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The Artist Is Present—Again: Marina Abramović Is Restaging Her Best-Known Performance to Benefit Ukraine



Installation view of Marina Abramović: "Performative," 2022, at Sean Kelly Gallery in New York. Photo: Jason Wyche.

More than 1,500 people sat across from Marina Abramović during her 2010 presentation of *The Artist is Present* at MoMA, all of them photographed. If you missed your chance then, well you're in luck.

This month, the Serbian artist will revisit her most famous work of art for a benefit auction to aid Ukrainian relief efforts.

Through [Artsy's auction platform](#), you can bid for an opportunity to be photographed sitting across from Abramović in a restaging of *The Artist is Present* at Sean Kelly Gallery, where a survey of her work is currently on view. Photographer Marco Anelli, the artist's longtime collaborator who captured portraits of each MoMA sitter 12 years ago, will take the pictures.

The resulting photograph will be framed and signed by both Abramović and Anelli. Winners will also receive a copy of the photographer's 2021 book collecting the MoMA images, *Portraits in the Presence of Marina Abramović*.

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*Installation view of Marina Abramović's performance *The Artist is Present* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 2010. Courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery.*

Bidding for the auction's two lots (one for a photo with just one sitter; the other for two sitters) is open now through March 25. As of this article's writing, bids for the lots are at \$4,000 and \$5,000, respectively. All of the proceeds from the sale will go to [Direct Relief's Ukraine aid efforts](#).

The idea for the auction came from two Sean Kelly employees, archivist Robert Spring and gallery associate Terrill Warrenburg, shortly after Abramović's exhibition opened on March 4. Kelly loved the idea, and when he phoned Abramović about it, she did too.

Two weeks later and the auction was live online. "We felt we needed to do something fast," he told Artnet News. "We just feel it's a huge imperative to get money into people's hands as quickly as possible."



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In October, Abramović [erected a public memorial at Babyn Yar](#), a ravine in Kyiv where thousands of Jews were executed by Nazis during the Second World War. Earlier this month, as part of its ongoing attack against Ukraine, [Russia bombed next to the site](#), killing five people in the process. (Abramović's monument was not damaged, Kelly confirmed.)

"Last year, I worked in Ukraine and I got to know the people there," the artist said in a [video she released in February](#) denouncing Russia's actions. (The video was published prior to the Babyn Yar attack.) "They're proud, they're strong, and they're dignified. I have full solidarity with them on this impossible day. An attack on Ukraine is an attack on all of us. It's an attack on humanity and has to be stopped."

Abramović's current exhibition at Sean Kelly, titled "Performative," brings together four key artworks from her now 50-year career.

"Presented together, these different bodies of work demonstrate how Abramović has shaped the trajectory of performance art over the last five decades and changed the public's perception of and interaction with this art form," reads a gallery statement. It's on view now through April 16.

In addition to the auction, Kelly will make donations to Direct Relief via a GoFundMe page.