

Protective Seal

Elena Knox 2020

7 channel digital video, sound

Summary

The artist took a robot seal on a long journey, ending almost at the North Pole. The work is about climate change and human relationship to machines.

In a loose narrative, the robot ("PARO") finds out about seals suffering due to warming in the Arctic, does some research, and then sets off to see it for himself. It ends on a contemplative note as he climbs a mountain at the North Pole and looks out over the land, calculating data.

The piece contains many interviews with elderly people both in Japan (@Echigo-Tsumari) and in Svalbard (@North Pole). The robot "interviews" them about how their lands have changed over their lifetimes. Some are visible and some are in voiceover.

It is a peacefully-paced, multi-channel installation. Each channel plays on loop. Sync is not required.

Total running time of all channels: 1:38:09
Subtitles (embedded): Japanese < > English
Creation was supported by Waseda University, Miraikan, Japan Science and Technology Agency, Galleri Svalbard, and Australia House at Echigo-Tsumari Art Field.



Exhibition notes

7 video channels are distributed in a single darkened space or sequence of spaces according to the practicalities of the venue.

All videos have sound, and some have detailed passages of dialogue. Therefore:

5/7 channels have sound playback through headphones. Headphone splitters with preamp can be provided by the artist.

2/7 channels use loud speakers for ambient sound in the space.

These 2 videos are different lengths, and the soundtracks will phase creating continuous variation in the soundscape.

It is possible, though not essential, to display the actual robot PARO, "performing" on an automatic setting. In this case the artist's black sealskin and blacklight spotlight shall be used so that the robot glows in the dark.

A printed panel with supplementary information including acknowledgements and credits will be displayed.

A document with example exhibition configurations is appended.

Chapter 1

10:06

Tokyo

The robot is at home with its elderly owner. They are reading news on the internet, and they read about seals currently suffering in the North Pole.

They are shocked.

The indoor robot seal realises he is very naïve and sheltered.

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Chapter 2

08:30

Aquarium

PARO goes to the aquarium to visit captive live seals, “talk” with them, and get their perspective.

There’s a scientific voiceover from an interviewee in Svalbard, North Pole.



Chapter 3

47:47

Countryside

PARO goes to Japan’s countryside where the winters are full of snow and ice.

He interviews the Japanese village elders in their homes.

They talk about how they see the climate changing.



Chapter 4

07:37

Journey

The little robot now ventures outdoors, travelling across snow and ice to reach the North Pole.

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Chapter 5

10:43

Svalbard

About to run out of power, PARO finds shelter with an elderly couple living in an old coal mine in a mountain.

They also talk to him about how they see the climate changing.

He sees the Northern Lights (aurora).



Chapter 6

07:27

North Pole

PARO decides to climb a mountain and survey the Arctic, his "homeland".

The mountain is very strenuous to climb. Seals are not made for climbing mountains, but PARO is a robot, so he persists.



Chapter 7

06:52

Eventually PARO reaches the peak of the mountain and looks out, using his special abilities to flashback through time.

There is a voiceover from the old woman in the coal mine.

We leave him up there, calculating... to be continued...

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Credits

主演
パロ

共演
柳川 幸雄
ベラ、マイサン、リラ、ロフェン
ポラリアのアザラシ飼育員
ヤンマーティン・ベルグ
竹内 清司
竹内 タケ
佐藤 富義
佐藤 スミエ
佐藤 敬一
田中 いずみ
竹内 信之
竹内 悦子
南雲 トメ
竹内 二三四
小堺 サツ子
小堺 哲也
早川 定雄
エヴァ・グロエンダル
カリ・アホラ

作家：エレナ・ノックス
音楽、写真、追加撮影と音、勇気：リンジー・ウエップ
追加の映像：ニーオルスン、スバルバル諸島のツェッペリン天文台
「Maraschino Moon」：ヴェルナー・タウツによる、ハインツ・キースリング
楽団による演奏、Brillant-Musikスイスによる公開
ロボット：産総研日本の柴田 崇徳 教授

翻訳：河合 政之、野中 克哉
通訳：野中 克哉、羽鳥 大介、荒川 洋子
記事翻訳、現場通訳(日本)：鈴木 淑子
オンライン記事：ブルース・ライト

ロケ撮影：ノールウェイ、スバルバル諸島、日本

協賛
科学技術振興機構 戦略的創造研究推進事業 (CREST)
早稲田大学
ギャラリー・スバルバル諸島
越後妻有 大地の芸術祭の里 オーストラリア・ハウス
東京のオーストラリア大使館
Lull Studio

以下の方々に謝意を表します
エスペン・ラフターとポラリアの皆様
渡邊 克巳 教授
ベッツィ・ウェザーヘッド 教授
エリン・ハグダル 教授
アン・カルヒオ 博士
飯塚 哲郎
小野塚 愛

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Credits

Starring
Paro

Co-starring
Yukio Yanagawa
Bella, Mai San, Lyra, Loffen
Seal keepers at Polaria
Jan-Martin Berg
Seiji Takeuchi
Take Takeuchi
Tomiyoshi Sato
Sumie Sato
Keiichi Sato
Izumi Tanaka
Nobuyuki Takeuchi
Etsuko Takeuchi
Tome Nagumo
Fumiyo Takeuchi
Satsuko Kozakai
Tetsuya Kozakai
Sadao Hayakawa
Eva Grøndal
Kari Ahola

Created by Elena Knox
Music, stills, additional camera, sound and heroism by Lindsay Webb
Additional footage from Zeppelin Observatory, Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard
Maraschino Moon by Werner Tautz performed by Heinz Kiessling
Orchestra for Brillant Musik Switzerland
Robot developed by Takanori Shibata for AIST Japan

Translation by Masayuki Kawai and Katsuya Nonaka
Interpretation by Katsuya Nonaka, Daisuke Hatori and Yoko Arakawa
On-set and article translation (Japan) by Yoshiko Suzuki
Online article by Bruce Wright

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Lull Studio

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