

April 23-26: Intimate Portrait

Yoko Ono chats with us about her late husband's artwork

BY SARAH THURMOND



For four days only, *The Art of John Lennon* will be on display at the Russell Collection Fine Art Gallery. The exhibit features more than 70 pieces and captures Lennon's talents as a visual artist. Here, we talk with his 82-year-old widow, **Yoko Ono**, an artist in her own right, about his process and more.

What do you think might surprise people about the collection?

I think that people will be very surprised that these works that John did are not just "rock 'n' roll star." He was an artist before he became a musician. He went to Liverpool College of Art at the time when it was one of the best in England. While he was in art school, he fell in love with rock 'n' roll, but his spirit was always like an artist. When I met him, the first thing that we talked about was Magritte.

What can you tell me about his process as a visual artist?

He was always productive; he just loved to create work. Most of it was in pencil drawings, and he would do it up in the air in an airplane or when he's talking to somebody on the phone.

Since you were both artists, I imagine this incredibly creative, vibrant household. Was it always like that? There was always an incredibly vibrant communication between us, but at the same time—nobody is going to believe it, even I never believe it—we never fought over it.

As a multimedia artist, you push the boundaries and challenge yourself. Is that something you

encouraged John to do in his art?

No, I didn't encourage him at all except to say something sweet and nice about his work. He used to be just very positive about my work. We would fall in love with each other's work. So there was no problem; it was very supportive but not intentionally.

Have you ever been to Austin?

Yes. I did a performance there about a year or two ago. That was the one time. I had a long, long walk around the main streets and went into shops where they have lots of old things. It was great. There's something special about it.

What is your secret to a long life?

I don't know. I have a nice apartment that I love very much. I eat well—only too well maybe [laughs]. That's the thing where you always have to compare yourself to people in other countries and where the women are treated badly. And I'm really thankful for what my life is like. It's not bad at all.

Russell Collection Fine Art Gallery, 1137 W. Sixth St., (512) 478-4440, russell-collection.com