

examiner.com

Imagine Peace billboard exhorts viewers to take up cause, make message their own



Photo by Lambertus van Boekel, courtesy of Bob Rauschenberg Gallery



Thomas Hall
Arts & Exhibits Examiner

Related Photo:

January 1, 2014

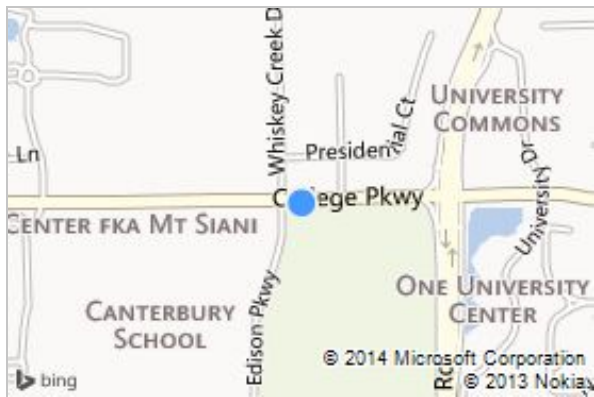
Drive south on Cleveland Avenue and as you pass Page Field Airport and approach Drive Time Used Cars, you'll see it. Twelve white letters against a cerulean blue background. Imagine Peace. It's the theme of the Yoko Ono art exhibition that opens January 24 at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery on the Lee campus of Edison State College.

Even today, Ono is known by most as the musician wife and widow of former Beatle John Lennon. But long before she met Lennon or formed the Plastic Ono Band, Ono had established herself as one of the leading artists in the genre of Conceptual Art. And it is her conceptual artwork that will be presented to Southwest Florida by *Yoko Ono Imagine Peace*, an avant garde exhibition of several of the artist's most current works,



Photo by Lambertus van Bochel, courtesy of Bob Rauschenberg Gallery.

8099 College Parkway, Fort Myers, FL 33919



8099 College Pkwy, Fort Myers, FL 33919

including *Wish Tree* (1996/2014), *Imagine Peace Maps* (2003/2014); *Onochord* (2003/2014); and the *Imagine Peace Tower* (2006/2014).

As the dates suggest, each of these pieces has been re-imagined anew for their installation inside the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery. And as is characteristic of her work, each piece will afford gallery visitors with an unparalleled opportunity to participate individually and collectively with the artist in the realization of her work.

"Consider the world with fresh eyes as you stamp the phrase 'Imagine Peace' on the map location of your choice," importunes new Rauschenberg Gallery Director Jade Dellinger via a recent post on Facebook. "Attach your handwritten wish for peace to the Wish Tree, and this wish will be delivered to the Imagine Peace Tower in Reykjavik, Iceland, where it will shine on eternally, joining more than a million others previously

collected. You are also welcomed to beam the message "I Love You" to one and all using the Onochord flashlights. You may take an Onochord flashlight and an Imagine Peace button as a gift to you from the artist and carry these timeless messages out into the world. As Yoko Ono has often observed: 'A dream you dream alone is just a dream, but a dream we dream together is reality.'

The billboard on Cleveland does more than just advertise the upcoming exhibition. It implicitly encourages those who see it to take up the cause and create their own variations and permutations on this theme. The billboards harken back in time to the massive, worldwide

"War Is Over! (If You Want It)" campaign that Ono and Lennon successfully employed in the late '60s and early '70s to promote their views regarding the Vietnam War. Since *Yoko Ono Imagine Peace* was first presented in 2007, Imagine Peace billboards, signs, placards and ads have cropped everywhere *Yoko Ono Imagine Peace* has gone on exhibit, helping convert the exhibition from a mere art show into a "gallery happening."

Kevin Concannon and John Noga have co-curated the exhibition with the support and involvement of the artist. The installation at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery has been configured in direct collaboration with Yoko Ono to reflect the Gallery's mission and its role as a learning laboratory on the campus of Edison State College in Fort Myers, Florida.

The Bob Rauschenberg Gallery was founded as The Gallery of Fine Art in 1979 on the Lee County campus of Edison State College (then Edison Community College). The gallery was renamed on June 4, 2004 as the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery to honor and commemorate its long association and friendship with the artist. During the three decades preceding his death in 2008, the Gallery worked closely with Rauschenberg to present world premiere exhibitions including multiple installations of the *1/4 Mile or Two Furlong Piece*. The artist insisted on naming the space the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery (versus the "Robert Rauschenberg Gallery") to symbolize and memorialize the intimate, informal relationship he maintained with both the Southwest Florida community and Edison State College.

Gallery exhibitions are sponsored in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, The State of Florida, Department of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Arts Council. *Yoko Ono Imagine Peace* is generously underwritten by Trevett Capital Partners, Steven Hubbard and Carolann Swanson, Barbara Yeomans, and the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery Docent Helping Hand Fund.