



MILENA USENIK

P74 Gallery is proud to present outstanding paintings from early seventies by Milena Usenik, that represents unique hybridity between pop art and op art and stayed mostly overlooked.

One of the most interesting works and also one of the first from this period carries the name »Bow I« (1972). Spread out over a vertically-oriented diptych, this type of layout of several paintings unfolding across separate, yet connected, canvases is one of the key achievements from that period and remained a regular feature later on. The painting shows the neckline of a monumental stylised female figure with a striped scarf tied around her neck. The figure with its contour drawing on a monochromatic blue background is only suggested, while the scarf with its characteristic op-art "moving" image immediately attracts attention. The painting is of essential importance for understanding the issues that interested Usenik in that time. The motif is clearly a characteristic theme of pop art, based on the idea of an ironic critical reflection of the daily life of modern consumer society. In this context, it especially exposes the question of the use of the female body as an object (of desire) in mass media and in popular culture.

Milena Usenik (b. 1934 in Bloke, Slovenia) studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana, where she graduated under prof. Maksim Sedej in 1965 and then under prof. Gabrijel Stupica finished her painting specialisation in 1968. She has presented her works on a number of solo and group exhibitions in Slovenia and abroad. She lives and works in Logatec and Ljubljana. Her awards and recognitions include a special recognition on an exhibition of Slovenian women fine artists at the Slovenj Gradec Art Pavilion (1973); a recognition at the 1st Biennale of Small-size Paintings Mini prix Lucas '93 in Bled; and the Grand Prix at the 2nd Biennale of Small-size Paintings Mini prix Lucas '95 in Ljubljana. Most recently she exhibited at the Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana, UGM Maribor and Ludwig Museum Budapest (Ludwig Goes Pop + East Side Story).

Exhibited Artist: Milena Usenik

Other Represented Artists: Jože Barši, Tomaž Furlan, Sanja Iveković, Polonca Lovšin, Dalibor Martinis, Tadej Pogačar, Uroš Potočnik, SBD, Mladen Stilinović, Balint Szombathy

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Front: Milena Usenik, *Bow I*, 1972, acrylic on canvas, 180 x 120 cm