

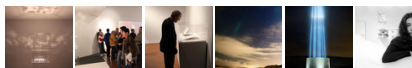
Like Lennon 49 years ago, modern art lovers beguiled by Ono 'Light House'



January 26, 2014

Yoko Ono Imagine Peace opened Friday night at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery in Fort Myers. One of the more beguiling pieces in the exhibition is tucked away in an alcove in the back of the gallery. It is called *Light House*, and its progenitor was first offered for sale by Yoko Ono in 1965.

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Of course, back then, *Light House* was purely conceptual, existing only in Yoko Ono's fertile mind and wild imagination. Still, she included it in her Conceptual "Sales List." Some 200 copies of the catalog were mailed out to people who followed Ono's art. John Lennon was a member of that select group.

"In 1967, John Lennon invited me for lunch at his house, 'Kenwood,' in Surrey, England," Ono recounts on [imaginepeacetower.com](http://www.imaginepeacetower.com). He told Ono that he'd read about *Light House* in her Sales List and wanted her to build one in his garden. "Oh, that was a conceptual light house!" Ono replied, bemused. "I'm convinced that one day, it could be built, but I don't know how to do it," she laughed.

"I still marvel at the fact that John was touched by that particular concept in my catalog, and 40 years ago at that!"

To appreciate Ono's conceptual renderings, it's helpful to use sheet music as a simile. "My work is like giving people scores - just like in music," Ono told Rauschenberg Director Jade Dellinger in an email interview. "You can play any of the classic music by following the scores. My work is very similar to that."

In that vein, the wall behind the Rauschenberg installation provides the conceptual score, which she re-wrote more succinctly for her 1967 exhibition at the Lisson Gallery in London: "The light house is a phantom house that is built by sheer light. You set up prisms at a certain time of day, under a certain evening light which goes through the prisms, the light house appears in the middle of the field like an image, except that, with this image, you can actually go inside if you wanted to. The light house may not emerge every day, just as the sun doesn't shine every day. Yoko Ono, 1965. Rewritten for Lisson Gallery, London, 1967."

Ono may have never figured out how to make a move-in ready light house, but she did find a way in 2006-7 to build a light tower that soars two and one-half miles into the sky on a clear Icelandic night. Called the *Imagine Peace Tower*, it can be found on Videy Island in Kollafjörður Bay near Reykjavík. It is conjured by 15 searchlights with prisms that act as mirrors, reflecting a column of light vertically into the sky from a 30-foot wide wishing well base. It uses roughly 75 kilowatts of power, supplied by Iceland's unique geo-thermal energy grid, which was a big factor in Yoko choosing Iceland as the tower's site.

Tom Hall, 2014



Thomas Hall
Arts & Exhibits Examiner

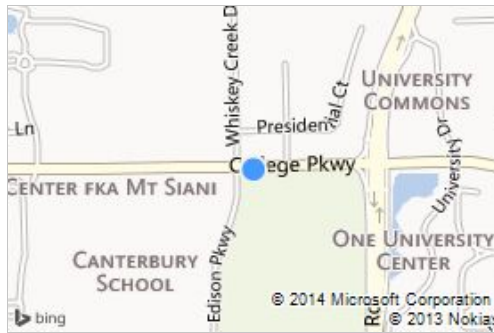
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Yoko Ono © Smaashata 2009

[YO-E5] Yoko Ono 2009 (c) Synaesthete

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Yoko dedicated the tower to John. "[B]ecause that was the first work of mine that interested him," she poignantly explains in her Dellinger interview (which is available in full at the gallery).

In addition to Ono, the October 9, 2007 dedication was attended by the couple's son, Sean Lennon, Ringo Starr, George Harrison's widow, Olivia, and George and Olivia's son Dhani Harrison. (Paul McCartney but could not attend due to a court case.) Yoko Ono said at the ceremony that the tower was the best thing that she and John had ever done.

"It is my work dedicated to John, expressing my gratitude and love to him," she adds today.

But Ono was not content to merely create a monument to her husband that radiates an eternal message of joy, wisdom, hope and healing. Buried beneath the tower are more than one million written wishes for peace that Ono has gathered over the years in conjunction with *Wish Tree*, her completely interactive conceptual work that is also included in the Rauschenberg exhibition. And written on the tower's base in 24 languages are the words "Imagine Peace," an abbreviated slogan that traces its origins to the "War Is Over! If You Want It" billboards that she and John erected in cities around the world during their

successful Year of Peace campaign to end the war in Vietnam.

In comparison to the Imagine Peace Tower, *Light House* may seem tame to *Yoko Ono Imagine Peace* attendees. Perhaps. But if one uses their imagination, the light cast against the back wall and ceiling of the Rauschenberg Gallery by the array of prisms spread across the base of its vitrine case are no less transfixing. *Yoko Ono Imagine Peace* is on view now through March 29 at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery on the Lee campus of Edison State College. During the exhibit, gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday (closed Sundays and holidays). For more information, please telephone 239-489-9313.

Suggested by the author

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