ALMINE RECH

Ryoji Ikeda

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"Technology is not neutral. We're inside of what we make, and it's inside of us. We're living in a world of connections – and it matters which ones get made and unmade." - Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*

Visionary artist and composer Ryoji Ikeda presents new outcomes from his groundbreaking data-verse trilogy at Almine Rech Brussels. This ever-evolving exhibition, the culmination of over two decades of tireless research and technical prowess, merges art, music, and science into a cornucopia of light and sound, inviting viewers on a journey from the infinitesimal to the infinite - from quantum mechanics to cosmology and astrophysics.

Born in 1966 in Gifu, Japan, and currently based in Paris, Ikeda is a pioneer in fusing art, music, and technology. Throughout his career, he has used creative coding to develop an audiovisual language exploring "an aesthetics of data, information, and computer science." Known for his hypnotic audiovisual installations and glitch music, Ikeda composes using sine tones, noise, and basses equipped with mathematical formulas.

To create his tour-de-force trilogy, Ikeda worked with the data sets provided by renowned institutions such as CERN, NASA, and the Human Genome Project. The information from these institutions forms the raw material of the data-driven multilayered environment he presents. Adding another layer is data.gram, a new series reimagining elements from the data-verse trilogy, presented for the first time in Europe in an extensive installation of 16 screens.

Ikeda masterfully manages vast scientific data to compose these works, creating a choreographed, stunning visual and auditory experience. A medley of bright lights, visceral patterns, and calming acoustics interplay reveals how Ikeda's relentless audiovisual works evoke digital media's opacity and totalitarian grip on our lives. His artistry delves into the visual language of data mapping, spanning from the atomic to the cosmic scale, as seen in his looped, 48-second films. Works like data.gram 09, showcasing molecular structures of viruses, or data.gram 12, depicting DNA sequence mutations, depart from conventional representations of scientific data. Through abstract imagery derived from graphs, 3D modeling, and information collation, Ikeda's films challenge our perceptions of biology, urban planning, and astronomy.

Incorporating a critical perspective on the Anthropocene, Ikeda's work reflects humanity's impact on the planet, highlighting the tension between natural processes and human-made systems. This aligns with non-Western philosophies that emphasize harmony with nature. As Timothy Morton explains, hyperobjects are "things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans," a concept paralleling Ikeda's exploration of vast data sets and the cosmic scale. Yuk Hui's philosophy of cosmo-technics—how different cultures integrate their cosmologies with technological practices—also deeply resonates with Ikeda's work. Hui argues that technology should be part of a broader, harmonious relationship with the cosmos. Ikeda's works reflect this philosophy, where manipulating data and digital media serves as both artistic expression and meditative exploration of our place within the technological and natural world.

Ikeda's symphonies of data are not just aesthetic experiences but philosophical inquiries that ask us to reconsider our relationship with the technologies we create and the data we generate. His art transcends Western technological determinism, embracing a holistic worldview that acknowledges all entities' interdependence. In data.gram 22, for instance, urban maps blend to obscure distinctions between cities while data.gram 26 transforms satellite data into a tangled web devoid of the earth's surface. Each film reminds us of the inherent limitations of our knowledge, urging us to confront the mysteries that persist despite our best efforts at comprehension.

Visiting Ryoji Ikeda's exhibition at Almine Rech Brussels offers not just a visual experience but a transformative journey. It invites viewers to discover the complex beauty of often invisible data and feel the profound connection between the microscopic and the macroscopic. Through Ikeda's process of unraveling immense data sets and codifying them for aesthetic consumption, the intense visual experiences of his work push the threshold of human perception and invite reconsideration of the organizing patterns and structures of what we conventionally call reality.

- Press release by Fernanda Brenner, curator and writer