

Yoko Ono is a Japanese multimedia artist born in 1933, she pioneered bringing new perspectives to interactive digital media creative spaces to inspire innovation and creativity. Ono has a diverse repertoire of creative work: singing, songwriting, and peace activism. She was also married to the late John Lennon from 1969 to 1980. Yoko Ono currently resides in New York City. She made her artistic language by instructing viewers to interact with her art pieces; by allowing the users to participate in the experience it creates a playful experience. Her interactive artwork incites strong reactions and gets people thinking. Ono's contributions to Conceptual Art are abstract and experimental. She moved to New York in the 1950s and made a huge impact on the development of Conceptual Art and Fluxus. Fluxus art emphasizes experimental and interactive art. Yoko's work mainly includes an array of instructions the viewer must follow to engage with the artwork. Therefore, this initiates a collaboration with the artist and the viewer, they become a crucial part of the piece. It creates a sort of reciprocal experience since the art is partial and the viewer must interact to complete it. In her book *Grapefruit: A Book of Instructions and Drawings*, Yoko Ono writes "A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality." (Ono). I believe she applies this also to her conceptual work, blending the practice of the conceptual with realism. She is an important figure in the art world because she was able to fuse Western and Eastern cultures through experimental art and gain more exposure. Yoko Ono used her platform to spread awareness such as the "Bed-ins for peace" protest with John Lennon during the Vietnam War. Their goal was to promote peace during their honeymoon. Ono's work challenges traditional art forms and experiments with the conceptual and abstract.



Figure 1 - Play It by Trust - Image Creator: Gary Mamay - Copyright: Photo © 2006 Gary Mamay

Play It by Trust created in 1966 is an interactive chessboard that serves as a metaphor for war. It is now located outdoors at the LongHouse Reserve in East Hampton New York. Chess is a game of logic and strategy, if you remove the colour from the board and pieces how will order and structure occur in this game? Through the separation of colour, Ono is removing the divide that we make in society. If there is no opposition there is no point to the game of chess, instead of conquering your opponent's king, you make your own rules. Colour plays a big factor in cultures, in Western culture red symbolizes danger but in Eastern culture, it resembles joy and prosperity. In the context of this installation, the white represents peace in war, such as waving a white flag. Therefore, stripping this game of clear opposition and calculations creates a sense of intrigue and creativity for the viewers to use. It is a collaborative installation that demonstrates how playful the conceptual piece can be. Viewers are invited to play the game through their explorations. Some try creating their own rules, they attempt to continue the original

game and try to keep track of their pieces, but they quickly get confused. The collaborative interaction hints at the title since you must trust your opponent and their judgement to play the game. Play It by Trust was made out of marble dust and concrete to build the pieces and board. The experience is determined by how the viewer decides to approach the game and what methods they use to navigate around the barrier of colour. It is intriguing how removing something such as colour can have an impact on the piece, it creates ambiguity but also playfulness. It is truly up to the players to decide what to do instead of following the strict rules of chess.

Resources:

joffeorama. "Play It by Trust, Yoko Ono." *Video Games of the Oppressed*, 13 July 2013, <https://videogamesoftheoppressed.wordpress.com/2013/07/13/play-it-by-trust-yoko-ono/> .

Ono, Yoko. *Grapefruit: A Book of Instructions + Drawings*. Bakhåll, 2000.

Van herck, Marjolein. "Yoko Ono: Play It by Trust." *Marjolein Van Herck*, 26 Feb. 2019, <https://marjoleinvherck3bagvsintlucasantwerpen20182019.wordpress.com/2019/02/26/yoko-ono-play-it-by-trust/> .