

video. I also held a solo exhibition titled “Unfinished Descriptions” (Hundred Years Gallery, 2018) based on things recorded at Ono Yoko’s exhibition at the Indica Gallery in 1966 (where she first met John Lennon) and questions about what had and had not been recorded there.

To connect my work on this theme to Ono’s birthplace, Tokyo, I did an exhibit at TOKAS Hongo in 2019 titled “Sotto Voce.” For that, I created works based on something she wrote later about the criticism she received concerning an exhibition of hers in Tokyo in the 1960s and articles, both positive and negative, that were published about her work. From the reactions of visitors to my exhibit, I was impressed that among the people of the generation that knew about her at the time, few knew how harshly she had been criticized. That made me realize anew that there is still a lot that we think we know and more that we don’t. As for the act of recording, I also realized that decisions about what to record can depend on authority and can be quite arbitrary, which led me to think anew about whose opinions are being reflected. Looking back, I see that questions of “recording and re-representation” also apply to musical scores and performances, and that this is a consistent concern of mine.

There Is More Than One Way to Approach Art

In 2020, after returning from Berlin on the TOKAS Exchange Residency Program, I go to New York on a grant from the Asian Cultural Council. In Berlin, I plan to do research and creative work on Kawakami Sadayakko, who is said to be Japan’s first actress. From the late 19th into the early 20th century the theater troupe led by her husband, Kawakami Otojiro, made performance tours in Europe and the U.S., and I planned my project when I found out that there are recordings of them archived in Berlin. Her beauty and her demeanor left a strong impression on artists and musicians at the Paris World Exposition in 1900, but very few recordings of her voice at the time remain. This is also interesting from the perspective of what is recorded and what is not.

In New York, I plan to do a new project on Ono Yoko. I hope it will be an opportunity to connect that city with the largest remaining trove of materials about her with London and Tokyo to enable more investigations of her history. Ono also connects to Sadayakko, as the one of the first Japanese women to be active overseas. And it will surely relate to how Japanese women have been perceived in the West.

I travel a lot now, but I am interested eventually choosing a place to settle down and build a community and create a base where I can present my work regularly. I also think that, if I find something true to my mission of what I really want to do, I don’t necessarily need to do it as an artist. In his book *Making Your Life as an Artist* (2014), American choreographer Andrew Simonet writes that any artist’s lifestyle changes over time, physically and in family makeup. He also suggests that, rather than giving up one’s inner mission in order to continue doing art, isn’t it better to change tactics in order to continue following one’s mission? I agree. What I like about art is the questions it raises. And I believe that there are various ways to continue that aspect of art in society without actually doing art. Whatever I choose to do, I want to remain critical. That is my mission.

(This interview was conducted at TOKAS Residency on Dec. 6, 2019.)



北條知子

1988年愛知県生まれ。東京都を拠点に活動。2016年ロンドン芸術大学ロンドン・カレッジ・オブ・コミュニケーション修了。TOKAS参加プログラムに「平成31年度二国間交流事業プログラム〈ベルリン〉」(2020)、「TOKAS-Emerging 2019『声をひそめて』」、「第6回展覧会企画公募『“sapporo” around the world』」(2012)など。

HOJO Tomoko

Born in Aichi in 1988. Works in Tokyo. Graduated with an MA from London College of Communication, University of the Arts London in 2016. Participated in TOKAS Programs: “Tokyo-Berlin Exchange Residency Program 2019,” “TOKAS-Emerging 2019 ‘Sotto Voce,’” “Emerging Artist Support Program 2011 “sapporo” around the world,” and more.