

IKON

Ikon Gallery, 1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS
0121 248 0708 / www.ikon-gallery.org
Open Tuesday-Sunday, 11am-5pm / free entry

Takehisa Kosugi *SPACINGS*

22 July – 27 September 2015



Takehisa Kosugi, Solo Concert, 23 September 2008. The Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse. Photographer: Kiyotoshi Takashima.

Ikon presents the first major solo exhibition in the UK by Japanese composer and artist Takehisa Kosugi (b 1938). A pioneer of experimental music in Japan in the early 1960s, he is one of the most influential artists of his generation.

Closely associated with the Fluxus movement, Kosugi joined the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in the 1970s, becoming Musical Director in 1995, and working with the Company up until its final performance in 2011. This exhibition will feature three sound installations, including one made especially for Ikon. Often comprising everyday materials and radio electronics, they involve interactions with wind, electricity and light, making sonic relationships between objects.

Kosugi was first drawn to music by his father's enthusiasm for playing the harmonica, and recordings of violinists Mischa Elman and Joseph Szigeti, which he heard while growing up in post-war Tokyo. He went on to study musicology at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music during the late 1950s. He was inspired by the spirit of experimentation coming from Europe and the US, while simultaneously intrigued by traditional Japanese music, in particular Noh Theatre, and its concept of 'ma' - the conscious appreciation of the in-between-ness of one sound and another. "That sense of ma in traditional Japanese music, the sense of timing is different from Western music. In my imagination time seems to stretch and contract. It's not just linear." Jazz was of similar inspiration, Charlie Parker in particular: "...I was totally stunned by him. That spontaneity and freedom, that beauty in the moment."

Kosugi's desire for spontaneity in his own performances led him to co-found Japan's first group dedicated to collective improvisation, Group Ongaku in 1960, and later the Taj Mahal Travellers. He became closely associated with the Fluxus movement, and in 1965 he settled in New York, where he collaborated with a number of other Fluxus artists including Nam June Paik. Kosugi's interest had by then shifted from making music towards what he referred to as 'events', and he began producing work that formed a tangible relationship between sound and the environment. Experiments with radio electronics were manifested in *Catch-Wave* (1967), a seminal work which includes several transmitters, radios and a toy slide projector, suspended from the ceiling, close enough to one other to cause audio and visual interference.

Ikon's exhibition features *Mano-dharma, electronic* (1967), a work in which Kosugi makes use of waves that themselves do not generate sound, such as electric waves, radio frequency waves and wind movement, and draws sound from them by installing an electronic system within the space. Electronic wave transmission devices and receivers hang by string from the ceiling, from which the artist produces sound by means of interference that occur between them and affecting that sound further through the use of a floor standing fan. Simultaneously, Kosugi projects an image of ocean waves on the gallery wall as an analogy.

Interspersion for Light and Sound (2000), is a work which embodies imperceptible movement. A Perspex box is filled with white sugar and/or sand emitting faint electronic crackles of sound and light from the electronics and LEDs concealed below the surface, caused by the effect of see-through and hear-through conditions on the sugar/sand. Kosugi insists that there is no conceptual meaning but rather it is a question of apprehending accidental encounters and uncertainty created by invisible phenomena at work.

In consideration of the relationship between his improvisatory performances and the use of electronic technology in his work, Kosugi explains: "I needed to liberate music from

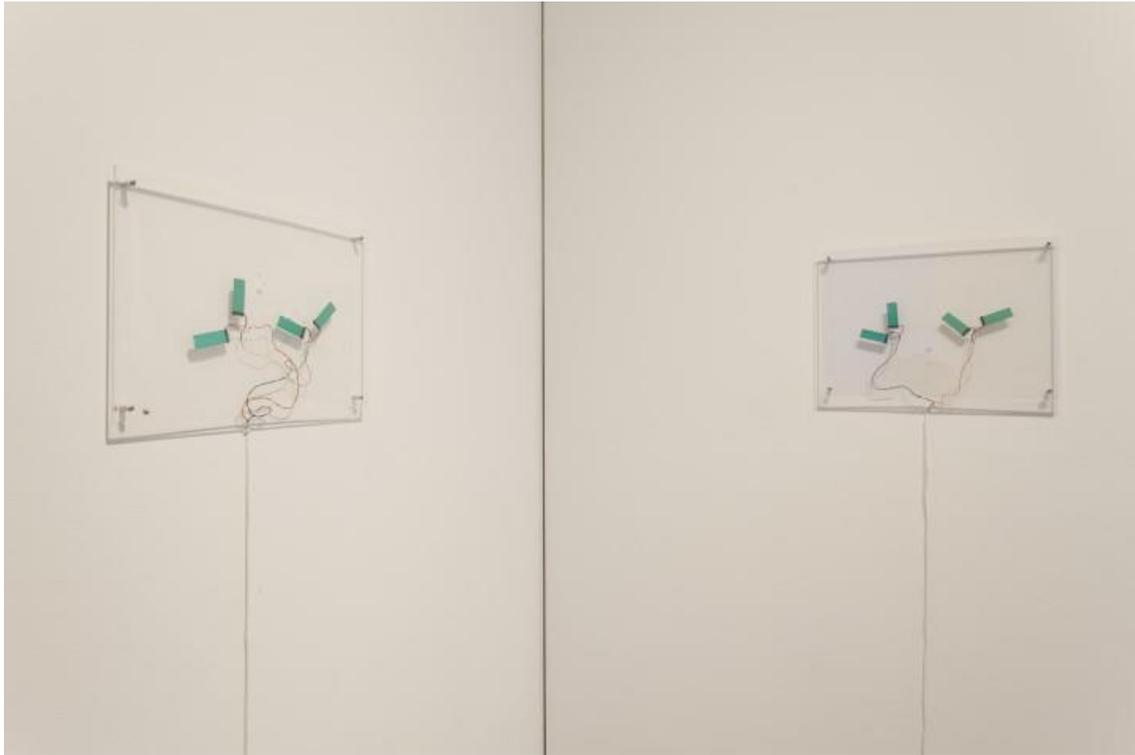
my own control, but improvisation is conversely still controlled by your playing habits. What electronics demonstrated to me was the movement of electronic waves separate from myself. Developing a relationship with those phenomena is a way to transcend yourself.”

This exhibition is supported by the Japan Foundation, the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation and The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation.

Note to Editors:

1. Ikon exhibition opening: Wednesday 22 July, 6-8pm. The exhibition is accompanied by a programme of public events, for full details visit www.ikon-gallery.org
2. Takehisa Kosugi received a John Cage Award for Music from the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts in 1994. He has received grants from The JDR 3rd Fund (1966/77) and DAAD in Berlin (1981). Future activities include two concert performances of his works at Whitney Museum in New York (September 2015) and his participation in Aichi Triennale in Aichi Prefecture, Japan (2016).
3. Ikon is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art venue situated in central Birmingham. Established in 1964 by a group of artists, Ikon is an educational charity and works to encourage public engagement with contemporary art through exhibiting new work in a context of debate and participation. The gallery programme features artists from around the world and a variety of media is represented, including sound, film, mixed media, photography, painting, sculpture and installation. Ikon's off-site programme develops dynamic relationships between art, artists and audiences outside the gallery. Projects vary enormously in scale, duration and location, challenging expectations of where art can be seen and by whom. Education is at the heart of Ikon's activities, stimulating public interest in and understanding of contemporary visual art. Through a variety of talks, tours, workshops and seminars, Ikon's Learning Team aims to build dynamic relationships with audiences, enabling visitors to engage with, discuss and reflect on contemporary art.
4. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 5pm. Admission is free.
5. For the latest news and events follow @ikongallery on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ikongallery), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ikongallery) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/ikongallery).
6. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council.
7. For more information, high-res images and to request an interview with the artist please contact Rebecca Small or Emily Luxford at Ikon on 0121 248 0708 or email r.small@ikon-gallery.org or e.luxford@ikon-gallery.org

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Takehisa Kosugi, *Pulses* (2008). Acryl panel, piezo transducer, electronic devices. Courtesy the artist.



Takehisa Kosugi, *Mano-dharma, electronic* (1967). R.F. oscillator, radio, string, electric fan, DVD, DVD projector. Courtesy the artist.



Takehisa Kosugi, *Interspersion for Light and Sound* (2000). Audio generator, light pulse generator, piezo transducer, LED, sugar and/or sand, plastic container. Courtesy the artist.