

**YOKO ONO: ONE WOMAN SHOW, 1960–1971 EXPLORES YOKO ONO'S
GROUNDBREAKING EARLY WORK**

MoMA Exhibition Brings Together Approximately 125 of Ono's Early Objects, Works on Paper, Installations, Performances, Audio Recordings, and Films, Alongside Rarely Seen Archival Materials

Yoko Ono: One Woman Show, 1960–1971

May 17–September 7, 2015

The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Gallery, sixth floor

Press Preview: Tuesday, May 12, 2015, 9:30–11:30 a.m.

NEW YORK, May 4, 2015—In late 1971, Yoko Ono announced an exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art—a one-woman show that she irreverently titled *Museum Of Modern (F)art*. When visitors arrived at the Museum, however, there was little evidence of her work. Outside the entrance, a man wore a sandwich board stating that Ono had released a multitude of flies and that the public was invited to follow their flight within the Museum and across the city. Now, over 40 years later, ***Yoko Ono: One Woman Show, 1960–1971*** surveys the decisive decade that led up to that unauthorized exhibition at MoMA, bringing together approximately 125 of her early objects, works on paper, installations, performances, audio recordings, and films, alongside rarely seen archival materials. On view from May 17 to September 7, 2015, this is the first exhibition at MoMA dedicated exclusively to the artist's work. *Yoko Ono: One Woman Show, 1960–1971* is organized by Christophe Cherix, The Robert Lehman Foundation Chief Curator of Drawings and Prints; and Klaus Biesenbach, Chief Curator at Large, MoMA, and Director, MoMA PS1; with Francesca Wilmott, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Drawings and Prints.

Yoko Ono: One Woman Show, 1960–1971 draws upon the 2008 Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, which added approximately 100 of Ono's artworks and related ephemera to the Museum's holdings. A number of works on view invite interaction, including *Painting to Be Stepped On* (1960/61), and Ono's groundbreaking performance *Bag Piece* (1964). Her earliest works were often based on instructions that Ono communicated to viewers in verbal or written form. At times poetic, humorous, unsettling, and idealistic, Ono's text-based works anticipated the objects that she presented throughout the decade, including *Grapefruit* (1964), her influential book of instructions; *Apple* (1966), a solitary piece of fruit placed on a Plexiglas pedestal; and *Half-A-Room* (1967), an installation of bisected domestic objects. The exhibition also explores Ono's seminal performances and films, including *Cut Piece* (1964) and *Film No. 4* (1966/67). At the end of the decade, Ono's collaborations with John Lennon, including *Bed-In* (1969) and the *WAR IS OVER! if you want it* (1969–) campaign, boldly communicated her commitment to promoting world peace.

Yoko Ono: One Woman Show, 1960–1971 is organized chronologically, with thematic currents, providing multiple ways for visitors to navigate the exhibition. Before entering the exhibition, visitors encounter one of Ono's earliest instructions, *Lighting Piece*. Composed in 1955, the text simply reads: "Light a match and watch till it goes out." In 1966, Ono enacted this work in her film *Match Piece (or No. 1)*, which is projected in 16mm. Each day, a performer will stop the film and realize Ono's instruction in the space. Upon entering the galleries, visitors must choose a path through which to follow Ono's work forward in time to 1971. After reaching the chronological end point of the exhibition, visitors can then experience a different route back through Ono's early years. At certain moments, these different paths converge around key ideas, including Ono's instruction-based works, performances, films, and interactive installations.

The first section of the exhibition focuses on her Chambers Street Loft Series (December 1960–June 1961). In 1960, Ono rented a loft on the top floor of a building located at 112 Chambers Street, in downtown Manhattan. She intended to use the space as a studio, but also envisioned it as a place to present new music and ideas, a place unlike any other in the contemporary performance scene dominated by Midtown concert halls. Ono borrowed a baby grand piano from a friend and created makeshift furniture with discarded crates, transforming the low-ceilinged, gray-paneled loft into a vibrant environment. Over the course of six months, Ono and composer La Monte Young presented numerous events by artists, musicians, dancers, and composers. Several works combined music, visual art, and performance, blurring the distinctions between mediums. On any given evening there were as many as 200 attendees, including art-world figures such as John Cage, Marcel Duchamp, Peggy Guggenheim, Isamu Noguchi, George Maciunas, Jasper Johns, and Robert Rauschenberg. The original rarely seen programs from all 11 events are on view alongside archival photographs from the Chambers Street Loft.

The following section focuses on Ono's first solo exhibition, which took place in July 1961 at the AG Gallery on New York's Upper East Side. George Maciunas, an architect, designer, and codirector of the gallery, invited Ono to do a show after attending events at her Chambers Street loft. Ono created the paintings in the exhibition from a single roll of canvas, to which she applied washes of Japanese *sumi* ink and performed other interventions. These works, which became known as "instruction paintings," were physical manifestations of Ono's own instructions. She communicated the instructions verbally or, at times, on handwritten cards, requesting that viewers personally engage with the works in order to complete their creation, thus resulting in unforeseeable outcomes. In order to convey a sense of the lost originals, MoMA, together with Ono, undertook an extensive study of the materials, techniques, and display strategies used in her early works, and made the paintings on view in this gallery. These works represent one of the ways in which Ono's instructions can be realized.

Ono returned to Japan in early 1962 and remained there for over two years. Her first concert and exhibition in Tokyo, at the Sōgetsu Art Center in May 1962, upended the expectations of the audience by encouraging them to participate in new and radical ways. She displayed a

poem that viewers could touch (*Touch Poem #5*) (on view in the first gallery of the exhibition) and instructions for paintings that viewers had to create in their imaginations (presented in this section of the exhibition). The concert consisted of a combination of new and older works, performed by Ono and a group of fellow artists and musicians. The evening closed with *Audience Piece to La Monte*, in which the performers formed a line across the stage, and each chose a different audience member to watch. As soon as that audience member broke eye contact, the performer redirected his or her attention to a new person. By inverting the direction of the gaze, Ono broke down traditional boundaries between performer and audience. The concert is represented in the exhibition through archival photographs.

In another gallery, performance facilitators are in the galleries during select hours to aid visitors in performing Ono's iconic *Bag Piece* (1964), which consists of visitors entering into a cloth bag, becoming completely enveloped. Ono performed *Bag Piece* publicly for the first time in Kyoto, in July 1964, in the same concert in which she premiered *Cut Piece*. Also on view in this gallery are eight photographs taken by George Maciunas of Ono's performance of *Bag Piece* in the Perpetual Fluxfest in New York in June 1965, along with her 1966 film *Eyeblink*.

The next gallery is focused on *Grapefruit* (1964), a self-published artist's book that comprises instructions Ono wrote between 1953 and 1964. She first presented instruction-based artwork during her Chambers Street Loft Series in 1960–61. In the years that followed, Ono created works that continued to distance her concepts from their physical manifestations, eventually culminating in *Grapefruit* in 1964. The grapefruit, a citrus hybrid, operates as a metaphor for Ono's incorporation of both Eastern and Western philosophies in her work. Between 1963 and 1966, Ono lived in both Tokyo and New York, serving as a critical bridge within the international avant-garde. Other works in this gallery exemplify Ono's close relationships with other artists, namely George Maciunas and John Cage. Maciunas organized Ono's first solo exhibition, in 1961, and Ono was actively involved with him in the formation of Fluxus, later participating in Fluxus performances and events. Ono met Cage when she first moved to New York in the mid-1950s. Although she at times distanced herself from his ideas, they remained friends and she performed during his 1962 Japanese tour. Cage dedicated a major composition, *0'00"* (1962), to Ono and her husband Toshi Ichiyanagi.

Assembled in the following gallery are several works inspired by the sky, including *To See the Sky* (2015), a new work created for the MoMA exhibition. The sky is a central and recurring subject in Ono's work. Her fascination with it dates back to her childhood memories of being displaced from Tokyo during World War II and finding safety in the countryside. "That's when I fell in love with the sky," remembers Ono. "Even when everything was falling apart around me, the sky was always there for me...I can never give up on life as long as the sky is there." Ono's favorite feature of her Chambers Street loft was its skylight, because it created the feeling of being "more connected to the sky than to the city outside." The ever-changing permanence of the sky—an element of nature that varies according to time and place yet is shared by everyone,

everywhere—has inspired Ono’s art making since the beginning of her career.

Since the beginning of the 1960s, Ono had relied on the viewer’s participation or imagination to complete her artworks, and she continued to develop this strategy in her solo exhibition at Indica Gallery, London, in 1966. Many of the works from that exhibition are on view in the next gallery. *Add Color Painting* (1961/66) and *Painting to Hammer a Nail* (1961/66) required the viewer’s intervention, whereas *Apple* (1966) (on view at the entrance to the exhibition) comprises a solitary fruit, devoid of the artist’s hand beyond its placement on a Plexiglas pedestal affixed with a brass plaque. The night before the show opened, John Lennon stopped by the gallery. Moved by Ono and her artistic concepts, he was the first person to sign the exhibition guest book, including his middle name, Winston, and his home address. In the years that followed, Ono worked in close collaboration with Lennon, producing films, initiating global peace campaigns, and launching the Plastic Ono Band.

The exhibition includes an audio room dedicated to the music that Ono produced with the Plastic Ono Band. Around 1968, Ono decided to create a band “that would never exist...that didn’t have a set number of members...that could accommodate anyone who wanted to play with it.” The name derived from a small three-dimensional work—composed primarily of transparent plastic objects—that John Lennon had made in response to Ono’s idea. The original is now lost, but the work has been reimaged by Ono for this exhibition. Although conceptually Plastic Ono Band had no members, in practice it had a flexible lineup. For a performance at the Toronto Rock and Roll Revival festival in 1969, the band consisted of Ono, Lennon, Eric Clapton, Klaus Voormann, and Alan White. During this session—which produced the band’s first live recording—Ono performed her *Bag Piece*, entering a white bag in the middle of the stage. Other performances likewise incorporated Ono’s earlier works or introduced new artistic pursuits. The band continued releasing records through the mid-1970s. In 2009, Ono revived Plastic Ono Band with her son, Sean Lennon.

The furthest gallery in the exhibition pairs Ono’s 1970 film *Fly* with her 1971 *Museum Of Modern (F)art* project. In *Fly*, the camera follows the journey of a fly across the terrain of a nude female body. Toward the end of the film, the camera zooms out to reveal that the woman is in fact dotted with multiple flies. Finally, the camera pans upward to the room’s window and the dusky cityscape outside. Ono’s voice—meandering and staccato, like the buzzing of an insect—serves as the soundtrack and is accompanied by Lennon’s abstract instrumentals. The act of tracing flies in flight was echoed in Ono’s *Museum Of Modern (F)art* (1971), on view nearby, which asked viewers to follow the path of flies, which Ono had purportedly released in MoMA’s Sculpture Garden, as they dispersed through the Museum and across New York. Ono published photos of the flies’ urban migration in a related artist’s book, which is also on display in this gallery. A short film captured the public’s response. While some were skeptical, others were moved by the absence of a concrete exhibition, including a man who reflected, “The entire world in general can be a show.”

SPONSORSHIP:

The exhibition is made possible by illy.

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PUBLICATIONS:***Yoko Ono: One Woman Show, 1960–1971***

Edited by Klaus Biesenbach and Christophe Cherix. With contributions by Yoko Ono, Julia Bryan-Wilson, Jon Hendricks, Clive Phillpot, David Platzker, Francesca Wilmott, and Midori Yoshimoto *Yoko Ono: One Woman Show, 1960–1971* examines the beginnings of Ono's career, demonstrating her pioneering role in visual art, performance, and music during this decisive decade. The publication features three introductory essays that examine Ono's early years and five sections organized chronologically to trace the evolution of Ono's artistic practice. Each chapter includes an introduction, artwork descriptions, primary documents, and a selection by the artist of her texts and drawings, including previously unpublished writings.

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Grapefruit

By Yoko Ono

On the occasion of the exhibition, The Museum of Modern Art has produced a facsimile of the first edition of *Grapefruit*, making it available again in its original form. First published in 1964 in Tokyo by Wunternbaum Press in an edition of 500 copies, *Grapefruit* contains more than 150 works divided into five sections: MUSIC, PAINTING, EVENT, POETRY, OBJECT. These works—conceptual instructions—are the culmination of a process that dispensed with the physical and arrived at the idea. Since the initial publication of *Grapefruit*, numerous expanded editions have been produced in many different languages, but first-edition copies are nearly impossible to find today. This new edition is produced from the copy of the 1964 book in The Museum of Modern Art Library, and is an exacting replica of *Grapefruit* as Ono first envisioned it. It is available in a limited edition of 500 unsigned and 50 signed copies. Slipcased paperback, 5.5 x 5.5"; \$150 for the unsigned edition, \$750 for the signed edition, with the price going up as fewer copies are left. Published by The Museum of Modern Art and available at the MoMA stores and online at MoMAstore.org. Signed editions are exclusive to the MoMA stores. Unsigned editions are distributed to the trade by ARTBOOK|D.A.P. in the U.S. and Canada, and by Thames & Hudson outside the U.S. and Canada.

PROGRAMS:

Yoko Ono's *White Chess Set*

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays & Saturdays, May 17–September 7, 1:00–4:00 p.m.

Sculpture Garden (weather permitting)

Visitors are invited to play on an exhibition copy of Yoko Ono's *White Chess Set* (1966), originally created by the artist to challenge the competitive structure of the game by requiring players to

work together for the match to progress. The program is a special collaboration with Chess in the Schools, a nonprofit organization that has empowered more than 500,000 students from Title I New York City public schools by using chess as an educational tool. This program is open to visitors of all ages and abilities, and is presented in conjunction with *Yoko Ono: One Woman Show, 1960–1971*. Free with Museum admission.

POPRALLY:

YOKO ONO MORNING PEACE 2015

Sunday, June 21, 2015, 4:30 a.m.

In celebration of *Yoko Ono: One Woman Show, 1960–1971* and on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of *Morning Piece (1964) to George Maciunas (1965)*, PopRally will present YOKO ONO MORNING PEACE 2015. Inspired by Yoko Ono's original work, the event will be marked by a sunrise gathering in The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden on the solstice, June 21, 2015. The morning will feature live music, participatory art-making stations, an open coffee and mimosa bar, light breakfast fare, and exclusive access to the exhibition. MoMA is partnering with institutions around the globe to continue the celebration for 24 hours as the sun rises in different time zones. Tickets (\$25) will be made available for purchase June 1 at MoMA.org/poprally. This event is made possible by The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

AUDIO TOUR:

The audio tour accompanying the exhibition features a newly recorded commentary by Yoko Ono. MoMA Audio+ is available free of charge at the Museum and is also available for streaming and download on MoMA's free app on iTunes, MoMA.org/m, and MoMA.org. MoMA Audio+ is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

WEBSITE INTERVENTION:

In conjunction with the exhibition, selected instructions from Ono's artist's book *Grapefruit (1964)* will be superimposed upon the homepage of MoMA.org. The texts range from the possible to the improbable, often relying on the viewer's imagination to complete the instruction. A different instruction will be featured each day of the exhibition.

ACCESSIBILITY:

In order to serve visitors with hearing loss, the exhibition includes an induction hearing loop for sound amplification. Visitors to the installation can turn their hearing aid or cochlear implant to T-Coil mode or borrow a personal receiver with headphones to hear enhanced sound effortlessly. In addition, all MoMA theaters, lobby desks, ticketing desks, audioguide desks, and one of The Edward John Noble Education Center's classrooms are also equipped with hearing loops that transmit directly to hearing aids with T-Coils.



No. 18

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