Taipei Fine Arts Museum Press Release

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Ryuichi Sakamoto | seeing sound, hearing time

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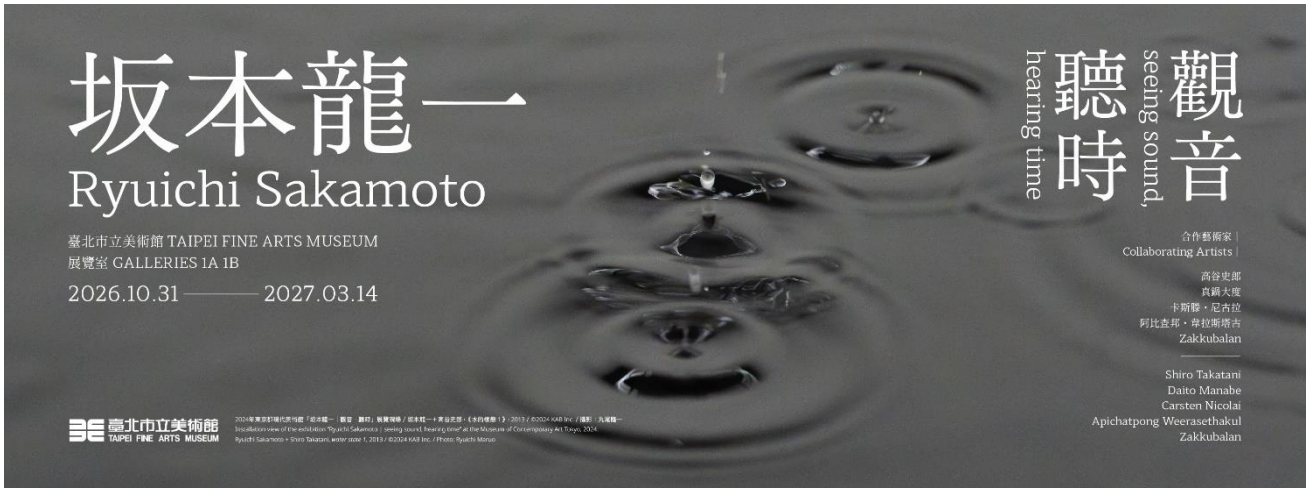
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Media Kit

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Ryuichi Sakamoto | seeing sound, hearing time
Major Retrospective Exhibition
New Ways to Sense the World through Sound, Space, and Image

Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) presents "**Ryuichi Sakamoto | seeing sound, hearing time**" (October 31, 2026, to March 14, 2027), the first large-scale exhibition in Taipei devoted to the late composer, music producer, and artist Ryuichi Sakamoto (1952–2023). The exhibition looks back on Sakamoto's groundbreaking artistic practice from the 2000s onward. It features seven large-scale installations, as well as selected archival materials from his 1999 opera ***LIFE***, highlighting his long-term collaborations with five artists and art collectives: Shiro Takatani, Daito Manabe, Carsten Nicolai, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and Zakkubalan. By tracing back Sakamoto's reflections on time, life, the environment, and technology, the exhibition reveals how he developed new forms of expression and sensory experiences of sound, opening up different ways for us to listen to and feel the world.

Internationally acclaimed as a musician, Ryuichi Sakamoto trained in classical piano and composition from childhood and earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Tokyo University

of the Arts. In 1978, he formed the electronic music group Yellow Magic Orchestra (YMO) with Haruomi Hosono and Yukihiro Takahashi (1952–2023), embarking on a creative journey that fused electronic music with experimental soundscapes. In the 1980s, he expanded into film scoring and went on to earn major international accolades, including an Oscar, a Grammy, and two Golden Globes. However, Sakamoto did not stop at music. From the 1990s, he enthusiastically incorporated images and digital technology into his live performances, initiating collaborations with artists across disciplines. Beginning in 2000, he frequently presented installations in art museums and at art festivals, combining sound with image and space to explore how sound could be seen, heard, and perceived. He also actively advocated for environmental protection and against nuclear power, integrating these stances into his sound works. Using field recordings, unconventional instruments, and technological data, he captured sounds that often go unnoticed in daily life. Sakamoto had a profound impact on contemporary music and interdisciplinary art.

Exploring the Interplay of Sound, Space, and Time

Tracing the trajectory of Sakamoto's experimental practice, "seeing sound, hearing time" illuminates how he transcended the boundaries between sound, image, light, and technology, transforming music into a spatial experience that can be seen and felt. The exhibition thus echoes his ceaseless inquiry into "installation music" in his later years. Interdisciplinary collaboration was at the core of Sakamoto's work. He partnered for years with visual artists, filmmakers, and new media artists to create environments that merge auditory, visual, and bodily perceptions. Each of the nine works across the seven installations unfolds through the sensation of the present moment, posing questions about space and time:

In the entrance corridor, a ribbon LED display stretches across the floor-to-ceiling window facing TFAM's central courtyard. This is the site-specific work ***Sensing Streams 2026–invisible, inaudible (Taipei version)***, based on an original collaboration between Sakamoto and Japanese artist Daito Manabe. Using antennas installed outside the museum, the work captures electromagnetic waves imperceptible to humans and converts them into a form we can hear and see, rendering the unseen infrastructural pulse of ever-changing Taipei. It also reminds us that our world is always filled with energy and connections that are invisible but real.

Upon entering the main galleries, visitors encounter two collaborations between Sakamoto and German artist and musician Carsten Nicolai, with whom he worked on several albums and live performances. ***PHOSPHENES*** and ***ENDO EXO*** both stem from *20,000*, Nicolai's first feature film project, inspired by Jules Verne's novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. Their soundtracks feature two musical pieces, "20210310" and "20220207," from Sakamoto's final album *12*. In *PHOSPHENES* abstract visuals hovering between dream and reality interweave with

Sakamoto's hazy synthesizer sounds. *ENDO EXO* combines images of animal specimens and skeletons with a slowly flowing piano melody, inviting visitors to ponder the boundaries of life, the body, and vision.

Sakamoto once invited Thai film director and artist Apichatpong Weerasethakul to listen to his album *async* while he was recording it. ***async–first light*** features two tracks from the album: "disintegration" and "Life, Life." Sakamoto re-arranged the music to match the visuals. The artwork pairs poetic images with a poetry recitation. Screened alongside it, the silent film ***Durmiente*** (Spanish for "sleeper") is inspired by Weerasethakul's own film *Memoria*, capturing the moment actress Tilda Swinton gradually falls asleep. Through intimate imagery and audio, both works evoke delicate states where dreams, memories, and awakening overlap.

The artist and filmmaker duo Zakkubalan, made up of Neo Sora and Albert Tholen, joined forces with Sakamoto in creating ***async–volume***. Scenes from Sakamoto's life and work in New York while he made the album *async*, including his studio, living room, and garden, appear in 24 devices that softly glow like little windows in the gallery. Through these screens, visitors catch behind-the-scenes glimpses of his creative life and everyday surroundings, as if stepping into a darkened space to encounter his private inner world.

Visual artist and theater director Shiro Takatani shared a friendship and collaborative relationship with Sakamoto that spanned decades. This exhibition features three of their joint creations: ***water state 1*****; *async–immersion*****; and *LIFE–fluid, invisible, inaudible...***. They are presented in different-sized exhibition spaces within TFAM.

In the work ***water state 1***, data on precipitation in the exhibition's locality (including in Taipei) is extracted from meteorological satellite images. As water droplets fall into a pool, the work expresses the changes and cycles of water in different states, as a microcosm of the natural environment. Meanwhile, ***async–immersion*** is based on Sakamoto's album *async*, blending recited texts from the tracks "fullmoon" and "Life, Life" with video of everyday scenes in his New York studio, such as a piano, books, percussion instruments, and plants in his garden. Across an 18-meter LED wall, a light beam slowly moves like a scanner, as images take shape, dissolve, and extend, gradually weaving an asynchronous timeline of sound and light. Completed by Takatani after Sakamoto's passing, it became one of their final collaborations, deepening the world of *async* the two had developed together.

A Turning Point in Installation Music, Rare *LIFE* Archives Unveiled in Taipei

In 1999, Shiro Takatani served as the visual director for Sakamoto's opera *LIFE*. This marked the beginning of their long-term collaboration. Then in 2007, the Yamaguchi Center for Arts and

Media [YCAM] commissioned the work ***LIFE–fluid, invisible, inaudible...***, a significant moment when Sakamoto turned to making "installation music." The two artists reconstructed the music, sound, and visual materials of the 1999 opera *LIFE*, algorithmically generating ever-changing audiovisual landscapes that incorporate such natural elements as water, fog, light, and shadow. The work carries forward the opera's reflections on 20th-century warfare, technology, and human civilization, while also imagining the 21st-century future, gradually unlocking viewers' perceptions and thoughts on the natural environment. Following its showing at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo in 2024, this is its first presentation in Taipei, in the form of a spatial reconstruction, and a major highlight of the exhibition.

Alongside the installations, the exhibition displays a selection of rare archival materials from the 1999 opera ***LIFE***, including notes, musical scores, manuscripts, videos, and audio tapes, along with documentary photographs taken at the time by photographer Mikiya Takimoto. Many of these materials are being publicly exhibited for the first time. In the archival area, visitors can look back at the conceptual origins of ***LIFE*** and Sakamoto's explorations of linear time in music. Presenting archives alongside Sakamoto's installation music offers a picture of his intellectual evolution from music to interdisciplinary art.

"Every year, Taipei Fine Arts Museum presents major international exhibitions, offering different artistic perspectives in response to contemporary cultural issues, to foster interdisciplinary exchanges and engage in an in-depth conversation with the global art world," says TFAM Director Li-Chen Loh. "While presenting Ryuichi Sakamoto's explorations of the forms that art can take, this exhibition also leads visitors to ponder the relationships among sound, time, space, technology, and bodily sensation. We hope that when visitors enter our museum, they will listen and see in new ways, and so experience how art changes our understanding of the world around us."

Ryuichi Sakamoto's long-term fascination with time was embodied in his installations of his later years. He once remarked, "Music is an 'art of time' existing only in time." He explored the non-linearity and asynchronicity of time, incorporating natural sounds, invisible sound waves from daily life, and audible noises into his work to investigate the essence of sound and the flow of time.

The exhibition invites viewers not only to view the artworks within a "space," but also to engage with them through their own bodies and senses within a set "time." Visitors can experience multiple layers of time, from the time of the work itself, to the time of their own experience, to the time of the exhibition as a whole. Curated by Sachiko Namba, the exhibition encourages visitors to slow their pace and gain a fresh sense of how sound occupies space, how images trigger memory, and how the body experiences time in motion.**A Dialogue with Taiwan,**

Responding to Ryuichi Sakamoto's Worldview

The Public Programs for "Ryuichi Sakamoto | seeing sound, hearing time" center on Ryuichi Sakamoto's worldview, guiding participants to appreciate his creative philosophy from a variety of perspectives, while connecting to the works in the exhibition. On October 31, during the first week of the exhibition, TFAM will host a Public Talk, featuring curator Sachiko Namba, who will share her vision for the exhibition and introduce selected works. The artist Shiro Takatani and Albert Tholen, a member of the art collective Zakkubalan, will also speak. Two sessions will be presented, moderated by Yi-Wei Keng, dramaturg of the National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts (Weiwuying), and Escher Tsai, creative director of Dimension Plus, guiding audiences into a deeper understanding of the exhibition's works and concepts.

Throughout the exhibition, Taipei Fine Arts Museum will present an interactive sound system called "Sound Box" in the ground-floor corridor. Echoing Sakamoto's belief that all sounds are equal, this installation is an extension of the concept of the "prepared piano," which deeply influenced his art. It transforms two discarded pianos into a medium for sonic exploration, in combination with such unconventional instruments as a Field Drum. Here, visitors can freely generate their own sounds through touch, percussion, and listening. It allows creativity to move beyond the threshold of professionalism, embodying TFAM's spirit of equal participation, openness, and inclusion. Additionally, "Cinematic Soundscape" is a series of online screenings, on-site screenings, and panel discussions, exploring the background of Sakamoto's thought in the areas of film and culture. For more details on these events, please await further announcements.

This exhibition also brings together cross-disciplinary private-sector support, with Taishin International Bank as its main sponsor. Upholding its core values of "Integrity, Innovation, and Sustainability," Taishin has long been dedicated to nurturing a diversity of arts and cultural events, both locally and internationally. By sponsoring "Ryuichi Sakamoto | seeing sound, hearing time," Taishin continues to fulfill its corporate social responsibility, aspiring to broaden the public's artistic horizons, enrich the spiritual life of Taiwan, and join in fostering deep reflections on sound, time, and life.

For further information on the exhibition, attendance at the Museum, or participation in related events, please visit the TFAM website at www.tfam.museum, or follow TFAM on Facebook or Instagram ("Taipei Fine Arts Museum").