

PRESS RELEASE

MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ

Cleaning the mirror

Sunday 19 December 2004, 12.00 a.m
Galleria Lia Rumma, Naples

On Sunday 19 December at 12.00 a.m., there will be a performance at the Lia Rumma Gallery in Naples specially designed to mark the opening of the personal exhibition of the work of Marina Abramović.

Widely acknowledged as one of the leading artists on the international art scene for the last thirty years or more, Marina Abramović was born in Montenegro in 1946.

Right from the beginning of her career in Belgrade in the seventies, her body has been the subject, object and instrument of her work which has always aimed to explore wide-ranging issues; confronting the passing of time and death, viewed as a fundamental moment of spiritual and emotional transformation, has been one of the main underlying features of her captivating performances. On various occasions, Abramović has used the skeleton as a universally recognised symbol, creating works and performances that represent a *memento mori* capable of evoking the macabre dances of the Middle Ages, the seventeenth century *vanitas* and, more generally, the rituals regarding the relationship between life and death throughout all epochs and cultures.

In her video installation made in 1995 entitled *Cleaning the Mirror*, for example, the artist films a performance lasting three hours during which she holds a skeleton on her lap and cleans it vigorously, following the outlines and exploring the empty spaces with her fingers: in *Cleaning the Mirror II* she lays the skeleton on her own naked body and makes it move to the rhythm of her own breathing.

In 1997 she made *Balkan Baroque*, a complex installation at the centre of which she placed a mountain of animal bones. For many hours each day Abramović would sit on the mound and sing as she scraped and cleaned the bones. An attempt to recuperate her cultural origins, an emotional reaction to the war in the Balkans, a sense of mourning and purification are all aspects which co-exist in this action of intense ritual significance for which she was awarded the Leone d'Oro at the Venice Biennial.

For the current exhibition, which re-utilises the title *Cleaning the mirror*, the artist will turn the theme of complementariness and mirroring between life and death into a theatrical performance during which her body, employed as the vehicle of energy par excellence, will once again undergo the direct confrontation with the human skeleton, the symbol of death.

The exhibition will also contain a series of photographs taken on Marina Abramović's return to Belgrade in 2003 after an absence of over twenty years. Some of them refer to the legendary figure of Tesla, the nineteenth century Balkan scientist famous for his remark "science is nothing but a perversion unless it aims to improve the condition of humanity" and to whom the city of Belgrade has dedicated a museum. In *Count on us, chorus*, Marina Abramović is "protected" by a skeleton while she directs a chorus of

children dressed in black singing the anthem of the United Nations, whereas in *Count on us, star* she presents a new version of one of her earliest performances: the artist is surrounded by children whose bodies form a five-pointed black star, the star of an uncertain future.

With this exhibition, Marina Abramović further underlines how the feeling of life arises from the fundamental confrontation with death and re-emphasises the need to face existence with complete awareness and vitality.