

# Ilija Bašičević Bosilj

## Ilija's Breath



11–31 October 2017

KiBela, Space for Art  
MMC KIBLA, Maribor, Slovenia

## Ilija Bašičević Bosilj

This unique, one-of-a-kind, extraordinary, peculiar and distinguished artist, is presented comprehensively with an extensive overview exhibition, organized and set up with the support of his family, the keeper and guardian of most of the artist's works and his legacy, and the manager of the Ilija & Mangelos Foundation.

Fifty art works from various periods of his creation are on display; from his first drawings to oil paintings and painted objects, all from his outstanding oeuvre, which comprises over 2000 works created over a relatively short time span. He was known for painting literally on any empty surface he could find, from doors and kitchen cabinets to bed frames, chairs, closets and walls, onto which he transferred his artistry through a typically vibrant color palette, in order to convey a story and emphasize what he considered meaningful about a certain object, or to portray the characteristics of a certain environment.

His first gouaches and drawings were created in 1957; he began using oil paint in 1958. During his

lifetime he exhibited across western Europe (Amsterdam, Munich, Milan, Dortmund, Basel, Zurich, Paris, Rome, Genoa), in Japan (Tokyo, Osaka), and in South America (Mexico City). In 2006 his works were displayed in a solo exhibition at the St. Etienne Gallery in New York. Since then, his amazing work has been shown on several occasions next to historical giants like Picasso, Chagall, Klee, Kandinsky, Schiele, Darger, or Rousseau.

In January 2007, the London-based *Raw Art Magazine* selected Ilija as one of the top 50 classics of *art brut* in the world (the term 'art brut' is a label created by French artist Jean Dubuffet to describe art created outside the boundaries of official culture). In 2008, a reproduction of Ilija's birds was published in the *New York Times*. His paintings have been acquired by some of the most important world museums and today form part of famous collections (Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne, Switzerland; Musée Anatole Jakovsky in Nice, France; the Carlo Ponti collection; Rockefeller; Max Bill; Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina, etc.).

Ilija's work is an enigma in contemporary Serbian painting, on account of his originality and authenticity, which represent the typical modernist opposition, the controversy between art and life. The issue of Ilija's authorship was pursued to the extreme point of publicly doubting his ability as a painter in the affair that became known as »the Bosilj affair«.

His work has influenced some of the most visible, award-winning Slovenian painters, as well as others artists, which is why this extensive overview of works by Ilija Bašičević Bosilj is an unparalleled event on the Slovenian visual and wider artistic scene in the year 2017. Bosilj's work resonates not only with artists and critics, but also with other professionals and the general public.

Before his death, he left a great part of his collection to his hometown Šid in Serbia, where the Ilijanum Museum was later established.

Ilija Bašičević Bosilj (b. 18 July 1895, Šid, Austro-Hungarian Empire, d. 14 May 1972, Šid, Yugoslavia) is a painter; a world classic of marginal arts, and the fa-

ther of Mangelos (Dimitrije Bašičević), an art historian and one of the most notable conceptual artists from the former Yugoslav territory.

– Peter Tomaž Dobrila

## Ilija's Art

“The paintings signed Ilija (in Cyrillic letters) by a shaky hand have been, ever since they appeared back in 1957, an inexplicable mystery for their numerous critics who can claim with certainty only one thing about these paintings: they exemplify a stunningly high-quality art, which evades all constraints of its origin, stylistic classification, historical movement and cultural context...”

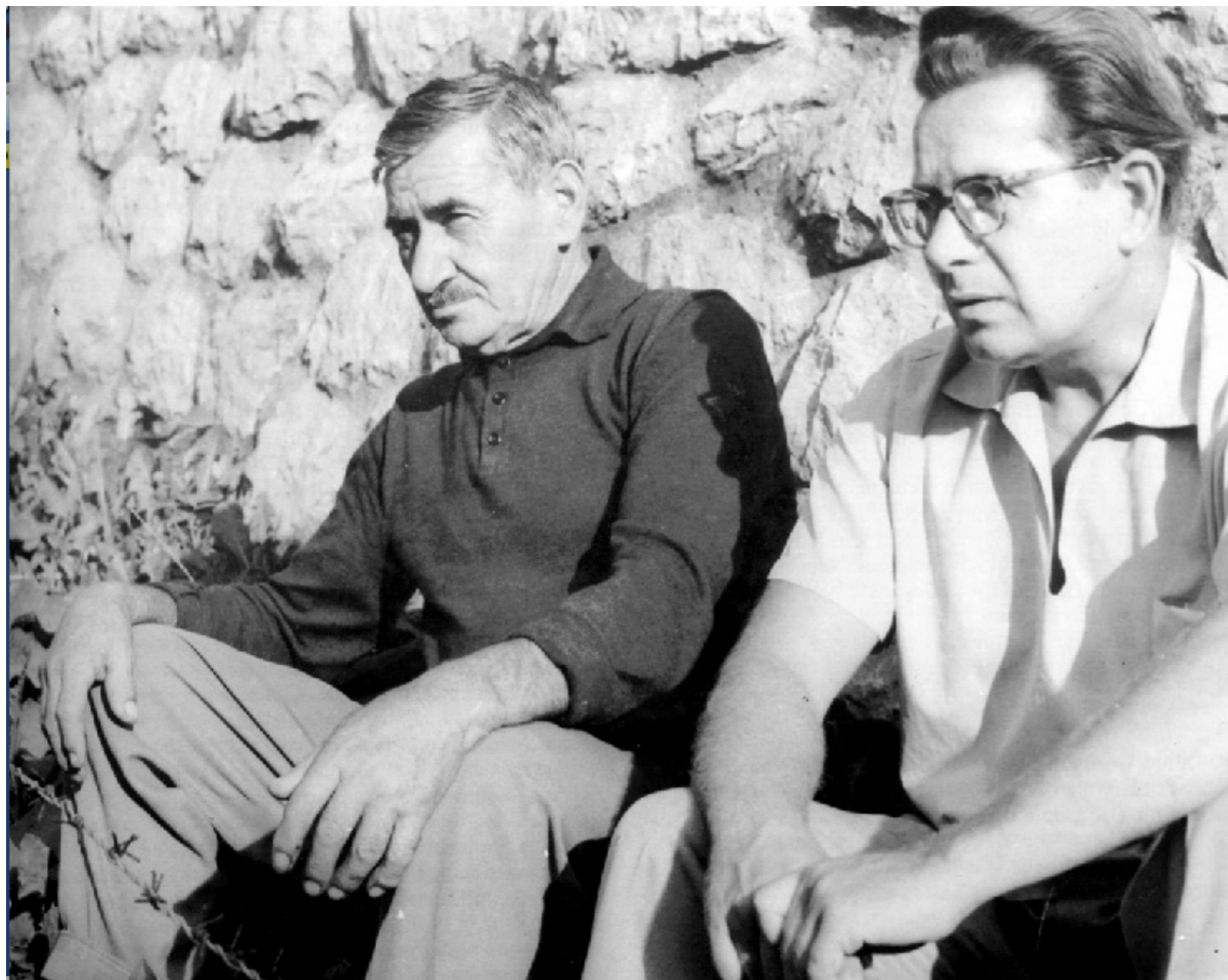
The scenes and figures, which have no recognizable features of our world, are introduced (distributed, or lined alongside, above or beneath each other) on a strictly two-dimensional plane, in which there is not a single trace of spatial illusionism and where the substance of color applied with extreme sensitivity is the direct bearer of the expression and sensibility, or in a word, of the very fascination of the painting. Bosilj's paintings are indeed painted or visualized stories, but in these paintings which fundamentally speak of the two-sided human destiny and the two-faced human nature (life-death, good-evil, beautiful-ugly, truth-lie, etc.), which are existential basics, all narration is condensed into emblematic figures, archetypal images and timeless symbols...

Whether Bosilj is a supposedly “naïve” artist, or some other kind, is totally irrelevant today, at the end of a century which has seen enormous extremes in art, but also great achievements within those extremes, what matters is that Bosilj is a very idiosyncratic artist, who is easily recognizable as such in the contemporary world of art in general.”

– Ješa Denegri

**Ilija Bašičević Bosilj** (born 1895, Šid, Austro-Hungarian Empire, died 1972, Šid, Yugoslavia)

Born into a peasant's family, Ilija spent most of his life working on land and in his vineyard. During World War II, Ilija had to flee from his hometown to Vienna, due to the fact that the Nazi regime sentenced both Ilija and his two sons to death. While living in Vienna, Ilija contracted severe tuberculosis and had to return home, where his hard working life had to be slowed down because of the illness. After the communists took away his land, Ilija began a new chapter of his life and started to paint. Since 1957 when the first drawings were made, till his death in 1972, Ilija was a painter. The fact that his older son was a well-known art critic Dimitrije Bašičević (today much better known as an internationally acclaimed conceptu-



Ilija je tematski proizveo ciklus slika čiji se simbolički sadržaji odnose na jedan nepostojeći svet, izmišljen svet, a to je novi stepen simbolike. Ako je slika već simbol, to je jedan stepen, slika sveta je drugi stepen, slika sveta koji je i za slikara nepostojeći svet, bio bi treći stepen simbolike. Celom ciklusu, kao zaokruženoj celini, autor daje ime. Imenovanje se tu javlja kao sledeći stepen simbolike. Tom nepostojećem, slikarskim sredstvom, samo, simbolizovanom svetu slikar daje najpre ono ime kojim ga imenuje, a zatim svoje ime, ime autora, po Iliji svet se zove Ilijada. Na ovom mestu, simbolika postaje veoma složenom, jer reč, ime, Ilijada simbolizuje već jednu simboličnu tvorevinu, Homerovu Ilijadu, koja je takode poseban svet, dimenzioniran maštom, mitom in istorijskom verovatnošću događaja.

U okviru konvencionalnih predstava o doživljajnim i mentalnim mogućnostima jednog seljaka, takav složeni postupak prevazilazi njegove mogućnosti. Takva veoma ukorenjena predrasuda ispušta iz vida, da ni Homer nije imao ni srednjoškolsko, a kamoli fakultetsko obrazovanje. Još manje vodi računa o izlišnosti obrazovanja za procese doživljavanja, posebno za procese umetničkog doživljavanja.

Mangelos

al artist Mangelos) made people doubt that Ilija was really the author of his paintings, so in 1965, Ilija was forced to paint in front of a commission in Zagreb. It is the only case in art history, when an artist was put in such a position in order to prove that he is really the author of his paintings.

As a painter, Ilija painted passionately, every day and most often late at night. Art became his religion and his profession. His works were exhibited worldwide and very early he got his first professional contract, namely he was represented by the Galerie Hilt in Basel. Jean Dubuffet acquired seven Ilija's paintings in 1963 and Max Bill included Ilija in his private collection.

Ilija has created over 2000 paintings and drawings. A significant part of them is being kept in the Ilijanum Museum in Šid, Serbia. In 2007, the London-based Raw Art Magazine selected Ilija as one of the top 50 classics of art brut in the world. On several occasions, his works were exhibited alongside those of Picasso, Klee, Kandinsky, Chagall, Darger, and Rousseau.

<http://www.ilija-mangelos.org/>

<http://www.basicevic.net/>

Ilija Bašičević Bosilj, Ilija's Breath

11–31 October 2017

KiBela / MMC KIBLA

Ulica kneza Koclja 9, Maribor, Slovenia

Kurated by Ivana Bašičević Antić and Peter Tomaž Dobrila

Opening: 11 October 2017, at 7 p. m.

On display until 31 October 2017

Production: Association Code Blue and Fond Ilija & Mangelos.

KODR MODRO



KiBela / MMC KIBLA

Ulica kneza Koclja 9, Maribor, Slovenia

Monday–Friday: 9:00–22:00 / Saturday: 16:00–22:00

**KIBLA**

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Ilija

Ilija Bašičević Bosilj — Šumanovičev zemljak i vršnjak, otac Mangelosov — rođen je u Šidu 1895. godine. Bavio se zemljoradnjom do svoje 62. godine kada mu država oduzima zemlju. Prve gvaševe i crteže uradio 1957. godine, a od 1958. počeo da slika uljanim bojama. Slikao je sve do smrti i ostavio opus od preko 2000 dela. Za života izlagao na stotinak izložbi širom sveta (Tokio, Osaka, Pariz, Amsterdam, Minhen, Milano, Dortmund, Bazel, Cirihi, Rim, Đenova, Meksiko Siti). U njujorškoj galeriji Galerie St. Etienne 2006. godine održana je njegova prva američka izložba.

Tokom 2007/08. u više navrata izlagan sa velikanima poput Pikasa, Šagala, Klea, Kandinskog i Šilea. Londonski časopis Raw Art Magazine januara 2007. uvrstio ga je među 50 klasika art brut umetnosti. Njegove slike deo su poznatih muzejskih i privatnih kolekcija (Collection del'Art Brut u Lozani, Muzej A. Jakovsky u Nici, kolekcija Karla Pontija, Rokfelera i dr.). Umro je u Šidu 1972. godine.