

Marina Abramović

Marina Abramović (Serbian Cyrillic: Марина Абрамивић, Serbo-Croatian pronunciation: [ma.riːna ab'raːmɔvić]; born November 30, 1946) is a Serbian performance artist based in New York.^[1] Her work explores the relationship between performer and audience, the limits of the body, and the possibilities of the mind. Active for over three decades, Abramović has been described as the “grandmother of performance art.” She pioneered a new notion of identity by bringing in the participation of observers, focusing on “confronting pain, blood, and physical limits of the body.”^[2]

1 Early life and education



At the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010

Abramović was born in Belgrade, Serbia on November 30, 1946. Her great uncle was Patriarch Varnava of the Serbian Orthodox Church.^[3] Both of her parents were Yugoslav Partisans^[4] during the Second World War. Her mother was Danica Rosi and her father was Vojin Abramović.^[5] After the war, Abramović's parents were “national heroes” and were given positions in the post-war Yugoslavian government.^[5] In an interview, Abramović described her family as having been “Red bourgeoisie.”^[5]

Until she was six years old, Abramović was raised by her grandparents.^[6] Her grandmother was deeply religious and Abramović “spent my childhood in a church following my grandmother's rituals – candles in the morning, the priest coming for different occasions.”^[6] At age six, when

Abramović's brother was born, she began living with her parents and took piano, French, and English lessons.^[6] While she did not take art lessons, she took an early interest in art^[6] and enjoyed painting as a child.^[5]

As a child, Abramović's mother beat her.^[5] In an interview published in 1998, Abramović described how her “mother took complete military-style control of me and my brother. I was not allowed to leave the house after 10 o'clock at night till I was 29 years old. ... [A]ll the performances in Yugoslavia I did before 10 o'clock in the evening because I had to be home then. It's completely insane, but all of my cutting myself, whipping myself, burning myself, almost losing my life in the firestar, everything was done before 10 in the evening.”^[7]

In an interview published in 2013, Abramović said, “My mother and father had a terrible marriage.”^[8] Describing an incident when her father smashed 12 champagne glasses and left the house, she said, “It was the most horrible moment of my childhood.”^[8]

She was a student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade from 1965 to 1970. She completed her post-graduate studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, SR Croatia in 1972. From 1973 to 1975, she taught at the Academy of Fine Arts at Novi Sad, while implementing her first solo performances.

From 1971 to 1976, she was married to Neša Paripović. In 1976, she went to Amsterdam to perform a piece (later claiming on the day of her birthday)^[9] then decided to move there permanently.

2 Career

2.1 *Rhythm 10*, 1973

In her first performance in Edinburgh 1973,^[10] Abramović explored elements of ritual and gesture. Making use of twenty knives and two tape recorders, the artist played the Russian game, in which rhythmic knife jabs are aimed between the splayed fingers of one's hand. Each time she cut herself, she would pick up a new knife from the row of twenty she had set up, and record the operation. After cutting herself twenty times, she replayed the tape, listened to the sounds, and tried to repeat the same movements, attempting to replicate the mistakes, merging past and present. She set out to explore the physical and mental limitations of the body – the pain and the sounds of the stabbing;