture. The visual effect comes very close to an impressionistic momentary perception, full of harmony with regard to the color and light effects. The *Sower* also has numerous symbolic connotations, notably the idea of sowing on one's own land, which will then come to fruition.¹⁰ It was taken at a time when the awareness of the importance of and love for the Slovene land was high and calls for Slovene unity loud. The motif resonates with Slovene viewers yet today.

⁹ Ivan Grohar's *Sower* (1907) is in the national library, the Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica in Ljubljana.

¹⁰ In terms of subject matter, Berthold's *Sower* is an exception in Slovene photography of that time. Perhaps the incentive for taking it might be found in painting, or more specifically, in Berthold's association with Rihard Jakopič, who was the main promoter of artistic activities in Slovenia. He may well have suggested to Berthold the idea of photographing a farmer sowing on his own land. The motif and the representation contain a strong symbolic emphasis, which did not see further development in Berthold's later work.

Figure 5. *Sower*, 1906, gum print, red pigment, 12.4 cm x 16.8 cm, mounted on cardboard, private collection.

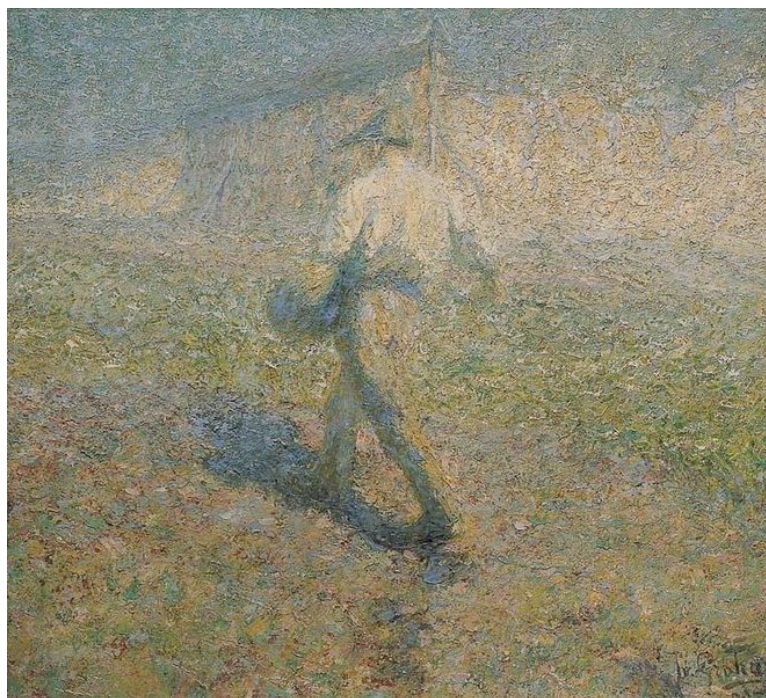


The similarities between Berthold's and Grohar's *Sowers* (figure 6) are manifest in the subject matter and composition, so much so that we can claim that Grohar painted his work on the basis of Berthold's photograph.¹¹ Furthermore, there is the one-year difference between Berthold exhibiting the photograph in Sophia in 1906 and Grohar's *Sower*, dated 1907. This in no way diminishes the originality or quality of Grohar's painting, but merely points to the possible interrelations between the two media and at the same time proves that artists have always borrowed ideas and subjects from one another. It is not just the idea or the subject that matter, but the execution, which differs in the medium of photography from painting. It was through this subject of the sower that Grohar established himself as a great artist and produced probably the most eminent Slovene work of art or, as it were, an icon of Slovene art. The figure of the sower in the painting is

¹¹ Like many European painters, also Slovene painters such as Janez Šubic, Ivana Kobilca, Jože Petkovšek, Anton Ažbe, Matej Sternen, Rihard Jakopič, and Matija Jama often followed the then custom of using photographs when painting portraits.

virtually identical to the one in the photograph. The sower's diagonal motion, the position of his legs, his body in a white shirt bent slightly forward, the motion of his hand as he sows, the way he carries the seed basket, even the shadow cast by the body, they all match. If we look closely at the shadows, at the lines and folds in the shirt, particularly around the waist, we can find great resemblance between the painting and the photograph. Also the diagonal accents of the field and the grassy area come to the height of his waist, just as they do in the photograph; only the background is different. While Berthold's photograph shows a varied natural background with a house, a hayrack, and a mountain, the painting presents a stylized version that brings more depth to the symbolic act of sowing. The background is brought closer with the motif of the hayrack incorporated into the dynamic diagonal of the movement of the figure and the lines of the field and meadow directed into the depth of the space. As in the photograph, also in the painting the movement and the slanting diagonal lines all run left, toward some imaginary point of convergence in the distance. In the painting (as in the red toned photograph) the man, the colors and light of the shimmering atmosphere and nature have blended into a cohesive optical whole.

Figure 6. Ivan Grohar, *Sower*, 1907, oil, canvas, 108 cm x 120 cm, Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana.



In his best photographic work Berthold came close to Slovene Impressionists. The Impressionist painters accepted him as an equal, as can be deduced from the fact that they exhibited together and, even more importantly, from the similarity in their choice of subjects. His way of observing nature and people and his aesthetic principles bear resemblance to the ideas and artistic views of the Slovene Impressionists. The greatest recognition of Avgust Berthold's creative genius came with the inclusion of his most outstanding works in the exhibition *Slovene Impressionists and Their Time 1890–1920*, staged by the National Gallery in Ljubljana (2008–2009). That exhibition validated Berthold as the fifth Slovene Impressionist, an artist who significantly impacted perhaps the most notable period in Slovene art. Berthold's works have also been included in the Slovene National Gallery's permanent collection, thus becoming part of the national cultural heritage. Last but not least, the image of Berthold's sower is also on Slovenia's one-euro coin.

Portrait photography

Portraiture has always represented a special challenge for photographers. It was a prevalent type in photography since its very beginnings, representing a major part, if not the largest part of studio work. It tended to bring in the most revenue for a studio and establish its reputation. In comparison with portrait painting, it was more affordable, more easily accessible, and also more popular in its accurate representation of a person's appearance and the appurtenances of their social standing and background, education, and profession.

Avgust Berthold's oeuvre comprises numerous portrait photographs of famous Slovene public figures taken between 1910 and 1917, such as the painters Rihard Jakopič, Ivan Grohar, the writers Oton Župančič and Ivan Cankar, and the writer and politician Ivan Tavčar and his wife Franja Tavčarjeva.¹² The portraits are technically accomplished and taken against a neutral background. The emphasis is on the lighted, soft lines of the faces without any sharp transitions between light and dark.

Three of the so-called character portraits are creatively more sophisticated. One is the *Portrait of the Painter Rihard Jakopič* (figure 7), one of Berthold's earliest portraits of this type, taken as early as 1904.¹³

¹² Other notable Slovenes Berthold photographed were Anton Aškerc, Emil Adamič, Izidor Cankar, Franc Derganc Pavel Golia, Fran Ilešič, Stano Kosovel, Juš Kozak, France Kralj, Lavoslav Schwentner, Viktor Steska, and Ivo Šorli.

¹³ This was the photograph Berthold exhibited at the *1st Yugoslav Art Exhibition* in Belgrade in 1904. Jakopič was the best educated of the Slovene Impressionists, had a genius for organizing, and was also the most technically adept. In 1909 he built an exhibition venue in Tivoli, called the Jakopič

Jakopič is photographed against a very dark background, leaning slightly to one side, his hand supporting his head in the position of a thinker and creator. His hair blends into the background, with only his face lit and, due to the highlights, especially the eyes standing out in the picture. In this way the artist's resolute temperament, energy, and youth are underscored. An exception among Berthold's portraits of notables of the time is his *Portrait of Ivan Grohar* from 1905 (figure 8), the only full-profile portrait of an artist in Berthold's body of work. Berthold's only existant self-portrait of this time dates to 1905 (figure 9).

The prominent writer Ivan Cankar was a family friend. Berthold made several photographs in various periods of the writer's life, which give important insights into the way his appearance changed. The two 1911 photographs, *Ivan Cankar* and *Ivan Cankar at Zgornji Rožnik*, show him at the peak of his creativity and success. The former picture served as the basis for many posthumous portraits done by Slovene painters, among them Ivan Franke (1919) and Rudolf Jakhel (1921). The latter picture is an almost full-length shot of Cankar in a hat and meticulously dressed, standing in a relaxed pose. Two more photographs were taken in the last period of the writer's life (the first half of 1918; figure 9). Cankar was extremely pleased with them. In all probability they are the subject of the anecdote he told Ivan Mazovec—that he had not been charged for the photographer's service, but had, on the contrary, in that time of a general shortage of food and lighting, received from him one kilo of sugar and a liter of lamp-oil just because he had come to him to have his picture taken (Mazovec 1920: 40).

Conclusion

Avzug Berthold (1880–1919) was the first Slovene photographer whose photography made the transition from simple craft to a higher level, comparable to that of other European photographers. A dynamic person and prolific artist, he left his mark on the Slovene cultural scene of the time. His oeuvre is indicative of the aesthetic scope and the expressive force of photography in the early twentieth century. He produced a number of important works (*Sower*, various landscapes, portraits of Rihard Jakopič, Ivan Cankar, and Ivan Grohar), which are appropriately positioned at the pinnacle of Slovene fine art at the time. Berthold actively cooperated with the Slovene Impressionist painters, both by exhibiting together with them and by sharing their aesthetic ideas and views on art. His works are now included in the Gallery's national collection, which makes them part of the Slovene cultural heritage, and Avgust Berthold, the fifth Slovene Impressionist artist.

Mestna Galerija, Ljubljana

Pavilion, at his own expense and staged art exhibitions in it as the first Slovene fine art curator.

Figure 7. *Portrait of the Painter Rihard Jakopič*, 1904, gum print, black pigment, 15.7 cm x 11.1 cm, private collection.

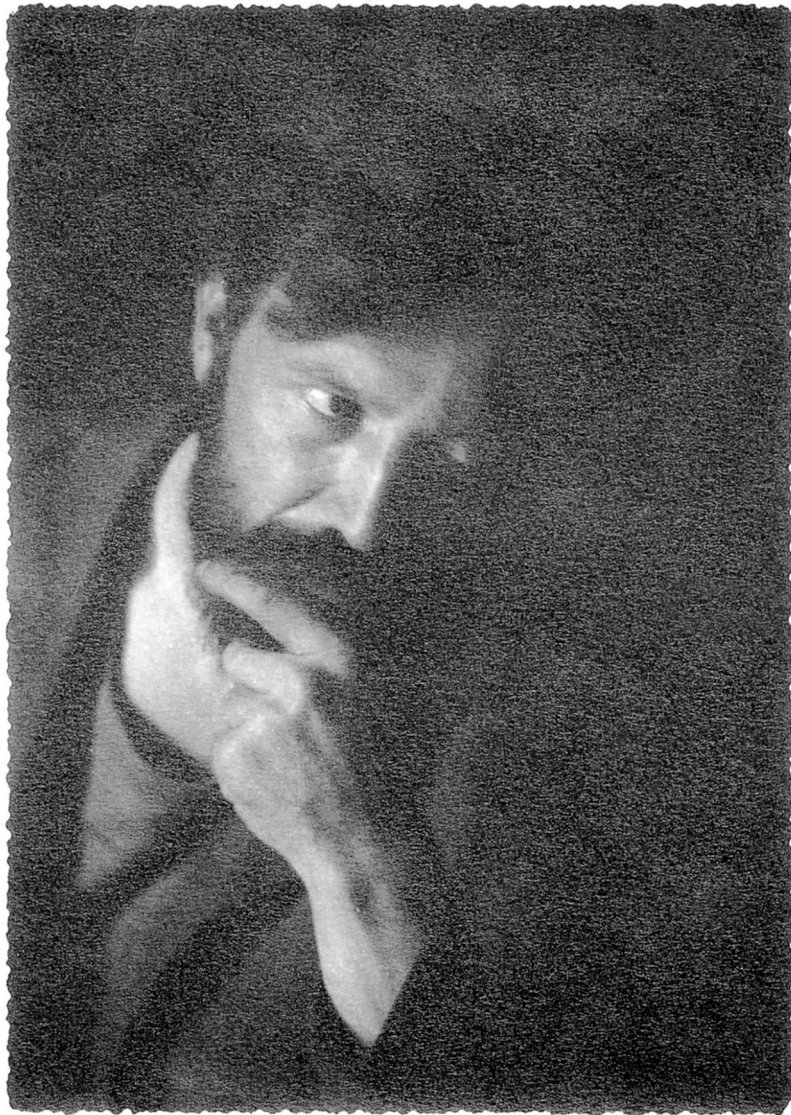


Figure 8. *Ivan Grohar*, 1905, silver bromide print, 22.2 cm x 14 cm, mounted on cardboard, Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana.



Figure 9. *Portrait of Avgust Berthold*, 1905, gum print, blue pigment, oval format, diameter 17.9 cm, private collection.



Figure 10. *Ivan Cankar*, 1918, silver bromide print, 19.9 cm x 13.4 cm, Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana.



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POVZETEK

FOTOGRAF AVGUST BERTHOLD, SLOVENSKI IMPRESIONIST

Avgust Berthold (1880–1919) je bil prvi fotograf na Slovenskem, katerega fotografije so prešle iz obrtne na kvalitetnejšo in evropsko primerljivo raven. Bil je dinamična, aktivna in ustvarjalna osebnost, ki je krepko zaznamovala naš kulturni prostor. Njegov opus potrjuje veliko estetsko širino in izrazno moč fotografskega medija v začetku 20. stoletja. Ustvaril je nekaj pomembnih fotografskih del (Sejalec, več motivov krajin z drevesi, portrete Riharda Jakopiča, Ivana Groharja in Ivana Cankarja), ki sodijo v vrh takratne slovenske likovne umetnosti. Bil je sopotnik slovenskim slikarjem impresionistov, ki so postavili slovensko umetnost ob bok takratni evropski umetnosti. Z njimi je aktivno sodeloval tako s skupnim razstavljanjem kot s sorodnostjo estetskih idej in pogledov na umetnost tistega časa. Po pregledu in analizi Bertholdovega dela ter uvrstitvijo v nacionalno zbirko Narodne galerije v Ljubljani z veliko razstavo (2008–2009) Slovenski impresionisti in njihov čas 1890–1920, so njegove fotografije postale del kulturne dediščine, Avgust Berthold pa peti slovenski impresionist.