

Sound in Space

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Introduction

My artwork explores the borders and limits of communication between disabled and non-disabled people, specifically hearing and hearing-impaired people, and how natural materials such as wood and stone interact with sound technology and language in gallery spaces. I have had a cochlear implant in my right ear since December 2012. As a result, I am able to express unique relationships between sound, color and language in my art. The question is: can I overcome the limits of communication and make connections with my audience? Even though I am hearing-impaired, will I be able to create a universal music with sound?

Theoretically, *Relational Aesthetics* require the viewer to be a participant and the meaning of the work is determined by what the participants do. For example, Rikrit Tiravanija served a Thai curry to visitors and the communication that resulted was a key feature of this work. Meanwhile Tino Sehgal focused on the gestures and social subtitles of lived experience, and similarly, my practice at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), is about finding ways. I use sound, vibration, and words to pose three questions: how do people communicate, how do people recognize communication barriers, and how can people create an effective space and system for communication? What I learned at MICA is the value of experimental music to help people cast differences aside and reach a mutual understanding.

My hearing aids have made it possible for me to create a new expression of original sound.

My linguistic system does not have the notion of general sound and sign. In this regard, John Cage's book *Silence* proved especially useful in giving me a new perspective on communicating through sound especially his talk of Zen principles and chance operations and his revolutionary ideas about sound and silence.

I hope to find ways to connect people by creating empathy musically. Using an iPhone, speaker, amplifier, recorder and a noise app, I created a composition to produce both disturbances and musical sympathy in a space. In terms of using language in my artwork, I can communicate with an audience and prompt them to think about a different perspective through hearing something they have never heard before. Moreover, when I put visual and audio limits or barriers on my artwork, the audience can also think about what constitutes borders and what constitutes walls. Finally, I will combine a new technology and develop my installations into interactive art projects that involve my audience as the future subject. After all, art is a universal language and a form of human communication. I ultimately hope to achieve my artistic goal in communicating clearly and effectively in a language that everybody can understand.

At the same time, it is important to know that I was born and raised in Japan, a culture profoundly connected to sound and space. This has had an equally profound effect on my artworks.

For example, when I clean a room, I focus not only on items, but the empty space. As a result, every time I paint, the blank space is important. In traditional Japanese culture, the notion of blank space “Yohaku, Ma, Ku”, is a kind of ambiguity and “borderlessness”¹ and that influences my new art: no borders unify people. “Yohaku, Ma, Ku” means higher spirit, nothing, or nothing in constant change, a haziness, without distinction between life and death.² The hazy space of Japanese art, in the form of open borders, is likewise something I want to explore through sound.

I discuss the three above questions in “sound and space” in Chapter 1. In Chapter 2, I examine “the border of visuospatial and audio-spatial abilities.” I explain the influence of Japanese aesthetic and space on my artworks in Chapter 3. Finally, I review and analyze my newest artworks, that is those produced at MICA in Chapter 4.

¹ Matunaga, Seigo. *Idea of Mountain and water – imagination of “negative”*. Chikuma gakugei bunko, 2008, 220.

² Kanbara, Masaki. *Japanese art*. Keiso shobou, 2001, 28, 83.