

Susan Jarosi

The Image of the Artist in Performance Art: The Case of Rudolf Schwarzkogler

Sztuka i Dokumentacja nr 5, 142

2011

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

Susan JAROSI



**THE IMAGE OF THE ARTIST IN PERFORMANCE ART:
THE CASE OF RUDOLF SCHWARZKOGLER**

“The Image of the Artist in Performance Art: The Case of Rudolf Schwarzkogler” frames an intervention into the scholarly and public discourse on the medium of performance art by revisiting the myth of Austrian artist Rudolf Schwarzkogler’s purported death by auto-castration, which was supposedly ‘documented’ in a series of performances in the mid 1960s. The myth was most famously propagated in 1972 by the *Time Magazine* critic Robert Hughes, and, despite a public recantation by Hughes in 1996 and a number of scholarly studies and exhibitions that have exposed the myth’s fallacy, it continues to demonstrably inflect the reception not only of Schwarzkogler’s work but also of contemporary performance art more broadly. Jarosi’s central arguments are concerned with examining the perpetuation of the Schwarzkogler myth through a series of examples all drawn from the last five years. Each of the examples revolves around the construction of an image of ‘the performance artist’ and what is determined to be true, proper, or detrimental to the practice of performance art. Together the examples underscore the persistent power of the myth in the representation of contemporary performance – a power that can readily exceed the historical record. The author theorizes her claims through exploration of seminal texts on the function of myth by Roland Barthes and by Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz. Having asserted the theoretical mechanics by which the Schwarzkogler myth holds such sway, Jarosi expands the scope of her essay to consider its negative impact on the scholarly reception and public perception of performance art, ultimately pointing to the ethical stakes raised by the myth’s absorption into the assumed critical expectations for what the medium of performance art entails.

Bibliography: see p.81