

Performance Art in Eastern Europe since 1960. By Amy Bryzgel. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017. xvii, 366 pp. Bibliography. Index. Plates. Photographs. £18.99, paper.
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Amy Bryzgel's history of performance art in eastern Europe, the second book-length study the author has devoted to the topic, is a must-consult for anyone interested in the subject. The amount of performances, actions, happenings, and body art that Bryzgel catalogues and interprets is staggering, and most are interpreted competently. And while the larger nations of the former eastern Europe with their by now more or less established canons receive much attention, performance practices in the "peripheral margins"—Albania, Macedonia, Belarus, and the Baltics—are also discussed, sometimes at length. Here, Bryzgel's book additionally performs the crucial task of canonizing performances that have, in some instances, received little or no critical mention in art historical accounts so far.

The author lays the foundations for her argument through a (short) foray into the historical avant-garde that forms part of an introductory first chapter, organized more or less chronologically. Subsequent chapters abandon strict chronological order and are organized around more synthetic themes such as "The Body," "Gender," "Politics and Identity," and "Institutional Critique." If these headings eschew a historical perspective, Bryzgel avoids the impression that they should be treated as unhistorical givens, or that their east European inflections can be subsumed without loss under the history of their western counterparts. This said, the author's seamless integration of post-1989 performance with its post-*Wende* counterpart—the book includes performances up to around 2012—while it mitigates the obsession with binary division that characterizes cold war art history, also poses a series of problems (some of them are acknowledged in the preface), inasmuch as on occasion it makes for juxtapositions of works and practices that can seem far apart both conceptually and historically. The author's deliberate decision to not treat 1989 as an absolute rupture, which has much to be said for it, also complicates the use (and usefulness) of the term eastern Europe, which, it must be acknowledged, after the fall of the Berlin Wall shifted from being shorthand for the west's "small Other" during the cold war to serving as a convenient label for a global art market hungry for regional differentiation. The issue is important because it raises the fundamental question if, after 1989, we need a history of east European performance art at all, as opposed to say, a history of Polish, French, Albanian performance, or, maybe, a history of performance art in Europe. The impetus behind Bryzgel's study is the one that currently motivates so many revisionist art histories in the former eastern Europe: the frequent exclusion of the region from the history of western postwar performance art. Of course, it is not a matter here of an absolute difference between east and west, but of what elsewhere I have called "conditional similarity"—the varying degrees to which art in the region, despite its phenomenological similarity, also *differs* from a western model that is itself neither universal nor undifferentiated.

Acknowledging this fact, Bryzgel is at her best when she puts these asymmetries to practical use, avoiding their reduction to the common cliché regarding "freedom" versus "oppression" that all too often becomes the interpretative model of choice for art historians at pains to explain how east European postwar art differs from its western counterpart. Indeed the author mentions some fascinating instances where east European performance artists attacked such mythmaking already at the time of the cold war, precisely by *historicizing* the west (I'm thinking for instance of her discussion of Tamas Szentjóby's 1970s amazing work *Sit Out-Be Forbidden* which, as Bryzgel notes, makes an explicit reference to Bobby's Seale's gagging in a US courtroom).

In other instances, she works across the east/west binary and its attendant stereotypes by noting the formal affinities between performance practices in different countries *within* eastern Europe: her astute analysis of the critique of representation in the work of Hungarian Dóra Maurer, Romanian Ion Grigorescu, and Polish Natalia LL, for example, is one of the book's highlights. On balance, one might perhaps have wished for a more robust theoretical model of performance (and its distinction from body art, action art, and others) to orient the reader through the book. On the other hand, the incredible diversity and vitality of the works Bryzgel discusses certainly offer ample compensation.

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Intimations: The Cinema of Wojciech Has. By Annette Insdorf. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. 147 pp. Appendix. Filmography. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. \$99.95, hard bound. \$24.95, paper.
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Wojciech Jerzy Has is an anomaly among post-WWII Polish filmmakers. One of the so-called "Polish School" of filmmakers whose careers began in the 1950s, his work is distinctive for its high aesthetic values and yet lacks the engagement with Polish national political themes and issues that characterized the work of contemporaries like Andrzej Wajda, as well as the younger filmmakers who would subsequently become known for the 1970s Cinema of Moral Concern. At the same time, despite sharing a surrealist inflected aesthetics with younger filmmakers like Roman Polański, Jerzy Skolimowski, Walerian Borowczyk and others, Has's work never resulted in departure from Poland and a subsequent career in exile. Perhaps for this reason, Has remains one of the most critically neglected filmmakers in both Polish and world film criticism and scholarship, despite the cult success and recent circulation of two of his films, namely *Rekopis znaleziony w Saragossie* (*The Saragossa Manuscript*, 1965) and *Sanatorium pod Klepsydra* (*The Hourglass Sanatorium*, 1973), which have had both recent DVD releases and cinematic revivals worldwide.

It is therefore welcome to see this volume in English by Annette Insdorf dedicated to his work. If one might have been anticipating a full critical assessment of his work in the context of Polish and world cinema, however, this is not what this slim volume sets out to provide. Essentially, it consists of a set of readings of his fourteen feature films in chronological order, followed by an epilogue on Has's pedagogical role in the Łódź Film School, and an appendix on his early short films. There is only a brief and largely anecdotal introduction, no conclusion and if there is an argument to be found in the book, it is only that, following the comments of a range of other critics, academics, and filmmakers that "Wojciech Has's career is ripe for rediscovery" (6). As she points out, the visual style of his films ranges from minimalist psychological portraits to works on a grand and epic scale and, perhaps more significantly, they are almost all based on literary adaptations, often of apparently unadaptable modernist works of literature. Yet there are discernible thematic tendencies across his body of work of psychological journeys across complex material and psychic landscapes. While it would be helpful to engage with the specific nature of Has's authorship more fully, what Insdorf does provide is a navigation across these different journeys in the chapters following the introduction, beginning with Has's first feature film, *Petla* (*The Noose*, 1957).