2014

Marina Abramovic: Methods for Establishing Performance Art in the Gallery and Museum System

Alex Wixon
CUNY City College

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Follow this and additional works at: http://academicworks.cuny.edu/cc_etds_theses

Part of the Arts and Humanities Commons

Recommended Citation
http://academicworks.cuny.edu/cc_etds_theses/329

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the City College of New York at CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact AcademicWorks@cuny.edu.
Marina Abramović:
Methods for Establishing Performance Art in the Gallery and Museum System

Alex Wixon

Advisor: Professor Craig Houser
May 2014
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts of the City College of the City University of New York
# Table of Contents

Introduction: Performance Art and Its Problematic Position in Modern Art 1

Chapter 1: Abramović and Sean Kelly: Marketing and Documentation 18

Chapter 2: *Seven Easy Pieces* and Promoting Past Performance in the Museum 38

Chapter 3: *The Artist Is Present* and Establishing Guidelines for Museums 67

Conclusion 87

Figure List 95

Bibliography 132
INTRODUCTION

Performance Art and Its Problematic Position in Modern Art

Performance has not been given its full attention within the realm of modern art. Numerous modern artists have engaged in the practice of performance art by deviating from the traditional media of painting and sculpture and exploring their own physical body as a tool of artistic expression. Among these avant-garde artists, Marina Abramović (b. 1946, Fig. 1) has remained dedicated to performance art since the 1960s and received critical worldwide acclaim for her work. Despite her reputation, her financial success did not take off until the 1990s. As any performance artist, Abramović has battled with the issue of creating time-based art, making a living, and preserving her legacy. Since the early 1990s Abramović has made it her mission to advocate for the protection and preservation of performance art to help endorse the medium within the context of the art gallery and museum.1 Her approach to the art market and museum practice presents new directions for younger generations of performance artists to pursue. This thesis will evaluate Abramović’s early repurposing of selected documentation for sale purposes and her partnership with gallerist Sean Kelly, followed by an analysis of her approached to documentation and re-performance in her exhibition series Seven Easy Pieces at the Solomon R. Guggenheim (2005) and her retrospective The Artist Is Present at the Museum of Modern Art (2010). While Abramović has been praised for her achievements

in promoting performance art, the process has not been quick or smooth, and a critical examination reveals Abramović's somewhat arduous path and some inconsistencies in her practices.

**Performance Art History and Its Traditional Exclusion in Museums and Galleries**

Before analyzing Abramović's approach to preserving and marketing her work and the work of her peers, one must first understand the history of performance art and its relationship to art institutions. According to Abramović, performance art can be dance, music, or theatre, so there is no precise definition. In general, performance art concentrates on the artist's mental and physical construction and the specific time and space in which they perform.\(^2\) While performance art was recognized as a distinct artistic medium in the late 1960s and 1970s, the medium dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century, with Futurism, Dada, and Surrealism, yet most of what is written about those movements concentrates on art objects produced by the artists.

Those early twentieth century movements combined performance with an array of other disciplines such as painting, literature, music, and architecture in an attempt to revamp conventional art practice.\(^3\) Futurist performance was more “manifesto than practice,” and first appeared in cafes, salons, and dance halls in Paris in 1909.\(^4\) The Futurists embraced visual arts, theater, fashion, and music and took inspiration from the


\(^3\) RoseLee Goldberg, Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 7-8.

\(^4\) Ibid, 11.
revolutionary machinery, technology, and sense of speed around them. Similarly, the Dada movement began in Zurich, at the nightclub Cabaret Voltaire, in 1916. The Dadaists were responding to the horrors of World War I and they criticized the war and modern culture through an array of different mediums, such as collage, readymade, poetry, and performance. Surrealism was also responding to the tragedies of World War I by exploring the imagination and power of the human mind. Surrealists wrote manifestos, and in 1925 the *Surrealist Manifesto* was published, which examined the “free reign” of words and actions.

Unlike these earlier approaches, performance art movements in the second half of the century did not relay on manifestos, but instead the artists left their actions and performative objects open to audience interpretation. For instance, in 1958 Allan Kaprow (1927-2006) invented Happenings, an art form in which multiple events occur at the same time and place and can never be exactly replicated. Abramović agrees with Kaprow that, like Happenings, performance art can never be precisely repeated, which makes the medium challenging to preserve. For his happening *Eighteen Happenings in Six Parts* (1959, Fig. 2), Kaprow created an interactive environment, where he performed with the audience and encouraged them to interact with him and the objects in the installation. Performance artists, like the Futurists, Dadaists, and Surrealists, aimed to expand upon...

---

10 Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces*, 11.
11 Ibid, 17.
traditional mediums of painting and sculpture. However, in the late 1960s, performance artists began to lose their need for objects and focused primarily on their own bodies as tools of artistic expression. At this time, more and more performance art venues emerged and the medium slowly rose to a fine art status.\textsuperscript{12}

In the 1970s, there was an increase in art spaces devoted to performance, museum sponsored festivals, and art colleges beginning to introduce performance courses, which led to the recognition of performance art as a distinct artistic medium and its own movement.\textsuperscript{13} Among the art spaces, the non-profit organizations Judson Memorial Church and The Kitchen in New York City have provided alternative performance venues since the 1950s and 1970s respectively and still thrive today.\textsuperscript{14} While these institutions and other similar ones have helped promote performance art, they typically cater to art audiences. They endorse artists but in general do not interrelate with the market of the gallery or with museums.

Abramović works with both galleries and museums, institutions that historically have been slow and quite erratic in accepting performance art as a legitimate artistic medium. Therefore this thesis will provide a critical examination of Abramović's approach to and effect on both systems. One must distinguish between the two types of institutions and address their relationship to understand the conflict at hand. Galleries, commercial entities that rely on sales to stay in business and support their artists, have traditionally resisted performance art because dealers were not able to see a way to make

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Goldberg, Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present, 7.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 7.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
money from it.¹⁵ And although museums are often nonprofit organizations that are not run for sales, the leadership of trustees and donors influence a museum's programming, and therefore the way in which performance art has been integrated into museums.¹⁶ These factors have contributed to the slow integration of performance art into gallery and museum programming and exhibition.

There have been few exhibitions in galleries and museums that have focused on the artist's performance art, and those exhibitions were exceptional examples that Abramović's practice had to build on and improve upon. One example of merging performance into an art institution is Joseph Beuys's 1974 live performance of *I Like America and America Likes Me* (Fig. 3) at the René Block Gallery in New York.¹⁷ Gallery owner and curator René Block defined the importance of performance among the arts by exhibiting this live performance and demonstrated how artwork does not always have to be materialistic. The performance was not for sale, but the event was diligently documented with photography to solidify the work for future reference and marketing.¹⁸

This progressive event was unfortunately not included in Beuys's 1979 retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum, which concentrated on his sculptural work. In the exhibition brochure, curator Caroline Tisdall described Beuys's broad interests including performance, lecture, sculpture, and drawing.¹⁹ Still, the exhibition consisted of large sculptures, installations, and smaller accompanying works, but did not devote

---

¹⁵ Lauren Kelly (director, Sean Kelly Gallery), in discussion with the author, New York, NY, November 10, 2012.
¹⁸ Ibid.
attention to his performance. The show recognized Beuys's performance background and its connection to his enduring artworks, but the Guggenheim had not attempted to integrate the two at this time, even though smaller institutions such as Rene Block Gallery had already taken the plunge.

By the 1990s, the Guggenheim advanced its interest in performance art and began to explore methods for merging the medium into exhibitions. The exhibition Robert Morris: Mind/Body Problem (1994, Fig. 4) at the Guggenheim is a prime example of blending physical movement and traditional art forms. The exhibition combined video re-performances of Morris's notable 1960s pieces as well as his early sculptures. This exhibition and its dedication to performance art will be examined in greater depth in Chapter 2 in relation to Abramović's exhibition series Seven Easy Pieces (2005) at the Guggenheim.

**Artists' Attitudes and New Methods to Include Performance in the Gallery and Museum: Documentation and Re-performance**

The insufficient acknowledgment of performance art within galleries and museums is most obviously linked to the ephemeral nature of live action, which makes the preservation of the medium so challenging. Artists of the 1960s and 1970s, many of whom were young and emerging in their careers, additionally sought to make work that could not be commodified and thereby served as a rejection of the gallery and museum

20 Ibid, 1.
These artists had no intention of selling their work, as they challenged the commercial nature of such traditional artistic media as painting and sculpture. However, by the late 1980s, many of these artists went back to their archives and repurposed their documentation in order to exhibit and market their past performances.23

One significant development that helped prompt this change was the growth of technology in the 1980s that began to stimulate the artists' and the art world’s interest in digitizing video.24 This development brought recognition of technology-based art forms, specifically a heightened interest in photography and video, and assisted in elevating the role of earlier performance documentation, and its place in art history. From the beginning of her career in the 1960s Abramović documented her performances using photography and video.25 Still, like many other performance artists, she did not sell her documentation until the early 1990s, when technology-based art gained prominence.

In addition, the 1990 Visual Arts Act (VARA) amended the 1976 Copyright Act to protect the moral rights of attribution and integrity of tangible artworks, such as painting, sculpture, and photography.26 Prior to the VARA, section 102 of the Copyright Act focused on property ownership of fixed mediums of expression,27 which gave the owner rather than the artist control over artwork. While painting and sculpture are protected under copyright laws to ensure that artists are credited and compensated when

23 Ibid, 59-60.
their work is referenced or sold, performance art has not been given comparable protection. However, photography and video documentation were included and seen as a means to stabilize the ephemeral nature of performance and establish copyright protection.\textsuperscript{28} By implementing photography and video documentation, performance can be appropriately copyrighted, preserved, and commodified.

Another practice that has proven crucial in the development of performance art in exhibition is re-performance, the act of training one or more artists to re-enact a prior performance. When a Broadway musical that follows a specific script and score is revived, copyright law protects it. However copyrighting the re-performance of a performance art piece is more difficult because it is less rigid and encourages artistic interpretation and improvisation. Re-performance has been applied to music, dance, and theatre, and the term gained prominence in the 1970s within the dance field.\textsuperscript{29} While the term has been applied to different artistic fields, re-performance of music, dance, and theatre tend to be more contrived than re-enactments of performance art, which typically discourage rehearsals and encourage spontaneity.\textsuperscript{30}

While Abramović has united documentation and re-performance in her exhibition of past performances, the standardization of re-performance and photographic and video documentation is still in its beginning stages, as this thesis will attest. Abramović and Sean Kelly have scrutinized and selected documentation that best embodies the original performance, which can require multiple photographs or be

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} See Adina Armelagos and Mary Sirridge, “The Identity Crisis in Dance,” The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol 37, no. 2 (winter, 1978): 129-139.
\textsuperscript{30} Westcott, When Marina Abramović Dies (New York: MIT Press, 2010), 109-110.
achieved with a single image and the inclusion of written descriptions.\textsuperscript{31} Abramović has also defined general guidelines for re-performance, which consist of asking the original artist for permission, paying the artist for copyright, exhibiting original documentation and re-interpreting the work.\textsuperscript{32} While standards are still being defined, this thesis will explore how Abramović's and Kelly's contributions have advanced the institutionalization of performance.

\textbf{Gallery and Museum Professionals and the Integration of Performance Art}

The development of photographic and video documentation has allowed performance art to become a vital entity in the art market. For instance, Sean Kelly Gallery has thrived with the exhibition and sale of Marina Abramović's photographic and video documentation. Similarly, Gladstone Gallery represents Matthew Barney and maintains the Jack Smith Archive and Marian Goodman Gallery represents Tino Sehgal. In turn, many museums have begun to collect performance photography and video, and the Museum of Modern Art has been foremost among them. MoMA began to collect photographic and video documentation of performance in the 1970s. Vito Acconci’s \textit{Undertone} (1973, Fig. 5) is one of the earliest performance pieces acquired by MoMA in 1975.\textsuperscript{33} By the 1990s MoMA's collection had grown substantially to approximately four hundred works dating from the 1960s and 1970s in the Media and Performance Art

\textsuperscript{31} Sean Kelly, in discussion with the author, New York, NY, July 11, 2013.
\textsuperscript{32} Marina Abramović, Seven Easy Pieces, 10.
Department.34

With increased interest in performance art, modern and contemporary museums have recently begun to grapple with the subject of collecting, exhibiting, and preserving performance art. Such curators as Chrissie Iles from the Whitney Museum of American Art, Klaus Biesenbach from the Museum of Modern Art, and Nancy Spector of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum have started to explore the presentation of past performance. They have written essays on the topic, such as those in the exhibition catalogue; *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present* (2010).35 They brought attention to Abramović's methods for exhibiting performance documentation and re-performance, yet none of them evaluated the success and failures in her attempts so far, which this thesis will address.

Conservator Glenn Wharton and curator Gretchen Wagner from MoMA have also introduced new methods for approaching performance art, which require different techniques from those applied to painting and sculpture. Wharton wrote such texts as "The Challenges of Conserving Contemporary Art," which brings attention to the issues of preserving performance and media based works.36 Wagner inventoried and archived recent acquisitions of Fluxus works, which is commonly the task of a registrar, rather than of a curator.37 Institutions have also held workshops and symposia to discuss

34 Although the museum had collected only roughly twenty such works prior to 1980, the museum's interest grew rapidly in the 1990s, as new media became more popular in the art market. See Museum of Modern Art, “Museum Collection Online.”
performance art within the museum, such as “(Re) Presenting Performance” (2005), and “Thinking Performance at the Guggenheim” (2010), where Iles and Spector both participated;\(^\text{38}\) as well as Performance Art Workshops at MoMA (2010).\(^\text{39}\) Universities have also helped the cause with educational forums about performance art and its place in the museum. For instance, New York University held the Performa-sponsored panel, “It's History Now: Performance Art and the Museum” (2011), where Iles and Wharton spoke about the challenges of instituting performance art.\(^\text{40}\) These discussions offered insight into how performance can be institutionalized, yet these exchanges were theoretical, whereas this thesis offers a practical and critical overview of Abramović's performance practices to help demonstrate the complexity of integrating the medium into galleries and museums.

**Scholarship and Controversy over Documentation and Re-performance**

In the 1970s, performance art was first analyzed in such scholarly publications as *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *Avalanche Magazine*, and *October*. By 1976, *Performing Arts Journal* was established, now the foremost journal that focuses on “new directions in performance, video, drama, dance, installations, media, film, and music” that combine concepts of theatre and the visual arts.\(^\text{41}\) In the late 1970s and early 1980s,

---


\(^{41}\) Bonnie Marranca, “A Journal of Performance and Art,” last accessed June 10, 2013,
performance art history courses emerged in universities, including the University of California, Los Angeles, and New York University. In 1978, performance art curator and scholar RoseLee Goldberg taught the first art history courses on the history of performance art at the School of Visual Arts in New York.\textsuperscript{42} Goldberg has also written numerous books and articles on the history of performance art and while she supports documentation and re-performance to perpetuate the medium, she has not grappled with how these methods should be properly preserved and exhibited.\textsuperscript{43}

With so much confusion, change, and progression in performance, documentation and how scholars and museum professionals scrutinize it, this thesis will evaluate the effectiveness of Abramović's documentation practices and its effect on the performance art field. Performance art scholar Peggy Phelan and curator and critic Rob La Frenais have argued against documentation and re-performance, claiming that approaches to the medium are so diverse that there cannot be a consistent documentation method and re-performance contradicts the temporal nature of performance art.\textsuperscript{44} While the argument against these methods is understandable, the concept that performance must disappear negates anyone establishing performance art in the canon of art history.

Art historians and critics, such as Amelia Jones, Kathy O'Dell, and Philip Auslander, have refuted Phelan's and La Frenais's claim and justified the conversion of live performance into documentation. For instance, Jones emphasizes the important

\begin{flushright}
http://www.mitpressjournals.org/loi/pajj.
\end{flushright}


relationship between documentation and performance art when she argues that the performance requires “the photograph to confirm its having happened” and the photograph requires the “event” to support the evidence. Similarly, Auslander argued that documentation in not solely an archive of a past event, but a performance in itself by capturing the essence of an artist’s intention and creating a connection with the present audience. These arguments support the integration of documentation into the institutional system, yet again standards for creating and exhibiting documentation have not been defined. Accordingly, this thesis will investigate Abramović and Kelly’s selection and exhibition of documentation and show how they helped to create overall standards.

Numerous scholars have written publications about Abramović’s practice to secure a place for herself in art history. For instance, author James Westcott wrote *When Marina Abramović Dies: A Biography* (2010), which offers rare insight into her artistic development and archival practice. However, Westcott only begins to touch on the marketing of her documentation, which this thesis will scrutinize. Abramović has written books with accompanying text by other scholars on her practice, such as *Marina Abramović: Objects, Performance, Video, Sound* (1995), *Marina Abramović: Artist Body Performances 1969-1998* (1998), and *Student Body: Workshops, 1979-2003: Performances, 1993-2003*, which examine her body as medium, the objects she has made in relation to her body, and the students she has influenced. In writing about her own work and her teachings, Abramović presented a biased and inaccurate view of her

---

practice without recognizing the problems, which need to be addressed in order to improve the integration of performance art. These publications provide vital insight into Abramović's life and work, yet only begin to examine how her performances have been and continue to be institutionalized.

**Abramović and Her Mission to Institutionalize Performance Art**

While galleries and museums have struggled to incorporate performance art in their programming and collections, Abramović has taken a lead in developing standards for establishing performance art. She began her career as a solo performance artist with the objective of pushing the physical and mental boundaries of her body. In the mid-1970s, Abramović made collaborative performances with her boyfriend Uwe Laysiepen (b. 1943), known as Ulay, and together they created performances that continued to focus on the limits of the human body, consciousness, and on challenging conventional gender roles. Abramović and Ulay lived a simple life and traveled around Europe. Without any material security or bills to pay, the two put all their effort into performing, and created a manifesto called “Art Vital,” which prescribed “no rehearsal, no predicted end, no repetition, and exposure to chance.”

Abramović and Ulay archived their collaborative performances, but sometimes found it challenging to document a one-time performance accurately. On a few occasions they, therefore, decided not to follow their stipulation for no repetition and chose to

---

47 Westcott, 100.
repeat performances before a video camera to capture the pieces as accurately as possible. Without these re-enactments, there would be no evidence of such performances as *Breathing in / Breathing out* (Fig. 6), where they knelt with their mouths pressed together and noses covered in a romantic exchange of air. Although this action defied their manifesto and Abramović's general attitude toward keeping her work consistently unique, the videos were at the time strictly for their own archive and not intended as artwork.

In 1988 Abramović and Ulay ended their decade-long relationship with their final performance, *The Lovers – The Great Wall Walk* (1988, Fig. 7). They each walked from opposite ends of the Great Wall of China and after ninety days, Abramović and Ulay were to meet in the middle and be married. Instead, they broke-up. Abramović struggled to understand the break-up and comprehend who she was as an artist without Ulay, which led her to reflect and re-stage her life in her theatrical production, *Biography* (first performed 1989). Abramović's move into theatre signaled a turning point in her career toward the commercial market and soon after she joined gallerist Sean Kelly, and together they went on to advance the performance art market.

**Evaluating Abramović's Guidelines for Establishing Performance Art**

Many performance artists and scholars have justified the use of documentation and re-performance as essential interpretations of past performance, yet the act of

49 Ibid, 135.
50 Klaus Biesenbach, “Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present. The Artist was Present. The Artist will be Present,” in Marina Abramovic: The Artist is Present (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010) 16.
51 Abramović, Seven Easy Pieces, 18-19.
objectively selecting, planning, and executing these methods for sale and exhibition has scarcely been discussed. As a result, this thesis will examine this practice using the work of Abramović as an example, in order to reveal general guidelines that benefit the establishment of performance art. Abramović has opened a discussion about how performance should be documented, how it can be exhibited after the event, and under what circumstances performance can be repeated. She has been very persuasive in her argument for specific performance documentation and re-performance standards, but as this thesis will discuss, she has not always been successful in following her own guidelines. This thesis will evaluate the problems in her practice through comparisons with other artists working in the field, often using original interviews from diverse performance artists, gallerists and museum professionals. This thesis is, therefore, not necessarily an art historical account, but more specifically an analysis related to gallery and museum practices.

Abramović's methods for preserving, promoting, and exhibiting performance art after-the-fact and the involvement of Kelly and supporting museum professionals will be fully addressed in the following three chapters. Chapter 1 examines the steps that led Abramović to her representation with Kelly and the tactics they developed for preserving and marketing her documentation. Chapter 2 investigates the success and failures of Abramović's re-performance strategies and use of documentation in her exhibition series Seven Easy Pieces at the Guggenheim (2005). Finally, chapter 3 examines the improvements Abramović made in her documentation and re-performance practices as demonstrated in her retrospective The Artist Is Present at MoMA (2010). While

---

52 Abramović, Seven Easy Pieces, 10.
Abramović has defined guidelines for marketing and exhibition of performance art, her journey has not always been smooth and easy; nevertheless Abramović has made significant strides in defining methods to preserve and revive performance art.
Abramović's legacy within the history of performance art has been firmly established because her documentation and re-performance practices have allowed her to systematize and commercialize her work while shaping the public’s perception of performance art in general. Although the majority of artists working in the 1960s and 1970s also produced work for sale in other media including painting, sculpture, photography, and video, Marina Abramović is one of the few who at the beginning of her career in the 1960 and 1970s consistently focused on performance. At that time she rejected the art market, but by the late 1980s, however, she was eager to establish a place for herself and performance art in the commercial art world. In the early 1990s she teamed up with gallery director Sean Kelly, and together they chose to focus on the sale and exhibition of Abramović’s photographic and video documentation. Though Abramović did not initially consider documentation to be an art form, she had been dedicated to documenting her performances from the beginning of her career, and that archive offered a strong foundation for selecting and exhibiting her work. While Abramović and Kelly have advanced the market for performance documentation and offered invaluable breakthroughs for institutionalizing performance art, they have not always been consistent in their approaches and in some respects they have been too

53 See Museum of Modern Art, “Museum Collection Online.”
limited in what they have chosen to market, going against the very goals that they had originally established for themselves.

**Abramović and Her Career Prior to the Market**

Before analyzing Abramović and Kelly's approach to the sale and exhibition of documentation, it is important to understand Abramović's history and what lead her to preserve performance. Abramović's background in communist Belgrade, Serbia (formally Yugoslavia), provided her with the interest and strength to withstand strict conditions over long durations of time in her performances. Abramović's family was financially secure and took care of all her basic needs as a young adult, allowing Abramović to save the money that she made restoring mosaics and frescoes as an art student at the Academy of Fine Art in Belgrade and apply those funds to her artistic career. Later, Danica, Abramović's mother used her connections and found her daughter an assistant professorship at the art academy of Novi Sad, which also provided a humble income.  

Abramović began as a painter, but she found painting limiting and by the late 1960s, she moved into performance and started to perform at small venues in Belgrade. Abramović presented a different piece each time or dramatically transformed a piece that she had previously done. As explained by Abramović, “Each piece has a certain task to accomplish, and once a certain task has been accomplished, I didn’t have a need to have the same experience again.”  

---

56 Westcott, When Marina Abramović Dies, 52, 64.  
57 Ibid, 52.  
58 Abramović, Seven Easy Pieces, 17.
Abramović would begin with the same premise, but greatly alter her approach and format, so it would become a renewed undertaking.

For instance, her performance *Rhythm 10* (Fig. 8) was first performed in 1972 in the gymnasium of Melville College in Scotland, organized by curator Richard Dermarco, and then performed again in 1973 as part of the *Contemporanea* exhibition, curated by Achilla Bonito Oliva in Rome.\(^59\) For *Rhythm 10*, Abramović tape-recorded herself stabbing a knife between her fingers on a tabletop until she missed and cut herself. She then played back the recording and re-created the same action until she cut herself on her finger in the same place. By doing this repeated action, she said that “time past and time present unify together by having two cuts in the same place.”\(^60\) In her 1972 performance of *Rhythm 10*, Abramović used ten knives, yet for the 1973 presentation she implemented twenty knives,\(^61\) which elevated and extended the initial action and forced her to challenge her endurance even further. The tape recording and Abramović's written description exist from the first 1972 performance, but Abramović documented the 1973 re-performance only with photography. This material was vital for preservation purposes and reveals Abramović's early attention to documentation and re-performance.

**Abramović’s Shift into Commercializing Performance Art**

After her break-up with her collaborator and boyfriend, Ulay, Abramović came to the realization that she did not have to be a poor struggling artist and made the life-
altering decision to re-stage her solo performance with her theatrical production, 

*Biography* (first performed in 1989). For *Biography*, Abramović presented segments of her most notable past performances by combining classic theatre methods with her experimental performance art. Abramović had previously aimed to keep each performance loose and unrehearsed, even when adapting a piece for the second time, but the theatrical production of *Biography* was staged with spotlights and costumes in an exaggerated environment. The production was a major change that went against her initial demand for spontaneity and originality and contrasted greatly with the original raw and honest performances. Even though this endeavor was not an artistic success, *Biography* introduced Abramović to the possibility of making substantial money from her artwork and elevated her public appearance, which lead to her interest in joining the art market.

**Creation of Salable Performance Documentation**

In 1992, fellow artist Juliao Sarmento introduced Abramović to Sean Kelly, who thereafter represented her at his gallery. At the time, Kelly was showing works by Sarmento (b. 1948), Ann Hamilton (b. 1956), and Rebecca Horn (b. 1944) in his SoHo loft and was just beginning to enter the New York art market, which intrigued Abramović because she was new to the market as well. Working with Kelly provided Abramović with a way to return to the art world after her brief stint into theatre. Abramović's

63 Abramović, Seven Easy Pieces, 18-19.
64 Lauren Kelly, November 10, 2012.
65 Westcott, 234.
extensive collection of photographic and video documentation provided them with the means to establish a market specifically for her performance art. It was her first time to consider selling performance, as she and Kelly thought of these photographs as artwork related to performance rather than simply documentation.66

Kelly purposefully chose to focus on Abramović’s photographic documentation because photography had a more established market at the time.67 Museums like New York’s Museum of Modern Art had begun to collect photography in the 1940s, followed by such institutions as the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts, Fort Worth’s Amon Carter Museum, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in the 1970s, and numerous others thereafter.68 However, while fine art photography held prominence in the art market, documentary photography was not always seen on par. The market for that type of photography was very limited and not well established.69

Kelly and Abramović’s initial undertaking was to go through her solo performance negatives and select which performances were most pivotal to her career and which had the strongest documented representations. Kelly visited Abramović in Amsterdam and spent days going through the negatives, attempting to select the ones that “encapsulated the essence of the performance.” They would put select negatives on a wall, look at them, leave for a few hours, come back and then re-evaluate them for days until they were both satisfied with their selection.70 Abramović had not originally planned to exhibit these photographs, so many were damaged due to improper care. In fact, some were damaged

67 Ibid.
69 Lauren Kelly, November 10, 2012.
70 Sean Kelly, July 11, 2013.
because Abramović had all the negatives in a bag that she used as a pillow while she was living in a van with Ulay. Kelly's team attempted to repair the damaged negatives, but they also used the blemished condition to their advantage with works like Rhythm 10 (Fig. 8), where the scratches on the film complemented the performance by emulating the slashes Abramović made with the knives.

Out of this process, the Performance Edition 1973-1994 was completed in 1994, consisting of series of photographs from her individual solo performances, each with an accompanying text panel, in printed editions of sixteen each. The selection was based on the available material, so some performances had numerous photographs, while others had barely any usable material. The edition included Abramović's solo performances, such as her Rhythms series (1973-1974), Lips of Thomas (1973), Role Exchange (1975) (Fig. 9), and Freeing the Voice (1975). This photographic series was a major step for Abramović because it was the first tangible performative artwork from which she could make money.

The Performance Edition ranges from small singular photographs and groupings of small photographs to larger diptychs. According to Sean Kelly, “Some [performances] needed to be multiple photographs with text panels.” The intent was to preserve the performance and keep suites of works together to ensure that collectors and viewers understood the entire performance. However, Kelly has occasionally transgressed in his practices by selling or exhibiting photography and video that are part of a larger series of

---

71 Ibid.
73 Kelly, July 11, 2013.
74 Museum of Modern Art, “Exhibition Checklist for The Artist is Present,” PDF from MoMA Librarian.
75 Ibid
photographs or longer video. For instance, the documentation of *Rhythm 10* consists of twenty-one framed photographs, which Kelly has exhibited together, but each photograph can also be purchased separately along with the framed text (Fig. 10). By dividing the group into individual sales, Kelly concentrated on the commercial gain of these works rather than on accurately presenting the overall performance. This separation presents a downfall of the market-driven nature of commercial galleries and conflicts with Kelly’s own claim that some of the performances require multiple photographs. These issues mainly occurred at the beginning of his alliance with Abramović, when he was trying to determine how to establish the medium and she did not appear to stop him. Abramović and Kelly have since improved their practice with her later documentation and installation works that are intended for exhibition and sale.  

### Comparison of Acconci’s and Abramović's Documentation Methods

The artist’s level of involvement in the selection of material and the inclusion of supporting text to inform the spectator are two factors that authenticate documentation. Abramović and Kelly were not the first to produce photographic documentation in relation to performance art. Abramović's combination of text and documentation to embody her performances occurred decades after Vito Acconci (b.1940) had implemented a similar practice. In the late 1960s and early 1970s Acconci photographed himself as he performed various tasks. The performances only truly exist through Acconci’s documentation because he often performed on empty streets and without a set

---

76 Kelly, July 11, 2013.
audience. At the same time Abramović was performing in small venues and documenting her work, but unlike Acconci, her performances focused on the interaction with her audience rather than on the interaction with the camera. Acconci's performance Grasp (b. 1969, Fig. 11) is a prime example of his examination of how his body and the environment around him interacted with the camera. In 1969 Acconci began to transform his performances, such as Grasp, into permanent artworks by combining a selection of his photo documentation with handwritten text.

Acconci’s assemblage of documentary photographs and descriptive text ensured an effective representation of his performances. His documentary artwork of Grasp depicts the actions, reasons for these actions, location, and time, clearly defining his thought processes during the original performance. In 2001, Acconci presented a collection of his photographic documentation from the period of 1969 through 1973 in the exhibition Vito Acconci: Performance Documentation & Photoworks at the UBU Gallery in New York City. According to art critic Kay Larson, Acconci's integration of text and documentation made his work more “conventional” and “presumably saleable,” but the works still have the raw energy of the original performances.

Abramović and Kelly were aware of Acconci’s earlier approach to performance documentation, but while they followed his example of including text, their method

---

regarding documentation differed greatly. Abramović and Kelly took a more academic approach to incorporating text. They wrote accompanying explanatory text panels to go alongside the photographs. For example, the display of Abramović's *Rhythm 10* (1973) includes a series of framed photographs that depict the sequence of this event and a small framed text box that states:

*I turn on the tape recorder.*  
*I take the first knife and stab in between the fingers of my left hand as fast as possible.*  
*Every time I cut myself, I change the knife.*  
*When I’ve used all of the knives (all of the rhythms), I rewind the tape recorder.*  
*I listen to the tape recording of the first part of the performance.*  
*I concentrate...*  

Abramović's documentation method has the viewer read the text before examining the series of chronological photographs while Acconci's documentation method consists of a singular mixed media artwork. Abramović guides the viewer in how to read the performance, rather than opening it up to interpretation as the original performance had done. The raw force of Abramović's original performance is not as pronounced in this polished format. In contrast, Acconci blends his text and imagery together so that the viewers have to decipher what they are seeing. Abramović's documentation method is more explicit than Acconci's approach and shows her need for her performances to be properly understood rather than interpreted. Abramović's and Acconci's methods also demonstrates that there is not only one way to present performance documentation. The goal behind both artists' methods is the same though: to capture the original performance, preserve the performance for public and academic study, and, if possible, profit from their craft.

---

Advancing the Market for Performance Art

While photography and video documentation were always essential to conserve Abramović's performances, her shift to selling these works had a profound effect on the art market, her performance, and other performance artists. In the early 1990s there was no set framework for how to approach the sale of performance documentation, so Kelly was defining these standards as he went.\(^8^2\) As an art dealer, Kelly was familiar with marketing traditional mediums and his approach to marketing Abramović's performance art was founded in conventional marketing practices. According to art researcher Tom McNulty, an artist's exhibition history, critical reception, publication, and inclusion in major public and private collections, as well as the artworks popularity, rarity, condition, and provenance, define the value of an artist's work and its place in the art market.\(^8^3\)

When Kelly began working with Abramović, she had an extensive international exhibition history and had received many positive reviews from critics, but she was not yet included in prominent collections because she had not developed a body of permanent artworks. The creation of the Performance Edition 1973-1994 transformed Abramović's performances into collectable material. Although these works were rare, they did not have the popularity, condition, or provenance that determine the value of an artwork.

As a dealer, Kelly was taking a high risk by representing Abramović, as he was not sure if he could turn a timely profit with her photographic documentation because

\(^8^2\) Lauren Kelly, November 10, 2012.
collectors, investors, and auction houses had not yet shown interest in this type of work. It had only been since the 1980s that photography gained elevated attention in institutions, universities, critical writings, and the collecting markets. The *Performance Edition* was not fine photography, but rather snapshots from performances taken by third-party professional and non-professional photographers hired by Abramović. She often had photographers sign agreements stipulating that the right to the photographs belonged to her. Additionally, live performance art had not been examined in scholarly texts until the mid-1970s and was not introduced to universities until the 1980s. It slowly began to enter art institutions in the 1990s. Essentially, Kelly was taking two recently acknowledged mediums, photography and performance, and combining them into a new commodity, ultimately creating a revolutionary method for preserving performance.

In 1994, Kelly and Abramović were both rather poor and did not have the money to advertise the *Performance Edition*. Kelly started introducing Abramović to private collectors and showing them the series and gradually a community started to form around the work. When describing his marketing strategy for the editions, Kelly said, “It was like a guerrilla activity, anti-market, no advertising because we couldn't afford it. People had to find us. It turned out that the anti-market strategy worked the most. People want what's difficult to get to: playing the game: like a cult.” This unusual approach did not include paying for advertisement space in newspapers and magazines or even promotional cards distributed to collectors, critics, and other dealers. Instead, Kelly

---

84 Lauren Kelly, November 10, 2012.
86 Kelly, November 10, 2012.
87 Kelly, July 11, 2013.
introduced Abramović's *Performance Edition* to a handful of collectors who trusted his opinion, and hype around the work grew independently.\textsuperscript{88} The circulation of information about Abramović and the *Performance Edition* created the popularity that Kelly needed to sell Abramović's work and the limited edition gave it the rarity that increased its demand.

Swedish collector William Peppler was one of the first collectors who Kelly introduced to Abramović. He did not know anything about her at the time, but Peppler was immediately interested in her work because of “her enthusiasm, passion, and political charm.”\textsuperscript{89} Peppler helped fund the development of the *Performance Edition 1973-1994* in exchange for a complete set. When making this decision, Peppler, like Kelly, had no idea what kind of attention Abramović and the *Performance Edition* would receive, yet they both took this chance because of the promise they saw in her. In 1994, the smaller works in the edition were going for $2,500 unframed to $3,500 framed and the larger diptychs went for $4,500. However, the word-of-mouth phenomenon surrounding the edition steadily increased their value, with the smaller works in 2013 going for $25,000 to $30,000, and the larger $30,000 to $50,000, if a person could still get their hands on an available set.\textsuperscript{90} In 1998, Abramović secured a place for her performance documentation in a prominent public collection when Peppler generously donated his complete *Performance Edition* to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

With Kelly's support and guidance, Abramović gained increasing attention in the art scene with notable accomplishments, such as receiving the Golden Lion for Best

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid
\textsuperscript{89} Westcott, *When Marina Abramović Dies*, 262.
\textsuperscript{90} Kelly, July 11, 2013.
Artist at the 1997 Venice Biennale for her video installation/performance piece *Balkan Baroque*. In 2003, she received the New York Dance and Performance award, known as the Bessie in honor of dancer and choreographer Bessie Schonberg, for *The House with the Ocean View* (Fig. 12), a 12-day performance at Sean Kelly Gallery. Kelly did not make a profit from Abramović's live performance, so he depended on her documentation to make her work profitable. While the awards were not for her photography, her increased popularity assisted in the sale of these works and heightened the market's interest in her documentation.

While Abramović's career was growing in the 1990s, Ulay had retreated into private family life. He still had possession of their collaborative archive, though, which was becoming a burden for him, and he needed money. According to biographer James Westcott:

> On April 29, 1999, Marina finally bought the entire archive (All the material in it-amounting to thousands of negatives and transparencies as well as video and film) for the intimidating sum of 300,000 DM ($210,000, also funded by Peppler). Marina gained complete control over the reproduction, exhibition, and sale of the work, though when she did sell it, Ulay was guaranteed 20 percent of the net proceeds. Taking into account Kelly’s standard 50 percent dealer’s share from sales, Marina would only be left with 30 percent of proceed from the sale.  

Despite her meager share, Abramović was satisfied to have control over the archive because Ulay had been selling the work at a low rate, exhibiting it at inferior venues, and not dividing the proceeds. Westcott provided unique insight into how Abramović gained control over her and Ulay's archive, but he did not explore what Abramović did with the archive once she gained the rights from Ulay. With command over the archive,

---

92 Westcott, When Marina Abramović Dies, 262.  
93 Ibid, 261.
Abramović and Kelly were able to examine the material as they had done for her earlier solo performances and select the strongest representations of the collaborative performances. They also could direct where the work would be shown, who could buy it, and the appropriate rate at which to sell it. The collaborative performances were now of the same caliber as her earlier edition, allowing for consistency in her documentation practice. For instance, Abramović and Ulay's documentation of *Relation in Time* (1977, Fig. 13) was exhibited alongside a re-performance of the work in *The Artist Is Present* at the Museum of Modern Art. Also the video projection of *Breathing in Breathing out* (1977) is available for sale at Sean Kelly Gallery in a limited edition.

**Abramović and Kelly's Approach to Video Documentation**

With the success of Abramović's *Performance Edition 1973-1994*, Abramović and Kelly decided to expand on Abramović's existing material by creating video documentation of new performances in the late 1990s. This decision shows a shift in Kelly's consideration of video art, which he had dismissed in the early 1990s. The Museum of Modern Art had been collecting video art since 1975, but it was housed in the Prints and Illustration Department until the development of the Department of Film and Video in the mid-1990s (now divided into the Film Department and Media and Performance Art Department). This transition elevated MoMA's concern for video art and reflected the need to show the diversity of the medium from the pioneering work by Bill Viola (b. 1951) and Nam June Paik (1932-2006) to exploratory works by Joan Jonas.
(b. 1936) and Vito Acconci. With the growth of the market for performance photographic documentation and institutions' increased support of video art, this was the ideal time for Abramović and Kelly to promote video documentation and meet the needs of both the expanding performance and video art markets.

In 1997 Abramović staged three performances before a video camera: *Dissolution, Luminosity, and Insomnia*. Kelly held a solo exhibition at his gallery entitled *Spirit House and Performance Luminosity* (Fig. 14 1997), which featured these video performances projected on the walls and an audio recording of Abramović talking. On the opening night of the exhibition Abramović performed *Luminosity* live, sitting on a bicycle seat suspended high on the gallery wall above the audience, naked except for black pumps, and moving her arms in slow motions. To her right was a video image of *Dissolution*, in which she kneeled whipping herself until she cried; above the door was a video of *Insomnia*, in which she performed a Tibetan Buddhist dance. After the opening *Luminosity* was represented as a video in the exhibition (Fig. 15), transforming the performance into a commodity. The video projections were arranged at different heights and scales throughout the gallery and the audio echoed from various corners of the room. The installation sought the same level of engagement as her live performances by encouraging the viewer to become immersed in the installation. Reflecting on the exhibition, Kelly said, “Whether for a camera or an audience, [Abramović] engages them and transports herself to another planet. An invisible sheet of glass forms between her

---

and the viewer. Same level of intensity with an audience or not.”

Abramović’s video documentation and dynamic display in *Spirit House and Performance Luminosity* demonstrate her and Kelly's early attempt at performance installation, which offered greater engagement with the audience than her photographic documentation had alone. The exhibition also influenced her creation of hybrid performance/installation work, intended for the gallery context and salability.

Abramović's installation/performance *Balkan Baroque* was made in the same year as *Luminosity*. yet the two approaches to video performance were rather different. For *Balkan Baroque* (Fig. 16), Abramović told the story of her life in Belgrade by projecting three videos in color with sound, with images of her mother, father, and herself, and then installing an enormous pile of cow bones, a sink and tub filled with black water, and a dress stained with blood. The connection between the videos and the physical objects in *Balkan Baroque* emphasized the powerful contents more than displaying the video alone. This type of display brings to mind other artists, who have combined objects and video to depict performance in an exhibition space, such as Matthew Barney (b. 1967), whose *Drawing Restraint 7* (1993, Fig. 17), integrated three videos, fluorescent lighting, and sculptural elements that examine his ongoing interest in self-imposed restraint. Barney creates situations where it is challenging to draw on a surface, as in *Drawing Restraint 7*, where “two cloven-hoofed satyrs” wrestle and force each other to make images on the sun-roof of a car with their horns.

---

96  Kelly, July 11, 2013.
98  Label text for Matthew Barney, Drawing Restraint 7 (1993), from the exhibition Selections from the Permanent Collection, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, December 8, 1996 to April 4, 1999, last accessed April 26,
As Abramović and Kelly advanced from her early photo documentation to her later videos and installations, they fine-tuned their methods for translating performance into permanent artworks. The performance art market was obscure when Kelly began to merchandise Abramović’s work in the early 1990s, so it was a learning process for them to figure out how to create a product that rendered performance accurately.\textsuperscript{99} \textit{Luminosity}, \textit{Balkan Baroque}, and the other videos and installations from this time period expanded upon Abramović’s earlier practice of performing before a camera for archiving purposes. However, these later works were not solely to preserve the live performances as she had done in the 1970s. Because she intended to exhibit and sell them, she had to think more carefully about the display and how the videos would captivate an audience.

\textbf{Opposition to Selling Actual Performance Art}

While Abramović and Kelly have had great success in selling Abramović's photography and video documentation, they have prohibited the sale of her actual performances. Given that Abramović and Kelly are adamant about defining standards to properly preserve and market performance, one would think that the sale of the performance itself would be vital to this development. Abramović and Kelly's guidelines for documentation, text descriptions, and training activities for re-performance show that their methods can be implemented in the sale of actual performances. However, according to gallery director Lauren Kelly, “[Abramović] does not choose to sell the

---

\textsuperscript{99} Kelly, July 11, 2013.
rights to her performances like Tino Sehgal does because a lot of her performances are dangerous.”

Meanwhile none of the re-performances in The Artist Is Present were dangerous, and Abramović and Kelly's refusal to sell these performances seems to be a setback for the advancement of performance art in the art market.

Artist Tino Sehgal, who is represented by Marian Goodman Gallery, has an entirely different approach than that of Abramović. He focuses on transforming his ephemeral performances into commodities and rejects the creation and sale of performance documentation or even written descriptions or certificates of authenticity. According to writer Rachel Wolff, in order to sell his performances, once Sehgal receives a bank transfer from a buyer, “title to the work is passed by verbal agreement” and a handshake; then “the collector must enlist Sehgal or his team to 'install' the work,” and if the work is resold then the seller must hire Sehgal or his representative to facilitate the sale.

While Sehgal's plan is possible for a living artist, it is not sufficient for the preservation of the performance once the artist and his or her initial team has died.

The bottom line is that Abramović wants to maintain full control over her own performances even though she encourages other artists to sell the rights to their performances. For instance, when Guggenheim curator Nancy Spector asked Abramović, whether or not a museum could collect a performance, Abramović responded that museums could collect performance documentation and “the permission to re-perform.” Abramović went on to say “those works with potential danger must have the full consent of the re-performing artists, like I did in Seven Easy Pieces. Again, this brings up the fact

---

100 Lauren Kelly, November 10, 2012.
that artists, in their lifetimes, must supply extremely strict instructions.”  

Abramović therefore might seem somewhat contradictory in stating that dangerous performances can be acquired and re-performed with the artist’s consent, while refusing to sell the rights to re-perform her own performances or grant re-performers consent to perform her dangerous performances.

Abramović and Kelly claim to want to preserve her work and offer methods to aid other performance artists in preserving their work. However, they are doing so halfway by omitting actual performance from their marketing strategy and losing vital revenue. If public institutions could purchase Certificates of Authenticity, the rights to re-perform her work, and her photography and video documentation, then the strongest possible representation of the performance would be institutionalized and available to the public for years and years to come. Abramović’s retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, *The Artist Is Present* (2010) demonstrated that combining documentation and live re-performance is an ideal way to exhibit past performances. Still, Abramović and Kelly are limiting future presentations of Abramović’s performances in the gallery context by not selling the rights to re-perform her work.

Despite some of his inaccuracies in his approach to establishing performance art, Kelly has been a dedicated advisor to Abramović over the last twenty years and continues to play a vital role in her career. Together they have become advocates for the integration of performance into institutional exhibitions and collections with an emphasis on preserving the medium through documentary material. Now considered an iconic

---

102 Abramovic, Seven Easy Pieces, 25.
103 Kelly, July 11, 2013.
104 Ibid.
figure of performance art, Abramović has extended her mission beyond her own work to help preserve the work of her peers and offer an exemplary practice for re-performing significant performances in the museum context.

The following two chapters examine Abramović's exhibition of documentation and re-performance, first, in *Seven Easy Piece* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (2005), and second, in *The Artist Is Present* at the Museum of Modern Art (2010). In both exhibitions, Kelly acted as a guiding figure for Abramović's live performance and documentation, which would never have been realized without his ongoing support. Kelly and Abramović have not always followed their own guidelines by dividing collections of photo documentation and by rejecting the sale of actual performance. Abramović also transformed her performances in a theatrical production with *Biography*, which went against her continuous insistence for improvisation and originality in her work. Despite the challenges of establishing a market for such an obscure medium as performance art, Kelly and Abramović's approach to documentation was generally successful and offer performance artists a platform for marketing, merchandizing, and exhibiting performance art.
CHAPTER 2

Seven Easy Pieces and Promoting Past Performance in the Museum Context

Performance art in the museum has often been offered as one-night events or as parts of residency programs, where artists workshop and present new performances. These programs are ideal for living artists who want to gain exposure for their current work, but a main concern for artists, scholars, and museum professionals is how this action can be preserved once the performance has ended. As discussed before, documentation and re-performance prevail as the primary methods for exhibiting and acquiring past performance. Abramović’s exhibition series Seven Easy Pieces at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (2005) is key example of how these exhibition methods can be seen. For Seven Easy Pieces, Abramović aimed to give her peers recognition by re-performing crucial performances from the 1960s and 1970s and in doing so she offered general guidelines for accurately exhibiting re-performance in the gallery context. Re-performance has only recently begun to be implemented as a method to preserve performance art. Standards are still being defined and not everyone is in agreement. 105 Seven Easy Pieces was Abramović’s first attempt at implementing her re-performance standards at a museum, and it revealed complications that need to be avoided in future exhibitions of re-performance. While the execution of Seven Easy Pieces had imperfections, the exhibition nevertheless offered premier instructions for re-performance, bringing attention to performance art history and demonstrating how

performance can be properly recognized in the museum environment.

**Abramović’s Motivation for Re-performance**

In the late 1990s, Abramović approached the Guggenheim to present *Seven Easy Pieces* because she had grown frustrated with the entertainment industry, photographers, and younger performance artists using her images and those of her colleagues without asking permission or giving them credit.\(^\text{106}\) In particular, Abramović was angered by a cover image and spread by fashion photographer Steven Meisel in *Vogue Italia* (November 1998). Meisel adapted Abramović's 1976 performance *Relation in Space* (Fig. 18) without crediting her.\(^\text{107}\) For *Relation in Space*, Abramović and her partner, Ulay, ran into each other repeatedly for an hour, increasingly gaining speed in an effort to merge their energy together.\(^\text{108}\) The black and white photographic documentation depicted a nude male and female moving aggressively to and away from each other. Some photographs captured the collision of the two bodies, while others showed the aftermath as the two separated and eagerly moved past each other.

Meisel’s cover image presented remarkable similarities to the appearance and body language of Abramović and Ulay, except the female wore a lightweight open jacket and the male wore a loincloth (Fig. 19). One of the images from inside the magazine took this connection even further with the female basically nude aside from a small thong and fur jacket draped behind her (Fig. 19). In the image, the male and female model move

---

swiftly past each other with their heads down, just as in Abramović's documentation of *Relation in Space*. Meisel focused on the division of the bodies in the magazine spread. He certainly had the models mimic Abramović and Ulay's gestures because the performance documentation and magazine photographs were too similar. Meisel's image was also black and white, which resonated even further with the black and white documentation of *Relation in Space*. It is not clear how Meisel knew about Abramović's documentation of *Relation in Space*, but he worked for *Vogue Italia* and the original performance took place at the Venice Biennial, so perhaps photographic documentation was leaked locally.

Essentially, Meisel was re-staging Abramović's documentation without bringing awareness to the original artist or the intention of the initial performance, which enraged Abramović and encouraged her to seek methods to protect ownership of her work and performance art in general. Abramović's lawyer contacted Meisel, but nothing was accomplished since no copyrights existed for the performance, unlike other visual art mediums and music, which are heavily protected. If an artist wanted to appropriate imagery by a painter or sculptor, then a credit to the original artist would be noted. Similarly, if a musician wanted to cover a song by another artist, or a filmmaker wanted to include a song by an artist, then she or he would need to gain approval from the original creator and compensate her or him for using the material. The copyright law for musicians was even amended in the late 1970s to protect ownership of songs made after 1978, which has assisted songwriters in gaining control of income on remakes. Laws

---

109 Spector, The Artist is Present, 39.
111 Larry Rohter, “Record Industry Braces for Artists’ Battles Over Song Rights,” *New York Times*, August 15,
have been enacted to protect these genres, but performance art is more enigmatic and the medium is fleeting. This predicament leads to the question of how one copyrights an intangible artwork. In response, Abramović decided to create her own copyright procedures for capturing and re-enacting performance art, and she used *Seven Easy Pieces* as a preliminary exploration of her model.

**Legal Protection for Performance**

Abramović's model for *Seven Easy Pieces* considers the laws that are already in place for visual art and theatre and explores how they can be applied to performance art. Visual art has only recently become protected under United State copyright law. The Visual Arts Act of 1990 (VARA) amended the 1976 Copyright Act to include section 106A, which allows visual artists to claim ownership of their work, to prevent any distortion of an artist's work or reference to an artist's work without proper recognition. Before 1990, artists in the United States were not able to protect the attribution, alteration, or destruction of their artwork. For example, in 1980, the Bank of Tokyo commissioned Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) to make a massive sculpture, *Shinto*, for their Manhattan lobby. They then removed it, took it apart, and distributed the parts, without notifying the artist, and Noguchi had no legal claim. VARA provides protection to paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, and photography produced for exhibition, and the

---

law limits editions to no more than two hundred. Other artistic disciplines such as theatre, literature, and audiovisual productions were already protected under the 1976 copyright act. According to attorney Kohel Haver, who specializes in working with artists, "copyright protection is automatic when an ‘original’ work of authorship is ‘fixed’ in a tangible medium of expression." Therefore temporary artistic mediums like performance and other live art events are exempt from copyright protection. For this reason, documentation, written or recorded instructions, and contracts and agreements are necessary to make performance “tangible.”

By implementing photographic and video documentation to substantiate her performances, Abramović’s work is now protected and a photographer like Meisel can no longer legally reference her performances without asking her permission and giving her credit. An example of this protection can be seen in Abramović’s copyright infringement case against French film-maker Pierre Coulibeuf, who directed Abramović’s video for *Balkan Baroque* (1997). Coulibeuf transformed the film into an installation of two moving images and a photograph. Abramović did not sign anything allowing Coulibeuf to make an installation or a photograph or to sell the piece after the exhibition as he did. “Coulibeuf and Regards Productions [his production company] were ordered to pay Abramović €50,000 damages for the infringement of her rights, and €25,000 for damage [to] the integrity of her work.” Abramović had hired Coulibeuf to document the video component for her performative installation *Balkan Baroque*. This process is

---

similar to an artist hiring a fabrication studio to create a sculptural element under the artist's specific instructions. The artistic concept belongs to the artist not the fabricator, and Coulibeuf had no legal right to exhibit and sell fragments of Abramović's video for *Balkan Baroque.*¹¹⁶

**Planning and Realization of Seven Easy Pieces**

Unlike Coulibeuf, who used Abramović's video without her permission, Abramović stipulates that it is necessary to ask artists for permission to re-perform their work, as she did for the exhibition series *Seven Easy Pieces* at the Guggenheim. The exhibition took place in the Frank Lloyd Wright rotunda of the Guggenheim Museum for seven consecutive nights from five o'clock until midnight. Seven performances by influential performance artists from the 1960s and 1970s were selected, and Abramović re-performed and reinterpreted one piece each night for seven hours. The performances took place on a round stage that was constructed to accommodate each performance with a trap door underneath and removable false walls and stairs. The weeklong exhibition was held after hours to not interfere with the 3-month, full-length exhibition *Russia!* Which filled all the ramps, thus demonstrating one more example of how museums place a greater importance on classical painting over performance art.

Because the early critical performances had limited documentation and were commonly described by word of mouth, *Seven Easy Pieces* sought to translate these

¹¹⁶ Ibid.
scarce materials into re-performance to preserve the work.\textsuperscript{117} In the accompanying catalogue for the exhibition, Abramović broke down the main components that are imperative to properly re-perform past performances. Abramović’s plan consisted of the following: “ask the artist for permission, pay the artist for copyright, perform a new interpretation of the piece, and exhibit the original material: photographic, video, relics.”\textsuperscript{118} These factors were broad enough to suit diverse performance artists, and the terms acknowledged that a performance could never be precisely duplicated, making transformation and reinterpretation part of re-performance. Reinterpretation brings the piece into a new context and keeps with the spontaneity of performance art, while incorporating original material brings awareness of the initial concept. Integrating Abramović’s standards into re-performance practice could be immensely beneficial to the acquisition of performance art, allowing institutions to gain the rights to re-perform and loan performances as one would an art object.

It is necessary to understand the distinctions between primary performance art and re-performance before delving into an examination of how re-performance can be accomplished accurately. Primary performance art is original work created and enacted by artists for the first time in a specific environment. Primary performance may also include props, sound, and/or dialogue to further engage the audience. Re-performance, on the other hand, is not original work. In re-performance, the original artist(s) gives consent for the work to be re-enacted. In accordance with Abramović’s re-performance practice, re-performance can be performed by the artist who created it or by skilled dancers or


\textsuperscript{118} Abramović, Seven Easy Pieces, 11.
performers who have been prepared via physical training, word of mouth descriptions, text, and documentary materials. Re-performers must adapt to a new environment and bring their own interpretation to the performance, so that the work is still authentic and spontaneous. Re-performance should include a brief description and may use props, sound, and/or dialogue taken from the original performance or use derivative materials that represent the original objects. Finally, if documentation of the original performance exists, then these materials should be included with the re-performance to aid in educating the audience.119

Once Abramović's model had been defined, she worked closely with Sean Kelly and the curatorial staff at the Guggenheim to construct an agreement outlining the conditions. Chief curator Nancy Spector then contacted the artists Abramović and Kelly had selected, sending letters of agreement that stated the plan for the exhibition and a request of permission for Abramović to “interpret and re-present” their work.120 The letter clearly defined the plan and goals of the exhibition, noting that each performance would be held on a separate day during the seven days of the exhibition in an effort to explore the “possibility of recalling, reviving, and preserving” important performances for future generations. There would be an accompanying exhibition of documentation, including “written descriptions, scores, drawings, photographs and/or video,” as well as video documentation of Abramović’s own interpretations of the performances. A catalogue would also accompany the exhibition, providing a forum for artists, historians, and critics to analyze the ability to re-perform past performances. When obtaining artwork for exhibitions, a registrar commonly drafts agreements like these, but since the

119 Ibid.
rights to re-perform do not involve physical art objects, registrars were not employed for *Seven Easy Pieces*. Instead, Abramović and the curators took on this additional role when figuring out how to gain rights from the original artists.

In preparation for *Seven Easy Pieces*, Abramović worked closely with Sean Kelly to select which performances would be the most beneficial to re-perform at the Guggenheim. They focused on performances from the 1960s and 1970s that had influenced Abramović’s work and had an impact on the history of performance art. The pieces also had to be safe for the museum space and contain material that could be transformed into seven-hour works. Abramović has always been invested in pushing her body with long durational tasks; so she was adding her own style to the re-performances by having them last seven hours. Abramović and Kelly wanted to have an equal number of male and female performance artists from various locations around the world to demonstrate the diversity of modern performance art. They then examined each performance artist’s body of work with the assistance of the Guggenheim curators and determined which iconic performance best represented each artist’s technique.\(^\text{121}\) The final selection with approval from all artists and/or estates was *Body Pressure* by Bruce Nauman (original duration unknown, Düsseldorf, 1974), *Seedbed* by Vito Acconci (originally two days a week, six hours a day, New York, 1972), *Action Pants: Genital Panic* by Valie Export (b. 1970, originally ten minutes, Munich, 1969), *The Conditioning, First Action of Self-portrait(s)* by Gina Pane (1939-1990, originally thirty minutes, 1973), and *How To Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* by Joseph Beuys (1921-1986, originally three hours, Düsseldorf, 1965). Abramović also performed her earlier

While Abramović was successful in gaining rights to re-perform the above works, there were other performances that Abramović did not get permission to re-perform, such as Chris Burden's (b. 1946) *Trans-fixed* (1974, Fig. 20), in which he had his hands nailed to a Volkswagen Beetle that was driven in and out of a garage. In an interview prior to the exhibition, Abramović explained that when Burden was asked for permission, his assistant responded “not this piece, not any piece,” and while Abramović respected this decision, she was angered by his refusal to give a reason. This example shows that asking permission for re-performance might not always get the desired reaction, but that it is important to respect the original artist's preference. An artist's agreement must remain a central element of the model in order to have a genuine re-performance. While Burden did not owe Abramović any explanation, his input would have been beneficial to the field of re-performance in general. Burden’s concerns could have been addressed to restructure Abramović’s re-performance tactics, which could have improved *Seven Easy Pieces* and may have led other artists with similar reservations to accept re-performance in the future.

Once the selection of the seven works had been finalized, Abramović researched and collected all the material she could find on each piece, including photographs, descriptions by artists, and accounts from those present at the original event. Abramović did not rehearse the performances as one would a play, but according to Joan Young,

---


director of curatorial affairs at the Guggenheim, Abramović made sure she has the stamina to endure seven hours of performance over seven nights by practicing exercises to ready her mind and body.\textsuperscript{124} In addition to her extensive research and preparation, she also entered into dialogue with living artists whenever possible. In the catalogue, Abramović talked about how an unspecified young artist who had asked her permission to re-perform her piece *Nightsea-Crossing* (1981-1986), but had not had the patience to meet with her in person, to enable her to evaluate his ability to accomplish the piece or to wait for Ulay to also give his permission. Abramović was amazed that “yet another artist was unwilling to research fully the original material and enter into a meaningful dialogue with the artist or artist’s estate.”\textsuperscript{125} This instance demonstrates why a consistent practice needs to be established for artists to re-perform another artist’s work properly.

Developing *Seven Easy Pieces* was a long process that took years for Abramović to conceive and accomplish. Without that dedication, the exhibition would not have met the standards that she was attempting to create.

*Seven Easy Pieces* was a unique project for the curatorial staff at the Guggenheim. It was organized by Nancy Spector, Joan Young, and Jennifer Blessing, senior curator of photography. While Abramović took the lead in selecting the performances and deciding how each piece would be reinterpreted, the curators offered their assistance in narrowing down the choices and figuring out how to exhibit the re-performances safely. With *Seven Easy Pieces*, Abramović, Kelly, and the curators addressed issues of how to properly care for performance artists when re-performing, similar to what the Actors’ Equity Association tries to do for theatrical artists. The curators spoke with Kelly about his

\textsuperscript{124} Joan Young, July 27, 2012.
\textsuperscript{125} Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces*, 21.
experience exhibiting *House with the Ocean View* (2002) at his gallery. For the piece, Abramović constructed a public living installation that she stayed in for twelve days, which gave Kelly significant knowledge about exhibiting lengthy performances in the gallery context. He offered the curators guidance on what to expect from the exhibition, such as how to care for someone who is performing for long durations, what the audience would expect, how people would react, and how the audience might try to engage her.\(^1\)\(^2\)

With no registrar, acquisition and care of the props for the performances instead fell to the Art Service and Preparation Department (ASaP), headed by Paul Bridge. Planning for the exhibition and assisting Abramović was very different from the usual exhibitions at the Guggenheim, and Bridge was faced with many unusual tasks, such as defrosting a frozen hare with a blow dryer for the re-performance of *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* and helping Abramović put on costumes below the platform.\(^2\)\(^7\)

Carolynn Karp, former exhibition designer at the Guggenheim, was involved in figuring out how each performance could be done on the same constructed platform and presented in the middle of the rotunda. According to Karp, Abramović was very involved in the design and visited the fabrication shop to examine the progress of the construction.\(^2\)\(^8\)

The circular stage-like structure allowed the re-performances to be viewed in the round, but this was not how any of the performances were originally viewed.\(^2\)\(^9\) In addition, someone from the Curatorial, Exhibition Design, or ASaP Departments was assigned to be present during each re-performance to check on Abramović's wellbeing, as a registrar

---

\(^1\)\(^2\) Young, July 27, 2012.  
\(^2\)\(^8\) Carolynn Karp, e-mail message to author regarding Seven Easy Pieces,” July 29, 2013.  
\(^2\)\(^9\) Young, July 27, 2012.
or conservator would for an exhibition of permanent artwork.  

**Performance Documentation in *Seven Easy Pieces***

The model developed by Abramović and the Guggenheim staff—with the creation of an agreement, consent from the original artists, extensive research on each piece, fabrication of a versatile exhibition layout, and inclusion of primary documentation to support the re-performances provided a clear plan for presenting re-performance in the museum setting. These stipulations were established at the inception of the exhibition, yet not all of these criteria were fulfilled in *Seven Easy Pieces*. The use of documentation was of vital concern for evaluating the authenticity of the exhibition. Abramović specified the inclusion of these materials in her model, and Spector's letter detailed the incorporation of original written text, drawings, and documentation photographs and videos in an accompanying exhibition space that patrons could visit during the re-performances to add to their understanding of the initial piece. However, the exhibition of these materials in a tower gallery was never realized, which provided a falsehood to the artists and artist estates that had signed the letter of agreement.  

This exclusion misled the audience by only displaying Abramović's interpretation of the performances, essentially giving her primary credit for the performances and negating her attempt to credit her peers.

The reasons for not including a documentation exhibit were not clear. Young believed it was due to lack of funding, lack of exhibition space, or the confusion

---

130 Ibid.
131 Blessing, October 17, 2012.
documentation might have created during the off hours when Abramović was not performing. Also, the audience at *Seven Easy Pieces* mostly consisted of performance academics, who were already aware of the original performances and Abramović's interest in re-performing them. Even if documentation had been exhibited, viewers may not have made the connection with it located in a tower gallery, far away from the re-performances. It would have been better to exhibit the documentation in the rotunda next to the re-performances, perhaps on moveable walls that could have been brought out during the re-performances. This would not have been expensive and there was plenty of space on the rotunda to accommodate the documentation.

The curatorial staff attempted to rectify the exclusion by handing out brochures that explained the exhibition with a script for each performance in the original artist's words. Blessing also tried to redress this issue by organizing the “(Re)presenting Performance” symposium, which included a survey of documentation and panel discussion from artists and scholars in the field. Even with the symposium, by excluding the documentation the museum missed an opportunity to educate the general public about the original performance. Abramović's performances would start at five o'clock in the evening, when the museum was still open and patrons attending the *Russia!* exhibition were still present. These patrons may not have known much about performance art history, and the documentation would have provided valuable information for them. In addition, the catalogue for the exhibition was published after the exhibition. It stressed the importance of including documentation with re-performance. The catalogue also had the letter of agreement to the artists specifying an exhibition of documentation, but there

---

133 Ibid.
was no mention of the fact that the original documentation was never actually exhibited.

Although the exhibition failed to include original material as specified, there was a great deal of video and photographic documentation taken of Abramović’s re-performances. That documentation was then displayed on monitors during the following re-enactments. The videos contain raw full-length footage, and are currently available in the education center at the Guggenheim. The documentation, however, has not yet been considered usable for resale or exhibition beyond the display during Seven Easy Pieces. Anyone can access the documentation in the education center, but the general public may not be aware of it or schedule an appointment to view the documentation as a scholar would, which limits its usefulness.

Abramović had additional photographers and videographers document the performances, and Kelly later prepared footage from her two pieces Lips of Thomas and Entering the Other Side (2005), for sale. Lips of Thomas has been marketed as a double-screen video projection, allowing for a detailed comparison of the 1975 and 2005 performances (Fig. 21). Abramović could have compensated the other artists and marketed their documentation, but according to Lauren Kelly, the daughter of Sean Kelly and director of his gallery, Abramović “was more interested in educating younger generations in these early performances than making a profit from them.”134 All of this documentation shows Abramović’s substantial interest in preserving the re-performances from Seven Easy Pieces. However, the same level of attention was not devoted to the documentation of the primary performances, so it presents an uneven and biased model for re-enacting previous performance art.

An additional documentation approach came from filmmaker Babette Mangolte, who took footage of the exhibition and produced a documentary detailing the week's events, *Seven Easy Pieces by Marina Abramović*. The documentary made the exhibition available to a broad audience at an affordable cost. *Seven Easy Pieces* was not Mangolte's first involvement in documenting performance at the Guggenheim. In the exhibition *Robert Morris: Mind/Body Problem* (1994), Mangolte restaged four pieces by Morris from the 1960s.\(^{135}\)

Mangolte's approach to documenting both Abramović's and Morris's performances and how the material was integrated into the museum environment, were dramatically different. *Robert Morris: Mind/Body Problem* was curated by Rosalind Krauss and Thomas Krens, who wanted to share the complexity of all the different aspects of Morris's work.\(^{136}\) Mangolte was hired to create video re-enactments of Morris's crucial 1960s performances, including *Site* (Original Cast 1964 Robert Morris, Carolee Schneeman), *Arizona* (Original Cast 1963 Robert Morris), *21:3* (Original Cast 1963 Robert Morris), and *Waterman Switch* (Original Cast 1965 Lucinda Child, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Morris). Mangolte worked closely with Morris, who choreographed the re-performances and gave her immense freedom with directing the reproductions.\(^{137}\) These video re-enactments were executed by actors and were created on a closed set. The look of Morris's video was more edited and polished than Abramović's live and improvised re-performances in *Seven Easy Pieces*. Morris's re-enactments were installed as high-definition videos in four bays throughout the Guggenheim ramps, allowing them to mingle with Morris's two-dimensional and three-dimensional artwork in the other

\(^{135}\) Babette Mangolte, “Films.”

\(^{136}\) Peter Lawson-Johnson, Preface, xiii.

\(^{137}\) Babette Mangolte, “How I Made Some of My Films.”
bays. The high-definition videos were profoundly different from the grainy black and white photographs that remain from the original performances, but Mangolte had Morris's support and guidance (Fig. 22). Morris's involvement in the processes fit with Abramović's model, having both consent and involvement in order to justly re-create another artist's work.

In contrast to the Morris exhibition, Mangolte did not have as much freedom with Seven Easy Pieces. Because Abramović was performing live in front of an audience in the museum rather than on a closed set. Mangolte captured the seven-hour performances over seven nights, and then she edited down the footage to a ninety-minute account of the exhibition. Viewing the finished documentary was vastly different from viewing the uncut version of the performances from the Guggenheim's footage in the Education Center. It is ideal for audiences to have both the full-length and abbreviated versions of Seven Easy Pieces available. An art history student may want to examine the exhibition in its entirety in the Educational Center while someone with a less academic interest maybe more interested in purchasing a ninety-minute DVD to watch at home. Either way, the two different documentation approaches allow people with varying interest in performance to experience the exhibition after it has ended.

Successes and Failures of Re-performance in Seven Easy Pieces

This thesis focuses on four of the seven performances that best exemplify the successes and failures in Abramović's re-performance in Seven Easy Pieces: Acconci's Seedbed, Abramović's Lips of Thomas, Export's Action Pants, and Pane's The
Conditioning. Abramović's re-performance of *Seedbed* and *Lips of Thomas* demonstrate the importance of successful reinterpretation and her re-performance of *Action Pants* and *The Conditioning* represent complications in re-performing work by other artists. Despite the lack of primary documentation, *Seven Easy Pieces* managed to follow other the stipulations of Abramović’s model, particularly the need to reinterpret the original performance in a new context and keep the actions unpredictable, even when the audience was familiar with the original work. For instance, Acconci’s 1971 performance *Seedbed* (Fig. 23) took place at Sonnabend Gallery in New York City, where he masturbated hidden under a ramp, while patrons walked above him for nine days, eight hours a day.\(^{138}\) In *Seven Easy Pieces*, Abramović transformed the virile sexual experience into a feminine act and the environment was changed from an intimate gallery to the main floor of an echoing museum. Abramović had less than three minutes of primary recorded footage without sound to help her prepare, so she focused on Acconci’s concept of producing semen and chose to explore what she believed women produce, moisture and heat.\(^ {139}\) This distinction between the male and female orgasm fundamentally altered the performance and made it unexpected because Abramović was not attempting to copy Acconci or the male’s experience, but instead provided a female perspective.

Abramović masturbated in an enclosed space underneath the round stage as patrons climbed stairs and sat or stood above her hiding place. Acconci and Abramović both had speakers projecting their moans throughout the exhibition space and each responded to the footsteps and noises of the visitors above them. When discussing the


\(^ {139}\) Ibid.
Acconci re-performance, Abramović stated, “I really think there’s no difference between an art piece made by a man and one made by a woman. Is it a good art piece or a bad art piece? Of course, if you’re female, you’re maybe dealing with different issues.”

This statement is assertive, yet she contradicts herself with her vague closing words about how women might deal with different issues. By masturbating, Abramović was taking control of her sexuality and rejecting the passive role women have traditionally played in society, thereby greatly altering Acconci's original performance. Abramović was able to pay homage to Acconci while also reinterpreting the piece, which was the goal of the exhibition.

Even when re-performing her own *Lips of Thomas* (Fig. 24) Abramović reinterpreted and altered the piece for the new environment. The original performance took place at Galerie Krinzinger in Innsbruck and lasted two hours. For the Guggenheim exhibition the design team built a wall for the re-performance of *Lips of Thomas*, so it was more like the original performance with one frontal view, rather than being in the round like the other pieces.

According to Abramović, the score for the 1975 performance went like this:

I slowly eat 1 kilo of honey with a silver spoon.
I slowly drink 1 liter of red wine out of a crystal glass.
I break the glass with my right hand.
I cut a five-pointed star on my stomach with a razor blade.
I violently whip myself until I no longer feel any pain.
I lay down on a cross-made of ice blocks.
The heat of a suspended space heater pointed at my stomach Causes the cut star to bleed.
The rest of my body begins to freeze
I remain on the ice cross for 30 minutes until the audience interrupts the piece by removing the ice blocs from underneath.

140 Ibid.
141 Young, July 27, 2012.
Based on the footage available in the Guggenheim’s educational center, Abramović repeated the actions from the original “score” for the seven-hour duration, from five o’clock until midnight, but she regularly changed the sequence. Abramović also removed the section where she broke the glass and inserted a new portion in which she put on a military hat and hiking boots and held a long stick, while a Russian song played. Abramović felt that the re-performance was more successful than the original because she had gained experience with age and could see the overall theme more clearly. In 1975, Abramović did not realize how autobiographical the performance was; in 2005, however, she was able to reflect on the symbolic use of a cross, communist star, honey and vine to see the connection to her orthodox and communist background. She added the section with the hiking boots as a tribute to her walk across the Great Wall of China. In this way, Abramović was not only reinterpreting the performance, but also building on the primary experience with a newfound understanding. This re-performance demonstrates the benefits of an artist re-performing his or her own work, both because there is the possibility of improving the original performance and also because it presents a new opportunity to document the work carefully for future re-performances.

*Lips of Thomas* demonstrated the widest range of actions within the seven-hour timeframe. Other performances by her peers were shorter and less varied. For instance, Valie Export’s *Action Pants: Genital Panic* (Fig. 25) was originally ten minutes long, so to reconfigure the piece to fill seven hours was problematic. Export's original

---

performance took place in 1969 at an unknown experimental art cinema in Munich. Export sat on a bench against a wall with a triangle cut out of her pants exposing her genitals and holding a machine-gun, and then she walked through the audience. She aimed to provoke the audience to defy stereotypes about women's historical portrayal as passive objects in cinema.\textsuperscript{145}

Based on the documentation footage of Abramović's re-performance of \textit{Action Pants} (Fig. 26) in the Guggenheim archive, Abramović sat in a chair with a rip in her pants exposing her genitals, and she would occasionally put her leg up on the opposing chair. This action had an intense impact for ten minutes, but over the hours it appeared to lose the original shock value and desensitize the audience. Abramović chose to perform \textit{Action Pants} in the round, even though Export originally performed with a stage behind her. The round stage was unnecessary because Abramović predominantly faced in one direction throughout the performance and never left the stage as Export had done. The re-performance was less confrontational than the original performance sought to be, and, despite holding a gun, Abramović appeared passive with a relatively static and laid-back motion.

Export produced a set of six identical screen-printed posters to memorialize her original performance, and this series has been acquired by museums like the Tate Gallery and the Museum of Modern Art (Fig. 27). Abramović's re-performance appeared to emulate those prints rather than the actual performance. Blessing had some reservations about the re-performance because she felt that re-performance relied too heavily on documentation and believed Abramović often froze in positions exactly like the original

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
documentary photographs. Furthermore, in a review of the exhibition, critic Roberta Smith claimed, “Without its original context, the piece seemed two-dimensional, a recapitulation of famous images, yet it graphically symbolized the way performance artists armor their vulnerability with focus and concentration.” Export gave Abramović permission to re-perform *Action Pants*, yet it appears that Export was not actively involved in the realization of the re-performance. Neither Young nor Blessing recalls Export or any of the other original artists coming during preparation or to see *Seven Easy Pieces*. It is interesting that the living artist, who gave her approval, was not more concerned with the outcome of the re-performance. Perhaps with more guidance, Abramović would not have relied so heavily on documentation and the re-performance would have been more sincere.

Abramović’s dependency on documentation for *Action Pants* illuminates a major challenge in re-performing work by another artist. *Seven Easy Pieces* demonstrated how re-performance is more manageable for the original creator than for an artist performing another artist’s work. Abramović’s re-performance of *Lips of Thomas* showed how re-performance can be not only a tool to share past performance with new audiences, but also a way for artists to reflect on their past work and figure out how it can endure after the original action is over. This practice is clearly beneficial to artists while they are living, but there needs to be methods instated to enable the same level of reinterpretation after the artist is deceased. Performance artists who want to preserve their performances and allow for re-performance must determine how to translate this personal connection to

---

146 Jennifer Blessing, October 17, 2012.
148 Jennifer Blessing and Joan Young, e-mail message to author, July 1, 2013.
teach others to perform their work. This dilemma makes a vital case for encouraging performance artists to write detailed scores and direct photographers to document their performances accurately, so that a clear guide can be established for enacting re-performance in the future.

Gina Pane was one of those performance artists, who made a point of habitually translating her performances to written text and photographic evidence. Pane, unlike many of the other artists from the 1960s and 1970s, was very concerned with photographic documentation and thoroughly instructed photographers in how to shoot her work. According to Pane, “Photography is a ‘sociological’ object that allows us to grasp reality, which makes behavior significant and informative to the public.” Since Pane had detailed notes and had guided the photographers, her performance *The Conditioning*, First Action of *Self-Portrait(s)* (Fig. 28), should have been an ideal study in re-performance, yet Abramović had difficulty with properly capturing the essence of the performance. The primary issue with Abramović’s interpretation was that *The Conditioning* (Fig. 29) was the first part of a three-part series of actions, all of which work together to complete the performance. *Self-Portrait(s)* consisted of three consecutive phases “condition, contraction, and rejection.” In *The Conditioning*, Pane lay on a metal structure above lit candles in an effort to denounce the suffering of submissive women then in *The Contraction*, Pane cut her face and examined herself in front of a mirror as an inquiry into women as superficial objects of society; and finally in *The Rejection*, Pane drank milk that was mixed with the blood from her cut mouth as a

gesture of women’s natural strength and power to produce life.\textsuperscript{150}

The Estate of Gina Pane only granted Abramović permission to perform the first part of the piece rather than to remake the performance in its entirety.\textsuperscript{151} As a result, Abramović could not portray the full scope of the actions as originally intended. Abramović should have requested a different performance that she could have done in its entirety to demonstrate a better representation of re-performance. Alternately, Abramović could have hinted at aspects from the other actions to make the intention of the original performance more apparent. Instead, she limited the performance to lighting candles, lying on the metal structure over the candles, and repeating those actions once the candles had gone out.

The brochure for the exhibition offered the following information for the performance:

There was a type of iron bed with a few crossbars and below fifteen 25-cm-long candles. The candles were lit and I lay down on this bed. My body only 5 cm from the flames. Needless to say, the pain started right away and was very difficult to dominate.” Pane ultimately abandoned the iron bed with the burning candles after thirty minutes; today Abramović must hold out for seven hours. Wearing black sneakers and gray, fireproof overalls, she is lying on an iron frame about 30 cm high that corresponds to Pane’s description: five crossbars supporting her body, with fifteen burning white candles attached to the five crossbars on the underside of the frame.\textsuperscript{152}

The description did not mention the other two stages of this performance, nor was there commentary about the female condition being described. Abramović and the brochure focused on the physical actions of the performance rather than the feminine

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{151} Abramović, Seven Easy Pieces, 24.
\textsuperscript{152} Sandra Umathun, “Beyond Documentation, or the Adventure of Shared Time and Place. Experience of the Viewer,” in Seven Easy Pieces, by Marina Abramovic (New York: Charta, 2007), 51.
\end{flushright}
undertones alluded to in the original piece. This portrayal is vastly different from Abramović’s description for *Lips of Thomas*, which focused on the symbolic imagery and emotional connection she had to them. According to Blessing, in the full spectrum of *Self-Portrait(s)*, Pane goes through a rounded display of emotions from sadness to playfulness, but the section the estate allowed only displayed the masochistic stage of the performance.153 Blessing wrote her dissertation on Pane and had mixed feelings about the re-performance of *The Conditioning* because “Pane is not very well known and her aspirations are not very well understood and now generations of people only know her work from what they might have seen Marina do and it’s Marina’s piece. On the other hand if Marina had not done the piece, people might not know her at all.”154 Blessing points out a significant dilemma of ownership and integrity that arises with re-performance. If one searches via Google for *The Conditioning, First Action of Self-Portrait(s)*, the link to the Guggenheim’s *Seven Easy Pieces* exhibition is the first to appear, along with other articles referring to Abramović's exhibition. Similarly, an image search also results in a photograph of Abramović performing *The Conditioning*, but none of Pane's original performance. Abramović's representation also perpetuates the masochistic quality of Pane's work without acknowledging the “playful” quality that Blessing described.

**Discoveries and Improvements for Abramović's Preservation Practices**

Abramović's re-performances of *Seedbed* and *Lips of Thomas* achieved her goals.
of staying true to the original performance while expanding on them to adapt to a new environment, era, and audience. Her re-performances of *Action Pants* and *The Conditioning*, on the other hand, did not stay consistent or expand upon the original performances beyond increasing the duration of the performances. Still, while the overall exhibition series of *Seven Easy Pieces* presented some shortcomings, the successful re-performances and the insights gained from the unsuccessful re-performances provide innovative instructions for caring for re-performers, approaching artists for the rights to re-perform, and the importance of documentation in re-performance. This information can assist future presentations of re-performance in museum and gallery contexts.

Abramović’s basic model allows artists the freedom to take diverse approaches to preserving their work. It asserts a need for artist permission, compensation, new interpretation, and inclusion of original materials when available.

Abramović's adaptation of *Lips of Thomas* confirms that it is favorable for artists to re-perform their own work and allows them to reflect and build on their original concept. Re-performance of another artist's work is more challenging and requires detailed accounts from the primary artist to accurately represent their performance. It is clear that Abramović did not succeed in this with *The Conditioning*, despite Pane's detailed notes and involvement with documentation. This failure exposes problems in Abramović's re-working of the performance as she focused too much on specific photographs rather than reinterpreting the performances in a unique way. According to Smith, “While [the re-performances] can never be completely recreated, they can be pulled into the present, stripped of some of their mysteries and returned to living art.”

---

155 Smith, “Turning Back the Clock.”
Thus personal interpretation is essential to re-performance because the original performance can never be exactly copied. These issues can be resolved with more detailed instructions from artists and a greater understanding of re-performance methods. With this broad foundation, artists and institutions can agree on logical terms for acquiring performance for re-performance purposes.

While Abramović has succeeded in defining tangible documentation to copyright her performances, she has not had the same success with protecting the rights to the live re-performance of her work or instructing other artists on how they can protect the rights to re-perform their work. As discussed in chapter 1, Abramović encourages living performance artists to write detailed instructions for how to re-perform their work, but she opts not to do so with her own work. Instead, Abramović has re-performers attend workshops and perform strenuous exercises to get into her mindset to re-perform her work. Abramović either leads these workshops herself or her team oversees the workshops.\textsuperscript{156} This approach is similar to Tino Sehgal's verbal agreements with buyers of his performance, also discussed in chapter 1, where he or his team must oversee the re-performance. Both artists want to remain in full control of their performances, but the lack of written, photographed, or video-recorded instructions for how to re-perform specific works has limited the legal activity they have against people who re-perform their work without prior consent. Still, neither artist seems to be interested in writing an agreement or general guidelines to make a permanent reference for their performances to be re-performed.

This paper proposes a solution to Abramović's failure to protect her own performance.
performance work that would follow valid current copyright law. Since Abramović already supports the use of referencing documents for re-performance, she should assemble a document including photographic documentation, a brief description of the original performance, and a list of exercises to prepare for re-performance, which would then be supplied to the institution or artists who wish to re-perform her work. This document could act as a legally binding representation for the re-performance, so Abramović would have a way to protect her work from being re-performed without her permission. For artists who reject documentation and written descriptions, like Sehgal, MoMA’s Performance Working Group and the Guggenheim's Variable Media Initiative have begun to establish other methods to preserve works for re-performance purposes, as will be discussed further in the conclusion.

Seven Easy Pieces brought attention to the institution’s unusual and often poor approach to re-performance. The exhibition would have had a greater impact if it had been exhibited in a tower gallery during museum hours, rather than segregated, after hours, to the rotunda, as if it were an afterthought to the Russia! exhibition. While the curators’ work on the exhibition indicates that registrars are not necessarily needed for live art objects and derivative objects, a registrar would have been helpful for dealing with copyright issues, agreements, and treatment of live artworks. The ASaP and Exhibition Design Departments were also faced with new challenges and had to learn to accommodate living artwork. Issues of authenticity arose with the round stage as none of the original performances was done in the round; however, this method was chosen more to accommodate the rotunda space and viewing from the ramps than to focus on the performances themselves. Another concern was the exclusion of original documentation,
which was a major problem for educating the general public in the original work.

*Seven Easy Pieces* acts as a precursor to her more effective exhibition *The Artist Is Present* (2010) at the Museum of Modern Art. Many of the apparent flaws in *Seven Easy Pieces* were examined and resolved, which demonstrates progress in instituting performance art. *The Artist Is Present* combined documentation and re-performance within numerous galleries throughout the museum rather than designating the performances to a stage in one location. The exhibition also expanded on methods for training artists to re-perform another artist's work efficiently, which in turn can assist other future exhibitions of performance art.
CHAPTER 3

The Artist Is Present and Improving Guidelines for Museums

The exhibition Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present (2010), held at the Museum of Modern Art, is an unrivaled example of institutionalizing performance art. The retrospective chronicled the lengthy career of Abramović with a focus on her early work, through re-performance, photography, video, sound, and derivative objects. In The Artist Is Present, she continued to apply the structure that she had begun in Seven Easy Pieces, by improving standards for re-performance and advancing protection for re-performers. Several performances that Abramović re-performed for Seven Easy Pieces were dangerous, so she added the condition that she was the only re-performer who could perform works that were harmful in The Artist Is Present and thereafter.157 Artworks that were hazardous, but imperative to her retrospective were represented in documentation. Furthermore, the retrospective resolved the division of live action and original documentation, which was not wholly fulfilled in Seven Easy Pieces. While a strategy for re-performance and documentation has not been perfected, Abramović’s approach has been a learning process, and her retrospective The Artist Is Present, has helped to establish standards for re-performance, documentation, and protection for re-performers and performance artists.

157 Abramović, “Thinking Performance at the Guggenheim.”
Cleaning the House: Approach to Training Re-performers

Abramović believes performance makes the most sense when experienced live, which is signified in the title of her retrospective *The Artist Is Present*. Therefore, it was crucial that she have performers and dancers re-perform her notable works. Meanwhile, she focused on her new piece of the same title, where she sat across a table from patrons in MoMA's atrium for the entirety of the exhibition. From opening to closing of the museum each day, she sat motionless without changing her expression or leaving her post, despite distractions from patrons sitting across from her. Abramović's performances are very long and often require holding limited positions for long amounts of time. For the performance at MoMA, Abramović did not take breaks as the re-performers did, which can be more challenging and harmful to the body and mind than constant motion and periodic rest.

Abramović has taught many courses on performance art, and her book entitled *Student Body: Workshops, 1979-2003: Performances, 1993-2003* detailing how she teaches younger performance artists. The book examines her “Cleaning the House” workshop as her prevailing method for training re-performers to enact her work. In preparation for re-performances in *The Artist Is Present*, Abramović had the re-performers attend a “Cleaning the House” retreat at her home in upstate New York. She taught re-performers the “Abramović Method,” which does not instruct them in how to enact the pieces or rehearse them because she believes re-performance should be open to

---

158 Abramović, Seven Easy Pieces, 19.
159 Biesenbach, Marina Abramovic: The Artist is Present, 15.
interparation and improvisation as described in her earlier manifesto. Rather she helped them mentally and physically prepare through a series of spiritual activities.\(^{160}\)

These activities explored a wide range of conditions that test and explore the re-performer's limits in a way that is conducive to Abramović's performances. The exercises include “long walks in landscape,” “walking backward with mirror,” “stopping anger,” “listening to sound,” “making sound,” and “slow motion.” In “walking backward with mirror,” Abramović asked the re-performers to “hold a mirror in front of [their] face. Starting from the house, walk backwards, looking constantly into the mirror to see the route behind [them]. 4 hours each direction.”\(^{161}\) While *Student Body: Workshops* provides written descriptions and photographs of the exercises, it does not explore how the re-performers responded to the exercises or how the retreat affected the re-performers during *The Artist Is Present*, as this thesis will do.

Thirty-five artists of varying backgrounds were selected to take the workshop and perform in the retrospective.\(^{162}\) Abramović selected a wide variety of re-performers and this chapter will examine the experiences of four re-performers, who exemplify that diversity. Abramović chose each for his or her unique skills, whether in physical fitness, performance, or dance, and each provided a unique viewpoint of his or her experience. For instance, Jacqueline Lounsbury, a Pilates instructor, lived with two performers who were selected for the exhibition and was invited to teach Pilates at the “Cleaning the House” retreat. During the retreat, Lounsbury was allowed to participate in the exercises.

---


\(^{162}\)Biesenbach, Marina Abramovic: The Artist is Present, 18.
Her effort in the “writing your name” exercise was more accurate than that of the selected re-performers, so Abramović decided to hire her for the exhibition. The “writing your name” exercise consisted of re-performers writing their names without allowing the pencil to leave the page, and the activity could not take less than an hour. After the exercise, Abramović hung all the papers in tiered groups and she analyzed how some artists wrote their name in circles and others wrote their name fifty times, which were clever approaches, but not the intended practice of slow and patient motion. Then she pointed to Lounsbury’s perfectly written “J” and said that even though she had not completed her name, it was the best because it showed patience and the ability to follow directions.163 The exercise gauged the re-performers discipline for performing slowly and methodically, as is essential for re-performing Abramović’s work and Lounsbury demonstrated that control.

Matthew Rogers, a trained performance artist, was sought out by Abramović and invited to participate in the workshop and exhibition. Rogers was skeptical of “Cleaning the House” because he was not familiar with Abramović and her methods, yet he still attended the retreat. Rogers recalled the breakthrough he made on his second day of fasting as part of the experience, when he walked blindfolded through the woods. At first he struggled with his discomfort in the situation and with trusting Abramović, but then Abramović whispered to him, in regard to her exhibition, “You don’t think I am scared too?” Her anxiety helped him to tolerate the exercise and later re-perform with her same tenacity.164 Doing these exercises under extreme conditions, such as hunger and fatigue in

164 Matthew Rogers, in Skype discussion with the author regarding re-performance in The Artist Is Present,
outdoor settings, aimed to toughen the re-performer, so he or she could endure re-performing for long durations during *The Artist Is Present*. However the re-performers ended up only performing for two-hour intervals, which did not allow them to fully demonstrate what they had been taught in the workshop.165 Since Abramović’s training focuses on preparation for long-durational re-performance, her methods would not work for all kinds of re-performances. Therefore, individual performance artists can look to Abramović’s retreat for general guidance, but they need to define the best training for their specific approach to re-performance.

Performance artist Rebecca Davis was also selected to attend the retreat and re-perform in *The Artist Is Present* and Davis became Abramović’s lead choreographer for traveling the re-performances after the MoMA retrospective. In addition, Yozmit, an eccentric dancer, went to an open call audition for the *Artist Is Present* and was hired as a re-performer because of his long flowing hair, which was ideal for the re-performance of *Relation in Time* (Fig. 30), in which Ulay and Abramović were attached together by their hair. Davis’s and Yozmit's experiences preparing for and executing re-performances at MoMA will be examined further in this chapter.

**Constructing a Contract Suitable for Living Artwork**

Once the artists had been prepared, Abramović and MoMA designed a contract that outlined stipulations for the re-performances and assured protection of the re-
performers. Museums commonly make contracts for their employees, but the contract for *The Artist Is Present* differed greatly from any of MoMA's standard paperwork because the re-performers were not only working in the museum, but were also on display as artwork. MoMA staff met with Abramović and the re-performers to make sure the conditions of the re-performances were clear and to figure out what the re-performers would need to be safe and comfortable during the exhibition. According to Rebecca Davis, one re-performer was not satisfied with the pay and initiated a discussion with the other re-performers. They requested higher wages during two meetings at the museum and MoMA ultimately conceded and met their demands. The final contract stipulated a pay rate that was approximately $25.00 per hour, the inclusion of security guards to watch over each re-performance, “safe” words for re-performers to say when in distress and worker’s compensation and unemployment benefits after the exhibition.\footnote{Davis, New York, NY, October 10, 2012.} The discussions between the re-performers, Abramović, and the museum staff show MoMA's openness to suggestions for how to employ individuals to act as artwork. In doing so, MoMA implemented a model contract for exhibiting living artwork in the gallery, which brought together standard employment terms and provisions to protect visual art.

While the contract had a detailed outline, additions and amendments were made throughout the exhibition as participants discovered more about how to properly care for the re-performers. In the first week, one of the re-performers fainted, which encouraged MoMA to limit performances to two-hour intervals. Initially, the intervals had lasted four or more hours. Some of the re-performers were upset about this change because they were interested in pushing themselves with the lengthy performances. However, re-
performers worked several days a week over the three-month period, which was already challenging to the body. Other amendments included a backstage room with heaters, lockers, and water, that the artists could use before and after they performed, and the hiring of stage manager Jill Samuels, who checked on the re-performers, helped during rotations, and found replacements when artists were sick. These additions helped in the mental and physical care of the re-performers and made the contract an even stronger model for future performance.

Re-performer's Interpretation and Interaction with the Public

Based on interviews with re-performers, most were satisfied with the contract and their treatment during the exhibition. The exhibition included five re-performances: Relation in Time (1977), Imponderabilia (1977), Luminosity (1997), Point of Contact (1980), and Nude with Skeleton (2002). Other performances such as Artists Must Be Beautiful (1975) and Freeing the Voice (1976) were presented in photographic and video documentation only. Each re-performance was accompanied by primary documentation to further inform the spectators. Sean Kelly acted as Abramović's mentor as usual, and the two of them, along with chief curator Klaus Biesenbach, consulted at great length about how the documentation should be included in The Artist Is Present.

The re-performers were encouraged to adapt the performances in their own way, as the re-performances could never be exactly like the original. For instance, re-performer

167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
Yozmit, who often cross-dresses and who examines gender cues in his own work, requested to also perform *Luminosity* (Fig. 31), which only female artists had been selected to perform.\(^{170}\) The piece required the re-performer to sit nude on a bicycle seat, which was suspended high on the wall, and occasionally move his or her limbs, while staying on the seat for two hours. This position would not be comfortable for a man with his full weight on his genitals, but Yozmit wanted to test his limits, as he had been trained in the retreat, and he was the only male artist to perform this piece. He was nude, but he tucked his genitals between his legs to appear more feminine or even asexual.\(^{171}\) The change in gender roles brought a new interpretation to the work and allowed Yozmit to make the piece truly his own, as Abramović had aimed for each artist to do.

Other performers’ interpretations were affected by the public’s engagement or lack thereof. Rogers was distraught by how uninformed some patrons were. Some felt uncomfortable by the performances and rushed through, while other patrons engaged the re-performers. Both responses influenced the outcome of the pieces.\(^{172}\) The re-performers were also asked to stay in character from before the museum opened until after it closed, even when they were changing shifts, faced with large crowds, or hearing the echoing noise from surrounding videos. For instance, in *Artist Must Be Beautiful* (1975, Fig. 32) Abramović had aggressively brushed her hair while repeating the mantra “artist must be beautiful” and in *Freeing the Voice* (1976, Fig. 33) Abramović screamed until she lost her voice. When asked if the audio and video in the galleries was distracting, Lounsbury said, “It eventually got to the point where hearing 'artist must be beautiful, artist must be

\(^{170}\) Yozmit, July 14, 2012.
\(^{171}\) Ibid
\(^{172}\) Rogers, December 17, 2012.
beautiful, artist must be beautiful,’ and Freeing the Voice, over and over again became a sort of sound therapy.”173 This tolerance for distraction was made possible by the intensive exercises, such as “listening to sound,” during Abramović’s training workshop/retreat “Cleaning the House.”

**Imponderabilia: Issues in Presentation at MoMA and Critic's Reactions**

There were many regulations that MoMA had to follow in order to provide safety for not only the re-performers, but also the patrons during the exhibition. Issues in accurately presenting re-performances arose because of these regulations, especially in the re-performance of *Imponderabilia* (Fig. 34), in which two people stood naked in the doorway, and museum patrons had to walk sideways between them. The performance was intended to challenge the audience by forcing them to walk between the performers and decide whether to face the male or female performer. The original performance took place in the expansive museum Galleria Comunale d'arte Moderna in Bologna (1977) and was stopped by police.174 The interaction between nude performers and the public was considered unseemly in 1977 Bologna. More than three decades later, times had changed and the re-performance at MoMA was presented without interruption. However, the museum had the re-performers stand farther apart than in the original piece, and there was a second entrance for those who did not want to walk between the performers. While these alterations provided a solution for fire evacuation and protected the re-performers

---

174 Biesenbach, Marina Abramovic: The Artist Is Present, 100.
from the busy traffic, they also negated the objective of the performance.

Lounsbury re-performed *Imponderabilia* and was frustrated by the second entrance because she believed that patrons should not have the choice. She brought the issue up with the other re-performers, Abramović, and Biesenbach, who agreed with her and approached the museum's administration to try to resolve the issue prior to opening the exhibition. However, the second entrance was a mandatory regulation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, so it could not be adjusted. Lounsbury recalled a man in a wheelchair who wanted to pass through the two re-performers as the piece was intended and since the walkway was wider than in the original work (Fig. 35), she was able to step back and rotate her feet, allowing the man to pass. The larger entrance gave the option for re-performers to step forward and keep a tight space between them as in the original work, while also making it possible for them to step back far enough for wheelchair accessibility. Therefore the one wide entrance eliminated the need for the second entrance that the ADA recommended, and, if this had been discovered prior to the exhibition, the performance could have been more accurate.

The re-performances, particularly *Imponderabilia*, were not well received by some critics who reviewed the exhibition. Mark Beasley from *ArtInfo* praised the documentation photography and video, yet he believed the re-performances subverted the strong archival material. Beasley considered *Imponderabilia* to be the least successful of the re-performances because he felt the “actors” as he called them, “lacked the artists’ chemistry, and without the need to actually move through the bodies (MoMA has

---

175 Lounsbury, December 19, 2012.
provided an alternative portal to the next gallery), it falls flat.”

Beasley brought up a key issue of the re-performance: the alternative entrance that could have been avoided due to the one large entrance between the re-performers that was wheelchair accessible. In regard to the artists’ chemistry, none of the re-performers was Abramović or Ulay, but they had been trained to understand their chemistry. The re-performers were changed every two hours, so Beasley was judging the re-performance based on only two of the many re-performers. Others may have been more successful in achieving the captivation he sought.

Holland Cotter of the New York Times felt that the nude re-performers caused a lot of buzz, but he agreed with Beasley that the re-performance fell flat. Cotter stated, “Two elements that originally defined performance art as a medium, unpredictability and ephemerality, were missing. Without them you get misrepresented history and bad theatre.”

These two terms “unpredictability and ephemerality” have often been used in critiquing re-performance, but many performance scholars, such as RoseLee Goldberg, do not agree. Goldberg is the founder of the Performa Biennial, which examines the preservation of performance art through re-performance and brings attention to new performances by contemporary artists. Abramović’s exhibition series Seven Easy Pieces at the Guggenheim, for instance, was part of Performa ’05.

Scholars continue to debate whether performance should remain short-lived or should be re-performed and/or exhibited as documentation. If performance art remains temporary, how can the medium

---


be acknowledged within the canon of art history or understood by future generations?

Cotter claimed that Abramović's re-performance of *Imponderabilia* lacked unpredictability, yet when training the re-performers to re-create the piece, Abramović did not give them specific direction. Instead, she brought the re-performers into her mindset and encouraged them to reinterpret the piece in their own way. This guidance aimed to make each re-performances unique rather than contrived. Abramović was attempting to create spontaneity and avoid an artificial portrayal of the original performance. *The Artist Is Present* was designed to explore how past performance can be made relevant for exhibition and collection purposes, so Cotter seems to have missed the prime intention of the exhibition because of his outdated viewpoint.

**Re-performance Standards within Private and Public Institutions**

It is necessary to consider nonprofit versus commercial presentation of re-performance, which must be consistent despite the contrasting goals of these types of institutions. For instance, Sean Kelly Gallery had a re-performance of *Imponderabilia* at the entrance to its booth during Art Basel Miami in 2012. The gallery asked for Abramović's consent to present this work, and she agreed under the stipulation that her choreographer, Rebecca Davis would train the re-performers. According to gallery director Lauren Kelly, Abramović wanted to present a cohesive look that was as seamless as possible to maintain quality and to make sure the performers had the stamina to endure
the performance. Since the retrospective at MoMA, Davis has been the lead choreographer to travel the five re-performances to other galleries and museums, and she worked closely with the re-performers for Kelly's booth. The implementation of a standard for these pieces indicates that performance can adhere to routine methods, which aids in perpetuating the medium fairly. Davis prepared the re-performers with a series of exercises like those in “Cleaning the House,” rather than having them rehearse, which again fits with Abramović's model.

Unlike MoMA’s display of *Imponderabilia*, Kelly's booth did not provide a second entrance to adhere to regulations and the space between the performers was narrower. This setup made Kelly's presentation truer to the original work by forcing patrons to pass through the limited space between the performers. This demonstrates the difference between public and private exhibitions of re-performance. Public nonprofit intuitions like MoMA are available to everyone and are supported by associated foundations and trustees. Contributions for *The Artist Is Present* were provided by MoMA’s Wallis Annenberg Fund for Innovation in Contemporary Art and by MoMA trustees, such as Maja Oeri and Hans Bodenmann. Therefore, the museum had to take into consideration both the needs of the general public and the agenda of those funding the exhibition. Such considerations can impact the presentation of artwork as appeared to be the case with *Imponderabilia*.

By contrast, Sean Kelly Gallery is a privately run space and Art Basel is a privately run art fair, which is an expensive endeavor for both the participating galleries.

---

179 Lauren Kelly, November 10, 2012.
and visitors. Tickets for visitors are rather costly as are hotel accommodations. An entry-level booth for a gallery at Art Basel costs $42,900, plus the prices for travel, accommodations, and shipping artwork. The fair is geared toward all the “in-the-know” private dealers, gallerists, and collectors, who are driven by the purchase and sale of art, rather than concern for the public or a panel of supporters. These opposing forces present obstacles when attempting to develop standards for re-performance across galleries and museums. The re-performance of Imponderabilia at Art Basel was more of a spectacle to entice patrons into his booth. One criticism is that although Kelly had asked Abramović for permission to re-perform the work and the re-performers were trained, he did not include documentation with the re-performance, which is a main criterion in Abramović's stipulations for re-performance.

Ultimate Presentation: Documentation and Re-performance

While the installation of Imponderabilia was altered slightly for museum regulations in The Artist Is Present, the display of documentation from the original performance was highly informative. On the wall near the re-performance, there were two videos capturing the original performance: A 16 mm film transferred to video in black and white with audio, and a short twelve-minute color video by Mario Carbone. The videos offered the public a superior understanding of the original work as well as a

comparison to the re-performance. This combination had been planned for *Seven Easy Pieces*, but the inclusion of primary material was never realized for the exhibition. In fact, all of the re-performances in *The Artist Is Present* had accompanying primary video and/or photographic documentation, which showed a clear improvement since *Seven Easy Pieces*, and created a stronger model for interpreting past performance.

*Nude with Skeleton* (2002, Fig. 36), another re-performance at MoMA offered an ideal example for displaying re-performance in the gallery context. The re-performance was adapted to a new environment, re-interpreted in a new way, and true to the original work; it included original documentation material and made sure that the work was not harmful to the re-performers by having them trade places every two hours. For *Nude with Skeleton*, a re-performer lay nude on a flat elevated structure with a skeleton lying on top of him or her. As the re-performer breathed, the skeleton became animated and the two moved together. The re-performer remained still other than breathing and looked like a living sculpture on a pedestal with a spotlight covering his or her body as one would mount and light an inanimate artwork. A color video of Abramović's original performance played next to the sculptural re-performance (Fig. 37). The combination of live performance and Abramović's original action solidified the purpose of the work and allowed the audience to compare and contrast the re-performance with the artist's work to see how each rendered the performance.

This presentation was vastly different from the re-enactment of *Nude with Skeleton* at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art’s Annual Gala in 2011 (Fig. 38). MoMA’s presentation highlighted the beauty of the tranquil activity in a customary museum display, which allowed patrons to have intimate encounters with both the live
action and the original footage, while also protecting the re-performers by maintaining controlled distance and security guards. The presentation at the gala had the performance—take place on a rotating surface in the middle of a dining table. After being hired, attending training, and receiving the contract, one re-performer, Sara Wookey, refused to participate in the event. According to Wookey, she was expected to commit to fifteen hours of rehearsal time, sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement, and lie naked and speechless for four hours, while ignoring any potential physical or verbal harassment from the dinner guests. She would only be paid $150.00, and, during the audition, there was no mention of safeguards, signs, or signals for performers in distress. What she experienced auditioning for this work was “extremely problematic, exploitative, and potentially abusive.”\textsuperscript{184} Wookey's experience was remarkably different from that of the re-performers at MoMA, who worked with the museum to define the contract and knew that MoMA was highly concerned with their well-being during the re-performances. It is surprising that Abramović agreed to the conditions of this event after all the insight she should have gained from her previous experimentation with re-performance. The stunt at MOCA was gimmicky and neglected the advancements in re-performance that were accomplished in \textit{Seven Easy Pieces} and \textit{The Artist Is Present}. It appeared to be more of a way to gain revenue and attention than to defend Abramović’s interest in honorably establishing performance art. Abramović had acted as a leader in her field for many younger performers, but this was not one of her progressive activities.

Exhibiting Past Performance through Documentation and Objects

Looking back on the achievements of MoMA's exhibition, one should consider the authentic presentation of Abramović's more harmful performances, which were exhibited in documentation form because the works were too dangerous for re-performance. Especially notable was *Rhythm 0* (1974, Fig. 39), which consisted of a silent black and white slide projection containing photographs from the original event and a table with seventy-two supplemental objects.\(^{185}\) During the original performance, patrons were instructed to interact with Abramović using any of the items on the table, as Abramović stood motionless. The table included objects for inflicting pain, such as scissors, a gun, a bullet, a pocketknife, and an axe, as well as objects for pleasure, such as feathers, a brush, flowers, and honey. Abramović described how at first the audience was playful, but they became progressively more violent. The performance became six hours of torture, where they “cut me, drank my blood, and then patched the wound with plaster and put the bullet in the gun and held it to my head.”\(^{186}\) Certainly, times and circumstances have changed from 1974 in a small Naples gallery to 2010 in a large globally recognized institution. There was no possibility of allowing the public to use these objects on a re-performer at MoMA, especially any re-performers other than Abramović. Accordingly, Abramović, Sean Kelly, and MoMA staff chose to display the dramatic photographs documenting the event and present the table as it had been arranged forty years before.

\(^{185}\) Biesenbach, Marina Abramovic: The Artist Is Present, 8.
MoMA did not include the original objects from the performance, as Abramović was more concerned with what the objects represented than their originality to the first performance. Erica Papernik was the curatorial assistant in charge of gathering replacement objects for the exhibition display with Abramović’s guidance. According to Papernick, Abramović was more particular with some of the objects than others. While certain objects were supposed to be generic, she felt that the pair of scissors, for example, should look thirty years old and particularly “Slavic.” The objects acted as surrogates for the original objects that “suggested all of the possible ways in which visitors could intervene into Abramović's personal space or even compromise the integrity of her body—rather than that of imitations burdened with the (impossible) task of replicating the force of the original objects.”

The static objects on the table were complemented by the projection of photographs. If the table with objects had been dispayled without the photographs, then the MoMA viewer would not have been aware of the initial audiences’ tendency toward malicious objects, which revealed the strange urge for the audience to harm someone who gives herself over willingly. Likewise, if the photographs had been displayed without the objects then the current patrons at MoMA would not have felt as involved. The physical objects allowed them to be more connected to the performance and question whether they too would have chosen the harsh objects.

_The Artist Is Present_ demonstrated diversity in exhibiting past performance. The combination of documentation, re-performance, and derivative objects offered all the possible options for exhibiting past performance. The criticism that _The Artist Is Present_

---

was not of the same caliber as the original performances is undeniable, but Abramović and MoMA were aware of this issue from the beginning because duplicating past performance is impossible. The material and live events in the exhibition did not claim to be equivalent to original performance, but instead offered a chance to understand the fleeting actions and make a place for the medium in art history. While *The Artist Is Present* was not a flawless exhibition, the retrospective still made drastic strides in presenting and preserving performance beyond correlating intuitions. MoMA’s exhibition provided more effective re-performance of past performance than either *Seven Easy Pieces* or MoCA’s later attempt did. *The Artist Is Present* also employed Sean Kelly’s methods for displaying performance documentation as he had done in exhibitions at his gallery, such as *Spirit House and Performance Luminosity* (1997) and *Balkan Erotic Epic* (2006).

*The Artist Is Present* brought worldwide attention to Abramović, which elevated the general public’s knowledge of her work and the medium of performance art. The exhibition was the first time that a museum had fully acknowledged the supervision of live art during a lengthy exhibition and constructed a framework for exhibiting human beings in the gallery context. After the exhibition, MoMA acquired photographs from Abramović’s *Performance Edition 1973-1994*, and the museum is now able to apply what it learned from *The Artist Is Present* to future exhibitions of this documentation as well as performance documentation by other artists. MoMA also hired Jill Samuels as its full-time stage manager, showing that re-performance will continue to thrive at the
museum. Overall, *The Artist Is Present* demonstrated a great deal of research, discussion between artists and museum staff, and daring experimentation before a live audience to assess their methods and improve them for subsequent performance exhibitions.

---

188  Davis, October 10, 2012.
CONCLUSION

The Continued Rise in Instituting Performance Art

Performance art is inherently fleeting, yet Abramović has made it her mission to retain the quality of these passing movements for future generations and for the study of art history. This thesis has explored Abramović and Kelly's establishment of a market for performance art documentation and techniques for displaying past performance through original materials and re-performance. They do not claim documentation or re-performance equal to the original work; rather, these practices act as educational tools that allow for permanent and consistent references for otherwise lost performances. Since The Artist Is Present, Abramović has continued to pursue the preservation of performance art and it is apparent that her methods in the marketing and exhibition of performance art have been embraced and adapted by other performance artists. Instituting performance art may have constraints, since re-performance and documenting performance conflict with the ephemeral quality of performance art. Abramović's methods still deliver insights for perpetuating the medium, but can aid her peers, younger performance artists, and gallery and museum professionals.

Marketing and Exhibiting Performance Documentation

As described in chapter 1, Kelly assisted Abramović in sustaining and merchandising her performances through documentation, and he advanced the market for
performance documentation. Kelly has also helped the careers of other performance artists such as Rebecca Horn and Tehching Hsieh (b. 1950). Simultaneously, other contemporary and modern galleries have also increased the exhibition and representation of performance artists, and their performance documentation. For instance, in 2000 Gagosian Gallery opened its first international gallery space in London and initiated a series of performance exhibitions, including such artists as Vanessa Beecroft (b. 1969) and Chris Burden. Gladstone Gallery purchased Jack Smith's archive in 2008 and has since exhibited and loaned drawings, photographs and film documentation to private collectors, museums, and galleries worldwide. Gladstone Gallery occasionally sells Smith's work, such as photographs that are part of a larger edition or drawings that have been carefully photographed, which still preserves archival references for scholarly research. Likewise, in 2012, Pace Gallery presented “Happenings: New York 1958-1963,” a group exhibition that consisted of over 300 documentary photographs, raw film footage, and original artworks. These renowned galleries are solidifying performance art's place in the commercial art world, which encourages other institutions to develop performance exhibition programs and influence clients to purchase performance documentation.

Exhibiting and Collecting Performance without Documentation

As expressed in this thesis, Abramović's use of performance documentation has not always been successful. Some performance artists are opposed to such materials. For
instance, Tino Sehgal believes that performance documentation interferes with the ability to re-perform because artists rely too heavily on these materials, \(^{191}\) which was apparent in Abramović’s over-dependence on photography for *Seven Easy Pieces*. Even without any documentation, Sehgal manages to sell the rights to re-perform his work, which brings attention to an alternative method for collecting and exhibiting performance art. But how is it possible to re-perform his work without any remaining visual or written evidence?

This question is a primary concern for Glenn Wharton, who is the conservator for the Media and Performance Art Department at the Museum of Modern Art. Wharton, along with a few other conservators, curators, and registrars, established the Performance Working Group to develop policies and procedures for dealing with re-performance. The Performance Working Group began a series of in-depth artist interviews, including detailed discussions about the kind of clothes the performers should wear, lighting levels, sound levels, and wall and floor colors, as well as any choreographic concerns. \(^{192}\) These methods provide a clear description of the artist’s intentions, allowing the performer to be less restrained by preconceived imagery and to visualize the artist’s intention in their own way. This system was employed for MoMA’s acquisition and loan of *Kiss* (2003, Fig. 40) by Sehgal. *Kiss* was lent to the Guggenheim for Sehgal's solo exhibition in 2010. For the loan, the MoMA gave the Guggenheim the detailed instructions gathered by the Performance Working Group, which clearly outlined Sehgal’s specifications and allowed for re-performance without any visual references.

Similarly, the Guggenheim developed the Variable Media Initiative in 1999, which was the first in the country to try to account for time-based and ephemeral work.

---

\(^{191}\) Spector, “Thinking Performance at the Guggenheim.”

The initiative focuses not only on performance, but also on sound, video, and photography, genres that rely on formats that eventually become obsolete. As Guggenheim curator Jennifer Blessing asked, “Does it just disappear or do you have some way of remaking it?” Like the Performance Working Group, the Variable Media Initiative has examined various methods for preserving performance, and museum professionals at both institutions are torn about the credibility of documentation. Artist’s taking more control and defining his or her own documentation standards could resolve this lack of agreement. It is imperative that artists themselves select the best methods for sustaining their performances. Sehgal has decided to develop contracts, verbal agreements, and personally instruct re-performers in how to re-perform his constructed situations, and while Abramović agrees with this approach, she also considers documentation to be a vital component. Whatever approach they choose, artists who are interested in re-performance must define parameters that best suit their specific performance, and artists who choose to include documentation must have accurate footage and specify how to interpret the visual content.

Mainstreaming and Advancing the Preservation of Performance Art

Whether through documentation or re-performance, the inclusion of past performance art in institutions has now become recognized within the art world. Abramović’s decision to create a documentary following the exhibition of The Artist Is Present heightened the experience, her work, and performance art in general, increasing awareness from the art community to the larger public. Filmmaker Matthew Akers

193 Blessing, October 17, 2012.
recorded the experience in the documentary of the same title, *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present*, which offered a detailed look at Abramović's artistic background and preparation for the retrospective. The film opened at the Film Forum in New York and Landmark's Nuart Theatre in Los Angeles, followed by a national rollout and a launch on HBO. This mainstream presentation transformed Abramović into a household name and emphasized who she was as an artist and the important role of performance art in modern art history.

Abramović is now widely recognized for her performance work and has begun to influence artists in other fields, such as rapper Jay-Z, who paid homage to her with his song *Picasso Baby*. Jay-Z was influenced by Abramović's performance *The Artist Is Present*, which was central to her retrospective of the same title at MoMA. For the music video of *Picasso Baby* (2013, Fig. 41), Jay-Z adapted Abramović's performance by rapping for six hours in front of “art-world V.I.P.s” at Pace Gallery in Chelsea. At one point, Abramović joined Jay-Z on his platform and approached the rapper and locked eyes with him. Similarly, Abramović trained pop musician Lady Gaga in the “Abramović method” to prepare her for a nude music video performance (2013, Fig. 42). These collaborations show how far Abramović's performance practice has shifted since the beginning of her career, when she, like so many modern performance artists rejected the commercial-art-world and remained on the outskirts of popular culture.

These two publicity stunts caused some negative feedback from critics and the

general public. In regard to Abramović and Jay-Z, writer Jillian Steinhauer of Hyperallergic said, “safe environment and monstrous superegos, indeed. That’s probably why most of the reactions I’ve seen range from unenthusiastic to apocalyptic.”197 The involvement of public media, whether negative or positive, has added to Abramović’s celebrity status and in turn has brought heightened attention to her work and the medium of performance art. Abramović has demonstrated how, like musicians or actors, performance artists deserve proper recognition for the work they create and they are not exempt from fame and fortune. Though her tactics seem contrary to the initial attitude of performance art, Abramović is defining a new place for performance, which is now at the forefront of the visual art field rather than a suppressed medium, often glossed over in art history courses.

Abramović is putting her success to use, not only for herself, but also for the betterment of performance art. The Marina Abramović Institute (MAI) previously referred to as the “Center for the Preservation of Performance Art,” is due to open in Hudson, New York, in 2014. Abramović has requested donations to fund the development of the institute and her well-known status has helped her to achieve her financial goal. According to cultural journalist Harriet Gibsone of the Guardian, “thanks to some high-profile promotion spurred on by Lady Gaga and Jay-Z, Marina Abramović has surpassed her Kickstarter goal to raise money for a long-durational performance art center. The Marina Abramović Institute hoped to raise $600,000 but ended up bringing in more than the goal amount.”198 While Abramović’s collaboration with these cultural icons may have had some backlash, they also helped to fund her

---
198 Gibsone, “Lady Gaga and Jay-Z.”
According to the institute's mission statement, MAI will focus on durational performance, dance, theatre, film, music, and opera, among other forms, and will provide an educational space to host workshops, lectures, residencies, and research. MAI will be one of the first non-profit organizations to focus primarily on durational time-based art forms with an emphasis on preserving performance. The educational role of the institution will expand on Abramović's exploration of documentation and re-performance in exhibitions like *Seven Easy Pieces* and *The Artist Is Present*. Moreover, MAI will amplify the study that started with MoMA's Performance Working Group and the Guggenheim's Variable Media Initiative, which will surely expedite the slow-moving integration and understanding of performance art within institutions.

As a fleeting and diverse medium, performance art cannot easily follow standards and be consistently represented each time, but Abramović has not let this stop her from pursuing the establishment of performance and earning her the self-proclaimed title of “grandmother of performance art.” She has offered clear distinctions between what is doable and what is not in regard to performance documentation and re-performances, which can assist other artists with similar explorations. Abramović is a role model for younger performance artists and her dedication has resulted in a thriving market for performance art, heightened critique of documentation and re-enactments within institutions, and greater public awareness. She has explored both commercial and non-profit approaches, trying everything from art fairs to free lectures to spread information about performance art and allow the medium to reach various cultures and classes of 

---


people. These techniques have earned her recognition for her lengthy career and transformed how the art world and society in general relate to and recognize performance art.

Abramović has developed guidelines for preserving and marketing performance art, helping to establish performance in the art history canon and assist in institutionalizing performance art. Abramović, with Kelly's assistance, has succeeded in defining parameters for selecting, marketing, and exhibiting photographic and video documentation. She has also demonstrated how, when properly executed, the combination of documentation and re-performance can present the strongest representation of past performance. However, there have been substantial mishaps in Abramović's practice, such as her and Kelly's refusal to sell actual performances or her lack of written instruction for re-performance, even while she encourages other performance artists to practice both. Abramović has also demonstrated too much dependency on documentation when re-performing and has not fought hard enough for the proper display of re-performance and documentation. Gaps, inaccuracies, and distortions in Abramović's practice show that work still remains to be done in instituting performance art. Nevertheless, Abramović has offered significant standards that can be built on as performance art continues to gain prominence and credibility in the art market and art institutions.
Figure List

Fig 1. – Marina Abramović, photograph by Mike McGregor, 2014.
Fig. 3 – Joseph Beuys, *I Like America and America Likes Me*, Rene Block Gallery, NY, 1974.
Fig. 4 - Installation shots of *Robert Morris: Mind/Body Problem*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, 1993.
Fig. 5 - Vito Acconci, *Undertone*, 34:12 min, black and white, sound, 1973.
Fig. 6 - Marina Abramović and Ulay, *Breathing in / Breathing out*, Student Cultural Center, Belgrade, 1977.
Fig 8 - Marina Abramović, *Rhythm 10*, single photograph close-up, black and white photographic documentation, 1973.
Fig. 9 – Marina Abramović, *Role Exchange*, Amsterdam Red light district, 1975.
Fig. 10 - Marina Abramović, *Rhythm 10*, black and white photographic documentation, installation, 1973.
Fig. 11 – Vito Acconci, *Grasp*, Gelatin silver prints, chalk, and crayon on board, 30 1/2 × 40 inches (77.5 × 101.6 cm), unique, 1969.
Fig. 12 – Marina Abramović, *House with the Ocean View*, Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, NY, 2002.
Fig. 13 - Abramovic and Ulay, *Relation in Time*, Studio G7, Bologna, Italy, 1977.
Fig. 14 – Abramović, *Spirit House and Performance Luminosity*, Installation, originally presented at Sean Kelly Gallery, 1997.
Fig. 15 - Abramović, *Luminosity*, 60 min color video with sound, Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, NY, 1997.
Fig. 16 – Marina Abramović, *Balkan Baroque*, Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, NY, 1997.
Fig. 17 – Matthew Barney, *Drawing Restraint 7*, intermedia room installation, including three video monitors, six high-abuse fluorescent lighting fixtures, enamel on steel, internally lubricated plastic, overall installed 108 × 264 × 120 inches, 1993.
Fig. 18 - Marina Abramović and Ulay, *Relation in Space*, black and white photographic documentation, Performance, 58 min. Originally performed at Venice Biennale, Italy, 1976.

Fig. 19 - Steven Meisel, *Vogue Italia* cover and inside page, November 1998.
Fig. 20 - Chris Burden, *Trans-fixed*, Performance at Speedway Avenue, Venice, California, 1974.
Fig. 21 – Marina Abramović, *Lips of Thomas, 1975/2005*, double screen video projection on DVD, 96' 14' loop, in a grey linen presentation box consisting of 2 PAL DVD Blu-Ray Masters, 2 PAL DVD Blu-Ray exhibition copies, 2 digital SD card masters, 2 digital SD card players, certificate of authenticity, dimensions variable edition of 5 with 2 APs.
Fig. 23 – Vito Acconci, *Seedbed*, Sonnabend Gallery, New York, NY. 1971.
Fig. 24 - Marina Abramović, *Lips of Thomas*, images from re-performance in *Seven Easy Pieces*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, 2005.
Fig. 25 - Valie Export, *Action pants: genital panic*, Munich, Germany, 1969.

Fig. 27 - Valie Export, *Action pants: genital panic*, 6 screenprints on paper, each: 658 x 459 mm, 1969.
Fig. 28 - Gina Pane, *The Conditioning*, first action of *Self-Portrait(s)*, Galerie Stadler, Paris, 30 min. 1973.

Fig. 29 - Marina Abramović re-performing *The Conditioning*, first action of *Self-Portrait(s)*, *Seven Easy Pieces*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, 2005.
Fig. 31 - Luminosity, re-performance at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, 2010.
Fig. 32 - a. Marina Abramović, *Artist Must be Beautiful*, Black and white documentation, originally performed in Copenhagen, Denmark, 1975.

Fig. 33 - Marina Abramović, *Freeing the Voice*, black and white documentation, originally performed in Budapest, Hungary, 1976.
Fig. 34 – Marina Abramović, *Imponderabilia*, 16 mm film transferred to video (black and white, audio) and short 12 min color video by Mario Carbone. Originally performed at Galleria Comunate d’Arte Moderna, Bologna, 1977.

Fig. 35 - *Imponderabilia*, re-performance at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, 2010.
Fig. 36 – *Nude with Skeleton*, re-performance at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, 2010.

Fig. 37 – Still from Marina Abramović, *Nude with Skeleton*, Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, NY, 2002.
Fig. 38 – Re-performance of *Nude with Skeleton*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles's annual gala, 2011.
Fig. 39 - *Rhythm 0*, Originally performed at Studio Morra, Naples, 1974.
Fig. 41 - Jay-Z, *Picasso Baby*, music video, Pace Gallery, New York, NY, 2013.
Fig. 42 – Lady Gaga, *Practicing the Abramović Method*, kickstarter video, *ARTPOP* album release, 2013.
Bibliography


Blessing, Jennifer and Joan Young. E-mail correspondence with author regarding *Seven Easy Pieces*. July 1, 2013.


Carr, C. *On Edge: Performance at the End of the Twentieth Century*. Hanover, NH:


Gygax, Raphael and Heike Munder. *Between Zones: On the Representation of the Performative and the Notation of Movement.* Zurich, Switzerland: JRP/Ringier;
2010.


Karp, Carolynn. E-mail correspondence with author regarding Seven Easy Pieces. July 29, 2013.


Lowery, Glenn D. Forward to Marina Abramovic: The Artist Is Present, by Klaus


Museum of Modern Art. Exhibition Checklist for The Artist is Present. PDF from MoMA Librarian.


