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Jan Sawka 1946 – 8/9/2012

BULLET SHIH

2

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Jan Sawka the Polish-American artist has recently passed away in New York from a heart attack at age 65. Born in Zabrze into a shattered Poland after World War II, Sawka describes his early years,

From the very beginning, from childhood, something was wrong with me (oversensitivity, the family physician stated). Books and reading interested me first. As far as I can remember drawing was somehow regarded as natural, not respected at all — like eating or playing with toys. My parents' house was overwhelmed by books and discussions during those dark, Stalin years. Little groups of friends gathered over the bridge table, not so much to play but mostly to talk.

After receiving degrees in architecture and printmaking in Wroclaw, Sawka moved to Warsaw and established himself as a voice for the disgruntled Polish youth. He had gained a reputation as a strong printmaker and in 1969 started working on multimedia projects. In the late 70s he emigrated to New York and quickly made a name for himself with his bold graphic designs during the 80s.

In 1989 Sawka saw a shift in focus as he embarked on much larger projects such as the set design for the concert tour of the Grateful Dead that was seen by millions.



Sets for the 25th Anniversary 88-concert tour of the Grateful Dead throughout the U.S., 1989-1991. They included: 52 banners painted in acrylic and dyes on canvas; 22 spare banners used for variations of the set, and a lighting system consisting of 380 color instruments, base tracks mounted on moving scaffolds, 120 lights installed on the face and within the structure of the set, four lighting batteries with rotating filters, and two computers synchronizing 180 different lighting changes.



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For the past twenty years Sawka had been focusing more on installations while enjoying retrospective

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Bullet Shih is an artist from New York City who has been living in Budapest since 2000.

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