



Marina Abramovic: Public Body

By *Marina Abramovic, Germano Celant, Sergio Troisi*

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Public Body is the third book in a trilogy dedicated to Marina Abramovic, and presents the work "Transitory Objects for Human and Non-Human Use." In this work Abramovic built a series of transitory objects with the objective of engendering active audience participation. Abramovic hit upon the idea while she was walking along the Great Wall of China; she realized that it was the first time that she was doing a performance without an audience. To transmit this experience she constructed a series of objects: for "human use," "spiritual use," and "use of power." These objects--made of iron, wood, minerals, pigs' blood, and human hair--all "contain a certain kind of energy," according to Abramovic. She does not see these works as sculptures, but as ephemeral objects that trigger public experiences through direct interaction. Whereas the first two books in the trilogy, *Performing Body* and *Artist Body*, focused on the artist and her oeuvre, *Public Body* flips the proverbial script, enacting a role reversal between artist and audience. The book features an impassioned essay by Abramovic concerning her thoughts on public performance and her recent trips to China, India, Japan, and Brazil, as well as an interview with the artist by Germano Celant.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

This monograph begins with a lengthy interview between the artist and Celant (Piero Manzoni), senior curator for contemporary art at the Guggenheim and the first to articulate the *arte povera* aesthetic. The interview is the book's principal text, and it offers the reader a valuable interpretive anchor for the subsequent catalog of works. But while the catalog shows the trajectory of Abramovic's career, the interview is concerned mostly with her pieces from the 1990s to 2000, focused squarely on her later preoccupation with the body, the shamanistic properties of her chosen materials, and their contribution to the work's meaning. Absent from the discussion, for example, are her mid-1960s sound installations, as pictured in the catalog. The catalog is organized to manifest the gradual change from Abramovic's demands on her own body as a performance artist to her desire to engage the public in an experience. It contains color and black-and-white double-spread images, which effectively communicate the power of the artist's distinctive lexis. Because the images span her career, there will be some overlap with *Artist Body: Performances 1969-1998* (Charta, 1998) and *Performing Body* (Charta, 1998), though this new volume does not replace these earlier texts, given its special emphasis. Recommended for collections focusing on contemporary art. Savannah R. Schroll, Smithsonian Inst. Libs., Washington, DC

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