

CUKRARNA

Press Release

Ljubljana, November 28, 2025

Invitation to the press conference

ART VITAL – 12 Years of Ulay / Marina Abramović

At Cukrarna Gallery, we will open the exhibition *ART VITAL – 12 Years of Ulay / Marina Abramović* on Sunday, 30 November 2025.

The exhibition *ART VITAL – 12 Years of Ulay / Marina Abramović* at Cukrarna Gallery will be on view until 3 May 2026 and presents the most extensive overview to date of their twelve-year collaboration—from their first performance *Relation in Space* (1976) at the Venice Biennale to their symbolic farewell with *The Great Wall Walk* (1988). Ulay and Marina Abramović played a pivotal role in shaping the development of performance art as an artistic practice and left an invaluable mark on the art-historical discourse of the 20th century.



Ulay / Marina Abramović: "Relation in Time", performance (17 Hours). Studio G7, Bologna, Italy, 1977. Photo © Ulay / Marina Abramović. Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

The photograph is available via the "Press Kit" link on the exhibition website.

ACCOMPANYING TEXT

ART VITAL – 12 Years of Ulay / Marina Abramović presents the iconic partnership between Marina Abramović (b.1946, Belgrade) and Ulay – Frank Uwe Laysiepen (1943, Solingen – 2020, Ljubljana). Between 1976 and 1988, the two artists lived and worked together, seamlessly integrating artistic practice into daily life while challenging conventional notions of authorship and identity. Their groundbreaking practice probed vulnerability, resilience, and interdependence, mirroring the intensity of their shared life and creative process.

For five years, Abramović and Ulay lived and travelled in a van, without a permanent studio or home, fully immersing themselves in their artistic journey. Their collaboration began with the performance *Relation in Space* (1976), exploring endurance, trust, and intimacy, and culminated in the notorious three-month walk along the Great Wall of China, documented in *The Lovers: The Great Wall Walk* (1988). The exhibition brings together videos, photographs, drawings, sketches, letters, and diary entries, revealing both the public performances and the intimate processes behind them. It offers a rare insight into how Abramović and Ulay redefined the dynamics of artistic partnership and self-representation, challenging conventional notions of authorship and the boundaries between art and life.

The exhibition unfolds across all gallery spaces and floors, where works from their collaborative years are arranged as spatially linked chapters. Ljubljana holds particular significance in this story, as Ulay spent the last decade of his life in the city. Presenting their shared legacy at Cukrarna Gallery therefore carries both symbolic and emotional weight. *ART VITAL* unites art, memory, and lived experience, offering renewed insight into a partnership that continues to resonate as a vital and transformative chapter in contemporary art history. Visitors will encounter previously unseen documents and artworks, learn about the methods and ideas behind their practice, and experience key moments from their rich oeuvre. The project was realised in close collaboration with Marina Abramović, Sydney Fishman from the Marina Abramović Archives, and Lena Pislak of the ULAY Foundation, with strong institutional support from macLYON, the Akron Art Museum, Kunstmuseum Bern, Kröller-Müller Museum and numerous other sponsors, partners, and contributors.

RE-PERFORMANCES PROGRAMME

The re-performances constitute the live component of the exhibition: they reactivate iconic performances in the present, sharpen our perception that history remains in flux with and through us, and open up performance/art as a field for social change. In preparation for the performances, Stegnar and Bezjak participated in the Cleaning the House workshop at the Marina Abramović Institute in Karyes, Greece. For five days, the artists refrained from eating, speaking, reading, and were without watches, phones, and other electronics. During the workshop, they completed a series of long durational exercises expanding focus, stamina, and concentration.

Historical performances by Ulay and Marina Abramović are re-performed by Katarina Stegnar and Primož Bezjak as part of *ART VITAL*.

Schedule:

Tuesday, 9 December 2025 at 6:30 p.m. – *Work Relation*

Tuesday, 16 December 2025 at 8:00 p.m. – *A Similar Illusion*

Saturday, 10 January 2026 at 6:30 p.m. – *Work Relation*

Saturday, 24 January 2026 at 8:00 p.m. – *A Similar Illusion*

Sunday, 1 February 2026 at 7:30 p.m. – *Breathing In / Breathing Out*

Sunday, 22 February 2026 at 8:00 p.m. – *A Similar Illusion*

New dates after February will be announced throughout the duration of the exhibition.

PUBLICATIONS (PHOTOBOOK AND CATALOGUE)

The **photobook *Love. Hate. Forgiveness.*** features photographs from their twelve years of shared life, offering an intimate look into the turbulent period following their separation, and includes a conversation between Marina Abramović and Lena Pislak. Available from 30 November 2025 in the online shop <https://shop.mgml.si/> or at the Cukrarna Gallery's reception.

Price: €19,80

The **catalogue *ART VITAL – 12 Years of Ulay / Marina Abramović*** (published by the Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana, Cukrarna Gallery, and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König) contains extensive visual and archival material and in-depth scholarly essays on their collaborative work—exploring the intersections of art and life, the boundaries of the body, relationship, and authorship, and revealing how Ulay and Abramović shaped the history of contemporary art. Texts by Alenka Gregorič, Felicitas Thun-Hohenstein, Elisabeth von Samsonow, Amelia Jones, Bojana Kunst, Suzana Milevska, Diedrich Diederichsen, Sabine Priglinger, Michael Klein, Hana Ostan-Ožbolt-Haas, Matthieu Lelièvre, and Kurt Kladler. Available from 30 November 2025 in the online shop <https://shop.mgml.si/> or at the Cukrarna Gallery's reception.

Price of the Slovenian edition: €45.00

Price of the English edition: €55.00

PRESS ACCREDITATION

Press materials and images are available on the exhibition website under the "Press Kit" section: <https://cukrarna.art/en/program/exhibitions/33/ulay-marina-abramovic/#press-kit>.

Press accreditation must be arranged through the gallery's PR department at least three working days prior to the visit. For more information about the press conference, and additional materials, please contact info@cukrarna.art.

OPENING DAY

There will be no public opening event. On Sunday, 30 November 2025, admission will be free, but advance ticket reservation is required.

COLOPHON

Curators: Alenka Gregorič, Felicitas Thun-Hohenstein

Production: The Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana/Cukrarna in collaboration with: ULAY Foundation (Lena Pislak), Marina Abramović Archive (Sidney Fishman)

Reperformance program: Billy Zhao, Rebecca Davis – Marina Abramović Institute; Mara Anjoli Vujić, Alenka Gregorič – Cukrarna Gallery; Performers: Primož Bezjak, Katarina Stegnar
Project Manager: Eva Bolha

Coordination and Production: Cathy Koutsavlis, Rosa Lux

Head of Communications and Strategic Partnerships: Nejc Kovačič

Marketing and Public Relations: Mojca Podlesek

PR Support: Karin Samsa

Production: Janja Buzečan, Marija Veljanovska Nemec, Neža Vengust

Education Programs: Nina Vošnjak

Exhibition Design: Prostorske prakse – Katarina Čakš, Pavlina Košir

Exhibition Design Consulting: Rok Žnidaršič, Jerneja Fischer Knap

Visual Identity and Graphic Design: Ajdin Bašić

Technical Design Support: Špela Razpotnik, Špela Banko

Photographic and Video Materials: Marina Abramović Archive, ULAY Foundation

Technical Team: Jože Kalan, Martin Lovšin, Bert Prelec, Žan Rantaša, Andrej Črepinšek, Borut Wenzel, RPS d.o.o., Peter Superti

Video Production: Ramon Coelho

Exhibition Equipment: RPS d.o.o., Eidotech GmbH, O.K.VIR d.o.o.

Special thanks to the institutions and private collections:

Marina Abramović Archive; ULAY Foundation; Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon; Akron Art Museum, Ohio; Dačić Collection, Hamburg; Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo; Kunstmuseum Bern

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The Cukrarna Gallery is part of the Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana public institution (MGML). The founder of the MGML public institution is the City of Ljubljana.