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Appreciating the incidental: Mieko Shiomi's "Events"

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Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi is a composer who has worked independently and within Fluxus. In 1964–5, she spent a year amongst fellow Fluxus artists in New York. She has participated in Fluxus-related performances in Japan, America and Europe. However, she is still under-studied. In 2005, Midori Yoshimoto produced the first chapter-length essay on her. This article adds to existing work by drawing out further observations regarding Shiomi's concern with nature and the unconscious. It argues that her desire to merge with nature, and her focus on dream-like disparate elements in her "Event" pieces, liberate the performer into a realm of direct experience and appreciation of the incidental, providing an alternative within day-to-day routine. This paper relates her concerns to tendencies in Fluxus and her experiences in the active art and music scene of mid-twentieth century Japan.

Keywords: Mieko Shiomi; Fluxus; Group Ongaku; 1960s Japan; environment and art

Mieko Shiomi's career began during her student days at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. There, she was a member of *Group Ongaku* (Group Music), which was active from 1959 to 1962. This was a free improvisational music group that included, amongst others, fellow future Fluxus participants Takehisa Kosugi, and, from 1960, Yasunao Tone, who gave the group its name.[1] Their improvisation resulted, for Shiomi, in the production of action as music. This was natural progression from Group Ongaku's concern with Schaeffer's idea of the *objet sonore*, which Group Ongaku interpreted as "sound as object."[2] Shiomi has described how, at one early improvisation session, she tossed some keys in the air to make a sound, and this experiment heightened her awareness of the action that she was producing.[3]

This way of working, where action could replace or be experienced together with sound, was utilised in an epochal performance of *I.B.M – Happening and Music Concrète* by composer Toshi Ichiyanagi at the Sōgetsu Art Centre in Tokyo in November 1961. The score for this piece was created through IBM computer punch cards with black and white squares. Ichiyanagi asked the performers to think of

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actions that they would like to perform in relation to the squares. Shiomi chose two actions, one playing a Theremin borrowed from fellow students who had made it, and the other was blowing bubbles. She intended these two actions to contrast with one another, as the childish activity of blowing bubbles was set against the electric sound of the Theremin.[4] Midori Yoshimoto writes that, "Through participating in this concert, Shiomi situated herself in an historic moment in Japanese avant-garde music and art in which every pre-existing concept was being challenged."[5] It was not only boundaries of genre that were being broken, but also boundaries of sense, logic and previous thought patterns.

Shiomi originally wrote down instructions in sentences as a logical progression on from producing action music, in order to provide performers with a sense of direction.[6] However, after graduating in 1962 and moving from Tokyo back to her parents' home in Okayama in the Chūgoku region of Japan,[7] she felt overwhelmed by her appreciation of the natural world around her. She wished to compose pieces that could be performed privately in natural settings. Around the beginning of 1963, she considered that she had found her element in the resulting "Action Poems" which were similar to "Events" orchestrated by other artists associated with Fluxus. They consisted of short instructions to be interpreted and performed.[8] After seeing some of George Brecht's Event scores during a visit toYoko Ono's apartment in1963, however, she began to refer to her pieces as "Events" too.[9] After she lived in New York between 1964 and1965, and participated in Fluxus concerts there, her interest in producing Events continued.

Shiomi's scores, with their heavy focus on nature, dreams and surreal environments, often liberate the performer into a realm where the consciousness is freed in such a way that the senses are heightened. Often, the performer becomes more open to experiencing ordinary material in different ways. This bears similarity to Shiomi's early work in Group Ongaku, where performers sought to move around creating sound "automatically."[10] This essay will explore Shiomi's concern with nature, dreams and the unconscious, and will relate her work not only to tendencies in Fluxus, but also to the art and music scene in mid-twentieth century Japan.

"Events," environment and everyday empowerment

Shiomi grew up surrounded by nature, and, since she was a child, has been very aware of its appeal and beauty. At the age of six, after an air raid that destroyed the town of Okayama where she was born, she moved with her family to the nearby town of Tamashima, a place rich in nature. She lived at the foot of a low hill, near a wide river which flows into the Seto Inland Sea. Although her birthplace was Okayama, she views Tamashima as a place where her thoughts and perceptions were formed:

> [Tamashima] was beautiful. The sky was so clear, and there were lots of trees and grass, lots of insects and birds. Beautiful place. So, my native town was Okayama, but my, what shall I say... my mental, my perceptional native town was Tamashima... This environment nurtured the way I see things.[11]

Shiomi's event pieces deal with nature in not only a poetic sense, but also cause us to be aware of our environment and challenge our attitudes toward it. Shiomi does not

describe herself as being against consumerist society,[12] as Fluxus organizer George Maciunas sometimes claimed to be, especially regarding the art-world).[13] However, I shall demonstrate that in bringing people to an awareness of the natural world, her works are empowering and may possibly push individuals toward a sense of community and toward the valuation of small incidents and experiences over commodities.

For Shiomi, to perform an event piece is an enriching experience, allowing the performer to experience something ordinary as Event and become more aware of it on its own, free from other things in the mind.

> We have a lot of obligations, and tasks, and many, many trivial things. Usually, our mind is occupied with these, like I'm a housewife, so I have a lot of things to do, for my family. But when you look at things as an event, your mind is free from that kind of task. It's very free and released, and yutakana [enriching] moment.[14]

As many of Shiomi's pieces deal with concrete elements of nature, essentially what the performer will experience through much of her Event work is a concentrated focus on nature and objects in the surrounding environment. Much of the material that Shiomi chooses to use, however, is in a fluid, moving, ephemeral or otherwise transitional or "boundary" condition. For example, she has produced pieces dealing with water, wind, air, sunlight, shadows, passing and disappearing. This is perhaps due to recognition that the normal condition of the natural world is change and fluidity. An acceptance of change also contrasts with a desire to buy security that lasts in a commercial world.

As in many Fluxus events, there is usually an element that requires the performer to interact in a thoughtful or playful way with material. Often, this could be something carried out in everyday life but unnoticed, and the event would cause the performer to notice it. For example, *Water Music* (1964), which reads: "1. Give the water still form. 2. Let the water lose its still form,"[15] could be as simple as filling up a bowl with water and washing, or could be as complex as the performer wished. It can be performed anywhere there is water, whether indoors or outdoors. It reinstates in the performer the childlike idea of water itself as an experience, rather than something necessary. However, water is not always considered to be an *experience* relative to the kinds of things valued in a consumerist society. This piece is enriching, allowing the performer to become aware of the satisfaction of consciously interacting with and experiencing a necessary, everyday element.

This also allows the performer to be aware of having choices in performing a certain action. Shiomi herself has performed this piece in different ways. In a 1965 presentation of Fluxus in Japan, she painted water-soluble glue onto a record and dropped water onto it from a syringe. The sound of Carl Maria von Weber's *An Invitation to Waltz* was gradually released. At the same event, she interacted with water in a wading pool, performing such actions as sucking water out of it with a rubber tube, putting a soldering iron into the water and transfering water into a cup with a syringe (Figure 1). A wet face was pressed against paper hanging from the ceiling, and the imprints cut out.[16] Prior to this, in October 1964, Shiomi included *Water Music* in the "Perpetual Fluxus Festival" in New York. She provided water in bottles with labels designed by Maciunas, and asked participants to perform part two

Figure 1. Water Music.

of her score: "let the water lose its still form."[17] The action of giving the water still form and then losing it may also be performed in certain ways in everyday life, such as washing or drinking, though we do not always recognise this as performing an action on the water. However, when faced with instructions that allow for some flexibility in their performance, the performer realises that he or she can behave toward the material in various ways. This realisation could be taken out into normal life and could encourage more creative ways of being. Shiomi has spoken of considering various phenomena within the everyday environment of her garden as "Event."[18] As in much Event-based work, her work does not seek to communicate only her ideas, but encourages the performers to interact with the environment around them and become aware of their own diverse perspectives regarding it and themselves. Hannah Higgins, in her book, *Fluxus Experience,* links the work in Fluxus that is based on actual material and experience to feeling that one has a place here, in the world:

> To value prosaic materials and experiences seems to me to go some way toward an appreciative (as opposed to cynical) and empathetic (as opposed to alienated) cognitive model that maintains a critical relationship to the subject while remaining open to it as well. Fluxus in these terms offers tools with which to create a sense of belonging in the world.[19]

Higgins and performance scholar Kristine Stiles concur that works that encourage people to experience things for themselves also offer the opportunity for radicalisation. Higgins writes, "In offering opportunities to gain knowledge by multi-sensory and performative means, Fluxus has political implications in the unfixed, unassigned, perhaps anarchic sense,"[20] and Stiles' view is that:

> [I]f Fluxus performance contributed to the restoration of a social and political discourse to art, as I believe it has, it was not through conventional activism nor partisan rhetoric

> superficially identified as "political." Fluxus performance – as all performance art – operates by infiltration and by offering alternative perspectives about the nature of identity, use, exchange . . . .[21]

These event works that use nature as material are equalizing in that as Events, they often allow for a variety of different ways of performing the instructed action. Thus, not just one performance or way is the correct one, but the ideas of many different people are encouraged. Further, using natural materials such as water, wind, light and shadow that are freely available undermines one of the underlying ideas of consumerist society that money is enriching and buys experience and happiness. As the environment and nature are often more freely available than goods, interactions between people are encouraged as they can play in nature together without a focus on the capacity to purchase. Hannah Higgins contends that "the experiential dimension of Fluxus work" itself "has the capacity . . . to offer ontological knowledge that connects people to a real world and to each other, expanding the individual's sense of belonging to a place and a group."[22] Experiencing and experimenting with materials in the environment brings one closer to the material reality of one's own existence, and to that of others.

In Fluxus, something of a community was encouraged, especially by Maciunas. He enjoyed experiencing many everyday things in life, such as meals, with his fellow Fluxus participants, and often liked to think of them as Events. Shiomi remembers that when she moved to New York, Maciunas kindly offered to give Shigeko Kubota and herself some of his furniture for the apartment he had found for them. They, with Nam-Jun Paik, Takako Saito and Ay-O, helped him carry it the few minutes' walk from his loft on Canal Street to Shiomi and Kubota's new residence on Sullivan Street. Shiomi recalls that Maciunas said laughingly, "This is a 'carrying event', ha ha ha . . . ."[23] She thought, "Though carrying them was tough work, I enjoyed the way we looked at this action as performance."[24] This may also be understood as a challenge to consumerist ideas. Rather than requiring money for communal enjoyment, which often isolates people who do not have any, the Event required only that people interacted with available things in their environment and each other, that they met and worked together, playfully, like children do.

The overproduction of commodities in post-World War industrial societies has generated an ever faster pace of life. Playing in a non-competitive way and interacting with everyday materials slows down the pace of life and causes people to be more reflective. For example, Shiomi's *Piece for a Small Puddle* (1964) reads:

> This piece is performed by several performers. Each performer takes position around the puddle. Each stands or squats according to ones own chosen rhythm looking at the surface of the puddle.[25]

Piece for a Small Puddle could have rather hilarious results, as one notices reflected on the surface of the puddle one's own or others' images bobbing up and down. Fluxus works are often humorous, and Kristine Stiles notes the potential for empowerment inherent in humor:

> [A]ssociations with slapstick and jokes have led to misunderstandings about Fluxus humor when the serious social commentary, psychological consequences and political potential for self empowerment inherent in humor are overlooked. Freud, for example,

> theorized that humor was an essential element in the release of psychic energies associated with freeing the imagination of inhibitions. From Plato to Aristotle, Descartes, and Hobbes, humor has been philosophically attributed to betraying and undermining hegemony and power relations.[26]

Indeed, as the performers notice the figures of the others, distorted and bobbing up and down in the surface of the water, they experience equality with their fellow performers. Everyone is in the same situation of looking rather silly; thus, any kind of social hierarchy in the group may be broken a little.

For Shiomi, Fluxus humor also relates to the idea of breaking down the wall between high art and life. She writes that:

> Fluxus is a treasure box of laughter. Why? Because Fluxus embraced an attitude of "anti," aspiring to repudiate high art and dismantle the wall separating art and life. When one attempts to denounce the past, one may either create a completely new set of values or call the existing authorities and conventions into question through such cynical strategies as iconoclasm, satire, parody, evasion, incongruity and inversion. The latter engenders hilarity of all kinds.[27]

This concurs with Maciunas' vision of Fluxus as "Art Amusement" rather than "Art." For him, to produce "Art Amusement" would be to subvert the ideas of art as commodity or institution. His 1965 *Fluxmanifesto on Art-Amusement* states that:

> [The artist] must demonstrate that anything can substitute art and anyone can do it. Therefore this substitute art-amusement must be simple, amusing, concerned with insignificances, have no commodity or institutional value. It must be unlimited, obtainable by all and eventually produced by all.[28]

Piece for a Small Puddle confirms this proposition. It is a piece that can be performed by anyone, anywhere there is a puddle and an opportunity to play. However, Shiomi's view does not correspond entirely with Maciunas' Marxist leanings. She has articulated her belief that an artist should be free and independent, writing:

> Once George wrote to me that he wished to come to Japan and make a Fluxus village. Living together with people of the same way of thinking was his dream. He often used the words "colony" or "commune," but I think an artist's favourite words should be "freedom" or "independence."[29]

Shiomi's concern with art that anyone can produce comes rather from a combination of tremendous respect for the creative potential inherent within the natural environment, and her concern with *musique concrete* while improvising in Group Ongaku. As she had created tape music from everyday sounds and improvised with not only instruments but ordinary objects such as a vacuum cleaner or wooden sandals, it was a natural progression to move to a philosophy whereby anyone can create a piece from their surrounding environment.

In *Piece for a Small Puddle,* rather than laughing, one could also choose to notice abstract patterns on the puddle's surface, and be drawn into the rhythm and activity of standing and squatting, letting the mind rest. This is consistent with Shiomi's view of her own Events, contrasted to Fluxus performances of them. She makes a distinction between Fluxus Events conceived as jokes, and her pieces.[30] Though her work does often contain humor, and Shiomi has stated that it is "interesting"

to see her works performed by Fluxus artists in a "Fluxusian manner,"[31] this differentiation emphasizes the extent to which she values experience in nature as the core of many of her pieces. The differences between Shiomi's original intentions and the *Fluxversions* can easily be seen when comparing versions of *Wind Music*. Shiomi's score reads:

> Wind Music
>
> 1
> Raise wind.
>
> 2
> Be blown by wind.
>
> 3
> Wind at the beach,
> wind in the street
> wind passing by a car
>
> Typhoon.[32]

This piece emphasizes the experience of wind in nature and the surrounding environment, and, like a musical piece, appears to crescendo. First, there is no wind, and the performer is asked to raise it. Then, there is wind, blowing the participant. The third part progresses to three different types of wind, moving finally to "Typhoon." However, these elements of musicality and appreciation for the natural world are not so evident in, for example, *Wind Music, Fluxversion I* (1963). The score reads:

> Scores are blown away from stands by wind from a strong fan in the wings as the orchestra tries to hold them.[33]

Rather than being situated outside, this piece takes place within the concert hall. Humor plays a strong part in it, as the orchestra struggle to hold down their sheet music. This subverts the idea of Western classical scored music, as the sheets are blown away. Although very valid as an interpretation of Shiomi's score, it is rather different from Shiomi's own *Wind Music*. Although Shiomi felt it was interesting to see her scores performed as *Fluxversions*, other artists have disliked the Fluxus productions of their work. La Monte Young, for instance, whose scores Shiomi admires for their purity and strength,[34] has complained that Maciunas' hand in his work sometimes meant that, "the influence of my ideas quickly degenerated into slapstick vaudeville . . . . I loved his humor but it distorted the intention of my works."[35]

Piece for a Small Puddle allows each performer to act according to his or her own rhythm rather than one that has been dictated. Although a premeditated rhythm could be chosen, the instruction does not specify it. This allows the performers to experience the present moment of their performance by submitting to the natural rhythm of their bodies, or to the sounds in the surrounding area. This is in opposition to the dictated rhythm of a clock or metronome, which tend to rule over laborers and artists, requiring that people work for a certain number of hours each day, or perform in a specific rhythm. If this piece was performed around a natural puddle outside, passers-by might interrupt their thought patterns to notice for a moment – or longer – the absurd-looking activity taking place.

In this way, the piece relates to Yoko Ono's idea that: "by actively inserting . . . a useless act . . . into everyday life, perhaps I can delay culture, so to speak."[36] In wishing to "delay culture," Ono was connecting with a desire common amongst young Japanese artists in the mid-1960s to resist the superficial happiness that a booming economic climate could be seen to provide. This idea is referred to in Chiaki Nagano's 1964 documentary film *Aru Wakamonotachi* (Some Young People). Yoshimoto points out that the opening of the film shows the regular routine of commuters in Tokyo in the midst of the post-war financial boom with the Japanese version of the song *If You're Happy and You Know it Clap Your Hands* played in the background. She writes that the first narration referred to the artists in the film as ones who were resisting the "happy myth" and comments that, "this film is filled with anti-institutional, subversive messages from the young artists who detested the shallow everyday happiness and attempted to disrupt it by their guerrilla performances."[37] This in similar to a sentiment expressed by the Happening artist Jean-Jaques Lebel: "We had a feeling of apocalypse, an insuperable disgust with the "civilization of happiness" and its Hiroshimas."[38] Writing of his experiences in New York, critic Kuniharu Akiyama recognised that the actions of artists associated with Fluxus and Happenings appeared to be in opposition to ordinary life in America at that time, where everyday activities were carried out within something like "the revolutions of a big cog."[39]

The fairly quiet nature of Shiomi's piece may not make it recognizable as "guerilla performance," but it can be compared to Ono's *Flower Event* (1962–63) which was a simple act of dropping flowers in the street. Yoshimoto points to Ono's sentiment that she hoped that by witnessing her interventions, people would "slow down the pace of their lives."[40] Though Ono's event was "presented as intentionally *inconspicuous*, to make a point of art disappearing into mundane life,"[41] Shiomi intends for passers-by to notice her Event, and be affected in some way. She has stated that the performers may be looked on as making a "mysterious, strange or poetic scene."[42] She also stresses the flexibility of this sort of work, saying that the boundaries between performer and audience can be dissolved, with onlookers and performers able to fulfill either role.[43] Thus, people going about their daily business may unexpectedly find themselves standing and squatting around a puddle with a group of others. With art that allows for passers-by to participate either by looking and wondering, or participating in the actions being performed in the public space, one can see how rather than being owned by one person, this is what Shiomi calls "Kyōyū suru Aato" (mutually owned art).[44]

Fluxus Event scores by other artists also allow for the possiblility of "mutual ownership" in performance. Shiomi's interest in "mutual" creation can be traced back to her involvement in Group Ongaku, where she improvised freely with the other members of the group. This interest continued after she had spent a year amongst Fluxus colleagues in New York from 1964–5. Between 1965 and 1975, she produced *Spatial Poems*, a large-scale series of Events. Shiomi sent out Event invitations via mail, and collated the results from 232 participants in various formats including a model of a map and a book, which she published in 1976. Through recording the diverse results of responses to her Events, Shiomi relinquished much

control over the content of her works, and produced pieces that were largely collaborative.[45]

In *Piece for a Small Puddle,* the idea that the puddle is "small" is also important. By emphasizing the smallness of the puddle, Shiomi further asserts that it is not only the large, impressive things in nature that are worthy of attention, but that small puddles and things that we may overlook. We are encouraged to imagine that our small deeds and words that escape attention are also worthy of being recognized. This valuation of the small is an aspect of much of Shiomi's work, including *Spatial Poem*, which recorded actions and observations often considered inconsequential, including opening something that was closed, noticing the direction one faced or moved in at a particular time, and writing a word on a card and putting it somewhere.

Another event of Shiomi's that juxtaposes action with an often incidentally treated object in the environment is *Passing Music for a Tree* (1964). The score is as follows: "Pass by a tree or let some object pass by a tree, but each time differently."[46] This could be done by consciously causing oneself to pass by a tree, or by causing an object to pass by a tree in different ways, thus juxtaposing one's own conscious action with a chosen natural object. Alternatively, one could just notice a tree and objects going past it over a short or long period of time, continuous or discontinuous, thus heightening one's awareness of things that change in the environment. Mobility is set alongside immobility, and this event could bring to mind an awareness of questions regarding movement and stillness, much change and little change. Questions of temporality are also brought to the fore, as the things going past the tree are changing, noticeably and quickly, but the tree is also changing and growing, more slowly. This could bring one to notice smaller changes in other things. Even if one were to try to pass by the tree or pass an object by a tree in the same manner each time, this would be impossible. Growth, ageing, another layer of dust or earth, or another fingerprint on oneself or the object would mean that change had occurred.

This piece also increases our perception of being a part of nature. Change is the constant state of all natural things, including ourselves. As Midori Yoshimoto writes, Shiomi has articulated the desire that she felt within her to "merge with this beautiful nature."[47] *Mirror* (1963) is indicative of this desire. It asks the performer to "Stand on a sandy beach with your back to the sea. Hold a mirror in front of your face and look into it. Step back to the sea and enter into the water." This was the first "action poem" that Shiomi composed, and is also her favorite.[48] Anna Dezeuze notes that this is because "it marked the end of her struggle to find "a new relation between the outside world (nature)" and herself, and because it allowed her "to go back" to her "roots" in the Seto inner sea where she grew up."[49] Shiomi writes of her idea to create pieces such of this that could be performed in nature that, "It was like a secret plan to transcend myself by unifying with a fragment of nature that I captured alive inside me."[50]

Mirror may have a disorientating effect on the performer, as the relationship between seeing and feeling is reversed. Instead of seeing the environment she is about to enter and being aware of her face by feeling, she sees her face and is aware of the environment she is entering through feeling. As she enters the sea, she may feel afraid

that she cannot see where she is going, and could experience resistance. Alternatively, she may enjoy the sensation and feel herself merged with the sea, submitting to the movement of the water. At some point, it may become too deep for the performer to step in any longer, and she may begin to float or swim. Because the entry into the sea will have been backwards, one may not be quite so aware of when this point will be as if one had been going forwards, and it may come as a surprise. If this point comes as a surprise then the performer will have, even at least momentarily, to submit to being suspended in a huge sea without her feet touching the ground, and perhaps will gain an idea of her body being merged with and submitted to nature.

It may be possible to construct a Jungian reading of the piece, in which we view the sea as the unconscious: "a boundless expanse full of unprecedented uncertainty .... the world of water, where all life floats in suspension ... where I am indivisibly this *and* that, where I experience the other in myself and the other-than-myself experiences me."[51] Jung refers to a common opinion that "anyone who descends into the unconscious gets into a suffocating atmosphere of egocentric subjectivity."[52] This is similar to a criticism by experimental musician Yūji Takahashi regarding Group Ongaku. He had commented that however much followers of improvisation thought that they were creating new sound, they could not transcend the aesthetic or technique that they had learned, or their physical habits, thus not being able overcome their own natural instinct.[53] However, Jung writes that confrontation with oneself is necessary before entering into the "boundless expanse":

> *True, whoever looks into the mirror of the water will see first of all his own face. Whoever goes to himself risks a confrontation with himself. The mirror does not flatter, it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely, the face we never show to the world because we cover it with the* persona*, the mask of the actor. But the mirror lies behind the mask and shows the true face ... the meeting with oneself is, at first, the meeting with one's own shadow. The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well. But one must learn to know oneself in order to know who one is. For what comes after the door is, surprisingly enough, a boundless expanse ....*[54]

Entering into the sea backwards may be seen as emphasizing the idea of an unknown expanse, while the mirror appears to represent a confrontation with self. Taking into account Group Ongaku's interest in the unconscious, this reading may seem plausible. Group Ongaku member Tone referred to Jung in an essay relating to the group's performance at "Nijū seiki buyoū no kai" (Twentieth Century Dance Performance) at the Kuni Chiya Dance Institute.[55] He wrote of a desire to attain through improvisation, "the universality of automatism, Jung's Collective Unconscious at the base of each Personal Unconscious."[56] Shiomi, though, did not have Jung's ideas in mind when she composed the piece, and rather stresses her appreciation and love of nature. She asserts that the use of the mirror and the backwards entry into the sea were intended to enable the experience of a process of merging with nature as one would witness oneself and the ocean reflected in the mirror simultaneously, whilst being aware of the distance reducing gradually between self and sea. However, she writes that even while the author's intention is known, researchers are free to draw out alternative interpretations.[57]

It is possible that after witnessing the terrible, ugly destruction of life and environment during and after the air raid on her native town of Okayama in

June 1945, during World War II, Shiomi developed an intense appreciation for life and natural beauty. Yoshimoto points out Shiomi's sense of "pent-up anger" over the poverty of the post-war environment. She was forced to share a piano, which hindered her musical progress, and her frustration "turned into the source of her passion and energy for living and artmaking."[58] Merging with nature, for Shiomi, appears to contain an element of recognizing the transformative, unstable nature of both environment and self. For example, *Shadow Piece II* (1964) instructs:

(1) Project a shadow over the other side of this page.
(2) Observe the boundary between the shadow and the lighted part.
(3) Become the boundary line.[59]

First we are asked to project and identify a shadow. Next, we are instructed to notice where the point is that light becomes shadow. We see two opposites on the page, light and dark, but because we have been asked to observe the boundary line, we become aware of a point that is neither strictly light nor dark. It is the point where light becomes dark and dark becomes light. Both are interdependent on one another at this point. It is this point of transformation, change and interdependency that Shiomi requires us to identify with.

In the first instance, Shiomi's own translation of her last sentence had been "Creep into the boundary." Maciunas, though, felt that this was difficult to understand and changed it to "Become the boundary line." Even now, Shiomi is not fully satisfied with that sentence, as she feels that in its changed form it has become even more challenging to comprehend.[60]

Identifying with a boundary effects a change in one's ideas. It encourages the performer to challenge his ideas and take them to their limit, a point where change may be possible. Shiomi relates the boundary to the expansion of perception and the imagination.[61] This, to her, is "Imagination Art."[62] She has previously written that:

> ... A shadow's outline changes according to the strength of light or distance from the light. It can be blurred, or sharp like a razor blade. It does not matter what kind of boundary but if you stare at it you will see the splitting of dimensions and a distant, expansive space. All you have to do is to enter into it. At that time, the observer should be free and quiet, as if floating. This is because they are sublimating in sight. At a time like this, their hearing may open up unexpectedly. They start to hear noises that they didn't notice before as if they are hearing it for the first time in ages. The sound of traffic from a distant highway resounds on the other side of the boundary line. It awakens a drama that couldn't possibly be in your memory.[63]

Thus, we could observe that at the boundary, one's senses of space, possibility and imagination are expanded.

Impossibility, Dreams and the Surreal

Shiomi's pieces sometimes exhort the performer to carry out impossible or seemingly impossible tasks. *Shadow Piece* (1963), asks the performer to:

> Make shadows – still or moving – of your body or something on the road, wall, floor or anything else.
> Catch the shadows by some means.[64]

Shiomi has admitted the impossibility within this piece, saying, "It's very difficult."[65] Of course, one could capture the shadows by drawing around outlines, as in Yoko Ono's *Shadow Piece* (1966), where she traced around twenty participants' bodies.[66] Alternatively, shadows could be photographed. However, one could question whether the actual shadows themselves have been caught, or whether one has only succeeded in capturing an impression of them at a particular moment. One has to admit that the capturing of a shadow is only possible for a certain amount of time, while the light is in the same position, and even then, one has not really caught it, as it cannot be held and it eludes any attempt to touch it. By its very nature, a shadow is elusive and frustrates any attempt made to own and keep it.

In Ono's case, as Kristine Stiles points out, *Shadow Piece* could remind one of the terrible fact that after the atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima, people's shapes were imprinted onto walls, and looked rather like shadows. Stiles asserts that Ono's piece "could not have been more poignant in its evocation of genocide and violence ... her event offered a mute analogue to the imprints of bodies left on the sidewalks of Hiroshima after the bomb." She points out that the location of the piece was on the Free School Playground, London, which was bombed during World War II.[67] However, due to the playful nature of Shiomi's work, her idea of preserving shadows appears not to be related to this. In fact, Shiomi has stated that she does not typically perform this piece in front of an audience, but rather mentally, on her own.[68]

The intention of impossibility is further announced in Shiomi's later development of her shadow event pieces into visual poetry. Her multiple edition, *Shadow Event no. X*,[69] asks the viewer to consider performing some rather unexpected actions on a projected shadow, such as "oscillate it," "alcoholize it," "nibble it," "water it." If one were to try to perform these tasks, one might realize the transitory nature of the shadow, and the impossibility of, for example, taking a bite out of it. The impossibility is further emphasized by the inclusion of concrete objects with the edition, such as an eraser for trying to delete the shadow. Although attempting to perform these actions in actuality may be interesting, they are quite fascinating when performed in the mind. If they were performed mentally, one could imagine the effects of a shadow growing as it is watered, or an inebriated shadow staggering along.

These types of pieces assert that actions can occur in the space of the mind that do not or cannot occur in the space of the concrete world. They empower the individual to realize that the everyday world can be affected or enhanced by the imagination. Ono has also made great use of impossibility and mental space. A major factor of art produced in the imagination is that, like a shadow, it cannot be physically grasped, or considered a possession. For Ono, the idea of non-ownership in relation to art-making seems to have been important. Her text, *On Ownership II* (1971) reveals some of her ideas regarding this:

> ... Pass around money.
> What happens?
> When you pass around,
> if you decide to keep it
> instead, do you own the
> money?

Pass around evening
light again. Then try to
keep the evening light.
Do you own the evening
light?

What happens when you
eat things and you
decide to keep them in
your body and not pass
them out?

What happens when
your body gets clogged?

What happens when
your mind gets clogged?

Count all the things you've kept instead of
passing it around.[70]

Ono uses an ephemeral matter, evening light, to illustrate the point that some things in life are impossible to own, and that ownership leads to a clogging of the mind. This could be compared with Shiomi telling the performer to catch a shadow in her 1963 *Shadow Piece*. However, although Shiomi's piece could also illustrate the impossibility of ownership, when it is set alongside her later visual poems involving shadows, her pieces seem rather more like games that one could play mentally, for example, imagining how one would catch the shadow if it were possible.

For Ono, the very act of creating an idea-based piece, challenges and defies ownership. In 1966, she wrote:

> "Idea" is what the artist gives, like a stone thrown into the water for ripples to be made. Idea is the air or sun, anybody can use it and fill themselves according to their own size and shape of his body . . . Instruction painting makes it possible to explore the invisible, the world beyond the existing concept of space and time. And then sometimes later, the instructions themselves will disappear and be properly forgotten.[71]

"Disappearing" is an important element of both Ono and Shiomi's work. Shiomi's 1964 event score, *Disappearing Music for Face*, which was produced as a film by Ono in 1966[72] deals very directly with disappearing, as the score reads: "Smile - - - - - - - - - stop to smile." For Shiomi, the idea of disappearing in her work is related to her musical training. When she was young, her piano teachers encouraged her to listen very closely to the sounds she was making. Therefore, she listened to the notes as they faded away until they were inaudible. She noticed that not only sound, but other things also gradually fade away, such as smoke, clouds, and most things in the natural world. Even the world itself may one day disappear or change its form.[73] Shiomi's concern with disappearance and diminuendo can therefore also be placed in the context of her desire to reach out and become one with something much larger in the natural world.

Dreams also disappear, and some of Shiomi's work has a heavy focus on dreamlike environments, with actions and objects that do not necessarily seem to

be connected. Her *Star Piece* (1963) positions stars in relation to various, often seemingly unconnected actions:

The biggest star
Look at it while you like

The second biggest star
Obscure it with the smoke of a cigarette

The third biggest star
Shoot it with a gun

The fourth biggest star
Hold a cat in your arms

The fifth biggest star
Look at it through a telescope

The sixth biggest star
When you find it, look at your watch

The seventh biggest star
Reflect it in the water of a glass and drink it

The eighth biggest star
Obscure it with the flame of a candle

The ninth biggest star
Draw a deep breath

The tenth biggest star
Lie down and look at it through a loop of your fingers

The eleventh biggest star
Read a letter sent to you recently

(draw connecting lines as you like).[74]

If one attempted to do this in reality, it would take a great amount of time to decide which of the stars were biggest. Some of the actions are simple to perform, and some would be more difficult. However, they are not particularly related to stars. Shiomi playfully deals with our desire to make connections and see the reasons behind instructions, by writing at the end, "draw connecting lines as you like." We could also interpret this as referring to connecting lines between stars, which are drawn to indicate patterns and constellations. Shiomi's instruction for the performer to draw connecting lines as she likes frees the individual to look at the sky freshly, and to not be restricted by the patterns she habitually sees in the night sky. This takes us beyond the bounds of culture and tradition, to a place where we are able to make our own patterns, and not only identify those that others have previously made. This piece, by allowing the performer's imagination to roam, recognizes diversity of thinking, especially important in a world where travel and international relationships were quickly becoming much easier than they had been previously.

The bizarre actions associated with each star are humorous, especially in the sense that, as Kristine Stiles points out, for Hutcheson, Kant and Schopenhauer, "humor resides in the inappropriate association of things and in incongruity."[75] Stiles comments particularly on Fluxus humor, believing the humor embraced in its

performance to be "of an entirely different order" than either the satire of modernism, or the cynicism of postmodernism. In Fluxus humor, Stiles sees freedom: "Filled with the marvel of a sense of discovery and release, Fluxus humor escorts freedoms: the freedom to play and goof-off, the freedom to value that play as an aesthetic habit . . . the freedom to abandon reason and aesthetics and just be."[76]

Although the play in *Star Piece* is play in the imagination as one thinks of performing the actions, it is nonetheless play. It is somewhat meditative, as one can imagine these actions being repeated in the mind of one or several performers. A loose parallel could be observed between this piece and Alison Knowles' *Identical Lunch* (1969) which began as a "noonday meditation . . . eating the same lunch at the same time at the same place each day."[77] Knowles perhaps described this piece as a meditation as performing ritual actions sometimes frees the mind for a while of cares that may concern it.

As Stiles points out: "doing emphasizes the concrete condition of being. This doing, because it has a temporal dimension, equally calls into question the relationship of being to becoming, in and through time . . . "[78] Not only the concrete condition of a person's existence is emphasized in Shiomi's piece, but by connecting an action to a star, the condition of the star's existence is brought closer to our minds. However, Shiomi asks the performer to decide what size the stars are in relation to one another. At different moments, different stars may appear to be larger or smaller, depending on how we perceive them, and this makes us more aware of how our shifting perspective can affect our perception.

The piece draws us into a strange rhythm, rather like a dream, where ordinary and surreal objects and actions are juxtaposed. The stars could be read as a reference to Shiomi's own dreams, as these often contain images of the sky.[79] As in dream analysis, however, elements of the everyday may also play a role. Musical patterns may be uncovered, and although Shiomi did not focus on a musical framework for this piece except for gradually changing volume, she points out that as a composer, musical structures are in her blood, and it is possible that they could have come out unconsciously.[80] It is as though Shiomi, as a composer, is dreaming of a composition, but instead of notes, finding stars and actions. The increasing sizes of the stars are like a crescendo, and in this way relate to her *Endless Box* (1963) which she describes as a "visual diminuendo."[81] This also corresponds to *Disappearing Music for Face*, which could be seen as a diminuendo of the smile.[82]

A diminuendo is itself interesting, as it emphasizes the process of change.[83] Also, it takes the listener down to the quietest or smallest point, where one is aware of not only significant sounds or objects but also the minutiae of one's surroundings. The senses are heightened to hear the smallest sound, or see the smallest object. One pauses to relax and become aware of the space. In this way, the smallest or quietest point is not the most restricted point, but in fact the most liberating. This piece is reminiscent of John Cage's composition *4'33"* (1952), in which the piano is not played, and the audience is left listening to the environmental sounds around them.

Cage's tutor Henry Cowell has pointed out the relation of crescendo and diminuendo in dynamics to sliding tone in pitch.[84] He connects the sliding tone,

or glissando, to nature, noting that sounds such as "wind playing through trees and grasses, or whistling in the chimney, or the sound or the sea, or thunder, all make use of sliding tones."[85] Thus, a further connection may be made between Shiomi's use of dimuendo and crescendo and nature.

We are reminded of time and pattern throughout *Star Piece*. The instruction to "look at your watch" is almost right in the middle of the piece on the "sixth biggest star." Also, the instructions that deal with looking at the star, firstly "while you like," then "through a telescope" and lastly "through a loop of your fingers" are on the first, fifth and tenth stars, almost giving a framework of fifths under the crescendo of stars. Similarly, we can find a pattern in the instructions that ask us to eliminate or obscure the star in some way, as they come in couplets, on the second and third and seventh and eighth biggest stars. In this way, *Star Piece* is similar to other event piece's of Shiomi's that deal with action and time, demonstrating that for her, events are very often not far removed from musical compositions. For example, *Event for Midnight* (1963) reads:

0:00 one light
0:04 five tones
0:05 smile.[86]

This event brings light, sound and action together in a short period of time to make a controlled and austere piece of great beauty. *Event for Midday in the Sunlight* (1963) deals with action and time in a very controlled and precise manner, asking the performer to open and close his eyes in relation to time that is specified down to the second, and lastly to look at his hands.[87] A conductor or a loud timepiece would most likely be required so that the performer would know when to open eyes that have been closed. For the duration of the piece, the performer focuses on the action of opening and closing the eyes to a specified time, restricting their concentration to their eyelids and time. Duration is important in Shiomi's work, as she regards "a concentrated duration of activity involving the occurrence of sounds and silence" that could be expressed by a visual object just as much as in sound works to be the essence of music.[88]

The difficulty of obedience to the strictures of time can be observed in this piece, as one may long to open the eyes when they are supposed to be closed, or wish to disobey the rules. This discipline could remind one of that required in musical performance, in which physical control is also required. Yoshimoto writes, "The repetition of the eye movement may be compared to playing an instrument; like the quickening of music, the duration of keeping the eyes shut becomes shorter as time goes by."[89] In the last stages of the piece, the discipline is still apparent, as the instruction is to look at the hands rather than anywhere one would like. However, one's focus may be on a distorted picture of the hands, because, as Yoshimoto also notes, the contrasts between darkness and midday brightness affect visual perception.[90] She points out that "By focusing on the eye movement and its effect, this work makes one conscious that the human body is a living organism that functions unconsciously."[91]

Shiomi continued working with disparate actions and elements in her performances and events, and one of these was included in the concert of happenings,

Figure 2. Compound View.

Kūkan kara kankyō e (From Space to the Environment). This event took place on November 14, 1966, at the Sōgetsu Hall. This was organised by the "Enbairamento no Kai" (Environment Association) which was a temporary association of over thirty Japanese arts practitioners and writers.[92] Yoshimoto notes that their aim was to use works of various media to create a chaotic environment.[93]

Shiomi's contribution to this event was her *Compound View No 1* (Figure 2). This was performed with Kuniharu Akiyama, fellow Fluxus artist Ay-O and Katsuhiko Yamaguchi. It was a surreal, dreamlike environment that linked together various unrelated objects and actions. Yoshimoto's description of *Compound View*[94] accords very closely with Shiomi's score, *Around Blue Vitriol*, one of her *Three Bird Events*:[95]

AROUND BLUE VITRIOL

Setting:

At the center of the stage placed one table covered with white cloth and four chairs around it (each ca. 10 feet apart from the table).
On the table placed a transparent vessel filled with water, a bottle of blue vitriol (CuSo4 crystal), a water thermometer and a microphone.
Right above them hung a big stuffed bird from the ceiling.
Four performers sit on the chairs each holding a spot-light in his hand.

Performance:
One of the performers comes to the table, opens the bottle of blue vitriol, pours it into the water and makes it dissolve by stirring with a thermometer. Then read aloud the temperature of the water at the microphone.
– stage light off –
The stuffed bird is set to swing widely in the dark.
Each performer puts his spot-light on, and always pointing it towards the vessel of the blue water, repeats the alternate acts to stand up and sit down in a rather mechanical and strict movement at random periods until the swing of the bird calms down to the motionless point.

> Near this moment one performer turns his light towards the bird to show its movement to the other performers and stage light operator.
> – stage light on –
> Each performer brings his chair to the table, takes out a cigarette, and on which writes either one of the next words: Amsterdam, Tomato sauce, 2 O'clock and Spiral. Then they read them aloud at the microphone one after another and smoke the cigarettes all together.
> When all the words have disappeared into ashes, performers leave the stage.

This Happening-Event in three acts is a strange mixture of scientific inquiry combined with dreamlike elements, and procedure combined with randomness. Freedom of imagination is combined with constriction in the instructions that are set out. In this piece, as in *Star Piece*, one is impressed by the combination of concrete and surreal elements. Yoshimoto has pointed out that the dreamlike effect of the piece led Surrealist poet Shūzō Takiguchi to compare Shiomi's work to Surrealist experimental theater. However, he did not call her work Surrealist.[96] Yoshimoto points out that Shiomi's intention was to stimulate her viewers' imaginations by including disparate elements in her work.[97] This again is empowering, as it encourages audience members not only to be passive viewers of the performance, but also encourages them to allow their own imaginations to come into play. Of course, the use of disparate elements and inspiration from dreams was common in Surrealist circles in the earlier part of the twentieth century. Shiomi stresses that she did not have much knowledge about Surrealism, but mentions that her Group Ongaku colleagues, Kosugi and Tone, who were enthusiastic about it, sometimes talked about the subject.[98]

Shiomi's 1966 *Flash Piece* is also similar to *Around Blue Vitriol*, in that it involves a stuffed bird and flashlights. This reads:

> A performer plays a record player on a dark stage, turning it with a stuffed bird on it, while other performers blow soap bubbles, and another flashes photo flashlights or flashes on stage lights.

As in *Around Blue Vitriol*, the bird and lights are juxtaposed with objects demonstrating transience – in this case the bubbles that will burst shortly after they are blown, and in the case of *Around Blue Vitriol*, the cigarettes with words written on them, which are smoked until they disappear.

It is interesting that in the score for *Around Blue Vitriol*, the final sentence refers to the words written on the cigarettes turning into ashes, rather than the cigarettes themselves disappearing. Through this act of watching the words turn into ashes and become indecipherable, it is as though Shiomi is asserting that the words that we use, write and speak do disappear and transform. Many Fluxus participants have been concerned with what Owen Smith has termed "the end of language as a proscriptive formula that restrictively shapes and dominates our cultural/world view."[99] The *Three Bird Events* all involve words and letters in the performances and Shiomi has said that the use of words in these was in order to create resonances with the sounds and meanings.[100] She has explained that in the juxtaposition of two words that are unrelated a new meaning – or no meaning – may emerge, or there may

be a very slight resonance that hints at a hidden distant relationship. She has related her concern with words here to music, stating that in putting together the images of the various words in *Compound View*, she was searching for a similar kind of a principle to how two notes resonate together with a particular sound color. Also, she felt that in listing unrelated words, she "wanted to make a chain of images that progresses continuously at all times and does not stay fixed," like music that changes as new notes are added to the melody. For Shiomi, words and sounds are "equal media" and she likens the changing images in the words that she uses to the tone of a chord changing.[101]

As mentioned previously, Ono has also been concerned with the idea of disappearing. Her 1955 *Lighting Piece*[102] reads, "Light a match and watch till it goes out." Similarly, her *Smoke Painting* (1961) instructs:

> Light canvas or any finished painting
> with a cigarette at any time for any length of time.
> See the smoke movement.
> The painting ends when the whole
> canvas or painting is gone.[103]

For Ono, burning something can demonstrate that although the physical object disappears, the object in the mind does not. She relates this to a feeling of nervousness about how the physical world can be portrayed as the final reality:

> I think it is possible to see a chair as it is. But when you burn the chair, you suddenly realise that the chair in your mind did not burn or disappear. The world of construction seems to be the most tangible, and therefore final. This made me nervous. I started to wonder if it were really so.[104]

Shiomi's work also asserts that the viewer's own memory, imagination and ability to make connections are of great importance. The idea of burning something such as a match, painting, or cigarette, is a temporal event and one is made aware of a disappearance that is taking place over time.

Shiomi has stated her interest in the "relationships between sound, symbol, light, space, movement and time."[105] These are fundamental elements of human perception and experience, and to explore and challenge the relationships between them is to rethink very basic factors of our everyday existence. Although when she wrote this (1973) Shiomi stated that she was more interested in work "not necessarily requiring big and expensive apparatus," a few years earlier she had produced *Amplified Dream No 1* and *Amplified Dream No* 2,[106] works that utilized technology to explore aspects of perception that interested her. These works also juxtapose disparate elements and create resonances between them. *Amplified Dream No 2* was performed at the *Intermedia Arts Festival* in Tokyo in January 1969 by Shiomi and fellow Group Ongaku and Fluxus colleagues Takehisa Kosugi and Yasunao Tone, who also collaboratively organized the festival which took place at Tokyo's Nikkei Hall. *Amplified Dream No 1* took place the following month at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo as part of the *Cross Talk Intermedia* festival.[107] *Cross Talk Intermedia* was to have involved a collaborative "Group Ongaku" project, as Kuniharu Akiyama,

one of the organizers, had asked for it. However, when it came to deciding on a work, the members involved realised that this would be impossible for them, so Shiomi, Shūkō Mizuno and Kosugi decided to present a set of their own works, with their telephone numbers as the title.[108]

Amplified Dream No 2 involved extracts from Schumann's *Carnival* being played on piano, a Theremin and distortion of sound by a ring modulator, slide projections of the letters, "A.M.P.L.I.F.I.E.D.R." being projected onto the ceiling and dropped down into the walls into the audience, lights scattered around the audience being flickered to the rhythm of Morse code, opera aria music played between two tape players with a two second delay and a performer with a megaphone running around in the aisles, shouting occasionally. *Amplified Dream No 1* was a similarly constructed piece, as it also involved pianos, the letters of amplified dream, Morse code, opera arias and light. Three pianists played on grand pianos the rhythm of the Morse code that corresponded to each letter of "AMPLIFIED DREAM" while a large windmill that Shiomi had designed stood in the middle of the stage, with lights attached to its wings and pole, and turning from the wind of an electric fan.[109]

The way that hidden, complicated and concrete elements intermingled in the piece seems to have fascinated Shiomi. She enjoyed the way in which the surface sound of Morse code, hid a secret message,[110] and also observed that, "in the combining of technology and natural forces, such as manual work and wind, calculated necessity and chance intermingled."[111] As Yoshimoto has pointed out, *Amplified Dream No 1* was inspired by a dream of Shiomi's where non-related elements of life interrelated, and sometimes overlapped and transformed each other.[112] This is not the only piece of Shiomi's that was inspired by a dream; one of her early experiments in painting whilst she was a student in Tokyo was also dream-inspired.[113] That *Amplified Dream No 1* was inspired this way shows us that while complicated, external technology was used in the piece, Shiomi was relying very much on her own instinct in the creation of the composition of it. The piece explores the "relationships between sound, symbol, light, space, movement and time"[114] that Shiomi was interested in at the time.

Many young artists in the sixties wanted to break down notions of preconceived reality. For example, Shiomi's fellow Fluxus artist Ay-O has written that before the creation of his first *Finger Boxes*[115] in the sixties, he was "searching for a work that would be completely new and solely my own, based on my senses and composed of concrete things around me . . . So then I told myself that it was my duty to ascertain how all the materials around me affected my six senses."[116] In Shiomi's search for resonances and principles between often unrelated concrete objects, and the creation of works based on her own dreams, we see that she was seeking something new and satisfactory to herself rather than just accepting the versions of reality she had been taught. Although not necessarily intentional, her pieces, with their focus on experience and fresh interpretations of small things in the environment, challenge a world view where the focus is on commodity and wealth. Shiomi illuminates the value of recognizing change, diversity and the imagination. Ultimately, Shiomi's work directs its participants toward direct experience, playfulness and equality.

Performers are liberated from their everyday routines into an appreciation of the surrounding environment and natural world.

Notes on contributor

Sally Kawamura has recently completed her PhD, *Object into Action: Group Ongaku and Fluxus* at the University of Glasgow. She has presented papers on aspects of post-1945 Japanese Art at international conferences. Her interests lie mainly in Japanese art of the 1960s.

Notes

1. For more on Group Ongaku, please see, for example, Kawamura 2009; Marotti 2007; Yoshimoto 2005, 23, 29, 139, 142–8, 158, 163, 165, 170–3 227nn11–12, 228n23; Shiomi 2007, 2005; and Munroe 1994, 217–20.
2. See Yoshimoto 2009, 143.
3. Shiomi, interview with the author, 23 July 2005; Yoshimoto 2005, 144; Shiomi 2005, 66–7.
4. Yoshimoto 2009, 144; Mieko Shiomi, interview with the author, 23 July 2005. Other actions that were performed included: composer Toshiro Mayazumi spreading paper tapes out over the stage and into audience's seats, Tone using a hammer to smash a grinding bowl and eating the pieces, Kosugi sawing and drilling a wooden board, Ichiyanagi drawing lines on a canvas, and pianist Yūji Takahashi talking nonsensically to a chair. Composer Toru Takemitsu played the piano. Information taken from Yoshimoto 2009, 144 (Yoshimoto's descriptions based on Kuniharu Akiyama's documentation in his review of the event in the *Yomiuri Shimbun,* 8 December 1961), and Shiomi 2005, 72.
5. Yoshimoto 2009, 144.
6. Shiomi, email to the author, 11 May 2009.
7. Yoshimoto 2009, 145.
8. Shiomi 2005, 75.
9. Yoshimoto 2009, 146.
10. For example, in *Automatism* (1960), Group Ongaku moved through the rooms in an apartment, using instruments and everyday objects, deciding spontaneously what to use and how to create sound. This is available on *Music of Group Ongaku* (Group Ongaku 1996).
11. Mieko Shiomi, interview with the author, 23 July 2005.
12. Mieko Shiomi, interview with the author, 23 July 2005.
13. See, for example, Maciunas 1997 [1963], 116.
14. Shiomi, interview with the author, 23 July 2005.
15. Friedman 1990, 49.
16. Yoshimoto 2009, 159 and Yoshimoto and Morita 2005, 90.
17. Yoshimoto 2009, 152–4.
18. Shiomi, interview with the author, 23 July 2005.
19. Higgins 2002, 63.
20. Ibid., 58.
21. Stiles 1993, 93.
22. Higgins 2002, 59.
23. Shiomi, "Memories of George," manuscript, Osaka, June 1993. This extract is printed in Williams and Noel 1997, 127.
24. Ibid.

25. Friedman 1990, 48.
26. Stiles 1993, 77.
27. Shiomi 2007, 58.
28. Maciunas 1981 [1965].
29. Shiomi, in Williams and Noel 1997, 128.
30. Shiomi 2008, 223.
31. Ibid.
32. Friedman 1990, 46.
33. Ibid.
34. Dezeuze 2008, 25.
35. Young 2008, 53.
36. Yoko Ono speaking in Nagano, *Aru Wakamonotachi* (see Nagano, transcribed, translated and annotated by Yoshimoto, 2005), 102.
37. Yoshimoto 2006, 106–7.
38. Lebel 1995, 272.
39. Akiyama 1964, 51.
40. Ibid., 115.
41. Yoshimoto 2006, 114. Yoshimoto refers to Ono's *Flower Event* (*c*. 1962–3).
42. Shiomi, email to the author, 16 December 2007.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. For more on *Spatial Poem,* please see, for example, Shiomi 1976b, 2005, 106–9; Yoshimoto 2009, 155–7, 165–7; Kawamura 2009, ch. 10.
46. Friedman 1990, 48.
47. Shiomi, ''Shi wa Janru wo Koete'' (''Poetry Is More Than a Genre''), unpublished Japanese manuscript for a German translation included in Klaus Peter Denckner, *Visuelle Poesie aus Japan* (*Visual Poetry from Japan*), Liternaturhaus, Hamburg, 1997. Cited in Yoshimoto 2009, 141.
48. Dezeuze 2008, 28.
49. Ibid.
50. Shiomi 2005, 75.
51. Jung 1959, 21–2.
52. Ibid., 20.
53. See Shiomi 2005, 65. Takahashi's objection to improvisation is similar to John Cage's objection to it. Cage contrasted his compositional methods utilizing chance to improvisation, and wrote, ''Improvisation . . . is something that I want to avoid. Most people who improvise slip back into their likes and dislikes and their memory, and . . . they don't arrive at any revelation that they are unaware of'' (S. S. Turner, ''John Cage's Practical Utopias,'' *Musical Times*, 130, 1990, 472, cited in Feisst 2002). However, when Cage began serious experimentation with improvisation in the 1970s, he used objects such as conch shells rather than familiar-sounding instruments. This was in order to remove the possibility of much control over the sound from the performer (see Feisst 2002). This resonates with Group Ongaku's utilization of everyday objects in their improvisation sessions in the late 1950s and early 1960s.
54. Jung 1959, 20–21.
55. See Marotti 2007. Marotti points out that Group Ongaku's first public performance, the previous year, had been in support of the Kuni Chiya Dancers, though Group Ongaku had not been named at that point (23). Kuni Chiya was influenced by the Neue Tanz school of dance (23n22). A niece of Kuni Chiya, and future wife of Nam Jun Paik, Shigeko Kubota, also became involved in Fluxus and flew out to New York with Shiomi in 1964 (Yoshimoto 2009, 170 and 175).
56. Tone, ''Ōotomatizimu toshite no sokkyō ongaku ni tsuite [About Improvisational Music as Automatism],'' in *20 Seiki Buyoū* 5 (1960), p. 16, cited in Marotti 2007, 23.
57. Shiomi, email to the author, 23 December 2008.

58. Yoshimoto 2005, 141. Information from Shiomi, email to Yoshimoto, 9 August 2003.
59. Friedman 1990, 48.
60. Shiomi, email to the author, 16 December 2007.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Shiomi, "Oto wo koeru ongakuteki sounen no kiseki" ("The track of musical thoughts that surpass sound"), in *Gainen Geijutsu* (*Conceptual Art*), special edition of *Geijutsu Kurabu* (*Art Club*) (Tokyo: Film Art Sha, 1974), reference provided courtesy of Mieko Shiomi in ibid.
64. Friedman 1990, 46.
65. Shiomi, interview with the author, 23 July 2005.
66. Yoko Ono, *Shadow Piece,* Free School Playground, London, 1966. See Stiles and Yoshimoto 2000, 168–71.
67. Ibid., 168.
68. Shiomi, interview with the author, 23 July 2005.
69. Shiomi, *Shadow Event no X* (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain: Edition Hundertmark, 1994). For more information see Shiomi, 2005, 239–41.
70. Ono, from *Museum of Modern (F)Art*, December 1971. Isles 1997, 137.
71. Yoko Ono, quoted in "Yoko Ono Instruction Painting," in *Yoko at Indica*, exh. cat. (no page numbering), cited in Alexandra Munroe 2000.
72. Yoshimoto notes that Shiomi is not enthusiastic about this film because it only shows Ono's mouth. Shiomi believes that a smile is not contained only in the mouth but is expressed by other parts of the body too. Shiomi did not authorize the film, or the Fluxus flip-book version that was produced of *Disappearing Music for Face*. (Yoshimoto 2005, 229n51).
73. Shiomi, email to the author, 16 December 2007.
74. Friedman 1990, 47.
75. Stiles 1993, 77.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid., 89. Cited from Alison Knowles, Introduction to Philip Corner, *The Identical Lunch: Philip Corner Performances of a Score by Alison Knowles* (San Francisco: Nova Broadcast Press, 1973), 1.
78. Stiles 1993, 64.
79. Shiomi, interview with the author 23 July 2005.
80. Shiomi, email to the author, 16 December 2007.
81. Shiomi, interview with the author, 23 July 2005; Yoshimoto 2005, 146.
82. Yoshimoto has noted that in *Disappearing Music for Face*, "Shiomi's intention was to visualize a diminuendo of music by human action" (2005, 154).
83. I am grateful to Natasha Lushetich for this idea.
84. Cowell 1969 [1930], 83.
85. Ibid., 20. Cowell also suggests that glissandi may be used to "build . . . abstract music out of . . . sliding pitches – not with the idea of trying to imitate nature, but as a new tonal foundation" (ibid., 20). Shiomi's Group Ongaku colleague Yasunao Tone has composed a piece consisting entirely of glissandi (*Anagram for Strings*, 1962) and Shiomi also incorporated glissandi into a piece called *Action Music Kaiten (Revolve)* at her solo recital at Okayama Cultural Center Hall in March 1962. For more information on Shiomi's piece, see Yoshimoto 2005, 145.
86. Friedman 1990, 47.
87. The score reads:

12:00	Shut your eyes
12:03	Open your eyes
12:03'05"	Shut your eyes
12:04	Open your eyes
12:04'04"	Shut your eyes

12:04'30'' Open your eyes
12:04'33'' Shut your eyes
12:04'50'' Open your eyes
12:04'52'' Shut your eyes
12:05 Open your eyes
12:05'01'' Shut your eyes
12:05'05'' Open your eyes
12:05'06'' Shut your eyes
12:07 Open your eyes and look at your hands (Friedman 1990, 47).

88. Shiomi 1973, 42.
89. Yoshimoto 2005, 148.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
92. Information from Yoshimoto 2005, 160–1. For more information, see Yoshimoto 2008.
93. Yoshimoto 2005, 160.
94. See Yoshimoto 2005, 160. The procedure for ''Compound View No. 1'' is almost identical to the instructions for ''Around Blue Vitriol.''
95. Shiomi 1976a [1966–8]. The other two ''Bird Events'' are ''Blue Bird and Eraser'' and ''Under the Letter 'R'.'' ''Blue Bird and Eraser'' is a game involving two performers sitting on swivel chairs with contact microphones attached to them, whilst pronouncing the words ''Blue Bird'' and ''Eraser'' in questioning and answering intonations to one another and swiveling, sometimes exchanging their seats. ''Under the Letter R'' involves a girl lying on a bed with her wrists tied together, under a large white letter ''R.'' She wears special gloves, from which pigeon feathers protrude from the fingertips. A hen wanders around on the bed. A man beside the bed reads out random numbers, and the girl moves the corresponding finger to the numbers she hears. This causes the letter ''R'' to move slightly. After about two minutes of this, two other performers enter carrying rubber balls, on which are written words which they read, and immediately afterwards fling the ball to the ground whilst the first part of the performance continues.
96. Yoshimoto 2005, 160–1. Information from telephone interview of Shiomi by Yoshimoto, 15 October 2001.
97. Yoshimoto 2005, 161.
98. Shiomi, interview with the author, 23 July 2005.
99. Smith 1996, 189.
100. Shiomi, interview with the author, 20 April 2006.
101. Shiomi 2005, 127.
102. In Ono 2000 [1964].
103. Ibid.
104. ''To The Wesleyan People (who attended the meeting) – A footnote to my lecture of January 13th, 1966,'' ibid.
105. Shiomi 1973, 45.
106. These works were both composed in 1968.
107. For more on these works, please see Shiomi 2005, 130–4; 1973, 44–5; Yoshimoto 2005, 162–5. *Cross Talk Intermedia* was a huge three-day festival focussing on mixed media and technology in art. See Yoshimoto 2005, 163–5, for more information on *Cross Talk* and Shiomi's contribution to it.
108. Shiomi 2005, 132–3.
109. Ibid., 133.
110. Ibid., 134.
111. Ibid.
112. Yoshimoto 2005, 164–5.
113. This picture was an image of a horizon with a triangular red mountain, and a woman's torso painted in behind it. Shiomi says that the reason she painted it was because of a

dream, and mentioned that she dreams of the sky a lot. Shiomi, interview with the author, 23 July 2005.

114. Shiomi 1973, 45.
115. *Finger Boxes* are square boxes with a hole in the top. The viewer inserts a finger to feel the unknown contents. For a picture, see, for example, Ay-0 2006, 45.
116. Ay-O 1986–8, 166.

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