

Billy Apple® / Braco Dimitrijević

Conceptual Art Pioneers

22 March – 24 May 2024

For our inaugural exhibition at 9 Bury Street, we are showcasing a dual presentation featuring the works of two conceptual art pioneers; Billy Apple® (b. 1935 – d. 2021, Auckland, New Zealand) and Braco Dimitrijević (b. 1948, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Billy Apple® (then known as Barrie Bates) studied at the Royal College of Art between 1959 and 1962 exhibiting alongside fellow artists such as David Hockney, Derek Boshier and Pauline Boty in the annual Young Contemporaries exhibitions.

In 1962 after graduating, he notoriously changed his name and altered his appearance becoming 'Billy Apple®' in a self-conscious art action that doubled as a canny exercise in re-branding. In 1964 he moved to New York working with Andy Warhol in the pivotal exhibition The American Supermarket including Oldenburg, Wesselmann and Johns. In 1969, the artist opened Apple at 161 West 23rd Street, one of the six not-for-profit spaces that established New York's Conceptual Art movement.

Exploring new consumer technologies, he was a pioneer in using a Xerox machine and Neon signage. During the 1980s, Apple's practice focused on the economics of the art world. In 1983 he produced a solid gold apple for the former Auckland Coin & Bullion Exchange Director – a significant precursor to Damien Hirst's 2007 diamond skull For the Love of God. By 2007 Billy Apple® was a registered brand.

In 1974, Apple's first major survey exhibition was held at the Serpentine Gallery in London: From Barrie Bates to Billy Apple® (temporarily shut down due to complaints of indecency) Recent exhibitions include the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, International Pop, touring to Dallas Museum of Art and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2015-2016, and a retrospective at the Auckland Art Gallery, Billy Apple®, The Artist has to live like everybody else, 2015.

A pioneer of conceptual art, Dimitrijević (b. 1948 Sarajevo, Bosnia) is known for his artistic intervention into urban landscapes. He studied from 1968 to 1971 at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb and continued with a Post-graduate work at St Martin's School of Art in London, obtaining a British Council Grant in 1972. This was followed by a DAAD fellowship in Berlin (1976-7). He received Major Award of the Arts Council of Great Britain (1978) and was made Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres in Paris in 1992 and in 2005 A.B.O. d'Oro in Rome.

In the early 1980s, the artist started making installations in which wild animals confront artifacts and works of art, thus joining the occidental model and the model offered by other cultures that live in greater harmony with nature. In 1998, the artist realised one-man shows, internationally acclaimed, at Paris Zoo with installations in the wild animals' cages. The artist gained an international reputation in the seventies with his Casual passer-by series, in which gigantic photo portraits of anonymous people were displayed on prominent facades and billboards in European and American cities. It was in the mid-seventies that he famously started incorporating in his installations original paintings borrowed from museum collections.

Over the last 40 years he has exhibited internationally, with solo shows such as at Tate Gallery, Kunsthalle Bern, Museum Ludwig Cologne, MUMOK Vienna. His works are in 80 public collections. He has participated in major group shows such as the Kassel Documenta 5, Documenta 6, Documenta 9, 5 times at the Venice Biennale, São Paulo Biennale, Sydney Biennale, as well as Santa Fe Biennale, Havana Biennale, Kwangju Biennale, Moscow Biennale.

Braco Dimitrijević lives and works in Paris, France.

Images: Braco Dimitrijević, *Casual Passer-by I Met at 1.56pm*, 1976, inkjet on PVC Artex, 360 x 300 cm (Detail) (Left)
Billy Apple®, *Self-Portrait with Eye-Patch*, 1973, photograph, 14.6 x 10.7 cm (Right)

High-res images available on request

Opening times: Monday – Friday, 10 am – 5.30 pm
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