

Press Release
The Montreal
Museum
of Fine Arts



IMAGINE

The Peace Ballad of John & Yoko

**Exclusively at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
April 2 to June 21, 2009**

Free admission at all times

“It’s time for Action. Action is Peace. I love you!” Yoko, March 2009

Montreal, March 31, 2009 – In 1969, John Lennon and Yoko Ono’s famous Bed-in, held from May 26 to June 2 in Suite 1742 of Montreal’s Queen Elizabeth Hotel, made headlines around the world. Forty years later, from April 2 to June 21, 2009, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is celebrating this legendary event with *Imagine: The Peace Ballad of John & Yoko*, a multidisciplinary exhibition, designed and mounted by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts under the direction of Nathalie Bondil, and organized in close collaboration with Yoko Ono, who will be honoured at this year’s Venice Biennale. The exhibition is presented exclusively in Montreal. Rekindling the philosophy behind John Lennon and Yoko Ono’s commitment for today’s world, this comprehensive exhibition provides a picture of the historical and political context in 1969 that formed the backdrop to the Bed-in, as well as explore the wide-ranging artistic and musical dialogue in the name of peace conducted by the pop icon and the conceptual artist with ties to the Fluxus group. In order to enable the widest possible public to understand, be moved by and perpetuate this still-topical peace message, **admission to the exhibition is free at all times.**

Some 140 works, drawings, unpublished photographs, videos, films, artworks and interactive materials convey the famous couple’s message of universal peace. Furthermore, visitors will be able to play “Imagine” on a white piano with a Disklavier sound system, write down their wishes and tie them to Yoko Ono’s *Wish Tree*, stamp “Imagine Peace” on maps of the world, read the works of certain Nobel Peace Prize winners in the Peace Library, play chess with *Play It by Trust* and, once a day at an unspecified time, speak on the phone with Yoko Ono.

Just as in the exhibition *Warhol Live*, sound, at once an emotional and educational conduit, occupies a privileged position within this exhibition. This soundscape closely reflects the entire thrust of the exhibition. From one gallery to another, John and Yoko whisper, murmur, speak, sing, shout, call each other and, most of all, remind us that they often acted as one. For the first time ever, it will be possible to hear little known excerpts of conversations between the two artists during the recording of songs like “Give Peace a Chance” (three different versions were recorded), as well as media interviews, video excerpts from the 1960s for such anthems as “Power to the People” and “I Dont Wanna Be a Soldier.” The soundscape also corresponds to the record covers, which are at once artistic and autobiographical statements.

“The Museum is offering a spring of peace,” explains Nathalie Bondil. “Thanks to the participation of Yoko Ono, this exhibition, while commemorating the 1969 Bed-in, which took place in Montreal, renews their pacifist action in the present, an action made all the more relevant given the current state of the world. In solidarity, an incredible number of businesses, suppliers and partners have decided to support this project by offering their services for free, so as to spread this universal message, which, it goes without saying, extends beyond the walls of this institution. I am very touched to report that this inclusive and collaborative approach is gathering great momentum, transforming this event into a collective Montreal work and a socially engaged action, with all of us rallying around the same philosophy.”

Made possible through Yoko Ono’s loan of many exceptional works, the exhibition retraces the story of these two major figures, from their meeting in 1966 to their first creations promoting peace, which culminated in the May 1969 Bed-in during which “Give Peace a Chance” was recorded. It examines the legacy of such anthemic songs as 1971’s “Imagine” and “Power to the People,” as well as the politically engaged 1972 album *Some Time in New York City*.

ORGANIZATION OF THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition comprises eight sections organized on a thematic and chronological basis. The **Introduction** presents the life of John Lennon and Yoko Ono. **The 1966 Meeting** reveals the circumstances in which John and Yoko met, and John’s discovery through Yoko of the American counterculture and conceptual art. In **Four-Handed Works 1969-1971**, we follow the rich artistic dialogue that developed between John and Yoko. In 1968, they presented their first happening and John had his first solo exhibition; the Plastic Ono Band was born. **The 1969 Bed-In** follows John Lennon’s engagement in protests against the Vietnam War, in the tradition of Martin Luther King, Jr., and of Ghandi: the Bed-in as political forum, the stage for experimental art and even a recording studio. **War Is Over if You Want It! 1969** traces the international advertising campaign championing peace in twelve cities worldwide. **Imagine 1971:** John Lennon and Yoko Ono’s political message comes through on the album *Imagine*, the second of John Lennon’s solo albums offering a new dream of a peaceful world. **Some Time in New York City – 1971-1972:** John and Yoko settled in New York, where they hung out with Bob Dylan, Jerry Rubbin and Abbie Hoffman, as well as the leftist leaders of the Youth International party and the Black Panther Party. They played active roles in many political protests and recorded *Some Time in New York City*, an echo of their political activism. This was also the year they were expelled from the United States. John Lennon had to wait four years to receive his green card, which affected his relationship with Yoko as well

as his political activism. The two last galleries of the exhibition, **Imagine Peace**, invite visitors to become agents of peaceful change by engaging with Yoko Ono's art and poetic installations, such as *Play It by Trust* and *White Chess Piece*. The *Wish Tree* offers visitors a moment of rest and meditation, while the Peace Library invites them to explore the many works by a great number of authors who have written on the theme of peace and to discover the images of the *Imagine Peace Tower* (2007). Once a day, certain visitors may be surprised to find themselves conversing briefly on the phone with Yoko Ono.

A BIT OF BACKGROUND

Following their wedding at the British Consulate in Gibraltar on March 20, 1969 – itself a performance/statement in a youth culture rejecting the traditional institution of marriage – John Lennon and Yoko Ono flew to Amsterdam to devote their honeymoon to the first Bed-in for peace, from March 25 to 31, at that city's Hilton Hotel. Their second Bed-in, which could not be held in the United States since John Lennon was denied entry, was staged in Montreal from May 26 to June 2, involving LSD guru Timothy Leary, singer Petula Clark, Rabbi Abraham Feinberg and hundreds of reporters. Knowing that their honeymoon would be a magnet for paparazzi, the couple decided to turn it into a public event to advance the cause of peace. The normally private, personal bed became a public stage, a podium, a forum where, dressed in pyjamas, they explained their perspective on the Vietnam War to the world's press.

On December 15, 1969, John Lennon and Yoko Ono launched an international advertising campaign for peace in twelve of the world's major cities: Athens, Berlin, Hong Kong, London, Los Angeles, New York, Paris, Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago), Rome, Tokyo, Toronto and, once again, Montreal. Huge billboards in each national language went up in strategic locations, proclaiming "WAR IS OVER! If you want it. Happy Christmas from John and Yoko." The format varied with the available space, ranging from immense billboards in New York's Times Square to posters and handout flyers, all bearing the same message. The campaign kicked off with the "Peace for Christmas" benefit for UNICEF at London's Lyceum Theatre on that same December 15, with the Plastic Ono Band assembling George Harrison, Eric Clapton, Klaus Voormann and Keith Moon of the Who for the occasion. The following day, John and Yoko took the peace campaign to Toronto, and met with Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada. On December 21, an ad with their "War is over" message appeared in the *New York Times*.

The Bed-in was the high point of John Lennon and Yoko Ono's actions for peace, which owed their efficacy to both communications strategies and contemporary performance art issues. Like their performances, these uncategorizable actions were generally rejected as gags or self-promoting theatrics by publicity-hungry stars. In the same vein as Andy Warhol founding *Interview* magazine or Joseph Beuys and the German Green Party, the couple demonstrated a keen awareness of how to use and channel popularity and manipulate the media.

YOKO ONO

Today, Yoko Ono is still actively pursuing the career in art she began close to fifty years ago. The latest retrospective of her work, *Between the Sky and My Head*, was recently presented in Germany and is currently on show in England. In 2004, she mounted a controversial exhibition of photographs depicting parts of women's bodies. Born in Japan, this avant-garde

artist associated with the Fluxus movement has never ceased to promote peace in her works, from those in the 1966 Indica Gallery exhibition where she first met John Lennon, to those shown throughout the world today.

A “conscientious objector” during a time of societal and political crisis throughout the world, John Lennon, along with his muse and alter ego, Yoko Ono, sang a message of hope and tolerance that sought the transformation of violence into peace, and hate and racism into love. Forty years after the iconic Montreal Bed-in, this four-handed work composed by John Lennon and Yoko Ono still speaks to us today. The tremendous explosion of media and public attention that surrounded “Beatlemania” often overshadowed the innermost voice of John Lennon, who, even as a child, believed he would be an artist and poet who would use a gift for words and humour and the power of a somewhat surrealistic imagination to build a world of magic again. *Imagine*, far from consigning the artist to the past, will endeavour to make his creative process come alive and let the voice of this extraordinary witness to his times be heard.

Peace activist Yoko Ono is being awarded a prestigious Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement on June 6, 2009, at this year's Venice Biennale.

"The work of Yoko Ono has revolutionized the language of art and will remain a source of inspiration for generations to come." AFP

CURATORS

Emma Lavigne is curator in the Department of Contemporary and Emerging Art at the Musée national d'art moderne–Centre Pompidou. Formerly curator of twentieth-century music at Paris's Cité de la musique, she has curated a number of exhibitions exploring: the relationship between music and contemporary art, including *Electric Body* and *Espace Odyssée*; rock and the contemporary music scene in *Jimi Hendrix Backstage*, *Pink Floyd Interstellar* and *John Lennon: Unfinished Music*, presented from October 2005 to June 2006 at the Cité de la musique, an exhibition which enabled her to forge closer ties with Yoko Ono; and the work of artists like Chen Zhen, Saâdane Afif, Dominique Gonzales-Foerster. Most recently, she presented the work of video and sound artist Christian Marclay in the exhibition *Replay* at Montreal's DHC/Art Fondation pour l'art contemporain. She was also co-curator of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts exhibition *Warhol Live*.

Emma Lavigne is assisted by **Thierry Planelle**, an art director and sound designer. Formerly art director at Virgin Music/EMI and visual and sound creative director for Virgin France, he now designs soundtracks for the showings of the Hermès and Jean Paul Gaultier fashion collections. An independent producer for the Maturity Music label, he is also a founding member of Paris's Radio Nova. In addition, he collaborated on the exhibition *John Lennon: Unfinished Music* at the Cité de la musique. Recently, he created the aural design for the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts exhibition *Warhol Live*.

The exhibition will also benefit from the collaboration of Thierry Loriot, Research Assistant in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts' Curatorial Department, and Karla Merrifield, Yoko Ono's archivist.

Éric Daoust, from the Montreal agency Bosses Design, is responsible for the design of the exhibition. Graphic design is by Philippe Legris.

A *microsite of peace* (www.mmfa.qc.ca/Imagine) contains many texts as well as images of the galleries. Those interested may also visit Yoko Ono's Web site (www.imaginepeace.com).

SPONSORS

The exhibition *Imagine: the Peace Ballad of John & Yoko* benefits from the financial support of Amel Chamandy from NuEdge Gallery.

The exhibition is presented in partnership with METRO.

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts would like to thank Air Canada and the Société de transport de Montréal (STM), as well as its media partners, *La Presse* and *The Gazette*, Astral Media, Transcontinental, AMEN and Mouvement Art Public. The Museum also wishes to express its gratitude to the Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine du Québec, the Conseil des arts de Montréal and the Canada Council for the Arts for their continuing support.

This exhibition has been made possible thanks to the collaboration of a number of partners, which have offered their services free of charge to support this peace project. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts would like to thank Baldwin, Meyer Sound, Archambault, the Museum's Volunteer Association, Le Méridien Versailles–Montréal, Côté Jardin, the Café des beaux-arts, Archives Radio-Canada, *Le Devoir*, Version Image Plus, Solotech, Sico, Marcil, L.L. Lozeau, Plastic Alto, Bosses Design, Masterpiece, Benoît Desjardins, Koa Construction, Transport Art Solution, LP Art, Luxtex, Lamcom, Contact Image, Philippe Legris, Kyle, Extension and Exo7.

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts' International Exhibition Programme receives financial support from the Exhibition Fund of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Foundation and the Paul G. Desmarais Fund.

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Images of works are available on the Museum's Web site at mmfa.qc.ca/media

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MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE MONTRÉAL
THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

IMAGINE

The Peace Ballad of John & Yoko

THE EXHIBITION'S THEMES

INTRODUCTION

A “conscientious objector” during a period of societal and political crisis throughout the world, John Lennon, along with his muse and alter ego Yoko Ono, sang a message of hope and tolerance that sought the transformation of violence into peace, and hate and racism into love. Today, the work they carried out together has not lost any of its resonance. This exhibition invites you to explore all the facets of the musical, artistic and political collaboration whose works so closely reflected the spirit of their time yet still speak to us today. Although Yoko Ono’s loan of these exceptional works has allowed this look at a chapter of history to be put together, the past. Indeed, this avant-garde artist of Japanese origin associated with the Fluxus and conceptual art movements has never ceased to promote peace in her works. This exhibition will retrace the story of these two major figures, from their meeting in 1966 to their first creations promoting peace, which culminated in the May 1969 *Bed-in*. It will examine the legacy of such anthemic songs as 1971’s “Imagine” and “Power to the People,” or such albums as 1972’s politically engaged *Some Time in New York City*.

THE 1966 MEETING

In 1966, the year that the Beatles made the radical decision to stop touring, John Lennon was attracted by the new artistic horizons opened by Yoko Ono, who gradually introduced him to the work of the American avant-garde: the films of Jonas Mekas and Andy Warhol, free jazz and the music of John Cage. He first met Ono in November 1966, at a preview of her exhibition *Unfinished Paintings and Objects* at London’s Indica Gallery. He had been invited by the gallery’s owner, John Dunbar, Marianne Faithfull’s husband and a key figure on the London art scene at the time. It was then that Lennon discovered the world of that conceptual artist and the imagination and humour that so closely resonated with his own intellectual and artistic ambitions: “Imagine two cars of the same make heading towards each other and they’re gonna crash, head-on. Well, it’s like one of those scenes from a film—they’re doing 100 miles an hour, they both slam their brakes on and there’s smoke everywhere and they stop just in the nick of time with their bumpers almost touching but not quite. That’s what it was like the first time I met her.” Lennon immediately joined in the game of

Ono's *Instruction* pieces, which provided viewers with directions on how to create the works in their imaginations

FOUR-HANDED WORKS 1968–1971

The avant-garde experiments conducted with Yoko Ono as of 1968, even though heavily covered—and criticized—in the media, became the hidden side of John Lennon's work; he no less continued to produce, along with Paul McCartney, the masterpieces that were the albums *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, *Magical Mystery Tour*, *The Beatles (The White Album)*, *Abbey Road* and, finally, the swan song of a collaboration begun in 1958, *Let It Be*. In 1970, he pronounced his official goodbye to the foursome with the song "God": "I don't believe in Beatles / I just believe in me / Yoko and me / That's reality / What can I say? / The dream is over." He had embarked on a new dream with Yoko Ono, a fertile artistic dialogue whose aesthetic, uniting a novel blend of pop culture and the avant-garde, would prefigure some of the era's most radical experiments. In 1969 the couple formed the conceptual group the Plastic Ono Band, of which they were the two official members. Various musicians, including Keith Moon of the Who, Eric Clapton, George Harrison and Ringo Starr, joined the couple on different albums. If many of John Lennon's original fans viewed this transition as a sacrilege, it was a natural progression for Lennon who, just before his untimely end, remembered that their first "attempts at being together and producing things together, whether they were bed-ins, posters or films, we crossed over into each other's fields, like people do from country music to pop . . . We tried to find a ground that was interesting to both of us. And we both got excited and stimulated by each other's experiences."

THE BED-IN 1969

"Henry Ford knew how to sell cars by advertising. I'm selling peace, and Yoko and I are just one big advertising campaign. It may make people laugh, but it may make them think, too. Really, we're Mr. and Mrs. Peace," said John Lennon during the famous 1969 Bed-in in Montreal that truly launched their peace campaign. Following their wedding at the British Consulate in Gibraltar on March 20, 1969, John Lennon and Yoko Ono flew to Paris, from where they made their way to Amsterdam to devote their honeymoon to the first Bed-in for peace, from March 25 to 31, at that city's Hilton Hotel. Their second Bed-in, which could not be held in the United States since John Lennon was denied entry, was staged in Montreal at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Room 1742, from May 26 to June 2, involving LSD guru Timothy Leary, singer Petula Clark, Rabbi Abraham Feinberg and hundreds of reporters. Knowing that their honeymoon would be a magnet for paparazzi—in 1964 two businessmen had bought up Kansas City hotel sheets used by the Beatles and cut them into 160,000 pieces to sell for one dollar each—the couple decided to turn it into a public event to advance the cause of peace. The normally private, personal bed became a public stage, a podium, a forum from which, dressed in pyjamas, they explained their perspective on the Vietnam War to the world's press. This event was in the passive resistance tradition of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, albeit reflecting the hippie sit-ins of the late 1960s. But it differed due to a conceptual dimension that, in an age where "attitudes became form," made it into a performance questioning the notions of identity and privacy, space and time. At the Montreal Bed-in, the bedroom served in turn as a political forum, an experimental art space and a recording studio for the worldwide hit pacifist anthem "Give Peace a

Chance,” recorded on June 1, 1969, with voices including those of local Hare Krishna temple members.

WAR IS OVER! IF YOU WANT IT 1969

On December 15, 1969, John Lennon and Yoko Ono launched an international advertising campaign for peace in twelve of the world’s major cities: Athens, Berlin, Hong Kong, London, Los Angeles, Montreal, New York, Paris, Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago), Rome, Tokyo and Toronto. Huge billboards in each national language went up in strategic locations, proclaiming “WAR IS OVER! If you want it. Happy Christmas from John & Yoko.” The format varied with the available space, ranging from immense billboards in New York’s Times Square to posters and handout flyers, all bearing the same message. The campaign kicked off with the “Peace for Christmas” benefit for UNICEF at London’s Lyceum Theatre on that same December 15, with the Plastic Ono Band assembling George Harrison, Eric Clapton, Klaus Voormann and Keith Moon of the Who for the occasion. The following day, John Lennon and Yoko Ono took the peace campaign to Toronto, and met with Canadian prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. On December 21, an ad with their “war is over” message appeared in the *New York Times*. The “War Is Over” peace campaign continued in 1971 with the song “Happy Xmas (War Is Over),” recorded with the children of the Harlem Community Choir. Again taking up the “war is over! If you want it” message in its chorus, it was a worldwide hit. No longer a simple example of artistic expression, the song has gone down in history as a radical action, a manifesto of politically committed art, a precursor of artist Jenny Holzer’s advertising sign aphorisms criticizing consumer society and the work of Barbara Kruger, among others.

IMAGINE 1971

John Lennon and Yoko Ono’s political commitment resounds throughout the magnificent *Imagine*, Lennon’s second solo album, which offers the world a new dream—that of a world at peace. “If you can imagine a world at peace, with no denominations of religion—not without religion, but without this “my God is bigger than your God” thing—then it can be true.” In March 1971 Lennon wrote the album’s title song, its lyrics inspired by the Yoko Ono book *Grapefruit*. “In it are a lot of pieces saying imagine this, imagine that,” he remembered. “Yoko actually helped me a lot with the lyrics, but I wasn’t man enough to let her have credit for it . . . I was still full of wanting my own space after being in a room with the guys all the time, having to share everything.” Recorded in one week by the two of them, along with the legendary Phil Spector, at their Tittenhurst Park home, this last album before their American exile has over the years emerged as the great classic of Lennon’s solo career. The couple chose personal, dreamlike images to illustrate the album’s ten songs in the film *Imagine*. Shot throughout the summer and fall of 1971 in New York, London and Japan, *Imagine* was a complete change from the experimental films they had previously made. Originally intended to be shown on television when the album was released, the film was designed to provide visuals for the pre-existing soundtrack. As Yoko Ono declared, they just wanted to do whatever came into their heads day by day. The spontaneity of certain improvised scenes and the surrealistic atmosphere of the sequences shot on the grounds of Tittenhurst Park imbued the film with a sure poetry echoing the album’s utopian

SOME TIME IN NEW YORK CITY 1971–1972

John Lennon and Yoko Ono settled in New York, which Lennon declared the Rome of the day. Following the period of creative seclusion at Tittenhurst Park, they discovered a stimulating artistic and political environment, became friendly with Bob Dylan again, spent time with Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman (the left-leaning leaders of the Youth International Party), got to know members of the Black Panther Party, supported the women's liberation movement ("Woman is the Nigger of the World"), and played an active role in many political demonstrations. In spring 1972, John Lennon and Yoko Ono went into the studio to record *Some Time in New York City*, which reflected their commitment to the causes of the far left, as well as addressed the violence in Northern Ireland. When, after months of harassment, US Immigration insistently asked them to leave the country, John Lennon and Yoko Ono came up with the idea of inventing a nation according to the principles set down in "Imagine." On April 1, 1973, they gave a press conference announcing the creation of NUTOPIA, "a conceptual country" that "has no land, no boundaries, no passports, only people." NUTOPIA was a country that belonged to everyone; its flag was a simple white handkerchief and the "Nutopian International Anthem," which appeared on the album *Mind Games*, consisted of a few seconds of silence. This conceptual country and silent anthem turned the page on the five years that Lennon and Ono's words and actions in favour of peace had sounded around the world. This new, blank page marked—until its tragically struck down renewal in 1980—the end of the musical and artistic dialogue they had begun in 1968. Following the tumult of what has been called his "lost weekend," Lennon, at peace with himself, away from the media in the solitude of the Dakota, created a new purpose for his life: to be the man beyond the icon.

"Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans," sang John Lennon on his last album, *Double Fantasy*, released after five years of silence in November 1980. One of its songs, "Watching the Wheels," as he shared with an interviewer, told how "the hardest thing is facing yourself. It's easier to shout 'Revolution' and 'Power to the People' than it is to look at yourself and try to find out what's real inside you and what isn't, when you're pulling the wool over your own eyes. That's the hardest one." On December 8, 1980, at the age of forty, John Lennon was assassinated at the entrance of his Dakota home.

IMAGINE PEACE

An avid chess player, Ono has made numerous objects based on a 1966 concept for an all-white chess set. Her simple alteration—painting the board and pieces a uniform white—derails any ordinary play of the game according to traditional rules. Instead, the players lose track of their pieces as the game progresses; ideally this leads to a shared understanding of their mutual concerns and a new relationship based on empathy rather than opposition. Peace is then attained on a small scale; perhaps the rules will even be revised so that the game can continue. While *Play it by Trust*, like *White Chess Set*, is of course closely related to Ono's consistent and varied activities toward the attainment of world peace, its one-on-one scenario is consistent with her wish that her work encourage each of us first to "deal with oneself." *White Chess Set*, which was at John Lennon and Yoko Ono's Tittenhurst Park residence, appeared in the film *Imagine*: In the movie, the famous couple argue over a game played out on this chess set. The first version of this piece was made for

Ono's 1966 Indica Gallery exhibition and titled simply *Chess Set*. It consisted of a table whose surface was a chessboard made of alternating raised squares, a set of chess pieces, and two chairs, everything painted white. An accompanying sign attached to the table instructed viewers to play. Ono's interest in chess is contextually linked to that of Fluxus mentor Marcel Duchamp, who in the 1920s announced his withdrawal from art-making to pursue his passion for chess.

Yoko Ono's poetic installation *Wish Tree* is an extension of the exhibition, providing a quiet moment for peace and meditation. *Wish Tree* is the generic title of a series of works produced by Ono beginning in the 1990s that uses real trees as the components and linchpins of this conceptual project. For Ono, a work of art must create a desire and an investment on the part of the viewer: "All my works are a form of wishing. Keep wishing while you participate." She has often recounted how, as a child in Japan, she wrote her wishes on little pieces of paper that she would then hang on the branches of trees in temple courtyards. *Wish Tree* is also a reminder of Lennon and Ono's earlier performances from 1968 on as "peace gardeners" in the Acorn Events, symbolic gestures that involved sending acorns to heads of state and religious authorities around the world with an invitation to plant them as a sign of peace. The work encourages the public to meditate on the meaning of life and the importance of hope, wishes and dialogue. Small blank paper tags are made available so that visitors may become active participants; they are invited to inscribe their words on the tags and attach them to the branches of a *Wish Tree*. Finally, the Resource Centre offers a selection of books written by a number of authors committed to peace, alongside images of the *Imagine Peace Tower*, a beam of light and hope illuminating the Iceland sky, created by Yoko Ono in 2007.



MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE MONTRÉAL
THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

IMAGINE ***The Peace Ballad of John & Yoko***

JOHN & YOKO CHRONOLOGY OF YEAR 1969

March 20 – Unable to marry in Paris, where they had wanted to make their union official, John Lennon and Yoko Ono decide to go to Gibraltar, a British territory. The ceremony lasts only ten minutes. An hour later they are back in Paris for their honeymoon, which they continue in Amsterdam.

March 24 – As night falls, the couple arrives at the Amsterdam Hilton Hotel in a white Rolls-Royce.

March 25 to 31 – The newlyweds occupy the hotel’s presidential suite and begin their first Bed-in for peace. Journalists are invited to come see them every day from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

April – Lennon and Ono begin sending acorns to government leaders around the world, inviting them to plant them as symbols of peace. This same month, John changes his name to John Ono Lennon on the roof of the building housing his record label, Apple Records.

April 14 – The song that would become the Beatles’ last number-one hit, “The Ballad of John and Yoko,” is recorded.

May 9 – The album *Unfinished Music Volume 2: Life with the Lions* is released.

May 24 – Lennon and Ono wish to organize a second Bed-in in the United States. American authorities reject John’s visa application because of his arrest on drug possession charges the year before. They go to Canada instead.

May 25 – Arrival in Toronto. Canadian authorities subject the couple to a two-hour interrogation, trying to find out if they are terrorists, radicals or subversive agents. They are granted a ten-day visa. Offended, the couple decides to go to Montreal, a city known for its more liberal attitudes and which also puts them closer to the American media.

May 26 – A large group of fans awaits the couple at the Montreal airport. Immediately upon arriving they go to the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, where they will stay in Room 1742 for a week.

May 26 to June 2 – Hundreds of journalists and fans parade through the pacifist couple's hotel room. Many well-known people of the day visit them, including the "Pope" of LSD, Timothy Leary, the singer Petula Clark, the newspaper cartoonist Al Capp, the Montreal rabbi Abraham Feinberg and several members of the Radha Krishna temple in Montreal.

May 31 to June 1 – The song "Give Peace a Chance" is recorded this night by André Perry in Room 1742.

June 3 – Lennon and Ono are in Ottawa for the Seminar on World Peace with students and media. The future cabinet minister Allan Rock, then president of the University of Ottawa's student union, takes the couple to 24 Sussex Drive, the mythical residence of Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. In his absence, John leaves him a note expressing a desire to meet with him.

July 7 – The 45 rpm record of "Give Peace a Chance" is released in the United States. It reaches fourteenth spot on the Billboard chart.

September 26 – The album *Abbey Road* is released. Although it appears before *Let It Be*, it is the last album recorded by the Beatles. Lennon quits the group this same month.

November 7 – The *Wedding Album*, recorded by John Lennon and Yoko Ono with Phil Spector, is released. It is the last in a series of three experimental records made by the couple, with a single song on each side: "John & Yoko" on the A-side and "Amsterdam" on the B-side.

December 16 – The worldwide advertising campaign *War Is Over! If You Want It. Happy Christmas from John & Yoko* is launched. Billboards, posters and pages in newspapers display the slogan in Athens, Berlin, Hong Kong, London, Los Angeles, Montreal, New York, Paris, Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago), Rome, Tokyo and Toronto.

December 23 – The prime minister of Canada, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, receives the couple at his parliamentary office in Ottawa.



MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE MONTRÉAL
THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

IMAGINE ***The Peace Ballad of John & Yoko***

JOHN LENNON AND YOKO ONO'S CHRONOLOGIES

JOHN LENNON

October 9, 1940 – John Winston Lennon is born in Liverpool during a German air raid.

1956 – Lennon's mother gives him his first guitar. The Quarrymen, a group playing skiffle music (with blues and jazz influences), is formed. The following year Paul McCartney and George Harrison join the group.

1958 – After the death of his mother Julia, John Lennon learns to play musical instruments such as the banjo and the ukulele.

1960 – The Beatles is formed. After meeting some success in Liverpool, the group is invited to play in Hamburg.

1962 – Lennon marries Cynthia Powell, with whom he has a son, Julian, the following year.

1963 – Release of the Beatles' first studio album, *Please Please Me*.

1964 – The Beatles' first North American tour and an historic appearance on the *Ed Sullivan Show* on February 9 and 16. In April, Lennon publishes his first book, *In His Own Write*. Concerts at the Montreal Forum on September 8 and 9.

1965 – A second book, *A Spaniard in the Works*, is published. The Beatles album *Rubber Soul* is released.

1966 – The album *Revolver* is released and the final Beatles concert is held at Candlestick Park in San Francisco on August 29. Lennon meets Yoko Ono in London. He acts in Richard Lester's film *How I Won the War*.

1967 – The Beatles album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* is released.

1968 – Cynthia Powell and Lennon divorce. *The Beatles*, also known as the White Album, is released eleven days after Lennon and Ono's album *Two Virgins*.

1969 – The Beatles perform in January, on the roof of their record label's offices in the Apple building, for the film *Let It Be*. The Beatles album *Abbey Road* is released in September.

1970 – Fourteen drawings from Lennon's *Bag One* are exhibited in London. The Beatles officially break up in April.

1971 – Lennon leaves England. The album *Imagine* is released.

1973 – After his separation from Yoko Ono, John Lennon lives in Los Angeles for a few months. His album *Mind Games* is released.

1974 – The album *Walls and Bridges* is released.

1975 – After several years of attempts, Lennon obtains his green card from American immigration authorities. The album *Rock 'n' Roll* is released.

1980 – Returning from a recording session, John Lennon is murdered in New York on December 8.

JOHN AND YOKO

1966 – John Lennon meets the artist Yoko Ono at Indica Gallery in London on November 9.

1967 – Yoko Ono's exhibition *Half a Wind*, sponsored by John Lennon, is held at the Lisson Gallery in London.

1968 – Lennon and Ono's first experimental record album, *Unfinished Music No. 1: Two Virgins*, is released, showing the two nude on the cover. *Acorn Event* performance at Coventry Cathedral.

1969 – Lennon and Ono are married in Gibraltar in March. The album *Unfinished Music No. 2: Life with the Lions* is released. Amsterdam and Montreal Bed-ins; a conference for peace follows at the University of Ottawa. In September, the 45 rpm single "Cold Turkey" is released. At the *Rock and Roll Revival Festival* in Toronto in September, Ono spends the first part of the concert in a white bag (Bagism). The film of the concert, *Live Peace Toronto*, is released in December, a few days before the campaign *War Is Over! If You Want It* begins. The *Wedding Album* is released.

1970 – The album *Plastic Ono Band* is released.

1972 – In June, the album *Some Time in New York City* is released.

1973 – April 1: Nutopia declaration. Lennon and Ono separate for eighteen months; Lennon describes this period as his “lost weekend.” The album *Mind Games* is released.

1975 – On October 9, Sean Taro Ono Lennon is born on John Lennon’s thirty-fifth birthday.

1978 – The album *The Ballad of John and Yoko* is released.

1980 – The album *Double Fantasy* is released.

1984 – Posthumous release of Lennon’s album *Milk and Honey* in collaboration with Ono.

YOKO ONO

February 18, 1933 – Yoko Ono is born in Tokyo. Her father, a banker, is transferred to San Francisco six weeks before her birth.

1935 – Ono’s family settles in San Francisco, where she sees her father for the first time.

1937 – Return to Japan. Ono studies music at the prestigious Jiyu-gakuen Music School.

1945 – Air raids on Tokyo. The family takes shelter in a bunker and then flees to the countryside.

1951 – Yoko Ono becomes the first woman to be admitted to the philosophy program of Gakushuin University in Kyoto.

1952 – Ono returns to live with her family in Scarsdale, New York, and continues her studies in art and music at Sarah Lawrence College.

1956 – Ono marries the Japanese composer Toshi Ichiyanagi.

1961 – Ono’s first solo show, *Paintings and Drawings*, is held at the AG gallery in New York, run by George Maciunas, the founder of the Fluxus movement. As part of the first International Week of Today’s Music, she performs *A Grapefruit in the World of Park: A Piece for Strawberries and Violin* at the Comédie Canadienne theatre in Montreal.

1962 – Ono divorces Toshi Ichiyanagi and returns to Japan, where she exhibits her Instruction Paintings. She gives a series of performances at the Sougetsu Art Center in Tokyo.

1963 – Ono marries the filmmaker Anthony Cox. Kyoko Chan Cox is born.

1964 – Publication of the book *Grapefruit*. Ono moves to New York.

1965 – *Cut Piece* is performed at Carnegie Hall in New York. Following its success, Yoko Ono is invited to present her work the following year at the Indica Gallery in London, where she meets John Lennon.

1966 – Yoko Ono is invited to participate in the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS), organized in London by the artist Gustav Metzger. The exhibition *Unfinished Paintings and Objects* is held at the Indica Gallery in London.

1967 – She makes the film *No. 4 (Bottoms)* and performs her *Lion Wrapping Event* in Trafalgar Square, London.

1968 – *Bag Piece* performance in Paris. Yoko Ono appears on the *David Frost Show*, where she performs *Painting to Hammer a Nail* with the show's guests.

1971 – The album *Fly* is released.

1973 – The album *Feeling the Space* is released.

1981 – The album *Season of Glass* is released.

1986 – The “World Tour for Starpeace,” to promote the album *Starpeace* released this year.

1989 – The exhibition *Yoko Ono: Objects, Films* is held at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

1991 – Ono revives “Give Peace a Chance” to protest against the Gulf War.

2001 – The album *Blueprint for a Sunrise* is released.

2002 – A retrospective exhibition of Yoko Ono's work, entitled *Yes*, is held at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Art Gallery of Ontario.

2007 – The Imagine Peace Tower is inaugurated in Iceland. The album *Open Your Box* is released, with songs by Yoko Ono remixed by famous DJs.

2009 – On June 6, Yoko Ono will be awarded a Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at this year's Venice Biennale. In the words of the Biennale press release, Yoko Ono, wife of John Lennon, is a “pioneer in performance and conceptual art [and] 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.” Yoko Ono is awarded a lifetime achievement Gold Lion at the Venice Biennale.



MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE MONTRÉAL
THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

IMAGINE

The Peace Ballad of John & Yoko

THE WORLD BEFORE AND AFTER 1969

The Early 1960s

Profound socio-political changes begin to be felt around the world in the early 1960s. In Quebec, the Quiet Revolution brings rapid modernization to Quebec society. There are a few bumps along the road: the Front de libération du Québec carries out terrorist activities and violent protests are held. The Quebec Women's Federation is founded in 1966.

In the United States, two great currents stir up American society. The African-American Civil Rights Movement follows on the wave of decolonisation in African countries and the unrest in South Africa in the face of apartheid, which leads to the arrest of Nelson Mandela. The movement's leading figures are Stokely Carmichael (Black Power), Bobby Seale (the Black Panthers), Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, who delivers his "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963 and wins the Nobel Peace Prize in 1965. The peace movement, born during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, raises people's awareness of the threat of nuclear weapons; in 1962 Linus Pauling receives the Nobel Peace Prize for his campaign against nuclear-weapon testing. Protests against the war in Vietnam are the logical consequence; the first bombings and the arrival of American troops date from 1965, and the first protests are held in Washington that same year. In 1967, 100,000 come out to hear Martin Luther King speak in front of the United Nations headquarters during a march for peace. In October of that year the Pentagon is encircled by thousands of protesters engaged in a sit-in for peace. "Flower Power" is born out of the protest movement against the war in Vietnam.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the Berlin Wall goes up in 1961. "May 1968," an unprecedented student and worker uprising, takes place in France: The country is paralysed by a spontaneous general strike. That same year sees the Prague Spring, when Czechoslovakia is taken unaware by its population's non-violent resistance to Warsaw Pact troops.

The 1960s are a time of major advances in safeguarding human rights. Amnesty International, which works for the release of political prisoners and for the abolition of the death penalty and torture, is founded in 1961. In 1964, US President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits all discrimination based on a person's race or sex. The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded in 1968 to René Cassin, principal author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

1969

Violent protests take place at the University of California in Berkeley in May. President Richard Nixon announces the withdrawal of 60,000 US soldiers from Vietnam in December. In Canada, the Omnibus Bill, precursor to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, is introduced by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau and adopted on May 14: Reflecting the new values of the Canadian people, it addresses abortion, homosexuality and gun ownership.

On June 28, the Stonewall riots erupt in New York. They will prove to be a turning point in the movement for equality, as homosexuals begin to claim their rights.

On August 4 in Paris, Henry Kissinger and Xuan Thuy, representing the United States and Vietnam respectively, hold secret peace talks, which fail.

In August there are violent clashes between Catholics and Protestants in Belfast and Londonderry; for the first time, the English army opens fire on protesters in Belfast.

On November 13 and 14, a protest in Washington against the Vietnam War attracts 250,000 people.

On December 9, the Rogers Plan for the Middle East is presented by William P. Rogers, the Nixon administration's secretary of state. The plan calls for Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula according to a calendar approved by Israel and Egypt, peaceful relations between the two countries and the creation of several demilitarized border zones.

A technological revolution is under way. The Concorde takes its first flight in France; in the United States the Boeing 747, the largest passenger aircraft, takes its first test flight. On July 21, Apollo XI lands on the moon. A billion people watch as the astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin take their first steps on the moon: "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

Post-1969

In 1971, West German Chancellor Willy Brandt receives the Nobel Peace Prize for his policy of openness to the Eastern Bloc and his rapprochement with the German Democratic Republic (*Ostpolitik*). The two German nations recognize each other's sovereignty and are admitted to the United Nations the following year.

New protests against the Vietnam War. In 1971, 500,000 protesters march through the streets of Washington; more than 7,000 people are arrested. The war in Vietnam ends in 1973 following negotiations between Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, who are awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The agreement stipulates that US troops will withdraw from the country within sixty days; the Vietnamese government agrees to free American prisoners of war. The final marine returns to the United States on March 29. In Vietnam, battles between North and South continue. On April 30, 1975, the South Vietnamese government capitulates, North and South are reunited, and the capital is renamed Ho Chi Minh City.



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IMAGINE

The Peace Ballad of John & Yoko

Interview of Yoko Ono conducted in March 2009
Excerpt from **M**, the Magazine of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

Montreal = love
Peace = green
Courage = blue
Imagine = light
Chance = what we notice it to be
Music = life
Citizens = of the world
Earth = listen to its heartbeat
War = is over
Youth = us
Future = is ours to create
YES = we are all together



MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE MONTRÉAL
THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

IMAGINE ***The Peace Ballad of John & Yoko***

QUOTATIONS

A dream you dream alone is only a dream,
A dream you dream together is reality.

Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit*, 1964

Give peace a chance! Just give it a chance! We ain't giving any gospel here—just saying how about *this* version for a change? We think we have the right to have a say in the future. And we think the future is made in your mind.

John Lennon, David Sheff interview, 1980

Everybody's talking about
Revolution, Evolution, Mastication, Flagellation,
Regulations, Integrations, Meditations,
United Nations, Congratulations
All we are saying is give peace a chance
All we are saying is give peace a chance

John Lennon in the song "Give Peace a Chance," 1969

All we got to do is turn the people on to the fact that they are the government now and they have the power now. It's not something that someone is gonna give them, they have it.

John Lennon, Montreal Bed-in, 1969

I believe sincerely that as soon as people want peace in the world they can have it. The only trouble is they are not aware that they can get it.

John Lennon, Montreal Bed-in, 1969

The point of the Bed-in in a nutshell was a commercial for peace, as opposed to a commercial for war, which was on the news every day those days in the newspapers. Every day it was dismembered bodies and napalm and we thought, well why don't they have something nice in the newspapers?

John Lennon, Andy Peebles interview, 1980

When it gets down to having to use violence then you're playing the system's game. The establishment irritate you, pull your head and kick your face to make you fight because once they've got you violent then they know how to handle you. The only thing they don't know how to handle is non-violence and humour.

John Lennon, Montreal Bed-in, 1969

We're one world, one people whether we like it or not. Aren't we? I mean, we can *pretend* we're divided into races and countries and we can carry on pretending that until we stop doing it. But the reality is that it is one world and it is one people.

John Lennon, David Sheff interview, 1980

Henry Ford knew how to sell cars by advertising. I'm selling peace, and Yoko and I are just one big advertising campaign. It may make people laugh, but it may make them think, too. Really, we're Mr. and Mrs. Peace.

John Lennon, television interview, 1969

Your Majesty, I am returning this MBE in protest against Britain's involvement in this Nigeria-Biafra thing, against our support of America in Vietnam and against "Cold Turkey" slipping down the charts.

With Love
John Lennon of Bag.

John Lennon, letter to Her Majesty the Queen, 1969

We're all responsible for war. We must all do something, no matter what—by growing our hair long, standing on one leg, talking to the press, having bed-ins—to change attitudes. The people must be aware that it's up to them.

John Lennon to Canadian press, 1969

It is the concept of positive prayer. If you want to get a car, get the car keys. Get it? "Imagine" is saying that. If you can *imagine* a world at peace, with no dominations of religion—not without religion but without this my-God-is-better-than-your-God-religion thing—then it can be true.

John Lennon, David Sheff interview, 1980

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one

John Lennon in the song "Imagine," 1971

What is wrong with war is, as Gandhi said, an eye for an eye makes all of us blind. I'd like to see the human race wake up to the danger and futility of war as soon as possible. At the time, in the Sixties, we thought we could change the world just like that! But it's taking a little bit more time!

Yoko Ono, Hans Ulrich Obrist interview, 2002

Find peace in your heart and it will spread over the world. The effect of it is strong and immediate. Keep your quite centre, and stand for peace, instead of fighting for peace. We can do it.

Yoko Ono, Oxford University speech, 2002

I'm a woman
without country or state
Opening her head to the universe

Yoko Ono in the song "Growing Pain," 1973



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THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

IMAGINE

The Peace Ballad of John & Yoko

DECLARATION OF NUTOPIA

We announce the birth of a conceptual country,
NUTOPIA.

Citizenship of the country can be obtained by
declaration of your awareness of NUTOPIA.

NUTOPIA has no land, no boundaries, no passports,
only people.

NUTOPIA has no laws other than cosmic.

All people of NUTOPIA are ambassadors of the country.

As two ambassadors of NUTOPIA, we ask for
diplomatic immunity and recognition in the United
States of our country and its people.

John Ono Lennon
Yoko Ono Lennon

Nutopian Embassy
One White Street
New York, NY 10013
April 1st, 1973



MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE MONTRÉAL
THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

IMAGINE

The Peace Ballad of John & Yoko

INFORMATION

ADMISSION **FREE AT ALL TIMES**

DATES: April 2 – June 21, 2009

ADDRESS: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
Jean-Noël Desmarais Pavilion
1380 Sherbrooke Street West – Level 3

INFORMATION: 514-285-2000 or mmfa.qc.ca

MUSEUM HOURS

Tuesday: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Wednesday, Thursday and Friday: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed on Monday

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

- **Lectures** (free admission)

- Wednesday, April 1 at 11.30 a.m., in English

John Lennon and Yoko Ono: The Music of Love and Peace

By Craig Morrison, Ethnomusicologist, author, professor, musician

- Wednesday, April 1, at 1.30 p.m., in French

Présentation de l'exposition Imagine

By Emma Lavigne, curator of contemporary art, Musée national d'art moderne/CCI, Centre Pompidou, and curator of the exhibition *Imagine*

- Wednesday, April 8, at 6 p.m., in English

Either You're In or You're Out: Bed-in, Love-in, Sit-in in Montreal

By Jean-Philippe Warren, sociologist and Concordia University Research Chair on the Study of Quebec

- Wednesday, April 15, at 6 p.m., in French

De la contestation à la participation

By Anithe de Carvalho, art history teacher at Saint-Laurent CEGEP

● **Films**

- Wednesday, April 1 at 3.30 in English and 6 p.m., in French

The U.S. Vs. John Lennon

USA, David Leaf and John Scheinfeld, 2006, b&w and colour, 105 min.

- Sunday, April 5, at 1.30 p.m.

The U.S. Vs. John Lennon

USA, David Leaf and John Scheinfeld, 2006, b&w and colour, 105 min.

- Sunday, April 12, at 1.30 p.m.

John & Yoko: Give Peace a Song

Canada, Paul McGrath, 2005, 81 min., English

- Wednesday, May 20 at 6 p.m., in English

I Met the Walrus

Canada, Josh Raskin, 2007, 5 min., animation

Followed by

Yoko and John: The Bed-In

Canada, John Lennon and Yoko Ono, filmed by Nic Knowland, 1969, 61 min.

- Tuesday, May 26 at 3 p.m.

John & Yoko: Give Peace a Song

Canada, Paul McGrath, 2005, 81 min., English

- Wednesday, May 27 at 6 p.m.

Two films about John & Yoko presented by Claude Chamberlan, founder of the Cinéma Parallèle and director of programming for the Festival du nouveau cinéma (FNC), French

Happy Birthday to John

USA, Jonas Mekas, 1995, 18 min., English

Followed by

Gimme Some Truth: The Making of John Lennon's Imagine Album

USA, Jonas Mekas and Andrew Solt, executive producer: Yoko Ono, 2000, 60 min., English

- Thursday, May 28 at 6 p.m., in French

Pop Deux

France, Claude Ventura, 1971, 30 min.

Followed by

Il était une fois John Lennon

France, *Un jour futur*, broadcast, 1975, 40 min.

- Friday, May 29 at 6 p.m.

68

France, Patrick Rotman, 2007, 90 min., French

- Saturday, May 30 at 6 p.m.

Yoko et John

France, Frédéric Le Clair, 2000, 90 min., French

The films are presented free of charge at the Maxwell-Cummings Auditorium, Michal and Renata Hornstein Pavilion, 1379 Sherbrooke Street West. Doors open 30 minutes before the film begins.

Details of educational and cultural activities in the brochure published by The Museum's Education and Community Programmes Department and on the Museum's web site at mmfa.qc.ca