

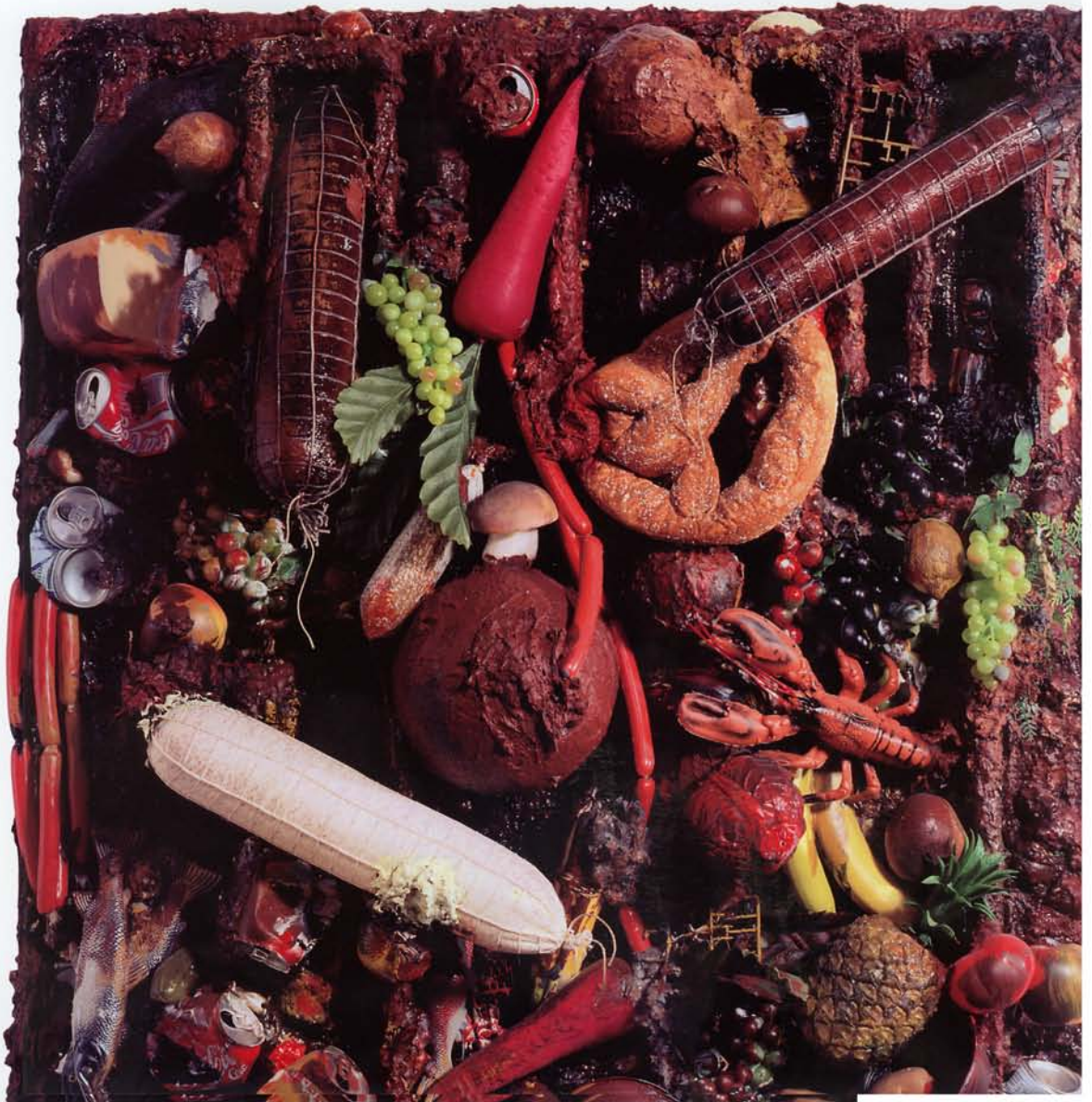


Marina Abramovic
Artforum
January 2010

ARTFORUM

JANUARY 2010 I N T E R N A T I O N A L

WINTER PREVIEW
ANNE TRUITT
LYNDA BENGLIS
JOHN MILLER



\$10.00





Marina Abramovic
Artforum
January 2010



Marina Abramovic and Ulay in *Imponderabilia*, 1977. Photo: Peter Lindbergh. Courtesy: Marina Abramovic

Marina Abramovic: The Artist Is Present
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK
Curated by Rena Stemenova

I FIRST ENCOUNTERED Marina Abramovic in 1979. We had been invited to perform for a video art symposium produced by Spanish television. And I remember thinking at the time that if she was as brave as her performance made me, then I would like to try it myself. She had a very simple, almost naive, way of doing it. We both happened to be in London, so we met for tea, and we each chose a table. She picked a rectangular one, and I picked a round one. She had a rectangular tablecloth and I had a round tablecloth. She had a rectangular tablecloth and I had a round tablecloth. She had a rectangular tablecloth and I had a round tablecloth. She had a rectangular tablecloth and I had a round tablecloth.

OF ALL THE PERFORMERS I have worked with, Marina is the one who has always been most thought-provoking to me. Most of her performances have been about presence and absence, and she has always been very open to the audience. I have always been interested in communication of performance. We never even, and I think experiencing these can have a profound effect on the relationship between people.

PIERCE CEASED in 1980, when two people took sides, fighting it out. The performance was about presence and absence, and she has always been very open to the audience. I have always been interested in communication of performance. We never even, and I think experiencing these can have a profound effect on the relationship between people.

Previews
Three times a year Artforum
takes a look at the coming
season. The following survey
previews forty shows opening
around the world between
January and April.

AT THE MUSEUM OF PERFORMANCE, we have an exhibit... of about a dozen or so performances. It is a museum where every... work represents a bridge between these periods.

IN MANY WAYS, our sculptural material was Marina herself... but body. During the process of making the work, Marina... me with her hair and her spirit for the audience. Every... deep understanding. Of course, she had a mind to do it. We would be looking for a mirror for her, trying to be... thing.

IF PERFORMERS are not... Marina herself... but body. During the process of making the work, Marina... me with her hair and her spirit for the audience. Every... deep understanding. Of course, she had a mind to do it. We would be looking for a mirror for her, trying to be... thing.



Marina Abramovic Artforum January 2010



Previews

Three times a year *Artforum* looks ahead to the coming season. The following survey previews forty shows opening around the world between January and April.

Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK
March 14–May 31
Curated by Klaus Biesenbach

I FIRST ENCOUNTERED MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ in 1989. We had been asked to collaborate for a video art series produced by Spanish television. And I remember thinking at the time that if she was as brave as her performances indicated, then of course she would want to work with someone she didn't know. We both happened to be in London, so we met for tea, and we each chose a cake: She picked a rectangular one, I picked a round one, and I thought, "This is perfect—we are opposites in so many ways; this could be interesting."

The result was a six-minute video piece titled *SSS*. Marina said it was the most baroque thing she had ever made; her previous videos had been single shots with no internal edits. But for me, it was the most minimal thing I'd ever done.

OF ALL THE PERFORMERS I have worked with, Marina is the one who has always been most strongly part of the art world. Most of her performances have been shown in galleries and art spaces; likewise, her sculptures, videos, and photographs derive much of their power from their link to performance. And so it seems particularly appropriate that her upcoming retrospective [including about fifty of these pieces] would be in a museum.

Revisiting historical performances in museums is a tricky thing, of course. For me, the best performances come out of a particular artist's need to perform at a particular time and in a particular context. I don't think they can be performed again and have the same meaning and impact. On the other hand, I have always been interested in reconstructions of performances I've never seen, and I think experiencing these can have educational value.

I understand that in Marina's upcoming show at the Museum of Modern Art there will be several "reperformances," in which live actors (chosen by Marina) reenact pieces in a gallery. The choice of works does seem to have resulted from a process of discrimination, featuring those that are perhaps less dependent on the relationship between specific performers [such as *Relation in Time*, 1977, in which two people are connected by their long hair, tied together, and *Point of Contact*, 1980, where two people touch index fingers]. A work like *Rest Energy*, 1980, in which two people face each other, holding a bow with its arrow pointed directly at one performer's heart, wouldn't survive reperformance as well. (She originally performed this with her collaborator and partner at the time, Ulay.)

IF THE HALLMARK OF PERFORMANCE was once its evanescence, its inability to be captured, then we have gone from an age of almost no documentation to a moment when every performance is recorded in some way, and that documentation is often conceived of as part of the performance. Marina's work represents a bridge between these periods.

Indeed, the next piece I worked on with Marina—*The Biography*, 1992—included her own reperformance of many of her previous works, a kind of live anthology. But after that we did *Delusional* together in 1994, which involved very little recapitulation. It was an elaborate multimedia solo performance for Marina; we constructed a large glass stage that was covered by fabric in the first part of the show, during which Marina danced and then laid on a bed of ice. In the second part, Marina (wearing a cumbersome costume designed by Leigh Bowery) slowly uncovered the stage, revealing four hundred live rats that had been hiding underneath. We also incorporated video—we'd gone to Serbia in the middle of the Bosnian war and shot video of her mother and her father, an amazing experience that injected some biographical and personal material into the piece. But there's no real record of *Delusional* beyond a few photographs; I didn't film it at the time because I considered it a work in progress. So it was a purely theatrical experience for me—and being a filmmaker, it was such a pleasure to be able to make immediate adjustments to the primary material. Unlike making a film, making a performance is intensely sculptural.

In many ways, our sculptural material was Marina herself, her body. During the process of making the work, Marina was absolutely open and willing to try anything. She floored me with her bravery and her appetite for the unknown. Every day we got up and had breakfast and went to the studio, just trying things and rehearsing them, building up endurance for the actual performance. Of course, she tried to train me, too: We would sit looking into a mirror for an hour, trying not to blink. "It's just willpower," she would say.

At MOMA, Marina will be premiering a work [*The Artist Is Present*] that will be a daily ritual: She's going to be in the museum every day, all day, sitting at a table, and any visitor can come and sit there for as long as they want. And of course she wants to film the entire thing, all 586 hours. She has always been deeply interested in these extremes between simple actions and high drama, particularly opera: I've often thought she wanted to be Maria Callas. In many ways, she has succeeded.

—Charles Atlas