

Statement for abstract speaking - sharing uncertainty and collective acts

by Mika Kuraya and Koki Tanaka

Having experienced the Great East Japan Earthquake, a disaster unprecedented on a national scale, what message should Japan be sending to the world? Alternatively, what questions should it be asking? Regardless of the form of expression taken by the Japan Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale, by some methodology or another, whether it be a tangible, practical approach, or encouraging abstract thinking, in my view what unfolds ought to reflect Japan's post-quake conditions.

Under this year's plan, by assigning equal status to compositional elements that include several projects underway since before the Biennale; collective acts referred to as "precarious tasks"; videos documenting the process of collaborative work carried out by people under special circumstances; an exhibition of the cumulative records of all these, plus text and catalogs referencing their processes, we will address the theme, "How is it possible to take on the experiences of others as our own?" or "How can we share, or take joint possession of, the experience of events?"

Both the artist, Tanaka, and the curator, Kuraya, have experienced the disaster indirectly, through the likes of power cuts and damage caused by radiation. Confronted on the other hand by the direct experiences of people who lost close relatives, whose homes and possessions were destroyed, or who were forced by the nuclear accident to abandon their usual way of life we are left feeling torn between those actually on the frontline, and those watching from the sidelines. Yet outside of Japan, all Japanese are perceived as victims of the disaster. Many people overseas are not even aware of the distance between Tokyo and Fukushima. This being the case, is there any point in differentiating between people's experiences? Each of us, as an individual, is attempting to take on board, interpret, and understand this world in a different way.

People who have experienced a major event on different scales or in different depths, people living in countries or regions far removed from that event, people of future generations separated from it by time: we are innumerable points positioned within these spatial and temporal distances. The various locations where projects have been carried out to date, and this exhibition, and the projects that will continue on from here, are designed as repositories for us, the innumerable points so to speak; where we can intersect and linger.

By bundling experiences multiplied to various levels – these layers of experience that cannot be shared – perhaps we may explore the possibilities for somehow understanding things/events/the world. By retelling tangible phenomena in a slightly abstract way, surely we can aid the understanding of things?

Modest platforms for understanding events and sharing experiences: it is in transcending the temporary opportunity of the exhibition format that these were conceived and formed.