

\*\*Sato read this letter on 14 January 2005 at a press conference held at Spiral Hall.  
translation: Pamela Miki

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Hello, my name is Risa Sato.  
How is everybody?

I find that usually when I'm explaining my work to someone, I start tripping over my words, get confused, and have a habit of falling into awkward silences. Which is why I have chosen instead today to write to you.

In May last year, when I was sounded out about entering the art competition for the Expo, I heard the theme for the exhibition was "Diverse Ways of Happiness". To tell the truth this made me quite depressed.

Now I'm sure there were various reasons for choosing this particular theme.

Even realizing this, I thought: give me a break.

It's because when I think of the word "happiness" as it is generally used, I immediately associate it with being compared to others.

I can't think of anything less conducive to happiness than to have a relative value assigned to everything, and one's happiness defined by others !

This was the starting point for my work here.

So for me, just what does constitute absolute happiness ?

I had some idea, but try as I might, couldn't come up with answer.

It would seem I'm basically a negative sort of thinker, and find it hard to consider things from a positive perspective.

OK, so what to me is "unhappiness" then ?

What is it that I dread from day to day, the fills me with unease ?

What kind of dreams do I class as nightmares ?

Suddenly, I had the answer.

It's "losing things".

I fear the tragedy of losing something, and lacking it.

I harbor a great unease about how I would live after such a tragedy.

When I think about it, even right now writing about it... I start to hyperventilate.

If only I could rid myself of this dread, imagine how happy I'd be !

What ? Happy, did you say ?

Now... I know ... what makes... me happy.

Slowly, painfully, it dawned on me.

Though of course there are differences in degree, everyone feels they lack something.

It could be something spiritual, ideological, physical, environmental, innate, acquired, unforeseen, ongoing...

And all the while, an infinite number of "blows" are "wresting" something from someday, creating "loss".

In the end, we are all aliens, incomplete on our own.

The player of the "player alien" title refers to a player piano.

We forget that we are all aliens, and automatically define those who do not conform to our ideals, or whom we cannot understand, as aliens.

Like a puzzle, we build then smash, smash then build.

The title is a reference to this.

One day when we are finally able to stop playing this game, perhaps phrases like "Diverse Ways of Happiness" will also disappear from the world.

I have this feeling, albeit vague, that they might.

The form the work takes meanwhile also expresses a desire to remain starting, relaxed and unmoving, even if one lacks something, even if in future one will lack something, and even if one sees a person lacking something.

In conclusion therefore, I'm afraid those "Divers Way of Happiness" were a mystery to me.

So at the very least, I present to you my position, which I hope will give you some idea of my version of "happiness".

So long then.

If I have anything else to confess, I'll be in touch.

01/ 14/ 2005

Risa Sato

\*alien : a. foreign, incongruous, different

n. (resident) foreigner, spaceman, being from another star

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