



"Build Back Better" after the 3/11 Disaster: Efforts to Revitalize a Disaster-Affected Region from the Perspective of a Museum Curator

Prof. Dr. Koji Kato (Tohoku University)



**15:15-17:00 on Tuesday,
May 15th, 2018
University of Zurich
Rämistrasse 71, 8006 Zürich
Room KO2-F-150**

*The lecture will be held in English and is open to the public
For questions, please contact the Section for East Asian Art History:*

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ABSTRACT

The multiple disasters of March 2011, with its origins in a massive earthquake off the northern coast of Japan, resulted in enormous and lasting damage. The earthquake gave birth to a tsunami that devastated much of the northeastern coastline, resulting in the deaths of at least 15,891 persons and the displacement of 300,000 inhabitants, only to be followed in quick succession by the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima nuclear reactors.

How does one react to disaster? How should we, as members of academia, respond to such events – and not as abstractions, but when they are actual events in one's own backyard? How should museums respond to a disaster that has devastated its own audience? And how should the past be represented when it is intimately connected to recent trauma?

Professor Kato has spent the last years working in the disaster-stricken sites of northeastern Japan. He has responded as an academic and as a museum curator and has created multiple museum exhibitions, at first in make-shift tents, in response to the needs of the survivors.

In this workshop, Professor Kato will look at a specific site – Ayukawamachi in Ishinomaki City – a location that was closest to the earthquake epicenter, and thus a place that suffered some of the greatest damage. He will detail the work that he has done in the area, such as the rescue of cultural property, and will describe the collaboration of many actors, including local individuals and institutions, in preserving and recreating the past.