

Give piece a chance



By Nick Hackworth
in Paris

Yoko Ono is still trying to change the world 40 years after first 'nude' show

YOKO ONO had high expectations for her one-off art show in Paris. "Cut Piece is my hope for world peace," she declared. The 70-year-old poet, conceptual artist and widow of John Lennon, took to the stage last night to repeat one of her most famous performances.

Last staged in Japan 40 years ago as a protest against the Vietnam war, Cut Piece consists of the audience cutting the clothes from the artist's body until she is naked.

In a statement accompanying her new performance, Ono said the instability of the post-9/11 world had

left her "vulnerable, like the most delicate wind could bring me tears".

However, for the audience in the Theatre Le Ranelagh, issues of peace and war were a sideshow. We were there because she was famous.

Ono cut a minimal, stylish figure as she emerged with her spiky hair swept back, in purple sunglasses, a flowing black skirt and a flimsy black top. She began with an even flimsier poem: "Never forget the sea/never forget love/never forget

love". A few light touches helped prick the hippy pomposity. "I love you all," she told us, before adding "... for tonight!"

She then held up a pair of scissors and announced: "Come on then!". First on stage was a tall American in a floral shirt, who cut clumsily, dropped the scissors loudly and then exited the wrong way.

A touching moment was the sight of Sean Lennon removing a portion of his mother's skirt. A routine

rhythm established itself. Claps and cheers rewarded more creative efforts, as when one woman cut a piece off her own dress and presented it to Ono.

Throughout, Ono sat tense but superficially impassive. When I went up to cut from her dress, she stared stiffly forward. In response to my greeting, she murmured and gave a darting look.

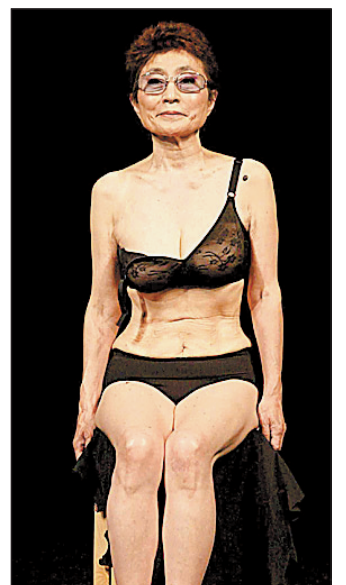
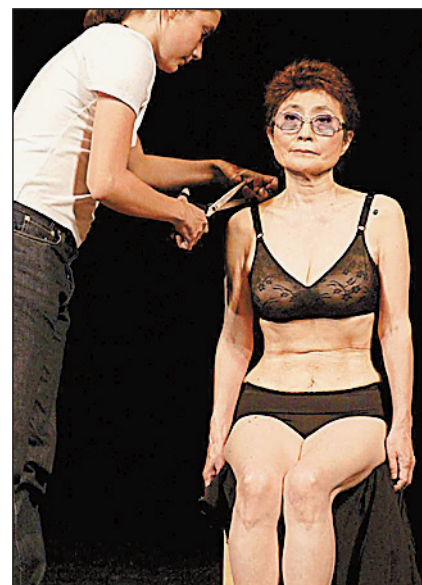
The voyeuristic interest of the audience increased as her clothes

diminished. At the end, she was left in her bra and pants, with one bra strap cut.

It was not modesty that prevented a naked dénouement but audience numbers. After an hour or so, there was no one left in the queue. She smiled and left to a standing ovation.

World peace did not instantly break out. But the event did highlight two key elements in Ono's pacifist philosophy — trust and self-sacrifice.

After four decades, Ono has proved a consistent and passionate peace campaigner, and this performance is no exception. Sometimes daft, sometimes sassy, her tenacity at least demands respect.



Cutting edge: a touching moment as Yoko Ono's son Sean takes part in her art show in Paris where members of the audience snipped off her clothes piece by piece until she was left in her underwear