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Marina Abramović Will Restage "The Artist Is Present" to Raise Funds For Ukraine

Abramović is auctioning two opportunities to restage "The Artist Is Present," with all funds going to a nonprofit assisting in aid efforts.



Installation view of *Marina Abramović: Performative* at Sean Kelly Gallery in New York, through April 16 (image by Jason Wyche; courtesy Sean Kelly, New York)

It requires no personal connection to Ukraine to have compassion for the current plight of its citizens. People from across the international spectrum, from politicians to poets, are speaking out and sending aid as Ukrainians experience devastating Russian airstrikes on [children's hospitals](#), [maternity wards](#), and most recently an [art school](#) sheltering some 400 individuals in the port city of Mariupol. At least [2,300 people](#) have died in Mariupol alone, and those still alive are facing shortages of food, water, and electricity as invading forces hold the city under siege.

The situation has inspired many artists and cultural institutions to [agitate for change and raise funds for war relief](#). Among them is performance artist Marina Abramović, who will restage one of her most famous works in support of a crisis that is both universally and personally upsetting for her.

"I really hurt," Abramović said in an [interview](#) with *W Magazine*. "It hurts so much because war hurts in general." But for the Yugoslavian-born artist (now Serbia), whose work draws from strong connections to her Eastern European origins, this conflict strikes close to home.

"I have full solidarity with [the Ukrainian people] on this impossible day," Abramović said in a [video statement](#) following the declaration of war by Russia on February 24. "An attack on Ukraine is an attack on all of us. It's an attack on humanity and has to be stopped."

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In a further demonstration of her support, Abramović has partnered with New York's Sean Kelly Gallery and Artsy to offer a performance art meet-and-greet ... or at least meet-and-silently-stare. Through March 25, interested parties can [bid on one of two opportunities](#) for a limited restaging of Abramović's epic performance *The Artist Is Present*, which took place over the course of almost three months at the Museum of Modern Art in 2010. An encounter for a single person and a second encounter for two people will be captured by photographer [Marco Anelli](#), who documented almost all of the 1,500 participants in the original performance — an attendance roster that included celebrities such as Lou Reed and Björk, and, famously, an emotional reunion with the artist's ex, [Ulay](#).

All the proceeds of the unconventional fundraiser will go to [Direct Relief](#), which is working with Ukraine's Ministry of Health to provide urgent medical assistance as well as long-term aid to the many lives devastated by the war.



Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present at the Museum of Modern Art in 2010 (photo by Marco Anelli © 2010; courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives and Sean Kelly, New York)

Bidding will likely be lively for such a unique opportunity in service of a greater good. Both the single- and two-person experiences have now [met their reserve price](#), surpassing the \$10,000 and \$15,000 mark, respectively.

Abramović has not staged a work in New York for seven years, but in October of 2021, the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center in Kyiv unveiled Abramović's "[Crystal Wall of Crying](#)," an interactive "wall of healing" that commemorates the Jews killed in Ukraine's capital during one of the biggest massacres of the Holocaust. It is poignant that a place where the artist sought to bring healing is suffering a new tragedy, and it makes sense that Abramović, who has made a career of [transforming pain into redemption](#), wants to do her part.