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Re-enactment as a critical strategy in contemporary East European art

Maja Fowkes and Reuben Fowkes

All attempts to restage works of neo-avant-garde performance art are confronted with the fact that the setting in which they were originally realised differed radically from that of today. Such differences go beyond widely remarked contradictions between the prevalent attitude of experimental artists of the 1960s and 1970s towards the unique status of performance as existing outside of institutional structures, and a more recent integration of ephemeral works of live art into public and private collections. The particularity of the remaking of East European performances derives rather from the fact that the originals lie on the other side of the historical fissure between the socialist past and the post-communist present. This has far-reaching implications for the interpretation of the content of performances, since for example the making of direct political allusions previously carried the risk of punitive retribution, while the choice of location for performative actions also had a particular meaning during socialism, since both the public and private realms had different connotations. The fall of communism also spelt the end for the distinctive existential territory of the second public sphere, disbanding the context in which live art had primarily been performed. To re-enact a performance from the period is also to engage with the contested legacies of socialism, from processing the experience of surviving under repressive conditions to exploring feelings of loss and nostalgia for a lifeworld that no longer exists.

The tendency of East European artists working in the post-communist period to investigate both the private and public spheres, often with a more openly provocative attitude than was practicable during socialism, has also affected the re-enactment of neo-avant-garde performances. Rejecting the ideological infiltration of cultural institutions, neo-avant-garde artists had inhabited from the 1960s a parallel universe of unofficial spaces, samizdat publications and alternative circuits that flourished in the interstices of the public and the private. Co-existing and overlapping with rather than directly contesting the dominance of the official artworld, the "second public sphere" both provided an outlet for radical artistic practices and restricted their social and political impact. The authorities sought not only to exert control over the public sphere but also over those areas of life that had been considered a separate private domain, out of reach of the state. Attempts by artists to withdraw from the oversight of the collective into the private sphere were therefore viewed with suspicion as a sign of the harbouring of un-socialist individualistic attitudes.

After the political changes, artists that had previously been discouraged from dwelling on private matters were suddenly able to freely exhibit works that revealed intimate details about their personal lives, while the availability of public space for artistic interventions completely changed the familiar coordinates of oppositional art from the socialist era. This had, for example, dramatic implications for the career of Ion Grigorescu, who until 1989 had been forced to confine his performance practice to the studio, with transgressive body art works such as *Male-Female* (*Masculin-Feminin*, 1976), carried out solely for the camera. A changed approach can be seen in his 2007 remake of another filmed performance, *Dialogue with President Ceaușescu* (*Dialog cu Președintele Ceaușescu*, 1978), in which the artist, using the technique of superimposition and wearing a mask, played both himself and the Romanian president engaged in an "impossible dialogue" about the failures of socialism. While the original was filmed in secrecy, in *Postmortem Dialogue with Ceaușescu* two figures hidden behind giant paper masks, representing the executed dictator and the artist, walk next to the megalomaniac architecture of the former House of the People broadcasting their conversation about the post-communist transition through megaphones. Speaking from beyond the grave, Ceaușescu defends his record and levels accusations against the iniquities of the capitalist system, a critique that working under post-communist conditions the artist is able to explicitly and publically voice (Kemp-Welch 2013; Debeusscher 2013).

The trend for the re-enactment of neo-avant-garde performances in Eastern Europe became especially pronounced in the new millennium, reflecting the stabilisation of art institutions that have increasingly turned their attention to the reassessment of art histories and the need to incorporate the work of artists from unofficial art scenes in both collections and revised local and global narratives. The question of re-enactment was therefore raised partly in relation to the difficulty in transposing the ephemeral and dematerialised works of the neo-avant-garde into a museum context in the light of both the paucity of documentation and the tendency to reduce the complexity of multifaceted performances to a single dimension arbitrarily frozen in iconic still images. At the same time the period after 2000 saw a revival of artistic interest in the communist past that went beyond the moralising attitude characteristic of the first post-communist decade, with new practices oriented more towards the desire to salvage, re-appropriate and re-activate the singularities of local histories that appeared to offer a counterpoint to cultural globalisation. The question of how to revive the ephemeral performances of the neo-avant-garde became a focus for those who in the wake of the memory turn sought a means to archive, comprehend and literally experience anew the art history of the socialist period. Rather than purely a matter of emotional nostalgia or retrospective fashion, the appeal of re-enacting socialist era performance lay also in the claim or hope that the forgotten radical practices of the past could be reactivated to provide methods or insights relevant to the art activist approaches of the present.

One frequent justification for the re-enactment of live art from the 1960s and 1970s is that even in those cases where photographic and video records do exist, they are never vivid enough to convey the immediacy and feel of the here and

now of the original events. It follows that only by recreating the conditions in which artist and audience share the same spatial and temporal coordinates is it possible to bring performances that have been flattened into neutral documentation back to life. Such methods were deployed, for example, in an attempt to reengage audiences with the social and artistic history of Poland of the sixties at the Contemporary Art Centre Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw, when in 2006 artist Pawel Althamer was asked to re-enact the *Zalesie Ball* (*Bal w Zalesiu*) of 1968. Originally organised in the house of art critic Anka Ptaszkowska and artist Edward Krasiński, the first extravagant gathering had been conceived as a *Farewell to Spring* (*Pożegnanie wiosny*) that offered a coded critique of the recent wave of anti-semitic and anti-intelligentsia witch hunts in Poland, while also drawing attention to the reality of food shortages behind the ideological facade of socialist abundance. In his freestyle remake Althamer cited Krasiński's 1968 outdoor installation of mannequins seated at a table with a bounty of sausages hanging from branches, which itself was an ironic restaging of Bruegel's painting *Land of Cockaigne* (1567), by positioning a trio of passed out dummies in leather jackets against a tree. He also added a campfire and an East German Trabant car to the setting, turning the memory of an elitist ball into an open party that also thematised the socialist past (Nader 2009).

In light of the strong stance taken by the early practitioners of performance art against attempts to contain, reify or convert free-flowing events into representations with the fixed status and exchange value of art objects, the recent wave of re-enactments has met with the accusation that the underlying motive is not art historical but financial. The very notion that performance art can be re-enacted runs against the grain of now classic definitions, such as given by art historian Peggy Phelan in a survey from the early 1990s, according to which "performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations" (1993, p. 146). Her further claim that performance "clogs the smooth machinery of reproductive representation necessary for the circulation of capital," (ibid., p. 148) is hard to square with the recent raft of re-enactments, which point rather to the genre's capitulation to art market mechanisms. What appears to be at risk is performance art's specific claim to authenticity, which depends on the embrace of the singularity of the experience of live art, as exemplified by the axiom of Marina Abramović and Ulay in the 1970s: "no rehearsal, no repetition, no predicted end" (Abramović and Ulay 1980, p. 19). Re-enacted performances by contrast are more receptive to the demands of the art market, not least through the production of new representations that preserve the restaged live actions for perpetuity.

In considering the re-enactment of performances in contemporary art a distinction also needs to be made between experimental practices that challenged individual authorship by encouraging others to repeat performative actions and the unique remakes of today. It was in fact only after the repetition of performances that were designed as unlimited multiples had ended, such as events following a script or set of instructions exemplified by the Fluxus concerts that spread also across Eastern Europe in the period (Stegmann 2007), that their re-enactment could commence. By closing the cycle of free repetition, a process of historicisation, museumisation

and marketisation was set in motion, with the result that "the re-enactment emerges as yet another original with its own claims to authenticity that are inextricably linked to its reproduction" (Allen 2005, p. 195). However, it could also be remarked that the photographic and video documentation of earlier episodes of performance art, despite or perhaps even because of its often intermittent or fragmentary character, already possesses the aura of a unique artwork.

Addressing in particular the revival of East European neo-avant-garde performance culture, there are, though, strong reasons to identify radical potential in the return of live art. Within the specific context of the post-communist transition, re-enactments of socialist-era performances, often including critical or iconoclastic reinterpretations of older artists' work, offer a position to critique both the direction of social and political transformation and the structural changes to local art-worlds. In her discussion of re-enactments, Amelia Jones notes that "the return to the live via complex modes of re-enactment, re-staging, reiteration," holds out the possibility of social and political intervention by "activating fresh ways of thinking, making, being in the world" (2012, p. 14). Specifically addressing the East European context, art historian Tomasz Załuski has singled out an "activist politics of inheritance" in the re-enactment trend, motivated by the desire to "rediscover and regain emancipatory impulses" from the past in order to "repurpose them within the context of contemporary struggles" (2016, n.p.).

In the typology of contemporary re-enactment of neo-avant-garde performances, the category of artists remaking their own work from the socialist period without additional collaborations appears to be the exception rather than the rule. Where they have done so, the new performance often functions as a sequel, updating their original concept to reflect on the contemporary social and political context. In that sense, when Sanja Iveković recreated her performance *Triangle* (*Trokut*) from 1979, a pioneering piece dealing with Tito's Yugoslavia that featured the artist apparently masturbating on a balcony overlooking the leader's cavalcade in full view of secret agents, she brought in new references to issues of gender and public space in contemporary Croatia (Noack 2013). Entitled *Triangle 2*, the re-performance took place in 2005 on the same balcony overlooking the hotel that Tito had passed by a quarter of a century ago, but which was now hosting 15 heads of state in Croatia for an EU summit (Džuverović 2013). Commenting on the distance between ordinary citizens and the political institutions of the new democracy, while alluding to official indifference towards artistic interventions in public space compared to the hypersensitive communist-era authorities, the artist attempts and fails to reach by telephone the Croatian Foreign Ministry, President, Parliament and local police station to inform them about her performance, before settling down to read about the summit in local newspapers.

A related category of re-enactment pertains to cases when an artist from the neo-avant-garde generation commissions or instructs other artists or actors to stand in for them as body doubles in the recreation of works. When in 2009 Iveković decided to remake *Practice Makes a Master* (*Übung Macht den Meister*, 1982), first for a conference in Berlin, and then for her solo show "Urgent Matters" held both at BAK Utrecht and the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, she invited dancer Sonja

Pregrad to carry out the 18-minute performance (Knaup and Stammer 2009). First performed in Künstlerhaus Bethanien Berlin in 1982, this physically intensive work dealing with violence involved the artist standing on stage in a black evening dress with a white plastic bag over her head, before repeatedly falling to the ground then getting up again, to the sound of a Marilyn Monroe song followed by gunfire. This was arguably a case in which video documentation of the performance could not come close to reproducing the nausea provoked by a live viewing, while the performer was able to more authentically replicate the atmosphere of the original work. It also reflects a situation in which a performance piece consists of a set of instructions that can be carried out by an institution without the involvement of the artist, far removed from the original understanding of performance as a singular unrepeatable act. The work was re-enacted once again for Iveković's solo show at MoMA New York in 2012, at a further remove from the original context, but gaining new associations in light of discussions on the human rights abuses of the war on terror (MoMA 2012).

Pertinent questions around authorship, collaboration and inter-generational communication were raised over the course of a series of inconclusive attempts to re-enact performances by Ewa Partum at the Wyspa Institute of Art in Gdansk in 2006. In preparation for the solo show of the influential Polish neo-avant-garde artist, a re-enactment workshop was organised for students of fine art and art history, where tension arose between the aim of documenting and preserving her performances by reproducing them as accurately as possible, and the desire of participants to "treat their scores as something to remix and repurpose" (Załuski 2016, n.p.). For example, when the group went with Partum to the beach to re-enact *Poem by Ewa* from 1971 that entailed letting paper alphabet letters float away on the waves, one of the participants tried to modify the instructions by reading out a poem with a megaphone, to the artist's disapproval. Disputes also arose over the issue of nudity, with the workshop participants not sharing the enthusiasm of the neo-avant-garde generation for the authenticity of the naked body. Another unsuccessful attempt to persuade Partum to adapt her performances in dialogue with the re-enactment workshop participants was in relation to *Change, My Problem Is a Problem of a Woman* (*Zmiana. Mój problem jest problemem kobiety*, 1979). While in the original performance Partum had half of her face transformed by a makeup artist into that of an old woman to draw attention to the misogynistic ageism of the artworld, a participant in the 2006 workshop wanted to edit shots of half of the artist's face and half of her daughter into a single film to show the physical process of aging.[1] What this discordant course of events underlines is the importance of proper preparation on the part of art institutions, as well as the need for a clear understanding of the aims and scope of the re-enactment of neo-avant-garde performances, especially when they involve collaboration with the original author.

In cases where neo-avant-garde performances have been re-enacted not by their authors but by other artists, there is little to prevent the re-enactor from making radical interventions in the original work, appropriating it for their own purposes. Marina Abramović has tendentiously explained her decision to remake the work of five other performance artists from the 1960s and 1970s, along with one of her

own, at the Guggenheim Museum in 2005 in terms of a pragmatic and conservationist response to the paucity of the surviving documentation, since "the only real way to document a performance art piece is to re-perform the piece itself" (Abramović 2014, p. 47). In practice, however, her re-enactments completely transformed the classic works by her peers, with the result that, "*Seven Easy Pieces* itself becomes constructed and viewed as a set of 'original' acts, pivoting around the name Abramović" (Jones 2012, p. 17). At the same time, her reworking of performances by Bruce Nauman, Vito Acconci, Valie Export, Gina Pane and Joseph Beuys was respectful rather than iconoclastic or demythologising, since as she explained in an interview, "in re-enacting other artists' work you have to ask permission, you have to do your own interpretations, but there has to be a kind of seriousness about it, because there are so many artists out there making slapstick art" (Jones and Abramović 2012, p. 554). It should also be noted that the success of Abramović's re-enactments at the Guggenheim cleared the path for a wave of East European neo-avant-garde remakes during the second half of the decade. Despite or perhaps because of her own experience of re-enacting the work of others, she rarely consents to others performing hers, making an exception for the digital remake by Eva and Franco Mattes of *Imponderabilia* (1977) in the non-competing virtual environment *Second Life* in 2007.[2]

The tendency of younger artists to use re-enactment to take a critical position towards the legacy of the neo-avant-garde can be observed in Hungarian duo Little Warsaw's restaging of Tamás Szentjóby's landmark 1972 performance *Exclusion Exercise-Punishment – Preventive Autotherapy* (*Kizárás gyakorlat: Büntenésmegelőző autoterápia*) in 2005 (Fowkes 2014). Explaining their attitude to the older generation in an interview, Bálint Havas and András Gálik noted that "artists who lived and worked in the previous (Communist) era tend to mythologize their own activity", while Little Warsaw "seek to demythologize and de-sacralize them, in other words, approach them in a more matter-of-fact way" (Spieker and Little Warsaw 2009, n.p.). Indeed, despite the fact that in many ways the remake was identical to the original, with Szentjóby again sitting with his head under a bucket ready to answer questions whispered to him by viewers or chosen from a list on the wall, much of the pathos of issues of individual freedom, fate and history that the work had daringly exposed in an atmosphere of censorship and repression in the early 1970s was lost on post-communist audiences. Little Warsaw commented on the new situation by producing a short video entitled *Cyrill & Method – Re-enactment – Exclusion Exercise* showing two older men with long beards talking animatedly to each other and at the bucket on Szentjóby's head with a soundtrack of choral music bringing associations of the medieval missionaries.

The addition of new layers of meaning and commentary to neo-avant-garde performances is exemplified by the multiple re-enactments of OHO's iconic work *Mount Triglav* (1968). In the first remake in 2004, IRWIN restaged the identical scene in the same location but as a full colour digital print, with the heads of IRWIN rather than OHO artists sticking out of a cloth mountain in a snowy Ljubljana park representing the "three heads" of Slovenia's most famous peak. In contrast to the strategy of postmodern over-identification with totalitarian symbols for

which the Neue Slovenische Kunst movement is best known, their *Mount Triglav: Like to Like*, one of a series of six re-enactments of OHO performances, is a straight homage, or perhaps act of self-insertion into the national canon of modernist art. Three years later, a Slovenian, Italian and Croatian artist marked the official change of each of their names to that of the then Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša with a more disruptive re-enactment of the same work (Tomić 2012). Janez Janša, Janez Janša and Janez Janša's *Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav* (2007) was carried out not in urban space but instead against the backdrop of the actual mountain, redirecting attention away from the circulation of cult images towards the existential, spiritual and geological implications of OHO's original performance, since "what emerges at the end, under all the layers, is not a meaningless fetish object, but the hard rock of the mountain" (Quaranta et al. 2014, p. 91). Miško Šuvaković has also located the specificity of their remake in its "tragic" reflection on the fact that contemporary artists are no longer "ludist actors (OHO) or professional creators of high art (IRWIN), but 'subjects' in performative life praxis" (2007, n.p.) in the frame of the biopolitical apparatuses of transitional countries.

There are instances in which the transfer of neo-avant-garde works from the 1970s into a contemporary context through their re-enactment exposes not the

Figure 16.1 Janez Janša, Janez Janša, Janez Janša, *Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav*, 2007.

Photo: Gaja Repe. Courtesy: Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana.

gaping chasm between the present and the past, but rather the existence of underlying elements of continuity between the socialist and post-communist contexts. Karol Radziszewski's re-performance in 2014 of Natalia LL's work *Dreaming* (*Śnienie*, 1979) grew out of a longer collaboration that included the film *America Is Not Ready For This* (2011), in which the younger artist retraced Natalia LL's journey to New York in 1977, conducting interviews with artists and gallerists she met to probe issues of feminist art, queer consciousness and conceptual art, as well as to investigate the obstacles facing East European artists in launching their careers on the international art scene both during the Cold War and in the post-communist period. It was the parallels rather than the differences between their experiences as artists that Radziszewski also highlighted in his re-enactment, in which he lay apparently fast asleep in an exact copy of the glass capsule used by Natalia LL in her performance in Permafo Gallery in Wrocław, wearing the same outfit of a white robe and colourful socks, with a garland of flowers on his head (Viola 2015). While questions of femininity and gender are transfigured in his faithful restaging into expressions of queer identity, it is the trans-historical experience of dreaming and the shared sense of human vulnerability of the original that are reiterated in this re-performance based on sentiments of inter-generational trust and solidarity.

Focusing in particular on the aspect of public space and the changes it has undergone since the fall of communism, Barbora Klímová's project *REPLACED – BRNO – 2006* entailed re-enacting five performances originally carried out by artists Karel Miler, Jiří Kovanda, Vladimír Havlík, Petr Štembera and Jan Mlčoch in the 1970s and 1980s. An exchange of ideas with the older generation was also an essential element of her project, with the artist conducting interviews with them touching on politics, urbanism, as well as changing social conventions in the use of public space. Re-enacting ephemeral gestures that during the socialist era had elicited a strong reaction, most notably from the authorities, was a means for Klímová to comment on post-communist "apathy that is a result of the over-saturation of urban space with commercial stimuli" (Budak 2009, n.p.). Symptomatically, her remake of Karel Miler's performance *Either/ Or* from 1972, that entailed the artist lying face down on and next to the horizontal line of the kerbside, was restaged by Klímová in various city locations in order to test the reactions of her fellow citizens. It turned out that seeing a body lying on the street was automatically associated with the new social problem of homelessness and therefore ignored by a hardened post-communist populace (Pospiszyl 2006). Similarly, when replacing Vladimir Havlík's *Experimental Flower* from 1981, which delicately intervened in public space by planting a flower between cobblestones, symbolically addressing the fragility of creative life under socialism, Klímová chose to plant a flower in front of a bank, drawing attention to the vulnerability of individuals in the world of financial markets and pointing to the extinguishing of opportunities for spontaneous free expression in the privatised urban spaces of post-socialist cities.

The Rafani group also remade a performance by Jan Mlčoch about his hesitation on whether to join the Charter '77 protest movement, which involved the artist lying on his back and spitting in the air for thirty minutes, before sitting at a table and writing his name very slowly on a sheet of white paper, with the performance

eventually ending without him signing. In their 2004 re-enactment of *Bianco* (*Bianco*, 1977) they carried out the same sequence of actions, with the difference that the three artists were dressed in identical uniforms and placed the emphasis on the act of collective spitting rather than the solitary dilemma of political commitment under communism (Morganová 2014). When Daniela Baráčková re-enacted Jiří Kovanda's *Untitled* (*Bez názvu*) action from 1977, for which the artist spread his arms on Wenceslas Square in a gesture of openness that contrasted with the repressive atmosphere of normalisation Czechoslovakia, she decided to transpose it to Times Square in New York. Restaged in these completely different geopolitical and historical circumstances, the performance offered a renewed critique of biopolitical regimes of state power and the post-9/11 paranoia about unauthorised public acts, as the documentation shows her harmless action interrupted after three minutes by police officers.

The vogue in the 2000s for remaking neo-avant-garde performances was also manifest in curator-led projects, such as *The Orange Dog and Other Tales* (*Even Better Than the Real Thing*) organised by curatorial collective Kontejner in Zagreb in 2009. Conceived as an "(art) history theatre play" in which the work of art historians is "turned into a drama, instead of a scientific paper" (Kontejner 2009, n.p.), the project involved the re-enactment of 13 pivotal moments in Croatian performance art by actors. Bringing to mind Claire Bishop's strictures about the ethical pitfalls of "delegated performance" (Bishop 2012, pp. 91–112), the press release also sensationally indicated that "the performances by the actors are not simulated; they are 'copies', repetitions, but all 'cuts' in the actors' bodies or the performing space 'truly' happen (again)" (Kontejner 2009, n.p.). Unusually, the actors involved in re-enacting individual pieces are not named on the photographic documentation, although they were clearly chosen on the basis of the facial or bodily similarity to the artists at the time of the original performances. For example, the photographs of the re-enactment of Tomislav Gotovac's iconic *Lying Naked on the Pavement, Kissing the Pavement (Zagreb, I Love You!)* (*Lezanje Gol Na Asfaltu, Ljubljenje asfalta [Zagreb, Volim Te!]*, 1981) show a bald naked man of very similar build, while the actress riding naked on a white horse in the remake of Vlasta Delimar's *Lady Godiva* had her dark hair styled identically. The distinction theorist Sven Lütticken makes between re-enactments that "take the form of very free variations," and those that "follow appropriation art in attempting to generate difference from extremely literal repetitions," (Lütticken 2005, pp. 57–59) is of relevance here, since despite the efforts at precise recreation, productive differences emerge from the temporal disjuncture.

Re-enactments have been used most provocatively as a tool to re-politicise debates over democracy, social justice and access to the public sphere in post-communist societies. The Kassaboys group in Košice collaborated in 2013 with Lenka Kukurová to re-enact Stano Filko and Alex Mlynárčik's conceptual happening *HAPPSOC* from 1965 in order to provoke critical discussion of the realisation of the multimillion euro project Košice – Culture Capital 2013 (Čarný et al. 2014). In Łódź in 2012 Ewa Partum's *Legality of Space* (*Legalnosc Przestrzeni*) was re-enacted not as a static copy of her traffic signs with absurd prohibitions from 1971, but as an activist initiative to reactivate its utopian attitude to re-imagining urban life in the

new circumstances of post-communist Poland (Załuski 2016). The radical potential of re-enactment for envisioning alternative scenarios was pinpointed by artist Irina Bucan, who noted that "when you know the ending, you're really focused on how something happened and what possibilities were not taken advantage of" (Picard and Botea 2011, n.p.). Her own work *Auditions for a Revolution* (2006) involved young people in Chicago auditioning for roles in a re-enactment of the Romanian revolution of 1989, which was notoriously the first to be televised. Juxtaposing documentary footage from Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujica's experimental film *Videogram of a Revolution* (1992) with attempts by non-Romanian speakers to act out the same historical scenes, this work raises questions about the nature of protest, the gap between the theatricality of political behaviour and conformism of everyday life, as well as the possibility of imagining further revolutionary transformations of society.

Although taking the form of an extensive series of re-enactments, the project in the Romanian Pavilion at the Venice Biennial of 2013 went far beyond the aim to preserve, archive or reanimate historical artworks, laying out the vast ambition to sum up and appropriate the whole history of the Biennial, while drawing attention to social and geographical inequalities. Alexandra Pirici and Manuel Pelmuș's *An Immaterial Retrospective of the Venice Biennale* reduced more than a century of

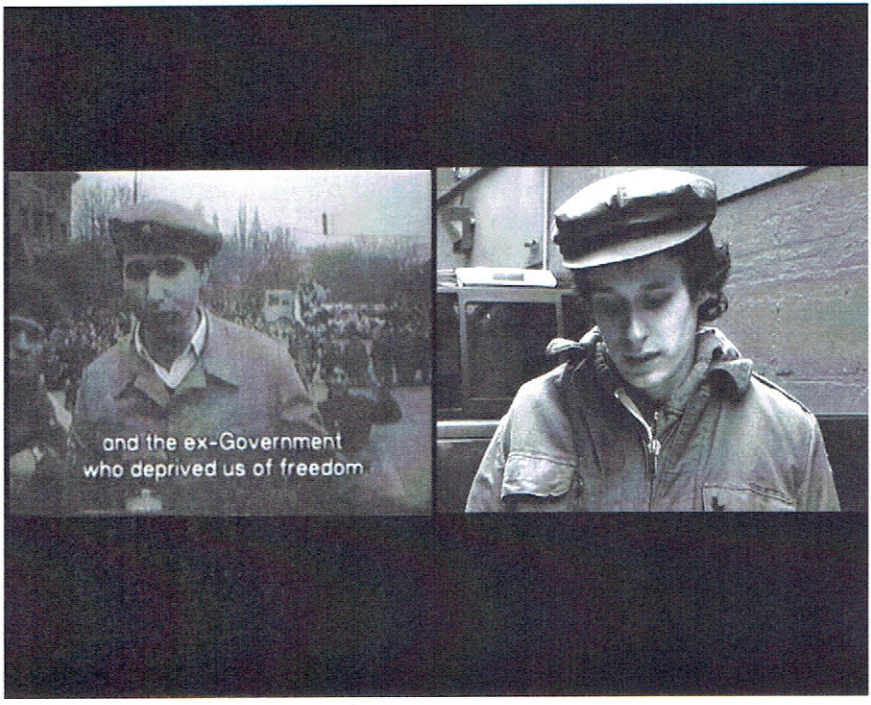

Figure 16.2 Irina Bucan, *Auditions for a Revolution*, 2006.
Courtesy: Irina Bucan.

"bronze and oil on canvas, marble or steel, smoke and screens, hyperbolic paintings, majestic sculptures, delicate objects, immersive installations or conceptual art, performance, live art or happenings" (Voinea 2013, n.p.), to the economical movements, gestures and phrases of a group of performers. Amongst the works of East European artists re-enacted in the pavilion was a socialist realist *Welder* statue from the 1950s, Dan Perjovschi's *rEST* drawings made on the floor of the Romanian Pavilion when he represented the country in 1999, Nedko Solakov's *Enactment of A Life (Black et White)*, and Anri Sala's short sad film *Uomo Duomo* of a homeless man asleep in a church. As the curator Raluca Voinea pointed out, again highlighting the radical potential of re-enactment, the exhibition did not require any expensive equipment, transport or customs paperwork to be realised, but depended instead on the precarious labour of the Romanian performers working in Venice "for a survival salary plus the plane ride and a bed" (Voinea 2013, n.p.) As often happens in contemporary art, the work of Pirici and Pelmuş also pushed the concept of performative re-enactment to its logical end, from which thus far there has been no return.

The re-enactment of neo-avant-garde performances in Eastern Europe has been undertaken for a wide range of sometimes contradictory motives. Remaking performative actions and events has turned out to offer an effective strategy for reflecting on the legacy of artworks produced in the socialist era, easing the integration of the dematerialised practices of the 1960s and 1970s into museum collections and stimulating art historical reassessments both locally and globally. Restaging performances has also helped to satisfy the demand for representations of ephemeral actions in the form of tangible art objects, at the risk of compromising their historical and genre-specific authenticity as live art. Most intriguing are the many cases in which re-enactment has been adopted as a subversive tactic for opening up critical perspectives on the social and ideological transformations of post-communism. The re-enactment of performance has also been initiated and realised by a wide range of institutions and individuals, with the artists who carried out the original pieces often choosing to collaborate with a new generation of artists who frequently also contribute novel elements to socialist era performances that reflect on post-communist realities. Recognising the futility of attempts to exactly recreate the circumstances of historical performances, artists have instead freely adapted original scenarios to reconfigure, revitalise and reanimate their critique for contemporary conditions. The "second public sphere" emerges as a historicised particularity of socialist performance art and as a renewable critical position outside of both neo-liberal and neo-official East European artworlds.

Notes

1 None of the documentation of these attempted re-enactments was included in the exhibition catalogue and the workshop receives only a cursory mention (Szylak et al. 2013).

2 *Imponderabilia* was also referenced by Janez Janša as part of the project *Life [in progress]* (2008–), which expanded significantly on Abramović and Ulay's 1977 performance, quoting the premise of the original but going beyond re-enactment to create a work with different performers, media and objectives (Janša 2014).