

The Heart of No Place

Director Statement

I came to the U.S. in May 1980. In November of that year, Ronald Reagan was elected president and, on December 8, John Lennon was murdered in New York.

The Heart of No Place originates in an internal dialogue between my own experiences as an artist and as a Japanese woman, and the life and work of Yoko Ono. Although the film pays tribute to Ono — who changed the way we see art, music, celebrity and Japanese women — it is not to be taken as a “bio-pic.” Rather, it is about how our generation has dealt with its losses and found its way in a world at once limitless and rootless. It is also a theory of economy and history put through a Surrealist’s mind — how people’s desires move history, and how artists, by instigating these desires, participate in this process.

I was working on the story as an interdisciplinary theater piece when the end of the Cold War finally began to affect arts funding in the U.S.: the avant-garde had lost its propaganda value, and in the decade that followed, conservatives cried for a stop to public funding of artworks they considered degenerate, and art organizations answered by trying to prove the social utility of art. Amid budget cuts, personnel changes and, in one case, the closing of a theater, I was forced to cancel a tour of my preceding piece — followed by a back injury. I then decided to make *The Heart of No Place* into a “movie,” shooting it entirely on Digital 8. The result is part a continuation of my work in performance art and installation, part exploration into the intimacy of the film medium.

Rika Ohara