

# Mai YAMASHITA + Naoto KOBAYASHI

Interviewer : Nozomi Kobori

**CPUE:** How did you two arrive at the opus "telepathy" from the theme of dialogue?

**Yamashita:** We are a pair, and constantly engage in dialogue with each other both in production and just ordinarily.

**Kobayashi:** We decided to take the very direct pattern of dialogue between two people for this exhibition, but the dialogue we have with something else is the motif of almost all of our other works. In fact, none of our works is based on the theme of encounter between us two. So this was a first attempt. But Yamashita is the sort who does not put credence in words, among other things (laughter), and so we took up the challenge of dialogue without words.

**Yamashita:** We argue a lot. You know how, when people quarrel, they say a lot of things they don't really mean, and the argument goes off in a direction that doesn't make much sense. For this reason, I don't put much stock in words, and always get a feeling (from words) that is divorced from what is actually thought. That's why I wanted to believe that we are linked a little more together on a non-verbal level, but the wall between individuals usually gets in the way.

**Kobayashi:** When we are producing works as well, we can be completely convinced that the other shares the exact same image, but later find out that there is a gap.

**Yamashita:** Experiences like this drove it home to me that we can't communicate without the use of words as tools. They set me to thinking about various things.

**CPUE:** The "plus 1" in the title of this exhibition stood for the viewers. When you create works, to what extent do you usually bear the viewer in mind?

**Kobayashi:** I think that, when we do something, whether it's climbing a mountain to make a sculpture or licking a chunk of candy for six consecutive months, the experience is somewhat extraordinary. We show the results to people, and I think this provides a kind of vicarious experience. When they see us doing something ridiculous that would normally not be done, they can imagine the results from our experience. That's how we regard our distance from the viewer. As I see it, the sharing of experience is basic to human life. People who climbed mountains, people who went into space - we all share their many experiences as individual human beings, and store the images in our brains.

**Yamashita:** We sometimes produce works in other countries, and the point is to make something that will be understood by all even without verbal explanations - works that can more or less be appreciated in any and all countries. What we do is generally very straightforward action, and this makes for relatively little deviation in the understanding of the people who see it. Even if it is something that would be hard to convey in words, perhaps our works will do a better job of relating it. In this sense as well, to us, our works are tools of communication.

