音を視る 時を聴く
坂本龍一

seeing sound, hearing time
Ryuichi Sakamoto

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Ryuichi Sakamoto + Shiro Takatani

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❽ *LIFE–fluid, invisible, inaudible...*
Ryuichi Sakamoto + Shiro Takatani

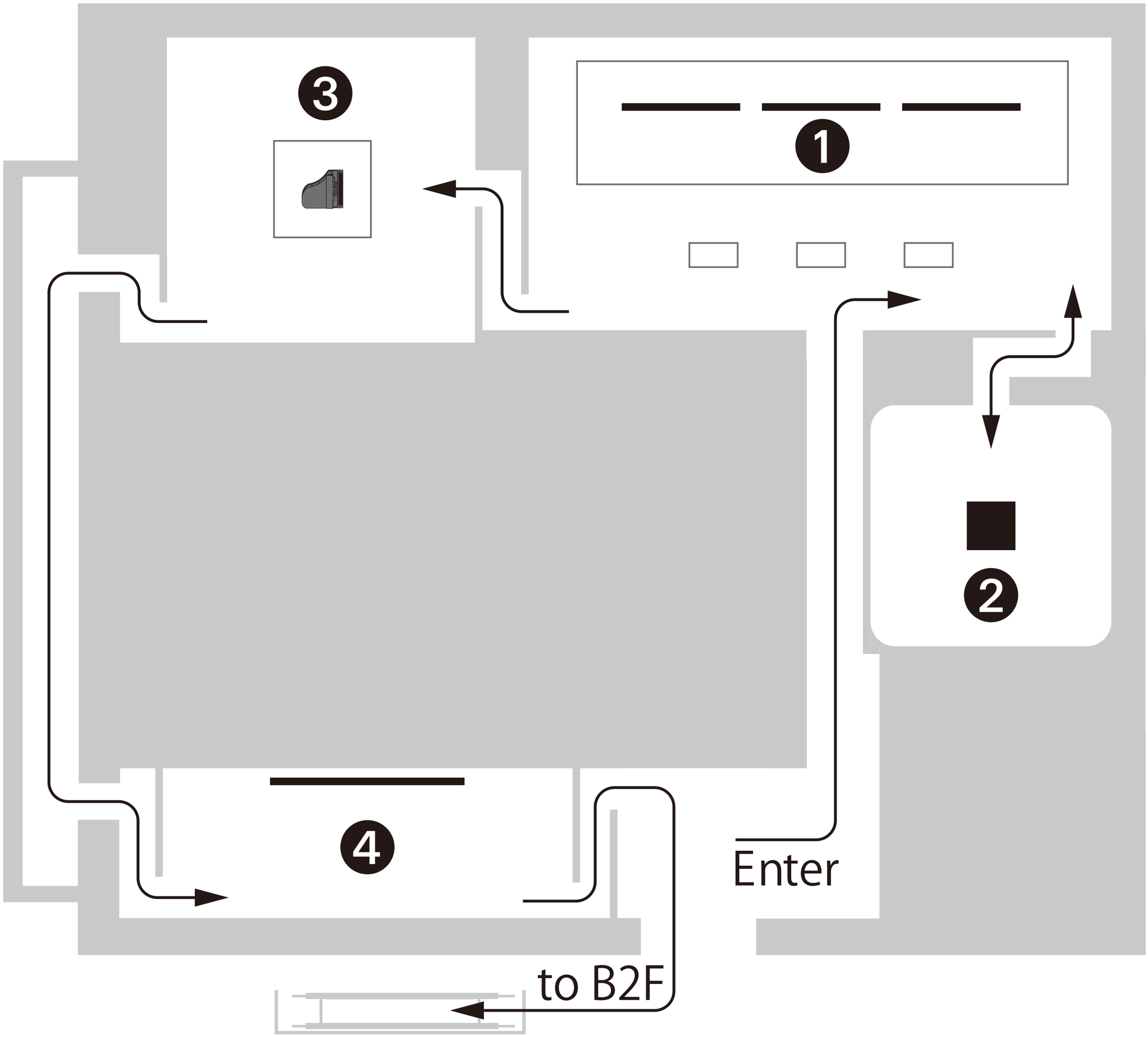
❾ Ryuichi Sakamoto Archive
Supervisor: Shigeru Matsui

❿ *LIFE–WELL TOKYO, Fog Sculpture #47662*
Ryuichi Sakamoto + Fujiko Nakaya + Shiro Takatani

⓫ *Music Plays Images X Images Play Music*
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–invisible, inaudible (MOT version)
Ryuichi Sakamoto + Daito Manabe

1st floor



Exhibiton Gallery, 1st floor

1 Ryuichi Sakamoto + Shiro Takatani, *TIME TIME* 2024

TIME TIME is a new installation work created for this exhibition based on the theater piece *TIME*, which premiered at Amsterdam's Holland Festival in 2021. In *TIME*, Sakamoto delved deeper into the asynchronism he explored in his async album, to pursue the question, "What is time?," in a form that can be called a musical theater steeped in the traditions of Noh. Creating a dreamscape inspired by Natsume Soseki's *Ten Nights of Dreams (Dream #1)*, the Noh play *Kantan*, and Zhuang Zhou's *The Butterfly Dream*, the theater piece brought different kinds of time into intersection—a moment and an eternity, a fleeting sleep and 100 years of time lived in a dream—and attempted to reexamine the concept and very existence of time. It also symbolically evoked a human being exhausting themselves in a futile attempt to create a path while striving against nature's overwhelming power. The theater piece and this installation were conceived as something inseparable in nature.

TIME TIME uses "water" as its stage, water being a substance of importance to Sakamoto, which he employed in various forms in his works. The installation combines new footage of Mayumi Miyata (filmed by Takatani for this work) playing a Japanese reed instrument, the sho, and video of Min Tanaka's appearance in *TIME* to express on three screens the three key elements portrayed in the theater piece — "Creating a Path", *Ten Nights of Dreams*, and *Kantan*. Sakamoto's music flows freely in and out of the three screens, and a dream world transcending time and space, with no beginning or end, quietly unfolds.

Exhibiton Gallery, 1st floor

2 Ryuichi Sakamoto + Shiro Takatani, *water state 1* 2013

Water and fog became recurring elements in Sakamoto and Takatani's installations following *LIFE–fluid, invisible, inaudible...* (2007). As its title suggests, *water state 1* creates a microcosm of nature to depict the changing state of water as it circulates.
At the center of the gallery is a black basin filled with water so clear its surface could be mistaken for a mirror. Large stones are arranged in its periphery. Data on precipitation in the exhibition's locality (Tokyo, in this case) is extracted from global images taken by meteorological satellites. Rain falls into the water basin from a ceiling-mounted apparatus, controlled by condensed weather data from individual years. The sound transforms minutely with the lighting as time passes. The widening ripples on the water vary in appearance, at times recalling the sea's surface viewed from the sky, and at times raindrops falling in a puddle. In a space like a meditation garden, viewers look inward to memories and thoughts while opening their consciousness to the natural environment.

Exhibiton Gallery, 1st floor

3

Ryuichi Sakamoto
with Shiro Takatani,
IS YOUR TIME
2017/2024

A piano stands quietly in a water basin. Above it, cutting a square in the darkness, is a screen displaying video of gentle snow falling. Sakamoto, who encountered the piano at Miyagi Prefecture Agricultural High School after the school's devastation by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake tsunami, saw it as a "piano tuned by nature" and gave it new life in this work.

When exhibited for the first time at NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] in 2017, five speakers and five LED panels lined both sides of the gallery, and two more speakers stood at the gallery's front and rear. Music, taken primarily from Sakamoto's album *async*, re-arranged for the installation, resounded alongside the piano tones generated using earthquake data collected from around the globe. Light from the 10 LED panels, emitted simultaneously with sound from the 14 speakers, offered an experience of sound as an "object" that moved three-dimensionally in the gallery space. On the occasion of the work's exhibit in Chengdu in 2023, a basin of water and LED panel displaying snow were also added.

For this presentation of *IS YOUR TIME* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, we have omitted the *async* elements in consideration of Sakamoto's will, to exhibit the piano simply with only its sounds being heard. The piano, rendered an object by the forces of nature, without a role or functional ability to play music created by human hands and heart, performs the earth's rumbling in the interval between sky and ocean.

Exhibiton Gallery, 1st floor

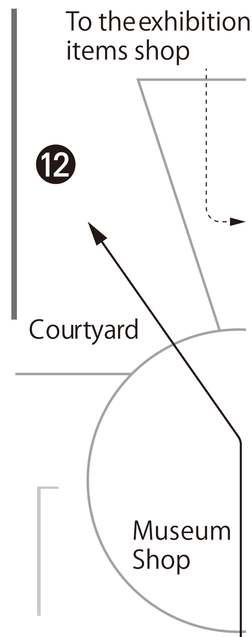
4

Carsten Nicolai,
PHOSPHENES, ENDO EXO
Music by Ryuichi Sakamoto
2017/2024

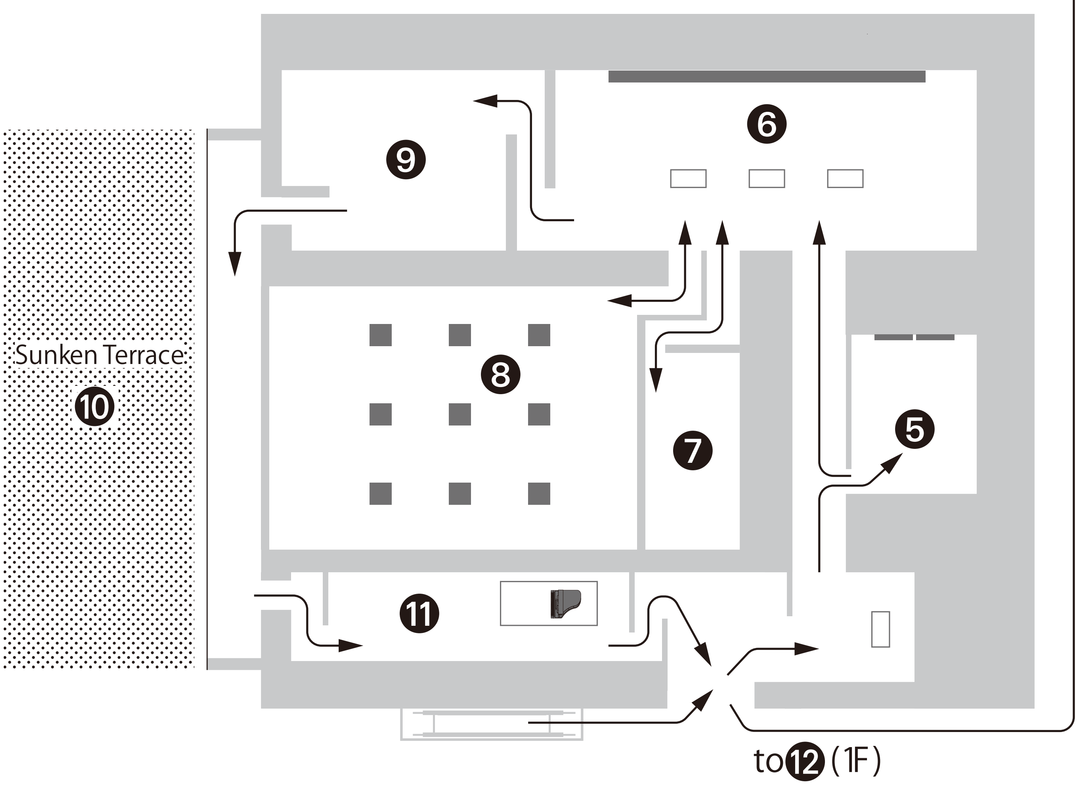
Carsten Nicolai investigates philosophical questions and natural and scientific phenomena via works fusing sound and visual art. He is also a musician who produces works of electronic music under the name "Alva Noto." Starting from 2002, he and Sakamoto collaborated in various forms, including releasing albums and touring live. Inspired by French novelist Jules Verne's science fiction novel *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea,* Nicolai is now engaged in his first full-length film, *20,000*, a long-standing project for which he has written a script having 24 parts. Fascinated by Captain Nemo of the Nautilus submarine in the novel, Nicolai once mentioned the idea of this film project to Sakamoto. In conversation with him, the idea grew and took shape. Now, with the realization of this Sakamoto exhibition, two of the parts, *PHOSPHENES* and *ENDO EXO*, are presented in video form for the first time as a culmination of his long-standing collaboration with Sakamoto. Each video employs one of two tracks, "20210310" and "20220207," from Sakamoto' s final album, *12*.

12 is an album of musical sketches Sakamoto recorded like a sound diary between 2021 and 2022. The songs' titles serve to record the date each song was recorded. "Phosphenes" are the images of light and color we see when our eyelids are closed. Nikolai' s abstract images unfold as if wandering on the boundaries between dream and reality, and consciousness and unconsciousness, while the coinciding sounds of Sakamoto's synthesizer seem to emerge from a thick fog. In *ENDO EXO*, we encounter great numbers of mounted animals and skeletal specimens of vertebrates, displayed in European museums, while Sakamoto's piano plays a slow and melancholy melody. The Greek-derived prefixes endo and exo mean "inside" and "outside," respectively. Here, they form one title that pairs opposing concepts denoting what is hidden and what is revealed, and private versus public. The bones of the animals, which humans have arrogantly collected and exhibited from insatiable voyeuristic curiosity, quietly raise questions about the ethicality of human beings' attitudes toward life and death, their relationship with nature, and the global environment. Viewers are invited on a journey of contemplation as deep as the sea.

1st floor



B2 floor



Exhibiton Gallery, B2 floor

5

Ryuichi Sakamoto
+ Apichatpong Weerasethakul,
async–first light
2017

Apichatpong Weerasethakul,
Durmiente
2021

People at a film screening, the sea, the view of a country road from a car, a sleeping child, adult, dog ... For Thai filmmaker and artist Apichatpong Weerasethakul, listening to Sakamoto's album async was a highly personal experience. He accordingly asked people close to him to shoot footage with the same pocket-sized Digital Harinezumi camera he himself uses in his work. The images thus captured are snippets of people's personal, everyday moments rendered in grainy, low-resolution with uniquely warm colors.

Asked by Sakamoto to collaborate on the album async, then under production, Weerasethakul spent much of his time listening to the music Sakamoto sent him. He finally chose the two tracks, "disintegration" and "Life, Life," and combining them, had Sakamoto arrange their lengths and transition into each other to suit his video. Meanwhile, he edited the video images collected by his friends. To the sounds of "disintegration," fragments of deconstructed scenes appear, personal moments that shift one to another or sometimes repeat themselves. Gradually, the music segues to "Life, Life" as the poem "And this I dreamt, and this I dream" by Ukrainian poet, Arseny Tarkovsky, is quietly heard against images of people falling asleep.

Durmiente (Spanish for "sleeper") is a silent film, inspired by his own *MEMORIA*, that Weerasethakul produced for screening in conjunction with *async–first light*. It features an intimate scene, not appearing in the main film, of the moment when the lead character (Tilda Swinton) slowly falls asleep, signifying the end of her journey. The two films depict the gradual blending of boundaries as day becomes night and waking becomes dreaming, and the melding of the real and the imagined.

Weerasethakul describes Sakamoto's music as very "refreshing." It made him feel as if encountering the sounds of nature for the first time, he says. "It's like when one opens his or her eyes in the morning and remembers the first light, first image that one sees. Imprinted."

Exhibiton Gallery, B2 floor

6

Ryuichi Sakamoto
+ Shiro Takatani,
async–immersion tokyo
2023/2024

Starting with *async–drowning* in 2017, Sakamoto and Takatani created a number of installation works exploring their concept of "installation music" — music placed three-dimensionally in a space. *async–immersion* is a large-scale installation first exhibited at AMBIENT KYOTO 2023, after Sakamoto's passing, that develops on his *async* series works. This time, the work has been reconstituted for a gallery at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo. Entering a space where music from *async* plays from fourteen channels (8.2.2.2) on high-precision speakers, viewers are surrounded by music on all sides. Before them, an image by Takatani is generated in real-time on an 18m-long LED wall.

The images composed by Takatani are based on footage of Sakamoto's piano, books, percussion instruments, backyard potted plants, and other objects at his New York studio. For this production of *async–immersion*, Takatani has added new elements such as beams of light crossing the screen in a scanner-like motion, and texts recited from the songs "fullmoon" and "Life, Life." The image on the large-scale LED wall changes steadily in one direction, from either the screen's left or right extreme, gradually transforming into a single, unified landscape. The image formed of countless thin, horizontal lines is slowly scanned pixel by pixel, much like weaving a fabric—into a still image. Once complete, the still image then slowly reverts to horizontal lines, one pixel at a time, gradually decomposing into countless lines stretching like layers of sediment. When the layered horizontal lines finally cover the entire screen, they begin transforming into the elements forming the next image. Takatani's visual changes are not synchronized with the album's sounds but evolve continuously, creating a parallel time axis within the exhibition space. This tide-like ebb and flow of an added time axis strikes a deep impression in viewers.

Exhibiton Gallery, B2 floor

7

Ryuichi Sakamoto
+ Zakkubalan,
async–volume
2017

In a darkened room, 24 iPhones and iPads are arranged on the walls like small, brightly lit windows. Sounds are softly heard coming from their screens as one approaches them. The devices display videos of Sakamoto's home studio, living room, and garden in New York—spaces where the artist spent much of his time while working on the album *async*. The fragmented videos and their sounds—a mixture of sounds isolated from the album's songs and natural and environmental sounds captured in each space—constitute a single installation.

async–volume is the work of Zakkubalan, an artist duo formed by Neo Sora and Albert Tholen, whose primary focus is producing film works. When asked by Sakamoto to create a "behind-the-scenes" portrait of his creative process, they eschewed the conventional documentary format, opting instead to show views of his surroundings and traces of his daily life in order to draw a portrait that would make his presence felt without the artist himself being present.

Each "window" is small. Viewers can look in the windows, but they are unable to see the overall work. Similarly, as they approach a window, sounds emitted by that device gain dominance over sounds from other windows. Going to peek in another window and another, they hear a different blend of sounds at each, ultimately obtaining a highly personal experience of the soundscape. Peering into Sakamoto's inner being through many small windows, each opening into a world, viewers feel a sense of being embraced by darkness inside a womb.

Exhibiton Gallery, B2 floor

8

Ryuichi Sakamoto
+ Shiro Takatani,
LIFE–fluid, invisible, inaudible...
2007

A video and sound installation whose production involved deconstructing Sakamoto's 1999 opera *LIFE*. Since the work's release in 2007, Sakamoto came to produce installation works at art museums and festivals, primarily in collaboration with Shiro Takatani. *LIFE* was an ambitious work on the theme of symbiosis, which through music, sound, words, visual image, and performance, addressed the "war and revolution" and "science and technology" of the 20th century and presented a vision for the 21st century. When translating the opera into art installation form, employing fog as a medium, the artists brought a new interest into play—that of exploring the boundaries between perceptible and imperceptible things, as the subtitle indicates. The original version, commissioned by Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media [YCAM], consisted of nine installation units. Versions consisting of three units and twelve units have also been adapted to suit different exhibit spaces.

Nine water tanks arranged in a 3 x 3 grid are suspended from the ceiling. Images are projected on fog generated inside the water tanks. Each tank is equipped with two speakers at both ends. When the fog is thick, the images appear distinctly, and when thin, they filter through the water and swirl, as if floating on the floor. The video images and sounds derive mostly from the opera *LIFE,* supplemented with new material created specifically for this installation. These elements are categorized into dozens of groups according to the taxonomical system used in the study of natural history, comprising over 400 sequences that are algorithmically combined to generate an infinitely evolving installation.
In this space with apparatuses suspended overhead like floating gardens, visitors walk about slowly, pausing sometimes to stand or lie down. Here, they experience an expanse of space-time, unlike our conventional linear experience.

Exhibiton Gallery, B2 floor

9 Ryuichi Sakamoto Archive 2024

As supplementary tools for understanding the trajectory of Ryuichi Sakamoto's artistic practice, we are presenting archival materials with explanatory texts and visual models aided by AI simulation.

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seeing sound, hearing time (Documentation)— Ryuichi Sakamoto's Media Performances

Shigeru Matsui

Ryuichi Sakamoto explored cross-disciplinary artistic expression for more than a half century, in the decades of the late 20th to early 21st century. What kind of artist was he? Here, by showing evidence of his investigations into diverse media, we provide "auxiliary lines" to the exhibition that underscore the thinking behind his work, the era in which he lived, and his relationship with technology. Below are explanations of one unpublished material (I), five publications (II–VI), and one simulation ([Simulation by generative AI]).

I. Ryuichi Sakamoto' s Thinking theme #1 #2（1984 / 1985）

There is a series of memos Sakamoto wrote on cards around the time when he disbanded YMO and expanded his activities in music and beyond it into the art scene. His words in the memos unmistakably embody the ideas of a postmodernist artist. We find concepts he would pursue until the end of his life, such as the skepticism toward originality underlying his opera LIFE, his partiality towards Jean-Luc Godard, the influence of Natsume Soseki seen in TIME, and his skepticism toward authority and the establishment. The following documentation shows the trajectory of Ryuichi Sakamoto's activities and substantiates a positioning of him as a postmodernist artist. In five sections serving as auxiliary lines to the exhibition, we have categorized materials that Sakamoto published and released to the general public. They reveal his attitude as an artist who posited "modernity" as a hypothetical enemy in his engagement with art, media, technology, and society, and directed his energies to what would come "after" = post-modernity.

II.The Postwar Avant-Garde Generation

Connections can be seen with the thinking and art behind voices raised in protest against the establishment circa 1968.

III. Media Performances after YMO

Finding opportunity in his precarious relationship with popular culture, Sakamoto staged media performances. His efforts to deconstruct and restructure preconceived notions he aired in general magazines rather than specialized journals.

IV. At the End of Music History —the Opera "LIFE"

Introducing the concept of an opera that, at the close of the 20th century, acknowledged the end of the modern age and advocated ecosophy (ecological equilibrium) as a direction for the 21st century to come. The unpublished document summarizing the opera's composition, "LIFE 990103 Kyoto Conference Notes (A.A.)" is a must see.

V. Post-Media Expression

From time to time, Ryuichi Sakamoto used cutting-edge media technology in holding experimental multimedia performances. From cassette books and video art in the 1980s, Sakamoto moved to MIDI data distribution and transmission in the 1990s, and explorative investigations of copyrights and the public sphere in the 2000s.

VI. Post-Human Ecosophy

In the 21st century, Sakamoto would remark, "We are no match for nature." Art that looks forward to a post-human (beyond human) world—Can we not view it as an attempt to reposition human beings within nature?

[Simulation by generative AI]

Tomoyasu Hirano

By mapping the relationships among Ryuichi Sakamoto's ideas, artworks, and people crucial to his work, we attempt to clarify the trajectory of his creative development, something that cannot fully be shown through exhibits alone.

Material Structure and Text:
Shigeru Matsui

Simulation by generative AI:
Tomoyasu Hirano, Naoko Oshima

Venue Configuration:
FOLT Taiki Tomita

Cooperation:
Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Sciences [IAMAS] Library

Sanken Garden (B2 floor / outside)

10

Ryuichi Sakamoto
+ Fujiko Nakaya + Shiro Takatani,
LIFE–WELL TOKYO
Fog Sculpture #47662
2024

Fujiko Nakaya is known for creating a "fog sculpture" that engulfed the Pepsi Pavilion at Expo' 70 in Osaka using artificial fog generated from pure water. She has since undertaken fog projects in locations around the world. Nakaya also actively produces experimental collaborations with artists from other genres, and worked with Ryuichi Sakamoto and Shiro Takatani, along with dancer Min Tanaka, to realize her major installations *London Fog* (Tate Modern, London) in spring 2017 and *a-form* (new National Museum in Oslo) in autumn the same year.

Sakamoto and Takatani have created works employing fog, such as *LIFE–fluid, invisible, inaudible ...* (2007) and *LIFE–WELL Installation* (2013). Sakamoto staged *LIFE–WELL* at a dried-up old pond in a shrine compound, likening the old pond to the dry well in the play *At the Hawk's Well* by W.B. Yeats, an Irish poet and playwright who was influenced by Noh theater. The Yeats play is set at a dried-up well from which, it is said, the water of immortality springs. It features an old man who has wasted his life waiting for its water to spring, the young Celtic mythological hero Cuchulain, who arrives at the well, and the well's guardian, a woman who dances like a hawk.

This time, in a special collaboration titled *LIFE–WELL TOKYO*, Nakaya envelops the Sunken Terrace on the art museum's B2 floor in fog and fills it with the water of immortality. Fog emerging from both sides of the venue collides and, creating a convection current, rises heavenward. Its swirling movement, captured by a camera, is converted instantly into Sakamoto's music while, upstairs, a mirror tracks the sun's path to reflect light into the fog. Fog, sound, and sunlight combine as one, changing in expression second by second. Together, they weave a dreamlike symphony eliciting feelings of love, respect, and awe for nature.

Exhibiton Gallery, B2 floor

11

Ryuichi Sakamoto
× Toshio Iwai,
Music Plays Images × Images Play Music
1996–1997/2024

Music Plays Images × Images Play Music is a collaborative performance by Ryuichi Sakamoto and Toshio Iwai using music and images, first performed at Art Tower Mito in 1996. With Sakamoto striking the keys, performance data sent from his MIDI piano was instantly translated into images projected on a giant screen via Iwai's programming to visualize the music. Further experiments in fusing music and visual media were also conducted. In one instance, images generated by Iwai bounced from the screen to play a piano and, in another, viewers were able to enjoy a session with Sakamoto using live broadcasting via the Internet, a technique relatively unknown at the time. In September of the following year, 1997, after enthralling the audience with their innovative performance, Sakamoto and Iwai won the Grand Prix (Golden Nica) in the Interactive Art category at Ars Electronica, a global media art festival held in Linz, Austria. In December of the same year, Sakamoto performed on his MIDI piano in a public experiment conducted at the "MPI X IPM" concert held at The Garden Hall in Ebisu, Tokyo. There, MIDI data performed by Sakamoto was distributed live to broadcast venues throughout Japan for remote performances on local pianos at the venues. These groundbreaking endeavors had a profound impact on subsequent media artists.

Sakamoto, who was always eager to use the new media of the times, incorporated the Internet into his creative practice from the early days of its inception. He also developed an early and active interest in experimenting with MIDI, a format that enabled his piano performances to be recorded and reproduced accurately.

For this exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, two songs selected from MIDI data actually played by Sakamoto at Ars Electronica' 97, which were discovered among Iwai's archives, will be recreated and presented along with video data captured from the scene at the time. Iwai will reconstruct the programming he employed back then and use Sakamoto's favorite MIDI piano to revive this legendary performance, which, in the form of an installation, has never aged. The exhibit will enable visitors to glimpse—and aurally experience—Sakamoto's origins as an artist who used cutting-edge media skillfully with playful creativity, and continually pursued and expanded the possibilities of expression through sound.

Courtyard (1st floor / outside)

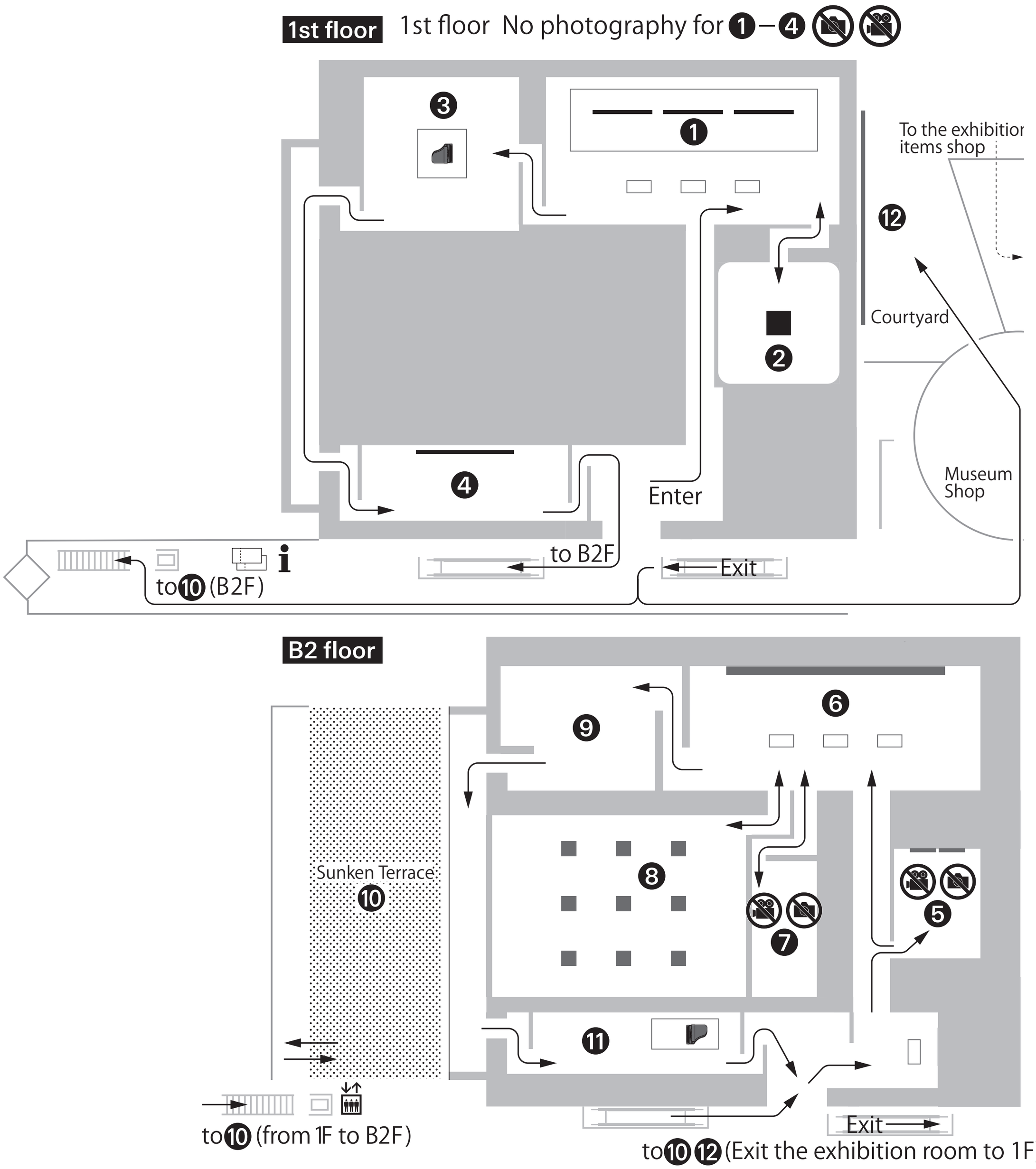
*ミュージアムショップ奥の自動扉から屋外へ出てご覧ください。

12

Ryuichi Sakamoto
+ Daito Manabe,
Sensing Streams
2024–invisible, inaudible
(MOT version)
2024

A 50cm-wide LED display, accompanied by outdoor speakers, stretches 16m along the courtyard wall adjacent to the shop and cafe at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo. Electromagnetic wave data, imperceptible to humans, used by mobile phones, Wi-Fi, terrestrial digital, and FM radio is collected by antennas installed outside the museum and converted into image and sound in real-time through the LED display and speakers. Together, they make seen and heard the invisible streams of electromagnetic waves flying around the metropolis of Tokyo.

This work manifests as an “ecosystem” the artificial flow of electromagnetic waves that, although we are normally unaware of them, form an essential infrastructure for today’s urban activities. It was originally presented at the Sapporo International Art Festival 2014: City and Nature, for which Sakamoto served as Guest Director. On that occasion, it employed a large-scale video display and speakers installed in the Glass Pyramid at Moerenuma Park in the Sapporo suburbs. For this exhibition, the large video display has been replaced with an upgraded version of the elongated LED display first used in an outdoor installation in Beijing in 2021. By means of the oscilloscope-like installation, the invisible infrastructure of the ever-transforming Tokyo megalopolis is depicted in images and sounds.



[Access to Sunken Terrace (B2F/Outdoor)]

❿ LIFE–WELL TOKYO , Fog Sculpture #47662 Visitors are free to be immersed in the fog. To access ❿ visitors must first go through ⓫, then go up to the 1F to exit the exhibition. Then please proceed past the ticket counter and take the stairs/elevator located by the main entrance to B2F. The entrance to the artwork is in front of the auditorium. Starts every 00/20/40 past every hour minutes (duration: approx. 5 minutes)

NOTICE:

- To prevent dangers of falling or slipping, please refrain from running outdoors.
- When fog is thick, please do not move until it has lifted and surroundings are visible.