



Grapefruit: A Book of Instructions and Drawings

Yoko Ono , John Lennon (Introduction)

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Back in print for the first time in nearly thirty years, here is Yoko Ono's whimsical, delightful, subversive, startling book of instructions for art and for life.

"Burn this book after you've read it." -- *Yoko*

"A dream you dream alone may be a dream, but a dream two people dream together is a reality."

"This is the greatest book I've ever burned." -- John

Grapefruit: A Book of Instructions and Drawings Details

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From Reader Review Grapefruit: A Book of Instructions and Drawings for online ebook

Yeshi Dolma says

Evocative. People should give this a try!

Reema says

what an unorthodox and brilliant book--cross-genre in the truest sense--and so liberating. almost a declaration of artistic independence. it is sectioned into 9 "chapters" or so that instruct you on how to create an art piece in a particular genre: music/painting/poetry/event//object/dance/film/etc. in its range, the book is truly democratic, imagining all the possibilities for experiencing and creating art in so many ways. in its elliptical language, the book is deceptively simple, challenging you to go past your comfort zone with art. burn a painting. wait on stage for the audience to snip away your dress. cut out from a film those images you hate.

on an emotional level, the work goes back and forth between being heartbreaking, exhilarating, and frustrating. some sections felt long--almost too many thought experiments for me to really sit with, digest--but i loved the rollercoaster feel of all these ways of finding art in the world, especially in broken things. (so eerily useful for the current collage story i'm working through.) "Break your mirror and scatter the pieces/over different countries./Travel and collect the pieces and glue them together again." (Collecting Piece III)

on an aesthetic/technical level, the work is itself a collage, piecing together these different instructions on genre art. the reader is thus being taught to see more clearly the resonances between genres and the differences. how are dance and event different? not so much, if the instructions boil down to witnessing and walking. how are architecture and painting different? because you can "throw it off a high building." (cut piece) i want to re-read this whole thing more carefully, as it really does work as an instruction guide on re-creation from genre to genre, which possibly purifies the work at hand.

as an artist, i can sense the guts and imagination it took to dream up this book. to offer it as a guide for other artists in other times--and the book does toy with linearity, does posit art as something that is timeless in that it crosses over into futures--a mandate for a more beautiful world. i listened to john lennon's "oh yoko" as i read this, and that about completed my 60s nostalgia and thrilling walk through yoko's landscape. really, thanks for this one . . .

Michael Dipietro says

Oh, Yoko. What will we do with you? I'm a huge huge fan of Yoko's music but this book just seemed silly to me. I dislike things (and people) that tell me to be still and breathe for a minute, and that that will change my life. I'll do that when I feel like it, thanks! I suppose I'm glad it exists...even though I DIDN'T burn it after reading as instructed, out of spite.

Ingrid says

Let people copy or photograph your paintings. Destroy the originals.

1964 Spring

*

I was inspired to read this book after sitting through brunch with a middle-aged dude who spent the whole pancake course sh*tting upon Ono, specifically for her bizarre (but, I would claim, intentionally subversive and hilarious), screeching performance as a backup singer for John Lennon and Chuck Berry's otherwise standard duet of "Memphis, Tennessee". (YouTube it.)

Within my age and weight category, I am probably one of the top 10,000 biggest Beatles fans, but I've always rolled my eyes when people hate on Yoko. People portray her as a manipulative leech who "stole" John Lennon away from his band and his fans, but she was a groundbreaking artist in her own right, as creative as John within her medium. Although I prefer the accessible stylings of Mr. Lennon, I believe the two of them were artistic equals. She influenced both the punk and riot grrl movements, she is a feminist and anti-war icon, and is still doing interesting art in her 80s.

Anyway, this book was interesting and weird and I only understood about 50% of it, but even when I was confused I enjoyed the strange flow of it.

tENTATIVELY, cONVENIENCE says

Ok, this was a very important bk to me. In 1975 when I read this, I wd've just recently heard Ono's "Fly" LP wch I also loved enormously so when I read this it had plenty of impact. I was probably just learning about Fluxus in general at the time. This is "A book of instructions + drawings by Yoko Ono" & it exemplifies Fluxus short performance index card scores - such as the ones also explored by George Brecht. I have "LIGHT PIECE" circled in pencil:

"Carry an empty bag.
Go to the top of a hill.
Pour all the light you can in it.
Go home when it is dark.
Hang the bag in the middle of your
room in place of a light bulb."

Love it. Imagining doing that seems fun even now 32 yrs later so this definitely endures the test of time for me. Then there's "PAINTING TO BE STEPPED ON":

"Leave a piece of canvas or finished
painting on the floor or in the street."

Now, many yrs later, she had a piece like this in a museum or a gallery & somebody walked on it & he was arrested & charged. Ono's comment was something to the effect that 'there are many ways to walk on something' as her way of saying that the guy was an asshole. I'm on his side. But, what the fuck, I give Ono slack - her husband was killed by an asshole or a Manchurian Candidate or whatever. Then there's a piece called "LINE PIECE III", another piece I have circled:

"Draw a line with yourself.
Go on drawing until you disappear."

A friend has told me that that's actually a well-known LaMonte Young piece but I suspect that Young might've done a similar thing that wasn't exactly the same or that there was enuf Fluxus cross-fertilization for pieces to have ambiguous authorship. Dunno. Anyway, this bk has a way of thinking that's completely out-of-the-box & I admire it for that. It's chock-full of ideas & she deserves to be considered a great artist even if she is from a rich banking family & has probably never had to work a day in her life. Privileged scum.

flannery says

I can't believe these reviews! To people who hated it and who hate Yoko Ono: wtf have you ever done that made me feel good about life? Have you ever slowed down time through the economy of words? Have you ever made me wonder? Yoko Ono likes simple words everyone can understand arranged in small, beautiful koans! Little bouquets of language! Just like flowers! You have to stop and smell them!!! What's not to understand/like? I love this!! GTFO!

Kara says

Book Report: Grapefruit by Yoko One

I've avoided writing this review for a long time. I find it easy to review books that have plots, that tell stories, that are logical, even if that logic only works in the reality of the story. And if the book doesn't have a plot or a story, and it's not particularly easy to understand, then I depend on its lyrical language. So it's difficult for me to review and rate Grapefruit. This is not a book with a plot, or a story, or particularly beautiful language. It's a conceptual book, and the concept is that the instructions it provides are impossible to follow, or if not impossible then perhaps not easy or even pleasurable. I'm not sure what to say about this book, other than that creating impossible instructions is harder than it sounds, and a unique challenge. I also have to admit that when I read this book I thought of John Lennon's Imagine. I mean, what's more impossible, based upon what we know of the world, than to imagine a world where there are no countries, there's no religion, no possessions, no greed, no hunger, where all the world's people live in peace? Impossible maybe. But certainly worthwhile to "imagine." I feel that way about this book. Sure it's silly and "whimsical" and sometimes annoying but it did inspire me.

Here are some "impossible" instructions of my own.

I.
Find a bus stop.
Board the first bus that comes along.

Sit in an empty seat at the back.

Either wait for someone to sit next to you, or turn to whoever is already sitting in the nearest seat.

Covertly stare at them.

Now imagine that somehow you're related through love, blood, or friendship.

This will vary depending on who you are, and who they appear to be.

For example, I once imagined the man sitting next to me was my boyfriend.

This was because he was especially ugly.

I guess I thought it would be a worthwhile challenge.

Regardless of who you pretend this stranger to be, it's important to imagine where you're going together in detail.

I imagined we were on the way to the supermarket to buy groceries for dinner.

I imagined his name was Henry and, like me, he was twenty-one years old.

I imagined that after we bought the groceries we'd go back to our apartment and feed our Bernese Mountain dog, and then grill shish-kabobs in the backyard.

Make-believe so far, but now imagine this:

What if the stranger sitting next to you is playing the same game?

What if he imagines you're his girlfriend, and you're on the way to the supermarket?

And what if, at the same time, you turned to each other and said something like:

I'm hungry.

Or let's not forget the dog food this time.

Or Charcoal!

Would an alternate reality be formed?

Would you forget you were strangers?

How long would this last?

Would you nervously wonder why you'd been fantasizing that Henry was a stranger?

II.

This requires that you be in a state of dying.

I do not mean psychological death, but physical decay.

As in, the permanent ending of vital processes in the cell or tissue.

The cause of this dying could be old age, or cancer, or a horrific accident.

Now die.

Go through the embalming process.

Have your eyes glued shut and your mouth sewn closed.

Lie in a coffin dripping with flowers.

Now wake up.

Pop your eyes open.

Pull the thread from your lips.

Speak.

Tell them:

I decided not to die, if that's okay with you. Maybe some other time.

Lilburninbean says

Let's Piece I

500 Noses are more beautiful than

one nose. Even a telephone no. is more beautiful if 200 people think of the same number at the same time.

a)let 500 people think of the same telephone number at once for a minute at a set time.

b)let everybody in the city think of the word “yes” at the same time for 30 seconds. Do it often.

c)make it the whole world thinking all the time.

1960 spring

I’ve been carrying this book around with me for a month and a half. It got lighter. And I love it. I need more time with it, though. Yoko is amazing and it’s too bad that she’s demonized in popular media because of unapologetic racism and misogyny. So many people are missing out on what she’s trying to communicate.

Steph says

Appreciating Yoko as more than John's wife is one of the best things that ever happened to me. The pieces in this book are hit-or-miss for me, but much love for Yoko.

For your listening pleasure, some of my favorites: x, x, x.

Unigami says

I became aware of this book because of my interest in the Beatles and John Lennon. Yoko Ono's art is one of those things that you either love or hate. I happen to love it. This is a book of instructions...little koan-like thoughts like; "imagine the clouds dripping. Dig a hole in your garden to put them in." Some of them are bizarre, some of them are poetic, some of them are painful, but they are all thought-provoking and beautiful - just like Yoko. Read this, and you'll understand why John fell in love with her...and you will too.

Courtney says

In this playful book of “instructional poems,” Yoko Ono allows readers to become participants of their own sensory experience. Words and scattered drawings make up this abstract but pleasant book, where Yoko will tell the reader to do something to enhance life: “Steal a moon on the water with a bucket./ Keep stealing until no moon is seen on the water.” Or, “Carry a bag of peas./ Leave a pea wherever you go.” This style of writing allows the reader to conceptualize the act, and be there with her.

I chose this book for teens because I think teens will be interested in her unconventional, experimental poetry. I think teens tend to be interested in the 60's era, Civil Rights movement, Berkeley protests, and more experimental musicians and artists like The Beatles White Album. It seems to resonate with the heightened experience of being an adolescent, constructing your own identity, and moving on from the nest.

Suad Shamma says

I mean...I'm not sure how to review this book. It is a piece of incredible artistic work, only because it really allows you into Yoko Ono's thought process. It gives us a glimpse of how she viewed the world, her ideology and her quirkiness. Her creativity came through in every piece, it really gave me a clear idea how she worked and how she is an artist in every sense of the word. It is an intimate look into her works - music, art, poetry, film and exhibitionism. In every aspect of her life, her uniqueness shone. There were parts that probably went completely over my head, and others where I found myself pausing for a minute to reread and let it sink in.

Although this is a book of instructions, I will openly admit that I barely followed any of the instructions given in this book. I think Yoko Ono might appreciate that I didn't, taking it as a sign of individualism, of assertiveness, maybe even rebellion? I don't know. I think I may be talking out of my ass - excuse the language. But that's the effect that Yoko Ono has on you, really.

Some instructions were very simple: "Light a match and watch till it goes out"

Others were interesting: "Carry a bag of peas. Leave a pea wherever you go."

Others were impossible: "Fly."

Some instructions were creative: "Painting to be slept on. Hang it after sleeping on it for more than 100 nights."

And some were intimate: "Listen to each other's pulse by putting your ear on the other's stomach."

Some instructions your mind couldn't help but follow: "Think that snow is falling. Think that snow is falling everywhere all the time. When you talk with a person, think that snow is falling between you and on the person. Stop conversing when you think the person is covered by snow."

Then there were passages that were just beautiful thoughts:

"It's sad that the air is the only
thing we share.

No matter how close we get to each other,
there is always air between us.

It's also nice that we share the air.

No matter how far apart we are,
the air links us."

What beautiful poetry, and what a beautiful thought.

Then there's humor and satire:

"I wonder why men can get serious at all. They have this delicate long thing hanging outside their bodies, which goes up and down by its own will."

A gem of a book, definitely worth keeping around.

Cristhian says

Revisitar este libro después de leer el ACORN representa un contraste y a la vez una proeza:

Si algo tiene de sobra Yoko Ono, es paciencia y ver las líneas que trazó aquí para ser reflejadas 50 años después en el otro es algo digno de tomar en alto aprecio.

Este libro (objeto) es muy bueno y si ACORN nunca hubiera sido publicado, sería el mejor, pero el tiempo ha vuelto refinados sus gustos, sus palabras exactas. En este aun se nota un tono oscuro, anarquista de ver arder el mundo, del happening. En el otro lado del espejo, el publicado 50 años después, es algo fino, una delicadeza.

Si fueran música, este sería punk, el otro sería un vals.

Maravillas cada uno. Geniales en conjunto.

Kayfor4me says

A rewrite I composed, addressed to my family, based on my experience with Yoko Ono's flowering poetry in Grapefruit:

PIECE FOR MY LITTLEST BROTHER

Make a mountain.

Put the mountain outside.

Hand out small portions to people who
come to see it.

PIECE FOR MY OTHER LITTLE BRO

Break big light into pieces.

Put the pieces in an empty bag.

Use pieces from the bag to fill
empty conversation.

PIECE FOR MY FINE ASS SISTER

Collect sounds you have heard throughout the week.

Replay the sounds at fullblast while
you laugh louder.

PIECE FOR GIDE, MY FATHER

Call every day and talk about many things.

Walk the distance of your conversation and back.

PIECE FOR MY OLDER BROTHER

A tie is a deed.
Gift one to your father on
your sister's wedding day.
Gift one to yourself in the morning
of the day.

PIECE FOR HURLANDE, MY MOTHER

Listen to a heart beat.
Write all the things you want to do.
Make a beautiful thing happen by sunset.

PIECE

Take every word you come across and
chew the fruit of it.

Be careful to spit the seed of that word
out.

bellatrix begins says

Those who expect to find a cute story or anecdote like Patti Smith's "Just Kids" or those who know the exact definition of art and are really really sure that Yoko Ono's work is not it, will be highly disappointed with this book. If you don't expect anything from the book, it can be quite interesting.

It made me happy. While reading it, I looked at the sky a lot more than usual.

Hanna says

Instructions for obtaining, reading, and disposing of Grapefruit

Buy this book on amazon with two others for free s&h. Still think you spent too much money. Don't care you spent too much money because you think this book will make you a better person.

See the word "whimsical" on the back cover. Laugh at the word whimsical. Laugh with a coworker about the word whimsical. Say, "Oh, Yoko Ono, you so whimsical!"

Make notes on every page. On some pages make pictures. In most of the notes, draw from your knowledge of physics, astronomy, psychology, sociology, and rationality to deconstruct the instructions. Logically prove them false, nonsensical, or even harmful. Feel bad about not being whimsical. Then feel good about being rational. Use no less than three different colored pens to do this.

Read out loud with a coworker at your place of business. Have giggle fits. Get stared at. Read to each other.

Instruct each other. Don't comply. Giggle more instead.

Talk about how Yoko broke up the Beatles and killed John Lennon. Feel cliché for doing so. But refuse to continue reading for that reason. Then continue reading anyways because it's assigned. Do it begrudgingly. Feel bad about not being whimsical. Then remember you're not insane.

Briefly think about how these instructions aren't meant to be taken literally, how it's an expression, a form of art. Think about the fact that each page probably means something. Don't care to figure it out because you can't translate crazy.

Feel bad for John Lennon. Wonder about how things might have been different. Decide you believe in fate and that things worked out for the best. Take that thought back and stop reading again. Then start again because maybe you'll get it this time.

Rate this book on Goodreads. Be surprised, but not surprised to see it has an average rating of 4+ stars. Think about how people automatically believe when something is strange and/or they don't understand it, that it is by default genius. Think about hipsters who pretend to like things they don't actually like because it makes them look cool or smart. Don't care about not being perceived as cool or smart because you absolutely abhor this book. Try to like it because you respect your professor and her reading list and she's obviously assigning this for a reason. Stop trying because you hate it and you will always hate it. Think you're just cranky and too serious. Then stop thinking because you've wasted enough time thinking about this already and you've got more important things to do.

Don't do Yoko the pleasure of burning this book like she requests. Put it on a shelf instead. Let it collect dust (the ultimate violence to books). Pull it out when your friends are over and you are all drunk. Read to each other. Have more giggle fits. Let it collect more dust. Briefly fantasize that because it has your notes and drawings in it that it will one day be valuable because you will one day be a published writer--but published because of merit rather than reputation. Have pride in the fact you don't want to ever be published by fact of your being an anti-celebrity or the spouse of a celebrity. Have pride in the fact that you only want to be published when your writing deserves it. Feel elitist. Feel snobby. Then feel bad for feeling elitist and snobby. Then stop caring and read something else.

Forget this book exists.

Amber says

So you still think Yoko broke up the Beatles? Get over it.

One great way to do so would be reading this book. It's quick, light, and madly creative. The book consists of a catalog of performance art pieces for you to try -- most of which are completely impossible.

One I try to practice is imagining snow is falling all the time. It's the heat of the summer, and I am certain my fellow Texans will agree that this is refreshing.

Ashley says

Fuck . I've never hated someone so much.

Michalle Gould says

Sometimes I laughed with it and sometimes at it (I am a bad person) but I always enjoyed reading it.

Erik Mallinson says

oh Yoko!
