

Work in progress: Two years of Keio ABR and performative sociology

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1. Aim

In early November 2016, a new research group known as “Keio ABR” was established in Keio University. One of the main goals of Keio ABR and arts-based research is combining art and research, which helps to produce multilayered and performative interaction between two sides, not available or sometimes even acceptable in orthodox academic research. In the paradigm of ABR, research outcome can be presented in art form, and more importantly, it doesn't end there. Here work of art is not a complete matter; it is indeed the “work in progress”, and so is sociological research. In short, ABR opens new doors for research, where inquirer and viewer create original content through mutual interaction.

2. Methods

During the past two years Keio ABR successfully published academic papers, held an exhibition and presented various art projects to the public. The intent of this presentation is to give brief explanation of these activities, mainly focusing on two big projects. First project is the 《Replica Symphony “Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park on August 6” (2015)》 video installation, first shown during Cultural Typhoon (2016). Multiple screens, each placed in the position according the map, “replicate” one memorable day in Hiroshima. Furthermore, installation space represents the view of the inquirer, and lets participant to feel and interact with the inquiry itself. Secondly, presentation will feature ongoing project 《Ten Small Pieces of Ushiku –Memory Song-》. Keio ABR's team visited small town of Ushiku multiple times with purpose of collecting life history of the locals. Simple research would end here, but we proposed new performative approach. By creating the song out of memories and continuously performing it, we attempted passing on “living memory” to others. This presentation will feature the performance of the “Memory Song” live or in the video format.

3. Conclusion

Despite Keio ABR publishing many theoretical research papers, this presentation will put emphasis on practical activity. In doing so, it intends to stress the importance of performative matter in the academic world. Particularly during the big sociological conventions, where everything finds settlement in “words” not “practice”.