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Mini-FM: Performing Microscopic Distance (An E-Mail Interview with Tetsuo Kogawa)

Tetsuo Kogawa with Annmarie Chandler and Norie Neumark

Tetsuo Kogawa introduced free radio to Japan in the early 1980s and helped found many microradio stations (including Radio Polybucket and Radio Home Run) that were part of the "mini-FM" boom in Japan. Mini-FM utilizes micropowered transmitters to create a micro broadcasting and communication context, acting as an alternative to the mass-media, large radio stations and global communications.

Question: You've written a number of articles in English on mini-FM (e.g., in *Radio Rethink* and on the Web <http://anarchy.translocal.jp/non-japanese/index.html>) and more in Japanese that have not yet been translated. We're very interested in the mini-FM phenomenon for a number of reasons, including the relationship between art and activism, performance and play, professionalism and "amateurism," distance, communication, networks, and social transformation.

Our first question has to do with the Japanese context for the mini-FM movement, including the post–World War II historical background. Can you discuss the specificities that helped shape the development of mini-FM? For instance, can you talk about government-controlled media in Japan after World War II, in relation, say, to concepts and habits of individualism, nationalism, citizenship, and foreign influence? Can you also address how Japanese youth culture helped shape the development of mini-FM?

Tetsuo: The mini-FM movement was encouraged by a number of Japanese social and cultural factors. As soon as the Allied Forces occupied Japan on August 15, 1945, the CIE (Civil Office of Information and Education), part of the GHQ (General Headquarters), brought all the Japanese mass media under control. The short period of transition just after the war paradoxically created a radical consciousness of freedom from the old system and customs. Ironically enough it was particularly via radio, at least at first, that they tried to educate the Japanese into freedom of speech—that is, in the Western modernist sense of democratic, political and religious "freedom." But even those who were against the U.S. politics did not reject their lifestyle. In 1951 NHK (Nippon Hoso Kyokai–Japan Broadcasting Corporation) started television broadcasting. American pro wrestling fascinated the audience. Electric washing machines, refrigerators, electric vacuum cleaners, Coca-Cola, Kleenex, and blue jeans became widely popular. To say nothing of American movies and pop music.

Several other long-term changes within the mass-media industry structures, the technological environment and social consciousness also prepared the ground for the mini-FM movement. For me individually, there was both my personal intentions and dreams to promote free radio that could be independently controlled by nonprofessional ordinary citizens, as well as the fact that as a college teacher, I had felt a strong need for a medium to bridge the isolated communications context of my seminar students. By this I mean that after the end of the student movements in the late sixties and early seventies, feelings and ideas about sharing with each other and political and cultural collaborations were rapidly declining among students.

The student movements in the late sixties had opposed authoritarianism, first in the schools and then in government and world powers. Influenced largely by the Cultural Revolution in China, and mixed with the impacts of various movements such as the American counterculture, underground theater, French *nouvelle vague* cinema and the Fluxus performances and happenings, the students started their rebellion outside existing parties and political organizations. The New Left student movements had encouraged new types of cultures of solidarity and collaborations among young people, including both those who were activists and those who were apolitical.

Sometimes national solidarity seemed viable but, as the pressure and repression by the police became stronger, separation between groups developed, with struggles over policy and conflicts between the factions. More hard-line or extreme Marxist and Leninist ideologies escalated and some of the groups started to arm. There were executions of the members of Rengo-Sekigun (the Allied Red Army) in the deep mountain area and then heavy gunfights with the police in 1971. These incidents changed the mood drastically and destroyed the dream of a peaceful "revolution." Especially among students who believed in change, the shock was very strong. In this sense, the system used the incidents very cleverly to suppress antiestablishment trends. The mood of radical change quickly disappeared. Distrust among students grew too.

Social-cultural institutions, such as broadcasters and schools, were unable to respond to this situation. The content of radio and television was still fifties-U.S. style and was unable to fulfill the needs of listeners who wanted more diverse programming. I think that Japanese broadcasting was still strongly controlled by the state government and therefore the number of radio/television stations was fewer in comparison to other advanced industrial countries. In the late 1970s there were only two national FM stations. There were local FM stations but their programs were mostly franchised from the national broadcasters.

This was very different from Australia, U.S., Canada and Europe where hundreds of local and community radio stations provided diverse programming on the FM dial. It was quite natural that a feeling of isolation became strong while the mindless enthusiasm for spending money and massive purchasing was escalating. At the same time, the postindustrial or service-oriented era was starting. Commodities were becoming more and more personal, rather than group/family-oriented.

Although Japanese culture was labeled and characterized as having an uncritical *banzai*-collectivity, the Sony Walkman (which appeared on the Japanese market in 1979) allowed people to individualize technologically even without their being explicitly conscious of it:

> The pre-war Emperor System replaced the spontaneous, regional and diverse collectivity with a highly artificial homogenous collectivity, what I called "*banzai* collectivity." *Banzai* is a special shout and hand gesture of a person or group who blesses the authority (the State, the Emperor, the employer). When a group shouts "*banzai*" with one voice, their leader shouts it first, and the others follow. *Banzai* collectivity is not spontaneous but manipulated as a cult. This manipulated collectivity was especially organized after the middle of the Meiji era, around 1890, by means of total integration of the educational system, the military system and family life into the Emperor System. Haruni Befu, Yoshio Sugimotto, Ross Mouer and others revealed that such stereotypes of the Japanese as workaholics or "devoting the self to the group" are not spontaneous social patterns but political phenomena, which are largely imposed from above by the authority.[1]

The rapid spread of personal car ownership also changed the homogenous group-oriented tendencies into a kind of individualism. The gradually escalating economy changed the housing situation, too. As the large family disappeared and the percentage of women workers grew, the nuclear family became popular. The number of one-child families was also increasing. This further intensified Japanese individualism. I once named such a peculiar individualism "electronic individualism." Later on, this notion had a popular term, *otaku,* and it spread outside the country.

A commentator on youth popular culture, Akio Nakamori, recognized a new type of youth emerging, where they called each other "*otaku*" instead of "you." They were possessed by a mania for comics, movies, etc. Nakamori started a column, "A Study of '*Otaku*,'" in 1983 in his magazine *Tokyo Otona Club*. Later on, mass-circulated newspapers and television adopted this term. This was the period when personal computers started to become popular and the means for virtual communication rather than face-to-face was becoming interesting and distance cultures began. Movies like *Being There* (1979), *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Videodrome* (1983) were favorites amongst the *otaku*.

This term *otaku* became popular in the English vernacular of popular culture in nineties magazines such as *Wired* where it was used synonymously for *nerd*, emphasizing a monomaniacal interest in computers, TV games, animations, and collecting gadgets. *Otaku* has other meanings, however. *Otaku* in Japanese originally meant "your house." But it could also be understood as a personal pronoun meaning "you" as well. The difference between the common understanding of "you" and *otaku* is that *otaku* has a connotation of slight distance.

Question: Can you talk further about how this *otaku* mentality and the gloomy political situation played a role in your developing interest in electronic art and radio?

Tetsuo: I started experiments using electronic devices in my seminars in April 1980 just after I came back from New York. From the mid-1970s to March 1980 I spent many years in New York as an ACLS (American Council of Learned Societies) fellow to the Department of Sociology at New York University. Maybe this was my idiosyncratic memory of that feverish era and my experience in New York where people of different backgrounds and languages talked, both in a friendly way and aggressively, but my seminar classroom felt too quiet. Although people were kind and wanted to talk to each other, they hesitated to talk directly because they were too reserved ("shy") and sensitive about cutting in on others. This behavior is not abnormal but is actually a part of Japanese culture that I call the "culture of distance."

As far as I was concerned, I had to solve the communication problems of my students; otherwise it was difficult to proceed with discussions in my seminars. This was my challenge to what I had in mind about communication, democracy and medium. At that time, I had already started to experiment with free radio in my own way, strategically utilizing very weak airwaves to

transmit signals. The first system was a remodeled wireless microphone with an adequate antenna added. It was already being used as a popular toy by some children and young people for playing "broadcaster." However, few people considered seriously using such a thing as a working transmitter for FM broadcasting. It wasn't long before I brought the system to my classroom.

After thinking hard about my students' reticence, I brought in a portable tape recorder and used it in my seminar. Each of the students spoke a few words or sentences onto it and passed it to the others. Rather than experiencing the difficulty of person-to-person communication, they could talk to the machine. When everybody finished talking, I replayed the tape. What I did was a kind of reverse of a William S. Burroughs' "cut-up" using the tape recorder instead of paper. When the tape was replayed, they found in otherwise random utterances an unexpected continuity and context that they had not intended but had unconsciously created. It was an expression of an unconscious (unwilled) collective work happening beneath our communication, which made sense to them through Merleau-Ponty's concept of "entrelacs." It also interested them as an area of performance art. This created a virtual and temporal consensus for us to continue further talks and progress to a further level.

Question: This interweaving of philosophical concerns, pedagogical issues, and engagement with electronic devices and art seems to be very important to your work as an artist and teacher. Do you want to add anything further?

Tetsuo: As a person who studied philosophy and was later inspired by the New Left movements, I did not want to "teach" my students. How could I teach? Communication problems are always interrelated. No one-sided solution is possible. I had to start from the beginning. But my early experience helped me to do so. I have to tell you a bit of a long story before going on about radio and education. I grew up as an only child and was accustomed to being alone. During my childhood in Japan (in the forties), one-child families were rare. I had no problem with person-to-person communications in small groups, but to join a group I had to intentionally change myself. Unlike today, rules and customs of homogeneous collectivity ("*banzai*-collectivity") were very strong. It may have been as a response to this situation that I became interested in amateur radio in my early junior high school period. It is difficult to describe how fascinating to me my first success with contact on the air felt. You may recall the beginning scenes of Robert Zemeckis's movie

Contact where young Ellie (Jodie Foster playing the grown-up Ellie) has her first experience of amateur radio communication. However, I soon had to give up this emancipating recreation due to impending preparations for entrance examinations to senior high school and college.

In my late teens, existentialism was the philosophy that justified my "loner" attitude. In Japan, existentialism appealed to intellectuals after the end of the forties and the influence continued until the sixties (up to the explosion of the New Left movement after 1968). Existentialism theoretically refuted collectivism and justified those who were isolated and independent as more "authentic" in their existence. These ideas triggered my decision to enter the Department of Philosophy to study phenomenology. One of the hottest topics in philosophy at the time was solipsism versus collectivism. Every intellectual who was captivated by existentialism had to confront the theoretical difficulty of solipsism. How can 'I' as an isolated existence find a window to the outside and communicate to other 'I's? It was lucky that I studied phenomenology, which relates not only to existentialism but also to more social theories. The late sixties was the period of the "renaissance of phenomenology," where new approaches to Edmund Husserl and advanced phenomenological studies in cultural anthropology and sociology appeared. Merleau-Ponty convincingly overcame the existentialist solipsism by reconsidering the 'I' and the body as not separated; for him 'I' am by nature embodied. 'I' and the other don't meet as essentially separated beings. They are "intertwined," "coexisting," "cofunctioning," in "communion." His notions of "chiasm" and "entrelacs" condense these ideas.[2]

Using Merleau-Ponty to break through my students' nihilism and isolation, as I talked about above, was successful, but I was still working as an "ordinary" schoolteacher, using books. Meanwhile I had also become more involved in the arts and in cultural activism and was looking for a new way of teaching, as a performance artist—as I came to call myself. My New York experience had inspired and nourished me a lot. At the same time, the students' attitudes had changed too. They read less and less. The printed medium wasn't working as an interpersonal communication space. Video, film and graphics interested them instead. That's why I started to use the tape recorder, 8 mm camera and the videotape recorder for communication (rather than as a documenting device). The film of an 8 mm camera runs for three minutes. My students shared this 180 seconds among the group (ten or so) and shot what each person wanted to express for the shared seconds (fifteen or so) in the classroom. The following week (film developing required a week) we watched the full film. We were fascinated by the unexpected plot or context or coherence. At worst, it could be considered as an "incomplete" surrealist artwork. Discussing the films, I would bring up Merleau-Ponty and other related theories such as structuralist semiotics and I even circulated relevant printed texts. I found that after such a workshop they were able to read and the print medium interested them again. My workshops using a tape recorder had the same objective. 8 mm film provides an interval while the film is in the lab being developed; during this time the students become a film audience rather than the makers. The tape recorder can replay quickly and is easy to use in intensive segments. First each student talked or created sounds for sixty seconds (record → pause → pass the machine on → record → pause . . .) and then at the end they listened to the ten- to fifteen-minute tape. In the following sessions the talking was reduced to thirty, fifteen, seconds. Over time, they found themselves spontaneously talking not only in monologue but also dialogue. In the end they forgot to use the tape recorder and just began talking to each other. Do you think this is a trick by a machine? Not in my opinion. The medium always has this function of neither just documenting nor simply carrying information but of "intertwining" people and creating interpersonal space. What I would call a "weaving" medium.

Question: We are very interested in the performance side of mini-FM: Could you to talk more about it? Can you discuss whether there was any tension (difficult and/or productive) between performance art and communication goals in mini-FM—an art/activism tension? Also, did groups address each other and the audience as "*otaku,*" and/or were there other direct ways in which the culture of the youth movement shaped the practice of mini-FM?

Tetsuo: The radio movement using low-power transmitters started in 1981 and then boomed in 1983 when many newspapers and magazines and even television stations reported it. The term *Mini-FM* had become popular since, I think, an article in *Asahi* newspaper used this term on May 11, 1983. Before that we used *free radio;* others used *independent radio* or *home-made radio*—there was no single terminology.

I mentioned that the Japanese youth culture of the 80s had a kind of *otaku* culture of distance where people wanted some kind of distance between each other in relation to communication, relationships and behavior. Mini-FM

was an appropriate medium for this culture because it kept such a distance and at the same time enabled them to feel at home when they communicated with others. In my observation, however, those who started mini-FM stations after 1981 had a mixed sensibility of both getting together and of *otaku,* or distance, in a sense. Authentic *otaku* communities were, by the way, actually passive and did not want to organize anything by themselves.

The seminar workshop I ran did not directly lead to mini-FM. Mini-FM had a different motivation—not to do with either education or making people feel at ease. As soon as I came back from New York in April 1980, a couple of my friends and I started to discuss how to start a free-radio movement, such as in Italy where free radio had been and still is flourishing. We were serious about opening an alternative radio station associated with community interests. The main aim was to use the radio medium as a means to deliver information and messages. This is quite different from what I later theorized for mini-FM as a form of cultural catalyst and performance art. At that point, though, it was just ordinary radio in micro size. Micro, because it had very-low-power broadcast, needed no license, and was able to use the massive free space on the FM dial (which was there unused because of the inflexible policy of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication). It was possible to link every microunit to each other. I have been thinking of a similar idea for today's Wi-Fi hot spots although in analog radio at that time it was very difficult to link a number of transmitters with a consistent sound quality. But the idea was fascinating and we believed in organizing a large-scale model of mini-FM networks to cover a large area.

It was in this period that I brought a set of micro transmitters into my classroom and let my seminar students use it. They were quickly fascinated and some of them started their own station, Radio Polybucket, on the campus. Using this as an example I wrote articles for mass-circulated cultural journals. News about free radio in Europe was also appearing in the major newspapers. People were becoming interested in "new media." Low-cost electronic toys like wireless microphones were also readily available. Within a year, mini-FM exploded way beyond my expectations and even major radio/television stations were interested in it. I learned that even big companies, which had been irritated by the government's inflexible policy on broadcasting, now expected that they could easily open their own radio station using mini-FM. After the end of 1982 many mini-FM stations were established in Tokyo and other big cities. Radio Polybucket was also developed under the

new name of Radio Home Run, which was recognized as the earliest mini-FM station in Japan.

Question: Can you say more about Radio Polybucket and Radio Home Run?

Tetsuo: Radio Polybucket was opened in 1982. The name derived from the plastic (polyethylene) bucket, which is a popular Japanese garbage can. The students imagined this as signifying something hodgepodge and something minor/marginal/negligible. It was also influenced by Guattari's *La revolution moleculaire* and an implicit criticism against "big is beautiful" careerism.

When they graduated, the students started to develop their radio activities at their new station Radio Home Run, located in Shimokitazawa, the most bohemian area in Tokyo. The name is a baseball term but its connotation was to "cross distant borders," because they wished to cross the borders of every obstacle (not only the airwave regulations but also sociocultural difficulties). The station finished in 1996 because the members became too busy with their "main" occupations and some of them moved far away from Tokyo. Soon afterwards we started Net.RadioHomeRun, an Internet radio, and tried to reorganize the members who were separated in different locations in Japan. It still operates every month but the excitement and enthusiasm is over.

Radio Home Run had an almost anarchic policy where nobody controlled it and anyone visiting the station could become a member. As the station used a room of one of the members' apartment, nobody had to pay except for the cost of making the programs. Depending on who took care of the program, the content and way of running it differed. Some of the programs were similar to regular radio but most of them used radio as a catalyst for talking, playing and getting together. The interesting thing was that as the atmosphere livened up during the program, listeners couldn't help coming over to our place. The location was very convenient and in our service area (one-kilometer radius) there were a lot of cafes, bars, and restaurants where young people gathered with their portable radios or Walkmans with FM radio functions. Some people visited, first hesitantly, and then within a week started their own program. Some audience enthusiasts parked their cars nearby to listen. This radio was just like a theater or a club where the audience themselves approached it instead of staying at distance. The whole activity was so diverse that it is difficult to summarize what they did (figure 8.1). While homeless

Figure 8.1 Radio Home Run holds a special broadcast in the countryside, 1984. Photo: Toshiyuki Maeda.

people came along, we were also visited by famous people such as Félix Guattari, Ivan Illich, DeeDee Halleck, and Hank Bull (figures 8.2 and 8.3).

There are many Japanese reviews of Radio Home Run (some in English)—in newspapers, journals and on radio and television. Toshiyuki Maeda, one of the founding members, who is now a professional photographer, has thousands of pictures of what happened at this station. There are sound/video documents too. You can see some of them at my Web site <http://anarchy.k2.tku.ac.jp/radio/homerun/histryrhr/>.

Question: Can you say a bit more about the response to mini-FM Outside Japan?

Tetsuo: In the eighties there were a number of people outside Japan who really appreciated mini-FM: DeeDee Halleck, Félix Guattari, Ivan Illich and Hank Bull. DeeDee had just started Paper Tiger Television, the first public-access television in New York City, and was interested in mini-FM's free networking and its positive "abusing" of the regulation. Félix Guattari found in mini-FM a kind of "micro revolution." Ivan Illich praised mini-FM's creative use of low-tech and grassroots character. Their evaluations were different but what they shared is that they considered mini-FM to be a medium.

Figure 8.2 Félix Guattari at Radio Home Run, 1985. Photo: Toshiyuki Maeda.

Figure 8.3 Ivan Illich at Radio Home Run, 1986. Photo: Toshiyuki Maeda.

Hank Bull was a bit different. He was more interested in mini-FM as art. He was one of the pioneers of telecommunication art using telephone, fax, and videophone. Therefore he was interested more in the "noncommunicating" function of mini-FM and associated it with "radio art." In the meantime, radio art had become popular and the first international conference of radio art was held in Dublin in 1990.

The understanding of mini-FM has changed since then. With the earlier "immature" Internet, people were accustomed to a "low" quality of technology and this even produced some artistic aspects of mini-FM. Club culture also supported mini-FM as an art form. In 1993 in the U.S., the microradio movement arose. The leading person was Stephen Dunifer in Berkeley, California. I first met him in 1992 when Jesse Drew of Paper Tiger West organized a radio party for me. I held a workshop to build a one-watt FM transmitter and then we instantly opened a radio station. A lot of activists joined the discussion. Jesse wrote,

> The first evening's program ranged from excited talk about the possibilities of pirate radio to tapes of music by local groups to a live clarinet performance by an 11-year-old. As one activist observed, the one-half- to one-mile radius the transmitter covers is about the size of a voting precinct. Neighborhood groups could use these stations to discuss political issues and report on local events not covered by Bay Area and national news shows.[3]

Stephen had been involved in pirate radio but he underestimated such a small power as one watt. It was amazing that in a year or so he started an activity to let people know about a mail order DIY [do-it-yourself] kit to build a transmitter. Meanwhile, his own pirate radio station, Free Radio Berkeley, was fined $20,000 by the FCC [Federal Communications Commission]. This triggered a lot of interest as well as protest by activists who were interested in alternative media and who had been disgusted with the controlled mass media under the "pool system" during the Gulf War. Since 1993 the microradio movement grew in the US. Microradio was not the same as mini-FM because its size, "micro," was larger than "mini." But it is very interesting that in the circumstance where too many radio stations existed and one could own one's own station (if one had the money) people became interested in relatively smaller size of communication.

Question: Getting back to your performance art work with mini-FM and what you write about it, this opens up different ways of thinking about communication and art. Can you talk more about this?

Tetsuo: Being deeply involved in the mini-FM movement, one day I noticed that most of the stations were less aware of the audience but more interested in the sender themselves: They were absorbed in what they were doing on the spot. If they had become anxious about the size of the audience, they would have given up very quickly. They found the audience too small and sometimes nonexistent. But the station worked. It seemed to me that mini-FM was "radio without an audience" (figure 8.4). Later I found the convincing explanation of this phenomenon in Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela's criticism of "the metaphor of the tube for communication." They argued that "communication takes place each time there is behavioral coordination in a realm of structural coupling. The phenomenon of communication depends not on what is transmitted, but on what happens to the person who receives it. And this is a very different matter from 'transmitting information.'"[4]

In 1984, there was a monumental event, the Hinoemata Performance Festival, where over fifty performance artists and art critics got together in a mountain venue. This allowed artists from different areas and genres to collaborate with each other and then gave them the chance to show their work in galleries, museums, theaters and public spaces. Performance art suddenly revived after a twenty-year vacuum (from the end of the fifties to the early sixties performance art had been active in Japan only through external movements such as Fluxus). Since I had been already involved in writing about performance art, I was naturally engaged in this trend and even started to show my own performance pieces which used electronics. My career as a performance artist started at this moment. While I was involved in the message-oriented mini-FM movement, I started to experiment with what I had theoretically rethought about mini-FM.

I think, at the time, there were very few who were convinced about the new artistic or even "therapeutic" or social possibilities for mini-FM. A lot of potential did exist, however, for seeing it as more than just a "means of communication." In order to try to deconstruct the conventional function of radio, I tried a sound installation using micro-FM transmitters and radio receivers in a garden, a collaboration with dance performers carrying

Figure 8.4 Radio Home Run on motorcycle, 1984. Photo: Toshiyuki Maeda.

transmitters to create fade-in/-out sounds on the receivers from their moves. There was also a kind of concert where the audience was in a house with radio sets on the floor and I walked around the house with a transmitter talking and playing tape sounds and so forth. Transmitting at the same frequency by a couple of transmitters was interesting, too. Later I named it "palimpsest art." The technique of "palimpsest" derived from Paolo Hutter of Radio Popolare in Milan in the seventies, which mixed various live sound sources during a program. Even a person who just happened to call in could instantly join the live mix. I tried this method through airwaves jamming. "Radio party," as I called it, is another one of the basic forms of mini-FM as performance art. This usually starts in my workshop, building a microtransmitter by myself (sometimes the participants do the building) and then people get together and begin a party using the completed transmitter to talk, play, eat and drink. In an hour-long radio party people also go for a short "picnics" outside carrying radio receivers.

Question: Have you worked with video or television in the context of your mini-FM or performance projects?

Tetsuo: In the late eighties we tested a microtelevision by a using a small transmitter, which was made of a booster and the RF [radio frequency] modulator of a VCR. The service area was as small as Mini FM but it worked to deliver moving images and sounds to our community areas. However we soon found that the viewers did not want to come to the station but kept watching. Television in particular seems to pin the viewer down to his or her own location. But ten years later when I started streaming radio with moving pictures by *RealVideo,* I found that the low quality of this medium helped motivate the audience to move. Since they were located a long distance from Tokyo, they could not come to the station but eagerly called in or mailed to our location. I suspect more sophisticated video transmission would not enable such a response. As Mitch Kapor said, low bandwidth sometimes has high "emotional bandwidth."

Question: You've mentioned Fluxus. Do you think that your approach was influenced by Fluxus? Did Fluxus have a particular inflection in the Japanese context?

Tetsuo: I like to consider myself as an irresponsible "descendant" of Fluxus. Apart from my activities as a media critic and as an artist, I've been faithful

to my own intuition and idiosyncratic taste. But whenever I was challenged to do something new, I found that Fluxus artists had been involved with something similar conceptually. John Cage (who is beyond Fluxus) did everything. Certainly Fluxus has a particular connection with Japan. And Cage was influenced by Taisetsu Suzuki, the Zen guru. Quite a few Japanese performance artists such as Takehisa Kosugi, Yasunao Tone, Yoko Ono and Ay-O were in the Fluxus network.

Among the various art movements from outside Japan, Fluxus was the one that most appealed to Japanese "avant-garde" artists in the sixties. Since the end of the fifties there had been a constant connection between New York and Tokyo. Yoko Ono was in SoHo and her loft was a hotbed of what later on [1961] George Maciunas called Fluxus. She had a lot of Japanese connections. Her partner at the time was Toshi Ichiyanagi, an artist of "avant-garde music." As Tone repeatedly said, however, the fact was that artists in Japan already had Fluxus ideas before they knew about Fluxus. So I should say that they had shared with Fluxus earlier influences such as existentialism and surrealism.

Actually, Fluxus-type performance art had already started in the late 1950s. Takehisa Kosugi, Chieko Shiomi, Shuko Mizuno, Yasunao Tone and so on eventually organized Group Ongaku in 1960. This was a very influential group not only for experimental music but also for other "avant-garde arts." In 1960 Ushio Shinohara with his companions such as Genpei Akasegawa, Shusaku Arakawa, and Shousaku Kazekura declared themselves to be "Neo-Dada organizers." They experimented with "happenings" as late as in 1958 and many popular magazines and newspapers wrote about this. Sofu Teshigawara, an "avant-garde Ikebana" artist, started the Sogetsu Art Center, the most magnetic art space, and most of experimental artists in this period showed their works there. This center invited Cage and [David] Tudor in 1962. [Cage's] first visit was a sensation. When I went to his "concert" at Tokyo Bunkakaikan-sho Hall, I found many notorious experimental artists I had heard about in various indy media. This event turned out to be the catalytic meeting for those who were involved in contemporary arts. Anyway, I can't summarize this very complicated history here, but let me just say that it's possible to think that many Japanese experimental artists found their "home" in Fluxus.

Question: Can you tell us anything more about your current radio work?

Tetsuo: I am presently more interested in much smaller scales of radio transmission along with sound art experiments. Radio Kinesonus <http://anarchy.translocal.jp/kinesonus/> was started exclusively for this. It was after the midnineties that more people became interested in mini-FM as something different from ordinary radio. I argued that in the age of public access via satellite communication, global communication would become somewhat banal; artists should be concerned instead with the microunit of the medium. The Internet has rapidly developed global communication literally and the exchange of data has become too easy. This gives us an opportunity to rethink our more micro and local area of space and time. Radio also allows me to rethink the relationship between art and the body. High technology can substitute equipment for our body elements. Media art, techno-art, and computer art tend to reduce the bodily involvement in an artistic creation. It is because technology has been commonly and bureaucratically used in these directions. However, *technology* has dual aspects: *techne* (techno-) and *logos* (-logy). *Logos* logicizes everything and eventually establishes *logistics.* Our modernist way of life and the military system have become ever closer to each other. *Techne,* however, means hand work. *Ars* (art) is the Latin translation from *techne.* So technology does not have to be only "high tech" but could also work on the scale of hand work and at the distance of human limbs. This is a new area for the electronic arts and perhaps provides an alternative to the present way of life.

As for my own recent work in radio art performance—having used microtransmitter(s) as a catalyst for experimental communication, I have become interested in more minimal transmission of airwaves. While mini-FM's range was walking distance, my present attempts are done within waving-hands distance. By moving my hands over very-low-powered transmitters, I can make my hand movements evident as well as the noise/sounds deriving from the interference that my hands and transmitters create. I am interested here in the relationship between hands and airwaves because I think the hand is the minimum integral part of our body. Immanuel Kant allegedly wrote that "the hand is the outer brain of human being." The brain is also a part of our body and is the most complicated and dense part. So our hands can act for our whole body. In the last couple of years, Kazuo Ono, who was born in 1906 and was one of the most important founders of Butho dance, has been performing using only his hands because he cannot move his other limbs due to paralysis. Leon Theremin invented his famous instrument

and many musicians have used it as a music instrument. Although the Theremin has been used as an instrument to be played, I think this invention is also suggestive about ways to create a new form of radio art using our hands and airwaves.

Question: What you say about radio and art and body is very interesting. Please expand on these ideas.

Tetsuo: The history of Western civilization is a process of substituting technological artifacts for the human body. Performance art is a compensation for the loss of the body. The artist's body is the battlefield between technology and the body. As modern technology has introduced new phases starting from machine technology to electronics to biotechnology, technology has driven the performance artist's body into a "body without organs."

Conscious of Artaud, Deleuze and Guattari took this concept as the matrix of our body. To my mind, the "body without organs" means what our body is and how it is. In the era of machine technology, the performance artist could rely on reconstructing the "living" (bare, naked, aural, and flesh-oriented) body-organ. Machine technology had already invaded the human body from external spaces (the city, architecture and so on). Computer-generated technology, however, has left less room for the performance artist for any "natural" spontaneity of the body. Simulation technology still needs at least a sample of embodiment though. In biotechnology, the change goes to the extreme. Cloning technology checkmates the body itself. It finishes off any optimistic counting on the body's spontaneity. This means the body must now deconstruct itself into a "body without organs." This situation could be interpreted as the realization of the Hegelian idea of "the subject-object identity" where our subjectively "physical" (embodied) and, at the same time, objectively "physical" (disembodied) body ends.

The technology of electromechanical reproduction climaxes in biotechnology where the distance between the original and the reproduction completely disappears. The "natural" body cannot be the criterion of the world any more. Distance exists but does so virtually. This does not mean that distance becomes fake and illusory. Rather, it means that distance does not rely on what is familiar any more. It becomes totally manipulative. So what is distance in media? It is not defined by conventional space and time. Even if virtual, we could experience numerous forms of distance with new technologies.

To put it another way, today's technology is going to remove every distance that defines the human body as well as the objectified body and the physical world. Geographical and spatial distances have been shrinking with global media. Digital technology erases the distance between the original and the reproduction. But I don't think that these trends homogenize everything. We need to change our conventional epistemology and macroscopic approach and we need to differentiate distances, or else everything might seem to be the same. The fact is that global media create "translocal" enclaves of cultures. They are very local as well as going beyond locality. It is difficult to understand such a translocality unless we insist on a microscopic approach, in order to find the diverse differences in the shrinking but increasingly dense distance. Mini-FM would be merely one examples of such a microscopic approach.

Notes

1. Tetsuo Kogawa, "Beyond Electronic Individualism," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue Canadienne de theorie politique et sociale* 8, no. 3 (Fall 1984): 15.

2. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible,* ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 130–155.

3. Jesse Drew, "This is Kxxx: Mission District Radio!" *San Francisco Bay Guardian News* May 13, 1992, 26, no. 32, p. 13.

4. Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge,* rev. ed. (Boston: Shambhala, 1992), 196.