

Yoko Ono is an artist, musician, and activist.

Born in Tokyo, 1933, Ono grew up in Japan, with periods spent abroad in San Francisco and New York. She was the first woman admitted to the philosophy program at Gakushuin University, Tokyo, where she studied before moving to New York in 1953 to attend Sarah Lawrence College.

In 1956 she settled in Manhattan with her then husband, composer Toshi Ichiyanagi. Immersed in a community of artists and composers, Ono began to develop her own art practice, often in the form of instruction, inviting the viewers' participation. In 1960 Ono rented a loft on Chambers Street in Lower Manhattan and began organizing performances and events in the space, becoming a vital part of the New York avant-garde scene.

In 1961, Ono's first solo exhibition was held at George Maciunas' AG Gallery in New York. *Painting To Be Stepped On*, a work of canvas placed on the floor with a card inviting the viewer to step on it, was one of several *Instruction Paintings* exhibited. Later that year Ono gave a performance at Carnegie Recital Hall of works involving movement, sound, and voice including, *AOS – To David Tudor*, and *A Grapefruit in the World of Park*.

In 1962, she returned to Tokyo, where at the Sogetsu Art Center she debuted new performances including, *The Pulse*, and exhibited her *Instructions for Paintings*, a progression from works shown at AG Gallery, this time comprised of only written instruction, marking a key moment in the history of conceptual art. Later that year she performed with John Cage on a concert tour throughout Japan. In 1964, Ono performed *Cut Piece* and *Bag Piece* in Kyoto and Tokyo, and self-published *Grapefruit*, her foundational book of instructions.

In 1965 Ono returned to New York, continuing to perform and stage events, pioneering new ways of disseminating her art through advertising and postcard events, and began making her own films, including *Film No. 4*, *Match* and *Eyeblink*.

In the fall of 1966, Ono was invited to London to perform and lecture in the *Destruction in Art Symposium*. Remaining in London, Ono had a solo exhibition at Indica Gallery, and Lisson Gallery the following year, showing new conceptual object-based works like *White Chess Set*, *Apple*, and *Half-A-Room*. During this period, she continued to make films, including a new version of *Film No. 4 (Bottoms)*, and presented a series of performances, including her concert tour *Music of the Mind*.

At her Indica Gallery exhibition Ono met John Lennon, beginning a personal and artistic relationship in art, film, music, and activism. By 1968 their conceptual events to promote peace had become world-wide news, including the *Bed-In for Peace* held in an Amsterdam hotel room during their honeymoon in 1969 and later in Montreal.

In the early 1970s Ono's activities, along with Lennon, primarily centered around music and activism, releasing five solo and collaborative albums over three years. In 1971 Ono had her first retrospective exhibition, *This Is Not Here*, at the Everson Art Museum. Later that year, *Museum of Modern [F]art*, Ono's unofficial conceptual exhibition at the museum was advertised in the *Village Voice* and documented as a new film.

In 1973, Ono and Lennon announced the birth of a new conceptual country, Nutopia, with “no land, no boundaries, no passports, only people.” In 1975 the birth of their son Sean Ono Lennon influenced the couple’s decision to take a break from public life.

In August 1980, Ono and Lennon returned to the studio to record their first album together since 1972. *Double Fantasy* was released in November and went on to win the 1981 Grammy Award for Album of the Year. Less than a month after its release, Lennon was shot and killed outside their home in New York.

Emerging from the tragedy of Lennon’s death, Ono immersed herself in making music, releasing several albums during the decade. “It was the music that made me survive” Ono said. After a long absence from exhibiting her art in museums and galleries, Ono’s 1989 solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, *Yoko Ono: Objects, Film*, signaled a renewed interest in her art, which continued to be exhibited extensively across the world.

In 2000 *Yes Yoko Ono*, a retrospective exhibition originating at the Japan Society Gallery in New York toured to thirteen international venues over four years. In 2007, Ono unveiled the *IMAGINE PEACE TOWER* on Videy, an island off the coast of Reykjavik, Iceland, giving a permanent home to her and Lennon’s long-standing commitment to world peace. In 2009 she was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the 53<sup>rd</sup> Venice Biennale. That same year, Ono released *Between My Head and the Sky*, her first studio album as Plastic Ono Band since 1973. In 2018, Ono released her thirteenth solo studio album, *Warzone*.

Ono’s work has continued to be honored with numerous exhibitions in some of the world’s most prestigious international venues, including The Museum of Modern Art in New York (2015) and Tate Modern in London (2024).

In a career spanning more than seventy years, Ono’s work as an artist and activist remains singularly relevant and continues to challenge the boundaries of artist and audience.