



# Performing the East: Performance Art in Russia, Latvia and Poland Since 1980

*Amy Bryzgel*

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Performance art in the West has developed in part as a response to the commercialization of the art object. But what are the roots of performance art in Eastern Europe and Russia, where there was no real art market to speak of? While Western performance artists of the late 20th century aimed to create works that could not be bought or sold, performances in the communist bloc in the absence of an art market, more often took the form of social critique. Instead of creations that questioned what the art object is, their work often related to local issues within the context of late- or post-socialism. By placing these performances both within a local and international context, this book pinpoints the nuances between performance art East and West.

Post-Socialist performance art in Russia, Poland, and Latvia is examined for the first time as agent and chronicle of the transition from Soviet states to free-market democracies. Drawing upon previously unpublished sources and exclusive interviews with the artists themselves, Amy Bryzgel explores the spontaneous theater of the period from Oleg Kulik's *Russian Dog* performances to Miervaldis Polis's *The Bronze Man* and Vladislav Mayhshev's *Monroe*. Bryzgel demonstrates that performativity in Eastern Europe went beyond the modernist critique to express ideas outside the official discourse, shocking and empowering the citizenry in the truest avant-garde tradition. *Performing the East* open the way to an urgent reassessment of the history, function, and influence of performance art.

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