

**CUT PIECE**

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**YOKO ONO**

# THE SCORE

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➤ January 1966, Strip Tease Show.

"Performer sits on stage with a pair of scissors in front of him. It is announced that members of the audience may come on stage – one at a time – to cut a small piece of the performer's clothing to take with them. Performer remains motionless throughout the piece. Piece ends at the performer's option."

# VIDEO

➤ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YJ3dPwa2tI>

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# THE PERFORMANCE

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- She wore her best clothes & the audience members could take home their sections of the garments
- "is structured around the phenomenological content of solitary actions, a concentration on the material of experience"  
Alexandra Munroe
- "Derived from Latin *decidere*, meaning "to cut," this sense of "decide" is integral to Ono's most famous action"  
Kristine Stiles

**CUT PIECE**

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**REENACTMENT**

# CUT PIECE | 1965 & 2003

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# REENACTMENT OF THE SCORE

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- Performance Score

"Thus there is no sense of an “original” performance – or any sense of priority for the artist’s own performances... The texts are not so much documents of a singular performance as the performances are realizations of the score."

- Kevin Concannon

- Ono has described her conceptual instruction works (scores) as 'seeds' in both Grapefruit and Acorn.

- multiple variations.

- It can never be performed identically twice

- time, location, intention.

# REENACTMENT OF THE PERFORMANCE

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- However, "Ono's intervention seems to differ since she decided to reenact Cut Piece, not for an exhibition, but for the mass media, and not merely to ensure the continued existence of her work, but in order to make a difference in the present."  
- Jennifer Allen cited in Kevin Concannon
- In 2003 Ono stated that she performed it  
"against ageism, against racism, against sexism, and against violence." (1965 - 2003 / broad)

# INTERPRETATIONS OF CUT PIECE

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- Has the original score lost its initial performative power because of interpretations, readings & new justifications?
- Indeed, in the 1960s Ono never stated that feminist interpretations could be found.
- "Cut Piece has been interpreted in a variety of ways, including an exploration of sadism/masochism and violence/victimization. It has also been discussed in terms of feminist discourses on the female body and the male gaze."  
- Jieun Rhee 2005

# INTERPRETATIONS OF CUT PIECE

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- That might be a valid reading, but Concannon states  
"Both [Jim] Bovino [2001] and [John] Noga [2007] assumed the seated position indicated in Ono's instruction and maintained a calm, passive demeanor. Thus performed, the more recent feminist framings seem irrelevant – and the "content" seems more clearly to be the actions of the audience members themselves"
- Therefore, we are back to reading Cut Piece as a conceptual score  
"[The work] moves beyond the psychological interaction of artist and participants to uncover the latent subject/object condition"  
Kristine Stiles

# DISTORTION OR ILLUMINATION?

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- "reformulations of Cut Piece have arguably contributed to a distortion of the work, more so than an illumination of it"  
- Kevin Concannon
- Is performing a piece of live art the best form of documentation - to be lived? Reenacting Live Art in order to catch up with spectacle. The performance as a wider concept / entity.
- Taking a step back  
"[Cut Piece] raises questions about the nature of the artist – audience relationship, and in so doing, deliberately offers its performers, audiences, and critics an opportunity to project their own “meaning” into the work.

# FREEDOM TO INTERPRET?

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➤ To Conclude,

The concept of a score allows a freedom to explore "variations of penetration, truncation, destruction, incineration, dismemberment, disappearance, breakage and laceration"

- Stiles (thus freedom to interpret?)

# CUT PIECE

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**MATTHEW HARRISON-LORD**

**28.10.2015**

# THE SCORE

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## ➤ Grapefruit, 1971.

### CUT PIECE

Cut.

This piece was performed in Kyoto, Tokyo, New York and London. It is usually performed by Yoko Ono coming on the stage and in a sitting position, placing a pair of scissors in front of her and asking the audience to come up on the stage, one by one, and cut a portion of her clothing (anywhere they like) and take it. The performer, however, does not have to be a woman.

## THE SCORE (PART 2)

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- January 1966, Strip Tease Show.

"Second version for audience: It is announced that members of the audience may cut each other's clothing. The audience may cut as long as they wish."

# REFERENCES

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- Kevin Concannon, PAJ – A Journal of Performance and Art Sept 90 (2008), pp. 81–93
- Grapefruit, 1971, Yoko Ono
- Yes Yoko Ono, Stiles in Alexandra Munroe with Jon Hendricks, 2000
- PERFORMING THE OTHER: YOKO ONO'S CUT PIECE, Jieun Rhee, 2005. *Art History*, 28:1, pages 96–118.
- Jennifer Allen, “‘Einmal ist keinmal’: Observations on Reenactment,” in *Life, Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art*, edited by Sven Lütticken, Rotterdam: Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art, 2005, 211–13.