

**Beyond Body**  
**Marina Abramovic**

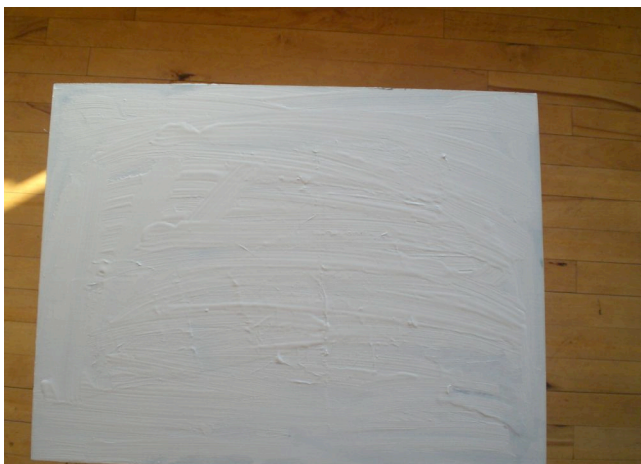
color, form



wall that we are



thick





sand



ash

touch it with my hands



this substance of existing



now can I leave it?  
soft gradation  
all is encompassed



blue hand of God



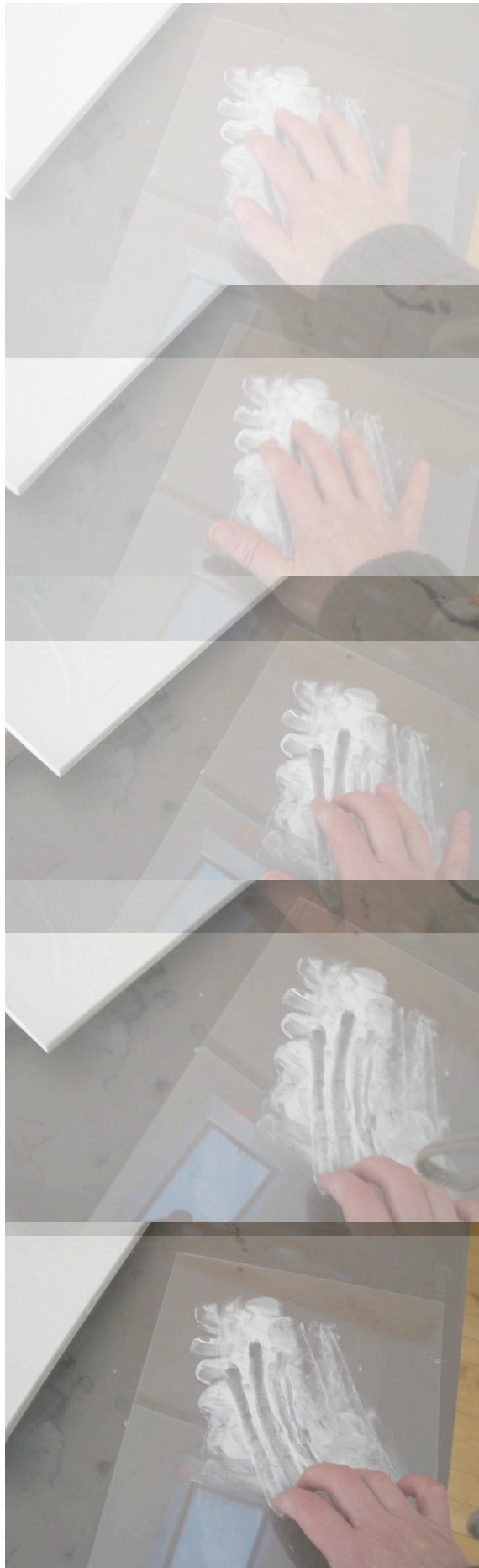
obscured  
(but not obliterated?)



can I break through?



what language can I use?



Participant Response: 18 responses  
#3 Marina Abramovic – “Beyond Body”

What words would you use to describe your experience of this painting?

strong	weak 7
hot	cold 4
sad 2	happy 2
tortured 2	ecstatic
boring 1	interesting 1
lovely 1	ugly 1
wonder 2	obvious
painful 1	pleasant 3

other words...

invisible

confusing, dispersing, open, spatial, transparent

disturbing, intellectual-conceptual, unaesthetic

I feel depth, calm, coolness

transition to death

fascinating, amazed, I want to have it for awhile to look and see the change of daylight,

intrigued

empty, expectant

clouds, peace. mountains, joy

nervous, uncertain, anxious

broken, masked. hiding

sleep

beckon beyond the veil

open, questioning, fragment. sketch. ephemeral. idea, spacious

obscured. unease

breathe, open

**Marina Abramović** (Serbian Cyrillic: Марина Абрамовић; born 30 November 1946, in Belgrade, PR Serbia, FPR Yugoslavia) is a New York-based Serbian performance artist who began her career in the early 1970s. Active for over three decades, she has recently begun to describe herself as the “grandmother of performance art”.

Abramović's work explores the relationship between performer and audience, the limits of the body, and the possibilities of the mind.

### ***Rhythm 10, 1973***

In her first performance 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 her hand (5-finger fillet). Each time she cut herself, she would pick up a new knife from the row of twenty she had set up, and recorded 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 together past and present. She set out to explore the physical and mental limitations of the body – the pain and the sounds of the stabbing, the double sounds from the history and from the replication. With this piece, Abramović began to consider the state of consciousness of the performer. “Once you enter into the performance state you can push your body to do things you absolutely could never normally do.”

In 1976, after moving to Amsterdam, Abramović met the West German performance artist Uwe Laysiepen. When Abramović and Ulay began their collaboration, the main concepts they explored were the ego and artistic identity. This was the beginning of a decade of influential collaborative work. Each performer was interested in the traditions of their cultural heritages and the individual's desire for ritual. Consequently, they decided to form a collective being called “the other”, and spoke of themselves as parts of a “two-headed body”. They dressed and behaved like twins, and created a relationship of complete trust. As they defined this phantom identity, their individual identities became less accessible. In an analysis of phantom artistic identities, Charles Green has noted that this allowed a deeper understanding of the artist as performer, for it revealed a way of “having the artistic self made available for self-scrutiny.”

While some critics have explored the idea of a hermaphroditic state of being as a feminist statement, Abramović herself denies considering this as a conscious concept. Her body studies, she insists, have always been concerned primarily with the body as the unit of an individual, a tendency she traces to her parents' military pasts. Rather than concern themselves with gender ideologies, Abramović/Ulay explored extreme states of consciousness and their relationship to architectural space. They devised a series of works in which their bodies created additional spaces for audience interaction. In "Relation in Space" (1976) they ran around the room - two bodies like two planets, mixing male and female energy into a third component called “that self.” "Relation in Movement" had the pair drive their car inside of a museum for 365 laps; a black liquid oozed from the car, forming a kind of sculpture, each lap representing a year. (After 365 laps they entered the New Millennium.)

In discussing this phase of her performance history, Abramović has said: “The main problem in this relationship was what to do with the two artists' egos. I had to find out how to put my ego down, as did he, to create something like a hermaphroditic state of being that we called the death self.”[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marina\\_Abramovi%C4%87\\_-\\_cite\\_note-10](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marina_Abramovi%C4%87_-_cite_note-10)

To create this “Death self,” the two performers devised a piece in which they connected their mouths and took in each other's exhaled breaths until they had used up all of the available oxygen. Seventeen minutes after the beginning of the performance they both fell to the floor unconscious, their lungs having filled with carbon dioxide. This personal piece explored the idea of an individual's ability to absorb the life of another person, exchanging and destroying it.

from Wikipedia