

# compassionate grounds

11 March - 26 September 2021  
Composite, Collingwood Yards,  
Melbourne

31 July - 21 August 2021  
Metro Arts, Brisbane



Masaharu Satō *Calling (Japanese version)* 2014 Animation, single channel video (HD, color, sound) 7 min. (loop) © Estate of Masaharu Satō, Courtesy of Mihoko Ogaki and KEN NAKAHASHI Gallery.

## Ten Years on in Tōhoku

Masahiro Hasunuma  
Chaco Kato  
Kyun-chome  
Natsumi Seo & Haruka Komori  
Masaharu Sato

Lieko Shiga  
Motoyuki Shitamichi  
Poem by Mayu Kanamori

Curated by Emily Wakeling

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<div><span><span></span></span></div>	
<p><span><b>With thanks</b></span></p> Masahiro Hasunuma / 蓮沼真弘	

Chaco Kato / 加藤チャコ
Kyun-chome / キュンチョメ
Natsumi Seo & Haruka Komori / 瀬尾夏美+小森春香
Masaharu Sato / 佐藤正治

Lieko Shiga /志賀理江子
Motoyuki Shitamichi /下道 基行
Mayu Kanamori / 金森マユ
Jenna Lee / リー・ジェナ
Channon Goodwin / グッドウィン・シャノン
Kyle Weise / ワイス・カイル
Ken Nakahashi / 中橋健
Mihoko Ogaki / 大垣美穂子
Yuki Takano / 高野由紀

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しばらく電話が不通。キャンベラ空港で芸人やクルーと搭乗するとき、

タグライン「自宅のようなあなたのホーム」とうたう

パースの宿に到着したとき。電話が鳴ったが、シドニーからだった。

『ニュースで聞いたけれど、あなたの人たちは大丈夫？』

感謝のすべきなのに、『事態はニュースの見出しどころじゃない。

私の人たちもあなたの人たちなのに』

と思ってしまった。口調で感じたに違いない。

ごめんなさい。

妹の声がようやく届いた。リハーサルの昼休み中、タグライン「体験を楽しもう」とうたう劇場裏のジャラー木の廊下。行ったり来たりしながら、受話器越しに頼む、非難出来るうちに離れて。取り返しがつかない、爆発が起こる前に。シドニーで母と猫たちと一緒に暮らそう。『出て行ける人は出て行き始めているよ。私は残る。ここで必要とされている。』と妹。音響チェックが始まっていた。いち、に、いち、に、いち、に。

**作家**　**金森マユ**

『温情の地：震災から10年の東北（COMPASSIONATE GROUNDS: TEN YEARS ON IN TŌHOKU）』

ちょうど10年前、東日本大震災と津波によって壊滅し、そしてその後の再建によって劇的な変化を遂げた東北の風景は、益々多くの日本人アーティストがビデオ作品の題材として扱うようになって来た。

2011年3月11日午後2時46分、岩手県、宮城県、福島県の31の沿岸市町村がマグニチュード9.1の地震に襲われ、それに続く最高40メートルにも及ぶ巨大な津波によって失われた。建物、車、そして人間も海に飲み込まれた。生存者たちは約18,000人もの犠牲者の死を悼んだが、(しばしば「3.11」と呼ばれる)この震災はそれだけではなく、何十万もの世帯から家を奪い、日本の地方部にすでに進行していた人口減少を更に加速させることとなった。

日本のコンテンポラリーアートを遠方から継続的に研究する「温情の地：震災から10年の東北」は、アーティスト達が遠隔からの観察や生存者との直接のやりとりを通じて、震災の生存者の間に未だにこぼまる社会的トラウマの表現として風景にフォーカスしたスクリーンベースの作品の展示会である。建設現場、瓦礫、防壁、高い防潮堤は、この震災とその後の政府による「復興」プロジェクトが人々やコミュニティに与えた今なお続く目には見えにくい影響を具現化したものである。オーストラリアの二つのアートスペースから、震災10周年とその今も続く影響を観察した。

岩手県南部の陸前高田市は2011年の津波による被害が最も激しかった被災地である。蓮沼昌宏は、地元の人々との交流や、彼らとこの町の様々な場所との関係にインスピレーションを得ながら、繊細な手描きのアニメーションで陸前高田（略して高田）の震災後の風景を捉える。彼の短く印象的なアニメーションが大震災のような未曾有の出来事を取り上げ、小さな美しい現象「りくぜんたかたのアニメーション2019」として現像される。元小学校があった場所の前で小学生のグループについて行く赤毛の猫、そこには3月11日の夜もそうであったように雪が降り始める。「かつて（津波前）の陸前高田の街並みはなく、これから新しい街並みも　まだない状態です。」と蓮沼は2019年のレジデンシーの際に記している。建設プロジェクトによって、もと商業施設があったエリアが「津波に耐え得る」高さまで10〜12メートルかさ上げされた。その様子がむき出しの人口丘として蓮沼の画像に映っている。津波の被害を受けた多くの町が同様の盛り土を行っているが、高田のものはその中でも飛びぬけて大規模である。

高田は、長年コラボレーションを行ってきた瀬尾夏美と小森はるかの映像作品群の主題にもなっている。二人の作品「二重のまち／交代地のうたを編む2020」は、震災を生きた地元の人々の話を聞く20代の四人の旅人を追ったものだ。彼らは建設エリアを歩き回る、以前よりかなり高くなった（以前松林だった場所に建つ過去の三倍の高さの）新しい防潮堤にさえぎられた海の景色、工事の足場や真新しい盛り土を見下ろす道路、常に鳴り響く重機の音。狭い仮設住宅の中で旅人たちは、地元住民の喪失とトラウマの親密な話を聞く。「二重のまち」の最後の会話では、若者たちが自分たちが聞いた話をどうするべきかまだ決めかねていることが露になる。「伝承者」というのは主に広島と長崎の被爆者の語継ぎに使われる用語だが、偶然「伝承者」になったかのような彼らは今、生存者の記憶を引き継ぐ重責を感じている。

数百キロメートル離れたところから、下道基行の「津波石 2015」は3.11をより長い歴史に結び付ける。2011年の津波によって気仙沼の岸から打ち上げられた60メートルの大型漁船が折りと花のシンボルとなったという話を読んだとき、彼はこの漁船の役割を沖繩石垣島の神聖な岩になぞらえた。巨大な不動の石柱のように見える石垣島東海岸の津波石は、実は何百年も前に津波に押し上げられたもので、その後神道の信仰の対象となっている。3.11後、気仙沼の住民は壊れた漁船を撤去するか、それとも今後も震災の実物記念碑としてその場にとどめておくか議論が続けた。下道のビデオは、震災の残骸が持つ過去と現在の社会的な役割に焦点をあてる。

Looking on from even further afield in Australia, Japan-born artist Chaco Katō responds to the 2011 disasters with a site-specific installation utilising thread and UV light. In the artist’s words, her ongoing interest in manually created line work, which in itself becomes a spatial plain, or a metaphorical landscape, demonstrate thought patterns and patterns of human movement inspired by the aftermath of the 2011 disasters.

Artist duo Kyun-chome feature sites of displacement for 3.11 survivors in *The story of making lies* 2015, a video that focuses on the former homes and neighbourhoods of those evacuated soon after the tsunami damaged the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. When the work was made, four years on from evacuations, its subjects were still in temporary housing. When Kyun-chome offered computer classes and lessons in image-editing software for the older evacuees from Tomioka, Namie, Katsurao and Hirono, it became an opportunity for them to share memories of their towns before the barricades were there. The activity becomes an opportunity to hear how people feel about the loss of their homes and an uncertain future. In areas including Namie and Iitate, towns that experienced some of the highest exposures to radiation, only 4-5% of residents have returned to their neighbourhoods. Some participants despair about the future: ‘My area is supposed to keep out for 30 years. No matter how hard I try I can’t go back’, says one elderly subject. ‘I want to go back with everyone, but it’s difficult...’ says another.

The late Masaharu Satō was living in Fukushima’s neighbouring prefecture of Ibaraki when the 2011 disasters hit. *Calling* 2014 is an uncanny collection of static scenes, resulting from Sato’s filming and then meticulous tracing of each frame of raw video footage with a digital pen, creating a fictional world in which the ‘real’ footage is still very present. In each of these scenes, a telephone or mobile rings out. Some locations, like a decaying bus on the banks of the Tone River, look long-abandoned except for the ringing mobile on one of the seats. A karaoke room, on the other hand, looks as though people will momentarily return. Nevertheless, the phones remain unanswered.

Photographer Lieko Shiga, who has lived in Tōhoku since 2008, creates a compelling monologue in *Human spring* 2020, her first foray into video. Just before daybreak, a young male figure emerges from the darkness of the black screen. The voice-over tells of her experience staying in temporary accommodation. Her neighbour experiences a type of mania with the arrival of spring, beginning a winding narrative that talks of spring both as a phenomenon with special significance to northeastern culture, as well as a concept that ruptures the worlds between living and dead. The figure on screen is slowly revealed with the break of day, always keeping an unrelenting, energised pace as he strides through a distinct coastal Tōhoku landscape—the ocean and land unambiguously separated by the high seawall.

‘[Photography] has served to overcome the inevitable fading of memories over time,’ is a line of narrated dialogue from *Human spring*, and through their works, Shiga, along with all artists included above, address and record the massive social impact of major loss. They do so on what could be described as ‘compassionate grounds’: a term commonly heard in pandemic times when discussing certain cases of extra liberties for individual citizens, but in this case also an artistic representation of the painful relationship many disaster survivors still have with their lost or now unrecognisable lands and homes.

**Emily Wakeling, March 2021**

*Compassionate Grounds: Ten Years on in Tohoku* is an exhibition at Composite, Collingwood Arts Precinct, Melbourne from March to September 2021 and Metro Arts, Brisbane in August 2021. Emily Wakeling is a Queensland-based curator and art writer.

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which this exhibition is held and extend my respect to elders past, present and emerging.

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, plus support from Bus Projects and Metro Arts.

The Tōhoku landscape, an area devastated exactly ten years ago by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami and subsequently transformed through reconstruction works, has been the subject of a growing number of Japanese artists’ video practices.

**On 11 March 2011, 2:46 pm, 31 coastal towns in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures were shocked by a 9.1 magnitude earthquake and then lost under a massive ocean surge— up to 40 metres high in areas—with buildings, cars and people swept out to sea. Survivors mourn an approximate 18,000 victims, but the disaster (often referred to as 3.11) also caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of households, accelerating Japan’s already existing trend to regional depopulation.**

Curated as a continuation of research in Japanese contemporary art, conducted from afar, *Compassionate Grounds: Ten Years on in Tōhoku* is an exhibition of screen-based works by several artists who, observing from a distance or working directly with survivors, focus on landscape as an expression for the social traumas still reverberating among the region’s survivors. Construction sites, debris, guarded barriers and higher seawalls appear as tangible expressions of the ongoing, less-visible impacts the disaster and state-funded ‘recovery’ projects have had on people and their communities. From two Australian art spaces, it observes the 10th anniversary of the disasters and their ongoing impact.

Rikuzentakata in southern Iwate Prefecture was one of the hardest hit by the 2011 tsunami. Masahiro Hasunuma captures the post-earthquake landscape of Rikuzentakata (Takata for short) via delicate hand-drawn animations inspired by his interactions with locals and their relationship to sites in the town. His short, impressionistic animations take something as overwhelming as a major disaster and processes it through small and beautiful phenomena: in *Rikuzentakata animation* 2019, a ginger cat follows a group of school children in front of the former school building, with snow beginning to fall as it did on the evening of March 11th. ‘The former [pre-tsunami] cityscape of Rikuzentakata is no longer there’, Hasunuma wrote at the time of his 2019 residency, ‘nor is the new cityscape that awaits construction’. The construction project adds 10-12 metres of ‘tsunami-proof’ high ground to the former shopping area—seen in the bare hills in Hasunuma’s images. Many of Tōhoku’s tsunami-hit towns are undergoing similar defensive re-groundings, but Takata’s is by far the largest.

Takata is also the subject of several films by long-time collaborators Natsumi Seo and Haruka Komori, whose *Double layered town / Making a song to replace our positions* 2020 follows four visitors in their 20s who listen to the stories of townspeople who lived through the disaster. They walk around areas under construction—ocean views obstructed by the new and much higher seawall (tripled in height all along the once tree-lined coast); streets looking over scaffolding and hills of new earth; and the constant sound of heavy machinery. In people’s cramped temporary living spaces the visitors listen to intimate stories of loss and trauma. A conversation at the end of *Double-layered town* reveals that the young people are yet to decide what to do with the stories they have heard. Like unwitting *denshōsha* (custodians of oral histories), a term used primarily for the keepers of Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombing survivor stories, they now feel a heavy obligation to honour the survivors’ accounts.

From hundreds of kilometres away, Motoyuki Shitamichi’s *Tsunami boulders* 2015 connects 3.11 to a longer history. When Shitamichi read that a 60-metre fishing vessel, washed ashore in Kesenuma by the 2011 tsunami, had become a focus of prayers and flowers, he began to compare the boat’s role to the sacred rocks of Ishigaki, Okinawa. The Ishigaki East Coast Tsunami Rocks, enormous immovable monoliths as they appear, were actually pushed onto the land by centuries-old tsunami activity and subsequently became sites of Shinto worship. After 3.11, Kesenuma’s survivors debated removing or keeping the damaged boat in place as an ongoing, functioning memorial. Shitamichi’s videos centre the social role of disaster debris both past and present.