

# Marina Abramovic

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- *Could this have been anyone else's drama you had been performing?*

-No, definitely not, because I really integrate my work in my life, my life in my work. The collaboration with Ulay was very strong. The big problem for me, was when we split, how to find my way out of it. Also there was so much pain, I needed to have the distance. A friend once said to me: Why don't you make a performance of it. And then I had this idea for a long time, the idea: how to split up. Then there was this idea, let's play my life, straight to the point, that it was really open. Not only to show these limits of body, but in a mental and physical way, also to show the humour in it. To ridicule myself. Before, there were those radical statements, with him it was this romantic relation, unification of energy and also to transform the normal relation into a kind of thing, which everybody can take as an example. We were an example for many relationships, not just as our private relationship, but we wanted to externalise this as a universal problem, and at one point in private life, we could not do that, everything collapsed and I was thinking of it as a failure and I was very ashamed that we could not continue and then I found the distance to find my way out and finally, after all these years, I could make such a biography. When I did it in Kassel at the Documenta, people were almost shocked of the intimacy and how many intimate things I say. I see myself as a public figure and I see myself to have a private life and the other life is art.

- *But don't you think that with this concept you correspond to a wellknown female role model. All the image you create in this piece are all role models.*

- But in my case there are many different models, because in the first part I hurt myself, I cut the star in my stomach, I play with the knives. Everytime I make a model I wreck it through a different model. So I show the multi-possibilities.

I found out that I'm all of these. Because before, I made the radical choice to be really an artist, to have short hair and dress in a certain way that would get respect from people, all these clichés people have about female artists. And only after I was forty years old did I find out that actually I like to be glamorous. I love to use make up, I love fashion clothes, and I also like to go to the desert, or live with aborigines, These are contradictions from one situation to another and humour in it, all this is me. From my point of view, this is courage that finally I admit that to myself.

-*The last image is where you are now, and this image doesn't have a surface anymore, it's a show for the public but doesn't include them anymore.*

- On one side, on the other side in my sculptural work, what I do there is actually open to others. A state of mind which I already went through. so I created these transitory objects. It's all for them, for the public, it can be touched. Now I withdraw, that's true, but in the performances there is another direction. Before it was Ulay and me and this sort of magnetic contact. Now everything is closer to others. All my work is touchable. It's the bridge to the people. I demand from them the experience not just to watch, but to integrate in the work. The objects don't exist by themselves, they only exist if they get used by the public, that's why I call them transitory. This is the contact, which I create through the objects.

-*The last image in the performance, which is then your latest performance*

-The last image which ends my piece is a bronze pillow, representing the past, this is gaining a distance from the past. And I create this for ending the biography and from there to start a new period.

- *In his travels through Italy Stendhal writes that when he had been to Naples, where he often saw a short pantomime, when in society a woman gets asked what she would do if her lover were to betray her. And then the girl as a pantomime would pull out a knife and make as if she would stab him. And he writes how very much more amusing the responses to this question would be in a Salon in Paris. In Naples there only*

*existed this stereotype. You are also using stereotypic behaviours. Do you see this as a general poor-ness.*

- It must be personal how people deal with that. To me the sculptural work is as important as the performance work, then I don't again divide as much. In the sculptural work I'm open to others, as I have not been before. And the Diva in the performance, I'm ridiculing myself, and it's a lot of humour, I find Bye, Bye Ulay extremely funny, saying this Bye, bye is like therapy, to really get rid of it in a humorous way, of that past.

*-You are using the form of drama.*

- Drama I love it

*-Which has a female option*

- And I feel very female. I'm very interested in putting female energy into my new work. what before I was not, because it's something. The images of the woman artists, there is another stereotype, they are not glamorous, they are just absolutely opposite. Tough girls, and I'm totally opposite to this. Rita hayworth hair, Chanel clothes, I don't care. It's incredible how strong you can be in this image too, because then they don't expect you to act. You shock people by that. Because the thing before, the star and knives and pistols and then I arrive in connecting this images through my work.

*-There is a text by Baudrillard in the latest Lettre, the sexual illusion, which says that women differe more from men, then men from women.*

- I think there is an amazing strength in this feminity, admitting that to yourself, playing with that. I didn't know that you can do things like that before. I hated the theater situation, the stage. I'm 46, twenty years of work and it is only in the last five years that I get into the other side. And I really enjoy, that you are actually allowed to do everything. Before, I had my own restrictions in many ways. I think collaboration with Charles (Atlas) is very beautiful. He comes from New York, another culture and we are very different, but I found out through him, everything is possible, and I didn't have that before, I was restricted, I thought an artist must have one language, you should not mix. But I'm going to do more outragous things now, I don't feel an obstacle. With Ulay there existed such a situation, a lot of compromising. Sometimes I felt stronger in the relation, then it was in the work. I always pushed these strengths down to make it equal.

At first the performance was defined that people really sit and in the maximum sevenhundred people, everybody seated. It's like a theater piece. You should really go through this different stages. We told the organizer that there was no way without the seats and not only put the seats but to make the level. And then there is the difference if you are a performer or a theatre artist to deal with three thousand people. It was so restless, the people could not see, there was no concentration. And then when this last image came, really people got quiet. And I felt, really, huh, I could do this. Performances in the seventies you dealt with twenty people thirty, hundred.

There was a lot of agression in the first part. And I like to be in front of the audience and see how I can receive their energy and transform it and give them back. That's all what is about performance. How to transform the energy. Performance is you enter in your own mental and physical construction and then you are in another space in time and you have to make the public enter in that space too.