



Discover. Read. Share.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN LOVE

DISCUSSION GUIDE

- 1 What was your interest level in and/or opinion of contemporary or performance art prior to reading this novel? How has that evolved since reading *The Museum of Modern Love*?
- 2 Is Arky doing the right thing by adhering to Lydia's wishes for the many months that he has? In what ways has his life changed or slowed down as well? How about Alice?
- 3 For viewers like Arky, who is separated from Lydia, and Jane, who has lost Karl, do you think visiting *The Artist Is Present* is filling a void or creating a separate experience altogether? Consider "Pillow Marina" and Jane wishing to discuss her New York adventures with Karl.
- 4 Due to the live feed, *The Artist Is Present* was available to viewers across the world at any time, and yet none of the online viewers are characterized in the novel. What does this say about the role of social media in art and the dichotomy between viewing art through a tech barrier and experiencing it firsthand?
- 5 Talk about Marina's relationship with her mother and with the history of her birth country. How has the trauma they described affected Marina's artistic process and product? What has been the personal cost for her and her mother?
- 6 The author develops multiple character narratives that she weaves together throughout the course of the book. Why do you think she structured the book that way and how did you respond to this as a reader?
- 7 Discuss the way minor characters—such as the striking Healayas—bring richness to not only our main characters, but also the novel as a whole. Which did you find most interesting or impactful?
- 8 So many of this book's passages were quite moving—worthy of pasting up in our own studios and offices for sure! We especially gravitated toward, "Art will wake you up. Art will break your heart. There will be glorious days. If you want eternity, you must be fearless." What are some of your favorite quotes or passages?
- 9 Discuss the way that fame or notoriety complicates relationships; did that play a factor between Arky and Lydia—a composer and architect? Marina and Ulay? Think of the scene where Arky explains he feels like he may sometimes disappear when kissing Lydia, or when Danica states Ulay will be Marina's for life after that Great Wall walk.
- 10 This novel examines a New York City that is one and yet not the same—the New York Arky inhabits as a local, the city Jane relishes as a tourist. Discuss this feat for the author, as well as your feelings about whether only New York is so uniquely inspiring; recall the butcher saying his city gives residents of all walks of life, "a little moment to remember we're poets, even if we never write a work."
- 11 What do you think the role of performance art—such as *The Artist Is Present*—is in contemporary society? How do we decide what counts as art?
- 12 Did you view *The Artist Is Present* documentary mentioned in hoopla's Book Club Companion? Before or after reading the book? Talk about similarities and differences in the way you understood the artwork from each source. In general, what are your opinions on this and Marina's other performance art works?

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