

Since the 1970s Mladen Stilinović has practiced an interrogation of “the language of politics” and ideological power created by and maintained through symbolism, bureaucracy and language. The figure of the artist and the relationship between labor, creativity and cultural value further permeate his work that spans nearly all media, including drawing, painting, photography, performance and text.

The exhibition will present works from Stilinović’s cycle *White Absence*: “What is the color of pain, the artist asked himself in the early, war-torn 1990s in Croatia. ‘White is the color of silence, very intimate, and pain is an intimate thing’, says the artist and spreads white across paintings and objects encompassing various concepts; that of silence, emptiness, absence, pain, poverty and the absurd .... His works are interspersed with verse by Paul Celan and Osip Mandelstam, thoughts by Emil Cioran and Marcel Duchamp that focus on pain, sorrow, naming, death; they often refer to ideas of Kasimir Malevich presented on his canvas *White on White*, evolving art and culture themes. The works are fragile, quick to achieve a patina of age, white, yellow and gray that soaks in time. Individual elements are arranged on the gallery walls in the manner similar to that used by Mallarmé to arrange verses on the page in his book *Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard*. The white space between the works creates intervals, emptiness is as eloquent as the works themselves. White objects are lost on the white wall, dematerialized by the monochrome and require additional concentration to establish the connection.

These works were made during the war in Croatia in response to a situation, tormenting for all, when the artist was unable to establish any rapport with political factors. The works are turned inwards, to individual experience, and reflect impotence. Stilinović has always worked with language, particularly with the direct impact of the language of politics on the language of everyday life and art. Manipulating the language of politics and the symbols of communism he provided a provocative, yet subversive and cynical criticism of the society.” (Branka Stipančić)<sup>1</sup>

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