

## Heykelsi Eylemler – sculptural narration

The series of exhibitions entitled SKULPTURALE HANDLUNGEN (Sculptural Narration) premiered in Munich in 2006, was repeated in Lithuania in 2007, and is now moving on to its third venue in Istanbul. It gathers together ten international artists whose conception of art treats interaction with the artist's body as an integral part of the artwork. The exhibition features photographs, video works, installations, objects and actions in which the performative strategy mobilised by the artist is either manifested in their own person or – e.g. in the case of objects – is displayed in the form of references to a past physical act by the artist. Although the artists themselves are not the explicit subject of any of these works, and the element of self-perception or even mystification is not central to their purpose – as it might be in a traditional self-portrait – the incorporation of the artist's body in the artwork necessarily implies an investigation of the artist's relationship to themselves and their role as an individual and in society, with a strong focus on contextualisation.

This has been a continuous process ever since the 1960s and 70s, when occidental artists first discovered the possibility of using their own bodies as a creative medium, and performance and body art reflected the sweeping social and moral changes taking place at the time. The 1980s and 90s added further dimensions to this quest to elucidate the materiality of the human body and translate it into the world of experience. This period was marked by the questioning of national and ethnic identities, and a critical response to the issues raised by the new technology of genetic engineering and the obsession with physical fitness and beauty. In other words, ever since the latter half of the 20th century, perceptions of the body have been firmly anchored in international contemporary art. Each of these scenarios and influential factors has been taken up as a creative challenge by the numerous branches of performative art that range between live action and interactive sculpture. In particular, video and other digital media have changed the way the human body is displayed and interpreted by the artist and given rise to new forms of presentation.

The exhibition “Skulpturale Handlungen” traces the evolution of contemporary art in this context, and illustrates how modern artists have appropriated the performative and experimental aspects of traditional action art and applied them to contemporary issues using new sculptural formulas.

(Erika Wäcker-Babnik)