

S.C.ALLIANCE Inc., with Shen Kyomei RIBEIRO,
Gabriel LEVY, and Ari COLARES (Brazil)

“Sky Bridge”

Fourth Report: Performance and Reflection

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Goals of the Fourth and Final Report

On December 23, 2021, the completed *Sky Bridge* full-dome movie production by S.C.ALLIANCE Inc. was shown at Saitama City Space Theater, bringing the project to a close. Fortunately, at this time the COVID-19 pandemic was not in a severe state. With restrictions on the number of attendees, the work was able to be shown to the public audience.

In this final report, I will report on the showing of the completed work. I will also look back on the project as a whole based on an interview with OTAKE Mayumi and OSHIO Misato conducted on January 12, 2022. Lastly, I would like to end this report with a short discussion of my opinions as a process observer of this international collaborative project. Due to the pandemic, excluding attending the showing of the completed work, my work as an observer had to be done entirely online. The creators themselves also did the majority of the work while utilizing the Internet. I would also like to provide an overview of the possibilities and limitations of international collaboration (cooperation) conducted remotely.



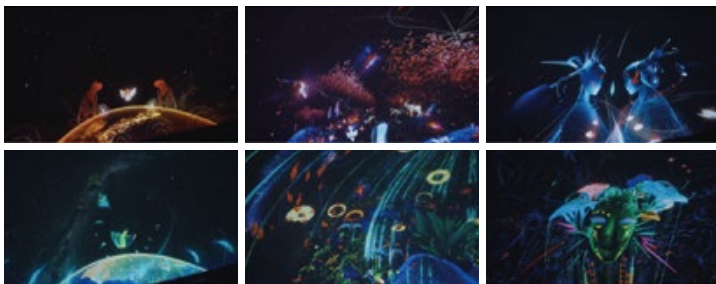
The Showing of the Completed *Sky Bridge*

The completed work consists of the 12-minute long actual video as well as a 2-minute-long making-of video. I have already discussed the overall composition of the work in my first report. However, I would like to convey

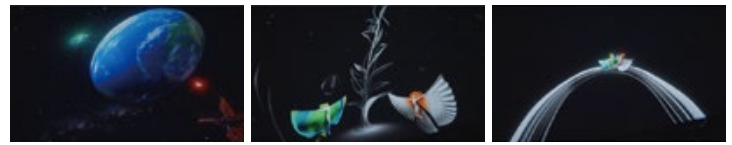
Introduction/*ki*: Japan and Brazil appear



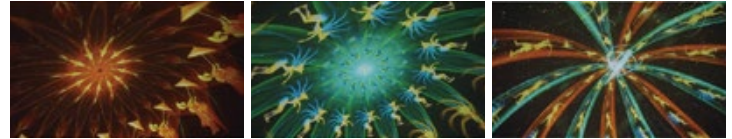
Development/*sho*: Japanese and Brazilian spirits are born + the world of myths



Twist/*ten*: The two spirits meet.



The cultural exchange party



Conclusion/*ketsu*: Japan and Brazil floating in the same ocean



From the making-of video



the atmosphere of the work using screenshots taken from a recording of the work's showing made by S.C.Alliance. Of course, it is impossible to fully convey a full-dome movie using flat images. It is also impossible to recreate a moving video using still images. Accordingly, please understand that these images only show the general flow of the work.

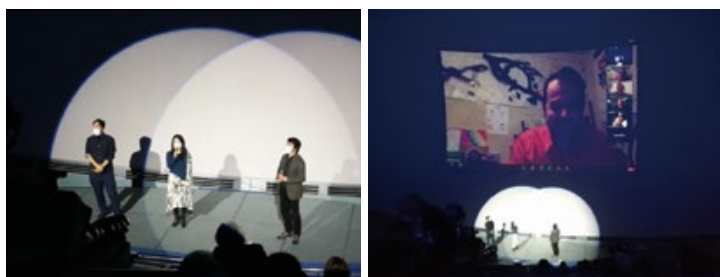
The work consists only of music and video. No words, including any kind of narration, are used in the actual work. Only at the end of the making-of video is the following message stated in Portuguese and Japanese:

People from all over the world are connected by the “Sky Bridge”.
We celebrate the diversity of cultures and ways of life, and we hope that together we can create a better future for our planet by uniting with one another.

People who watch this work may freely enjoy the combination of music and video, and interpret their own message from the images and title. My own personal interpretation was that Japan and Brazil, which are located on opposite sides of the Earth, form a variety of contrasts in many different areas and, particularly in this video, their symmetry was striking. For example, even the use of color created contrast, with Japan primarily depicted with red tones and Brazil primarily depicted with green tones. (These colors are also connected to the colors used on each country's national flag.) The work's music also highlighted the contrasting composition of the video images. Changes in the music's tone expressed the story's structural changes: the “introduction/*ki*” in which both countries appear; the “development/*sho*” in which we move from Japan to Brazil; and the banquet during the “twist/*ten*” when music from the two countries combines and fuses. For 12 uninterrupted minutes, the work plays in the awe-inspiring space of a planetarium, its imagery drawing viewers in. When the work is finished, it feels like it only lasted a moment. This sen-

sation is also mixed with a feeling of tension—so great one wasn't even able to blink—evaporating.

When the work was finished showing, members of the production team held a talk about the project's creation. These included Executive Producer Otake Mayumi, Movie Director HASHIMOTO Daisuke, and Music Producer and musician KOBAYASHI Yohei. In addition, members of the Brazilian team participated online via screen: Music Producer Shen Kyomei RIBEIRO, and musicians Ari COLARES and Gabriel LEVY. First, Otake provided an overview of the project. Then the production process and how the members collaborated online were explained. After that, the Japanese and Brazilian production staff discussed what they enjoyed and found fulfilling. I have already discussed the production process in this series of reports, so I apologize for repeating myself, but what the members from both countries emphasized was that they discovered new possibilities by collaborating remotely. Originally, it was planned that Brazilian members would come to Japan to engage in collaborative work. This ended up being impossible. However, working online had become normalized, and using the Internet actually doubled the amount of time that the members collaborated. The musicians from both countries were able to listen in real time to each other's performances, improvise, and combine their performances to create the work's music. The process of adjusting and synchronizing the work's video and music was also conducted collaboratively between the Japanese and Brazilian teams. The members said that the experience was very fresh and novel. They said that although they never actually met in person, the Japanese and Brazilian collaborators were also able to build friendships by working together online.



During the informal talk with staff from the Japan Foundation after the showing, the possibility of showing the work in Brazil was discussed. There are no planetarium projectors in Brazil that can show a video like this work, and the planetariums existing in Brazil are small in scale. Because of this, sharing the work as VR content instead of showing it at a planetarium is being considered.

Looking Back on the Production

In an interview around three weeks after the project presentation showing, I asked Otake and Oshio about how they felt about working on the project and the project's challenges.

First, we talked about international exchange and international collaboration. Otake compared working on this project with her other production experiences, but the very first thing she said was that this project resulted in the raising of a good team. In any collaboration between people from different countries, there will be differences in communication. Not only language barriers, but also differences in the way people negotiate and assert themselves. Such projects start with the participants watching to see how the other group responds, and with confusion. In this project,

Brazilian team Music Producer Ribeiro had studied in Japan and was also good at Japanese. Even so, when the project started and they first began working with each other, there was some tension on the Japanese side. Particularly with regard to working together online, there was anxiety about people's thoughts and expectations beyond what the screen could convey. However, after one or two months of repeated and frequent planning meetings, the project members had established a communication rhythm, and things went smoothly after that. As the project members worried about how each other's countries were doing under the pandemic, their desire to do the best work possible given the limitations may have also been a positive.

One of the things that made this project difficult was the nature of making a full-dome movie. It is normal for the plan for a video to change as it is being made. When making a documentary, faithfully following the course of events will result in the scope of the video expanding. Even dramatic films become better works when the creation process continues throughout the script writing, filming, and editing stages. When making a video, it is almost impossible for the project budget to stay the same as originally planned. Especially for this project, changes occurred frequently during the production process because, from the start of the planning stage, the focus was on experimenting and trying to create a new kind of planetarium work that had never been seen before, without regard for the commercial value. The project's budgetary framework also had to be changed because of things such as the need to add more people to work on CG production as the video team's work became more and more complicated. Because of COVID-19, the Brazilian creators were forced to give up on coming to Japan. This freed up some of the budget to cover other things, but some parts of the work were only able to be completed (through considerable effort) thanks to the members' love for the project. Such situations required the Japan Foundation to be flexible toward changing the planned budget. In addition, there was no requirement for an audience for the performance showing in December. However, just before this time, the Japan Foundation requested that a general audience be allowed to watch the work. The project's members told me that they understood why the Japan Foundation wanted to see the best results possible as the situation changed again and again under COVID-19. However, the project's end goal, as it were, of whether it would be shown to a general audience was a very important matter, and switching to allowing a general audience at the last minute made things difficult for the project team. S.C.Alliance later informed The Japan Foundation of this issue, and it was recognized that there had been a difference in interpretation.

Despite these difficulties, the members said that overall, they felt significance in having been given the chance to take on the challenge of a new kind of creative activity. They also said that, in part thanks to a great team, international collaboration was very enjoyable. They were forced to do everything online due to COVID-19, but this also helped them to find new possibilities. As a chance to focus on their own artistic sensibilities and try something new without worrying about costs, Otake thought that this project (organized by the Japan Foundation) was a particularly meaningful opportunity for young creators.

When I asked about how this work will be used in the future, I was told that they wanted to submit it to a planetarium movie festival and find other opportunities to show it overseas. They were also thinking about finding chances to show it at international expositions such as Expo 2025, scheduled to be held in Osaka. This project was a collaborative Japanese-Brazilian work. The members believe that it practically expresses the people of Japan and Brazil as well as cultural exchange, and that it should be proactively shown in spaces for international exchange.

Overall View as an Observer

Lastly, I would like to discuss my views on three points with regard to this project from my position as a process observer: full-dome movies, international collaborative works, and remote work.

First, a full dome movie is an unusual kind of project for the Japan Foundation. As I have said repeatedly in my reports, particularly in Japan, planetariums are limited to educational purposes, and they usually adjoin museums and similar facilities run by the local municipal government. I felt that there was a lot of meaning in this work and its goal of being an artistic full-dome movie that would freely move the emotions of both audiences and the creators. I have heard that overseas, filmmakers are entering the planetarium movie world. Japan has many planetariums, and I think that new possibilities for artistic activities in their domed spaces should be demonstrated.

Next, regarding international collaborations, it is true that with this project, leadership tended to come from the Japan side. In part, this is likely because the only supporting organization was the Japan Foundation (no assistance was received from overseas foundations, etc.). However, I also think that this may have been due to a general lack of symmetry in mutual understanding between the societies of Japan and Brazil. In this project, the knowledge and experience that Brazilian members such as Music Producer Ribeiro had regarding Japan were greater than those of the Japanese members regarding Brazil. Because of this, I believe it was easier for the Brazilian members to adapt to Japanese culture. For the Japanese creators, the Brazilian members were the first Brazilian people they had worked with, and this project became an opportunity for them to learn about Brazil. Not just in this project but in all international exchange, there is always asymmetry in the relationships between countries. With regard to Brazil and Japan, Japanese-Brazilians have had an important position, and they have contributed greatly to conveying the culture of Japan to Brazil over the generations. A Japanese-Brazilian artist (Camila GONDO) participated in this project as well. Her depictions of the sights of Brazil and Japan are part of her identity. Today, a not insignificant number of Japanese-Brazilians are living in Japan. By conveying the culture of Brazil to Japan, they have increased Brazil's presence in Japan and promoted international exchange and understanding. There is a need to create environments for this, and I think that this work could provide an opportunity for people in Japan to feel how close Japan and Brazil are.

I have already discussed remote work in my reports previously. For this project, everything had to be done online, but this restriction was turned into a positive, namely engagement in a collaborative process in a way that would not have happened before the pandemic. If this project had happened before the pandemic, its international exchange and collaborative work would have had to have been squeezed into a short period of time when the Brazilian members came to Japan. Because the Brazilian members were not able to come to Japan, however, all of the members were able to work together closely, repeatedly, and over a long period of time. It is impossible to compare and say which way would have been better, but it is true that the project's members developed a new style of collaborative creation. Even after COVID-19 subsides, it is likely that Internet-based remote work will not disappear. I am confident that when that time comes, it will result in the creation of a method that effectively combines both face-to-face and remote work in a balanced way.

Japanese original text by Prof. Minamide,

English translation from the original text by the Japan Foundation