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ILIJA SOSKIC | Gandy gallery | Back to the future | Booth 17

Ilija Soskic 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, Soskic moved to Italy, to Bologna, where he discovered the language of Manzoni and Pascoli, 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 a 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.

S.L. and D.C.S