

ABOUT

THE PERFORMANCE ART OF JOSEF KA

<https://eskargoeskargo.com>

“I am equally passionate about performing on the streets of some unfamiliar city, in status-conscious contemporary art venues – or in the forest all alone. Each of my works starts from a largely intuitive, highly personal place within me, and is based on my real life and the questions I have.”

Josef Ka is a visual and performance artist whose work uniquely combines a range of potent influences, disciplines and sources. Both Butoh and Flamenco dancing are at times strongly in the foreground, but other expressive modes – from traditional Russian folk singing and contemporary experimental dance, to a smart palette of literary and cinematic cues – are clearly in the mix.

Her creative processes, and the performances they serve, are rooted in the instinctive, spontaneous, and highly intuitive. The structure of a typical piece (if any Josef Ka work can be said to be “typical”) reveals itself slowly, as if artist and audience are together slowly seeking and finding the path and its resolution, in real time.

The viewer may quickly come to realize they have been invited to not merely watch, but to fully inhabit the experiential space – that momentary crevice in our façade of mundane control that Josef Ka has opened for us. Her tool to this end is most often a frankly sexualized Chaplinesque charm that, as with the master himself, can evoke responses ranging from sympathy, gaiety and failure, to a seemingly complete humiliation of the most public sort.

Her relentless physicality – how she imposes and exposes her body within uncertain, potentially threatening real environments – is key to Josef Ka’s skill at drawing us within her creative domain. By turns delicate and brute, our carefully policed checkpoints between the sexual and political, the intellect and the simply felt, the artful and the chaotic – are casually, systematically demolished.

Since site-specific and one-off improvisational modes drive and define her work, it’s not surprising Josef Ka has an almost obsessive commitment to video and photographic documentation of each of her many events, even – or especially – when there are no other witnesses. Her performances take place as she travels the world.

In addition to her foundation in dance, Josef Ka studied video, sculpture and photography in 2012 under Sergey Bratkov at the Rodchenko School in Moscow. Also in Moscow, she took part in a three-month master class in 2011 led by noted performance artist Marina Abramovich.

In Saint Petersburg, Josef Ka studied sculpture with Mark Jenkins at ProArte (2010), and she holds a degree in Film Studies from the Saint Petersburg University of Arts (2005-2010).

Mark Maher, Curator // Helsinki, Finland