

Wong, Pamela, *Up Close: Yuko Mohri*, ArtAsiaPacific Issue 127, March - April 2022

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Whorinal?, 2021

Marcel Whochamp

UP CLOSE



This and opposite page: installation view of YUKO MOHRI's *Piano Solo*, 2021, piano, video, monitors, speakers, audio interface, microphones, and computer, dimensions variable, at Glasgow International 2021. Photo by Matthew Barnes. Courtesy the artist; Project Fulfill Art Space, Taipei; and Mother's Tankstation, Dublin/London.

YUKO

MOHRI

In the absence of a performer, notes intermittently emanate from a piano, almost as if a ghost is mindlessly hitting the keys. There is an uncanny rhythm to the sounds, which are mixed with the rush of crashing waves. This automated performance is Yuko Mohri's *Piano Solo - Ohara* (2021), where a piano is connected to a nearby video, featuring the waters of the Pacific Ocean tirelessly hitting the shore. The sound from the footage is collected by microphones and transmitted to a computer, which transforms the signals into musical notes, initiating the performance on the piano. As Mohri's algorithm is designed to pick up only certain pitches, instead of the piano replicating the sounds perfectly, each line sounds different, even a bit unnatural and spontaneous, rejecting expectations of a coherent musical piece. The inner structure of the instrument, including the hammers and strings, is exposed to the audience. The keys move in succession, recalling waves, as if the piano itself, though a product of human invention, is a water body of its own.

Piano Solo was inspired by Mohri's experience as she retreated into nature during the pandemic and found comfort in recording her surrounding environment. In some versions of the installation, she juxtaposes audio fragments from natural and urban environments, orchestrating through a single piano the sounds of waves, birds chirping in a forest, and water falling into a rain gutter. For the version at the Asian Art Biennial titled *2 SOLOS (Quarantine)* (2021), she combined ambient sounds recorded separately during two periods of quarantine, exploring how individuals can find variations and resonance even in seemingly tedious moments of isolation. While the absence of performers was initially a compromise necessitated by Covid restrictions, her series evokes a post-human world, where nature occupies the relics of human civilization and carries on with its own solos.

PAMELA WONG

