

SEAN KELLY

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Marina Abramović's "No Selfies" Show Comes to Sean Kelly



Marina Abramović.

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Marina Abramović is getting set to stage a new gallery exhibition at Sean Kelly. "Generator," which opens October 24, will be the artist's first solo exhibition in New York since her landmark Museum of Modern Art retrospective "The Artist is Present" and her first performance show at Sean Kelly since she staged "The House with the Ocean View" in 2003, the historic show where the artist lived in the gallery on an elevated platform for 12 days without eating or speaking.

"New York is an Alpha-plus city," Kelly tells artnet News over the phone. "We're all too busy and frantic and frenetic. What [Abramović] wants to do is slow everybody down so they're really dealing with their inner thoughts and their inner selves."

Abramović will turn Sean Kelly's gallery into a zen space of "sensory deprivation," per Kelly, where visitors will don blindfolds and noise-canceling headphones before being led into the gallery, which will, except for the other visitors (a maximum of 68 will be allowed in the space at a time), be completely empty. The show is a take on one aspect of Abramović's summer show at the Serpentine Gallery, "512 Hours" (see "In London Stunt, Marina Abramović Delivers Empty Room. Huh?"). Unlike that show, however, Abramović will not be on hand for every hour of the performance, but will be committed to coming to the gallery unannounced each day for the full six weeks of its run.

"In many respects people won't know if they're interacting with her or not," Kelly says. In this way, according to the dealer, it becomes more about the individuals and the way they animate the space. "She'll be able to interact with the piece in whatever way she sees fit." It's an effort to create what

Abramović calls a “full emptiness,” a reference to the Buddhist concept of oneness, according to which life and the environment are inseparable.

Kelly notes that while “sensory deprivation” sounds “rather aggressive,” it’s not meant to be. “At the same time you’re being deprived of sight, deprived of hearing, and effectively turned in on yourself, you also have to figure out how to function in space, and how to function with other people. It’s very much about creating this immaterial energy and sense of how you’re going to function in the world.” Kelly also asserts that though the project may “sound hokey” in writing, since the MoMA retrospective and her show at the Serpentine, people have come to understand that “Marina is very powerful. Our experience has been that it is a very profound experience for a lot of people.”

What will the gallery do if the show draws massive numbers of visitors, as the Serpentine show did? (See “Long Lines for Marina Abramović’s Serpentine Gallery Show.”) Nothing. The show, per Kelly, will be “self-regulating.”

As much as there is a spiritual goal to the project, there’s also one that relates to our experience with art. “How many people spend more than 15 seconds in front of a painting at MoMA or the Guggenheim,” asks Kelly, “and what is the quality of that experience when you’re in a line being shuffled along in front of Matisses like a conveyor belt?”

Those hoping to spend hours with art are free to do so, but don’t count on documenting the event for Instagram. All phones, bags, and Google Glass devices will be summarily stashed in lockers. What are Abramović’s Instagramming buds James Franco and MoMA PS1 director Klaus Biesenbach to do?