KINONIK

WR: MYSTERIES OF THE ORGANISM (1971)

Directed by Dusan Makavejev

WEDNESDAY June 10th 7PM

SATURDAY June 13th 2PM / 7PM



From his laboratory in Rangeley Wilhelm Reich pointed sheet-metal tubes at the sky and claimed he could draw the sexual energy of the universe out of the atmosphere. He lined wooden boxes with steel wool and sat patients inside them to absorb it. In 1956, the FDA burned six tons of his publications in a New York incinerator; the following year he died in federal prison, charged with contempt of court for refusing to stop building the boxes. Out of this and other material Dušan Makavejev collaged a comedic delirium that skewered psychiatry and soviet Marxism at the same time. It’s either a work of heresy or genius depending on who you ask.

Makavejev belonged to the Black Wave — the Yugoslav filmmakers of the 1960s and early '70s who registered fractures in Tito's federal project that the political class could not yet afford to name. Brotherhood and Unity was still the official language, and the Non-Aligned Movement was a going concern. The films weren't predicting the dissolution so much as they were symptomatic of it.

Makavejev built his narrative and argument through intercutting juxtapositions. Stalin's state funeral is spliced against an erection; Reich's cloudbusters scan the Maine sky with the earnestness of a man who believes the cosmos owes him an answer; in Belgrade, a young communist named Milena stands on her balcony delivering speeches about revolutionary orgasm to her neighbors. Nothing here is sorted into a hierarchy of seriousness because Makavejev's whole point (maybe) is that the sorting is the pathology: each system which promises liberation begins by telling you which desires are permitted and which ones aren't. Naturally, the systems unsettled by the film promptly banned it. Those willing to look directly in the mirror and laugh will recognize this a artist at the peak of his talent.