

Fluxus Heidelberg Center BLOG

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FRIDAY, AUGUST 22, 2008

Yoko Ono in Kunsthalle Bielefeld (Germany)



Several cat sculptures called 'Bastet' created by artist Yoko Ono are shown at Kunsthalle Bielefeld. EFE/Oliver Krato.

BIELEFELD, GERMANY.-Yoko Ono, born in 1933 in Tokyo, is one of the pioneers of Conceptual Art. In 1952, she became one of the first women in Japan to study philosophy. In 1953 she took composition courses at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, NY, and studied creative writing at Harvard. In the mid-1950s, Yoko Ono lived in New York City, where she knew John Cage, and many other artists and composers. In 1960, she rented a loft on Chambers Street, and together with La Monte Young, organized a series of concerts, attended not only by young musicians and artists, including Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns and Fluxus founder George Maciunas, but also by Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Peggy Guggenheim, and Isamu Noguchi.

On her mother's side, Ono is a member of one of Japan's most respected families, and so, as a child, she attended a school for members of the Japanese imperial family. Her father, who originally intended to be a pianist before he ultimately became a leading Japanese banker, insisted she take piano and voice lessons at an early age. Her parents and relatives acknowledged that Yoko had a strong will and an irrepressible desire for freedom. The lengthiest publication on the artist to date says that her main intention was "to think the unthinkable—and then do it." After beginning a relationship with John Lennon in 1967, Ono began working on no less an ambition than to bring inner peace to different peoples. Representing one of her chief messages, her work Imagine Peace will be presented in front of the Bielefeld Kunsthalle.

As a young artist, Ono left New York in the early nineteen-sixties in order to return to Japan. During this period she performed several concerts with John Cage and the pianist David Tudor. In 1962 at the Sogetsu Art Center in Tokyo, she began hanging texts, instead of the pictures she had shown in

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1961 at the AG Gallery in New York. Her work in conceptual art manifested in the famous collection of works, Grapefruit, which she first published herself on July 4, 1964 in Tokyo. It went on to be published in several editions. Some of the works in it date back to 1953. The book divided her oeuvre into chapters dealing with music, painting, happenings, poetry, and objects, documenting her affinity for all categories of art. To this day, she has remained interested in the process of tearing apart various forms of presentational media to the point where their boundaries dissolve.

Therefore, for the 2008 exhibition in Bielefeld (featuring a selection of Ono's work from 1961 to the present), works placed outside the museum will relate to the city itself. One of these will be a Wish Tree. The Wish Tree differs greatly from the "wish pieces" in Japanese temple gardens or the "fortunes" in Chinese fortune cookies. While those preprinted prayers and fortunes are materialistic, the Wish Trees invite the public to express hopes and dreams. Just before the opening of the exhibition, children and teens from three schools in Bielefeld will hang their wishes on a selected tree outside the Johnson building.

A Golden Ladder, which is an allegory for the exhibition's title, Between the Sky and My Head, will be installed in the Kunsthalle park. The work is an imaginary, spiritual space centered between sky and earth. Since Ono works not only with grand dreams, but also with poetic visions of how one can change, she plans a third work that will take place outside the Kunsthalle. It will be the realization of a work she originally noted down in 1962: titled Riding Piece "Ride a coffin car all over the city." During the run of the show, visitors to the Kunsthalle can decide to be chauffeured around the city in a hearse for a short time.

Inside the Kunsthalle, visitors will experience three floors of sculptures, paintings, drawings, photographs, films, and sound installations. An interview with the artist, filmed in Bielefeld, will accompany the exhibition. One of the earliest works is Cough Piece, first written down in 1961; and Keep Coughing a Year, a sound installation featuring the artist's cough and other sounds, will be heard in dark rooms. Laughing and coughing were important anchors in Ono's work at the time she began creating conceptual art: they considerably expand the sense of time during a performance. In the entrance to the Kunsthalle is Play It by Trust, a chess game that has been set up several times in various places since 1966. In Bielefeld, it will be in marble, with chess pieces one meter high, on a surface measuring five by five meters. One can imagine playing the game with the heavy, fragile marble pieces, all of which are white. Morning Beams, consisting of one hundred nylon threads running throughout all of the floors of the Kunsthalle, illuminates the twelve-meter-high staircase. Since the mid-1990s, Ono has been working with ink on paper, and the show will feature a drawing called Franklin Summer. Other pieces in the exhibition include a labyrinth made of Plexiglas, titled Amaze; the famous film Fly, showing a fly on a woman's body in a six-part installation; and a participatory piece, My Mommy is Beautiful, in which visitors are invited to put photographs and other thoughts of their mothers onto the bare canvas of the work, or other feelings that they themselves write.

Yoko Ono. Between the Sky and My Head will be accompanied by an exhibition catalogue. To celebrate the re-opening of the sculpture park on 27 September, 2008, at 6 p.m., the work Golden Ladder, made in Bielefeld at Ono's behest, will be installed on a temporary basis.

Yoko Ono. Between the Sky and My Head will run until 16 November, 2008, and is sponsored by the Kulturstiftung Pro Bielefeld

source: http://www.artdaily.org/index.asp?int_sec=11&int_new=25698



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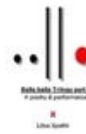
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