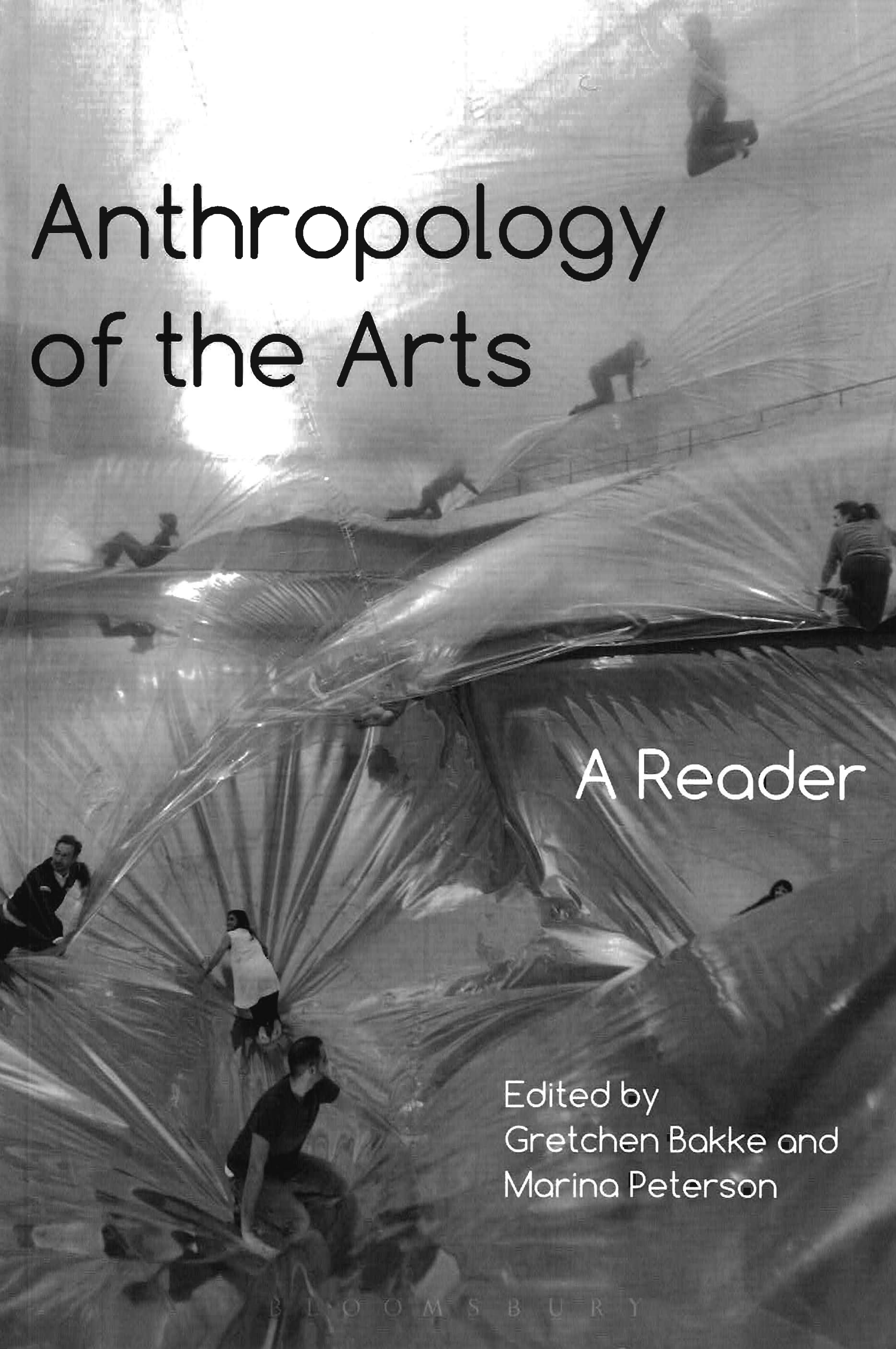

Anthropology of the Arts

A Reader

Edited by
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BLOOMSBURY

CHAPTER 25

INCORPORATIONS: CONTEMPORARY SLOVENE ART AND THE BODY POLITIC

Gretchen Bakke

> Each art tends toward an indefinite extension of its power ... this tendency leads it finally to its limit ... it would not know how to pass this limit without running the risk of losing itself in the incomprehensible, the bizarre, and the absurd.
>
> Richard Wagner (1852)

Slovenia, a young country, small, relatively wealthy, and generally speaking copacetic, sits on Europe's southeastern frontier straddling the Balkans, of which it was once a part, and "The West," the heritage of which it claims—at times ferociously—as its own. It is also and perhaps surprisingly, given the size of its population (just under 2 million, only half of whom are urbanized), one of the world's foremost centers of contemporary art production and display. This is the sort of art that baffles rather than pleases most audiences or, what a critic of a recent series of exhibitions, called "the biggest head-scratchers" (Pearson 2005). Some of Slovene contemporary art is just that, baffling; it is art that needs a lot of looking into, some analysis, a strong background in the nuances of art theory, middling knowledge of regional history, and an open mind in order to appreciate and occasionally even enjoy. It is art for experts; art made for audiences who are already well versed in the normative doings and beings of the art world (Becker 1982; Danto 1964, 1981; Gell 1989, 2006). For the most part this is not the sort of art I will be discussing here.

There is a fringe to the contemporary art world and during the period of my research, conducted in the years immediately preceding Slovenia's entry into the EU in 2004, art works that flirted around this edge, at times stepping blithely over it and shattering audiences, were a constant (van Alphen 1993). Performances were crafted in blood and bile and bodies—human bodies—were joined in the most uncomfortable of ways with the things of the object world: scalpels, bullets, drills, gastric lavages, needles, and thread. These pieces were uncomfortable; physically so for artists and also often viscerally so for audiences. For an anthropologist, art works such as these raise the question: if one is going to study violence, why devote oneself to that perpetrated in a gallery by artists upon themselves rather than turning one's attentions to the plenitude of "real" violences which swamp the world at present and which hurt all the more for being unexpected and unplanned?

One answer is that artworks in flesh and human pain are planned, they are scripted and organized, and as such they are texts that though visceral are also readable. Slovenes, in their choice of art whether imported or natively produced, were saying something very strongly about the world in which they were living. In performance after performance they reiterated the point. Blood bled out of successive bodies, from cuts, from holes drilled, from tubes implanted, and needles run through the skin. More than one mouth was sewn shut; more than one anus penetrated, and more than one artist taken from a gallery space in an ambulance.

Again and again audiences watched as artists proved themselves to be flesh by pushing foreign materials into their bodies and drawing them out again until being and object were linked so tightly to one another that they became heterogeneously singular. This effect was accomplished in different ways by different artists working across genres, but the central thematic of conjoining, interpenetrating, and incorporating a diversity of elements naturally unfriendly to one another (like scalpel and skin) into a singular functional entity was, in the final years before Slovenia's integration into the European Union, ubiquitous.

The local world within which all of this incorporative art was happening was, during that period, defined by rapid geopolitical and socioeconomic change. Yugoslavia, of which Slovenia had been a part, was quite violently gone and Europe's Union loomed large on a horizon. Near to all of this change was both glossed as and actually good for Slovenia. They had extracted themselves from Yugoslavia with virtually no violence and in the process gained independence as a nation for the first time in history. By 1999, when the sort of art works discussed in this essay were becoming commonplace, Slovenia was exiting a decade of increased prosperity, political stability, access to technology, and even substantial money for the arts; the future looked brighter still.

All of this breathless progress also meant that many Slovenes were living in a world of constant unknowns over which individuals had little say and even less control. A generation raised with socialism was rendered almost instantaneously superfluous. While among certain populations, most notably middle-aged and university-aged men, suicide rates grew to be among the highest in the world (Marušič 1999; Marušič and Brecelj 2000). In Slovenia, in the 1990s, there was both peace and great sorrow, prosperity and horrific loss, hopefulness and national dismemberment. Yet in public only one of these stories was told—that of progress toward ever-greater goods. In art, by contrast, the soft fleshy underbelly of this progress was laid bare; weakness, hardship, suffering, isolation, and loss were made palpable. Here the "work" of maintaining functionality was exposed in ways that were often difficult for artists to endure and for audiences to absorb. All of this was, however, done without anybody ever saying as much. What was impossible to articulate in daily life may have been omnipresent in contemporary art works, but both realms were equally characterized by the avoidance of clearly articulated, oppositional messages.

Despite this, quiet, physically invasive artworks were clearly providing an outlet for the other side of the story: art was being used as a visceral and extremely expressive space for "speaking" about things for which there were neither adequate words nor suitable fora for complaint—beyond those offered by galleries. In this way Slovene artists were laying a certain claim, on the microlevel, to what was happening on the macro. In their art, whether they were consuming it or doing it, Slovenes were making shifts in geopolitics immensely and intimately local. They were making the nation of their bodies and practicing "integration" on themselves as politics and politicians plied their own integrations on the body politic. By these means they were finding ways to make the more abstract and vertiginous experiences of transition their own.

It is something of a universal truth to say that, in the era of extractive capitalism on a global scale, bodies politic are full of non-native objects and persons (Ferguson 1999; Tsing 2015) The same can be said of bodies, whether speaking of medical devices (like pacemakers or artificial limbs) or ornamentation (like a bone through the nose or silicon in the lips). While this can long be claimed as true what is startling about the treatment of these intrusions within Slovene contemporary performance art is that tropes of functional assimilation or absorption are actively eschewed. What is forced upon audiences (and into artists), instead, is the undeniable, unalterable fact of quintessential difference in the midst of the most intimate spaces of home and flesh. There is no aesthetic slippage, no beauty, arguably no sublimity. Material differences of kind are rather allowed to remain unwieldy, uncomfortable, and alien to what they are stuck into—a drill bit left in the knee, a French hypermart left at the edge of town, an EU law granting foreigners the right to buy property left on the books. The fit is awkward. In Slovenia, where things are most often made to work, the task of remarking upon this awkwardness was left to the artists, who "spoke" mimetically with their bodies of what didn't belong and how that felt. Their performances in the process worked more as a visceral metonym of opinion than as a suggested plan of action. In Slovenia's case the sensation to be expressed—in art as in life—was primarily of being, experiencing, and coming to understand oneself and one's nation as nonhomogeneous, inconsistent, yet nevertheless viable.

* * *

Each of the artworks detailed here flirt intentionally with the edges of the conceptually whole by either threatening or breaking apart the integrity of the physically human; they divorce bits of the body from itself or they plant impossible abstractions into that body and then (tongue almost in cheek) call the resulting confused mass "one." In the process such projects both call into question the parameters of the individual and echo the strange, present tense, reconfigurations of contemporary nation-states.

'Enjoy your nation as yourself'[1]

In 1999 Ive Tabar, a nurse and a medical performance artist, ate fifteen paper stars, each a bright shade of goldenrod. As a chaser he ingested a copious amount of blue liquid. This rested in his belly, each element mixing with his own acids, each slowly digesting, intermingling, degrading. His audience saw none of this. But before the digestive process was complete Tabar inserted the tube of a gastric lavage (stomach pump) in through his nose, pushed it down through his esophagus and into his swollen belly. And up it all came, spilling out into the lavage tank positioned on a thin plinth at the center of Kapelica galerija's small exhibition space—golden stars in a sea of blue. The flag of the European union mixed with the stuff of Tabar's body; a supranational symbol aswim in a sea of Slovene bile. There Tabar left it, and left the gallery, without further comment.

This fit of spleen was called *Evropa I* and it was the first, and arguably most genteel, of a series of projects Tabar would craft over the next eight years, each called by the same title *Evropa* (I–IV) each a wordless play on the same theme: Slovenia's integration into the European Union. *Evropa I*, though it had no spoken language, was premised upon a local turn of phrase. To have someone or something in (one's) stomach ["Imeti nekoga ali nekaj v želodcu"] (a sentiment similar to the English "to be unable to stomach something or someone") is, in Slovene, to feel something so distasteful, so ill-making, that to vomit it up is preferable to simply, patiently bearing it (Krpič 2010: 94).[2] What was clear in 1999, five years before Slovenia's entry into the European Union, was that despite wide spread popular support for the transition, Tabar simply couldn't stomach the thought—so much so that he made this thought flesh and then forcibly, mechanically, removed it from his body. Thus, though Tabar does not speak his distaste, his choice of medium allows for certain visceral qualities to enter into a very public—indeed performed—commentary on local politics.

In the second of the *Evropa* series—*Evropa II: Luknja v sistemu, buža v kolenu* [*Europe II: Hole in the System, Drill in the Knee*][3] (2001)—the central allegory of the work shifts from that of "expulsion" of the symbol of a united Europe from the Slovene body to the effective "penetration" of this body by the European Union. As one might intuit from the title, this piece, which was performed in Obalne galerije, in the coastal town of Koper, consisted almost entirely of the artist drilling through his knee. The performance itself was fairly stark. The only props were a chair and the drill, while the performers (all of whom, Tabar included, were medical professionals), were dressed in the practical aqua and blue scrubs of an operating theater. Tabar sat in the chair, his pant leg rolled up, and injected a bubble of anesthesia just under the skin. The audience then waited, along with Tabar, for this to take effect. After some minutes he picked up a drill with a 10-inch bit and meticulously ran it through his calf, just under his kneecap. He then wrapped the entire apparatus (knee plus drill) in gauze, was loaded onto a gurney and wheeled to a waiting ambulance which sped away, presumably—but not explicitly—to a hospital, where an antiseptic drill-removal procedure would be performed. The actual drilling portion of the performance was extremely short, about five minutes, though the videotaped version, which is how most people have seen it, extended this slightly by documenting all of the knee preparation procedures, which were hidden from the live audience's view by a green-scrub curtain.

As in *Evropa I,* Tabar's second piece in this series not only explicitly addresses itself to the project of European integration, though again here more through its title and subtext than anything made explicit in the content of the work itself. It is also play on a common Slovene phrase, in this case, "Rajši si zvrtam luknjo v koleno, kot ..." [I'd rather drill a hole in my knee than ...] (here the English equivalent is "I'd rather have a hole in my head than ...").[4] Tabar's two subsequent performances in this series, also follow this pattern of an explicitly evocative title, a subtle "in the know" reference to an idiomatic phrase likely only recognizable to fluent speakers of Slovene, coupled with a common and easily recognizable symbol of a geopolitical entity (usually a flag of some sort), and physical violence enacted by the artist himself upon his body. In brief, in *Evropa III* (2004) Tabar slowly separated his fingernail with a Slovenia flag painted upon it from the flesh of his finger (on the occasion of Slovenia's acceptance into the EU) and affixed it to a plastic *Proteus anguineus*, a local, pale-skinned newt which is often used in Slovenia as a sort of national totem; and in *Evropa IV* (2008) he sliced open his abdomen with a scalpel, inserted a catheter and then released a stream of dyed blue urine straight from his bladder into a fish tank containing a goldfish and a number of test tubes, each of which stood in for a member nation of the EU.

Though in Tabar's work his political stance is made more or less explicit, he was not alone in his use of highly evocative, physically invasive, live body art performances to obliquely express concerns about Slovenia's entry in the European Union. A second example is the work of Slovene philosopher, sexologist, and performance artist Peter Mlakar. Mlakar's 2001 *Logika, Mučenje, Tirada* [*Logic, Torture, Tirade*]— also part of a series of quite similar works—was a performance that, while not originally cast in terms of processes of geopolitical integration, was reread that way in 2004 by another sort of artist altogether, the political caricaturist.

That Mlakar's sexological performances might become the topic of a mainstream political cartoon, published on the occasion of Slovenia's acceptance into the EU (May 2004) in Slovenia's weekly magazine with the widest circulation, *Mladina*, already says something about centrality of "fringe" performances like those of Tabar and Mlakar in Slovene popular culture. Mlakar, for example, is a well-known man about town, the author of many books ranging from philosophical treatises to short works of pornographic fiction. He is also a long-term member of the arts collective of some renown Neue Slowenische Kunst, and was the host of a weekly television show for a period of time on RTV Slovenia (Slovenia's state run TV channel). *Logika, Mučenje, Tirada,* and popular responses to it should be read then in relationship to Mlakar's role not just as an artist but as an easily recognizable public figure.

The performance was a much longer and far more (nonsensically) verbose work than any of Tabar's undertakings. *Logika, Mučenje, Tirada* was divided into three parts of unequal affective weight: the first and the third acts were utterly eclipsed by the second, in which Mlakar attempted to insert a dildo on the end of a very big drill into the exposed vagina of a woman. The strangeness and indeed palpable discomfort of both Mlakar and his willing assistant during the portion of the performance that involved him pressing the dildo into her—her legs up in stirrups made of antlers horns *as if* upon a gynecologist's table, her head cloaked in shadows, and her body tense and unwilling to let that thing in—trumped the two acts of the performance that bracketed it. Yet the performance's denouement did not come here, rather Mlakar's magician moment—when he actually causes something to become something else—came in the third act of the performance when he transformed this same woman into a diskette (the first act involved prodding a brain in a tank with a slim metal probe and recording, and broadcasting, it *as if* meaningful electromagnetic reactions). Mlakar staged this transubstantiation of substance (woman to diskette) as if he were playing the lead in an old time magic show, first hiding her with a deep red cloth, then spinning her around, speaking a few words and whipping the cloth away "Whala!" to expose where once she had lain ... the thin black square of a computer disk! This he inserted easily (note the trebling of insertions: probe into brain, dildo into woman, disk into machine) into a waiting PC. Reduced thusly into data, safely contained there inside the disk inside the machine, he talked with her, and her gibberish answers to his queries spewed out at processor speed and in the vivid green text of early DOS machines on the large projection screen mounted behind his head.

In general Mlakar's work is highly sexualized and this performance is not out of keeping with a tendency toward perversion that is not, in Mlakar's case, about producing shock from the violence of a stylized sexual act, but rather the public expression of desire and vulnerably—his own, here more so than her own.[5] He is as much a performer in this work as he is a man having attenuated sex in a public forum. It might be tempting to read this work only as a sort of blatant misogyny that reflects badly on the artist, his audience (who did not level this critique), and his home culture. In context, however, and with a sense of the man who makes the art—a sense readily available to the audience of the performance itself, an audience who laughed with Malker and also laughed at him, an audience who held their breath with him and sat tight and silent when things got difficult—*Logika, Mučenje, Tirada* is the story of a man failing to enter, or even touch, a woman. It brims with humor, self-exposure, and self-deprecation. All of this was accomplished in this piece, as in Tabar's work above, with remarkable earnestness.

Mlakar, as the artist, set out to tell a particular story in this tripartite work, the story of attempting to get things into bodies and to transform bodies into things. An artwork, however, like any complex symbolic form, when released into the world, is open to multiple interpretations and one Slovene after-the-fact reading was a humorous recasting of the entire dildo-on-a-drill second act of the performance in terms of a Slovene "penetration" of Europe. The cartoon was roughly drawn in quick black strokes by Josip Visarjonoič, whose style and pointed humor often graces the pages of *Mladina*. In it Peter Mlakar looks more like an evil butcher with an industrial tamper rather than a drill and the dildo is closer in its size to a horse's penis than a man's. For her part, his assistant is evidently bored with the proceedings as she thumbs her way through a magazine.[6] From Mlakar's mouth, in the cartoon, comes this word bubble: *"In Tako je Slovneija penetriala v Evropo!"* ["And thus has Slovenia penetrated into Europe"].

A joke certainly and, locally at least, a pretty funny one; but also a depiction of integration that turns the tables on the more common ways of talking about small Slovenia and the much larger European Union. Here Slovenia is not absorbed; it is not "integrated"; it does not join. It penetrates, like a wrecking ball might penetrate a condemned building, or like a plastic, and thus also sterile, penis might penetrate a woman. And these, while interesting metaphors for European integration, pale in comparison to the already odd decision of selecting Mlakar's performance as the source material for the joke.

Thus is art made to "speak" to and for the world in two different ways. It speaks first through its content, its form, and its medium of things the artist, him or herself, is interested in and personally affected by—from the personal and the passionate (Mlakar) to the geopolitical and definitional (Tabar). Second, it contributes through its appropriation into popular discourse to wider conversations about power and more concretely, within the Slovene context, to the many jogglings of position attendant to the particular process of moving from a hard won and short-lived independence (1991–2004) into the fold of yet another surpra-statist organization.[7]

Temporary functional conjoinings

There are other ways to incorporate the body into larger systems of machinery and metaphor than those routes familiar from sex or medical procedure. I want to turn to a final performance, *Brainscore* (Darij Kreuh and Davide Grassi 2002), that harnessed the autonomic systems of the body and its electrical impulses without penetrating the flesh, and then used these impulses to power and control machine-based assemblages. It was far from the sole project of this type to have been staged in the years immediately preceding Slovenia's entrance into the EU, but it was the most unabashedly grandiose, indeed nearly operatic in its scale and complexity.[8]

* * *

Brainscore was presented in a fairly mainstream theater-in-the-round in Cankarev dom, a labyrinthine cultural center in downtown Ljubljana with conference rooms, exhibit halls, a bar, and numerous stages of every size and sort including Gallusova dvorana, the largest venue in the Republic. This performance could be best characterized as a biomechanical opera, the biological components of which were the artists' bodies—each strapped into sturdy black chairs at the wrists, waist, thighs, calves, and feet while their heads were immobilized in contraptions reminiscent of 1970s science-fictive brain-transfer devices. Each man also had a camera positioned up close and recording at his right eye. This live-capture eye-image was sent to a TV screen positioned at the artist's side though angled up at the audience. In the darkness this eye on TV that peered up out of obscurity was almost all that was visible of the artists strapped-in down there. In addition to this eye-cam that captured every twitch, blink, and involuntary dilation, each performer had a host of electrodes fixed to his head. For the forty minutes of the performance, Grassi and Kreuh's sole task was to remain as immobile as humanly possible.

Above them—at the audience's eye level—swarmed strange 3D stones shaped like blood vessels, coming now faster, now slower out of a screen hung high on the wall at stage center. This mammoth, stone-spewing screen was flanked by two others, each of which displayed a super-sized image of a brain meant to correspond to the brain of one of the two immobilized performers. Various sections of these brains lit up during the performance, fairly randomly, and beneath them was displayed a constantly shifting set of URLs supposedly generated by electromagnetic activity in each of the artists' heads. Every change in the eyes' motions—their dilations, blinks, and twitches—controlled the size, shape, and rapidity of blob production while shifts in electromagnetic "brain" activity controlled the brain-screens and the more or less constant shifts in URL production. The piece was literally "scored" by the brain, changing not in essence, but in its particularities with each performance. Without the artist's body there could have been no *Brainscore*. All of the creative stimulus of the otherwise mechanical, mechanized, and preprogrammed show was provided via those few actions the nearly immobile men strapped tight into chairs could not control.

Despite this, *Brainscore* was not about the limited flesh-bound body *per se*. Instead it emphasized the matrix of the physical, of which the human was only one small, albeit essential part. Perhaps what *Brainscore* best illustrated was how even the most minor of physiological impulses can be harnessed into a large biomechanical system that pays no mind to the conscious human—the human as distinct individual—despite being rooted, literally, in it.

Though *Brainscore* neither formally addressed itself to processes of political integration nor was it used after the fact to serve this project, the concerns embodied in the piece were not dissimilar from those made flesh by a host of works performed in, funded by, and staged in Slovenia in the early 2000s, including those of Tabar and Mlakar. What does it mean, these works seem to ask, to be integrated into larger systems and processes? To be interpenetrated by them? And how might integration be conceptualized and practiced without "absorption" of various components serving as the key figure of transition? Or to put it another way: What kind of equilibrium, or functionality, might be maintained in a system that is both unsteady and impermanent?

In no case is the story told that of "becoming-other" but rather, again and again, what one sees in these works is the violence of something fragile coming into contact with objects and systems which insist upon co-existence. In each case, I would argue it is the integrated being that is of interest to these artists—the man or woman plus the drill (differently, in the two cases) or the body plus the complex bio-mechanical system that it scores—and not the absorbed or homogenized being but the diversely functional one. As such, these Slovene artists among others were toying with new metaphors for integration, ones in which the smallest competent parts were not lost, but neither were they irrelevant or left untouched.

Optimism; impurity

Not unlike paint and canvas, or celluloid and light, the body allows artists certain sorts of expression and forecloses others. "Body artists" are, in other words, much like painters, sculptors, and composers in that they are limited in their creativity by the constraints and potentials of their chosen medium. The body will (and will not—as we have seen in the case of Mlakar's unsuccessful penetration of his assistant) allow for certain actions to be taken upon or, by means, of it. Despite the inherent limitations of the body as a medium for art, no small number of artists, both within Slovenia and beyond, find that the body expresses what they want to "say" better than a comparable medium might. In this, the body is not so different from the forcefulness of the reeds in the basketmaker's hands, described by Tim Ingold, their resistance to being woven influencing the final form of the basket far more than the artist's will or imagination (2011). Or, to use an older theoretical apparatus, the medium is part and parcel of the message (McLuhan 1964); much of what art says or does socially subsists in the ways in which the medium selected by an artist is strung together with both a work's expressive content and with its form. This is likely a universal characteristic of art whether one speaks of Dinka cattle (Lienhardt 1961), Tuvan throat singing (*Genghis Blues*, dir. Roko Belic 1999), or the sewing of the flesh of one's hand to the skin of one's face (as Norwegian performer Håvve Fjell did in Ljubljana in 2002). The body, and most especially the body interrupted by the stuff of the object world (dildo, drill, needle, thread, scalpel, catheter) or reinterpreted as just another thing among many (pupil dilatation, brain wave, URL) can be, and perhaps ought to be, read as unique for the ways it can be made to express artists' concerns. By this I mean that like any medium the expressive capacity of the body is both specific and limited and thus, like any media, it is both "unique" and "uniquely suited" for the communication of certain sorts of messages, and particularly unsuited for the effective communication of others. What is more, even when the articulated intent of a work of art is to speak to one aspect of social, economic, political, or personal life, the breadth of possible interpretations is not—indeed is never—limited to the artist's intentions. It is not merely information that flows into and out of bodies but also objects that constantly interrupt bodily integrity. The two, objects and bodies, individuals and information, machines and persons, are made in these works to interpenetrate one another. These interactions, within the realm of art, often appear to have been designed to call into question what it is to be a bounded, self-conscious, willful individual person under conditions of massive infrastructural interdependence; or, to put it another way, what it is to be literally a part of global processes of sociocultural integration.

Such conditions, whether it is losing one's heart to someone (Franko B's nude bloodletting performance, *I Miss You*, 2002), using a cell phone (to text and to talk and even to make purchases) upwards of fifty times a day, or having one's nation become a part of something much greater and still largely unknown and unpredictable, each in their own way becomes a cause for the reconceptualization of integrity. The body, once inviolable in the world of conceptual art, had become by the early 2000s a central means for the public expression of sensations of perforation, penetration, immobility, inexpressivity, loss of self, loss of control, and the sapping of life force.

In a more hopeful vein, these same contemporary works also speak to the bodily integration of outside influences and foreign objects into new sorts of wholes. The body—the flesh as well as the person intrinsic to it—was made in these projects to become a functioning part of something larger than the self-conscious, self-centered human being. Monadism was not only dismissed out of hand but was clearly not even conceptually viable to these artists whose works spoke at a fundamental level, if under onion-layers of anxiety, of a functional optimism based upon impurity and the intermingling of types. Even Ive Tabar with all the biliousness of his opinions regarding Slovenia's incorporation into the EU takes this institution symbolically into himself. He integrates it even if only to purge the thought (and stuff) of this integration a moment later. The body thus flirts with newly inclusive versions of itself that, as *Brainscore* makes clear, needn't last long to be both readable and real.

None of this is clear yet. That is to say, none of it or at least very little of it has leavened upward to the level of speech, articulation, pontification, or theory. But the lack of saying (and indeed even of sensible language) in most of these projects in no way undermines their message, repeated again and again by shunt and by scalpel, by diskette and by dildo, by electrode and gastric lavage: the body is no longer whole, no longer inviolable, no longer conceptualizable as an isolate. The same might also be said for the self or for the nation. In these processes of intermingling and incorporation new things are being made from the stuff of the human, not as a way of dismissing them but rather as a means of newly incorporating them into the interpenetrating complexities already so common to everyday life.

Notes

1. Žižek 1993. In using this phrase Žižek is making a slightly different point than that emphasized here, however, it should be noted that his definition of enjoyment and of the nation clearly underlie my own thinking in this essay and elsewhere. This is largely because Žižek is himself a Slovene and as such his ideas about how cultures work, how they imagine and distill themselves, are particularly well suited to the particularities of Slovenia even if this is rarely the use to which he puts them.
2. Special thanks to Tomaž Krpič for pointing out how Tabar draws upon idiomatic Slovene phrases in his work. For a more detailed description of each of the *Evropa* projects and some of Tabars' other performance pieces, see Krpič 2010.
3. *Buža* is either a slang word or from a dialect of Slovene with which I am unfamiliar. It is not in the dictionary and I have never heard the term used outside of the name of this particular piece; about two-thirds of the time it is translated (by Slovenes) as "drill" and the rest of the time as "hole" a state of affairs, which lead me to believe that others find it equally unfamiliar. I have chosen to use "drill" here simply because it is a quantitatively more frequent choice.
4. Krpič suggests that the implied phrase after the ellipse to be "... than become, at least willingly, a citizen of the European Union" (2010: 94).
5. Personal conversation with Ivo Saliger, Ljubljana, March 2005.
6. Drawing by Josip Visarjonoič, from *Mladina* 26, June 28, 2004: 58. The image can be found at: http://www.mladina.si/91510/peter-mlakar/
7. 1991 was the beginning of Slovenia's only period of independent nationhood. Previous to this it had always been part of a larger multinational entity: Communist Yugoslavia, Nazi Germany, The Kingdom of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, the Austro-Hungarian (and before that Austrian) empires.
8. Works by Franko B., Ron Atheny, Kira O'Reily, and Oleg Kulik, all of whom performed in Slovenia between 2000–4 (as well as Orlan's extended plastic surgery project) could be argued to be ego reifying rather than ego ablating; the person of the performer becomes much more

solid and bounded by means of the work of art rather than becoming diffuse and peripheral to audiences' notice or care.

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