

Yoko Ono: Anton's Memory

If one billion people in the world think peace, we'll get peace. You may think: "Well, how are we going to get one billion people in the world to think PEACE?" Remember, each one of us has the power to change the world. Power works in mysterious ways. You don't have to do much. Visualize the domino effect and just start thinking PEACE. Thoughts are infectious. Send it out. The message will circulate faster than you think. It's time for action. The action is PEACE. Spread the WORD. Spread PEACE.

Yoko Ono, 2003

Yoko Ono
My mommy is beautiful, 2004
Installation view at the Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Germany, 2008
Photograph by Jon Hendricks
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John Lennon immediately sustained Yoko Ono as an artist, claiming that soon the whole world would notice her creative skills. Anyway, the famous "beetle's" wife-to-be was already well-known in the artistic milieu even before 1996, year of their fateful meeting at London's Indica Gallery.

Born in Tokyo on 18th February 1933, Yoko Ono is the eldest child of Isoko Isuda, member of one of the richest Japanese bankers' families, and Eisuke Ono, a classical pianist that abandons her performing career to devote herself to business.

The education of the Japanese artist is immediately delegated to tutors that leave in the young Yoko the indelible marks of an unavoidable sufferance, caused by the distance from her family ties.

After the war, the Ono family moves to New York, where Yoko continues her studies and come in contact with the artistic milieu, with the galleries and, consequently, with the Big Apple's bohemian life, becoming one of the founders and protagonists of the famous Fluxus art movement.

A woman that is certainly controversial, obscure, very often hated by the Beatles' fans since she is considered the cause of





This is not here.

Yoko Ono
Blue Room Event,
1966
Installation view at
the Kunsthalle
Bielefeld, Germany,
2008
Photograph by Jon
Hendricks
 © Yoko Ono

the band's dissolution, but who is undoubtedly a very charismatic and fascinating female figure that always fought for human rights, for sexual equality, supporting the uniqueness of the female universe and 'fighting' for a possible and less utopian triumph of peace over war.

The Japanese artist is certainly an anomalous case in the contemporary art scene, since she always wanted to remain free and loose from exclusive relationships with gallerists and art merchants that would have provided her with more visibility.

A free, independent spirit, who dedicated all her life to art, intended as the highest objectification of the expressivity and the potentialities of human mind. Qualities also recognized by the jury at the 53rd Edition of the Venice Biennale that awarded her with the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement with the following motivation: "a key figure in post-war art. A pioneer in performance and conceptual art, she is one of the most influential artists of our time. Long before becoming an icon in popular culture and in peace activism, she developed artistic strategies that have left a lasting mark both in her native Japan and in the West".

The homage that the Serenissima pays

to her is not concluded with the prestigious winged statuette, but continues with an important exhibition at the Palazzetto Tito, where the Bevilacqua La Masa Foundation is located and where Yoko Ono reciprocates the interest towards her work with a retrospective exhibition titled Anton's Memory. A meaningful journey through Ono's artistic life, which specifically refers "to a woman's life we see only through her son's eyes - his faded memory".

Who is Anton? As the artist herself reminds us, he is that imaginary son who, as first image of his life, sees the mother's breast, which represents a sense of memory, of desire, of first sustenance and nourishment, therefore source of life blood, but also first sensation of abandonment, deprivation, loss that with time remains only as unconscious memory.

A chance to reflect on one's own life, on the intimate quest that, through memory, provides the opportunity to retrace both her existence as a mother, as a socially engaged woman and as an artist, correlating and comparing her past works with her actual research.

Yoko Ono especially designed the exhibition for the rooms of Palazzetto Tito, since it covers the structural and, therefore, the physical space of a real

house, where the most obvious activities are carried out, but also the most important vital functions, from eating to sleeping, from heating to talking, and, consequently, to relating.

There it is the Grapefruit, the book of recipes for artistic actions, divided into chapters, which deal with music,

painting, poetry and events. In the Venetian show, the volume is placed on an essential bed for a deep rest, in order to capture a hundred nights of dreams and passions and, eventually, to hang it in eternity.

Man, however, lives and dreams of the sky, of the infinite, as it happens in Sky TV's monitors (1966), that film Venice's sky live, or as in the installation where military helmets with pieces of sky inside are hanging on nylon threads. We are all connected, we all live under the same sky, we are human beings that, in the best-case scenario, tend to infinity or, as Yves Klein also did in *Cosmogonies*, try to represent immaterial art using pigments exposed to the effect of the atmospheric agents.

How can a checkerboard be pervaded by the color white in every part, from the base to the squares and the pawns? All of this becomes possible in *Play it By Trust*, where to the hypothetical opponents, instead of playing to win, it is offered the chance to trust each other.

The exposition continues with the work *Cut Piece*, shown in its double version, the original one from 1964, and the 2003 one. In both, Yoko Ono sits still on a chair and lets the public cut away parts of her clothing. In the first version the artist is thirty-two years old, and in the second version she is seventy, harshly reminding us of the significant changes in our appearance, giving a sense of the inexorable marks left on us by the passing of time. But afterwards, she supports with equal intensity the path to continuous self-evolution: "The first time I measured myself against this performance, in 1964, I did it with anger and worry in my heart. Now, I am doing it with love, love for you all, for me and for the world".

Yoko Ono

Sky tv for Hokkaido, 1966 - 2008
 Photograph by Jon Hendricks
 © Yoko Ono



Yoko Ono,

Unfinished element from Yoko Ono's touch me iii (marble version), 2009
 Photograph by Nora Halpern
 © Yoko Ono

