

Miki Yui

Miki Yui's work deals with the memory of lived events, focusing in particular on images and sounds it reveals the trace, or wake, that these leave behind as they fade, after having appeared (in the former case) or been produced (in the latter). Yui records everywhere sounds from real, 'everyday' life, drawing them also, but not exclusively, from nature. She then processes them electronically, turning them into 'other' sounds, often difficultly recognizable – as when we sometimes are half-asleep and we happen not to recognize certain regular sounds, which we don't exactly know how to place in space and which, though close to us, seem to come from afar, or vice versa – using them to create musical compositions, or visual art installations.

Presented in the Summer of 2002 on her debut exhibition at the Stadtgalerie in Saarbrücken, *Resonanzen*, “ever” embodies to a certain extent her manifesto: an empty space, except for a chair placed in front of a window left ajar, and sounds, scattered, faint, which are always repeated differently, through a process – activated by means of especially created software – that goes towards the infinite (for ever). Metaphor, or re-creation, of the mnemonic methods of the mind, the process consists in the continuous transformation of fragments of sound, which are constantly, though slightly, changed (and that's just what happens with memories).

Whereas Julius, an artist apparently very close to her, shows us something that happens, that is happening in front of us, Yui, on the other hand, is more interested in showing us the signs, the traces of something – even pertaining to the realm of imagination or thought, or to the area of feelings and emotions – that has already taken place.

Her installations, invariably arranged on a horizontal plane, frequently on the floor itself, are fragile, delicate things, like thoughts, memories or dreams as they take labile shape in the mind. For her first solo exhibition, *traccia / trace*, in 2004 in Turin (at e/static), Miki Yui presents a series of objects and materials that belong to her past, connected to something that happened to her, something nice, positive, which seems to have been chosen by the artist to help her (as a dear friend or a trustworthy person may do) during the delicate moment of her veritable debut, after the one in the group exhibition in Saarbrücken, two years before. On the floor, arranged to form some sort of rather undone diagonal, crossing the room from one corner to the other, there are fragments of the seashells she had collected on a beach in Holland, where she often loves to go in her spare time. There are also cinders from fires lit on the beach, together with the pieces of a shattered mug, broken one morning at breakfast time. A mug which is ideally pieced together again through the realization of her work, which displays all those pieces combined with faint sounds, electronically processed to recreate the ones actually heard back then, and mixed with some cinders and a small broken stick. The last two elements belong to different moments in her life, but mingle with the others, forming a just apparently incongruous group (as is often the case with imagination and dreams*).

Like two valves that in closing form a shell, Miki Yui's shows often take place in two complementary parts, sometimes in different spaces (*atem* and *innerest* at the Singhur in Berlin, in 2006) other times in the same space (*still life – under your feet* at the Kunstverein Lippstadt, that same year): contrasting elements, foremost of all light and dark, open and closed, visible and invisible, dilation and contraction (in the 2003 drawing “composition 1”, exhibited as part of *traccia / trace*).

Yui's work (as the video she did in 2007, “sweeping - innerest”, testifies) also springs from an intuition similar to that of Joseph Beuys' 1972 work, “Ausfegen”: the residue of an event, or a number of successive events that in its piling up outlives the event itself, represents by its form, which is the result of its passage from a formless state (the little mound of dust and dirt gathered on the floor of the Singhur like the pile of waste materials swept up and collected by Beuys after a political demonstration), something that has taken place, something that has been and is no longer, leaving in its wake only this small *trace*. What might be ashes or dust or sounds recorded and then modified, remade; and in a similar manner the photos (of Yui's kitchen-garden or of one of her own installations) that she presented in the form of ink-jet prints for her first show in Turin, after computer-processing them to the point where they were almost completely unrecognizable, still indissolubly linked to the things they represented.

All these works stem from one event, an experience – be it a manifest or an inner one – something that was and isn't anymore, or isn't as it was, whilst only its traces remain, only clues to that which – disappeared in its visible and perceivable form – survives in an uncertain, remote non-form. As her drawings, traced on very long rolls of paper, each one completed in the course

of weeks, or months: a trace of those days is imprinted on them, the very trace that those days left through her, just as a snail may leave along its way (it's usually much easier to discover its long-lasting, iridescent trail, than to catch it as it's leaving its slime behind). Undoubtedly, the mainspring of Yui's research is her own personal experience, an aspect equally evident in her drawings: what appears is put there precisely to evoke what has been and is no more, to visibly and audibly testify to the absence of something one cannot (or can no longer) see, hear or touch. But putting a mug together again (though just ideally) or making a reference to the fire that produced those cinders, isn't as important to Miki as evoking, by means of a barely whispered allusion, the feelings that she experienced back then when she was holding those fragments in her hands, or while she was sitting close to that fire, while it was still burning. This aspect of her work leads us to define Miki Yui as an artist of feelings and inwardness, and her art as essentially poetic. Her language makes use of a limited number of elements, chosen for their meaningfulness and used in a natural manner, just as a painter might do with his colours: cinders, seashells, sticks, fragments of broken mirrors, small sounds coming from contact microphones/speakers in shiny brass, and everything that is evident and distinct, like light and darkness, silence and its opposite. These elements make up as many tools, which outline an immaterial and protected area, but they are also, once read and interpreted, the keys that Miki Yui leaves us to enter that very area.

Carlo Fossati, 2007/2009 (translated by Graeme Thomson and Valentina Maffucci)

*: the title of the Saarbrücken work, "ever", was written with the letters separated from each other, E V E R, so as to suggest one reads them backwards, R E V E ('dream' in French)

** : Joseph Beuys, "Ausfeigen", 1972, Galerie René Block. The action took place on 1st May of the same year, in Karl-Marx-Platz in Berlin.