

KRASSIMIR KRASTEV – RASSIM

Born 1972

About the Artist:

Krassimir Krastev – Rassim (born in 1972), graduated from the National Academy of Arts, Sofia in 1998 with a major in painting, but was quick to try other mediums and joined the contemporary art scene in Sofia while still a student. Rassim was among the most prominent young artists who embarked on changing the very concept of art in Bulgaria during the 1990s. He began with transforming his own persona. First it began as a brand name RASSIM®, which he promoted in various ways - by 1997 it could already be found on stickers, t-shirts, posters. The artist (and his brand name) also appeared on paid advertisement pages in "Izkustvo (Art in Bulgaria) Magazine" – with his girlfriend (and the slogan "I love Denitsa"), with a mobile phone or semi naked with bold yellow gloves. He then went through, and documented, multiple transformations of his body like circumcision or bodybuilding. He also changed his legal name to Rassim Krastev – a contradiction of sorts, reflecting certain issues in Bulgarian history and culture: while Rassim is a Muslim name, his family name Krastev means both "cross" and "baptism".

In the 1990s, Rassim was the artist who captured most acutely the tension and impact of the transition period in Bulgaria on the younger generation. He used his own body not only as a subject of transformation but also as a product, from the perspective of consumerism, which was quite new for Bulgarian society and art at the time. In the works of Rassim the experience of the new post-socialist reality was immediately transposed on the terrain of art, where the role of the work of art in this new changing society was also questioned.

Rassim has taken part in many international exhibition and has represented Bulgaria in most of the important exhibitions dedicated on art from Eastern Europe, among which "Body and the East", Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana (1998); "After the Wall: Art and Culture in post – Communist Europe", Moderna Museet, Stockholm (1999), "Blood & Honey/Future's in the Balkans", The ESSL Collection, Vienna (2003); 26. Biennale of contemporary art, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2004); "Gender Check. Femininity and Masculinity in Eastern European Art", ZACHETA National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, MUMOK Vienna (2010);

He continues to be active as an artist today and had a retrospective solo exhibition - KRASSIM®IP – at the Sofia Arsenal Museum for Contemporary Art in 2016, as well as an important solo show – SALT – at One Gallery, Sofia in 2019 .

Rassim was one of the founders of the XXL Gallery in Sofia, Bulgaria.

KRASSIMIR KRASTEV – RASSIM

1. *Corrections*, 1996-1998 (short version)

- Video projection, 6 min.;
- Two posters Before & After, 210 cm x 90 cm / each

Edition: 2 of 3 + 2AP

Ownership history: The Artist

Edition 1/3 in the collection of the Sofia City Gallery, Sofia



Installation view, Yuzina Gallery, Sofia 2018

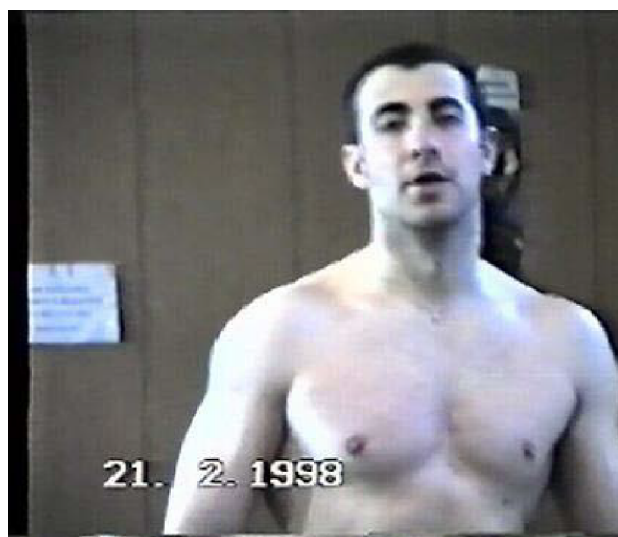
KRASSIMIR KRASTEV – RASSIM, *Corrections*, 1996-1998

2 Posters: “Before” and “After”



KRASSIMIR KRASTEV – RASSIM, *Corrections*, 1996-1998

Video stills



KRASSIMIR KRASTEV – RASSIM, *Corrections*, 1996-1998

About the Work:

In 1996, Rassim started his project *Corrections*. The project's aim was the complete a transformation of the artist's body—over a period of a year and a half, Rassim trained as a bodybuilder, followed various diets, and took proteins and such, while constantly documenting the changes that took place in his body. The lean young man gradually turned into a pumped up and muscular bodybuilder. In this way, he sublimated his body according the contemporary standards of male attractiveness, but also to Bulgaria's specific societal norms at the time: the “macho” man, mobster, wrestler, Mafioso, strong man, hoodlum, etc., which marked the years of transition in the country.

In 1997, when the project was about to be interrupted due to the financial strain of maintaining the specific regimen, Rassim was able to continue due to the support of FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon in Montpellier, France, at its director Ami Barak's personal invitation.

The end result of the *Corrections* project consisted of two large-format posters of the “before” and “after” type: the first one showed RASSIM before his transformation had started and the second one showed him at its end. A video screen played footage of him working out at the gym.

“In the beginning of 1996, I turned to my own body and turned it into an object of art, creating a sculpture of flesh and blood using not classical means but the tools of bodybuilding, formally banned up to 1989. I corrected my body in order to create an ideal for a modern nude body coveted by Antiquity, merging together model/object and artist in a single unity. If Michelangelo created David from marble, I created RASSIM from a live body.

Working out in the gym for a period of one year, I followed – around the clock – a sporting, nutritional and sleep regimen. The *Corrections* project had to do with my dealing with a certain period of my life – the time when I was conscripted in the army. It was firstly experienced as a means to cope with reality and, secondly, conceived as art. Looking inside, in an attempt to know yourself, you change in order to express yourself freely. This is the only way to change the things that are out there.”

Krassimir Krastev – Rassim

KRASSIMIR KRASTEV – RASSIM, *Corrections*, 1996-1998

Exhibition history (selected):

2023 – A Few Ways to Win the World, Doza Gallery, Sofia

2018 – AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Sofia Arsenal – Museum for Contemporary Art, Sofia (Solo Exhibition)

2013 - A Possible History, Sofia City Art Gallery, Sofia

2011 - On Your Marks. Body-Sports and Society, Deutsches Hygiene-Museum, Dresden, Germany

2009 - Gender Check. Femininity and Masculinity in Eastern European Art , MUMOK Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna Transitland.

Video Art from Central and Eastern Europe 1989-2009. Transmediale, Berlin

From Ideology to Economy. Contemporary Bulgarian Art 20 years later, The State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia, Moscow

2006 - Glamour and Globalisation, Phoenix Halle, Dortmund, Germany

2005 - Rassim number one, horse champ Gallery, Strasbourg, France (Solo Exhibition)

2003 - Writing Identity. Autobiography in Art. Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, Germany

EXPORT-IMPORT, Contemporary Art from Bulgaria, Sofia City Art Gallery, Sofia

2001 - Corrections, HOY Gallery, Belgrade (Solo Exhibition)

LOOMING UP, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna

Body and the East, EXIT ART, New York

2000 - After the wall: Art and Culture in post – Communist Europe, Hamburger Bahnhof Museum, Berlin; Ludwig Museum, Budapest

WHAT, HOW & FOR WHOM, Moderna galerija, Zagreb

1999 - After the Wall: Art and Culture in post – Communist Europe, Moderna Museet, Stockholm

1998 - Body and the East, Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana

1997 - Art ex Natio. Made in Bulgaria, 4th Annual Soros Center for the Arts (SCA) Exhibition, Plovdiv, Bulgaria