

Braco Dimitrijević

My Berlin Years

October 29, 2016 – January 7, 2017

Opening: Friday, October 28, 6–9 pm

Braco Dimitrijević arrived in Berlin as one of the DAAD guests in 1976 along with On Kawara, Malcolm Morley, Dan Graham, Yvonne Rainer, among others. Coming to grips with Berlin, which at that time was surrounded by a wall and packed with War World II memories, was hard for a young man who grew up in post war Yugoslavia. But after an initial period of getting accustomed to the city, a process in which René Block Galerie played an important role, Berlin proved to be a great inspiration for the artist during an extremely prolific period in his career.

Invited by René Block for a solo exhibition in his gallery on Schaperstrasse, in September of 1976, Dimitrijević realized an important public work when he hung a blown up portrait of a woman, a *Casual-Passer-By*, on the facade of the Hochschule der Künste on Steinplatz. Dimitrijević was already internationally known for similar works, which were realized in Paris, Naples, Zagreb, Venice and in Kassel for documenta 5 in 1972.

That same year another very important cycle of Braco Dimitrijević's oeuvre started in Berlin. For the first time he was given permission to make installations incorporating original master works from a museum, the Berlin Neue Nationalgalerie, which offered paintings by Mondrian, Kandinsky, Picasso, Manet. In these works with the generic title *Triptychos Post Historicus* the artist confronts and unites high art, everyday life and nature, changing forever the relationship between the museum collection and the contemporary artist by using existing art works as 'ready mades' and as starting points for creating other works of art. *Triptychos Post Historicus* marked a new departure not only in Dimitrijević's oeuvre but proved to be prophetic for the 'appropriation' tendency which started in the 1980s, as well as being a catalyst for changing curators' attitudes towards art historical chronology.

Berlin, being a city full of historical references, was also an inspiration for a series of photographic pieces titled *This Could be a Place of Historical Interest*, which were later shown at documenta 6. Paradoxically, these photographs of anonymous sites don't possess any historical grandeur, but they efficiently question the notion of 'historical importance'.

The most spectacular work Braco Dimitrijević realized in Berlin is the monument in the garden of the Schloss Charlottenburg. The project, which he initiated during his stay in the city in 1976, was completed in 1979 with the financial assistance of the Berlin Senat, Berlin Lottery, DAAD and Schloss Charlottenburg. It is a 10 meter high, white Carrara marble obelisk, erected in honour of Peter Malwitz's birthday, a 'regular' person that the artist met by chance. Dimitrijević dedicated the obelisk to this passerby's date of birth by engraving with gilded letters in four languages *11 March – This Could be a Day of Historical Importance*. This 'obelisk beyond history', as the artist put it, is the most monumental conceptual art work ever made. Today visitors can find this monument at the end of the Schloss Charlottenburg garden, still bearing witness to an era when the most adventurous art projects were possible.

Daniel Marzona will present an important selection of Braco Dimitrijević's work from this period.