

THE NAME GAME / MARINA ABRAMOVIC

In March 1993 Marina Abramovic, self-appointed "grandmother of Performance Art," gave a one-woman show titled "Biography" at the Hebbel Theater in Berlin (she shared the billing with Charles Atlas and there was a cameo appearance by Heiner Müller and a pack of Doberman pinschers). It was a staged retrospective of some of her early performance work, an artistic autobiography (the word "*Biographie*" in Germany is often used to mean one's own life story). For the grand finale, she took a razor blade and cut a five-pointed star around her navel. I was shocked. I knew her to be a tough sort of person, and Berlin is a notoriously tough town, but still: why did she do that? Was she trying to avoid kitsch the hard way? Was it a return to the graphic authenticity of the body to keep her performance from lapsing into mere theater? Was it the compensatory price of stardom? Was it an allusion to her homeland, the former Yugoslavia, then in the throes of a bloody civil war (it used to have a red star on its flag)? Or was it a symbolic statement about her nomadic life, connecting so many points on Mother Earth? In her signatures, she usually gives her initial "A" the shape of a star drawn with a continuous line.



Marina Abramovic
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