

When a human feels pain, nerves signal your brain that it's time to retreat. It's a default reaction to avoid further harm that every human experiences. Art is the creative process of putting human emotion, thoughts, or memories on a canvas. Typically, it's something that is displayed on a wall and is meant to be still and quiet. When one combines pain and art through performance, unease settles in, and the threshold of what might be too far begins to challenge society's norms. To use the human body as your medium is a choice that not many would make. The liveliness and fragility of flesh is too vulnerable to convey the deep internal messages an artist wishes to express. This concern is what makes the human body so effective as a medium. Serbian artist Marina Abramovic (b.1949) is known for performing daunting tasks that distress her body and mind. She often puts herself in harm's way to challenge her endurance. She assesses her limits while putting herself on display in close proximity with danger. In the piece *Art Must Be Beautiful, Artists Must Be Beautiful* from 1975, Abramovic violently brushes her hair back with one hand while combing it forward with the other. She repeats this motion as well as the words "Art must be beautiful, artists must be beautiful" for an hour straight. By executing this rather simple feminine task in an aggressive way, Abramovic calls attention to the sexist expectations of the art world and ultimately exposes the damage that these inveterate mentalities can breed. Abramovic is the pioneer of how impactful performance art can be and why her bodies of work, and performance art as a whole, is incredibly important to women and society.