

F O R M

&



Improviser **Rie Nakajima** tunes in to the secret language of everyday objects

F U N C
T I O N

Rie Nakajima's sound pieces create sculptures both spatial and temporal. "Sometimes when I'm making work, I experience a moment where time and space are so close together," she explains, describing her performances. "The moment is physical but there is no form. Lately I think it's just like an impression. I look for this state all the time."

Yokohama born Nakajima is currently based in London, where she moved to study sculpture at the Slade School of Fine Art. Yet earlier this year she beat composers Lina Lapelyte, Richard Skelton and Jennifer Walshe to win 2014's Arts Foundation Award for Experimental Music. Her improvised performances see her shepherd a twitching, buzzing, rattling herd of battery-powered motorised objects around a space. As each object's distinct pattern of sound and silence combines with those of its neighbours, she shapes a dynamic and complex vibrating form: adding and subtracting elements, moving sounds to different locations and sending the more animated objects off to explore beyond the boundaries of the group.

Such performances form a contrast with *Fall*, her recent installation at London's noshowspace, in which a set of small, repetitive but symbolically rich mechanised movements took place without human stimuli: a wooden piston sinking into the surface of a yellow sponge fixed to the wall; a white cloth suspended by one corner slowly lowered onto the floor, then raised. For her sound pieces, Nakajima

hovers over her miniaturised populations like a deity intervening to shape a greater narrative. But she sees her role as essentially hands-off. "Accidents, chances and success and failure in my work do not belong to me, they belong to the objects," she says. "Of course they are my work, my materials, but I don't want to possess their ideas, gestures and behaviours. I expect them to be the same to me. In a way I'm also owned by them but my idea is mine and I'm responsible for my behaviour. We are equal in this sense."

Nakajima's imminent debut LP *Four Forms* features a recording of a tabletop set in Oxford last January that captures her orchestra of objects in four crisp and subtly varied trajectories of harmonious agitation. With the performances removed from their original space, Nakajima remains neutral on whether she would prefer listeners to picture the objects and actions behind the sounds, or to focus purely upon each click, ring and scrape as disembodied occurrences. "They can listen as they want. I don't want to impose anything on people," she says.

The inner sleeve shows her sound-making devices in greater detail, revealing a collection of bowls, cooking pans, tins, plastic cutlery, pebbles, colourful beads and toys. "I somehow react to those objects which carry the sense of simplicity within them and where the form expresses the functions of use," she says. "Weight, texture, colour, size and shape all reflect the place and history of their origins. They are the best critique and

best audience. The connotations they could express are infinite. One white bowl can explain the size of our hands, the type of food we eat. It is made of clay, soil, water, fire. If you place it on somewhere, for example on the floor, we can also start to discuss why table, why chair and why floor. Why we sit, why we stand or walk. It's infinite. I can just think about it for ever."

Such openness lends itself generously to collaboration. At the time of writing, the final day of *Fall* was scheduled to include *No Fall*, the debut performance of a new duo formed by Nakajima with Keiko Yamamoto, cofounder of London's Cafe Oto. She also teams up with David Toop for *Sculpture*, an ongoing series where the pair improvise together and are joined by other artists who contribute their own short sound sculpture pieces. "When I talk about something to someone, my sentences become fragmented and ideas drift from one to another. Somehow David is good to continue my fragmented sentences, so we are fine with having conversations," Nakajima says, reflecting upon how an initially one-off collaboration reached its fifth instalment in Bergen in November. "Sculpture is maybe a little like this. There are no clear boundaries between words, sounds, ideas and interests; they are giving space to each other. It starts from somewhere and ends at somewhere unpredictable." □ Rie Nakajima's *Four Forms* is released this month by Consumer Waste
Abi Bliss