



Still Life by Ion Zupcu



Published in *LensWork* #38

Commentary

Photography is about the finding and capturing of emotion, the expression of life, the visual exploration of moments and feelings. Notice that in that previous sentence there was nothing about fuzziness, but it is a very common misconception that somehow out of focus or blurry pictures do a better job of communicating emotions than tack sharp ones. How quaint, but how silly a notion.

So often, I find photographers attempting to give depth and feeling to their images by simply making them blurry. It's become so cliché, and so commonly *unsuccessfully* attempted, that I've developed a knee-jerk reaction against out of focus, blurry photographs. But then, along comes a photographer like Ion Zupcu who understands that soft focus is a tool that, like any other tool, can be used successfully when employed at the right time, in the right amount, in the right situation, under the right conditions. This image, from his portfolio in *LensWork* #38 does just that, in my opinion.

Limp tulips have been photographed before, and even frequently. It's hard to see a black and white tulip and not think of André Kertész and *Chez Mondrian*. But this image by Zupcu succeeds in ways that even the Kertész image did not. I think it has to do with the fact that the tulip is leaning out of its base toward us whereas the famous Kertész image shows us a more distant flower in the context of its greater surroundings. The close view as to

sense of intimacy which I think intensifies the emotion we project onto the flower.

Perhaps the soft focus in Zupcu's image is simply a function of the shallow depth of field inherent in close-up photography, but I suspect not. There are all kinds of ways to introduce soft focus to an image and shallow depth of field is only one of them. The blur in this image may very well be a combination of shallow depth of field and diffuse enlargement.

However the image was made, the effect is powerful and that has to do with a combination of inherent emotion in the flower, the angle at which he photographed it, and the beautiful soft focus which emphasizes the soft light and our intimate relationship with the subject.