

The bittersweet story of Marina Abramovic's epic walk on the Great Wall of China

From the moment in 1976 that **Serbian** and German performance artists Marina Abramović and Ulay clapped eyes on each other they were inseparable.

Serbian 塞尔维亚的

mythology 神话

The pair began to perform together, describing themselves as a "two-headed body". In 1983, Abramović and Ulay announced their ultimate collaboration: The Lovers. They proposed to be the first people to walk the Great Wall of China, known to the Chinese as The Sleeping Dragon. Setting off alone from opposite ends, they planned to meet in the middle, where they would marry.

Abramović and Ulay began their walks on 30 March 1988. More by **happenstance** than planning, Ulay and Abramović met at the centre of a stone bridge in Shenmu in Shaanxi province. While musicians, the Chinese press and even a fireworks display had been laid on for the pair, there would be no wedding ceremony.

happenstance 意外事件; 巧合

renown 声誉; 名望

In the five years that Ulay and Abramović had been waiting for permission for the walk, their lives had changed irrevocably. Their work had become internationally **renowned**. Abramović welcomed the success, but Ulay rebelled against what he saw as a growing commercialisation of their work. In short, they had grown apart. Both had had affairs; communication and trust had broken down. They decided to go ahead with the walk, not in order to marry but to split up.

To the Chinese, the dragon is an **auspicious** symbol. Walking the dragon's **spine**, for Ulay and Abramović, was to be a totem of love and reconnection.

auspicious 吉祥的; 有利的

spine 脊柱

Unlike in China, the dragon in western **mythology** is perceived as a destructive creature to be hunted down and destroyed. They had, it seemed, woken the wrong dragon.