

Mladen Stilinović: The Language of Politics

Opening: Thursday, 24th October 2024, 7–9pm

Duration: 25th October until 23rd November 2024

Galerie Martin Janda is pleased to present Mladen Stilinović's fourth solo exhibition, *The Language of Politics*, curated by Branka Stipančić from 25th October to 23rd November 2024.

For Mladen Stilinović, language is, in the words of Mikhail Bakhtin, “an ideological phenomenon par excellence”. The function of words as signs, their expressive and representative nature, make language the purest and most subtle medium of social communication, thereby granting it a special place in any ideology. And it is here that Stilinović opens up his “discussion” about the “dual nature” (truth / falsehood) of any linguistic utterance, any ideological sign. It was not only words that were questioned, but also the colour red, symbols, various myths of our civilization such as money, bread, pain, etc.

The solo exhibition *The Language of Politics* at Galerie Martin Janda consists of four installations and smaller individual works from different periods of his artistic practice.

On Work (1980–1984) is an installation of cardboard panels with collages related to political language in communist Yugoslavia. Worn-out political phrases are accompanied by newspaper clippings with photos of politicians sitting in meetings. The wall is slanted towards the spectator, and a chair placed in the space allows participants to sit and reflect. A table with loaves of bread, cakes and stone cubes – like those that the protestors in the 1968 Paris demonstrations and other protests picked up from the pavement to throw at the police – in *For Marie Antoinette '68* (2008) reminds us how short the path is from government cynicism to revolution, whereas *Dictionary – Pain* (2011) shifts attention closer to our time. It is clear that English is the language of globalisation, that “history is written in English, that belonging to the interest, political and economic circle that communicates in this language also means real existence on the map of the world”, as Stilinović said in an interview. “This is the language with which, at the moment, the greatest power is stated ...” and “... for me, pain is the opposite of power. Actually, power produces it; it is the consequence of power.”

Finally, the installation *The Red Line* (1977), consisting of a red thread lowered from the ceiling onto a pedestal, which again belongs to the political language of a communist country (specifically, the phrase “red line” is a symbol of the continuity of the Revolution), is there to bring closer different political systems and economies, different times, and the early and later works of the artist, for whom language was an important political tool.

Although we might also ruefully say that Stilinović was often aware that the position of the artist in society is frequently so weak that he can only bark like a dog: *Woof – Woof* (2002).

Branka Stipančić

Mladen Stilinović, born 1947 in Belgrade (RS), died 2016 in Pula (HR).