

Artist China Blue Shows at Tokyo Experimental Festival



*8 Bit
Cricket.
Image
courtesy of
the artist.*

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Interacting with electronic animals used to only be possible in Philip K. Dick stories. For October and November of this year, though, at the Tokyo Experimental Festival Vol. 8 in that city's Hongo district, American sound artist China Blue exhibited an art piece that proves otherwise.

China Blue was invited to the festival as a representative of the American art community. Founder and executive director of The Engine Institute, she creates artworks that marry art and science. She specifically created The Engine Institute—based in Providence, Rhode Island—“to harness the strengths of artists and scientists to benefit communities.” Current Engine programs include a partnership with NASA and the Rhode Island Space Grant to create a movie about sound and human perception, as well as the annual Firefly

Festival, which educates the public about the importance of dark skies and holds workshops showing visitors how to build their own electronic fireflies.

The piece Blue brought to Tokyo was called *8 Bit Cricket* and consisted of a series of simple circuits that responded to sound. If no one were close to the piece, the circuits would randomly fire on and off, creating an artificial “cricket chorus.” If, however, visitors turned flashlights on and off near the artwork, the cricket song would change.

“During my trip I noticed the sound of the crickets,” Blue said, “and I was surprised that they sounded different from ours and oddly more like my electronic crickets.” For the Tokyo festival, art indeed seemed to mimic reality.