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SHIMABUKU Cucumber Journey, 2000



The train from London to Birmingham takes two hours, but I made the trip by boat on a canal built in the eighteenth century, taking two weeks. During this trip, I made pickled vegetables. The vegetables and cucumbers that I bought fresh in London were pickled by the time I reached Birmingham. When I conceived of this project I didn't know how to make pickles, but by the end of my trip I had learned something about it and my pickled tomatoes were quite good. While traveling from London to Birmingham, I got recipes for pickles from other people, and I watched the sheep and water birds and leaves floating in the water. And I watched the cucumbers slowly turning into pickles. There was an English couple, Jeff and Jean, who were traveling with me and taught me about the operation of the boat. I learned quite a bit about England while talking to them almost every day. Geoff and Jean began by saying, "Why is making pickles while traveling on a boat art?" But they ended up saying, "Maybe it is art. Why not call it art?" Geoff and Jean encouraged me to eat English cooking every day, making things like sausages and roast beef morning, noon, and night. Gobbling down this food, I got fatter than I had ever been before. A boat trip and pickles: a slow trip and a slow food. There are places to which you can only travel slowly, and there are things that can only be made slowly.

Arriving in Birmingham, I gave the pickles to friends in Birmingham to eat. The pickles will begin a new journey in people's bodies.