

When Yoko Ono and John Lennon's *Bed-In* was first performed in 1969, it inspired mixed reactions of outrage and awe. The event not only utilized Lennon's celebrity status to promote world peace in a situation that would not involve violent protesting, it also directly confronted the press in regards to the duo's highly profiled relationship.

As a child raised in the East and watching the televised *Bed-In*, I vaguely remember the bewilderment of my conservative elders as they observed with disapproving eyes the notorious antics of Ono and Lennon. Perceived as a wild card, Lennon's involvement in the event only confirmed the candid eccentricities of the West while Ono was considered a renegade when it came to observing the traditionally inconspicuous nature of the Asian sensibility. In retrospect, I believe that it was the outlandishly

wig – intensely forecasting a surreal experience. Venturing forward, visitors encounter a second room sustaining hundreds of incense sticks individually mounted in the gallery's hardwood floor. The lingering essence and the white-walled surroundings hark back to the Zen-like aesthetic popularized by Fluxus in their heyday, another nod to Ono. The final room yields the presence of Min and deSouza comfortably tucked in bed, appropriately clad in pajamas, with an array of scrap paper, artificial hair and flowers. The bed is positioned against a wall of mirrors, where one can also see a reflection of a projected image of the bed and performers on the opposing wall. The visitations are broadcast live via webcam on the gallery's website. This dual image of oneself heightens the self-consciousness of one's participation, an occurrence the

What initially fascinated Min about Ono was her manufactured appearance as the unconventional and cunning Asian woman who supposedly corrupted a clean-cut, candy-mouthed Beatle adored by millions. Few failed to acknowledge Ono's established position as an artist; rather, she was the woman who caused the break-up of the world's most successful band. As a young emigrant growing up in the United States, Min indirectly experienced the turbulence resulting from Ono's relationship with Lennon. Children, she said, teased her and called her "Yoko" for no reason other than the fact that she was visibly Asian. Min confesses that her performance as Ono, among other things, accomplishes her childhood yearning to embrace her once ill-begotten namesake, proving once and for all to the bullies, au contraire.



YONG SOON MIN AND ALLAN DESOUSA, *Will \*\*\*\* for Peace*, 2000-03, PERFORMANCE STILL, PHOTO: PAUL LITHELAND, COURTESY OBORO.

exhibitionist aspect of *Bed-In* that prompted the condemnation of Ono and Lennon in the view of the conventional Asian. The oddness of two celebrities wanting to share their private space with millions of curious viewers not only seemed "unnecessary," it also conjured up ideas of bizarre and ritualistic cults due to the duo's Svengali-like appearances in their white bedclothes. It was a scene that posed a threat to the tried and trusted attributes of the banal everyday, and was thus regarded as a "bad example" for a then-impressionable young me. When Yong Soon Min and Allan deSouza's collaborative performance, coyly titled *Will \*\*\*\* for Peace*, arrived in Montréal, it was little surprise that those apprehensive feelings instilled in me from watching the original *Bed-In* made their resurgence.

The artists have been touring the United States with *Will \*\*\*\* for Peace* since 2000. In the advent of the United States' declaration of war on Iraq, Min and deSouza decided to showcase *Will \*\*\*\* for Peace* internationally. (Incidentally, the original *Bed-In* was performed at Montréal's Queen Elizabeth Hotel. Those who know little about Lennon and Ono can at least recall the copious media coverage it generated during its week-long duration.) The work of Min and deSouza explores issues surrounding cultural displacement and political representation. Both husband and wife left their eastern birthplaces at a fairly young age and have since spent a great deal of their lives examining and dissecting the effects of the Western environment on the state of their cultural identity. deSouza emigrated to England from Kenya while Min, born in Korea, moved with her family to the United States at the age of eight. Their collective experiences of emigrating and relocating are fundamental to their collaborative and independent works. While *Will \*\*\*\* for Peace* does embody the irony characteristic of Min's and deSouza's works, the performance preserves the sincerity Ono and Lennon maintained with regards to promoting world peace.

Upon entering the space of *Will \*\*\*\* for Peace*, one is accosted by a metronome, mounted on a pillow, ticking away, with a paper eye and wearing a long Ono-inspired

artists heartily welcome in the tradition of the original *Bed-In*, in which Ono and Lennon encouraged television viewers to partake in the event from the comfort of their own bed.

Min and deSouza consciously slip into John and Yoko mode, though this eventually proves to be awkward when someone asks about the artists' feelings regarding the work. Beckoning the timid to join them in bed, the duo thrust folded newsprint, pens and scissors into unsuspecting hands. A major portion of the experience involved an elaborate procedure in which visitors were asked to crop pieces of hair from the artists' tangled hairpieces, fill in the blank in a speech bubble printed with "Will \_\_\_\_ for Peace," and attach the hair and bubble onto an ever-growing paper duvet. Min revealed that the "peace blanket" would be sent to Ono herself, in acknowledgment of her role in recent antiwar protests.

The duo's ongoing obsession with Ono and Lennon has been sustained since their 2000 "happening," *Flux US*.

The motivations behind the performance proved as dizzily idealistic as the original *Bed-In*, though it did recall Ono and Lennon's strategy to call attention to the seriousness of war through humour. Min and deSouza made the *Bed-In* their own by incorporating the presence of the audience into the performance, daring visitors to engage with them in a televised situation. Much like a Fluxus exercise, the outcome was unpredictable and spontaneous because the event extended, via live webcam, beyond the conventions of the gallery. Recalling Ono's countless compositions of art formulas, one could easily imagine her approving a reprisal of one of her most infamous projects. Min confirmed Ono's consent by referring to the vase of white roses propped in a corner of the room as a gift sent by "her friend Yoko in New York" on the occasion of the opening. > Adele Chong

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