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Yoko Ono with *Glass Hammer*, 1967. © Yoko Ono. Photo by and © Clay Perry.

Multimedia material:

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MCA Chicago shares birthday celebration programming for *Yoko Ono: Music of the Mind*

CHICAGO—The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is thrilled to announce birthday programming celebrating the titular artist of *Yoko Ono: Music of the Mind*, which closes on February 22, 2026. Organized by Tate Modern in London—where it enjoyed record attendance—and produced in close collaboration with Ono's Studio One, this groundbreaking retrospective covers seventy years of Yoko Ono's (b. 1933, Tokyo, Japan; lives in New York) trailblazing career, featuring over 200 works including participatory instruction pieces and scores, installations, performance, a curated music room, films, music, photography, and archival materials. The upcoming birthday programs include [A Day for Yoko Ono](#), taking place February 7 from 12 to 6 pm, and [A Night for Yoko Ono](#), taking place February 18 at 7:30 pm.

A Day for Yoko Ono will include a rare staging of Ono's influential *Cut Piece* (1967), a participatory work that invites the audience to slowly cut away the clothing of the performer. Performed live by artist Anna Martine Whitehead, the piece will be followed by a screening of the influential short film collection *Fluxfilm Anthology* and a talk to cap the day-long event. A Night for Yoko Ono will be the live finale of *Music of the Mind*, taking place on the evening of Yoko Ono's 93rd birthday. At this musical tribute, Northwestern University's Contemporary Music Ensemble will perform John Cage and Ono's iconic 1965 score *Sky Piece to Jesus Christ*, in which the musicians are progressively wrapped in gauze until their playing is silenced.

In addition to official birthday programming, museum guests will also have the opportunity to fill out their own birthday wishes to Ono at a kiosk on the MCA's second floor. These wishes will be collected and sent to Ono's studio.

Yoko Ono: Music of the Mind was organized by Tate Modern, London, in collaboration with Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf. It was curated by Juliet Bingham, Curator, International Art, Tate Modern; Patrizia Dander, Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs, Gropius Bau; and Andrew de Brún, Assistant Curator, International Art, Tate Modern. The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago presentation is curated by Jamillah James, Manilow Senior Curator, with Korina Hernandez, Curatorial Assistant, in close collaboration with Yoko Ono's Studio One.

Timed tickets are available for purchase online or at walk-up. Booking ahead of time is strongly encouraged. Please visit mcachicago.org for more information.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Yoko Ono (b. 1933, Tokyo) is an artist, musician, and activist whose pioneering work has shaped the course of contemporary art, music, and performance for more than seventy years.

Raised in Japan, with periods spent abroad in San Francisco and New York, she was the first woman admitted to the philosophy program at Gakushuin University in Tokyo before moving to New York in 1953 to attend Sarah Lawrence College. In 1956, she settled in Manhattan with her then husband, composer Toshi Ichihyanagi. Immersed in a community of artists and composers, Ono developed her own art practice, often in the form of instructions that invited the viewer's participation.

In 1960, she rented a loft on Chambers Street in Lower Manhattan where, with composer La Monte Young, she organized performances and events that became a vital part of an emerging New York art and music scene. Her first solo exhibition followed in 1961 at George Maciunas and Almus Salcius' AG Gallery, featuring her *Instruction Paintings*, such as *Painting to Be Stepped On*. Later that year, she gave a performance at Carnegie Recital Hall that included works involving movement, sound, and voice, such as, *AOS – To David Tudor* and *A Grapefruit in the World of Park*.

In March 1962, Ono returned to Tokyo, presenting new performances at the Sogetsu Art Center, including *The Pulse*, and exhibiting her *Instructions for Paintings*. Evolving from the canvases shown at AG Gallery, these works consisted solely of written instructions, replacing the physical artwork with the idea itself, marking a decisive moment in the emergence of conceptual art. Later that year, she performed with John Cage and David Tudor on a concert tour throughout

Japan. In 1964, Ono performed *Cut Piece* and *Bag Piece* in Kyoto and Tokyo, and self-published *Grapefruit*, her seminal book of instructions.

Returning to New York in late 1964, Ono continued to perform, stage events, and pioneer new ways of disseminating her art through advertising and postcard events. She also continued writing instruction-based film scripts and making her own films, including *Film No. 4*, *Film No. 1* (*'Match'*) and *Eyeblink / Fluxfilm No. 15*.

Invited to London in September 1966 to perform and lecture in the *Destruction in Art Symposium* at the Africa Centre, Ono remained there for several years. She exhibited at Indica Gallery and Lisson Gallery, presenting new conceptual object-based works such as *White Chess Set*, *Apple*, and *Half-A-Room*, while continuing to make films—including a new version of *Film No. 4* (*'Bottoms'*)—and giving a series of performances on her concert tour *Music of the Mind*. At her Indica Gallery exhibition, she met John Lennon, beginning a personal and artistic relationship in art, music, and activism.

By 1969, Ono and Lennon's peace initiatives—such as *WAR IS OVER! If you want it* campaign and the *Bed-In for Peace* in Amsterdam and Montreal—were international news. Through these events, Ono extended her conceptual practice into a framework for political and social imagination, transforming art into platforms for global activism.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s Ono and Lennon's activities centered on music, film, and activism. Over the span of five years, Ono released four solo albums and four collaborative albums with Lennon, while also making multiple films, including *FLY*, *Freedom*, *"RAPE"*, *Apotheosis*, and *Imagine*. In 1971 Ono had her first museum retrospective, *This Is Not Here*, at the Everson Art Museum, and staged her unofficial conceptual exhibition, *Museum of Modern [F]art* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In 1973, Ono and Lennon announced the founding of *Nutopia*, a conceptual country with “no land, no boundaries, no passports, only people.” Two years later, the birth of their son, Sean Ono Lennon, influenced the couple's decision to withdraw from public life. In 1980, they returned to the studio to record their first album together since 1972. *Double Fantasy* was released that November, winning the 1981 Grammy Award for Album of the Year. Less than a month after its release, Lennon was assassinated outside their home in New York.

Emerging from this loss, Ono immersed herself in making music, releasing several albums during the 1980s. “It was the music that made me survive,” she reflected. After a long absence from exhibiting her art in museums and galleries, her 1989 solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, *Yoko Ono: Objects, Film*, signaled a renewed recognition and interest in her work.

In 2000 the retrospective *Yes Yoko Ono*, originating at the Japan Society Gallery in New York, toured to thirteen international venues over four years. In 2007, Ono unveiled the *IMAGINE PEACE TOWER* on Videy, an island off the coast of Reykjavik, Iceland, giving a permanent home to her and Lennon's long-standing commitment to world peace. In 2009, she received the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the 53rd Venice Biennale. That same year, Ono released *Between My Head and the Sky*, her first Plastic Ono Band album since 1973. In 2018, Ono released her thirteenth solo album, *Warzone*.

Ono's work has continued to be honored with numerous exhibitions at some of the world's most prestigious venues, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2015), Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2015), Tate Modern, London (2024), and Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2025).

In a career spanning more than seventy years, Ono's work as an artist and activist remains singularly relevant, continually reshaping the boundaries between artist and audience.

SUPPORT

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Performances during *Yoko Ono: Music of the Mind* are generously supported by the Zell Family Foundation.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART CHICAGO

The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The MCA interweaves exhibitions, performances, collections, and educational programs while providing a place for audiences to contemplate and discuss contemporary art in pursuit of a creative and diverse future. The MCA believes in the values of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) as a platform to enact structural change. The museum is generously supported by its Board of Trustees; individual and corporate members; private and corporate foundations, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and government agencies. The MCA acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council. The MCA is a proud member of Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District.

[The MCA is located at 220 E. Chicago Avenue](#) and is open 10 am to 5 pm Wednesday to Sunday and Tuesdays from 10 am to 9 pm. Tuesday evenings (5-9 pm) are free for Illinois residents. The museum is closed on Mondays. Admission is free for all youth 18 and under, members of the military and veterans, and MCA members. Free admission for anyone 18 and under is generously provided by the Lefkowsky Free Under 18 Fund. Find more information about MCA's exhibitions, programs, and special events at mcachicago.org or 312.280.2660.



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