

## Yo#ko Ono Piece

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| Item Type     | Thesis  |
| Authors       | Silverman, Madison  |
| Citation      | Silverman, Madison. "Yo#ko Ono Piece". BA Thesis, John Cabot University, Rome, Italy. 2021.                       |
| Rights        | Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International   |
| Download date | 2025-03-17 14:36:45   |
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## **John Cabot University**

Department of Art History and Studio Art

Bachelor of Arts in Art History  
Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs

Yoko Ono Piece

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Spring 2021

## **Acknowledgements**

A big thank you to Professor Ilaria Gianni for all of her guidance and insight over the course of this project. Her in depth knowledge of Yoko Ono and the Fluxus avant-garde movement, as well as all of the time and effort she spent reading drafts and meeting with me for months on end, evolved this project into something truly special to me. Thank you.

Thank you to my second reader Professor Cornelia Lauf, who guided me in framing the scope of the research and refocusing my approach. It has been truly valued and appreciated.

## Abstract

Whereas in ages past, the icon was a sacred symbol reserved for political and religious leaders, divine beings and mythical sprits, our modern culture worships the celebrity- or condemns them.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate and analyze Yoko Ono's reception from different perspectives over the course of 60 years, and attempt to understand why her perception is so fragmented and divided with the ultimate goal of constructing a homogenous image of this heavily controversial and avant-garde artist and icon. This study is carried out first by considering her personal life and its representation, as well as her art through the point of view of the media and the voice of her peer groups.

The methodological approach was to relate very different types of sources (academic, voices from real artists, interpretations from different perspectives from both critical and mass-media), and to mold the idea of the representation of Yoko Ono both internally and externally. This is accomplished via a narrative approach, with media definitions embedded and entangled throughout, as well as the rethinking of definitions in a moment in time in which we are surrounded by different influences. The use of quotes is used as sort of images, almost like subjects themselves, woven and contextualized as a linguistic decision. They are narrative devices which add both structure and counter story.

The main – and still open - question this thesis addresses is, did Yoko Ono decide that her life would be a performance, or did her life become a performance. Was she in charge of her representation, or overwhelmed by it?

## Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to Yoko Ono, who was not only one of the greatest Fluxus artists, but one of the greatest thinkers and activists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

On February 22, 2020, Yoko Ono posted this image of her and Andy Warhol on her Instagram page. The caption reads:

“The first time I met Andy was in the 60s when I worked in a macrobiotic restaurant called Paradox on the Lower East Side. Andy often came alone. He had a quiet, gentle way of saying things and always made you feel that he cared, that you mattered to him.

In the 70s I was alone in New York for a while. It was a difficult time for me. Andy was very helpful then in reminding me of **what I was** and encouraging me to do my own thing. Andy was so good at doing his own thing. After Andy died, one person said that he was like a New York skyscraper, and with him gone, the New York skyline had permanently changed. I understood what he meant, but for me, the skyline did not change. Andy is still with us, and he will always be.”



*Yoko Ono and Andy Warhol, Courtesy of Yoko Ono Instagram; Photo by Allan Tannenbaum*

With this thesis, I want to remind everyone of what Yoko Ono was, and continues to be.

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# 1. Introduction

## Avant-Garde Experimentalism

What place does avant-garde and experimental artistic production have in the time in which it was created? Edouard Manet's Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe (1863) was rejected from the Paris Salon, the 19th century center of the Parisian art world. Not to be discouraged, Manet set up his own exhibition for the work, but its reception was marked with scandal,



Figure 1: Manet, Edouard. *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*. 1863. Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Figure 2: Pollock, Jackson. *Number 34*, 1949. Pollock-Krasner Foundation ARS

disbelief, and biting criticism. Today, Manet is considered to be one of the fathers of modern art. In the 1950s, an artist began exhibiting artworks consisting of splattered and dripped paint on a canvas- a premise that was considered laughable. How could this be art- *a child could do it- the death of skilled artists- preposterous- absurd!* Art critic Robert

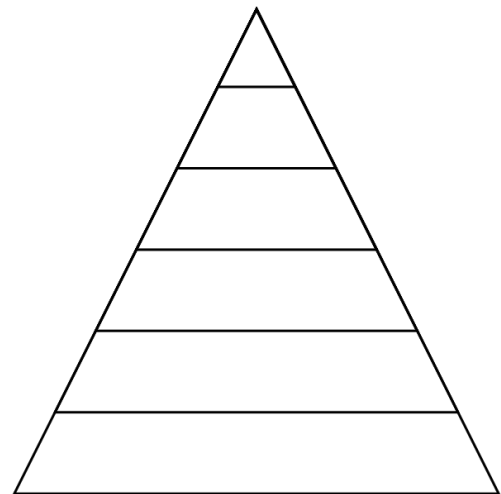
Hughes referred to these works as a “*furious congestion of signs and scribbles*”<sup>1</sup>. Today, this technique is referred to as the ‘drip technique’, and its inventor was Jackson Pollock. Vincent Van Gogh only sold one painting in his lifetime, Johannes Vermeer was plagued by financial struggle and debt and Paul Gauguin lived in poverty. Wassily Kandinsky, a Russian art theorist and abstract painter, theorized this quandary of why the avant-garde has continuously been dismissed in its own time, and later acclaimed, and he did so by using a *triangle*.

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### **Kandinsky’s Triangle**

According to Kandinsky, avant-garde artistic reception can be understood by using a triangle<sup>2</sup>.

Imagine that each segment of the triangle is populated by artists. These artists are aware of their place and time within both their segments and within the larger triangle. The larger the segment, meaning the lower it lies in the building block of the triangle, so too the greater number who understand the artist and their work, and the longer ago the works were



*Figure 3*

created. So, the top of the triangle is the most recent artistic work with the smallest amount of

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<sup>1</sup> Cohen, Ben. “Jackson Pollock Is Trash and Abstract Expressionism Needs to Die.” The Unaffiliated Press. The Unaffiliated Press, May 14, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Kandinsky, Wassily. 1977. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. Translated by Michael Sadleir. New York: Dover Publications.

understanding, and the bottom of the triangle is the oldest artistic work with the largest amount of understanding. Thus, the triangle is a representation of the relationship between time and understanding, as well as the evolution of art itself. This triangle is in a constant state of moving upwards and onwards; of expanding and evolving; of pulsing and progressing along with the advancement of time. The avant-garde resides at the tip of this pyramid, and with time as the vehicle, it inevitably descends down the triangle and becomes more widely understood and recognized, while a new wave of avant-gardism takes its place at the tip.

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### **Reception and Perception**

Understanding and recognition is not an entirely abstract concept, in fact it is quantified in the form of reception. According to Thomas Kaufmann in a 2003 article published on *Oxford Art Online*: “the notion of ‘reception’ in general connotes a concern with the reaction or response to a work of art or literature and thus implies a shift in emphasis from the production or creation of the work, or from the writer or artist to the perception or interpretation of the reader or beholder”<sup>3</sup>. Reception is quantified based upon portrayal, perception, and criticism from different sources. Depending on what is being received, these sources can vary greatly- from lifestyle magazines to academic journals, to blogs, and these different sources shape the mindsets and belief systems of

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<sup>3</sup> Kaufmann, Thomas Dacosta. "Reception theory." Grove Art Online. 2003; Accessed 7 May. 2021.

their different readerships. So, reception and perception are inherently linked, and both are subject to change over time.

Different actors pulling and pushing against one another in their receptions of a figure can culminate not only in a sort of ‘divided image’ but demonstrates why different people from different backgrounds have different perceptions. There is no figure which better exemplifies this principle than the artist Yoko Ono.

Who is Yoko Ono? Is she the artist who pioneered the Fluxus art movement or the musician whose ‘Plastic Ono Band’ released 7 experimental albums over the course of 40 years and collaborated with musicians including Eric Clapton and former Beatles members? Is she the activist who championed peace and love, or the villain who broke up the Beatles and was subjected to a proverbial witch hunt for 50 years?

By empirically analyzing Yoko Ono’s *reception* from different perspectives over the course of 60 years, this thesis will attempt to *understand* why her *perception* is so fragmented and divided, and attempt to construct a homogenous image of this heavily controversial and avant-garde artist.

### **Who is Yoko Ono?**



*Figure 4: Japanese artist and musician Yoko Ono sits in a white-painted half bedroom entitled Half-a-Room, in “Half-a-Memory” exhibition, at the Lisson Gallery, London, 1968. Photo by Roger Jones/Keystone Features/Getty Images.*

## 2. The Life of Ono

In 1933, it was unthinkable that the world would soon erupt into a global war which would be remembered as the largest and deadliest in all of human history. Instead, 1933 was shrouded in an ignorant and peaceful bliss. It was in this haze, one morning in Tokyo, that Isoko and Eisuke Ono welcomed a new child: Yoko Ono. While the Onos were by all means a conventional, conservative, and elite Japanese family, they were also lovers of the arts. Yoko's mother Isoko was a painter while her father, Eisuke, had marred dreams of being a concert pianist before resorting to a



*Figure 5: Yoko Ono sits with her mother, date unknown. Photographer unknown. Getty Images.*

profitable career in banking. When Yoko was only 4 years old, her parents sent her to a music school before enrolling her in Gakushuin, one of Japan's most exclusive and elite schools. While to the outside world, Yoko lived a charmed life of aristocracy and servants, a young Yoko Ono began relying on these very servants for affection and support as her parents were noticeably absent. In this neglect Ono would cling to the arts for refuge- as she would for years to come. While Yoko Ono's life has always been a subject for criticism and judgement in the public eye, it has always only been considered in bits and pieces which serve to illustrate a specific point or narrative rather than considered as an all-encompassing whole. This is one of the primary drivers as to why there is such a fragmented understanding of not only Yoko Ono's life, but of her work,

and media sources have played one of the largest roles in depicting multiple versions of Yoko Ono. For example, while this theme of isolation would be a constant in Ono's life, newspapers like *The Salt Lake Tribune* and *The Ottawa Citizen* would publish quotes about isolation directly from Ono, while others, like *The Advertiser* and *The Observer*, would make links between isolation and Ono's relationship with John Lennon.

**The Salt Lake Tribune, April 6, 1994<sup>4</sup>**

**Riches and Tragedy, Admiration and Scorn: The Wonderful, Terrible Life of Yoko Ono**

*Quoting Yoko Ono: "I still feel like I haven't come out of a long, dark tunnel," Ono says, pausing to light another Capri. "I've experienced fear, humiliation... **isolation**, I guess mostly **isolation**, over the past 10 years. I still hope I can come out of it, I hope I survive".*

**The Advertiser, November 27, 1995<sup>5</sup>**

**Yoko's Bizarre Hold Over John**

*"The Japanese artist made the murdered Beatle endure days of silence and **isolation** and starved him of sex during their last months together".*

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<sup>4</sup> Hinckley, David; New York Daily News. "Riches and Tragedy, Admiration and Scorn: The Wonderful, Terrible Life of Yoko Ono". *Salt Lake Tribune* (Utah). April 6, 1994, Wednesday.

<sup>5</sup> "Yoko's bizarre hold over John". *The Advertiser*. November 27, 1995 Monday.

**The Ottawa Citizen, November 29, 1997<sup>6</sup>**

**Alas, Yoko Ono Says No One Understands**

*“Yoko Ono, the conceptual artist who has gone down in history as the woman who broke up the Beatles...” Quoting Yoko Ono: “I cherish freedom to the point that I have to take freedom over connections with people. It might lead to **isolation**, but I like freedom”.*

**The Observer, March 28, 1999<sup>7</sup>**

**This Week: It Was 30 Years Ago Today...; This Week in 1969 John and Yoko Staged Their ‘Bed-In’- In Retrospect**

*“**Isolation** also marked out Ono’s childhood. As a wealthy child in Tokyo, she was cut off from the city around her in a way that is eerily echoed now. Her New York apartment is still full of Lennon’s possessions, including his white baby grand piano. His pictures cover the walls and her life is dominated by the business of running his \$ 300 million estate. The responsibility of his memory is a burden, but one she believes she is the right person to handle”.*

Later in life, Ono released a song with the Plastic Ono Band titled Isolation, in which she seems to directly address this association:

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<sup>6</sup> Reynolds, Nigel; The Daily Telegraph. "Alas, Yoko Ono says no one understands". *The Ottawa Citizen*. November 29, 1997, Saturday, Final Edition.

<sup>7</sup> Thorpe, Vanessa; "The week: It was 30 years ago today...; This week in 1969 John and Yoko staged their 'bed-in' - in retrospect, it". *The Observer*. March 28, 1999.

“People say we got it made; Don’t they know we’re so afraid? Isolation; We’re afraid to be alone; Everybody got to have a home, isolation; Just a boy and a little girl; Trying to change



*Figure 6: Yoko Ono as a child, date unknown. Photographer unknown. Artsper Magazine; Getty Images.*

the whole wide world, isolation; The world is just a little town; Everybody trying to pull us down, isolation; I don’t expect you to understand; After you’ve caused so much pain; But then again, you’re not to blame; You’re just a human, a victim of the insane; We’re afraid of everyone; Afraid of the sun, isolation; The sun will never disappear; But the world may not have many years, isolation”.

World War II began on September 1, 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. While the violence and destruction of the war was concentrated in Europe for 5 years, in 1945 American planes made it to Japan and began bombing Tokyo. The Ono family was forced to flee to the countryside where they resorted to travelling from farm to farm in search of food and shelter. This was a far cry from the comfortable lifestyle that the Ono family had once enjoyed. However, following the surrender of the Axis powers the Ono family was able to return to a level of semi pre-war normalcy, and when the Gakushuin school reopened Yoko was able to return and eventually



*Figure 7: Yoko Ono & father, date unknown. Photographer unknown. Pinterest; Getty Images.*



graduate in 1951. In 1953, Yoko Ono moved to New York and enrolled at Sarah Lawrence College, a small liberal arts school located just outside of the city. Here, Ono studied music and poetry, and for the first time was exposed to all that a small liberal arts school has to offer, including: American bohemia, radical politics and contemporary, experimental art and thinking. It was in this vanguard New York scene that Ono met and befriended avant-garde composer and musician John Cage- a relationship which would prove to be *instrumental*. She would also meet Japanese composer Toshi Ichianagi, a student of John Cage who would soon become her first husband.



*Figure 8: Yoko Ono and Toshi Ichianagi, 1961. Photographer unknown. Beyond the Coda; Getty Images.*

In 2015, Mark Swed, a *Los Angeles Times* music critic, interviewed Toshi Ichianagi for a piece titled: *A Dean of Japanese Music Talks Boundaries, John Cage and Life with Yoko Ono*. In this interview, Ichianagi discusses his relationship with Ono and the influence that John Cage had on both of the young artists.

**Los Angeles Times, May 15, 2015<sup>8</sup>**

**A Dean of Japanese Music Talks Boundaries, John Cage and Life with Yoko Ono**

*“In 1956, he met Ono, another young Japanese artist living in New York. They were almost the same age, born two weeks apart. She too had classical music training and once harbored hopes of writing 12-tone music. Ichiyanagi did not, like Ono, have wealthy parents and thus was not acceptable to Ono’s family, so the couple eloped... Ono, whom Ichiyanagi describes as having been a poet at the time he met her, encountered Cage in classes on Zen Buddhism given by D.T. Suzuki at Columbia University... It was in these classes that both found their direction as artists, although ironically that was a direction that would quickly move them apart.*

*From Cage, Ichiyanagi discovered how to open his music up to new influences while remaining true to his Japanese heritage... Cage’s classes, which attracted poets and artists more than composers, became the foundation for the Fluxus movement, which viewed art as the result of actions. This showed Ono what to do. Ichiyanagi and Ono were soon living apart – he was never quite as avant-garde as she – although they remained close”.*

While this 2015 interview paints Ono as a young, Japanese avant-garde artist growing and developing artistically formative relationships with contemporaries, her early relationships have not always been portrayed in the media under this same light. The media would look back at Ono’s 6-year marriage to Ichiyanagi which ended in divorce in 1962 (with Ono remarrying jazz musician

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<sup>8</sup> Swed, Mark. “A Dean of Japanese Music Talks Boundaries, John Cage and Life with Yoko Ono.” Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times, May 15, 2015.

Anthony Cox a year later) and would weaponize Ono's dating history against her. Instead of focusing on the intellectual relationship and mutual cultural influences, Ono would often only be painted as a witch who seduced and manipulated men. The following news clippings demonstrate the proverbial witch hunt of Yoko Ono dating back to 1988, and with references even as early as 2017.

**The Sunday Times, September 11, 1988<sup>9</sup>**

**My John; Yoko Ono and Sean Lennon; The Lives of John Lennon, by Albert Goldman**

*“Even the last pictures of Yoko and him [referring to Lennon] did not show the reconciled, happy pair the world supposed, but were a cynical pantomime of ‘impassive bitch and her blindly-sucking whelp’”*

**The Australian, June 12, 2002<sup>10</sup>**

**Gold Diggers and Old Giggers**

*“Linda [Referring to Linda Louise Eastman] was asking for it. After all, she and Yoko Ono had just used the awesome force of their vaginas to break up the Beatles. (Women’s **witch-like** superpowers are so potent we can annihilate entire cultural phenomenons just by flexing our secondary sexual characteristics.) Fact: Female partners of male musicians are all wheedling, manipulative sluts”*

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<sup>9</sup> Norman, Philip; "My John; Yoko Ono and Sean Lennon; The Lives of John Lennon, by Albert Goldman". *The Sunday Times* (London). September 11 1988, Sunday.

<sup>10</sup> Emma, Tom. "Gold diggers and old giggers". *The Australian*. June 12, 2002, Wednesday.

**Irish Examiner, September 30, 2017<sup>11</sup>**

**A Behaved Woman Never Made History**

*“Yoko Ono, the sorceress who emasculated John Lennon, and broke up the Beatles”*

While still married to Toshi Ichianagi, Ono made the decision to drop out of school and move to Manhattan with her husband to devote herself to contemporary art and experimentalism. Soon, Ono found herself in an experimental artist circle investigating *happenings*, or performance art, and even began to hold happenings at her own apartment. Thus, her space soon evolved into a sort of salon, hosting avant-garde musicians, writers, performers, artists, and various artistic visionaries of the day. Among these were Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Marcel Duchamp and even prolific American art collector and socialite Marguerite “Peggy” Guggenheim. She was so dubbed the *Happening High Priestess* and began to become a curator of sorts for the 1960s New York avant-garde art scene.



*Figure 9: Peggy Guggenheim with her dogs on the terrace of the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, 1950. Photo by David Seymour. inExhibit.*

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<sup>11</sup> "A behaved woman never made history". *Irish Examiner*. September 30, 2017 Saturday.

**Frieze, March 3, 1998<sup>12</sup>**

**Happening High Priestess**

*“In the early 60s, she attracted the attention of the New York avant-garde, but in between organizing concerts with LaMonte Young at her loft and going on tour with John Cage in Japan...”*

It was in 1961 that Ono had her first solo show, offered to her by architect, designer, and writer of the *Fluxus Manifesto* George Maciunas.

**Yoko Ono, Speaking with the MoMA about her First Solo Show<sup>13</sup>**

*“And I said, oh my god, this is the first time somebody wanted to do my show. I went to an Army surplus shop. There was a rolled canvas – it was just in a corner. I said could I buy this? He said – sure. And I went home to the loft, and I started to cut pieces. And I just felt so good about it because I never thought I wanted to do it, like, you know, stretch the canvas. I thought that was rather contrived, and everybody was doing that. So I kept cutting, and, when I wanted to do *Painting to Be Stepped On*, I didn’t have enough canvas. So then I realized that after I did *Water Painting*, and after cutting the circle, there was a kind of strange shape that was you know, remaining there. I said, well, this will be a *Painting to Be Stepped On*, why not?”*

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<sup>12</sup> “Happening High Priestess.” Frieze, March 3, 1998.

<sup>13</sup> “Yoko Ono. *Painting to Be Stepped On*. 1960/1961: MoMA.” The Museum of Modern Art. Accessed March 22, 2021.

*And I thought that was beautiful, you know, different kind of beauty. And the fact that each one had a function that was totally different from each other, and that, too, I thought was very important.*

*So it was a very strange show. It's right in the middle of the summer and was very hot in New York. I think the first opening, five people came. One was John Cage; one was Isamu Noguchi.*

*And whenever they came, I started to explain what the function of each painting was.*

*And I thought, well, I can't do that. I just have to have something written, you know? Each one had an instructions.*

*I just wanted to make those things. And I wasn't thinking how many people saw it or, you know, that kind of thing. In other words, there was a certain pride in what I did, for myself"*

After leaving her first husband Toshi Ichiyanagi and marrying Tony Cox, Ono soon gave birth to daughter Kyoko and was an even more established figure in the New York avant-garde art scene, and specifically in the Fluxus art group led by George Maciunas. Her career began to become more recognized and prolific as she published her book of performance poetry Grapefruit (1964) and performed her infamous work Cut Piece (1964). In 1966, Ono was invited to hold an exhibition at *Indica Gallery*, London and exhibit works including YES (1966) and Hammer a Nail (1966). The exhibition at Indica Gallery would prove to be momentous, as it also served as the meeting place between Ono and Beatles rock star John Lennon. Although it was Lennon who attended Ono's exhibition, there has been continuous debate in the media as to whether their meeting was by chance, or whether Ono was the pursuer. Many today believe that Ono was a Beatles fan, because, as said, how could it be that one of the most famous men in the world pursued her, and not the other way around?

Couldn't a man like Lennon be interested in contemporary art practices or even be inspired by them in a moment of great revolution in the visual field?

**Ultimate Classic Rock, November 9, 2016<sup>14</sup>**

**The Day John Lennon Met Yoko Ono**

*“Was Ono an oblivious artist who made an instant connection with rock royalty over art? Or was she a calculating figure who worked to forge a relationship for the sake of love, fame or money?”*

At the time, Ono was still married to Tony Cox with their daughter Kyoko, and Lennon to Cynthia Lennon with whom he had son Julian. Soon the two began collaborating in filmmaking and performances, and eventually both left their partners and married in 1969.

Whereas in ages past, the icon was a sacred symbol reserved for political and religious leaders, divine beings and mythical sprits, our modern culture, as Andy Warhol taught us, worships the celebrity. As much as Lennon was regarded as rock royalty, Cynthia was his queen, and Ono the usurper.

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<sup>14</sup> Wawzenek, Bryan. “The Day John Lennon Met Yoko Ono.” Ultimate Classic Rock. Ultimate Classic Rock, November 2, 2020.

**Sunday Mail, September 25, 1988<sup>15</sup>**

**Lennon Unmasked**

*“Never in all the years since his passionate affair with Cynthia in art school had he been in love or even seriously involved with a woman...Eventually, Cynthia was sent away... this time to Greece and, by the time she returned, Yoko had moved in... Cynthia had been amputated from the Beatles with ruthless precision.”*

**The Globe and Mail, December 8, 1990<sup>16</sup>**

**LENNON REMEMBERED “We All Shine On, Sang John Lennon. And he definitely does. We remember him for how he died, but more importantly for how he lived.**

**It is the passion we miss the most**

*“[Lennon] was the original married Beatle, so he represented a sort of conventional stability within the mad swirl of the Fab Four’s fairytale existence. When he up and left Cynthia and Julian for that wild, Oriental home-wrecker Yoko Ono, we were shocked. We felt Cynthia’s feeling of betrayal because she, too, was one of the family”.*

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<sup>15</sup> Goldman, Albert; "Lennon Unmasked". *Sunday Mail (SA)*. September 25, 1988 Sunday.

<sup>16</sup> Niester, Alan; SPCL. "Lennon Remembered" We All Shine On, sang John Lennon. And he definitely does. We remember him for how he died, but more importantly for how he lived. It is the passion we miss the most". *The Globe and Mail (Canada)*. December 8, 1990 Saturday.



If John Lennon was king, Cynthia queen and Ono the opposing player, then Kyoko and Julian soon became pawns in the game. Following the divorce, Cox began denying Ono visitation rights with their daughter Kyoko, possibly as a method in which to keep Ono in his life, but in 1971 disappeared with the girl. Ono released her song: *Don't Worry Kyoko (Mummy's Only Looking for Her Hand in the Snow)*- a musical piece which emphasized a distraught screaming and tonal resonance from Ono. While her screaming was often criticized in her music, for Ono it was at its core the most primal emotive tool. Desperate, Ono and Lennon travelled all over the world in search of her daughter, as news began to come out that Cox had joined a religious cult. Finally, in 1985, Cox produced an autobiographical documentary about his experience with the religious cult, and Kyoko was listed as an associate producer. In 1986, Ono wrote an open letter to her daughter that read:

**Associated Press, January 26, 1986<sup>17</sup>**

**Magazine Reports Word of Yoko Ono's 'Long-Lost' Daughter**

*"Dear Kyoko:*

*All these years there has not been one day I have not missed you. You are always in my heart. However, I will not make any attempt to find you now as I wish to respect your privacy. I wish you all the best in the world. If you ever wish to get in touch with me, know that I love you deeply and would be very happy to hear from you. But you should not feel guilty if you choose not to reach me. You have my respect, love and support forever.*

*Love, Mommy."*

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<sup>17</sup> "Magazine Reports Word Of Yoko Ono's 'Long-Lost' Daughter". *The Associated Press*. January 26, 1986, Sunday, AM cycle.

It would be another 14 years after this letter before Ono would ever see her daughter again, as they were finally reunited in 2000.



*Figure 10: Yoko Ono, John Lennon and Kyoko, date unknown. Photographer unknown. Stock Photo: Alamy.*

On April 10, 1970, Paul McCartney gave an interview which was interpreted by the media as a formal announcement that the Beatles had broken up. During the 1960s, the fan base of the Beatles evolved into a sort of cult fanaticism dubbed **beatlemania**, but this intensive fan frenzy soon took a dark turn for Ono as her high-profile relationship with Lennon was progressively considered as one of the causes of the split.

Idolization of the rocker and Ono soon turned into villainization, as The Independent reflected on the medias treatment of Ono.

**The Independent, January 24, 1996<sup>18</sup>**

**What John Saw in Yoko...**

*“What Yoko Ono struggles with today, while still living in the vast Upper West side apartment she shared with Lennon, is the word associations the rest of us have been trained to make whenever we hear her name.*

*She will always be the odd Japanese artist who stole Britain’s greatest rock’n’roller, the wife of John Lennon, the woman who split up the Beatles, the siren on whose rock the mythical innocence of the Sixties was wrecked.”*

**The Independent, June 24, 1997<sup>19</sup>**

**Starting Over; The Press Hated Her. Beatles Fans Blamed Her...**

*“Yoko Ono was a lightning rod for the Sixties’ most vicious currents. John Lennon was a man she’d barely heard of, a man she fell in love with. But with that act, the world heard of her.*

***The peace and love generation rained all the hate and prejudice, all the reactionary bile it could muster on her head. She was The Woman Who Split Up The Beatles. She was the outsider who had wrecked a sacred institution, the scapegoat for a moment that left a generation bereft.***

*She was hated for being Japanese, hated as a woman.”*

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<sup>18</sup> Glancey, Jonathan; "What John saw in Yoko; Yoko Ono deserves to be remembered for more than breaking up the Beatles, argues Jonathan Glancey". *The Independent (London)*. January 24, 1996, Wednesday.

<sup>19</sup> Hasted, Nick; "Starting over; The press hated her. Beatles fans blamed her. But over 30 years ago, Yoko Ono created one of the first collisions of the avant-garde with pop. It's time, she tells Nick Hasted, to give her music a second chance". *The Independent (London)*. June 24, 1997, Tuesday.

Yoko Ono was again deemed a *witch*.

**The Guardian, August 12, 1988<sup>20</sup>**

**All You Need Is Hate: The First Extracts of the Book that Disembowels a Legend**

*“Yoko Ono, for example, is pictured in the People magazine extracts wearing a **witch’s** costume: a caption informs readers that some of John’s friends thought Yoko’s 1968 costume was the perfect choice”*

**USA TODAY, September 24, 1991<sup>21</sup>**

**Insider Tattles on Lennon and Ono**

*“Seaman says that Ono was close to divorcing her husband and sexual activity between the couple was non-existent. He writes: “John had complained on more than one occasion that he ‘never got any.’ “The portrait has its sympathetic side. Lennon is shown as a caring parent who adored son Sean. But Yoko is once again portrayed as a **manipulating witch**: “When Yoko decided to jerk the strings, John danced madly.””*

It is clear that the mass media’s treatment of Yoko Ono was the modern-day equivalent of a proverbial witch hunt. However, rather than stay silent, Ono reflected and responded by releasing her song: *Yes, I’m A Witch*:

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<sup>20</sup> Goodwin, Chris; "All you need is hate: The first extracts of the book that disembowels a legend". *The Guardian (London)*. August 12, 1988.

<sup>21</sup> Wloszczyna, Susan; "Insider tattles on Lennon and Ono". *USA TODAY*. September 24, 1991, Tuesday, Final Edition.

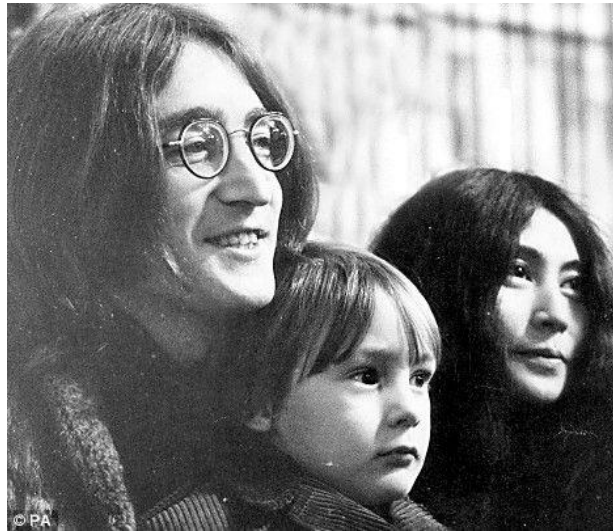
*“Yes, I’m a witch,  
I’m a bitch,  
I don’t care what you say,  
My voice is real,  
My voice speaks truth,  
I don’t fit in your ways,  
  
I’m not gonna die for you,  
You might as well face the truth,  
I’m gonna stick around for quite awhile.”*

And she certainly did just that.

For ten years, Ono and Lennon enjoyed a marriage filled with artistic collaboration, with the two working together to share their message of peace and love via music, performance activism and events. In 2009, Ono looked back at her early activism:

“When John and I were sort of talking about world peace and love and all that kind of thing, bed-ins, etc, you know people were just laughing at us... But now I think that everybody is involved because we just know that we have to do something about this world”<sup>22</sup>.

Although there was a noticeable break due to infidelity, as Lennon spent 18 months with assistant May Pang in an affair dubbed the ‘lost weekend’, the pair reunited. According to Ono, the affair did not bother her, as she realized that both she and John needed space from their intensely intimate relationship. In 1975 Ono gave birth to son Sean.



*Figure 11: Yoko Ono, John Lennon and Sean, date unknown.  
Photographer unknown. Getty Photos.*

All was well- until one day in 1980, it all came tumbling down.

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<sup>22</sup> Frierson, Burton. “Yoko Ono Looks Back on Early Activism.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, November 6, 2009.



Figure 12: Liverpool Echo Front Page; John Lennon Shot Dead; December 9th, 1980; Photographer unknown, Liverpool Echo.

### CNN Evening News, December 9, 1980<sup>23</sup>

#### Former Beatles John Lennon Was Gunned Down...

*“On December 9, 1980, former Beatle John Lennon was shot and killed outside the Dakota, his apartment building on Manhattan’s Upper West Side. Lennon’s accused killer is a 25-year-old unemployed security guard, Mark David Chapman, who grew up in Georgia and recently lived in Hawaii. It has been established that Mark David Chapman had an obsession with John*

*Lennon before he left Hawaii.”*

<sup>23</sup> Don Miller, Kathleen Sullivan, Joann Lee, Cynthia Wallace, Courtney Harrington, Tracey Lyons, Laura DiDio, Linda Tyra, Jeff Levine, Cindy Druss, Dallas Raines, Elaine Tack, Maureen Zimmerman, Dan Brewster, Bob Berkowitz, Jerry Liddell, Bob Kurtz, Dave Browde, Lou Dobbs, Stuart Varney, Sylvan Rodriguez. "Former Beatles John Lennon Was Gunned Down In Front Of His Exclusive Manhattan Apartment Building; Reagan Inauguration; Fair Housing Act; The K-Car: Variations On A Theme Helped To Save Chrysler. Aired 11:30p-1a ET". CNN. December 9, 1980 Tuesday.

**The Associated Press, December 9, 1980<sup>24</sup>**

**Carter Praises John Lennon**

*“President Carter issued the following statement Tuesday on the murder of John Lennon:*

*“John Lennon helped create the music and the mood of our time. His spirit, the spirit of the Beatles – brash and earnest, ironic and idealistic all at once. In the 1960’s, John Lennon and the Beatles captured the imagination of the world. Their greatest success came when they conquered America; and in recent years it was in America that John Lennon chose to live, because he valued the atmosphere of freedom and ferment, he found here. His work as an artist and musician was far from done, but in the songs, he composed, both in partnership with Paul McCartney and in his own right, he leaves an extraordinary and permanent legacy. I know that I speak for many millions of Americans when I say that I am saddened by his death and distressed by the senseless manner of it. It is especially poignant that John Lennon has died by violence, though he had long campaigned for peace.*

*Rosalynn and I extend our deepest sympathy to Mr. Lennon’s wife, Yoko, and to their young son, Sean.””*

Following the murder of Lennon, Ono was bombarded with a media frenzy like she had never seen before, as the whole world turned to her with their sadness, anger, and dysphoria. Now, Ono was no longer known as the artist, no longer known as the wife, but known as one of the most famous celebrity widows in the world.

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<sup>24</sup> "Carter Praises John Lennon". *The Associated Press*. December 9, 1980, Tuesday, AM cycle.



In 2008, award-winning author and scholar of media studies Christine Scodari published her work “Frozen in Time: Gender, Fan Culture, and a Young Widow’s Icy Terrain”. In this article, Scodari considered how fan culture and popular media influenced the way in which Yoko Ono, and other widows of famous figures, are remembered. Scodari’s examination of celebrity widowhood, and what it means to be frozen in time as part of a public partnership, offers insight into how and why not only the beatlemania cult fandom turned against Ono, but why the whole world turned against her. A large part of this lies in the idea of fans claiming ownership over the deceased celebrity and turning as a collective against those who in their eyes keep them away from the object of their adoration and devotion. For the public, John Lennon evolved from rock royalty into sainthood, and Yoko Ono stood as a barrier to their worship as she endeavored to keep Lennon’s legacy alive the way she claims he would have wanted, and not the way his cult denomination demanded.

One of the greatest sources of ill will towards Ono derived from the fact that she was named executor of, and inherited the vast majority of, Lennon’s estate, while his first son Julian, whom he had conceived with Cynthia, was left out.

For years, Ono and Julian would be wrapped up in a semi-public feud as Julian sued for greater inheritance and was outspoken as a string of negative public remarks were given to the press.

**The Hamilton Spectator, May 21, 1998<sup>25</sup>**

**Julian Lennon disses Dad, Yoko Ono**

*“Julian denied reports of a quarrel with his younger half-brother, but said a “camp” including Sean’s mom, Yoko Ono, could be “manipulating events” to make it appear the two young men don’t get along. “She wants to make sure Sean’s OK, whatever it takes.” ... And dad John Lennon, says Julian, was a big hypocrite: “Dad could talk about peace and love out loud to the world but he could never show it to the people who supposedly meant the most to him – his first wife (Cynthia) and son. How can you talk about peace and love and have a family in bits and pieces – no communication, adultery, divorce? You can’t do it, not if you’re being true and honest with yourself.”*

**The Globe and Mail Canada, March 22, 1999<sup>26</sup>**

**Julian Lennon Comes Out Swinging...**

*“Two years ago, however, Lennon [referring to Julian] settled out of court with Yoko Ono, the executor of John Lennon’s estate. Of his father’s estimated \$600-million-dollar fortune, Lennon was awarded \$50-million – a figure the singer shrugs off by saying he’s “seen better record deals.”*

*Because he didn’t inherit any of his father’s possessions, Lennon has been visiting auctions and slowly amassing a collection of Beatles memorabilia... “The most ironic thing is*

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<sup>25</sup> Camilli, Doug; "Julian Lennon disses dad, Yoko Ono". *Hamilton Spectator (Ontario, Canada)*. May 21, 1998 Thursday Final Edition.

<sup>26</sup> McLaren, Leah; The Globe and Mail. "Julian Lennon comes out swinging The songwriter rails against inherited fame and the tasteless gall of stepmother Yoko Ono.". *The Globe and Mail (Canada)*. March 22, 1999 Monday.

*that I'm buying back my father's stuff with his money," said Lennon laughing, shaking his ponytailed head.*

*"It's beyond me how this woman thinks," he said of Ono, whom he referred to as "her highness" during the interview. In case you hadn't noticed, Lennon makes no secret of his dislike for his stepmother, a woman whom he has publicly accused of attempting to sabotage his career through the press. "I was distant from the man as a father but I knew what he stood for and it wasn't the consumer element by any means," said Lennon, expressing his disgust at the cottage industry Ono has built on her late husband's image.*

*"It pisses me off to say the least, to have absolutely no control over that. She has the rights to his name, his likeness, his underwear"".*

**The Sunday Telegraph London, December 10, 2000<sup>27</sup>**

**Not Universally Loved Profile Yoko Ono Twenty Years After John's Murder, Yoko Remains as Controversial as Ever**

*"There was a lot of anger in my life during my teens and twenties," declared Julian, "because I didn't understand what was going on, or why things were the way they were. I had a great deal of anger towards Dad because of his negligence and his attitude to peace and love. That peace and love never came home to me. I wonder what it would have been like if he were alive today. I guess it would have depended on whether he was John Winston Lennon (Dad) or John Ono*

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<sup>27</sup> "Not universally loved Profile Yoko Ono Twenty years after John's murder, Yoko remains as controversial as ever". *Sunday Suteleaph* (LONDON). December 10, 2000, Sunday.

*Lennon (manipulated lost soul).” Likening Yoko to “a black hole”, who sucked all the strength out of Lennon, Julian suggested that it was because of her influence that he never really knew his father.”*

Although Ono went into a period of seclusion following the immediate aftermath of Lennon’s murder, she did continue to work as an artist, releasing albums, visual pieces and more. Over time, Ono’s relationship with Julian improved, and in 2015 when Cynthia Lennon passed away, Yoko Ono spoke out.

**Mirror UK, April 1, 2015<sup>28</sup>**

**Cynthia Lennon Dead: Yoko Ono Pays Tribute to John Lennon’s First Wife**

*“I’m very saddened by Cynthia’s death. She was a great person and a wonderful mother to Julian,” she [referring to Ono] said. “She had such a strong zest for life and I felt proud how we two women stood firm in the Beatles family. Please join me in sending love and support to Julian during this very sad time.””*

In this same article, the Mirror UK also included this...

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<sup>28</sup> Rutter, Claire; "Cynthia Lennon dead: Yoko Ono pays tribute to John Lennon's first wife, says "she was a great person"; Yoko Ono has spoken out upon hearing the sad news of Cynthia's death". *mirror.co.uk*. April 1, 2015 Wednesday.

*“Cynthia Lennon tribute sent out by son, Julian Lennon: “I think it was the attraction of opposites between them. When they got together at art school everyone was amazed – she was*

*seen as refined and reserved and nobody thought they would last.*

*“John treated her appallingly. He slept with Yoko in their marital home and, as we discovered later, he also physically attacked her but she was loyal to him.””*

Today, Yoko Ono is 88 years old, and is still living in the same apartment building in New York where John Lennon was murdered 41 years ago. However, Ono is still very much a practicing artist, with her work *DREAM TOGETHER* (2020) being selected as the first artist-designed banner for the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s fifth avenue façade,<sup>29</sup> and, in 2015, the Museum of Modern Art presented *Yoko Ono: One Woman Show, 1960-1971*, an exhibition dedicated towards memorializing and celebrating the work of Yoko Ono.

But, more than her work, her personality is the prime principle of this chapter- who was Yoko Ono? What did she want?

**The Herald, February 8, 2002<sup>30</sup>**

### **Stars and Stripes**

*“And then there’s Yoko Ono who was a quintessential New York artist and musician and a founding member of the Fluxus art movement, who happened to get married to some guy from*

*The Beatles.”*

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<sup>29</sup> “The Metropolitan Museum of Art Unveils First-Ever Artist-Designed Banners for Its Fifth Avenue Facade.” *Met Museum*, August 19, 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Jeffrey, Moira; "Stars and stripes". *The Herald* (Glasgow). February 8, 2002.

In her own words...

**On art:**

*“Art is my life, and my life is art”.*

*“Art is a way of survival”.*

*“I thought art was a verb, rather than a noun”.*

**On peace activism:**

*“A dream you dream alone may be a dream, but a dream two people dream together is a reality.”*

*“Each time we don’t say what we wanna say, we’re dying.”*

*“Every drop in the ocean counts.”*

*“There’s a long life ahead of you and it’s going to be beautiful, as long as you keep loving and hugging each other.”*

**On love and relationships:**

*“I feel sad that he’s just a voice now.”*

*“Life with another person is always difficult.”*

**On hardship:**

*“Nobody’s life is a bed of roses. We all have crosses to bear, and we all just do our best.”*

*“Controversy is part of the nature of art and creativity.”*

*“Sometimes I am happy and sometimes not. I am, after all, a human being, you know. And I am glad that we are sometimes happy and sometimes not. You get your wisdom working by having different emotions.”<sup>31</sup>*

It is fundamental to understand Yoko Ono not only as a person, but as an artist, as her life undoubtedly informed and shaped her work and artistic progression, just as the representation of her life was interfered with by biased media. In this way, the idea of participation stood on both sides: both as an artist and an audience member, as well as a figure and media subject. In the next chapter, “The Art of Ono”, Ono’s most notable pieces and link to the Fluxus art movement will be considered, as will the difference in her reception in lifestyle publications as seen in Chapter 1: “The Life of Ono” versus art and academic sources in the pursuit of understanding why her perception is so fragmented and divided, and with the ultimate goal of constructing a homogenous image of Yoko Ono.

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<sup>31</sup> “Yoko Ono Quotes.” BrainyQuote. Xplore. Accessed May 5, 2021.

### 3. The Art of Ono

#### Preface

In the 1950s there occurred a shift as for the first time the capital of avant-garde art was not in Europe, but rather in the United States. New York City, which had been dominated by Cold War politics and conservatism, enjoyed not only unprecedented economic growth but a thrusting into the global spotlight as the center of the art world. This post-war art movement, sometimes dubbed the New York School, or Abstract Expressionism, was dedicated towards using abstraction as a vehicle for emoting and expressing in an effort to break away from the traditional processes and constraints. Artists at the forefront of this era included Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Willem de Kooning, among many other... *men*. For just as abstract expressionism was influenced by Cold War ideology and economic prosperity, it was likewise a product of machismo, bravado, and the cult of masculinity.

When speaking to artist Grace Hartigan, Clement Greenberg, one of the most influential art critics at the time and champion of macho artistic personas, “criticized women who dared venture into the manly domains of high art”<sup>32</sup>. In an attempt to explain this postwar cult of masculinity, somewhat driven by homophobia, somewhat driven by fear, Pollock’s biographers stated that “Given their upbringing, it was inevitable that male artists in the art world of the thirties, forties, and fifties would be condemned to a constant struggle to appease their

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<sup>32</sup> Heins, Marjorie. “Abstract Expressionism, Machismo, and the Cultural Cold War.” *Presented at the Center for the United States and the Cold War*, 2017.



insecurities... that they would all but exclude female artists from their company; that they would pass women around like bottles of whiskey; that they would feel compelled to walk the barroom gauntlet, snarling insults, hurling profanities, and picking fights in a running parody of masculinity”<sup>33</sup>. It was out of this patriarchal art period and environment in New York that the Fluxus Art Movement was born- a movement which for the first time championed not only the individual *man*, but the individual irrespective of gender, race, or sexuality; it was perhaps a direct challenge to not only the Abstract Expressionist dominance of the avant-garde art scene, but to the societal values and attitude of New York and the larger Western world.

## Fluxus

In New York, a loose group of artists who met at one of John Cage’s classes in 1959 at The New School, banded together in a quest to overturn the elitist and machismo-driven environment of the avant-garde New York art scene, as well as due to shared interests. Inspired by the Dadaists, a movement driven by gesture, irrationality, irony, humor and provocation and the Futurists, a movement defined by objecthood, dynamism and change, the Fluxus artists focused on elements of chance and the use of everyday objects.

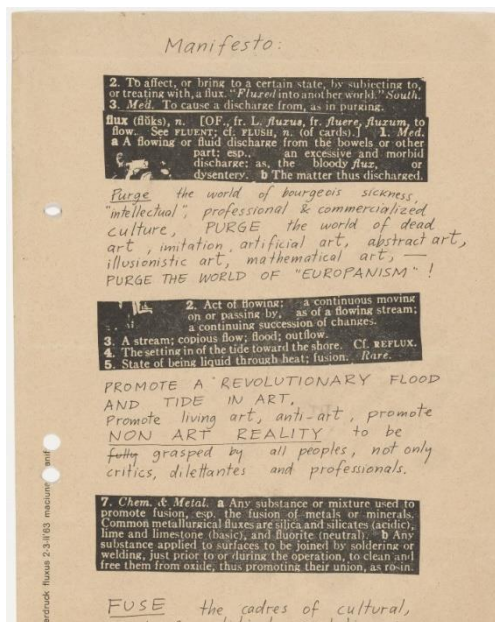


Figure 13: Fluxus Manifesto by George Maciunas, 1963. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift; MoMA

<sup>33</sup> Heins, Marjorie. “Abstract Expressionism, Machismo, and the Cultural Cold War.” *Presented at the Center for the United States and the Cold War*, 2017.

In 1963, artist and writer George Maciunas was credited with writing the Fluxus Manifesto, which was a public outline of the aims, intentions, and motives of the Fluxus art collective, and coining the very term *fluxus*- which means to *flow*. According to Maciunas, one of the key aims of the Fluxus movement was to “purge the world of bourgeois sickness... [and] Europeanism”, and the promotion of “living art [and] anti-art” to “fuse the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action”<sup>34</sup>. However, just as Fluxus would place an emphasis on performance art and experimental art, it likewise placed a special emphasis on individualism. According to filmmaker George Brecht: “in Fluxus there has never been any attempt agree on aims or methods; individuals with something unnamable in common have simply coalesced to publish and perform their work”<sup>35</sup>. This concept of the championship of individuality went hand in hand with Fluxus’ relationship with Zen- a philosophy deriving from Buddhism which affirms the importance of living in the present moment and finding higher value not in the outside world but rather in oneself. Many Fluxus artists sought to apply this philosophy to their art, and thus many Fluxus works are aligned with reaching enlightened states and heightened self-awareness. Fluxus also departed from Abstract Expressionism and the status quo in that, for the first time, female participation was considered as integral in a major art movement- although major publications written about Fluxus in the last two decades negate a large portion of their contributions, both to conceptual practices of performance and object-based art as well as to pioneering feminist art. Female Fluxus artists included Simone Forti, Carla Liss and Charlotte Moorman, among others.

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<sup>34</sup> Maciunas, George. "George Maciunas. Fluxus Manifesto. 1963: MoMA." *The Museum of Modern Art*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Apr. 2020.

<sup>35</sup> “Yoko Ono Biography, Life & Quotes.” The Art Story. Accessed February 17, 2021.

One such Fluxus artist was Yoko Ono.

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### **Conceptual Art**

In her early career, instruction was a focal point of Ono's works, which would be communicated by her to viewers and participants in either a verbal or written form. The centrality of the instruction in the work directly confronted the idea of the artist-viewer relationship, and the role that each had to play in experience, as well as the identity of the instruction as part of the art. *Is the instruction a part of the artwork itself, or merely a precursory? If the instruction is to be considered a part of the artwork, is the viewer also to be given this designation? Where is the line to be drawn, and does this ambiguity provide a crucial dimension to its meaning?* These questions and ideas were explored in Ono's contributions to the international development of Conceptual Art, a term first used by Sol LeWitt in 1967 in an article for Artforum.

*“In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. (Lewitt, ‘Paragraphs on Conceptual Art’, Artforum Vol.5, no. 10, Summer 1967)”<sup>36</sup>.*

Ono’s contributions to the development of Conceptual Art were twofold; firstly, Ono referred to the instructions that accompanied her works, and when followed resulted in the performance or art experience, as scores, similar to *music scores*. In 2000 Ono gave an interview for *Sculpture*, and described her works as if they were songs, and she was the composer:

*“The concept is my work. You can say that it’s the score: in music there is a score, and, let’s say, Mozart wrote it and maybe played it once and made a notation or two. And now it’s played by a group of people centuries later and... it’s just viewed as a musical score that [anyone can play]. But that’s not done very much in the art world because most people just do the artwork and do not allow other people to participate in it. But, in my case, it’s instruction- the instruction is like a score. So, it is all right that it’s repeated and repeated by other people... the environment makes a big difference to the piece. Again, it’s the concept that is the work”<sup>37</sup>.*

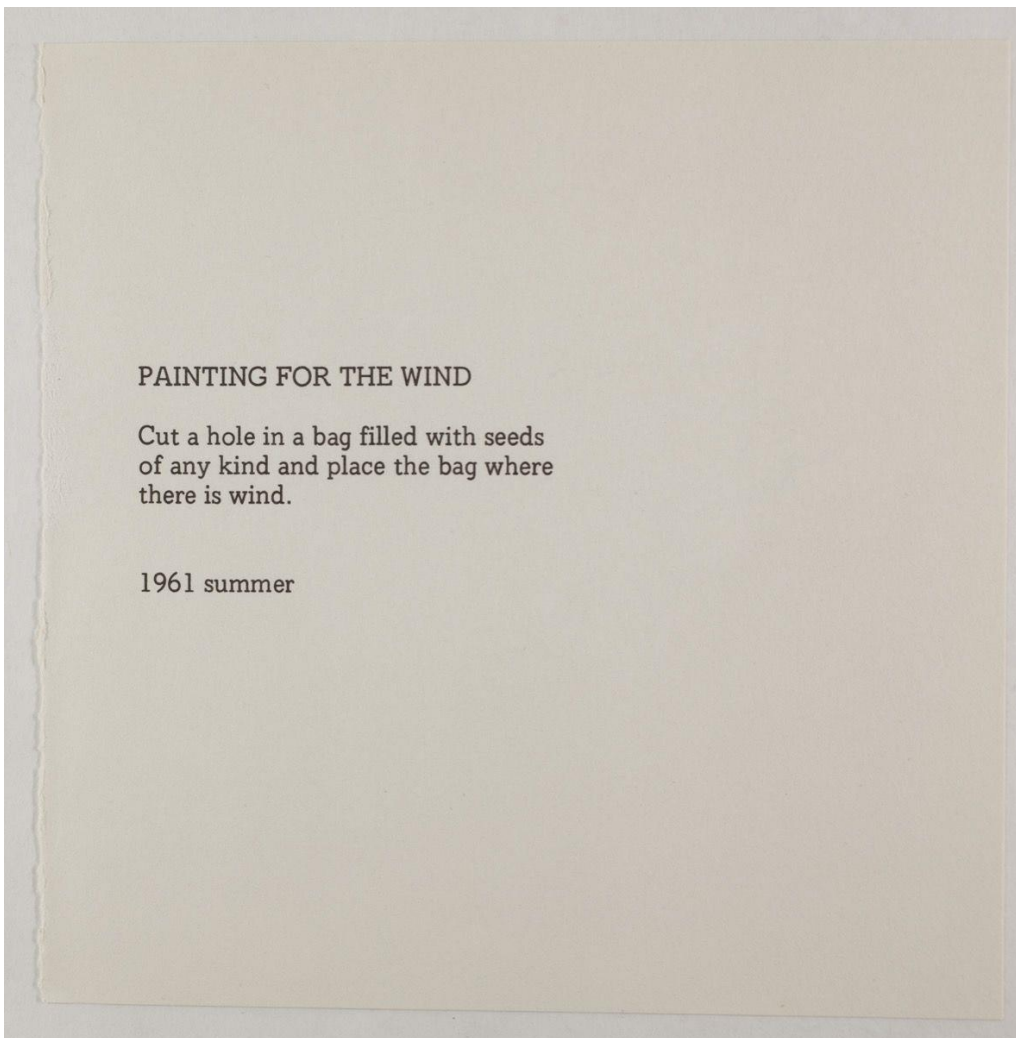
Remember Kandinsky’s Triangle? The theory states that the avant-garde resides at the top of the pyramid, and with time as the vehicle, it inevitably descends down the triangle and becomes more widely understood and recognized, while a new wave of avant-gardism takes its place at the tip. This is not only a method in which to understand evolving acceptance of art, but a method in which to understand how art and thinking evolves.

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<sup>36</sup> Tate. “Conceptual Art – Art Term.” Tate. Accessed April 21, 2021.

<sup>37</sup> Rushing, Erin. “Exploring Yoko Ono’s Work through Exhibition Ephemera.” Smithsonian Libraries / Unbound, September 5, 2017.

The second way in which Ono's works offered monumental input into the development of Conceptual Art was their inherent ephemeral quality. As explained by her in the interview she released for *Sculpture*, every time the work is performed or viewed it is different, whether by nature of the environment or the participants, impossible to recreate or perfectly duplicate. Thus, the emphasis is inseparably placed on the immaterial concept of the work rather than the material work itself, which is the very basis of Conceptual Art according to Sol LeWitt.



*Figure 14: Painting for the Wind, Yoko Ono, 1961, Grapefruit*

One of Ono's first works which encompassed both instructions and ephemeral quality was Painting to Hammer a Nail (1961). In this piece, Ono provided viewers with the following set of instructions:

*“Hammer a nail into a mirror, a canvas, a piece of glass, wood, or metal every morning. Also, pick up a hair that came off when you combed in the morning and tie it around the hammered nail. The painting ends when the surface is covered with nails”<sup>38</sup>.*



Figure 15: *Painting to Hammer a Nail*, 1961, Yoko Ono, Getty Images.

This work was also revolutionary in that Ono effectively relinquished her role as artist and author, instead not only empowering, but relying on the viewership to complete the work. This audience-artist relationship would be a concept that Ono would continue to explore throughout her career. However, in this piece, the concept of the score was not the only antecedent to music present, as “this is essentially an equivalent to John Cage’s experimental “*Four minutes, thirty-three seconds*” (1952), in which the ambient noises in the room (furnished by the audience) throughout that brief period of time are considered the work”<sup>39</sup>. This is an example of how, even early in her career, Ono demonstrates her capacity as a multimedia artist, in this case between performance art and music, and as an innovator who would consistently push up against the boundaries of visual art.

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<sup>38</sup> Rushing, Erin. “Exploring Yoko Ono's Work through Exhibition Ephemera.” *Smithsonian Libraries / Unbound*, September 5, 2017.

<sup>39</sup> “Yoko Ono Biography, Life & Quotes.” *The Art Story*. Accessed February 17, 2021.

Painting to Hammer a Nail was one of the works included in Grapefruit (1964), a collection of writings organized by Ono which would later be regarded as one of the cornerstones of Conceptual Art.

Grapefruit is by nature both a book and an artwork itself and is another testament to Ono's multidimensionality as she found a way for writing, visual art, and music to all coexist within the same body. Organized into five sections: Music, Painting, Event, Poetry and Object, and containing over 150 written instructional pieces, Grapefruit does not insist for all of its instructions to be



Figure 16: Grapefruit, 1964, Yoko Ono, First Edition.

physically carried out, but instead gives the opportunity for the work to be imagined by the reader, and thus come to life. For example, Cloud Piece instructs readers to: “*Imagine the clouds dripping. Dig a hole in your garden to put them in*”<sup>40</sup>, notably leaving ambiguity as to whether digging the hole is to be imagined or carried out. In this way, Grapefruit effectively entirely circumnavigates the role of the artist (Ono) and instead transfers the artistic process and judgement to the reader. This transference has roots in both Zen Buddhism and Dada, and the work functions as both a Fluxus and a Conceptual Art piece.

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<sup>40</sup> “Yoko Ono Biography, Life & Quotes.” The Art Story. Accessed February 17, 2021.

In the same year that Grapefruit was released, Ono also presented a landmark work which would prove to be one of her most memorable and acclaimed: Cut Piece (1964).

While Yoko Ono had originally written Cut Piece as a conceptual score, it eventually evolved into a recurring live event- performance art being one of the cynosures of the Fluxus avant-gardes. One such performance, recorded in 1965, can be found online, and has provided the

basis for the following analysis.<sup>41</sup> It is fundamental to keep in mind that the recording of the performance, and the still images captured from the performance, is not the piece. The true piece had to have been witnessed live. Thus, our experience of the performance is inherently different to the one designed and performed by Yoko Ono. This is an inevitability, and unfortunately this means that we are innately and irreparably separate from the artist-audience relationship which this piece sought to confront. Furthermore, an important aspect to keep in consideration is the social-political context in which the piece was staged and the consequences it had on the



*Figure 17: Yoko Ono Cut Piece, 1964. MoMA.*

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<sup>41</sup> *Yoko Ono - Cut Piece (1965). YouTube.* YouTube, 2013.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YJ3dPwa2tI>.



development of feminist art movements. Art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson opines that the piece is a commentary on the treatment of the female body in times of war and was in fact a response to the global annihilation crisis and pandemonium associated with the Cuban missile crisis and cold war climate of 1960s New York. The final consideration to keep in mind is the intent of Cut Piece- which can be interpreted in different ways depending on viewer perspective. While Cut Piece can be interpreted as a commentary on social issues, such as gender roles and feminism, or political issues, such as incited panic and nationalism, it can likewise be interpreted as a Zen Buddhism inspired call for self-awareness and reflection. The versatility of the piece is one of the reasons why it is arguably not only the most well-known work by Yoko Ono, but the most well-known work by an artist to come out of Fluxus.

In the beginning of the recording of this performance, we see that Yoko Ono is sitting in the middle of a stage. She is removed from the audience not only by nature of being on stage, but also in terms of her passive seated position in contrast to the active audience members who approach her. There is an even subconscious juxtaposition or difference in power between a seated person and a standing person. She stares blankly outwards, towards the audience. We notice that her expression is neutral and passive, if not melancholic, while one by one, audience members approach her using the scissors she has positioned next to her on stage, each actively participating in her scored performance by cutting off pieces of her clothing (which they were then allowed to keep). Her clothing, like the still image, are thus byproducts of the performance. While her clothing is modern and modest, we see it gradually being cut away from her, unveiling her body underneath.



Figure 18: *Yoko Ono Cut Piece, 1964, Yoko Ono, Courtesy of Art-Solido.*

In the background, we are able to hear the chattering and laughing of the audience.

As some audience members approach, we can observe their timidness and apprehension. Yet with others, their expressions seem eager,

almost devious. We can see that Ono remains motionless and expressionless, unchanged, as

some people approach hesitantly, cutting only a small square of fabric from her sleeve or the

hem of her skirt, while others come boldly, snipping away at the front of her shirt or at her bra straps.

We can observe differences in audience attitudes on the basis of two considerations: gender and time (place in line). In terms of gender, in the aggregate, the men are more willing to cut off pieces of Yoko Ono's clothing. They are also more willing to cut off larger pieces of clothing, and in more revealing or intimate places. In contrast, the women are generally more bashful and reticent, most likely as a result of their heightened awareness, or *self*-awareness. When I say that these generalizations are in the aggregate, I mean that this is the general performance of the male versus female audience members. However, as we continue to watch we will notice a few big outliers. One woman, for example, cuts off a noticeably large portion of Ono's garment, doing so in a very aggressive manner which is both off-putting and startling. Furthermore, we can observe some of the men cutting very sheepishly. In terms of time, Yoko Ono was experimenting with the relationship between the different audience members as well as between the audience and artist, as their interactions shape the performance. The two words

which best sum up this interaction are *mob mentality*, or *collective assurance*, as the act of participating was branded more and more acceptable as more people did it, and the audience members seemed to feed off of one another. After all, Cut Piece relies upon audience members willingness and eagerness to interpret and act on the instructions which outlines their role in the score.

“In reflecting upon the experience recently, the artist [Yoko Ono] said: “When I do the Cut Piece, I get into a trance, and so I don’t feel too frightened... We usually give something with a purpose... but I wanted to see what they would take... There was a long silence between one person coming up and the next person coming up. And I said it’s fantastic, beautiful music, you know? Ba-ba-ba-ba, cut! Ba-ba-ba-ba, cut! Beautiful poetry, actually”<sup>42</sup>.

Some of the big questions which *Cut Piece* raised were regarding *traditional roles*. What is the nature of the artwork? Is the performance the work, or is it the score? How does the active relate to the passive, and how does the role of the artist relate to the role of the audience? Furthermore, this work confronts the role of the human body, and more specifically the *female* body, as an art object, with roots in Zen Buddhism. “According to Ono, her original intention was to harness the Buddhist mentality (Buddha, born a wealthy prince, achieved enlightenment by giving up everything and sitting under a tree for seven years), with a feminist subtext: women too often need to give up everything”<sup>43</sup>. After all, during this time period, the accepted role of the female was one of subservience, subordination, objectification, and *vulnerability*. The idea of patriarchy and of stillness in the assumption of a position, and the idea of limit and boundary in intimacy, as well as in life.

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<sup>42</sup> “MoMA Learning.” MoMA. Accessed April 12, 2021.

<sup>43</sup> “Yoko Ono Biography, Life & Quotes.” The Art Story. Accessed February 17, 2021.

This feminist consideration should not be any surprise, as Yoko Ono was actually one of the **first** feminist artists, and *Cut Piece* has been considered as being **fundamental** for female performance art and the very development of feminism in art. It was only in the late 1960s that a second wave of feminism hit New York, following the 19<sup>th</sup> century women's suffrage movements and feminist activism (although no feminist art was created during this period). While artists like Eva Hesse and Louise Bourgeois are now credited with creating some of the first feminist art, their practice largely began in the *late* 1960s.

*“Women are put in a position of feeling embarrassed about their bodies. It's so ridiculous, but also astounding—we have to always be apologetic about having created the human race”.*

*“There's nothing bad about feminism. We have to help each other, because there's a lot of women in the world who are suffering because the fact is we're not equal. It's as plain as that.*

*It's still a men's world. I don't know. We'll go on with it”<sup>44</sup>.*

In an article written for Graphite Publications, “In the Middle of the Cut: Re-Visiting Yoko Ono's “Cut Piece”” (2020), author Bella Silverman highlights that Cut Piece confronted not only the sexist attitudes of the 1960s, but the racism.

“Cut Piece's productive components, such as its nod to enlightened giving, have been overlook by its audiences. Audience attention has routinely been fixated on Ono's gendered and

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<sup>44</sup> “Yoko Ono Quotes.” BrainyQuote. Xplore. Accessed May 5, 2021.

racialized presence. Swept away in their fetishized fascination with her Asian body, audience members often violated Ono by deliberately undressing her and exposing her most sexualized parts. The audience's role as performers in *Cut Piece* and their subsequent defiant nature exposes the degree to which Japanese female performers were stereotyped – and the way that such stereotypes were internalized – by Western onlookers in the 1960s. To understand the implications of *Cut Piece*, one must analyze the performance through an intersectional lens, taking into consideration not only feminist interpretations but readings that account for race as well<sup>45</sup>.



Figure 19: Yoko Ono *Cut Piece*, 1964, Courtesy of ArtVersed.com

While Yoko Ono worked to dismantle the objectification of women and women of color, she did so by putting herself in the position of being objectified. Almost as if on purpose, she put herself in the condition of being an object in order to stress the fact that women are not objects, but instead are subjects. After all, Yoko Ono was a *Japanese woman* not only working, but

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<sup>45</sup> Silverman, Bella. “In the Middle of the Cut: Re-Visiting Yoko Ono’s ‘Cut Piece.’” Graphite Publications, April 30, 2020.

*succeeding*, in the heavily segregated, patriarchal, and *racist* landscape of post-war New York. This certainly had bearing not only on her work, but on her reception and treatment in the media and by the public.

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### **Peace Activist and Musician**

By the end of the decade, Ono's art began to evolve into a sort of campaign with a clear purpose: the promotion of world peace.

In 1965, under President Johnson, the United States entered into one of the longest and most divisive conflicts in the nation's history: the Vietnam War. While opposition to the war bitterly dividing the nation, Ono used her platform as a way in which to spread a message of love, acceptance, and peace.

Interestingly, Ono was always a very individual artist, yet her work was also always very participative as it always required an audience, and the intervention of people. However, there was an interest in collaboration with an audience instead of a collaboration with her peers. Ono rarely worked with other artists, such as John Cage or George Maciunas, and especially never reached towards other female artists. In the 1960s, all female artists and personalities that were struggling to develop their practice and impose themselves in the art world worked alone, and at the same time they did not reach towards one another, as this came a bit later in the 1970s.

In fact, one of Yoko Ono's strongest artistic collaborations was with John Lennon.

In 1969, Yoko Ono and John Lennon staged Bed-In, a sort of weeklong live-event performance in Amsterdam in which she and Lennon confined themselves to a bed in protest of the Vietnam War. The first of these bed-ins occurred a few



Figure 20: Yoko Ono and John Lennon Bed-in, Photographer unknown, Courtesy of Sky TG24.

days into their marriage, and the couple invited both press and photographers to join them in the name of world peace.

In the words of Yoko Ono: “John and I thought after *Bed-In*, “The war is going to end.” How naïve we were, you know? But the thing is, things take time. I think it’s going to happen. I mean, that I think we’re going to have a peaceful world. But it’s just taking a little bit more time than we thought then.”<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> “Yoko Ono. Bed-In. 1969: MoMA.” The Museum of Modern Art. Accessed April 26, 2021.

**The Guardian, July 2, 2015<sup>47</sup>**

**Observer Ethical Awards 2015 Winners...**

*“Communication with the world at large has been Yoko Ono’s lifelong mission – even when the world responded with hostility. She’s won the Lifetime Achievement Award for her activism over half a century, most of which is indivisible from her art. Think of the “Bed-In” that she and John Lennon staged in Amsterdam in 1969, or the billboard posters that announced: “War is Over! If You Want It” the same year that her “Wish Trees”, an ongoing work started in 1981 where many members of the public are encouraged to write their deepest wishes on labels and hang them from a tree.*

*“Art to me is a way of showing people how you can think,” Ono says. “Some people think of art like beautiful wallpaper that you can sell, but I have always thought that it is to do with activism.””*

While there was still a healthy amount of criticism and objection to Ono’s work in peace activism, her reception in that regard was nonetheless more positive and empirical in comparison to the media coverage of her personal life and relationship with Lennon.

Interestingly, Ono and Lennon’s artistic collaboration was not purely visual and experiential, but also musical. In fact, Ono was instrumental in creating one of Lennon’s most revered and famous songs- Imagine.

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<sup>47</sup> Needham, Alex; "Observer Ethical Awards 2015 winners: Yoko Ono; The winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award reflects on half a century of activism and reveals how her art has always been at the heart of her fight for peace. To read the full interview with Yoko Ono, see the Observer on Sunday". *The Guardian*. July 2, 2015 Thursday.



“More than 40 years after the song’s release, Yoko Ono is receiving a songwriting credit on John Lennon’s classic Imagine. The surprise announcement was made at an annual meeting of the National Music Publishers Association in New York on Wednesday. They explained the move by playing a clip of Lennon saying that Imagine “should be credited as a Lennon-Ono song”.

“A lot of it- the lyric and the concept – came from Yoko,” he said. “But those days I was a bit more selfish, a bit more macho, and I sort of omitted to mention her contribution. **“But it was right out of Grapefruit, her book.** There’s a whole pile of pieces about ‘Imagine this’ and ‘Imagine that.’”<sup>48</sup>.

In 1969, Ono and Lennon also began the *Plastic Ono Band*, considered by Lee Zimmerman to be “one of the most revelatory, remarkable and fully reflective albums of the entire rock era”<sup>49</sup>. He continues by saying that it was “a stunning rebuke of the fame and adulation he [referring to Lennon] had accumulated in the wake of his years as a rock and roll superstar... it was a raw, stripped down, often angst-ridden affair recorded in the aftermath of the primal scream therapy sessions he and Yoko undertook in California”<sup>50</sup>. While the Plastic Ono Band was a fully collaborative endeavor by the couple, even today it is largely accredited as Lennon’s ‘anti-Beatle’ initiative- Zimmerman’s article was written in 2020, yet still fails to acknowledge that Lennon made up only half of the band- “Lennon often asks Yoko for feedback

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<sup>48</sup> Savage, Mark. “Yoko Ono Added to Imagine Writing Credits.” BBC News. BBC, June 15, 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Zimmerman, Lee. “Review: The Making of a Masterpiece-'John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band'.” American Songwriter, April 26, 2021.

<sup>50</sup> Zimmerman, Lee. “Review: The Making of a Masterpiece-'John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band'.” American Songwriter, April 26, 2021.

while he takes on the material”<sup>51</sup>. The Plastic Ono Band would go on to release 7 experimental albums over the course of 40 years and collaborated with musicians including Eric Clapton as well as other former Beatles members.

Following the death of Lennon, Ono continued her solo music career with the release of her album Season of Glass (1981) and the off-Broadway musical *New York Rock*. Ono’s music, both solo and in the Plastic Ono Band, was always focused on the promotion of peace. In fact, the first Plastic Ono Band single was titled Give Peace a Chance.

While Ono’s musical ventures are still largely accredited to Lennon, in 2020 James Hall wrote that: “Musically, the pair – particularly Ono – kicked the door open for the DIY ethos of punk and the experimentation of new wave... The echoes remain today. There are clear parallels in both subject matter and glee of delivery between Open Your Box and this year’s controversial number one WAP by Cardi B featuring Megan Thee Stallion. Perhaps Plastic Ono were half a century ahead of their time after all”<sup>52</sup>.

Perhaps the Plastic Ono Band was not the only thing half a century ahead of their time, as Yoko Ono’s legacy continues to be a driving force.

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<sup>51</sup> Zimmerman, Lee. “Review: The Making of a Masterpiece-'John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band'.” American Songwriter, April 26, 2021.

<sup>52</sup> Hall, James. "Wailing, writhing and primal screams: inside John Lennon and Yoko Ono's reviled anti-Beatles band". *telegraph.co.uk*. December 8, 2020 Tuesday.

## 4. The Legacy of Ono

By empirically analyzing Yoko Ono's reception from different perspectives over the course of 60 years, it is evident that the legacy of Yoko Ono is twofold. There remains the positive legacy of being one of the first female feminist and avant-garde artists, environmentalists, peace activist, musician and the woman who was stronger than a Rockstar- and the negative legacy of being a witch, a traitor, and the woman who broke up one of the most famous bands of all time. The reasoning for this fragmentation and division of her perception is derived from media representation and serves as an excellent example of how mass media interpretation and information is influential in the representation of, in this case a subject, artist and a person.

In terms of her positive legacy, Ono's contributions to the formation of Conceptual Art continue to influence avant-garde art, even decades later. Her work in the advancement of feminism and peace activism has heightened awareness of societal issues worldwide, and her music continues to be analyzed and reconsidered by musical blogs and writers to this day.

**Pitchfork, October 23, 2018<sup>53</sup>**

**Yoko Ono**

*“A ferocious optimism animates Ono’s half-century career... Impassioned, erratic vocals tore at long-held conventions of what women behind microphones should sound like. Her liberating irreverence reverberated throughout New Wave in bands like the B-52s and the Talking Heads, as well as underground experimentalists like Meredith Monk”*

**The Guardian, October 18, 2018<sup>54</sup>**

**Yoko Ono: Warzone review- name another 85-year-old making music this combative**

*“She has spent a significant portion of the last decade curating her own musical legacy in a climate far more accepting of her work than the one in which it was made... You can see why Ono has a penchant for this stuff: she was, after all, the uncredited co-writer of a protest song that actually stuck, Give Peace a Chance.”*

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<sup>53</sup> Geffen, Sasha. “Yoko Ono.” Pitchfork. Pitchfork, October 23, 2018.

<sup>54</sup> Petridis, Alexis. “Yoko Ono: Warzone Review – Name Another 85-Year-Old Making Music This Combative.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, October 18, 2018.

In terms of her negative legacy, she is still largely blamed for and recognized as the reason for the Beatles breakup and has become a marker by which other women who are associated with infamous men are compared to.

**Daily Mirror, April 8, 2014<sup>55</sup>**

**Love Rejects Yoko Ono Comparison**

*“Kurt Cobain’s widow Courtney Love has rejected comparisons with Yoko Ono. Twenty years after his death and as Nirvana are about to be inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, she admitted many Nirvana fans view her negatively in the way Beatles’ fans looked at John Lennon’s wife.”*

**Express Online, January 8, 2021<sup>56</sup>**

**Meghan Markle ‘Stole Prince Harry’ like Yoko Ono ‘Stole John Lennon’ Claims Expert**

*“Uproar the Duchess of Sussex, 39, has faced from a section of the British public has been likened to the experience of Yoko Ono. Ono, who married John Lennon in 1969, was judged by many to have influenced the breakup of The Beatles a year later... In an interview with Elle, historian Robert Lacey describes similarities between the headstrong women”.*

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<sup>55</sup> Taylor, Richie; "Love rejects Yoko Ono comparison". *Daily Mirror*. April 8, 2014 Tuesday.

<sup>56</sup> Shipman, Alex; "Meghan Markle 'stole Prince Harry' like Yoko Ono 'stole John Lennon' claims expert". *Express Online*. January 8, 2021 Friday.

One of the most striking elements of an analysis of Yoko Ono's reception in the media is that while her artistic career was centered on the dismantling of objectification of the woman by assuming the role of the objectified in performance, this same phenomenon appeared to take place in her treatment by the media.

Perhaps no homogenous image of this heavily controversial and avant-garde artist *should* or *can* be constructed, and this is by design, as her representation in the media as an artist is tailored towards artists and scholars, her representation as a peace activist is tailored towards fellow activists, and her representation as the wife of Lennon and driver behind the ending of the band fulfills a need by Beatles fans for a villain.

Just as in *Cut Piece*, Ono explored the relationship between the audience and artist, and between the active and passive, her life, and the representation of her life, in the media aligns with these same dynamics and considerations. This discussion is further exacerbated due to the complexity of Yoko Ono's figure and character, whose public perception remains as fragmented and divided today as it was in the 1960s.

The question remains: did she decide that her life would be a performance, or did her life become a performance. Was she in charge of her representation, or overwhelmed by it?

## 5. Literature Review

I have related very different types of sources, ranging from academic to mass-media, including the voices from real artists to interpretations from different perspectives both critical and popular. This wide variety of sources molds the idea of representation holistically and offers a true insight into how consumption of all sorts of medias influences and shapes our perception of any topic, subject or person.

Popular mass media sources included *the Irish Examiner, The Globe and Mail (Canada), The Sunday Mail, The Guardian, Express Online, The Associated Press, The Telegraph, The Mirror, The Unaffiliated Press, The Sunday Times, The Salt Lake Tribune (Utah), CNN, Hamilton Spectator, The Australian, The Art Story, The Independent, The Herald (Glasgow), The Daily Telegraph, The Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, BBC News, USA Today, Los Angeles Times, The Observer, Ultimate Classic Rock, and American Songwriter.*

The included popular mass media sources encompass decades of Yoko Ono's representation in popular media across the world and have the farthest reach and effect.

Scholarly sources included the *Journal of Performance and Art, Frieze Magazine,* presentations at the Center for the United States and the Cold War, the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian Libraries, the *Journal of Communication, Culture & Critique, Graphite Publications,* the Tate, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The included scholarly sources were used to add context and inform the academically minded consumers of Yoko Ono media- which offers a different image than that of popular media sources.

The following 4 sources demonstrate how different kinds of sources from different kinds of authors tailored to different kinds of readers work to paint Yoko Ono in different lights, revealing the multitude of personalities depicted and the complexity of this extra-ordinary artist.

## ARTIST

Glueck, Grace. "Art by Yoko Ono Shown at Museum in Syracuse." *The New York Times*, October 11, 1971. <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/10/11/archives/art-by-yoko-ono-shown-at-museum-in-syracuse.html?searchResultPosition=42>.

Grace Glueck wrote the short piece "Art by Yoko Ono Shown at Museum in Syracuse" in October of 1971 for *The New York Times*. In this piece, Glueck writes about Ono's first museum show at Everson Museum, an exhibition which consisted of more than 80 conceptual works. Glueck includes a quote from the Everson Museum's director, James Harithas, which said that while the exhibition had the possibility of boosting the number of people in attendance, it would likewise be "a tremendous loss of good taste and of respect in the art world". Glueck offers a description of the included works, before diverting the column towards Lennon. Although Lennon had said that his role in the show was subordinate to that of Yoko Ono's Glueck refers to this as 'modest', which has the effect of reversing this comment and of drawing the attention away from Yoko Ono and towards Lennon. Glueck finishes her article by including more comments from administration, providing metrics on attendance and a comment from a visitor. While Glueck offers no direct personal criticism, her bias shows through at some points throughout the article as she includes a quote from a museum director which insinuates that part of the reason Ono had the exhibition was to give a better male-female balance at the museum,



and she diverts substantial attention to John Lennon. This source is filed under ‘artist’ because it is a *New York Times* column on Ono’s first museum exhibition. It is an important note that her contributions to art in this 20th century context are considered by *The New York Times*, which is a popular media outlet, and not a strictly art related or peer-reviewed journal.

## **WIFE AND MOTHER**

Desborough, Jenny. "John Lennon family feud: Is son Julian close to Yoko Ono? Inside relationship; JOHN LENNON already had a family when he met his second wife, Yoko Ono - but does Yoko get on with John's eldest son Julian Lennon?". *Express Online*. May 22, 2020 Friday. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YYK-30J1-JCJY-G1PC-00000-00&context=1516831>.

This 2020 piece by Jenny Desborough for *Express Online*, a tabloid newspaper, is titled “John Lennon Family Feud: Is Son Julian Close to Yoko Ono?”. In this piece, Desborough begins by highlighting the fact that Lennon left his first wife Cynthia “for” Yoko Ono, and then remarks on the lawsuit over Lennon’s will that Julian and Yoko Ono fought over following Lennon’s death. Desborough includes quotes from Julian and John which serve to publicize a supposed rift between the pair. Via an analysis of quotes from Julian and Yoko Ono over the years, Desborough asserts that the pair are “finally on better terms”, insinuating that the pair were priorly on bad terms. This source is filed under ‘wife and mother’ because it is a representation of how Yoko Ono was portrayed in the media as a member of the Lennon family, and how this representation was not always favorable. While this source was published in 2020, it considers quotes from interviews as far back as 1998.

## ACTIVIST

Hoenigman, David F. "Yoko Ono, Forever a Force for Peace." *The Japan Times*, November 7, 2009. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2009/11/07/general/yoko-ono-forever-a-force-for-peace/>.

David F. Hoenigman wrote the 2009 article "Yoko Ono, forever a force for peace" with *The Japan Times*, one of the predominant media outlets in Japan. It is important to note that the beginning sentence of the article is "Even before she married John Lennon...". The article continues by offering a brief history of her early life coupled with quotes from Ono and other actors including renowned art critic Michael Kimmelman. After providing an overview of Ono's work in visual arts and music, Hoenigman writes that "the uncompromising sense of herself and dismissal of convention that shaped her artistic drive can also be considered the force that fuels Ono's role as a peace activist". Hoenigman does not offer any further details on events, exhibitions or works Ono has participated in in her mission to spread her message of peace, and in the final few sentences writes "Yoko Ono and her late husband's message of peace and love...", meaning that Hoenigman both began and ended his article in reference to John Lennon. Even though the goal of this article was meant to highlight and feature Ono's work in peace activism, it hardly considered it, and instead focused on her relationship with John Lennon and her history. This source is filed under 'activism' because it is a perfect highlight of how even articles meant to focus on her contributions to peace activism are curtailed, and this is a big reason why her involvement in peace activism is largely unknown. It is shocking that this was also published by *The Japan Times*. It is an important note that her contributions to peace activism in the 21st century are in this context considered by a popular media outlet.

## MUSICIAN

Foote, Cameron. "Yoko Ono's Secret Piece." InsideOut. MoMA, April 30, 2014.  
[https://www.moma.org/explore/inside\\_out/2014/04/30/yoko-onos-secret-piece/](https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2014/04/30/yoko-onos-secret-piece/).

Cameron Foote wrote the 2014 article "Yoko Ono's Secret Piece" in conjunction with the Museum of Modern Art affiliate blog InsideOut as part of his 12 month *Modern Women's Fund Research Placement* at the MoMA. In this article, Foote offers a brief account of the MoMA exhibition *There Will Never Be Silence: Scoring John Cage's 4'33"* (2014) before moving on to describe Yoko Ono's involvement in avant-garde music experimentation, Ono's relationship with John Cage and her 1964 book *Grapefruit* in which appeared *Secret Piece* which was written in 1953 and featured in the MoMA exhibition. Then, Foote analyzes the musical qualities of *Secret Piece*, describing it in terms such as "It has one held F note in the bass clef and, where performance directions would usually be written, the inscription, "with the accompaniment of the birds singing at dawn." (Foote). This article is relevant as it offers insight into how museums in the 21st century look back and are considering Yoko Ono's contributions to music and the interdisciplinary nature of her works. The Museum of Modern Art did not publish anything on Yoko Ono in any capacity between the years 1955 and 1965, illustrating how her work was largely dismissed by institutions, or at the very least The Museum of Modern Art, during their creation, and are only being acknowledged and acclaimed decades later in memorandum. This source is filed under 'musician' because it relates to Yoko Ono's contributions to music. It is an important note that her contributions to music in the 21st century are in this context considered by a visual art, not music, institution.

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