Transactions & Impulsions

Exhibition at the University of Lapland, Faculty of Art and Design

Galleries SEINÄ; KILO; KAJO; HÄMÄRÄ and LYHTY. Rovaniemi Finland
3th–16th June 2019
Curatorial Statement

The Transactions and impulsions exhibition at the University of Lapland galleries shows works by invited artists from Alaska and other parts of the USA, Canada, the Russian Federation, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Most of the artist are partners of the Arctic Sustainable Art and Design (ASAD) Thematic Network, which aims to identify and share innovative practices promoting sustainable and responsible models of art and cooperation in education and art-based research.

The exhibition shows how contemporary artists present and construct the multifaceted Arctic in their art and art-based research and also in an educational context. The artists use a wide range of artistic and media tools, such as installations, media art, photographs, videos, textile art and posters. Some of the artists use traditional materials, techniques and colours and ancient symbols in a contemporary context. The artworks raise questions about and offer fresh perspectives on crucial Arctic issues such as climate change, plastic pollution, advocacy for consideration of land-based knowledge and environmental responsibility. At the same time, the exhibition shows how artist, designers and art educators can became co-authors of local makers by commenting on and refining the living culture and the visual appearance of the North.

The exhibition proposes collaborative ways for art and art education to promote greater individual and community awareness of growing environmental challenges and to teach more sustainable ways of having intercultural encounters. Some of the artworks were shown in the ASAD network’s earlier exhibitions, and some, such as the contemporary media art focusing on Arctic issues, are being displayed now for the first time.
The viewpoints from artistic responses to academic critiques enable a cross-disciplinary approach to supporting the art and cultural sectors in a circumpolar collaboration, which is the key aim of the Arctic Arts Summit 2019. We hope the Transactions and impulses exhibition will help to deepen the public’s understanding of our joint Arctic—its beauty, diversity and vulnerable nature, as well as its strength and sustainable possibilities.

Rovaniemi May 27th 2019
Mirja Hiltunen & Timo Haanpää
Curators
Curators

Mirja Hiltunen is a professor of Art Education in the Faculty of Art and Design, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi. She devised a performative art strategy as part of her work in art teacher education and has been leading community-based art education projects in Lapland for twenty years. Site specificity, performativity, socially engaged art and art education are her key research interests. She has presented numerous international research papers and published widely in art education journals, books and art exhibitions.

Timo Haanpää is lecturer in the Audiovisual Media Culture degree programme in the Faculty of Art and Design, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi. Haanpää is a filmmaker who works in different fields of film production. Haanpää has focused particularly on documentary filmmaking but is also interested in a wide range of media art. Haanpää has also worked on community-based art projects.
Artists

Anna Petrova-Kerehit & Olga Rakhleeva
Herminia Din
Denis Kukanov, Yulia Konkova, Nikolai Garin, Svetlana Usenyuk-Kravchuk,
Artemiy Belopashintsev, Alexander Kashirov & Alexander Matveev
Vladimir Durnev
Irina Zemtsova & Anelyia Lyantsevich
Ruth Beer
Torunn P. Dagsland
Jeanne Ilgen & Charles Licka
Timo Jokela
Mette Gårdvik, Karin Stoll & Wenche Sørmo
Tanja Koistinen
Richard Lerman
Simi Susanna Ruotsalainen & Johanna Ruotsalainen
Tatiana Batova & Daria Chebotar
Éva Freund
Marit Susanna Eira
Rauna Vieltojärvi
Jouni Laiti
Monica Blind-Påve

Flying birds symbolise freedom of thoughts and personality. The birds move in the same direction, united by a single gust of freedom. Some prefer to stay with the group, while others stay alone. Furthermore, the painting suggests that there are manifest and unmanifest worlds, so some birds are indicated by contours only. Despite the physicality and concreteness of the work, it addresses the abstract. The ornamental forms are associated with traditional Yakut culture and the interpretation of Yakut ornaments.
Our Plastic Arctic and Our Clean Arctic

Interactive Popup Book (10x10)

The international community is becoming increasingly aware of the rise of plastic pollution found in huge amounts in oceans and on beaches, especially in the Arctic coastal area. Arctic communities need to be resilient against this environmental threat, particularly in view of the health, wellness, and economic priorities that affect the quality of life in the Arctic.

An informed and educated community is fundamental to establishing this resiliency. Among the most important audiences to build awareness in are youth, who will inherit the environmental consequences of previous generations’ actions. Through education, small but significant changes can positively influence their Arctic environments.

This piece is an interactive popup book that will be published by Herminia Din and Astor Lai in April 2019. It is a teaching and learning tool for students from kindergarten to sixth grade that will provide information about plastic pollution and give readers ownership of the problem as they gain knowledge about plastic waste in our oceans. By sharing this book, I hope to increase the exchange of ideas for how to make the Arctic a better and cleaner place for current and future generations.
This series of 13 posters presents a research collection of ideas and technologies for small-scale mobility in the conditions of wintry, northern roadlessness. All of them are united by a common principle of sliding—from ancient, but still practical and efficient, skis to futuristic-looking, but almost forgotten, “ski-mobiles”. This research constitutes a special “database” for the team of authors on the way to introducing and establishing the “Arctic design” domain within the specific context of the Russian Far North.
Denis Kukanov, Yulia Konkova, Nikolai Garin, Svetlana Usenyuk-Kravchuk, Artemiy Belopashintsev, Alexander Kashirov & Alexander Matveev (RU)

An Educational Experiment on Designing a Locally Appropriate ATV: A Method of Artistic Composition

4 posters, 1000×800 mm each

This series of four posters presents projects of BA and MA students of the Arctic Design School on developing locally appropriate ATVs for remote, roadless areas with severe climate conditions. These projects are “designerly” reflections on the phenomenon of vernacular design, also known as—since, Soviet times—the garage-making and tinkering movement of DIY enthusiasts.

Based on our previous fieldwork and analysis of internet resources for ATV makers, we selected several models of homemade vehicles from different regions of Russia. To develop the presented solutions, we employed the method of artistic composition. Within the educational framework, the application of this method was limited to creating, evaluating and transforming the visual composition of a selected piece of technology. As a result, the designers became co-authors of local makers by commenting on and refining the visual appearance of the original ATVs. By following the construction principles and functional features of the original vehicles, the designers could (potentially) fit into the complex web of local needs, existing patterns of use and environmental limitations.
Vladimir Durnev (RU)

Fairytales of Komi

Local Komi clay, white glaze, metal oxides, 80×80 cm

A series of nine ceramic plates, “Fairytales of Komi” is an illustrative composition devoted to little-known legends of the Komi people. This project aims to draw the attention of Komi citizens to the ancient culture of their ancestors. Each image on the plates is in meaningful communication with every other. The legend of the mythological hunter Yirkap was chosen as the main storyline. Hunting was the main occupation in ancient times in northern Russia. Therefore, the story of the successful hunter reflects the idea of a perfect man.
The Project “Verös da götyr”

Mixed media

The project “Verös da götyr” is a scientific experiment on the synthesis of the field of traditional folk art and design. It is aimed at studying and preserving the cultural traditions of the Northern peoples and promoting family values. The project participants focused on the theme of the wedding ceremony as the most important stage of the human life cycle.

During the academic year, students studied the history and cultural traditions of people living in the territory of Northwestern Russia. They explored the local artefacts represented in the national museums, as well as items from the private collection of Irina Zemtsova. The idea of the project was to combine the digital collages, graphics and multimedia installations made by student-designers under the leadership of Anelyia Lyantsevich. Unique photographs created by the researcher Sergey Sergell in 1906 in the Komi village of Bad-El, Ust-Kulom district, were used for the installations. The culmination of the project was an exhibition at the Yugor Cultural Centre (22/03/2018–16/04/2018).
“Intersections” was produced using sound and images recorded in the regions of Terrace, Kitimat, Prince Rupert, K’san, Nisga’a First Nation and Douglas Channel along the proposed route of oil and gas pipelines and tanker traffic that will traverse sensitive waterways and contested terrain in Northwest British Columbia, Canada. It includes songs and voices of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and other cultural producers who live in these communities. Referencing weaving, the visual and audio components are “interwoven” using CG animation to poetically and affectively express complex interrelationships, thus addressing the impacts of increasing energy resource extraction and infrastructure development while advocating for the consideration of land-based knowledge and environmental stewardship. “Intersections” is a component of “Trading Routes: Grease Trails, Oil Pipelines”, a research study and creative interdisciplinary project led by artist/researcher Ruth Beer and supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
Torunn P. Dagsland (NO), 2018

Sami Blood; Sami Varra

Old weaving technique (honeycomb weave) and embroidery
Wool yarn, raw wool, silk, nylon and embroidery yarn (80×180 cm)

Tapestries can be placed in a decorative textile handicraft tradition as well as in a narrative contemporary context. Using various materials, techniques, lines, ancient Sami symbols and colours, this tapestry tells three stories. “Sami Blood” starts with a story about my identity—my Sami roots from the field and the coast. The second story is about my grandfather, a coastal Sami who sailed his fishing boat from north to south in the early 1900s in the hopes of a brighter future. His Sami identity has been covered in silence for two generations because of society’s racism against the Sami. Both of these stories are part of the third story, a story of the repression of the Sami people throughout Norwegian history.

The wool tapestry, made of Norwegian wool, a sustainable and biodegradable resource, is a long-lived tapestry that can be passed down through the generations. Much of the yarn is from secondhand stores.
We are not good stewards of our planet. Global commercial and governmental interests make it difficult to maintain sustainable environments for future generations. The Arctic is subject to environmentally hazardous substances transmitted by long-range atmospheric air and ocean currents, heavy metals being dumped in fjords and eutrophication. Not enough has been done worldwide to work towards a viable environment.

“Siren Surge 1” is a 2’×9’ digital print on vinyl focusing on arsenic transmission through oil spills. The wave, an oil/arsenic mixture, is linked to alchemical symbols. “Siren Surge 2” is a 2’×9’ vinyl digital print with oil splatters buffeting the shoreline of an oil-slicked shore, directed towards the central black void—the abyss of our times. In the case of the arsenic wave, or the expressionistically bespattered Pollock-like flurries of paint, the imagery can be aesthetically pleasing, but these are illusions that are toxic to our environment.
In the 80s and 90s, I used to walk on the shorelines of the Varangerfjord villages in Northern Norway. In those days, the local fishing industry was experiencing a rapid change. Fishermen said that “The sea is black, empty of fish.” The boat sheds were abandoned, and hard winds had scattered the old-style fishing gear around the seashore. I picked up cork fishing net floats one by one—each of them like a story of a changed life at the sea. I used them as notebooks and marked down my landscape observations, the lights and colours of the sea and the sky and the shadows of the abandoned stock fish drying contraptions. About twenty years later, when I returned to Varangerfjord, the old boat sheds were gone and the cork floats on the shore had changed to broken, colourful plastic pieces and messy ropes.
This piece documents contemporary challenges in the relationship between humans and the pollution of the ocean. It represents how new “species” from our throw-away culture occupy the tidal zone in the Arctic region. We used the scientific method of collecting, ordering and exhibiting found objects from the Arctic coast to create a contradiction between the aesthetic presentation of the items and the subsequent message of awareness.

The artefacts were carefully selected in the tidal zone along the Arctic coast whilst ridding beaches of debris. This was done within the framework of an interdisciplinary community art educational project involving the Departments of Arts and Handicrafts and Natural Sciences at Nord University, Nesna.

Mette Gårdvik, Karin Stoll & Wenche Sørmo (NO), 2017

New Species

Collection of marine debris artefacts, 50×50 cm
Tanja Koistinen (FI), 2018

**Potential partnership**

Documented performance, installation of 7 photographs, total size 80×250 cm (6× 25×47, 1× 54×105)

“In the Russian Arctic, oil companies are drilling oil from the lands, where its inhabitants are used to getting their daily necessities from. In the work ‘Potential Partnership’, the artist ponders her own partnership with oil, showing the character of oil as a possible partner of life. For the Siberian communities, the absence of oil companies has impacts on everyday living. It’s like a relationship, but is it abusive or reciprocal? Loving and caring or destructive? The visibility of this partner and the complexity of the relationship is shown in the research interviews and in the companies’ and governmental representatives’ statements.”

“Potential Partnership” was originally part of the exhibition Oil, Land & Networks, where artworks were made concerning the research project “Oil Production Networks in the Russian Arctic: Societal Impacts and Potential for Partnership”. Tanja Koistinen’s approach to building art based on research material was self-reflective, aiming for reliable research interpretations and avoiding othering between herself and the indigenous communities of Siberia.
Richard Lerman (USA), 2014–19

Arctic Transitions 3: In the Age of Carbon

Audio, camera & editing

Recordings were gathered from 2014–2016 in Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. The majority of the recordings were made at the University of Helsinki Biological Research Station in Kilpisjärvi during several BioArts research residencies. I have designed and worked with piezoelectric devices for more than 40 years. In these pieces, the devices have amplified and recorded small vibrations in carbon fibre rods, ice, grass, trees, rocks, etc. You can see these homemade devices attached to many materials in the video. I also used a hydrophone to record sounds of ice colliding, scraping, traveling and melting. The rods are both image and transducer; they behave as single-ended strings and produce a wide range of sounds. These pieces are from a three-channel video installation. I am working on new piece that will be called “Nostalgia for the Ice”.

Digital/Media Arts at Ariz State University
The media art piece “What they say” works with media speech and how different operators give statements and reports from their own positions. Since there is no one truth, media audiences should follow different communicators to get an overall view of the big picture. The case presented in the artwork is the Arctic Railway Plan, and related reports and statements give the words and speech to the artwork. At the same time, the artists raise the questions of “What does Northernness mean in decision-making processes conducted elsewhere?” and “Do local communities have any voice in those conversations?”
This piece involves designing a collection of clothes—Arctic fashion—that connects the visual identities of the peoples of the North (through transformed forms of traditional clothing) and adds modern trends in textiles and fabric printing, technology, etc. The main idea is that the general silhouette (shape) of the outer garments of the indigenous peoples of the North is taken as the basis and then adapted to modern desires.

Tatiana Batova: “This is based on my memories of early childhood in Nar-yan-Mar (Nenets Autonomous District), my motherland, and based on the experience of wearing traditional Nenets clothes, or panitsa. I would like to introduce the following senses into clothes: sensations of being in a house, where it’s warm, comfortable and protected. This is the house that is always with you. The outer clothing of indigenous peoples is such that the Nenets can fall asleep in the winter in the tundra and not freeze.”

The name of the collection is “Punuska”, which means “bird” in Nenets, because the overall silhouette of the clothing resembles a bird.
Éva Freund (HU), 2019

Crossing Paths

Assistant director: Ulla Nagy
Camera: Ulla Nagy, Éva Freund, Janne Leimola
Sound design: Janne Leimola

“Crossing Paths” is an experimental short film shot during a poetic, associative tracking in the Lappish environment, from Rovaniemi to Utsjoki. The piece reflects on the local territorial and ecological issues of “paths” or “ways,” such as the Arctic Railway Plan, without attempting to be comprehensive. The film conveys metaphoric meanings of crossing roads and paths with an allusion to the dichotomic relation between the urban and natural environment, which could be seen as an analogy to the civilized and wild aspects of human nature as the struggling components of the self. How could a journey to the North offer a solution?
Sámi people traditionally use a gietkka (a cot where a baby sleeps) while relocating. The gietkka is used to protect the baby. However, this tradition is on the wane. New rules prevent the use of gietkka during car trips. Today, car seats protect babies while traveling by car, but they do not possess a sense of identity. According to Sámi tradition, a baby should be protected by a šiella (often silver jewellery) that wards against underground people (mythical creatures). Nowadays, modern car seats do not include šiella, and so the belief disappears.

I have decorated a modern car seat for babies in line with traditional gietkka from Guovdageaidnu. The car seat has a goahki (a curve over the baby’s head) and woven ribbon, colourful beans, silver buttons and fabric to cover the baby. The decoration makes the car seat more beautiful and expresses Sámi identity. At the same time, it is nice for the baby to have toys (thanks to the beans and the silver buttons) and be protected by the šiella. You can also cover the baby with the fabric while it sleeps.
Kallokkaat, Lakki, Sisnarahi

Reindeer skull skin, red broadcloth, willow-tanned reindeer skin

Kallokkaat (Duodji1)
These shoes are made from reindeer skull skin. The shoes are quite warm and comfortable during the wintertime.

Lakki (Duodji2)
Women’s hats from Karasjok are traditionally made from red broadcloth. Traditionally, there are three types of ribbons in the hat.

Sisnarahi (Duodji3)
“Sisti” is willow-tanned reindeer skin. This low bench is made from different pieces of sisti. The decorations are part of the old, traditional women’s Sámi costume. The low bench’s sitting area is divided into eight parts based on the eight Sámi seasons of the year.
Early on, I understood the power of crafting. My mother, father, grandmother and aunt—all of them together and individually—showed me how a craftsman lives and what a delight it is to make something practical and beautiful. Nature’s offerings became more and more important to me, and I felt great respect for Nature when I made my first handicrafts.

And then came the new period of rushing. Everything must happen faster, in a rush. There is no longer time to follow the rhythms of Nature or to clean up after yourself. Many things go wrong: the river is dammed, the forest is logged, waste mounts, there’s a rush of people and there’s noise. One hill after the other, the forest, the spring, the bog—they are all destroyed. The Earth is crying.

In the future, we will be together and, therefore, stronger. We are strengthened by our Sámi origins, our families and our friends. Our future is like the wooden cup that offers possibilities for both of us. One of the handles is for you, the other one for me. Through the decorative star of the handle, I smile at you; the star below shows the warm feeling of my body towards you. You suit me so well, and you make our future brighter. The cup enables us to reflect on the beauty and the good aspects of the world. One day, the chest of our memories will be full of gentle thoughts, containing only the things that are dearest to us.
Monica Blind-Pâve (SE)

Relocation

Relocation is a handbag that has been inspired by the pointed tip of a Sámi ski, or a boat, or a geres (a Sámi sledge), or the ears of a moose. The handbag is for carrying a mobile phone when relocating and travelling. It is made of reindeer hide, prepared at home, and fur from a newborn reindeer calf. The handbag was sewn using offcuts and leftovers that the artist had in storage for some time. The bracket on the handbag is made from reindeer antlers.

I am...

I am... was inspired by a woman’s traditional belt that forms part of the gákti (a Sámi costume) from the Gárasavvon area, where Monica hails from. The belt is made from prepared reindeer hide, wool cloth and silver buttons decorated with antler. The colours of the belt are different from the traditional women’s belts of the Gárasavvon area, which mainly use red and yellow.
The Transactions and impulsions exhibition shows works by artists from Alaska and other parts of the USA, Canada, the Russian Federation, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Most of the invited artists are partners of the Arctic Sustainable Art and Design (ASAD) Thematic Network, which aims to identify and share innovative practices promoting sustainable and responsible models of art and cooperation in education and art-based research. The artworks show how contemporary artists present and construct the multifaceted Arctic in their art and art-based research and also in an educational context.