



Large
Print

Marina Abramović

Main Galleries

Do not remove from gallery

Marina Abramović

Main Galleries

23 September 2023 – 1 January 2024

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CLARIDGE'S

Introduction to the exhibition

By pushing the limits of her body and mind to extremes, Marina Abramović has captivated audiences for over fifty years.

Born in Belgrade, Yugoslavia (now Serbia) in 1946, Abramović studied as an academic painter in Belgrade and Zagreb from 1965 to 1972. From the late 1960s she engaged with the era's radical political and artistic ideas, which expanded the definition of art beyond traditional media such as painting and sculpture. Beginning in the 1970s she created work at the forefront of the emerging discipline of performance art, shaping it as an art form and propelling it into the mainstream.

Through her performances, which often comprise simple actions sustained over long durations, Abramović has consistently tested the boundaries of her own physical and mental endurance, whilst also extending her practice to embrace collective experiences of great intimacy between artist and audience. A pioneer in the use of the live body for art, she has explored the myriad associations the body can occupy: as physical and energetic presence, as personal identity, and in relation to others, both on a personal and societal level. Later work has expanded the definition of what performance can be, creating performative objects and exploring the possibility of performance without the presence of the artist.

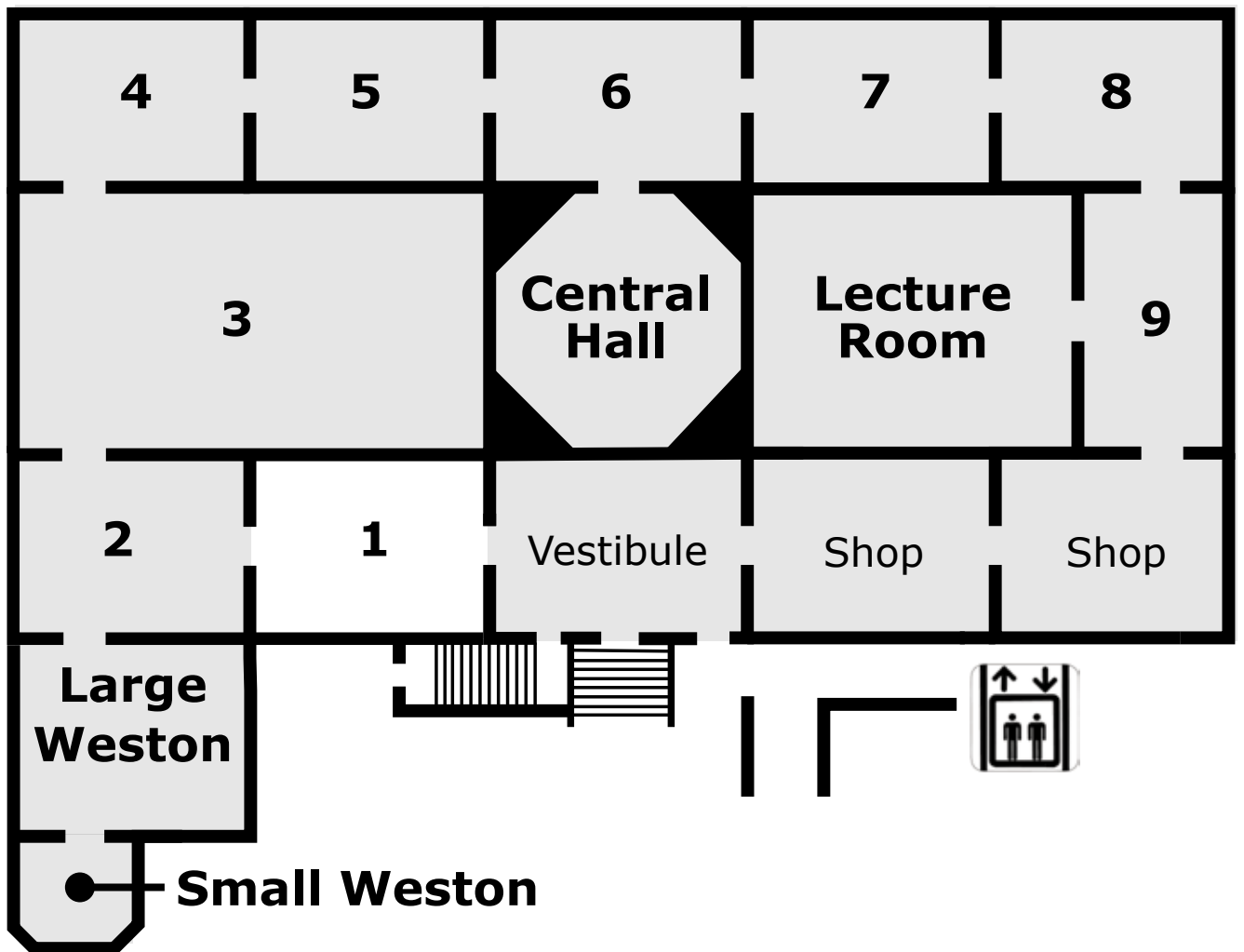
Whilst best known for her performances, Abramović is a genuinely multidisciplinary artist, working across photography, video, installation and sculpture.

This major exhibition – the largest of Abramović's work in the UK to date – presents work thematically from across her extraordinary career, curated in partnership with the artist to reveal her ongoing preoccupations. What emerges is a lifelong exploration of art as a vehicle for emotional and spiritual transformation.

Performances

Marina Abramović is the founder of MAI, the Marina Abramović Institute. For this exhibition, artists from the next generation of performance have been trained by MAI in the Marina Abramović Method, preparing them mentally and physically to reperform some of the artist's most iconic works. Since the 1990s, Abramović has developed a framework for reperformance of past works by both herself and other performance artists. Her intention is to create a new form of documentation that will allow later audiences to experience a past performance as she had originally intended.

Performances will take place daily throughout the run of the exhibition. Witnessing a live performance can be both startling and intimate, and we welcome respectful behaviour towards the performance artists. Please speak to RA team members for further information.



You are in Gallery 1



Introduction to Gallery 1

Public participation I

Performance art activates a live relationship between art, artist and viewer, uniting them at a moment in time. From the outset, Abramović pushed this concept further, making the audience a fundamental participant in her work. The energy flow between artist and audience is a vital condition of her performances: 'I cannot do anything without an audience, I need their energy.'

During 'The Artist is Present' (2010), Abramović sat for three months at a table in the atrium of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York. Members of the public were invited to sit silently opposite the artist for a duration of their choosing, their gazes meeting. Footage of the sitters reveals the extent to which the experience impacted them, their charged and often highly emotional reactions speaking to the basic human need for connection.

The artist: Marina Abramović

The performance: 'The Artist is Present'

The location: The Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Beginning: 7 March 2010

End: 31 May 2010

Duration: 75 days – 716 hours, 30 minutes

Conditions: Visitors were invited to sit in front of the artist in silence for as long as they chose, without any time limit.

Total number of visitors: 1,545

Wall labels

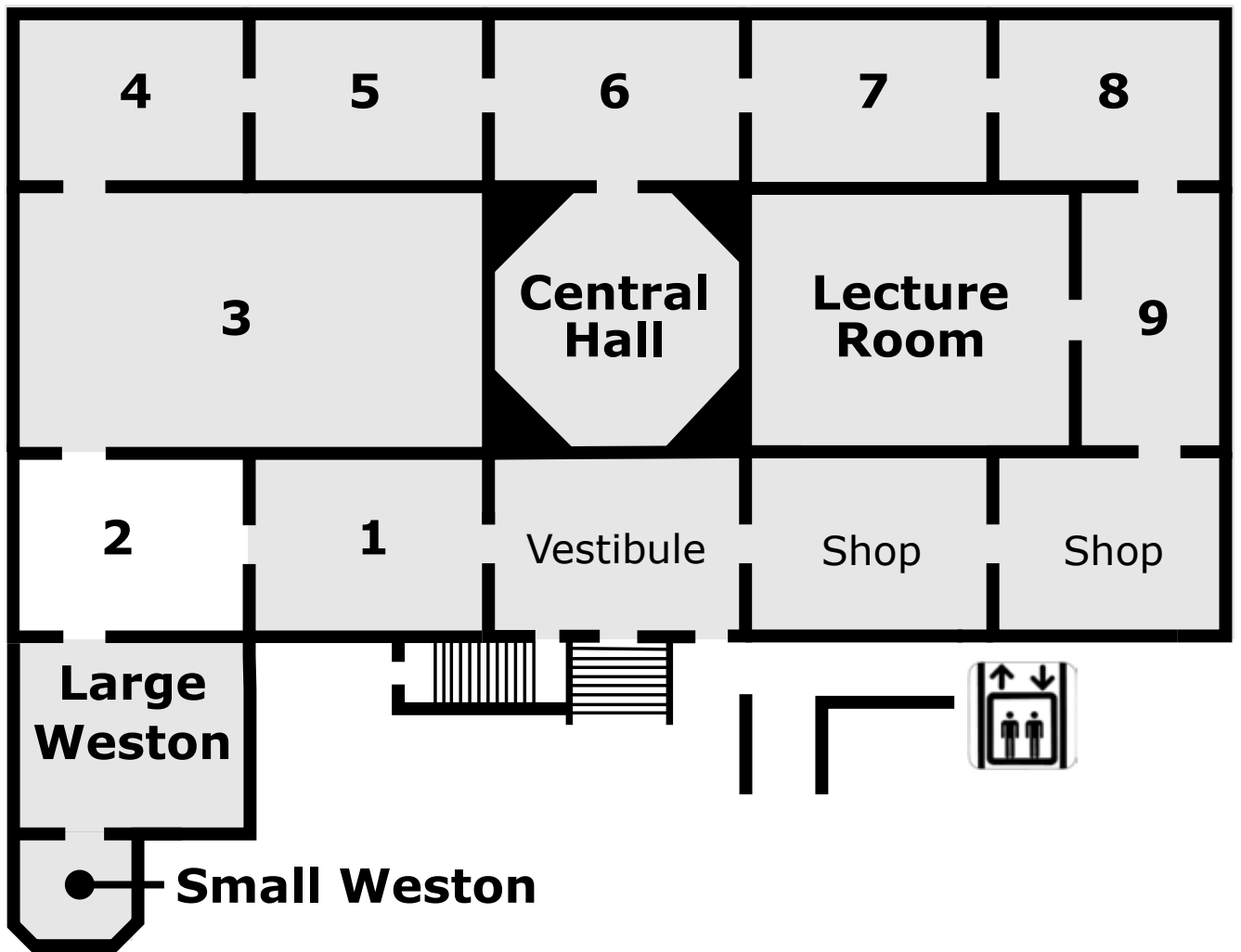
The Artist is Present

2010

Performance, 3 months, The Museum of
Modern Art, New York

Multi-channel video, no sound, 6 hours 12 seconds

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives



You are in Gallery 2



Introduction to Gallery 2

Public participation II

'Rhythm 0' (1974) saw Abramović present herself as an object to be acted upon, as she stood motionless for eight hours alongside a table of 72 items referencing pain and pleasure, for the public to use on her as they wished. Initially hesitant, some audience members became increasingly violent, stripping the artist to her waist, cutting her skin, and even holding a gun to her neck. When the performance ended and Abramović moved, the public fled the galleries. The trauma of the experience turned a section of the artist's hair white.

In both 'The Artist is Present' and 'Rhythm 0', the audience's emotions were projected onto the artist; what differed were the tools and framing she provided.

The journey between these two performances, from physical interaction and aggression to stillness and spiritual connection, define the arc of Abramović's practice.

Wall labels

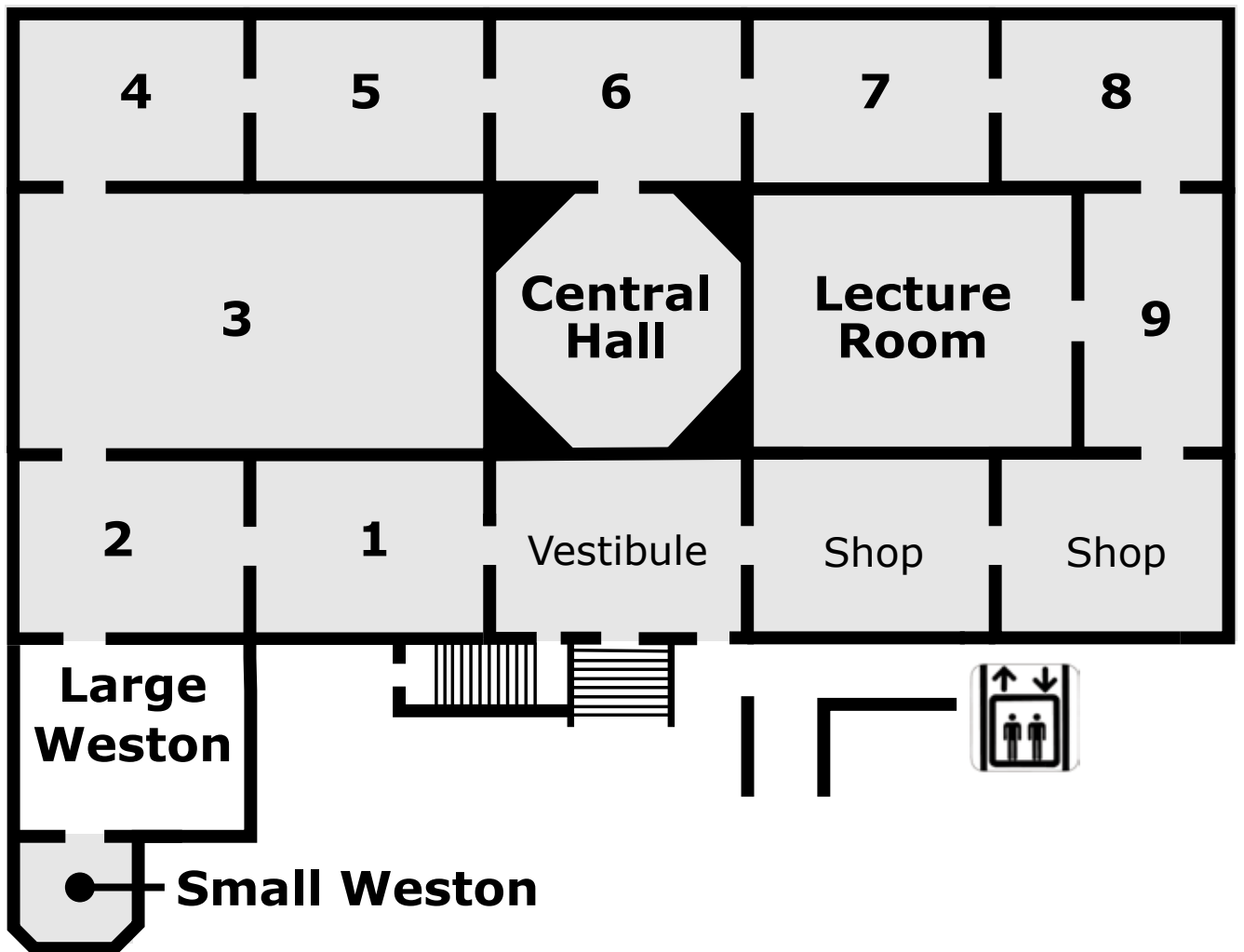
Rhythm 0

1974

Performance, 6 hours, Studio Morra, Naples

Table with 72 objects, and digital slide shows

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives



You are in Large Weston



Introduction to Weston Rooms

Communist body

Abramović was born in communist Yugoslavia. Her parents Danica Rosić and Vojin Abramović had been partisan fighters in the Second World War and, feted as heroes, were rewarded with coveted state jobs. The strictures of communist ideology – from extreme physical discipline to restricted freedom of speech – shaped Abramović's early years and her subsequent formation as an artist.

Abramović often weaves elements of her personal biography into her work. The five-pointed star appears in many early pieces, as she explored communist ideology and its impact on herself and others. In 'Rhythm 5' (1974), this took the form of a wooden structure which was set alight as she lay within it. The resultant dense smoke was suffocating and caused the artist to faint.

The following year she incised a star into her abdomen as part of the performance 'Lips of Thomas', leaving behind an indelible scar on her body.

Abramović left Belgrade in 1976 but continued to feel a close tie to the region. Her perception of the Balkan identity as bound up in extremes of violence and eroticism often influenced her later work. At the Venice Biennale in 1997 she presented 'Balkan Baroque', her most complex and multifaceted reflection on her homeland. Conceived in response to the decade's violent conflict in the Balkans, following the disintegration of Yugoslavia that began in 1991, she performed a ritual, if hopeless, act of cleansing the horrors of war.

Three years later, her father Vojin Abramović passed away. In memory of him she created 'The Hero' (2001; displayed in the next gallery), combining her personal biography with a wider reflection on the historic events her father had lived through.

In it, the artist sits on a white horse while an elegiac arrangement of the Yugoslavian national anthem is sung.

Wall labels

Lips of Thomas (Star on Stomach)

1975

Black-and-white photograph with text panel

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York/Los Angeles

Balkan Baroque

1997

Performance, 4 days 6 hours, XLVII Biennale, Venice

Installation, multi-channel video, with sound, 12 minutes 38 seconds, and c-print

A multifaceted reflection on her Yugoslavian heritage, *Balkan Baroque* saw Abramović engaged in a futile attempt to wash clean a pile of bloodied bones.

This act was accompanied by projections of the artist flanked by her parents, recounting a gruesome folk story and then dancing to a suggestive Balkan song.

The performance had been developed to represent Yugoslavia at the Venice Biennale, however the organisers were dismayed by the anti-nationalistic message it appeared to convey. Abramović instead performed in the basement of the Italian pavilion.

The performance caused a sensation and was awarded the Golden Lion.

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York/Los Angeles

Transcript of Balkan Baroque

I like to tell you the story how we in Balkan kill the rats. We have a method to transform the rat into a wolf, to make wolf rat.

But before I explain this method I like you to know some more about rats themselves.

(continued over)

First of all rats consume large quantities of food. Sometimes the double weight of their own body. Their front teeth's are growing permanently. They have to be grinded constantly, otherwise they are facing suffocation.

Rats take very well care of their family. They will never kill or eat their own members.

They are extremely intelligent. Einstein said once, if the rat would be 20 kilos heavier, he definitely will be ruler of the world. If you put the plate with food and poison in front of the hole, the rat will sense it and will not eat it.

The method.

To catch the rats you have to fill the holes with the water leaving only one open. In this way you can catch 35-45 rats. You have to make sure that you only choose the male ones. You put them in the cage and give them only water to drink.

After a while they start getting hungry, their front teeth start growing and even genetically they will not kill the same members of the tribe. Facing suffocation they are forced to kill the weak one in the cage.

And then another weak one, and another weak one, and another weak one, till only one, the strongest and the more superior rat from all of them is left in the cage.

Now, the rat catcher continue to give the water to the rat. In this point the timing is extremely important. He's teeth start growing and when the rat catcher sees that there is less than half an hour left before he suffocates he open the cage, take the knife and take his eyes out of his head and then he let him free.

Now the rat is nervous, outraged, in panic. He is facing his own death.

He run into the rat holes and kill every rat coming his way, till he find the rat that is stronger and more superior than him. This rat kill him.

This is the way how we in Balkan make wolf rat.

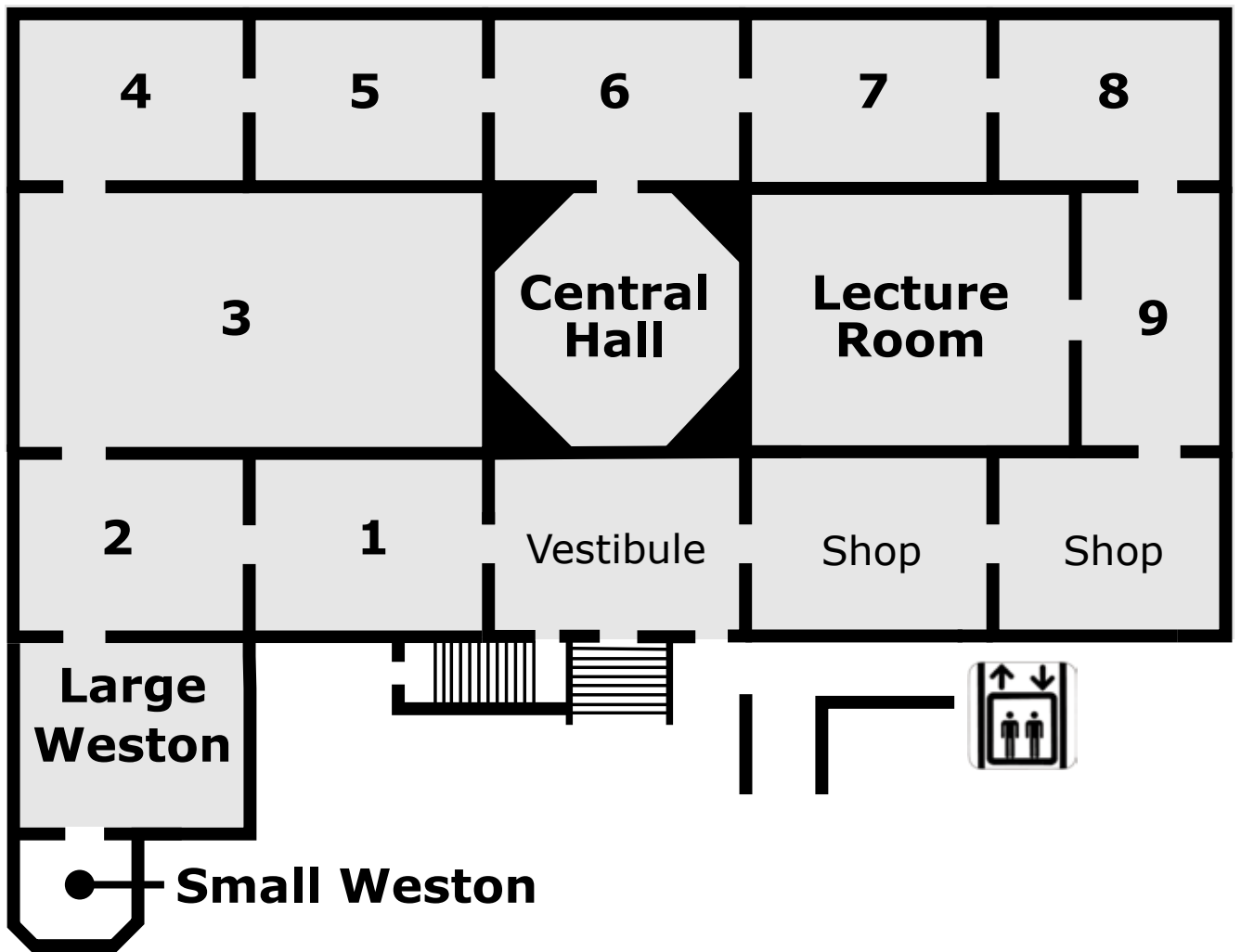
Rhythm 5

1974

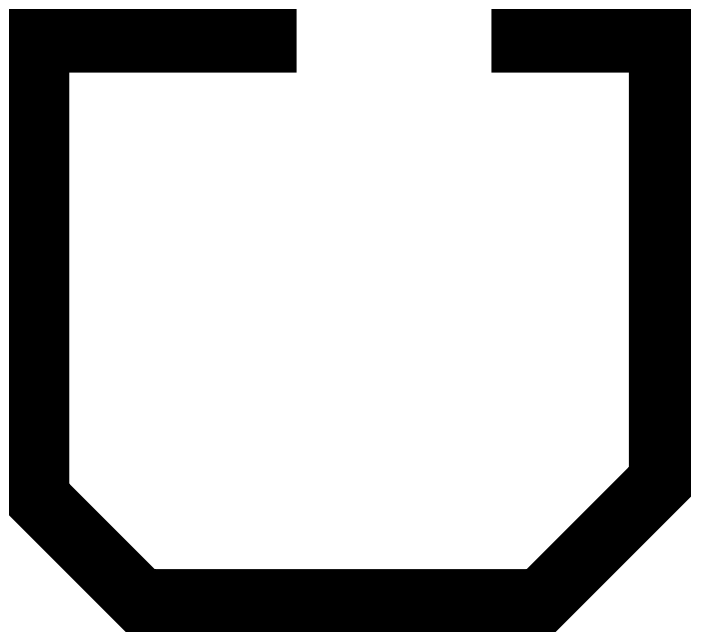
Performance, 90 minutes, Student Cultural Centre, Belgrade

Silver gelatin prints with text panel

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Lisson Gallery



You are in Small Weston



Freeing the Horizon

1971

29 paintings on Agfa colour prints

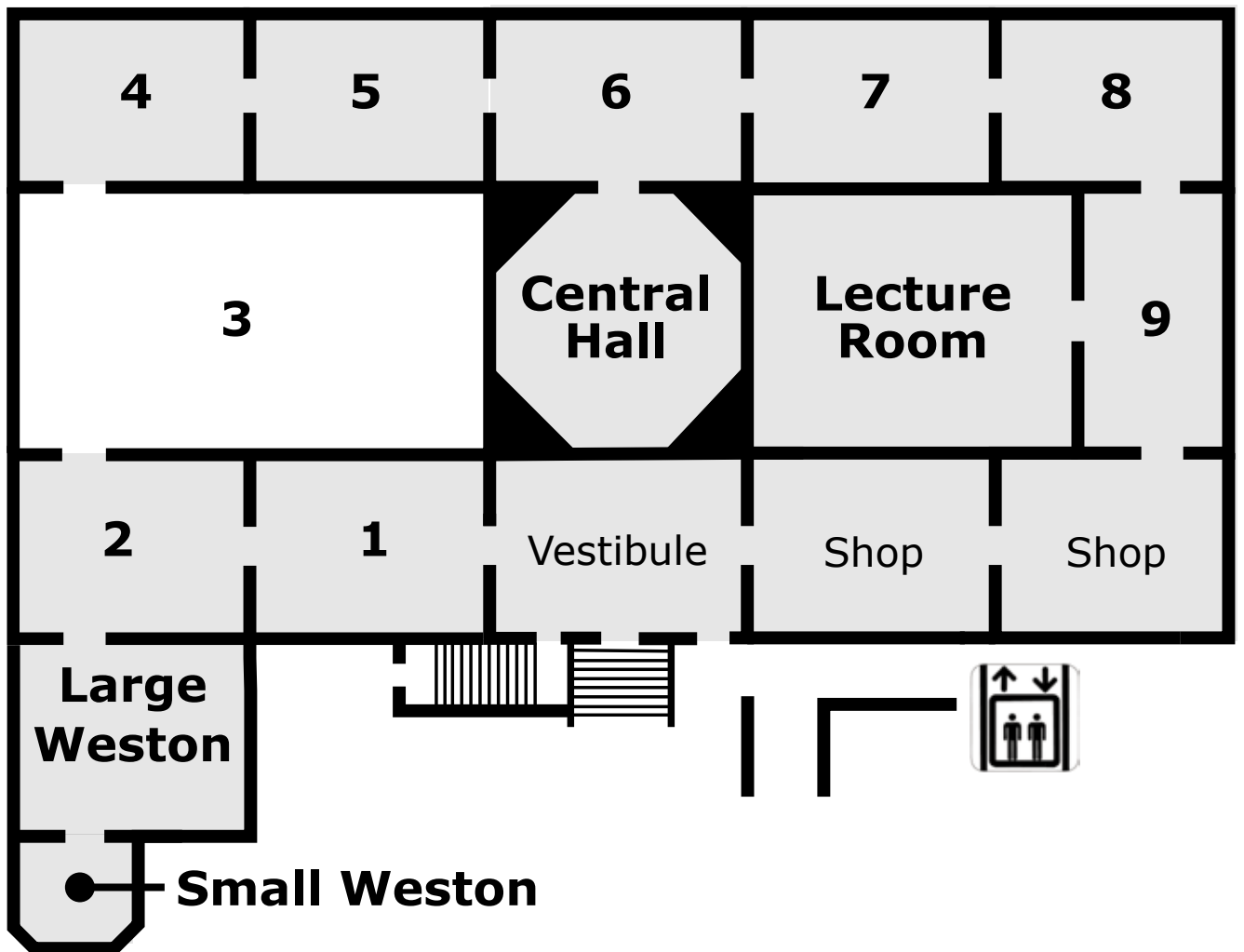
Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Lisson Gallery

The Hero

2001

Single-channel video, with sound, 14 minutes 21 seconds, and vitrine containing objects that belonged to Vojin Abramović

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Luciana Brito Galeria



You are in Gallery 3



Introduction to Gallery 3

Body Limits

From the moment of her first performance, 'Rhythm 10' in 1973, Abramović felt the power of using her body to create art: "I knew then that this was my tool, the body was my tool." Against a backdrop of existentialist thought, and alongside other contemporary artists, Abramović explored her physical limits through her work, describing the pain she endured during these early performances not as the goal of the work, but as a method to experience extreme mental clarity and presence. These early works have an intensely emotive quality, giving cathartic expression to universal human experiences of pain, anger and fear, and quickly established Abramović as the leading performance artist of her generation.

In 1975, Abramović met fellow artist Ulay (Frank Uwe Laysiepen), and the two experienced an instant emotional and artistic connection. In Ulay, Abramović found a partner equally interested in pushing the body's limits to create art. Together they made work that considered the relationship between the self and the other, their symbiotic connection growing to the point that it became what they called "That Self", an entity that represented their fused relationship. After undergoing hypnosis they produced a series of works delving into "That Self". Of these, 'Rest Energy' (1980) viscerally demonstrates the extreme trust their partnership depended on.

Wall labels

Rhythm 10

1973

Performance, 1 hour, Museo d'Arte
Contemporanea, Villa Borghese, Rome

Silver gelatin prints with text panel

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Lisson
Gallery

Rhythm 2

1974

Performance, 6 hours, Gallery of Contemporary
Art, Zagreb

Photographic prints with text panel

Private collection

Ulay / Marina Abramović

Talking About Similarity

1976

Performance, 45 minutes, Singel 64,
Amsterdam

Black-and-white photographs with text panel

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Ulay / Marina Abramović

Relation in Time

1977

Performance, 17 hours, Studio G7, Bologna

Black-and-white photographs with text panels

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Lips of Thomas

1975

Performance, 2 hours, Krinzinger Gallery,
Innsbruck

Digital slide show, 1 hour 36 minutes
14 seconds

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Ulay / Marina Abramović **Rest Energy**

1980

Performance for video, with sound, 4 minutes 4
seconds, ROSC '80, Dublin

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Ulay / Marina Abramović

Relation in Space

1976

Performance, 58 minutes, XXXVIII Biennale, Giudecca, Venice

Black-and-white photographs with text panel

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Ulay / Marina Abramović

Relation in Movement

1977

Performance, 16 hours, 10ème Biennale de Paris, Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris

Black-and-white photographs with text panel

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Rhythm 4

1974

Performance, 45 minutes, Diagramma Gallery,
Milan

Photographic prints with text panel

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Lisson
Gallery

Role Exchange

1975

Performance, 4 hours, De Appel Gallery,
red-light district, Amsterdam

Black-and-white photographs with text panel

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Sean
Kelly Gallery, New York/Los Angeles

Ulay / Marina Abramović

Imponderabilia

1977/2023

Performance, 90 minutes, Galleria Comunale
d'Arte Moderna, Bologna

Video, with sound, 50 minutes 25 seconds

Live reperformance, 60 minutes

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Central display

Freeing the Memory

1975

Performance, 1½ hours, Dacić Gallery,
Tübingen

16 mm film transferred to digital video, with sound,
50 minutes 18 seconds

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Galerie
Krinzinger

Art Must Be Beautiful / Artist Must Be Beautiful

1975

Performance for video, with sound, 23 minutes
36 seconds

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Freeing the Voice

1975

Performance, 3 hours, Student Cultural Centre,
Belgrade

Video, with sound, 35 minutes 20 seconds

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Ulay / Marina Abramović **AAA–AAA**

1978

Performance, 15 minutes, RTB television
studio, Liège

Video, with sound, 12 minutes 58 seconds

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Ulay / Marina Abramović **Breathing In, Breathing Out**

1977

Performance, 19 minutes, Student Cultural Centre, Belgrade

½-inch film transferred to digital video, with sound,
11 minutes 15 seconds

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

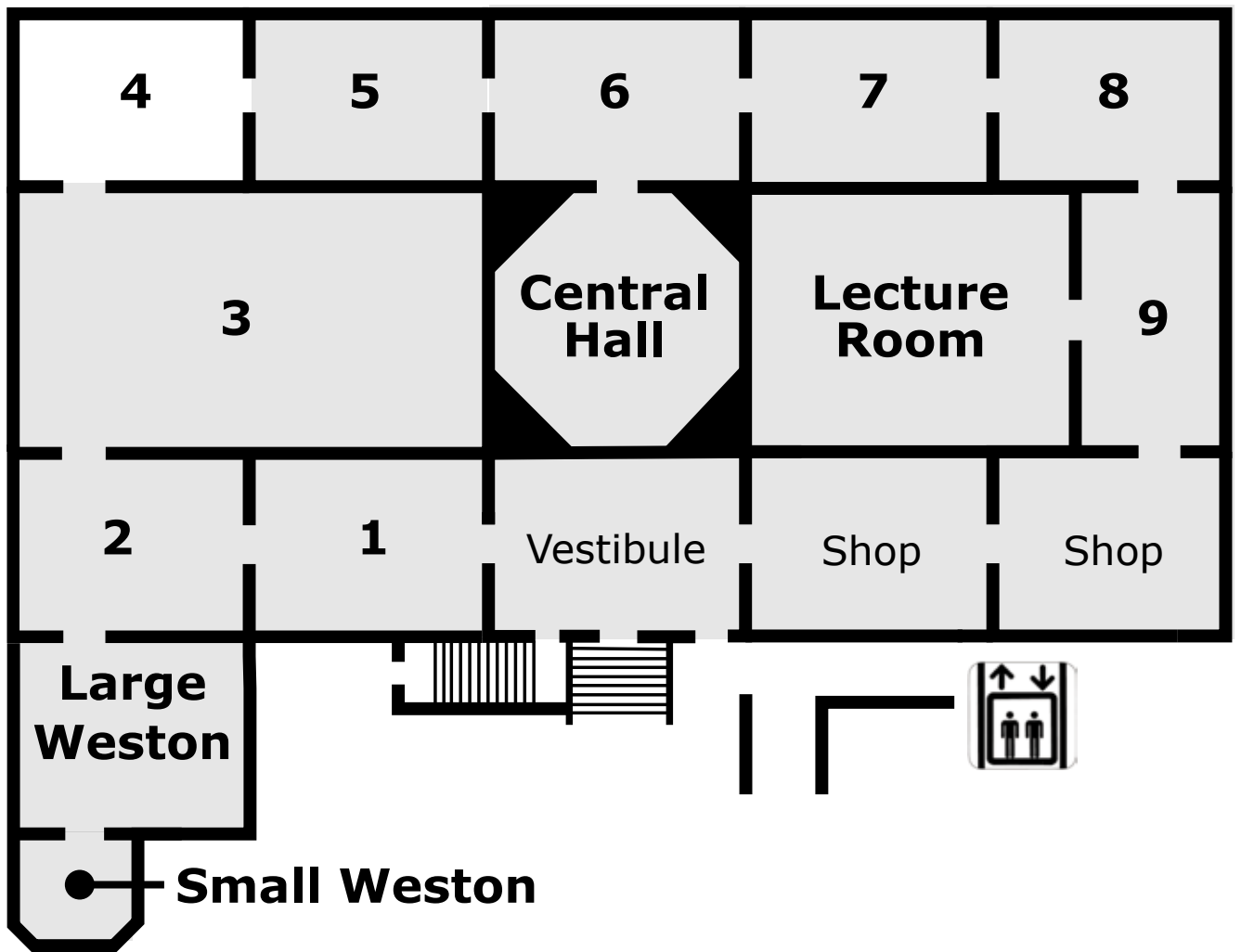
Ulay / Marina Abramović **Light Dark**

1977

Performance, 20 minutes, Internationale Kunstmesse, Cologne

16 mm film transferred to digital video, with sound,
9 minutes 15 seconds

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives



You are in Gallery 4



Introduction to Gallery 4

Absence of The Body

On 27 June 1988, Abramović and Ulay met on the Great Wall of China, having walked towards each other for ninety days from opposite ends. They had originally planned to marry at this meeting point, but by the time Chinese authorities had granted them permission for the performance, their relationship had deteriorated. Instead the work became a ritualised separation, formally ending their personal and creative partnerships.

In the preceding years, Abramović and Ulay had turned towards making art that did not directly use their bodies. The body-scale vases of 'The Sun and the Moon' (1987) are opposites: one as matte and unreflective as the other is shiny and reflective.

They speak to themes of the duality and symbiosis present in many of the couple's works, yet also marked the breakdown of their artistic and personal connections. Abramović realised: "The vases represented us and our inability to perform together anymore."

The end of their relationship was a creative turning point for Abramović. As she had walked the Wall, she had become conscious of passing over stones that held vast quantities of geological and human energy. Rubbings made as she travelled reveal her fascination with artistically engaging with this energy, and she returned home to Amsterdam ready to explore further the ideas this new direction had fostered.

Wall labels

Marina Abramović / Ulay **Modus Vivendi: Urn 1, Urn 2, Veil, and Urn 3**

c. 1983

Polaroid photographs

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Central display

Marina Abramović / Ulay **The Sun and the Moon (Die Mond, der Sonne)**

1987

Polyester, two parts, high-screen and matt varnish

Kunstmuseum Bern

The Lovers, Great Wall Walk, Wall Rubbings

1988

Ink and charcoal on paper

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Marina Abramović / Ulay The Lovers, Great Wall Walk

1988

Performance, 90 days, Great Wall of China

Video, no sound, 15 minutes 41 seconds

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

On 2 March 2020, after a long battle with cancer, Ulay (Frank Uwe Laysiepen) passed away. I would like to dedicate these images of our time together to his memory.

— Marina Abramović

Art vital

No fixed living place

Permanent movement

Direct contact

Local relation

Self-selection

Passing limitations

Taking risks

Mobile energy

No rehearsal

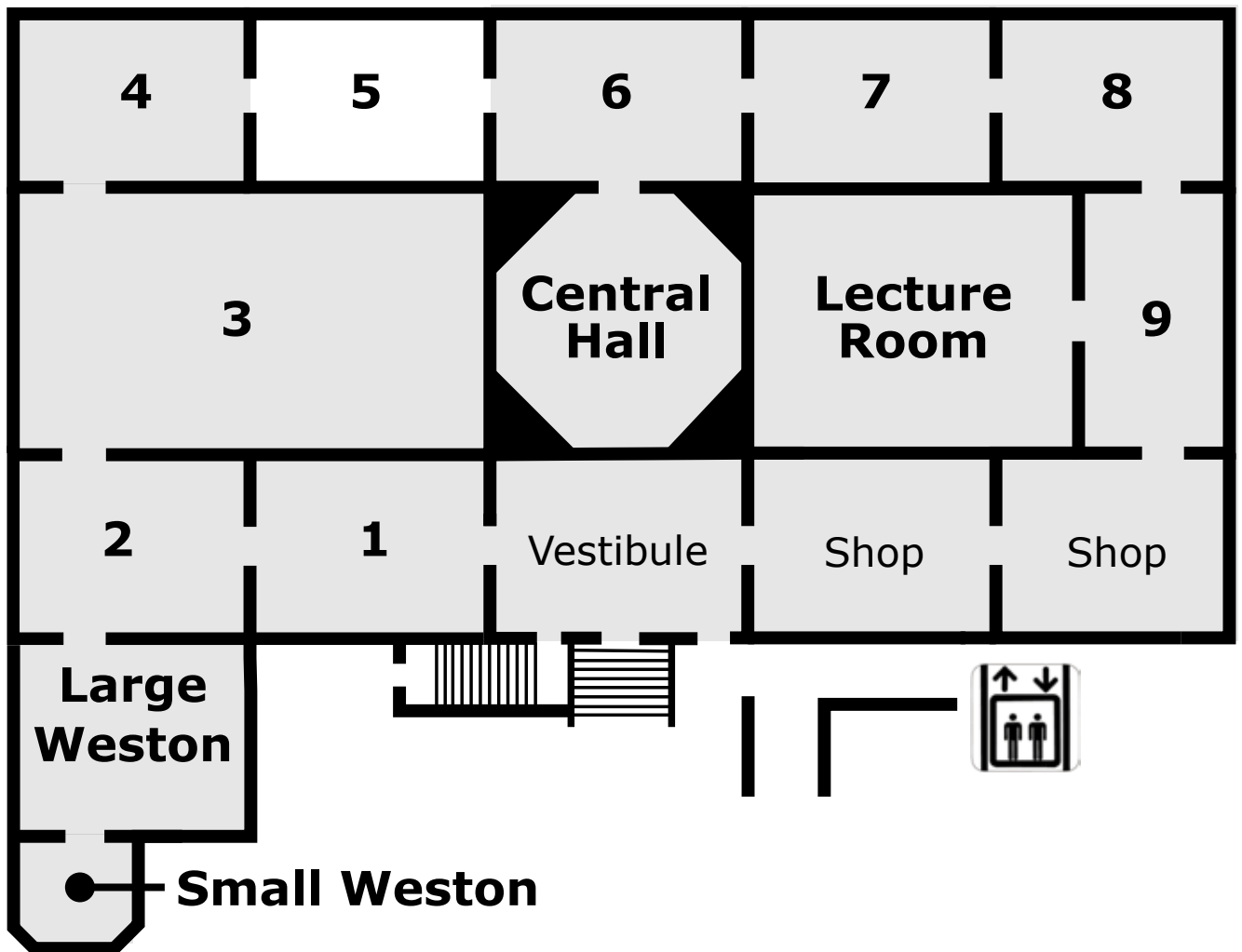
No predicted end

No repetition

Extended vulnerability

Exposure to chance

Primary reactions



You are in Gallery 5



Introduction to Gallery 5

Energy from nature

Following Abramović's experience of walking the Great Wall, she spent much of the late 1980s and 1990s exploring the relationship between matter and immaterial energy. In 'Dragon Heads' (1990), her first performance since parting from Ulay, a snake slowly finds its way along the artist's face and head, as though following the energy lines within. It was inspired by the myth that the Great Wall was built in the shape of a dragon's tail, along the earth's energy lines.

Abramović considered how to convey such energetic interactions directly to her audience. The "Transitory Objects For Human Use" are a series of works that for the first time make the audience the central participant of the artwork without requiring the presence of the artist.

Rather than sculptures or items of furniture, the “Transitory Objects” act as tools allowing viewers to access the energy and curative power of the crystals and metal that form them, based on traditional Chinese medicine’s correspondences between minerals and parts of the body. Through years of use, the surface of these objects has become worn and polished, bearing witness to the passage of bodies over time.

Other performances around this period see the artist communing with the energy of specific places: “I always want to go to the source. And to me the source is nature – places that contact magnetism and energy: waterfalls and volcanoes, sites where the earth cracks, great rock formations on top of mountains.” Such works aligned with a growing awareness of the destructive impact of humans on the natural world, while also offering the possibility of reconnection and healing.

Visitors are welcome to use the Transitory Objects in this gallery.

Please ask our team members if you need any further guidance.

Wall labels

Stromboli III Volcano

2002

Silver gelatin lambda print

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Galleria Lia Rumma, Milan/Naples

Dragon Heads

1990/2018

Video, no sound, 5 minutes 18 seconds

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Galerie Krinzinger

Red Dragon

1989

Oxidised copper and rose quartz

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Instructions for the public: Sit on the copper seat. Rest your head on the mineral pillow until its energy is transmitted.

White Dragon

1989

Oxidised copper and agate

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Instructions for the public: Stand on the copper base. Rest your head on the mineral pillow until its energy is transmitted.

Green Dragon

1989

Oxidised copper and green quartz

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Instructions for the public: Lie on the copper bed. Rest your head on the mineral pillow until its energy is transmitted.

Black Dragons

1990

Green quartz, snowflake obsidian, hematite, blue quartz and brown agate

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Instructions for the public: Face the wall. Press your head, heart and sex against the mineral pillows. Duration: limitless

Shoes for Departure

1991/2015

Quartz crystal

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Instructions for the public:

Enter the shoes with bare feet.

Eyes closed.

Motionless.

Depart.

Sleeping Under the Banyan Tree

2010

Performance for video, no sound, 56 minutes
43 seconds

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Sean
Kelly Gallery, New York/Los Angeles

Central display

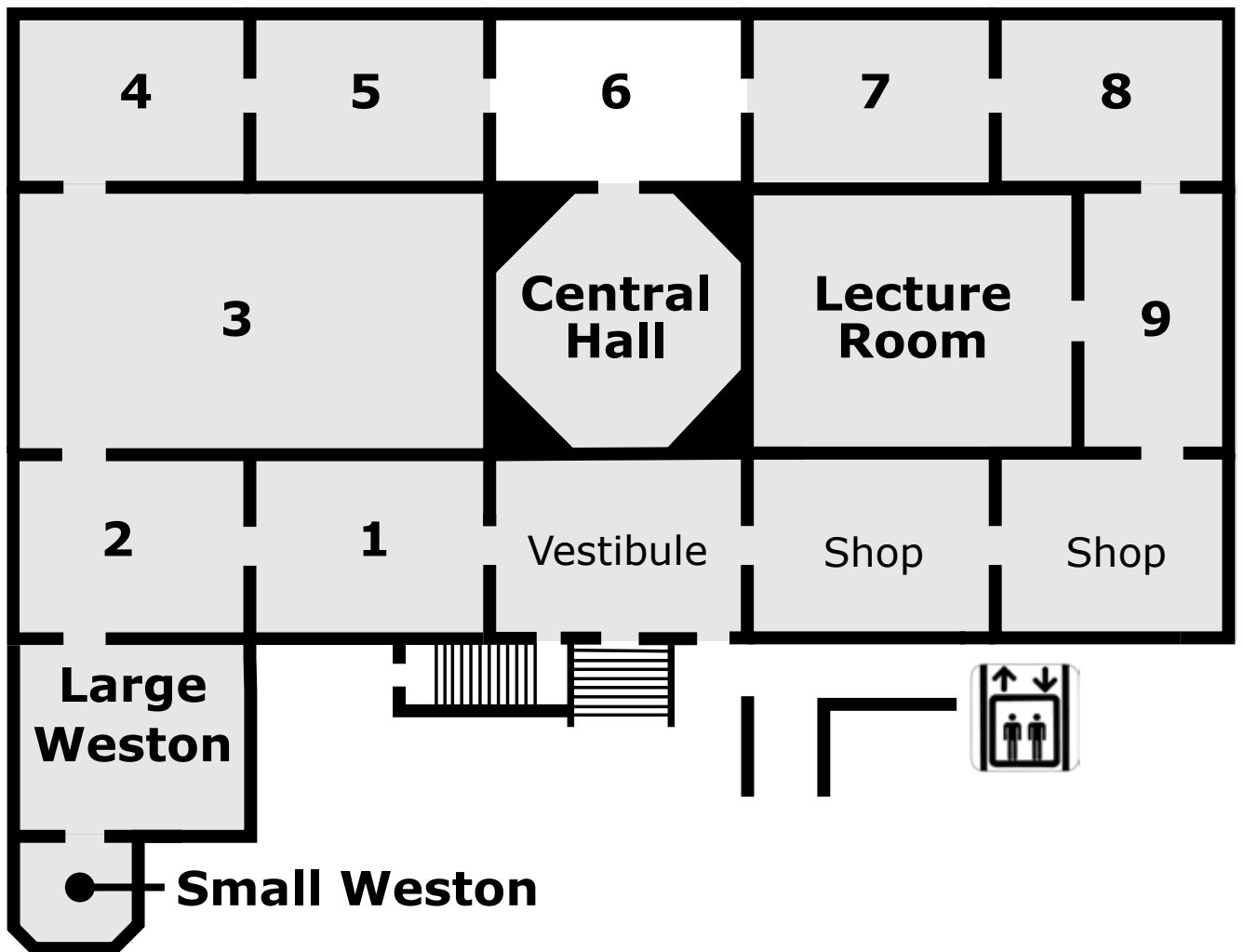
Inner Sky

1991/2015

Iron and amethyst geode

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Please do not touch



You are in Gallery 6



Introduction to Gallery 6 and Central Hall

Coming and going

The temporal nature of performance has been an enduring preoccupation throughout Abramović's career, and one she has deeply engaged with: in creating works that explore what happens when a moment in time is stretched to its limits; in her interest in time as a perceptual dimension from which we have become disconnected; and as a metaphor for our own mortality.

Since her early performances, Abramović has understood the importance of photographic and video documentation in giving performance an afterlife, even beyond the artist's lifespan. In recent years she has explored innovative forms of preservation. For 'Five Stages of Maya Dance' (2013/16), she "performed to camera" the extremes of human expression.

These photographs were carved in negative relief on alabaster slabs, turning them into performative sculptural objects that memorialise the artist's performance yet transform into rough stone when approached.

The theme of death has been a frequent undercurrent in Abramović's art, particularly in her recent works, as she considers the ultimate physical transition that all of us will undergo: from life to death. As the artist has stated: "When death knocks on my door, I want to enter this last experience very consciously and free from fear, bitterness and anger. It is the last experience that we can have in our lives."

Wall labels

Five Stages of Maya Dance

2013/2016

Alabaster, light panels and stainless steel

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Lisson Gallery

Coming and Going

1973/2016

Silver gelatin prints

Natascha and Allard Jakobs, courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery, New York/Los Angeles

Nude with Skeleton

2002/2005/2023

Performance for video, no sound, 23 minutes
14 seconds, Belgrade

Live reperformance, 2 hours

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Cleaning the Mirror I

1995

Performance, 3 hours, Oxford University

Video on Barco monitors, with sound,
29 minutes 53 seconds

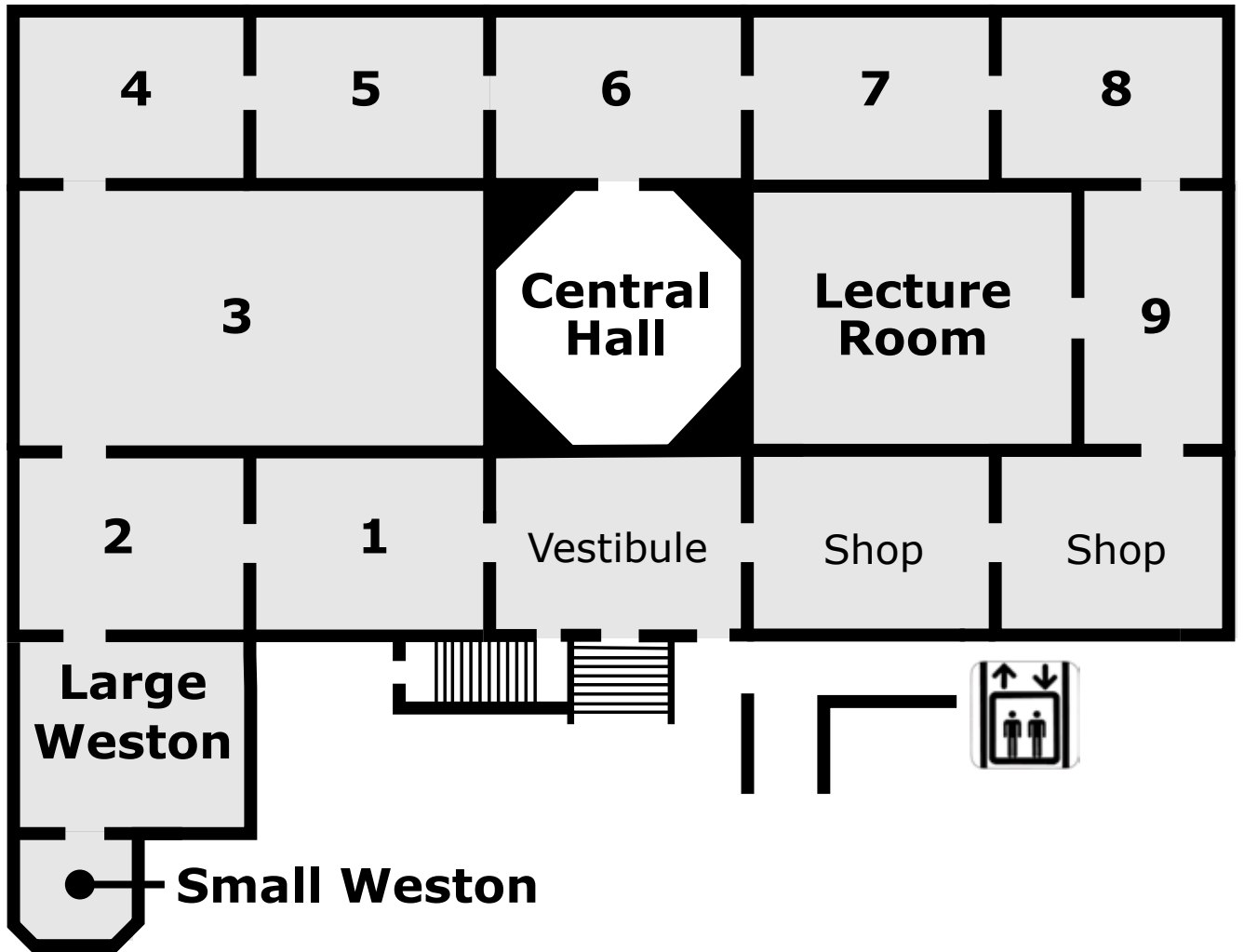
Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Sean
Kelly Gallery, New York/Los Angeles

Artist Portrait with a Candle (A)

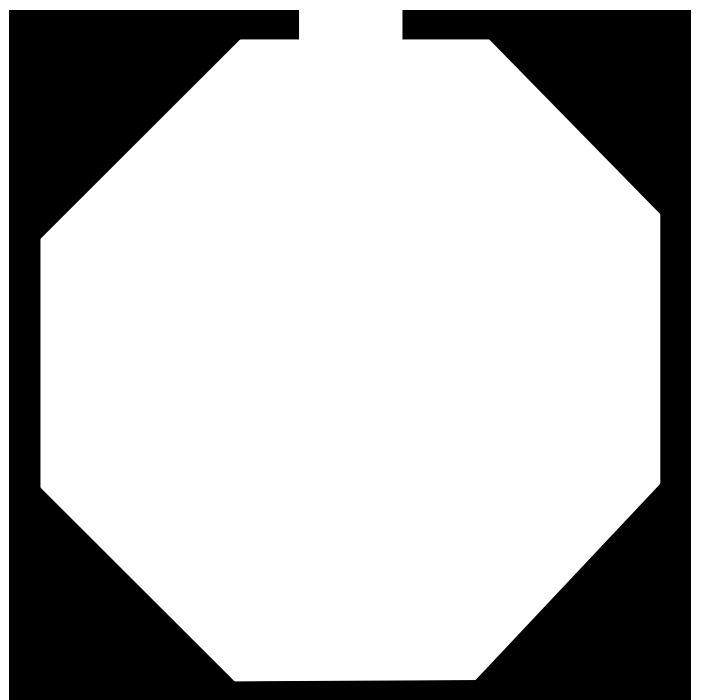
2012

Fine art pigment print

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Galerie Krinzinger



You are in Central Hall



Four Crosses

2019

Corian, aluminium, iron and oak with LED panels

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

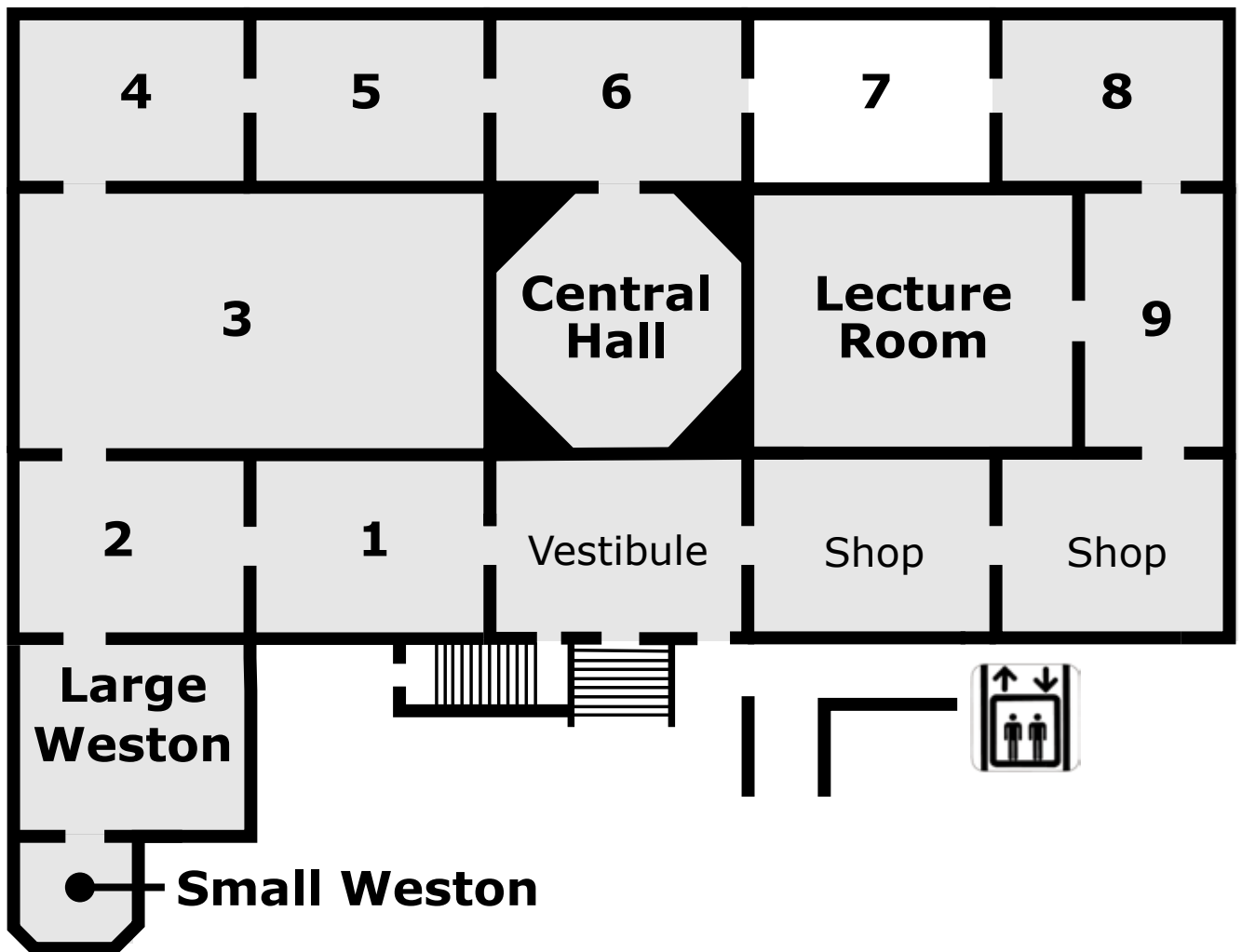
Central display

Bed for Dead Spirits

1996

Lead and rose quartz

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives



You are in Gallery 7



Introduction to Gallery 7

Portal

Every day we move without thinking through a series of thresholds, each ushering us between different experiences and states of being. Throughout cultures, portals have also been understood as symbolic sites of passage between good and evil, darkness and light, paradise and hell, life and death. Building on her earlier “Transitory Objects” (displayed in section 6 “Energy from Nature”), Abramović has created numerous works that give image to transition and transformation, increasingly focusing on transformative states of consciousness.

“The portal, for me, is really about a changed state of consciousness”, the artist has stated. “It’s about how to access different temporal dimensions, from the cosmic to the earthly. But then I think the physical body can also be a gate.

I watched Tibetans doing prostrations in Dharamsala. There were women who, even if they were not in good physical shape, would prostrate in front of the temple for up to twelve hours a day. It's extraordinary. Normally nobody could do that because it just hurts, but they seemed oblivious to the pain. I think this is a kind of necessary physical condition and preparation, which can get the body into the state that makes it possible to become a portal. To be receptive to that, I feel, is like being in a state of dream."

Visitors are welcome to pass through the Portal in this gallery.

Wall labels

Marina Abramović / Ulay **Gold Found by the Artists**

1982

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Count on Us (Tesla)

2003

Chromogenic print

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Galleria Lia Rumma, Milan/Naples

Nomadic Journey and Spirit of Places 1–5

1976–2023

Giclee water colour prints

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

The Communicator (3)

2012/2023

Black wax with black tourmaline stones

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Galleria Lia Rumma, Milan/Naples

Portal

2022

Selenite, steel, aluminium and LED

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Lisson Gallery

The Spirit In Any Condition Does Not Burn

2011

C-print

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Introduction to Gallery 8

Dozing consciousness

A recurring thread throughout Abramović's practice is her exploration of the limits of consciousness. Through performances such as the "Freeing" series (1975; displayed in section 4 "Body Limits"), the artist attempted to release her spirit from her body and conscious memory through extremes of movement and vocalisation. Abramović recalled of her early performances, "when I ... pushed my body very hard, I really started to experience different states of mind. I didn't know what they were, because I didn't have any relation to meditation or spirituality at the time ... much later when I met spiritual people I realised that I was experiencing meditation."

The catalyst for this change was the time Abramović and Ulay spent during the 1980s living with and studying the spiritual traditions of the Aboriginal people of Australia, and Tibetan Buddhism. Their distinct practices of stillness and energy concentration had a lasting influence on her work. In particular, Aboriginal culture's sophisticated conception of space and time – in which past, present and future co-exist, and nature, humanity and the cosmos form a single unity – informed her perception of the critical role that performance art plays in conveying unspoken knowledge to audiences.

These concepts are reflected in the work displayed in this gallery, the frenetic energy of earlier performances having transformed into a compelling stillness that challenges the artist's body in a different manner. Abramović has described the trajectory of her practice as "more and more of less and less".

Wall labels

Stromboli

2002

Performance for video, with sound, 19 minutes
12 seconds

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Dozing Consciousness

1997

Performance for video, with sound, 7 minutes
19 seconds, Amsterdam

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

The Current

2017

Performance for video, no sound, 1 hour, Brazil

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

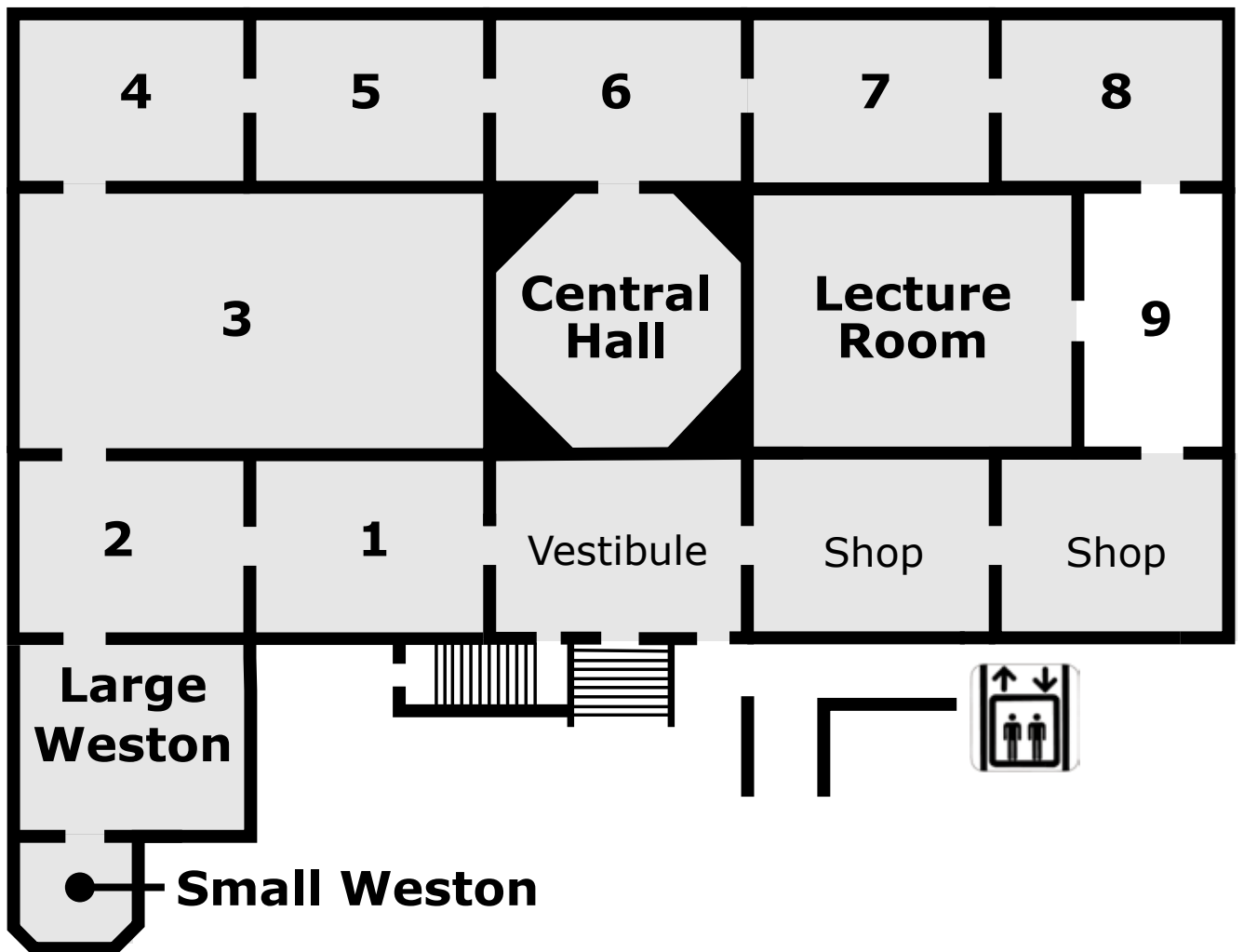
Central display

Reprogramming Levitation Module

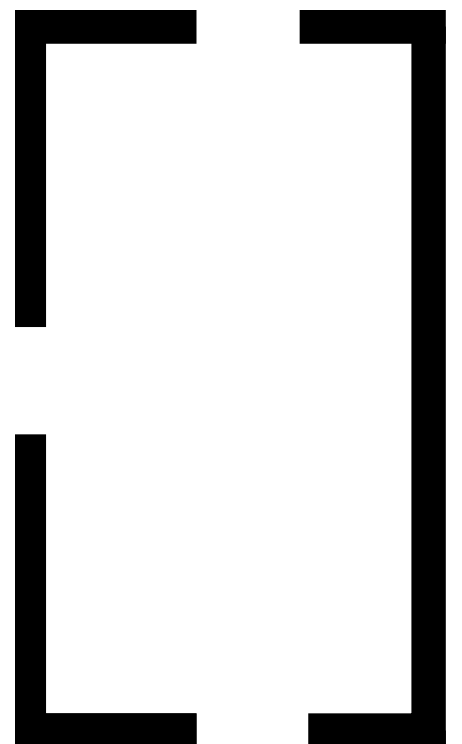
2000/2008

Camomile flowers, copper and quartz

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Galerie
Krinzinger



You are in Gallery 9



Introduction to Gallery 9

Spirit body

Whilst Abramović grew up under communism, a social and political system that rejects religion, spirituality was central to her upbringing. She spent the early years of her childhood living with her devoutly Christian grandmother, whose blend of Serbian Orthodox Christianity with folk beliefs left a lasting impact on Abramović, even as she investigated other spiritual practices: "I am not particularly religious ... what I do believe in is spirituality. I believe that one of the components of a work of art should be spiritual."

In her work exploring Western traditions of mysticism, Abramović pays particular attention to female spirituality. The 2009 series of performances to video "The Kitchen" relates to the experiences of St Teresa of Avila.

A cloistered nun whose mystic visions of Christ's love allegedly caused her to levitate, St Teresa's bodily experience of spirituality as well as her emphasis on asceticism and contemplation have made her a recurring figure of interest to Abramović.

Other works bring a sense of the spiritual directly into museum spaces. 'Bed for Aphrodite and Her Lovers' (1991) is dedicated to the ancient Greek goddess of love, reflecting a spiritual tradition that embraced sexuality and celebrated the human body. Part of the series 'Transitory Objects for Non-Human Use' and in parallel to the sculptural works made during the same decade for human use (such as 'Shoes for Departure', displayed in section 6 "Energy from Nature"), these works offer an opportunity for spiritual contemplation and rejuvenation. Abramović has spoken of her sense that people now visit galleries instead of churches; these sculptures embrace the museum's role as a secular temple.

Wall labels

The Levitation of Saint Therese, from The Kitchen

2009

Video, no sound, 11 minutes 21 seconds

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Galleria
Lia Rumma, Milan/Naples

Carrying the Milk, from The Kitchen

2009

Video, with sound, 12 minutes 42 seconds

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Central display

Bed for Aphrodite and Her Lovers

1991

Iron

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Untitled Octopus 2 (negative)

2019

Corian, LED panel and iron frame

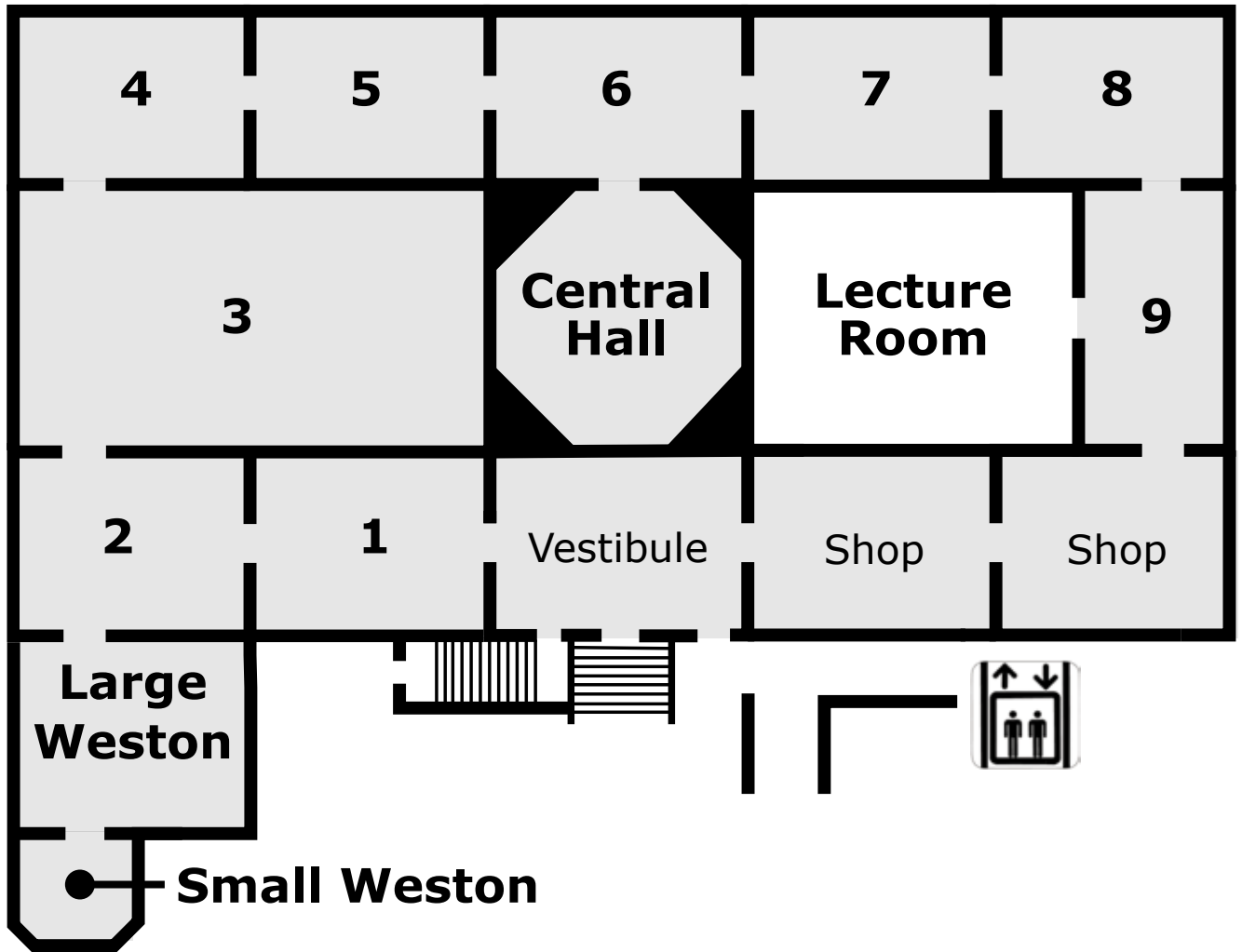
Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Chair for Human Use with Chair for Spirit Use (6)

2012

Wood, crisocola stone and quartz

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives



You are in The Lecture Room



Introduction to The Lecture Room

Luminosity

Since the 1990s, Abramović has increasingly turned to performances of longer duration. Through these she has discovered a state beyond physical and mental exhaustion, and pain that she terms “luminosity”, which is perhaps comparable to the transcendence some people experience through meditation. Only reachable through intense focus, she has explained that “performance is about being in the present, it’s about creating a luminous state of being”. The performance ‘Luminosity’ (1997) captures this process, employing a simple movement that becomes increasingly physically challenging, forcing the performer’s ability to concentrate and be present.

Abramović's endurance was particularly challenged by 'The House with the Ocean View' (2002). For 12 days, the artist lived in Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, as she abided by self-imposed ascetic rules that included not eating or speaking. Visitors could come each day to watch her and would establish a silent energy dialogue with the artist; in the final days of the performance, Abramović's connection with the audience became so strong that she said she could see their auras. Opening less than a year after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the performance became a collective space for people to gather, process and connect.

Wall labels

The House with the Ocean View

2002/2023

Performance, 12 days, Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

Video projection, with sound, 12 days

Live reperformance, 12 days

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Golden Mask

2009

Video, no sound, 30 minutes

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Galleria Lia Rumma, Milan/Naples

Central display

Beds for Human Use (III)

2015

Wood and crystal quartz

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Luminosity

1997/2023

Performance for video, no sound, 5 minutes

18 seconds, Amsterdam

Live reperformance, 30 minutes

Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives, and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York/Los Angeles

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