

Ryuichi Sakamoto + YCAM InterLab "Forest Symphony"

July 26 (Fri) - December 1 (Sun) 10:00 - 19:00
Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media [YCAM] Foyer

Experiencing the life of the forest

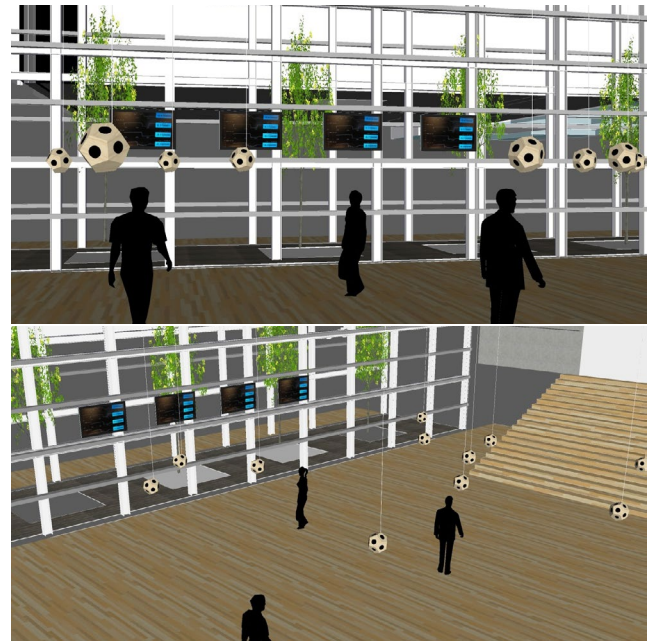
Ryuichi Sakamoto and YCAM launch a collaborative art project

As part of its 10th Anniversary Program, the Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media [YCAM] presents "Forest Symphony" as an installation realized in collaboration between the Anniversary Program's artistic director, Ryuichi Sakamoto and the YCAM InterLab.

Inspired by his longstanding interest in forests and trees, Sakamoto has been engaging in forest preservation activities in parallel with his work in the realm of music. The Tohoku earthquake was a catalyst that prompted him to conceive the "Forest Symphony" project translating the bioelectric potential of trees into music, as a means of expressing his concerns through concrete artistic endeavors.

With the additional involvement of the YCAM InterLab, the project was further developed on the technical level, resulting in the production and presentation of this new installation into different versions, i.e. physical installation in YCAM and the web version. And this project also see the publication of an originally developed device for obtaining electrical data from trees as open-source hardware.

With its focus on the perception of the breath of forests and trees not only with the ears but with all body senses, "Forest Symphony" is a symbolical work that embodies the 10th Anniversary Program's general theme of "Art / Environment / Life".



Ryuichi Sakamoto + YCAM InterLab "Forest Symphony"
(conceptual drawing)

[INQUIRY]

"Forest Symphony" – a symphony performed by trees



Tree at Izumo Shrine in Yamaguchi (photo by Shiro Takatani)

"Trees are geniuses that convert sunlight into energy, or in other words, catch electromagnetic waves by way of photosynthesis. I'd like to translate that periodicity into music."

Ryuichi Sakamoto

Ryuichi Sakamoto, artistic director for the YCAM 10th Anniversary Program, has been harboring a deep interest in forests and trees for a long time. Out of concern for the globally progressing environmental destruction, he launched "moreTrees" as an initiative for forest preservation in 2007, through which he continues his efforts educating society about various aspects of the forest, such as its functions of maintaining biodiversity and absorbing CO₂.

Sakamoto, who engages in such environmental activities in parallel with his musical endeavors, was inspired by the Tohoku earthquake in 2011 to contemplate on future directions of civilization, and eventually start one art project with the aim to bring his thoughts to the attention of a wider audience. The result is "Forest Symphony" – music composed based on the minute bioelectric potential of trees.

Making a clear departure from the current worldwide trend of music inspired by natural/environmental themes, the approach of taking the rhythm and interaction that crystallizes as "life" through the conversion and reconfiguration into music of bioelectric potential keeps breaking new ground in the field of music "created" by trees as a form of artistic expression.

Ryuichi Sakamoto



Photo: Atsushi Tanabe

Musician. Born 1952, currently lives in New York, USA. Released his first album "Thousand Knives" in 1978, and joined the band YMO in the same year. After the breakup of YMO, he composed numerous movie soundtracks and other Academy Award-winning works that established him as an internationally renowned artist who keeps pursuing an innovative sound. Since the opera "LIFE", unveiled in 1999, his works have been dealing with topics related to environmental, peace and social issues, including "Hisen (Non-war)", an anti-war anthology put together in reaction to 9/11. Launched "more trees" in 2007, and took part in forestation projects and educational activities on the prevention of global warming. In 2009, he received an "Echo Award" at the Echo Festival launched under the patronage of the United Nations Environment Programme, and was awarded the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres from the French Ministry of Culture. Received the Artist's Award from the Agency of Cultural Affairs in 2010, and is continuously active in projects to support recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, such as "LIFE311 by more trees", "Kodomo no ongaku saisei kikin (School Music Revival)" and "www.kizunaworld.org" among others.

Moving to the next stage in collaboration with the YCAM InterLab



Fixing a sensor measuring bioelectric potential to a tree
(Morotsuka, Miyazaki Prefecture)

For the 10th Anniversary Program, members of the YCAM InterLab got involved in "Forest Symphony", to produce and unveil a sound installation and web contents harnessing their acquired know-how in the production of artworks.

Sound Installation and Online Contents

First of all, the InterLab team developed an original sensor device for obtaining bioelectric data from trees, and sending these data to a dedicated server. The device was mounted to trees in the Central Park adjacent to the YCAM building; at the Izumo and Kumano shrines in Yamaguchi City, where some of the oldest trees in Japan are remaining; in the forest of Morotsuka in Miyazaki Prefecture, an area that boasts one of the richest vegetations in the world; and with the cooperation of educational and research institutions in Japan and abroad, trees in regions with different ecosystems around the world.

While sounds generated based on the collected data engulf the entire exhibition space, visual displays made under the direction of artist Shiro Takatani document transformations of the bioelectric potential, and provide information on the respective environments in which the sensor was installed. These elements amalgamate into a "forest-like" sound installation that keeps transforming according to changing seasons and weather conditions.

Concurrently with the exhibition opening, the exhibition's website offers new contents for visitors to listen to bioelectric data and sounds from the actual exhibition space, and thereby sensing at any time and any place the aura of trees as radiated by the "Forest Symphony".

YCAM InterLab

produces art and theater works within YCAM's commission works, as well as producing technological aspects of educational programs at YCAM, and acting as technical support for invited exhibitions and performances. YCAM Interlab not only collaborates with visiting artists and outside engineers, but also collaborate with other cultural facilities and research institutions, and pursue their own independent research and development projects.

The sensor device is located at

JAPAN:

Izumo Shrine, Yamaguchi

Kumano Shrine, Yamaguchi

Morotsuka Village, Miyazaki

Sapporo Media Arts Lab [SMAL], Hokkaido

USA:

MIT Media Lab

AUSTRALIA:

SymbioticA The University of Western Australia

HUNGARY:

Ákos Maróy

Design Terminal

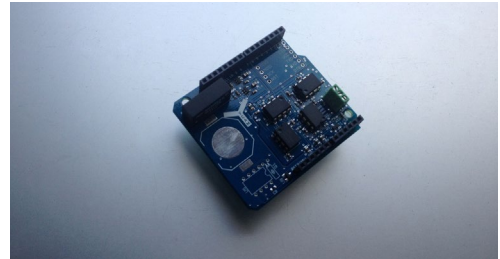
Sensor device planned to be published as open-source hardware

As part of this exhibition, the sensor device developed by the YCAM InterLab team will be published along with the parts list and drawings on the Internet as admission-free, open-source hardware (details to be announced via the project's website), in order to allow anyone who has the necessary materials available to build a sensor device as the one used in this exhibition.

The purpose of this project is to encourage all people interested in the "Forest Symphony" to measure the electric potential of trees, and spontaneously develop new creative ideas, and thereby hopefully spread interest in forests and trees in an approach yet different from the sound installation and web contents.

Open Source Hardware

Hardware developed as an open-source project, to be freely produced/alterd based on manufacturing drawings and how-to-make explanations published on the Internet.



Sensor device developed specially for this exhibition

Event Data

Ryuichi Sakamoto + YCAM InterLab "Forest Symphony"

July 26 (Fri) - December 1(Sun), 2013 10:00 - 19:00

Admission Free

Place: Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media [YCAM] Foyer

<http://forestsymphony.ycam.jp>

* YCAM will be open on October 22 (Tue) for visitors to view the "LIFE-WELL" installation.

* As the exhibition venue is an open space, visitors will not be able to experience the works at certain times on days when other events take place.

Organized by: Yamaguchi City, Yamaguchi City Foundation for Cultural Promotion

In association with: Yamaguchi Board of Education

Supported by the Agency for Cultural Affairs Government of Japan in the fiscal 2013

Cooperate sponsored by: SHISEIDO

Cooperated by: moreTrees Intermediary organization, Izumo Shrine (Yamaguchi), Kumano Shrine (Yamaguchi), Morotsuka Village (Miyazaki), Sapporo Media Arts Lab [SMAL] (Hokkaido), MIT Media Lab (USA), SymbioticA The University of Western Australia (Australia), Ákos Maróy (Hungary), Design Terminal (Hungary)

Circuit board design, production: Sensignal Co.,Ltd.

Co-developed with: YCAM InterLab

Produced by: Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media [YCAM]

Related Events

Gallery Tour

August 3(Sat), 17 (Sat)

September 7(Sat), 14(Sat), 21(Sat), 28(Sat)

November 9(Sat), 23 (Sat), 30(Sat) 15:30- Admission free

YCAM 10th Anniversary "THE OPENING LIVE CONCERT"

July 26 (Fri) 19:00 start (Venue opens 30 minutes prior to the start)

venue: Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media [YCAM] Studio A

Performer: Ryuichi Sakamoto, Koji Ueno, Taylor Deupree, ILLUHA