

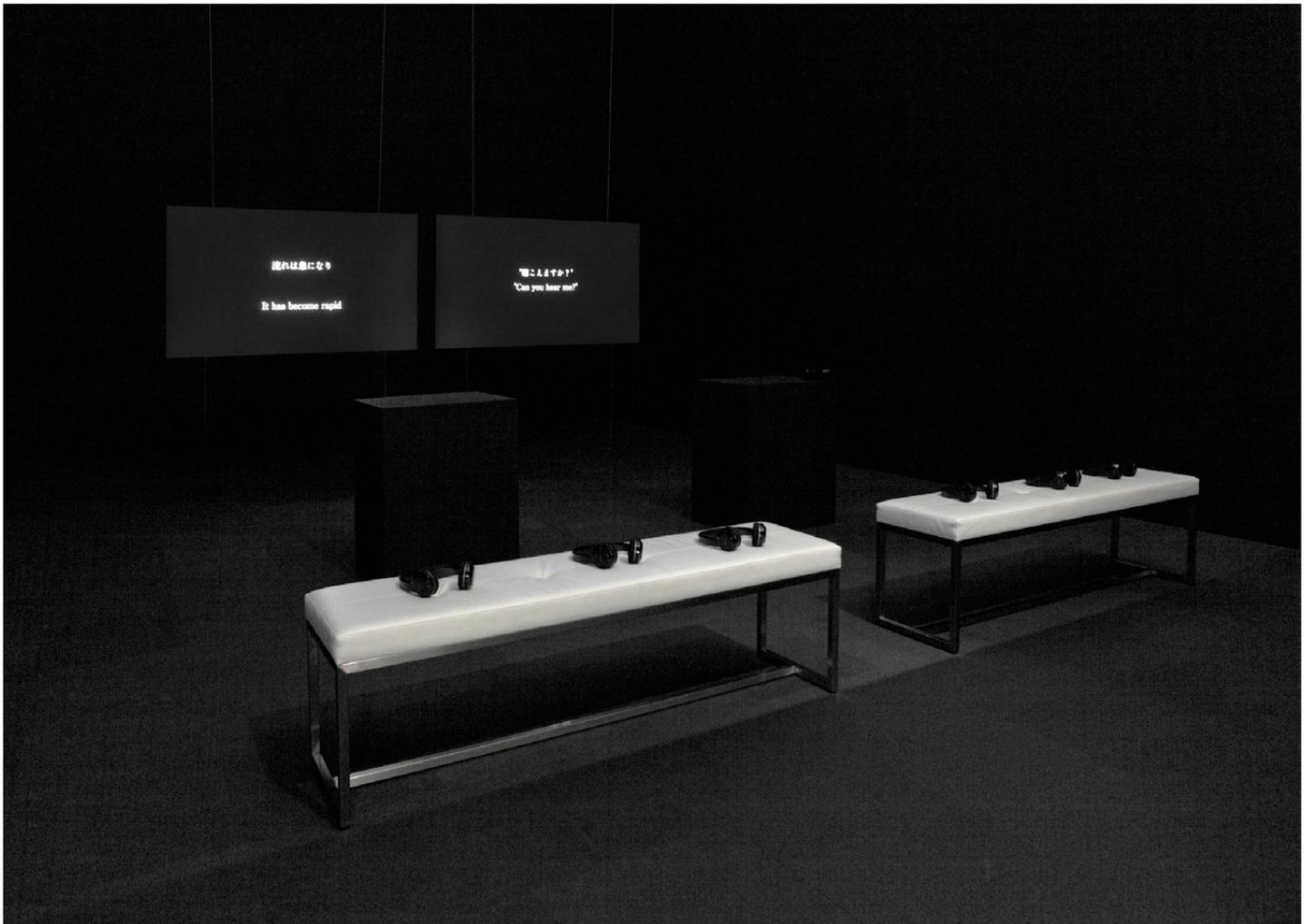
"A Geological Sketch Map of the Island of Yesso, Japan" (reproduction) (C) mamoru / Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Courtesy of Yuka Tsuruno Gallery

THE WAY I HEAR, B.S.LYMAN

Benjamin Smith Lyman (1835-1920) was one of the foreign experts hired by the Japanese government to help accelerate modernization of the country in the late 19th century. His task was to conduct a survey of mineral resources and to train Japanese engineers for geological survey. Arriving in Japan in 1873, he proceeded to Hokkaido (which was also called Ezo or Yesso back then) and carried out a detailed geological survey, which took total of 12 months in 3 years. As one of the results, Lyman published the geological report of Hokkaido and the first comprehensive geological map in Japan, "*A Geological Sketch Map of the Island of Yesso, Japan*" in 1876. His Japanese assistants who were trained on these survey trips also played important roles in the development of Japanese energy industry later.

The work is centered around the historical moment in which Lyman found coal pebbles on the sandy beach of the River Yubari on the 19th June, 1874, which preceded the development of one of the most important coal mines in Japanese history. The texts which mainly describe the soundscape that are transcribed from all the research material draw people gradually into the imaginably space to be the witness of the moment.

The Research, in the summer of 2013, after preparatory archival research to trace back the geographical change and history in Yubari region and also to point out the location of Lyman's discovery, a month-long fieldwork was conducted in Hokkaido; on sight listening research around the River Yubari, going up the current by canoes with outdoor experts to experience Lyman's expedition, and interviewing local historians. At the same time, extensive documents about the development in the region were provided by the local libraries in Hokkaido and the library of Hokkaido University in particular. In January 2014, for further study on Lyman's handwritten field notebooks, the 2nd research took place at the Special Collection and University Archives at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where the Lyman collection is kept. The following summer during which the meteorological conditions were very similar to that of 1874, mamoru went back to River Yubari again to listen to and record the soundscape especially on 19th June 2014, 140 years after Lyman's discovery.



(C) mamoru / Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Courtesy of Yuka Tsuruno Gallery, 2015

THE WAY I HEAR, B.S.LYMAN The 5th Movement Polyphony for Collective Imagination

2-channel text-based video projection, 2channel sound with headphones, and archival material/map, 2015

"Time of Others", group exhibition, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Japan, April 11th - June 28th, 2016

"Time of Others", Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia, June 11–September 18, 2016

viewing link: http://afewnotes.com/TWIH_LYMAN_viewing.html

"On June 19, 1874, the American geologist and mining engineer Benjamin Smith Lyman - employed by the Meiji government to carry out a geological survey of Hokkaido - found a lump of coal on the banks of the Yubari River and was convinced that a major coal bed lay at the site. Lyman's assistants subsequently discovered the Yubari coalfield, which constitutes part of the largest coal deposit in Japan, the Ishikari coalfield. These events triggered the development of Yubari as a mining town, which in turn provided an energy source that drove the modernisation of Japan.

As such, it could be said that the moment Lyman found the lump of coal connects all the way across time to the present.

Elaborating on this idea, mamoru researched the copious survey records and documents left by Lyman, and then actually went to Yubari to retrace the footsteps of the surveying team and collect the sounds that Lyman himself might have heard there.

The work based on these field recordings, THE WAY I HEAR, B.S.LYMAN The 5th Movement Polyphony for Collective Imagination, takes the form of an installation comprised primarily of text and sound elements. The fragmentary records and memories of the place visited by Lyman and mamoru, each in their own eras, evoke for viewers all kinds of images and aural landscapes. These are made audible in the installation as words that alternately correspond to and diverge from texts presented on two screens. In that sense, this work could be considered an attempt by mamoru to use the act of listening to access space and time that we cannot directly experience."

Che Kyongfa, curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo



(C) mamoru / Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Courtesy of Yuka Tsuruno Gallery, 2015

THE WAY I HEAR B.S.LYMAN

第五章 協想のためのポリフォニー

The 5th Movement Polyphony for Collective Imagination

- I. 川 River
- II. 男達の話し声 Some Men Start Talking
- III. 19 June,1874 / 2014
- IV. 出発 Departure
- V. 石炭 Coal



(C) mamoru / Tokyo Wonder Site, 2014

THE WAY I HEAR, B.S. LYMAN The 4th Movement for a soloist "19 June, 1874"

Japanese and English text-score, prismatic compass, music stand, archival material, coal pebble, acrylic box, water, photo on panel
"TOKYO STORY 2014", Tokyo Wonder Site Hongo, Tokyo, Japan, 2014.May.3rd - June.8th

In the exhibition space, there is a short introduction text on the wall, "PRELUDE / PREFACE", which introduces the imaginarily soundscapae of the River Yubari from 1874. It also instructs the viewer/reader to take the text-score on the shelf to the music stand for them to "perform/imagine" more "sound". The text-score, 50 pages long, though very sparsely layout, is consisted of direct quotes from Lyman's official report "*Geological Trip Through and Around Yesso*", his field notebook "*L10*", and soundscape descriptions that was sampled throught the field research and archival research by the artist. There are several instructions inserted in the text such as checking the direction with the prismatic comapsss or picking up a coal pebble from the acrylic box filled with water. These instructions activates the installation as the stage and the spectator into an actor and a listener at the same time.



<excerpts from the text-score scene "I. The Dawn">

Much rain in the night, but more promising.
Though cloudy this morning and no rain.

The water is somewhat less muddy than yesterday but is still a gray color.

[you also look down, and check the color of the "river" around your feet]

It is rather rapid, contains much water since it has been raining in the past days.

[listen to the river]

Here and there, from the other side of the river,
the spring cicadas have started tuning their choir
Rosefinch singing with its short and high crystal voice
Water drops from the leaves of the alder tree



<excerpts from "II. The Departure">

7:10
7 canoes, 3-4 person each. We start going up the stream.

[check the direction with the compass]

I write down the direction ["N" with an arrow] on the notebook, then start drawing the river and taking memos.

The river goes straight and seems to be turning right.

The canoes on the water, [the wind touches your cheek]and I hear the Ainus paddling just behind me.

Open prairies on both sides of the river, from which some insects are chirping.

7:16
A little further up, on the right-hand side, there is a small rill streaming down. The sound of water coming close.

Our canoe travels up smoothly, breaking water with its front edge and making such a great sound.

[the sound of a small rill fading away]



<excerpt from "Coal Pebbles">

Footsteps on the sandy beach

Someone picks up a stone, murmuring something, taking memos, then throws it back, and picks another one up.

A Yesso warbler chirps uniquely
The chorus of the cicadas and the river in the background

A horsefly passes by



<excerpt from "Coal Pebbles">

Someone shouts in his excitement.
"Lyman-sensei!"

Waving his hands from near the water.

All of us walk towards him,
and
we stare at the small black pebbles.
[there is one in front of you]

I pick one of them from the water.
[you also pick one from the box]

I check to see if it is very light and say ...
[you also check to see if it is very light and say ...]

"Coal Pebbles!"