

Marina Abramović

Her childhood and adolescent years

Born to revolutionary parents who were also war heroes in former Yugoslavia on November, 30, 1946 in Belgrade, Marina Abramović had a privileged upbringing both culturally and economically, due to her family members' esteemed positions within the post-revolutionary order of the country. Abramović lived with her grandmother until she was six years old, owing to her ill health throughout her first years, as well as her parents' demanding jobs. She was introduced to the rich cultural legacy, religious structure and spiritual beliefs in the Balkans during her stay with her grandmother. She developed her thoughts that would shape her artistic principles in the future, through the art lessons she has received in her adolescent years involving uncontrollable natural and physical processes, such as using materials other than painting, as well as cutting and burning.

Education

Abramović started experimenting with the painting medium aiming to bring to life non-object concepts such as violence and movement on canvas. She took part in student protests against the inequality in society and participated actively in the artistic efforts to bring life and art together in Student Cultural Center in Belgrade, which had opened as per the government's permission. She came together with a group of artists she shared artistic interests with and joined in their discussion regarding avant-garde figures such as Kazimir Malevich and Marcel Duchamp, more contemporaneously, Art Povera in Italy, Conceptual art in the U.S.A., and the social-mystical nexus of the German artist Joseph Beuys. She concurrently established contact with the prominent museums and art institutions via a black post box she implemented in her house in order to follow the artistic events happening in the rest of the world.

Artistic career and performance art

In 1971 an artist friend of Abramović taped over her whole body; an event marking her first performance. She increasingly went on to use the elements of sound, movement and viewer participation on her following works. In the following year, she received an invitation from the Edinburgh Festival, where she performed her iconic piece ***Rhythm 10*** (1973) in front of an audience including Joseph Beuys. Concurrently she started teaching art in Belgrade. Her following performances focusing on both the control and the loss of control of the body, such as ***Rhythm 0*** (1974), where she allowed herself to be manipulated by the viewer, and ***Rhythm 2*** and ***Rhythm 5*** of the same year, gradually turned her into a well-known figure in Yugoslavia and the rest of Europe.

Ulay (1975 - 1988)

Upon receiving an invitation to participate in a television program in Amsterdam in mid-1970s, she met the German artist Uwe Layspien also known as Ulay. Their personal and artistic relationship marked a turning point in their respective artistic production and they went on to perform radical pieces on the relationship between body and its surroundings around Europe. Their productive relationship evolved into performances such as ***Relation in Space*** (1976), where they collided with each other fully naked, ***Breathing In / Breathing Out*** (1977), where they shared their breath with each other and ***Impondereblia*** (1977), where they stood naked opposed to each other in the entrance to the art institution, obstructing the flow of visitors. Following their performances that stretched their limits both corporeally and spiritually, the duo travelled to Australia in 1980 to work with Aboriginals with a grant from the Australian

government. Influenced by the Aboriginals' mysticism and practices, they went after new discoveries regarding spirit, nature and body, which they incorporated into their performances. The stern nature of desert life enhanced Abramović's practices based on slowing down the time and disciplining her own body. In 1988, they decided to bring an end to both their personal relationship and artistic collaborations; celebrated this closure with their video-recorded performance piece **The Lovers**, a colossal work immortalizing both of the artists. The couple terminated their relationship as they met after walking from the opposite ends of the Great Wall of China for 90 days.

Solo works, the Marina Abramović Method and MAI

Following the closure of her personal and artistic relationship with Ulay, Abramović gradually incorporated spiritual elements in her art and started working with energizing semiprecious stones such as quartz and crystal. At this point of her career, she started amassing an archive consisting of the video and photographic documents of her previous works and continued developing participatory performance projects inviting viewers to a unique experience, through her work as an educator. She was awarded the Golden Lion at Venice Biennale with her performance piece **Balkan Baroque**, she continually cleaned a pile of animal bones as an elegy for her homeland's hard times. She moved to New York in 2000s and performed the piece *The House with the Ocean View* (2002) in Sean Kelly Gallery; she stayed in the gallery space for 12 days without leaving for vital necessities. This piece is a touchstone for Abramović's non-object artistic works complemented by the participation of the viewers. Having drawn a bridge towards viewers' expectation, curiosity and energy in *The House with the Ocean View*, Abramović's reputation and influence grew with *Seven Easy Pieces* performed at New York Guggenheim Museum in New York, consisting of seven re-performances. Her work ***The Artist is Present***, which she performed at New York MoMA in 2010, sitting across a table from the viewers for eight hours a day for three months, turned performance art a well-known discipline all around the world, and became a turning point in the artist's career. 850,000 people visited the exhibition.

In recent years Marina Abramović founded the Marina Abramović Institute (MAI), a platform carrying out the mission of researching, developing and presenting long durational performance works, as well as sharing Abramović's artistic legacy and experience through its collaboration with institutions and artists around the world.