

IN THE AIR

Art News & Gossip

NOVEMBER 11, 2011, 11:40 AM

Read the Full Text of Yvonne Rainer's Letter Denouncing Marina Abramovic's L.A. MOCA Gala

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Earlier this morning, **ARTINFO** reported that famed **choreographer Yvonne Rainer** sent a letter to **Los Angeles MOCA** director **Jeffrey Deitch** denouncing artist **Marina Abramovic**'s plans for the museum's annual gala, which involves installing performers under gala tables, turning them into disembodied rotating heads for three-hour-long stretches over a period of two days. The performers would be paid a paltry \$150 for their troubles. Read the full text of the letter below.

November 9, 2011

To Jeffrey Deitch:

I am writing to protest the “entertainment” about to be provided by Marina Abramovic at the upcoming donor gala at the Museum of Contemporary Art. It has come to my attention that a number of young people will be ensconced under the diners’ tables on lazy Susans and also be required to display their nude bodies under fake skeletons.

This description is reminiscent of “Salo,” Pasolini’s controversial film of 1975 that dealt with sadism and sexual abuse of a group of adolescents at the hands of a bunch of post-war fascists. Reluctant as I

am to dignify Abramovic by mentioning Pasolini in the same breath, the latter at least had a socially credible justification in the cause of anti-fascism. Abramovic and MOCA have no such credibility, only a flimsy personal rationale about eye contact. Subjecting her performers to public humiliation at the hands of a bunch of frolicking donors is yet another example of the Museum's callousness and greed and Ms Abramovic's obliviousness to differences in context and to some of the implications of transposing her own powerful performances to the bodies of others. An exhibition is one thing — this is not a critique of Abramovic's work in general — but titillation for wealthy diners as a means of raising money is another.

Ms Abramovic is so wedded to her original vision that she — and by extension, the Museum director and curators — doesn't see the egregious associations for the performers, who, though willing, will be exploited nonetheless. Their desperate voluntarism says something about the generally exploitative conditions of the art world such that people are willing to become victims of a celebrity artist in the hopes of somehow breaking into the show biz themselves. And at sub-minimal wages for the performers, the event verges on economic exploitation and criminality.

This grotesque spectacle promises to be truly embarrassing. We the undersigned wish to express our dismay that an institution that we have supported can stoop to such degrading methods of fund raising. Can other institutions be far behind? Must we re-name MOCA "MODFR" or the Museum of Degenerate Fund Raising?

Sincerely,

Yvonne Rainer

<http://blogs.artinfo.com/artintheair/2011/11/11/read-the-full-text-of-yvonne-rainers-letter-denouncing-marina-abramovics-la-moca-gala/>

Accessed February 5, 2014