

RA

Royal Academy of Arts

Marina Abramović

Press Release

Marina Abramović

Main Galleries

23 September 2023 – 1 January 2024

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The Royal Academy of Arts presents the first major solo survey in the UK of the work of internationally acclaimed Serbian performance artist and Honorary Royal Academician, Marina Abramović (b. 1946). In a career that spans over five decades, Abramović has propelled performance art from its experimental beginnings to the mainstream. The exhibition, arranged in close collaboration with the artist, provides an overview of her extraordinary practice with photographs, videos, objects and installations. It features four of Abramović's iconic performance pieces, which are reperformed by performance artists live in the galleries. Three of these performances are being reperformed in the UK for the first time: *Imponderabilia*, 1977, *Nude with Skeleton*, 2002, and *The House with the Ocean View*, 2002.

Originally trained as a painter at the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade, Marina Abramović turned to performance in the early 1970s and established the hallmarks of her practice: every day actions ritualised through repetition and endurance. She is a pioneer in using the live body in her work and has consistently tested the limits of her own physical and mental tolerance. Abramović has continued to navigate a space between the personal and the social, the conceptual and the existential, the physical and the spiritual. From 1975–88, Abramović collaborated with her then partner, the German artist Ulay, exploring male and female dualities. Returning to solo performances in 1989, the artist further tested boundaries with the creation of performative objects, performances to camera and audience participation.

The exhibition opens with *Public Participation*, featuring two works in which Abramović famously engaged directly with her audience: from the radical physical interaction of *Rhythm 0*, 1974 to the quiet stillness of *The Artist is Present*, 2010. Held 36 years apart, the two works encapsulate the development of her practice. Following on, *The Communist Body* foregrounds Abramović's origins in the former Yugoslavia and how Communist ideals, experienced socially as well as personally, have informed her practice. Works featured here include *Rhythm 5*, 1974 (London, Lisson Gallery) and *The Hero*, 2001. The artist has spoken of the Balkan mind as 'baroque', in reference to what she describes as dramatic extremes of expression and emotion. Also included is *Balkan Baroque*, 1997, a work related to the Balkan wars of the 1990s.

Body Limits brings together Abramović's key early performances, presented through video and photographs. Some focus on the use of her body and her physical stamina, while others represent a search for transformative release. Featured is Abramović's work with Ulay, an intense exploration of human relations, including *Imponderabilia*, 1977, which is reperformed. The next section, *Absence of the Body* focuses on the break-up of Abramović and Ulay's relationship and feature *The Lovers*, *Great Wall Walk*, 1988, a ritualised separation where the artists walked for 90 days across the Great Wall of China from opposite ends, meeting briefly before going their separate ways. During the Great Wall Walk Abramović became fascinated by the mythology of the wall, that it was built along the earth's energy lines, and by her study of Chinese and Tibetan medicine. This gave rise to a series of Transitory Objects, displayed in *Energy from Nature*, with which Abramović sought to give shape to nature's energy flows. The surfaces of the objects are polished through use, bearing witness to the passage of bodies in time.

In *Coming and Going*, Abramović equates the ephemerality of performance art with the transitory nature of our own lives. Inspired by Tibetan monks' practice of sleeping alongside the dead, *Nude with Skeleton*, 2002, is reperformed here. Also featured is *Four Crosses*, 2019, which refers to the language of Slavic icons. Art making is a way of life for Abramović, and in using her own body as her medium she has literally lived her life through her work. Through her experiences of different cultures, Abramović became interested in how feats of endurance act as vehicles towards a mental leap of faith, a transcendence that goes beyond one's own physical limitations. The final galleries focus on the transformative experience of performance art and equating this with different spiritual traditions, particularly giving shape to female spirituality, such as *Bed for Aphrodite and her Lovers*, 1990. Works are increasingly still, including *Luminosity*, 1997, which is reperformed. Abramović said: "I call it liquid knowledge. When the body is exhausted you reach a point where the body doesn't exist anymore. Your connection with a universal knowledge is so acute, there is a state of luminosity."

The exhibition concludes with *The House with the Ocean View* being reperformed. First performed by Abramović in 2002, she lived continuously for 12 days in a 'home' of only three spaces in the Sean Kelly Gallery in New York. Abramović fasted by only drinking water, while ritualising everyday actions to the bare conditions of living. Audiences were invited to witness it on the condition that they didn't speak but established an energy dialogue with the artist. Held a year after 9/11, the work created a collective vigil.

Live performance schedule*

The live performances in the exhibition will be reperformed by performance artists cast and trained by the Marina Abramović Institute. royalacademy.org.uk/page/marina-abramovic-reperformances

- *Imponderabilia*, 1977
Daily, approx. 1 hour per performance
4-6 performances each day
- *Nude with Skeleton*, 2002
Daily, approx. 2 hours per performance
2-3 performances each day
- *Luminosity*, 1997
23 September-4 October, 16 October- 20 November, 3-5 December, 18 December-1 January
Approx. 30 minutes per performance

3-4 performances each day

- *The House with the Ocean View*, 2002
5-16 October: Performed by Elke Luyten
21 November-2 December: Performed by Kira O'Reilly
6-17 December: Performed by Amanda Coogan
Performed continuously over 12 days, 24 hours per day

Performances will end no later than half an hour before closing time. There will be breaks between performances which will vary from 30 minutes to 2.5 hours.

**The performance schedule is subject to change.*

Performance artists

Alessio Bagiardì, Darcey Ball, Mads Bittmann, Antonio Branco, Tina Afiyan Breiova, Lorea Burge, CARU, Seamus Casey, Marie Close, Jia-Yu Chang-Corti, Valerie Ebuwa, Chiara Marini Ferretti, Emma Fischer, Agata Flaminika, Jose Funnell, Rowena Gander, Agnes Luck Galpin, Rob Hesp, Bartel Jespers, Benjamin Jordan, Francesca Kamil, Katarzyna, Kuzka, Lidia Lidia, Sara Maurizi, Hannah Mason, Duarte Pinho E Melo, Loren McK, Kieram Corrin Mitchell, Mateusz Piekarski, Olia Poliakova, Yuyu Rau, Mahsa Salali, Laura Schuller, Leonardo Sinopoli, Agnieszka, Szczotka, Madinah Farhannah Thompson, Jaya Twill, Rosalie Wahlfrid and Kam Wan.

Marina Abramović Biography

royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/name/marina-abramovic-hon-ra

Organisation

Exhibition organised by the Royal Academy of Arts, London, in close collaboration with the artist. The exhibition is curated by Andrea Tarsia, Director of Exhibitions, Royal Academy of Arts.

Accompanying Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with texts by Karen Archey, Adrian Heathfield, Svetlana Racanović, Andrea Tarsia and Devin Zuber.

Dates and Opening Hours

Dates: Saturday 23 September 2023 – Monday 1 January 2024
10am – 6pm Tuesday to Sunday
10am – 9pm Friday

Admission

From £23; concessions available; under 16s go free ([T&Cs apply](#)); Friends of the RA go free.
[25 & Under](#): 16 to 25 year olds can access a half-price ticket ([T&Cs apply](#)).

Tickets

Advance booking with pre-booked timed tickets is recommended for everyone, including Friends of the RA. Tickets can be booked in advance online (royalacademy.org.uk) or over the phone (0207 300 8090).

Images

Publicity images for *Marina Abramović*, can be downloaded via this [link](#).

Installation images for *Marina Abramović*, can be downloaded via this [link](#).

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Marina Abramović

Royal Academy of Arts, London, 23 September 2023 – 1 January 2024

Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Netherlands, 16 March – 14 July 2024

Kunsthaus Zürich, Switzerland, October 2024 – February 2025

Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel, March – August 2025

Kunstforum Wien, Austria, 2 October 2025 – 18 January 2026

Marina Abramović UK projects

Marina Abramović Institute Takeover, at the Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, 4 – 8 October 2023

7 Deaths of Maria Callas, at the English National Opera, London Coliseum, London, 3 – 11 November 2023

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BNP Paribas AccessArt25

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"The Nature of Diamonds" exhibit at Tokyo's National Science Museum and part of the permanent collection of the Fashion in Menswear Exhibition at LACMA. CHROME HEARTS® has thirty-three stores globally including the US, France, Japan and Taiwan and can be found in the most exclusive boutiques around the world including Bergdorf Goodman in NY and Selfridges in London.

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About the Royal Academy of Arts

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by King George III in 1768. It has a unique position in being an independent, privately funded institution led by eminent artists and architects whose purpose is to be a clear, strong voice for art and artists. Its public programme promotes the creation, enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate.

The Royal Academy is an independent charity. It does not receive revenue funding from the government so is reliant upon the support of its visitors, donors, sponsors, patrons and loyal Friends.

For public information, please print: 020 7300 8090 or www.royalacademy.org.uk

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