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Tina Rigby Hanssen

‘Please, do not turn up the volume’:

quiet microsound and the displacement of auditory perspective
in works by Miki Yui

Tina Rigby Hanssen
Independent scholar, writer and curator
PhD in Art History, University of Oslo
tehanssen@gmail.com

www.soundeffects.dk



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Abstract

The works of the Japanese composer and sound artist Miki Yui are known to represent an extremely evocative displacement of aural perspective, as we first struggle to hear the sounds and then struggle to determine what is 'music' and what is incidental. Her works operate on the very threshold of audibility, and under normal listening conditions her 'small sounds' often appear inaudible or hard to get a hold of. The ambient noise of the surrounding environment helps to reinforce the blurring boundaries between what in fact constitutes the work and what is more commonly referred to as interference. This article will discuss how Yui's works represent a challenge for the listener in the context of the gallery space, as well as question the artist's claim that silence and ambient small sounds produce a more attentive and peaceful state of mind.

In the works of the Japanese composer and sound artist Miki Yui, the sounds are fairly smooth, with no great dynamic variations or sudden cuts among uneven or rapidly moving tones. In an atmosphere of stillness and sonic simultaneity, listeners find themselves directing renewed attention to the small sounds of everyday life. Sounds that are intentionally almost (but not entirely) too subtle to be noticed evoke an intensified mode of listening. Yet with sounds of this nature, the harder the listeners must listen, the less certain they are of what they have heard. Listening to these sounds may, according to the artist, evoke a more intense and concentrated form of listening in the listener than usually experienced. However, these small and short sounds may at the same time create frustration, because they make the listener unsure of what he/she really hears or believes to hear. It is no small feat to reintroduce the familiar as something unfamiliar or otherwise engaging. But these sounds continue to operate on the periphery of the listener's perception, contributing a dynamic psychoacoustic supplement to a given space's overall feel. This article will take a closer look at two of Yui's works with an emphasis on the kind of sensorial and social experience of listening they evoke and connect with, as well as their connection to the production of memories. The artist's claim that silence and small sounds automatically connect to attentive and concentrated modes of listening will be questioned, as will claims about silence being a more productive and better way to experience the world or music. We shall return to this shortly. But first it is necessary to place Yui's work in a broader artistic framework.

Yui's work relates to the electronic music genre called 'microsound', which exploits infinitesimal sounds for compositional purposes. Joanna Demers explains:

These elementary particles exist on the microtime scale, meaning that they are so brief that they are barely perceptible; in fact some of the microsound works are so brief and hard to apprehend that they seem to avoid any classification. But when

combined, grains can construct previously unimaginable textures and sounds. Microsound is thus the reassembly of sound at its most basic level, yielding new composite sounds that would be unthinkable if working with longer, macro levels of perception. (2010, p. 71)

Microsound music often derives from scratched or damaged recorded media, digital noise or electric hums; that is, repetitive arrangements of the tiniest, even virtually inaudible clicks of computers and sound-related technologies into musical textures that in fact might not bother with melody at all. It is often hard to tell when a piece of microsound music actually starts, because it usually begins with its most insignificant elements and only gradually layers them into something recognisable, which then concludes as abruptly as it seemed to start. This kind of music almost happens before we are able to realise it, unless we are well-prepared and well-trained.

Yui's work represents the use of extremely low volumes, also called 'quiet microsound', found within this genre, in addition to its use of glitch and digital noises as its main compositional elements. Demers points out:

Quiet microsound is recorded at soft volumes, so much so that playback at what one usually considers a normal volume is often inaudible. Turning up the volume does not necessarily help and may in fact hinder the listening process, because a loud volume can produce speaker hiss that competes with the recorded sounds. (2010, p. 74).

This represents an extremely evocative displacement of aural perspective, as the audience struggles to hear the sounds in the first place and then struggles to determine what is 'music' and what is incidental.

The human ear is a very sensitive organ, of course, which helps the listener. Human beings are able to distinguish very fine nuances of sounds in a frequency range from roughly 20 to 20,000 Hz. While the ear responds poorly to frequencies below 20 Hz, humans can perceive these sounds via the sense of touch. Many microsound artists explore these thresholds not solely to frustrate, but also to renew and even simply to remark upon the subjectivity of human experience: that is, the wonders that might lie beyond perception, at least to those who are willing to open up to them. Emerging from the ambient sounds of the environment, then, the works of Yui may expand the listener's capacity to hear, while divulging as if for the first time an entire bandwidth of sounds that they otherwise dismiss. Some find this stultifying, particularly if the ambient sounds in question change very little. For others, however, such an 'underload' (as opposed to overload) of sound stimulates the auditory imagination and may generate daydream or hallucinatory sequences that at once suppress and create sounds that are quite different from the sounds we are actually experiencing.

In *I See A Voice* (1999), Jonathan Rée argues, 'The spatial indeterminacy of sounds means that auditory illusions can be even more disconcerting than either optical or visual ones' (1999, p. 46). There is, in other words, a profound degree of uncertainty involved in any listening experience, even in those that are not already full of playful illusions, purposeful errors and contingent idiosyncrasies. This is relevant in relation to Yui's work, because she explores the uncertainty and illusions connected to auditory perception in order to study processes related to the imagination and the production of memories. The audience's perception of the small ambient sounds on the soundtrack is repeatedly challenged and mixed with the ambient noise of the gallery space. As a result, the listener's attention might shift back and forth between attentive listening and everyday listening to the familiar sounds of the natural environment. With Yui's 'small sounds' there is always this eerie feeling that one might have heard wrong or confused the sounds with something else. Listeners may repeatedly question what the context, previous experience and common sense tell them they are.

However, claims about the existence of a natural connection between silence/small sounds and attentive modes of listening, or silence being the optimal state to listen from, are quite problematic and anti-modernistic and resonate heavily with the writings of soundscape theorist R.M. Schafer.¹ Through his recordings of various soundscapes, Schafer proposed a fundamental distinction between the preindustrial (rural) 'hi-fi' soundscape, in which individual signals can be heard clearly, and an industrial (urban) 'lo-fi' soundscape, in which individual sounds are obscured or masked by other sounds (Schafer 1994, p. 43). Obviously, the dichotomy leaves aside the influence of technology upon both soundscapes as well as the potential mediation of alternative listening modes either within or between them. Schafer promotes a strong disbelief in noise and the artifice of urban environments as well as the noise of mechanical processes.

Since Schafer's writings first appeared there has been a marked change in how sound technologies influence people's listening and how listening contributes to the production of works of art (for example, sound is as much created in the ear of the listener as it is created and placed there by the artist). Unlike Schafer and his colleagues, who frame noise as filth or pollution through their promotion of urban 'ear cleaning' workshops and 'soundwalks' designed to help the public hear only what they are supposed to, scholars like Emily Thompson (2002) and Jonathan Sterne (2003) have opened up for the possibility that cultural factors and technological changes as well as the ways in which sound is controlled and managed by different people in various contexts influence the ways audiences listen to sound in their environment. Schafer's strong disregard of noise seems to overlook that noise is just as much a component of nature as it is of the urban environment, be it the intense symphony of frogs in the middle of the night or the calls of seabirds by

the seaside. Indeed, Schafer's strong belief in the connection between nature and silence appears to place him in Western, romanticist ideas of naturalism and in silence connection to the tranquillity of the spirit. But what about audiences that have other preferences; who prefer to listen to the noise music of Japanese Merzbow or the feedback of Jimi Hendrix's guitar? Moralistic judgement about what is best for you and what is worth listening to is as problematic as those who claim that the world is too noisy.

In *The Audible Past* (2003), Jonathan Sterne objects to Schafer's ahistorical approach to human experience and the human body as well as the acousmatic or 'schizophonic' definitions of sound reproduction (for Schafer, the term 'schizophonia' refers to the 'split between an original sound and its electroacoustic transmission or reproduction' (Schafer 1994, p. 90) that is enabled by sound reproduction technologies). Sterne defends the influence of reproductive technologies on sound, but then wonders whether such technologies can possibly function as neutral conduits or as instrumental rather than substantive parts of social relationships; that is, are they really ontologically separable from the source as a faithful copy alone, or do they have a part of their own to play? He concludes:

We do *not* need final, fundamental, or transhistorical answers to questions about the relations between hearing and seeing, between technological reproduction and sensory orientation, between original and copy, and between presence and absence in communication. We can provide more robust answers to those questions by reconsidering them in the course of studying sound reproduction. This history of sound begins by positing sound, hearing, and listening as historical problems rather than as constants on which to build a history. (Sterne, 2003, pp. 21-22; emphasis in original)

Sterne argues against any objective apprehension of sonic reality, because different people listen differently in different historical times. Audiences' ways of listening are continuously changing, as are their surroundings, which make it impossible to refer to one particular form of listening. The context of the gallery space and its controlled and regulated environment is where Yui's works are presented to the listener, as well as on CD. Artworks on display in a gallery context can face different challenges, for example, the fact that it has to compete with other artworks for the audience's attention or physical restrictions with regard to acoustics, circulation of audience members or technical equipment, just to mention a few.

Mamagoto and Out in the Dark

The work *Mamagoto* (2011), which includes a performance and an installation, is a typical example of Yui's artistic practice (I will only refer to the installation work here as it was presented in the exhibition *Simple Interaction* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde in 2011).² The work consists of two parts: *Pot*, where what

appears to be the sound of a Japanese teapot, a pan and a lid are recorded and played back on small speakers placed beneath the objects in the exhibition space. These objects are placed on top of a small box placed on the floor. One hears the sound of the subtle clatter and rattle in the stoneware and something slightly moving inside the pan and the movements of the lid, as well as long periods of silence. These sounds evoke the everyday sounds that are produced whenever a teapot or a pan is in use. The second part, *Mirror*, consists of a small mirror placed on top of a small box placed on the floor; a broken porcelain cup is placed on top of it. Inside the cup lies a marble and the sound heard gives associations to the sounds produced whenever the marble is moving on top of the mirror surface. The ambient sounds from the environment blend effortlessly with the subtle tones. As such, the audience may discover a new space in the time spent with these works.

The word 'mamagoto' refers to a Japanese game in which children imitate adults' culinary practices. The word 'mama' does not only refer to the obvious meaning, but also the childish word for food, especially rice in Japanese. The word 'goto' means 'thing' or 'act'. As such the title gives hints and associations to what is played out before one's ears, which can be useful because it provides us with something to hold on to as a tool for accessibility. At the same time, it is not too prescriptive and thus does not stand in the way of listeners being able to read the piece individually.

The track *Out in the Dark* on the record *Silence Resounding* (2003) opens with several seconds of silence and then introduces a modified fluttering sine tone, which gives associations to radio static or wind sounds that constantly fade in and out. This sound is accompanied by a gentle rattling sound, and together they create a dense texture. The sounds sometimes appear at a distance and at other times very close to the listener. But since they are so brief and short they can be hard to apprehend, resisting classification as conventional tones. Repeated listening is required. The track ends like it started with several seconds of silence. *Out in the Dark* does not consist of individual sounds, but rather entire worlds of sounds. It is dark and eerie, and light and beautiful at the same time. It introduces a mysterious and otherworldly sphere of sounds that resonates with our world of unconscious dreams and mental processes, and it evokes the experience and fear of strange sounds heard within eerie silences, those things that go bump in the night, or the beauty of listening to the wind blowing outside.

Although the soundscapes of *Mamagoto* and *Out in the Dark* are very different, they both connect to the production of memories and the human auditory perception of familiar and unfamiliar sounds that ask for renewed engagement and interaction. Sounds that are hard to hold on to or easily slip away from our comprehension often allow more room for our imagination and playfulness. This is why so many sound artists find them fascinating to work with.

Quiet microsound music, accessibility and listening

Yui and several other microsound composers stress in their CD liner notes the importance of resisting the temptation to turn up the volume, asking listeners to accept the volumes they intended their works to be played at, although this may cause frustration for the listeners. By being patient and disciplined, they argue, the listeners will sensitise themselves to phenomena usually ignored in today's noise-laden world. However, the problem with this argument is that it has a rather moralistic view on noise. Silence, in fact, may not be the best way to listen to these records and music.

In relation to music listening, Ola Stockfelt points out:

Which mode of listening the listener adopts in a given situation depends mainly on how the listener chooses to listen – that is, which mode of listening he or she chooses to develop or adopt. And yet this choice is neither totally free nor accidental. (Stockfelt, 2004, pp. 89-90)

He argues that it will involve a certain degree of competence on the part of the listener as well as a repertoire of modes of listening. But, more importantly, that 'different modes of listening are in different ways more or less firmly connected to specific listening situations' (Stockfelt, 2004, p. 90). In a concert hall with fixed seats, for example, it is not convenient to dance while one listens to music. He also argues that it can be rather challenging 'to choose to listen in an autonomously reflexive mode if too many other things are competing for attention, and impossible to refuse to listen ... to very strong and profiled sounds, or to musemes with a special significance for the listener' (Stockfelt, 2004, p. 90). In a gallery context (where Yui often exhibits her works), sound and images from numerous artworks may compete for the listener's attention. Listening will never take place on its own, but together with other activities, which will result in differing levels of attention. Social and cultural factors always play an important role whenever listening takes place. As Paul Hegarty reminds us, listening is not under 'my' control. Indeed, 'any listening, including the belief that listening is good, ethically sound, productive, and so on, comes from within a culture' (Hegarty, 2008, p. 5). The listener's knowledge about the 'proper' way to listen to microsound music may therefore affect the way the listener chooses to listen to these sound recordings or the exhibited artworks. There is also the possibility that interferences from other activities in the listening context may weaken efforts to engage in attentive listening and concentration, because 'the most interesting point of encounter might be a loss of controlled listening, a failure of adequate hearing, even if this is only temporary' (Hegarty, 2008 p. 5).

In *Ways of Listening*, Eric F. Clarke relates attention to auditory perception in terms of the 'ecological approach' to the perception of music:

Just as concentrated listening ... can be diverted in unexpected directions, so too a listener can be unexpectedly and suddenly drawn *into* some music that until then had been paid more distracted and heteronomous attention—as, for instance, when telephone hold music actually engages your undivided attention rather than being just a sound to fill the waiting. (Clarke, 2005, p. 36; emphasis in original)

Clarke sees perception and action as continuously modifying and overlapping each other, and microsound music plays upon this dynamic, within the continuum from attention to distraction.

In order to increase accessibility to sound-based music, music scholar Leigh Landy stresses the importance of 'something to hold on to', a phrase he uses frequently in his book *Understanding the art of sound organization* (2007), when referring to a situation in which composers are interested in an optimally appreciative public by offering 'access tools', that is, 'audible musical aspects, or alternatively, aspects of intention that could enhance the listening experience for those (new listeners) who prefer not to discover these works unaided' (Landy, 2007, p. 27). He lists several factors which he argues would increase the listener's access to the piece: for example, the incorporation of elements that connect to listeners' own previous musical experiences; that the music piece has a clear articulation of musical content and structuring devices; that it contains CD liner notes which provide salient details concerning a piece's intention and how it can be accessed; that the music connects to the listener's associative imagery, linking preferences through repeated listening. To some artists it is important that the composition is listened to with their intentions in mind, and to others it is not. Some composers emphasise recognisable sound, structure, narrative, while others find it more important that the technical processes involved in the composition are recognised by the listener or put more effort into providing the right listening conditions for the work. There are, however, some objections to Landy's list of 'access tools', the most evident being that they are too complex as well as strained, telling the listener how and what to listen to, rather than indicating alternative approaches and ways of listening. However, this does not mean that all presentation to the music is unnecessary or stands in the way of a deeper involvement and a broader range of engagement with the music. It is, however, important to recognise that listeners listen differently and have certain preferences when it comes to, for example, volume or dynamic range of sound qualities.

Silence as a compositional element

Yui relies on extremely low volumes, intense concentration and reflective pauses to perceive her work, which pushes the limits of perceptibility. The ambient sound of the exhibition space mixes freely with the recordings, continually challenging our interaction and perception of the work. Yui puts much effort into the precise

placement of small sounds in empty space. Still, the audience is not encouraged to listen with concentration to the sound coming from the speakers, but instead to the sound as part of the larger environment (the ambient sound of the exhibition space and the audience members moving about affect the acoustic characteristics of the work, for example, footsteps, floor creaks and clothes rustling). This may be a challenge to audience members who are not used to this kind of music and easily get confused by the interference of the 'outside world' (which in this case mixes freely with the sound of the artwork).

Generally, the term sound includes the entire continuum of the audible and inaudible spectrums, including silence, noise, quiet, implicit and imagined sound. Yui uses the term 'small sounds' about her work, other composers use 'quiet music' or 'small music', among others. But what is actually the difference between silence and quiet? The difference does not seem that obvious. David Toop suggests that:

Silence and quiet are not the same condition. Quiet can be quieter than a silence, even though silence has pretensions towards the absolute. Silence is more of a social or technical condition (they made love in silence, he fell silent, she worked in silence, digital silence is quieter than analogue silence, are you determined to remain silent!, the breakfast room was horribly silent). (Toop, 2004, p. 44)

But although Toop stresses that silence first and foremost connects to our social world or a technical condition, he is less interested in discussing how different forms of silence trigger different modes of listening.

The practice of 'onkyo' (Japanese word referring to sound reverberation) is often mentioned in relation to microsound composers to say something about what drives their interest for quiet, small sounds, gaps and silences. 'Onkyo' is a minimal, improvisatory music style and performance practice which is part of the experimental music scene in Tokyo, and it is characteristic for its use of minimal and near imperceptible sounds as well as 'its seemingly utter lack of any discernible musical structure – rhythmic, harmonic, or otherwise – which is often performed at barely audible levels' (Plourde, 2008, p. 270). But more importantly it is presented in an environment that allows for the ambient sounds of a particular space to mix freely with the recorded sound. In her article 'Disciplined Listening in Tokyo: Onkyo and Non-Intentional Sounds', Lorraine Plourde argues that with onkyo we find a shift 'from producing or performing sound, to that of concentrated and attentive listening' (Plourde, 2008, p. 273). In other words, primacy is given to the role of the listener rather than to compositional elements; tonal colour and reverberation and its physiological effects on the listener are emphasised as crucial components of the genre (Plourde, 2008, p. 273). Silence used as a compositional element is central to this genre. Thomas B.W. Bailey even refers to this practice as the 'digital-age silence', pointing out that it followed the rise of digital formats like the CD, MiniDisc and MP3, among others, in which,

No form of interference or system noise, like tape hiss or vinyl crackle, is readily detectable, in many cases you would have to place your ear next to the playback device simply to be reminded that moving parts are at work, to hear the restless whirring of the disc or the liquid squelching sound of the laser navigating its way through the tiny indentations on its playable surface. (Bailey, 2009, p. 175)

Indeed, onkyo artists play with the near total absence of sound on the recordings, introducing only what they need in order to challenge the listener's auditory perception. That is why the intrusion of ambient sounds from the outside world as well as sounds from the audience in the performance space becomes such an important part of the listening experience.

Still, there is no need to overestimate the connection between Yui's work and the genre onkyo, mainly because the latter relies more on the idea of happening and listening as a social practice, designating intermittent sounds, while Yui is more oriented towards individual listening experiences and sounds exhibited in relation to objects in a gallery context. Although she frequently presents her works as performances, she appears to be more interested in how small sounds may evoke individual associations and memories. Yui's work is also presented as recordings (which would be impossible with onkyo), while onkyo always takes place in a small community of listeners who directly and physically experience the music together, often through enforced silence and demands on the listeners, privileging certain modes of etiquette.³ Although Yui provide her listeners with certain guide lines from CD liner notes etc. they are never enforced on the listeners.

Small sounds, space and auditory perception

While hearing implies simply the detection of sound, listening implies one's active attention to that sound – its properties as well as its potential meaning, emotional content or symbolism. Roland Barthes described hearing as a physiological phenomenon and listening as a psychological 'act' (Barthes, 1994, p. 245). The former can be described via the science of acoustics and the physiology of the ear; the latter introduces a certain type of additional engagement from the brain. Humans share with nonhuman animals the ability to be alert and quickly differentiate between sounds that need our attention or tell of danger in the environment. Music, on the other hand, certainly entails a process of listening that includes understanding or at least appreciation, which begins with hearing. Listening is more selective than hearing, but it is also intentional.

David Toop claims that John Berger may have missed something essential when he in his influential book *Ways of Seeing* argues that seeing has primacy over all other senses, up to the point that it establishes our place in the surrounding world. Toop explains, 'seeing is the least effective of the senses in grasping this sense of

the surrounding. Listening, smelling, touching, thermoception, proprioception ... can supply feedback that is specific, enveloping, immersive. Seeing, however, gives us what is in front of our eyes' (2010, pp. 27-28). Toop argues that hearing contrary to seeing allows us constant access to a more unstable, omnidirectional world that is in constant flux, a world that is 'in a state of becoming and receding, known and unknown. This is the world that surrounds us and flows through us, in all its uncertainty' (2010, pp. 37-38). However, there is no need to overemphasise the importance of listening; listening constantly works in cooperation with other senses, providing us with a multisensory view of the world.

Human beings have a natural ability to differentiate between spaces using their binaural hearing. Through factors such as room reverberation time,⁴ resonance, sound reflection characteristics and types of frequency absorption we can use our ears to get quite accurate impressions of spatial dimensions, architectural features and even construction materials. In their book *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?*, Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter write:

Auditory spatial awareness is more than just the ability to detect that space has changed sounds; it includes as well the emotional and behavioural experience of space. For example, detecting reverberation is different from responding to it. Listeners react both to sound sources and to spatial acoustics because each is an aural stimulus with social, cultural, and personal meaning. (Blesser & Salter, 2007, p. 11)

Alternative spaces thus have different influences upon our social behaviour, orientation and navigation and aesthetic sense. As a result, sound not only 'produces' space, but also continually performs and transforms it anew. The act of listening also involves the 'aural architecture' of the environment, whether virtual or real (Blesser & Salter, 2007, p. 15). This has relevance for Yui's works, because her listeners' need to take into consideration the environmental sounds which mix freely with the recorded sounds, as part of the overall structure of the work and as food for their own imagination and recollection. Flowing and mixing freely, Yui's recorded sound and the sound of the exhibition environment create a sphere of their own that changes each time the work is exhibited in a new place, placing the work in a state of continuous flux, becoming and unpredictability.

Memories of lost sounds

Yui connects the 'small sounds' with the larger production of memories that inhabit our physical body, arguing that they 'derived from sounds that we all know, however vague or abstract they may appear, they still remind us of something we have experienced. Small sounds mediate between our bodily remembered space and the imagined space we experience' (Søchting, 2012). Yui, in other words, argues for a

strong connection between her sounds and emotionally charged memories. The rattling sound in *Out in the Dark* or the marbles moving inside the pan and teapot in *Mamagoto* may even evoke tactile responses such as, for example, the physically affective reaction that occurs when our bare skin is touched by something cold, often resulting in goose bumps. But although the listeners' may not have experienced these kinds of sounds before, they may experience them more intensely here due to the technological emphasis and silent context that allow for a contemplation of the original sounds. As a result, space and memory intermingle, producing new memories and experiences through Yui's sound recordings. Indeed, whenever sensory information in the form of a particular sound is coupled with emotional information, for example a memory of fear or pleasure, it evokes a strong reaction. Sound can reactivate the memory of actions and places long forgotten.

Yui's sounds may evoke various memories and reactions, from delightful sensations to frustration. In *Listening and Voice*, Don Ihde argues that our auditory imagination gives us the capacity to recall voices from the past, imaginatively hear the sound of several instruments, fantasise about a conversation between close friends, connect previous aural sensations with the ones occurring in the present and rely on new ones to appear or mix freely with aural images of real or virtual incidents (Ihde, 2007, p. 131). Whereas loud sounds may cause the listeners to lose their 'thinking selves', extremely minimal quiet sounds may create the possibility to dive into inner thoughts and imagination; but the opposite may also be the case. The listeners could get so bored and frustrated that they lose concentration altogether. It all depends on the quality of the sound, the context it is placed in and how receptive the listeners are to these kinds of aural expressions. With auditory imagination there is always, as Ihde points out, 'the possibility of a synthesis of imagined and perceived sound ... the auditory "hallucination" is not a matter of hearing one thing as something else but a matter of a doubled sound, a synthesized *harmonic echo*' (Ihde, 2007, p. 132: emphasis in original), that is, a time in which we hear the past in the present. In music listening this occurs continuously, recognising previously played tones and harmonies in the ones played in the present. But, as Ihde explains, what often happens is that 'the perceived sound is in harmony with or in dissonance with the imagined sound' (Ihde, 2007, p. 134).

In conclusion, Yui's work and 'small sounds' are as much about audiences' perceptual processes and auditory imagination, as they are about the sounds recorded, modified and remade. Her interest in the world of 'real' sounds, sounds from our everyday lives, and aural events and small incidences that do not cause any dramatic effect or alertness of any kind may produce renewed interest and concentration in the process of listening itself and its production of knowledge and insight into our presence and engagement with the surrounding world. Yui appears to hear a whole world in the tinniest and quietest of sounds. She certainly makes us wonder

about the importance of the 'small things in life' and, at the same time, triggers our imagination about the world beyond our reach, a world that, although right in front of us, still rests in a sphere that to a certain degree remains incomprehensible or ungraspable due to its transient qualities.

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Notes

- 1 Schafer initiated the World Soundscape Project in 1971 at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia.

- 2 This exhibition also included works by Japanese artists Yuji Dogane, Yukio Fujimoto, Atsuhiko Ito, Soichiro Mihara, Atsushi Nishijima, Jio Shimizu, Toshiya Tsunoda and Tetsuya Umeda.
- 3 Plourde mentions several modes of etiquette and respectability: being patient, not consuming alcohol prior to the performance, avoid falling asleep during the concert, keeping one's mind completely empty, closing one's eyes in order to concentrate more intensely and so on (Plourde, 2008, pp. 287-288).
- 4 Room reverberation time is the time it takes before the sound pressure level has decreased by 60 dB after the sound source is terminated, which depends on how quickly the sound energy is absorbed by the surfaces of the room.