

San Francisco: Sonic Delicacies

By Roddy Schrock

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Carl Stone, currently based in Tokyo, has been active in promoting the work of Japanese artists abroad. Fortunately for those of us who live in San Francisco, he was able to curate a duo performance by [Yuko Nexus 6](#) and Mariko Tijiri here a few months back. I knew the work of Yuko Nexus 6 a bit from my years in Tokyo, but the work of Mariko Tijiri was something that I had not had the pleasure of experiencing. The downtown venue of 964 Natoma, sadly no longer presenting work, was the perfect space to hear this performance: a large warehouse space whose upstairs was quietly intimate, with bean bags and pillows scattered around for the audience to sit on. As Aaron Ximm, organizer of the [Field Effects](#) concert series, said, "The ears are only able to listen when the body is comfortable." Field Effects is a uniquely San Francisco series: it is very DIY, flies under the radar, is community oriented, and is able to present work of the highest caliber.



Roddy Schrock
Photo by Hideki Kubota

The concert of Yuko Nexus 6 and Mariko Tijiri was well attended, the audience compiled of hipsters who saw the advertisement in local magazines, local luminaries of electronic music, and a collection of people who just enjoy listening to new music. Yuko and Mariko were seated amongst the audience on the floor towards the back of the space behind the glowing screens of their PowerBooks. It seemed as though one of them was primarily controlling the video and the other was working on the sound, but this was unclear and rather irrelevant to their aims which seemed to be a kind of total interconnectedness, between performer and performer, audience and performers, and among the audience members themselves.

The video was comprised of lightly processed shots of everyday objects, at times in very tight zoom, and at others from a much wider angle. The objects themselves were strikingly unspectacular but their arrangement was not—one got the sense that a lot of time was put into the preparation of these props for their filming. For example, an aluminum lamp would be filmed from behind at a very close distance creating little beads of light and darkness, then the camera would pan down to a pot of boiling water on a gas stove.

The sounds were treated much the same way. It seemed there was very little processing, the focus being primarily on subtle change of tone and placement of sound in time, all the while never leaving the realm of the delicate and suggestive. This was a sound environment for aural connoisseurs, so to speak. The intense care taken with the presentation of every gurgle of water, every slip of metal against metal, every atmospheric wash, was highly polished, deliberate, and lovely.

Throughout their performance I was thinking about how meaning is conveyed through performance, and how refreshing it was to hear and see work which seemed to avoid any overt insistence on message or commentary. If there was intentional communication taking place, it was of the kind that one might receive from the hands of a gifted masseuse, the kind that communicates relaxation to tense muscles and calms anxiety. Their music was content with the simple and powerful act of making a beautiful experience for all present. And at that concert in that space with that particular audience, it achieved its goal marvelously.

[Roddy Schrock](#) is a sound artist who digitally mines everyday sound for the profound and canvasses the glitzy, rough edges of pop for its articulate immediacy. He has lived and worked in Tokyo, The Hague, New York, and San Francisco, with performances in the Czech Republic, Holland, Japan, and North America. He is also an educator, currently teaching at De Anza College (California) and will be giving a summer workshop on Supercollider software at STEIM (Netherlands).

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