

PRESS RELEASE

YOKO ONO
HALF-A-WIND SHOW. A RETROSPECTIVE

February 15 – May 12, 2013

Press preview: Thursday, February 14, 2013, 11 a.m.

Yoko Ono is one of the most influential artists of our time. In honor of the 80th birthday of the artist, who was born in Tokyo on February 18, 1933, the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt is presenting an extensive retrospective encompassing a representative selection of her works from the past 60 years. From February 15 to May 12, 2013, the Frankfurt exhibition will feature a comprehensive survey of the multifaceted universe of this extraordinary artist, who is regarded as a pioneer of early conceptual, film and performance art as well as a key figure in the world of music, the peace movement and feminism, who continues to play an influential role in current developments in art. Some 200 objects, films, spatial installations, photographs, drawings and textual pieces as well as a special music room will shed light on the diverse media landscape of Ono's art and the central themes of her oeuvre. The retrospective devotes particular attention to Yoko Ono's works from the 1960s and 1970s. It features, among other exhibits, such groundbreaking works as the *Instructions for Paintings* first exhibited in 1961 and 1962, the performance *Cut Piece* (1964), and her book *Grapefruit*, published in 1964, which firmly established Yoko Ono's influential position within the avant-garde in Japan and the United States and the Fluxus movement associated with George Maciunas. Several large-scale installations and recent works by this world-renowned artist will also be shown at the exhibition. Yoko Ono has also developed a new work – the installation and performance *Moving Mountains* – specifically for the exhibition in Frankfurt.

The exhibition "Yoko Ono. Half-A-Wind Show. A Retrospective" is sponsored by the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain and Dr. Marschner Stiftung.

"Yoko Ono is a unique, indeed perhaps even a mythical figure, not only in the art world, but in the field of music and the peace and feminist movements as well. She is familiar to practically everyone, yet only very few people are fully aware of the outstanding artistic oeuvre she has created. Yoko Ono's 80th birthday offers us an ideal opportunity to change that," noted Schirn Director Max Hollein in advance of the exhibition.

As exhibition Curator Dr. Ingrid Pfeiffer emphasizes, "A body of work that often tends toward the immaterial, the substance of which consists to a lesser extent of objects and installations but to a significant degree of ideas and texts, is not easily presented. Thus I am particularly pleased that we have succeeded in close collaboration with Yoko Ono and Curator Jon Hendricks in making the incisive themes and substantive leitmotifs of this unique artist directly accessible to experience at the Schirn Kunsthalle."

Yoko Ono, who was born in Japan and spent her childhood in both Japan and the U.S., is regarded as one of the pioneers of Conceptual Art. In 1952, she became the first woman ever admitted to Gakushūin University in Tokyo as a student of philosophy. She went on shortly thereafter to study composition and creative writing in the United States. Later on, she moved to

New York, where she became a protagonist in the avant-garde scene associated with such musicians as John Cage, Fluxus founder George Maciunas, and the film-maker Jonas Mekas. Having helped pave the way for the socially critical art of the 1960s, Yoko Ono quickly attained recognition as an artist who played an instrumental role in the birth and formal development of performance and conceptual art. Later, in collaboration with her husband John Lennon, with whom she took part in numerous sessions and musical projects until his violent death, Ono herself advanced to the status of a world-famous pop legend and continues to work on music projects under various pseudonyms even today – most recently on an album recorded with Thurston Moore and Kim Gordon from Sonic Youth in 2012. Yoko Ono has also demonstrated her commitment to environmental protection, peace, and human rights in numerous public actions.

As early as 1971, John Lennon referred to his wife Yoko Ono as the “most famous unknown artist in the world” on the occasion of her first museum exhibition at Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, New York. The art of Yoko Ono, who still lives in New York, is based above all on ideas and verbal or textual instructions for utopian or actually performable actions. Occasionally, an idea is manifested in a two- or three-dimensional object, yet many of her poetic, witty, or unusual ideas and instructions remain in a state of “almost” or “perhaps.” Some reveal a subtle sense of humor, others express harsh social criticism; they are political, feminist, and usually profoundly human. One of the artist’s earliest works is a series of paintings with corresponding instructions for viewers, which was first exhibited at George Maciunas’ AG Gallery in New York in 1961. The Fluxus founder had met Ono at the *Chambers Loft Series*: a series of evening events featuring experimental music and performances presented in Ono’s own New York loft at Chambers Street, which were also attended by such artists as Max Ernst and Marcel Duchamp. In the following years, Ono was represented with numerous works in Fluxus editions and took part in a number of exhibitions, although she never regarded herself as a member of a fixed group.

The principle of involving the viewer and the appeal either to complete a work or realize it as a whole are fundamental concepts of Yoko Ono’s art. And that applies as well to her numerous performances, especially the earliest ones. One of the most spectacular performances was *Cut Piece*, first presented in Kyoto and then in Tokyo and New York in 1964 and 1965, in which the audience was invited to cut the clothes from the artist’s body with sharp scissors while she sat on the stage. In this way, the artist sought to visualize through subtle means the themes of vulnerability, the role of women and violence. Another of Yoko Ono’s earliest installations was *Half-A-Room* (1967), which was composed of furniture cut in half and painted white to form a poetic ensemble. This work focused in a penetrating presentation on the loss of “wholeness” by the individual and the longing for completeness. In many other objects, an actual or merely imagined act on the viewer’s part finalizes the work and stimulates further thought on the roles of art, the artist, and the work of art.

Ono’s works are characterized by dualisms and her concern with basic elements and fundamental issues of human existence. Many works revolve around the phenomena of light and shadow, water and fire, air and sky. Destruction and healing as well as balance play important roles in Ono’s concept. The happenings organized by artists such as Alan Kaprow and Claes Oldenburg tended to be more outer-directed and to rely on Western traditions of art, whereas Ono’s approach was devoted above all to the self and to various methods of shaping consciousness. Many of Ono’s works share the quest for a balance of oppositions and the search for unity as well as

SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT

attempts to express the absence of this ideal state. In this sense, Ono pursues a central goal of Zen-Buddhist philosophy.

“Yoko Ono. Half-A-Wind Show. A Retrospective” – the title of which refers to an exhibition of Ono’s art at the Lisson Gallery in London in 1967 – will also feature several installations from the 1990s to the present alongside many important earlier works by Yoko Ono. One such relatively recent work is *Balance Piece* (1997), for which the artist wrote the corresponding instruction in 1958. For *Water Event*, which is also exhibited in Frankfurt, Ono invited other artists to provide containers which she can then fill with water (or imaginary water). Other such cooperative actions include *Wish Tree*, which is presented in the foyer of the Schirn, as well as actions carried out in the city of Frankfurt, in which large billboards call upon viewers to DREAM, TOUCH or FEEL. The installation *Morning Beams* (1996/97) will be presented in the rotunda of the Schirn. In this work, ropes suspended from high above the floor symbolize rays of sunlight.

Ono’s films also play an important role in more recent art history. These include, for example, *Rape* (1969), in which the camera becomes a pursuer, and the famous *Fly* (1970), which shows a close-up view of a fly crawling over the naked body of a woman, in which strange and unusual “body landscapes” are revealed for discovery. In such films as *One (Match)* from 1966, which features a match being struck and then burning out in close-up and very slow motion, the artist concentrates on minimal actions that achieve a poetic effect by virtue of the frugal use of cinematic resources and promote insights into broader contexts.

Ono’s extensive musical oeuvre from the 1960s to the present is documented in a separate room at the exhibition. From early performances of new experimental music to joint sessions with John Lennon to the disco New-Wave hit single *Walking on Thin Ice* (1981) to releases by the Yoko Ono/Plastic Ono Band, the full range of the artist’s numerous musical projects and cooperative ventures is presented to the eyes and ears of visitors.

As part of the program of events accompanying the exhibition, Yoko Ono will present the performance *Sky Piece to Jesus Christ* on February 13, 2013. In this performance, the members of a chamber orchestra are wrapped in gauze bandages by the artist and other performers. The title is a reference to John Cage, who was sometimes referred to as JC or Jesus Christ by some within the group. At the same time, Ono views the sky as the epitome of freedom in contrast to the inner and outer bonds visualized during the performance.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an extensive catalog edited by Ingrid Pfeiffer and Max Hollein in cooperation with Jon Hendricks and published by the Prestel Verlag. The catalog provides an overview of the artist’s oeuvre as well as numerous essays whose authors examine various thematic complexes within her overall concept, including film, music, and “intermedia” – with in-depth articles by Kathleen Bühler, Jörg Heiser, Jon Hendricks, Ingrid Pfeiffer, and Kerstin Skrobaneck and a biography of Yoko Ono by Lisa Beißwanger.

The retrospective conceived by the Schirn Kunsthalle will be presented later on at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, the Kunsthalle Krems, and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.

SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT

CATALOG: Yoko Ono. Half-A-Wind Show. A Retrospective. Edited by Ingrid Pfeiffer and Max Hollein in cooperation with Jon Hendricks. Preface by Max Hollein, essays by Kathleen Bühler, Jörg Heiser, Jon Hendricks, Ingrid Pfeiffer, and Kerstin Skrobanek. German and English editions, 208 pages, approx. 280 color plates, designed by Harold Vits, Mannheim; Prestel Verlag, Munich, 2013, ISBN 978-3-7913-6459-9 (German edition), ISBN 978-3-7913-6460-5 (English edition), price: approx. 29.80 € (Schirn), 39.95 € (bookshops), also available as an e-book.

VENUE: SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, Römerberg, D-60311 Frankfurt. **EXHIBITION DATES:** February 15 – May 12, 2013. **OPENING HOURS:** Tue, Fri–Sun 10 a.m. – 7 p.m., Wed and Thurs 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. **INFORMATION:** www.schirn.de, E-Mail: welcome@schirn.de, phone: +49.69.29 98 82-0, fax: +49.69.29 98 82-240. **ADMISSION:** 9 €, reduced admission price 7 €, family ticket 18 €; combined ticket with the exhibition “Last Works. From Manet to Kippenberger” 16 €, reduced admission price 12 €; free admission for children under eight years. **PUBLIC GUIDED TOURS:** Wed 8 p.m., Thurs 7 p.m., Fri 11 a.m. Sat 3 p.m., Sun 5 p.m. **CURATOR:** Dr. Ingrid Pfeiffer. **ASSISTANT CURATOR:** Lisa Beißwanger. **SPONSORED BY:** Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain, Dr. Marschner Stiftung. **MEDIA PARTNERS:** Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Rolling Stone, Scholz & Volkmer, VGF – Verkehrsgesellschaft Frankfurt am Main, hr1. **MOBILITY PARTNER:** Deutsche Bahn. **SPARPREIS KULTUR:** Travel with Deutsche Bahn to the exhibition and back within three days from 39 € with ICE/EC/IC from all railway stations within Germany. For further information please see www.bahn.de/kultur. **ONLINE MAGAZINE:** www.schirn-magazin.de.

PRESS OFFICE Axel Braun (Head of Press/Public Relations), Markus Farr (Press Spokesman), Carolyn Meyding (Press Officer), Simone Krämer (Press Officer). **SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT**, Römerberg, D-60311 Frankfurt, **PHONE:** +49.69.29 98 82-148, **FAX:** +49.69.29 98 82-240, **E-MAIL:** presse@schirn.de, www.schirn.de (texts, images and films for download under **PRESS**), www.schirn-magazin.de