

# Yoko Ono: The Music of the Mind [B2]

Un'importante retrospettiva rivendica la carriera di questa artista multidisciplinare e instancabile attivista per la pace, che è stata bersaglio di critiche a causa della sua presunta influenza sulla separazione dei Beatles.

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Long before marrying John Lennon in 1969 and becoming, in the public mind at least, the woman who [broke up](#) the Beatles, Yoko Ono was already a renowned artist. Born into privilege in Tokyo in 1933, Ono was the daughter of an international banker and a musician. Before the age of ten, she had [attended](#) elite schools in Japan, been taken to the finest concerts and spent time in the United States. In 1945, she and her family lived [through](#) two atomic bombs [dropped](#) on Japan, which ended World War Two. Her life was drastically affected when she and her family found themselves exiled to the Japanese countryside, where food was [scarce](#). These experiences proved [pivotal](#) in Ono's life and would radically influence her life and art.

## ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT

From early on in her career, Ono's art has been marked by her [staunch](#) aversion to establishment and mainstream ideas. She was the first female student accepted into the philosophy department in Gakushuin University in Tokyo, but she left after two years because she found the institution restrictive. In 1953, she moved to the US and [attended](#) Sarah Lawrence College, a liberal arts school in New York State, where she began to further develop her social justice-oriented ideas. Yoko Ono emerged onto the art scene in the early 1960s, a turbulent time marked by an irreverent attitude to [once-revered](#) institutions.

## TONGUE-IN-CHEEK

In 1971, Yoko Ono created and [ran an ad](#) announcing her one-woman [show](#) in New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), one of the premier art institutions in the world. The ad was a photo of herself outside the museum,

holding a [placard](#) with the F [lined up](#) next to the word “art” so that it read “(f)art.” To accompany the ad, she made a film in which she interviewed people, asking them if they’d seen her one-woman [show](#). This is one of Ono’s most iconic, [tongue-in-cheek](#) works, given that the [show](#) did not actually exist.

## PEACE ACTIVISM

Yoko Ono’s art is filled with messages of peace in response to her lived trauma of war. Many of her pieces, especially those created from 1966 to 1971, reflect such messages. During these years she moved from New York to London, where she connected with artists, musicians and writers, including John Lennon, her [soon-to-be](#) husband and long-term artistic and activist partner. The couple became known for their activism and campaigns for peace and unity, such as the so-called ‘bed-ins’ they [enacted](#) during their honeymoon in 1969: one at the Hilton Hotel in Amsterdam, and another at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal. These were non-violent protests similar to the sit-ins of anti-war protest. The couple invited the press into their suite and held conferences on world peace from their bed.

## FLUXUS

Since her early days in New York City in the 1960s as part of the group of artists called Fluxus, Yoko Ono has been breaking down the barrier between audience and spectator in art. Many of Yoko Ono’s pieces require the participation of the audience. [In keeping with](#) her irreverence, the participation she asks of her spectators can often be [rough](#) and [seemingly](#) destructive towards her art, the opposite of what one would normally expect of an experience in an art museum. For instance, in her first solo exhibition in July 1961 at the AG Gallery on the Upper East Side of New York, she asked spectators to drop water on [canvases](#) and [step on](#) her paintings. In another famous performance called Cut Piece, audience members were invited to come onstage and cut clothes off her body.

## DIVERSE MEDIUMS

For seven decades, Yoko Ono's art has touched on anti-war protests, early feminist movements and environmental issues using a great variety of methods and techniques, from performance to multimedia, photography, film or music. [Regardless](#) of the medium, however, Ono has always been [unfailingly committed](#) to social justice. Always conceptually tied to real world [goings-on](#), her body of work is a response to contemporary history from World War Two to third wave feminism. And although her various artistic mediums have evolved over time, Yoko Ono remains wholly irreverent. The impressive Tate Modern in London, a [former power station](#) on the South Bank of the River Thames, is hosting an extensive retrospective of Yoko Ono's life and career. The multidisciplinary [show](#), entitled Yoko Ono: The Music of the Mind [spans](#) seven decades and features over two hundred original works by the artist. The exhibition guides visitors [through](#) all phases of Ono's artistic career, from her involvement with the avant-garde Fluxus group in New York to her five years [embedded](#) in London's counterculture in the late 1960s. It reflects the [vast array](#) of mediums used by Ono and visitors are encouraged to interact with select pieces. Among them, Add Colour (Refugee Boat) invites visitors to add paint to white gallery walls and a white boat as a means to consider urgent issues of crisis and displacement, or My Mommy Is Beautiful centres on a fifteen-metre-long wall of [canvases](#) on which visitors can attach photographs of their mothers and share personal messages. As exhibition curator Juliet Bingham explains, Ono employs various mediums as "all different expressions of the same idea, which [draws](#) the mind from an ordinary gesture to notions of transience, the immaterial and the ephemeral." Ono's art, she says, invites us to "imagine and to [whisper](#) a call to action, a provocation to change the world, [one wish at a time](#)." [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk) (Until September 1)  
[www.imaginepeace.com](http://www.imaginepeace.com)

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# Glossary

- **one wish at a time** = uno alla volta
- **ran an ad** = precedentemente venerare
- **soon-to-be** = futuro
- **In keeping with** = in accordo con
- **seemingly** = apparentemente
- **broke up** = separare
- **scarce** = scarso
- **staunch** = solida
- **show** = mostra
- **rough** = brusca
- **Regardless** = indipendentemente
- **once-revered** = precedentemente venerare
- **goings-on** = vicende
- **vast array** = vasta gamma
- **draws** = attrarre
- **committed** = impegnata, dedicata
- **former power station** = antica centrale elettrica
- **spans** = abbracciare
- **attended** = andare a, frequentare
- **pivotal** = cruciali
- **tongue-in-cheek** = ironica
- **canvases** = tele, pitture
- **dropped** = lasciare cadere, sganciare
- **lined up** = allineata
- **step on** = calpestare
- **embedded** = immersa
- **enacted** = rappresentare
- **placard** = cartello
- **(f)art** = scoreggia
- **unfailingly** = infallibilmente
- **whisper** = sussurro