RYOJI IKEDA: THE TRANSFINITE
MAY 20–JUNE 11
ARTIST STATEMENT

As an artist/composer, my intention is always polarized by concepts of the “beautiful” and the “sublime”.

To me, beauty is crystal: rationality, precision, simplicity, elegance, delicacy; the sublime is infinitesimal, immensity, indescribable, ineffable.

To me, the purest beauty is the world of mathematics. Its perfect assembly of numbers, magnitudes and forms persist, independent of us. The aesthetic experience of the sublime in mathematics is awe-inspiring. It is similar to the experience we have when we confront the vast magnitude of the universe, which always leaves us open-mouthed.

As a composer/artist, I compose music, visuals, materials, physical phenomena and abstract concepts. For this project, the invisible multi-substance of data is the subject of my composition. Three large-scale audiovisual installations are re-orchestrated into a single, symphonic work as the transfinite.

This project explores the transfinite (the infinite that is quantitative and ordered) intersection that lies between such polarizations—the beautiful and the sublime; music and mathematics; performance and installation; composer and visual artist; black and white; 0s and 1s.

—Ryoji Ikeda

www.ryojiikeda.com

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Japan’s leading electronic composer and visual artist, Ryoji Ikeda, has gained a reputation as one of the few international artists working convincingly across both visual and sonic media. He has been hailed by critics as one of the most radical and innovative contemporary composers for his live performances, sound installations and album releases. The versatile range of Ikeda’s research is demonstrated by his collaborations with visual artist Carsten Nicolai, choreographer William Forsythe, photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto, and architect Toyo Ito, amongst others.

Ikeda has presented his work at a number of international venues and festivals, including the SPILL Festival in London; Nuit Blanche and Centre Pompidou in Paris; the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo; Dream Amsterdam; the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre; the Deep Space Gallery at Ars Electronica Center in Linz; the Surrey Art Gallery, Vancouver; and Garage Center for Contemporary Culture in Moscow. Ikeda presented his first New York exhibition, the transfinite, at the FIAF Gallery in September 2010.

In 2001, Ikeda was awarded the Ars Electronica Golden Nica prize in the digital music category and he was short-listed for a World Technology Award in 2003, and then again in 2010.

CREDITS

Commissioned by Park Avenue Armory
Co-produced by Park Avenue Armory and Forma

THE INFINITE BETWEEN “0” AND “1”

In the transfinite, Ryoji Ikeda takes the pursuits and structures of mathematics as one ‘material’ for his aesthetic, and does so with monumental and poetic result. At the center of the work is his sonic and visual re-purposing of binary code: 0 and 1. These numbers form the string codes used to represent all information in the digital world.

While few of us understand just how the intricacies of this work, we are impacted by it in every conceivable way and on a daily basis. Ikeda is drawn to that which is at the edge of comprehensibility and human perception, and he distills it into an experience we can visually and physically connect to. In so doing, he also offers us a tangible glimpse into the sublime purity that exists within mathematics.

Ikeda’s installation can be divided into multiple experiences, synchronicities, vantage points and self-contained ideas that inter-relate and coexist within the overall piece. The Wade Thompson Drill Hall itself affords each aspect of the installation ample space for his chosen scale—both macro and micro in dimension. On one side of the wall is an exploration of dynamism, the other a strictly calculated mathematical order. Both are physically immersive experiences, visually and aurally.

Some of us find a sense of joyous wonderment in mathematics—taking exhilaration from the awe of mathematical infinity, or conversely, a sensation of security in the ordered existence of fixed and proven end points. Others find any and everything mathematical to be fascinatingly beyond reach, irrelevant to the scent of hensibility and human perception, and he distills it into an experience we can visually and physically connect to. In so doing, he also offers us a tangible glimpse into the sublime purity that exists within mathematics.

Ikeda straddles these poles and creates an art that is like that of a poet; he offers us a way of being in possession of something otherwise overwhelming or previously unnoticed, illuminating the existence of endless possibility.

—Kristy Edmunds, Consulting Artistic Director

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Tuesdays–Sundays: 12:00–7:00 pm
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Monday, May 30: 12:00–7:00 pm
Closed all other Mondays

SPECIAL VIEWING HOURS FOR MEMBERS
Saturdays: 11:00 am–12:00 pm

ADMISSION
General Admission: $12
Students/Seniors/Groups (8 or more): $10
Children 10 and under: FREE
Park Avenue Armory Members: FREE

PROGRAMS
Artist Talk: Ryoji Ikeda in Conversation with Kristy Edmunds
Saturday, May 21: 2:00–3:00 pm
FREE with a ticket to the transfinite. Pre-registration required. For more information, visit www.armoryonpark.org.

Imaging Infinity: Decoding Your Family Data through Art
Educational workshops for families with children ages 5-12.
Saturday, May 28 and Sundays, May 29 and June 5:
10:00 am–12:00 pm
$5 material fee per participant; free for Members.
Pre-registration required. For more information, email artseducation@armoryonpark.org or call (212) 933-5803.

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