

# Abramovic takes over MoMA with The Artist is Present and a selection of past works

Artist reveals plans for the longest performance of her  
career

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The title of next year's Marina Abramovic retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art is "The Artist is Present"—and for good reason: every minute the show is open to the public Ms Abramovic will be there, creating a piece that she says will be the longest of her career. In an act of enormous endurance, for nearly three months from March to May 2010, the 62-year-old artist will perform seven hours a day for five days a week and ten on Fridays (when the museum is open late), only resting on Tuesdays when MoMA is closed—586 hours in total.

The Art Newspaper can reveal that the new work will involve wooden shelves, each about the size of a desktop, mounted in a zig-zag pattern from the floor to around 50 feet high on the north wall of MoMA's towering atrium. Ladders connecting the shelves will have rungs made of upturned knife blades making ascent or descent impossible. Each day the public will arrive to find Ms Abramovic positioned on one of the platforms—a crane will have hoisted her into place before the gallery opened—and she will remain there until after the museum has closed. The entire performance will be recorded on high definition video so that it may be virtually re-staged.

Audiences will recline on chaises longues equipped with telescopes to enable close inspection of the performer. The artist will have no food or water, no

seat or cushion, no television or iPod, but may incorporate other objects, yet to be determined. She will not have access to a toilet and may at times appear nude. And with no balustrades on the narrow shelves, a safety cord is likely to be employed to ensure Ms Abramovic does not unwittingly enact her final performance in a moment of unsteadiness. Asked how she feels about heights, the artist replies: “I don’t know how it feels to be up there, and I don’t want to try. Performance is not about trying. Performance is, they put you there and you deal with the situation.”

Positioned on the uppermost shelf when the exhibition opens, the artist will then move one level down, continuing to descend at regular intervals until, by the end of the exhibition, she is on the ground. “It represents a biographical and spiritual journey of an artist,” she explains, referring to “the idea of the descending of ego. Artists build themselves into kind of stars,” Ms Abramovic continues. “I like the idea of starting at the top and at the end I’m the same level as the public, very open and vulnerable. That’s very important to me.”

Meanwhile, in the sixth-floor galleries, photographs and videos will chronicle the artist’s evolution from conceptual work in her native Yugoslavia in the early 1970s, to her 12-year partnership with the West German performance artist Ulay (Uwe Laysiepen) and more recent work. Four pieces—three originally done with Ulay—will be re-performed continuously by a rota of other artists: *Imponderabilia* (1977), in which a male and female stand nude facing one another in a doorway through which museum visitors squeeze past; *Relation in Time* (1977), for which a couple sit back to back with their hair tied together for the entire day; *Nightsea Crossing* (1981-87), consisting of a man and a woman sitting motionless facing each other across a table; and *Luminosity* (1998), in which a woman appears to levitate naked against a wall while slowly moving her arms. In addition, the artist will narrate guided audio tours, not only of the exhibition but the accompanying catalogue. Organised by curator Klaus Biesenbach, the show promises to revolutionise the way performance art is presented in a museum context.

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