

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Marina Abramovic & Ulay

April 11, to May 9, 1987.

Marina Abramovic and Ulay (assumed name of Uwe Laysiepen) met in Amsterdam in 1975.

Their collaboration started on the next year, arising from a common need to make daily life meet the practice of art.

They began with a series of performances called "Relation Works" : small scale actions which were nevertheless of great concentration. Always changing in style, some of the performances they achieved reached a provoking and aggressive finality. In "Imponderabilia" for example, Marina and Ulay stood naked at the entrance of a gallery, compelling the visitor to make his way through their bodies. Other actions, like "Relation in Time" which presented the two artists tied by the hair to one another, sitting still for 17 hours, were of a more passive and meditative kind.

Marina Abramovic and Ulay presented their work throughout Europe for five years, challenging both their physical and mental limits ; the set of their themes originating within their collaboration it self, in the reciprocated relationship it implied and in the relation that bound them both to their environment.

Since 1980, Ulay and Marina Abramovic have undertaken numerous initiatory trips with the intention of discovering different, and mainly non-occidental cultures. They have took more and more interest with time in the relationships between human beings in general, as well as in the integration of intercultural components. After a several months stay in the Australian Marina and Ulay created a new series of performances, "Nightsea crossing", inspired from this experience ; they both sat still and silent at each side of a table for 7 hours (this performance was resumed in various museums and went up to so days altogether before being presented for the last time in Lyons in late 1985). Grounded on the same experience was also "Positive zero", in which Tibetan lamas and Australians aborigines took an active part ; each of them with his specific contribution, thus giving rise to a balanced exchange operation between the various cultural traditions, and suddenly tipping out the ethnocentric viewpoint of western art. The various medias (performances, videos set ups, polaroids) complement one another as fragment of a larger whole of multiple medias, thus enriching the forms of their works.

"(...) a video production such as "City of Angels" (1983) is conceived in terms of the aesthetic of this very media and shows a professional care for the quality of the audio-visual. The performances are developed in such way that the become real theatrical productions, with a true care for lightning effects, shapes and colours, dresses and stage set (Positive zero); all things that are of great interest, even in small performances like "Nightsen crossing"" (Jan Debbaut)

They reach a high level of technology with the large size polaroids in which the work, for the first time, really materializes as a reflection of experiences made visible at a 1 : 1 scale; without any manipulation since they emphasize the things which happen within the image, rather than the process this image is submitted to.

Marina Abramovic and Ulay now prepare a new trip : the crossing of the great wall of China. Marina shall start from the East (Yellow sea) and Ulay from the West (desert). They will walk for 5000 km to join one another half-way after a year of parting.