

Press Release: 16 August 2022

MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ @ PITT RIVERS MUSEUM

A new installation by the pioneering artist, Marina Abramović, at the Pitt Rivers Museum

24 September 2022–2 April 2023



Still from *Presence and Absence*, a new video work by Marina Abramović

© Marina Abramović and Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. Photography by Tim Hand.

“The Pitt Rivers Museum is filled with tens of thousands of treasures reflecting the diversity and richness of cultures from all over the world. My research there could be never-ending.” - Marina Abramović

In August 2021, the pioneering performance artist Marina Abramović undertook a research residency at the Pitt Rivers Museum in preparation for an exhibition at Modern Art Oxford. That residency has now led to her *Gates and Portals* exhibition at Modern Art Oxford and an installation featuring new work by the artist at the Pitt Rivers Museum, both opening in Oxford in September 2022.

For Abramović, the residency was a kind of home-coming, as she had previously developed an exhibition for Modern Art Oxford in partnership with the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1995. Her now famous video work, *Cleaning the Mirror* was devised and exhibited at the Pitt Rivers at that time.

On her return to Oxford in 2021, Marina Abramović spent a month conducting research in the global collections of the Pitt Rivers, making drawings and filming her encounters with objects. She focused in particular on artefacts associated with rites of passage, magic and transformative states of consciousness from various communities around the world. When making her selection from the thousands of items on display in the museum, Abramović was drawn to certain things by the powerful energies they emit, saying: “I did not choose the objects. They chose me”.

The results of the artist's interactions with those items will be revealed in a site-specific intervention in the galleries of the Pitt Rivers Museum, featuring a video work entitled *Presence and Absence* and new drawings made during her residency. Inserted in the heart of this world-leading museum of anthropology and archaeology, Abramović's work sets up a dialogue with its historic displays and highlights the creativity and cultural diversity that the museum's collections represent. In exhibiting the work of a major figure from the contemporary art world, the installation offers an exciting opportunity to see the Pitt Rivers in a new way and through the eyes of Marina Abramović.

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PRESS IMAGES

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Installation: *Marina Abramović @ Pitt Rivers Museum*
Dates: 24 September 2022–2 April 2023
Venue: Pitt Rivers Museum, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PP
Admission: Free

About the exhibition

The installation is curated by Professor Clare Harris and staff of the Pitt Rivers Museum. The *Gates and Portals* exhibition at Modern Art Oxford and the installation at the Pitt Rivers Museum will be accompanied by a publication, co-designed by Abramović and published by Koenig Books, focusing on spiritual practice in relation to long durational performance, and the significance of portals and gates throughout history and cultures. It includes illustrations of the objects that Abramović worked with at the Pitt Rivers Museum and a conversation between the artist and Pitt Rivers Museum curator, Professor Clare Harris.

About the artist

Over the last fifty years, Marina Abramović (b.1946, Belgrade, lives and works in New York), has earned worldwide acclaim as a pioneer of performance art. Abramović has consistently tested the limits of her own physical and mental endurance in her work. Early works, such as *Rhythm 0* (1974), invited audiences to freely interact with Abramović however they chose – famously

resulting in a loaded gun being held to her head. Later works, such as *The Artist is Present*, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2010, pushed audiences to question their own emotions, as they sat in silence opposite the artist. More recently, the artist has focused on video works and on encouraging her audience to become performance artists themselves.

The Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford is one of the world's leading museums of anthropology, ethnography and archaeology. Established in 1884, it now has over 700,000 items in its collections and is in the top 100 most visited museums in the UK, welcoming nearly half a million visitors in 2019. The Museum was shortlisted for the Art Fund Museum of the Year 2019 for its creative programmes of reinvention and reinterpretation, which show a much-loved Victorian space challenging perceptions and demonstrating the vital role museums can play in contemporary society.

Open: Monday, 12:00–17:00; Tuesday–Sunday, 10:00–17:00
Admission: free

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