

OVERVIEW REPORT SUMMARY

JAN 10 – MAY 26 2018

I. Summary

The activities on this report happened during January 10 until March 5 2018. The activities were primarily done in Tokyo, with a few days in Yokohama city and Aomori prefecture.

Activities are divided based on the following categories: a) Meetings and encounters, b) Festivals, and c) Performances or Concerts accomplished and attended. These are not presented in chronological order (kindly refer to first part roman numeral I for the chronology of the activities.) Activities which included in locating apartments, getting accustomed to Tokyo daily life, travel concerns, and other living adjustment activities are excluded from this report but it is worth noting that the first two weeks (beginning from Jan 10) were primarily spent adjusting to Tokyo daily life.

II. Pre-MECA / Meetings with Artists and Curators, Symposium

Meeting with Artists / Preparatory Work:

- The purpose of this was to get connected and network as fast as I can during the first month in order to meet all artists, curators, musicians, etc that could potentially assist me in my research and activities. I have met more than 35 people from Jan - Feb ranging from artists, producers, publishers, media artists, musicians, professors of art universities, researchers, art and music venue owners, creative agency personnel, and student/artists. I cannot recount all the people, but I will decide to focus on some crucial people I have met and find interesting.

- Ryota Kuwakubo (IAMAS) - a visual artist who works with varying mediums, most commonly utilizing digital or electronic aspects, and a typical theme his works center on is contrasting matter. Very interestingly he avoids the cliché interactive art works that tend to depend too much on technology by using simple LED lights to reflect shadows of objects for example. He is a popular professor in IAMAS having mentored various students. He will assist my visit in IAMAS next month.

- BRDG Tokyo (Tama and Iamas Students) - I met Ryota Kuwakubo with his former students from IAMAS: Guillaume Tchong, Kakuya Shiraishi, Scott Allen, Shoya Dozono. These young artists are creative coders who work with audio-visual art: moving images, motion graphics and electronic music. They also participate in BRDG (or Bridge Tokyo) a Tokyo based collective project for audiovisual expression led by producer Yasushi Fukuzawa. [<http://brdg.tokyo>]

- Hatanaka Minoru (ICC) - a well-known curator for media art in Japan, Minoru works in ICC as its head curator. I have met him before when I went to ICC Japan in Aug 2017 so meeting him again was more about asking for advice, his thoughts and ideas of media art history, particularly in the field of audio-visual media art. He has been helpful in connecting me also with key media artists in Kansai and Kyushu areas. Minoru-san has been an invaluable resource for meeting and being connected to media artists for my research.

- Aki Onda (TPAM) - sound artist, writer, and curator based in New York, I met Onda when he interviewed me in Manila during his research on sound art in the Philippines. He has written about WSK and myself for the popular contemporary sound / music magazine, The Wire this year.

I met with him couple of times for chats, dinner, and attending a few concerts in TPAM (Performing Arts Meeting in Yokohama) where he is one of the artistic directors since 2016.

- Yoshi Suzuki (Ftarri) - One of the key people in the Tokyo sound art, underground music scene since the 90s, Suzuki is a publisher, a music concert organizer, writer, record shop owner (Ftarri), and archivist. He was responsible for an influential resource website called Improvised Music in Japan (now defunct). The history of audio-visual media art in Japan has not just been limited in contemporary art, theater circles but also has its roots in underground music culture.

- Ito Satoko (ACAC) - a longtime curator at Aomori Contemporary Arts Center, Satoko assisted me not just during my stay in Aomori (from lodging to driving me around) but also in connecting to other artists such as Ken Furudate, and other media artists who were included in the Aomori Triennale. ACAC is an interesting place, I would like to go back and do projects with them in the future.

- Noboru Tsubaki (Artistic Director, Curator) - Professor at Applied Arts in Kyoto University and the artistic director of the recently concluded Aomori Triennale. He is a recent connection that I will pursue for more research when I am in Kyoto next month.

- Hiroshi Inukai (e-Sports) - Inukai is a media artist, a producer, a businessman, and sports enthusiast having conducted numerous "Digital Undokai". I met him when I gave a lecture at Fabcafe for a public meet-up. I find his use of very simple audio-visual technology to promote sports and fun was intriguing. I believe it would be an interesting avenue to investigate further or perhaps new ideas or approaches for educational purposes could be discovered from his work.

Toshiyuki Hashimoto (aircord.co.jp) - A media artist and CEO of aircord - a creative agency whose works encompass interactive, digital projections, lighting and visual systems - similar to the likes of Rhizomatiks, Backspace, TeamLab. I was interested in his use of interactive audio-visual design for art and corporate brands, so perhaps I will investigate this field further in my research.

- Kiyoshi Suganuma & Richi Owaki (YCAM) - Suga is the chief educator in YCAM and Richi is a visual / video specialist in YCAM. I met them during the MeCA festival and have been exchanging for preparation of my activities when I visit in YCAM. I am a big fan of YCAM's work so I intend to delve in deeper when I get there. Richi also demonstrated a smaller scale of his VR work during one of the setups for MeCA.

- Akihiro Kubota (TAMA) - Director of Media Center at TAMA Art University. Because of certain changes with my initial hosts (Tetsu Kondo, Kyogei University) I intend to pursue the educational research in media art departments in universities at TAMA instead of Kyogei.

- Atsunori Kihara – Composer and creative coder working in the field of audio-visual art and performance. I have had multiple dinners at his home as we discuss and share ideas on possible collaborations in Tokyo for May. He is one of my host partners for my fellowship.

There have been many more relevant and interesting people I met during my first two months, but I cannot go through each and everyone so in my final report I will summarize and make the connections.

What is important is these people are some of the key people I believe that will assist me further in my investigation of media art in Japan.

III. Festival report

During February until early March, I spent a lot of time participating in these four festivals both as a participant and observer. This is just a summary of activities I did but I will write a further conclusion or further thoughts in my next reports because so far I have discovered some crucial information and analysis that connects the current state of media art.

a. MECA

MeCA is a project by AAC Tokyo (one of my key hosts for this fellowship) and Japan Foundation Asia Center. So my participation in MeCA are as follows:

- Guest Director (Exhibition): I was the guest director for the exhibition section of the festival, having selected some artists and assisted in the conceptualization, management, pre-planning, and supervision of installation of the exhibition which began last Oct 2017.

- Keynote Speaker (Symposium): I gave a public lecture for the 2nd International Symposium for Media Art & Technology: Creativity, Education, and Archive Environments which was held at The Tokyo Women's Plaza last February 11.

Quick Thoughts & Summary as co-organizer: MeCA is the next project born out of the initial collaboration between my festival organization in Manila, WSK: Festival of The Recently Possible and Asia Center last year. My participation in MeCA however was limited unlike being so directly involved in the production of the festival. However my colleague, Chesca (WSK co-director) participated directly as a festival manager and workshop lecturer for MeCA. This position of having a distance between the organizing parties enabled me to be able to sift through various people and various issues between the organization. In short, I had the perspective of an eagle, able to see various groups on a top-view but cannot see the details up-close.

As with any new joint collaboration, the uncharted waters to which organizer's boats ride on will often encounter rough seas as they travel - but this is not to say MeCA failed to deliver. In fact, it delivered well, oftentimes in defiance of what is the norm or certain archaic standards for art organizing here in Japan. For a relatively new festival in its first try, I believe it couldn't have done what it has achieved if it had not been for the sheer willpower of the organizers themselves. However, I believe that so much needs to be improved on, not just on the programming itself but also on how to create a competitive but convivial working environment and social relationship between the artists and organizers and the organizers amongst themselves. I will write a more detailed account of this in the future but this is my initial summary.

Quick Thoughts & Summary as participant / audience: MeCA as a whole was an interesting attempt to bring various cultures, pre-existing relations, while forging (and breaking *see above) new ones. MeCA's ultimate goal to create a "transnational" platform intrinsically a great aspiration, however, personally I

would have wanted to have seen more Southeast Asian countries involved in either exhibition or performances but NOT too much as to be not compared to the recently concluded "Sunshower" Exhibition. I was personally not too happy with the curation of the exhibition - meaning the placement of works between themselves. However this could have been solved if there was an official curator for the exhibition. However the production level of the exhibition was excellent. I would have also wanted to have seen more performances / concerts during the festival. Another comment was the colliding and conflicting scheduling of the Biocamp project which happened simultaneously during MeCA. I believe the programming would have been resolved if there would have been an activity or space where the Biocamp participants and the MeCA participants would engage with daily. For me, as a participant and a guest, I was able to attend some activities of the Biocamp and of MeCA but the participants themselves were not even able to see the exhibition at Omotesando Hills. Perhaps in the future, a solution is to create a social platform for both participants to be part of sometime during the day or evening. We must not forget that to create a "transnational platform", is also akin to a home for different cultures to exit in, engage in, and develop relations.



1 Bani Haykal's necropolis for those without sleep @ MeCA exhibition



2 Q & A at the Symposium



3 Tad Ermitano (PH) working on his Spinning Jimmy @ MeCA exhibition



4 I was giving a tour to the VIP committee of Asia Center. This work is by Shiro Takatani and Ryuichi Sakamoto

b. TPAM

TPAM's programming was very good in my opinion. However since it was happening simultaneously as MeCA, I had missed out on a lot of interesting performances and activities which happened during the first few days of MeCA. I was accompanied by Aki Onda, one of the artistic directors of TPAM.

Here is a quick summary of what I was able to see:

1) Japan's Improvised Music Scene Today @ Ftarri,

Obscure, yet somewhat spiritual musical gems in a very inclusive environment, Japan's Improvised Music Scene has been ongoing since the 90s as an opposition to the loud noise music movement. This scene was led by various people some of the more famed people is Otomo Yoshihide, Toshimaru Nakamura, Keiji Haino, etc.



5 One of the performances at Ftarri

2) Multi-sensory / medium performance by Antibodies Collective @ YCC Yokohama Creativecity Center,

The Antibodies Collective is a very interesting multimedia group comprised of dancers, dramaturgists, musicians, visual artists, and media artists. It is very hard to describe what the performance was about because of the way the performance was setup - there was no central stage but multiple stages, multiple performances surrounding the audience. The audience is free to roam around and see various "mini stages" while overall the piece is accompanied by an electronically-produced live sound performance and abstract digital projections with a very huge timer counting down to 0.

They're based in Kyoto so I intend to meet with them when I get there.



6 Members of the Antibodies Collective taking a bow after finishing their performance.



10 One of the mini-stages at the Antibodies performance

3) Hiroaki Umeda x Tokyo University of the Arts "Synesensory Embodiment Project, work in progress" @ Arts & Science LAB, Tokyo University of the Arts

Famed dancer, choreographer, and media artist Hiroaki Umeda premiered a work in progress in collaboration with students and staff at the Arts & Science LAB in Tokyo University. They premiered a newly choreographed dance accompanied by digital projections and electronically produced sound.



11 Hiroaki Umeda x Tokyo University of the Arts "Synesensory Embodiment Project

c. Media Ambition Tokyo

Media Ambition Tokyo if I would describe in three words: "Predicatable New Standard." Not to say the Media Ambition Festival did not have any interesting works or artists, they just belong in the media art which I find the least fascinating, or as I call it "Commercial Media Art." To explain, the current standard for audiovisual and interactive works for media art is what pioneering big media art collectives, Rhizomatiks and TeamLab do in their commercial works. It is pretty, visually stunning, and aurally beautiful - however this is what I feared interactive art's trap, that the point of an interactive art is "beautiful interactivity" but not much substance or critical weight on the medium or the practice itself. Media Ambition Tokyo showcased various media art works, a lot were audiovisual interactive pieces often done in collaboration with other artists, and even in one instance, with a car company. This is the bright yet terrifying future of media art in the world of commerce. So in short, Media Ambition was a very well designed exhibition from top media artists but is hollow within -- is this the ambition we must aspire for in the future?

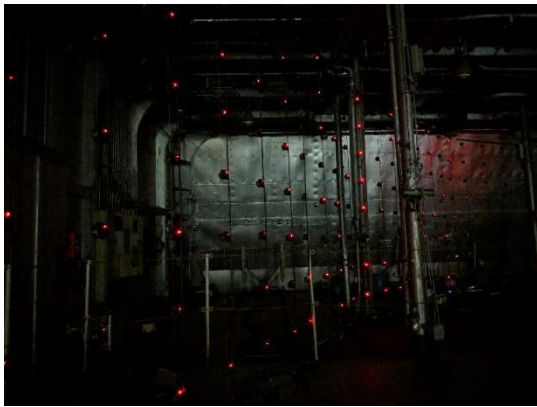
d. Aomori Triennale

I caught up to the last few days of Aomori Triennale through the recommendation of media artist, Ken Furudate from Kyoto. I have wanted to always go to Hokkaido for the crazy snow, so Aomori was the next closest place I could go to. Upon arriving, I was not prepared for the weather - I have never seen so much snow in my life. The experience however was good due to the warmth of the people. Aomori Triennale produced public works (one is located in the hull of an old ship) while the rest of the artworks were held in ACAC. One particular work of interest was Ken Furudate's A Composition for Hundreds of Pulse Generators located inside a unlit part of an old JR train carrier ship. The ship was decommissioned for a long time but now acts as a relic museum for the ship's productive past. I was staying at Aomori Contemporary Arts Center (ACAC) during my stay in Aomori.

It boggles me to see the fantastic setting and architecture of ACAC in the middle of nowhere. There was a meditative calmness being in the middle of a white forest, only accompanied by the howling wind and the beauty of snow. The experience was almost magical.

There was one bioart workshop conducted by Biocamp co-director, Georg Tremmel which was about DIY dna analysis and testing.

However great the place and the people are, I ask myself the question: who is the audience?



12 Ken Furudate's work inside the ship

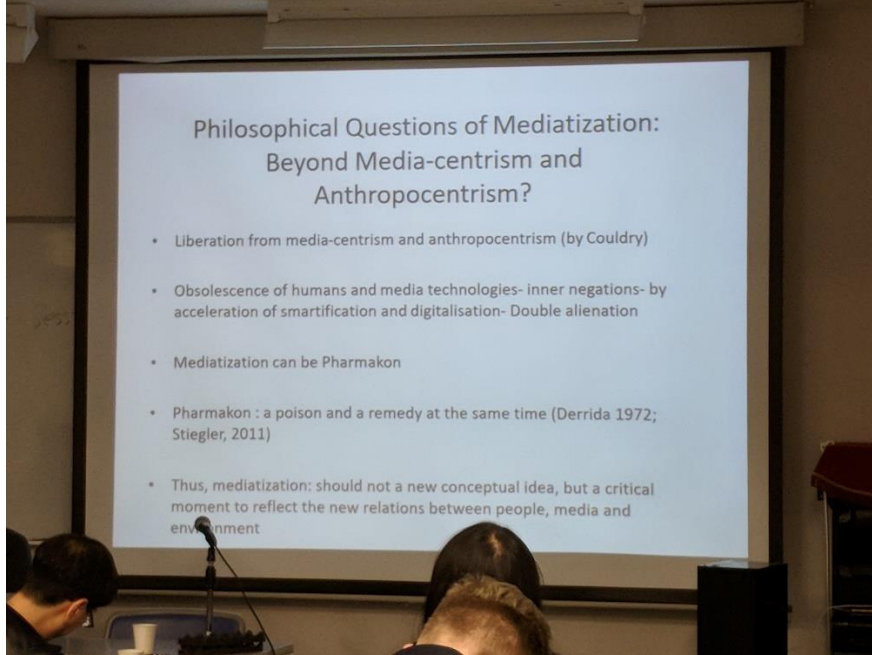


13 BCL's DNA virus work

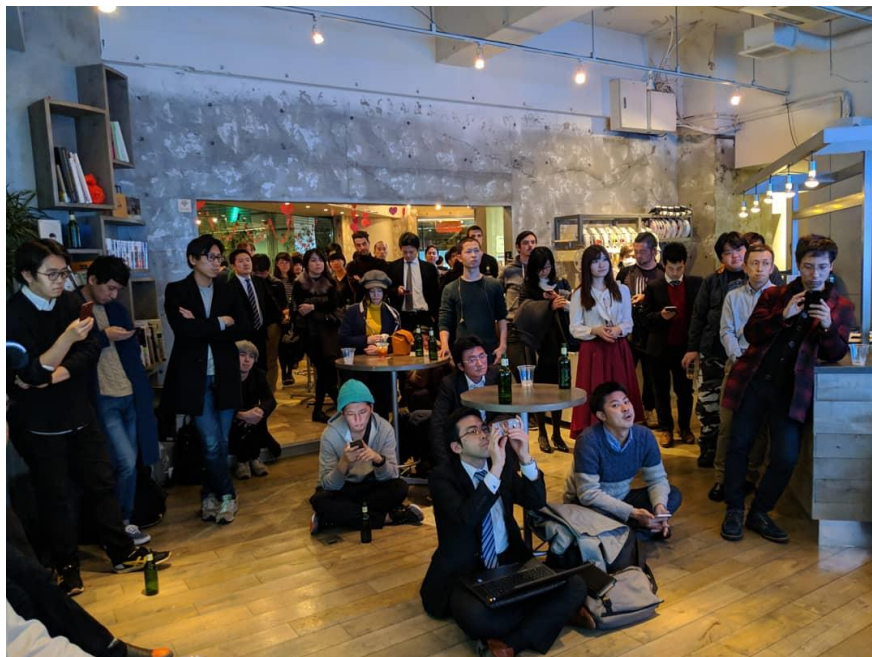
IV. Events / Performances / Concerts Attended and Accomplished

Since Jan, I have given lectures, performed and watched concerts in various venues, and attended an academic symposium. I have kept myself busy by going to a lot of performances, exhibitions, and activities during my first two months in Tokyo. For the sake of brevity, below are a select few. In no particular order, here are the details:

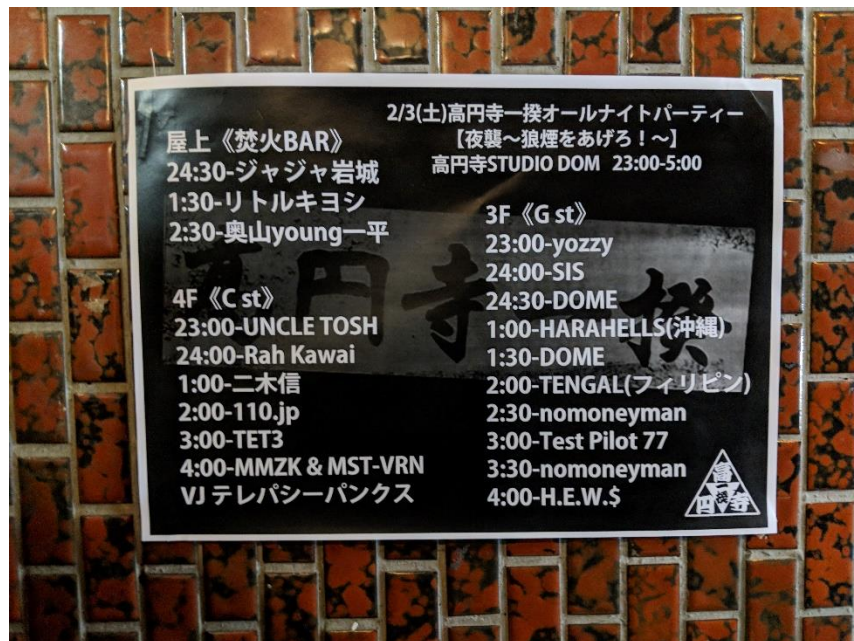
- Attend symposium on Post Media Studies in Asia (Tokyo University) [Jan 27-28]



- Public Lecture at Cerevo Café Special Meetup at Fab Café [Jan 31]



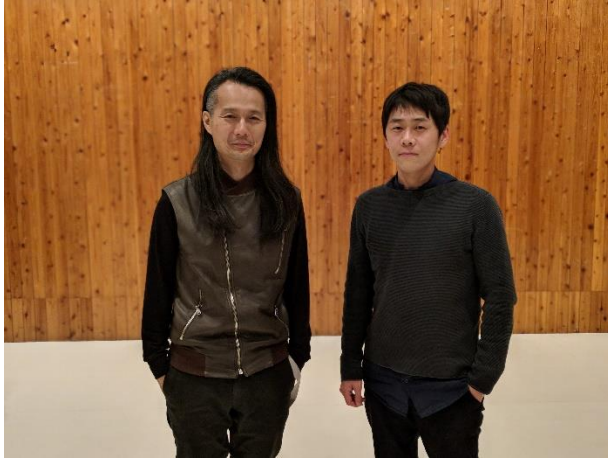
- Performed at Koenji Festival 高円寺一揆2018 [Feb 3]



- Performed at artist-run-space uma merdre in Fuchu city [Feb 18]



- Attended sound, visual art performances by Akio Suzuki and Aki Onda, and audio-visual performance by Makino Takashi and Aki Onda [Feb 24-25]



*If you request for videos or photos, you can. These are just selected media materials.

V. MARCH 15-MAY 26

The activities on this report happened between March 15 until May 26 2018. The activities which are divided into three sections – 1) giving lectures and performances, 2) attending performances and exhibitions, and 3) meetings with artists -- were done in various cities starting from Tokyo to Fukuoka, and ending in Tokyo. (See fig. below)

JAPAN 2018



VI. Tokyo

After my activities in MeCA Festival, I continued connecting and interviewing various media art people: artists, professors, and professionals whom I met and worked with during this festival. These are only some highlights:

Meeting Artists



One artist who caught my attention was **Norimichi Hirakawa** <http://counteraktiv.com/>, an artist who have exhibited in the MeCa exhibition program. His work highly focuses on installations that use mathematical processing using computers to generate unique audio-visual artworks that tend to question one's perceptions of the limits of computer-generated art. One particular thing that I found interesting in himself as an artist is that apart from working as an artist, he also worked behind the scenes of various well-known established artists in media art, particularly Ryoji Ikeda. This theme of artist-assistants will become a point of interest for my research as I continue my journey in Japan. A lot of interesting perspectives coming from being assistants to more established and famous artists reflect a certain aspect of progression in media art in Japan which I muse and elaborate more in my website.



SIDE CORE <http://sidecore.net/>: This is a project by a collective of artists coming from various backgrounds. Their primary practice is to unfold the rules laid on public space, intervene with it, and create new action. I met Sakie Takusa and Tori Matsushita during a public art walking tour in Shibuya which was organized during the Shibuya Hack Project <https://shibuyahack.com/>. Public artworks were subtly and secretly scattered throughout Shibuya-- a well-known area which forbids street art and graffiti. Part of the project involved using a sound kit which includes photos of pictures of places in Shibuya and an audio-tour guide left for the audience to rediscover as they walk around Shibuya. (See photo below)



Eric Siu is the creator of the successful art and commercial project, *Touchy – a human camera*. Eric is a Hong Kong new media creative and has built a tactile camera known as “Touchy” which was developed as a resident artist of the Ishikawa Oku Laboratory (of Maywa Denki fame). The camera works in a such a way that it sits atop a user’s head, blocking out his sight until the individual is touched by another person. According to Eric, in our interactive technological piece which serves as an actualized phenomenological social interaction experiment, dividing its wearer from the world until they receive the touch of another human being. In our technologically driven modern world, it is easy and “... *common for humans to be separated into social bubbles, to avoid sharing social space and to connect to strangers. however, technologies like internet social networking or the mobile phone loosens social boundaries, hence dehumanizing physical communication. to a certain extent, it generates social anxiety such as the one experienced in the ‘hikikomori’ and ‘otaku’ cultures in japan. touchy criticizes this phenomenon and suggests a solution by transforming the human being into a social device: a camera. the touchy project investigates how such a device improves social life, presupposing that a camera is a known tool for sharing memories, valuable moments, enjoyment, emotions, beauty and so forth.*”



Attending Exhibitions and Concerts

Nike Lab Ateliar Exhibition by various artists who I previously met namely Yang02 (Takahiro Yamaguchi), Houxo Que – both artists work between the field of visual art and media art. There were also other artists in the exhibition: Kentaro Okawara, Yudai Nishi, Bien, Mammoth, Keenue, Yoko Kusano, Kenichi Asano, Magma, Arika, Macciu. Nukeme, Alexander Julian, Maito Otake, Ohara Daijiro, Bam, Hikaru Narita, Hiroki Kehara, Nampei Akaki, Satoshi Murai, Kota Iguchii, and many more.

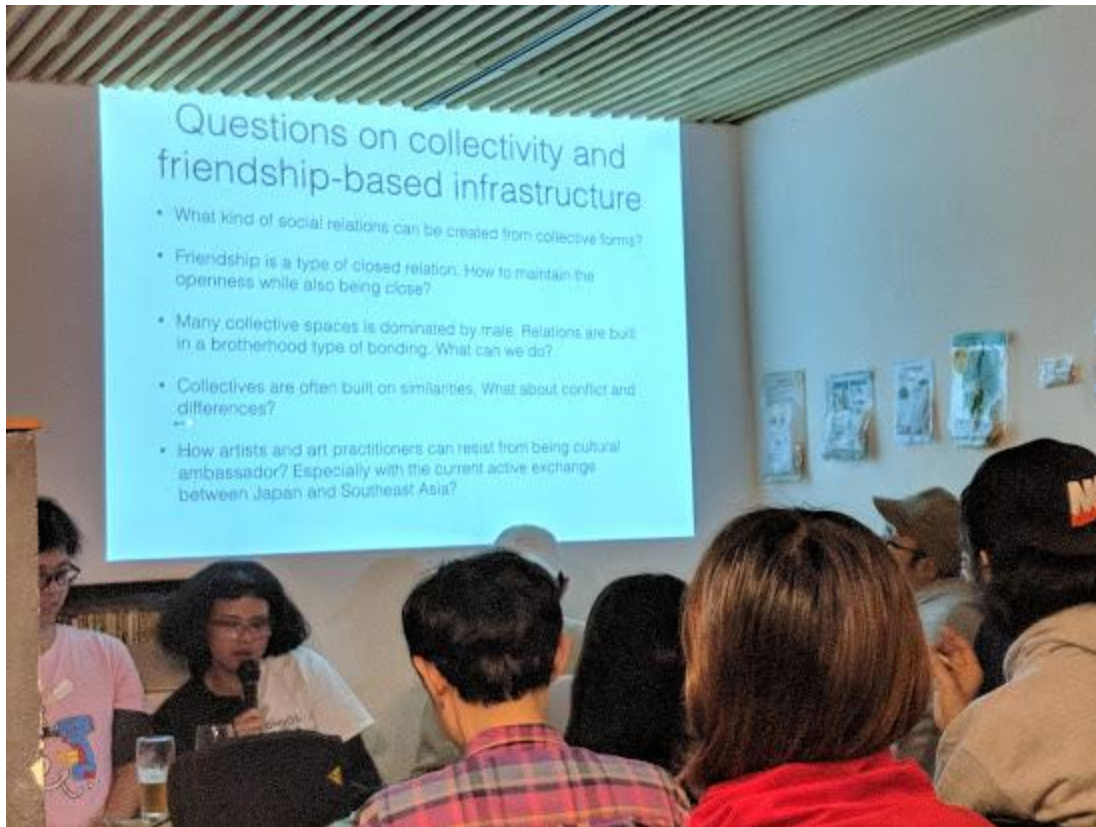




100 Fragments by Atsushi Tadokoro at Art & Science Gallery Lab Axiom was a new work showing computer-generated video works of abstract nature.

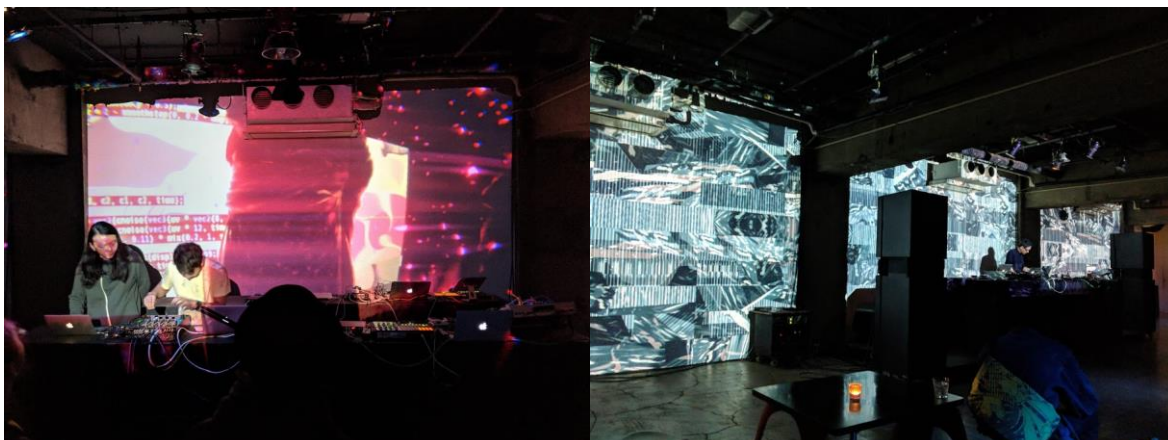


Art Center Ongoing: I met up with the artist-collective that runs the independent artspace, Art Center Ongoing located in Kichijoji and participated in a public forum and artist talk about Artist Collectives led by Syafiatudina, a curator and member of KUNCI Cultural Studies Center (Jogjakarta). She would later join my event which I will discuss below.



BRDG Event at SuperDeluxe:

I went to the concert at SuperDeluxe in Roppongi with the artists of the loose collective of BRDG Tokyo whom I met last January. These young artists are creative coders who work with audio-visual art: moving images, motion graphics and electronic music. They also participate in BRDG (or Bridge Tokyo) a Tokyo based collective project for audiovisual expression led by producer Yasushi Fukuzawa. [<http://brdg.tokyo> audio-visual]



NUSANTAO SOUNDSCAPES – A pop up lab for radio and food

<https://nusantaosound.wordpress.com>



Nusantao Soundscapes was a one-night pop up bar and radio lab which happened on March 15 at Koenji, Tokyo. The program consisted of curated radio programs, live performances, public discussions while Filipino food and drinks was being served by myself and my small team of volunteers. The featured artists are Yannick Dauby (Taiwan), Raya Martin (Philippines), Michael Leung (Hong Kong), Ion Yamazaki (Japan), Pisitakun (Thailand), Syafiatudina (Indonesia), Tomoko Hojo (Switzerland), Elaine W. Ho and Olaf Hochherz (Hong Kong), The Library by Soundpocket (Hong Kong). The project seeks to engender a dialogue through sound about migrations and speculative history of Nusantao, a fictional term devised by archaeologist Wilhelm Solheim II to describe his hypothesis of migration by seafaring Austronesian people who navigated and built networks connecting the Celebes Sea, the Pacific and Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. By reconstructing the memory of Nusantao speculatively as soundscapes in relation to today's fiber optics and distributed network technology, the programmed radio event also hopes to engender a discourse about the irrationality of imaginary borders that paradoxically define the space of globalization today. Using both the physical space of Nantoka Bar in Koenji and the sonic virtual space of Internet radio, the program will be in three parts. The first part is a set of playlist, specially selected for this event, from sound artists/researchers who are working on oral history/sound ecology of translocal cultures in Asia. The second part is a live performance by artists/researchers who are currently in the status of migration and or interested in migrant issues responding to the playlist through sound works. Lastly, as the entire event metaphorically represents as a seafaring boat sailing into the high seas of Internet, a random playlist from the audience's device was netcasted. This project was curated by myself and Jong Pairez with the support of Arts Initiative Tokyo for Radio RabaTokyo program.

VII. Kansai Region (Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe, Naoshima)

My trip in Kansai Region was mainly focused on two cities: Kyoto and Osaka, with minor cultural and transit visits in other cities as part of my land route towards Kyushu region.

KYOTO

Meeting Artists

I met with Ken Furudate, Soichiro Mihara, Kazuhiro Jo, Takehisa Mashimo, etc. mostly key figures of the Kansai-Kyushu media art scene. Most of them have studied (with the exception of Kazuhiro Jo who graduated in Kyushu University but taught as a professor in IAMAS) in IAMAS and have all been involved with Yamaguchi Media Art Center (YCAM). Ken Furudate and Kazuhiro Jo have been members and collaborators of the project Sine Wave Orchestra (swo.jp) whom since 2002 have exhibited and performed their work exclusively using sine waves in ICC Art Center in Tokyo, YCAM in Yamaguchi, Ars Electronica (AT, Transmediale (DE), International Triennale of Contemporary Art Yokohama, to name a few. Both of these artists will assist me in my research and activities in Kansai and Kyushu. My intention is to invite Sine Wave Orchestra in 2019 for the festival in WSK.

Takehisa Mashimo, a graduate of IAMAS is a researcher and media artist working in the field of interactive arts. He is a professor at Seian University of Art and Design in Shiga. I have scheduled to meet him and he'd tour me in the university but due to time constraints, my visit did not happen.

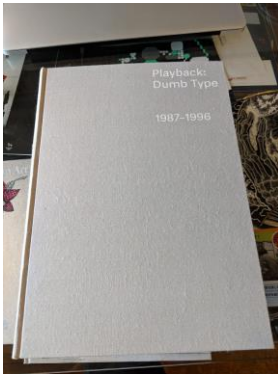
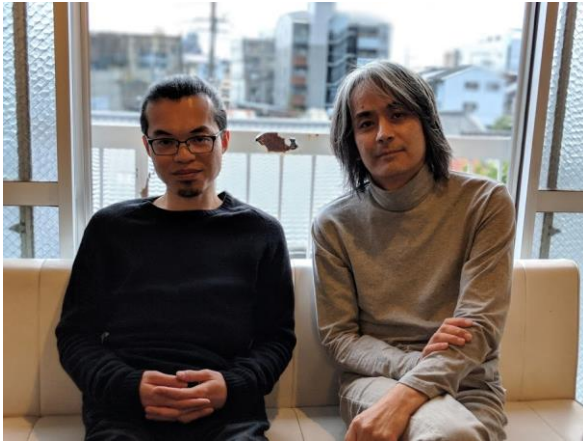
Soichiro Mihara and I had met in Tokyo during MeCA and whose work I saw in ICC earlier this year. His practice is very interesting for me as he uses open and closed systems using new media whose aim is to investigate possibilities of art as altered by nature and by technology. We also discussed a possible residency in Manila in late 2019 to develop an open system project he is currently investigating with radioactivity and politics.



Through Ken Furudate who is also an assistant and consistent collaborator of **Shiro Takatani**, the director and founder of Dump Type collective – probably the most influential media artist collective starting from the late 80s. Takatani also exhibits as a duo with famed musician and composer, Ryuichi Sakamoto whose amazing exhibition I saw at ICC Tokyo earlier this year. Their collaboration is at the pinnacle of audio-visual media art in current times.

Shiro showed me around his studio which housed a lot of artifacts from Dumb Type performances, old records and videotapes, as well as some recent work he's been doing with Kyoto's if not Japan's most famous teaware master, Kichizaemon Raku. We discussed how their collaboration worked, as well as with Ryuichi Sakamoto and the history and current state of Dumb Type.

Below are photos of his studio and my visit:



Forum Kyoto, HAPS, Soto-Kyoto.jp, Under-Throw: Kyoto does not have as many art galleries and art centers as compared to Tokyo however there are a few unique places I found during my visit. HAPS was one of the first places I tried to visit and hoping to meet with its director Mizuki Endo however HAPS was closed for the season and Endo was not in Japan. I have met Endo-san back in 2004 in Manila during that time he co-founded an artist-run initiative with Filipino artists called Future Prospects which lived until late 2007. Upon my travels in Japan I would later on find out that Endo was involved with establishing and setting up various artist-run spaces and initiatives in Kansai-Kyushu particularly Art Space Tetra in Fukuoka. Forum Kyoto is a small café and bar that has a small gallery in its tiny 3-floor building. Sometimes they would host small scale DJ concerts here, photo exhibitions, and pop-up shops but during the time I went there, they had just finished a show. Ken Furudate tells me that Forum Kyoto is open to media art despite not being dedicated to it and he and his colleagues have done shows here in the past. Soto is one of the only few art spaces dedicated to music of the experimental and adventurous kind. Meanwhile, Under-Throw (circa 2013) is both a rehearsal studio and a performance atelier for the works of Chiten, a theater company led by Motoi Miura.

Anti-bodies organized concert for Alvin Lucier (US) and Ever Present Orchestra

Kyoto University Western Auditorium

I attended a concert organized by Anti-bodies multimedia theater company who are based in Kyoto with fellow artists I had previously described above. Alvin Lucier is one of the most important representatives of American music of the second half of the twentieth century, Alvin Lucier's pioneering work is most notable for making what is normally inaudible audible, but also for his very idiosyncratic way of making the audible visible or spatially tangible. His music was performed by The Ever Present Orchestra, an orchestra dedicated to the presentation of the exceptional work of Alvin Lucier. The orchestra attempts to make Lucier's beating-pattern-focused instrumental music approachable to a wide audience with its uncommon instrumentation of four electric guitars, three saxophones, four violins and piano. Along with classical musicians, the presence of prominent Lucier interpreters such as Stephen O'Malley and Oren Ambarchi, allows for the ensemble to appeal to a wider audience than the conventional contemporary music scene.

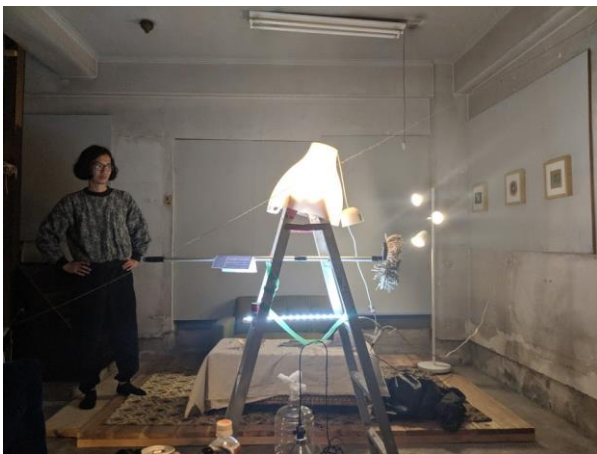


OSAKA

Meeting Artists, Artist-run Spaces, and Osaka's small yet tight-knit community of media artists & musicians

I started my trip to Osaka by a performance of a concert organized for me by sound artists who run **FIGYA**, an artist-run art space for performances, exhibitions, and concerts. Founded and run by two artists Mizutama Araki and Kayu Nakada who work with installation, sound art, and performance. My performance was met with success and was full house having people in the audience was Tetsuya Umeda whose studio and house was just a few blocks away from FIGYA.

I stayed at Konohana area, an old harborside leisure district that hosts the theme park, Universal Studios which was to my surprise, also a district occupied by artists and artist-run art spaces. A lot of these spaces used to be meat and vegetable warehouses but through a patron owner, the artists get to rent these big spaces for very cheap. Figya's monthly rent for a 2-storey building is only 10,000 Yen! This was immediately the biggest difference between Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka – there are more empty spaces which could be taken over for the arts.



Also located in Konohana area were also the following artist-run spaces:

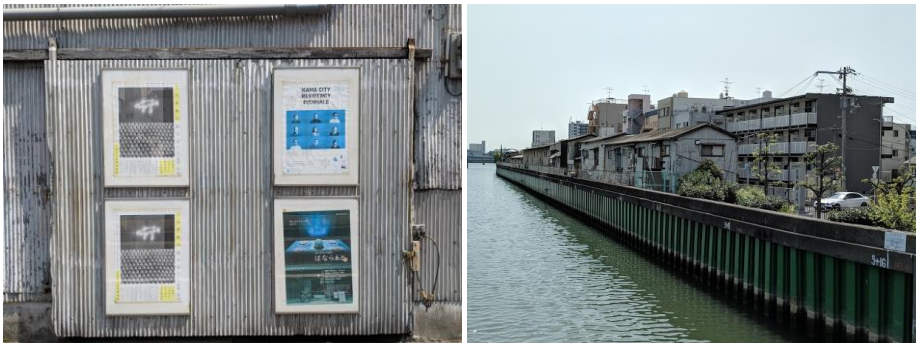
PORT: As an artist studio, a residency hostel, and a performance venue, Port is one of the oldest artist-run spaces in Konohana. Ran by Yonago Tadashi, a sound artist, instrument builder, and member of SJQ Collective, an audio-visual performance group.



MIIT HOUSE: MIIT House is an art space dedicated to experimental music, sound art installations, and poetry performances. It is run by American-born Jerry Gordon, who is a poet and a musician.



ASYL is an artist-run studio and art space that occupies the river banks and has hosted countless shows in the past. It is one of the oldest and longest running art spaces in Konohana area. However the space was closed due to the owner not being in Osaka at that moment.



Next few art spaces I went to were outside the Konohana-ku but were mostly in and around Namba district. I visited **The National Museum of Art Osaka**, which is probably the largest art space in Osaka for contemporary art, but they also exhibit sound art works as well as video art. **Namba Bears** and **Environment 0g** are two spaces that focus on producing and hosting concerts for the underground and experimental scene. Namba Bears, a legendary live house has been running for almost 30 years.



Figure 7 Namba Bears



Figure 8 Environment 0g

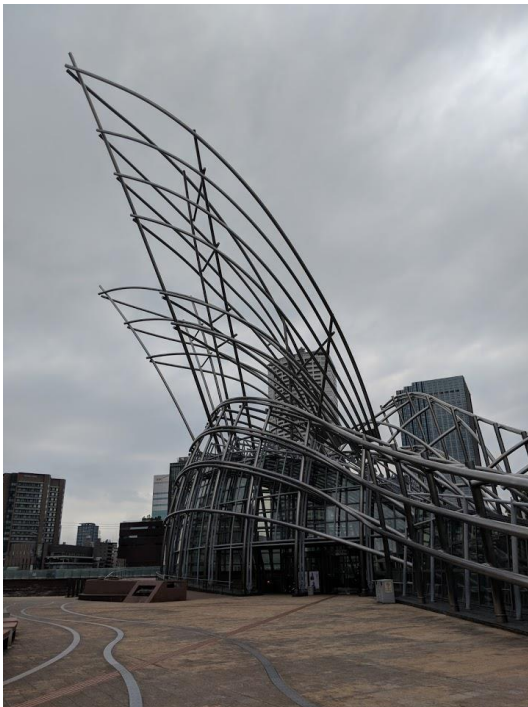
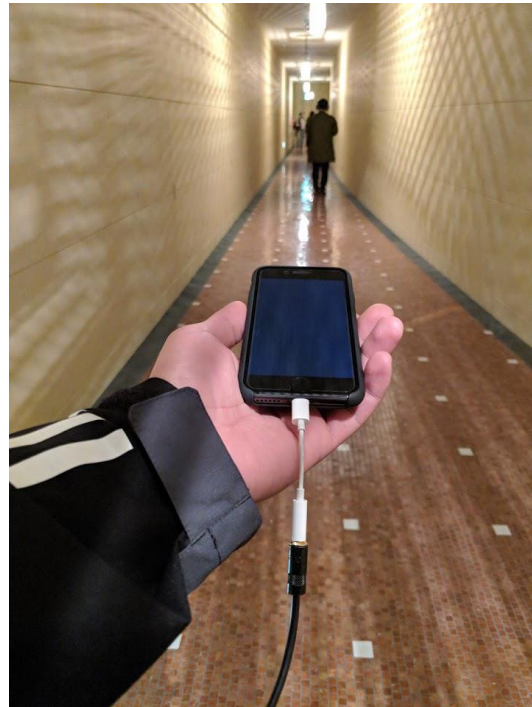


Figure 9 National Museum of Art Osaka



Cosmic Lab (www.cosmiclab.jp), Cosmic Lab is Osaka's answer to Tokyo's TeamLab. Despite their small team, they produce a lot of work in the Kansai region from video mapping an ancient temple and working with Buddhist priests for a reworking of a ritual using light and sound, to VJing in clubs for famous DJs, to creating interactive works for companies and galleries alike, like the growing list of

media art labs (Rhizomatiks, TeamLab, AnnoLab, etc), Cosmic Lab definitely belongs in the ranks of interactive design studios working both commercially and culturally. There were some other audio-visual projects they showed me that were works-in-progress that I couldn't show here but they were very interesting.



Hopken is a unique art space which has three floors: the first floor serves as a restaurant and bar, meanwhile the basement is the art gallery (usually paintings and photographs, however they have hosted sound and media art exhibitions as my host and guide Mizutama and his community has exhibited here before) and finally the second floor is a record shop that occasionally hosts performances and concerts for experimental music.



Figure 10 Hopken Basement Gallery

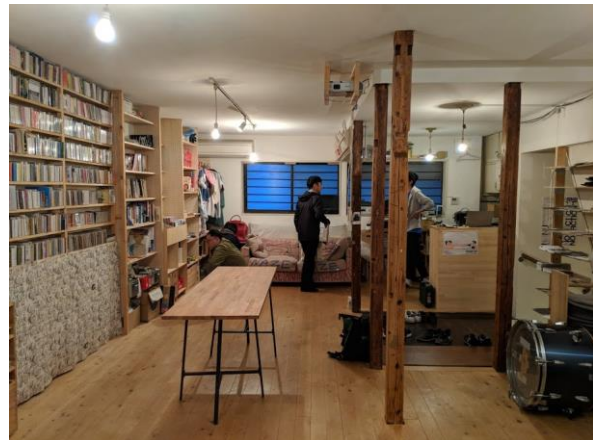


Figure 11 Hopken Top Floor as Record Shop / Live House

I met **Yasushi Utsunomiya** at his studio, a professor at Osaka University of Arts, former students include Tetsuya Umeda and is also considered a pioneer and inventor in the field of sound art and music. He showed me his latest invention, *The Half One*, a unique speaker cut in half that produces unique properties of presenting sound to occupy a space in the most natural and omnidirectional way without the use of any other component.



これまでのスピーカー技術を踏襲しながら
これまでになかった発音メカニズム

Acoustic Neo-Paradise Half One

これまでの多くのスピーカーは、その理想系として「無限に小さい呼吸する球」⁽¹⁾その結果である「球面波」を得る位相と云えます。その特長である動力として、振動系の非共振運動や直線的な振動系運動があるのですが、その両方である完成されたスピーカーユニットに特異な加工を施し、散逸非共振運動、非球面波を引き出し、「生楽器のような豊かな音のエネルギ」を得ることに成功しました。

非直線運動・非球面波

従来のスピーカーは、音波は正逆水平より45度方向を中心として見た目からは想像できないワイドレンジで鳴ります。

● 音波 ● 音波

Half Oneは従来のスピーカーユニットを改良したから、独自の発音メカニズムを作り出すことでそれを実現しているのですが、従来のスピーカーが球面波を得るために必要とするエンクロージャーやディフュージョンを省くことで、ボール状の音と、生楽器から聴かせる、豊かで自然な音を実現しようとしました。

ボイスコイル

Half Oneが新鮮な音を生み出すのは、発音の根本であるボイスコイルの改良に由来しているから、つまりボイスコイルやコンダクターなどを除く全てのスピーカーでは振動運動の中心である、決して外に響き出しがたがボイスコイルが振動したからには伝わりません。また、Half Oneのランジエントが非常に優れていることと音の中心は半音階での動作がリニアなコンダクターのそれに匹敵していることにもよります。結果、音の中心は半音階で、ボイスコイルですが、振動運動を実現することにより従来の音と異なった音の質を得ることが出来ます。

エンクロージャー

Half Oneはエンクロージャーを持たないため、同じ振動運動のスピーカーと比べ、エンクロージャーが存在することによる音質的劣化の発生を避けたいために、楽器や音の中心と同等のランジエントが得られます。

※完全オーダーメイド品のため、価格も価格に相応となります。

日本音響株式会社 〒557-0024 大阪府東淀川区山崎1丁目3-9
電話 ☎ 06-6533-6125 06-6533-6127
FAX ☎ 06-6533-6127
Eメール info@nihon-onkyo.co.jp
http://www.nihon-onkyo.co.jp

Half One
Acoustic Neo-Paradise

presented
by Engineering Department

 The image shows the back of a brochure or poster. It features the Half One logo at the top, which includes a stylized speaker icon. Below the logo, the text reads "Acoustic Neo-Paradise" and "presented by Engineering Department". At the bottom right, there is a large, detailed image of the Half One speaker, showing its internal components and the top dome.

Fukugan Gallery, is one of Osaka's longest running alternative art space and commercial gallery located in downtown Dotonbori established in 1998. The gallery primarily functions as a contemporary art gallery (prints, photographs, paintings) yet significantly focuses on music and sound art events and exhibitions. During my visit, visiting art duo MSHR from Oregon, USA had a participatory exhibition called *Solar Helix* which consisted of art prints, interactive electronic sound installations utilizing electronic synthesizers and led lights. They performed their installations and invited the audience members to openly participate by interacting with the installations. Below are pictures of the show. <http://www.fukugan.net/>





Conclusion of Osaka Trip and Social Dinner

Osaka is the city of work. Run by merchants throughout history, despite its busy exterior, between the crevices of business and work lie a tight-knit community of young and older artists and musicians. Despite the smaller number as compared to Tokyo and Kyoto, their humor and laid-back attitude does not impede their seriousness in organizing and nurturing their growing community of artists. My prior information about Osaka was a place that a lot of good and famous musicians come from, hence the abundance of art spaces and live houses that accommodate music and sound art activities. I ended my short visit by organizing a social gathering at an apartment I was renting from most of the people I met and interviewed over convivial conversations about potentiality of their art scene over drinks and food. During this trip I had a chance to have a day visit in Kobe for a concert at the Guggenheim House, a day trip to Nara for tourism, and three days side trip to Naoshima and Teshima island to visit their modern art museums. My hosts, Mizutama Araki and Kayu Nakada were very helpful, talented, friendly hosts and I could see their key roles in the small community they are nurturing. This community is a continuation from an influential Japanese curator, Gogota Hisanori (deceased) who used to be a curator at ICC NTT, a very established institution for media art in Tokyo. He moved to Osaka during the last decade of his life and is kind of a spiritual center for the experimental arts in Osaka according to the locals. He was the first professional who came up with the idea of starting an artist-run space called BIKADO which ran for six to eight years, which is now called ASYL (see above). The energy of the community born out of this history reminds me a bit of

what you would see in Southeast Asian artist-run communities which I found rare in other cities in Japan, including Tokyo.



Figure 12 Hosting a dinner party at my apartment



Figure 7 (R-L) Kayu, Mizutama with family

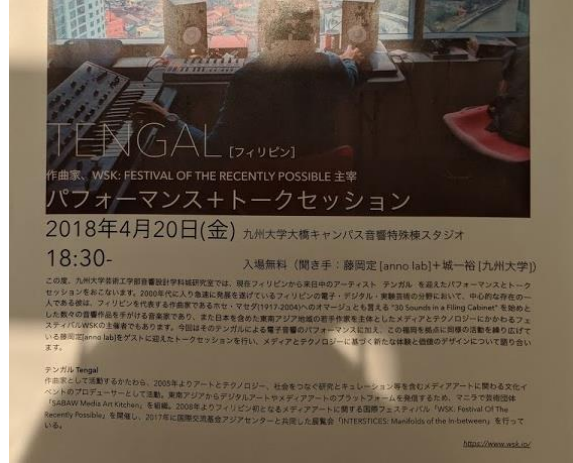
VIII. Kyushu Region

For the next ten days I would spend most of my trip at Fukuoka city with side trips for performance and a meeting at Oita city and Beppu city. My hosts were professor Kazuhiro Jo Kyushu University (whom I previously met at Kyoto) and Sadam Fujioka, director of Anno Lab, an interactive media art design lab.

FUKUOKA (First visit)

Giving Lectures and Performances at Kyushu University

Associate professor Kazuhiro Jo organized for me a performance and lecture at the Kyushu Arts and Sciences building under the department of acoustic design. He teaches under the Department of Communication Design Science, as a faculty of design specializing in media arts. My lecture began with a presentation of my sound art / composer practice followed by an open panel discussion with the audience and Jo-san accompanied by Sadam Fujioka. Afterwards I performed a short musical piece to end the event and was later accompanied over dinner with local artists, producers, and researchers working in the fields of music, sound art, and media art.



OITA

Performance at AT HALL, Oita City

My primary activity in Oita city was to perform at the long-running live house called AT HALL, located beside the main Oita train station. Being a small city, this live house venue is considered the primary music venue in the city that is open to all forms of music, from singer-songwriter genres to noise music. I was playing alongside a French-based electronic music act The Winter Family who was touring in Japan. Local acts were in the same bill as the event.

Meeting and city tour with BEPPU PROJECT <http://www.beppuproject.com/>, Beppu City



Figure 13 Beppu Project Office

I met with Mari Ayaki, a program coordinator for Beppu Project on my way back to Fukuoka after a 4-day side trip to Oita prefecture. Beppu Project, a non-profit organization was founded by artist Jun'ya Yamaide in 2005 to manage two main events: The Beppu Contemporary Art Festival and the “Kunisaki Art Project” which is another city in Oita prefecture. I was entertained by Mari Ayaki as Jun'ya Yamaide was out of the country during that time. Giving me an overview of Beppu Project's multiple activities, which includes their Kashima Beppu Artist in Residence (circa 2008), miss Ayaki brought me for a little city walking tour to view various “permanent” public installations in the city as well as some of their art spaces—shops, artist residency apartments, and small galleries.



Figure 14 Overview of Beppu Proj activities



Figure 8 Art shop and gallery, Select Beppu



Figure 15 Beppu Artist Residence



Figure 9 Inside an artist's atelier in the artist residence

FUKUOKA (Second Visit)

Lecture and Meetings

Back in Fukuoka, I gave a lecture about WSK Festival Of The Recently Possible – talking about my curatorial practice, WSK activities in Manila and in the region of Southeast Asia, as well as design communication aesthetics at the media design communication class of professor Kazuhiro Jo at the Kyushu University. After which, Jo-san's graduate students presented me their projects at his office on a private sharing and consultation.



I also had a facility tour at the university conducted by Kazuhiro Jo. The university has impressive facilities ranging from fabrication labs, acoustic labs, engineering and woodwork facilities.



LAB VISIT AT ANNO LAB

Sadam Fujioka, a creative engineer and media artist is one of the key figures in Fukuoka (and Kyushu region) media art scene. As CEO of Anno Lab, a creative design studio specializing on media art and technology, their projects range from building educational interactive exhibitions for the recently opened Fukuoka Science Museum, to commercial projects working with large advertising agencies and collaborations with artists in Japan (like Rhizomatiks, a consistent collaborator of his is famous media artist Daito Manabe) and outside of Japan. Anno Lab team members consist of engineers, media artists, visual and sound artists working together in a creative space in Fukuoka. Apart from the lab tour, they also brought me to Fukuoka Science Museum where they had maintenance work at one of their interactive installations.



Figure 16 Sadam Fujioka



Figure 11 Anno Lab electronics lab



Figure 17 Fukuoka Science Museum



ART SPACE TETRA (<http://www.as-tetra.info/>) is Fukuoka city's longest running alternative artist-run art space. Established by artist students in 2004, Mizuki Endo, whom I mentioned earlier in this report was one of the key founders. Now running for fourteen years, the artists running the space are third generation members. As an independent space, their activities are not as much active as it was five years ago given that most members are busy with their own art projects. However the space still exists as a meeting place, as an office, as a host for various events that cater to Fukuoka's burgeoning art scene mostly comprised of students. They offer artist-in-residency programs as well as weekly food-related social gatherings. According to the members, they have plans to re-activate old programs and new programs for 2019 leading towards the Tokyo Olympic craze.



DESIDERATA is a new art space in Fukuoka only a year old and primarily functions as a music club for DJs with a shop but has recently opened its doors to art exhibitions, workshops, and venues for artist talks.



Conclusion:

Fukuoka is a charming city, probably one of the nicest looking cities I've been to. Nature and skyscrapers co-exist at equal division, while its islands and rivers divide the city into manageable parts where everything is conveniently accessible. Fukuoka does not have too many art spaces or media art related projects except for the few I previously mentioned. Despite this, the most striking feature of Fukuoka is its independence from the art scene in Tokyo, or Osaka. Also, since it is much closer to South Korea, Taiwan, and the rest of Southeast Asia – Fukuoka has a large potential for cultural exchanges and trade. I visited a few art spaces that cater to music and experimental media but they're not so many, one interesting place was Konya2023, an artist residence and independent art space is where I stayed during visit and is conveniently located in downtown Tenjin.

IX. YAMAGUCHI CENTER FOR ARTS AND MEDIA, YAMAGUCHI

My last stop in Kansai-Kyushu region was in Yamaguchi, where I have scheduled a week-long visit at Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media, a well-known art center focused on art, technology, and society. My visit coincided with the YCAM Sports Hackathon and the 3rd Yamaguchi Athletic Meeting of The Future Undokai. My hosts here were people I have met earlier this year when I first arrived in Japan: YCAM educator Kiyoshi Suganuma and founder and director of YCAM Sports Hackathon / Future Undokai, Hiroshi Inukai who I met when I gave a talk at Fabcafe Shibuya (see previous activity report). I participated in this event as a participant and observer.



When I first arrived, I was given a facility tour by Kiyoshi Suganuma who showed me the expanse and diversity of YCAM's program. Primarily YCAM is state-funded for its public library which impressed me for the diversity of its collection.



I also had a discussion of ongoing and previous projects – the history, the organization function, education and research and development of past and present projects – with R&D director and YCAM Interlab Takayuki Ito. YCAM is cutting-edge when it comes to a synthesize of media design, biotech research, and audio-visual culture and their relationship with technology and society. The small yet diverse team members all have interesting stories, ideas, and views as I befriended and hung out with most of them during my stay. YCAM is huge and has a multitude of facilities: a movie theater, a public library, biolab, electronics and fabrication facilities, a huge foyer for exhibitions and other events, an auditorium, an open park, etc. Here are some photos of the facilities of YCAM:

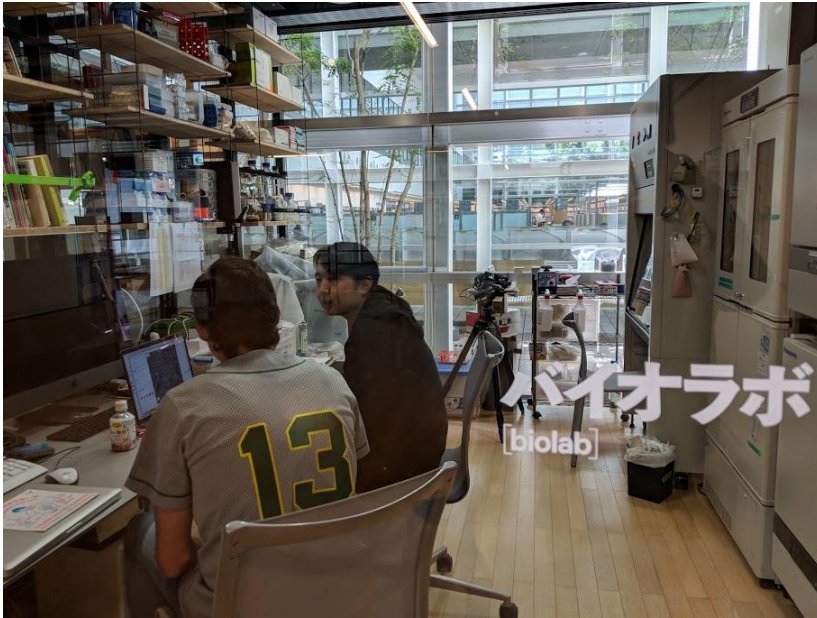


Figure 18 biolab facility



Figure 19 design department



Figure 20 electronics dept



Figure 15 fabrication dept



Figure 16 Interlab R&D dept



Figure 17 larger fabrication dept

Hackathon

YCAM Sports Hackathon gathered developers, artists, choreographers, musicians, and media artists from all over Japan to participate in a hackathon to develop new games aided by technology and gaming and artistic concepts. This format was very new to me and I was very inspired. For example, a selection of contributor-participants in the hackathon were contemporary performance/dance group Contact Gonzo, art producer and writer Arina Tsukada, Koichiro Eto, founder of Nico Nico Chokaigi Super Conference, media artist Natsumi Wada, media artist Kanno So, Takaaki Yoneji, CEO of RiSF (Research Institute of Sports Facility) Isao Uebayashi, etc. My participation was mostly as an observer and contributing ideas whenever they would ask for opinions about certain game functions or ideas in the brainstorming sessions.



A key element of the hackathon was spontaneity, openness, and plainly having fun testing out ideas against ideas while being backed by a team of experts who handle existing technological expertise to make sure these ideas come are realistic and doable.

After a few days of brainstorming and testing, there was a day dedicated to rehearsals and practice and final tweaking of the new games that have been invented for the event. The day before the event was a night spent on technical testing and event production preparation. I found myself suddenly part of the program out of spontaneous peer-pressure from the team members, I would have to rap on stage on the big day alongside the other curators and producers of the event.

The Big Day (3rd Yamaguchi Athletic Meeting of The Future Undokai)

The main event was a whole day program from morning to evening. Starting from introductions, opening speeches by dignitaries such as Yamaguchi city mayor to sports officials, followed by game after game. There were more than 400 children and parents of locality and were assigned to groups.





The event was concluded by a communal participatory dance, a kind of Bon Odori-inspired festive dance. The event was a massive success and taught me new ways of combining the idea of sports aided by audio-visual technology taken from media art to bring people together. This idea was unique and I have been fortunate enough to have participated in it.

X. BACK TO TOKYO

After being on the road for almost two months, I was exhausted from the travel. My succeeding activities in Tokyo was primarily preparing to move back to Manila and following through my previous appointments on education side of my research: 1) a visit and meeting with media art professor at Tama Art University with Akihiro Kubota and his graduate class; 2) giving a lecture and meeting with Tetsu Kondo's class at Kougei University (Tokyo Polytechnic University); 3) my last music concert; and 4) a public lecture about my 6-month research work-in-progress at FabCafe.

My visit at Tama Art University was fruitful and I was presented with graduate projects of Kubota's students. I was asked to consult and give my opinions as they were presenting. I talked with Kubota about certain aspects of approaches in education for media arts and balances between university knowledge and outside the academe.





Figure 21 TAMA Art Uni Students showing works-in-progress

Next was I gave another lecture about my art and curatorial practice to the media art students at Kougei University under professor Tetsu Kondo, one of my key hosts in my research. Apart from the lecture and university visit, me and Tetsu would discuss in person and meet in different days during my stay in Japan.



During the rest of my time in Tokyo, I met and caught up with other artists and hosts I knew and met whom I consider friends and we'd continue personal conversations on future collaboration and further personal insights about my area of interest.

I also attended a few concerts, performances, and events but my notable ones are:

KAWAII HACK at FabCafe – art and technology showcase revolving around the concept of “Kawaii”



Black Opera presented by Goethe Institute and Black Smoker Records – a multimedia art concert combining dancers, music, art installations, live projections, and rappers. This performance was my favorite highlight of concerts I've witnessed in Japan.



Finally, I organized my farewell party with the help of friends and in partnership with Loftwork / Fabcafe Shibuya. I presented a very rough lecture about my research travel and activities in Japan to the public. I cooked Filipino food with the help of new friends. I presented also new music that I developed while I was in Japan. I was asking for people's opinions towards the end on how to move forward in my final output for this half a year experience. That I am still working out which I will discuss in the conclusion.

Below are some photos of the event:



XI. Conclusion

When I started my research proposal on my area of interest for this fellowship I had very limited knowledge about Japan. My initial proposal was only limited to a few key institutions (ICC, YCAM, IAMAS) and the people who hosted limited to two Japanese artists working on audio-visual culture and a professor for media art. However, I exceeded my expectations on my own research, having expanded my network of contacts, key persons/hosts, and travel destinations three-fold than expected. I never expected to explore Kansai area, even as far as to Kyushu – performing, giving lectures, and meeting so many new artists and having a kind of more rounded overview of audiovisual culture in media art of Japan. The fellowship project became much bigger than what I could have handled yet I felt I have only broken the surface. A lot of art as they say is often centralized in the capital city of a country. In Japan, media art is no exception. From knowing very few to understanding on a more intermediate level of intricacies of personal affiliations, relationship's, connections of artists and art scenes, comparative timelines and locations – I felt I had achieved a step deeper to exploring something more lasting than what can just be found on the surface of a long history of complex media art scenes in Japanese history. But to be honest, my time spent was not enough for me to conclude or grasp anything deeper than from what I have just encountered. Although I have no yet fully grasp information I have encountered, as there is still a lot of things to process: interview recordings, photos and video documentation, written notes –there have been many highlights, many new things and new ideas which I have expressed previously. My intention is to continue writing long form, formulating observations based from my perspective and aided by varying perspectives from the people I interviewed. I have decided to publish these travel journals accompanied by photos and videos in short and long format as a continued work in progress through the popular online publication website, The Medium.com, because there is already a steady and sizable viewership in that website. This approach is very complicated as it is a combination of personal opinions, observations, comparing and collecting varying opinions from many different artists I've talked to and art practices I've encountered. My goal is to try to have a comparative perspective rather than an objectified observatory report as this could not work due to intricacies between varying opinions, histories, art and geo politics. In the end my writing output on the website will be a combination of my personal and other people's personal narratives. I still intend to continue the dialogue and the narratives of people I've met with the people I will meet as the situation continues to change – more concretely I have already intended to invite some selected projects and artists to collaborate with WSK Festival Of The Recently Possible in 2019. These dialogues will continue in the form of artist collaborations and exchanges not just between Japanese artists themselves but through the network that myself and WSK has been building in Asia.

On a more poetic note, to sum up my personal experience of this encounter with Japanese media art is like the experience of coming three days late to Naka-Meguro's sakura blooming season. You can still see the pink leaves, it's still beautiful however it has changed so fast and the cherry blossoms have turned back to green because perhaps I have arrived a bit late? The media art scene in Japan has changed similarly. I ask myself and to this day still ponder whether the golden age of media art has long gone and past despite being able to still see and experience the beauty of the effects. Like the metaphor of the sakura leaves turning back to green color, perhaps it is not a lingering of past primes of Japanese media art but perhaps it also means turning green is to give new space and new meaning and new changes for something new to bloom and repeat again. This is where I am hopeful.

