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Marina Abramović Revives 'The Artist is Present' to Benefit Ukraine

Marina Abramović talks to Observer about the healing power of crystals, the Ukraine-Russia conflict, and her military edge.



Photo via Getty/ Bennett Raglin/ WireImage

The Artist is Present and now, you can be too. [Marina Abramović](#) is putting one of her most famous performances up for auction to benefit Ukraine. The body of work, which wowed the art world in 2010 is back for a cause, and a price tag.

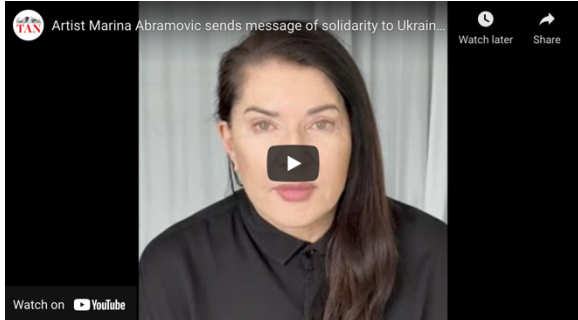
Up for auction on [Artsy](#) is the chance for a photograph opposite Abramović in one of her most famous performances: *The Artist is Present*. Always one for playing with art and audience, Abramović will sit in the Sean Kelly Gallery, where her work is currently on view, across from an empty chair for the duration of the performance, allowing the brave, curious or intrigued attendee the chance to sit across from her and lock eyes with the Serbian artist.

With the support of Marco Anelli, who first photographed those who sat with Abramović in 2010, the auction winner will receive a framed photograph signed by Abramović and Anelli and a copy of Anelli's 2021 book, *Portraits in the Presence of Marina Abramović* from the 2010 debut.

The revival and reimagining of the performance testifies to the adaptability of Abramović's art. Her message and exploration spans decades, social upheavals and political unrest by creating a space to rest, contemplate and drive change, with all proceeds going to Direct Relief's efforts in Ukraine.

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This is the most recent expression of a longstanding legacy of Abramović's alignment with the politically oppressed. As an early critic of Russia's aggression, Abramović shared a video in solidarity with Ukraine.



“I have full solidarity with [the Ukrainian people] on this impossible day,” she said. “An attack on Ukraine is an attack on all of us. It’s an attack on humanity and has to be stopped.”

The auction, which opened yesterday, will run until March 25, offering the option to bid on an image with one or two sitters opposite Abramović.

This updated iteration of the performance subverts the spectacle of the original, which drew over 1,500 in 2010, spurring a 2012 HBO documentary of the same name following the intrigue and anticipation of the gathering. With on-lookers peering down from all angles, and the individuals sitting across from Abramović forced to confront themselves on screens projecting their image behind Abramović, the piece recreated the experience of subjective perception.

The paired-down installation at Sean Kelly Gallery will hone Abramović's intention to simply hold space, and in holding the lucky winner in her gaze, Abramović extends an embrace to the “proud, strong and dignified” Ukrainian people.