

# The Power of Narration and the Drive Toward Fiction: Sakai Ko and Hamaguchi Ryusuke's Tohoku Documentary Trilogy

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In Sakai Ko and Hamaguchi Ryusuke's Tohoku trilogy a whole series of people speak of their experiences during the earthquake, bracketed by fragments of scenery captured from inside a moving car. That mode of construction basically doesn't change throughout the trilogy. It's a simple, almost curt, style but it develops a space and time overflowing with a sense of life.

In the first film, *The Sound of the Waves*, and the second film, *Voices from the Waves*, men and women from several generations speak of their experiences in the Great East Japan Earthquake. Although they vividly convey the fear, what makes the greatest impression is the almost unbelievable equanimity and geniality with which they speak, whether to fellow survivors or in interviews with the filmmakers. Even those who are reticent at first quickly become more buoyant as they talk. In those cases, their "experience" is not simply the content of what they say. Rather, what they say is fused with how they say it, such that the event called "experience" appears on the screen.

In the film's powerful appeal to our eyes and ears, one thing becomes clear. There's something unusual about the placement of

the camera. Without in any way seeming affected, the strangeness of the camera placement adds to the force with which we experience the event.

Although it's all part of the same Great East Japan Earthquake, not everyone's experience is the same. It depends on the person. It may be a subtle difference but that subtlety is tremendously important. In that way the uniqueness of experience, the particularity of voice and expression and way of speaking, comes to the surface. What I want to emphasize here is that the work of narration goes hand in hand with the urge to fictionalize, which is expressed in the fluency of that telling.

In the third film, *Storytellers*, three old men relate local oral traditions or folk tales but the style is no different from the other two films. The stories that lie at the base of everyday life are made into objects of experience by virtue of an inherent power of narration and urge to create fiction.

Narration + Style = Event. The spectacular fascination of this movement in the Tohoku trilogy surely comes from the very essence of cinema. (Translated by Michael Raine)

## ■ Screenings

*Voices from the Waves* 【IC】 ..... 10/12 16:30- [A6] | 10/14 14:30- [CL]  
*Storytellers* 【PJ】 ..... 10/13 10:00- [F3] | 10/14 18:50- [F4]