



## Walk over me | Stepping over Balkan performance artist Igor Josifov is both a work and a walk of art

 Randy Gener | [CultureOfOneWorld.org](http://CultureOfOneWorld.org)  June 11, 2012

**NEW YORK CITY:** They walked over him at Chic Art Fair in Paris. They walked over him in Chicago. They walked over him in San Francisco. The Arabs walked over him in the [United Arab Emirates](#). You can now walk over him, too, in New York.

Stepping on a human being is now both a work *and* a walk of art. In *2-Dimensional*, an unconventional performance installation, the young Macedonia-born artist [Igor Josifov](#) lies underneath a plexiglass structure. Josifov remains perfectly still inside the case. He will connect with the eyes of each person who passes over the platform.

Starting 8 pm Tuesday June 12 to Thursday June 14 at Abrons Arts Center Gallery, *2-Dimensional* invites the audience to walk over him. In this performance, part of the inaugural [Queer New York International Arts Festival](#), the artist is an observer as much as he is observed while the spectator becomes a performer.



Igor Josifov (Macedonia) inside "2-Dimensional" at [Art Institute of Chicago](#) | Photo by performaat

Still unsure? Still hesitating? Don't have the right shoes? Take your cues from [the legendary performance artist Marina Abramovic](#) who had no problem walking on Josifov at the opening of the Modern Wing built by [Renzo Piano](#) at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Step by step, the handsome [Igor Josifov](#) has become one of the more fascinating young artists to come out of the [Balkans](#) today. Always carefully thought-out and highly theatrical, Igor Josifov's installation/performances raise our critical awareness of Balkan alienation at the same time that they capture the incomprehensible side and irrational elements of cultural regeneration.

Those who are sympathetic to the porosity of aesthetic forms and theatrical expressions coming out of the Balkan regions today will instantly recognize and appreciate how Josifov's work does more than transgress the borders and upset genre categories. Josifov's recent inclusion in the annual Perforations Festival (March 2011 at [La MaMa E.T.C.](#) in New York City) went a long way toward arguing in behalf of the aesthetic blurring proposed by new and emerging artists from the Central and Eastern Europe.

He belongs to a new generation of independent Balkan artists working inside that region and outside of the state-subsidized institutions. Josifov touches upon live-wire issues of identity (public, political, religious), redefining nationalist borders and performative spaces and artistic genres. He wrestles with how a collective Macedonia past impacts upon the present moment and his own personal history.



Igor Josifov (Macedonia) inside "2-Dimensional" at Art Institute of Chicago | Photo by performaart

Born in 1986 in Kavadarci, Macedonia and presently counting San Francisco as his alternative home base, Josifov attended the School of [Applied Arts](#) in [Skopje, Macedonia](#), and started his secondary education and career in San Francisco, Calif. In his performances, the body is a medium that translates his personal and cultural experience into a broader context.

[Josifov's work, as his own blog states](#), is rooted in psychoanalysis:

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*“His work is based on psychoanalytic perception and the cultural and moral realities of contemporary living. The subject of his work deals with identity, death, loss, and social commentary. He uses concept as the first and most crucial part of the process and then uses the medium and its symbolic function to support the concept as an element. After years of experience with all mediums he decided that the most important and primary medium is his body — it is a common form that communicates his own experience and reflects the viewer's own ideas of self. The liberation of the*

*body in his work has a metaphoric meaning for the freedom of people in the contemporary world.”*



Macedonia-born performance artist Igor Josifov | Courtesy of the artist

*Presenting Memories* was a performance/installation that he executed in March 2011 near the foundation in the Washington Square Park (a stone's throw away from New York University in Greenwich Village). It was an anthology of previous Josifov pieces, shown in a foreign

environment. Presented over several hours in an outdoor park setting, Josifov sampled elements and pieces from his five previous works (*Purification Process*, *PPP Mental Prison*, *Emit*, *2 Dimensional*, and *Reflection on Originality*).

And yet Josifov disrupted the archival quality of this performance anthology by insisting that what matters the most were not the individual pieces per se. After all they were being presented out of their original context. What mattered more to him was the very process of re-entering and moving through each work. What he focused on were those in-between spaces and moments as each piece transitions into the next piece.

Josifov's appearance at Queer New York International Arts Festival re-confirms his belief that the body is "the most important and primary medium," as the artist avows. What was the aim of the "performance" under plexi-box? Josifov tells me in [my interview in Critical Stages](#), an international webjournal which I edit:

“*2-Dimensional is a social commentary work where the public makes or completes the performance. In this installation, I remove part of the floor (usually the entrance of an art gallery or museum during an art opening) and place a Plexiglas in replacement of the floor. I lie underneath this glass, and when the public comes to the opening, they have to step or walk over me. Their reactions make the work. It is an experiment where the reactions usually are self-projections of the public that attends art openings, and they really go out of control with this piece. 2-Dimensional is about the relation between the artist and the viewer that comments on many levels.*”



Walk over Igor Josifov in "2-Dimensional" | Courtesy of Queer NY website

**Queer New York Festival** curator André von Ah adds that *2-Dimensional* is quite possibly "a reflection on both the subjectivity of wedding processions and their importance to identity building, and the cultural and aesthetical relevance of cemeteries in his native Macedonia."

André von Ah also says that *2-Dimensional* is "reminiscent of Josifov's earlier experimental performance and photography series *Lost Bodies — dying artist*, in which he partnered with American artist M. Ryan Noble to abstract on the artists' subjective experiences of the local places and cultures which they are from and on their roles as art makers."

*2-Dimensional* intrigues because of its reversal of positions. When the audience walks over the art, the art look right backs at the audience. "This inversion of roles is a crucial point in the experience of the audience and the artist, as Josifov reflects on the uses and abuses of contemporary art and artists," André von Ah says.



Igor Josifov inside "2-Dimensional" | Courtesy of Queer New York International Arts Festival

### **Igor Josifov (Macedonia) – 2-Dimensional**

#### **Performance Installation**

**Tuesday through Thursday, June 12-14, at 8:00pm**

**Abrons Arts Center: Gallery**

**Free event**

#### **Venue Information**

##### ***The Abrons Arts Center***

466 Grand Street (at Pitt Street), NYC

212-598-0400

[www.abronsartscenter.org](http://www.abronsartscenter.org)

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