



LUNDS
UNIVERSITET

Post-Disaster Recovery Through Art

A case study of Reborn-Art Festival in Ishinomaki, Japan

A Master's Thesis for the Degree Master of Arts (120 Credits) in Visual Culture

Eimi Ann Tagore-Erwin

Division of Art History and Visual Studies
Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences
Lund University
KOVM12, Master Thesis, 15 credits
Supervisor: Max Liljefors
Spring semester 2018

Acknowledgments

I gratefully acknowledge the generosity of the Asian Studies Program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, the patience and support of my supervisor and fellow colleagues at Lund University, and the continued love and encouragement of my family and partner.

I also thank all the wonderful people in Ishinomaki, Tokyo, and New York who have so generously donated their time to answer my many questions and further my understanding of this project. Without your help, this thesis would not have been possible.

Abstract

This thesis closely examines Reborn-Art Festival, a new arts and culture festival inaugurated during the summer of 2017 in one of the regions hardest hit by the triple disaster that devastated the northeastern coastline of Japan in 2011. In the face of an unspeakable tragedy like the Great East Japan Earthquake art may not seem like a central concern, but this thesis focuses on that subject specifically, investigating the ways in which art has become part of the healing process in the small community of Ishinomaki by way of the large-scale festival. The proliferation of ‘contemporary art festivals for revitalization’ in rural areas of Japan have become an increasingly researched phenomenon due to their engagement with *machizukuri*, or community-building. This analysis of Reborn-Art Festival furthers understanding of art’s potential to regenerate communities by providing opportunity for social interaction and avenues to combat depopulation. In addition, the festival’s post-disaster context provides necessary insights into art practice as the socio-cultural work of processing the human experience of disaster and aiding in empathic understanding of trauma. The festival’s organizational dimensions as well as individual artworks within it are considered primarily via interviews with five participating artists, the festival’s executive director and volunteer director, and through interaction with various community members and festival attendees during fieldwork conducted in Japan. Community-oriented art initiatives have been criticized in Japanese and Euro-American art circles for their heteronomy and instrumentalism, making it difficult to contextualize initiatives like Reborn-Art Festival within the realm of socially engaged art. However, through investigation of the social engagement and collaborative qualities of the artworks exhibited within it, it becomes clear that a comprehensive definition of ‘socially engaged art’ cannot be fixed as the success of such artworks are heavily dependent on their context.

Key words

Great East Japan Earthquake, art festival, *machizukuri*, trauma, socially engaged art, revitalization

Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES.....	V
GLOSSARY	VI
INTRODUCTION	1
<i>Research Question</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Method.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Empirical Materials.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Previous Research.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Theory and Approach.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Disposition</i>	<i>11</i>
CHAPTER 1: THE CASE FOR MACHIZUKURI: COMMUNITY-BUILDING	13
THE IMPORTANCE OF KIZUNA: CONNECTION	13
MACHIZUKURI AND RURAL REVITALIZATION THROUGH ART	14
REBORN-ART FESTIVAL AS MACHIZUKURI.....	16
<i>Symbol of community: Kohei Nawa.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Large-scale collaboration: Tatsuo Miyajima, and Kyun-Chome</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Small-scale Connections: Masaru Iwai and Zakkubalan.....</i>	<i>29</i>
A NEW HOPE	31
CHAPTER 2: THE CASE FOR EMPATHY: ART AND TRAUMA	33
THE SOCIO-CULTURAL WORK OF PROCESSING DISASTER.....	33
EMPATHIZING WITH TRAUMA THROUGH ART IN REBORN-ART FESTIVAL.....	35
<i>Sea of Time - Tōboku': addressing ritual, memorial, and embodied loss.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Utsusemi Crush!: rendering trauma intelligible through associations</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Dumparrium': addressing ways of facing nature in the future</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Seachange': rendering trauma intelligible through narrative</i>	<i>48</i>
THE QUESTION OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT	51
CHAPTER 3: CONTENDING WITH SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART CRITICISM.....	53
REBORN-ART FESTIVAL IN A WIDER CONTEXT	53
THE DEBATE: BISHOP VS KESTER	55
<i>Addressing autonomy.....</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Addressing instrumentalism.....</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>Addressing the artworks</i>	<i>63</i>
THE PARADIGM SHIFT	66
CONCLUSION	68
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	72

List of Figures

Figure 1. ‘White Deer (<i>Oshika</i>)’, Kohei Nawa, Press Image.	4
Figure 2. ‘Sea of time - Tōhoku’, Tatsuo Miyajima, interior view.	5
Figure 3. ‘Deleting Them with the Sky in Ishinomaki’, Kyun-Chome, installation view.	6
Figure 4. Utsusemi Crush!, Kyun-Chome, film still.	7
Figure 5. ‘Dumparium’, Masaru Iwai, installation view.	7
Figure 6. ‘Seachange’, Zakkubalan, film still.	8
Figure 7. Online crowdfunding platform for ‘Sea of time - Tōhoku’.....	26
Figure 8. Utsusemi Crush!, Kyun-Chome, film still.	42
Figure 9. ‘Dumparium’, Masaru Iwai, view from interior.	46
Figure 10. ‘Seachange’, Zakkubalan, film still.	48

Glossary

Japanese terms and phrases

- ***āto purojekuto:*** A transliteration of the English phrase, ‘Art Project’. In Japan, socially engaged art practices are commonly referred to as Art Projects.
- ***Hito no ikiru-jutsu:*** The art of living.
- ***kizuna:*** Social bond, or connections between people.
- ***machizukuri:*** A term that refers to the practice of community-building or town-building, usually in less populated areas of Japan.
- ***Onaji kama no meshi o kuu:*** A Japanese proverb meaning, ‘to eat from the same bowl’. It implies close friendship or family, all eating under one roof.
- ***sōsharī engējudo āto:*** A transliteration of the English phrase, ‘socially engaged art’.
- ***shika:*** deer.
- ***Tōhoku:*** The northeastern region of Japan’s largest island, Honshu. It traditionally includes 6 prefectures: Fukushima, Miyagi, Yamagata, Iwate, Akita, and Aomori.
- ***tōjisha:*** directly impacted person.

Acronyms

- **RAF:** Reborn-Art Festival
- **ETAT:** Echigo-Tsumari International Art Triennale
- **SEA:** socially engaged art

Introduction

Seven years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake, the devastating triple disaster that took place on March 11, 2011 – a date that continues to denote tragedy and loss for the nation and worldwide. On that day, an earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale struck the ocean east of Japan’s Tōhoku region, propelling a black wall of churning seawater inland along the nation’s Pacific coastline in the deadliest tsunami in Japanese history.¹ In addition to the immediate catastrophic damage and loss of life along the coast, the tsunami caused three nuclear meltdowns and hydrogen explosion at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukushima Prefecture during the three days that followed. The Great East Japan Earthquake is therefore notoriously known as the ‘triple disaster’ – the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown were responsible for the deaths of 19,630 people, and inundated 561 km of land with total economic damages estimated to be the costliest natural disaster in recorded world history.^{2,3}

In the face of an unspeakable tragedy like the Great East Japan Earthquake, it seems that art may be the last topic on anyone’s mind. However, this thesis focuses on that subject specifically – it investigates a new festival that is placing art right in the middle of the community’s healing process. The object of my thesis is to closely examine Reborn-Art Festival, a new arts and culture festival located in one of the worst individually-affected areas of Tōhoku. The festival took place over the course of seven weeks during the summer months of 2017, and featured a lineup of 38 Japanese and international contemporary artists including Yayoi Kusama, Bruce Nauman, Tatsuo Miyajima, Kohei Nawa, and Chim↑Pom. By considering Reborn-Art Festival as a case study for large-scale, socially engaged art initiatives in post-disaster Japan, I aim to investigate the different ways that art can become part of the healing process in regions that have endured disasters.

Reborn-Art Festival took place in Ishinomaki of the Oshika (or Ojika) Peninsula in Miyagi Prefecture, a coastal city about 75 km west of the 2011 earthquake’s epicenter.⁴ According to 2018 Disaster Management Agency figures, in Ishinomaki 3,553 people lost their lives while 423 still

¹ M. Koseki, ‘The unfolding of the triple disaster’ in D. Al-bari and G. Berends (eds.), *After the Great East Japan Earthquake: Political and Policy Change in Post-Fukushima Japan*, Copenhagen, NIAS Press, 2013, pp. 11-16.

² Fire and Disaster Management Agency (FDMA), *Summary Report of 2011 Tōhoku Region Offshore Pacific Earthquake (Great East Japan Earthquake)*, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2018, p. 4, <http://www.fdma.go.jp/bn/higaihou/pdf/jishin/157.pdf>, (accessed 23 April 2018), translated from Japanese by the author.

³ ‘The Recent Earthquake and Tsunami in Japan: Implications for East Asia’, *World Bank East Asia and Pacific Economic Update*, Vol. 1, 2011, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEAPHALFYEARLYUPDATE/Resources/550192-1300567391916/EAP_Update_March2011_japan.pdf, (accessed 14 March 2018).

⁴ M. B. Engelen, J. Edom, and H. Wood, ‘Building legitimacy through the spatial aesthetics of the illicit: Non-state urban actors in post-3.11 Japan’ in F. Chiodelli, T. Hall (ed.) and R. Hudson *Corrupt Places: The Illicit in the Governance and Development of Cities and Regions*, London, Routledge, 2018, pp. 181.

remain missing, 50,758 people were displaced, and 33,091 buildings were destroyed.⁵ Before the disaster, Ishinomaki and the Oshika Peninsula had been an industrial area with primarily labor-intensive industries centered on fishery, fish processing, shipbuilding and pulp.⁶ Like many other rural areas in Japan, in 2006 the boundaries of the small city were extended to encompass most of the Oshika Peninsula, amalgamating the five small towns sited around the peninsula into one municipal area.⁷ In the years following the tsunami, the citizens of the Oshika Peninsula faced severe loss, suffering, and utter derailment of their everyday life. For the past seven years Ishinomaki has endured a long and arduous healing process and though recovering, the city is scarred deeply on social, political and economic levels even as buildings are reconstructed and reparations are paid.

Reborn-Art Festival (hereafter RAF) completed its inaugural 51-day cycle from July 22nd through September 10th, 2017. It was a multilayered initiative that aimed to harness the power of art, along with music and cuisine, to recapture what the executive committee referred to as '*hito no ikiru-jutsu*', or the art of living.⁸ The festival director was Gota Matsumura, an Ishinomaki native who is also the representative director of Ishinomaki 2.0, a non-profit community-building organization founded two months after the tsunami struck.⁹ The goal of Ishinomaki 2.0 is to make Ishinomaki 'the most interesting city in the world', by supporting creative business ventures in town such as co-working spaces, artist workshops and studios, and various cafes and bars.¹⁰ Matsumura collaborated with Takeshi Kobayashi, musician and director of Ap Bank, a nonprofit organization directed to renewable energy and environmental projects in Japan that had been active in Ishinomaki in providing food and organic farming education for tsunami survivors after the disaster. Kobayashi became the executive producer of RAF, and his extensive network in Japan helped the festival reach fruition. Matsumura explained that when they first presented the festival concept local governments were doubtful of the idea; alongside the reconstruction of the physical town, the idea of an arts festival seemed ludicrous.¹¹ However, the Ishinomaki Mayor was in support of the project, and by 2017 the festival had an abundance of stakeholders, with an executive committee made up of the Miyagi Prefecture Governor, the mayors of the four other major municipalities in Miyagi Prefecture (Shiogama, Matsushima, Higashi-Matsushima, and Onagawa), presidents of universities in Tōhoku, and CEOs and directors of various Japanese corporations

⁵ FDMA, 'Attachment', in Summary Report of 2011 Tōhoku Region Offshore Pacific Earthquake, 2018, p. 1.
Note: Building count includes 'fully collapsed', 'half collapsed', 'damaged', and 'flood damaged'.

⁶ S. Klien, 'Reinventing Ishinomaki, Reinventing Japan? Creative Networks, Alternative Lifestyles and the Search for Quality of Life in Post-growth Japan', *Japanese Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2016, pp. 40-41.

⁷ Due to population loss, the amalgamation of small, aging towns in rural parts of Japan is quite common.

⁸ Note: All instances of Japanese throughout this thesis have been translated into English by the author.

⁹ Note: The names of all Japanese nationals are listed in the following order for consistency: forename, surname.

¹⁰ Gota Matsumura, interviewed by the author, 2018.

¹¹ Ibid.

and cultural institutions. The artworks in RAF were curated by Etsuko and Koichi Watari of the Watari Contemporary Art Museum (Watari-um) in Tokyo, one of Japan's premier contemporary art institutions. My focus on RAF is primarily the festival's engagement with art, or more specifically, the siting of artworks around Ishinomaki and the surrounding Oshika Peninsula by 38 different artists, many of which were produced in collaboration with community members and a large volunteer base.

Research Question

My analysis has been guided and subsequently organized by the following overarching research questions: In what ways has RAF contributed to *machizukuri* (community-building) and processing the trauma of the tsunami in Ishinomaki; and has the diversity of RAF stakeholders rendered the artists vulnerable to the kind of political co-option feared by critics of community-based practices? I argue that RAF was overall a socially engaged initiative, and that through it, art has become part of the healing process within Ishinomaki and the Oshika Peninsula. I identify ways in which RAF and the art included in it has aided in the community's social and cultural recovery through *machizukuri* with both the establishment of a new community identity and the social interactions formed during collaborative production of artworks. RAF included artworks that provided opportunities for survivors to cope with the trauma and moving forward, and also contributed to a wider understanding of the emotional impacts of the disaster for newcomers to the Oshika region. However, socially engaged 'community projects' of this nature have been criticized by art critics in Japanese and Euro-American circles as naive, apolitical platforms for government stakeholders to utilize artist labor as a means for conducting social work that would – and should – otherwise be the responsibility of the state. Such criticism has made it difficult to contextualize initiatives like RAF within the realm of contemporary art, and may be responsible for their lack of publicity in international art circles. Nevertheless, I believe that through their collaborative and affective qualities, especially when taking the festival's context into account, much of the artworks included in RAF do engage in socially engaged art practice. Each of these topics – *machizukuri*, trauma, and RAF's intersection with art criticism – make up one of the three main chapters of this thesis.

Method

By examining both organizational dimensions of RAF and the production of individual artworks, I aim to gain insight into the initiatives of the overall festival through consideration of its smaller working parts – in this case, the participating artists and the artworks they created for the festival. The primary objective of this thesis is to identify ways that the festival, artists, and exhibited artworks engaged in the recovery of the local community. As such, I have investigated the art aspect of RAF primarily through interviews with five participating artists and analysis of their respective artworks. I then interviewed RAF's Executive Director, Goto Matsumura, Volunteer Director, Akane Suzuki, and also spoke informally with various Oshika Peninsula community members and RAF attendees during fieldwork conducted to examine the aftereffects of RAF over the course of two weeks in Japan (Tokyo and Ishinomaki) in May 2018. The interviews that inform this thesis were conducted both digitally and in person. The five participating artists interviewed for my analysis include two artist collaboratives, and range from established Japanese artists to emerging artists based in New York. My examination of their artworks takes into account the intentions of the artists as established through interviews, and various reports from attendees, volunteers, and community members. In addition, I consider each artwork from my own position as a spectator. As I could not attend the festival myself, for the second chapter I utilize art historian Amelia Jones' notion of 'distance' to observe the affective quality of artworks phenomenologically via the visual traces they left behind in the form of photographs, videos, interviews, articles, and reviews.¹²

Empirical Materials

Throughout this thesis I will refer to the artwork of five artists to provide examples and evidence for my



Figure 1. 'White Deer (*Oshika*)', Kohei Nawa, press image.

¹² A. Jones, ‘“Presence” in Absentia’, *Art Journal*, vol. 56, no. 4, pp. 11-18.

analysis of RAF. While the works will be explained in more detail over the course of this thesis, the brief overview of each artists and artwork provided below may serve as a contextual background for the following chapters.

Kohei Nawa (b. 1975 Osaka Prefecture) is a mid-career contemporary sculptor, well established in Japan and also internationally. Nawa exhibited ‘White Deer (*Oshika*)’ in RAF, a 6-meter-tall sculpture of a white deer with large antlers (**Fig. 1**). *Oshika* means ‘deer’ in Japanese and also refers to the Oshika Peninsula. It was produced by compiling the data from a 3-D scan of a taxidermied wild deer. ‘White Deer (*Oshika*)’ was first exhibited in Tokyo as part of Roppongi Art Night 2016 and was brought to the Oshika Peninsula for RAF, where it was poised on the edge of Ogihama Beach along with an installation of buoys along the coast. Nawa’s sculpture became the main symbol for the festival’s promotion and brand. He stayed in Ishinomaki for a total of two weeks.

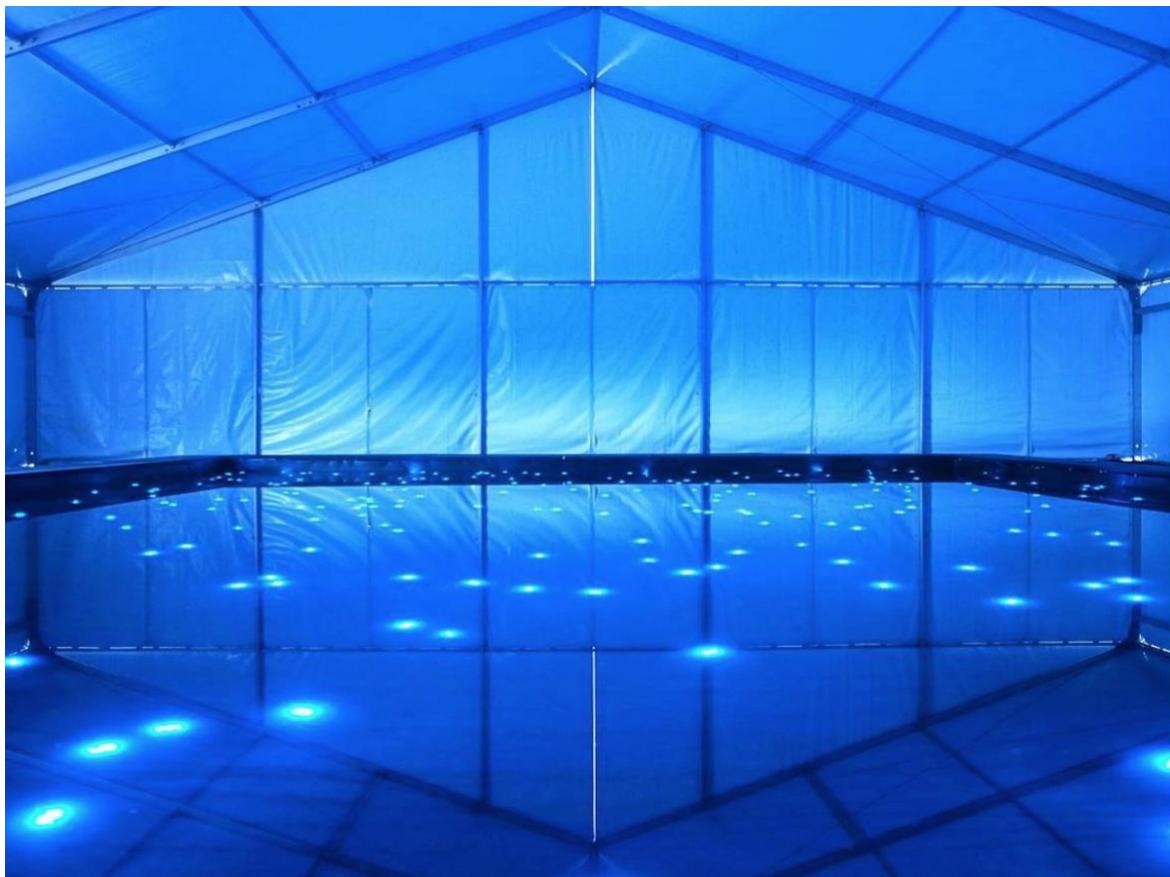


Figure 2. ‘Sea of Time - Tōhoku’, Tatsuo Miyajima, interior view.

Tatsuo Miyajima (b. 1957 Tokyo Prefecture) is a mid-late-career contemporary sculptor and installation artist well established in Japan and internationally. He is known for using digital LED counters in his work. For RAF, Miyajima created ‘Sea of Time - Tōhoku’, an installation of 300 waterproof LED counters with glowing displays that cycled through the numbers 1-9 inside a large

pool of water (**Fig. 2**). According to Miyajima, the numbers represent the indefinite cyclical process of life and death, and the speed of each counter's cycle was set by the family members of victims of the tsunami in Ishinomaki.¹³ Miyajima's installation was sited within a covered tent near the ocean on the eastern-most side of the Oshika Peninsula. The artist had ties to Ishinomaki before RAF, and spent a total of five weeks in the area between 2015 and 2017 for this particular project.



Figure 3. 'Deleting Them with the Sky in Ishinomaki', Kyun-Chome, installation view.

Kyun-Chome is an artist unit formed in 2011 following the triple disaster, made up of Eri Honma (b. 1987 Kanagawa Prefecture) and Nabuchi (b. 1984 Ibaraki Prefecture). For RAF, they created two films involving local community members in Ishinomaki entitled 'Deleting Them with the Sky in Ishinomaki' and 'Utsusemi Crush!'. 'Deleting Them with the Sky' involved interviews with local survivors about things that they wish they could delete from their lives, despite having lost everything in the tsunami. Together they symbolically 'deleted' that object by taking a photo using the iPhone's panorama feature and a mirror reflecting the sky. The mirror caused a glitch in the panorama which would replace the object with the reflected sky, 'deleting' it from the image (**Fig. 3**). For 'Utsusemi Crush!', the artists asked various community members what they would want to be if they were reborn. The participants shared their response before crushing a large cicada

¹³ Tatsuo Miyajima, interviewed by the author, 2018

chrysalis with their bare hand (**Fig. 4**). The films were exhibited as an ‘ensemble’ on multiple screens arranged within the dark interior of a deteriorated beauty salon near the Ishinomaki town center. Kyun-Chome lived in Ishinomaki for three months to produce the films.

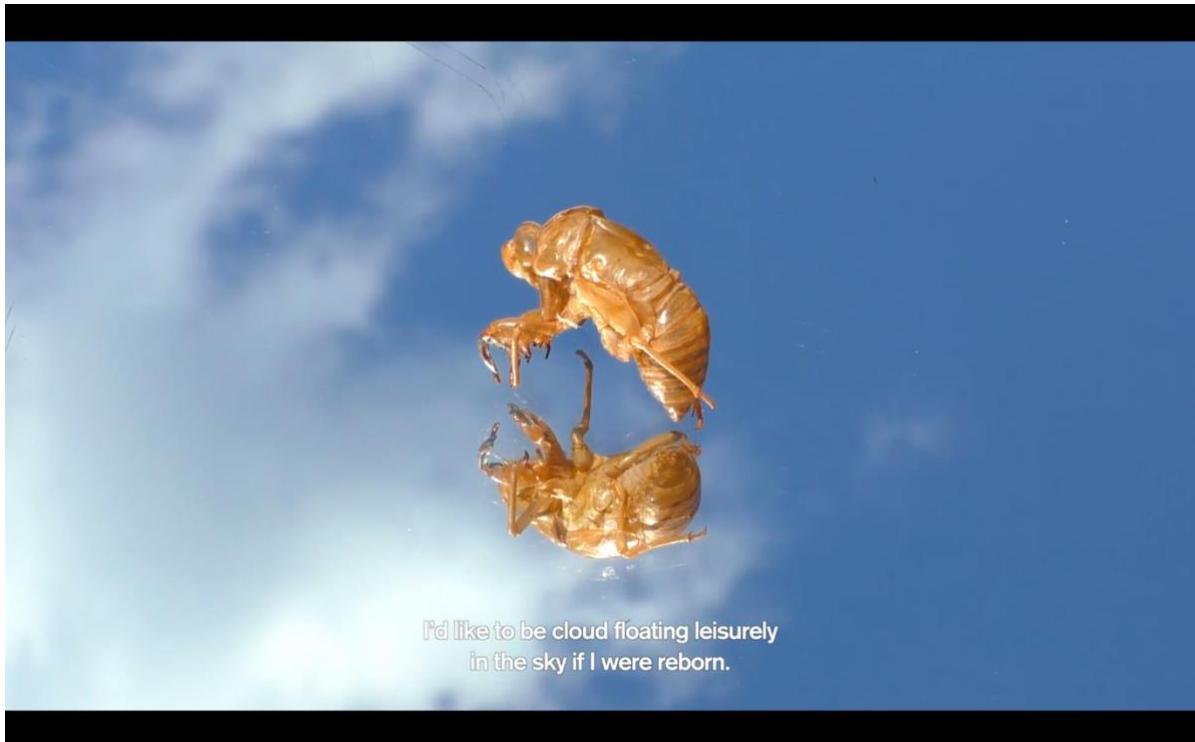


Figure 4. ‘Utsusemi Crush!’, Kyun-Chome, film still.



Figure 5. ‘Dumparium’, Masaru Iwai, installation view.

Masaru Iwai (b. 1975 Kyoto Prefecture) is a mid-career established artist that has engaged in participatory creative projects in Japan and abroad in Cambodia, Georgia, and Germany, amongst other countries. For RAF, he created ‘Dumparium’ (**Fig. 5**), a wooden dome installation strung with objects illegally dumped in the mountain forests of the Oshika Peninsula. The dumped materials not only included garbage that had been accumulating for 40 years, but also the carcasses of deer that were shot and cast into the woods. ‘Dumparium’ was sited just outside of the Buddhist temple Jizosankaigofuji, overlooking the sea on the eastern side of the Oshika Peninsula. Iwai created the work in collaboration with volunteer students and friends, and they lived together at the temple during its production. He conducted two months of research for ‘Dumparium’ in the area in 2015, and lived there for a total of four months in 2017.

Zakkubalan is a New York-based artist unit made up of filmmakers Neo Sora (b. 1991, New York) and Albert Thoren (b. 1992, Washington D.C.). For RAF, they created ‘Seachange’ (**Fig. 6**) with Tokyo-based filmmaker Yuta Koga (b. 1993, Fukuoka Prefecture). ‘Seachange’ is a short film of hybridized documentary and fictional elements that depicted two members of Ishinomaki, a woman and young boy as fictional mother and son, searching for and finding each other amidst the town’s silent landscape. The film was screened within a makeshift cinema that Zakkubalan installed inside the top floor of an old toy store in Ishinomaki’s city center. Zakkubalan and Koga stayed in Ishinomaki for two weeks to shoot the film.



Figure 6. ‘Seachange’, Zakkubalan, film still.

Previous Research

Since the 1990s, ‘art festivals for revitalization’ have become an increasingly popular method of *machizukuri*, or community-building, to combat Japan’s issue of depopulation and economic decline in rural regions.¹⁴ These festivals have a particular format of siting works throughout a town or region in locations that repurpose abandoned buildings or create emphasis of the surrounding landscape, usually inviting visitors and locals to have a renewed appreciation for the locale. These festivals have become a prominent force in Japanese socially engaged art, a genre referred domestically as *āto purojekto* or Art Projects (a transliteration of the English phrase). Neither the festivals nor Art Projects in general have received much interest in Euro-American art history, a topic that was addressed in two Japan-focused issues of *FIELD Journal of Socially-Engaged Art Criticism* in 2017. Despite a lack of international recognition, art festivals for revitalization have provided platforms for many artists in Japan’s domestic art scene to produce and exhibit socially engaged artworks for the last few decades.

Sociologist Adrian Favell has conducted extensive research into the foundation and content of Japanese revitalization festivals, especially about two that are particularly prominent, the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale (ETAT) and the Setouchi International Art Triennale.¹⁵ Favell’s work forms an important foundation for this thesis, as ETAT in particular has become an ‘archetype’ of sorts for new revitalization festivals, thus shaping RAF’s organizational structure in Ishinomaki. Kitagawa Fram, who is the director of ETAT and often considered the founder of revitalization festivals, detailed the intentions and community-building initiatives of ETAT in his book *Art Place Japan*.¹⁶ Another scholar important to this thesis is Japan sociologist Susanne Klien. She analyzed various artworks in ETAT from 2000-2006 and also conducted case studies in the community to consider the real impacts and effectiveness of the art festival’s intended community-building activities.¹⁷

Due to the catastrophic damage suffered by the Great East Japan Earthquake, the Tōhoku region has been the subject of research across various fields. There has been an expected influx of researchers in the region within the fields of disaster risk management and urban planning, but

¹⁴ For more context on Japan’s shrinking population, see P. Matanle, A. Rausch, and Shrinking Regions Research Group, *Japan’s Shrinking Regions in the Twenty-First Century: Contemporary Responses to Depopulation and Socio-Economic Decline*, Amherst and New York, Cambria Press, 2011.

¹⁵ A. Favell, ‘Echigo-Tsumari and Rural Art Festivals: Rise of the Northern River’, in *Before and After Superflat*, Hong Kong, Blue Kingfisher Limited, 2011, pp. 174-184; and A. Favell, ‘Echigo-Tsumari and the Art of the Possible: The Fram Kitagawa Philosophy in Theory and Practice’, in F. Kitagawa, *Art Place Japan*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2015.

¹⁶ F. Kitagawa, *Art Place Japan*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2015.

¹⁷ S. Klien, ‘Collaboration or confrontation? Local and non-local actors in the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial’, *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 22, no. 1-2, 2010, pp. 153-178; and S. Klien, ‘Contemporary art and regional revitalisation: selected artworks in the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial 2000–6’, *Japan Forum*, vol. 22, no. 3-4, 2010, pp. 513-543.

there has also been research conducted regarding the socio-cultural impacts of the disaster. Kristina Iwata-Weickgennant, Barbara Geilhorn, and Jean-Luc Nancy have written about the cultural effects of the Fukushima nuclear incident on artists and society, and have been influential to my consideration of art as a way to respond to and process the trauma of the tsunami in Ishinomaki.¹⁸ In addition, Klien conducted extensive research in Ishinomaki after the disaster, studying the proliferation of volunteer activities, and the total reinvention of the town following the tsunami – both in terms of reconstruction and identity – by an influx of young migrants working on revitalization and social business projects.¹⁹ Other studies conducted in Oshika specifically that inform this thesis include studies into the organization of state and non-state sponsored *machizukuri* initiatives, and the risks of social isolation after the tsunami.²⁰

There have been many artists that responded to various aspects of the disaster within socially-engaged art practices in Japan.²¹ Until the development of RAF however, these Art Projects had not yet employed a ‘revitalization’ format, or contended with the complications that arise from a largescale exhibition of art with many stakeholders and participants, including government bodies. As such, I have chosen RAF as the object of this study because it is the first large-scale arts festival of this kind to engage communities in the catastrophically affected area.

Theory and Approach

For this case study, I consider RAF first and foremost from the field of visual culture. Visual culture as an empirical field encompasses much more than the visual arts; it can be approached as an interface between multiple disciplines, a stepping stone to addressing broader, wider questions about how the visuality of our world influences socio-cultural aspects of society.²² In this regard, I consider revitalization festivals in Japan as more than a visual phenomenon, but rather, as a kind

¹⁸ J. Nancy, *After Fukushima: The Equivalence of Catastrophes*, trans. C. Mandell, New York, Fordham University Press, 2014; and K. Iwata-Weickgenannt and B. Geilhorn (eds.), *Fukushima and the Arts: Negotiating Nuclear Disaster*, London and New York, Routledge, 2017.

¹⁹ S. Klien, ‘Reinventing Ishinomaki, Reinventing Japan?’, 2016, pp. 40-41.

²⁰ T. Hiji, ‘The Direction of the Organization for Post-Disaster Recovery and Machizukuri: From the position of performing “public-private partnership” in Otsuchi-cho, Iwate’, *Journal of the Rural Planning*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2012, p. 494, translated from Japanese by the author.; M. B. Engelen, J. Edom, and H. Wood, ‘Building legitimacy through the spatial aesthetics of the illicit’, 2018.; and M. Inoue et al., ‘Risk of Social Isolation Among Great East Japan Earthquake Survivors Living in Tsunami-Affected Ishinomaki, Japan’, *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2014, pp. 333-340.

²¹ Some Art Projects to note include: ‘Project Fukushima’, a music festival in Fukushima City each year; ‘Don’t Follow the Wind’, an exhibition initiated by Chim↑Pom in Fukushima’s exclusion zone; and Haruka Komori’s *Iki no Ato* (Trace of Breath), a documentary film shot in Rikuzentakata, north of Ishinomaki.

²² M. Liljefors, ‘What is Visual Culture’, Lecture, Lund University, Lund, Sweden, 29 August 2016.

of ‘visual culture’; they are a new cultural context of viewing contemporary art that also influences community-building and cultural management.

RAF was designed in the same format as other festivals for revitalization, but has the distinctive difference of being sited in a region particularly affected by the tsunami. This context adds a complex layer to its status as an element of visual culture. Visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff argues that rather than focusing on the visual by excluding the other senses, one should examine why society places so much significance on the rendering experiences in visual form.²³ RAF’s production was brought about by a group of people in Ishinomaki actively searching for a creative platform that could bring community together while also stimulating the local economy, and the large-scale format and highly visual content fulfilled both of the community’s needs. In turn, the festival’s implementation has shaped perception of the socio-cultural effects of the tsunami, and has the potential to set in motion changes within the community in Ishinomaki over time through sustained festival activities. It would thus be insufficient to approach RAF simply through consideration of its visual manifestation; rather, its socio-cultural and economic context must be considered.

By approaching visual culture studies as a field that can function as an interface that connects disciplines, this thesis investigates RAF as a case study that may reflect on the wider possibilities of visual production that intersect within the fields of Art, Art History, Cultural Management and Urban Planning – how can art aid community development, and what factors should be considered when putting this notion into action?

Disposition

The first chapter identifies the ways that the festival engaged in *machizukuri* practices to create and foster community ties in Ishinomaki. Like other art festivals, RAF’s purpose is to revitalize the community through social, cultural and economic stimulus, but the context of RAF’s production is quite different from other prominent art festivals for revitalization. Ishinomaki’s ongoing reconstruction framed it as an opportunity to build a town identity shaped around the peninsula-wide event, while also providing tangible opportunities for community members to create and renew social ties. For this chapter, I will first explain the history and significance of *machizukuri* in Japan, before considering the *machizukuri* incentives of RAF as a whole, followed by an analysis of the collaborative elements of individual artworks’ production.

²³ N. Mirzoeff, ‘Introduction’, in *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 1999.

The second chapter reflects upon art practice as a way of engaging in the socio-cultural work of responding to the disaster to closely examine the ways in which five individual artworks have contributed to the understanding of trauma after the tsunami. To do so, I consider the intentions behind artists' work while also taking spectator responses into account. I utilize Jill Bennet's theorization of the 'affective' quality of art to shed light on how artists and artworks encouraged audiences to reflect on and empathize with trauma, not as way to relive it, but to shape their perception of the disaster and further their understanding of the trauma that came with it.

The third chapter deliberates on the organizational and artistic initiatives of RAF in the context of its position within existing contemporary art criticism of socially engaged art practices. The criterion for socially engaged art remains an unresolved state after being debated upon by art critics in 2006, especially with regard to artistic autonomy and the instrumentalism of artists by stakeholders. For this chapter I ask: can RAF and the art within it be constituted as socially engaged art practice? RAF and the artists engage directly with the social work of aiding in community recovery, blurring the boundaries between art and social work, and it is thus important to investigate how RAF may hold up to existing art criticism. This chapter first outlines the debate amongst prominent critics in the field, and then discusses how RAF contends with this criticism.

Through consideration of these three distinct, yet interrelated aspects of many of the art festivals for revitalization that have become widespread in Japan in recent years, I hope that this case study sheds some light on the factors that are at stake in art production in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake – from community recovery to aesthetics.

Chapter 1: The case for *machizukuri*: community-building

The importance of the bond of the family and of the people of the community was reaffirmed following the great disaster of 2011. The word has even become a motto for the restoration effort. I believe that the publication of the English edition [of this book] is in fact a product that has been woven by the bond of the people who were united, beyond the borders of a region and of nations, in their earnest desire to help spread the lessons of the disaster around the world.

- Yoshihisa Nishikawa, *Surviving the 2011 Tsunami: 100 testimonies of Ishinomaki Area Survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake* (Note from the editor)²⁴

The importance of kizuna: connection

In *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan*, political-scientist Richard Samuels pointed out that similarly to the years that followed the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake in Kobe, the reconstruction of Tōhoku after the triple disaster has been largely centered around the rhetoric of social solidarity, sanctifying ‘community’ as a key element of post-disaster Japan.²⁵ The concept of *kizuna*, which conveys ‘connection’, ‘bond’, and ‘togetherness’, became a metaphor for social solidarity and a prominent representation of the post-disaster community when selected by the Japanese public as 2011’s kanji (Chinese character) of the year.²⁶ In addition, the Reconstruction Design Council further established *kizuna* as central to the nation’s recovery strategy when it published the mandate ‘7 Principles in the Basic Law of Recovery’, which referenced *kizuna* heavily throughout its 36 pages.²⁷

The community-centered implications of *kizuna* rhetoric witnessed in the aftermath of the disaster are directly related to the phenomenon of *machizukuri*, or community-building. While there is no exact translation of the concept of *machizukuri* in English, a literal translation of the term is town-making; town (*machi*) and creation (*zukuri* or *tsukuri*). *Machizukuri* practices generally focus on collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors of a community as methods for bringing about change, in contrast to protest movements. Throughout Japan, *machizukuri* has become an important way of engaging citizens in town-related planning and improvements, with an emphasis on civic participation through which residents gain a sense of ownership and pride in

²⁴ Sanriku Kahoku Shimpo Co, *Surviving the 2011 Tsunami: 100 testimonies of Ishinomaki Area Survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake*, Tokyo, Junposha Co. Ltd., 2014, p. 003.

²⁵ R. Samuels, ‘Never Waste a Good Crisis’, in *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2013, pp. 39-42.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ T. Ii, ‘Elusiveness of Social Connection in Contemporary Japan: “Kizuna” in the pre- and post-3.11 Disaster’, Department of History, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, Unpublished paper, 2016, pp. 9-10.

their communities; often an overarching goal is to nurture residents' investment in their communities long-term.²⁸ The breadth of community-building initiatives in Japan are quite diverse, but they tend to consist of bottom-up rural renewal projects and voluntary social welfare projects.²⁹ *Machizukuri* projects often emphasize the importance of *kizuna*: striving to sustain community ties and social connections in locales peripheral to Japan's urban centers.

Machizukuri and *kizuna* are central notions to the conceptualization of RAF. This chapter will give a background of the *machizukuri* practices of recent art festivals in Japan that precede RAF, before examining various aspects of RAF's community-building initiatives in Ishinomaki. The art festival is the organizers' approach to building a sense of shared identity and purpose within Ishinomaki by renewing social bonds amongst surviving community members while encouraging inclusion of residents that have moved to Ishinomaki after 2011. In addition, many artworks exhibited within RAF engaged – directly and indirectly – with long-time residents of the Oshika Peninsula and new community members during the production process, encouraging social collaboration. Subsequently, the artworks themselves – especially those by more well-known artists – drew an influx of 260,000 visitors to the region, which in turn stimulated the local economy, generating almost 2 billion yen in the region over the course of its seven-week tenure.³⁰

Machizukuri and rural revitalization through art

Machizukuri initiatives were initially developed in Japan during movements in the 1960s and 1970s within civil society to confront environmental and social issues related to the widening disparity between the nation's urban cities and rural regions.³¹ *Machizukuri* has since become an umbrella term for community-led initiatives that include a wide variety of grassroots activities and processes to facilitate change within their own neighborhoods. Following the collapse of Japan's 'bubble era' economy (1986-1991), *machizukuri* initiatives have become a significant element of contending with the nation's 'post-growth' condition – its prevailing state of continuous economic and demographic decline.³²

²⁸ E. Kusakabe, 'Advancing sustainable development at the local level: The case of *machizukuri* in Japanese cities', *Progress in Planning*, vol. 80, 2013, pp.7-10.

²⁹ André Sorensen and Carolin Funck's extensive research into urban planning in Japan provides an insightful introduction to *machizukuri* practices. See A. Sorensen and C. Funck, *Living Cities in Japan: Citizens' movements, machizukuri and local environments*, London and New York, Routledge, 2007.

³⁰ G. Matsumura interview, 2018.

³¹ E. Kusakabe, 'Advancing sustainable development at the local level', 2013, pp.7-10.

³² In addition to Japan's ongoing financial stagnation, Japan's national birth rate has been relentlessly dropping since 2011.

Subsequently, *machizukuri* has become a driving force within the genre of ‘Art Projects’, or socially-engaged art initiatives in Japan, especially in the recent proliferation of ‘contemporary art festivals for revitalization’ that have popped up all over the country since the early 2000s. These revitalization festivals have developed into a prevailing format generally consisting of the following criteria: the festivals invite an array of emerging and high profile domestic and international artists to create site-specific artworks in a rural area, usually in cooperation with local people and materials; the artworks are sited in various locations throughout the town or region, making audiences spend time traversing the area to view the works; and the festivals and festival sites are largely staffed by huge volunteer bases who are provided free dormitory housing and work schedules that consist of greeting visitors and stamping ‘passport tickets’ during festival season, or maintaining the artworks in the offseason. ETAT, which first took place in summer 2000, is often considered the original and premier revitalization festival, and includes hundreds of art installations and outdoor sculptures, workshops, performances and other events over the course of 50 days in the rural Echigo-Tsumari mountain region of Niigata Prefecture. It has resulted in a measurable increase of art tourism to the rural area, contributing to the economic vitality and funding of infrastructure in the region during the 18 years since its inauguration.³³

ETAT’s director and founder, Fram Kitagawa, was also an advisor on the executive committee of RAF’s first festival cycle. Kitagawa has implemented his festival format in many other locations in Japan as a way to promote regional revitalization in rural areas, including the Niigata Water and Land Art Festival (2009), the Setouchi International Triennale (2010), Suzu: Oku-Noto Triennale (2017), and the Japan Alps Art Festival- Shinano Omachi (2017). These festivals are sited in areas facing post-growth challenges, and consist of various activities to create new social interactions and rebuild community ties through art. Some examples include: an artist working with volunteers to restore the walls of the buildings that line an aging town’s shopping street; an artist ‘collecting memories’ of the dwindling residents of an island village in the form of donated trinkets and displaying them in an installation; and an artist inserting a colorful tunnel installation in an agricultural landscape to lead audience eyes to a forgotten view.³⁴

Where RAF differs from the festivals above is in its context and direction – it is the first contemporary art festival to take place in a region affected by the triple disaster, and it is not directed by Kitagawa, as has become customary of many similar festivals taking place throughout Japan. Rather, Executive Director Matsumura has taken up the responsibility of the role, adding an intrinsically personal touch – Ishinomaki is Matsumura’s hometown, and RAF is his first run at

^{33.} S. Klien, ‘Contemporary art and regional revitalisation’, 2010, pp. 517-518.

^{34.} Kaoru Muraki’s ‘Making view with Mud wall in Matsudai’ at Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale 2000, Mayumi Kuri’s ‘Bottle Memories’ at the Setouchi Triennale 2016; Tobias Rehberger’s ‘Something Else is Possible’ at Suzu: Oku-Noto Triennale 2017.

an event of this scale. As mentioned in the introduction, Matsumura is also the founder of Ishinomaki 2.0, an organization he formed after The Great East Japan Earthquake to enable and support citizens in the reconstruction of their town and community. Another point of difference to note is the curation of the artworks in RAF. While in ETAT, artists normally submit proposals of their artworks for competitive selection, the curation of RAF's first cycle was based on invitation – the Wataris invited specific artists they had worked with in the past to come to Ishinomaki to create works that contributed to the town's recovery.³⁵

Thus, when considering *machizukuri* practices, it is overly simplistic to compare RAF to the aforementioned art festivals, because there is arguably much more at stake – RAF's goal is to contend with a rural community that was already in a weakened state of community before the largest recorded disaster in Japan's history struck the region in 2011. It was the first cycle of a long-term socially engaged initiative to help Ishinomaki locate its identity in the wake of the disaster and work towards securing the community's sustained survival.

Reborn-Art Festival as machizukuri

When considering the local community surrounding RAF, it is useful to consider political theorist Miroslav Hroch's definition of a nation as a 'large social group' integrated by various objective relationships. Significantly, his definition considers the 'shared memory of a common past, treated as a destiny of the group' as irreplaceable in the nation-building process.³⁶ When applying this idea of a 'large social group' to the Ishinomaki community, it is clear that the 2011 triple disaster is a shared memory, a collective trauma suffered by the Oshika Peninsula community. Regardless of ongoing reconstruction efforts, the Great East Japan Earthquake and the devastating tsunami that followed will inevitably continue to play a major role in the community's future identity and long-term historical narrative. RAF engaged with this shared history to develop *kizuna*, as demonstrated by the suggestive title 'Reborn' and witnessed in the festival's introductory concept:

In the midst of the scars caused by the tsunami, Reborn-Art Festival is created through the rich resources of the sea, the mountain, the forest, and the efforts of people. We believe that when everyone visiting this place works together with local people, artists and staff to create this festival, the energy for the region to truly move forward will be born.³⁷

³⁵ G. Matsumura interview, 2018.

³⁶ M. Hroch, 'From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-building Process in Europe,' in G. Balakrishnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation*, New York and London, Verso, 1996: pp. 78-97.

³⁷ 'Reborn-Art Festival - Concept', *Reborn-Art Festival*, [website], 2017, <http://www.reborn-art-fes.jp/concept/>, (accessed 2 February 2018), translated from Japanese by the author.

RAF harnesses the shared memory of the tsunami to foster community growth, calling for a ‘rebirth’ of the community through the festival over time. As a whole, the development of RAF in the area engaged in *machizukuri* in three main ways: by encouraging local participation in the festival, increasing opportunities for social interaction, and combatting depopulation.

First, RAF encouraged local participation as a way of fostering community rehabilitation. In a study of *machizukuri* practices in the areas affected by the triple disaster, Toru Hiji argued that the most effective method of post-disaster recovery is a long-term plan that incorporates both the governmental role of infrastructural reconstruction and also ‘creative projects’ that foster an awareness of residents to participate actively in rebuilding.³⁸ He claimed that the combination of these elements can ‘restore while maintaining community forces in the region.’³⁹ As reconstruction efforts are ongoing throughout the peninsula, the emergence of RAF operates similarly to the complementary creative project Hiji refers to. From the start, the executive committee stressed the importance of different actors working together, highlighting collaboration as a way for people to move forward from the destruction and loss of the triple disaster. RAF made efforts to include the local townspeople and residents of the Oshika Peninsula, encouraging their participation in the festival by collaborating with staff, volunteers, and artists.

My thesis is primarily about art, but it quickly became apparent that food was an essential force behind the participation of locals in the art festival. The art aspect of RAF was a main draw for the influx of tourists in the region, but the majority of locals were not involved in the production of the artworks. In the first cycles of ETAT attitudes were similar, with less interest (and even doubt and suspicion) towards the added presence of contemporary art in their communities during the first festival cycle.⁴⁰ But as the recurring art festival became more normalized, it has become an important aspect of Echigo-Tsumari’s regional character – and an anticipated period of economic stimulation for the community. As such, during the first cycle of RAF, much of community participation was oriented towards the festivals’ food-related activities. Farmers, fishermen, hunters, and chefs – many of whom relocated to Ishinomaki as volunteers after the tsunami – were included in the sourcing of local ingredients showcased as part of RAF Dining (temporary food markets set up during the 51-day festival cycle). Locals also aided in preparing meals for the festival volunteers who resided at the ‘RAF House’ dormitory during their stay in Ishinomaki.⁴¹ Merchants and restaurants peppered around Ishinomaki and the Oshika Peninsula also indirectly participated in the festival by preparing their shop fronts, merchandise, and menus for the arrival of tourists during

³⁸ T. Hiji, ‘The Direction of the Organization for Post-Disaster Recovery and Machizukuri’, 2012, p. 494.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ S. Klien, ‘Collaboration or confrontation? Local and non-local actors in the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial’, 2010.

⁴¹ G. Matsumura interview, 2018.

the festival. According to observations by artists and visitors, many local elderly people were not as interested in the planning and production of the art sites, but did participate by helping the artists with finding their materials and meals in Ishinomaki.

In addition, a major aspect of *machizukuri* was the immense ‘Kojika-tai’ (little deer corps) volunteer force that operated the festival; of the total 2,405 volunteers that participated in RAF over the 51 days, a total of 1,124 were residents of Ishinomaki.⁴² This demonstrates an example of the local community’s active participation in RAF. Kojika-tai volunteers lived together at the RAF House and were fed three meals a day at no charge. Kobayashi was responsible for this initiative, citing the traditional proverb, ‘*onaji kama no meshi o kuu*’, which literally translates to ‘eating rice out of the same bowl’ and nurtures the notion of one large family eating together under one roof.⁴³ Although the Oshika Peninsula is a rural area, it is quite large and spread out, requiring a car to reach certain parts of the peninsula. The communal living experience aimed to give volunteers a chance to meet and spend time together in a new context. Long-time residents of the region shared local histories and told stories of the tsunami, which shaped knowledge of the region for newcomers to the area and volunteers who visited to work at the festival.⁴⁴

Matsumura has expressed his intention of continuing RAF and various festival activities for at least ten years. As time passes, residents of Ishinomaki will become more accustomed to RAF’s presence and may take on more ownership and responsibility in its planning and implementation. Thus, it is important for RAF to continue to encourage local participation in the years to come as the festival grows and becomes more integrated into the community. RAF has only just concluded its inaugural festival cycle in September 2017, and plans for RAF 2019 are already in the works, with a transitional pre-event in 2018. During the offseason, Kojika-tai volunteers have been publishing e-mail newsletters to keep interested parties informed of other social activities in Ishinomaki. In addition, new businesses developed as part of RAF have remained open and continue to operate in Ishinomaki even when the festival is not in season. One notable example is Momonoura Village, a new housing facility in a fisherman village about twenty minutes away from the city-center. The original village has only 17 remaining residents after the tsunami destroyed all but four homes in 2011.⁴⁵ The aim of Momonoura Village is to eventually become a long-term housing community that helps repopulate this dwindling fishing community, but for now offers temporary accommodation and activities such as fishing, hiking, and storytelling for visitors.⁴⁶

⁴² *Reborn-Art Festival 2017 Summary Report*, Reborn-Art Festival Secretariat, 2017, p. 27, Translated from Japanese by the author. Reborn-Art Festival Jisshi Houkoku-sho, Reborn-Art Festival Jimukyoku, 2017, p. 27.

⁴³ G. Matsumura interview, 2018.

⁴⁴ Airi Sugihara, interviewed by the author, 2018.

⁴⁵ Dobashi Takenobu, interviewed by the author, 2018.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Secondly, the new presence of RAF in the Oshika Peninsula caused a flurry of activity in the region that led to increased opportunities to develop social ties. RAF organizers proclaimed that the most urgent need in Ishinomaki was a way to recapture '*hito ga ikiru jutsu*', which translates loosely to 'the knowledge of the everyday', or – more concretely – the 'art of living'.⁴⁷ In the aftermath of the tsunami, survivors faced the complete uprooting of their everyday lives. Not only did people suffer the losses of their family members and loved ones, but they were also abruptly displaced from their homes and lost all of their belongings, as well as estranged from their regular places of work, school, and other social daily interactions. Stable activities that were seemingly routine were no longer possible after the tsunami and during the long periods of reconstruction in the years following. In this way, the 'art of living,' as RAF referred to it, has been lost in the area.

Studies of disaster risk reduction have shown that when central community hubs such as schools, town halls and event centers are inundated by disasters, the community structure is at an even higher risk of breaking down.⁴⁸ Seven years after the disaster, much of Ishinomaki proper has been repaired or reconstructed, but much of the outer peninsula is still under construction with many roads blocked as land is elevated and new seawalls are constructed. The extended loss of the community's previous sites of activity and regular social interaction have heightened the risk of social isolation, especially for those living alone and facing unemployment due to loss of infrastructure after the tsunami.⁴⁹

Produced out of the incentives of Ishinomaki 2.0, RAF began operating as a new community hub for the region. The establishment of the large-scale, recurring festival offers repeated opportunities for social interactions based on the shared history of the tsunami, and may become a new tradition for the community to participate in – as has happened in the Echigo-Tsumari region.⁵⁰ The festival itself functions as site of community, offering participatory events and activities for the residents the Oshika Peninsula. In addition, the influx of volunteers and tourists in the region for RAF increases chances of *kizuna*, or connection. With a total of 260,000 visitors over the course of the 51-day cycle in 2017, the festival provided ample opportunities for those who lost loved ones or have become isolated to meet people and form new connections and friendships. The influx of visitors increased foot traffic around the region, providing social opportunities for residents going about their daily lives such as grocery shopping, fishing or commuting to and from work or school. Citizens working at local businesses such as hotels,

⁴⁷ 'Reborn-Art Festival - Concept', *Reborn-Art Festival*.

⁴⁸ S. Matsuura and R. Shaw, 'Identifying Elements for School Based Recovery and Disaster Resilient Community Building in Japan in Tohoku Recovery' in R. Shaw (ed.), *Tohoku Recovery: Challenges, Potentials and Future*, Tokyo, Springer, 2015, pp. 108-109.

⁴⁹ M. Inoue et al., 'Risk of Social Isolation Among Great East Japan Earthquake', 2014, pp. 333-340.

⁵⁰ A. Favell, 'Echigo-Tsumari and Rural Art Festivals: Rise of the Northern River', pp. 174-184.

restaurants, retail merchants, and transportation services reported that there was a significant increase in clientele, and it was a very busy period during which they met many interesting new people.⁵¹

Thirdly, the development of RAF may help Ishinomaki combat depopulation in the years to come. Ishinomaki and other communities in the Oshika Peninsula already faced the harsh challenges of depopulation and an aging community prior to the 2011 triple disaster(1 in 3 people were over the age of 65 in those localities), but the tsunami devastated the population further.⁵² In recent years, since much of Ishinomaki's initial reconstruction efforts have taken place, many organizations and businesses in town have begun striving to make the area more interesting and creative, which strengthens the existing community and in turn makes it more attractive to potential new residents.⁵³ A biennial contemporary art festival like RAF with a long active season can combat depopulation in the region by attracting youths interested in art, social work, or the benefits of a non-urban lifestyle. Matsumura explained that, like the many volunteers who decided to remain in Ishinomaki after the tsunami, RAF volunteers may also choose to remain in the region. '*Sukoshi-zutsu, sukoshi-zutsu*', he explained, meaning 'little by little.'⁵⁴ By continuing to focus on *machizukuri*, over time RAF can attract more people to populate and contribute to the area.

Sociologist Yoshitaka Mōri asserts that due to the lengthy recession, spread of international wars, rising anti-globalization and anti-nuclear movements, and the devastation of the catastrophic events of 2011, there has been an awakening in the political consciousness of the creatives in Japan, leading to more involvement in socially engaged initiatives.⁵⁵ Favell has also written several articles about parallels between the rise of post-growth youth culture and socially engaged art in Japan; he referred to the growing population of youth as a 'lost generation' coping with the notion of a future with no growth potential in the face of declining population, economy, and opportunity.⁵⁶ This 'lost generation' in Japan has more opportunity to live off the grid than is usual in other industrialized nations, and many people have started traveling around the country as long-term volunteers throughout the nation's rural regions where they can live cheaply, join new communities, engage in gratifying social work, or experience face-to-face exchanges that have become a rarity in

⁵¹ Informal interviews conducted by the author at local businesses: customers and staff of Irori Café and co-working space, with the assistant director of Ishinomaki 2.0, staff at Long Beach House guest house and restaurant, 2018.

⁵² M. Inoue et al., 'Risk of Social Isolation Among Great East Japan', 2014, p. 333.

⁵³ Some examples of Ishinomaki businesses are Irori Café and co-working space, the 'Common-ship' street food market, and the non-profit Long Beach House youth hostel, which each make a point contribute to the local area, and develop relationships between locals and visitors.

⁵⁴ G. Matsumura interview, 2018.

⁵⁵ Y. Mōri, 'New Collectivism, Participation and Politics after the East Japan Great Earthquake', *World Art*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2015, p. 169.

⁵⁶ A. Favell, 'Socially Engaged Art in Japan - Mapping the Pioneers', *FIELD*, iss. 7, 2017, <http://field-journal.com/issue-7/socially-engaged-art-in-japan-mapping-the-pioneers>, (accessed 21 February 2017).

large cities.⁵⁷ With this generation reaching maturity within Japan's current post-growth condition, many rural regions have been incentivizing youths to live, invest and start their lives as part of cities and communities outside of the nation's urban centers. Hosting a large art festival every other year increases the rural peninsula's draw through increased opportunities for social engagements, creative jobs, and a sense of pride and positivity about the community's identity.

In his research of *machizukuri* practices in Oshika, Hiji proposed an organizational system that increases the population in disaster stricken regions, claiming that programs that promote active participation in recovery efforts allows participants to achieve 'membership' in the community, increasing the desire to settle long-term.⁵⁸ By participating in the festival, newcomers take part in a shared community event and form social ties, increasing their chances of becoming attached to the area. Already during RAF's first cycle, many people who initially visited for just a weekend returned to join the volunteer team for longer periods.⁵⁹ RAF attracted people from the Tokyo metropolitan area (only about two hours away by bullet train) and also from around Miyagi Prefecture and neighboring northern prefectures who were seeking purposeful activities, but did not have the desire or means to travel very far from their families.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the development of RAF may create an incentive for the youth that have grown up and already reside in Ishinomaki to remain in the region upon reaching adulthood; by encouraging their participation in creative community activities, they may adopt a sense of responsibility towards their hometown. After disasters, it is common that surviving elders will want to remain, but youth are likely to move away in search of better opportunities and thus need more encouragement to invest in their own hometowns' *machizukuri* processes.⁶¹ Younger residents that lived through the tsunami may enjoy participating in the festival and form renewed attachments to their community through its continued engagement with art and other cultural activities.

Art production as machizukuri in Ishinomaki

I have now sketched out the *machizukuri* processes of the festival overall, and will dedicate the remainder of this chapter to identifying ways that artists specifically engaged with community-building in their individual artworks. Etsuko and Koichi Watari, the curators of RAF, scouted the area for almost one year before the festival's inauguration, analyzing spaces and consulting with

⁵⁷ Shoko Sasakawa, interviewed by the author, 2017; and A. Sugihara interview 2018.

⁵⁸ T. Hiji, 'The Direction of the Organization for Post-Disaster Recovery and Machizukuri', 2012, p. 497.

⁵⁹ A. Sugihara interview, 2018.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ S. Matsuura and R. Shaw, 'Identifying Elements for School Based Recovery and Disaster Resilient Community Building', 2015, p. 116.

local landowners before inviting a total of 38 artists/art units to create site-specific works in Ishinomaki proper and around the Oshika Peninsula.⁶² They claimed that they were not so interested in static paintings and sculptures, but instead hoped to include more collaborative projects that engaged with aspects of the existing local environment and – they asked artists to create ‘works that were for the local people, an homage to the land, that felt like “gifts.”’⁶³ Etsuko Watari explained:

Many things have happened here [in the Oshika Peninsula] – sad and painful things are overflowing. In this place, I have a desire to achieve things that I cannot do alone. Therefore, I was not so concerned at all with artwork in the form of paintings and sculptures. Instead let’s make use of what is here already – let’s just add our touch to it, let us all feel it together. I think that it has become quite an unusual exhibition.⁶⁴

In this way, the artists invited to RAF were ideally meant to engage in *machizukuri* by creating works in collaboration with local people, materials, and sites. However, the production of the artworks was essentially left to the artists’ own discretion. The 38 artist/artist units tackled the criteria in their own way, each creating a project that had a different approach to the festival concept and local history of Oshika. In the following sections, I will analyze the ways that Kohei Nawa’s sculpture brought the community together as a symbol; the collaborative practices by which Tatsuo Miyajima and Kyun-Chome engaged in *machizukuri* in the production of their artworks, and how Masaru Iwai and Zakkubalan created *kizuna* through their artworks on a smaller scale through interpersonal engagement with locals and the environment. With the exception of Nawa’s work, I focus primarily on the artist collaborations with the community during the production of their work, and the *machizukuri* effects of those interpersonal connections. The aesthetic and affective qualities of the artworks will not be discussed in detail here, but are the main focus of the second chapter.

Symbol of community: Kohei Nawa

As explained in the previous section, the development of the festival was a community-building event that residents of the town prepared for and experienced together. As the first cycle of RAF approached, Kohei Nawa’s sculpture, ‘White Deer (*Oshika*)’, became a symbol that the community recognized as representative of the Oshika Peninsula.⁶⁵ The proliferation of its image as a visual

⁶² Etsuko Watari, interviewed in R. Watanabe, ‘In Ishinomaki, think about art’s power to create new things’, *Reborn-Art Festival 2017 Official Guidebook*, Japan, STARTS, 2017, pp. 135-139, Translated from Japanese by the author.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ See page 5 for a brief introduction to this artwork.

emblem of the region realized *machizukuri* objectives in two ways – it united the community around one symbol, and become a landmark that attracted visitors to Ishinomaki.

Nawa's 6-meter tall white deer was visible for miles along the coastline, serving to symbolize the festival's active presence in the community. The Oshika Peninsula derives its name from the wide prevalence of wild *shika*, deer, in the region; as such, Nawa's sculpture became adopted as RAF's mascot, even appearing in the name of the volunteer force Kojika-tai (little deer corps). 'White Deer' appeared as the most prominent and widely spread press image (Fig. 1) and even became integrated into one version of the festival's logo. Images of Nawa's deer were spread through RAF's print and online promotional materials in Miyagi Prefecture and the Tōhoku region, serving as a visual representation of the Oshika Peninsula's new festival. The recognizable deer was a sign throughout the northeastern prefectures of Japan that people were banding together for this event. As the image proliferated, more and more people became aware of the festival and its concept. In Miyagi Prefecture particularly, the continuation of community traditions such as local *matsuris* (festivals) and folk performances became symbolic of the recovery process after the disaster, and a way for people to get involved and contribute.⁶⁶ Similarly, the giant deer's actual and symbolic presence increased knowledge of RAF for the local community; the sculpture was an indication of the active recovery and revitalization of Oshika, and an open invitation for others to take part. In this way, the artwork served as an emblem for the community, one that represented the resilience and creativity of the region.

While the sculpture itself did not particularly function as a participatory art project, Nawa reported that he collaborated with local fishermen in the area to set up fishing buoys behind it in the sea along the coast.⁶⁷ By asking to cooperate with them, Nawa not only involved the local community in the artwork, but also framed the sculpture in front of markers of the regions' most important industry, making the contemporary artwork more readily accessible to a larger local audience. The artwork served as a way to unite the municipality, which is made up of small amalgamated towns with respective local histories and traditions. The combined visual imagery of the deer, fishing buoys, and the peninsula's landscape were representative of the entire Oshika Peninsula, making the artwork a recognizable symbol for the region's locals.

In addition, knowledge of Nawa's sculpture spread to the Tokyo and other areas of Japan; before RAF began Nawa exhibited the deer in Tokyo. As a well-known contemporary artist in Japan, Nawa's sculpture was directly responsible for drawing many visitors from outside the region to RAF. As images of 'White Deer' spread outside the region, the huge sculpture became associated

⁶⁶ F. Lahournat, 'Reviving tradition in disaster-affected communities: adaptation and continuity in the kagura of Ogatsu, Miyagi Prefecture', *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2016, pp. 185-207.

⁶⁷ Kohei Nawa, interviewed by the author, 2018.

with the peninsula and formed an incentive for people to visit. Thus, the region as a whole became more well-known due to Nawa's sculpture, the festival it represented, and the peninsula landscape it foregrounded in RAF's promotional material. As the piece is not sited within Ishinomaki proper, it drew people out into the harder-to-reach areas of the peninsula, which stimulated the local economy in rural areas that were more negatively affected by the tsunami than the city-center. Similarly to the way that Yayoi Kusama's permanent sculpture, 'Yellow Pumpkin', has become a well-known landmark of the small island Naoshima after its inauguration as part of Benesse Art Site Naoshima in 1994, Nawa's 'White Deer' became a landmark of the area during RAF. The prominent sculpture was taken down with the other artworks at RAF's conclusion, but Matsumura revealed that once construction of the new seawall in Ogihamo is completed, 'White Deer' will be reinstated as permanent public art site, a draw for visitors to come to the region in the future.⁶⁸ The sculpture is to be permanently installed in time for the RAF transitional event in 2018. The artwork's permanence will bring more people to Ishinomaki in the long-term, and solidify it as a uniting symbol for the community that makes up the Oshika Peninsula.

Large-scale collaboration: Tatsuo Miyajima, and Kyun-Chome

For his site-specific work 'Sea of Time - Tōhoku', Tatsuo Miyajima involved the community in many ways, creating a network of connections that aided in the production of an art piece that functioned as a community site.⁶⁹ Long before the conception of RAF, Miyajima has been involved in Tōhoku and the Ishinomaki community. He was the Vice President of the Tōhoku University of Art and Design in the neighboring prefecture when the Great East Japan Earthquake struck, and traveled to Ishinomaki to volunteer with teams clearing wreckage and mud from the city in the months following the tsunami.⁷⁰ 'Sea of Time - Tōhoku' was originally conceived in 2015 when he visited Ishinomaki several times to interview local residents, inquiring about their feelings towards the notion of creating art in the region, and how they were feeling four years after the disaster.⁷¹

My project was originally intended to be executed by myself regardless of Reborn-Art Festival, but it just so happened that the festival was occurring in the same place – we wanted to cooperate, and the circumstances allowed the realization [of the projects] together.⁷²

⁶⁸ G. Matsumura interview, 2018.

⁶⁹ See page 5 for a brief introduction to this artwork.

⁷⁰ 'Artwork dedicated to Tohoku after the disaster: "Sea of Time" ', *Motion Gallery Crowdfunding*, [website] 2017. <https://motion-gallery.net/projects/tatsuomiya-jima> (accessed 15 March 2018). Translated by the author.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Tatsuo Miyajima, interviewed by the author, 2018.

'Sea of Time - Tōhoku' was sited in Oshika's Ayukawa area overlooking the eastern-most coast of the peninsula. It consisted of a tented structure containing a dark pool of water with 300 digital LED counters glowing beneath its surface. The waterproof counters cycled through the numbers 1-9 and shut off between cycles, representing the infinite cycle of life, death, and rebirth.⁷³ Miyajima asked 300 local survivors of the tsunami who had lost loved ones to participate in his project. Each victim chose the speed at which the LED counter would cycle through the numbers and restart, symbolically setting the length of the represented 'life cycles' as she or he desired. I will further analyze the ways in which Miyajima's piece engaged with loss and recovery after the tsunami in the next chapter, but for now will remain focused on its collaborative elements.

In addition to interviewing people in Ishinomaki in 2015, Miyajima also held workshops in Oshika and Ishinomaki and displayed models of the project for the local community to view and discuss one year before the festival, before starting the final production. The time Miyajima spent in Ishinomaki speaking with victims allowed him to temporarily bridge the distance between himself as an artist and the community in the area. Art historian Miwon Kwon has written that the meaning and central objective of community-based site-specific artwork is to create artworks in which 'members of the community – as simultaneously viewer/spectator, audience, public and referential subject – [...] will see and recognize themselves in the work' in positive and affirming ways.⁷⁴ Miyajima's piece was primarily intended for the local survivors of The Great East Japan Earthquake, to honor the memories of those who died and raise hope for the future. In his explanation of the concept, Miyajima writes that his experiences in Ishinomaki impressed upon him 'the reality of [local] people trying to move forward, but at the same time their wish not to be forgotten'.⁷⁵ Based on this realization, Miyajima created a site to pay respect to those lost in 2011 by directing a collaborative project to reflect the real feelings and desires of local people.

Through direct contact with physical aspects of the piece, participants actively contributed to the final site's appearance, and influenced how it would be perceived by audiences, including other community members. Miyajima's project formed social ties between people who participated, creating a community site for people to view the final outcome of the collaboration and to pay their respects to the victims. Signs at the exhibition site detailed the community's involvement in the project, which revealed the artist's intentions and creative process to visitors. As such, understanding the social aspect of its production became a major factor in the piece's meaning and reception – essentially it could be understood by viewers that the piece was made for the community.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ M. Kwon, 'Sittings of Public Art: Integration Versus Intervention, in *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Cambridge and London, The MIT Press, 2002, pp. 95-96.

⁷⁵ 'Artwork dedicated to Tohoku after the disaster: "Sea of Time"', 2017.

In addition, Miyajima collaborated with a large digital network of people in the production of ‘Sea of Time - Tōhoku’ through an online crowdfunding initiative to raise money to cover the cost producing each digital counter. The donors included people from Japan and all over the world, totaling nearly 500 contributors.

One of the crowdfunding websites, Motion Gallery (**Fig. 7**), allowed its 186 contributors to post public messages with their donations. The majority of these contributors were from Tokyo, and posted messages of support for Miyajima’s project, their intention to visit Ishinomaki to see the piece, support and send prayers for the victims of the tsunami, and some also shared anecdotes of their personal experiences in the region.⁷⁶ While

perhaps this online community did not directly engage with locals via traditional *machizukuri* practices, it should be noted their participation provided the financial means for local involvement to occur. The online community was an ‘imagined’ one, which people gained membership to by supporting the project – although they may not have known many local people in the Oshika region, they could feel a sense of belonging as a participant, and strong incentive to visit the site for themselves.⁷⁷ The digital nature of their involvement also spread word of RAF through the vast networks of social media circulation, spreading knowledge of the site-specific piece to otherwise unaware individuals.

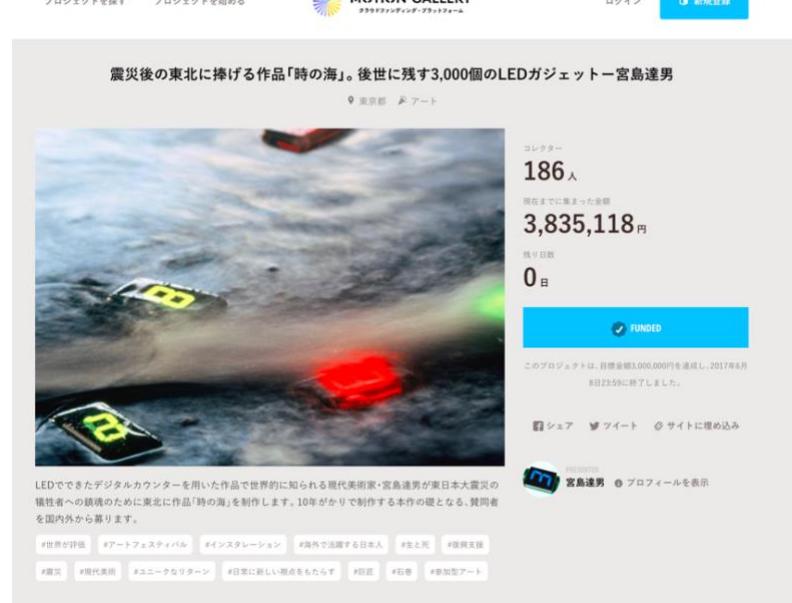


Figure 7. Online crowdfunding platform for ‘Sea of time - Tōhoku’.

Kyun-Chome created two video works for RAF with production processes that depended entirely on the artists’ collaboration with locals. This section focuses on Kyun-Chome’s ‘Deleting Them with the Sky’, which was a platform for certain community members to present their true desires, regardless of audience expectations.⁷⁸ Audience members may have arrived at RAF projecting their own idea of an ‘Ishinomaki tsunami victim,’ and been surprised by the forthright content of Kyun-

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1983, pp. 48-59.

⁷⁸ See page 6 for a brief introduction to this artwork.

Chome's work. For this piece, the artists asked Ishinomaki community members, 'despite the fact that you have lost everything, is there something you'd like to erase?', and shared their responses with the public.

The artist duo lived in Ishinomaki for three months while they created the work, actively making connections with local people such as young tour guides, theatre groups, fisherman union members, and various company executives in the town.⁷⁹ Rather than bringing up their artwork from the beginning, they focused on creating social connections by dining and drinking together with locals and becoming friends. Kyun-Chome stated that this social process 'served as important research to understand [local residents'] passions and discontent'. For three months Kyun-Chome visited the same diner each day, noticing that the phrase 'earthquake disaster' would come up quite frequently in the casual conversations engaged in by the diner's guests. Kyun-Chome explained, 'That's when [we] finally become aware of the obvious fact that today is an extension of *that* day. In Tokyo, we barely ever hear that word anymore.'⁸⁰ Having experienced firsthand the overwhelming presence of this shared memory in the community's everyday existence and identity, Kyun-Chome posed their question as an entry into the reflections of those who had survived, to understand how they contended with their survival and continuation in a community in which everything had changed drastically.

'Despite the fact that you have lost everything, is there something you'd like to erase?', is a simple enough question, but does not necessarily call for any explicit action to 'erase' that thing – rather, it is to point out an annoyance in their everyday life. To answer this question, residents shared very personal (even socially taboo) responses openly and at length with the artists they had grown to become friends with, sharing annoyances that remained in their lives or had emerged post-disaster. In their responses, the subjects of 'erasure' varied greatly, ranging from concerns such as: social rules that enforced specific strains of morality; new construction that obstructed the fishing industry; natural and manmade obstacles for human health; and individual struggles with identity, purpose, and happiness after the disaster. Following their response, Kyun-Chome and the interviewee then took a photograph using iPhone's panorama feature to visually 'erase' these annoyances, by using mirrors to replace them in the image with reflections of the sky (**Fig. 3**). Kyun-Chome's direct interactions with community members for this production were paramount in enabling it to come to fruition. Neither artist had any prior connections to the region, and had to start from scratch.

When you are an outsider, it is difficult to engage deeply with the local people in order to create artworks. [...] It is very difficult to keep a good sense of distance with locals. Building a relationship

⁷⁹ Kyun-Chome, interviewed by the author, 2018.

⁸⁰ Kyun-Chome, *Exhibition Statement*, 2017 (received from Kyun-Chome 15 March 2018).

with them, making friends, but not empathizing too much – that was the biggest challenge. The fact that we were outsiders was important in being able to make this work, as there are things that they cannot speak about amongst themselves that they could share with us. After a few months, they knew that we would be gone. And despite that fact, they spoke very deeply with us.⁸¹

By listening and understanding the individual passions and discontent of locals, Kyun-Chome was temporarily entered the community in Ishinomaki, achieving a type of ‘membership’ which enabled them to ask residents to share their personal thoughts on camera. Kyun-Chome harnessed their position as outsiders, to draw out responses that may otherwise have been difficult to express. Some responses confronted social norms of the local community quite directly. The sense of trust that artists established during time spent living in Ishinomaki was essential to the production of this project, and the video’s exhibition was a presentation of that collaborative process.

The participants’ responses to Kyun-Chome’s questions were cut together successively and presented with low volume on multiple screens running simultaneously as a multi-channel ‘ensemble’ of different voices. The effect was a series of simultaneous monologues that gave keen insight into the individual lives of local residents and their lived experiences in Oshika – their art of living. Kyun-Chome readily acknowledged the format as ‘unfriendly’ for those hoping to consume the work quickly.⁸² Instead, the overlapping dialogue encouraged viewers to try to focus on singular voices, to spend time listening to what was being said in order to form a more complete understanding of the piece, and subsequently learn more about the concerns of people in Ishinomaki after the disaster.

The ensemble drama derived from the great story of the “disaster” on this seventh year is a collection of very quiet whispers. Yet they are all associated. Here there are many voices. [...] If you may, we would like to have you lend your ear to the voices of the seventh year for a while in this dark room.⁸³

Instead of projecting their own perception or opinion about the victims through their work, the collaborative nature of Kyun-Chome’s work provided a window of insight into the community’s current state, allowing members of the community to reflect upon their own desires and share them with the public.

⁸¹ Kyun-chome interview, 2018.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Kyun-chome, *Exhibition Statement*, 2017.

Small-scale Connections: Masaru Iwai and Zakkubalan

Masaru Iwai and Zakkubalan fostered *kizuna* – social bonds – within the community on a smaller scale through their engagement with locals and the environment during the production of their works.

Iwai first spent 2 months researching his project and listening to the stories of local people in the Oshika Peninsula in 2015. To create his installation ‘Dumparium’, Iwai returned again for 4 months, living on site in a local Buddhist temple for the duration of the building process.⁸⁴ The artwork confronted the immense problem of illegal dumping that existed in the region long before the Great East Japan Earthquake, an issue that had not been discussed by the community until the tsunami brought the waste out of the mountains and into sight. Iwai invited his friends and students to collaborate on ‘Dumparium’, some of whom drove four hours each way to participate every day. They collected waste from the mountainside together, and interacted with each other on the temple grounds where the work was sited, far removed from the nearest town.

The remote location of the art site made Iwai’s artwork quite an isolating experience, contrary to the *machizukuri* incentives of RAF, yet small connections were made as their peculiar activities caused curiosity in the area. They were assisted in their activities by local hunters, and fed and cared for by local women living in the area.⁸⁵ After the festival, some of the students that participated in his project decided to remain in the region, acquiring part-time jobs in the *wakame* seaweed industry on the Oshika Peninsula.⁸⁶ In this way, although Iwai did not directly collaborate with local people for the production of this piece, the bonds created during Iwai’s project contributed to the area’s *machizukuri* process, inspiring youth to take interest in the region.

Zakkubalan’s film ‘Seachange’ also created small bonds in its production process. None of the filmmakers had been to Ishinomaki before, but they managed to connect with a local filmmaker and theatre directors to cast two Ishinomaki residents – survivors of the tsunami – to play the mother and son in their film.⁸⁷ Zakkubalan’s film directly engaged with the geography and environment in Ishinomaki, and their artistic process was impacted by their collaboration with the actors. The artists’ consciously injected fictional elements – characters, music, narrative – into the ‘restrained framework’ of the Ishinomaki landscape to produce a ‘specific sensory understanding of Ishinomaki’ through which audiences could engage with the real landscape of the place, but in

⁸⁴ See page 7 for a brief introduction to this artwork.

⁸⁵ M. Iwai interview, 2018.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ See page 8 for a brief introduction to this artwork.

the emotional context of the film's narrative.⁸⁸ Over the two-week course of the film's production spent many hours with the actors and learned about their lives in Ishinomaki, which in turn influenced the content of the film they exhibited for RAF.

Haruto-kun was the son of the family who lives in, and runs the Kashimamiko-Shrine, the main Shinto shrine in Ishinomaki on top of a hill that overlooks the flattened landscape of the city. [...] Both Haruto-kun and Yukari-san were incredibly generous with their time and energy. Over the course of shooting the film. Yukari-san in particular began to open up more about her life in Ishinomaki and the psychological effect the tsunami had on her and her family.⁸⁹

Kizuna in the form of new friendships was fostered during the production of Zakkubalan's film. Conversations between the artists and the film team introduced the survivors' sense of reconciliation with landscape and nature, the juxtaposition of which constituted a large visual presence in the final film.

While not direct collaboration, another aspect worth mentioning was Zakkubalan's use of Ishinomaki's '5pm Chime', a song that plays over the citywide loudspeakers each day at exactly 5pm. The chime is part of the Municipal Disaster Management Radio Communication Network which is set up across localities nationwide to warn citizens of emergencies, but the song plays each day to make sure the system is working and to mark the end of the day, usually to remind children to return home before dark. By incorporating Ishinomaki's specific rendition of the song into scenes, the location and narrative of the film became even more familiar to residents, which fostered an identification with their own community. It demonstrated to viewers that the artists had spent time, and taken notice of the community quirk and invested a very unique aspect of the town into the film itself.

RAF was Zakkubalan's first time participating in an arts exhibition of this scale, and upon reflection of their experience in Ishinomaki, they expressed their hope to deepen their connections with the community when filming projects of this nature in the future.⁹⁰ The direct social ties made for this project were small, but the artists and their project briefly touched the lives of at least two families in Ishinomaki – Yukari-san, who played the mother in the film, and Haruto-kun, who played her son. Getting to know them influenced the content of 'Seachange', the screening of which framed aspects of isolation and loss for the public to view. Zakkubalan's collaboration with these local residents further hybridized fiction and documentary, as they had experienced a real version of the narrative depicted in the film.

⁸⁸ Zakkubalan, interviewed by the author, 2018.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

A new hope

In this chapter I outlined the ways that RAF as a large-scale festival contributed to community recovery through *machizukuri* initiatives, and also how individual artists collaborated with the community as part of RAF. By combining the top-down approach of the executive committee with the bottom up approach of local collaboration and a large volunteer base, the first cycle of RAF demonstrated the organizational capacity and community willpower to bring about revitalization for the Oshika Peninsula over time – socially and economically. Even before the Great East Japan Earthquake, Ishinomaki faced population and economic decline, but a *machizukuri* project of this caliber has the potential for renewing community ties and combatting population growth. The festival served as a strong impetus to bring people out into social situations; as curator Etsuko Watari said, ‘local young people felt a kind of “hope” that was unique. The visible things have all been broken, so let’s dream ourselves new ones on our own. Let’s draw people out.’⁹¹ It is clear that the importance of local participation is not to be underestimated when it comes to the potential for *machizukuri* after a disaster. As it becomes more integrated into the community, RAF may form a new tradition for the region and contribute to the community’s sense of identity, and a collective point of pride to share with visitors.

The artists I interviewed engaged in community-building on a large scale through the uniting symbolism of Nawa’s ‘White Deer’, the production of a community site in Miyajima’s ‘Sea of Time - Tohoku’, and face-to-face interviews in Kyun-Chome’s ‘Deleting the Sky’; as well as smaller instances of social connection in Iwai’s ‘Dumparium’ and Zakkubalan’s ‘Seachange’. Miyajima and Kyun-Chome especially engaged local people in the production of their artworks, giving them influence over the content, and therefore a sense of investment in the project. The renunciation of their artistic authority is a key signifier of socially engaged art, a topic which I will return to in the third chapter. Matsumura informed me that starting from RAF 2019, the curatorial team will be changed to include locals in the curation process, but it remains to be seen whether it will become a competitive project.⁹² If so, the selection process for artists may become more based on *machizukuri* initiatives. While perhaps useful for the community, it could lead to the instrumentalization of artists – ETAT has been criticized for this in the past, and it would be pertinent for RAF to be cautious in this regard. I will also expand upon this issue in the third chapter.

Inviting outsiders to connect with, learn, and share stories with local residents in a way that contributes to the survival of the community in the long term is a gentle, yet effective method of

⁹¹ R. Watanabe, ‘In Ishinomaki, think about art’s power to create new things’, 2017, pp. 135-139.

⁹² G. Matsumura interview, 2018.

machizukuri. By visiting, the artists created works very specific to this one community, works that were perhaps out of sync with the art world at large, but very relevant and reflective of the social needs of the Oshika region. As part of this larger project, collaborators – both artists and non-artists – engaged in the socio-cultural work of community recovery, in ways not as readily tangible or measurable as reconstruction, but perhaps equally important in the community's sustained survival. In the next chapter, I will investigate the ways that individual artworks contributed to the emotional recovery of tsunami survivors and also built awareness and empathy for those who did not endure the trauma themselves.

Chapter 2: The case for empathy: art and trauma

But the “after” we are speaking of here stems on the contrary not from succession but from rapture, and less from anticipation than from suspense, even stupor. It is an “after” that means: Is there anything that follows? Are we still headed somewhere?

- Jean-Luc Nancy, *After Fukushima: The Equivalence of Catastrophes*⁹³

The socio-cultural work of processing disaster

In the previous chapter, I explained how the rhetoric of solidarity – community and connection – surrounding reconstruction efforts in post-disaster Tōhoku were exhibited in the *machizukuri* initiatives of RAF as a general operation, as well as within the production of the artworks exhibited within the festival. The nationwide rhetoric of *kizuna*, along with the popular campaign slogan ‘*Ganbarō Nippon!*’ (Let’s do our best, Japan!), undoubtedly created impetus for those outside of the affected areas to connect with, volunteer, send financial aid, and offer support for the victims through campaigns supporting various Tōhoku regional products. In the months following the catastrophic events, many foreign commentators commended Japan for their ‘stoicism, their solidarity, their peaceful and law-abiding willingness to get down to the important work of rescue, recovery and reconstruction.’⁹⁴ Seven years later, city centers, transportation infrastructure, residences, harbors and coastal levees, and cultural facilities have been reconstructed in many areas, returning a coveted sense of ‘normalcy’ to the nation.

These initiatives have had undoubtedly positive effects on the lives and recovery of many communities after the Great East Japan Earthquake, and I do not intend to downplay the heartfelt sincerity behind the nation’s show of support for the citizens of its affected northeastern prefectures. However, there are many in Japan who view the quick reconstruction and accompanying *fukkō nashonarizumu* (reconstruction nationalism) very critically, claiming that they were part of the national government’s active crusade to downplay the potentially grave dangers of radiation effects in the water, soil, and food supply spreading through the nation as the immensely anticipated 2020 Tokyo Olympics approached.⁹⁵ As the country was also deep into an aggressive

⁹³ J. Nancy, *After Fukushima: The Equivalence of Catastrophes*, 2017, p. 15.

⁹⁴ M. C. Poulton, ‘Antigone in Japan: some responses to 3.11 at Festival/Tokyo 2012’, in K. Iwata-Weickgennant and B. Geilhorn (eds.), *Fukushima and the Arts: Negotiating Nuclear Disaster*, London and New York, Routledge, 2017, pp. 128-129.

⁹⁵ K. Iwata-Weickgennant and B. Geilhorn ‘Negotiating Nuclear Disaster: an introduction’, in *Fukushima and the Arts: Negotiating Nuclear Disaster*, 2017, pp. 6-9.

2003-initiated campaign to increase tourism as a way to combat its post-growth condition of economic and demographic decline, the triple disaster could not have occurred at a worse time. The highly mediated Fukushima incident immediately induced a sharp drop in tourism to Japan, causing an economic panic – but tourism was only down by 25% as soon as September 2011, a mere seven months later.⁹⁶ However, reconstruction is far from over in much of the affected areas, and thousands of people are still displaced, especially those from Fukushima Prefecture. In Ishinomaki specifically, the local government was heavily criticized for misappropriating restoration funds to push the tourism and whaling industries in the town instead of rebuilding the community and resettling its more than 50,000 displaced residents.⁹⁷ The positive image of the town, built on a rhetoric of social harmony, may have been at the expense of locals taking measures to cope with the life-altering disaster.

In the year after the tsunami, an influx of approximately 240,000 volunteers streamed to Ishinomaki, and many locals buried their grief or put on brave faces to encourage volunteers in the town.⁹⁸ Many residents had no ability or opportunity to spend time to mourn the loss of their loved ones or process the intense physical trauma they had suffered – with 400 still missing in Ishinomaki alone, for some families even the possibility of properly burying their dead was stolen away by the sea. Klien noted during her field research in Ishinomaki in 2012 and 2014 that although the town exuded hope and most citizens were trying to maintain routines, subtle signs of suffering were revealed once people opened up about their emotions.⁹⁹ The Japanese sentiment of *shikataganai*, that nothing can be done (there is no method of doing), is a phrase often references in Japanese communities to express the need to carry on in times of suffering, to accept the fragility of life and move forward past a negative situation. *Shikagatanai* is not a fatalistic reaction, but a sentiment to avoid fixating over asking why, and instead find a way to proceed in spite of tragedy.¹⁰⁰ As Jean-Luc Nancy wrote, an integral part of catastrophe reconstruction is to try to forget the tragedy quickly: ‘We must forget and hide in order to restore the normal or everyday nature of life, and if possible, to make it better than before.’¹⁰¹ During the collection of Ishinomaki survivor testimonies

⁹⁶ E. Ma, Y. Zhang, and H. Qu, ‘Influence of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) on the Chinese Outbound Travel Market’, in *Tourism Crisis Management and Disaster in the Asia-Pacific*, edited by B. W. Ritchie and K. Campiranon, CAB International Oxfordshire, UK 2015, p.165.

⁹⁷ K. Freda, ‘Ishinomaki Stone Memorial for the Victims of the 2011 Earthquake’, *Spoon and Tamago: Japanese Art, Design, & Culture*, [website], 2016, para. 2, <http://www.spoon-tamago.com/2016/03/07/ishinomaki-stone-memorial-for-the-victims-of-the-2011-earthquake/>, (accessed 20 April 2018); and M. B. Engelien, J. Edom, and H. Wood, ‘Building legitimacy through the spatial aesthetics of the illicit’, 2018.

⁹⁸ S. Klien, ‘Reinventing Ishinomaki, Reinventing Japan?’, 2016, p. 41.

⁹⁹ Ibid. pp.42-43.

¹⁰⁰ The sentiment of *shikataganai* was used by Japanese-Americans during their internment in the USA, and by Emperor Hirohito in 1945 following the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States.

¹⁰¹ J. Nancy, *After Fukushima: The Equivalence of Catastrophes*, 2017, p. 48.

for a local interview series entitled ‘My March 11’, many survivors refused to share – many rejected journalists with the simple response, ‘I do not want to remember it.’¹⁰²

In *Fukushima and the Arts: Negotiating Political Disaster*, Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt and Barbara Geilhorn observe that artists engage in the socio-cultural work of ‘making sense’ of the Great East Japan Earthquake calamity, participating in shaping perceptions about disasters through their very work.¹⁰³ The triple disaster of 2011 was one of the most globally recorded and mediatized disasters, and the overwhelming collection of data and research were central to disaster management, urban planning, tourism, and risk management publications in the years following. But the reduction of the catastrophe to numbers and statistics fails to contend with the social and cultural effects of the trauma on the affected population. As the *Shūkan Gendai* (Modern Weekly) Magazine expressed: ‘“Big data” is of no help when it comes to tracing the memories of the dead. It cannot record the voices of the deceased. But isn’t that what humans have their imagination for?’¹⁰⁴ Cultural responses, such as the art included in RAF, are significant forces of processing and analyzing the human experience of disaster, and they also establish a basis for empathizing with those affected.¹⁰⁵

Empathizing with trauma through art in Reborn-Art Festival

The implications of the title ‘Reborn’, and the festival’s revitalization theme of restoring *hito no ikiru-jutsu* – the art of living – to the region were not lost on the artists who took part in RAF. As such, the 38 artists were active participants in RAF’s cultural undertaking of responding to the disaster – most artists created their works on site in Ishinomaki; they did not simply donate works for the festival to display. The importance of their physical visit to the scarred landscape of Ishinomaki was emphasized by RAF organizers and curators, and their work engaged with the community’s shared memory of the trauma the community had suffered in 2011 – indirectly or directly. They were asked to create works not just about and in collaboration with the local community, but *for* them, artworks that ‘felt like “gifts.”’¹⁰⁶

In this chapter, I analyze four artworks by Miyajima, Kyun-Chome, Iwai, and Zakkubalan as socio-cultural responses to the tragedy that decimated the community and landscape

¹⁰² Sanriku Kahoku Shimpō Co, Surviving the 2011 Tsunami: 100 testimonies of Ishinomaki Area Survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake, 2014, p. 003.

¹⁰³ K. Iwata-Weickgenannt and B. Geilhorn ‘Negotiating Nuclear Disaster: an introduction’, 2017, pp. 9-11.

¹⁰⁴ S. Kiyoshi, *Shūkan Gendai*, 2013, cited in K. Iwata-Weickgenannt and B. Geilhorn ‘Negotiating Nuclear Disaster: an introduction’, in *Fukushima and the Arts: Negotiating Nuclear Disaster*, London and New York, Routledge, 2017, p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ It is important to note that literature, poetry, performance, and theatre have also been very important to processing and analyzing the socio-cultural impacts of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

¹⁰⁶ Watanabe, R. ‘In Ishinomaki, think about art’s power to create new things’, 2017.

surrounding the works they sited in Ishinomaki and surrounding Oshika Peninsula during RAF. My analysis of their works is founded in Jill Bennet's *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*. Bennet theorizes that art has the ability to engage not only with the past event, but also the present experience of memory.¹⁰⁷ Drawing from her work, I posit that those who experienced the tsunami in Ishinomaki are undeniably survivors of a serious and grave traumatic experience, and consider the artworks through this lens. Art that engages with trauma has the power to 'activate and realize connections' within spectators, and 'ultimately has the potential to take [them] outside the confines of [their] character and habitual modes of perception.'¹⁰⁸ In short, art that responds to the trauma that the community in Ishinomaki endured has the ability to evoke empathy within viewers. For this reason, there is value in analyzing the artworks individually for their engagement with trauma and its affect, making a contribution to the research of the cultural dimension of disaster.

The artists who participated in RAF needed to reconsider the relationship between art, representation of trauma, and the lived experience of trauma. The festival put artists in the position of contending with incredibly sensitive and complex aspects of the human experience, making it absolutely necessary for them to adopt approaches of empathy and imagination. When considering their responses, it is important to note the artists' positionality, as there has been much debate over who has the right to speak about the triple disaster.¹⁰⁹ The artists I interviewed were not from the affected regions, nor were they direct victims of the tsunami, known as *tojisha* (directly affected people). However, as noted regarding Kyun-Chome's work in the previous chapter, the artists' position as outsiders gave them the ability to express things that may not be acceptable as a community member in Ishinomaki. Their positional distance allowed their artworks to serve as what Bennet referred to as 'vehicles of interpersonal transmission'; they allowed the disaster's affect to reach those who had not experienced the trauma without claiming ownership of the *tojisha*'s personal experience.¹¹⁰ In addition, the wide differentiation of media, concepts, and execution between artworks provided a variety of perspectives and responses to the event, avoiding a singular understanding of the tsunami and suffering that followed. Cultural theorists have warned of the danger of adopting one reductive narrative to the disaster's social and cultural impacts on the community.¹¹¹ There is no singular understanding of what happened in Ishinomaki, and likewise there are many different ways to interpret the art pieces.

¹⁰⁷ J. Bennet, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2005, pp. 25.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. pp 44-45.

¹⁰⁹ K. Iwata-Weickgenannt and B. Geilhorn 'Negotiating Nuclear Disaster: an introduction', 2017, p. 10.

¹¹⁰ J. Bennet, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, 2005, pp. 25.

¹¹¹ K. Iwaki, 'The politics of the senses: Takayama Akira's atomized theatre after Fukushima' in K. Iwata-Weickgenannt and B. Geilhorn (eds.), *Fukushima and the Arts: Negotiating Nuclear Disaster*, 2017, p. 218.

Miyajima, Kyun-Chome, Iwai, and Zakkubalan created socio-cultural responses to the disaster in the form of artworks that provided opportunities for the two primary spectator groups of RAF – locals and visitors. First, the artworks created sites of remembrance and memorialization for the victims, and their collaborative nature allowed survivors to process and reflect upon their own experiences. Perhaps more than five years after the tsunami, now that the semblance of normalcy has begun to return to the region, these artworks offered a way to cope with traumatic memories that had been suppressed. Second, the artwork reached out to visiting audiences and new members of the community that had not experienced the trauma firsthand, activating and connecting their own conscious understanding of the tsunami to foster empathy towards the surviving community's experience. The artworks rearticulated the relationship between trauma, the affected community, and those outside that community into a visual language to communicate emotion not easily expressed through conversation. Sympathy facilitates compassion and sorrow for another's loss, but through empathy, spectators may encounter the suffering and loss in a deeper way, to begin understanding and reflecting upon the emotional state of survivors while still maintaining their distance as outsiders.

Bennet wrote that art has the 'capacity to transform perception'.¹¹² In the case of RAF, art's capacity to transform opens up space for empathic encounters between victims and non-victims regarding their view of the terrible tsunami that caused such trauma, shaping the future perception of both parties. Therefore, in the words of Bennet, the question to ask of these artworks does not end at, 'What does it mean?', but rather, 'How does it work?'¹¹³ Thus, for the remainder of this chapter, I analyzed four artworks with the intention of identifying the ways that they may have affected viewers, transformed their perception, and established a basis for empathy.

'Sea of Time - Tōhoku': addressing ritual, memorial, and embodied loss

In the previous chapter, I established that Miyajima's piece, 'Sea of Time - Tōhoku', served as a community site in Ishinomaki during RAF. When considering its affective quality, there are a variety of operations that were in play to be noted. First, Miyajima's work engaged heavily with Japanese ceremonial practice regarding death and mourning. In Japan, there are many traditions and rituals surrounding the death of a family member in Japan; although often a secular country, Buddhist and Shinto cultural ceremonies play a large part in how many people cope with loss. As mentioned previously, a major challenge after the disaster was the proper burial of the dead; the

¹¹² Ibid., p. 10.

¹¹³ Ibid, pp. 45.

inability to perform the traditional rituals of mourning and loss added to the traumatic stress of tsunami survivors. In a testimony of his experience, a member of the Ishinomaki community shared that they could not move on with his life until he ceremonially ‘buried’ his wife, even though her body was never found.¹¹⁴ There were many reports in Tōhoku of hauntings and spiritual possessions from families unable to conduct funeral rites to aid the passage of the spirit from the living to the dead, signs that many victims were unable to address the deaths of their loved ones in customary ways that eased their ability to cope with the losses.¹¹⁵

Common funerary tradition in Japan includes ceremonies called *hoji* that are held at specific times after someone’s death. ‘Sea of Time - Tōhoku’ addressed the ‘seventh-year memorial,’ which occurs on the sixth anniversary of death, referred to as *shichikaiki*. Miyajima called his piece a ‘topos where everyone can gather in memory of the deceased’, a community site to ‘allow those left behind to have hope and continue living.’¹¹⁶ He referred to the glowing digital counters in his work as the ‘light of life’ of those who had passed away on that fateful day. The counters cycled through the numbers one through nine, and went dark in place of the number zero, before restarting again. The cycling of the numbers was Miyajima’s take on the cyclical nature of birth, death and rebirth. He further explained, ‘When counting numbers, it signifie[d] life, and when it [went] off, it signifie[d] death. [---] The counting speed can be adjusted down or up, the same way each life has a unique character.’ Those who lost loved ones participated in the time-setting process, setting the speed at which the numbers cycled. Participating time-setters have commented on this experience, sharing that they set the timer at a certain speed because it reflected the personalities of those who were lost.¹¹⁷ The collaborative practice of the work offered participating survivors an occasion to ease real bodily anxieties related to the ritualization of death, and provided other affected people a site and occasion to honor tsunami victims.

Second, the accessibility of the site’s immediate meaning as a memorial created an incredibly ‘affectively charged space’ for viewers, both those who had not experienced the tsunami and those who had lived through it.¹¹⁸ The work was sited off of a remote, winding road in the Oshika Peninsula, meaning that viewers did not happen across it – people came to this location because they were familiar with the work, and had a desire to see it specifically. Many locals knew what to expect as a result of the workshops held in the region to discuss physical models of the site, and the works’ large online presence meant that images of the piece throughout its production

¹¹⁴ Sanriku Kahoku Shimpo Co, *Surviving the 2011 Tsunami: 100 testimonies of Ishinomaki Area Survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake*, 2014, p. 073.

¹¹⁵ M. C. Poulton, ‘Antigone in Japan: some responses to 3.11 at Festival/Tokyo 2012’, 2017, pp. 129-130.

¹¹⁶ T. Miyajima interview, 2018. Note: The remainder of observations regarding the artwork in this section can be credited to this interview.

¹¹⁷ Artwork dedicated to Tohoku after the disaster: “Sea of Time”, 2017.

¹¹⁸ J. Bennet, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, 2005, p. 150.

process had been widely circulated to those not from the area. Thus, many audience members understood the concept and had knowledge of its collaborative process before entering the site – they knew what the lights meant, and who had set them. There were also multiple explanatory signs (available in English and Japanese) to mediate understanding before audiences entered the tent. Furthermore, Miyajima sent all participants and crowdfund donors an aerial map of the piece so that they could locate their specific counter when visiting. The result of all these connections was that before seeing the work, it was already quite clear to most audiences that the meaning of the work was to memorialize those who died in the tsunami, addressing victims who were never recovered from the sea and returned to their loved ones.

The direct communication of its meaning gave the work a didactic quality, engaging spectators with the moral aspects of visiting a memorial site. However, this pre-existing familiarity with the concept of the work did not lessen the affect of the work, rather it wordlessly compelled a certain type of social conduct within the space that registered within the conscious and the body of spectators. Spectators were encouraged to be conscious of their bodies in the space in a way akin to entering a funerary ritual or cemetery grounds; there were unwritten social rules compelling them to conduct themselves in a way that acknowledged and did not interrupt the reverent atmosphere. Spectators entered the installation tent through flaps that opened; and upon entering were immediately forced to contend with their own body inside the dark space –the darkness rendered people momentarily visually impaired, and their entry allowed light into the dark space inside, immediately disrupting the visual atmosphere of the work and creating a fleeting moment of guilt upon entry. There was very limited room to stand, only a thin pathway that circumnavigated the ground level, surprisingly large, pool of dark water from which the counters flickered up at viewers. The site's remote location and limited accessible interior space kept the number of visitors down, creating a sense of intimacy within the solemn space. The quiet space heightened sense of sound, adding to the self-consciousness of one's own bodily movements in the space.

Third, the perceptibly handed quality of the memorial contributed to establishing a basis of empathy for visitors to the region. Miyajima's piece was a place of remembrance, made up of many acts of remembrance.¹¹⁹ Unlike the Holocaust memorials discussed in the writings of James Young, the process of making 'Sea of Time - Tōhoku' was rendered transparent. The collaboration with survivors that created it concretized its function as an embodied memorial; 300 different points of human contact revealed the site's inner workings. By inscribing the memorial with

¹¹⁹ J. Young, 'Sites Unseen: Shimon Attie's Acts of Remembrance', in *At Memory's Edge: After-images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 62.

‘memory of its own genesis’, viewers were reminded of the ‘memorial’s essential fragility, its dependence on others for life – that it was made by human hands in human times and places’.¹²⁰

From any point in the tent, audiences had complete visual access to the entire watery field of lights as they flickered at varying speeds and went out individually. Viewing the movement of these lights ‘registered affectively’ as viewers recognized the traces of human touch that remained on each counter by the mourning family who had set the speed; indirectly they were witnessing the pain of another.¹²¹ Feminist scholar Sarah Ahmed has asserted that emotions are ‘precisely about the intimacy of the “with”; that is, they are about the intimate relationship between selves, objects and others’.¹²² In Miyajima’s piece, the emotions evoked through witnessing the pain of others created a relationship between the spectator, the piece, and the survivors of the tsunami. When processing the world around them, individuals are only able to draw from their own knowledge and experiences. Thus, when viewing Miyajima’s work, ‘rehearsed associations’ with grief or loss (which could be real or imagined), caused memory images to surface within the viewer, linking them to the victims of the tsunami.¹²³ Ahmed’s argument can be further applied here: by feeling emotion toward the victims and toward Miyajima’s piece – spectators’ bodies ‘surface[d] in relation to other bodies’, producing a collective of individuals who could empathize with victims.¹²⁴

These three aspects of Miyajima’s ‘Sea of Time - Tohoku’ – ritual, memorial, and embodiment – created an affectively charged space, recognizable by survivors and also those visiting to see the artwork or pay their respects to victims. The site’s accessible meaning of the work accentuated spectators’ awareness of their own body within a memorial space. The transparency of the site’s own collaborative production allowed spectators to witness the pain of the victims. Ultimately, the affective atmosphere and the embodied pain of the digital counters made spectators reflect upon the experiences and losses of the victims of the tsunami in new ways, and became more empathetic toward the Ishinomaki community and other individuals who endured the Great East Japan Earthquake. As a memorial site, ‘Sea of Time - Tohoku’ offered a place and occasion for community members to cope with loss, while also shaping perception of the disaster for visitors in a didactic way. At the same time, it maintained a distinct separation between the groups, forcing a respectful awareness of the difference between *tōjisha* and outsiders. It silently made clear that the zone of experience is inaccessible for those who did not endure the

¹²⁰ J. Young, ‘Germany’s Vanishing Holocaust Memorials’, in *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought*, vol. 43, no. 4, 1994, pp 416-417.

¹²¹ J. Bennet, Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art, 2005, p. 108-110.

¹²² S. Ahmed, ‘Collecting Feelings’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, SAGE, vol. 21, no. 2, 2004, p. 39.

¹²³ Ibid. pp. 25-41.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

trauma – but that through empathy outsiders may understand the present experience of the traumatic memory.

'Utsusemi Crush!': rendering trauma intelligible through associations

For this section, I will turn to the second of Kyun-Chome's works for RAF, the video 'Utsusemi Crush'.¹²⁵ Like 'Deleting them with the Sky', Kyun-Chome's 'Utsusemi Crush!' engaged with face-to-face interview contact with local residents, the compilation of many individual responses to one question, and mirror reflections of the sky. For 'Utsusemi Crush!' the artists asked community members the question, 'If you were reborn, what would you want to be in your next life?', and then asked them to crush an empty cicada chrysalis with their hand. The artist unit again harnessed the social ties they built within the community to deploy affective devices in a fifteen-minute video that stimulated alternative ways of thinking in audiences. 'Utsusemi Crush!' affected spectators through two distinct methods: juxtaposing compositional elements to create relationships between spectator and participant, and drawing on local perception about cicadas. Kyun-Chome was conscious of art's capacity for shaping the way people think over time:

We believe that art has a function of creating alternate pathways within the human brain that may not have occurred previously. Perhaps this function affected the local community during RAF? Of course, art does not have immediate effects in the area. Art can gradually influence people's thinking and cause changes over time.¹²⁶

First, the juxtaposition of visual and audio compositional elements in 'Utsusemi Crush!' evoked empathic responses by activating connections between viewers and the audience. For each participant response, there was a large cicada chrysalis in the center of the frame, seemingly floating in space as it was perched on a mirrored surface that reflected the sky. After the response was given, the hand of each respective participant entered the frame and smashed the exoskeleton (**Fig. 8**). The video was displayed on large screen in the exhibition space, and each cicada appeared enormous, showing the bug in great detail. The size and detail of the cicada caused those unfamiliar with the species to feel disgust and discomfort, a bodily reaction that emerged in stark juxtaposition to the audible sound of the spoken responses. Each participant response was expressed in the same format; a singular voice declaring, 'I'd like to be...., if I were reborn again.' In some shots, the surrounding noise was also audible, conveying to spectators that there was an audience gathered to watch each response – that in watching this video they were only viewing one small part of a

¹²⁵ See page 6 for a brief introduction to this artwork.

¹²⁶ Kyun-Chome interview, 2018. Note: The remainder of observations regarding the artwork in this section can be credited to this interview.

larger event. As the scene registered to viewer consciousness, a more complete rendering of the entire scene emerged in viewer imagination, relieving the initial bodily reaction to the grotesque image of the bug. Then, the interviewee's hand, also seemingly gigantic on the screen, would abruptly crush the chrysalis into the mirror, causing the fragile exoskeleton to shatter into pieces against the reflected sky. The cicada's minuscule size and the flatness of the plane were both revealed in an instant, undoing the visual allusion of the giant bug floating in space. The corporal sound of the cicada shattering encouraged odd bodily reactions—often either shock and surprise at the violent act mixed with a sense of satisfaction or even pleasure at the sound of its destruction. The strange combination of disgust, shock, and pleasure that became associated with the chrysalis and its destruction in the film were juxtaposed against the simultaneous formation of a connection with each interviewee.



Figure 8. 'Utsusemi Crush!'. Kyun-Chome, film still.

Each participant gave their response to what they'd want to be if they were reborn, ranging from tangible objects like a beautiful rose, whale, hula dancer in Hawai'i, and seaweed in the Caribbean Sea, to more abstract objects like a planet, the sky, water, and a god. The familiarity and accessibility of interviewee responses created a language of understanding that activated the formulation of a connection between the viewer and interviewee. The responses were mostly similar, however, there were outliers, such as 'nothing,' 'myself!', and 'I do not want to be reborn!' These outliers served as reminders that allow viewers to understand what they are watching, that the question has become more than a hypothetical for survivors of the trauma of the tsunami.

Including those still missing, nearly 4,000 people died in Ishinomaki alone; viewers must acknowledge that people behind the voices they are hearing have actually recently witnessed, confronted and escaped death at a very close range. In the context of trauma, the question of rebirth holds a lot more weight.

There was a ‘shock of recognition,’ as real, human, voices attached to real, lived experiences produced a new image of the disaster for spectators that may have previously only been associated with the statistics of the trauma – numbers displayed on screens. Hearing the actual voices of trauma survivors gave viewers some sense of who they are, even without seeing a face.¹²⁷ The anonymity of their voice worked to evoke an attempt to position the speakers’ identities through rehearsed associations drawn from with their voices – especially age and gender. Spectators became hyper aware of the hands of survivors – the nails, wrinkles, and hair – that may further personify the voice of each participant. Voices and hands associated as belonging to very young, innocent bodies especially evoked empathic emotion. There was a reorientation of the tsunami in terms of real, relatable identities. This reorientation in turn produced relationships based on empathy, a collective fear of disaster, and readily transmittable horror at the thought of the death of a child.¹²⁸ The violent act of crushing the chrysalis into pieces and the sudden flatness of the frame reinforced these feelings, again and again as other interviewees responded. The recurring violence of the act served as a kind of reenactment of the tsunami’s power, but only for a moment. The scene would cut, and the crushed chrysalis was replaced with a fresh new one as the next participant began to speak. The cyclical nature of the video allowed spectators to form a relationship to each individual voice, while also reflecting on the community at large. In this way, the composition of Kyun-Chome’s video evoked an emotional response that produced a relationship between the spectator and survivors.¹²⁹ This relationship shifts perception about the survivors, establishing a basis for empathy that may in turn shape larger perceptions about the disaster and the stigma surrounding trauma in Japan.

Secondly, Kyun-Chome drew on local knowledge of cicadas in Japanese society in to render the trauma into an intelligible language for spectators. *Utsusemi* is a play on words, *utsu* means hollow and *semi* means cicada – referring to the cicada chrysalis. However, *utsusemi* is also an older word for ‘the living world’(*utsusomi*). The title alone set in motion a narrative of the film for those who understand Japanese. In Japan, cicadas are a prevalent species that have cultural significance as a reminder of summer; each summer cicadas molt from their exoskeletons, leaving chrysalises scattered around as they fly around and fill the air with the sound of their distinctive call, even in

¹²⁷ J. Bennet, Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art, 2005, p. 106.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ S. Ahmed, ‘Collecting Feelings’, 2004, pp. 25-41.

locales as urban as Tokyo. Although it is debated upon within in the scientific community, there is a general popular belief in Japan that cicadas live underground as nymphs for seven years, before emerging from the soil to live for one week before they die. Cicadas that emerged after March 11th, 2017 were considered to be in their seventh year, so the cicadas that flew in Ishinomaki during the summer that RAF took place would have been born in 2011, meaning that they too are survivors of the tsunami.

'To us, it is meaningful for the cicadas of Ishinomaki, the stricken area, to fly again in the sky. [...] To be born again, is to die once. Many of the people who live in Ishinomaki may have already imagined themselves having perhaps died. That 'what if' is an important concept to us.'

The symbolism of seven years associated with cicadas was thus a strong visual language to Japanese people that created a narrative around which to frame the work. As the victims crushed the empty cicada, the title's double meaning implies that they are also crushing the world of the living, to be reborn. In 'Utsusemi Crush!' Kyun-Chome created a mental association between the cicada and survivor victims, which produced the collision between 'sense memory' and 'common memory' in this work. Bennet writes that 'sense memory', is an individualized, deep memory of the process of trauma and its affective impact, while 'common memory' is when those memories are interpreted and placed into a more communicable framework.¹³⁰ 'Utsusemi Crush!' holds these in tension, offering the shared visual narrative of the remnants of a cicada who was reborn, and its cast-off chrysalis crushed as it enters its next life. This narrative renders communicable the notion of coping with physical and mental trauma of surviving the tsunami and continuing to live with its present memory. By rendering the traumatic experience into a communicable format, viewers familiar with cicadas may understand the connection, and listen more closely to their responses. Gayatri Spivak has theorized about the importance of speaking comes with 'the possibility of being heard,' and the ethics of listening without trying to assimilate the speakers' experience.¹³¹ Taking a closer consideration of their responses could give spectators insight into survivor values and sentiments, without revealing the inner workings of their trauma for public consumption.

Kyun-Chome's affective use of composition and social beliefs stimulated new ways of thinking about the tsunami and tsunami survivors. The video presented viewers with a series of encounters that evoked bodily reactions and created a relationship between spectators and participants built on empathic emotion. The video's successive framework, a constant repetition of a similar scene – cicada, response, crush – allowed the artists to manage the emotional responses

¹³⁰ J. Bennet, 'Art, Affect, and the "Bad Death": Strategies for Communicating the Sense Memory of Loss', *Signs*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2002, pp. 334-335.

¹³¹ J. Bennet, Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art, 2005, p. 104.

of a broader audience, constantly renewing the imagery from the beginning to stimulate the same response again and again to produce a lasting affect. The affect is accentuated if spectators have knowledge about cicadas in Japan, as there is an implied narrative throughout the piece that survivors' old skins have been cast off and shattered after the trauma they endured: they are not the same as before. Through interviews, the work created a testimonial alliance between viewers and locals, promoting a form of thought that arises from the body and 'takes spectators out of their characters and habitual modes of perception' – that is, into the realm of empathic perception.¹³²

'Dumparium': addressing ways of facing nature in the future

In his work 'Dumparium', Iwai approached the trauma of the event in a different way, focusing not on collaboration with specific community members, but instead by confronting viewers with signs of the ongoing volatility between human and natural forces on the Oshika Peninsula. Even before the 2011 tsunami struck, the community has been battling the natural environment for years, including previous earthquakes and tsunamis (although none as devastating as the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake).¹³³ In addition, the deer population characteristic of Oshika has become invasive, which in turn causes over-propagation of mountain ticks and leeches that makes it very difficult for people to enter the mountainside, even to contend with the waste that has accumulated as a result of illegal dumping for 40 years. The deer population is 'controlled' by seasonal hunting in the community, but more than 400 carcasses are discarded in the mountains every year as part of this task.

These combined issues – illegal dumping, invasive deer, and the resulting mountain pests – have been an ongoing problem in Oshika for years. The goal of Iwai's work was to foreground the ways that 'people face nature' by gathering materials that had been regularly dumped in the mountains by community members, including industrial and residential waste and deer carcasses, and making audiences 'view things that [they] usually – subconsciously or unconsciously – do not look at'. By openly displaying objects that had previously been cast out of sight, Iwai's work exposed how people have been treating the natural environment as a dump site in the past, providing a new avenue of critical thinking towards reconciliation with Oshika's nature in the future. As the community is built anew, Iwai believes there is opportunity to reformulate the manner in which the community deals with these unwanted objects. 'Dumparium' employed viewers'

¹³² Ibid, p. 44

¹³³ M. Iwai interview, 2018. Note: The remainder of observations regarding the artwork in this section can be credited to this interview.

responses to abject imagery, holding them in tension with shame as a way to start a critical discussion about the state of the current treatment of the Peninsula.

The main structures of ‘Dumparium’ were two geometric domes made up of wooden triangles, created to mirror the shape of the mountains upon which the piece was sited. An assortment of dumped materials that Iwai and his associates had collected from the mountainside were strung within each triangle like a specimen on display, including, among other things, rusted bicycles and car parts, eroded kitchenware and household appliances, and deer carcasses in varying stages of decay (**Fig. 9**). Explanation of the work furthered understanding that these items were not a result of the tsunami itself, but caused by illegal dumping in the mountains for years before the disaster struck. By confronting audiences with human pollution, Iwai’s work encouraged a sense of shame or regret. From the outside the work was quite colorful and appeared safe, and audiences were encouraged to enter the interior of the mountain-like structure to experience being enveloped on all sides by the dumped objects. ‘After the earthquake, [the community] had to confront the wreckage, but during [their] ordinary days... they never really glanced twice at the mountains of garbage that had been accumulating before the quake’. In this way, Iwai’s work exposed the interior of the mountainside, displaying the reality of the illegal dumping situation in Oshika. The artist explained, ‘I hoped the following could be explored through my work: how do the people of the Oshika Peninsula, which suffered tremendous damage, face nature and one another, and how can they move forward together?’



Figure 9. ‘Dumparium’, Iwai, view from interior.

By inviting them inside, Iwai’s work went beyond simply revealing dumped items for audiences to view; ‘Dumparium’ also allowed viewers to experience the work within their own

bodies when entering the dome's interior. The waste created a strong aversion to viewing or entering the structure, especially the inclusion of deer carcasses that peppered the domes' frame towards the interior – drying skin, partial skeletons, and even decaying flesh. Particularly repellent were these organic remains, which produced a foul, rotting odor that attracted flies and maggots. Iwai pushed the artwork into the realm of the abject by inserting rotting carcasses into the frame of a colorful manmade structure. In addition to the shape of the mountain, the domes' geodesic frames were reminiscent of playground climbing frames for children, which also created a visual association that encouraged audiences to recall childhood memories, drawing forth familiarity and nostalgia. By inserting rotting organic carcasses in a structure associated with these familiar shapes resulted in a space in which disgust and guilt were held in tension with each other. This tension encouraged viewers to experience a bodily recoil to the sight and smell of the rotting carcasses. In some cases, audiences even refused to enter the dome, or stopped their children from coming inside.¹³⁴

This 'moment of recoil', as explained by Bennet, is a moment in which one feels ones' own body reacting to the image, a 'trivial, unwilled response that in terms of spectatorship can constitute an experiential link between affect (sensation in the present) and representation'.¹³⁵ Thus the feeling of aversion to viewing the organic material included in the piece was also experienced within a viewers' body, as an affect, or sensation in the present. Bennet explains further that this bodily aversion is not a retreat, but instead a way to negotiate the 'felt impact' of the image – to locate ones' self in relation to it.¹³⁶ The moment of recoil incited by the carcasses included in 'Dumparium' thus allowed viewers to consider their relationship to Iwai's piece, to consider their own role in the dilemma between nature and humankind. Recognizing a relationship to the garbage and carcasses further emphasized guilt or shame associated with the pollution.

Unlike many other artists in RAF, Iwai did not explicitly engage with the implications of 'reborn' in RAF's title, explaining, '[t]hat word may be a comfort to some people, but I think it will also dilute sorrow and suffering. We cannot be reborn. There is also a need to confront the fact that this is a one-time life.' His approach was not to provide catharsis for survivors, but instead reveal an alternative way of moving forward from the trauma – by considering new avenues for reconciling the community's volatile relationship with nature. By holding shame, nostalgia, and aversion in tension, Iwai managed to create a work that evoked an actionable response – in this way, it raised awareness to the issue of illegal dumping in the region, of both garbage and the deer remains. Iwai's piece encouraged a desire for change to be implemented as the 'art of living' is

¹³⁴ Masaru Iwai, interviewed by the author, 2018.

¹³⁵ J. Bennet, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, 2005, p. 43.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

recovered in the Oshika Peninsula. In this way, whether or not the artist intended it, the critical response to Iwai's artwork disrupted the community by provoking reflection through tension, an indicator of socially engaged art which I will discuss further in the next chapter. The affective, sensorial qualities of Iwai's work demonstrated how art can guide the viewer outside of their character toward new forms of critical thinking, in this case to reflect upon one's role in illegal dumping, and to consider the 'interior' of the natural environment in the future.¹³⁷

'Seachange': rendering trauma intelligible through narrative

Zakkubalan injected a narrative into the language of landscape photography to evoke emotion through their film 'Seachange'. By intertwining elements of reality and fiction together, the American artist unit rendered the trauma of the tsunami in Ishinomaki into a visual format that could be understood by those who did not experience it for themselves. Zakkubalan presented visual imagery of the landscape of Ishinomaki that appeared isolated and barren, but also injected fictional characters and a narrative into those landscapes, which transmitted feelings of isolation and displacement into a visual language that could communicate the impacts of the trauma to viewers who had not experienced the disaster in 2011.



Figure 10. 'Seachange', Zakkubalan, film still.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p.104.

The film presented audiences with locations in Ishinomaki in which the strained relationship between natural and human forces were revealed – places where ‘negotiations’ were taking place.¹³⁸ Especially prominent were scenes in which the recent reconstruction of the town was evident, such as the new concrete seawall in Ishinomaki, a dig site where soil was excavated to elevate the land around the town-center’s reconstruction, a field of freshly-made concrete tetrapods, and an enormous tractor poised on newly flattened earth (**Fig. 10**). Despite the signs of these reconstruction efforts, the film’s wide, slow-moving frames made recognizable spaces in Ishinomaki (the seawall, park, freeway, etc.) appear deserted and desolate, sites of contestation between the town and the recent tsunami. The landscapes presented in each shot were predominantly motionless, with a stillness reminiscent of photographs.

Zakkubalan’s interest in documentary landscape photography inspired their approach to the images of Ishinomaki they presented, but the artists also wanted to bring emotion to the forefront by including characters into those scenes ‘to create a hybridized work of fiction and documentary that complicated the distinction between the two fields’. The artists explained their approach to capturing traces of human activity further:

‘Our characters move through these spaces that capture and represent the tumult of energies that can be found in [Ishinomaki]: the buried or still-visible trauma of the tsunami; rebirth and reconstruction the continuation of mundane life; the beauty of nature; the unease with, or fear of, nature; and the ongoing negotiations between humankind and the natural environment.’

The film followed two characters: a middle-aged woman who first appeared soaking wet, holding two plastic bags at the bottom of the excavation site before embarking on a search for the other character, a young boy who played with a red ball, chasing it through various scenes. Although the presence of the human characters was generally only a small part of the landscape, the camera’s lack of movement made any movement of their bodies hyper-noticeable, bringing attention to their solitary forms and emphasizing the narrative quality of the film.

This narrative, formed by the two fictional characters and their relationship, were essential to the film’s affective quality. Bennet argued that by ‘extracting affect from a narrative, or by isolating embodied sensation from character’ affective imagery can promote novel forms of thought within viewers.¹³⁹ By way of narrative framing, Zakkubalan could render an unspeakable trauma into a format communicable to outside viewers through a collective understanding of familial relations. Although the characters’ mother-son relationship was not confirmed until the boy screamed ‘*okaasan!*’ (mother) after almost twelve minutes had passed in the fifteen-minute-long film, their relationship was implied throughout by subtle signs that they were searching for one

¹³⁸ Zakkubalan interview, 2018. Note: The remainder of observations regarding the artwork in this section can be credited to this interview.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 44.

another. The signs of their relationship allowed viewers to comprehend the overarching narrative of a mother and son searching for each other, which could draw viewers' associated memories of their own parents or children. In this way, the film allowed viewers to think about the tsunami through an empathic lens. Furthermore, the combination of real imagery from Ishinomaki and the fictitious characters allow meta-narratives related to the tsunami to emerge against the backdrop of the Ishinomaki landscape. The camera followed the mother throughout Ishinomaki as she persistently carried two plastic bags full of unknown belongings, appeared to steal and don clothing from an abandoned clothesline outside a warehouse, dried her wet clothes on the freshly built tetrapods, and warmed herself by a trash-can fire near the highway when night falls. Her various actions may have been peculiar on their own, but in the context of Ishinomaki's past and the RAF festival concept, they trigger reflection about the displacement caused by tsunami. The imagery presented in 'Seachange' took on new meaning in the context of the characters isolation and pursuit of each other; the emptiness of each Ishinomaki scene, the new concrete structures, and the sound and sight of the ocean itself served as reminders of the tsunami's enduring impacts on community members who went through it seven years ago.

Another significant aspect of the emotion invoked through Zakkubalan's film was the artists' affective use of sound, including song, silence, and distinctive sounds in nature. As mentioned in the last chapter, Zakkubalan used the '5 pm Chime' specific to Ishinomaki, which drew out collective recognition and community identification within local viewers of the film. The chime itself operates as a checking system for the loudspeakers that emit citywide evacuation warnings, serving to remind local viewers of the warnings they received seven years ago. Much of the film was very silent, bring attention to the natural background noises present in the film such as bird calls, wind, and most noticeably, the ominous sound of the sea. The prominence of the sounds of nature fluctuated throughout the film, changing from common bird calls and light wind, to an intensifying roar of the ocean and wind. Paired with the visual imagery, these sounds served to remind viewers of the force of nature present in the city; in the context of the city's history and the festival theme the sound of the sea created a clear association to the tsunami. The presence of nature depicted as a dynamic, living force in both in sight and sound emphasized the small stature of the human characters, and shaped audience awareness of the present memory of the tsunami that still remains in the everyday landscape of Ishinomaki.

Zakkubalan's affective use of local imagery and a simple narrative structure did not subscribe to a pre-coded representation of 'what trauma looks like', and thus allowed viewers a different way of considering the trauma, through formulation of a connection with characters in the film. Ahmed wrote that perception of others 'involves a form of "contact" between [the self]

and others', and that this perception is informed by longer histories.¹⁴⁰ Perception of the characters in 'Seachange' were also built upon previous histories and rehearsed associations of familial (or other) human relationships. For example, the only word spoken in the film was the aforementioned '*Okaasan!*', confirming the characters' mother-son relationship, a point of empathic entry for Japanese-speaking viewers who could recall calling for their own mothers with the same word. In addition, knowledge of the history of Ishinomaki further influenced perception of the characters and their actions. Zakkubalan thus allowed viewers to connect with Ishinomaki and its surviving community, reflecting upon isolation, separation, and displacement caused by the trauma, as understood further through the film's narrative.

The question of social engagement

In this chapter I have detailed the affective qualities of four artworks exhibited during RAF, with the objective of identifying ways that the artworks transformed perception of the trauma of the tsunami within audiences, both for survivors and newcomers to the region. Expedited efforts to return economic stability to the region have resulted in survivors not having much time to cope with their experiences, and has enabled newcomers to settle in without necessarily recognizing the pain that is manifested within the peninsula's residents. Through consideration of their artwork as the socio-cultural work of responding to the human experience of disaster, I found that these artists engaged deeply with the affective potential of their artworks to bring about recovery and reflection after the tragedy that occurred in the Oshika Peninsula.

The artists I interviewed for this chapter established avenues for trauma recovery and spaces for empathic encounters in their work through engagement with funerary ritual in Miyajima's 'Sea of Time - Tōhoku', the creation of testimonial relationships between audience and subject in Kyun-Chome's 'Utsusemi Crush!', the juxtaposition of bodily recoil with shame, guilt, and nostalgia in Iwai's 'Dumparium', and the hybridization of recognizable landscape and communicable narrative in Zakkubalan's 'Seachange'. The artists' removed position as outsiders enabled them to create works that rendered the unspeakable trauma into a communicable visual language which could invoke a multitude of responses from viewers. Despite using a different mediums and formats in their work, the artists all engaged in the creative use of visual elements such as site, lighting, composition, and speed as well as sound and mental associations to further accentuate affect within their artworks.

¹⁴⁰ S. Ahmed, 'Collecting Feelings', 2004, p. 31.

However, are these case by case projects truly a reflection of the festival as a whole? While these more interactive, affective works may impart more lasting perceptions about the tsunami upon its viewers static, some of the festival's more famous art objects were not interactive, although they drew swarms of art tourists to stimulate the economy of the region.¹⁴¹ Iwata-Weickgenannt and Geilhorn assert that artists may 'only engage with the disaster' if he or she is willing to be 'led by imagination and human empathy'.¹⁴² The four artworks I analyzed in this chapter certainly had imaginative and empathic approaches to creating artwork as part of RAF. They rearticulated the loss and suffering caused by the trauma into the untraditional format of contemporary art, opening what Kyun-Chome called 'alternative pathways within the human brain'. Indeed, many of the artists included in RAF produced socio-cultural responses to the disaster that brought about reflection amongst viewers – but I still cannot claim that all of them did so without conducting further investigation.

That being said, the artworks I have analyzed thus far in this thesis have demonstrated their ability contribute to the festival's *machizukuri*, and their capacity to individually affect audiences in positive ways. Thus, I argue that certain artworks within RAF, specifically Miyajima, Kyun-Chome, and Iwai, fall within the realm of socially engaged art practice. However, separating individual artworks from the larger festival platform they are part of may not be an easy task in light of existing criticism in the field of art. The 'categorization' of contemporary art as socially engaged art is far from a simple practice. The definition of the genre is an ongoing debate within the field of art, and there has been conflicting criticism within the field about the 'criteria' for its evaluation. Within this criticism, community-oriented initiatives like RAF, regardless of their clear social engagement, have been marginalized for their lack of artistic autonomy, a factor which may make it difficult for the artworks within in to be considered on the same plane as similar practices that better meet the benchmark for inclusion into the genre. I will expand upon this topic in more detail in the next chapter.

¹⁴¹ For example, the artworks of Yayoi Kusama and Kohei Nawa.

¹⁴² K. Iwata-Weickgenannt and B. Geilhorn 'Negotiating Nuclear Disaster: an introduction', 2017, p. 10.

Chapter 3: Contending with socially engaged art criticism

By avoiding questions of artistic criteria, the community arts movement unwittingly perpetuated the impression that it was full of good intentions and compassion, but ultimately not talented enough to be of broader interest.

-Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells*¹⁴³

Reborn-Art Festival in a wider context

I have now demonstrated the impacts that art can have on post-disaster communities, using RAF as a case study to analyze how the festival and its artworks can contribute to *machizukuri* and socio-cultural understanding of the trauma of the tsunami in Ishinomaki. As I briefly explained in the introduction and first chapter, the *machizukuri* initiatives of ‘art festivals for revitalization’ have become a principal aspect of the genre of socially-engaged Art Projects in Japan since the early 2000s.

Despite an almost 30-year tenure as a major aspect of Japan’s art scene since the early 1990s, Art Projects have been strangely absent from international literature related to socially engaged art practices, or participatory, collaborative, community, and site-specific art – until the two Japan-focused issues of *FIELD Journal of Socially-Engaged Art Criticism* emerged in 2017. This disconnect may have come about due to Japanese preference of the term ‘Art Project’ to refer to socially-engaged art practices, but this hardly seems to merit its omission in a globalizing art world. These days the Japanese art vocabulary includes *sōshari engejudo ato* (a transliteration of ‘socially engaged art’), and this term is often used to avoid international confusion.¹⁴⁴ Rather, the omission of Art Projects is likely due to the abundance of Superflat and neo-pop art in Japan that framed the global reception for contemporary art in the 1990s and 2000s, which contributed to an essentialist pop-culture narrative that was highly marketable (and lucrative) during the fame of Japan’s bubble economy.¹⁴⁵ This critical benchmark for a singular Japanese pop narrative was set by EuroAmerican curatorial interests and Japan’s own exported image at the time, leaving little room for alternative forms of expression to come to light – especially ones not well suited for international display or

¹⁴³ C. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, London and New York, Verso, 2012, p. 190.

¹⁴⁴ K. Kajiyama, ‘Japanese Art Projects in History’, *FIELD*, iss. 7, 2017, <http://field-journal.com/issue-7/japanese-art-projects-in-history>, (accessed 21 February 2018).

¹⁴⁵ I expand on this further in E. Tagore-Erwin, ‘Contemporary Japanese Art: Between Globalization and Localization’ *Arts and the Market*: Special issue on arts marketing in Asia, forthcoming publication in summer 2018.

sale, and which had concepts that practically contradicted the high-tech, hyper-sexualized urban worlds of Murakami Takashi and Araki Nobuyoshi, two of the international art stars of the time.¹⁴⁶

Favell has written on this topic extensively, and he and Jesty also respectively point out that Art Projects may have skipped notice of relevant international taste-makers due to marked differences in their content, as well as a perceived lack of autonomy and political engagement, both of which have left them vulnerable to criticism of community-building art initiatives within the field of contemporary art theory.¹⁴⁷ Socially engaged art initiatives that involve community-building have been subject to strong criticism for rarely manifesting responses to social issues that are explicit or confrontational – in short, they have frequently been criticized for not being political enough.¹⁴⁸ In 2006, art critics Claire Bishop and Grant Kester engaged in a heated debate over the specific criterion for quality socially engaged artwork; they were in stark disagreement about how to evaluate the success of a socially engaged art project. Their arguments regarding socially engaged art practices diverged most notably on the notions of artistic autonomy and political instrumentalization.

In this chapter, I will explore their arguments concerning socially engaged art (SEA) practices as they may have applied to RAF. In addition to Kester and Bishop's respective publications on the topic, it is also important to include artist and theorist Pablo Helguera's publication on SEA practice, as his definition of SEA is often used pedagogically as a framework for ethical and effective SEA artworks, and has been cited by art historians in their consideration of Art Projects in Japan. Ultimately, I argue that although perhaps RAF as an organization has too many stakeholders to be considered 'art' in and of itself, the festival invited artists that unquestionably engaged in SEA practice in their artworks. When considering their position within the art historical canon, the festival and artworks – including their autonomy and political instrumentalization – must be considered within the social context of Ishinomaki and the Oshika Peninsula, and the needs of the local community at this point in time.

As such, I approach RAF from an art historical standpoint that is firmly aligned with the notion of multiplicity, as I have understood through art historian Reiko Tomii's proposed methodology of 'international contemporaneity' in world art historiography.¹⁴⁹ Tomii emphasizes the importance of local context in the study of global contemporary art, because 'each locale bears a story of how its modernism has evolved and arrived at its current state.'¹⁵⁰ When approaching

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ A. Favell, 'Socially Engaged Art in Japan - Mapping the Pioneers', 2017.

¹⁴⁸ S. Kumakura and Y. Nagatsu, '*An Overview of Art Projects in Japan: A Society that Co-Creates with Art*', Art Project Research Group, Arts Council Tokyo, Tokyo, Suiyōsha, 2014, p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ R. Tomii, 'Introduction to "International Contemporaneity" and "Contemporary Art"', in *Radicalism in the Wilderness*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, U.K., The MIT Press, 2016, pp. 11-32.

¹⁵⁰ R. Tomii, 'Localizing Socially Engaged Art: Some Observations on Collective Operations in Prewar and Postwar Japan', *FIELD*, iss. 7, 2017, <http://field-journal.com/issue-7/localizing-socially-engaged-art-some-observations-on>

contemporary art in our increasingly globalized world, it is of the utmost importance to take into account the multiplicity of modernism – or rather, modernisms – that provide the diverse historical foundations upon which contemporary practices have been built.

Especially when considering SEA, a practice embedded in and also inextricably dependent upon the social context of its production, it is important to pay heed to its development in relation to the social, political, and economic factors surrounding it. In other words, I think establishing local context and history matters. If Art Projects in Japan had been included in the heated debate over SEA practice in 2006, perhaps the status of community-building art initiatives would be different today. Instead, more than ten years later, while the practices in Japan have continued to proliferate, there is still barely any acknowledgement within much of EuroAmerican arts literature regarding these practices. It is therefore important to consider criticism within the field when analyzing a project such as RAF that engages with community on many different scales and levels. The criteria for SEA has continued to fluctuate in the years following their debate, but Bishop and Kester's ideas, however divergent they may be, still form much of the theoretical foundation for the critical evaluation of SEA today.

The debate: Bishop vs Kester

In February 2006, Bishop's article, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents' was published in *ArtForum*. In it, Bishop asserted that the 'surge of artistic interest in collectivity, collaboration, and direct engagement with specific social constituencies' that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s in Europe and the US had become 'less interested in relational aesthetics' than with the 'creative rewards of collaborative activity'.¹⁵¹ She argued that the social turn within art practice had prompted an unpromising 'ethical turn' in art criticism. According to Bishop, instead of judging the quality of art based strictly on its aesthetic quality, the grounds for ethical art criticism considered the following: a heightened attention to how the collaboration was conducted, a focus on the ethics of the working process of the project, and the establishment of dynamic and sustained relationships with communities. Furthermore, artists were lauded for 'authorial renunciation', in which artists no longer occupied the authoritative position of 'pedagogical or creative mastery', instead allowing non-artist collaborators to wield real influence over the artwork.¹⁵² Bishop criticized these ethical evaluations, citing philosopher Jacques Rancière's notion that aesthetic doesn't need to be 'sacrificed at the altar of social change,' and that

collective-operations-in-prewar-and-postwar-japan, (accessed 21 February 2018).

¹⁵¹ C. Bishop, 'Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', *Artforum*, vol. 44, no. 6, 2006, pp. 179-183.

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 181.

'good intentions do not render art immune to criticism.'¹⁵³ She argued that the best art practices must maintain a degree of autonomy so as to avoid political or economic co-option, and generally dismissed works that did not take a more political and adversarial approach in favor of socially disruptive participatory practices.¹⁵⁴

'It is to this art – however uncomfortable, exploitative, or confusing it may first appear – that we must turn to for an alternative to the well-intentioned homilies that today pass for critical discourse on social collaboration. These homilies unwittingly push us towards a Platonic regime in which art is valued for its truthfulness and educational efficacy rather than inviting us...to confront darker, more painfully complicated considerations of our predicament.'¹⁵⁵

Upon publication of Bishop's article, Kester and Bishop exchanged correspondence that was subsequently published in the May 2006 issue of *ArtForum* under the title, 'Another Turn'. Kester, an advocate for collaborative art, disagreed with Bishop on the fundamentals of political art and autonomy. Kester asserted that there is no discursive requirement for artists to 'author' collaborative practice and be placed in the sole position of oversight, claiming that within Bishop's benchmark for successful practice there is an assumption that the viewer cannot be trusted, and the artist must facilitate understanding by maintaining an authoritative position.¹⁵⁶ He questioned the critic's readiness to invalidate such projects, advocating instead for an account of collaborative art that takes into account the breadth of diversity within the field.

'While otherwise quite keen to question the limits of discursive systems of meaning in her criticism, [Bishop] exhibits an unseemly enthusiasm for policing the boundaries of legitimate art practice. Rather than deplored the fact that some contemporary artists refuse to make the "right" kinds of work, she might consider the "uncomfortable" possibility that her own version of the aesthetic is simply one among many.'¹⁵⁷

Following this public debate, both Kester and Bishop went on to elaborate further on their criteria for evaluating SEA projects, each writing a book to explain in more detail their respective views. Kester wrote *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* in 2011, and Bishop wrote *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* in 2012. Their brief clash was the subject of much discussion within the arts sectors in the US and Europe, where collaborative, participatory and relational art had proliferated as 'successful' art for some time. They

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 183.

¹⁵⁴ E. Heartney, 'Can Art Change Lives?', *Art in America*, vol. 100, no.6, 2012, pp. 67-69.

¹⁵⁵ C. Bishop, 'Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', 2006, p.183.

¹⁵⁶ G. Kester, Another Turn (Letter to the Editor), *Artforum*, vol. 44, no. 9, 2006.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

largely established the critical benchmark for evaluating SEA art projects, and are thus quite important to consider in relation to RAF.

In 2011, separate from the Bishop-Kester debate, Pablo Helguera published *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, a pedagogical guide for prospective artists hoping to conduct SEA in the future, offering a general ‘best practices’ approach for process-based and collaborative conceptual practices that fit into the realm of SEA practice. Helguera defined SEA as an ‘actual practice’ – not symbolic or hypothetical – but instead a ‘social action’ that effects the public sphere in a meaningful way, often to achieve a specific end.¹⁵⁸ He wrote that ‘social interaction occupies a central and inextricable part of any socially engaged artwork’ but exists ‘somewhere between’ art and non-art in a state that ‘may be permanently unresolved’.¹⁵⁹ Helguera’s definition of SEA has also established a benchmark for inclusion into the category of SEA, one that actually serves to exclude the Art Projects often considered socially-engaged in a Japanese context, as noted by curator Takehisa Yuu in regards to the exhibition she curated in 2012, *Artists and the Disaster: Documentation in Progress*.¹⁶⁰

In this chapter, I consider the critical benchmarks respectively set by Bishop, Kester, and Helguera, especially with regards to the autonomy and political instrumentalization of RAF. The festival had a plethora of different stakeholders in charge of its organization and implementation, and its *machizukuri* initiatives are directly tied to the government. A crucial factor to consider include the fact that officials from around Miyagi Prefecture make up a large portion of the festival’s executive committee, meaning they had the ability to exert influence upon the festival and co-opt it to meet political, economic and social aims. Furthermore, many of the previous revitalization festivals in Japan under art director Kitagawa Fram such as the successful ETAT and Setouchi International Art Triennale have required that the included artworks are ‘not political’.

Before continuing, however, it is important to keep in mind that the genealogy of SEA in Japan is specific to its own local context, and that as an art critic, having a linear approach based on the assumption of a EuroAmerican center can and does limit understanding of SEA practices in Japan today. In his introduction of the 7th issue of *FIELD*, Jesty perceptively summarizes the very problematic – yet strangely common – assumption that EuroAmerican practices set the benchmark for art everywhere else in the world. For example, in Japan the foundation of SEA practices was not influenced by EuroAmerican practice nearly as much as public art, and furthermore, Bourriaud’s theorization of relational art that influenced much of SEA practice in EuroAmerica was not introduced in Japan until 20 years *after* the proliferation of Art Projects

¹⁵⁸ P. Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook*, New York, Jorge Pinto Books, 2011, pp. 5-8.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Y. Takehisa, ‘After the Exhibition *Artists and Disaster: Documentation in Progress*’, *FIELD* iss. 7, <http://field-journal.com/issue-7/after-the-exhibition-artists-and-the-disaster-documentation-in-progress>, (accessed 21 February 2018).

across the country.¹⁶¹ Keeping this in mind, for the remainder of this chapter I will consider RAF in relation to Bishop, Kester, and Helguera's respective books with the intention of 'evaluating' its content similarly to how art critics evaluated various SEA projects. I will first clarify some historical differences between the notion of aesthetic autonomy in EuroAmerica and Japan, before addressing the questions of autonomy and instrumentalism in RAF.

Addressing autonomy

The social turn towards much of SEA practice in Europe and the US was centered around art's post-autonomous condition – artists increasing engagement with collaborative processes and non-art objectives such as social work and activism. Bishop worried that because many of these emerging art projects '[sought] more concrete ends', they missed the point of the 'aesthetic regime' of art.¹⁶² Her concerns regarding this lack of autonomy are grounded in the notion that modern art and artists must remain outside of state or market influence. However, as Jesty reminded readers in *FIELD*, claims of autonomy in institutionalized art are deeply contradictory; and that 'the avant-garde remains dependent on the support of the bourgeoisie', or the metaphoric golden 'umbilical cord' as Clement Greenberg provocatively phrased it.¹⁶³ Bishop's staunch determination to maintain 'aesthetic autonomy' tends to look past much of contemporary art's connection to the operations and incentives of art institutions, which in turn are also frequently funded by the state or through corporate sponsorship.

Considering RAF in relation to this issue of aesthetic autonomy is problematic, as the prominence of this question is chiefly an ideal born of the EuroAmerican art world; Bishop herself admitted that she referred to 'the system of art as we understand it in the West'.¹⁶⁴ Within an art historical framework of multiple modernisms, it is understood that influence does not move only *outwards* from a dominant (namely, EuroAmerican) center into peripheral locations.¹⁶⁵ With a multiplistic approach, it becomes clear that the same post-autonomous condition does not frame SEA in Japan, where modern art has been situated in a marriage of operational and expressive objectives since its foundation. Before discounting RAF's lack of autonomy, it is crucial to reflect upon the factors that do frame SEA in Japan: the collectivist foundation of Japanese modern art and the rather recent development of corporate and national support for the arts.

¹⁶¹ J. Jesty, 'Japan's Social Turn: An Introductory Companion', *FIELD*, 2017.

¹⁶² C. Bishop, 'Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', 2006, p.183.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ R. Tomii, '"International Contemporaneity" in the 1960s: Discoursing on Art in Japan and Beyond', *Japan Review*, vol. 21, 2009, p. 140.

Tomii argues that the Japanese framework of contemporary art today was established in a heteronomous system of collectivism, because artists ‘could not afford the modernist claim to autonomy as many artists in the West hold claim to.’¹⁶⁶ It is true that national development of the modern arts in Meiji-era Japan was largely based on pre-existing frameworks of museums in Germany and the UK, and the French national salon.¹⁶⁷ However, the lack of a European-style ‘art system’ in Japan led to development of a modern art system built from scratch by collective *bijutsu dantai* (art organizations). The *bijutsu dantai* ‘served as the primary engine[s] to propel modernism,’ because neither museum nor market supported modern art at this time.¹⁶⁸ Thus, the *bijutsu dantai* lacked aesthetic autonomy because they merged artistic expression with the operative tasks ‘that would later be shouldered by professionals,’ such as the roles of art critics, educators, curators, dealers, and gallerists.¹⁶⁹ Japanese art history is easily traced back to these many art organizations (some are still around today), pointing to a heteronomous foundation that developed out of practical necessity in a nation where there has traditionally not been support for the arts.

However, since Japan’s ‘bubble era’ – roughly around the same time that the very first *machizukuri* SEA projects started to make headway – there has been an exponential increase in support for the arts from corporations and the state. During the short-lived bubble economy, arts management organizations were developed to lead corporations in supporting Japanese artists and sponsor exhibitions, gallery-spaces and events.¹⁷⁰ It has thus become quite common in Japan for art initiatives, museums, and exhibitions to operate through corporate sponsorship. In this manner, RAF was sponsored by large corporations including Toyota, Kirin, Bose, and the Tohoku Electric Power Company, and co-hosted by Yahoo and Japan Rail East. In addition, a law passed in 1998 finally allowed non-commercial civic or voluntary activities to obtain corporate status, leading to the emergence of a previously non-existent NPO sector in Japan.¹⁷¹ This significantly impacted RAF since its foundations were generated by Matsumura and Kobayashi’s respective NPOs’ activities in the region, Ishinomaki 2.0 and Ap Bank.

Following the economic recession, when significant budget cuts were made to the construction of buildings and urban development, it became incentivized for the cultural sector to invest in arts and culture programs because they were cost-effective ways of revitalizing neglected areas of Japan.¹⁷² Positioning cultural policy in connection with other public policy areas,

¹⁶⁶ R. Tomii, ‘Localizing Socially Engaged Art’, 2017.

¹⁶⁷ E. Tagore-Erwin, ‘Contemporary Japanese Art: Between Globalization and Localization’ 2018.

¹⁶⁸ R. Tomii, ‘Localizing Socially Engaged Art’, 2017.

¹⁶⁹ For a more detailed historical background of *dantai*, see: R. Tomii, ‘Introduction: Collectivism in Twentieth-Century Japanese Art with a Focus on Operational Aspects of *Dantai*’, *Positions*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2013, pp. 225–67.

¹⁷⁰ N. Kawashima, ‘The Development of Art Projects in Japan: Policy and Economic Perspectives’, *FIELD*, iss. 8, 2017.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

government spending on arts and culture projects became ‘justified’ in their potential to lead to national branding, inbound tourism, soft power, community development, and social inclusion.¹⁷³ As the status of cultural policy rose, national and local governmental authorities were held responsible for integrating cultural policy within larger frameworks of city and community development – something that economist Nobuko Kawashima projects will continue to increase with the imminent 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.¹⁷⁴ These policy shifts provided a surge in funding opportunities for art initiatives with socially-engaged *machizukuri* objectives such as RAF. As such, in addition to having multiple government figures on its executive committee, RAF was supported by the National Agency for Cultural Affairs.

Due to the modern art system’s collectivist foundation, interweaving social structures and negotiation have been central to the production, display, and marketing of art in Japan – this system can still be observed in the operations of many Art Projects today. When opportunities for economic support for the arts from corporate and state sponsors started to become more prominent and accessible in the 1990s, SEA practices subsequently became more widespread in Japan. Thus, the current state of heteronomy in festivals like RAF should be understood in the context of this historical progression. It is true that Matsumura and Kobayashi made RAF happen through collaboration with many stakeholders, including Watari-um, local and prefectural politicians, local and national businesses, as well as the many artists, volunteers, and community members that contributed to the festival’s production. However, when viewed within the context of Japan’s collectivist art foundations, the heteronomy of stakeholders in RAF does not seem out of place – most festivals for revitalization around Japan involve many government stakeholders in the planning process and rely on the support of businesses across a variety of industries, especially tourism, manufacturing, and transportation. The individual artists’ collaboration with RAF also makes more sense; while they engaged in expression, the festival handled the operative and organizational aspects of their work to exhibition produce an exhibition that was accessible to audiences, in this case a large-scale festival that also included music and cuisine.

Because the history is vastly different, addressing RAF’s autonomy in a EuroAmerican context is a one-sided argument; it only provides reason that RAF and the art within it should be discounted due to the diversity of stakeholders, while omitting the valid reasons as to how it came to be set up that way. The question of instrumentalism, however, is a very pressing one – especially when it comes to the influence that these stakeholders had on the content of the festival.

¹⁷³. Ibid.

¹⁷⁴. Ibid.

Addressing instrumentalism

Bishop's concern with the lack of autonomy in SEA practice is particularly wary of artists being taken advantage of by those given power to influence the work; she notes that SEA practices occupy a 'suspicious' presence in the public sector.¹⁷⁵ By collaborating with the public and corporate sectors, artists become vulnerable to co-option and could lose their editorial independence – this would, in turn, compromise the aesthetics of the art. Regarding Japanese SEA, sociologist Mōri's criticism of recent neoliberal cultural policies aligns with Bishop's; he claims that 'while the art market thrives in the context of speculative neoliberalist globalization, artistic practices have gradually been reorganized under the pressure of both public and private financially-led instrumentalism.'¹⁷⁶ Fundamentally, I do share their concerns – especially as corporate support for the arts continues to flourish and cultural management has become a more powerful government sector, it is essential to have a critical approach to the intentions and limitations put in place by the stakeholders behind Japan's increasingly popular festivals for revitalization. Still, it is important to consider the art itself on a case by case basis, and not establish one sweeping benchmark that invalidates a project before understanding its context and impact.

When viewed as one large SEA project, RAF aligns with Kester's support of artists that immerse in local conditions and develop solutions to particular socio-political problems in that locale.¹⁷⁷ Although it was and will most likely continue to be sponsored by various governmental and corporate stakeholders, the festival was initiated over multiple years as a non-profit community recovery project. The foundation of RAF by the directors of two respective NPOs that were active in the region before the festival's conception demonstrates their investment in the social outcomes of this project for the region over their own economic gain. The festival generated 2 billion yen in the Oshika Peninsula, but as an organization RAF itself did not net any profit.¹⁷⁸ Although RAF has the underlying objective of stimulating the local economy, the overall social objective to recover the 'art of living' in Oshika has a main focus of *machizukuri* and dealing with the trauma that occurred there. Matsumura admitted that it took two years overall to find funding for RAF, and even longer to convince local governments to support their activities in the region. He shared that part of the reason it took such a long time was because they were very careful not allow influence on the festival's content, and as a result could not ask for much funding from each party.

Despite their good intentions, it is still important to be critically aware of the festival's autonomy with regards to its governmental support when trying to discern its social engagement

¹⁷⁵ C. Bishop, 'Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', 2006, p.183.

¹⁷⁶ Y. Mōri, 'New Collectivism, Participation and Politics after the East Japan Great Earthquake', 2015, pp. 169-170.

¹⁷⁷ E. Heartney, 'Can Art Change Lives?', 2012, pp. 67-69.

¹⁷⁸ G. Matsumura interview, 2018.

in the community from socially engaged *art practice*. Especially after the Great East Japan Earthquake, instrumental aims of government stakeholders are indeed cause for concern. The development of Japan's recent cultural policies has created opportunities for artists, but often only insofar as they align with the goals of government stakeholders. Favell has also addressed the growing concern about artists being 'drafted into welfare service,' and noted that the 'idealized presentation of some [art] projects can mask the social conflicts and divisions' that have been produced by the governments' neglect towards marginalized populations, especially post-disaster.¹⁷⁹ Zakkubalan and Nawa respectively raised similar concerns: Zakkubalan wondered whether there were more direct routes of action if stimulating the economy was really the ultimate goal of RAF, and Nawa voiced his skepticism of *machizukuri* events that handle artists and artworks like spinning tops.¹⁸⁰ As a more cost-efficient way to provide support for community-building measures in Oshika's most vulnerable areas, perhaps investing in RAF was a way for officials to absolve themselves of responsibilities in post-disaster Japan, while also de-politicizing the situation.

Another significant factor to consider is tourism, as Tōhoku is hugely reliant on tourism to restore economic stability in the region. Of the prefectures hit hardest by the disaster, Miyagi has recovered its tourism levels the most, through strategic development of 'spotlight events' that broaden the prefecture's image as a cultural center, and also the development of many informational projects about the disaster in the urban city of Sendai, less than two hours away from Tokyo.¹⁸¹ In 2014, Miyagi Prefecture released a Tourism Strategic Plan to recover its annual tourism numbers to pre-disaster levels by 2017.¹⁸² Perhaps RAF's endorsement was factored into this plan. By 2014, the success of ETAT and the Setouchi International Art Triennale had been widely acknowledged, and perhaps Miyagi government officials felt that a large-scale art festival, with inclusion of famous artists, could achieve the prefecture's plan for tourism recovery.

At this stage, suspicion towards state sponsors is merely speculative. Although there are a multitude of state sponsors, it seems that the content of the festival was not particularly influenced by their involvement; rather, Matsumura, Kobayashi, and the curators had the most organizational authority over the project. Nonetheless, Bishop's concerns regarding autonomy may be pertinent to the influence of certain stakeholders over RAF, especially in the context of Ishinomaki after the 2011 disaster. For this reason, I do not believe it is possible to separate the festival as a whole from the incentives of its stakeholders – even if those incentives are positive. However, the *machizukuri* and empathy-building characteristics of the artworks, which I detailed in the previous chapters,

¹⁷⁹. A. Favell, 'Socially Engaged Art in Japan - Mapping the Pioneers', 2017.

¹⁸⁰ K. Nawa interview, 2018; Zakkubalan interview, 2018.

¹⁸¹ D. Nguyen and F. Imamura, 'Recovering from Prolonged Negative Destination Images in Post-Disaster Northern Japan', *Community, Environment and Disaster Risk Management*, vol. 18, 2017, pp. 37-59.

¹⁸² Ibid.

had important social outcomes as part of the festival. For this reason, I do not believe the heteronomy of the festival proves to discredit the quality of the art within the festival, as Bishop might conclude. According to the guidelines detailed in Helguera's text, many of the artworks within RAF could be defined as SEA. It is thus important to consider them on a case by case basis before presuming that the artists were acting as instruments of the government.

Addressing the artworks

In terms of the instrumentalization of individual artists, it is very important to note a distinct difference between RAF and other festivals for revitalization, such as ETAT. Instead of having artists compete for exhibition spaces and selecting artists based on project proposals, the Wataris invited artists with no knowledge of their projects. They were invited by the Wataris based on the curators' previous experiences working together with them at various points in the past. Only Miyajima's project plan was known beforehand because he had initiated it before he decided to collaborate with RAF. RAF and its stakeholders did not select proposals based on the effect they would have in the community; in this way, the artists were not selected according to the 'social good' they would provide. Rather, the festival offered an opportunity for the artists to engage in an SEA project that may have been otherwise impossible, due to the lack of infrastructure for the arts in the region, especially after the disaster. Nawa, Miyajima, Kyun-Chome, Iwai, and Zakkubalan all reported that there was no censorship or influence on their artworks by the organizers in any way, and that they were allowed to proceed with their project as they desired – with or without inclusion of the local community. Therefore, the artists were in control of their own projects, and were not instrumentalized by RAF or RAF stakeholders during the process. For this reason, the variety of artworks and art processes exhibited as part of RAF were quite diverse, and cannot be generalized as SEA, or any other genre for that matter without further investigation of each work on a case by case basis. As this thesis focuses on SEA, I will analyze their socially engaged properties for the remainder of this section, with the objective of recognizing their merit in spite of existing criticism in the field.

The artists chose to 'compromise' the aesthetic autonomy of their own artworks by engaging with non-art elements in various ways that I consider socially engaged. Most prominently, they engaged in the authorial renunciation of collaboration at varying degrees, and immersed with the local communities to address specific social issues. Helguera wrote that while all art invites social interaction, SEA engages in social interaction during the art-making process or in the

fabrication of the work itself.¹⁸³ He asserts that artists engaging in SEA establish collaborative ‘participatory structures’ in which the community shares responsibility for the development and content of the artwork with the artist, but maintain a distinction between themselves and collaborators so as to not become mere facilitators.¹⁸⁴ He also wrote that the most successful SEA projects are executed by artists who have spent time and effort understanding communities and engaging in the social environment there. This aligns with Kester, who wrote that through extensive ‘knowledge and engagement’ with a locality, ‘artists become increasingly conscious of complex social and environmental interconnections’, developing works in dialogue with the community.¹⁸⁵

Of the five artists, Miyajima, Kyun-Chome, and Iwai engaged in collaboration and community interaction to the highest degree. Both Nawa and Zakkubalan spent only a few weeks in Ishinomaki, so their work cannot be expected to have engaged with the community to the same degree as the others. Nawa’s ‘White Deer’ was the most immediately ‘textual’, borrowing the word Kester uses to refer to artworks that retain a more traditional format of presenting an object for a viewer.¹⁸⁶ Nawa did collaborate with fishermen in the installation of buoys along the coast behind his sculpture, but it remains unclear as to whether he instructed them on where to place the buoys or allowed them to compose it of their own free will. As such, I do consider Nawa’s sculpture to be a very important community-building aspect of RAF in general as a widespread symbol of the festival’s presence, but I do not consider it to be socially engaged. Zakkubalan mainly preserved their autonomy in ‘Seachange’ as well, as they controlled the casting, narrative, cinematography, and sound of the film, as well as its final edits and production. However, they reported that the narrative changed as their relationship with the actors deepened; this implies that the interactive and collaborative nature of this project did influence the final content of the film. While Zakkubalan’s film engaged with *machizukuri* and empathy-building in various ways, I do not believe it was a socially engaged project, rather it was a film that responded to and addressed social issues symbolically through visual representation.

Miyajima’s ‘Sea of Time - Tōhoku’ demonstrated authorial renunciation in an articulated, controlled way. He asked audiences to choose the timing of the counters, which had a significant impact on the visual appearance of the final site. He retained his role as the final authority of the work, however, by mapping the exact placement of each LED in the water with the intention of allowing participants to be aware of the position of their counter when visiting the site. Miyajima was the most invested in the local community, having come there as a volunteer immediately after

¹⁸³ P. Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook*, 2011, p. 9.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 14, 53.

¹⁸⁵ G. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 141-143.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

the disaster in 2011, and again multiple times conducting research and talking to many people over the course of producing his artwork. The project was based on these experiences and knowledge of the stories of the local community, produced with the intention of specifically addressing the grief and mourning of the community members who had lost family members. While Helguera's definition of SEA may exclude Miyajima's work due to its lack of impact on the community that could be 'measured directly', I do believe that this work is socially engaged.¹⁸⁷ It is not possible to measure art's affect, especially in the context of coping with loss. If even just one participant or audience member felt relief after seeing his work, then the piece accomplished its objective.

Kyun-Chome renounced their artistic authority to the greatest extent, as the two films they produced were based entirely on the unrehearsed responses to questions by outside collaborators. In this way, the overall content and meaning of the work was dependent on non-artist participants. While Kyun-Chome maintained their role as the artist by producing, installing, and editing the final films to emphasize certain affective qualities, they still had to work within the limitations of the content they were provided by community members. In this way, both of their films are a reflection of the community itself, and work to accomplish an important aspect of SEA according to Kester: they made 'local stories visible' to audiences.¹⁸⁸ In addition, Kyun-Chome immersed themselves deeply into the local community by living there for three months, speaking with locals each day, listening to their stories and fostering *kizuna* over time. Especially in 'Deleting them with the Sky,' Kyun-Chome involved the non-art community to an extent that projected the stories of various narrators into the public sphere to address specific political issues within the community, including topics as diverse as radiation in agriculture, non-normative social behaviors, and the city's waste system. I consider Kyun-Chome's work to be indisputably socially engaged; the artists' collaborated and immersed themselves into the local environment to exhibit the voices and feelings of a community attempting to address its social identity moving forward.

Iwai's work was also socially engaged, but perhaps not intentionally so. Helguera wrote that art may 'subscribe to the same values' of social work, but often 'ironizes, problematizes, and even enhances tension...to provoke reflection'.¹⁸⁹ By immersing himself in the environment and region, he became aware of a specific social issue – illegal dumping – and made this issue visible in a disturbing way that heightened tension to provoke reflection through the use of rotting deer carcasses. Iwai allowed the local environment to control the work's appearance; the organic deer carcasses decayed over the seven-week festival cycle and were greatly impacted by the hot and rainy summer weather during RAF (**Fig. 9**). Although he did not collaborate much with locals in

¹⁸⁷ P. Helguera, Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook, 2011, p. 7.

¹⁸⁸ G. Kester, The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context, 2011, p. 143.

¹⁸⁹ P. Helguera, Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook, 2011, pp. 32-36.

'Dumparium', the objects strung in the dome were selected in collaboration with his associates. Iwai reported that they all collected the materials to include in the piece according to what they found to be interesting, and many dumped objects remained in the mountainside.¹⁹⁰ Iwai's role in selecting the dumped materials was equal to his associates, and appearance of his work was thus impacted by others through collaboration. In a way, it was also indirectly influenced by those who dumped the objects in the mountainside to begin with. By including found objects – which have been historically considered to have their own autonomy as art objects, Iwai demonstrated authorial renunciation in the actual content of the work he presented at RAF. The remote location of his art site made it difficult for him to collaborate with many local people, but I still consider Iwai's work to be socially engaged. 'Dumparium' was conducted by a collaborative team during a period of immersion in the Oshika Peninsula at the temple Jizosankaigofuji, and it addressed an issue specific to the community: its reconciliation with the forces of nature after the disaster.

The paradigm shift

When addressing the aesthetic quality of artwork, one it is important to consider the work within its context before dismissing it. In this chapter, I took a closer look at how RAF is situated within the development of SEA in Japan, and how this consideration contends with recent art criticism of community-oriented SEA practice. The many stakeholders in RAF may have influenced its content, especially in terms of tourism. However, this very tourism is part of RAF's socially engaged objective – bringing more visitors to Ishinomaki is one method of combatting the dire situation of depopulation that has been ailing the community even before the tsunami. Jesty questioned whether an organization in itself can be considered SEA, and Favell's writing certainly suggests the idea.¹⁹¹ After speaking with Matsumura, it seems that RAF is not really an art project of its own, but can be thought of more as an extension of Ishinomaki 2.0 – a long-term initiative to rebuild Ishinomaki as a city with a strong community identity with many exciting reasons to stay.¹⁹²

The artists and artworks included in RAF cannot be simply generalized as belonging to one category, as they were quite a diverse group that engaged in different conceptual approaches and formats. To think of each artist as contributing to one large-scale SEA project would serve only to

¹⁹⁰ M. Iwai interview, 2018.

¹⁹¹ In Issue 7 of *FIELD*, Jesty calls for 'an aesthetic approach' to large-scale post-growth Art Projects, and Favell suggests the notion that the practical dimensions of organization of large-scale initiatives by Fram Kitagawa, Yukinori Yanagi, and Masato Nakamura may also be considered Art Projects.

¹⁹² G. Matsumura interview, 2018.

undermine their individual artistic visions, and deem them mere instruments of RAF as an organization. However, as RAF did not influence or limit the content of their work, I argue that the artists were not instrumentalized in the way that Bishop has criticized. It can be debated that RAF and that artwork within it were not political due to the uplifting intention of the festival's community-building objectives, but I argue that the certain artists did address social issues that have political implications on a local scale. Within the context of Ishinomaki and the Oshika Peninsula, the main issues were the loss of identity and community connection within the area, even from before the disaster. In response, most artists made works that contributed to the recovery process of the community and could be considered socially engaged if the criteria allowed it. As such, the artists did not avoid questions of artistic criteria due to the objectives of stakeholders and collaborators as Bishop has accused community-building projects in the past.

Rather, I believe that the works they created contributed to what Kester called the 'cyclical paradigm shift *within* the field of art' that increases the permeability between art and other methods of symbolic production.¹⁹³ Kester argues that 'the greatest potential for transforming and re-energizing artistic practice is often realized precisely at those points where its established identity is most at risk.'¹⁹⁴ Festivals like RAF are setting a new benchmark on the types of art possible in Japan today, and setting the precedents for what art can accomplish in Japan to deal with not only the destruction and trauma caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, but also the longstanding issues that trouble Japan in its post-growth condition, such as depopulation and the ever-widening gap between urban areas and the rest of the nation. Thus, I agree with Kester – smaller gestures may not change everything, but they may change *something* – and these smaller gestures are important to consider, not only within the context of their locale, but also in expanding the criteria of consideration for SEA.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ G. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, 2011, p. 7.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ E. Heartney, 'Can Art Change Lives?', 2012, pp. 67-69.

Conclusion

Works grounded in site specificity and heterogeneity, rather than the “white cube” can change the world around them. Perhaps the notion of time – and more specifically memories – is one of the few things that cannot be exchanged for currency.

Fram Kitagawa, Art Place Japan¹⁹⁶

With the objective of analyzing RAF as a case study for large-scale, socially engaged art initiatives in post-disaster Japan, I investigated the methods in which art can become part of the healing process in regions that have endured disasters, namely through community-building and trauma recovery. Both RAF as a whole and selected individual artworks exhibited as part of the festival were taken into account in this case study; I considered both aspects with regards to *machizukuri*, processing the trauma of the tsunami, and art criticism of community-oriented socially engaged art (SEA) projects. The first two chapters of this thesis demonstrated the festival's engagement with social practice, and the third chapter took a closer look at how RAF contended in the face of existing criticism regarding that very social engagement.

In terms of its overall social engagement in Ishinomaki and the Oshika Peninsula, RAF has contributed to building a new kind of hope in the form of a creative community identity that can contribute to its sustained survival. Much of the *machizukuri* initiatives are due to the festival's steadfast executive director, Gota Matsumura. Matsumura is unquestionably committed to his hometown community and creating as many creative projects as it takes to rebuild and recover Ishinomaki – his ambitions did not begin nor will they end with RAF. As has been proven with other volunteer-based projects in Ishinomaki after the disaster, the increased social opportunities created through RAF will combat depopulation in the area over time as the festival becomes more integrated into the community's regional identity. The festival's seven-week cycle provided enough time to form strong connections and build new friendships between residents and visiting volunteers, and during the production of artists' various projects. The artists within it utilized affective qualities in their work to invoke empathic responses within both the *tōjisha* and those who did not endure the tsunami themselves. These affectively charged art sites peppered throughout the peninsula provided introspective opportunities for survivors who may still be coping with the present memory of the disaster in their everyday lives, while also shaping wider perception of the social and cultural impacts of the disaster. While the current critical benchmark for SEA perhaps may not consider these aspects of the artwork directly ‘measurable’, I argue that these socially

¹⁹⁶ F. Kitagawa, *Art Place Japan*, 2015, p. 92.

engaged art projects were significant methods for the community to face what happened to them in a new way – they invoked responses that may have lasting effects in the public sphere over time as the festival recurs.

While driving around the Oshika Peninsula during my fieldwork for this thesis, it seemed that every ten minutes there was yet another construction stop – most of the roads further out in the peninsula are still being refurbished and elevated, and a freshly laid concrete seawall grows higher with each passing month. I can only imagine the affect these constant reminders of the tsunami have on local residents, even as they promise the assurance of safety and stability in the future. Thus, the importance of having the tragedy visualized and expressed in a new way, rendered communicable through art, may provide alternative ways of thinking about and coping with the tragedy. Additionally, that visualize the tsunami's devastation account for the affected community's cultural and social responses, instead of reducing real, lived human experiences into mere statistical data of fatalities, injuries, and displacement. The spread of narratives outside of what is traditionally presented in the media after disasters may allow for an updated awareness of Ishinomaki's current situation, to which much of Japan and the rest of the world has long since turned away from seven years after the triple disaster.

Over the course of this study, an unforeseen – but perhaps unsurprising – reality emerged: the importance of food in community-building and social interactions. While the proverb '*onaji kama no meshi o kuu*', to eat rice out of the same bowl, was raised by Kobayashi in relation to the volunteers staying at the RAF House, I think it is reflective of the best method for *machizukuri* in this region. The importance of food was made clear to me during this study, both during my interviews with the artists and while visiting Ishinomaki for myself. I discovered just how essential dining is to fostering social connections and in turn, *machizukuri*. Food and eating together is a simple, informal, and inclusive way of engaging in social interaction – regardless of age, gender, or profession – everyone eats. The Oshika Peninsula has many local delicacies, including not only fresh fish and shellfish, but also *kujira* (whale), *shika* (venison), and most famously the rare *boya* (a sea pineapple or ascidian). During my fieldwork in Ishinomaki, the importance of trying the local cuisine was impressed upon me by many different residents, both in town and further out in the peninsula. As Kyun-Chome aptly put it, 'It seems that one cannot separate the region's food that feeds our bodies, and the region's stories that fill our minds.'¹⁹⁷ Iwai also mentioned food as a primary way that he met local people, reporting that he gained weight due to kind elderly women bringing gifts of food to the temple every day while he worked on 'Dumperium'.¹⁹⁸ In a region where the unspeakable

¹⁹⁷ Kyun-Chome interview, 2018.

¹⁹⁸ M. Iwai interview, 2018.

occurred for no comprehensible reason, the importance of maintaining social connections cannot be emphasized enough – and if food is an effective pathway to recovering the community, then so be it. The fundamentally human act of eating proved to connect people in RAF, regardless of background and experience, during the production of the artworks and over the course of its active cycle.

Contrary to the often-popular belief in EuroAmerican circles, Japan is not a homogenous country; within the nation's borders exists a diversity of culture that encompasses social norms, language and expression, tradition, belief, and not least, historical development. Especially with regards to modernization, there are immensely differing levels of development within the nation, with economic and demographic gaps exponentially widening between its urban centers and rural regions each year. The effects of Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 were felt greatly in Tokyo's metropolitan center, but the vast majority of fatalities, displacement and destruction was concentrated in rural, out-of-the-way locales of Japan that already faced the difficulties of declining population and industry in– mainly the fishing, clamping, and whaling communities along Japan's northeastern coastline, and the agricultural community in Fukushima.

Japan is far from the only nation facing societal 'post-growth' challenges. Favell argues that in this regard, consideration of Japanese SEA may have 'an organic relevance to diagnosing and addressing the condition of post-growth societies'.¹⁹⁹ For that reason, I argue that rather than closing off the genre of SEA to these festivals for revitalization that have flourished in Japan, art critics should instead turn to it as a noteworthy signifier of what may be on the horizon within EuroAmerican art practice and worldwide as this condition spreads. In addition, with the rising occurrence of natural disasters plaguing the globe as a result of environmental change, there is no denying the relevance of studying art that engages in environmental disaster. In the face of wildfires, mudslides, and hurricanes devastating both coasts of the US, and the recent eruption of the Kīlauea in Hawai'i, it is increasingly pertinent to consider the socio-cultural responses to natural disasters, and pay attention to how artists engage in the social practice of aiding communities recover from these catastrophes.

As demonstrated in the third chapter of this thesis, it is within the moments that art challenges its own established definition that have always proved to be the catalyst for transformation within the field – the 'categorical slippage' between art and non-art has long served as the pathway for progression within art practice. The definitions of SEA that I have cited in this thesis were established almost a decade ago, and I argue that we may be long overdue for a re-

¹⁹⁹. A. Favell, 'Socially Engaged Art in Japan - Mapping the Pioneers', 2017.

energizing of the criteria – one that takes into account the vast multiplicity of the social landscape that the definition presumes to contend with. As Kester aptly stated:

Art may perceive itself as existing at some remove or distance from the social, but it also, always, imagines that it retains a causal or reflective relationship *with* the social world (whether as a reservoir for forms of affect and identity that are under assault in the modern life-world, as a therapeutic reprieve, or a symbolic embodiment of what-could-be).²⁰⁰

Here Kester reminds the art world of the paradox that exists within contemporary art practice – while it vies to remain autonomous, art practice is incontestably dependent on its relationship with the social world. The artworks I analyzed in this thesis engage with the issues that face the Oshika Peninsula, exactly as Kester states above – they formed platforms for building and understanding a community identity devastated by the tsunami, formed affective pathways of alternative healing from the trauma of survival, and even functioned as symbolic embodiment of a united, recovering community. The evaluation of socially engaged artwork cannot be reduced to one universal definition, as the quality of each project is undoubtedly impacted by the context within which it is produced and sited.

The future of RAF's impact on Ishinomaki and the Oshika Peninsula remains to be seen as the festival continues to develop over time, and as time passes, it will be interesting to witness how the theme of the festival changes as the community is indeed 'reborn.' Hopefully the organizers maintain the inclusion of local voices in the organization of the festival and continue to avoid instrumentalization of the artists moving forward. Now that the festival's inaugural 'rebirth' has passed, perhaps socially engaged artworks within it will shift to account for the community's needs in the future – or perhaps, like ETAT, the festival will become more oriented towards global narratives. Whichever way it goes, it seems that the Oshika Peninsula community will be along for the ride, and that in itself is an indication of art's influence on the future of the community.

²⁰⁰ G. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, 2011, p. 37.

Bibliography

Interviews

Iwai, M., participating artist, interviewed by the author, 2018, translated from Japanese by the author.

Matsumura, G., Executive Director of RAF, interviewed by the author, 2018, translated from Japanese by the author.

Miyajima T., participating artist, interviewed by the author, 2018, translated from Japanese by the author.

Nawa, K., participating artist, interviewed by the author, 2018, translated from Japanese by the author.

Sasakawa, S., Koebi-Tai Volunteer NPO secretariat, interviewed by the author, 2017.

Sugihara, A., Tokyo student and RAF volunteer, interviewed by the author, 2018.

Suzuki, A., RAF Volunteer Coordinator, interviewed by the author, 2018, translated from Japanese by the author.

Takenobu, D., Momonoura resident leader, interviewed by the author, 2018.

Kyun-Chome, participating artist unit, interviewed by the author, 2018, translated from Japanese by the author.

Zakkubalan, participating artist unit, interviewed by the author, 2018.

Reports

Fire and Disaster Management Agency (FDMA)[Shōbō-chō], Summary Report of 2011 Tōhoku Region Offshore Pacific Earthquake (Great East Japan Earthquake) [Tōhoku-chihō Taiheiyo-oki Jishin (Higashi-Nihon Dai-shinsai) Torimatome-hō, Saishin], Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications [Sōmu-shō], 2018, p. 4, <http://www.fdma.go.jp/bn/higaihou/pdf/jishin/157.pdf>, (accessed 23 April 2018), translated from Japanese by the author.

Reborn-Art Festival 2017 Summary Report [Jisshi Houkoku-sho], Reborn-Art Festival Secretariat [Jimukyoku], 2017, p. 27, translated from Japanese by the author.

The Recent Earthquake and Tsunami in Japan: Implications for East Asia', *World Bank East Asia and Pacific Economic Update*, Vol. 1, 2011,
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEAPHALFYEARLYUPDATE/Resources/550192-1300567391916/EAP_Update_March2011_japan.pdf, (accessed 14 March 2018).

References

- Ahmed, S., ‘Collecting Feelings’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, SAGE, vol. 21, no. 2, 2004, p. 39.
- Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1983, pp. 48-59.
- ‘Artwork dedicated to Tohoku after the disaster: “Sea of Time” [Shinsai-go no Tōhoku ni sasageru sakuhin: “Toki no Umi”]’, *Motion Gallery Crowdfunding*, [website] 2017. <https://motion-gallery.net/projects/tatsuomiyajima>. (accessed 15 March 2018), translated from Japanese by the author.
- Bennet, J., ‘Art, Affect, and the “Bad Death”: Strategies for Communicating the Sense Memory of Loss’, *Signs*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2002, pp. 334-335.
- Bennet, J., *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2005, pp. 25.
- Bishop, C., *Artificial Hells*, London and New York, Verso, 2012, p. 190.
- Bishop, C., ‘Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents’, *Artforum*, vol. 44, no. 6, 2006, pp. 179-183.
- Engelien, M. B., Edom, J., and Wood, H., ‘Building legitimacy through the spatial aesthetics of the illicit: Non-state urban actors in post-3.11 Japan’ in F. Chiodelli, T. Hall (ed.) and R. Hudson *Corrupt Places: The Illicit in the Governance and Development of Cities and Regions*, London, Routledge, 2018, pp. 181.
- Favell, A., ‘Echigo-Tsumari and Rural Art Festivals: Rise of the Northern River’, in *Before and After Superflat*, Hong Kong, Blue Kingfisher Limited, 2011, pp. 174-184.
- Favell, A., Echigo-Tsumari and the Art of the Possible: The Fram Kitagawa Philosophy in Theory and Practice’, in F. Kitagawa, *Art Place Japan*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2015.
- Favell, A., ‘Socially Engaged Art in Japan - Mapping the Pioneers’, *FIELD*, iss. 7, 2017, <http://field-journal.com/issue-7/socially-engaged-art-in-japan-mapping-the-pioneers>, (accessed 21 February 2017).
- Freda, K., ‘Ishinomaki Stone Memorial for the Victims of the 2011 Earthquake’, *Spoon and Tamago: Japanese Art, Design, & Culture*, [website], 2016, para. 2, <http://www.spoon-tamago.com/2016/03/07/ishinomaki-stone-memorial-for-the-victims-of-the-2011-earthquake/>, (accessed 20 April 2018).
- Heartney, E., ‘Can Art Change Lives?’, *Art in America*, vol. 100, no.6, 2012, pp. 67-69.
- Helguera, P., *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook*, New York, Jorge Pinto Books, 2011, pp. 5-8.
- Hiji, T., ‘The Direction of the Organization for Post-Disaster Recovery and Machizukuri: From the position of performing “public-private partnership” in Ōtsuchi-cho, Iwate [Fukkō

machizukuri soshiki no arikata: Iwate ken Ōtsuchi-chō ni okeru kyōdō no suishin o mezasu tachiba kara]’, *Journal of the Rural Planning [Nōson Keikaku Gakkaishi]*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2012, p. 494, translated from Japanese by the author.

Hroch, M., ‘From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-building Process in Europe,’ in G. Balakrishnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation*, New York and London, Verso, 1996: pp. 78-97.

Ii, T., ‘Elusiveness of Social Connection in Contemporary Japan: “Kizuna” in the pre- and post-3.11 Disaster’, Department of History, University of Hawai’i at Manoa, Unpublished paper, 2016, pp. 9-10.

Inoue M. et al., ‘Risk of Social Isolation Among Great East Japan Earthquake Survivors Living in Tsunami-Affected Ishinomaki, Japan’, *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2014, pp. 333-340.

Iwata-Weickgenannt, K. and Geilhorn, B., ‘Negotiating Nuclear Disaster: an introduction’, in *Fukushima and the Arts: Negotiating Nuclear Disaster*, pp. 6-9.

Iwaki, K., ‘The politics of the senses: Takayama Akira’s atomized theatre after Fukushima’ in K. Iwata-Weickgenannt and B. Geilhorn (eds.), *Fukushima and the Arts: Negotiating Nuclear Disaster*, p. 218.

Jones, A., ‘“Presence” in Absentia’, *Art Journal*, vol. 56, no. 4, pp. 11-18.

Kawashima, N., ‘The Development of Art Projects in Japan: Policy and Economic Perspectives’, *FIELD*, iss. 8, 2017.

Kajiya, K., ‘Japanese Art Projects in History’, *FIELD*, iss. 7, 2017, <http://field-journal.com/issue-7/japanese-art-projects-in-history>, (accessed 21 February 2018).

Kester, G., Another Turn (Letter to the Editor), *Artforum*, vol. 44, no. 9, 2006.

Kester, G., *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 141-143.

Kitagawa, F., *Art Place Japan*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2015.

Kiyoshi, S., *Shūkan Gendai*, 2013, cited in K. Iwata-Weickgenannt and B. Geilhorn ‘Negotiating Nuclear Disaster: an introduction’, in *Fukushima and the Arts: Negotiating Nuclear Disaster*, London and New York, Routledge, 2017, p. 9.

Klien, S., ‘Collaboration or confrontation? Local and non-local actors in the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial’, *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 22, no. 1-2, 2010, pp. 153-178.

Klien, S., ‘Contemporary art and regional revitalisation: selected artworks in the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial 2000–6’, *Japan Forum*, vol. 22, no. 3-4, 2010, pp. 513-543.

Klien, S., ‘Reinventing Ishinomaki, Reinventing Japan? Creative Networks, Alternative Lifestyles and the Search for Quality of Life in Post-growth Japan’, *Japanese Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2016, pp. 40-41.

Koseki, M., 'The unfolding of the triple disaster' in D. Al-bari and G. Berends (eds.), *After the Great East Japan Earthquake: Political and Policy Change in Post-Fukushima Japan*, Copenhagen, NIAS Press, 2013, pp. 11-16.

Kumakura, S. and Nagatsu, Y., 'An Overview of Art Projects in Japan: A Society that Co-Creates with Art', Art Project Research Group, Arts Council Tokyo, Tokyo, Suiyōsha, 2014, p. 4.

Kusakabe, E., 'Advancing sustainable development at the local level: The case of *machizukuri* in Japanese cities', *Progress in Planning*, vol. 80, 2013, pp.7-10.

Kwon, M., 'Sittings of Public Art: Integration Versus Intervention, in *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Cambridge and London, The MIT Press, 2002, pp. 95-96.
Kyun-Chome, *Exhibition Statement*, 2017 (received from Kyun-Chome 15 March 2018).

Lahournat, F., 'Reviving tradition in disaster-affected communities: adaptation and continuity in the kagura of Ogatsu, Miyagi Prefecture', *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2016, pp. 185-207.

Liljefors, M., 'What is Visual Culture', Lecture, Lund University, Lund, Sweden, 29 August 2016.

Ma, E., Zhang, Y. and Qu, H., 'Influence of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) on the Chinese Outbound Travel Market', in *Tourism Crisis Management and Disaster in the Asia-Pacific*, edited by B. W. Ritchie and K. Campiranon, CAB International Oxfordshire, UK 2015, p.165.

Matanle, P., and Rausch, A., and Shrinking Regions Research Group, Japan's Shrinking Regions in the Twenty-First Century: Contemporary Responses to Depopulation and Socio-Economic Decline, Amherst and New York, Cambria Press, 2011.

Matsuura, S. and Shaw, R., 'Identifying Elements for School Based Recovery and Disaster Resilient Community Building in Japan in Tohoku Recovery' in R. Shaw (ed.), *Tohoku Recovery: Challenges, Potentials and Future*, Tokyo, Springer, 2015, pp. 108-109.

Mirzoeff, N., 'Introduction', in *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 1999.

Mōri, Y., 'New Collectivism, Participation and Politics after the East Japan Great Earthquake', *World Art*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2015, p. 169.

Nancy, J., *After Fukushima: The Equivalence of Catastrophes*, trans. C. Mandell, New York, Fordham University Press, 2014; and K. Iwata-Weickgenannt and B. Geilhorn (eds.), *Fukushima and the Arts: Negotiating Nuclear Disaster*, London and New York, Routledge, 2017.

Nguyen, D. and Imamura, F., 'Recovering from Prolonged Negative Destination Images in Post-Disaster Northern Japan', *Community, Environment and Disaster Risk Management*, vol. 18, 2017, pp. 37-59.

Poulton, M. C., 'Antigone in Japan: some responses to 3.11 at Festival/Tokyo 2012', in K. Iwata-Weickgenannt and B. Geilhorn (eds.), *Fukushima and the Arts: Negotiating Nuclear Disaster*, London and New York, Routledge, 2017, pp. 128-129.

'Reborn-Art Festival - Concept', *Reborn-Art Festival*, [website], 2017, <http://www.reborn-art-fes.jp/concept/>, (accessed 2 February 2018), translated from Japanese by the author.

Samuels, R., 'Never Waste a Good Crisis', in *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan*, Ithaca and

London, Cornell University Press, 2013, pp. 39-42.

Sanriku Kahoku Shimpo Co, Surviving the 2011 Tsunami: 100 testimonies of Ishinomaki Area Survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake, Tokyo, Junposha Co. Ltd., 2014, p. 003.

Sorensen, A. and Funck, C., Living Cities in Japan: Citizens' movements, machizukuri and local environments, London and New York, Routledge, 2007.

Tagore-Erwin, E. 'Contemporary Japanese Art: Between Globalization and Localization' *Arts and the Market*: Special issue on arts marketing in Asia, forthcoming publication in summer 2018.

Takehisa, Y., 'After the Exhibition *Artists and Disaster: Documentation in Progress*', *FIELD* iss. 7, <http://field-journal.com/issue-7/after-the-exhibition-artists-and-the-disaster-documentation-in-progress>, (accessed 21 February 2018).

Tomii, R., ‘“International Contemporaneity” in the 1960s: Discouraging on Art in Japan and Beyond’, *Japan Review*, vol. 21, 2009, p. 140.

Tomii, R., 'Introduction: Collectivism in Twentieth-Century Japanese Art with a Focus on Operational Aspects of *Dantai*', *Positions*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2013, pp. 225–67.

Tomii, R., 'Introduction to “International Contemporaneity” and “Contemporary Art” ', in *Radicalism in the Wilderness*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, U.K., The MIT Press, 2016, pp. 11-32.

Tomii, R., 'Localizing Socially Engaged Art: Some Observations on Collective Operations in Prewar and Postwar Japan', *FIELD*, iss. 7, 2017, <http://field-journal.com/issue-7/localizing-socially-engaged-art-some-observations-on-collective-operations-in-prewar-and-postwar-japan>, (accessed 21 February 2018).

Watanabe R., 'In Ishinomaki, think about art's power to create new things' [Ishinomaki de, atarashī mono o umidasu āto no chikara o kangaeru], *Reborn-Art Festival 2017 Official Guidebook*, Japan, STARTS, 2017, pp. 135-139, translated from Japanese by the author.

Young, J., 'Germany's Vanishing Holocaust Memorials', in *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought*, vol. 43, no. 4, 1994, pp 416-417.

Young, J., 'Sites Unseen: Shimon Attie's Acts of Remembrance', in *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 62.

Image Sources

Figure 1. 'White Deer (*Oshika*)', Kohei Nawa, Press Image.

'White Deer (*Oshika*)', [mixed media sculpture], Kohei Nawa, photograph by N. Omote, courtesy of SANDWICH, copyright Reborn-Art Festival, 2017 (received 15 April 2018).

Figure 2. 'Sea of time - Tōhoku', Tatsuo Miyajima, interior view.

'Sea of time - Tōhoku', [mixed media installation], *Instagram*, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BYa9lz4hAK_/?tagged=%E6%99%82%E3%81%AE%E6%B5%B7, [screenshot of image by @redtank2013], (accessed 5 May 2018).

Figure 3. ‘Deleting Them with the Sky in Ishinomaki’, Kyun-Chome, installation view.

‘Deleting Them with the Sky in Ishinomaki’, [video], Kyun-Chome, photograph courtesy of Kyun-Chome, (received 28 February 2018)

Figure 4. Utsusemi Crush!, Kyun-Chome, film still.

Utsusemi Crush!, [video], Kyun-Chome, film still created by the author, courtesy of Kyun-Chome, (film received 28 February 2018).

Figure 5. ‘Dumparium’, Masaru Iwai, installation view.

‘Dumparium’, [mixed media installation], Masaru Iwai, photograph courtesy of Iwai, (received 5 April 2018).

Figure 6. ‘Seachange’, Zakkubalan, film still.

‘Seachange’, [HD video], Zakkubalan, film still created by the author, courtesy of Zakkubalan, (film received 15 April 2018).

Figure 7. Online crowdfunding platform for ‘Sea of time - Tōhoku’

‘Artwork dedicated to Tohoku after the disaster: “Sea of Time” [Shinsai-go no Tōhoku ni sasageru sakuhin: “Toki no Umi”]’, *Motion Gallery Crowdfunding*, 2017, <https://motion-gallery.net/projects/tatsuomiyajima> [screenshot of webpage by the author], (accessed 21 May 2018).

Figure 8. Utsusemi Crush!, Kyun-Chome, film still.

Utsusemi Crush!, [video], Kyun-Chome, film still created by the author, courtesy of Kyun-Chome, (film received 28 February 2018).

Figure 9. ‘Dumparium’, Masaru Iwai, view from interior.

‘Dumparium’, [mixed media installation], Masaru Iwai, photograph courtesy of Iwai, (received 5 April 2018).

Figure 10. ‘Seachange’, Zakkubalan, film still.

‘Seachange’, [HD video], Zakkubalan, film still created by the author, courtesy of Zakkubalan, (film received 15 April 2018).