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Editors. "Legend. Icon. Performing Grandmother. Who is Marina Abramović?"
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LEGEND. ICON. PERFORMING GRANDMOTHER. WHO IS MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ?



Documentation of "Rhythm 0" presented at the Center for Contemporary Art in Toruń / Source: tvn24

There were 72 items on the table, including a knife, a scalpel, pins, a chain and a loaded weapon. The audience had six hours, she could do anything with her. As time approached, Abramović was bloody, half-naked and with tears in her eyes. Then someone grabbed the weapon. She decided to risk that only later.

The Toruń Center for Contemporary Art will present the exhibition "Do czysta" from Friday, which goes through all of Europe. The project, consisting of more than a hundred works by Marina Abramović – one of the most striking contemporary artists – is the largest retrospective of her work so far shown on the Old Continent.

The exhibition aroused protests from Catholic circles that alert the satanic vernissage and organize rosary prayers. On Friday, about 100 people prayed around the museum building in Toruń. The protest in the form of a prayer was organized by the Rosary crusade for the homeland.

– We are against the fact that our national money is being wasted on such shame, insulting the cross. It hurts Polish Catholics in this way and especially for sick people. What is this? Lay the dragon with the cross? People died for him – protesters argued.

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Protest of members of the Rosary Crusade before entering the Center for Contemporary Art "Znaki Czasu" in Toruń / Source: JUSTYNA ROJEK / EAST NEWS

Earlier, the artist's exhibition took the distance from the Ministry of Culture and the National Heritage, which stated in a special announcement that it did not fund the event.

Who is the artist, whose works are among the most important collections of exhibition institutions in the world and which evoke so much controversy in Poland?

"I was all bruised"

"I come from a dark place, from post-war Yugoslavia from the mid-1940s to the mid-1970s," says Abramović. She published them in the book & # 39; Defeat the Wall & # 39; ;. Dark was not just Yugoslavia's time of Josip Broz-Tito, in which her parents, Danica and Vojin Abramovici, were war heroes and representatives of the so-called red bourgeoisie. Her youth was also dark and her house was raised.

Marina's mother, Danica, came from a well-to-do house and her uncle was the patriarch of the Serbian church of Barnabas. During the Second World War she joined the communist guerrilla movement and became a major. Father, Vojin, came from an arm, but – as Marina remembers – a heroic family. During the war, the parents of Abramovic saved each other's lives and started their romance. After the war, my father was a close associate of Tito and her mother also became an important person in the Communist Party, which made them abound. They occupied a flat with a few rooms, which at that time was a rarity in Belgrade. The romance between Danica and Vojin ended in a marriage, but the passion passed with the birth of Marina. Father, an extremely handsome man,

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began to get problems with loyalty. Danica frustrated and discharged her anger at the little Marina.



"To clean" by Marina Abramović in the Center for Contemporary Art Znaki Czasu in Toruń / Video: tvn24

Marina's relationship with her mother was difficult from the start. Literally. She was born as a premature baby the day after the first anniversary of communist Yugoslavia (November 30, 1946). The postpartum part of the placenta in the uterus left the mother sepsis. Danica spent almost a year in the hospital. The grandmother, mother of mother, took care of the marina during this time and it stayed that way longer. Abramović has repeatedly said that if it had not been for her grandmother, she would not have known love in a family; in memories she appears as a fascinating but also very pious woman. On the one hand she went to church with great zeal and prepared Christmas, which was forbidden in Yugoslavia at the time, and on the other she believed in the magic of dreams and taught the little Marina to interpret them. She passed her coffee grounds.

She returned to her parents as a six-year-old after the arrival of her younger brother, Velimir. He does not mention it properly. "New guards, house and brother – all at once, almost immediately I felt unhappy," he writes.

Memories from childhood are also brutal corporal punishment that her mother or mother sister, Ksenia, met her. "I was often punished for the slightest offenses, almost always physically – throbbing, slapping or slamming. (...) They hit a sour apple, I was completely bruised", he reports in the book. As she emphasized, my father never beat her.

– I never thought we were a family, I did not feel affection for them. I felt emptiness, that's why I searched for love among the audience, something I could fill this void with – Abramović admits in an interview with TVN24 Magazine.

As a teenager she was full of complexes – too thin, with a huge nose. "I considered myself the ugliest child in school, besides being unusually ugly, I was tall and slim, so I was called a Giraffe," writes Abramović. Moreover, she was

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wearing ugly thick glasses and orthopedic shoes, and her mother did not buy her clothes as their peers. Despite the fact that they belonged to wealthy families, Danica did a modest, neat appearance of her daughter.

Their difficult relationship took a long time. Even when she graduated and was already married, she still lived with her mother and grandmother (my father left Danica when Marina was a teenager). She always had to come home before the 22nd. The mother, who was a prominent Communist Party activist, tried to control her life almost completely. Marina, still in high school, was looking for a way to free himself from this regime. She found the way to freedom in art.

Marina was looking for all the ways to experience the life of her peers. I lost my virginity only at the age of 24. And I organized everything for the first time because I was beginning to worry that something was wrong with me. But I had to make an appointment with my friend in the morning because I could not. I had to be home by 22:00. It could not be done normally, as it was with other people. I had to keep everything secret. We practiced sex in the parks, in the cinema – says the artist in an interview with TVN24.



One of the first paintings of Marina Abramović, presented in Toruń / Source: tvn24

She completed her artistic studies in Zagreb. After her return to Belgrade (1971), she married a friend, slightly older than Nesa Paripapović. She was an important member of the 70 group, which, after the wave of the revolution that flew through Europe in 1968, founded the student culture center in Belgrade. Here she reached for new experimental artistic means, she slowly walked away from the painting she was studying. As she says, in her life she tried to escape from her mother and Belgrade, and in art – escape from her one-dimensionality.

– After the death of my mother, I found her diary and letters in which she described how much she loved me. It was an overwhelming revelation for me. In my youth, my mother seemed a cold, loveless, incredibly cruel person. However, it was her way to prepare for life, to make me stronger – Abramović said in a conversation with the German "Die Zeit" in 2016.

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"Then I realized that the public could kill"

In 1973 she received an invitation to Edinburgh, where she surprised the world for the first time. She presented the first work from the cycle "Rhythm" – "Rhythm 10". It was an action in which she used the motif drunken game: on the table a hand spread with fingers and as quickly as possible a knife edge in between. Abramović rolled out a piece of white paper on which she knelt and spread ten knives. She started the action, used all the tools in turn and the associated groaning of pain when she hurt – she took it. "Fear and pain are gone, I have become a marina that I have never known before" – remembers the first strong experience.



Documentation of "Rytm 10" presented at the Center for Contemporary Art Znaki Czasu in Toruń / Source: tvn24

These were moments when the performance was not taken seriously and was dominated by men. In one of her conversations Abramović drew attention to the fact that during the first four decades of her career the performance was not even included in the visual arts.

A year after "Rytm 10" more works from this series were made. In "Rhythm 5" the title five was a reference to the five-pointed communist star, shown in two ways: as a wooden construction on the floor with a diameter of 4.5 meters and as an incision on the belly of the artist. During the performance, Abramović distributed the wood chips in the chipped star and poured them with gasoline. She set fire to everything, put the cut nails and hair into the fire and then lay down in the star, spreading her legs and arms so that her body would also create a symbolic shape. As she says, she does not remember much. She lost consciousness after the fire consumed all the oxygen around her head. "Rhythm 5" in the artist later aroused anger because she lost control of herself.

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Her most famous action, however, was Rhythm 0. This time for six hours she became one of the objects that the public had to deal with in the exhibition. She stopped, 72 things on the table for her, including a jar of honey, a rose, a lipstick, a pair of scissors, a bottle of wine, bread, a scalpel and a rifle loaded with one bullet. Viewers could do anything with the artist. The purpose of this activity was to investigate what the public can do. Initially, people who watched the artist treated a little distance. Someone gave her a rose from time to time, wrapped her in a scarf and kissed her. After three hours they started to move the borders dangerously. Someone had her with a pin, someone poured a glass of water over his head, someone put a loaded pistol in her hand, someone cut the skin around his neck. After six hours the director of the gallery finished the execution. "Then I realized that the public could kill," says Marina. Historians have recognized "Rhythm 0" as one of the most important representations in history.



Documentation of the reconstructed version of the "Mond Thomas" version from 2005 / Source: tvn24

In the following months, two more important works by Abramović were created: "Art must be beautiful / Artist must be beautiful" and "Mouth of Thomas". The latter was particularly dangerous. In the exhibition space a cross was made of ice blocks, above which an electric filament was hung. Marina sings the Yugoslav hymn, cuts the wounds on her hands and a five-pointed star on her belly. With a bleeding wound she lay on the chunks of ice, in such a way that the filament heated the wound, so that it did not solidify. She lay there for two hours until she lost consciousness. It was an action in which – as she explained – she was confronted with the repression of the communist system and her own house.

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Marina Abramović, "Art Must Be Beautiful, Artist Must Be Beautiful" / Source: Mariny Abramović / CSW Archive "Znaki Czasu" in Toruń

While the European art world was watching Abramović with interest, the Yugoslav press laughed at her and suggested she go to a psychiatric hospital. The mother received information that Marina is obscene in her art, shows herself naked, mutilated. One day, when the young artist returned home, Danica threw an iron at her. If she did not clean herself up in time, she would not survive the onslaught of her mother's anger.

Marina and Ulay

In 1976, Amsterdam met the German artist and photographer Ulay, or Uwe Laysiepen. It was a fire, Marina left her husband, with whom she had little more than the first of the three abortions she made in her life – and she moved to Amsterdam. It turned out that they were both born on November 30, they started to create together. Moments later they lived in an old police bus and traveled from place to place, where they had just received an order.

Previous individual actions combined common characteristics: pain, loneliness, exceeding own limitations and weaknesses. They decided to combine their search. They have completed a dozen joint actions. They circled Europe and counted poverty. But Marina remembers this time as very happy. She felt free and loved.



Documentation of joint works by Marina Abramović and Ulay, presented at the Center for Contemporary Art in Toruń / Source: tvn24

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Their work included what, as an individualist, sought Abramović: the limits of the physical and mental strength of man, the limits of pain and aversion. The first joint action was established in 1976 with the title "Relationship in space". For an hour, naked, they met a few meters away. In the subsequent performances they screamed at each other, sitting at a short distance, or sat in silence for hours to look at each other. "Wdech / Wydech" is another action in which they tested their physicality. They closed their noses with cigarette filters, Marina gasped and Ulay exhaled. Then she joined their mouth. Ulay took a deep breath from Marina's mouth, and then Marina breathed his breath. They did it until their lungs were completely filled with carbon dioxide. Both lost consciousness.

One of the most moving actions of their joint was the implementation of "Rest Energy" (1980), in which they put mutual trust in the test. Marina held the bow in one hand. Ulay had a drawn string and a bow that was straight to the heart of the artist. They stood there for four minutes and the knife dangerously approached the heart of Abramović. After years, Marina recognized "Rest Energy" as one of the most difficult activities in her career. If her beloved let go of the arrow, she would die.

One motto always led the marina: when it comes to art, everything has to be sacrificed.



Marina and Ulay during "Rest Energy". A frame of video recordings presented at the Center for Contemporary Art Znaki Czasu in Toruń / Source: tvn24

The beginning of the common end

Although there was no Marina in those days without Ulay – and vice versa – it was louder to her. It was her – through a much more radical creative attitude – that evoked curiosity and curators. Ulay was often overlooked. The beginning of the 80s was also the beginning of their end. The turning point in their relationship was the death of Ulay's mother. Ulay began to push his partner more and more to give him a child. He insisted on getting married more and more. But Marina, who had already carried out abortions three times, consistently refused. Art was the most important.

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Exhibition of Marina Abramović. In the background a framework from the documentation of the performance "Lovers" / Source: Tytus Żmijewski / PAP

In 1988 the Chinese authorities agreed with their joint – and later proved – the last action "Lovers". They were both to cross the Chinese wall. Ulay began his journey from the west – from the Gobi desert side, Marina of the Yellow Sea. After 90 days of wandering they met in the middle of the wall. The meeting had to end in the wedding, but it did not happen as planned. Ulay broke off. When they met, he kissed her and hugged her. It turned out that Ulay betrayed his partner on the way with a Chinese translator who became pregnant with him.

"I had a torn heart, I was not just crying because of farewell, we created a monumental work – but apart ... My part looked like an epic story, a passion that finally came to an end, I was relieved and sad ... We spent twelve years with Ulay – as authors of communal I told my friends that I suffered at least half of that time," she says in the book.

She was 42 years old. She felt unloved, ugly. She thought she would always be alone.

Meeting after years

In 2010, the New York Museum of Modern Art organized a grand overview of the work of the artist. The corresponding event was a new performance: "Artist Is Present." She sat at the table where strangers were sitting, and the organizers asked for one thing: no verbal and physical contact with the artist, only eye contact. In total Abramović spent 736 hours.

The project's assumption was to show that people in times of fragile and fast virtual relationships still need personal contact, that they themselves carry a lot of sadness and a sense of loneliness. That they seek love. The exhibition was viewed by more than 850,000 people. – I looked into the eyes of many people who bore so much pain that I could immediately see and feel them – said

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Abramović in one of the conversations. – I became a mirror for their own emotions – she added.



Abramović: we have great contact with Ulay / Video: tvn24

One of the people who sat down with her was Ulay. It was their first meeting since 1988. And very moving. Just as their farewell on the Great Wall of China declined in the history of art, the reappointment is inscribed on the pages of the history of modern art.

However, it was not the end of Ulay – the contacts of Marina. The next phase of their relationship was between lawyers. In 2016 a former partner filed a lawsuit against her in a court in Amsterdam. Well, after his retirement, he sold his archive to Abramović, which contained works made together with their documentation, including films and negatives. In 1999, Ulay signed a contract with its former partner on rights and profit distribution of the common acquis.

– All of our work has created a story that is now in school books – said Ulay in November 2015 to the British "The Guardian". – However, she deliberately misinterpreted certain things or omitted my name – he added. Ulay also claimed that Abramović asked the galleries to remove his name as co-author of individual works, which was incompatible with the contract and made it difficult to honestly arrange the profits that these works produced.

The court defended the suit of Ulay. Abramović had to pay him 250,000 euros in arrears of royalties and cover the research costs for more than 23,000 euros. It is also mandatory to correct the descriptions of jointly made works. Works from the period 1976-1980 contain information about the makers: "Ulay / Abramović". Works from 1981-1988 must be signed: "Abramović / Ulay". The court gave Abramović two weeks to complete the job descriptions. This also applies to all reproductions and copies of works that have been made and sold since 2007.

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It seems that this is the definitive end of their friendship and friendship. The fate, however, combined them again, although they had not planned this. – We met in the middle of nowhere in India (in 2017 – ed.). In the same place, at the same time quite accidentally. We meditated with us for a month. We have learned how to forgive each other. Now we are friends – she confessed in an interview with TVN24 Magazine.

"I am happy, very happy"

After the retirement of Ulay in 1988, Marina continued to work hard and created new projects. She increasingly experimented with theatrical stylistics, combining various artistic media. It was still her own body that formed the most important medium, but it was supplemented with video installations or photos.

She went beyond the art world, participated in photographic sessions of fashion magazines. It became part of the popular culture. She was aware that through the blurring of the boundaries between pop, fashion and academic art she could reach more recipients. She started working with Lady Gaga, with whom she is friends, and with Jay-Z. She posed for excellent fashion photographers, including Maria Testino.



Exhibition of Marina Abramović / Source: Tytus Żmijewski / PAP

In 2005 she married again. This time for the recognized Italian conceptual artist Paola Canevari, whom she met at the Venice Biennale in 1997. Four years later her husband left her.

– He really broke my heart. It was very difficult for me to get rid of this relationship and experience it emotionally – she confesses in an interview with TVN24 Magazine. – I wept the river of tears. I cried all the time. Everyone around me told me that I should go to a psychologist and take antidepressants. I did not want this. I wanted to feel this sadness, face it. He accompanied me for a long

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time, seven years. If you really fall in love and you have a broken heart, you can not eat or sleep. You are also physically weak, he adds.

She has collected herself. Friends advised her shamans from Brazil. She went there because, according to her, she saw no other way to recover. It was thanks to them that she rose after saying goodbye and loved herself. She also found peace of mind. She is in love and for several years she has been accompanied by love with a 51-year-old businessman.

– When it comes to emotional pain, it is gone. I'm happy. Really happy – she confessed in an interview with TVN24 Magazine.



Marina Abramović / Source: Tytus Żmijewski / PAP

"I would like to have a long life, live for a hundred"

On the contrary, he does not regret his life choices, which are also artistic choices. For her, life was always art, and art was all about life.

– I removed my pregnancy three times, I was convinced it was [posiadanie dzieci] it would be a disaster for my work. Each of us has a limited amount of energy in our body and I should share it. This is also my answer to the question why women are not as successful as men. Why do men occupy more important positions? Very simple: love, family, children – this woman does not want to give up – she spoke in German with the German "Tagesspiegel" in 2016.

Although she is aware that this is the last phase of her life, she does not slow down. The calendar is filled for the next five years. He emphasizes that he has many ideas and that he wants to do many things. – I still make performances. This is crazy because my generation is already gone – she said.

– I would like to have a long life, live with a hundred – she added.