Yoko Ono’s Cut Piece

In the performance art, the Cut Piece, Yoko Ono is the main performer who sits on the stage as she allows audience members to come up and cut pieces of her garments. As Ono allows the audience to strip away of her clothes, she keeps a calm and collected manner. Captured by a black-and-white film recording device, this performance can be watched by either attending the performance live, or viewing it on a hardware that can playback the film. In this case, the hardware is run on a computer. The code that was used to run this film is HTML.

As mentioned before, in this piece of art the audience is actively engaged to this artwork by cut pieces of her clothes. However, the audience who are not part of the act is therefore passively viewing other members of the audience being a part of this act.

The meaning of Ono’s request to let the audience cut off her clothes can be interpreted as a way of creating a piece of art that is random but filled with the same elegance to any great art as well as giving the intended meaning more significance. A similar act where the factor of random is present in The Cut-Up Method of Brion Gysin by William S. Burroughs, which the cut up method involves taking a pair of scissors and cutting up pieces of text and arranging them in a random order. As you read the rearranged text, the meaning is still there but in a different context, and that amplifies itself to give it a bigger meaning.
This randomness is seen in her performance where she takes the unknown variables of letting the audience with a pair of scissors dictate the performance, which in turn becomes the performance. In a lecture she gave at Wesleyan University, Ono states that “All of my work in fields other than music have an Event bent… Also it has no script as Happenings do,” which further gives background to her Cut Piece performance as the factor of random is a main point in her meaningful artworks.