

## Archives

### ART IN REVIEW; 'Body and the East' -- 'From 1960 to the Present'

By ROBERTA SMITH  
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In this invaluable survey of four decades of body art from Eastern Europe, the activities recor in photographs, film and videos run a familiar gamut from the mundane to the defiant, the obvious to the amusing. Toenails are clipped, hair is cut, sex is simulated, coal is hauled; naked bodies are wrapped in gauze or cellophane, covered with mortadella or chocolate, or submerged in fat; weddings are held, guns fired, books burned and instruments played; mountain walks taken -- and it's all art.

There are also familiar names -- Komar and Melamid, Marina Abramovic -- and familiar developments, including the progression from black-and-white to color video, the advent of video installation and large-scale color photography, and the rise in female artists.

What is profoundly unfamiliar, however, is the context. Until the early 1990's these artists worked largely underground, pushing at art's limits in societies that tended to push back in very real, repressive ways. In this situation, acts of physical liberty were politically loaded. To lie naked on a busy street as Tomislav Gotovac did in 1962 in Zagreb, then in Yugoslavia, involved a different element of risk than, say, the midnight run that Scott Burton made through the streets of Manhattan in 1969.

Organized in 1998 by the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, Slovenia, this exhibition includes about 100 artists or artists' collectives in 14 countries that were formerly parts of the Soviet bloc. It represents a tremendous effort of retrieval; adds many names, locations and artworks to the constantly expanding map of postwar art; and offers further proof that American and Western European artists did not, and do not, act alone. ROBERTA SMITH

