

GALERIE LELONG

528 West 26th Street New York, NY 10001
T 212.315.0470 F 212.262.0624
www.galerielelong.com

13 rue de Téhéran 75008 Paris
www.galerie-lelong.com

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by Ida Panicelli



Yoko Ono

GALERIE LELONG/ANDREA ROSEN GALLERY

To those who wondered why Yoko Ono's "The Riverbed" comprised two separate installations, identical in their components, that were sited in two separate galleries in close proximity in Chelsea, the answer quickly became evident. The show resonated differently in its two locations: In my experience, the installation at Galerie Lelong was more concentrated, silent, and intimate, while the one at Andrea Rosen Gallery was more luminous, open, and social. Others might have felt differently. But that is all to the point, for each visit was unique, affected by its participant's individual memories and perceptions.

Ono made objects available, accompanied by brief instructions, offering each viewer the opportunity to use them creatively. *Stone Piece*, 2015, consisted of river stones—inscribed, like Tibetan prayer stones, with words—that could be collected by the visitor and brought, as objects of contemplation, onto the meditation cushions scattered around the room. *Line Piece*, 2015, invited visitors to draw a line in a book and then expand it three-dimensionally into the space by manipulating strings attached to a wall. Perceptible only at close proximity, the thin cords created an unexpected obstacle to movement in the gallery space, drawing viewers' attention to their own bodies—to the here and now. To similar effect, Ono re-executed *Mend Piece* (1966/2015). For that installation, viewers were able to choose fragments of broken cups and plates, and were invited to recombine them with glue, twine, and tape. Day after day, shelves were filled with these "repaired" objects, all of them different and completely new. They are silent traces of each visitor's Zen-like private activity, an encounter with his or her inner space. Creativity is the flip side of destruction, and both the artist and the public collaborated in this regenerative process.

Ono brings contemplative and emotionally vibrant space into being—space that merges art and life. She transformed the gallery into a container, an intimate place of creative expression, sharing, and meditation. I have no problem meditating with other people around, and I have done so at other times, sitting with eyes open in front of Marina Abramović at the Museum of Modern Art, and blindfolded in her 2014 show at Sean Kelly Gallery in New York. I also did it here, on two occasions, noting the differences. Unlike Abramović, who overtly presents herself as a catalyst of experience, Ono more frequently limits herself to providing a neutral field: By letting her own authorial presence fade into the background, she makes it easier for us to perceive our own subjectivity and role in the work. The provisional configuration of these two shows, apparently identical but both subject to continual change,

indicated the indeterminate quality of experience. And the repetition of gestures in the two separate spaces reminded visitors that every action, no matter how brief or quotidian, is unrepeatably unique.

—*Ida Panicelli*

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.



Yoko Ono, *Mend Piece*, 1966/2015, mixed media, dimensions variable. Galerie Lelong.