

## Christian Marclay *Found in Odawara*

*Enoura Observatory, Odawara 27–28 November*

On a late-November day so crystalline it sent the spirit soaring, several dozen spectators watched as Christian Marclay raked pebbles around a tattered piece of a hollow globe. The moment was part of *Found Objects*, the second of three performances that ran for two days at Enoura Observatory, an art complex about an hour and a half from central Tokyo. Joined by musician Yoshihide Otomo, sound performer Akio Suzuki and artist and khoomei singer Fuyuki Yamakawa, the artist banged, bumped and blew on a collection of materials he had gathered from the surrounding area. Instructed not to speak or clap, the audience stood in hushed reverie as the four performers batted around industrial mixing bowls and dragged a flimsy chair across the surface of a stone stage to create acoustic sounds. The sober wall was broken when Marclay tossed a hemisphere through the air that fell with a satisfying smack on the gravel surrounding the stage. Titters followed.

As far as outdoor experimental sound performance venues go, Enoura Observatory is a dreamy one. Conceived and designed by artist and architect Hiroshi Sugimoto, and run by his foundation, it opened as an art and culture space in 2017. It's also a piece of Land art in its own right. The observatory sits on the side of a mountain facing the Sagami Bay, and at sunset the galleries' glass facades fill with a rosy and yellow warmth, reflecting back the surrounding moss, bushes and stone. Stones and archaeological objects, some dating back to the year 250, are arranged throughout the site, with certain vantage points best viewed at the year's solstices and equinoxes.

The artists led the way to a second stage made of optical glass layered over a cypress framework. In the shadow of the mountain, and with a clear view of the water beyond, spectators pulled on gloves and crossed their legs against the cold as the four grown men rolled marbles, blew on empty wine bottles, tossed dry leaves and pushed Styrofoam about so that it screeched across the glass. In the clear afternoon stillness, Yamakawa, crouched on all fours, relinquished his instruments and banged his forehead full-on against the stage, his impressive long locks fluttering.

After living many years in New York, I find there are times when Japan feels too buttoned up. One exception is when I watch kids play: loud, unfettered, not yet attuned to all the social rules. This performance was not dissimilar. The essential curiosity, adaptability and eagerness needed for such a fearlessly impish display were infectious.

The artists left the stage, and we were ushered to follow – to where exactly? I wasn't paying attention, too engrossed in watching Marclay and Otomo heave and hurl objects to the ground ahead of us, including a 25kg weight-plate and a sphere large enough that it took two hands to lift, and which issued a particularly thrilling sound like a laser-gun blast when thrown. The ground turned out to be the roof of a 70-metre tunnel, which we passed through next, to a score both industrial and womblike.

Like pilgrims, we followed the musicians, who scattered to various locations along a route winding through the 9,500sqm property.

As the performance became less staged and focused, the experience in turn started to converge around a point: with the artists hidden from view, the aural scope of what it felt we ought to be listening to, and for, widened. It became harder to parse what was being made for our pleasure and what was already there. Our ears now trained, we homed in on every bit of aural friction in the environs. Live birds and planes and treetops performed for us, too, and so did we for each other. The low growl of the zipper on someone's bag, the dusty clicks of rocks skidding under soles, the dry chuckle of a wordless joke recognised, even words on the back of someone's jacket: a circle of the letters *WHOOOOO*. And we strained to hear more. Traversing the expansive space, we passed a mandarin grove, then found a squatting Suzuki, who was dropping pieces of bamboo and plastic bottles against a tree stump. The voice and visual artist Ami Yamasaki, who had performed earlier in the afternoon, joined from the audience, issuing intermittent dolphin calls and bird chirps.

The final gathering spot was a bamboo grove, a trove of sounds waiting to be released. Pebbles thrown at random knocked pleasantly against hollow culms, as someone crunched a plastic water barrel. Fuyuki straddled a fallen piece of bamboo, forcing it to splinter under his weight, as Yoshihide hit a bass drum. Just then the perfect weather almost seemed like a missed opportunity; I imagined for a moment a great storm, and the world of wet, dirty, wild texture it would have played back to its rapt audience.

*Thu-Huong Ha*



*Found Objects*, 2021  
(performance view, *Found in Odawara*, 2021).  
Photo: Timothee Lambrecq



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(performance view, *Found in Odawara, 2021*).  
Photo: Changsu