
Articulating Voices and Objects, Co-Creating Tsunami Cultures : On the Earthquake Exhibition at the Rias Ark Museum of Art

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This paper examine the framework that can share the memory of disasters while ensuring individual experiences in public exhibitions and in the preservation and utilization of remains. More than 10 years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake, and in the process of recovery and reconstruction, many communities are attempting to keep the memory of the disaster alive for the future. However, the messages sent out by new monuments and facilities tend to converge in a conformist framework that internalizes people into nationalism. Individual experiences and memories are often reduced to collective representations and integrated into colorless, anonymous things and messages.

For this purpose, this paper focuses on the permanent exhibition on the theme of the Great East Japan Earthquake at the Rias Ark Museum of Art in Kesennuma City, Miyagi Prefecture. The exhibition on the earthquake at Rias Ark has already attracted attention from many quarters, and a number of articles have been written about it. In the following, we will examine the impact and significance of the exhibition, and discuss its unique qualities that set it apart from existing public facilities and the potential of the message it conveys.

Section 1 outlines the city of Kesennuma and the Rias Ark Museum of Art, and introduces the characteristics of this exhibition by describing the author's own participant observation of the earthquake exhibition. In Section 2 we summarize the discussion that previous studies have pointed out regarding the method of representation of the exhibition. Section 3-5 provides a detailed examination of exhibitions based on the previous discussion and attentive observations. This exhibition not only displays a wealth of primary materials such as damaged objects and pictures of damaged area, but is also characterized by the ambiguity and polyphony of the commentary that accompanies them. Through the practice of realizing commentaries, audiences articulate things with stories according to their own interpretation. In addition, we will argue that this exhibition aims to co-create a "tsunami culture" that resists disasters by requesting changes in our meta-level perceptions and values through images and damaged objects.

Key words: Rias Ark Museum of Art, earthquake exhibition, Great East Japan Earthquake, earthquake exhibition, ambiguity, polyphony, articulation, culture
