



AKIO SUZUKI  
SPACE IN THE SUN, 1988

30 January — 5 March

# AKIO SUZUKI

Sense Of Ekō

Retrospective Exhibition

Curated by Lawrence English

PRESENTED BY

**ASIA TOPA** THE SUBSTATION 

SUPPORTED BY



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PHOTOGRAPHER: NANA E SUZUKI

## A NOTE FROM DAVID TOOP

My first performance with Akio Suzuki was in 2003, a long time after hearing of his work, but in 2002 I had seen him present a solo concert at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, where something extraordinary took place. Everything he did that evening was what you might call the essence of simplicity, but that makes it sound both more and less mysterious than it actually was. He played percussive stones, the Analapos, a stone flute, all of them holding our attention through a quality of tone and decisive gesture. Afterwards, a SOAS professor insisted that there must be more to it. The stone flute must be hollow, the Analapos must be battery powered. He refused to believe what his ears and eyes were telling him, that in simplicity lies an infinitude of possibility. What I have witnessed since then is a further reduction. Last year, for example, I played with Akio twice and saw him working for long periods of time with a cardboard box, bowing it, scraping, extracting every sound imaginable through a mix of patience and fascination with the material.

A key to his practice is clarity of thought-in-action, derived from clear concepts: throwing and following, echo, listening mind. One of his recent exhibitions was called An Encouragement of Dawdling. 'Dawdle' is a word that has fallen out of regular use, perhaps because the idea of dawdling – to waste time, to move in a slow, undirected manner – is anathema to the foundations of 21st century purpose. Here is another example of clear thinking, to take an intriguing old word and give it resonance for the present, at the same time to encapsulate a quiet practice: to dwell on something ordinary, feel it emerge into life from what was previously unremarkable.



PHOTOGRAPHER: BRIAN WHAT

## ECHOES RETURNED

Sound is an elusive companion. Just as we come to know it and perhaps even to understand it, it pulls away from us, slipping from the material world into the subjective imaginarium of memory. It's in these moments of slippage between searching and knowing that Akio Suzuki has situated his life's work.

At 79, Suzuki's practices place him at the epicentre of what has come to be recognised as sound art. His interests in listening, vibration, site specificity, transmission and reception have come to form the thematic arcs that orbit outward from broader sonic art practices into the discourses of sound studies and more broadly sounds' readings in contemporary art. Across the final quarter of the 20th century and into this millennia, his installations and performance works presented across Asia, Europe and North America have been a point of pollination, helping to germinate a generation of sound artists who have encountered, absorbed and responded to his gentle provocations.

2020 is a milestone for Akio Suzuki. It informally marks the 60th year of his inquiries into sound. It was in the later part of 1960 he began to forge the interests that would accumulate into his first substantive sound exploration, the 'Self-Study Events'. This program of actions (which Suzuki often conducted in private) were ultimately a personal interrogation - some might even call it training.

Through heterogeneous experiments concerned with the qualities of sound's behaviour in space, Akio Suzuki began the process of devising terms of engagement for how he might define his practices. He summarised this approach with the phrase

'throwing and following' - an action, and the desire to trace and receive the echo of that action. It took two decades for Suzuki to publish his first recording, *Analapos*, but since that time his presentations including exhibitions, performances and publications have been consistent, and consistently curious.

*Sense Of Ekō* collates Suzuki's divergent performative, sculptural and conceptual artworks, and presents them alongside documentation from his archive. Drawing on his principal interest in echo, the exhibition reflects the space between the pillars of his practice, one work bouncing against another to create a conceptual meshing that typifies his approaches, grounded in sound, time and spatiality.

Several of the works included in *Sense Of Ekō*, including *sui hei shi ko* (*Lateral Thinking Machine*), have never been exhibited outside of Japan. *Space In The Sun*, his grandest and perhaps career defining project is also presented. The piece, a land artwork installed in the middle of a mountain, was completed in 1988. The exhibition includes artefacts from the now destroyed artwork, on display for the first time.

In conjunction with the exhibition, Akio Suzuki has created "o to da te" in Newport/ Melbourne, a sound-walk devised in the locality surrounding *The Substation*. He invites people to experience this work and the "o to da te" map can be found in Gallery Five, alongside other documentation and artefacts from this ongoing project.

Lawrence English, Curator

## LIST OF WORKS

### GALLERY 1

- A : ha na (1997)  
B : fu da te (1973-74)  
C : Notes For Self-Study Event (1963 ~ ongoing)
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### GALLERY 2

- D : analapos - Type-A (1970)  
E : analapos - Type-A (1976)  
F : de koolmess (1975)  
G : ku gi u chi (2015)  
H : sui hei shi ko (1978)  
I : Cardboard and Cellophane Tape (1978)  
J : Conceptual sound work (1978 ~ ongoing)  
K : Performance Book (1975)  
L : Contemporary Artists in Japan : Akio Suzuki (1983)  
M : Performance documents (1978 ~ present)
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### GALLERY 3

- N : [Before/After] Space In The Sun, Sketch (2020)  
O : Space In The Sun, Diary (1988)  
P : Block Maker (1987)  
Q : Untitled Prints (1988)  
R : Artist Book (1993)  
S : Autumn Equinox, 23 September (1988)  
T : Space In The Sun, sun dried brick (1988)  
U : Space In The Sun Video Documentation (1988)  
V : Untitled Print (1987)
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### GALLERY 4

- W : na mi (1997)
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### GALLERY 5

- X : "o to da te", rubber stencil (2014)  
Y : "o to da te", concrete plate (2017)  
Z : "o to da te" Wakayama (2006)
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