

# Marina abramovic



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## Introduction

From the initial stages of Marina Abramovic's career that started in the 1970s while in Belgrade, she has been on the fore front in performance as a visual art form. The first of her initial performances in the early '70s were not documented at all. This is due to the notion she had no documentation of whatever genre could be used as a substitute for the actual real performance on stage, be they video coverage or even photos. They strongly had in mind the idea of leaving the real performance experience on stage embedded in the larger audience who viewed the performed arts. This can be backed by Phelan Peggy in her book *Unmarked* (1993) which she notes that a performance's life is only in the present and once a performance is saved, documented, recorded, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representation of representations, it ceases to become a performance and becomes something other than performance. She reckoned that the real act would leave a major impact on the audience and captivate them even more than the documented work.

Despite this significant observation that there is a great difference in the actual performed art and the documented art, there is a certain significance in the relation of the two. Since the performance has a likelihood of being repeated, documentation comes in very handy for reviewing and correcting on the mistakes made in order to make it more appealing. An actual performance of an act and a documented one can however be identified with ease. There is also a relation between the actual performance and the documented performance supplement each other mutually.

To this end, she has been described as one among the defining artists radical performance she has risen above the ordinsry in the form's provocative origins and came up with some of the most important works in the genre of prfoming arts. Abramovic's durational practice continually experiments with, and explores the boundaries of, both her mental and physical endurance and that of her audience with her often uncompromising, challenging and often shockingacts. She examines the relationship between the performer and the audience using her body both as the subject and also the medium and in the process she withstands exhaustion, pain and danger in her search for conscious, emotional and liberating altering transformation.

#### Marina Abramovic's works

Some of Marina Abramovic's works include is Light/ Dark which she first perfomed in 1977 for a short period the later in 1978. Here, she partners with Ulay, and the act they do is slapping each other in the face continuously for a long time until one of them gives up. In this perfomance, their faces are brightly lit with strong lamps with the intention of giving the perfomance a big carravagesque setting. Though not meant for repetition, they replated this perfoance later on, but Marina comments that these perfomances were not planned for rehearsals, had no definite end and also these acts had no repetitions. In spite of this fact, it can be notedthat with each ensuing repetition, which can either be in the form of a re-enactment or documentation, a perfomative still remains that, a perfomative. Perfomtivity may also be interpreted as repeatability, reproducibility or even iterability. I would like to take this even further: every repetition, either as re-enactment or document, is performativeevent in itself. A perfomative character can thus

be represented in an image.. Performativity can also be understood as reproducibility, repeatability, iterability

Another of Marina Abramovic's performance acts is *The House with the Ocean View* in which she stars. Here, she tries out a performance act with very stringent conditions that she has set for herself and while doing this, she engages the audience very minimally as she needs the audience's silence to achieve her goals. Also in this act, she has set herself the rules of No talking and a target of establishing an energy dialogue with her audience! She goes on with this performance act for twelve days where there is no speaking nor eating. This act is set up on a platform that is five feet above the ground and surrounded by a white line that aims to prevent the audience from crossing over to her side and vice versa. She does this to cleanse herself from the external interferences to her act.

Marina Abramovic also did another performance act in the form of a story namely *Thomas Lips* which is also sometimes referred to as *The Lips of Thomas*, a performance she first did in 1975. The performance act generally is made up of a series of actions that seem to represent ritualistic procedures. Abramovic in this act begins by eating one kilogram of honey with a silver spoon finishing it. She then goes ahead and drinks a glass of red wine, breaking the glass with her right hand afterwards. At the end of the performance, she iconically finalizes her act by cutting a five-pointed star with a razor blade on her stomach, subsequently followed by events which are even more violent: whipping herself hard until she goes numb and subsequently lies down on a cross made of ice blocks. The cut star on her stomach that she made with a blade starts to bleed at the heat of a

suspended heater pointed at her stomach whereas the rest of the body freezes! The public intervenes by removing her from the ice bloccks where she had lay for about thiry minutes.

In yet of another Marina's pefomance arts, she coins them Rhythms in which she actually takes part in the events, some terrifying ones. For example, in Rhythm 2 showcased in 1974 brings out Marina Abramovic displaying the effects of medications of schizophrenia and catatonia. Here, she rolls over and over and grimaces in pain at the camera to show her anguish. In Rhythms 3, Ulay and Marina lying on the floor stare a starved python in the face for over three hourss. In Rhythms 5, she placed herself at the centre of a blazing wooden star and at some point he audience had to inervene and save her after her oxygen supply went down and she lost consciousness. Rhythms O sees her engage the audience to do anything to her with the objects that she had provided for them. These includes a pair of scissors, a loaded gun, knives, pens and an and a host axeof 72 other items! The perfomance act only stopped after the audience became too aggressive warranting the closing down of the act.

In Freeing the Voice perfomed in 1975, Marina Abramovic screams out in anguish to the extent that her her larynx falters bringing out a piercing melodrama that notes itself in the ear.

Her documented work in the form of pictures in the Museum shows her in partnership with Ulay are displayed. In one of her works, Rest Energy (1980) Marina is depicted gripping a bow with Ulay drawing back an arrow held in the bow. They are facing each other and the bow is tightly drawn. In this act,

tension is filled in the audience. The Lovers, also another of Marina's works in partnership with Ulay, see them walk along the Great Wall of China, from each end this was a representation of their life of what they had intended in their life, however their plans went wrong before they did the performance. It is a sign of lost love.

Another piece of art is where Abramovic and Ulay are portrayed in The Point of Contact, where they have their hair intertwined at the back and they are at a distance from each other. Enacted in 1980, this performance is a re-enactment of Relation in Time that was initially done in 1977 in which two people stand facing each other, bent over forwards with their hands barely touching the ground. Imponderabilia depicts two nude performers who are standing opposite and facing each other in a doorway, hence forcing the visitors to the entrance wishing to pass through it to squeeze themselves in between the small gap left in between them, facing either the male or the female character.

## Conclusions

Coined the grandmother of performed arts, Abramovic Marina has revolutionized this sector and gone ahead to involve herself in the actual performance. She has gone to the extent of using her body as a medium and engaging the audience in various instances. In some cases, intervention had to be brought either by the audience due to the conditions of the act or to prevent extensive and undesirable outcomes. However, she has portrayed the use of the body as a medium of performed arts is possible and documentation of some of her works are today exhibited in the major

Museums worldwide including the Guggenheim Museum in New York, The Museum of Modern Art in Oxford, The Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, at The Neue National Galerie in Berlin in 1993 and The Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven among others. Today, she is a renowned Professor and has received numerous awards.