

# Yoko Ono to dedicate “SKY LANDING” construction with ceremony June 12 on the site of the historic Japanese Phoenix Pavilion from the Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park

By Gary M. Ossewaarde

On June 12, 2015 artist Yoko Ono will announce, break ground and celebrate her latest installation, SKY LANDING, according to releases by the City of Chicago, the Chicago Park District, Project 120 Chicago, and Garden of the Phoenix Foundation.. The installation will be sited in Jackson Park, Chicago on Wooded Island, on the site of the Phoenix Pavilion, a gift from Japan to the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 and Chicago and located next to the later Japanese Garden, now called The Garden of the Phoenix. The ground-breaking event (invite-only) will constitute a “Ground Healing” ceremony making the site a bridge between sky and earth and will include performance by Kitatsu Aoki and Miyumi Project featuring TsuKaa Taiko drumming. Remarks are expected from the Council General of Japan in Chicago, Council on Global Affairs, Japan Alliance Society of Chicago, Project 120 director Robert Karr, and Chicago Park District superintendant Michael Kelly.

Final design of the project was not released before the event, but will include a low hill and a sculpture by Ono and a marker, a site for meditation that will open June 12 2016. Design is by architectural firm WHY.

Work is being undertaken now while extensive restorative work is underway on and around Wooded Island. SKY LANDING represents a restoration or recollection of the Phoenix Pavilion. Chicago Park District CEO and General Superintendent Michael Kelly said, as quoted in the Tribune, “The City of Chicago was honored to receive such a gift from Japan at the time of the World’s Columbian Exposition. Understanding our past and our relationship today as global partners, we are privileged that the site, with the addition of ‘SKY LANDING’ by Yoko Ono, will teach and inspire us and future generations who visit The Garden of the Phoenix.” It’s an expression of the “enduring legacy of Eastern and Western collaboration” and unity the release adds.

Yoko Ono is an internationally-renowned installation and performance artist who grew up in Japan and has kept her connections to her homeland strong. She has overseen many large out of doors installations such as in New York City’s Central Park (“Strawberry Fields”) and Reykjavik, Iceland (“Imagine Peace Tower” made of light beams). SKY LANDING is her first permanent installation in the Americas. Ono is the widow of John Lennon, and has a strong interest in peace, meditation, and mystic powers and significance.

According to Project 120 (visit [project120chicago.org](http://project120chicago.org)) officers, they invited Ono to visit during their 2013 planting of 130 cherry trees near the Garden and north of the Island. (Cherry blossoms are an iconic symbol in springtime Japan—and in our nation’s capital) The planting was one of Project 120’s first undertakings in their evolving vision for the park and an extension of their conservancy work in the Garden of the Phoenix. Ono was immediately drawn to and struck by the power of the place—the lawn that replaced the burned phoenix pavilion that had long outlasted the Fair as a public building and café. She was also intrigued by its location at the focal point of several major axes of the park, the Chicago grid, and the layout of the Columbian Exposition. She has stated, as quoted in the releases and in the Project 120 website, **“I recall being immediately connected to the powerful site and feeling the tension between the sky and the ground. I wanted the sky to land here, to cool it, and make it well again.”**

SKY LANDING is the second project among four that Project 120 is undertaking or planning with the Chicago Park District under an emerging Framework to restore historic landscape and habitat and ensure a resilient and sustainable Jackson Park that works for the people of Chicago. The first project is the US Army Corps of Engineers Habitat Restoration presently underway on Wooded Island (Paul H. Douglas Nature Sanctuary), the and Lagoons and other sections of the park. Jackson Park Advisory Council appreciates the ongoing vetting and collaboration on planning and oversight for these projects.