

## Yoko Ono exhibit kicks off season at Edison State College

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Dec. 04

news-press.com



Yoko Ono / Special to news-press.com

**Bio Box**• **Who:** Jade Dellinger• **Job:** New director of Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at Edison State College• **Age:** 45• **Home:** Fort Myers• **Birthplace:** Tachikawa, Japan• **Education:** Bachelor of Arts degree in art history from the University of South Florida, master's degree in arts administration from New York University• **Previous Career:** An independent curator who worked for two decades with the Tampa Museum of Art and The Contemporary Art Museum at the University of South Florida.

**If You Go**• **What:** Yoko Ono art exhibit• **When:** Jan. 24 through March 29. • **Where:** Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at

Edison State College, 8099 College Parkway, Fort Myers• **Admission:** Free• **Info:** 489-9313 or [bobrauschenberggallery.com](http://bobrauschenberggallery.com)

Rauschenberg Gallery opens its new season in January with a biggie: An exhibit from avant-garde artist Yoko Ono.

And it's a taste of more to come, promises new director Jade Dellinger, who curated the popular John Cage exhibit last year at the Edison State College gallery.

Dellinger hopes to bring more high-profile and international exhibits to Fort Myers in the coming years — exhibits worthy of the gallery's famous namesake, late Captiva Island artist Robert Rauschenberg.

"Our primary desire is to really extend that legacy," Dellinger said. "This legacy is important."

He compares the gallery to a "sleeping giant" with the potential for national and international recognition.

"I just see tremendous potential in it, because of Rauschenberg's name on the door," said Dellinger, who previously worked as an independent curator with exhibits in Tampa, New York City and many other places. "I think with artists like Yoko Ono, we can really raise the profile of the gallery."

The Ono exhibit opens Jan. 24 and features new or reimagined work from the 80-year-old conceptual artist most famous (or infamous) for her relationship with John Lennon of The Beatles. But Ono was well on her way to art fame when she met Lennon at one of her exhibits in 1966, Dellinger said.

Curated by Kevin Concannon and John Noga, the new show makes a few nods to Ono's late husband and their shared themes of peace and love. But the focus is mostly on solo Ono.

"This is a show I've been wanting to do for a lot of years," Dellinger said. "She's an artist that I've always been interested in."

Works in the exhibit include:

- **“Parts of a Lighthouse,”** a light sculpture that will use a plexiglass box and prisms to bathe the gallery alcove in light.
- **“Imagine Peace Maps,”** a wall-mounted interactive piece with large maps of China, Florida, The Middle East and the rest of the world. Gallery visitors use rubber stamps and ink pads to stamp the motto “Imagine Peace” anywhere they want to in the world.
- **“Play It By Trust,”** an oversized chess game with no black chess pieces – only white ones. “It is sort of a metaphor for war,” Dellinger said. “It’s about the futility of war. After moving a few pieces, you lose track of where you are.”
- **and “The Wish Tree,”** a living tree that will stand inside the gallery. Visitors write their wishes on pieces of paper and hang them from the branches on string. Ono has collected more than 1 million of these wishes since 1996, according to her website, and she’s incorporated them into her Imagine Peace Tower in Iceland.

The idea for many of these conceptual art pieces is a simple one: The artwork isn’t complete until people get involved. “She sees them as unfinished until people participate and interact with them,” Dellinger said.

Dellinger isn’t sure if Ono, herself, will appear at the exhibit’s opening reception. But if she can’t make it, he said, she’ll likely make an appearance via Skype or prerecorded video greeting.

Dellinger started working at the college gallery in September, replacing longtime director Ron Bishop. Bishop left the gallery without a 2013-14 season programmed, and it took Dellinger several months to pull something together by drawing from his many art-world contacts.

He’s still mapping out exhibits for the coming years, but he already has the rest of the 2014 season planned. Other exhibits include a student art exhibit and, in May, a collection of miniature exhibits from “The John Erickson Museum of Art” (or “JEMA”).

JEMA isn’t a traditional museum at all. Instead, it’s a traveling project created by Gainesville artist Sean Miller. Miller gives artists shoebox-sized, diorama-like mini galleries and lets them “curate” however they want. Ono’s contribution, for example, decorates one miniature wall with the slogan “IMAGINE PEACE.”

Edison State College President Jeff Allbritten said the Ono exhibit reinforces the college’s commitment to “offering impressive cultural experiences for everyone to enjoy.”

“Jade Dellinger is already demonstrating his talents and determination to take our Bob Rauschenberg Gallery to the next level,” Allbritten said in an email to The News-Press. “I’m looking forward to all the exceptional exhibits he will bring to ... Edison State.”