

World of Art



The Body in Contemporary Art

**Thames
&Hudson**

Sally O'Reilly

In *Unhinged* (2010), Vlatka Horvat performs with a door for six hours, the duration making for a disquieting fusion of person and thing. This is a door made mobile and a body encumbered, the typical momentums of both arrested. The object is anthropomorphized into a dance partner or someone to keep close, perhaps tenderly, for their own safety or the safety of others. The human body here is the director of a scene, the animator of an object, an actor and a character burdened by an occult duty. One can empathise with the discomforts of a cumbersome load and a long haul. But it is a self-imposed ordeal. Only through the narrowing of her energies to this physical feat can the artist achieve the artwork.

92 Chapter 4



69 Vlatka Horvat, *Unhinged (Lisbon) 05*, 2010.

There is the suggestion of a 'before' in which this decision was made, of which this action is an echo. Compounding this, the door is stylistically different to those of the venue. It has been brought from elsewhere. Perhaps it is a trap from which the body has yet to escape, or a problem it is grappling with, or a barrier it has clung to for protection. Is this a challenge, a limit reached, a perverse comfort? Antagonism and resilience are impossible to disentangle. With only hints of a narrative, the intentions of a wilful body are unknowable.

In her related series of collages, *Hybrids* (2008), Horvat grants arms, legs, torsos or whole bodies to a traffic cone, windows, a mixer tap, a pile of bricks, a lightbulb, a trombone, doors.... On the page, different black-and-white photographic sources are conflated, the creatures becoming credible single entities.