

Press release

Marina Abramović

Exhibition from 19th May to 10th October 2005
Opening on 19th May from 6pm

The Guy Bärtschi gallery exhibits for the first time the work of the artist **Marina Abramović** from May 19 to September 10, 2005.

In order to present his work in the best possible way, the gallery has chosen to show, in both spaces, a large selection of his works giving an overview of the range of her work and publishes on this occasion a catalogue entitled *Eternal Performances: Marina Abramović, Recent Photographic Works*, with a preface by James Westcott.

In the "Gallery Space" photographs and objects will be exhibited and the "Project Space" will show the installation *Count On Us*, composed of 5 video-projections.

Marina Abramović was born in 1946 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. She lives and works in Amsterdam.

Abramović, winner of the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 1997, travels the world to showcase her art through exhibitions and courses. Marina says about her participation in the biennale: "I am only interested in art that can change the ideology of society art ... that is only invested in aesthetic values in the unfinished ... I am not defending anyone, neither Serbian, nor Bosnian, nor Croatian ... I am trying to deal with my own emotions, for example with this huge feeling of shame I have about this war. As an artist, you can only deal with what's inside of you. I make this game because it's the only way to react emotionally to the war. »

This artist remains today associated with the body art work she carried out with Ulay, her companion, between 1976 and 1988. During this period, they never stopped questioning sexual identities and the power relations that underlie them through performances in galleries and public spaces. About thirty years after the beginning of his experiments, the artist continues his work without concession while considering current technological innovations. She uses her body as her primary material, pushing it to the extremes of consciousness and often putting herself in physical danger. In her executions she has lacerated herself, flogged herself, frozen her body on blocks of ice, taken drugs that made her unconscious, or been on the verge of asphyxiation by being under a curtain of flames.

Some performances only reached completion when a member of the audience intervened. She explains: "I'm interested in art that disturbs and pushes at that moment of danger; then, the observation of the audience has to be here and now...".

More references to intimacy or subjectivity are mobilized to take the visitor into an enigmatic and dreamlike world, at times visually close to the darkest paintings of Velasquez or Goya.

On the artist's photographic and video work, James Westcott explains in *Perpetual Performances: Marina Abramović, Recent Photographic Works*: "If performance art has been constituted above all as an art of the fleeting and the ephemeral, anchored in the present moment, the work of Marina Abramović is accompanied by an apparently contradictory peculiarity: the obsession with cataloguing and conservation. The systematic recording of performances and the organization

The rigorous documentation, "KGB-style" according to the artist, has never prevented her from clearly expressing her disinterest in the usual methods of performance preservation: shaky videos, blurred photographs where spectators enter the field, endless written explanations. Photographic documents have their charm, combining authenticity with nostalgia, the sweet regret of a moment that has disappeared forever. But traditional photographic documentation so desperately strives to respect the primacy of the performance that it confines itself to the position of the somewhat ashamed observer, conscious of distorting the spirit of the show by fixing it on film. The anguish underlying performance photography, of not being able to capture the magic of the live performance, becomes a prediction that comes true every time. Perhaps what bothers Marina Abramović the most is that documentary images are not in themselves works with their own aesthetics and system of meaning. They always refer to something else. Like the photographic report, the image cannot function properly or, let's say, reliably without an external knowledge of the main data of the represented scene and its context. »