



ILIJA ŠOŠKIĆ
EMPATHY?

Gandy
Gallery

EMPATHY?

Exhibition: 29.05 - 26.07.2024

Proposed by Dragica Cakic Soskic.

"For the Greeks the essence of friendship consisted in speech. They argued that only a constant exchange of words could unite citizens in a polis [...] They called philanthropy this humanity that is realized in the dialogue of friendship, since it manifests itself in the willingness to share the world with other men. Friendship therefore presupposes the notion of humanity and at the same time being rooted in the world. In fact, where a pure friendship is realized there "a spark of humanity is produced in a world that has become inhuman".

Hannah Arendt - "Humanity in dark times"

Body of the exhibition proposed on the occasion of "Empathy?" explores the concept of an anxious form of cultural and political memory, which analyzes the devastating effects of the totalitarian assault on the human condition, i.e. political and socio-linguistic mutations!

The title composed of the word "empathy" and the question mark sign is (almost) an oxymoron, so as not to define the point in the art that moves away: documentation as a means to explore formal and perceptive relationships and investigation of new concepts and methods.

Reflection of Soskic's sublimated self who recognized himself in the documents collected and chosen to accompany the "healing" drawing, which is the foundation of his work, and the photography - narrative art, testimony to clandestine and institutionally founded actions.

When he turns to see the fire burning in his house in April 1941, Ilija Soskic begins to consider that nothing is immune from the contamination of the world: surmounting 1949 metres, the Čakor, the highest pass in former Yugoslavia, Ilija Soskic makes a move of considerable weight and density. From here the movements lend themselves as enigmatic and fragmentary pieces, but contribute to the summary of historical events, to make them more concise.

And now here is The Exhibition of Memories in the form of a rationally reconstructed dialogue where the dialogue is an exhibited, very illusory device.

May 1, 1994, after leaving the recent Yugoslav war and arriving at the Kounellis gardens and house in Hydra, the free island that was never occupied, was the beginning of using the arsenal of ideas and the consolidation of thoughtful eloquence.

The incorporeal moments of time that possess an existence that did not belong to them: dedication by Luigi Ontani on the back of the unique photo in his repertoire, given to a friend; the friendly but demanding signatures under the general unit phrases, to resolve bureaucratic procedures, of Jannis Kounellis and Fabio Sargentini; letter of thanks from my friend and political companion Luigi Manconi; ecstatic sign of the young companion in dialogue on Roman art Flavia Rebecchini; the echo of the trampling of wild horses and their environment and natural reserves that the war overwhelms, in the painting of the painter friend from Kiev Sasha Makarska... The sentences are documented units, not measurable in the contemplation of the truth!

Ilija Soskic, who prefers to be described as a visual artist, has been a fascinating figure since 1968, when he began experimenting with action, given the variety of his work, and remains so today, at 89 years old, weighing own physical and bodily existence. He's not going to simplify anything yet! His work is layered, elusive, evocative and usually difficult to articulate concisely, even more so on this occasion when he shows materials where there is the contemplation of discomfort in the form of life!

Dragica Cakic Soskic, 28 May 2024

BIOGRAPHY OF THE ARTIST

Ilija Šoškić was born in Decani, a Montenegrin part of former Yugoslavia, in 1934.

His artistic position was in line with the intellectual intelligentsia repressed by social realism. During Tito's regime, through his sporting abilities – Yugoslavian hammer throw record-breaker – he was able to escape a military punishment for his critical anti party position, and he gained the opportunity to study at the Belgrade School of Fine Arts.

His early works were marked by the violent and profound impact that Jerzy Grotowski's Poor Theatre had on him. The 1964 article on the subject (that was then used as an introduction to the famous Towards a Poor Theatre, released in 1968) was translated into his language in 1965, in the journal "Scena" published by Novi Sad. His work was also marked by his fascination for the American art of Pollock, as well as French existentialism and Russian theatre. After this, his creative path tended to no longer be distinguishable from his own life.

As part of the cultural scene of Belgrade, his contact with Djuna Blasevic was important, who at the time was the director of the Student Cultural Centre of Belgrade (conceded by Tito after the student revolts of 1968). From 1969, Soscic moved to Italy, to Bologna, where he discovered the language of Manzoni and Pascali, and where he met and became a close friend of Luigi Ontani, with whom he opened the European performative season.

From 1973 he was in Rome, where he frequented the supranational circle of the Gap and Attico galleries; he would return to his country only to bear witness and testify to the disasters of war.

His work, between performative action, video and installation, tends to fuse, in an highly critical elaboration, elements that are cultural and political, mythologies and natural dramatic elements: a path that offers ample space to the planning dimension, condensing the conceptual and philosophical nature.

Simonetta Lux and Dragica Čakić

BIOGRAPHIES OF FRIENDS

Jannis Kounellis (1936 - 2017) was a Greek performance artist and sculptor associated with the Arte Povera movement. He studied art in Athens and then at the Accademia de Bella Arti in Rome. Kounellis's practice spanned sculpture, performance, installation, and painting, and his disparate media included cotton, soil, coal, burlap sacks, glass bottles, meat hooks, fire, soot, bed frames, instruments, clothing, and more. He participated in prestigious exhibitions including Whitechapel Gallery, the Museo Reina Sofía, the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, documenta and the Venice Biennale.

Luigi Manconi (1948) is an Italian academic and politician, former senator of the Democratic Party. Manconi graduated in Political Sciences at the University of Milan and started teaching Sociology in the University of Palermo and the IULM University of Milan. In the 1980s, Manconi founded and directed, together with Massimo Cacciari and Rossana Rossanda, the magazine Antigone. He was a columnist and commentator for Italian newspapers, such as Il Messaggero, Corriere della Sera, La Stampa; he is currently a columnist for Il Foglio and La Repubblica.

Luigi Ontani (1943) is an Italian painter and sculptor. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts of Bologna. Throughout his long career Ontani has worked with many different techniques and materials, including film, plaster and fiberboard. From his "oggetti pleonastici" made in plaster, to the "stanza delle similitudini," made with objects cut in corrugated fiberboard. He has exhibited his works in among others in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum to the Pompidou Centre, the Museo Reina Sofía to the Frankfurter Kunstverein. He has also participated in several editions of the Venice, Sydney, and Lyon biennales.

Flavia Rebecchini (1972) was born in Rome, where she lives and works. Her first exhibition was in the Galleria Comunale d'Arte in Cesena, with the solo show Track, in her second 'public' show she presented herself in the young Italian art scene during the Belgade April Meeting (2003).

Fabio Sargentini (1939) known as a gallerist, director, and writer. He co-founded the L'Attico gallery, where he transformed exhibition spaces to facilitate dynamic artistic expression. He has organized dance and music festivals, staged several plays since 1979 and published multiple books. Sargentini played a pivotal role in introducing European audiences to New York's avant-garde music and dance scene during the 1960s. His innovative approach extended beyond traditional galleries, as he explored unconventional venues for artistic events, including public parks.

EXHIBITION

Gandy Gallery, Bratislava
29.05.2024 - 26.07.2024



ILIJA ŠOŠKIĆ

Drawings from the wars, 2005

16 drawings 24x33 cmm each, 24x33 cm

Fabriano 220 g paper with embossing seal



Ilija ŠOŠKIĆ
Untitled, 1966
155x6x6 cm
Wood, copper



Ilija ŠOŠKIĆ
UNTITLED, 1963-66
30 cm (variable)
Wood, wire



Ilija ŠOŠKIĆ
Healing Drawings, 1993
4 drawings, 51 x 71 cm each
Fabriano paper, graphite, pastel, Indian ink



Ilija ŠOŠKIĆ
Untitled, 1962 - 1966
35x10x10 (variable)
Wood, wire, canvas
Variable dimensions



Ilija ŠOŠKIĆ

Sewn-up Ficus, 1974

Photo documentation of the performance

digital print, substrate: aluminim bond, wooden frame

6 pieces, the only copy



Flavia REBECCHINI

Chacun porte une croix et moi je porte une plume

23x23 cm

linocut on plexiglass and silver leaf



Left to right

Luigi ONTANI

'Nazi.sta.nazi', 1974

30x40 cm

colour photograph

gift to Ilija Soskic, with dedication by Luigi Ontani on the back.

Ilija ŠOŠKIĆ

"E=mc²", 1999

30x40 cm

tableau-vivant

black/white photograph

Buby DURINI

'Lo sguardo dentro la canna'

37x27 cm

action for photography, published in the book *Obiettivo dell'arte* di Buby Durini, Charta 1997



Original documentation from cooperations of Ilija Šoškić with Jannis Kounellis, Luigi Manconi, Luigi Ontani, Fabio Sargentini and Flavia Rebecchini

List of documents:

1. Photo from Hydra, august 1995, by Michelle Coudroy
2. Letter from Michelle, 1994
3. Letter from Giovanni Kounellis / photo of Ilija Šoškić by Michelle Coudroy
4. Academy of Fine Arts, Tutor Award for 21st century.
- 5-6. Luigi Manconi, Thanks to Ilija – letter and envelopes
- 7-10. Leaflet and three photographs from the performative action at Sapienza University Faculty of Philosophy Villa Mirafiori during demonstration against Bossi-Fini law decree / photo Antonio Colantoni
11. Letter from Fabio Sargentini, 2009 / Letter from Fabio Sargentini, 2010
12. Letter from Fabio Sargentini 2010